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Spyridon Vlachopoulos

Political Correctness as Modern Censorship?

From Legal to Political
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of Intellectual Expression

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the Boundaries of Intellectual Expression

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ISSN 2191-5466 ISSN 2191-5474 (electronic)
SpringerBriefs in Political Science
ISBN 978-3-032-17642-4 ISBN 978-3-032-17643-1 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-17643-1>

This work was supported by National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

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*In memory of Stavros Tsakirakis;
Had he still been with us, he might have
agreed with quite a few of the ideas suggested
here.*

Competing Interests The author has no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this manuscript.

Sayings about Political Correctness

“A kind of orthodoxy prevails, assuming that all sensible-thinkers would accept a set of ideas without questioning it. It’s not exactly forbidden to say one thing or another, but it’s “not okay” to say it. [...] Anyone who challenges the prevailing orthodoxy finds himself silenced with surprising effectiveness. A genuinely unfashionable opinion is almost never given a fair hearing, either in the popular press or in the high-brow periodicals” (George Orwell, *The Freedom of the Press*, in *George Orwell, Η φάρμα των ζώων* [Animal Farm] (translated into Greek by Katerina Schina), Athens: Metaihmio, 2021, p. 151 [156]).

“Anyone who presents political correctness as a caricature, and despises it, they may be forgetting that it has successfully resisted minority discrimination. Perhaps some pioneers of political correctness have not made it clear that it is not about prohibiting or punishing; it is about applying unwritten rules of interpersonal relating; it is about a boundary between what can prudently be said and what cannot. Ignoring the boundary is not proof of moral progress. Quite the opposite” (Frank-Walter Steinmeier, ‘Rede bei der Jahresversammlung der Hochschulrektorenkonferenz am 18 November 2019’ [Speech at the annual meeting of the German Rectors’ Conference on November 18, 2019] in Hamburg, available at: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/service/bulletin/rede-von-bundespraesidentfrank-walter-steinmeier-1696216>, last accessed April 10, 2024).

“As far as I can see, cancel culture is mercy’s antithesis. Political correctness has grown to become the unhappiest religion in the world. Its once honourable attempt to reimagine our society in a more equitable way now embodies all the worst aspects that religion has to offer (and none of the beauty) — moral certainty and self-righteousness shorn even of the capacity for redemption. It has become quite literally, bad religion run amuck” (Nick Cave [composer-singer], ‘What is mercy for you? What do you think of cancel culture?’, available at: <https://www.theredhandfiles.com/what-is-mercy-for-you/>, last accessed April 12, 2025).

“The ‘language of oppressors’ does not simply represent violence. It is violence itself [...] Whether it is an obscurantism of the state language [...] or a language aimed at alienating minorities, which expresses a racist mentality of its users: all these discourses should be changed, rejected, exposed [...] Sexist, racist, religious

discourses manifest policing intentions, power, and do not allow new knowledge cultivation, they do not encourage a mutual exchange of ideas” (Toni Morrison [Nobel laureate 1993], in Solon Papageorgiou [selection-translation] and Kostas Katsoularis [editing-preface], *Τα μυστικά της συγγραφής. Απόσταγμα σοφίας 66 κορυφαίων δημιουργών* [The Secrets of Writing. Distilling the wisdom of 66 leading authors], Athens: Key Books, 2023, p. 173).

If there is a principle of the Constitution which calls us, more than any other principle, to imperatively identify ourselves with it, it is the principle of free thinking—not on the part of those who agree with us, but freedom for the thought we hate (Oliver Wendell Holmes [1841–1935], judge on the Supreme Court of the United States of America).

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Chapter 1

Legal Correctness as a Diachronic Central Concept of Legal Science



1 Correctness, Instead of Truth, a Central Concept in Legal Science

Legal science differs from other disciplines in many respects, despite shared elements and the need for interdisciplinarity. Although most disciplines, at least the so-called sciences, are interested in finding the truth, legal science¹ seeks truth primarily in the field of the real, i.e., the actual facts that primarily constitute the minor proposal of juridical reasoning. Also, at the level of applicable rule of law, of the major proposal of juridical reasoning, there is a potential for seeking the truth: for example, a legislative provision which passed with a particular wording and appeared in the Government Gazette, or a customary rule of law, are issues that fall in the lawyer's potential to seek the truth.

The connection, though, between legal science and truth seems to stop at this point, and another concept comes in, that of correctness. Whether rule A or B is selected as applicable in a case and whether legislative provision A or B constitutes the major proposal, is not a question of truth-seeking but a question of proper judicial decision. Similarly, specifying and specialising vague concepts (e.g., bona fides, morality, right abuse), as well as including the minor in the major proposal of a juridical reasoning is a matter of correctness.²

¹ For a concise and understandable introduction to the basic features of legal science, see Apostolos Georgiadis, *Τι είναι Δίκαιο; Η νομική επιστήμη για όλους* [What is Law? Legal Science for All], Crete University Press, 2018.

² On the general issue of whether there is a single correct solution to legal issues, see Pavlos Sourlas, *Δίκαιο και δικανική κρίση. Μια φιλοσοφική αναθεώρηση της Μεθοδολογίας του Δικαίου* [Law and Juridical Judgment. A Philosophical Revision of the Methodology of Law], Crete University Press, 2017, pp. 256 ff.

The central concept in law, therefore, is probably not that of truth, but that of correctness,³ which is not universal over time, but specific to place and time. “Law is a deontological science. Its proposals are not true or false but rather correct or incorrect relative to certain purposes, which they intend to serve”.⁴

Besides, if truth is by definition one and only, in each case, it cannot describe large parts of juridical judgment, such as

- the scope of a law enforcer’s assessment, when specifying indefinite concepts (“Beurteilungsspielraum”),
- the discretion granted to the administration, by many legislative provisions, to choose one out of several legal solutions and
- the (appropriately limited) freedom of a judge, e.g., in assessing a sentence by the criminal judge or, in reforming a fine, by an administrative judge.

These instances may partly explain some of the specifics of legal science. They primarily explain what scientists of other disciplines can hardly understand: the lack of certainty and a strong subjective element in juridical reasoning.⁵ Of course, the history of science, in general, confirms that science feeds on uncertainty.⁶ The greatest scientific discoveries were made by researchers who challenged commonly accepted axioms and principles. However, what in other sciences is an exception, in law, is actually the rule. Questioning is a building block and part of the “DNA” of legal science. “Knowledge of law is always relative [...] legal thought is largely evaluative;

³ See in detail, Karl Engisch, *Wahrheit und Richtigkeit im juristischen Denken* [Truth and correctness in legal thinking, Lecture given at the 491st foundation celebration of the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich on July 6, 1963] München: Max Hueber Publishing. See also Andreas Gazis, *Νομική σκέψις και μέθοδος αυτής* [Legal thought and its method], EEN 1965, pp. 381 ff.

⁴ Ioannis Giannidis, ‘Science, Science of Law and Legal Dogmatics’, *NoV* 1981, p. 253 [260].

⁵ See Prokopis Pavlopoulos, ‘Ο «νόμος» μεταξύ Νομικής Επιστήμης και Φυσικής Επιστήμης με την «επικουρία» των Μαθηματικών’ [The “law” between Legal Science and Natural Science with the “assistance” of Mathematics], available at <https://www.constitutionalism.gr/o-nomos-metaji-nomikis-epistimis-kaifisikis-epistimis/> last accessed March 10, 2025: “In the field of Natural Science, scholars perpetually seeking the truth about the natural world, use objectively-operating scientific methods—observation and mainly experiment—and move between ‘verification’ and ‘refutation-falsification’, reminding of semi-god Prometheus (in Aeschylus’ trilogy) who initially appeared as a ‘Fire bearer’, was then ‘Tied down’ and, finally, ‘liberated’: The brave search for truth about natural world, in favour of humanity, the ‘punishment’ for potential ‘refutation’ and the final ‘redemption’, when ‘verification’ is achieved [...] In the field of Legal Science, the judge, as an interpreter and enforcer of institutional law, resembles [...] Hercules: He is called to carry out the ‘feat’ of choosing the right solution, according to requirements of Justice, with a view to unimpededly exercising Fundamental Human Rights, on the basis of Freedom and Equality, in its proportional sense”. See also Pavlos Sourlas, ‘Δίκαιο και Δικανική Κρίση. Μια Φιλοσοφική Αναθεώρηση της Μεθοδολογίας του Δικαίου’ [Law and Forensic Judgment. A Philosophical Review of the Methodology of Law], Crete University Press, 2017, p. 261: “In practice, of course, there is often a subjective uncertainty around the correctness of certain legal judgments and their foundations, which largely explains the phenomenon of disagreement.”

⁶ See also Giorgos Kouvelakis, ‘Έχουν αυξηθεί τα παράπονα. Δικηγόροι νοσταλγούν τους παλιούς δικαστές’ [Complaints have increased. Lawyers miss the old judges], *Ta Nea*, February 1, 2024: “The University of Frankfurt has posted the inscription: “You enter this place not to worship science, but to question it”.

and where there is evaluation, there can be no absolute certainty”.⁷ Andreas Gazis (1965) suggested that “legal concepts prevent a perfect application of a productive method in the field of knowledge of law, resulting in lack of full certainty, due to lack of precision with respect to legal concepts; [...] the law, due to its imperfection and its inability to fully address regulatable relations and events of social life, needs to be supplemented by an inductive method, which does not ensure certainty, but solely probability; variability in the meaning of the law, is another feature which sometimes makes it necessary for accepted truths to be revised”.⁸

By extension, lawyers can (and sometimes should) vigorously defend their views (especially on issues of individual rights protection); if they express themselves with absolute certainty (which unfortunately frequently occurs) and do not allow any doubt when an opposite argument raises itself in a scientific dialogue, they are probably inadequate lawyers. This is because they disregard that “matters related to law are not mathematically accurate; we do not deal with mathematical data but issues and experiences related to humans and society, we deal with conflicting interests and different perceptions of “law” or evaluative criteria”.⁹

2 Why Accepting Correctness as a Central Concept of Law Science

Why is uncertainty and constant evolution more observed in Law than in other disciplines? The difference lies in the ‘raw material’ of legal science. Law regulates social, economic and political relations in a society, with coercive force. These relations are constantly changing over time, resulting in subsequent change of legal regulations and of the data of legal science. The law is constantly in progress, in motion. We are not just looking for new, innovative applications of old axioms, rules and principles, in law; facts are often completely overturned. “The public reasonably expects that science would unveil and formulate rules that apply everywhere and always. For example, we can hardly imagine laws of physics, chemistry or mathematics that apply only to specific areas of the planet”. Things are different in legal science: “Its findings apply only to the legal order of a particular state, because law varies from place to place and over time, within a state. “Focusing on randomness, randomizes (legal) science; corrective words of the legislator and entire libraries are transformed into pulp,” von Kirchmann suggested in his seminal speech”.¹⁰

⁷ Apostolos Georgiadis, *Τι Είναι Δίκαιο; Η Νομική Επιστήμη για Όλους* [What is Law? Legal Science for All], Crete University Press, 2018, pp. 145, 147.

⁸ Andreas Gazis, ‘Νομική σκέψις και μέθοδος αυτής’ [Legal thought and Its method], *EEN* 1965, p. 381 [pp. 387–288].

⁹ Apostolos Georgiadis, ‘Η αμφισβήτηση της Νομικής ως επιστήμης’ [Questioning Law as a science], *Χρ/Δ* [Chronicles of Private Law] 2011, p. 481 [485].

¹⁰ Apostolos Georgiadis, *Τι Είναι Δίκαιο; Η Νομική Επιστήμη για Όλους* [What is Law? Legal Science for All], Crete University Press, 2018, pp. 143–144. See also Andreas Gazis, ‘Νομική σκέψις και μέθοδος αυτής’ [Legal thought and its method], *EEN* 1965, p. 381 [pp. 383 ff].

Let us look at the above, a little more analytically through some examples, which come from the area of constitutional law. Up until a few decades ago, the main source of constitutional law was the National Constitution. International law played a limited role for constitutional scholars. Everything was examined in the light of regulations of the national constitutional legislator, with a few ‘strikes’ of comparative constitutional law at the level *de constitutione ferenda*. In recent decades, however, constitutional law has become internationalised and has radically changed. Today, we speak of “multilevel constitutionalism” and the national constitutional law is increasingly enriched by the EU and international law (in particular, the European Convention on Human Rights).¹¹ Contrary to what one might think, this influence does not only concern fundamental rights but also the organisational part of the Constitution, as demonstrated, for example, by the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), in cases concerning MP immunity lifting for offences unrelated to parliamentary activity (the Sygelidis and Tsalkitzis cases against Greece). This phenomenon is due to a number of factors, the main ones being the establishment of the European Communities and their evolution into the European Union, as well as the internationalisation of law due to the globalisation of economic relations, the mobility of people and populations, the awareness of the international community about issues concerning human rights, the development of technology and the internet, etc.

Another typical example is the principle of proportionality, which, following the 2001 constitutional revision, is now explicitly enshrined in article 25, par. 1, of the Constitution. If someone goes back to the classic handbooks of constitutional law of past decades, one will find very few words on the principle of proportionality. Nowadays however, the principle of proportionality is perhaps the leading principle of constitutional law and its scope has been extended to private law.¹² This development is due to a series of structural changes that have taken place in society, economy and politics. First of all, reality has become so complex—e.g., due to the development of technology—that legal rules either do not regulate certain issues or regulate them

¹¹ See, among others, Evangelos Venizelos, *Μαθήματα Συνταγματικού Δικαίου* [Constitutional Law Courses], New edition, Athens: Sakkoulas Publications, 2021, pp. 161 ff., Spyros Vlachopoulos, *Η Δυναμική Ερμηνεία του Συντάγματος. Η Προσαρμογή του Συνταγματικού Κειμένου στις Μεταβαλλόμενες Συνθήκες* [The Dynamic Interpretation of the Constitution. Adapting Constitutional Text to Changing Circumstances], Athens: Eurasia Publications, 2014, pp. 136 ff.

¹² See Plenary of Greek Supreme Court 9/2015: The principle of proportionality “in the sense of a mandatory measure of a reasonable counterbalance between supply and benefit [...] impacts any kind of state activity and, when it comes to conflicting interests in the field of private law, since the scope of this principle is not limited only to certain areas of law; instead, [...] even prior to its explicit constitutionalisation, it permeated the entire legal order and should therefore be taken into account in the interpretation and application of any rule of law. Besides, through the explicit statement of Article 25, par. 1, of the Constitution, the institutionalized protection it establishes for human rights, and as individual rights,” also applies “to the relations of individuals to which it applies”, and thus the obligation of the competent judicial bodies is defined—when they are involved in the resolution of private disputes—to resolve them in such a way so that there is a fair balance between the opposing interests, with a parallel protection of fundamental rights.

through general clauses, vague concepts, etc. Laws have largely lost their “effectiveness”, in the sense that they rarely regulate a factual situation ‘directly’ and do not immediately point to a legal consequence but merely provide the framework for a more “creative”, “lawmaking” operation of the judge. The latter, who cannot refuse to adjudicate, in the context of this law-shaping operation, is constantly weighing up rights, legal commodities and interests.

This balancing (which together with the test of availability and necessity) constitutes the principle of proportionality and is multiplied in modern law for a number of additional reasons: Mainly because new rights are constantly being acknowledged (e.g., protection of personal data, access to public documents, protection of the environment), which are constantly in conflict with other rights. Secondly, because fundamental rights also concern relations between individuals “to which they relate” [article 25, par. 1, of the Constitution], the necessary balances and, consequently, the application of the principle of proportionality is constantly being extended. Of course, all these are connected to the general political conditions. During the inter-war period and after World War II, violations of fundamental rights were of such a scale and intensity¹³ that it was difficult to comply with the application of the “luxurious” principle of proportionality. When the persecutions of political opponents took the form of executions and deportations with extensive use of the ‘para-constitution’ (postwar legal and regulatory measures against human rights, which were conflicting with the then 1952 Constitution, but were applied to resist the spread of communism), the best case scenario of constitutional law application in those times could only be the application of the constitutional provisions to the extent that they safeguarded citizens’ liberties.

¹³ See in detail, Nikos Alivizatos, *Οι Πολιτικοί Θεσμοί σε Κρίση, Όψεις της ελληνικής εμπειρίας*, [Political Institutions in Crisis 1922–1974. Aspects of the Greek experience], 3rd edition, Athens: Themelio Publications, 1995, pp. 337 ff.

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Chapter 2

Political Correctness. The General Context



1 The Concept, Historical Development, Supporters and Opponents of Political Correctness

Nowadays, there seems to be little concern about the concept and the broader problematic of legal correctness.¹ The problematic of “political correctness” has occupied a central place in scientific debates, especially in the field of constitutional law. In a broad sense, we mean the development of a code of expression, communication and behaviour, which is considered correct by society, or a large part of it; if one violates it, one suffers adverse consequences. Simply put, in the words of Francis Fukuyama, “political correctness refers to things we cannot say in public without fear of a humiliating moral condemnation”.² In its narrowest sense, ‘political correctness’ is a prohibition of using words, expressions and behaviours that may be offensive towards certain groups. They are usually minority groups identified on the basis of their skin colour or other physical characteristics, gender, ethnic origin, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.³ The consequences of violating the rules of political correctness are not usually of a strictly legal nature (in the sense that they

¹ See Xenophon Kontiadis, *To Avορθολογικό μας Σύνταγμα. Γιατί απέτυχαν οι πολιτικοί θεσμοί*; [Our Irrational Constitution. Why have political institutions failed?] Athens: Papazisis Publications, 2013, pp. 120 ff., on the concept of “constitutional correctness” (“correttezza costituzionale”), which means “evaluation based on constitutional ethics without legal binding force or sanctions”.

² Francis Fukuyama, *Ταυτότητα. Η Απαίτηση για Αξιοπρέπεια και η Πολιτική της Μνησικακίας* [*Identity. The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment*] (translation by Stavros V. Gavalas, editing by Andromachi Spanou), Athens: Ropi Publications, 2018, p. 176.

³ For a definition of political correctness, see Angeliki Giannikopoulou, *Ιδεολογία στην Παιδική Λογοτεχνία. Πολιτική Ορθότητα και Παιδική Λογοτεχνία* [Ideology in Children’s Literature. Political Correctness and Children’s Literature], National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2015, available at: <https://opencourses.uoa.gr/courses/ECD3/>, and Spyros Moschonas, ‘Τελικά η πολιτική ορθότητα είναι εργαλείο ισότητας ή περιορίζει την ελευθερία της έκφρασης?’ [Is political correctness a tool for equality or does it limit freedom of expression?], available at: <https://www.lifo.gr/stiles/politiki-orthotita-ergaleio-isotitas-i-periorismos-tis-eleytherias-tisekfrasis>; Deborah Cameron,

are not included in the law), but they are very serious (in many cases, more serious than legal consequences) and their “enforcement” is considered obligatory by the circles concerned. However, political correctness is often abusively invoked for obligations that originate directly from the law and reflect fundamental values of our legal culture. Thus, respecting the presumption of innocence in the media is not a matter of political correctness but a legal obligation deriving from the constitutional principle of the Rule of Law (Article 25, par. 1, of the Constitution), the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 6, par. 2), and numerous other provisions of the applicable legislation (e.g., Article 11 of Presidential Decree 77/2003). Likewise, it is not a matter of political correctness but a legal obligation for citizens to refrain from publicly inciting discrimination, hatred, or violence, conforming to the relevant provision of the “anti-racism law”.⁴

Instances of political correctness rules are numerous and extend to almost every domain of scientific, social, and political life.⁵ As a result, the attributive adjective *political (correctness)* is rather limiting and, in any case, fails to capture the nearly universal scope of the term, in public discourse, the arts, education, scientific dialogue, professional and workplace relations, journalism, religion, international relations, advertising, and social media, are just some of the fields where political

Verbal Hygiene, London: Routledge Linguistics Classics, 2012, pp. 122 ff., Geoffrey Hughes, *Political Correctness. A History of Semantics and Culture*, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2010, pp. 3 ff., Ingo von Münch, *Meinungsfreiheit gegen Political Correctness* [Freedom of expression versus political correctness], Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2017, pp. 17 ff., Charoula Papastefanaki, *Political Correctness: a Threat to Free Speech or a Tool to Achieve Equality?: Examination of whether political correctness is a justified restriction to freedom of speech or not*, 2022, pp. 3 ff., available at: <https://repository.gchumanrights.org/items/969f7612-acc6-420c-b94e-cd03968a4f0e>, Anatol Stefanowitsch, *Politisch korrekte Sprache und Redefreiheit*, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* [Politically correct language and freedom of speech, From politics and contemporary history] 12–13/2020, pp. 22 ff., Thomas Tsakalakis, *Political Correctness: A Sociocultural Black Hole*, London: Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 2021, pp. 82 ff., Rainer Wimmer, *Politische Korrektheit. Verschäfter Umgang mit Normen im Alltag*, [Political correctness. A tighter grip on norms in everyday life], in Friedrich Müller, *Politik, [Neue] Medien und die Sprache des Rechts* [Politics, [new] media and the language of law], Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2007, pp. 71 ff.

⁴ Article 1 of Law no. 927/1979: “Whoever, intentionally, publicly, orally or through the press, via the Internet or by any other means or manner, incites, provokes, stimulates or incites acts or actions that may cause discrimination, hatred or violence against a person or group of persons, on the basis of race, colour, religion, genealogical origins, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender characteristics or disability, in a manner that endangers public order or poses a threat to the life, liberty or physical integrity of the aforementioned persons, shall be punishable by imprisonment for a term of three (3) months to three (3) years and a fine of five to twenty thousand (5.000–20.000) euros”. On the problematic nature of prohibiting hate speech, see Andreas Takis, ‘Ρητορική μίσους, δημοκρατία και λογοκρισία’ [Hate speech, democracy and censorship], in Penelope Petsini and Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *Λεξικό Λογοκρισίας στην Ελλάδα. Καχεκτική δημοκρατία, δικτατορία, μεταπολίτευση* [Dictionary of Censorship in Greece. Stunted democracy, dictatorship, transition to democracy], Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 2018, pp. 245 ff.

⁵ See also Thomas Tsakalakis, *Political Correctness: A Sociocultural Black Hole*, London: Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 2021, p. 5.

correctness matters. Political correctness is currently even taught at universities⁶ and was a topic of discussion in the 2023 Thessaloniki International Book Fair.⁷ At the same time, however, political correctness may have contributed—alongside other factors—to politicizing fields that were not previously considered part of the political sphere. Stuart Hall insightfully suggested that “sites of social conflict proliferated in the era of political correctness, to include, beyond class politics and inequality, struggles over issues of race, gender, sexuality, family, ethnicity, and cultural difference. Matters such as family life, marriage and sexual relationships, or food, which were once deemed ‘non-political,’ have now been politicized”.⁸

Nevertheless, it would probably be more accurate to speak of “moral correctness.” This is because most rules of political correctness carry a moral undertone (e.g., “Do not use expressions that may offend certain social groups”),⁹ raising a further question as to what extent moral rules can be enforced and made obligatory. The above seem to suggest that political correctness raises numerous issues, spanning multiple academic disciplines. Further down, the study examines constitutional issues posed by political correctness.¹⁰ The topic is of particular interest because it presupposes engaging with other fields of study (e.g., political science, sociology, linguistics, art history), once again highlighting the need for an interdisciplinary approach. At the same time, it presents a significant difficulty, however, as it touches upon highly sensitive issues that divide and polarize contemporary societies worldwide. Under these circumstances, there is an inevitable risk that any scholarly study on political correctness may itself attract heavy criticism on the basis of political correctness.¹¹ Moreover, any stance taken on related issues is likely to conflict

⁶ See, for example, the e-learning programme of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens entitled “*Political Correctness and Cancel Culture*” (https://elearningekpa.gr/courses/politiki-orthotita-kai-kouloura-tis-akurosis?gad=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwmICoBhDxARIsABXkXIIjYVb0NgA1_eMSqn6ncIfgx6QkdlyI11StB9PB1xSYerr_sLgvDJ0aAv0IEALw_wcB), (Academic Supervisor: Myrto Rigou/Programme Contributor: Thomas Tsakalakis), last accessed May 9, 2024.

⁷ See also, *Banned Books in the Era of Political Correctness and the Limits of Intervention in the Space of Ideas and Creation*, available at <https://www.thessalonikibookfair.gr/en/banned-books-in-the-era-of-political-correctness-and-the-limits-of-intervention-in-the-space-of-ideas-and-creation/>, last accessed May 10, 2024.

⁸ Stuart Hall, Exploring some ‘politically incorrect’ paths of political correctness (translated into Greek by Grigoris Ananiadis), *Synchrona Themata*, 160–161 (April–December 2023), p. 141 [143].

⁹ See also Alexander Grau, ‘Brauchen wir political correctness?’ [Do we need political correctness?], available at <https://www.goethe.de/ins/hu/de/kul/sup/klf/21458975.html>, last accessed May 15, 2025.

¹⁰ On the broader issue, see also Sandra Dzenis and Filipe Nobre Faria, ‘Political Correctness: The twofold protection of liberalism’, available at <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11406-019-00094-4>, last accessed May 15, 2025., Charoula Papastefanaki, ‘Political Correctness: A Threat to Free Speech or a Tool to Achieve Equality?: an Examination of whether political correctness is a justified restriction to freedom of speech or not’, 2022, available at <https://repository.gchumanrights.org/items/969f7612-acc6-420c-b94e-cd03968a4f0e>, last accessed May 20, 2024.

¹¹ “The culture wars, almost by design, touch on subjects (such as race, gender, religion, and sexuality) about which people feel very strongly. It’s difficult to unpick the arguments around PC [Political Correctness] without causing some offence to someone, particularly when presenting a

with views held by either supporters or opponents of political correctness. Some introductory clarifications on political correctness may be useful.

Contrary to what one might assume, the term “political correctness” is not a new one.¹² The term appears (albeit in a different context) in a 1793 decision of the Supreme Court of the United States.¹³ It was one of the favoured expressions in “leftist vocabulary”, a few decades ago, often used—sometimes humorously, as a kind of “internal joke”—to suggest that a view was not “politically correct”.¹⁴ Michel Foucault associated political correctness with political thought when the latter carried scientific weight.¹⁵ Nevertheless, despite the fact that the debate around political correctness is not new, in the modern era, it has gained even greater significance, primarily due to advances in technology, the internet, and social media. Violation of political correctness rules has always had certain consequences. Today, however, in the era of technology and the internet—often described as ‘Datacracy’ (a play on ‘Democracy’), social condemnation online for violating rules of political correctness can reach such a scale and intensity that it may lead to stigmatization, job loss, or even social isolation of the “offender”. The unrestricted, hostile, and excessively easy public shaming (facilitated by online anonymity) of anyone who has made a “mistake” may have immeasurable consequences.¹⁶ The assumption is that political correctness is closely linked to “cancel culture”,¹⁷ or what has been

case that is at odds with the mainstream left as well the right” (Jeff Sparrow, *Trigger Warnings. Political Correctness and the Rise of the Right*, Melbourne/London: Scribe, 2018, p. 10).

¹² On the history of political correctness, see Stuart Hall, *Περιδιάβαση σε ορισμένες «πολιτικά μη ορθές» απραποιές της πολιτικής ορθότητας* [Exploring some ‘politically incorrect’ pathways of political correctness] (translated into Greek by Grigoris Ananiadis), *Synchrona Themata*, 160–161 (April–December 2023), p. 141 [142 ff.], Geoffrey Hughes, *Political Correctness. A History of Semantics and Culture*, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2010, pp. 60 ff., Jeff Sparrow, *Trigger Warnings. Political Correctness and the Rise of the Right*, Melbourne/London: Scribe, 2018, pp. 12 ff., John Wilson, *The Myth of Political Correctness. The Conservative Attack on Higher Education*, Duke University Press, 1995, p. 3.

¹³ In the opinion of Judge James Wilson, in the decision *Chisholm vs. Georgia*.

¹⁴ See Soti Triantafyllou, ‘Πολιτική ορθότητα και λαϊκές προκαταλήψεις’ [Political correctness and popular prejudices], available at: <https://www.tanea.gr/2018/06/01/opinions/politikiorthotita-kai-laikes-prokatalipseis/>, last accessed March 11, 2025, and Ari Shapiro, Alejandra Marquez Janse, Mia Venkat, Noah Caldwell and Patrick Jarenwattananon, ‘How cancel culture became politicized—just like political correctness’, available at: <https://www.npr.org/2021/07/09/1014744289/cancel-culture-debate-hasearly-90s-roots-political-correctness>, July 26, 2021.

¹⁵ See Dioni Zouvelou, ‘Πολιτική ορθότητα: Η «αθωοποίηση» της λογοκρισίας’ [Political Correctness: Acquittal of censorship], available at [link](#), last accessed February 23, 2024, and Giannis Konstantinidis, *Ο αυθορμητισμός στην πυρά της πολιτικής ορθότητας* [Spontaneity on the Fire of Political Correctness], available at: <https://www.lifo.gr/stiles/politiki-orthotita-ergaleio-isorismos-tiseleytherias-tis-ekfrasis>, last accessed February 24, 2024.

¹⁶ See also Panagiotis Sotiris and Petros Konstantinidis, ‘Γιατί «σκοτώνουμε» στα social media’, [Why we “Kill” each other on social media], *To Vima*, November 5, 2023.

¹⁷ See Julian Nida-Rümelin, ‘Cancel Culture’. *Ende der Aufklärung? Ein Plädoyer für eigenständiges Denken* [‘Cancel Culture’. The end of Enlightenment? A plea for independent thinking], Munich: Piper Publishing, 3rd edition, 2023, and Laure Murat, ‘Qui annule quoi?’ [Who cancels what] (translated into Greek by Giannis Ktenas, *Ποιος ακυρώνει τι; Σκέψεις για την cancel culture*),

called the ‘modern version of ostracism’.¹⁸ Anyone who violates the rules of political correctness is “stigmatized” online, before an unlimited audience, and becomes isolated from their social circle.¹⁹ The internet is indeed a modern “Panopticon” (in Jeremy Bentham’s terms) which applies the saying “homo homini lupus”²⁰ (man is a wolf to man). However, the development of technology also intersects with the debate on political correctness, in another way. Artificial intelligence applications operate on the basis of data and programming (input) provided by humans. The more this programming is excessively oriented towards political correctness, the more frequently incidents like recent ones will occur—such as Google’s Gemini AI, depicting the Pope as an Asian woman and the Vikings as Black people.²¹

Athens: Polis Publishing, 2022. Also, see Dimitris Athanasiadis, ‘Cancel Culture: What do you know about cancel culture?’, available at: <https://www.athensvoice.gr/epikairota/politiki-oikonomia/682845/cancel-culture-ti-xerei-gia-tin-koytoyra-tis-akyrosis>, last accessed March 10, 2025, Christos Logaras, ‘Cancel Culture α λα ελληνικά: Ακύρωση της πολυφωνίας ή απλώς μια τοξική κουλτούρα που δεν συγχωρεί’ [Cancel Culture, the Greek way: Cancelling pluralism or just a toxic culture that doesn’t forgive], available at <https://www.tovima.gr/2024/01/09/society/cancel-culture-a-la-ellinika-akyrosi-tis-polyfonia-i-aplos-mia-toksiki-koultoura-pou-den-sygxorei>, last accessed March 10, 2025, Shakantura Banaji, ‘Cancel Culture and historical silencing’, available at <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mediase/2021/07/20/cancel-culture-and-historical-silencing/>, LSE, July 20, 2021, Kathryn Lofton, ‘“Cancel Culture” and other myths. Anti-Fandom as heartbreak’, available at <https://yalereview.org/article/kathryn-lofton-cancel-culture>, last accessed May 10, 2025, Nadine Strossen, *Free Speech. What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024, pp. 229 ff.

¹⁸ Karolina Mermigka, ‘Μόνο όταν γελάω’ [Only when I laugh], available at <https://mag.frear.gr/mono-otan-gelao/>, last accessed March 10, 2025.

