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**”SILENCE IS THE REAL CRIME” — THE VOICE OF A THERAPIST  
ON SOME PUBLIC ISSUES**

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**the memory of the Shoah**

**multidirectional memory**

**internal racism**

**Summary**

The author takes under consideration the current controversial issue of the Polish collective memory, from a personal perspective, taking into account various conflicting discourses of memory that shape collective aspects of our identities (according to the logic of the concept of multidirectional memory). Particularly, this reflection focuses on the memory of the Shoah of the Polish Jews and its elements that have become repressed from the Polish collective consciousness, absent in the direct transgenerational transmissions, and returning in the “mediated” public discourse, creating a sort of “prosthetic memory”, which may either be taken in uncritically or repeatedly denied and rejected. Inspiring sources for the paper were publications on the Polish debate on the topic of Polish involvement in the Shoah and collective memory, as well as the psychoanalytic reflection on the relationship between self and Other. The denial of the participation of Poles in the Shoah is understood particularly through the lens of sociological concepts, such as “exteriorization of the evil” and “inner orientalization”, as well as the psychoanalytical concept of “internal racism”, an unconscious constellation of defense mechanisms, which constitutes the natural core of personality, shaping our distrust of the Other. The paper is an illustration essay, an expression of the author's belief that psychotherapists should take up reflection, as well as discussion on difficult social phenomena in which they, as citizens, are also active participants.

*We do not want to admit that actually our self has always been shaped in opposition to the other – Negro (Nègre), Jew, Arab, a foreigner whom we interiorized, however in a regressive way; that essentially we have been formed by different borrowings from foreign subjects and therefore we have always been liminal beings – this is what many people today do not want to admit.*

Achille Mbembe, *Polityka wrogości* [1, p. 52]<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from the Polish edition of [1].

## Introduction

### The psychotherapist as a citizen

The current socio-political situation in Poland confronts us with a difficult necessity of asking ourselves about the limits of our own political engagement. Particularly, it is not easy to speak out on civic issues, when the space of public debate seems to be set in advance, the standpoints becoming more and more polarized; extreme views are those that are most audible. Trying to take voice on any issue, the subject unwittingly becomes situated on one side of the conflict. Therefore, it is not easy to speak one's own voice. Moreover, I am convinced that psychotherapists should not participate in public political debates; neutrality is an essential element of therapeutic attitude, without which spontaneous communication between therapist and patient in the consulting room would be restricted. Particularly, public statements of therapists as a professional group may be construed in an ambiguous way. Such declarations are inevitably entangled in complex historical connotations associated with medical discourse, which can be considered – after Foucault [3] – an example of a language of “positive science”, claiming the right to define what is objectively true, which exposes such declarations to objections against this sort of “social didactics” [4]. On the other hand, as Hanna Segal argued in 1987 in the paper *Silence is the real crime* [5], in certain situations remaining silent in the name of neutrality may become for us a shield of denial. According to the author, psychoanalysts, who – just like other ordinary human beings, experience destructive and self-destructive instincts, should not turn away from reality and try to understand the surrounding difficult reality, inspired by psychoanalytic insights.

It seems that the way out of this dilemma may be taking up one's voice from a personal position, not ignoring the fact that a statement on social issues always involves taking a political stance, at least in the sense that behind our words always lie our own assumptions concerning the shape of our political community. My opinion about the necessity of taking one's voice on current social issues is enforced by arguments of Hannah Arendt [6], who analyzed the concept of freedom in the sense given to it by ancient political culture, according to which real freedom can be realized only in the public sphere. Such public space can be conceived as an external arena of our spontaneous action, in contrast to the internal space, in which freedom has been confined by the modern Western thought. Modern understanding of freedom as a sign of individual will elicits reactions – *e.g.* along the liberal way of thinking – to defend individual freedom against claims of the community.

