

AGNIESZKA JARZEWICZ
Akademia Pomorska, Słupsk
jarzewicz@gmail.com

ORIENTALISM VERSUS OCCIDENTALISM. THE AXIOLOGICAL CONFINES OF INTERPRETATION

An increased intensity of social communication has become a hallmark of the era live in since new media commenced organizing our public and private life. The digital revolution has resulted in an unprecedented scale, scope, and speed of personal or institutional interactions, in their intra- and intercultural variations. Potentially unlimited possibility to interact with the others expands the opportunity to information access. As far as the new media in the context of technological acquirements are concerned, it is not misleading to view the world as a realm shrinking in size or duration. Indeed, the world has contracted into a “global village”. Marshall McLuhan’s (Ref) metaphor is pertinent to the technological advance, yet remains ambiguous in a context of cross-cultural comprehension. While The term “village” used to connote ideas of community and sharing experience that results in a social intimacy, making use of progressively sophisticated electronic media has not converted the public sphere into a peaceful domain yet (Kapuściński 2006, 21). There is no such a transformation in prospect, unless the technological development takes place in the lack of profound changes measurable within the sphere of symbolic culture. It is highly dubious or downright perfunctory to claim the opposite.

In our new public sphere the so called computer-mediated communication technologies (CMCTs) have been providing a means for executing globalization strategies. An invention-oriented form of social life has been enormously influencing our civilization, and yet human reality has abounded with deep-rooted and protracted conflicts nevertheless. A vast majority of cultural differences might be found as the main source of bitter clashes. These are differences of an axiological nature. Some of them give reasons to trigger off reactions so radical and fundamental that are even violently disuniting adversaries. What must be considered essential for being able to proceed with cross-cultural comprehension whenever a dissimilitude gets out of control, I insist, is a knowledge of interpretation rules. Pursuing an unceasing im-

provement of CMCTs could have been a factor suitable for supporting peace-oriented activity but cannot implicate *per se* arriving at solution for social violence. Even though an outstanding capability for contribution to knowledge exchange seems to considerably influence human behaviour, we ought not to be expecting that technological infrastructure will inevitably force the spiritual alteration.

The focus of the present paper is to rethink an interpretative mechanism of the symbolic culture in the context of a discourses' clash situation. A case that is going to be analysed below refers to a controversial wording of Orientalism that three decades ago was propounded by Edward Said(Ref). After describing his approach towards this discourse, the paper will shift focus up to the point of reference that is going to occur necessary for defining Orientalism, notwithstanding Said omission of including it within the spectrum of his intellectual interests. A comprehensive study of Occidentalism, conducted by Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit (Ref) over two decades after the publication of *Orientalism* (date?), will enable us to confront adversarial approaches towards cross-cultural criticism. A comparison of these antipodal discursive structures is the main focus of Burma's article. It mainly demonstrates the kind of intellectual sensitivity about criticism and knowledge about interpretation required for communication in multicultural societies. Meanwhile, a digression on the case of Ayaan Hirsi Ali who is used to animadverting upon Islam(Ref), will ensue. This piece of the puzzle is relevant to our consideration for it marks some vital confines of criticism. To conclude my analysis of discrepant but interrelated discourses confrontation, I am going to refer to Andrzej Szahaj argumentation on various attitudes towards multiculturalism, and to socio-regulative concept of interpretation generating a sense of mutuality (Ref) .