¹⁹ See Ari Shapiro/Alejandra Marquez Janse/Mia Venkat/Noah Caldwell/Patrick Jarenwattananon, *How cancel culture became politicized—just like political correctness*, available at <https://www.npr.org/2021/07/09/1014744289/cancel-culture-debate-has-early-90s-roots-political-correctness>, npr, July 26, 2021. However, see Giannis Balabanidis’ view in ‘Η πολιτική ορθότητα, από τα αμερικανικά κάμπους μέχρι τη μικρή μας χώρα [Political Correctness, from the American Campuses to Our Small Country]’ (available at <https://mag.frear.gr/i-politiki-orthotita-apo-ta-amerikanika-kampos-mechri-ti-mikri-mas-chora/>, last accessed April 27, 2025), who argues that the virtue of political correctness is that it serves as an informal mechanism not of sanctions or censorship but of democratic self-restraint, thanks to which the public sphere can be framed by a pedagogy of freedom of expression”. Also see the relationship between political correctness and freedom of expression, below.

²⁰ Thomas Tsakalakis, *Political Correctness: A Sociocultural Black Hole*, London: Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 2021, p. 127.

²¹ See Manolis Andriotakis, ‘ChatGPT and bias’, in ‘woke. *The Awakening Movement*’, *Kathimerini* (special edition), April 28, 2024, p. 52. See also Giannis Tsekouras, ‘Google Gemini /Το πρόβλημα με την «υπερβολική πολιτική ορθότητα» της εφαρμογής και το πραγματικό ζήτημα’ [Google Gemini. The problem with the application’s “excessive political correctness” and the real issue], available at: <https://tvxs.gr/news/kosmos/googlegemini-to-provlima-me-tin-ypervoliki-politiki-orthotita-tis-efarmogis-kaito-pragmatiko-zitima/>, March 10, 2024.

The discussion about political correctness has now expanded on a global level²² and, as is the case with many other issues of public discourse, it has become polarized and politicized. There are enemies of political correctness, who even use numerous and very harsh expressions, such as “new orthodoxy,”²³ “Left-wing McCarthyism,”²⁴ “totalitarianism,”²⁵ “new McCarthyism”, “Stalinist orthodoxy”, “liberal fascism”,²⁶ “a new version of fascism”,²⁷ “intellectual conformism”, “liberal

²² Apart from the numerous references that follow regarding Europe and the United States of America, a very intense debate on political correctness is also taking place, for example, in Canada (see Stephen Fry, Jordan Peterson, Michael Eric Dyson, Michelle Goldberg, *Political Correctness Gone Mad?*, London: Oneworld Publications, 2018), and in Australia (see Jeff Sparrow, *Trigger Warnings. Political Correctness and the Rise of the Right*, Melbourne/London: Scribe, 2018, p. 54).

²³ Harvey Mansfield, ‘Political correctness and the suicide of the intellect’, available at: <https://www.heritage.org/political-process/report/political-correctness-and-the-suicide-the-intellect>, June 26, 1991, last accessed May 2, 2025.

²⁴ Nikolas Gkibiritis, ‘Πολιτική ορθότητα: Ο ανοιχτόμυαλος μακαρθισμός της Αριστεράς’ [Political Correctness: The open-minded mcCarthyism of the left], *ResPublica*, available at: <https://www.respublica.gr/2017/03/post/political-correct-leftish-ideology/>, last accessed May 2, 2025.

²⁵ Nathalie Heinich, ‘Wokism’ *The New Totalitarianism?* (translation and editing: Christina Stamatopoulou), Athens: Enallaktikes Ekdoseis, 2023, pp. 131 ff.

²⁶ Steven Bahls, ‘Political Correctness and the American Law School’, *Washington University Law Quarterly* 69 (1991), pp. 1041 ff., available at https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_lawreview/vol69/iss4/3/.

²⁷ Xenophon Brountzakis, ‘Για το «κίνημα των αφυπνισμένων»’ [on the movement of the awakened], *Ardin*, Issue 127, (December 2023–January 2024), p. 49 [50].

McCarthyism”,²⁸ “inquisitorial medievalism”,²⁹ “cloud of obscurantism”,³⁰ “messianism”,³¹ and “sociocultural black hole”,³² “cultural neurosis” that “requires treatment”,³³ “tyranny of the few”,³⁴ and “Evil” that fights against “Good” (freedom).³⁵ Characteristic is the work of a most well-known German constitutionalists, Ingo von Münch, who in his work *Meinungsfreiheit gegen Political Correctness (Freedom of expression versus political correctness)* uses expressions such as ‘prohibition of speech’, ‘censorship of opinion’, and ‘tyranny of group veto’.³⁶ Umberto Eco also described political correctness as “the new fundamentalism”.^{37,38}

Beyond the opponents of political correctness, who often associate it with the Woke movement,³⁹ there are also its supporters, who, with some variations and not

²⁸ Craig Anderson, ‘Political correctness on college campuses: Freedom of speech v. doing the politically correct thing’, *SMU Law Review* 1993, pp. 171 ff., available at: <https://scholar.smu.edu/smulr/vol46/iss1/10/>, last accessed May 2, 2025.

²⁹ Aristeidis Kantzos, ‘An attack of irrationalism against sciences’ (interview with Giorgos Gontzos), *Ardin*, Issue 128 (February–March 2024), p. 23 [24].

³⁰ *Estia*, editorial, 20 March 2024.

³¹ Giorgos Karabelias and Giorgos Rakkas, ‘Η αποδόμηση του ευρωπαϊκού –ελληνικού– πολιτισμού’ [The deconstruction of European–Greek?– culture], in Giorgos Karabelias (ed.), *Woke. The Universal Deconstruction: Nation—Gender—Race*, Athens: Enallaktikes Ekdoseis, 2023, p. 9 [11].

³² Thomas Tsakalakis, *Political Correctness: A Sociocultural Black Hole*, Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 2021, p. 9: ‘The main hypotheses of this work are these: PC [Political Correctness] is a double-edged sword which, paradoxically, cuts only one way: the wrong one. Just like the gravity of a literal black hole distorts the fabric of space time, PC is a socialcultural black hole that warps people’s truth—seeking processes and moral radars. PC is simply one of the innumerable manifestations of human inanity, egotism, and malice...».

³³ Takis Theodoropoulos, ‘Πώς γλυτώνεις απ’ τον μαύρο Αχιλλέα’ [How to escape from the black Achilles], available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/561343324/po-s-glito-neis-apton-may-ro-achille-a/>.

³⁴ Giorgos Panopoulos, *Woke Culture. Η Βαρβαρότητα της «Σωστής πλευράς» της Ιστορίας* [Woke Culture. The Barbarism of the “Right Side” of History], Athens: Ellinoekdotiki, 2023, p. 17.

³⁵ Andreas Andrianopoulos, ‘Η τυραννία της πολιτικής ορθότητας’ [The Tyranny of Political Correctness], available at: <https://www.in.gr/2023/05/23/apopsi/tyrannia-tis-politikis-or-thotitas/>: “The supporters of political correctness violently impose behaviours (restrictions on free thought and expression). Thus, it takes the form of a battle between Good (freedom) and Evil (suppression of rights) for the enforcement of political correctness”.

³⁶ Ingo von Münch, *Meinungsfreiheit gegen Political Correctness*, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2017, p. 6.

³⁷ See also Takis Batzelis, ‘The swamp of political correctness’, *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, January 17, 2023.

³⁸ See also Nikos Vatopoulos, ‘The new puritanism’, *Kathimerini*, March 30, 2023: “Anything that does not conform to the principles of the new conformism is cut off. Once cut off, it is ridiculed and cast into outer darkness. The puritanism of our century does not only deal with the control of the body but also with the entire system of understanding the world. The increasingly frequent incidents of content control in books, the form of artworks, freedom of speech, academic freedom, public behavior, the nature of language, and its capacity to evolve freely, are gradually shaping the environment of an International of totalitarianism.”

³⁹ See Nikolas Dimitriadis, ‘Introductory note. The academic adequacy of the “woke” movement’, *Neos Ermis o Logios*, Issue 26 (September 2023), p. 120: “Through political correctness, the

always accepting the term ‘political correctness’, consider that rules of speech and behaviour are necessary, especially for protecting minorities.^{40,41} For if “we have the freedom to say that all Arabs are unassimilable Islamists, all Black people are drug dealers, we deprive them of the freedom to find employment, or even to walk down the street without being subjected to police checks”⁴² It is also often alleged that those who react to political correctness are financially supported by conservative foundations and think tanks⁴³ and are in fact not interested in freedom of expression,

Woke movement develops under academic greenhouse conditions: through intimidation, it becomes immune to scientific criticism. Its supporters have free rein to promote their ideas without any criticism, in an environment where ‘everything can be said’ and ‘every theory is respected,’ provided it is politically expedient.”

For the Woke movement, see also Nikos Efstathiou, ‘The tangled history of woke’, in *‘woke. The Awakening Movement’*, *Kathimerini* (special edition), April 28, 2024, p. 4 ff. (as well as all the other texts referred to in this work).

⁴⁰ See, for example, Stevi Kitsou, ‘Ποιος χρειάζεται την πολιτική ορθότητα; [Who needs political correctness?], available at: <https://popaganda.gr/postscripts/pios-chriazete-tin-politikiorthotita/>, last accessed March 11, 2025, Sabine Hark, ‘Gleichheit ist nicht verhandelbar’ [Equality is non-negotiable], *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* December 13, 2020, pp. 12 ff., Karsten Schubert, ‘Demokratisierung durch “Cancel Culture”. Zum Verhältnis von Kunstfreiheit und Emanzipation [Democratization through “Cancel Culture”. On the relationship between artistic freedom and emancipation] available at: <https://verfassungsblog.de>, Felix Stephan, ‘Die politische Korrektheit ist kein Unterdrückungsinstrument, available at: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/sprache-und-macht-die-politische-korrektheit-istkein-unterdrueckungsinstrument-1.3904425>, last accessed May 15, 2025, Moira Weigel, ‘Political Correctness: How the Right invented a phantom enemy’, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/30/political-correctness-how-the-right-invented-phantom-enemy-donald-trump>. Among the supporters of political correctness is Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of the Federal Republic of Germany: “What was the point of political correctness, which is now being fought so fiercely? Conscious or unconscious discrimination against individuals or groups should be reduced, for example through more appropriate use of language. The simple laws of politeness and civil interaction should apply to everyone, including those who are in some way different from the majority: difference not as a deficiency, as a risk—difference rather as being different with equal rights. Recognizing the equal dignity of others in language, and thus in social consciousness—that was and is the point” (Rede bei der Jahresversammlung der Hochschulrektorenkonferenz am 18. November 2019 in Hamburg [Speech at the annual meeting of the German Rectors’ Conference on November 18, 2019 in Hamburg], available at <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/service/bulletin/redevon-bundespraesident-dr-frank-walter-steinmeier-1696216>).

⁴¹ See also Laure Murat, ‘Ποιος Ακυρώνει Τι; Σκέψεις Για Την Cancel Culture’ [Who Cancels What? Reflections On Cancel Culture], translated into Greek by Giannis Ktenas, Athens: Polis Publications, 2022, pp. 12–13. Regarding “cancel culture”: “Cancel culture, a critical tool of minorities exercising their freedom of expression, exposes issues or acts [...] that are deemed unacceptable or offensive [...] Cancel culture is therefore above all a form of expression and protest [...] Cancel culture is a call for people to take responsibility for our ideological positions and an invitation to ethical awareness”.

⁴² Tzvetan Todorov, *The Inner Enemies of Democracy* (translated into Greek by Sotia Triantafyllou/Mariana Koutalou, *Οι Εσωτερικοί Εχθροί της Δημοκρατίας*), Athens: Patakis Publications, 2013, p. 184.

⁴³ See John Wilson, *The Myth of Political Correctness: The Conservative Attack on Higher Education*, Duke University Press, 1995, pp. 26 ff.

but in not recognising minority rights.⁴⁴ It has, furthermore, been suggested that whenever a conservative viewpoint is criticized, especially in the United States of America, it is automatically blamed for political in/correctness.⁴⁵ Even the negative character of ‘cancel culture’ is being questioned, on the grounds that it is simply a “consequence culture”, in the sense that everyone assumes accountability and suffers the consequences of their actions.⁴⁶

2 Ideological Assumptions of Political Correctness

The debate often acquires a political character. Particularly in the United States of America,⁴⁷ conservatives are considered enemies of political correctness and liberal-leftists its supporters. The categorisation derives from US political life. In the spring of 1991, the then-President, George W. Bush spoke out against political correctness in a speech at the University of Michigan that made a great impression. As he suggested in dramatic tones, on the bicentenary of the “Bill of Rights”, freedom of expression is endangered by political correctness; its “crusaders” are fighting diversity, in the

⁴⁴ See Thodoris Georgakopoulos, ‘Πολιτική ορθότητα και ελευθερία έκφρασης’ [Political Correctness and Freedom of Expression]: “When you hear someone complaining about ‘political correctness’, they almost never mean, say, that in the country’s public discourse it is deemed inappropriate to refer to the small country located between Albania and Bulgaria by the name ‘Macedonia.’ Although this is a prime example of ‘political correctness’ [...] In our time, by ‘political correctness’ we almost exclusively mean the restrictions on the reproduction of words and expressions that offend social groups who have historically faced discrimination: people with disabilities, LGBTQI individuals, people with eating disorders, with mental illnesses, with a different religion or different origin from the majority of a country’s population,” available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/1016799/politiki-orthotita-kai-eleytheria-ekfrasis/>, *Kathimerini*, Mar. 29, 2019, last accessed May 10, 2025.

⁴⁵ Dennis Baron, *You Can’t Always Say What You Want. The Paradox of Free Speech*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023, pp. 214 ff., also see Ernest Owens, *The Case For Cancel Culture: How This Democratic Tool Works To Liberate Us All* (an excerpt of the book, as presented in *Lifo*), available at: <https://www.lifo.gr/apopseis/idees/giati-i-koilytoyra-akyrosis-einai-kali-gia-tin-dimokratia>, last accessed January 10, 2025: “For many years, the so-called cancel culture has been scorned or misinterpreted as a new phenomenon that undermines freedom of expression and speech [...] Cancel culture is a poison for those in positions of power who benefit from a perverse idea of uncontrolled freedom of speech. Those who fear a cancel culture may claim to fear suppression of free expression, but often what they want to avoid is accountability for their actions”.

⁴⁶ See also Yascha Mounk, *The Identity Trap. A Story of Ideas and Power in Our Time*, UK: Allen Lane-Penguin Books, 2023, p. 168.

⁴⁷ The new “wave” of political correctness has started in the United States of America and then spread to Europe. See, from a more general point of view, Bruckner, Pascal, *Ένας Σχεδόν Τέλειος Ένοχος* [Pascal Bruckner, *Ein nahezu perfekter Täter* (Greek translation by Andreas Pappas), Athens: Patakis Publications, 2022, p. 25]: “America has a unique trait: it encourages those who wish to imitate it. For a century, its culture has been exported better than any other. It adapts to all climates and all beliefs, it possesses an unparalleled power of dissemination and transmission, it is the preeminent culture of disguise. Even those who hate it want to enjoy it”.

name of diversity and in a manner reminiscing the works of George Orwell.⁴⁸ Since then, the Republican Party and conservative circles of American political life, in general, have identified with the polemic against political correctness; the tendency reached its peak with Donald Trump⁴⁹ who referred to cancel culture as one of the many “crimes” of the Left⁵⁰ in 2020, at the Republican national convention, and defined an “Anti-Woke” University as one of his central political goals in case of his re-election as President of the United States of America.⁵¹

However, these distinctions do not always reflect reality.⁵² Apart from the inevitable generalisations and oversimplifications that any categorisation and classification into ‘camps’ assumes, the ‘conservative’ or ‘progressive’ character (whatever these terms mean) of political correctness (or opposition to it) is far from fixed and granted and depends on the historical and spatial context in which it occurs.⁵³ The United States of America is a typical example. There, progressive-liberals appear as proponents of existing political correctness standards. But, especially with regard to book withdrawals from school libraries, e.g., due to erotic content, the defence

⁴⁸ See Jeff Sparrow, *Trigger Warnings. Political Correctness and the Rise of the Right*, Melbourne/London: Scribe, 2018, pp. 20–21, Moira Weigel, ‘Political Correctness: How the Right Invented a phantom enemy’, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/30/political-correctness-how-the-right-invented-phantom-enemy-donald-trump>, *The Guardian*, November 30, 2016, John Wilson, *The Myth of Political Correctness. The Conservative Attack on Higher Education*, Duke University Press, 1995, pp. 8 ff.

⁴⁹ See Georgia Anagnostaki, ‘Η πολιτική ορθότητα (political correctness or PC) στον πολιτικό λόγο και τη διαμόρφωση πολιτικής ταυτότητας’, [Political correctness (or PC) in political discourse and in shaping political identities], available at: https://thesafiablog.com/2019/01/20/analysis_anagnostaki_dec/, last accessed June 14, 2024. Among others, Donald Trump has suggested that he thinks “the big problem this country has is being politically correct” (Jeff Sparrow, *Trigger Warnings. Political Correctness and the Rise of the Right*, Melbourne/London: Scribe, 2018, p. 3).

⁵⁰ Dennis Baron, *You Can’t Always Say What You Want. The Paradox of Free Speech*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023, p. 214.

⁵¹ Andrew Restuccia, ‘Trump’s Agenda Upends GOP Orthodoxy’, *To Vima—International edition*, December 10, 2023. On France, see Maria Kornarou, ‘Η νέα Γαλλίδα υπουργός Πολιτισμού βάζει στο στόχαστρο τη woke κουλτούρα’ [New French culture minister takes aim at woke culture], *Estia*, February 25, 2024: ‘Woke has become a culture of censorship’, French culture minister Rachida Dati suggested a few days ago, pointing out that “culture is not about deconstruction, it is not eradication. I will not take the side of the censors”, ‘I am in favour of freedom of art and democracy’, she concluded”.

⁵² See Thomas Tsakalakis, ‘Περί πολιτικής ορθότητας’ [On political correctness], *Avgi*, 18 June 2023. See also Stephen Fry who is an opponent of political correctness, ‘Stephen Fry in Conversation with Rudyard Griffiths’, in Stephen Fry, Jordan Peterson, Michael Eric Dyson and Michelle Goldberg, *Political Correctness Gone Mad?*, London: Oneworld Publications, 2018, p. 21: ‘I think it’s very important to try to suggest that any anti-PC [Political Correctness] rhetoric isn’t entirely the property of the Right, I characterize myself as a soft leftie—a flaccid, flabby leftie—not a progressive or a street-marching socialist but someone who’s always tended toward a liberal outlook”.

⁵³ See also Alexandros Skouras, ‘Η άλλη πολιτική ορθότητα’ [The other political correctness], available at <https://www.liberal.gr/apopsi/i-alli-politiki-orthotita>, Nov. 13, 2019, last accessed May 15, 2025.

of political correctness comes from the conservative side.⁵⁴ Similar remarks can be made about Europe. Ingo von Münch, for example, an opponent of political correctness, politically belongs to the Liberals and not to the traditional conservative parties of Germany (CDU-CSU). Sahra Wagenknecht, one of the most popular politicians of the German Left, has likewise adopted a very militant approach against political correctness, speaking about a “hypersensitivity” to issues of language and symbolism and assuming that this trend did not originate from oppressed minorities but from the “elite universities” in the United States of America and Great Britain.⁵⁵ Even the prestigious German weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*, which identified itself with the leading figure of European social democracy, Helmut Schmidt, very often hosts militant articles against political correctness. In Great Britain, one of the most important figures of the left-wing intellectual community, Stuart Hall, has been very critical towards political correctness.⁵⁶ In Greece, there are quite a few who refer to standards of political correctness in national and religious issues,⁵⁷ so whoever expresses a “deviant” opinion on national issues or artistically express themselves in an unconventional/challenging way about Christianity, faces the reproach of an unprecedented anti-national attitude⁵⁸ or blasphemy,⁵⁹ respectively.

⁵⁴ See Amy Ntourou, ‘Λογοκρισίας το ανάγνωσμα’ [On reading censorship], available at: <https://www.documentonews.gr/article/logokrisias-to-anagnosma-2/>, last accessed March 10, 2025, reporting that book-banning efforts doubled in 2022, compared to 2021, according to the American Library Association data. As a matter of fact, conservative organizations, which are at the forefront of book withdrawals, are aiming for books “that address issues related to LGBTQ rights and racial inequities. Among the banned books are Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, and *Milk and Honey* by the extremely popular young instapoet Rupi Kaur”.

⁵⁵ Sahra Wagenknecht, *Die Selbst-Gerechten. Mein Gegenprogramm—für Gemeinnsinn und Zusammenarbeit* [The self-righteous. My counter-programme—for public spirit and cooperation], Frankfurt: Campus Publishing, 2022, in particular pp. 131 ff.

⁵⁶ Stuart Hall, ‘Περιδιάβαση σε ορισμένες «πολιτικά μη ορθές» ατραπούς της πολιτικής ορθότητας’ [‘Exploring some “politically incorrect” pathways of PC’ (in Greek, translation by Grigoris Ananiadis), *Synchrona Themata* [Contemporary Issues], 160–161 (April–December 2023), pp. 141 ff., who sarcastically admits that he wouldn’t expect the persons supporting political correctness to agree. Indeed, as I am writing, I can sense the thumb clamp come out of its socket, the guillotine sharpened, the Dictionary of Political Correctness being flipped through, the tumbrils for transporting the mortals to the scaffold beginning to roll (ibid., p. 153).

⁵⁷ See for example., Thomas Tsakalakis, *Political Correctness: A Sociocultural Black Hole*, Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 2021, pp. 15 ff., Thodoris Georgakopoulos, ‘Πολιτική ορθότητα και ελευθερία έκφρασης’ [Political correctness and freedom of expression] available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/1016799/politikiorthotita-kai-eleytheria-ekfrasis/>, March 29, 2019, last accessed May 10, 2025.

⁵⁸ See Dimitris Dimoulis and Dimitris Christopoulos, ‘Λογοκρισία για «εθνικά θέματα» στην Ελλάδα’ [Censorship on “national issues” in Greece], in Pinelopi Petsini and Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *Dictionary of Censorship in Greece. Stunted democracy, dictatorship, transition to democracy*, Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 2018, pp. 221 ff.

⁵⁹ See Michalis Tsapogas, ‘Βλασφημία’ [Blasphemy], in Penelope Petsini & Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *Dictionary of Censorship in Greece. Stunted democracy, dictatorship, transition to democracy*, Athens: Kastaniotis, 2018, pp. 173 ff.

Monolithic approaches to the issue of political correctness become even more prohibitive, considering the structural and inherent contradiction in political correctness: “it is an idea born in an ultra-liberal era, aiming to protect the freedom of the weakest, and especially of all kinds of minorities, from the verbal-symbolic imposition of the majority; it seeks to achieve it by setting limits on speech, which seemingly contradicts a basic acquis of liberal culture: freedom of speech”.⁶⁰ Stephen Fry very aptly describes the contradiction: “It’s a strange paradox that the liberals are illiberal in their demand for liberality. They are exclusive in their demand for inclusivity. They are homogenous in their demand for heterogeneity. They are somehow un-diverse in their call for diversity—you can diverse, but not diverse in your opinions, in your language and in your behaviour”.⁶¹

3 The Involvement of Language

Finally, things become even more complicated, because the issue of political correctness involves one of the most “alive” and dynamic human tools, language.^{62,63} As Rudi Keller points out “*If language is indeed a thing, it is not a dead one, at least. Language lives. Forces are “at work” in it; it “grows”, “gets old”, and “dies”. Again, the revitalisation of language openly invites an anthropomorphic perspective: the language ‘searches for a solution’, ‘eradicates’, ‘seduces’, ‘fights for survival’, and*

⁶⁰ Giannis Balabanidis, ‘Η πολιτική ορθότητα, από τα αμερικανικά κάμπους μέχρι τη μικρή μας χώρα’ [Political correctness, from the American campuses to our small country], available at: <https://mag.frear.gr/ipolitiki-orthotita-apo-ta-amerikanika-kampoys-mechri-ti-mikri-mas-chora/>, last access April 27, 2025.

⁶¹ Stephen Fry, ‘Dialogue’, in Stephen Fry, Jordan Peterson, Michael Eric Dyson, Michelle Goldberg (eds), *Political Correctness Gone Mad?*, London: Oneworld Publications, 2018, p. 97.

⁶² For more details, see Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene*, Routledge Linguistics Classics, 2012, p. 116 ff., and Geoffrey Hughes, *Political Correctness. A History of Semantics and Culture*, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2010, p. 87 ff. See also Paridis, Christos, ‘Λέτε κάποιον «βλάχο» ή «σακάτη»; Δύο Έλληνες γλωσσολόγοι μιλούν περί Πολιτικής Ορθότητας’ [Do you call someone a “bumpkin” or a “crippler”? Two Greek linguists talk about Political Correctness], available at: <https://www.lifo.gr/apopseis/idees/lete-kapoiionblaho-i-sakati-dyo-ellines-glossologoi-miloun-peri-politikisorthotitas>] last accessed March 11, 2025.

⁶³ The involvement of language in political correctness is sometimes serious but sometimes not. Thus, for example in the 1970s extreme groups of feminists, in the US, tried to replace the item “his-tory” with “her-story”, although it has nothing to do with the possessive adjectives “his” and “her”, but rather with Greek lexical item “ιστορία”. See also Geoffrey Hughes, *Political Correctness. A History of Semantics and Culture*, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2010, p. 6 and the entry “Herstory” in: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095933417>.

‘wins’⁶⁴ Most “violations” of political correctness rules can be attributed to incorrect use of words. Language, though, has such a dynamic and multifaceted nature that it is difficult to be hemmed by rules of political correctness,⁶⁵ which, even when they occur, at least at the linguistic level, are constantly changing; e.g., if someone looks up the German word ‘Indianer’ (Indian) in the famous German dictionary *Duden*, they will only find the etymology of the word (from Cristoforo Colombo who mistakenly thought he discovered the Indies, while of course he discovered America), but they will also read the note, namely, that the item conveys adverse discrimination (‘discriminierend’). Some alternative names are listed, such as ‘Pueblos Originarios’ and ‘First Nations People of America’. And yet, a shared insight would suggest that the term conveys a very positive connotation.⁶⁶ The term “people with special needs”, which was used and considered correct some decades ago, is now considered totally wrong and offensive and the older term ‘people with disabilities’⁶⁷ is used instead. People with black skin in the United States of America used to be called “Coloured”, then “Negro”, then “Black”, then “Afro-American”, then “African-American” and

⁶⁴ Rudi Keller, ‘Γλωσσική Μεταβολή. Το αόρατο χέρι στη γλώσσα [Language change: The invisible hand in language], (translation into Greek by Despina Skourti, in Teodoros Moisiadis (ed.), Crete University Press, 2023.] p. 37. In the same volume, see the following examples highlighting the living nature of the constantly changing language: “The newspaper *Embros* in its May 25, 1948 issue announces that ‘the Jews have accepted the proposal’ for an extension of the cease-fire deadline on the part of the ‘Arabs’ in Palestine. Today, instead of ‘Jews’, the journalist would choose the ethnonym ‘Israelis’, and accordingly, instead of ‘Arabs’, ‘Palestinians’. Not even the language of fashion advertisements has remained unaffected by today’s language either: For example, instead of the phrase *πάντοτε του τελευταίου συρμού* (always of the latest train), popular in the 1950s, to mean ‘fashionable’, today another item is preferred, *η τελευταία λέξη της μόδας* (the latest word of fashion); likewise, instead of *mannequin* we prefer *μοντέλο* (model), instead of *λαιμοδέτης* (neck tie) we use *γραβάτα* (tie), and when we want to describe someone as well-dressed, we no longer use the word ‘figurini’, but prefer other words such as *κομψός* (elegant), *σιλάτος* (stylish), etc.” (ibid.: 28).

⁶⁵ As a matter of fact, the use of new terms for reasons of political correctness often raises new problems. See, e.g., Vangelis Intzidis, ‘Do you call someone a “bumpkin” or a “crippler”?’ Two Greek linguists talk about political correctness’ [Βαγγέλης Ιντζίδης, ‘Λέτε κάποιον «βλάχο» ή «σακάτη»; Δύο Έλληνες γλωσσολόγοι μιλούν περί πολιτικής ορθότητας’], available at: <https://www.lifo.gr/apo-ipseis/idees/lete-kapoiionblaho-i-sakati-dyo-ellines-glossologoi-miloy-n-peri-politikisorthotitas>, last accessed March 11, 2025. In relation to replacing the term ‘prostitute’ by ‘sex worker’: “When one refers to a woman as a sex worker, one does it for two reasons. First, to provide healthcare rights, by integrating them into the work force, which is a positive thing. But there is also a risk of presenting this kind of work as a plausible option to an unemployed woman, which is not the case. This is a very controversial issue, to be thought over and over again”.

⁶⁶ See Bernhard Schmidt, ‘Der Verleger: Rettet Winnetou!’ [The publisher: Rescue Winnetou!], *Die Zeit*, 20 April 2023. See also Slavoj Žižek, “I am against cancel culture” (interview), in *woke. The Awakening Movement, Kathimerini* (special edition), 28 April 2024, p. 68 [70] who provides the following incident from a round-table debate in Missoula, Montana: *We were talking about Native Americans, the so-called Indians, and one of them used the term ‘Indian’ for himself. He was immediately attacked by a woke guy, who said to him: “Why do you use this word for yourself? Don’t you know that it is a racist, ‘white’ and oppressive term?”*

⁶⁷ See Giannis Kostantinidis, ‘Ο αυθορμητισμός στην πυρά της πολιτικής ορθότητας’ [Spontaneity on the fire of political correctness], available at: <https://www.lifo.gr/stiles/politiki-orthotita-ergaleio-isisotitas-i-periorismos-tiseleytherias-tis-ekfrasis>, accessed March 11, 2025.

today the politically correct wording is the more general term “People of Color”⁶⁸. The example of black skin people is particularly illustrative, because literally a single letter (the “u”) makes the difference: Nowadays, “Coloured” is considered anachronistic and highly offensive, while “Colour” (People of) is the politically correct designation.⁶⁹ Certain of the above older expressions are considered so offensive that they are not allowed to be used even in narrative form, not even when it is clear that the person using them disapproves of them. Thus, the word “Nigger” is now referred to as “N-word” (“N-wort” in German).⁷⁰

The linguistic rules of political correctness cannot be the same in every language either. Today, for example, the use of neutral gender is spreading to cover persons who, for whatever reason, do not identify themselves as either men or women. Among other things, ‘university students’ in Greek are suggested to be referred to as students^{+male suffix} (οι φοιτητές), students^{+female suffix} (οι φοιτήτριες) and students^{+neutral suffix} (τα φοιτητά) as an example of inclusive language,^{71,72}. But what about languages, such as Italian, which do not have neutral gender? Can languages that have a “grammatical gender”, such as Greek and German, be assimilated with other languages, such as English, that do not?⁷³ In Greek, for example, it is a question of whether to use the term professor^{+male suffix} (ο καθηγητής) or professor^{+female suffix} (καθηγήτρια) when not referring to a specific person. English, which does not mark nouns for gender, can use the term ‘professor’ indiscriminately. This is the reason why some titles of plays or films in Greece remains untranslated.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ See more in Barbara Sgorbati, ‘Political correctness and the law’, *The Coimbra Journal for Legal Studies* 1/2021, p. 147, pp. 151 ff.

⁶⁹ Geoffrey Hughes, *Political Correctness. A History of Semantics and Culture*, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2010, p. 133.

⁷⁰ See Berat Gürbüz, ‘Der Schüler: Kein rassistisches Wort!’ [The student: Not a racist word], *Die Zeit*, 20 April 2023.