However, Arendt refers to a sort of freedom that results in co-creating the political community. A similar thought inspired Jürgen Habermas who wrote about participatory

(deliberative) democracy, in which the key, constitutive element is participation in public debate [7].

### **Polish "obsession of innocence"**

In this paper, I would like to reflect particularly on Polish collective memory, from the perspective of both observer and participant. The direct impulse to write this paper was introduced by the Polish government the amending of the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance (Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation) in January 2018. The essential regulations of this law concerned "protection of the reputation of the Republic of Poland and the Polish Nation" [8]. Its implementation entailed penalizing, with a fine or deprivation of liberty, those who publicly attribute to the Polish Nation responsibility or co-responsibility for crimes committed during World War II [8, art. 55a]<sup>2</sup>. Half a year later – under international political pressure – the most controversial regulations of this bill have been removed. Nevertheless, it is difficult to consider this attempt to censor spontaneous discussion about our past as merely incidental. It is equally difficult to assume that the tendency in our society, exemplified by this attempt, disappeared along with the withdrawal of this controversial law. At the same time, the attempted denial of passive or active involvement of Poles in crimes committed against ethnic minorities during World War II, raised questions about our so-called "settlement with the past", as well as reawakened the so-called Polish "obsession of innocence."

What seemed particularly striking during the debate on the Act – apart from openly antisemitic statements – was that public criticisms were primarily associated with the legislation's harmful effect on Poland's image abroad. Not that the image does not matter, however, it does not seem to be the core of the issue. Far more disturbing is the shrinking of space for different points of view on our individual as well as our common past.

From the perspective of a psychotherapist, relationship with one's past is particularly significant, constituting an essential part of everyday therapeutic work. The question of collective memory obviously has its personal dimension, since we are talking about "our" past. The memory of one's (collective) past in the view of individual psychology is significant in the process of identity development and repressed elements of this memory may contribute to disturbing this process. I conceive the concept of identity not in a static sense, but rather as

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<sup>2</sup> With exclusion of those who commit the act within the framework of artistic or scientific activity [8, Art. 55a, ust. 3].

a constant multidimensional process, with ongoing renegotiating, not only of its individual but also collective aspects.

Before I turn to considerations on collective identity, I would like to emphasize that for me the social and historical facts, such as widespread antisemitism in Poland, as well as involvement of Poles in the extermination of Polish Jews, are beyond doubt, particularly as far as the so-called “outskirts of extermination” are concerned, *i.e.* confrontations between the threatened Jewish population and local Polish community (both in the countryside, and in the cities) during World War II<sup>3</sup>.

The course of public debate on these events, focusing primarily around publications of Jan Tomasz Gross, has been analyzed by Paweł Dobrosielski in the book *Controversies around Gross. Polish problems with memory of the Jews* [4], where the author indicates different discursive strategies intended for invalidating the charges against Poles for their involvement in extermination of Polish Jews. One of these strategies – apart from many others aimed personally at Gross himself – is the so-called “exteriorization of evil”, *i.e.* putting the blame on particular persons, to whom dehumanizing labels are attributed. Such practice, also called by Dobrosielski the “inner social orientalization”, is based on the assumption that “committing a crime excludes the perpetrator beyond the margin”, and therefore “any crime may be invalidated by such an excluding rhetoric gesture”, which allows at the same to “maintain the coherence and innocence of a particular collective body” [4, p. 92]<sup>4</sup>. It does not refer only to Poles as an ethnic group, but also to particular social groups among Poles, such as intelligentsia or city dwellers, who eagerly shifted the blame away from themselves onto countrymen (in this context, the bad fame of Jedwabne may be construed as scapegoating, as the following statement indicates: “the countryside was Jedwabne, the city was Żegota”<sup>5</sup> [9]). As Joanna Tokarska-Bakir argued in 2011, “peasants are regarded as bogeymen in the Polish modern history”, despite the fact that “the so-called peasant viewpoint was rarely an invention of peasants themselves, particularly in the parts associated with what could be done to the Jews. Without the permission of the upper classes – clergy, landed gentry, teachers, and bureaucracy elites – peasants, as a subordinated group, ‘would not lean out’ against the Jews” [9].