POSTMODERN DISILLUSION: IDEOLOGICAL ENTANGLEMENTS OF DISCOURSE

By the term "Orientalism" Edward Said (2003) meant a dogmatic discourse which has become established as continuously recurring throughout the history of relations between the Orient and the Occident. This discourse has been able to prevail due to the strength of an ontological and epistemological distinction formulated between both the Middle East or, more generally, the Arab world and the West. For identifying the phenomenon at issue Said employed Michel Foucault's (2004) description of the discourse. The concept being elaborated by French pos-tstructuralist in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* refers to a set of statements interconnected in the form of particular collocations, also related to events other than of verbal ones, such the political, economic, or technical ones. A statement taken on its own, whether spoken or

written, is a discursive event that consists of verbal actions being interlinked with non-verbal happenings. If statements to be uttered are provoked by other types of events, such as to lead to various types of deeds, then discourse function cannot be elucidated solely within the frame of a pure linguistic analysis. The postmodern notion of discourse has been devised as a vehicle for giving a support to carry an alteration of history through from the stage when the document has been perceived in the category of an inert material to the stage when historians have gained self-awareness of their constructivist position in relation to their knowledge sources. In organizing the document, history itself has become caught up in ideological systems of references. The background of preconceived value judgements gives historians a sense of being eligible to presuppose what is relevant or worth to expound and disseminate. An appeal to look beyond the frontiers of official narratives and to scrutinise their origins and continuities has been deliberately aimed at revealing prejudices, biases, and dogmas essential for the metanarrative.

Has Edward Said managed to free himself from the Western ubiquitous metanarrative? Determination to expose what has become tacit knowledge being presupposed about the Orient has been, invariably, a mission statement of his intellectual activity. Clearly decisive for his notion of Orientalism is an assumption that this discourse serves as a manipulative knowledge filter. Defined as a dogmatic elaboration of the ideological creations, Orientalism functionally relates to the cultivation and enforcement of false consciousness. However, the discursive corpus of statements on the Orient ought not to be qualified as a collection of absolute lies or pure fantasies. This highly ideological system of statements engages us, directly, with the Western tradition of biased thinking about the Others. In fact, roots of this inheritance go back a long way to ancient Greeks who attached stigma to non-Greeks by labelling them with such an inglorious word as *'barbaros'*. This deeply and thoroughly entrenched tradition is hard to resist since it gives the Westerners a sense of being themselves culturally pre-conditioned and privileged to a cultural modernization. Use of an entire collection of discursive devices tends to perpetuate this tradition ever since. These are metaphors and many other rhetorical devices such as allusion, dysphemism, or satire. The tropes being combined with a suitable genre of expression, have engendered heated controversies between the two cultural circles.

Biases against the Orient have been construed and proclaimed by the Europeans, but also professed also by the Americans. An Oriental inferiority and Occidental superiority opposition, inspired by the Western "imaginative geography", has become a cornerstone of Orientalism. An officious and obstinate recurrence of the Orientalist dogma, being widely distributed throughout the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment eras, reflects the Westerners' persistent tendency to recreate the Arab world in demeaning and humiliating terms. The Orient has been reduced to a synonym for extraneousness and ex-

oticness, in a pejorative sense of these words, so as to connote preposterousness and irrationality of thought and behaviour. As such a peculiar entity, the Orient has been turned into the source of Western archetypical images of the Other. Has it not been for the distortion imposed on the Others, as Said suggested, there would have not been the Western sense of identity.

Despite claiming to be a veridical narrative, Orientalism inevitably "stands forth and away from the Orient". Something yet "more formidable" has been generated than merely misrepresentation. The nexus of biased knowledge has been brought into focus to impose and execute power system. The Baconian theme of parallelism between knowledge constitution and power gaining activity appears obvious here. Said's contention has been that pursuit for hegemony represents a major component of the Western culture. Accordingly, an astonishing strength, durability, and coherence of discourse in question have been relying on a projection of a desire to control and manipulate the Orient. Indeed, over a span of centuries there has been successfully handled, a deliberate distribution of European-Atlantic imperialism. Thereby, the Western identity sense as represented by Said has not resulted from simply innocuous myths, but functionally related to the subjugation of the Others. Powerful instruments for implementing the imposition of Western domination, whether due to colonial or postcolonial order, have helped establish an administrative infrastructure, and may have created a Western culture of looking at things; that is a subjugating hermeneutics encapsulating art, religious, scholarship, science, economy and politics.