⁷¹ Tassos Kaplanis, ‘Μη σεξιστική γλώσσα: «πολιτική ορθότητα» ή δικαιοσύνη;’ [Non-sexist language: “political correctness” or justice?] *Avgi*, June 18, 2023: Solutions are many and varied (use of neutral language, e.g. ‘φοιτητικό ακροατήριο’ (student audience) instead of ‘οι φοιτητές’ (students^{+male suffix}), inclusive language use, e.g. *οι φοιτήτριες και οι φοιτητές* (students^{+female suffix} and students^{+male suffix}), use of gender-sensitive language, e.g., *οι φοιτητές, οι φοιτήτριες και τα φοιτητά* (students^{+male suffix}, students^{+female suffix} and students^{+neutral suffix}).

⁷² The German language offers other options for overcoming similar problems. Instead of the nouns *Studenten* (male students) or *Studentinnen* (female students), the present participle *Studierenden* (those who are studying) may be used, which is neutral in German. This seems to be expanding. Instead of the term *Fußgänger* (pedestrian) for example, the neutral option *Zu Fuß Gehenden* (those who go on foot). See more in Anatol Stefanowitsch, *Warum wir politisch korrekte Sprache brauchen* (Why we need politically correct language), available at: <https://www.cicero.de/kultur/sprache-politisch-korrekt-politischkorrekt-diskriminierung-vorwuerfe>.

⁷³ Lorraine Daston, *Warum nicht ‘der’, ‘die’ und ‘das’ abschaffen?* (Interview, ‘Why not get rid of ‘der’, ‘die’ and ‘das’?’), *Die Zeit*, October 26, 2023.

⁷⁴ As in the play “The doctor” by Robert Icke, directed by Katerina Evaggelatos, at the “Amphitheatro” (winter 2023). See also Ioanna Sotirchou, “The suffix @ expresses a current problem that needs a solution” (interview with Nikos Hatzopoulos), *Efimerida ton Syntacton*, December 30, 2023: “in Greek, the inclusive word *γιατρός* (doctor) is masculine, regardless of gender. This is why the title was not translated, to avoid gender marking”.

Obviously, there are language shifts which showcase and simultaneously contribute to a gradual social shift in favour of gender equality. Because, indeed, symbolic load and subjective values which words carry can help remove obsolete social prejudices.⁷⁵ In English, for example, ‘Policeman’ is fading out and tends to be replaced by the term ‘Police Officer’. Similarly, ‘Chairman’ is being casted aside and replaced by the term ‘Chair’, in conferences. Greek no longer uses the outdated term ‘επανδρώνω’ (to staff, to provide personnel [which is male-gender-specific]) but the verb ‘στελεχώνω’ which has the same meaning but is gender-neutral). Those are some positive lexical shifts, which however were not imposed but followed a shared linguistic insight, which attenuated (unfortunately, not extinguished) social imbalances, at the expense of women.⁷⁶ To sum up, every time period has its language sensibilities, which in turn co-configure a historical and social framework.⁷⁷

Even in legal discourse, some terms can contribute to consolidating some rule-of-law institutions and perceptions. For example the term ‘temporary detention’ is undoubtedly closer to the presumption of innocence of an accused, in relation to the obsolete term “pre-trial detention”. After the reform of family law, the term “child born out of wedlock” has been established in both the legal and the colloquial language instead of the inadmissible older term “illegitimate child”. Here we are dealing with a typical case, where legal terms helped consolidate the principle of equality and human value. These instances, however, are different from others (to be discussed below) for which there is so much debate about what the politically correct term may be, which downgrades the significance of the primary and substantive issue. The assumption that “if things are called by a different name, they will cease to exist” is an instance of extreme ‘nominalism’.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ See Geoffrey Hughes, *Political Correctness. A History of Semantics and Culture*, Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2010, pp. 289 ff. See also, Andreas Pappas, *Γλωσσίδα. Κείμενα για τη γλώσσα και όχι μόνο* [Glossidia. Texts about language and more] (preface by Christophoros Haralampakis), Athens: Patakis Publications, 2023, pp. 86–87, who suggests that in some respected professions and occupations (e.g. minister, member of parliament, rector, judge, mayor, doctor, engineer) Greek did not ‘create’ a female version of the terms [profession nouns are inflected for gender, in Greek]), because until recently women did not have access to these positions.

⁷⁶ See also, Gregor Gysi, *Was Politiker nicht sagen. Weil es in der Demokratie um Mehrheiten und nicht um Wahrheiten geht* [What politicians don’t say. Because democracy is about majorities and not truths], Berlin: Ullstein, 2023, pp. 18 ff.

⁷⁷ Gregor Gysi, *Was Politiker nicht sagen. Weil es in der Demokratie um Mehrheiten und nicht um Wahrheiten geht* [What politicians don’t say. Because democracy is about majorities and not truths], Berlin: Ullstein, 2023, pp. 134–135, who highlights however, that language does not always reflect reality. As an example, he uses the cynical term ‘collateral damage’ (to describe the death of innocent civilians), the term ‘climate change’ which is neutral and does not illustrate the implied destruction of the environment, as well as the German terms ‘Arbeitgeber’ (literal meaning ‘someone who gives out work’, the employer) and ‘Arbeitnehmer’ (‘someone who takes work’, the employee), while in reality it is the other way round: an employee provides work to an employer.

⁷⁸ Stuart Hall, ‘Exploring some “politically incorrect” pathways of political correctness’ (translated into Greek by Grigoris Ananiadis), *Synchrona Themata* [Contemporary Issues], 160–161 (April–December 2023), p. 141 [144]. “He adds that adherents of political correctness should know that it is one thing to question the assumptions embedded in common use of language and another to control it” (ibid., p. 151).

Language, finally, is getting involved in the issue of political correctness, in another way. The views disapproved by political correctness are very often heavily characterized as ‘racist’ and ‘sexist’, which may end up depriving the relevant items of their meaning. Research has shown that the use of the term ‘racist’ in the *New York Times*, increased by 700%, between 2011 and 2019; in *The Washington Post*, occurrence of the term increased to 1.000%.⁷⁹ The phenomenon seems worrying; the higher the reckless use of a word, such as ‘racism’, which assumes denial of human nature and human civilisation, and the more it is applied to behaviours that are not really racist, the more the item loses its negative connotations, and the more it loses its meaning as behaviour to be avoided and condemned at all costs.

4 Political Correctness and War

The war in Ukraine and the even more recent war in the Gaza Strip have brought to the fore another expression of political correctness, which relates to warfare.⁸⁰ The fact that the author of this book feels the need to make clear the obvious, to readers (namely that Russia’s invasion into Ukraine is a reprehensible and illegal act and that Hamas is a terrorist organization) suggests that there is political correctness⁸¹ in the context of armed conflicts.

The conclusion also emerges from current affairs, e.g., from France and Germany, where the pro-Palestinian demonstrations were banned.⁸² Phenomena of self-censorship are also mentioned on social media, while the European Commission also drew attention to platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter) and Youtube, on issues related to the attack by Hamas on October 7, 2023 and the war in the Gaza

⁷⁹ See, Yascha Mounk, *The Identity Trap. A Story of Ideas and Power in Our Time*, London: Allen Lane—Penguin Books, 2023, pp. 93–94.

⁸⁰ On restricting freedom of expression in conflict situations, see Dennis Baron, *You Can’t Always Say What You Want. The Paradox of Free Speech*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023, pp. 45 ff. On risks of offending individual freedoms and constitutional values of liberal democracies that may arise from taking measures against Russia (due to its invasion of Ukraine), see Yannis Drosos, ‘Η ρωσική εισβολή στην Ουκρανία στις συνταγματικές μας τάξεις’ [The Russian invasion of Ukraine in our constitutional ranks], *e-Politeia*—3/2022, pp. 322 ff.

⁸¹ See also, Daniela Dahn, *Im Krieg verlieren auch die Sieger. Nur der Frieden kann gewonnen werden*, [In war, even the victors lose. Only peace can be won], Hamburg/Berlin: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2. Auflage, 2023, pp. 9 ff. Political correctness in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine has also affected art. See Liaka Zoe, ‘«Χοντρή» ορθότητα ή αναφαίρετο δικαίωμα;’ [“Coarse” correctness or inalienable right?], *Ta Nea*, November 20, 2023: The ‘Scorpions’ modified their anthem “The Wind of Change” after the Russian invasion of Ukraine just last year. “Singing ‘Wind of Change’ as we have always done is not something I can imagine anymore” the singer of the band, Klaus Meine, told the German newspaper *Die Zeit*. “It’s not right to romanticize Russia with lyrics like: I follow the Moskva down to Gorky Park... Let your balalaika sing what my guitar wants to say”.

⁸² See e.g., press articles <https://www.kathimerini.gr/world/562668436/gallia-i-kyvernisi-apagor-eyei-tis-diadiloseis-yper-ton-palaistinion/>, last accessed January 15, 2024. See also Rainer Stadler, ‘Unter Verdacht’ [Under suspicion] *Die Zeit*, 11–12 November 2023.

Strip. In Berlin, a prerequisite for artist support is now their written confirmation that they condemn anti-Semitism.⁸³ In France, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of the largest left-wing opposition party, was banned from holding an event on Palestine and the co-organizer of the event, of Palestinian origin, Rima Hassan, was asked to explain to the judicial police the “glorification of terrorism”, even though she had condemned the terrorist attack by Hamas. Victims of censorship are sometimes Jewish people or intellectuals of Jewish origin, such as the philosopher Nancy Fraser, whose invitation to teach at the University of Cologne was withdrawn because she put forward pro-Palestinian positions.⁸⁴ The issue seems to be even more acute in the United States of America, where government officials are reportedly threatening to cut off funding to those Colleges whose students blame Israeli policy for the situation.⁸⁵ In this regard, Donald Trump proposed expulsion from American college campuses of those who speak out against Israel and America, while New York University launched an investigation on the student who, after the Hamas terrorist attack, reacted with the phrase “Israel bears full responsibility for this horrific loss of life”.⁸⁶ In any case,

⁸³ See Thomas Schmidt, ‘Das Gift des Grundsätzlichen’ [The poison of fundamentals], *Die Zeit*, January 11th 2024, which also registers the reaction of the Berlin art scene. See also, *Hestia*, February 18th 2024: “Last month the Folkwang University of The Arts in Essen announced that it was cancelling the invitation of the internationally renowned American musician and performance artist as a visiting professor of the Chair Pina Bausch, because she had signed an open letter by artists and intellectuals in which it was claimed that Israel had established an apartheid regime against the Palestinians”. See also Xenia Kounalaki, ‘Πεδία μάχης και τα campus της Αμερικής’ [Battlefields and Campuses of America], *Kathimerini*, April 21, 2024: In Germany “restrictions on freedom of expression go to extremes, victimizing from the president of MeRA25 Party, Yanis Varoufakis, who was banned from any activity and participation in a conference on Palestine, in Berlin”, to the journalist and writer Massa Gessen “who received the Hannah Arendt award, but in a degraded ceremony, because she compared Gaza to the Jewish ghettos during Nazism”. See also, Oliver Maksan, ‘Die Bundesrepublik geht immer repressiver gegen Deutsche und EU-Bürger mit missliebigen Meinungen vor—ein gefährlicher Irrweg’ [Germany is increasingly taking repressive action against Germans and EU citizens with unpopular opinions—a dangerous mistake] available at <https://www.nzz.ch/der-andereblick/sellner-und-varoufakis-einreiseverbote-gegen-and-ersdenkende-sindilliberal-ld.1826954>, April 19, 2024, last accessed January 15, 2025.

⁸⁴ See Lefteris Charalampopoulos, ‘Ο κίνδυνος ενός νέου μακαρθισμού’ [The danger of a new McCarthyism], available at <https://www.in.gr/2024/04/22/editorial/o-kindynos-enos-neoumakarthismou/>, *in.gr*, April 22, 2024, April 22, 2024.

⁸⁵ See also Angelos Chaniotis, ‘Ελευθερία διαλόγου, όχι ασυδοσία έκφρασης’ [Freedom of dialogue, not unaccountability of expression], *Kathimerini*, December 17, 2023: “First American Jews withdrew sponsorships from the University of Pennsylvania, protesting against a conference on Palestinian literature organized by the University; suspension of Harvard funding followed, by Wexner Foundation, because student organizations blamed Israeli politics for the attack on Hamas.”

⁸⁶ On the above, see David Inserra, ‘Είναι η ελευθερία της έκφρασης επικίνδυνη;’ [Is freedom of expression dangerous?], available at: <https://www.liberal.gr/think-tanks/einai-i-eleytheria-tis-ekfrasis-epikindyni>, *Liberal.gr*, Nov. 1, 2023; Aaron Terr, ‘As the Israeli-Palestinian conflict escalates, so must our commitment to free speech’, available at: <https://www.thefire.org/news/israeli-palestinian-conflict-escalates-so-must-our-commitmentfree-speech>, Oct. 17, 2023; Kelvin Chan, ‘EU Demands Meta and TikTok detail efforts to curb disinformation from Israel—Hamas War’, available at: <https://apnews.com/article/meta-tiktok-eu-europe-digital-services-act-81c682d25bd2bd62333ba64564dde9e5>, *AP*, Oct. 19, 2023. See also, Rhadika Sainath, ‘Η εξαίρεση στην ελευθερία της έκφρασης. Η υποστήριξη των δικαιωμάτων των Παλαιστινίων αντιμετωπίζει μια μακαρθικού

the case of the Hamas attack on Israel and Israel's intervention in Gaza has shown how acute the problem of political correctness in American universities is, which will be discussed later on. Presidents of three leading universities (MIT, Pennsylvania and Harvard) were called to account for utterly disparate positions, before the House of Representatives, by members of the academic community, and two of them (the Presidents of the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard) resigned, after strong reaction. In fact, the “interrogation” of the three Presidents was undertaken by Elise Stefanik (a close political friend of Donald Trump), who after the first resignation of the President of the University of Pennsylvania tweeted: “One has fallen. The other two shall follow”.⁸⁷

Interesting is the correlation of the difficult position which the three renowned American universities found themselves in, with their tactics of political correctness of the past, on issues, such as biological sex or positive discrimination in favour of specific minorities. As Professor of political science at Johns Hopkins University and co-editor of the German newspaper *Die Zeit*, Yascha Mounk, suggests, “When they [the Presidents of the three Universities] invoke academic freedom, their words sound hypocritical. Their institutions have repeatedly failed to protect the freedom of speech of their own academics, who have suffered persecution and ‘cancellation’ for their frequently ideologically mild positions. Universities are now paying the price for such misdeeds. If they support freedom of expression, they should do so systematically. What they cannot do is to selectively apply the rules, offering a form of hatred—one that supports Hamas and anti-Jewish positions—the institution’s seal of approval”.⁸⁸

τύπου εχθρική αντίδραση’ [The exception to freedom of expression.’ Supporting Palestinian rights causes a McCarthyite-style hostile backlash] (translation into Greek by Antigone Samela), *Synchrona Themata* [Contemporary Issues], Issue 160–161 (April–December 2023), pp. 43 ff.

⁸⁷ Korina Vasilopoulou, ‘Φίμωση της λογικής στα πανεπιστήμια των ΗΠΑ’ [Silencing reason in US universities], *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, December. 11, 2023. For more on the general matter, see also Charis Exertzoglou, ‘Ελευθερία του λόγου, ρητορικές μίσους και πολιτικές της Ιστορίας’ [Freedom of speech, hate speech and history policies], *The Books’ Journal*, Issue 149 (January 2024), pp. 14 ff.

⁸⁸ Yascha Mounk, ‘Απειλείται η ακαδημαϊκή ελευθερία’ [Academic freedom is threatened], *Kathimerini*, December 9, 2023, who continues: “In 2021, the climatologist Dorian Abbott was forced to cancel a lecture at MIT, because of an article he had written against the policy of positive discrimination in favour of minority members. That same year, biologist Carol Hooven left Harvard after suggesting that she believed in only two genders: male and female, on a TV show. Graduate students accused the professor of “transphobic attitude and hostility”, her colleagues stopped talking to her, the administration stopped supporting her and her students began to harass her. A few months later, Hooven resigned”. See also, Xenia Kounalaki, ‘Ο πόλεμος του λόγου’, [The War of Discourse], available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/society/562798987/o-polemos-toy-logoy/> *Kathimerini*, December 27, 2023, last accessed May 3, 2025, and Michalis Tsintinis, ‘Η γενοκτονία του λόγου’ [The Genocide of Discourse], available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/562785655/i-genoktonia-toy-logoy-ki/>, *Kathimerini*, December 17, 2023, last accessed May 3, 2025: “The right wing succeeded in short-circuiting the enemy with their own weapons. The representatives of the academic elite got what they deserved. Having used all their dogmatic tools for years to impose restrictions on tolerable speech; having propagated the prohibitions themselves, they found themselves in a very vulnerable position to the extent that their values became foldable.

Condemning actions of terrorist organizations, such as Hamas, is self-evident and obviously not related to matters of political correctness. But does this mean that the deeper and longer-term causes, which led to the current situation, should not be sought after? Does it mean that the potential responsibility of the part that suffered the terrorist attack should not be examined? Does it mean that freedom of expression would not protect even the wrong view and that it should be integrated into the ‘molds’ of foreign policy relations and expediencies? In any case, regardless of answers to the above questions, the aforementioned examples show us that political correctness is no longer limited to domestic political and social life, but extends to the field of foreign policy and international relations.

They bend the rules of expression depending on the offended”. In the same direction, Paschos Mandravelis’, ‘Η πανταχόθεν λογοκρισία’ [‘A multi-sourced censorship’], *Kathimerini*, January 4, 2024, notes on the resignation of the President of Harvard: “A tradition of censorship has recently been created in American universities [...] It is a bottom-up censorship and from the sides. It is not state-owned, but private. There is the bottom-up censorship of political correctness by the “woke movements”, which in democratically apparent ways (shouting, sit-ins, etc.) cancelllectures.”

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Chapter 3

Political Correctness as a Constitutional Issue



1 Political Correctness and Freedom of Speech

The Key Features of Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression is not just another fundamental right. Although individual rights cannot be hierarchically categorised, and even if we do not accept that freedom of expression is a “preferred freedom,” as the case is in the United States of America¹ we cannot overlook the importance of this right²: It is not only an integral part of human personality, but also the basis of free public discourse that, in turn, characterizes any democratic society. In other words: Democracy cannot exist without freedom of expression.

The fundamental right of freedom of expression, enshrined in Article 14 of the Greek Constitution and in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, has a number of key features: For someone to express themselves freely, they should ‘sense’ freedom and not hesitate to express themselves fearing persecution or social disapproval.³ This “aura of freedom” disappears when, for instance, in a 2019 survey in Germany about two-thirds of respondents said that someone today should be very careful on what issues they tackle, especially when they are related to refugees and

¹ See Stavros Tsakirakis, ‘Η ελευθερία του λόγου στις ΗΠΑ’ [Freedom of Speech in the USA] (Preface: Paschos Mandravelis, Epilogue: Ioanna Tourkochoriti), Crete University Press, 2021.

² See also, Eric Heinze, *The Most Human Right, Why Free Speech Is Everything*, The MIT Press, 2022.

³ Sandra Kostner, ‘Keine Meinungsfreiheit ohne ein Klima der Freiheit’ [No freedom of opinion without a climate of freedom], *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, Dec. 13, 2020, pp. 8 ff.

Islam.⁴ Similarly, in the United States of America 71% of citizens believe that political correctness has stopped discussions that should be taking place in society, and 58% of citizens have political views that they are afraid to share with others.⁵ The most important restriction on freedom of expression in practice is the so-called “chilling effect”, when someone is afraid to express themselves and self-restrict their expression having in mind other cases of prosecution.⁶ This is a case of self-censorship, “censorship without the censor”. We impose it on ourselves, often subconsciously, because we are afraid of the consequences.⁷ It is not visible to third parties and that is why it is perhaps the most dangerous form of censorship. It thus turns out that “*censorship is not just what is ‘forbidden,’ and repression gives way to the production of inherently self-censoring discourse*”.⁸

Furthermore, freedom of expression protects all kinds of opinions, not only the traditional ones and the ones embraced by public opinion. Freedom of expression equally protects a “heretic”, an “incorrect”, a provocative and an unconventional

⁴ Sandra Kostner, ‘Keine Meinungsfreiheit ohne ein Klima der Freiheit’ [No freedom of opinion without a climate of freedom], *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* Dec. 13, 2020, pp. 8 ff. See also, Till Raether, ‘Eine Liebeserklärung an die ‘Politische Korrektheit’ [Political Correctness] [A declaration of love to ,political correctness’], available at: <https://sz-magazin.sueddeutsche.de/leben-und-gesellschaft/politische-korrektheit-87318>: 41% of Germans believe that political correctness is too highly valued, 63% that there are too many unwritten laws about which opinions are acceptable and which are not, and 59% feel that they can express themselves freely only among friends. See also, Peter Huth, ‘Die Faust stoppt die freie Rede’ [The Fist stops free speech], *Die Welt*, February 15, 2024: 60% of the Germans think they cannot say what they want to say.

⁵ Poll: 71% of Americans Say Political Correctness Has Silenced Discussions Society Needs to Have, 58% Have Political Views They’re Afraid to Share, available at: <https://www.cato.org/blog/poll-71-americans-say-political-correctness-has-silenced-discussions-society-needs-have-58>, *Cato Institute*.

⁶ Furthermore, the fear of making a mistake of political correctness can negate one of the most important characteristics of fine speech, spontaneity. See, Giannis Konstantinidis’s ‘Ο αυθορμητισμός στην πυρά της πολιτικής ορθότητας’ [Spontaneity on the fire of political correctness], available at: <https://www.lifo.gr/stiles/politiki-orthotita-ergaleio-isotitas-i-periorismos-tis-eleytherias-tis-ekfrasis>: “But the worst thing that the politically correct speech can achieve in the long run is to get people used to expressing themselves without spontaneity. Something that translates as the habit of never saying everything altogether and freely, thus emptying and discharging your soul. Rather than “economizing” your expression and consequently your desire. Something that may seem easy at first, perhaps even pleasant, but in the long run leads to the greatest mental decline”. Also, in terms of political correctness, the speaker or writer thinks more about how to say or write something, rather than the content will be.

⁷ Thomas Tsakalakis, *Political Correctness: A Sociocultural Black Hole*, London: Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 2021, p. 4.

⁸ Dimitris Christopoulos, ‘Λογοκριτικά συμφραζόμενα’ [Censorship Context], in Penelope Petsini and Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *Λεξικό λογοκρισίας στην Ελλάδα. Καχεκτική δημοκρατία, δικτατορία, μεταπολίτευση* [Censorship Dictionary in Greece. Stunted democracy, dictatorship, transition to democracy], Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 2018, pp. 279 [285]. See also, Nathalie Heinich, «Γουοκισμός». Ο νέος ολοκληρωτισμός; [Wokeism: The new totalitarianism?] (translation-editing in Greek by Christina Stamatopoulou), Athens: Enallaktikes Ekdoseis, 2023, pp. 27 ff.

opinion. It even protects a view that contradicts an opinion shared by an overwhelming majority.⁹ In Stavros Tsakirakis' terms, "history teaches us to never rely on certainties and solid truths. A wrong opinion may engage individual truths and thus, promote knowledge in general. Even a completely wrong view can revitalize and reinforce the hypothesis of truth [...] Freedom of expression is appropriate to a philosophy of social organisation that seeks consensus, respects diversity and promotes tolerance. Suppression of speech conceals, rather than solves, problems; it creates bitterness, hatred and threatens social cohesion".¹⁰ From this point of view, political correctness and freedom of expression are two incompatible concepts, two lines that never intersect.¹¹

The value of listening to the different, the "wrong" point of view was highlighted long ago by John Stuart Mill, in his classic work *On Liberty*, using many examples from the history of Christianity. He suggested, for example, that the Roman Catholic Church, the least tolerant of all Churches, has institutionalized the contrary opinion in the beatification procedures; it defined the "devil's advocate" as someone who put forward all possible reasons against the beatification of the person in question.¹² In any case, Christianity was largely based on opposition to other religions and the pre-existing world, regardless of any "loans" from former civilizations. In addition, the Bible is based on the bipolarity between the Old and the New Testament, with the latter becoming meaningful through its connection and comparison to the former.¹³

Freedom of expression equally protects both "politically correct" and "politically incorrect or unorthodox" opinions. It first and foremost protects the opinion which we disagree with. "Believing that the freedom of expression protects only what we want to hear, read and see constitutes an inexcusable misinterpretation of this very principle".¹⁴ Yet, this does not mean that the freedom of opinion and other types of freedoms of intellectual expression (scientific and artistic freedom) are not subject

⁹ See Nikos Alivizatos, 'Why is freedom of the press not adequately protected in our country?', *To Vima*, September 3, 2023: "Freedom of expression includes not only information and ideas that are favorably received and considered inoffensive or indifferent but also those that offend, shock and disturb the state or part of the population".

¹⁰ Stavros Tsakirakis, *Η ελευθερία του λόγου στις ΗΠΑ* [Freedom of speech in the USA] (preface: Paschos Mandravelis, Epilogue: Ioanna Tourkochoriti), Crete University Press, 2021, p. 373.

¹¹ Political correctness can negatively affect freedom of expression on another level, too: forming and expressing an opinion assumes that one must have previously received necessary information on the relevant events and views that have been formulated. But, when mass media avoids informing on "sensitive" matters for fear of violating the rules of political correctness, citizens will not think and consequently will not express an opinion on them. See Ingo von Münch, *Meinungsfreiheit gegen Political Correctness* [Freedom of expression versus political correctness], Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2017, pp. 31 ff.

¹² John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (editing-introduction: Gertrude Himmelfarb), London: Penguin Books Classics, 1985 (1st edition 1859), p. 81.

¹³ John Stuart Mill, 'On Liberty' (editing-introduction by Gertrude Himmelfarb), London: Penguin Books Classics, 1985 (1st edition 1859), pp. 111 ff.

¹⁴ Filimon Paionidis, *Η ελευθερία της έκφρασης, Μια δύστροπη αξία* [Freedom of Expression: A Recalcitrant Value], Athens: Eurasia Publications, 2022, p. 14.

to restrictions. Just as there is no such thing as unlimited freedom,¹⁵ freedom of expression may be limited too for protecting other legal interests. After all, “words can gravely hurt, perhaps more than actions”. The distinction between words and actions is not that clear either: “There are actions that ‘speak’, that reflect an opinion (e.g. silent behaviour) and words that ‘act’. The use of words does not only invoke actions, it constitutes the action itself. We use words to claim, confirm, swear, threaten, slander, insult, deceive, conspire, encourage, praise, condemn, etc.”.¹⁶ Excluding, by definition, the “politically unorthodox” opinion from constitutional and legal protection is a direct offense towards the individual right to freedom of expression. The “politically incorrect” opinion can only be confined to the extent that it infringes upon another legal interest and under the conditions of the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights (mainly complying with the principle of proportionality). Not because it is “politically incorrect”, but because it incites actions of violence or hatred towards people and social groups on the basis of their physical, national, religious characteristics or sexual orientation, infringing other peoples’ freedoms and exceeding the acceptable boundaries of exercising individual rights.

To explain the difference between the two, I would refer to the case of Ambrosios, the former Metropolitan bishop of Kalavryta and Aigialeia, Greece. Ambrosios was not sentenced by the Greek criminal court just because he expressed a negative opinion on homosexuality. Such a sentence would contradict freedom of expression. It is his own right to refuse to acknowledge that sexual orientation constitutes an expression of human nature, which, however, is not a disorder, does not define oneself and is entirely acceptable in all modern liberal democracies. Refusing to acknowledge homosexual people as human beings and inciting acts of violence and humiliation against them (e.g., “Spit on them”) does not constitute a right of his. These fine, yet fundamental, distinctions are shaped with great clarity in a recent decision by the European Court of Human Rights, which rejected Ambrosios’ appeal. It was pointed out that one has the right to critique social attitudes on the ground of moral and religious beliefs, yet one does not have the right to deny people’s human nature due to their sexual orientation and incite acts of violence against them.¹⁷

¹⁵ See also Tzvetan Todorov, *Οι Εσωτερικοί Εχθροί της Δημοκρατίας* [*The Inner Enemies of Democracy*] (translation into Greek by Soti Triantafyllou and Marianna Koutalou), Athens: Patakis Publications, 2013, p. 194: “By definition, no organized society grants unlimited freedom to its members, since it gives itself a body of laws. The closest to this extreme case would be a country where total anarchy reigns (‘reigns’ is not the most appropriate option here: in fact, nothing would reign!)...”

¹⁶ Vasso Kinti, ‘Τα όρια της ελευθερίας λόγου και πράξης’ [The limits of freedom of speech and action], *Kathimerini*, August 20, 2023.

¹⁷ Section III, *Ambrosios-Athanasios Lenis vs. Greece*, Decision 31.08.2024, Recital 54: “The Court would further stress that criticism of certain lifestyles on moral or religious grounds is not in itself exempt from protection under Article 10 of the Convention. However, when the impugned remarks go as far as denying LGBTI people their human nature, as in the present case, and are coupled with incitement to violence, then engagement of Article 17 of the Convention should be considered”.

Freedom of Expression and Political Correctness. Typical Examples of the Contrast Between Them

Under the circumstances, there indeed seems to be an issue with regard to freedom of expression and political correctness. In Germany, an editor was dismissed from a newspaper, because her article shared some of the then-ongoing protests against pandemic control measures.¹⁸ In the United States of America, *New York Times* employees stood against fellow editors-colleagues with regard to what they considered to be outdated news reports about transsexual people. Luckily for them, the editors were defended by the newspaper's editorial board.¹⁹ In Greece, supporters of the view that an embryo is a potential life, rather than an object, and that action should be taken for reducing abortion rates, through sexual education and support for young couples, are collectively treated as “obscurantists” by a large part of public opinion and the press. This applies even when they do not question the application and the correctness of the current regulation of Greek law, which strikes a truly successful and fair balance between the protection of the embryo and female self-determination.²⁰

In other cases, the discussion concerning the terminology to be either used or avoided in sensitive issues is so big that addressing the primary and essential issue takes a back seat. Such an example is the refugee/immigration crisis. There is greater focus on whether the terms “illegal” or “irregular”(παράτυποι) migrants may be used (Italy's Court of Cassation even issued a relevant decision²¹), rather than on migrants themselves who lose their lives in their attempt to cross borders or on the frequently unacceptable conditions of living in host countries.²² Furthermore: Do we think that adopting the term ‘femicide’ for murders of females will improve our legal ‘armory’ and deal with the current proliferation of female murders? Instead of focusing on treating the causes of the incidents and creating the necessary social and state-run

¹⁸ Anne Hähmig, ‘Falsch geschrieben’ [Written incorrectly], *Die Zeit*, April 27, 2023.

¹⁹ Yascha Mounk, ‘Wenn Journalisten ihre eigenen Kollegen zum Schweigen bringen wollen’ [When journalists want to silence their own colleagues], *Die Zeit*, March 2, 2023.

²⁰ Broadly speaking, the issue of abortions has been “trapped” within a “Manichaen” logic, that eases instances of political correctness and extreme behaviours. See Rainer Wimmer, ‘Politische Korrektheit. Verschäfter Umgang mit Normen im Alltag’ [Political correctness. A tighter grip on norms in everyday life], in Friedrich Müller (ed), *Politik, [Neue] Medien und die Sprache des Rechts* [Politics, [new] media and the language of law], Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2007, p. 71 [74]: In October 1992, demonstrators prevented organization of a speech event, in New York, entitled “Can a Liberal Be Pro-Life?”. Some demonstrators were wearing badges saying “Fuck free speech”.

²¹ ‘Ιταλία. Οι μετανάστες που ζητούν άσυλο δεν είναι παράνομοι αποφάσισε το Ανώτατο Δικαστήριο’ [Italy. The Supreme Court of Cassation decided that the migrants seeking asylum are not illegal], available on <https://tvxs.gr/news/kosmos/italia-oi-metanastes-poy-zitoy-n-asylo-den-einai-paranomoio-pofasise-to-anotato-dikastirio/>, last accessed January 10, 2025. See Takis Theodoropoulos, ‘Μη νόμιμοι ή παράνομοι μετανάστες’ [Non-legal or illegal immigrants], *Kathimerini*, August 17, 2023.