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<sup>3</sup> These facts have been widely researched, particularly by historians of the Polish Center for Holocaust Research at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

<sup>4</sup> Translated from the Polish edition.

<sup>5</sup> Żegota – an underground Polish resistance organization that between 1942 and 1945 aided Jews threatened by the Nazis in German-occupied Poland.

### **Individual memory of Polish Jews**

The aforementioned phenomena, in their social dimension, have been researched not only by historians but also by sociologists and anthropologists [cf. 4, 10–12].

The topic that I would like to elaborate on is the question of why the memory of Polish Jews and the memory of the Shoah have been repressed from the Polish social and individual awareness. It seems that the memory of Jews in Poland has a particular character because its essential elements are absent in direct transgenerational transmissions, which – returning in mediated public discourse – become attached, creating a sort of “prosthesis of memory” [13], which cannot be weaved naturally in the narrative that shapes our identity. According to Alison Lansberg [13], media such as movies, allow for more personal access to the memory of events that we did not experience ourselves. As Dobrosielski points out, there is, however, a risk that such a prosthesis of memory may be either uncritically accepted as one’s own, or rejected in passionate denial.

To avoid the risk of generalizing, I would like to give an example of my own work of memory associated with the history of Polish Jews. My personal memory of the Polish past has been mediated by my grandfather, who died when I was 10 years old. Before he passed away, I had a close, emotional bond with him and I still have memories of his narratives of pre-war times, in which he often talked about Jews. His attitude could be labelled as philosemitic: he granted Jewish people with a particular kind of admiration and respect; there was also a lot of humour in his narratives. Only after many years did I realize that there was a significant void in his stories, similar to the void in the Polish cities and towns after the exterminated Polish Jews. I do not remember whether my grandfather ever mentioned what happened to them (or maybe I was not mature enough at that time to ask about it?) Of course, one can wonder at what age a child can listen to stories about the Holocaust, how should we talk about it? I am confronted with a similar dilemma in my conversations with my own children. I do not think, however, that the issue was only my young age at that time because in the direct memory of my mother there is also a similar void on this topic. I once asked her whether she ever had talked to her father, my grandfather, about what had happened to the Jews in Radom, the town where she has grown up, and she answered to me with surprise that “there were never any Jews in Radom”, she never talked to her father about it, since she “was a girl; one would not talk about it...” The history of Jews in Radom is not inaccessible at present, it is not even difficult to reach, since it is enough to click on a website like *Wikipedia* [14] to find out that Jews made up one third of the pre-war population in Radom; during the war, between the spring of 1941 and summer 1944 there was a ghetto, in which a few

thousand Jews died and then almost 30 thousand were transported to Treblinka<sup>6</sup>. My mother was less than 3 years old at that time. All those terrible events took place in the walking distance of about 10 minutes from her home...

I am revealing this personal family story to illustrate, to what extent regaining memory of our collective past may encounter different sorts of difficulties, associated with reviving memories or talking about issues, which our close relatives do not want to remember, let alone speak about. I mention this story also because I think that the process of regaining memory of those events is a personal challenge and it can have a different meaning for everyone. What seems puzzling to me is, on one hand, the necessity of those who survived the war to repress, erase from their memory the facts that are difficult to accept, and on the other hand, the phenomenon which can be named lack of curiosity, the need to not-know rather than reach for the truth, by the second generation of survivors, those who (like my parents) were children during the war.