Edward Said cultivated, throughout his intellectual activity, an expression of a certain *topos* that might cohere with a zealousness of a political activism. In order not to conceive of these inclinations as a failure to reach scientifically valid standards, a claim of an axiological neutrality has to be contextualised. The neo-Kantian philosophers have left a positivistic image of science as an untenable position. Also the ideal of scientific objects as a "copy of objective facts" ought not to be disregarded valid any longer. In fact, Max Weber's (1904) explicit rejection of presuppositionless approach to the world has been done in favour of an advanced argument about discursive status of cognition. Since the focus of humanities has shifted towards values and other beliefs preconceived in every interpretation (an intellectual activity and a product of that activity), it has become worthwhile to examine the role of an axiological affiliations of the very interpreters. They have been either adherents or opponents of certain prejudgements long before making a large number of varied choices about indicating and interpreting facts. They have also proposed a significance of events for the interpretive *explanandum* to show the efficacy of different scientific methods. These choices, some of which are more spontaneous while others are carefully considered, presuppose a certain value orientation. Axiology as a set of normative (ethical or political) beliefs has integrating and at the same time diversifying functions.

Values are parts of certain *Weltanschauungen*, and are used to confirm some forms of social life, but contest some others, as well. We express *ipso facto* our spiritual membership in various communities, but also our dissociation from groups that we do not approve of. These are values which unify scientists into an “interpretive communities”. This Stanley Fish’s coinage (2007) has been used by Andrzej Szahaj (2007) to refer to an ethical turn in science, which has revealed a rich saturation of scientific discourses with value judgements and political interests. Anti-positivistic breakthrough help demonstrate why any attempt to eradicate values from the reality, to be scientifically described and explained is no more likely to seem successful. The key issue here is an inalienability of cultural background while formulating any value judgement. An idea of a pure contemplative approach to the world collides with a concept of human thought and cognition as being culturally established and regulated.

In light of the ethical turn it is comprehensible why Said’s argumentation proved significant for social sciences. He could have felt so passionately on politically inspired writings because he had complete confidence in the ideas of Gramscian provenance about an eminently important role of intellectuals and writers as mentors to the confusing present. His search for an authenticity of intellectual values contributes to some struggles, such as protecting history against falling into oblivion, or its reformulation and “bowdlerization”. The other struggle refers to adversarial attributes necessary for an effective public intervention. Its basic form relies on presenting historical narratives alternative to official memory: “(...) every situation should be interpreted according to its own givens, but (and I would argue that this is almost always the case) that every situation also contains a contest between a powerful system of interests on the one hand and, on the other, less powerful interests threatened with frustration, silence, incorporation, or extinction by the powerful” (Said 2005, 24). Interpretation should be drawn, according to Said, from a political vocation serving as a mouthpiece for all those subjugated.

Nowadays, in pursuit of their vocation, intellectuals have to face the challenge of cyberspace. Within this new environment the public sphere has been enormously expanded by means of CMCTs (see Ess 2002). In the course of time, Said identified as regards systems of communication a tremendous boost and a rapid acceleration as the key factors contributing enormous changes to the concept of discourse. There are significant modification this concept has undergone, in parallel with alteration of two other notions: an archive and an audience. Recirculation of discourse-events’ multiplying reproductions deprives the authors of control over their creations. In addition, the public sphere’s reconfiguration done in terms of the digital technologies, has brought about a transition in the audience which has become exceedingly difficult to precisely and definitely be delineated. Without a solid sense of a mental linkage with an audience, the authors of alternative narratives can-

not rely on the systems of references to be deciphered forthwith, pursuant to their intentional senses. Therefore, Said had to reconsider how to create the alternative narrative in the digitalised circumstances of social interactions, whereby a manifestation of transparency might be misinterpreted:

The thing to remember, I keep telling myself, is that there isn't another language at hand, that the language I use must be the same used by the State Department or the president when they say that they are for human rights and for fighting a war to "liberate" Iraq, and I must be able to use that very same language to recapture the subject, reclaim it, and reconnect it to the tremendously complicated realities these vastly overprivileged antagonists of mine have simplified, betrayed, and either diminished or dissolved. It should be obvious by now that for an intellectual who is not there simply to advance someone else's interest, there have to be opponents that are held responsible for the present state of affairs, antagonists with whom one must directly engage. (Said 2005, 22)

While writing the words cited above, Said was conscious of derogatory connotations which could have been, after 9/11, ascribed to the language being used as a means of criticism towards democracy.