²² Ingo von Münch, ‘*Meinungsfreiheit gegen Political Correctness*’ [Freedom of expression versus political correctness], Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2017, p. 7 (German journalist, Iris Radisch cited): It is a misconception (“Voodoo glauben”) to believe that real problems can cease to exist by replacing negative terms with positive ones.

institutions aiming at the protection of women who face domestic abuse?²³ In other words, it has not been made clear that vocabulary indeed influences one's thinking pattern, yet changes in words are not enough to alter either reality or established and false mindsets of the population.²⁴ It would be wrong to believe in “*an alchemical transformation of the promises of language into new data in the context of the material world*”.²⁵ The problem is simply concealed. “It’s a kind of consolation, a mental bandage that not only fails to alter the mindset of the involved ones but also relieves the ones who make use of it by clearing their conscience”.²⁶

Yet, there are two other important matters with regard to the relationship between freedom of expression and political correctness. It is often taught in constitutional law courses that there is one kind of freedom that de facto cannot be restricted: That is freedom of thought, at least for as long as thought remains in forum internum and is not externalized in any way. Still: As correctly observed, thinking and its externalization do not form two separate and independent fields. When one is afraid

²³ The term “femicide” can reveal the great number of murders of women, which, even today, stem (directly or indirectly) from women’s inferior status or their suppression in their family and social environment. Even though not all such murders share the same background, it is evident that the term “femicide” tends to be adopted by the media for any female murder, regardless of the murderer’s motives. For more information on the specifics of the term “femicide” in legal terms, see Ilias Anagnostopoulos, ‘Γυνακοκτονία ή ανθρωποκτονία;’ [Femicide or homicide?], *Kathimerini*, April 7, 2024, Konstantinos Tsinas, ‘Femicide: Ζητήματα ορισμού και ποινικοποίησης ενός αδικήματος’ [‘Femicide’: Issues of definition and criminalization of an offence], in Haris Papacharalambous (ed.), *Femicides and Criminal Law*, Nomiki Bibliothiki, 2023, pp. 287 ff., Dimitris Christopoulos, ‘Γυνακοκτονίες και λογοκρισίες: Από το γενικό προξενείο της Νέας Υόρκης στο ΑΤ Αγ. Αναργύρων’ [Femicides and censorship: From the Greek Consulate in NYC to the Agioi Anargyroi police department in Athens], available in: <https://www.news247.gr/gnomes/ginaikoktonies-kai-logokrisies-apo-to-genikoproxeneio-tis-neas-iorkis-sto-at-ag-anargiron/>, *News 24/7*, April 8, 2024, last accessed May 4, 2025.

²⁴ See also Rainer Wimmer, ‘Politische Korrektheit (political correctness). Verschäfter Umgang mit Normen im Alltag, in Friedrich Müller, *Politik, [Neue] Medien und die Sprache des Rechts*’ [Political correctness. A tighter grip on norms in everyday life, in Friedrich Müller (ed.), *Politics [New] Media and the Language of Law*], Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2007, pp. 71 [73]. See also Thomas Tsakalakis, ‘Συνέντευξη με τον Θωμά Τσακαλάκη – «Η αριστερόστροφη πολιτική ορθότητα είναι βαλβίδα ασφαλείας για το σύστημα»’ [Interview with Thomas Tsakalakis, The leftward-oriented political correctness functions as a safety valve for the system itself]: “It engages in pseudopolitical battles, redirecting the focus from fundamental systemic injustices or deficiencies and frequently skips the rationally correct, thus showing ideological stiffness and lack of self-criticism”, available in: <https://www.documentonews.gr/article/thomas-tsakalakis-h-aristeros-trofi-politiki-orthotita-kataligeina-leitoyrgei-os-ena-eidos-exypiretikis-valvidas-asfaleias>, *To Kouti tis Pandoras*, Oct. 18, 2021, last accessed May 4, 2025.

²⁵ Antzela Dimitrakaki, ‘Πολιτική ορθότητα: Η αβάσταχτη ελαφρότητα του υπαρκτού λόγου και το αβάσταχτο βάρος της απουσίας πράξης’ [Political correctness: The unbearable lightness of existing discourse and the unbearable weight of no-action], available at: <https://www.lifo.gr/stiles/politiki-orthotita-ergaleio-isotitas-iperiorismos-tis-eleytherias-tis-ekfrasis>, last accessed March 11, 2025.

²⁶ Pascal Bruckner, *Ένας σχεδόν τέλειος ένοχος* [An Almost Perfect Culprit /Ein nahezu perfekter Täter] (Greek translation by Andreas Pappas), Athens: Patakis Publications, 2022, p. 152.

to express themselves regarding an issue, they usually stop thinking about it.²⁷ Our thoughts are formed on the basis of what we hear and read. If we do not read and listen to more opinions, we will either seize thinking about them or even worse, we will all start thinking in a similar manner. The latter would be negating democracy, given that democracy only exists where there is dispute.²⁸

That aside, political correctness “targets” specific words and phrases, which should be avoided in any case. This is where the problem lies. Because words and phrases do not convey unalterable and univocal meaning. They acquire meaning from the context they are used in. Even in oral discourse, intonation can attribute a different meaning to a lexical item. Therefore, it has been correctly pointed out that “the meaning of sentences is hidden in their context and especially in the force of utterances”. Discourse may be subject to restrictions but they cannot be “general and abstract, presupposing the meaning of a sentence from the very beginning, before it even occupies a place and a meaning within a pragmatic context. In that sense, everything can be uttered, given that no sentence can be given an ‘a priori’ meaning ‘in abstracto’”.²⁹ To conclude, political correctness can lead to “automations” in thought and expression. Some thoughts (and the language that express them) should be avoided by definition and independently of the context in which they occur. Of course, there are condemnable thoughts and language expressions. However, rejecting thoughts and phrases should be the result of conscious reflection

²⁷ See Theodoros Georgiou, ‘Πολιτική ορθότητα και επιστημονική γλώσσα’ [Political correctness and scientific discourse], *Efimerida ton Syntacton*, March 2, 2023: “Ever since the Age of Enlightenment (18th and 19th century) we know that [...] thought and language are interrelated. One who knows how to talk, knows how to think. And one who thinks can also reflect and be a competent speaker”. See also Ingo von Münch, *Meinungsfreiheit gegen Political Correctness* [Freedom of expression versus political correctness], Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2017, p. 6, who argues that, because of the interrelation between language and thinking, political correctness can turn “language police” into “thought police”.

²⁸ See also Marie-Luisa Frick, *Streitkompetenz als demokratische Qualität. Oder: Vom Wert des Widerspruchs* [Conflict competence as a democratic quality. Or: On the value of contradiction], *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, Dec. 13/2020, pp. 28 ff.

²⁹ George Karavokyris, ‘Το νόμιμο και το α-νόητο’ [The legal and the incomprehensible], in Dimitris Christopoulos (ed.), «Όλα μπορούν να λεχθούν» ή υπάρχουν «εκείνα που δεν λέγονται»; [“Can everything be said” or are there “things that cannot be said”?], Hellenic Association for Human Rights – Athens: Vivliorama Publications, 2015, p. 81 [87, 91]. See also same author, ‘Είτε είναι απαραίαστη, είτε επικίνδυνη’ [Either unneeded or dangerous], available in <https://www.tanea.gr/2020/07/11/opinions/ta-oria-tis-politikis-orthotitas/>, *Ta Nea*, July 11, 2020: Political correctness “demolishes pragmatic meaning and value of discourse. It is impossible for the strict rules of ethics and truth of political correctness to detect ‘humour’ or ‘sarcasm’ or a well-meant challenge. It is impossible for it to tolerate the “pest” of irrationality that challenges our aesthetic and moral limits while it obeys, even in a rebellious way, norms of discourse communities”. See also the following humorous example, by Gregor Gysi, *Was Politiker nicht sagen. Weil es in der Demokratie um Mehrheiten und nicht um Wahrheiten geht* [What politicians don’t say. Because democracy is about majorities and not truths], Berlin: Ullstein, 2023, p. 137: A Jew asks another Jew why he is sad and the latter says that he received a negative answer by the rabbi when he asked him whether he can smoke during the Torah reading. At this moment, the other Jew intervenes saying: “You are a fool! You should have asked whether during smoking, Torah reading is allowed. In that case, you would have gotten a positive answer!”.

rather than the result of a “linguistic automation” which distinguishes allowed from dis-allowed thoughts irrespective of their context of expression.

The Private Censorship of “Sensitivity Readers”

Finally, freedom of expression cannot exist without freedom of the press, both in print and digital form. Over the years, the most severe restriction of freedom has undoubtedly been preventive censorship. Older readers have witnessed—and the younger must have read about—white gaps in newspapers, as well as politically rough and illiberal eras. For this reason, the current Greek Constitution not only determines that the “press is free” but also adds that “*Censorship and any other preventive measures are forbidden*” (article 14, par. 2). Whoever thinks, however, that censorship does not exist is probably wrong. It does not originate, of course, from any state authority—this would be inconceivable in any democratic and liberal country. Yet, because of political correctness there has been another kind of atypical and private censorship, also concerned with artistic freedom, to be discussed further down. Great publishing houses have already been recruiting employees as “sensitivity readers”.³⁰ This new category of “editors” reads the soon-to-be published works and pays attention to whether they violate the rules of political correctness, with specific focus on whether they include language that could be considered offensive towards certain social groups. If the latter is detected, either the book is not published or, even worse, its author is impelled to readjust their content in order for it to be established as “harmless”. This example reminds us of the fact that in our era, the

³⁰ See Pascal Bruckner, *Ένας Σχεδόν Τέλειος Ένοχος* [Pascal Bruckner, An Almost Perfect Culprit/Ein nahezu perfekter Täter (Greek translation by Andreas Pappas), Athens: Patakis Publications, 2022, p. 172, Evi Samara, ‘Πολιτική ορθότητα και λογοτεχνία: κλασικά βιβλία στο μικροσκόπιο’ [Political correctness and literature: classical books under the microscope], available in <https://www.maxmag.gr/politismos/koinonia/politiki-orthotita-kailogotechnia-klasika-vivlia-sto-mikroskopio/>, *MaxMag*, July 21, 2023, also see Eleni Tzannatou, ‘Λογική και «ευαισθησία»: Μπορούμε να ξαναγράψουμε τα βιβλία του παρελθόντος με όρους του σήμερα;’ [Sense and “sensitivity”: Can we rewrite books of the past in today’s terms?], available in: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/culture/books/562354507/logiki-kai-eyaisthisia-mporoyme-na-xan-agrapsoyme-tavivlia-toy-parelthontos-me-oroys-toy-simera/>, *Kathimerini*, April 4, 2023, Ask Dogan, *Was ist Sensitivity Reading? Ein Blitzüberblick!* [What is sensitivity reading? A quick overview], available in: <https://ask-dogan.de/wasist-sensitivity-reading-ein-blitzueberblick/>, *Ask Dogan*, August 11, 2020, last accessed May 4, 2025, Ijoma Mangold, ‘Alles so schön keimfrei hier’ [Everything’s so beautifully germ-free here], *Die Zeit*, April 20, 2023, Rachael Minott, ‘Sensitivity Readers! Who they are and what they do’, available in: <https://jerichowriters.com/sensitivity-readers/>, *Jericho Writers*, last accessed May 4, 2025. See also Maria Thanasoulia, *Κουλτούρα της ακύρωσης / ο Ρόαλντ Νταλ, η πολιτική ορθότητα και τα Ορκ* [Cancel Culture / Roald Dahl, political correctness and the Orcs], available in: https://www.avgi.gr/tehnes/443010_o-roalnt-ntal-i-politiki-orthotita-kaita-ork (last accessed May 4, 2025), who observes that there is still no Greek translation for this new profession and furthermore highlights that “sensitivity readers” judge on the basis of experience. A black woman may read a book that refers to black women, a disabled person will read a book about disability, etc.”.

most important restrictions imposed on our constitutional rights do not come from the state but rather from private authority. As Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg has suggested, “In many ways, Facebook is more like a government than a traditional company”.³¹ Therefore, the old debate in constitutional law, as to whether citizens can invoke their individual rights only against the State or also against private individuals (“third-party effect” of constitutional rights) should be considered obsolete and of historical value only. Fundamental rights either apply for everyone or do not apply at all. Thus, the current Constitution of Greece accurately suggests in Article 25 par. 1, that fundamental rights “*also apply to relations between individuals*” whom they refer to.

Nevertheless, preventive censorship practiced in prominent publishing houses, with “Sensitivity Readers”, seems to be innocuous when compared with the preventive and repressive censorship, exercised by social media owners and managers.³² This is because social media and the Internet, in general, are part of the new public sphere,³³ the contemporary “marketplace”, where exclusion from social media equals exclusion from public life. This type of exclusion, also referred to as “deplatforming”, is a nightmare scenario for many of our fellow citizens.³⁴ The case of Pakingham

³¹ “In a lot of ways, Facebook is more like a government than a traditional company” (David Kirkpatrick, ‘The Facebook Defect’, available at <https://time.com/5237458/the-facebook-defect/>), *Time*, last accessed April 12, 2025.

³² On this problem, see Charalambos Anthopoulos, ‘Ψηφιακές πλατφόρμες και έλεγχος των περιεχομένων της πληροφόρησης’ [Digital platforms and information content control], online *Εφημερίδα* 2021, pp. 19 ff, Spyros Vlachopoulos, ‘Σύνταγμα, Ευρωπαϊκή Σύμβαση Δικαιωμάτων του Ανθρώπου και ανωνυμία στο διαδίκτυο’ [Constitution, European Convention on Human Rights and Online Anonymity] in *Συ και Δικαστής Άριστος. Σύμμεικτα εις μνήμην Γεωργίου Χ. Παναγιωτόπουλου* [You, an Excellent Judge: Collection in Memory of Georgios Ch. Panagiotopoulos], Athens: Sakkoulas Publications, 2022, pp. 189 ff. Also, Giannakopoulos Kostas, ‘Το «Ανώτατο Δικαστήριο» του Facebook και η κρυφή γοητεία του ιδιωτικού ψηφιακού συνταγματισμού’ [Facebook’s “Supreme Court” and the hidden allure of private digital constitutionalism], *Εφημερίδα* 2021, pp. 27 ff, Ioanna Kymaki, ‘Το Oversight Board και συνταγματικές διαστάσεις της απορρύθμισης των μέσων κοινωνικής δικτύωσης’ [The Oversight Board and constitutional dimensions of social media self-regulation], *e-Politeia* 4, pp. 515 ff, Panagiotis Mantzoufas, ‘Η επιρροή των εταιριών του διαδικτύου στην ελευθερία του λόγου και στην πολιτική αντιπαράθεση. Πεδία σύγκρουσης και πιθανοί κίνδυνοι’ [The Influence of Internet Companies on Free Speech and Political Debate. Conflict fields and potential risks], *Εφημερίδα*, 2021, pp. 522 ff, Prokopis Pavlopoulos, ‘Νεοπαγείς κανόνες ελέγχου των μέσων κοινωνικής δικτύωσης. Ένα φαινόμενο ρυθμιστικής παρέμβασης της Κοινωνίας των Πολιτών στο πλαίσιο της παγκοσμιοποίησης’ [Newly-coined Rules for Controlling Social Media. A Phenomenon of Regulatory Intervention by Civil Society in the Context of Globalization] *Εφημερίδα*, 2021, pp. 9 ff, Vasiliki Christou, ‘Λογοκρισία στο διαδίκτυο’ [Internet Censorship], in Penelope Petsini and Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *Λεξικό Λογοκρισίας στην Ελλάδα. Καχεκτική δημοκρατία, δικτατορία, μεταπολίτευση* [Dictionary of Censorship in Greece. Stunted Democracy, Dictatorship, Transition to Democracy]. Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 2018, pp. 269 ff, Yascha Mounk, *The Identity Trap. A Story of Ideas and Power in Our Time*, UK: Allen Lane—Penguin Books, 2023, pp. 176 ff.

³³ See Charitini Karakostaki, ‘Η δημόσια σφαίρα στην εποχή του Δικτύου’ [The Public Sphere in the Era of the Network], *To Vima*, October 8, 2023.

³⁴ See Julian Nida-Rümelin, “Cancel Culture”. *Ende der Aufklärung? Ein Plädoyer für eigenständiges Denken* [Cancel Culture. The end of enlightenment? A plea for independent thinking], Munich: Piper Publications, 3rd edition, 2023, pp. 121 ff.

vs. North Carolina emphatically highlighted in 2017, in the Supreme Court of the U.S.A., that the freedom of expression includes everybody's right to access public spaces where they can speak and listen, and then listen and speak again, in response to what they have heard. And if, in the past, there was difficulty in establishing the most important venues for this exchange of ideas, nowadays the situation seems more straightforward. The most important, albeit intangible field of discussion is the internet, in particular, social media. "The vast democratic forums of the Internet", as the Court suggests. The risks that arise for both fundamental rights and democracy itself, regarding the restriction of free expression on the internet, cannot be negated by 'Oversight Boards', which determine what should pass the "threshold" of political correctness and what should not. We simply replaced public censorship by private one and "privatized" the power of restricting individual freedoms—especially freedom of speech. In the 1970s, Paul Sethe, one of the founding publishers of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (one of the largest and most reputable German newspapers), remarked, when referring to the mass media of Germany, that "the freedom of the Press is the freedom of the two hundred rich people who spread their views".³⁵ Five decades have elapsed since then, and one might wonder whether the former suggestion still applies, or perhaps whether the real change lies in that the two-hundred individuals (who now control social media) are becoming far fewer.

The freedom of thought and speech are not only threatened in non-liberal regimes. They also are in liberal democracies. Perhaps because, in liberal democracies, citizens' opinion shapes the intent of the state apparatus, which in turn influences the interests of economic, political and social forces. Thus, the "temptation" of controlling thought and expression continues to occur in contemporary liberal democracies, despite the risk (especially in the form of attempts at imposing a homogeneous way of thinking, that does not tolerate opposing views) no longer originates from state or private centers of power.³⁶ It is, nevertheless, alarming that in the contemporary liberal democracies of Europe and America (not in some kind of a dictatorship) the individual right of expression is characterized as a medium of the powerful, or, of those who simply wish to suppress the rights of minorities.³⁷

³⁵ Sahra Wagenknecht, *Die Selbst-Gerechten. Mein Gegenprogramm – für Gemeinsinn und Zusammenarbeit* [The self-righteous. My counter-programme - for public spirit and cooperation], Frankfurt: Campus Publishing, 2022, p. 305.

³⁶ See also Simon McCarthy-Jones, *Free Thinking. Protecting Freedom of Thought Amidst the New Battle for the Mind*, London: OneWorld Publications, 2023, p. 238.

³⁷ See Yascha Mounk, *The Identity Trap. A Story of Ideas and Power in Our Time*, London: Allen Lane–Penguin Books, 2023, p. 165.

2 Political Correctness and Scientific-Academic Freedom

The Forbidden “Ghost” Word

A way of dealing with legal issues, perhaps not the most usual one, but perhaps the most fascinating, is through literature and art. Regarding political correctness in scientific-academic fields, one may refer to Philip Roth’s work *The Human Stain*³⁸ narrating the adventure of Coleman Silk, a gifted professor of classical literature at the University located in Athens, Georgia, USA. Silk was an outstanding professor, who, however, committed a grave error of political correctness, albeit unintentionally. In one of his classes, numbering fourteen students in total, Silk was taking attendance in order to memorize all of their names. There were two students who, after five weeks, kept being absent, so Silk began the lecture by asking: Has anyone ever heard of those two? Are they real or “spooks”? Unfortunately for Silk, the item “spooks” had historically been used as a racial slur against Black people and both absent students were of African American origin. Silk was accused of racism, his name was smeared, and the university launched formal proceedings against him. But what if Silk did not know that the two students were Afro-Americans? What if the item “spooks” coming out of Silk’s mouth, was just one of the million words he had uttered during lectures? The only thing that mattered was that he violated, although unintentionally, rules of political correctness.

Basic Features of Scientific-Academic Freedom

What has been developed on freedom of expression is equally applicable to scientific freedom. Any activity, which by its content and form, constitutes a systematic effort for discovering truth, could be characterized as science. No restriction of freedom is permissible, if someone expresses a scientific position, of a pioneering, unconventional, unorthodox, or incorrect nature (provided that no other legal interests are offended). Science itself develops from scientific “mistakes” and “imperfections” (and above all, from the effort to refute them). Hence, limiting constitutional protection purely to “correct” or “valuable” scientific views runs contrary to the very nature of science. In this sense, freedom and political correctness are indeed two incompatible notions,³⁹ as previously suggested regarding the relationship between freedom of

³⁸ See Philip Roth. *The Human Stain* (translated by Trisevgeni Papainoannou. *Το Ανθρώπινο Στίγμα*, Epilogue by Ilias Maglinis and Kostas Botopoulos.) Athens: Polis Publications, 2003. See also Vena Georgakopoulou, ‘Οι ανθρώπινες ιστορίες, όμως, έχουν μεγαλύτερη αξία από το εικονοστάσι των ιδεολογιών’ [Human stories, however, have more value than the iconostasis of ideologies], available at: <https://www.lifo.gr/stiles/politiki-orthotita-ergaleio-isotitisi-periorismos-tis-eleytheriastis-ekfrasis>, accessed March 11, 2025.

³⁹ Political correctness in science has also extended to citations of epistemological articles. “Certain editorial notes in scientific journals have begun encouraging authors to cite ‘articles by colleagues

expression and political correctness. From the point of view of Constitutional Law, scientific freedom enjoys even greater protection than the freedom of expression, as it is classified under the so-called “unconditional” constitutional rights—that is, those not accompanied by a reservation in favour of the law (Article 16, par. 1 of the current Greek Constitution). Academic freedom is a distinctive manifestation of scientific freedom which ensures the freedom of dialogue in universities, not solely on behalf of professors but also of students.

Scientific-Academic Freedom and Political Correctness. Typical Examples of Contrast Between the U.S.A and Europe

Political correctness and the intolerance of dissent are now reaching universities, as an example from Germany demonstrates. The Humboldt University of Berlin organized the “Long Night of Sciences” in the summer of 2022. Among other participants, a PhD biology candidate wanted to make a presentation on the biological concept of gender.⁴⁰ After having heated reactions and announcements about demonstration against it, the University administration postponed the presentation, on the grounds of security reasons due to the risk of riots.⁴¹ The issue, however, does not concern the new researcher’s ideas. One might naturally agree or disagree with these. The issue is how one reacts to contradicting opinions. Can they react through public dialogue or by prohibiting their expression? In a democratic society, the answer should clearly be in favour of public dialogue. Even the most extreme opinions cannot be prohibited in democracy, with the sole exception of those who, directly or indirectly, commit any form of violence or offend human dignity.

who refer to varied racial identities and geographical areas. Moreover, tools have been forged for applying ‘citation justice’”. (translation into Greek Rakkas, Giorgos, ‘Συλλογική παρέμβαση. Για την υπεράσπιση της αξιοκρατίας στην επιστήμη’ [Collective intervention for defending meritocracy in science], *Neos Ermis, o Logios*, September 2023, 26, p. 125 [148]).

⁴⁰ Another typical example in the same field, comes from the U.S.A and it involves an internal document coming from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Antony Blinken, in which he advised the ministry’s employees to refrain from using gendered terms such as “mum/dad” or “son/daughter”, on the assumption that gender is a social construct that may not correspond to the biological gender given at birth. See also Annie Podimata, ‘Συμπεριληπτικότητα και ακρότητα’ [Inclusiveness and extremity], available at: <https://www.iefimerida.gr/politiki/symperiliptikotitakai-akrotita>, *iefimerida.gr* February 21, 2024, accessed March 11, 2025.

⁴¹ On this incident see Spyros Vlachopoulos, Η «μακρά νύχτα των επιστημών» και η ελευθερία του λόγου [The “long night of science” and Freedom of Speech]. *To Vima/Nees Epoches*, August 28, 2022. There is however, an optimistic aspect: The newspaper *Die Zeit* managed to publish the article of the young researcher, in which she presented everything she was to say in her speech. The fundamental right of freedom of the press “avenged” obstruction of freedom of speech inside the academic environment. Political correctness proved to be vain: what would have reached only a few students, was eventually read by thousands! For other examples of political correctness in Germany consult Julian Nida-Rümelin, ‘Cancel Culture’. *Ende der Aufklärung? Ein Plädoyer für eigenständiges Denken* [“Cancel Culture” The End of Enlightenment? A plea for Independent Thinking], Munich: Piper Publications, 3rd edition, 2023, pp. 155 ff.

The example is not only indicative of the effect political correctness may have on academic freedom⁴² but is also particularly alarming, because the postponement of this “politically unorthodox” speech was justified on the grounds of public security and avoiding disturbances. It is extremely problematic for the freedom of speech, when somebody bans unconventional opinion for fear of possible tumults by any social group. It suffices, for the oldest of us, to remember the 1988 riots in Greece, when “indignant” citizens demanded a ban of Martin Scorsese’s film “The Last Temptation of Christ”.⁴³ Public order⁴⁴ is, certainly, an indispensable good for any social coexistence. It is just that, in a legal system governed by the rule of law, the State should protect those who exercise the freedom of expression, not those who seek to suppress dissenting opinions. As the US Supreme Court of Justice emphatically has remarked already since 1963, “*constitutional rights may not be denied simply because of hostility to their assertion or exercise*”.⁴⁵ Yet, eminent scientists suggest that the risk of causing unrest, and public order, can be an acceptable reason for limiting freedom of expression. Thus, Ronald Dworkin endorsed non-republication of cartoon sketches of Muhammad in a Danish newspaper in 2005, by the British and the American Press, on the following grounds: “This republication would probably mean –and still does mean – that people would be killed and that properties would get destroyed [...] reviving tension with a new republication would, in reality, only serve the interest of those responsible for it and would encourage their violent strategies”.⁴⁶ Regarding the relationship between freedom of expression and the risk of unrest caused by opponents, one of the two must be the case: either I have the right to say something and in that case the legal force is obliged to protect me from those seeking to deprive me of my individual rights, or I don’t have the right to say something and therefore, will not be protected constitutionally, regardless of whether or not

⁴² See also Karolina Mermigka, ‘Μόνο όταν γελάω’ [Only when I Laugh], available at <https://mag.frear.gr/mono-otan-gelao/>. “The Universities, by default institutions of unimpeded circulations of ideas and freedom of speech, are afraid. They are transformed into places that restrict freedom, into hothouses of social justice. But in hothouses, as we know, there is not much air”.

⁴³ See Dimitris Dimoulis, ‘Τελευταίος πειρασμός’ [Last Temptation] in Pinelopi Petsini & Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *Dictionary of Censorship in Greece. Stunted Democracy, Dictatorship, Transition to Democracy*, Athens: Kastaniotis, 2018, pp. 502 ff.

⁴⁴ On the more general problem of public order as a reason for restricting fundamental rights, see Christos Papastylianos, ‘Η ερμηνεία του όρου «Δημόσια Τάξη» ως περιορισμός των ατομικών ελευθεριών στην ΕΣΔΑ και το Σύνταγμα: Τα όρια της δικαιοδοτικής κρίσης του δικαστή κατά την εφαρμογή των περιορισμών των ατομικών ελευθεριών’ [Interpreting the term “Public Order” as a restriction of individual freedoms in the ECHR and the Constitution: The limits of the judicial judgment of the judge in applying restrictions on individual freedoms], *ToS*, 2003, pp. 403 ff.

⁴⁵ *Watson v. City of Memphis*, 373 US 526 [533].

⁴⁶ Ronald Dworkin (On the Right to Ridicule 2006), cited in Stavros Zoumboulakis, ‘Οριοθετήσεις (Για την ελευθερία της έκφρασης, την ουδετερότητα, τον ισλαμισμό και την ισλαμοφοβία)’ [Demarcations (On freedom of expression, neutrality, Islamism and Islamophobia)], in Dimitris Christopoulos (ed.), «Όλα μπορούν να λεχθούν» ή υπάρχουν «εκείνα που δεν λέγονται» [“Everything can be said” or are there “things that are not said”]. Hellenic Association for Human Rights, Athens: Bibliorama Publications, 2015, pp. 71 [72–73].

there is a threat of riots.⁴⁷ If we do not adopt this view but instead obey to the law of force, allowing violent reactions that will delimit individual rights, we will effectively vindicate the Spanish dictator of interwar José Primo de Rivera, who declared that “from the dialectic of words, I prefer the one of fists and pistols”.⁴⁸

In any case, the majority of views on the problematic relationship between academic freedom and political correctness comes from American universities.^{49,50} “A professor who is, by no means, a racist, loses his job for being caught to read out a novella in class without omitting a potentially offensive phrase towards a student. Even Stanford, one of the most prestigious universities, has published a list of banned words”.⁵¹ USA Universities are governed by the DEI doctrine, which may be creating

⁴⁷ See also Andreas Takis, ‘Φονταμενταλισμοί, ευαισθησίες και δημόσιο forum’ [Fundamentalisms, Sensitivities and Public Forum], in Dimitris Christopoulos (ed.), «Όλα μπορούν να λεχθούν» ή υπάρχουν «εκείνα που δεν λέγονται» [“Everything can be said” or are there “things that are not said”]. Hellenic Association for Human Rights, Athens: Bibliorama Publications, 2015, pp. 159 [165: “The main reason however for rejecting any justification based on public order arguments is that, if such reasoning is accepted, then, any public guarantee of freedom of speech is abolished. Because, the possibility of violent reaction of any intolerant individual would suffice, in order to prohibit negative public expression against any identity, even if it were expressed in the mildest and friendliest manner”].

⁴⁸ See Kostis Kornetis, ‘Ο Βολταίρος, ο Μάης του ’68 και τα «όρια» της σάτιρας’ [Voltaire, May ’68 and the “limits” of satire], in Dimitris Christopoulos (ed.), «Όλα μπορούν να λεχθούν» ή υπάρχουν «εκείνα που δεν λέγονται» [“Everything can be said” or are there “things that are not said”]. Hellenic Association for Human Rights, Athens: Bibliorama Publications, 2015, pp. 99 [102].

⁴⁹ See Steven Bahls, ‘Political Correctness and the American Law School’, *Washington University Law Quarterly* 69, 1991, p. 1041, available at: https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_lawreview/vol69/iss4/3/. See also Giorgos Goulas, ‘Οι παράλληλοι μονόλογοι στην ελευθερία του λόγου. Από τα αυτονόητα της Νομικής του Στάνφορντ στα ζητούμενα του ελληνικού πανεπιστημίου’ [The Parallel Monologues on Freedom of Speech. From Self-Evident Issues of Stanford Law to Goals of the Greek University], *Synigoros* 157/2023, pp.64 ff. and Karolina Mermigka, ‘Ο θάνατος της λογικής’ [The death of reason], *The book’s Journal*, available at: <https://booksjournal.gr/gnomes/3290-o-thanatos-tis-logikis>, last accessed March 10, 2025. Princeton University decided to abolish the requirement for students of Classical Studies to take up Ancient Greek and Latin as a compulsory course, on the grounds that these languages are inextricably linked with the white supremacy.

⁵⁰ See the resignation letter of Peter Boghossian from the state university of Portland with the eloquent title “My University sacrificed ideas for ideology. So today I quit”: “Students at Portland State are not being taught to think. Rather, they are being trained to mimic the moral certainty of ideologues. Faculty and administrators have abdicated the university’s truth-seeking mission and instead drive intolerance of divergent beliefs and opinions. This has created a culture of offense where students are now afraid to speak openly and honestly. I noticed signs of the illiberalism that has now fully swallowed the academy quite early during my time at Portland State. I witnessed students refusing to engage with different points of view. Questions from faculty at diversity trainings that challenged approved narratives were instantly dismissed. Those who asked for evidence to justify new institutional policies were accused of microaggressions. And professors were accused of bigotry for assigning canonical texts written by philosophers who happened to have been European and male”, available at: <https://peterboghossian.com/my-resignation-letter>.