### **Feelings of guilt and shame of those who survived**

I would like to stop for a while and concentrate on the word “survive”, because it arouses emotions, particularly: guilt and shame. One’s own “survival” and the simultaneous erasure of victims of the Shoah from memory may in this context be interpreted as a passive acknowledgement of the facts of violence. If I may again refer to my personal perspective, throughout all my adolescence I felt primarily guilt and shame with reference to the “Jewish question”, despite the fact that at school I was taught the heroic-suffering version of the history of the Polish nation during the Second World War. In this official version of history, there was no place for the complex truth about the fate of Poles and Jews during the war, not to mention the truth about Polish antisemitism – not only private but also public – in the interwar period or in the postwar years<sup>7</sup>. During my adolescence, my feelings of guilt and shame did not arise as a result of some particular knowledge of these issues, absent in discussions at school, as well as in the public, but rather they were triggered by my confrontation on an everyday basis with manifestations of Polish antisemitism<sup>8</sup>, which in the face of the facts of the Holocaust seemed as particularly shameful to me.

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<sup>6</sup> These facts have of course been subject of reliable historical studies, which are quoted in the *Wikipedia* entry (cf. [15]).

<sup>7</sup> I am referring to what a student of primary school or high school during the 90ties could learn about these facts.

<sup>8</sup> I mean here a phenomenon, analogical to the one described by A. Mbembe with reference to minorities, that he labels as “nanoracism”, which expresses itself “in seemingly anodyne everyday gestures, often apropos of nothing, apparently unconscious remarks, a little banter, some allusion or insinuation, a slip of the tongue, a joke, an innuendo, but also, it must be added, consciously spiteful remarks, like a malicious intention, a deliberate dig or jab, a profound desire to stigmatize and, in particular, to inflict violence, to wound and humiliate, to degrade those not considered to be one of us [...]” [2, p. 31]

Speaking of collective guilt, it is worth introducing distinctions, following Karl Jaspers [16], who in 1945, with reference to the issue of the Germans' collective guilt, stressed that one cannot judge a nation as a group, since there are different kinds of guilt, which should be clearly separated: criminal, political, moral and metaphysical guilt. I am convinced that Poles participate in different ways in all these types of guilt. Criminal guilt applies to perpetrators themselves, moral guilt – to those who were passive witnesses of the crimes. Political guilt can be a result of our refusal to exercise our political freedom, which may lead to opportunism or passive acknowledgement of what is going on around us. In this context it is worth stressing – after Jaspers – that “feeling responsible marks the beginning of an inner transformation calculated for realizing political freedom” [16, p. 87].

However, my doubts are raised over Jaspers' concept of metaphysical guilt. The philosopher prompts us to refer to an abstract idea of humanity in order to find in ourselves feelings of guilt for the actions of other people. Having grasped this abstract idea – with its sources in ancient philosophy – should lead to an acknowledgment resulting in the feeling of guilt and co-responsibility for the evil inflicted by other human beings. It is difficult to judge Karl Jaspers for his attempt made in 1945 to save the European (not only German) culture and reconstruct its continuity by referring to its humanistic tradition. However, guilt and shame seem to me to be more direct feelings, not resulting from any intellectual activity or theorizing about the meaning of humanity. Those feelings are rather an expression of inner (not always conscious) doubts, such as the following: “since my ancestors were passive in the face of crimes committed on their neighbours, even if it resulted from natural human fear, does this mean that I would act the same way, if I were in their place?”; “would I have the courage to speak out and protest, hearing my compatriots expressing contentment that ‘the Germans are finally making order with the Jews’”?

When I was in primary school, I very often heard (“nanoracist”<sup>9</sup>) allusions to Jews or antisemitic jokes among my peers, which I could not laugh at, but I could not protest either, because it was such a common practice that my reaction would seem strange. I am convinced that my feelings of shame and guilt at that time resulted from recognizing in myself the passive and conformistic withdrawal, rather than from some metaphysical reflection<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> See previous footnote.