THE INTERNAL-EXTERNAL OPPOSITION

Fairly crucial to the issue, remains that we cannot prove that there could be such an interpretation of any preconceptions and absolutely right; thus indisputably accepted by all adversaries. Not all interpretations are equally rightful, notwithstanding. There are various ideologies incoherent with each other; but still they have their own. Certainly, the author of *Orientalism* possessed philological erudition. Nonetheless, many critical annotations have been made on his writing about historical contexts of Western ideas' emergence and expansion (see Lewis 1994). Some of his primary postulates must also be given close philosophical scrutiny. Uncritical celebration of Said's attitude towards Western discourse of power, I insist, prevents from going beyond the frontiers of its counter ideology. Unfortunately, manifestation of his own political preferences often relies on overinterpretation and results in imputing ideological contaminants to any critical apprehension of the Orient.

Firstly, to engender scepticism in a critical reader's mind, let me rethink the Saidean assumption that Orientalism is a discourse conducted from a morally and existentially external perspective on the Orient. What does it mean to gain the pure internal perspective of events' description? Said could not refer to a viewpoint of the Orient's constant inhabitant, as he himself spent most of his life in the United States of America. The allegation that the Orient has been subject to ideological treatment tends to be levelled not only against those who do not come of the Oriental but also against those who have become, despite their Oriental ancestry, converts from their original cultural heritage

to the bitterly critical reflection. Shall we then consider an established power of an internal authority as being built without any biases? Saidean criteria of what it is to have the internal or the external outlook carry strong ideological overtones that coheres with deep involvement in politics. It is highly important then to raise the question about value and function of criticism. Should internal perspective be manifested in an invulnerability to any strong criticism coming from the outside? Can an imperviousness to the others' disapprobation betoken cultural maturity? Should not rather the ability of a given society to incorporate a critical review of its own tradition enhance its cultural prominence?

It is worthwhile to illustrate an ambiguity deeply embedded in the categories of externality and internality with regard to cross-cultural relations by an example referring to a contemporary international public life. A person who has become an iconic figure of an extreme criticism against the Islamic Orient is Ayaan Hirsi Ali. She received Muslim upbringing in Somalia and some other Arab countries where she had to live while accompanying her family. After she had left her native homeland and arrived at Western Europe, she became an apostate. While obtaining with an academic education in Holland, she has renounced Islam and internalized secular values. The value judgements on Islam being pronounced by her, since she abandoned submission to Allah, was utterly provocative. Being pronounced with a missionary zeal, words such as these: "The doctrine stating that the faith is inalterable because the Koran was dictated by God must be replaced. Her call for Muslims to realize that it was human beings who wrote the holy scriptures¹" convey an authoritarian message which does not locate the followers of Allah in an equal position with members of a secular society. Incitement to saving the Orient from the obscurity makes its inhabitants feel, at least, as the whipping boy. Some extremists have even felt prompted to threaten Ayaan's life. Those who feel struck to the very heart's think that she rightfully deserves to be subjected to a fatwa.