⁵¹ Alexis Paphelas, ‘Ακρότητες της πολιτικής ορθότητας’ [Extremities of political correctness] available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/562199668/akrotites-tis-politikisorthotitas-k> (*Kathimerini*, December 25, 2022, last accessed March 10, 2025) who cites even more general examples of political correctness, as signs of extreme behaviour on the part of American society; “Americans use the phrase ‘There is no point in beating a dead horse’ meaning that it is a waste

an allusion to God, but it arises from the initials of the values “Diversity, Equity, Inclusion”. Even though they are obvious rules of academic life, in practice they end up functioning as “fossilized doctrines of an official religion” to excuse cancellation of events and lectures given by “heretics”.⁵² Although it is argued that incidents of political correctness in American universities are magnified and generalized for political reasons,⁵³ there are a lot of extreme cases, recorded in articles. The employees of the dining hall of Harvard were frowned upon by the Dean, when they decided to organise a 1950s themed party; it was assumed it would be politically unorthodox to feel nostalgic over a period where racial segregation was present. In another case, students’ reaction prevented the simulation of a trial, from occurring, in the Law School of the New York University, because it involved the custody rights of a divorced lesbian mother. Similarly, a criminal law professor at the Law School of Harvard was criticized by a women’s organization for lacking sensitivity, just because he was discussing the rationale of laws that foresee an investigation into the specifics of past cases of rape victims. Already, as early as 1987, the University of California fired the publisher of the University paper, because he allowed the printing of a cartoon that satirized affirmative actions in favour of social groups. During a university conference on gender, race and ethnicity, a speaker criticized *West Side Story*, because its creator was a white man, who had no right to represent the experiences of Puerto Rican Americans. When another attendee remarked that *West Side Story* is just an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, written by a man who was neither white, nor a

of effort to focus on something that is already settled. Not any more! Because it is assumed to be fueling violent and condemnable acts against animals. The list of what is allowed or not can never end. Neither is, however, the list of demands which started with the introduction of three types of restrooms and continues to grow”. Available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/562888714/simadia-parakmis-se-skiniko-dichasmo/>, *Kathimerini*, Alexis Papahelas ‘Σημάδια παρακμής σε σκληρό διχασμό’ [Signs of Decline against a Backdrop of Division], February 18, 2024.

⁵² Vasso Kinti, ‘Η χαμένη πυξίδα της φιλελεύθερης Αμερικής’ [The lost compass of liberal America], *Kathimerini*, 28 April 2024, adds that despite a “trust in diversity, the self-proclaimed conservatives in Harvard, amount for 3% of the professors, while liberals amount for 75% of them”. On political correctness in US Universities, see Harvey Mansfield, ‘Μικροπρεπείς ζηλωτές του ηθικισμού’ [Harvey Mansfield, ‘Petty zealots of moralism’ (interview)], in ‘woke. The Awakening’ Movement’, *Kathimerini* (special edition), 28 April 2024, pp. 64 ff. Also see, Ραμσέιερ Μαρκ, ‘Ο καθηγητής που έγινε ‘cancel’ [Mark Ramsayer, ‘The professor who became cancel’] (interview), in ‘woke. The Awakening Movement’, *Kathimerini*, April 28, 2024, pp. 81ff, in which he (a Harvard Law School professor) narrates not only his own cancelling (after an academic work on “comfort women” of the Japanese Army in WWII), but also that of the popular Human Evolutionary Biology lecturer of Harvard, Carole Hooven. She lost her position due to her suggestion that “to understand science, evolution and biology, we have to first understand that there are two sexes, male and female”. See *Zeit Magazin*, 7 March 2024, for Carole Hooven’s interview on the matter.

⁵³ Jeff Sparrow, *Trigger Warnings. Political Correctness and the Rise of the Right*, Melbourne/London: Scribe, 2018, pp. 38 ff. See particularly, John Wilson, *The Myth of Political Correctness. The Conservative Attack on Higher Education*, Duke University Press, 1995. Wilson does not deny the existence of instances that restrict conservative views in American universities, he suggests that these instances get overly magnified and overly covered, while on the other hand cases of restriction of left views are underrepresented, in the context of a general effort of the conservative circles of the United States of America for dominion in the universities.

citizen of Verona, the previous speaker criticized Shakespeare as racist⁵⁴ too. Furthermore, establishing and enacting “Speech Regulations” in American Universities,⁵⁵ aiming to impose regulations of politically correct behaviour is also problematic. They have troubled American jurisprudence, as courts have frequently judged the regulations unconstitutional, on the grounds that they oppose freedom of speech. Specifically, they assume that these regulations do more harm than good in terms of diversity, and they excessively restrict free exchange of views, which is vital for academia.⁵⁶ These restrictive tendencies may not tally with the perception of freedom of speech as a “preferred freedom”, but they perfectly align with rankings, such as the 2020 ranking by the “Reporters without Borders” on freedom of speech globally, where the United States occupied merely the 45th position out of 180 countries.⁵⁷ Numbers and rankings may not always reveal the truth, possessing only limited value, but it is worth noting that, in one of those rankings on academic freedom in universities, Princeton University occupies the 187th position out of 248 universities. Columbia occupied the 214th position, while Harvard occupies the very last place.⁵⁸

It would be wrong to assume that these issues are encountered only in American universities. British universities⁵⁹ issue “sensitive content warnings”, because during classical English literature classes, classic works, such as for example Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, Jane Austen’s *Persuasion* and Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, can create feelings of sadness and anxiety.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Craig Anderson, ‘Political correctness on college campuses: Freedom of speech v. doing the politically correct thing’, *SMU Law Review* 1993, pp. 171 ff., available at <https://scholar.smu.edu/smulr/vol46/iss1/10/>, last accessed May 2, 2025.

⁵⁵ See also John Wilson, *The Myth of Political Correctness. The Conservative Attack on Higher Education*, Duke University Press, 1995, pp. 90 ff.

⁵⁶ Craig Anderson, Political correctness on college campuses: Freedom of speech v. doing the politically correct thing, *SMU Law Review* 1993, pp. 171 [201 ff] available at: <https://scholar.smu.edu/smulr/vol46/iss1/10/>, last access May 2, 2025.

⁵⁷ See Eric Heinze, *The Most Human Right. Why Free Speech Is Everything*, The MIT Press, 2022, p. 101. See also, Marianna Kakaounaki, Στο δικό μας ΑΕΙ δεν θα φοβάσαι να μιλήσεις [In our university you will not be afraid to speak], available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/society/562785838/>, *Kathimerini*, December 18, 2023: “Recently professors at Columbia University received a lengthy ‘guide’ with words and phrases to avoid. Some of the included items, were the ‘brown’ food bag, which they frequently use to refer to lunch meetings for exchange of ideas, or the ‘black’ day in history, because as they write, they are negatively charged words and may offend somebody [...] At another university they stopped teaching Zorba the Greek, as some students felt that it disseminated toxic masculinity”.

⁵⁸ Sergiu Klainerman, ‘Η εξίσωση του wokισμού’ [The equation of wokism (interview)], in ‘*woke. The Awakening Movement*’, *Kathimerini*, April 28, 2024, pp. 85 ff.

⁵⁹ Political correctness has reached such an extent in the scientific world, that in some cases prior to the publication of conference proceedings, guidelines (albeit non-obligatory) are sent to the authors for observing the rules of political correctness, especially with regard to the expression of equality between men and women.

⁶⁰ A book by Jane Austen was given a “yellow card” by a British university, <https://www.prototHEMA.gr/culture/article/1335150/kitrini-kartase-vivlio-tis-tzein-osten-evgale-vretaniko-panepisti-mio/>, *Proto Thema*, February 1, 2023, last access April 13, 2025. See also Pascal Bruckner, ‘Ένας σχεδόν τέλειος ένοχος’ [An almost perfect culprit, translated by Andreas Pappas], Athens: Patakis

Furthermore, in Sorbonne, there was an uproar because the university decided to stage Aeschylus' play *Ἰκέτιδες* [The Suppliants], with actors wearing white and black masks. The production and actors of the performance were accused of “afrophobia” and of reproducing racist ideologies. The director and the University in vain tried to convince protesters that the theater “is a place of transformation and not a refuge of identities” and that they simply wanted to stage a theatrical performance as it was done in ancient times.⁶¹

The Greek Experience

Broadly speaking, political correctness hinders academic discussion and the role of universities.⁶² Some issues may be “difficult”, but they have to be discussed. The rules of political correctness either prohibit discussion of issues, such as abortion, immigration or crimes against sexual freedom, or they conduct it, in terms that do not ensure a free exchange of views without ‘second thoughts’, in fear of reactions, misunderstandings and misinterpretations. This all encourages self-censorship, especially among young scientists, which is most dangerous for academic freedom, as “it can result in stagnation of research activity, and abandonment of the search for truth, especially in areas where there is an urgent need for new approaches”.⁶³ This

Publications, 2022, p. 153 [footnote 5]: “In 2017, 60% of British universities had already severely restricted freedom of speech. Left-wing feminist and activist Germaine Greer was banned from speaking out because of her views on transgender persons. It is not only the extreme Left that is intolerant. Some conservative universities also prohibit speakers who criticize Israel or advocate in favour of abortion, from getting on the podium”. See also Carolina Mermigka, ‘Μόνο όταν γελάω’ [Only When I Laugh], available at <https://mag.frear.gr/mono-otan-gelao/>: “Cambridge University has published a list of ‘microaggressive’ suggestions and behaviours that may be perceived negatively and create problems to teachers. It has also created a website that allows students to anonymously report incidents.” For more examples from British universities, see Giorgos Panopoulos, ‘Woke Culture. Η Βαρβαρότητα της «Σωστής πλευράς» της Ιστορίας’ [*Woke Culture. The Barbarism of the “Right side” of History*], Athens: Ellinoekdotiki, 2023, pp. 56 ff, and especially pp. 134 ff, on the case of Professor Kathleen Stock, who was forced to resign, in November 2021 from the University of Sussex, because of her views on biological sex. On the same case, see Richard Adams, ‘Kathleen Stock says she quit university post over ‘medieval’ ostracism’, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/nov/03/kathleen-stock-says-she-quit-university-post-over-medieval-ostracism>, *The Guardian*, November 3, 2021.

⁶¹ See Thomas Tsakalakis, *Political Correctness: A Sociocultural Black Hole*, London: Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 2021, p. 67. For other examples of political correctness from French Universities see, Hinich, Nathalie, *Le Wokisme serait-il un totalitarisme?*, pp. 95 ff, see Nathalie Heinich, *Γουοκισμός. Ο νέος ολοκληρωτισμός*; (translation into Greek and editing by Christina Stamatopoulou), Athens: Enallaktikes Ekdoseis, 2023.

⁶² For examples of political correctness in Greek Academia see Thomas Tsakalakis, *Political Correctness: A Sociocultural Black Hole*, London: Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 2021, pp. 37 ff.

⁶³ Filimon Paionidis, The freedom of academic expression and its enemies: A philosophical approach, in: Philemon Paionidis, Asterios Evangelos Kehagias, Dimitrios Tsimpouklis (eds), Athens: Okto Publications, 2015, p. 125 [134].

is happening at a time when “the university and relevant spaces [...] are nowadays the *par excellence* spaces for seeking truth [...] Only there can research acquire such a universal character and be conducted with absolute rigor and completeness”.⁶⁴

A few years ago, during exams in a Constitutional Law course, I asked a group of students whether our Constitution could be revised to account for the death penalty for the most heinous crimes, such as drug trafficking or rape. The answer I expected was that abolishing death penalty is an *acquis* of European legal culture and that because the death penalty offends human value, the constitutional revision for its reintroduction is not allowed. I was surprised, however, when after the examination one of the students told me, in a genuinely polite manner, that it was not appropriate for me to ask a question about rape in a group of test takers that included women.⁶⁵ A few years later we discussed the issue of abortion in a course about constitutional rights. I mentioned that the absolute ban on abortion enforced in some countries, not only has been incapable to solve the problem but also completely overlooked the position of the women who have to make the very important decision of bearing children or not. After class, a student commented, in a perfectly polite way, that it was not right for me to refer to women’s decision to bear children, because men can now bear children too; I should have referred to the decision of a “person” (man or woman) for childbearing.

The case of “Babioniotis’ Dictionary”, in the late 1990s, could be characterised as a case violating rules of political correctness concerning scientific freedom, which reached the courtroom. The dictionary entry ‘Bulgarian’ also registered the use of the item, in Greek football pitches, to derogatorily refer to certain Northern Greek football fans. Although the entry use description was accompanied by an explicit explanation that the term conveyed abusive and insulting meaning, applications for injunctions were brought before the courts and the Court of First Instance of Thessaloniki issued a decision prohibiting the circulation of the book.⁶⁶ The Court even recommended guidelines for writing dictionaries, suggesting that a dictionary should

⁶⁴ Filimon Paionidis, *ibid.*, p. 152, he adds: “In other organized spaces in the public sphere, the market can not perform this role effectively, because in business, research activity, to the extent that it exists, is secret and profit oriented”.

⁶⁵ See also Barbara Sgorbati, ‘Political Correctness and the Law’, *The Coimbra Journal for Legal Studies* 1/2021, p. 147 [154]: “Students grow wary of expressing their opinions [...], and professors are afraid to ask their students to explore certain topics; some may even suggest that subjects such as rape law should not be taught because of their potential to cause distress [...] Many instructors (especially male professors), in fact, feel anxious about teaching rape law: students who have been victims of rape might find it traumatic to discuss the topic? discussions could become emotionally charged; issues of identity and gender are involved [there may be the feeling that “All women are potential victims. All men are potential defendants” [...] Lasson reports that “in 1993, a group of female law students threatened Professor Alan Dershowitz with formal charges of sexual harassment for having created a hostile atmosphere during two days of classroom discussion about men falsely accused of rape. According to Dershowitz, many professors avoid teaching classes where issues of race, gender, or sexual preference might arise” [...] Professors either do not teach these topics at all, or they teach them in a very different manner than the way they normally teach criminal law subjects [...]]”.

⁶⁶ See Akis Gavriilidis, ‘Λεξικό Μπαμπινιώτη’ [The Babiniotis Dictionary], in Pinelopi Petsini & Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *Λεξικό Λογοκρισίας στην Ελλάδα. Καχεκτική δημοκρατία, δικτατορία,*

not only register reality but also educate.⁶⁷ The decision was ultimately annulled by the Greek Supreme Court⁶⁸ but, once again, the incident showed how ‘fragile’ scientific freedom is against rules of political correctness and prohibition of terms, especially in national matters,⁶⁹ even when the author explicitly suggests that they do not adopt the use.

Male or Female Gender? A Teacher/Student Dilemma

Academic life may be hampered by use of titles and gender-based address forms. Greek, and other non-English languages, marks nouns/adjectives/ pronouns for grammatical gender. Should masculine or feminine gender prevail, or both?⁷⁰ Should the neutral gender also be added to⁷¹ titles and address forms as it was recently proposed in Greece? In Germany, regulations on these issues, provoke discussions and reactions. Thus, the Senate of the University of Leipzig, on the footsteps of other German universities, decided that only the female gender be used in its regulation for all actors of the academic community (e.g. “students”, “professors”, “doctorates”, “rector”, etc.). The Rector (or “Rectoress”?) of the University of Leipzig replied to the reactions to the exclusive use of the female gender, that it is in the tradition of the University to go beyond the limits and solve problems in a groundbreaking way. And that until equality between men and women in science is restored, there is still a long way to go that justifies this practice.⁷²

μεταπολίτευση [*Dictionary of Censorship in Greece. Stunted democracy, dictatorship, transition to democracy*], 2018, pp. 404 ff, Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 2018, pp. 404 ff.

⁶⁷ See Spyros Vlachopoulos, ‘Υπόθεση Ανδρουλάκη (ΜΥ). Μια απόφαση που δεν εκδόθηκε ποτέ’ [The Androulakis case (ΜΥ). A decision never published], *ToS (ΤοΣ)* 2020 pp. 543 ff.

⁶⁸ Plenary Session, Greek Supreme Court 13/1999.

⁶⁹ See Athina Skoulariki, ‘Το ταμπού της σλαβοφωνίας στην ελληνική Μακεδονία’ [The taboo of Slavophony in Greek Macedonia], *Archeiotaxeio* 22 (Λογοκρισία και δημοκρατία. Μετεμφυλιακό κράτος και μεταπολίτευση), November 2020, pp. 49 ff.].

⁷⁰ In Germany, many newspapers use both genders: an asterisk is placed after the male suffix and the female suffix is then added. E.g. “Studenten*innen” (for both male and female “students”).

⁷¹ The use of neutral address forms also creates reactions. Hilary Mantel (award-winning British author) protested when a university publication referred to her as “they” instead of “she”. She said: “Being a woman means a lot to me. I don’t want my womanhood to be confiscated by the press.” See Marilia Papatthaniou, ‘Ζούμε μες στην τυραννία, στο σκοτάδι το πικρό...’ [‘We live in tyranny, in bitter darkness - lyrics from a Mikis Theodorakis song, 1974] available at: <https://booksjournal.gr/gnomes/3368-zoyme-mes-stintyrannia-sto-skotadi-to-pikro>, Sept. 6, 2021, last accessed March 10, 2025.

⁷² See Heike Klovert, ‘Uni Leipzig verteidigt Herr Professorin’ [Leipzig University defends Professor], available at: <https://www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/uni/gleichberechtigung-uni-leipzig-bleibt-bei-weiblicher-grundordnung-a-903957.html>, Der Spiegel. See also the interview of the professor of linguistics, Anatol Stefanowitsch, in *Der Spiegel* magazine (available at: <https://www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/uni/anatol-stefanowitsch-verteidigt-sprachreformer-der-uni-leipzig-a-904777.html>), who approves the initiative of the University of Leipzig, pointing

However, the issues that arise do not only concern the teaching staff of universities. They equally concern students. Thus, the University of Applied Science and Art in Hildesheim, has issued guidelines for examinations and assignments and a “fair” language use towards the sexes. According to these guidelines, students should either use neutral forms or they should use the asterisk (*) after the male suffix and add the female suffix as well.⁷³ In fact, at the University of Kassel in the winter semester of 2018/2019, grades were deducted from a student because he had used male gender in one of his writings. Eventually, the student was vindicated, and the grade was restored, as there were no relevant rules of the examination regulation that were violated. This incident reveals practical aspects of the issue.⁷⁴ Case law of courts in Germany has been preoccupied with linguistic issues regarding description of academic titles. Thus, a woman, who holds a doctorate in veterinary medicine, appealed in court, requesting the replacement of the title “Doctor medicinae veterinariae” with the female form “Doctora”. Her appeal was rejected by the Administrative Court of First Instance of Hanover in 2000, on the grounds that this term does not exist in Latin (where the female of the “Doctor” is “Doctrix”). The assumption was that language pre-exists and does not belong to the absolute disposition of state power, which cannot create artificial words.⁷⁵

To be fair, these issues are indeed difficult and do not only concern the university but all institutions. Thus, in Greece a book of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was published in 2018 by the National Printing House for drafting of administrative documents in a non-sexist manner.⁷⁶ The book also includes a circular of the Greek Ministry of the Interior with specific regulations.⁷⁷ Could a similar issue arise, in the

out that similar regulations already exist at the Universities of Potsdam and Karlsruhe and highlighting that 99% of laws, decrees and university regulations use the male gender.

⁷³ However, in some German federal states (e.g., Bavaria, Hesse), abolition of the asterisk (and other inclusive signs) is promoted in public administration and public education. On this, see Von Tim Frehler and Kathrin Müller-Lancé, Die Sternchen – Krieger [‘The Starlets – Warriors’], *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December 16–17, 2023.

⁷⁴ See Anant Agarwala, ‘Zwingen die Unis zum Gendern?’ [Are universities forced to use both the male and female gender?] *Die Zeit*, February 16, 2023.

⁷⁵ Christian Dornis and Tim Oliver Feicke, ‘Alles, was Recht ist. Kuriose Urteile und hilfreiches Jurawissen’ [Everything that is right. Curious judgements and helpful legal knowledge] *Kalender* 2024, *Harenberg* 2023 (on the page of April 16, 2024).

⁷⁶ Maria Gasouka and Marianthi Georgallidou, *Οδηγός χρήσης μη σεξιστικής γλώσσας στα διοικητικά έγγραφα* (Υπουργείο Εσωτερικών – Γενική Γραμματεία Ισότητας των Φύλων) [*Guide on the use of non-sexist language in administrative documents* (Ministry of the Interior - General Secretariat for Gender Equality)], Ethniko Typografio (National Printing House), 2018.

⁷⁷ No. 652/2016 Circular, General Secretary for Gender Equality of the Greek Ministry of the Interior and Administrative Reconstruction. “1) Simultaneous reference to both women and men is recommended by using both grammatical genders, when the text refers to mixed population or in cases where gender is not specified. This can be achieved either by using the full word or by adding suffixes (Greek adjectives and nouns are inflected for gender, e.g. *candidate*^{+fe/male suffix}). 2. When reference to women is exclusive, the use of the feminine gender is also exclusive, as are adjectives and pronouns. 3. In cases of nouns where the masculine and feminine forms coincide, it is recommended that adjectives and pronouns be listed in both genders, (*available*^{+fe/male suffix})”. See also Article 12 of Law 4604/2019. (“The use of expressions that imply or encode gender

future, regarding the drafting of judicial decisions? The issue, which could also be the topic of a separate study, is highly interesting, especially because it is linked to judges' functional independence (Articles 87 ff. of the Greek Constitution).

However, even at the level of wording in the Constitution,⁷⁸ similar questions could be raised: As suggested in Article 4, par. 1 of the Constitution "All Greeks are equal before the law"; wouldn't it be better for the law to read, for example, "Greek women and Greek men are equal before the law" or are we "overloading" texts and complicating communication (especially in long sentences⁷⁹), when we [Greeks] signal both feminine and masculine (grammatical) articles, along with both the masculine and feminine suffixes? Would anything meaningful be obtained in terms of gender equality, especially when the next paragraph of the same article of the Constitution (Article 4, Par. 2) suggests that "Greek men and women have equal rights and duties"? In the next paragraphs of the same article (regarding acquisition of Greek citizenship, equal access to public procedures, proportional contribution of citizens to public burdens, and prohibition of nobility titles), the Constitution continues to refer only to "Greeks" and not to "Greek women". One could wonder, isn't it clear that by the term *Greeks*^{+masculine suffix} the Constitution simultaneously refers to "Greek women" as well? "Right!" one might agree. However, does the same apply for par. 6 of article 4, namely, that "any Greek^{+masculine suffix} who can bear arms is obliged to contribute to the defense of the homeland, according to law"? This is an instance of use which does not assume inclusion of both the male and female gender in the same form.

Related instances exceed national borders and extend to the level of the European Union. Thus, in October 2021, a thirty-page Guide was released by the Commissioner for Equality (Helena Dalli), suggesting that Commission officials should not address

discrimination is prohibited when drafting administrative documents"), and the Recommendation of the Council of Europe, No. CM/Rec(2019)1, according to which the use of both genders or gender-neutral expressions should be encouraged in drafting public documents).

⁷⁸ On the use of masculine and feminine gender in laws and legal language, see Uwe Diederichsen, 'Männlich – Sprachlich – Juristisch' [Male - Linguistic – Legal], in Eberhard Schilken, Ekkerhard Beckert Eberhard, Walter Gerhardt (Herausgeber), *Festschrift für Hans Friedhelm Gaul zum 70 Geburtstag*, [Commemorative publication for Hans Friedhelm Gaul on his 70th birthday], Bielefeld: Ernst und Werner Giesekeing, 1997 pp. 121 ff. Diederichsen distinguishes between grammatical gender and biological sex, arguing that the "generic masculine" (Generisches Maskulinum) may also include women, without it, in itself, contradicting the principle of equality. For the broader issue from a linguistic point of view, see Kübra Gümüşay, *Sprache und Sein* [Language and Being], Belize: btb Publications, 3rd edition 2021, pp. 19 ff.

⁷⁹ On examples from the German language, see Uwe Diederichsen, 'Männlich – Sprachlich – Juristisch' [Male - Linguistic – Legal], in Eberhard Schilken, Ekkerhard Beckert Eberhard, Walter Gerhardt (Herausgeber), *Festschrift für Hans Friedhelm Gaul zum 70 Geburtstag*, [Commemorative publication for Hans Friedhelm Gaul on his 70th birthday], Bielefeld: Ernst und Werner Giesekeing, 1997 pp. 121 [134]: The new version of Article 18, Par. 1, of the Lower Saxony Constitution offers an almost parodistic prime example: 'The state parliament elects its president, *his or her* deputy and the secretaries (presidium) (emphasis added)'. Or doesn't Article 63, par. 5 of the 2nd draft of the University Studies Act of the Austrian Ministry of Science, Transport and the Arts of 8.11.1996 also speak for itself in full linguistic mastery? It reads: 'The dean of studies shall appoint the university/college teacher who supervised the author of a dissertation as an assessor'.

an audience as “ladies and gentlemen”, but use gender-neutral expressions such as “Dear colleagues”. In any case, the next recommendation of this very document attracted most of the reactions, namely, that the term “Christmas” should be avoided, in favour the item “Holidays” for not offending non-Christians.⁸⁰ A commentary on this document suggested that the Commission “invites people to cover up the meaning of Christian holidays, on the basis of which, countries have organized their winter holiday break. If we don’t celebrate Christmas, what can we celebrate? Consumerism, namely, excessive consumption, during the winter break, in traveling, eating, and drinking?” We need “a pluralistic political environment, which honours traditions and respects particularities”.^{81,82} Similar issues have arisen on the other side of the Atlantic,⁸³ when, in the 1980s, the term “Christmas trees” was replaced with the term “holiday trees”, in certain states of the USA.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ See ‘Politico: Η Ε.Ε. απέσυρε έγγραφο που κατηγορήθηκε ότι «καταργεί τα Χριστούγεννα»’ [Politico: EU withdraws document accused of “abolishing Christmas”], *Kathimerini*, December 1, 2021, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/world/561610894/politicoi-e-e-apesyre-eggrafo-poy-katigoriti-hike-oti-katargei-ta-christoygenna/>, last access April 13, 2025. See also Spyros Vlachopoulos, ‘«Καλά Χριστούγεννα» ή «καλές γιορτές»’, [“Merry Christmas” or “Happy Holidays”?], available at <https://www.tovima.gr/2023/12/25/opinions/kala-xristougenna-ikales-giortes/> *To Vima*, 25 December 2023, last access March 12, 2024, and Karolina Mermiga, ‘Μόνο όταν γελάω’ [Only when I laugh], available at <https://mag.frear.gr/mono-otan-gelao/>: “I hear about changing the “Merry Christmas” wish to a “Happy Holidays” one. I’m not a devout Christian, but I get annoyed [...] What kind of cancel culture can change a deeply rooted tradition that, even though of religious origin, today it celebrates joy for all?”.

⁸¹ *The books’ journal*, ‘Χριστούγεννα και πολιτική ορθότητα’ [Christmas and Political Correctness], available at <https://booksjournal.gr/editorials/3551-xristoygenna-kai-politikiorthotita>, December 15, 2021, last access April 13, 2025.

⁸² See also Manos Hadzidakis, *Η γέννηση του Χριστού και οι αμαρτίες των νεαρών μαθητών όταν παραβιάζουν τον Κώδικα Οδικής Κυκλοφορίας, Τα σχόλια του Τρίτου. Μια νεοελληνική μυθολογία* [The birth of Christ and the sins of young students when violating the Road Traffic Code, *The Comments of the Third Programme of the Greek Radio Council. A Modern Greek Mythology*], 2nd edition, Athens: Exantas Publications, 1981, pp. 101–102: “Especially in our country, Christmas has become a time of trading and self-satisfaction. An opportunity for a European show [...] The birth of Christ has become a barren anniversary with no feeling. The meaning of this unique birth, which illuminated and established our world with feeling and love, has been forever forgotten”.

⁸³ On a broader perspective, see Giorgos Androutsopoulos (‘Η πολιτική ορθότητα των γιορτών’ [The Political Correctness of Holidays], available at <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/562806946/i-politiki-orthotita-ton-giorton/>, *Kathimerini*, December 30, 2023, last accessed April 13, 2025) who provides examples of Christmas celebration, from the European and American context, especially with respect to placing nativity scenes in public spaces. See also Ioanna Kleftogianni, ‘Το «σύνδρομο» της φάτνης, οι έριδες και το politically correct της θρησκευσιολογίας’ [The “syndrome” of the manger, the disputes and the politically correct of religion theory], *To Vima*, December 24, 2023, and Marilena Gerantoni, ‘Χριστούγεννα της πολιτικής ορθότητας’ [Christmas of political correctness], *To Vima*, December 17, 2023.

⁸⁴ See Geoffrey Hughes, *Political Correctness: A History of Semantics and Culture*, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2010, p. 213.

3 Political Correctness and Artistic Freedom

Artistic Freedom and Political Correctness. Typical Examples of the Contrast Between Them

Artistic freedom is the right to intellectual expression, which has “suffered” the most from political correctness.⁸⁵ Examples are numerous, and in some cases, they tend to be comical: Roald Dahl’s best-known fairy tales (*Matilda*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Jimmy and the Giant Peach*)⁸⁶ have been rewritten, along with Ian Fleming’s *James Bond* books for removing or replacing words or phrases which could be considered offensive to certain groups of the population, based on today’s standards. A few years ago, in 2020, HBO Max temporarily removed *Gone with the Wind*, arguing that it reproduced racist stereotypes.⁸⁷ The fact that the film was released in 1939 didn’t seem to bother them much! Six seconds were also removed from a film dialogue between detectives of a police department, played by Gene Hackman and Roy Schneider, in the 1971 film *The French Connection* (Greek title: *Ο άνθρωπος από τη Γαλλία* [The man from France]), because the content of the conversation was

⁸⁵ See Ijoma Mangold, ‘Alles so schön keimfrei hier’ [Everything is so beautifully germ-free here], *Die Zeit*, April 20, 2023. See also Nora Ralli, ‘Ο Εμίρ Κουστουρίτσα είναι πολύ θυμωμένος!’ [Emir Kusturica is very angry!], available at: https://www.efsyn.gr/tehnese/sinema/412752_o-emir-koystoyritsa-einai-poly-thymomenos, *Efimerida ton Syntacton*, November 24, 2023, last accessed April 13, 2025, where the well-known film director suggests: “When I still was a young filmmaker, we believed that through cinema, leftist ideology and movements, we could really change the world. None of the current young creators have this belief or illusion anymore. Even filmmakers well-known for their political films and of an older age, like Wim Wenders, have become captives of political correctness. There is no room for free cinema due to political correctness. It now seems impossible for someone to ask questions through their films or to comment on situations or people in a satirical or deeper way.”

⁸⁶ ‘Ο νέος Φιλικός Γίγαντας «μάσησε» τα λόγια του’ [The new friendly giant minced his words], *Kathimerini*, February 21, 2023: “It is typical in books like *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *The Big Friendly Giant* and *Matilda* that references to appearance, weight and nature of the characters have been removed. For example, Augustus Gloop, in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is now described as “huge”, with the word “fat” removed from every book, the *Telegraph* newspaper reports. Mrs. Tweet is no longer “ugly” and “beastly”, but just “beastly”. Items like “crazy” and “insane” were also removed out of consideration of mental health issues”. See also Alexandra Samothraki, ‘Roald Dahl, οι νεότερες εξελίξεις’ [Roald Dahl, the latest news], available at <https://www.oanagnostis.gr/i-politiki-orthotita-skotonei-ta-paidika-vivlia-tis-alexandrassamothraki/>, and Nikolas Zois, ‘Δύο Ρόαλντ Ντάλ για να διαλέξουν οι αναγνώστες’ [Two Roald Dahl versions for readers to choose from], *Kathimerini*, January 11, 2024, where we read that the British publisher of Roald Dahl’s books now prints them in two versions: the “politically correct” version and the original one, without any alterations to the initial text.