<sup>10</sup> It is worth to add here that among the publications of Polish psychotherapists, very few refer directly to the problem of Polish antisemitism, apart from a few passing mentions. For example, Maria Orwid considering the causes of a longtime silence of survivors of the Holocaust, referred to the fact that Poles of Jewish origin had been forced to hide their true identity during communist times in Poland because of strong signs of the governmental and private antisemitism [cf. 17, 18]. More about Polish antisemitism and about how difficult it is to speak about it, cf. biographical interview with prof. Maria Orwid (by K. Zimmerer and K. Szwajca) [19].

### **Antisemitism as „internal racism” – social and individual perspective**

I would like to suspend for a while the moral perspective and return to the issue of collective memory, in the context of relationships between Poles and Jews, as well as to the issue of identity and relationship with the Other, from a psychoanalytic perspective that takes into account particularly the unconscious processes. In psychoanalytic literature in recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the significance of not only gaining knowledge about oneself in the analytic process but also of the necessity to recognize the existence of the Other, a challenge for our natural tendency to familiarize otherness [20]. In the analytic process, both the patient is confronted with the otherness of the analyst, and the analyst is confronted with the otherness of the patient. The otherness of the other person is associated with acknowledging the fact that we cannot understand everything, something that seemed familiar at first sight, turns out to be unfamiliar and foreign. In the process of a child's social development, which starts in early childhood, getting to know oneself and recognizing otherness of the Other, are interconnected processes. The development of identity is possible only when we meet someone different from us. As mentioned earlier, I conceive identity as a set of conscious and unconscious beliefs and phantasies on oneself, which is not a static construct, but rather a dynamic process. How dynamically identity can develop, depends on the possibilities of meeting the Other during one's development.

From this perspective, the issue of the attitude towards Jews has a much more fundamental meaning for Poles than it seemed to me before. It is not only a question of our settlement with the Polish collective past. A Jew in the awareness of Poles is someone special, a “paradigmatic Other” [4], symbolizing our inner strivings with our own collective identity. Such a reflection comes to mind particularly in the face of the widespread, still very vivid antisemitism, despite the factual absence of unassimilated Jews in the Polish society.

From the psychological perspective, the absence of the Other may disturb the process of identity development, resulting, for example, in grandiose beliefs about oneself and one's own group. On the societal level, this has its expression in the nationalistic ideology, in which the conviction about the superiority of one's own national group over other groups is essential. It seems that the deepening of social divisions that we are experiencing in today's Poland, may be construed as a sign of an unconscious need to constitute an Other-stranger, a safe target for hostile projections. In a natural way – as a society – we create our own minorities, our own strangers, those with a different worldview, who by their sheer existence help us to define our own group identity.

It is worth pausing for a while to take a wider look at the growing nationalism as an element of a broader social process in Europe today. Achille Mbembe [1], from a distance resulting from his experience of growing up in a postcolonial country<sup>11</sup>, writes about Western democracy without any sentiments: "The current epoch is marked by the triumph of mass morality. Contemporary psychic regimes have brought to a maximum level of exacerbation the exaltation of affectivity and, paradoxically, within an age of digital telecommunications, the desire for mythology, a thirst for mysteries" [1, p. 27]. And further: "Having only relatively recently counted on dividing humanity into masters and slaves, liberal democracies today still depend for their survival on defining a sphere of common belonging against a sphere of others [...]. [W]ithout enemies, they struggle to keep themselves going alone. Whether such enemies really exist matters little. It suffices to create them, find them, unmask them, and bring them out into the open. Still, this endeavour became increasingly onerous when one began to believe that the fiercest and most intrepid enemies had lodged themselves in the deepest pores of the nation, forming a kind of cyst that would destroy the nation's most fertile promises from within..." [1, p. 28]. This is a disturbingly accurate description of our current reality. Moreover, it assumes that what we call today a "crisis of democracy" is not a mere momentary collapse of a previously well-functioning system, but rather it seems that a visible inclination to violence and objectifying others had always been present before, either hidden or displaced to other territories<sup>12</sup>. From this follows, far from optimistic, a diagnosis of the contemporary reality: "Our epoch seems to have finally discovered its truth [...] it can finally allow itself to proceed naked, free of all inhibition [...]. The great repression (which never really happened) is, therefore, followed by a great release. [...] We should fear a violent return to an era in which racism did not yet belong to only the 'shameful parts' of society" [1, p. 30].