It is not for the first time that the power to evoke a widespread outrage among some Islamic communities has flowed from an incisive language of criticism or satire. Let me briefly consider Ayaan Hirsi Ali's constant refrain about her former religious overview as a part of the external -internal opposition. Wording in Saidean terms, her unfavourable and intransigent comments are an example of the perfectly external perspective. Existential and moral externality on which Orientalism is premised, pursuant to Said's suggestions, eliminates any correct and rightful course concerning the Orient. Such an outsider is fated to produce not "truth" but misrepresentation irrespectively of his/her intentions or a genre of a text. Whether a given form of the Orientalist's expression belongs to historical narrative or demonstrates openly imagi-

¹ <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,399263,00.html>

native style, the externality functions as a sort of a filter altering the Orient "as such" into something that fails to present its reality.

Contrary to attempts of classifying Ayaan Hirsi Ali's approach simply as the external, *ipso facto* distortive, outlook, I deem her strictures on Islam firmly entrenched in her thorough apprehension of the doctrine. She has not been merely observing Muslim submission from the outside. Her current attitude ensues from critical distance she has been keeping from previous deep involvement in Muslim culture. Being applied in a way that Said determined, the label of exteriority serves to protect mass of worshippers against discussion and confrontation with the Others. In spite of that, a great stress must be laid on a need for a valid criticism against Western expansionism and the interventionist policy. The history of Europe and the United States has been burdened for centuries with power-discourses. It is not my aim to defend the West from the charge of imperialism. Indisputably, imperial administration strategies – be it in the form of colonial occupation, military interventions, or in the form of torturing many Arabs who have been charged with, or even suspect of terrorism – are the facts for which the West has had responsibility towards the Orient. On the other hand, the ubiquitous suspiciousness tending to indicate Orientalism in any remark or expression about the Arab world appears exorbitant. The exclusion of criticism coming from those who have been no longer able to identify themselves with the very doctrine they had followed previously confronts us with the situation of throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Even though political inclination does not undermine an authoritative status of science, the methodological requirements have to be fulfilled, if we are to accept the accusation of producing the East's biased images. The thesis about an incommensurability of Western texts on the East and the East itself has to be proved by revealing what the subject of misrepresenting descriptions is really like. We shall not assume that Said expected to get a description of the East in terms of naive realism. It is reasonable not to suppose so, according to his remarks like the one given in the following quotation: "In any instance of at least written language, there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a *re-presence*, or a *representation*" (Said 2003, 21). The author of *Orientalism* appears to follow up a constructivist line of thought as regard to history and culture, albeit only partially. Although he did not allege that the ideological embodiment of the Arab world – created in the West, by the West, and for the West – is an idea with no corresponding reality, his study lacks the transparency of knowledge on what he labelled as the "real Orient". Should not we feel being enlightened about what it means to demonstrate the clear "nature" of the East, or how to make a "natural" depiction of it? Description limited to the statement that the Orient has been defenceless against Western techniques of domination is not only definitely insufficient – it has, furthermore, appeared deceptive. Living in the post-9/11 period we are confronted

with escalation of events giving us to think about claim that Orientalist discourse is performed in a highly conspicuous absence of the Orient's voice as merely a pious wish.

BEYOND THE ONE-DIMENSIONAL HORIZON

What serves as a pivot of the argumentation follows from a comparative study. Said's statement that the Orient has never been a free subject of Western thought and action stays in stark contrast with deficiency of an inquiry into its counterpart, namely Occidentalism. It can be defined as an Oriental style of usurping the supreme moral authority of the West – the "rotten" West. Why did not Said try, the least, to focus on the Occidentalisation of the Occident? He was so insistent on the repressive and exclusionary power of the Western culture, but at the same time strove to eschew criticism against the Orient. Any effort for defining and analysing Orientalism without examining this dehumanizing discourse on the West is to produce solely unilateral account, whereas double-sided perspective that would embrace a complexity of intricate intercultural relations is needed. The conscience of the interdependence between these two contending imaginary horizons must serve a necessary condition for avoiding ideological limitations which are imposed on both the East and the West, when approaching to them separately. Just because these cultural and geographical entities reflect each other, it is necessary to investigate to what extent and why these man-made constructs, emerging from highly dogmatic systems of representations, are fixedly intertwined. Confronting the ideological product of interpretation with the very "reality" of the Orient being seen from within ought to be the burden of a research.