⁸⁷ See Eleni Tzannatou, ‘Λογική και «ευαισθησία»: Μπορούμε να ξαναγράψουμε τα βιβλία του παρελθόντος με όρους του σήμερα;’ [Sense and “sensitivity”: Can We Rewrite Books of the Past in Today’s Terms?] *Kathimerini*, April 4, 2023, available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/culture/books/562354507/logikikai-eyaisthisia-mporoyme-na-xanagrapsoume-ta-vivlia-toy-parelthontosme-oroys-toy-simera/>, last access April 27, 2025.

racist.⁸⁸ Even the *Lord of the Rings* has been accused of racism, for how Orcs are presented in contrast to humans and elves (on the one hand the dark-skinned “bad guys” and on the other the white “good guys”).⁸⁹ In the music industry, news reports state that the Rolling Stones removed “Brown Sugar” from their concert repertoire, because it tells the story of a slave ship arriving in America and an English slave trader praising the beauty of a young Black woman.⁹⁰ Similarly, the studio version of Patti Smith’s⁹¹ “Rock n’ Roll Nigger” song was removed from platform libraries (such as Spotify). Furthermore, in Florida, USA, a teacher was fired for showing her students Michelangelo’s masterpiece—the marble Renaissance sculpture depicting the nude biblical King David, ready to confront Goliath.⁹² Speaking of Bible, it did not escape political correctness either. Specifically, in Davis, Utah, USA, it was decided to remove the Bible from school libraries because it used vulgar references and violence.⁹³ Recently, there has been a strong reaction in Spain because a poster for the Holy Week events that took place in Seville depicted Christ without clothing from the waist up (after all, he is depicted half-nude in many other paintings that hold a prominent position in the history of art.⁹⁴ Classic authors, such as Shakespeare, couldn’t escape political correctness either, as he has been criticized because, in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Lysander says, “Who will not change a raven for a

⁸⁸ «Θύμα» πολιτικής ορθότητας και «Ο Άνθρωπος από τη Γαλλία» [“The Man from France” also a “Victim” of political correctness], *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, June 8, 2023 available at: https://www.efsyn.gr/tehnesh/sinema/392881_thyma-politikisorthotitas-kai-o-anthropos-apo-ti-gallia.

⁸⁹ Maria Thanasoulia, ‘Κουλτούρα της ακύρωσης / ο Ρόαλντ Νταλ, η πολιτική ορθότητα και τα Ορκ’ [Cancel Culture / Roald Dahl, Political Correctness, and the Orcs] *Avgi*, March 26, 2023, available at: https://www.avgi.gr/tehnesh/443010_o-roalnt-ntal-i-politiki-orthotita-kai-ta-ork, last access May 4, 2025.

⁹⁰ See Marilia Papathanasiou, ‘Μαύρη ζάχαρη και Αραπίνες’ [Black Sugar and nigger (indicating a black woman)], *the books’ journal*, October 14, 2021, available at: <https://booksjournal.gr/gnomes/3436-mayri-zaxari-kai-arapines>.

On Greek reality, see replacement of the item ‘fat’ by Alkisti Protopsalti, in ‘Adonis’ by Stamatis Krouanakis and Lina Nikolakopoulou. See also Zoi Liaka, ‘«Χοντρή» ορθότητα ή αναφαίρετο δικαίωμα;’ [‘Fat’ Correctness or Inalienable Right?], *Ta Nea*, November 20, 2023.

⁹¹ Although in Patti Smith’s song the item ‘nigger’ does not have a negative connotation. See also Panagiotis Kostas, «Ε, όχι και το όσα παίρνει ο άνεμος»..., in ‘woke. Το Κίνημα της Αφύπνισης [Well, not the ‘Gone with the Wind’, too’, in ‘woke: The Awakening Movement’], *Kathimerini* (special edition), April 28, 2024, p. 42 [45–46].

⁹² See Dagmar Hirschfelder, ‘Die Kuratorin: Wir hängen nichts ab’ [The curator: We don’t hang anything], *Die Zeit*, April 20, 2023. See also Matoula Kousteni, ‘Ο Μιχαήλ Άγγελος και ο δαίμονας της πολιτικής ορθότητας’ [Michelangelo and the Demon of Political Correctness], *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, March 28, 2023: “Common sense is fading. Art bows to political correctness. I remember a few years ago, during a press conference by Dimitris Papaioannou at Stegi, in connection with his performance at Pina Bausch’s renowned dance theater, a journalist asked him ‘if the audience has become accustomed to nudity,’ provoking the ironic smile of the other art critics, as we found it unthinkable to talk about nudity as a provocation trigger nowadays. Papaioannou, restrained, replied: ‘The answer should come from the statues or a visit to an archaeological museum...’”

⁹³ ‘Αποσύρεται η Βίβλος λόγω «χυδαιότητας και βίας.’ [The Bible is withdrawing from Utah schools due to ‘vulgarity violence’!], *Estia*, June 19, 2023.

⁹⁴ See Hanno Rautherberg, ‘Begehrt mich!’ [Desire me], *Die Zeit*, February 15, 2024.

dove?”), which was linked as associating whiteness with beauty and blackness with ugliness.⁹⁵

The examples are numerous that they could fill many more pages.⁹⁶ Therefore, let us focus on one of the most well-known and beloved victims of political correctness, where “sensitivity readers” seem to have been particularly active: Agatha Christie. As reported in the news, “[t]he modifications to the books published between 1920 and 1976 (the year of Christie’s death) involve changes to the narrators’ internal monologues. For example, in Christie’s first novel *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, Poirot describes another character as ‘a Jew, of course’, a reference that has been removed in the new edition. In the same book, a woman originally described as a ‘gypsy’ is now referred to as a ‘young woman’, and all references to Roma have been removed from the text. In the revised edition of the short story collection *Miss Marple’s Final Cases and Two Other Stories*, the item *native* has been changed to *local*. In a passage where a servant was originally described as ‘a smiling black man’ the character is now simply noted as nodding, with no specific reference to his race [...] In the new edition of the 1964 novel *A Caribbean mystery*, Miss Marple’s thought that a smiling hotel clerk from western India has “such beautiful white teeth” has been removed”.⁹⁷ However, political correctness is not limited to literature, and its ‘overcorrection’ stance can affect all forms of art. Phoebus Delivorias addressed the topic with humor in one of his musical performances. In performing the politically correct adaptation of ‘Ένα το χελιδόνι’ [‘A Single Swallow’, verse by Odysseus Elytis, set to music by Mikis Theodorakis], the phrase ‘Θεέ μου πρωτομάστορα’ [my God, master builder] has been replaced by “A higher power in which some believe and some do not”.⁹⁸

Political correctness seems to be particularly ‘active’ in school libraries, obviously taking advantage of everybody’s legitimate concern for children. Indicatively, in the USA, there were 2532 instances of book bans, “from July 2021 to June 2022,

⁹⁵ See also Douglas Murray, ‘Ο πόλεμος ενάντια στη Δύση. Επικρατώντας σε μια εποχή ανορθολογισμού’ [The war against the West. Prevailing in a time of irrationality] (translated into Greek, by Michalis Katsimitsis), *Liberal Books*, 2023, pp. 344 ff.

⁹⁶ See also Angeliki Giannikopoulou, ‘*Ιδεολογία στην Παιδική Λογοτεχνία. Πολιτική Ορθότητα και Παιδική Λογοτεχνία*’ [Ideology in Children’s Literature: Political Correctness and Children’s Literature], National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2015, available at: <https://opencourses.uoa.gr/courses/ECD3/>. In the second book of Ten-ten’s adventures, *Ten-ten in Congo*, the comics book was first published in 1937 and re-appeared in 1975 in a different form. As it was linked to the Belgian sovereignty in Congo, it was requested that it will be either withdrawn or an ‘explanation’ would be provided regarding the ideological context of the colonial era. In the United Kingdom, the comic is only available in the adult section of bookstores.

⁹⁷ See ‘Agatha Christie: Τα κλασικά της μυθιστορήματα «ξαναγράφονται» για λόγους πολιτικής ορθότητας’ [Agatha Christie: Her Classic Novels Are Being ‘Rewritten’ for Political Correctness], *Kathimerini*, March 27, 2023 available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/culture/books/562341727/agkatha-kristi-ta-klasika-tis-mythistorimataxanagrafontai-gia-logoyoys-politikis-orthotitas/>, last access April 27, 2025.

⁹⁸ See Giannis Balabanidis, ‘Η πολιτική ορθότητα, από τα αμερικανικά κάμπους μέχρι τη μικρή μας χώρα’ [Political Correctness, from American Campuses to Our Small Country], available at: <https://mag.frear.gr/politiki-orthotita-apo-ta-amerikanika-kampouys-mechri-ti-mikri-mas-chora/>, last access April 27, 2025.

involving 1,648 book titles, 1,261 different authors, 290 illustrators, and 18 translators. Out of the banned books, 674 titles, (41%) address LGBTQ+ topics, 659 book titles (40%) concern issues of color, 338 banned titles (21%) deal with racist and ethnic matters, while 357 banned titles (22%) included sexual content of various kinds (e.g., novels with descriptions of teenage sexual experiences, stories about teenage pregnancy, sexual assault, abortion, etc.).⁹⁹

Artistic freedom is also a right of expression, which, more than any other, has fallen victim to “private censorship”. As mentioned above, ‘sensitivity readers’ have been employed by major publishing houses in order to “investigate” books for any “unorthodox” passages that might offend social groups or provoke public backlash. Regarding the broader pursuit and erasure of evil from literature,¹⁰⁰ it might be worth reflecting on how many ‘forms’ [...] evil can take in literature. Forms such as philosophical evil (in Bataille), poetic evil (touching upon metaphysical, natural, and moral forces), theatrical evil (with the condemnation of comedy), metaphysical evil (in Eastern European writers), racism (in Celine), betrayal (in Genet), perversion (in Sade), satanism, fixation on diseases (such as syphilis), drug addiction, alcoholism”.¹⁰¹ In any case, preventive action has now reached dancing. At dance performances in Germany there are persons who monitor whether there is violation of permissible limits of physical contact by the dancers.¹⁰²

Why Artistic Creation Does Not “Fit” into the Rules of Political Correctness

There are, however two further points which make the relationship between political correctness and artistic freedom extremely problematic. One point has to do with the unique nature of artistic creation, often overlooked by those who try to impose rules of political correctness on art. Artistic discourse cannot be equated with straightforward, direct, non-artistic human discourse. It is different and this is what gives art its unique

⁹⁹ Matoula Kousteni, ‘«Σιδερόνοντας» την τέχνη με παράλογους κανόνες’ [“Ironing” art with absurd rules], *Efimerida ton Syntacton*, April 8–9, 2023. See also Nikolas Zois, ‘«Καίγοντας» βιβλία, ιδέες και αξίες’ [“Burning” books, ideas and values], *Kathimerini*, March 30, 2023 and Stavros Zoumboulakis, ‘Τχνη βαρβαρότητας’ [Traces of barbarism], *Kathimerini*, March 30, 2023.

¹⁰⁰ See also Ilias Maglinis, ‘Ποιος σκότωσε τον Όμηρο;’ [Who killed Homer?], available at <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/561217129/poios-skotose-ton-omiro/>, *Kathimerini*, January 5, 2021: “There is nothing wrong in saying, in the context of teaching school or university students, that Homer or Shakespeare used expressions, characters, figures that, in our present view, seem ambiguous, as far as their ideological background is concerned. Let each student judge for themselves. The pernicious, the petty, the stupid lies in prohibition, in censorship. No matter how much damage the professional ‘sensitive readers’ do, Homer’s universality is not threatened by fashions that come and go.”

¹⁰¹ Jason Laios (ed.) ‘Η λογοτεχνία και το κακό’ [Literature and the evil], *Diavazo magazine*, 289 (1992), p. 25.

¹⁰² See Dorion Weickmann, Achtung, Körperkontakt [Attention, physical contact], *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 11th August 2023.

value. Artistic creation usually operates on a metaphorical and allegorical level, even if it deals with historical themes. Therefore, just as Othello can be played by a white actor,¹⁰³ so can Cleopatra be played by a black actor, in the Netflix mini-series,¹⁰⁴ as long as it is motivated, of course, by the free will of artistic creator and not by a forced “quota” for the participation of all social groups. After all, the artist’s perspective does not always coincide with readers’, viewers’ or listeners’ perception of the work of art. Nor do we all agree with each other on the ‘reading’ of an artistic work. Get a dozen people to look at a painting: Even if the painting depicts a seemingly “neutral” subject (e.g., “still life”), a dozen viewers may receive a dozen different messages, associate the painting with a dozen interpretations and a dozen experiences and feelings. A multifaceted character is one of the key features of art. Imagine if all this were to be put into the “mold” of political correctness. Can this be done without compromising the very nature and value of artistic freedom?

Beyond that, there is something even more obvious: There are entire artistic genres which “live” and “thrive” from exaggeration, (apparent) insult, mockery of certain figures and, broadly, from violating rules of political correctness. Could there be caricature, satire or comedy, in conditions of political correctness?¹⁰⁵ Could a ‘politically correct’ caricature, be so well-thought-out that it does not offend any social group? Could it ever be consistent with the requirement that a caricature should evoke immediate public response, a smile or a laugh?¹⁰⁶ The transgression of boundaries is a general feature of art. As has been pointed out, e.g., about literature, “authentic literature is promethean. A true writer dares to come into conflict with fundamental laws of society, dares to desire and seek the impossible, with rabid persistence. Just

¹⁰³ See Sahra Wagenknecht, *Die Selbst-Gerechten. Mein Gegenprogramm – für Gemeinsinn und Zusammenarbeit* [The self-righteous. My counter-programme - for public spirit and cooperation], Frankfurt: Campus Publishing, 2022, p. 136.

¹⁰⁴ See also, Adrianopoulos, Andreas, ‘Η τυραννία της πολιτικής ορθότητας’ [The tyranny of political correctness], available at <https://www.in.gr/2023/05/23/apopsi/tyrannia-tispolitikis-orthotitas/>, *in.gr*, May 23, 2023, last accessed May 5, 2025: “It is no coincidence that only on the initiative of Egyptian officials, who could hardly be accused of racism, there was a reaction to the choice of Netflix to show a black family of Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt! But the English, who are now too tolerant, have not reacted with respect to the black (!) wife of King George and the black nobles in Bridgerton (“Queen Charlotte”) and in “Two Queens” (Elizabeth, Mary Stuart). We are basically witnessing a barbarization of the West with unknown consequences for the cohesion of societies”.

¹⁰⁵ See Vangelis Mallios, ‘Νοείται προνομιακή μεταχείριση των θρησκευτικών πεποιθήσεων;’ [Is there such a thing as preferential treatment of religious beliefs?], in Dimitris Christopoulos (ed.), «Όλα μπορούν να λεχθούν» ή υπάρχουν «εκείνα που δεν λέγονται»; [“Everything can be said” or are there “those things that are not said”?], Hellenic Association for Human Rights – Athens: Bibliorama Publications 2015, p. 105 [106], with reference to the case law of the European Court of Human Rights: “Satire is a mode of artistic expression and social commentary which, through exaggeration and distortion of reality [...], aims to shock and disturb, by its very nature. Thus, any restriction of an artist’s right to express themselves must be examined with particular care”.

¹⁰⁶ See Giannis Papadopoulos, ‘Τέλος εποχής: ο Willem αποχωρεί από τη Libération’ [End of an era: Willem leaves Libération], available at <https://booksjournal.gr/gnomes/3183-telos-epoxiso-willem-apoxorei-apo-ti-liberation>, *the book’s journal*, March 31, 2021. Papadopoulos quotes Willem (Dutch cartoonist with a long career in the French press), who suggests that “A cartoon in the press must be understood within two seconds”.

as the author's desire is placed above barriers and self-evident prohibitions, so his work refuses to confine the world within a narrow framework where everything is given and fixed, in advance".¹⁰⁷

Political Correctness or Purity? When the Past Is Erased

The second and perhaps most problematic point, which has hit art harder than other forms of intellectual expression, is the new editions of books without the offensive items of the original editions. Phrases or words that were formulated in a different historical context and are now considered offensive to sections of population 'disappear'. The imperative of political correctness extends beyond the realm of books and becomes a command for 'purifying' and 'sterilizing' social environments from cultural elements that might offend a group. In Germany, a request was made, in 2022, for erasing the Christian inscriptions on the Berlin Palace dome, on the grounds that it is a secular building, in which religious symbols have no place.¹⁰⁸

The practice is highly dangerous. Evidently, every reader and viewer has the right to read an older book or watch an older film through the "lens of the present" and not necessarily through the "eyes of its creator". "Otherwise, we are talking about fossilized readings, i.e., dead readings".¹⁰⁹ Isn't this art, after all? A creator communicating with a reader/viewer and the latter having the right to judge, criticize, even condemn the artist's work? Erasing objectionable words and scenes, also erases a part of human history, as if it consisted only of positive and not negative moments.¹¹⁰ "The present thus becomes an ultimate judge of past centuries".¹¹¹ As if the world

¹⁰⁷ From the back cover of the book: *George Bataille, Η λογοτεχνία και το κακό* [Literature and Evil] (translated into Greek by Eleni Varika, editing by Aleksis Ziras), Athens: Plethron Publications, 1979.

¹⁰⁸ See Spyros Vlachopoulos, 'Θρησκευτική καθαρότητα ή θρησκευτική ελευθερία;' [Religious purity or religious freedom?], available at <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/562156717/thrisk-eytiki-katharotita-i-thriskeytiki-eleytheria/>, *Kathimerini*, November 27, 2022, last accessed April 13, 2025.

¹⁰⁹ Niki Kostantinou-Sgourou and Maria Topali, 'Τι απομένει, από το έργο του Ρόαλντ Νταλ;' [What is left of Roald Dahl's work?] *Kathimerini*, August 27, 2023.

¹¹⁰ See Nikolas Sevastakis, 'Πολιτική ορθότητα: Εύλογες διορθώσεις, παράλογοι δογματισμοί' [Political correctness: Reasonable corrections, irrational dogmatisms], available at <https://mag.frear.gr/politikiorthota-eyloges-diorthoseis-paralogoi-dogmatismoi/>, *Frear*, issue 5, last accessed May 5, 2025.: "In rewriting history and especially the history of culture, from an exclusive 'super-subordinate' or dominated' subject's point of view, horizons of cultural perception are distorted, along with the very function of educational and cultural values. Adopting an outright politicization of all relations, they construct a schematic world consisting of 'sovereigns' and 'dominated' as if they were distinct moral entities in a Manichaean struggle".

¹¹¹ Pascal Bruckner, 'Ein nahezu perfekter Täter' (translated into Greek by Andreas Pappas, *Ένας Σχεδόν Τέλειος Ενοχός* [An Almost Perfect Culprit]), Athens: Patakis Publications, 2022, p. 174; see also Karolina Mermigka, 'Μόνο όταν γελάω' [Only when I laugh], available at <https://mag.frear.gr/monootan-gelao/>, *Frear*, 2024: "There is also the ignorant view, where history, the canvas on which we step, willy-nilly, creaks. Because the unspeakable injustices committed over the centuries by

were or could become a better place, if “good” and “just” were exclusively communicated.¹¹² Younger generations are thus ‘banned’ from learning that there were very bad pages in the history of humanity (and there still are today, but not to the same extent), where people were subjected to brutal treatment, oppression and discrimination because of skin color, gender, physical characteristics or sexual orientation.¹¹³ The educational community is ‘banned’ from discussing the various stages in the evolution of human civilization, and from reflecting (even through negative examples) on fundamental principles of law and social coexistence, such as equality and respect for human dignity.¹¹⁴ Reading a work independently of its “historical and political context”¹¹⁵ and presenting an idyllic image of human history is dangerous and historically ignorant”.¹¹⁶ Interfering with artistic creation, after all, is an attempt at changing history, a form of “historical revisionism”. In conclusion, “the greatness or beauty of a work does not lie in its morphological complexity or in its ingenuity, but in its conformity to the moral dogma of our time”.¹¹⁷

The view can be “illuminated” by a recent example: Author Isabel Abedi (with parents from Germany and Iran, married to a Brazilian), author of a successful series of short stories entitled *Lola*, was heavily criticized for using the word “Negro” in the first book of this series. Of course, the word, in itself, is offensive and should be avoided in communication between people. But is the same also true, in the context of a short story, where Lola, the protagonist, is raised in Hamburg by a German

man to man are there, part of the canvas. We do not honour them, but we acknowledge them - alas if we did not, for the canvas has no carpet to shove them under”.

¹¹² Ijoma Mangold, ‘An ihren Worten sollt ihr sie erkennen!’ [By their words you shall recognize them], in Annika Domainko, Tobias Heyl, Florian Kessler, Jo Lendle, George M. Oswald (eds), *Canceln. Ein notwendiger Streit* [Cancelling. A necessary dispute], Munich: Carl Hanser Publishing, 2023, p. 9 [12].

¹¹³ On the necessity of teaching about slavery in schools, see Jürgen Overhoff, Kinder, schaut euch das an! [Kids, look at this!], *Die Zeit*, November 16, 2023.

¹¹⁴ See Vangelis Intzidis, ‘Λέτε κάποιον «βλάχο» ή «σακάτη»; Δύο Έλληνες γλωσσολόγοι μιλούν περί Πολιτικής Ορθότητας’ [Do you call someone a “bumpkin” or a “crippler”? Two Greek linguists talk about Political Correctness], available at <https://www.lifo.gr/apopseis/idees/lete-kapoiou-blaho-i-sakati-dyo-ellines-glossologoi-miloun-peri-politikis-orthotitas>, *Lifo*, December 27, 2018: “It’s not about correcting Twain, but when one teaches him in school and that word appears (as written), one has to have a whole discussion with the class about why it was said that way, at that time, what it meant, why we don’t say it today, etc. There is no point in interfering with the text and changing the way it was written.”

¹¹⁵ Evi Samara, ‘Πολιτική ορθότητα και λογοτεχνία: Κλασικά βιβλία στο μικροσκόπιο’ [Political correctness and literature: Classic books under the microscope], available at <https://www.maxmag.gr/politismos/koinonia/politiki-orthotita-kai-logotechnia-klasika-vivlia-sto-mikroskopio/>, *MaxMag.gr*, July 21, 2023, last accessed April 13, 2025.

¹¹⁶ See Kosmas Vidos, ‘Πολιτικώς ορθό παρελθόν’ [Politically Correct Past], *VIMagazino*, Issue 345, March 24, 2024: “This is called History! History with all its good and bad pages, history that changes over time and is recorded. And what is recorded can neither be censored nor altered and paraphrased so as not to offend us today. History threatens no one, offends no one. It only educates and offers examples”.

¹¹⁷ Pascal Bruckner, ‘Ein nahezu perfekter Täter’ (translated into Greek by Andreas Pappas, *Ένας Σχεδόν Τέλειος Ένοχος* [An Almost Perfect Culprit]), Athens: Patakis Publications, 2022, p. 155.

mother and Brazilian father, and a racist writes on the wall of their house ‘Negroes belong in the jungle’? It is obvious that this is a phrase written with anti-racist intent and meaning, but was to be read as racist. The book was first published in 2004, but due to reactions and with the “help” of “sensitivity readers”, it was rewritten in 2023 with those passages that could cause reaction deleted, although the story conveys a clear anti-racist message.¹¹⁸

Somewhat better than censorship is the labelling of books and films with “warnings”, which sometimes seem to underestimate the reader’s or viewer’s critical thinking skills. The case of Disney’s movies is typical. As “it was preparing to launch a streaming service in 2019, it went through a grueling examination of its film library to add the following warning to many of them: ‘The work contains negative depictions or mistreatment of people or cultures. These stereotypes were incorrect then and remain incorrect today’. The warning was placed in episodes of the 1970s *Muppet Show* and in a 1941 version of the film *Dumbo the Elephant*”.¹¹⁹

One Word, Many Meanings. The Polysemy of Language Through Costis Palamas’ Poetry

As mentioned, language is an alive and dynamic tool, which is constantly changing and adapting to social evolution. A word whose use, in the past, was self-evident and manifested an instance of cultural evolution, today may convey a negative load, which is to be avoided. This does not mean that it should be deleted from all the artistic works, in which it appears. Let me put it very simply, with an example. The item “gypsy” is nowadays considered offensive and is avoided. There are no

¹¹⁸ See Katrin Hörnlein, ‘Wenn Worte wehtun’ [When words hurt], *Die Zeit*, October 19, 2023. See also the translator’s dilemmas: “Does anyone adopt the current term, “African-American”, in a text written in 1923? Is it possible that what is considered politically correct today (African-American) is also an appropriate translation for *black* and *negro*? On the other hand, if you write “John felt a black man approaching him” or “a negro”, how do you guard against the burst of shots you are likely to receive? It’s like being between devil and the deep sea. Or rather, without metaphorical language, it’s like being between political ‘corrective-ness’ and racial vilification.” Andeas Pappas *Γλωσσίδα. Κείμενα για τη γλώσσα και όχι μόνο* [*Glossidia, Texts on Language and more*, preface by Christoforos Charalampakis], Athens: Patakis Publishing, 2023, p. 113).

¹¹⁹ See Brooks, Barnes, ‘Παραμύθια, φαντασία, αλλά και πολιτική ορθότητα στην Disney’ [Fairy tales, fantasy but also political correctness – originally from *New York Times*, April 27, 2022, ‘Disney, Built on Fairy Tales and Fantasy, Confronts the Real World’], available at <https://www.kathimerini.gr/nytimes/561824617/paramythia-fantasia-alla-kai-politikiorthota-stin-disney/>, *Kathimerini*, April, 28, 2022, last accessed April 13, 2025. See also Pascal Bruckner, ‘Ein nahezu perfekter Täter’ (translated into Greek by Andreas Pappas, Ένας σχεδόν τέλειος ένοχος [An almost perfect Culprit]), Athens: Patakis Publications, 2022, pp. 174–175: “The *New York Times*, in turn, asks for Mark Twain’s book [*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*] to appear with a warning: ‘A book that deals with racism in a way that might cause trauma or disrupt knowledge’. As for Fitzgerald’s [...] *The Great Gatsby* (1925), the same newspaper suggests that it too should come with a warning: ‘A book displaying instances of offensive and appalling misogynistic violence’.

“gypsies” but “Roma”¹²⁰ and, where they have not been integrated into society, this is mainly a fault of the rest of the population and of state institutions that have not created the conditions for their integration into society. This does not mean, of course, that Costis Palamas’ poem “The Dodekalogue of the Gypsy” should not circulate or be available in school libraries, or we would not listen to the song “Γύφτισσα τον εβύζαξε” [A Gypsy woman nursed him] (by composer Manos Loizos, sung by folk and rebetika singer Haroula Alexiou), or the song “Γύφτισσα μέρα” [Gypsy Day] by Greek singer-songwriter Yannis Pouloupoulos.¹²¹

The great problem of political correctness lies in a generalised deletion of words or phrases, without taking into account the context in which they are used and the pragmatic background assumptions, they convey, which assign them a different meaning. The view applies even more so to works of art, which often operate on a metaphorical and allegorical level, transforming reality and being open to more, often contradictory, aesthetic interpretations. Once again, Costis Palamas (central figure of the Greek literary generation of the 1880s and one of the co-founders of the so-called New Athenian School) fuels the issue. ‘Γύφτος’ [Gypsy] today has negative and offensive connotations and has rightly been replaced, in formal discourse, by the term ‘Ρομά’ [Roma]; however, ‘gypsy’ is what Palamas used at the time, when he wrote his probably most important poem. Palamas himself describes it as “his complete set of ideas”¹²² and identifies himself with the protagonist of the poem, describing his associations, in the prologue, as follows: “... from the ‘gypsy woman’ I passed to the ‘gypsy man’; the zourna (wind instrument played in the centre of Eurasia), the hammer, the blower, the mule, the fiddle, the tent, the fates, the spells, the wild, the anarchic, the unruly, always in the open air, always under the sky, gypsy life, enchanting and enchanted, unfolded before me [...] My focusing on the gypsy means that I am a gypsy too; my soul is a gypsy”.¹²³ Nikos Zachariadis gives a further interpretation of the choice of the term: “the poet’s selecting the term ‘Gypsy’ is not accidental, because gypsy does not only denote an ethnic minority; in manual labour,

¹²⁰ Although there are people in this group who disagree with the exclusive use of the term “Roma”, considering that the term has been effectively imposed and excludes their particular ethnic consciences and local traditions. See Dimitris Galanis, ‘Δεν είμαστε Ρομά, είμαστε Τσιγγάνοι’ [We are not Roma, we are Gypsies], available at <https://www.tovima.gr/print/society/den-eimaste-crr-oma-eimastecr-tsigganoi/>, *To Vima*, April 3, 2023.

¹²¹ A further example could be the old (1946) popular song by Vassilis Tsitsanis (Greek leading songwriter, bouzouki player and singer), “Νύχτες μαγικές” [Magical Nights], where “Αραπίνες” [female “Niggas”] are thought highly. See also Marilia Papanasiou, ‘Μαύρη ζάχαρη και Αραπίνες’ [Brown sugar and female niggas], available at <https://booksjournal.gr/gnomes/3436-mayri-zaxari-kai-arapines>, *The books journal*.

¹²² See Fanis Michalopoulos, ‘Κωστής Παλαμάς’ [Costis Palamas] (study), *Nea Estia*, ΛΔ’ (34) – issue 397 (Christmas 1943), p. 126 [184].

¹²³ Costis Palamas, *Άπαντα* [Complete Works] (Vol. 3- *Ο Δωδεκάλογος του Γύφτου* [The Dodecalogue of the Gypsy], Costis Palamas Foundation, 2019, pp. 12–13. Translators’ note: The study renders the title ‘Ο Δωδεκάλογος του Γύφτου’ as *The Dodecalogue of the Gypsy*. It has also been referred to, in English, as *The Twelve Lays of the Gypsy* (John Thomson, *Classical Review* February 27, 2009, published online by Cambridge University Press).

blacksmiths and machinists, i.e., the most industrial workers, are called gypsies”.¹²⁴ The important thing is that a ‘Gypsy’, no matter their potential defects, is anything but a negative protagonist. In Constantinos Tsatsos’ words, “A Gypsy is a Greek above all, and enjoys the most freedom. He does whatever he decides for himself, according to his own faith and judgment, without obeying any other authority, without following the various everyday herds of people in everyday life [...] The Gypsy is a Greek because he is an aristocrat. He knows that the ones with the most freedom are the few, the misunderstood, but also the only ones who stand close to truth and beauty [...] He is most courageous, with the courage of thinking, and he believes that worth in life is to be found only in the perspective of the few”.¹²⁵ The same lexical item, then, seems to activate so many different associations and meanings, depending on the historical, social and artistic context, offering ‘counter arguments on political correctness, on the part of Costis Palamas’ *The Dodecalogue of the Gypsy (The Twelve Lays of the Gypsy)*.

Fairy Tales in the Age of Political Correctness

Perhaps a most exciting way of noticing the hyperboles and dangers of political correctness is its application, real or imaginative, on fairytales.¹²⁶ One reason is because they address children, thus simplifying reality, another is because they reproduce stereotypes and social conventionalities of previous decades and centuries.

James Finn Garner published a book in the United States of America in 1994, entitled *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories*. The book, which has been translated

¹²⁴ Nikos Zachariadis, *Ο αληθινός Παλαμάς* [The real Palamas] (4th ed.), Athens: Ta Nea Biblia LC. Publications, 1945, p. 63.