Returning to the individual perspective, in the psychoanalytic view, the process of constituting an Other takes place from the earliest stages of life [24]. An infant being initially in an inseparable bond with the mother perceives a third one – usually the father – as an alien, whose role it is to contain hostile projections. Such a constellation fulfills an important developmental task because what is indispensable on this stage is a safe environment, without

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<sup>11</sup>Born in Kamerun, he did his PhD at the Sorbonne, in Paris, and currently he is a Research Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg, RSA, as well as Visiting Professor at Harvard University, USA.

<sup>12</sup>This argument of Mbembe refers directly to countries with colonial past. Democracy of "equals" in these countries developed with a simultaneous (and also thanks to) exploitation of people of the occupied territories. Violence still existed, however, displaced away from the sight of citizens of the occupying countries. In case of Poland it was different: during the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries both exploiting others and being exploited by others took place in the process of emanation into a democratic society; therefore, this process took a different course [cf. 21-23].

hostility and persecutive fears. With time, as the child grows, the father is gradually becoming acquainted. Beyond the mother-child dyad, the closest family starts to play the role of a safe environment, the hostility is being now projected outside the family circle, until the child starts gradually familiarizing the extrafamilial environment, where he or she learns to develop safe bonds that create the basis for the collective element in their identity. However, as Fakhry Davids [24] points out, this psychotic core composed of hostile and persecutive feelings remains our constant personality equipment; we never get rid of it. In case of more or less normal development, hostility is directed outside the familiar group, towards “others”. These feelings may have an unconscious and egodystonic character. In this way, Fakhry Davids formulates his conception of “internal racism”, a normal disposition of everyone, in contrast with racism as an element of a pathological defensive structure of personality.

What is at issue here is therefore not racism as a – consistent with one’s identity – pathological hatred towards others, but racism as an egodystonic constellation of defensive mechanisms that contribute to feelings of distance, initial distrust, or unconscious hostility toward individuals from different ethnic groups. Such core unconscious constellation – as the author’s case studies illustrate – may also be found in individuals with liberal views, contributing to so-called systemic racism, *i.e.* institutional solutions which discriminate persons from minority groups. The hidden unconscious racism in multicultural environments may stand behind attempts to do something about racial injustice once forever, however, those attempts usually turn out to be ineffective. According to Davids, this proves that people at such institutions are dealing with a set of conflicting feelings with which we all have to struggle constantly [24].

In this context, we may see from a different perspective what happens when our politicians disinform the society, showing in a negative light the refugees from distant cultures and pointing at problems that they allegedly cause in multicultural societies. Taking into account internal racism as a constellation of defensive mechanisms that we are not eager to be confronted with, we may be unconsciously supportive of such objections. The only remedy that can help overcome internal racism is authentic curiosity of other people and other cultures, as well as awareness of the fact that our identity may develop only in contact with the Other, despite widespread tendencies for uniformization of our national identity.

Returning to the moral aspects of Polish-Jewish relationships in the past, if we consider the construct of internal racism, it may also be easier to realize the effort of mutual reconciliation and forgiveness. If internal racism is a natural element of our personality, any singular acts of reconciliation between conflicted parties – even though they are important

gestures for both communities – on the long run may turn out to be futile. It seems that such acts on behalf of the whole society cannot by definition have the expected effect. An act of reconciliation – if it is an authentic experience – can bring real change only to those who are personally involved in it. Confessing guilt by one side and forgiveness by the other will not eliminate the differences; on the contrary, it should involve acknowledgment of these differences. Moreover, confession of guilt does not have to result in forgiveness. The fact that we can dare to ask for forgiveness on behalf of our ancestors does not give us the right to expect forgiveness from those who may not necessarily allow themselves to forgive on behalf of their ancestors [25].