A mature and comprehensive analysis of Occidentalism has been presented by Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit in their work *Occidentalism. The West in the eyes of its enemies*. (2005) We can clearly discern a significant difference between their and Said's description of the ideological discourse, on both methodological and subjective levels of consideration. There is a startling contrast between writing about an ideology with a full comprehension of its adverse equivalent and writing from one-sided perspective deprived of any self-criticism. The former approach coheres with an ability to level serious criticism at one's own culture, while the latter one relies on accusing only the opposite side of a full responsibility for presence and permanence of an unfavourable or a hostile ideology. Buruma's and Margalit's work displays deep awareness of dualism between Occidentalism and Orientalism:

The view of the West in Occidentalism is like the worst aspects of its counterpart, Orientalism, which strips its human targets of their humanity. Some Orientalist prejudices made non-Western people seem less than fully adult human beings; they had the minds of children, and could thus be treated as lesser breeds. Occidentalism is at least

as reductive; its bigotry simply turns the Orientalist view upside down. To diminish an entire society or a civilization to a mass of soulless, decadent, money-grubbing, rootless, faithless, unfeeling parasites is a form of intellectual destruction. Once again, if this were merely a matter of distaste or prejudice, it would not be of great interest. Prejudices are part of the human condition. But when the idea of others as less than human gathers revolutionary force, it leads to the destruction of human beings. (2005, p. 10-11)

An argument of the first magnitude in this book reveals that discursive “hateful caricature” of western modernity is rooted in Europe. The authors blame both East and West for their sectarian views and treatment of each other. A sectarianism whose main result is the destruction of the Humanity in either. They do not advocate Enlightenment, which originated from these ideas, in a way as if any of its critiques was driven by an anti-modern, irrationalist incitement, or meant a glorification of obscurantism. Not avoiding cultural self-criticism, in defiance of enlightened faith in the power of the “pure reason”, Buruma and Margalit forewarn us of falling into a “paralysis of colonial guilt”:

It should be repeated: European and American histories are stained with blood, and Western imperialism did much damage. But to be conscious of that does not mean we should be complacent about the brutality taking place in former colonies now. On the contrary, it should make us less so. To blame the barbarism of non-Western dictators or the suicidal savagery of religious revolutions on America imperialism, global capitalism, or Israeli expansionism is not only to miss the point; it is precisely an Orientalist form of condescension, as though only Westerners are adult enough to be morally responsible for what they do. (...) A distaste for, or even hatred of, the West is in itself not a serious issue. Occidentalism becomes dangerous when it is harnessed to political power. When the source of political power is also the only source of truth, you have a dictatorship. And when the ideology of that dictatorship is hatred of the West, ideas become deadly. (...) We cannot afford to close our societies as a defence against those who have closed theirs. For then we would all become Occidentalists, and there would be nothing left to defend. (Ibidem, p. 148-149)

There have been scores of facts prompting waves of protests against the Western strategies of dealing with the Arab world. It is necessary to restate the obvious: the West must face the consequences of its own policy. On the other hand, it would be naive to expect a solution for axiological dilemmas inherent in multiculturalism, which could satisfy members of all cultures involved in conflicts. In order to fulfil the equality postulate, some values and principles should be sacrificed, but neither are we to antagonise values fundamental for keeping our own identity nor are we to adhere to a contending axiology