¹²⁵ Constantinos Tsatsos, ‘Η ελληνική ιδέα στον παλαμικό Δωδεκάλογο’ [The Greek idea in Palamas’ Dodecalogue], in *Kostis Palamas, Complete Works* (Vol. 3), Costis Palamas Foundation, 2019, page 205 [214]. See also Fanis Michalopoulos, ‘Κωστής Παλαμάς’ [Costis Palamas], *Nea Estia*, Vol. ΛΔ’ (34), Issue 397 (Christmas 1943), p. 126 [192]: “The Gypsy tears down the old alone and alone builds the new edifice of tomorrow. He rejects and accepts life in order to reach higher and breathe a cleaner air. Thus, he rises into a symbol, a symbol of life itself, which destroys and molds itself, tracing the means and elements which allow him to return to eternal values like God, Country, Power, Heroism, Art, Health and Science”.

¹²⁶ See in detail, Aggeliki Giannikopoulou, *‘Ιδεολογία στην Παιδική Λογοτεχνία. Πολιτική Ορθότητα και Παιδική Λογοτεχνία’* [Ideology in Children’s Literature. Political Correctness and Children’s Literature], National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2015, available at: <https://opencourses.uoa.gr/courses/ECD3/>. The paper also suggests “politically correct” terms, such as: *black woman* (“gendered person rich in melanin”), *ugly* (“person whose appearance questions the stereotypical beauty standards/ person whose appearance does not go unnoticed”), *cannibalism* (intra-racial consumption of human flesh by humans”) and *immoral* (“individual with a personal, non-traditional, value system”). The writer also highlights non-politically correct folk verses, such as “A blind man was looking for a needle in a hay barn and a deaf one was telling him that he heard a bang”.

and published in Greek,¹²⁷ as well, “rewrites” classical tales with contemporary politically correct terminology. The story of the “Little Red Riding Hood” begins as follows: “Once upon a time, there was a young person named Little Red Riding Hood [...] with her mother on the edge of a large wood. One day her mother asked her to take a basket of fresh fruit and mineral water to her grandmother’s house – not because it was a woman’s duty to do so, but because the deed was generous and helped develop a sense of community solidarity.” On the way to Grandma’s house, Little Red Riding Hood met a wolf who told her: “*You know, my dear, it isn’t safe for a little girl to walk through these woods alone.*” Little Red Riding Hood replied “*I find your sexist remark highly offensive, but I will ignore it because of your traditional status as part of ‘lumpenproletariat’ [...].*”¹²⁸

Neither could Cinderella escape James Finn Garner’s ridiculing disposition. The fairy tale starts with the prince’s invitation, who invited them to a masquerade ball to “celebrat[e] his exploitation of the dispossessed and marginalized peasantry. Cinderella’s step-sisters were very excited to be invited to the palace. They began to plan the expensive clothes they would put on, to alter their appearance and suppress their natural body shape in them in order to emulate an unrealistic standard of feminine beauty”.¹²⁹ Snow White could not escape, either. The scene with the apple is described as follows in the new version: “Snow White thought for a moment. She had made it a personal matter of principle never to buy food from middlepersons, in protest against accumulation of agricultural products. But her heart told her to economically help marginalized women, so she decided to buy the apple. Snow White didn’t know that this was, in fact, the queen in disguise and that the apple had been chemically and genetically mutated so that whoever bit it, they would sleep forever”. The queen begins to cry and the following dialogue occurs:—“You’re so young and beautiful”, sobbed the disguised queen, “and I’m horrible to look at and getting worse”.—“You shouldn’t say that. After all, beauty comes from inside a person”.—“I’ve been telling myself this for years,” said the queen, “and I still cannot believe it. How do you stay in such perfect shape?”—“Well, first of all, I meditate and exercise by following an intense aerobic programme for three hours every day and eat only half-portions of anything placed in front of me”.¹³⁰

Is it, perhaps, time for us to change titles in fairy tales? Instead of “Beauty and the Beast”, how about “Beautiful female, on the outside and Beautiful male, on the

¹²⁷ James Finn Garner, *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories*, Macmillan Publishing 1994 (translated into Greek by Lily Exarhopoulou, *James Finn Garner. Πολιτικώς Ορθά Παραμύθια* [Politically correct fairy tales], Athens: Diavlos Publishing, 1995.

¹²⁸ James Finn Garner, *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories*, Macmillan Publishing 1994 (translated into Greek by Lily Exarhopoulou, *James Finn Garner. Πολιτικώς Ορθά Παραμύθια* [Politically correct fairy tales] Athens: Diavlos Publishing, 1995, pp. 21–22.

¹²⁹ James Finn Garner, *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories*, Macmillan Publishing 1994 (translated into Greek by Lily Exarhopoulou, *James Finn Garner. Πολιτικώς Ορθά Παραμύθια* [Politically Correct Fairy Tales] Athens: Diavlos Publishing, 1995, pp. 65–66.

¹³⁰ James Finn Garner, *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories*, Macmillan Publishing 1994 (translated into Greek by Lily Exarhopoulou, *James Finn Garner. Πολιτικώς Ορθά Παραμύθια* [Politically Correct Fairy Tales] Diavlos Publishing, 1995, p. 62.

inside”? In place of “Tommy Thumb”, we could use titles such as “The boy who fit everywhere/ Little Chickpea / Mr. Fits anywhere/ Mr. Smart Tommy Thumb”? “Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves” could turn into “Ali Baba and the 40 Who thought everything belongs to everyone/ and the 40 managers of other people’s property/ and the 40 constant borrowers”? Perhaps “The Ugly Duckling” could now carry the title “The Special Duckling/ The Unique Duckling”?¹³¹ And, finally, should we replace the apple in the Snow White fairy tale, since it alludes to the original sin and Eve’s apple for Adam, in the Bible? Perhaps we have not realized that “exaggerating leads to new stereotypes, at the other extreme” and that “fairy tales, are also meaningful at a deeper symbolic level, apart from the social one. Beauty, for example, alludes to something ‘good and kind’, internal beauty. The king and the queen represent, in a young child’s eyes, the parents’ willpower. If they get abolished for being antidemocratic, all meaning is lost”.¹³² On the other hand, ‘evil’ also has a place in fairy tales, because “if we don’t include evil in fairy tales – at least to a certain degree – then what can we possibly contrast the good with?”.¹³³

Funny examples? Unfortunately, reality is constantly overtaking us. According to press reports, Disney planned to publish a new version of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (by the Grimm brothers). However, the Seven Dwarfs will not be dwarfs, any more. Instead, three of them will be “People of Colour” and a woman.¹³⁴ As mentioned, any adaptation of a fairy tale is allowed for the sake of artistic creation. Art is not a photocopy of an original work. But, is it fair that dwarfs are disappearing from the real world and fairy tales, as if they don’t exist, in the name of political correctness? Especially these so cute and endearing fairy tale dwarves? Should we perhaps also ban other children’s fairy tales “like the *Little Red Riding Hood* which reproduces a figure that is both sexist in its depiction of female weakness and “species-tic” in its negative portrayal of the wolf? Or *The Three Little Pigs* because they praise

¹³¹ Aggeliki Giannakopoulou, ‘*Ιδεολογία στην Παιδική Λογοτεχνία. Πολιτική Ορθότητα και Παιδική Λογοτεχνία*’ [Ideology in Children’s Literature. Political Correctness and Children’s Literature], National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2015, available at: <https://opencourses.uoa.gr/courses/ECD3/>.

¹³² Eleni Svoronou, interview, in ‘Παραμύθια και πολιτική ορθότητα: Ο κακός λύκος είναι χορτοφάγος, το αρσενικό εξαφανίζεται και η Χιονάτη δεν περιμένει τον πρίγκιπα’ [Fairy tales and political correctness: The bad wolf is a vegetarian, the male disappears and Snow White doesn’t wait for the prince, available at: <https://www.protothema.gr/paidi/article/1427455/paramuthia-kai-politiki-orthotita-o-kakos-lukoseinai-hortofagos-kai-i-hionati-den-perimenei-prigipa/>, *Proto Thema*, October 27, 2023.

¹³³ Alexandra Kappatou, interview, in ‘Παραμύθια και πολιτική ορθότητα: Ο κακός λύκος είναι χορτοφάγος, το αρσενικό εξαφανίζεται και η Χιονάτη δεν περιμένει τον πρίγκιπα’ [Fairy tales and political correctness: The bad wolf is a vegetarian, the male disappears and Snow White doesn’t wait for the prince, available at <https://www.protothema.gr/paidi/article/1427455/paramuthia-kai-politiki-orthotita-o-kakos-lukoseinai-hortofagos-kai-i-hionati-den-perimenei-prigipa/>, *Proto Thema*, October 27, 2023, last accessed April, 13, 2025.

¹³⁴ See also Harald Wartenstein, ‘Über Zwerge und den Respekt für andere Kulturen’ [About dwarves and respect for other cultures], *Zeit Magazin*, August 10, 2023.

an animal which is impure in Islam?¹³⁵ If we cannot realize the difference between *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, on the one hand, and the unacceptable presence of dwarfs in “circus” performances on the other, which is indeed an insult to human dignity and not a matter of political correctness, then we probably have a serious problem as a society. Let’s hope, at least, that Disney will not also rename “Lion King” to “Lion President”. To conclude, the point is not to rewrite some well-known fairy tales, to the extent that are no longer recognizable. The point is to engage in conversation with children, for them to understand the symbolism behind fairy tales, the different beliefs of the past and the progress that human civilization has achieved, meanwhile.¹³⁶

Political Correctness Has No Political Orientation

We can conclude from the above that the “schematic” and “Manichaeian” dichotomy (conservative opponents of political correctness versus progressive/liberal supporters) is highly oversimplified and does not always correspond to reality. Even in US universities, where political correctness has been associated, by many, with an attempt to censor conservative views, there are also examples in the opposite direction, that of obstructing left/progressive positions. Typical is the reaction to the “Critical Legal Studies” movement, which very schematically could be said to represent a leftist conception of legal studies in American universities. Richard Posner described the movement as “an inassimilable and troublesome foreign matter in the body of law schools”, while Paul Carrington argued that the “nihilists” of “Critical Legal Studies” have a moral duty to leave the university. In fact, even at Harvard Law School, which is considered the center of the movement, there have been repeated attempts to prevent its supporters from being hired as faculty.¹³⁷

From this point of view, political correctness does not have a political orientation (in the broader sense of the term).¹³⁸ Even the Manichaeian logic on which

¹³⁵ Pascal Bruckner, ‘Ein nahezu perfekter Täter’ (translated into Greek by Andreas Pappas, *Ένας Σχεδόν Τέλεια Ένοχος* [An Almost Perfect Culprit]), Athens: Patakis Publications, 2022 pp. 171–172.

¹³⁶ Chrysa Kouraki, interview in, ‘Παραμύθια και πολιτική ορθότητα: Ο κακός λύκος είναι χορτοφάγος, το αρσενικό εξαφανίζεται και η Χιονάτη δεν περιμένει τον πρίγκιπα’ [Fairy tales and political correctness: The bad wolf is a vegetarian, the male disappears and Snow White doesn’t wait for the prince] available at <https://www.protothema.gr/paidi/article/1427455/paramuthia-kai-politiki-orthotita-o-kakos-lukoseinai-hortofagos-kai-i-hionati-den-perimenei-prigipa/>, *Proto Thema*, October 27, 2023, last accessed April, 13, 2025: “We always set the context beforehand, letting the parents know that we read all kinds of fairy tales to children. ‘What I’m going to read to you now is a fairy tale written many years ago when people had different beliefs. Let’s hear it and talk about it’”.

¹³⁷ See also John Wilson, *The Myth of Political Correctness. The Conservative Attack on Higher Education*, Duke University Press, 1995, p. 31 ff.

¹³⁸ In relation to political correctness in the academic field, see also J. Angelo Corlett’s, ‘Ο ρόλος της φιλοσοφίας στην ακαδημαϊκή ηθική’ [The Role of Philosophy on Academic Ethics] (translation

political correctness is based does not derive from a particular political sphere.¹³⁹ “Conservative”/“right-wing” and “progressive”/“left-wing” political correctness are “two currents” that “although they start from completely different ideological starting points, they end up at the same point: censorship and the restriction of freedom of expression”.¹⁴⁰ Lack of tolerance towards opposing views is not a “privilege” of either some leftist/progressives or some right/conservatives.¹⁴¹ Examples, such as Michelangelo’s “David” or Ersi Sotiropoulos’ *Zigzag through Bitter-Orange Trees* which has been requested to be withdrawn from school libraries¹⁴² following court decision, similarly for pornographic material,¹⁴³ suggest that political correctness may well take the form of puritanism and hypocritical prudery.¹⁴⁴ Several decades

into Greek by Nikos Kuzinos), in Philemon Peonidis/Asterios-Evangelos Kechagias/ Dimitrios Tsioulas (eds), Athens: Okto Publications, 2015, p. 89 [98–99]: “However, the ethics of academic freedom should also provide a fairly calculated counterweight to the frequent institutionalization of political correctness, which translates itself into an attempt by many on both the Right and the Left to restrict [...] the way in which academic staff and students express themselves”.

¹³⁹ One only has to recall George W. Bush’s ‘excommunication’ on September 20, 2001 (a few days after the attack on the Twin Towers) in his speech to Congress, where he addressed all nations saying: “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists”. See on this Yascha Mounk, *The Identity Trap. A Story of Ideas and Power in Our Time*, London: Allen Lane - Penguin Books, 2023, p. 122.

¹⁴⁰ Stavros Zoumboulakis, ‘Ιχνη βαρβαρότητας’ [Traces of barbarism], *Kathimerini*, 30 March 2023.

¹⁴¹ See also John Wilson, *The Myth of Political Correctness: The Conservative Attack on Higher Education*, Duke University Press, 1995, especially p. 31 ff., on ‘conservative’ political correctness in American universities.

¹⁴² Although the pressure to withdraw books from school libraries is not political either. See, for example, Evi Samara, ‘Πολιτική ορθότητα και λογοτεχνία: Κλασικά βιβλία στο μικροσκόπιο’ [Political correctness and literature: Classic books under the microscope], available at: <https://www.maxmag.gr/politismos/koinonia/politiki-orthotita-kai-logotechnia-klasika-vivlia-sto-mikroskopiio/>: “In recent years, US school libraries have been depleted because of bans. And it’s not just conservative groups that are banning books in the US. The shelves are being emptied from the other wing as well. One mother’s protest was enough for the removal of two classics of American literature. Specifically, the books *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain were accused of racist language. The complaint concerned the misuse of the word ‘nigger’. This is not the first time that these books have been attacked. Mark Twain’s book has been removed from libraries for other reasons, such as the “coarse” language he uses. And Harper Lee’s adventures date back to the 1960s, with accusations of racial bigotry, immorality, crude scenes (description of a near-rape). It has been banned by right-wing, conservative organizations as well as left-wing, progressive groups.”

¹⁴³ See Eleni Kyramargou, ‘Ζιγκ ζαγκ στις νερατζιές’ [Zigzag through the Bitter-Orange Trees], in Penelope Petsini and Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *Dictionary of Censorship in Greece. Stunted democracy, dictatorship, transition to democracy*, Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 2018, pp. 335 ff.

¹⁴⁴ See Eva Stamos, ‘Πολιτική ορθότητα και νέες μορφές αποκλεισμού’ [Political correctness and new forms of exclusion], *Avgi*, 18 June 2023: “In its uncritical and mechanistic application, political correctness seems to lead to the invention of new divisions, the consolidation of new forms of isolation and the restriction of the free expression of ideas. Removal of a painting from the gallery wall and of a book from the shelf of the public library reinforces the view that the public needs strict guidance from ‘experts’ and protection from any negative ‘side effects’ of art, since they are unable

may have passed since 1957, when a painting by Tsarouchis with a sailor next to a naked man provoked strong reaction on the part of the Navy leadership, leading to withdrawal of the work from the “Armos” exhibition, but similar incidents have been repeated, later.¹⁴⁵ In the 1982 school textbook *Modern Greek readings* for the last year of secondary education, Constantine Cavafy’s “Ithaca” poem was censored and the lines “και ηδονικά μυρωδικά κάθε λογής” [sensual perfumes of every kind—as many sensual perfumes as you can] were “disappearing” from the poem¹⁴⁶ But also in the *Anthology of Lyric Poetry* of the last year of middle school, in Sappho’s “Ode to Aphrodite”, the agents in the passage of the poem changed gender (in the lines) ‘Ποια και πάλι θες η Πειθώ να φέρει στην αγάπη σου Σαπφώ, ποια σ’ αδικάει,’ [And who^{+female suffix} the lovely/ One beloved that wouldst lure to loving?/ Sappho who^{+female suffix} wrongs thee?] became [‘And who^{+male suffix} the lovely/ One beloved that wouldst lure to loving?/ Sappho who wrongs^{+male suffix} thee?]. The then Minister of Education justified gender shift by saying that one of the surviving versions read who^{+male suffix}, instead of who^{+female suffix}.¹⁴⁷

Around the same time (1984), when public television was broadcasting Nikos Alevras’ film *A Hail of Bullets*, a large number of viewers complained by phone about the provocative content of the film which resulted in interrupting screening!¹⁴⁸ But it is not only the sexual gloss of an artistic work that can trigger the “conservative reflexes” of political correctness. The same is true of any artistic expression that offends the religious feelings of believers. Apart from the aforementioned incident with Martin Scorsese’s *The Last Temptation* in Athenian cinemas, in the late 1980s, in the more recent past, the Greek Cyber Crime Division took down a satirical Facebook account bearing the fictitious name “Elder Pastitsios” and its creator was arrested.¹⁴⁹ The ‘account name’ was a pun on the name of Saint Paisios (a Greek Cappadocian monk of the twentieth century who became widely known for his monastic life and work). I don’t know if it is appropriate and truly humorous to make puns on the

to understand the historical or socio-political context of an important visual or literary work. In my view, this elitist attitude marks society’s return to conservatism and moral puritanism”.

¹⁴⁵ See Evgenios Matthiopoulos, The censorship of the nude in art, *Archiotaxio* 22 (Censorship and democracy. The post-civil war state and the transition to democracy), pp. 9 ff. Shortly afterwards, in 1964, Dimitris Kollatos’ film, *Elies [Olives]*, was described in the press as obscene, because the protagonist appeared ‘half-naked with a topless gown’. See Maria Halkou, Expanding the boundaries of the ‘permissible’, *Archiotaxio* 22 (Censorship and democracy. The post-civil war state and the transition to democracy), November 2020, pp. 29 ff.

¹⁴⁶ *Anti*, Issue 215/October 1, 1982.

¹⁴⁷ *Anti*, Issue 216/October 15, 1982 and 217/October 29, 1982.

¹⁴⁸ See Dimitris Kehris, ‘Οι σφαίρες πέφτουν σαν το χαλάζι και ο τραυματισμένος καλλιτέχνης ανασπενάζει’ [The bullets fall like hail and the wounded artist sighs], in Penelope Petsini and Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *Dictionary of Censorship in Greece. Stunted democracy, dictatorship, and transition to democracy*, Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 2018, pp. 461 ff.

¹⁴⁹ Stratis Bournazos, “Elder Pastitsios”, in: Penelope Petsini/Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *Dictionary of Censorship in Greece. Stunted democracy, dictatorship, and transition to democracy*, Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 2018, pp. 332 ff., Thomas Tsakalakis, *Political Correctness: A Sociocultural Black Hole*, London: Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 2021, p. 28.

name of the (now canonized) Elder, a holy person for Christian believers. Also, having had the chance to meet him in his cell, on Mount Athos, I can confirm that he was indeed a man who embodied the model of asceticism, in its simple form. Does this mean that one would forbid someone else from using a (potentially unfortunate) satire, especially when it does not probably target Elder Paisios, but the religiosity of certain believers? After all, anyone who disagrees with the content of this Facebook account may as well not visit it.

The most recent manifestation of “conservative” political correctness in Greece was the incident with Georgia Lale’s work “Neighborhood Guilt” (known as the “pink flag”), which symbolized violence against women in Greek society. The work was exhibited at the Greek Consulate, in New York and then withdrawn, after strong reactions that spoke of desecration of the national symbol. I wouldn’t think that argumentation is necessary for confirming that flags and national symbols are timeless objects of inspired artistic creation. Indeed, leading works on the flag adorn public buildings, such as the famous work “Exodus” by Christos Bokoros (inspired by the Exodus of Messolonghi), which was placed in a prominent position in the Presidential Mansion.¹⁵⁰ The very theme of the flag with blood is not original in the history of art. One need only recall Faith Ringgold’s painting “The Flag is Bleeding” which is considered one of the leading works of contemporary American art and is on display at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. A flag on the flagpole of public buildings is one thing, that cannot be tampered with, and quite another to see a flag as an object of artistic creation that operates at a metaphorical and allegorical level and is protected by artistic freedom in private and public spaces.

Apart from a ‘conservative’ political correctness, especially on national and religious matters, there is also a ‘progressive’ political correctness, on issues such as those of the Greek Civil War (1946–1949). The disastrous Civil War (with tens of thousands of deaths on both sides), and despite the fact that no more wars were being fought at the time, was followed by a post-Civil War state, which enacted fierce persecutions of the defeated, which took the form of executions, deportations, imprisonment and removal from the state apparatus. The Greek Civil War was named by the victors “Guerrilla warfare”, the government army was named “National Army” (as if the supporters of the opposite side had no national consciousness) and “anniversaries” were set to celebrate the victory of government forces, forgetting that it was fratricidal war. All this culminated, of course, in April’s dictatorship (1967–1974). Things started to change with the Transition to Democracy. One would assume that we would realize the negative effect of a civil war, on either side,¹⁵¹ we would learn

¹⁵⁰ See ‘Ο πίνακας “Εξόδος” του Χρήστου Μποκόρου δωρήθηκε στην Προεδρία της Δημοκρατίας’ [The painting “Exodus” by Christos Bokoros was donated to the Presidency of the Republic, available at: <https://www.iefimerida.gr/politismos/o-pinakas-exodos-toy-hristoy-mpokoroy-dorith-ike-stin-proedria-tis-dimokratias>, *Iefimerida*, December 28, 2021.

¹⁵¹ Civil war is the worst form of war, because it is “war with a name”. A foreign invader or conqueror will eventually leave. But in a civil war it is the neighbour, the relative, the fellow villager who may have killed your parent, father or (worse) your child. The political-ideological dispute becomes personal, and besides the “opponent” is next to you, so that you can take revenge at any time. And even worse, there is a risk that the rage will be passed down from generation to generation.

from mistakes of the past and avoid repeating them in the future but, perhaps because of the prosecutions of the post-civil-war state, a type of political correctness emerged in the form of “reverse nationalism”, in favour of the defeated.¹⁵² In fact, I doubt if there could be such a characterization of a civil war where brother fights brother, so that by definition everyone is defeated. As Thanassis Valtinos has observed, “There was no losing side. Whether in quotation marks or not. Nor was there a winner, of course. The distinction between them, which is persistently maintained, was an easy ideological construction that relieved many, on both sides. What truly existed was a defeated population. And that was tragic”.¹⁵³

In this context, a group of people attempted to prevent the screening of a film adaptation of Nikos Gatzoyannis’ book “Eleni”, in 1986, because it projected crimes of the rebels against Nikos Gatzoyannis’ family, in a village of Epirus, Greece. In fact, some protesters bought tickets and tried to destroy the screens and the projecting apparatus. One could ask why all these protests have arisen.¹⁵⁴ Regardless of what is recorded in the book or the film, isn’t it clear that, in a civil war, crimes are committed on both sides? This example is not only typical in terms of restricting artistic freedom for the sake of political correctness. It suggests that political correctness often has a selective perspective,¹⁵⁵ hindering expression of opinion, in only one direction. The handling of Greek Civil War again has high educational value. While, the events on the film “Eleni” did emerge, in the 2010s a documentary, produced by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Greece entitled *What if Grammos fell, We will win*, was screened. What was mentioned by party officials at the first screening of the documentary on the occasion of the 70 anniversary of the Hellenic Democratic Army, was the following: “In a while, through the documentary, you will find yourselves back in your glorious mountains, your machine guns nests, on untrodden mountain peaks [...] all the great moments will come to life before you, your beloved ones, joys, sorrows, songs, the entire grandeur of the Hellenic Democratic Army (ΔΣΕ) [...] The celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Hellenic Democratic Army (ΔΣΕ) also

¹⁵² See also Penelope Petsini, ‘Από τον «κατευνασμό των πολιτικών παθών» στη «δεξιά κουλτούρα» [From “appeasing political passions” to the “right culture”] *Archeiotaxio* 22 (Censorship and democracy. Post-civil-war state and transition to democracy), November 2020, p. 93 [111]. With reference to the enormous box office success (over 600,000 tickets) of Nikos Tzima’s film, *Ο άνθρωπος με το γαρόφαλλο* [The Man with the Clove] (1980), the following has been suggested: “The great success of the film came to confirm an undisputed hegemony of the Left, in the Transition to Democracy, in terms of the narrative of traumatic past: losers of the Civil War battlefield had turned into winners in the field of ethics and culture”.

¹⁵³ Thanassis Valtinos, ‘Η επικίνδυνη αναγκαιότητα της μνήμης’ [The dangerous necessity of memory] (discussion with Stelios Rogkakos), *Anti*, issue 557, 5 August 1994.

¹⁵⁴ See Manos Avgeridis, ‘Eleni’, in Penelope Petsini and Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *Dictionary of Censorship in Greece. Stunted democracy, dictatorship, and transition to democracy*, Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 2018, pp. 41, ff., Thomas Tsakalakis, *Political Correctness: A Socio-cultural Black Hole*, London: Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 2021, p. 23 ff.

¹⁵⁵ A selective approach to history also has deep political significance. As George Orwell reminds us, in 1984 (translation into Greek by Nina Mparti, Athens: Kaktos Publications, 1999, p. 270): “Whoever controls the past controls the future. Whoever controls the present controls the past”.

embeds – among other things – a special project for placing commemorative monuments¹⁵⁶ to highlight this great epic”.¹⁵⁷ Political correctness thus favours inequality and the practice of double standards, selectively undermining, but in its core, freedom of art.

Artistic Freedom. A Right, Not an Obligation to Create Art with a Specific Content

Furthermore, it has been suggested that in order to receive support or to succeed in an artistic project of any kind (book, film, theatrical performance), the creator should have positively integrated minority-related roles and incidents that promote inclusion. Certainly, equal treatment of all people, regardless of gender, skin colour, ethnic origin or sexual orientation is highly important in modern civilization, including law. A lot has been achieved towards this goal and a lot remains to be done. However, this is one thing, and quite another to implicitly impose an “inclusive” agenda, on artistic works. If this occurs for the sake of political correctness, it seems extremely problematic. It is now, obvious, for instance, that artistic work can contain homosexual erotic scenes. Homosexual love it is not just a reality. It is also a manifestation of everyone’s freedom. Fortunately, we are far from the time when the Greek ‘National Council for Radio and Television’ imposed a fine on a TV channel for showing two men kissing, in a Christopher Papakaliatis series.¹⁵⁸ However, having a “sensitivity reader” noting on the margin of a script that a young girl’s love affair, in the scenario,

¹⁵⁶ Speaking of monuments, the following experience is perhaps worth mentioning: at the annual joint meeting of Postgraduate Public Law Programmes of the Law Schools of The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in collaboration with the “Aristovoulos Manesis” Group, we visited villages on Gramos (4th highest Greek mountain, 2520 metres) and the National Reconciliation Park. A shocking experience, where battles of the Greek Civil War took place). Inside the park of the ‘national reconciliation’, there are two separate monuments a few kilometers away from each other: one for the fallen partisans and the other for the fallen soldiers of the governmental side. One may wonder when this will end.

¹⁵⁷ See Spyros Vlachopoulos, ‘Selective memory and oblivion of the Greek Civil War’, available at <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/916604/epilektiki-mnimi-kai-lithi-toy-emfylioy-polemoy/>, *Kathimerini*, July 1, 2017, last accessed April 14, 2025.

¹⁵⁸ See Valia Tsigirioti, ‘To Φιλί του Παπακαλιάτη’ [Papakaliatis’ kiss], in Penelope Petsini and Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *Dictionary of Censorship in Greece. Stunted democracy, dictatorship, and transition to democracy*, Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 2018, pp. 520 ff., and Council of State 3490/2006, which cancelled the decision on the fee, on the grounds that “a mere presentation of a scene, which simply expresses a homosexual romantic desire with a kiss and without a pornographic content or profanity, cannot in any way be considered to confer upon the controversial film a low and degraded quality level, which is prohibited by the Constitution and renders it blameworthy.

Depicting, in the contested intermediate scene, an expression of homosexual romantic desire represents an existing social reality, which relates to a social group among the many that make up an open and modern democratic society, whose romantic choices are not only not condemned by the constitutional order of the country, but on the contrary, are mandated by the provisions of Articles 2 (respect and protection of human value) and Article 5, par. 1 (protection of personal freedom), as

should be with another girl, and not with a man,¹⁵⁹ is quite different. The hypocrisy and freedom deprivation that prevailed until a few decades ago, in matters of sexual self-determination is one thing, and it is a different thing when an actor may miss an opportunity to play a homosexual role, because they are not openly homosexual themselves.¹⁶⁰ It is one thing not to exclude social groups from their representation in works of art, and another to have “Diversity Checklists”, on the basis of which the funding of a film is determined (among other things), according to, e.g., whether there are enough non-white people in the film, whether genders are equally represented etc.^{161,162}

Artistic freedom is a right, not an obligation of artful creation with specific content. The so-called positive measures for removing social inequalities (e.g., quotas in favour of one gender when filling in public offices) which are constitutionally justified (Article 116, par. 2 of the current Greek Constitution), should remain within the confines of the Law, letting artists shape their artistic conception, away from indirect coercion. That’s why tools like the “Bechdel Test” are extremely problematic: regardless of how it started and its many different versions, it sets quantitative criteria to determine whether a film respects the equality of men and women. In fact, the «Bechdel Test», or other similar ones, seems to have been extended to art products as a criterion for affirming or denying equal treatment for LGBT+ community, non-white people and ethnic minorities.¹⁶³ As has been pointed out, the imposition of quotas of any kind in art “is no longer a creation but something like elections with a simple proportional representation. [...] Furthermore, we confuse two things: good intentions and talent, which has nothing to do with quotas and ‘fair distribution’ [...] Is it possible that we are facing a kind of conformism sprinkled with aesthetics, where priority is no longer given to works because of their quality but to

a manifestation of free choice of its members, to be fully respected and expressed in works of art, just as the romantic choices and sensitivities of other groups within the population of the country”.

¹⁵⁹ See Juli Zeh, ‘Die Schriftstellerin: Angst ist gefährlich [The author: Fear is dangerous], *Die Zeit*, April 20, 2023.

¹⁶⁰ See Matthias Brenner ‘Der Intendat: Radierer im Hirn’ [The Intended: Eraser in the brain], *Die Zeit*, April 20, 2023.

¹⁶¹ See Helge Albers, ‘Der Filmförderer: Mehr Diversity!’ [The film funder: More diversity], *Die Zeit*, April 20, 2023.

¹⁶² See also Thomas Tsakalakis, ‘Η αριστερόστροφη πολιτική ορθότητα λειτουργεί ως ένα είδος βαλβίδας ασφαλείας για το ίδιο το σύστημα.’ [Leftward-oriented political correctness acts as a kind of safety valve for the system itself], available at: <https://www.documentoneews.gr/article/thomas-tsakalakis-h-aristerostrofi-politiki-orthotita-kataligei-na-leitoyrgei-os-ena-eidos-exypiretikisval-vidas-asfaleias>, October 18, 2021: “A striking example of the irrationality of political correctness and the consequent ‘cancel culture’ stance is what happened to a friend of a former student of mine: the artist in question was doing her master’s in fine arts at an American university, and her professors accused her of painting only white people. The thing is, the girl only did portraits of her (all-white) Icelandic family”.