### **Psychoanalysis as a method of studying social phenomena?**

I would like to address the question of the method, *i.e.* whether a theory such as psychoanalysis that focuses primarily on individual psychology, can be valid for explaining processes that take place on the level of social groups. It seems that such reservations are well-founded in certain circumstances, for example when taking such a viewpoint excludes other perspectives: a historical, sociological, or anthropological perspective. With reference to such complex phenomena, all those perspectives seem to complete each other. No doubt, on the group level we are dealing with many phenomena which cannot be reduced to the individual level. Ethnic identity – whether we want it or not – constitutes a part of our individual identity. On the other hand, a bothering question remains – particularly in the current Polish socio-political context – to what extent the collective part of our identity may be negotiated by us individually, if beliefs that are presently dominating in the public opinion, expressed by our representative politicians, arouse our opposition and we do not want to identify with the majority.

Another instance, when psychoanalytic interpretations may raise some doubts, occurs when they are used as a polemic strategy against those that do not share our views<sup>13</sup>. The problem is that the sting of such polemic – touching on unconscious motives – is pointed at the area outside the conscious awareness, exceeding the rational discourse, practically taking away from the opponent the possibility to reply. Such polemic is burdened with a risk of medicalizing someone's personal experience<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> An example of such use of psychoanalytic concepts is an essay by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir [25, p. 116-133] where she interprets Henryk Grynberg's writings [26] as a sign of his "trauma that has not been worked through". My own reading of Grynberg makes me think that there are traumas which are difficult to be "worked through" – in a way Tokarska-Bakir expects – making the victim apt to consider the complex psychology of the perpetrators.

<sup>14</sup> Such a risk is pointed out by the Author herself [25, p. 116].

### **Conclusion: towards multidirectional memory**

It is difficult to say what sort of collective effort is necessary for the society, in which we live, so that the community may become more like the ideal that Arendt or Habermas had in mind. In conclusion, I would like to return to the issue of memory of important communal events and bring up the concept of multidirectional memory by Michael Rothberg [27], whose perspective is consistent with such a notion of a community. Rothberg critically analyzes the tendency to perceive the issue of memory of important collective events in terms of mutually exclusive discourses. From such a perspective, memory discourses exclude each other from the public space: too much emphasis put on the Holocaust allegedly results in making other collective traumas invisible; or reversely, referring to the rhetoric of the Shoah when speaking of other traumas may be construed as relativizing or even negating its uniqueness [2]. The result of competition between different discourses of memory is that subjects of this competition are defined in advance; when speaking out about any issue, one situates him- or herself within one or the other conflicting discourses. In effect, it is very difficult to take one's voice and be heard as speaking from one's own, personal perspective, and not as someone adding fuel to the fire of sufficiently escalated social tensions. The concept of multidirectional memory assumes that there are parallel, interfering discourses of memory that constitute the public sphere, in which different subjects may seek space for their own voice<sup>15</sup>. Having this in mind, it is worth stressing that a psychotherapist is also a citizen, and that their professional identity is merely one of the elements of his or her identity. Either participating or refusing to participate in the debate on critical social issues, it is nevertheless impossible to avoid one's personal commitment.

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<sup>15</sup> It has to be emphasised that this does not mean some sort of false conciliation between different views. As Dobrosielski [4] points out: „Rothberg does not mean that everyone is right, or that the truth lies somewhere in between. His view is anti-normative, questioning in a critical way the concepts of ‘rightness’ and ‘truth’, but at the same time, he problematizes intentions and motivations that stand behind particular practices of memory” [4, p. 29-30].

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