Hopes for finding such a “furniture of the world” that everyone would make him-/herself at home, regardless of axiological dissimilarities between him/her and the others, are shattered by multicultural dilemmas. In that case, I deem Szahaj’s reasoning (2004 and 2008) in favour of an intermediary position between radical multiculturalism and radical ethnocentrism. Soft ethno-

centrism makes us eligible for negating beliefs or praxes alien to our own background, and defending our own values without any paternalistic or authoritarian inclinations. Taking such moderate stand at least excludes haughtiness made manifest in a fundamentalistic belief that within the bounds of one's culture patent on Truth has been obtained. Any attempt to monopolize a certain *Weltanschauung* by lobbying for infallibility of a particular set of beliefs is, from this point of view, unjustified. This is not to say that a right to think about one system of beliefs as if it were morally or epistemologically more advanced than others does not exist. Soft ethnocentrism shows inclinations towards relativism, but undermines its vulgar version which results from axiological nihilism. Claiming that cultures are impossible to be judged because of historical relativisation coheres with radical multiculturalism, which is an untenable position owing to its inconsistency. Yet again the whole argumentation pivots on the conjecture – which itself is an expression of a certain axiological approach – that it is not possible to gain axiologically neutral perspective in cognition. Otherwise it would be appropriate to suspect that metaphysical realism, metaphorically expressed by referring to the “God's eye view” (Putnam 1992), does not disclose naivety any more, but it is still not a case. A denial of naive realism could not be a solution here, because it is open to doubt since negation of a metaphysical thesis inherits the metaphysical character of this thesis. That is why adverse, even hostile, comments of Ayaan Hirsi Ali on Islam are equally fundamentalist as the set of religious beliefs that she negates.

From the perspective of soft ethnocentrism we are eligible to argue for a validity of our beliefs by demonstrating that at least some of them have helped establish efficient mechanisms of peace negotiation and contributed to international security much more than beliefs being cherished within the bounds of other traditions. At the same time we must not eschew criticism. Szahaj's philosophical essays are richly suggestive of such a social order that being a guest in the West (not belonging culturally to it) obliges to honour Western legal rules. We should not read any extreme attitude into this suggestion. Soft version of ethnocentrism does not cohere with its counterpart variant or any other absolutist endeavour to legitimize a claim for universalization of any form of life and imposing it on the Others. But we must not lose sight of the compromise boundaries. According to Szahaj, liberalization of minority cultures, at least to some degree, is the necessary condition of stable social peace. He has not been indicating any universal solution to deal with social tensions and cultural discords. An analysis of given events in relation to specific contexts – including historical aspects, or principal values – is necessary whenever conflict breaks out. What we should however constantly include in our efforts to resist conflicts is to treat the Others without haughty contempt, while minimizing their frustration and sense of alienation (Szahaj 2004 and 2008).

THE MUTUALITY BARE MINIMUM

Peace is at stake when we ponder over and proceed with problems embedded in intercultural relations' domain. Edward Said insisted that constructing fields of coexistence is part of intellectual labour, therefore proclaiming the struggle for peace as an intellectual duty. The idea of peace is one of the hardest to be accomplished. Regardless of how many different conceptions for approaching this idea have been developed, it should be pertinently repeated that giving peace awards anyone who is convinced that sometimes struggle for peace has to be waged by means of military operations betrays our Western high ideals' heritage. We must not forget that European philosophy of morals, which commenced with an anthropological breakthrough made by Socrates, sprang from the idea of *psyche* related to *techne dialektike* which was the art of conversation providing methods for carrying out a nonviolent revolution (Reale 2003).

We have already indicated some rules so decisive for the art of discourse that, even though they do not remedy the clash situation, lead to a sense of mutuality. Let me outline these interpretative rules in a mature form they have received within the socio-regulative approach to culture. From this point of view at least two types of communication are to be distinguished. (1) A practical type presupposes knowledge becoming objectified in a naive-realistic manner, while effectiveness of (2) a theoretical type depends on whether the interlocutors are aware of semantic rules of reference or not. Thinking and talking about reality may therefore be cultivated in two opposite modes. (a) An objectivised one is achievable by using semantic rules which belong to an object language and treating them as true of a given phenomena, whereas (b) a metalinguistic mode requires consciousness of semantic beliefs which serve as a means for referring to the world. The realistic objectivisation of cultural knowledge is not accompanied with a comprehensive awareness of interpretation rules. Respectively to the distinction of practical and theoretical communication types, there are two types of interpretation. (i) An adaptive interpretation reports a receiver's feelings being introspectively grasped during the process of interpreting an action/text of a speaker. (ii) A historical interpretation, in turn, represents a humanistic explanation procedure directed at establishing a logical relation between an action and its sense. The former type of interpretation is based on empathy which helps the receiver identify his/her system of values with the speaker's axiology. Empathy permits the receiver to impose his/her own worldview on the speaker and thereby obstructs an exploration of other *Weltanschauung* or culture. Within the historical interpretation, an action/text interpreted is considered as determined intentionally due to a culturalistic order. This means that the action/text is oriented on achieving a culturally identified values, and selected by directive knowledge of how the values may be accomplished. *Explanans* involving

