

Richard D. Lewis, *When Cultures Collide, Third Edition: Leading Across Cultures*, London, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2006, 624 p.

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Living in a century when human interactions are animated by accessible modern technology represents the vital occasion for people of diverse backgrounds to initiate, even unconsciously, a paramount of upbringing aimed at constructing contexts focused on multidimensional dynamics. Whether I am talking about business, politics or arts, everywhere I turn my attention to has at least one element of *inter-national* or *multi-cultural*. But by beetling the architecture of the global socio-cultural scene it becomes easier to observe that most individuals are brimmed with stereotypes and misleading conceptions. As a result of these findings, Richard D. Lewis – a British cross-cultural specialist – publishes the reviewed book in an unprecedented 3rd edition which may be considered a continuous *fundamentum inconcussum* for those who seek to gain an introductory stock of knowledge upon various handsets, customs, and communication and relationship dimensions of each culture across the world.

Generally speaking, the book offers a practical guide whose objective is to project not a trivial, classical sort of guide, but a global oriented method of inner and outer analysis. The author himself being a cosmopolitan individual, the reflection of the topic debated throughout the book resembles fragments of communication, business, negotiation, management or global affairs etiquette. It is the type of guide I would say which is meant to offer its readers an introspective outlook, a preliminary stage or an incipient toward real life circumstances and professional contexts, yet not losing sight of many other aspects interconnected. These

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aspects are about a certain focus envisaged on societies, history, traditions and customs of one another.

Throughout the material, I can easily identify a series of figures and tables which are conceived in order for the reader to gain an unbiased overview of the interactions between cultures. Nevertheless, it is utterly important to bear in mind that most contents and, implicitly, the three parts of the book are in a close symbiosis affair. One cannot understand, for instance, why Koreans "believe that they can handle Westerners better than other Asians" if we do not dive into Korean "listening habits" and counterbalancing their likes and dislikes.²

Encouraging its readers to meditate and link such aspects discussed to their personal experience, Lewis is the sort of author who gives I believe the ideal start-up theoretical preparation to improving and achieving a certain level of cultural communication competence. The book is divided into three parts each of which bring up different approaches to culture, cultural interference and cultural interaction.

In the first part the author defines, for instance, the concept of culture and culture shock among others, trying to unlock a door to understanding our own perception upon "precious values and unshakeable core beliefs"³. I believe that it is essential to understand ourselves, our own cultural background in order to proceed to mutual understandings and interactions. And rightly, the first part of the work describes effectively how language or culture can affect the ways an individual may think, act or respond. However, in this part what captures my attention is the fluid narrative about a theory linked to "the use of time."⁴ Lewis argues that "The worldviews held by different cultures vary widely, as do a multiplicity of concepts that constitute and represent a kaleidoscopic outlook on the nature of reality. Some of these concepts—fatalism, work ethic, reincarnation, Confucianism, *Weltschmerz* and so on—are readily identifiable within specific groups, societies or nations. Other concepts—central and vital to human experience—are essentially universal, but notions of their nature and essence are strikingly different, such as

² Richard D. Lewis, *When Cultures Collide, Third Edition: Leading Across Cultures*, London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2006, pp. 505 - 508.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 53.

space and time.”⁵ Furthermore, he explains these mentioned notions which define a certain paddle of characteristics for a variety of cultures which for me was altogether fascinating. This being said differently, this first part examines “the cultural roots of behavior and assessed the effects of cultural diversity on people’s lives and destinies.”⁶

The main feature of the second part of the book is emphasized on the “world of business”, although not losing sight of various issues and “problems of international exchanges”.⁷

Onward, Lewis defines success, for example, from different national angles, accentuating strong points of each culture in terms of leadership or economic competitiveness. This analysis is very complex in its own nature because the latter dynamics put at stake are linked indeed to current issues within the international sphere in an attempt to determine universal solutions.⁸ This flow of ideas is still undergoing a series of re-shaping and political, business or academic debates are ongoing because the attributes of status, leadership or cultural organizational roots of the elite are rooted in different visons with regards to various national or regional circumstances.

In addition, a series of descriptive figures that are meant not only to complete but to stimulate a process of assimilation of information efficiently are provided to readers.⁹ Lewis stubbornly drags the readers' attention to the ever-changing “perspectives of management and strategy at the turn of the twenty-first century and shows that widely diverging horizons and credos can be managed.”¹⁰

The third and final part represents, as far as I am concerned, the zenith of the work, the most innovative section of the study. Surprisingly, all these aspects noted across the book are information provided by Lewis based on his various experiences, explaining “why the behavior” of people “follows certain paths and agendas”, giving “practical advice on how to minimize friction with each group.” It is the most comprehensive part, the

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 53.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 101.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 101.

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 101 - 124.

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 101 - 124.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. xx.

most practical, injecting methods of empathizing with people of other cultures, expressing their values or exposing assorted aspects of religion, patterns of communication or what features to avoid when interacting with people from "over 70 of the world's major countries and regions."¹¹ (i.e. "English-Speaking Countries", "The Baltic States and Central Asian Countries", "Middle Eastern Countries" etc.)

To sum up, the work itself has to be charged as something towards keeping pace with emerging and changing¹² facets of the twenty-first century. Its pragmatism and challenging manner of laying down facts and figures represent opportunities for engaging with trust and confidence into a world where citizenship might be just a tag.

Appraising the endeavor analyzed as a whole, I can asseverate that I endorse the majority of assumptions and conjectures presented throughout the pages of this book with the exception that the border between academic content and practical appealed is frail. However, I can contend that contemporary individuals witness a further vitalizing shift from what it is known, but imposing to a certain degree of extent an evaluation of such parameters are only for our common societal asset.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. xx.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. xxii.