both of these initial premises are logically bound to an *explanandum* by the assumption of rationality treated as a general law which ensures deductive quality of the explanation procedure. This assumption, being inspired by the decision theory, says that if an agent having a goal to achieve singles out a set of activities which lead with a certain probability to certain results, differently preferred by the agent, then he/she takes an action directed at the result of the highest expected preference (Kmita 1996).

The historical interpretation is not value free, but as any other scientific method, it is implicated by a certain axiology. In contradiction to the adaptive interpretation it facilitates and enhances cross-cultural understanding. The concept of rationality being a part of interpretative *explanans* fulfils the function of providing a norm which states nothing more than a consistency of the agent's activity with his/her culturally acquired, evaluational and instructive, knowledge. This norm is not fixed on the level of some beliefs taken as universal, just the opposite – it is contextually identified and culturally relativised (Buchowski 1996). To prove the premised coherence between the agent's behaviour and his/her knowledge, a reconstruction of culture to which he/she belongs is required. It means that the interpreter must not mix up the interpretative metalanguage with his/her own object language. That is why the interpretation being founded on such a minimised concept of rationality admits of possibility to acquire mutual understanding in the multicultural environment. Although the historical interpretation is not sufficient to resolve dilemmas of multiculturalism, it serves as a vehicle to eschew imputing interpreter's worldview to the agent being interpreted.

REFERENCES

- Buchowski, Michał (1996), *Via Media: on the Consequences of Historical Epistemology for the Problem of Rationality*. In: *Epistemology and History. Humanities as a Philosophical Problem and Jerzy Kmita's Approach to it*, edited by Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, p. 181-196.
- Fish, Stanley (2007), *Interpretacja, retoryka, polityka. Eseje wybrane*, Kraków: Universitas.
- Foucault, Michel (2004) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge.
- Kapuściński, Ryszard (2006), Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak.
- Kmita, Jerzy (1996), *Towards cultural relativism with a small 'r'*. In: *Epistemology and History. Humanities as a Philosophical Problem and Jerzy Kmita's Approach to it*, edited by Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, p. 540-614.
- Lewis, Bernard (1994) *Islam and the West*, USA: Oxford University Press.
- Putnam, Hilary (1992), *Realism with a Human Face*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Reale, Giovanni (2003), *Myśl starożytna*, Lublin: KUL.
- Said, Edward (2003) *Orientalism*, London: Penguin; first published in 1978.
- Said, Edward (2005) *Nation, Language and the Ethics of Translation*. In: *The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals*, edited by Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, p. 15-29.

- Szahaj, Andrzej, 2004, *E pluribus unum? Dylematy wielokulturowości i politycznej poprawności*, Kraków: Universitas.
- Szahaj, Andrzej (2007), *Zwrot antypozytywistyczny dopełniony*. W: *Filozofia i etyka interpretacji*, Adam F. Kola, Andrzej Szahaj (red.), Kraków: Universitas, s. 7-14.
- Szahaj, Andrzej (2008) *Relatywizm i fundamentalizm*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.
- Weber, Max (1904) "Objectivity' in Social Science". In: *Classical Sociological Theory* (2007), edited by Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, Indermohan Virk, Blackwell Publishing, p. 211-217.