¹⁶³ See Thomas Tsakalakis, *Political Correctness: A Sociocultural Black Hole*, London: Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 2021, pp. 62 ff. In particular «Bechdel Test» investigates whether at least two women appear in an artwork, who are conversing with each other and not only in relation to men. The example Thomas Tsakalakis refers to, in relation to the series *Chernobyl* and the criticism it attracted for using only white actors, is interesting and instructive.

artists because of their origin?”¹⁶⁴ After all, artists’ attempt to incorporate rules of political correctness takes away from art, the creative imagination and its multidimensional character: “Hemingway is being sidelined for the sake of the minor Gary Soto, because Mexican–American descent counts more than literary merit. [...] And if Thomas Mann finds a place in university programmes it’s because his life and work are commented upon with reference to homosexuality. But can creative imagination or ironic aestheticism fit into the narrow corset of sexual preference? [...] All of these approaches are supposed to assume a kind of anti-puritanism. But they are so restrictive, so confining, so idealistic, that the work of art, having only the value of an example, is lost or even destroyed. Is it an anti-puritanism perspective, or a new puritanism?¹⁶⁵”.

¹⁶⁴ Pascal Bruckner, *Ένας Σχεδόν Τέλειος Ένοχος* [*An Almost Perfect Culprit*, translation into Greek by Andreas Pappas], Athens: Patakis Publications, 2022, pp. 161–162, 169–170, who also cites the following example: “In Baltimore, the director of the Museum of Modern Arts sold several paintings of the collections including a Rauschenberg and a Warhol, “to buy works by artists who were underrepresented, in this case, African–Americans and women”. What will the visitor think for these paintings? That they are not exhibited because of their originality or audacity, but because their creator is African–American or female. Is there anything more derogatory and degrading?”.

¹⁶⁵ Nikos Bakounakis, ‘Ο νέος πουριτανισμός’ [The new Puritanism], available in: <https://www.tovima.gr/2008/11/24/books-ideas/o-neos-poyritanismos/> *To Vima*, November 24, 2008.

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Chapter 4

‘Thematic’ and ‘Ad Hominem’ Political Correctness



Political correctness could roughly be categorised into two major categories. The ‘thematic’ political correctness, which restricts or even prohibits discussion of certain topics and the use of certain words, and on the ‘ad hominem’ (personalized) political correctness, which targets certain people, because of their unorthodox stance or their history, in general. ‘Thematic’ political correctness is dangerous for a democratic organization of society, to the extent that it hinders free discussion of certain issues and places them in ‘molds’ of political appropriateness. As mentioned, democracy assumes an informed and thoughtful citizen and, consequently, favours a free democratic dialogue, on matters of public interest.

‘Ad hominem’ political correctness, which is gaining ground, is no less dangerous. In personalized political correctness, it’s not what someone writes or says that is criticized, but the persons themselves. By extension, there is no dialogue on the merits of a case, on the basis of arguments and counter-arguments; the positions of the political-correctness-offender are rejected by definition, simply because they come from them. In the spirit of cancel culture, the ‘offender’ is isolated socially and professionally, even for a long time¹ since their mistakes are reproduced on the internet.² And as suggested, “internet does not forget” despite the efforts of legal

¹ See also Ilias Maglinis, ‘Μεταλλάξεις’ [Mutations], available in <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/561360625/metallaxeis2/> *Kathimerini*, May 12, 2021: “In America right now, and by extension to the rest of the Western world the label of ‘misogyny’ or ‘sexist’ is beginning to dangerously resemble that of ‘communist’ in the McCarthy era. Not only because these characterizations alone are enough to condemn and ostracize someone, even without tangible evidence, but also because the concepts, all of them (‘misogynist’ today and ‘communist’ in the McCarthy era), are semantically extendable, depending on the appetite of the offender and the mood of the moment.

² For a typical example, see Ioanna Vlastou, ‘Πού πήγε η επιείκεια;’ [Where has the leniency gone?], available in: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/561309181/poy-pige-i-epieikeia/>, *Kathimerini*, March 28, 2021: “The 27 year old American journalist, of mixed racial origin, Alexi McAmonte was about to take on her duties as director of *Vogue*’s youth magazine. But the collaboration with *Teen Vogue* did not succeed, as at the last minute someone dug up something from the past. Ten years ago, the 17-year-old tweeted “haha you are so gay” and expressed concern that

order (See in particular the right to oblivion³), intended to allow people to live without their mistakes.

Furthermore, based on a Manichaeic logic of the absolute distinction between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ and classifying people into acceptable and unacceptable, personalized political correctness subjects historical personalities to ‘purity tests’, disconnected from the historical context in which they acted. A typical example is the destruction of statues. Obviously, statues of conquerors or dictators have no place in public spaces. Things however, become more complicated, when statues are demolished and casts of great historical figures are removed for some negative aspect of them. Is it right for example, to remove, from New York Town Hall, the bust of Thomas Jefferson, a leading scholar and statesman, an interlocutor of Adamantios Korais and main author of the United States Declaration of Independence, because he owned slaves,^{4,5}? Can this negative aspect of Thomas Jefferson’s life be seen apart

she would wake up in the morning with ‘Asian puffy eyes’—comments that she deleted from her account and apologized for. At the job interview she did not fail to mention them. But nothing is erased from our digital world, nothing fades. There is always a remnant to feed the witch hunt. Past photos, past statements may expose anyone and invalidate them forever.

³ Article 17 of the General Data Protection Regulation.

⁴ Recent further examples: Attempts to remove statues of Catherine the Great (founder of the city) from Odessa, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, of Jefferson Davis (President of the Confederate States) in the USA, of Edward Colston (slave trader and benefactor of the city) from Bristol, of Robert Milligan (also a slave trader) from the London Museum, of Leopold II because of his colonial policy, from the cities of Belgium. Among other things, it was also decided to remove the statue of the former President of the United States of America, Theodore Roosevelt, from the entrance to the American Museum of Natural History in New York, because it shows him on horseback accompanied by a pedestrian Indian and a pedestrian African-American.

⁵ On the contradictions of this approach, see also Andreas Drymiotis, ‘Να καούν όλα τα έργα του Picasso!’ [Let all Picasso’s works burn!], available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/561438025/na-kaoun-ola-ta-erga-toy-picasso/>, *Kathimerini*, July 18, 2021: “In the same spirit, on 27/8/2020 the bust of the founder of the British Museum, Sir Hans Sloane, was removed from the entrance. Sloane donated 71,000 objects to the British nation, which formed the basis of the British Museum, the British Library and the British Museum of Natural History. The rationale for Sloane’s deposition is that he created his fortune by exploiting plantations in the Caribbean where slaves worked! Let’s get serious. Does this make sense to you? Not to me. If Sloane’s money is stained with the blood of slaves, then all 71,000 items he acquired with that money are bloodstained and should be destroyed. We depose the criminal but we retain and enjoy the product of the crime. This is not logic, but hypocrisy.”

from the stage of human civilization, at the time, and tarnish his overall contribution, for which the bust obviously was made,^{6,7} In terms of ‘ad hominem’ political correctness, we should, also, refrain from reading and reflecting on the works of the German jurist and political theorist, Carl Schmitt. Despite the fact that he closely collaborated with the National Socialist regime of Hitler’s Germany, he is assumed to have authored highly significant works and has shaped, like few others, the theory of public law, refining a number of key concepts, such as ‘politics’, ‘emergency’, and the ‘sovereign state’ apparatus. The dark chapter in Carl Schmitt’s life did not prevent engagement with his work, in fact, interestingly, it has been studied more extensively than that of his great theoretical adversary and defender of democracy and parliamentarism, Hans Kelsen. Let alone Winston Churchill, to whom we owe the victory in World War II, to a great extent. Should we erase this immense contribution to

⁶ See also Giorgos Th. Mavrogordatos in Giorgos Th. Mavrogordatos and Charis Exertzoglou, ‘Ντιμπέιτ. Αποκαθίλωση ή διατήρηση; Αγάλματα, δημόσιος χώρος και ιστορική μνήμη’ [Debate. Removal or preservation? Statues, public space, and historical memory] (edited by Nikolas Zois), ‘History Pages’, *Kathimerini* 2/2023, p. 94 [100], who adds: “No past is entirely innocent and unblemished when viewed through today’s eyes, through the prism of contemporary beliefs and prejudices. After all, neither is the present innocent and unblemished!” See also Michael Paschalis, ‘Στον εφιαλτικό κόσμο του George Orwell’ [In the nightmarish world of George Orwell], available at: <https://www.tanea.gr/2020/07/11/opinions/ta-oria-tis-politikisorthotitas/>: “Where Orwell is undoubtedly vindicated is in regard to revision of history.” In the ‘1984’ society, “all records are destroyed or falsified, books are rewritten, paintings are repainted, statues and streets are renamed, dates are altered.” We recently experienced and continue to experience verbal and practical interventions in history, in the context of reactions against police violence against black citizens of the United States. See, however, Michelle Goldberg, ‘Michelle Goldberg in Conversation with Rudyard Griffiths’, in Stephen Fry, Jordan Peterson, Michael Eric Dyson and Michelle Goldberg (eds), *Political Correctness Gone Mad?*, London: Oneworld Publications, 2018, p. 13 [14]: “I would disagree, for example, with his [Stephen Fry’s] fierce opposition to tearing down statues of figures we now revile, just because I think cultures change and people should be allowed to decide who they honour, celebrate, and commemorate”.

⁷ On the broader issue of statue removals and monuments of controversial figures, or historical events from public spaces, see detailed analysis by Douglas Murray, *Ο πόλεμος ενάντια στη Δύση. Επικρατώντας σε μια εποχή ανορθολογισμού* [The war on the West. Prevailing in an Age of Unreason] (translated into Greek by Michalis Katsimitsis), Athens: Liberal Books, 2023, pp. 150 ff., who provides numerous examples of statue removals, including those of Cristoforo Colombo, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Winston Churchill. See also Laure Murat, *Ποιος ακυρώνει τι; Σκέψεις για την cancel culture* [*Who Cancels What? Reflections on Cancel Culture*—translated into Greek by Giannis Ktenas, Athens: Polis Publications, 2022, pp. 13 ff. Anna Maria Droumbouki, *Μνημονικοί Τόποι και Δημόσια Ιστορία του Β΄ Παγκοσμίου Πολέμου στην Ελλάδα—μια συγκριτική προσέγγιση* [Memory Sites and Public History of World War II in Greece—A Comparative Approach, PhD Dissertation, Department of History and Archaeology, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens], 2014, http://repository.edulll.gr/edulll/retrieve/11930/3610_Δρουμπου_υκη_διατριβή.pdf, Paschos Mandravelis, ‘Ούτε άσπρο ούτε μαύρο’ [Neither Black nor White], in *woke. The Awakening Movement*, *Kathimerini* (special edition), April, 28, 2024, p. 27 [30 ff.]; Giorgos Th. Mavrogordatos and Charis Exertzoglou, ‘Ντιμπέιτ. Αποκαθίλωση ή διατήρηση; Αγάλματα, δημόσιος χώρος και ιστορική μνήμη’ [Debate. Removal or Preservation? Statues, Public Space, and Historical Memory] in Nikolas Zois (ed.), *History Pages (Kathimerini)*, 2/2023, pp. 94 ff.; Alexandros Teneketzis, ‘Τα μνημεία για τον Β΄ Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο. Εικονομαχίες στην Ευρώπη του Ψυχρού Πολέμου (1945-1975)’ [Monuments on World War II. Iconoclasm in Cold War Europe (1945-1975)], Foreword: Evgenios Matthiopoulos, Athens: Asini Publications, 2020.

humanity and demolish his statues because he also “made an incalculable number of racist statements, from “I hate Indians [...] those beastly people with their beastly religion”, to glorifying the ‘superior [white] race’, which he justified for exterminating Native Americans and Aboriginal Australians”.⁸ Speaking of Churchill, an “apotheosis” of political correctness regarding his figure is found in an exhibition on British history, where one of his classic photographs had his iconic cigar photoshopped out.⁹

⁸ Laure Murat, ‘Ποιος ακυρώνει τι; Σκέψεις για την cancel culture’ [*Who Cancels What? Reflections on Cancel Culture*, translated into Greek by Giannis Ktenas], Athens: Polis Publications, 2022, p. 37. On the oversimplified nature of the intense and aphoristic criticism of Churchill, see Douglas Murray, *Ο πόλεμος ενάντια στη Δύση. Επικρατώντας σε μια εποχή ανορθολογισμού* [The war on the West. Prevailing in an Age of Unreason, translated into Greek by Michalis Katsimitsis], Athens: Liberal Books, 2023, pp. 195 ff.

⁹ See also Stratis Aggelis, ‘Η αλήθεια πίσω από τις ψεύτικες εικόνες’ [The Truth Behind Fake Images], *To Vima*, March 17, 2024.

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Chapter 5

Digression: Political Correctness and Its Relationship to the Rise of Populism



The rise of populism in modern democracies is a multifactorial and multifaceted phenomenon¹ The strengthening of populists, who promise easy solutions to complex problems, stems from various causes that have been discussed in the theory. One may reasonably assume that populism is related to political correctness. When someone is afraid of speaking out and expressing an opinion that may be considered ‘unorthodox’, ‘obscurantist’, ‘anachronistic’ or ‘out of the mainstream, they experience the “cancel culture” effect and social isolation, and are highly likely to turn to populism. A shared trait among populists is that they present themselves as unconventional politicians who may ‘liberate’ citizens from political correctness constraints and address issues that traditional, ‘trapped’ politicians dare not tackle. However, beyond the multiple contradictions of populists, what has perhaps not been sufficiently highlighted is that the very populist politicians are themselves agents of political correctness—perhaps a different one, but political correctness, nonetheless.

¹ See, among others, Ioannis Vartzopoulos, Thanos Veremis, Vasiliki Georgiadou, Nikos Demertzis, Nikos Dimou, Andreas Pantazopoulos, Fr. Charalambos Papadopoulos, Stelios Ramfos, Stelios Stylianidis, Soti Triantafyllou, *Ο πειρασμός του λαϊκισμού και οι περιπέτειες του λόγου* [The temptation of populism and the adventures of discourse], Athens: Armos Publications, 2016; Stamos Papastamou, Gerasimos Prodromitis, Tasos Pappas, *Λαϊκισμός: Μια ατίθαση λέξη* [Populism: A Wild Word], Athens: Pedio Publications, 2022; Giannis Stavrakakis, *Λαϊκισμός. Μύθοι, Στερεότυπα και Αναπροσανατολισμοί* [Populism. Myths, Stereotypes, and Reorientations], Athens: Hellenic Open University, 2019.

A typical example is Donald Trump.² While he portrays himself as the fiercest opponent of political correctness, a closer examination of his language reveals that he, too, could be seen as an advocate of it, albeit in a way that differs from “progressive-liberal” political correctness; he favours one tailored to features of conservative audiences. It has been suggested, for instance, that Donald Trump, in his highly skeptical stance toward environmental protection, avoids using the term “climate change” and instead prefers “weather extremes”.³

The remarks confirm what has been emphasized multiple times, namely, that political correctness is a universal phenomenon that transcends the traditional Left–Right division. However, when political correctness hinders or excludes expression of a conservative audience that feels blocked from voicing its stance on issues, such as immigration, abortion, biological versus social gender, or same-sex parenting (even when discursively debated, without hostility), and to the extent that ‘conservative’ parties in Europe do not largely represent the “socially conservative” voter, a segment of this audience shifts towards the far right.⁴ It has been rightfully observed that, even with a progressive orientation, political correctness in these matters functions as a kind of “piety” among the political elite, which (alongside many other factors) drives segments of society towards the so-called anti-systemic forces.⁵ A typical

² On the relationship between political correctness and the rise of Donald Trump, see Thomas Tsakalakis, *Political Correctness: A Sociocultural Black Hole*, London: Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 2021, pp. 5 ff., Tina Mandilara, ‘Πολιτική ορθότητα: Η αβάσταχτη ελαφρότητα του υπαρκτού λόγου και το αβάσταχτο βάρος της απουσίας πράξης’ [Political Correctness: The unbearable lightness of existing discourse and the unbearable weight of no action], available at: lifo.gr/stiles/politiki-orthotita-ergaleio-isotitas-i-periorismos-tis-eleytherias-tis-ekfrasis, *Lifo*, and Kostas Papachristou, ‘Πολιτική ορθότητα και αμερικανικές εκλογές’ [Political correctness and the U.S. elections], available at: <https://www.tovima.gr/2020/06/23/opinions/politiki-orthotita-kai-amerikanikes-ekloges/>, *To Vima*, June 23, 2020.

³ See also Spyros Moschonas, ‘Τελικά η πολιτική ορθότητα είναι εργαλείο ισότητας ή περιορίζει την ελευθερία της έκφρασης;’ [Is Political Correctness a Tool for Equality or a Restriction of Freedom of Expression?], available at: <https://www.lifo.gr/stiles/politiki-orthotita-ergaleio-isotitas-i-periorismos-tiseleytherias-tis-ekfrasis>, *Lifo*. It is worth noting that skepticism or a negative attitude towards environmental protection measures is typical not only of the Republican Party (see Jeff Sparrow, *Trigger Warnings. Political Correctness and the Rise of the Right*, Melbourne: Scribe, 2018, pp. 100 ff.), but also of far-right parties in Europe. A notable example is the ‘*Alternative für Deutschland*’ [An Alternative for Germany]: their official website suggests that there is no scientific consensus that climate change is primarily human-induced (see website: <https://www.afd.de/energie-umwelt-klima/>, last accessed: September 20, 2023). See also Vasiliki Georgiadiou, ‘Κλιματική κρίση και άκρα δεξιά’ [Climate crisis and the far right], *To Vima, Nees Epoches*, April 14, 2024: “Initiatives against climate change are perceived among far-right advocates as a ‘pointless hobby’ (Geert Wilders, PVV), a branch of ‘cultural Marxism’ (VOX), which turns Europe ‘into a deindustrialized space’ (AfD), driven by a cosmopolitan elite”.

⁴ See also Meletis Meletopoulos, ‘Η πολιτική επιστήμη και η πολιτική ορθότητα’ [Political science and political correctness], available at <https://www.in.gr/2022/04/21/apopsi/politikiepistimi-kai-politiki-orthotita/>, *in.gr*, April 22, 2022.

⁵ See Francis Fukuyama, *Ταντότητα. Η Απαίτηση για Αξιοπρέπεια και η Πολιτική της Μνησικακίας* [Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment] (translated into Greek by Stavros V. Gavalas, edited by Andromachi Spanou), Athens: Ropi Publications, 2018, p. 178, in relation

example of such political correctness is the conference that was scheduled to take place in 2021 entitled “*First Panhellenic Conference on Fertility and Reproductive Autonomy: Limits and Choices*”. The issue, in this case, is not the promotional spot for the conference, which indeed reproduced outdated and simplistic stereotypes about the woman who can no longer have children, because she had devoted herself to her career. Nor was (the issue) the criticism regarding the conference’s one-sided composition. Would it be the first conference to have an one-sided composition? The real issue is that, instead of engaging in serious criticism and debate on these issues, the political world (from ministers to the leader of the opposition) engaged in a ‘demonstration of political correctness credentials’, which “turns decency into sanctimony. The vague ethical framework surrounding the conference [...] was forcibly adjusted by politicians to fit their own ideological and political needs. They did not seek to thoughtfully contribute to the debate, but rather to display devotion to the liberal value of choice [...]. This is yet another manifestation of self-referentiality: they are not so much concerned with critically engaging, with reflective authenticity, with the rationale of the conference, as they are with projecting their own perspective”.⁶ After intense reaction, the conference was ultimately cancelled. Instead of being used as an opportunity for serious (and not slogan-driven) discussion on important issues and for exposing the flaws of outdated stereotypes about the role of women, “no-dialogue” prevailed.

Of course, the phenomenon, is complex and cannot be fully analyzed within the scope of this study, which merely addresses it, as a brief digression. If the above observation holds true, then this is certainly a highly negative development. Because it is one thing for the conservative world to be expressed through democratic parties, and another to be appropriated by the far right, associated with acts of violence and with an overt or covert nostalgia for Nazism. Democracy needs all voices, provided that constitutional limits on freedom of expression are upheld, as suggested times above. Democracy needs both progressive and conservative expression. It needs both the traditional and the forward-thinking approach to difficult social issues. The

to Trump’s extreme and condemnable suggestions: “Although many of his supporters may not have agreed with every individual statement, they liked the fact that he was not intimidated by the pressure to be politically correct. Trump was the perfect professional of authenticity morality that defines our era: one may be a liar, malicious, bigoted, and unfit for presidency, but at least he says what he thinks.” See also Susan Neiman, ‘Είναι η Αριστερά woke;’ [Is the Left woke?] (interview), in *‘woke. The Awakening Movement’*, *Kathimerini* (special edition), April 28, 2024, p. 73 [75]: “Supporters of woke culture strengthen the arguments of the Right, focusing on symbolic policies that essentially divide people and on issues that truly, have no significance for the overwhelming majority of people on the planet, such as gender pronouns, instead of focusing, for example, on citizens’ working conditions, ideas deriving from a traditional Marxist framework”.

⁶ Charidimos Tsoukas, ‘Η πολιτική ορθότητα ως ευσεβισμός’, [*Political correctness as pietism*], available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/561413401/i-politiki-orthotita-oseysevis-mos/>, *Kathimerini*, who adds: “Just as in religious worship, political pietism, if uncontrolled, traps speakers within a moralizing and conformist discourse. The pursuit of orthodoxy (correct opinion) leads to favouring pietism: it is not important whether you are ‘pious,’ but whether you appear to be. Real problems are not addressed; rather, artificial problems are projected, as they are shaped within ideological frameworks of reference, supported by people who build careers out of promoting political sanctimony.”

synthesis of different perspectives, with its stabilizing function, is what a society should strive for, rather than a single perspective to be heard. This, ultimately, is the essence and value of parliamentary democracy, as the ever-relevant Hans Kelsen reminds us even today.⁷

⁷ Hans Kelsen, 'Περί της Ουσίας και της Αξίας της Δημοκρατίας—Το πρόβλημα του κοινοβουλευτισμού' [*On the Essence and Value of Democracy—The Problem of Parliamentarism*] (introduced and translated into Greek by Michael G. Kypraios, Athens: Nomiki Vivliothiki Publications, 1998).

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Chapter 6

“Mutual Tolerance” as a Social Norm and Legal Principle



1 ‘Respect’ and ‘Friendliness Towards Others’ Instead of ‘Political Correctness’

A conclusion, to be drawn from the above, is that, if political correctness does not align with the permissible restrictions on fundamental rights, it poses a significant threat to the freedoms of expression and art, as well as to scientific and academic freedom. Indeed, while advocates of political correctness favour diversity and protection of minority opinions and ways of life, we have seen that its application often leads to uniformity, to the eradication of diversity, and to suppressing minority opinions.¹ Because, in reality, ‘uniformity is born out of pseudo-diversity’.² “The craving for political correctness can lead to persecution of beliefs, almost like those carried out in the name of the opposite ideology”.³ Even at one of the world’s most ‘open’

¹ See Stefano Rozanis, “Η πολιτική ορθότητα ως σύμπτωμα” [Political Correctness as a Symptom], *Avgi*, June 18, 2023: “The postmodern subject should now think, feel and be moved according to the dictates of political correctness”. See also Charis Exertzoglou, “Ελευθερία του λόγου, ρητορικές μίσους και πολιτικές της Ιστορίας” [Freedom of speech, hate rhetoric, and the politics of history], *The Books’ Journal*, Issue 149 (January 2024), p. 14 [16]: “I would like, however, to emphasize a strong objection, if not outright *opposition*, that arises from various forms of political correctness that undermine respect for diversity, inclusivity, and tolerance, precisely the values political correctness should uphold, by imposing a form of censorship within a preordained framework, regarding which opinions may be freely expressed and which may not”.

² Pascal Bruckner, *Ένας Σχεδόν Τέλειος Ένοχος* [An Almost Perfect Culprit, translated into Greek by Andreas Pappas], Athens: Patakis Publications, 2022, p. 170. See also Ijoma Mangold, ‘Alles so schön keimfrei hier’ [Everything so beautifully germ-free here], *Die Zeit*, April 20, 2023.

³ Kostas Botopoulos, ‘Το πιο πολιτικό βιβλίο ενός βαθιά πολιτικού συγγραφέα’ [The most political book by a deeply political author], in Philip Roth, *Το Ανθρώπινο Στίγμα* [The Human Stain, translated into Greek by Trisevgene Papaioannou, afterword by Ilias Maglinis and Kostas Botopoulos], Athens: Polis Publications, 2003, p. 493 [498].

festivals, the Edinburgh Festival, exclusion of artists has been reported which contradicts the spirit of ‘colourful’ (and simultaneously ‘uniform’) political correctness.⁴ In this sense, political correctness seems to contribute to the dull and “unnatural” homogenization of the world, which Stefan Zweig described nearly a hundred years ago: “Everything becomes uniform in the outward expressions of life, everything is flattened into a homogeneous cultural model [...] Countries seem identical to one another, people’s lives and actions are integrated into the same framework”.⁵

In any case, where political correctness seems to have drifted away from its goal of inclusivity and respect for diversity, is in that it opposes anything that can be labelled as ‘cultural appropriation’. The movement condemns anyone who adopts symbols, customs, artistic works, clothing, or even tastes of a cultural group to which they do not belong.⁶ The examples are many: The American culinary magazine *Bon Appétit* issued an apology for allowing a non-Jewish person to publish a recipe for a traditional Jewish dessert. The British newspaper *The Guardian* debated whether celebrity chef Jamie Oliver should have the right to cook *jollof* rice (a dish from West Africa) and whether fellow celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay should open a Chinese restaurant, as well as whether it was appropriate for famous singer Adele to wear a “Jamaican-style” hairstyle at the Notting Hill Carnival. These incidents may be on the verge of the comical, but they highlight (along with other, more serious examples) a “proprietary” view and a trend toward “cultural purity”,⁷ which, of course, has nothing in common with inclusivity and the protection of minorities.

⁴ Alexander Menden, ‘Ein Hauch von DDR’ [A touch of the GDR], *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, August 19–20, 2023.

⁵ Stefan Zweig, *Η Ομογενοποίηση του Κόσμου* [The Homogenization of the World, translated into Greek by Maria Angelidou—Angelos Angelidis], Athens: Agra Publications, 2024, p. 9.

⁶ See Douglas Murray, *Ο πόλεμος ενάντια στη Δύση. Επικρατώντας σε μια εποχή ανορθολογισμού* [The war on the West. Prevailing in an Age of Unreason, translated into Greek by Michalis Katsimitsis], Athens: Liberal Books, 2023, pp. 371 ff. See also Valia Dimitrakopoulou, Panagiotis Koustas, Pantelis Tsompanis ‘10 παραδείγματα’ [10 examples], in ‘woke. Το κίνημα της αφύπνισης’ [woke. The Awakening Movement], *Kathimerini* (special edition), April 28, 2024, p. 21 [24], regarding the criticism directed at Serbian musician Goran Bregović, for allegedly appropriating traditional Roma melodies in the film *Time of the Gypsies*.

⁷ See also Hannah Holborn Gray, ‘Ο γουοκισμός είναι ένα αντιδιανοητικό κίνημα’ [“Wookism is an anti-intellectual movement”] (interview), in ‘woke. The Awakening Movement’, *Kathimerini* (special edition), April 28, 2024, p. 88 [90]: “the woke movement on campuses mirrors what is happening in society and, although it stands against what it identifies as ‘right-wing sources of extremism’, it has nevertheless come to represent their extreme opposite and has the same lack of tolerance when it comes to dissent”.

After all this, no wonder political correctness has been described as “a double-edged sword⁸ that, paradoxically, only cuts on one edge, namely the wrong one”.⁹ Yet, in its very core (and certainly not in its extremes that accuse Kant and Aristotle[!],^{10,11} of being racist), there is a positive element that should be utilized, namely, that in a society one cannot simply say and do whatever one wants, as if one were *legibus solutus* (not subject to law). One should always bear in mind that we coexist with other people and should respect their sensitivities, refrain from offending them and

⁸ See also Haridimos Tsoukas, ‘Η πολιτική ορθότητα ως ευσεβισμός’ [Political correctness as eusebism], available at <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/561413401/i-politiki-orthotita-os-eyes-evismos/>: “Like all noble ideas, ‘political correctness’ has, roughly speaking, two versions—the good and the bad one. In its good version it constitutes political decency—an affirmation of otherness, in the context of liberal democracy. In its bad version, it becomes political piety—petrified into a ritualistic self-affirming display of respect for institutions, expressed in wooden language and potentially degenerating into thought policing.”

⁹ Thomas Tsakalakis, ‘Περί πολιτικής ορθότητας’ [On Political Correctness], *Avgi*, June 18, 2023; he further notes: “this multifaceted phenomenon is governed in theory by moral and social values, which all sane people would agree with (this is its good ‘edge’, for example, its intention to eliminate systemic injustices against socially weak individuals), in practice it realizes the incomparable stand-up comedian’s view, the “amateur” analytical philosopher and anything but conservative, George Carlin: ‘It is the latest American form of intolerance and what makes it extremely malicious is that it appears disguised as tolerance. Its motive is a virtuous one, but as it always happens in such cases in the USA, it has been so monstrously distorted, so as to be devoid of practical utility.’”

¹⁰ See Douglas Murray, *Ο πόλεμος ενάντια στη Δύση. Επικρατώντας σε μια εποχή ανορθολογισμού* [The war against the West. Prevailing in an era of irrationality] (translated into Greek by Michael Katsimitsis), Athens: Liberal Books, 2023, pp. 257 ff.

¹¹ See Ingo von Münch, ‘Meinungs freiheitgegen Political Correctness’ [Freedom of expression versus political correctness], Duncker & Humblot, 2017, p. 62. Here is an example of extreme political correctness: there was a placard in public transport in Hamburg which read: ‘Travelling “black” costs 60 Deutschmarks’. It was withdrawn after reaction, although it was of course clear that the expression, like similar others (“black money”, “black labour market”), had nothing to do with skin colour. See also Eleni Tzannatou, ‘Λογική και ‘ευαισθησία’ [Sense and “sensitivity”: Can we rewrite the books of the past, in terms of today?], available at <https://www.kathimerini.gr/culture/books/562354507/logiki-kai-eyaisthisia-mporoyme-naxanagrapsoyme-tavivlia-toy-parelthontos-me-oroyms-toy-simera/>, *Kathimerini*). Another example with an extreme comic gloss is that Tik-Tok blocked Charles Dickens’ official museum account, because his name included the word “dick”!

accept their right to think and live differently than others,^{12,13}. This positive core of political correctness is not cancelled by the concern for the ‘collective’, rather than the ‘individual’, in the sense that it is primarily aimed at protecting social minority groups rather than specific individuals. Let alone that many important rights are primarily exercised collectively (e.g. religious communities, political parties) and also that over time the most severe persecutions and violations of individual rights are not primarily triggered by individual features of specific persons, but rather by their affiliation to a religious, ethnic, political or other group. Rather than “discriminating and excluding,” we should favour “acknowledging difference and embracing”. This is why the term ‘political correctness’ (which, among other things, connotes purity and a kind of “linguistic hygiene”¹⁴) has been proposed to be replaced by alternatives such as ‘respect for diversity’ and “friendliness toward one’s fellow human beings”.¹⁵ The key question, therefore, is “how to develop sensitivity to certain forms of discrimination and clear injustices, without legitimizing nihilistic culture wars and waves of

¹² See Yannis Balabanidis, ‘Η πολιτική ορθότητα, από τα αμερικανικά κάμπους μέχρι τη μικρή μας χώρα’ [Political correctness, from the American campuses to our small country], available at <https://mag.frear.gr/i-politiki-orthotita-apo-ta-amerikanika-kampos-me-chri-ti-mikri-mas-chora/>: “Political correctness sets ‘customary’ limits so that we can continue to live in society and protect the common bond, especially when the speech of the powerful directly offends the weaker”. See further Spyros Moschonas, ‘Τελικά η πολιτική ορθότητα είναι εργαλείο ισότητας ή περιορίζει την ελευθερία της έκφρασης;’ [Is political correctness a tool for equality or does it limit freedom of expression?], available at <https://www.lifo.gr/stiles/politiki-orthotita-ergaleio- isotitas-i-periorismos-tis-eleytherias-tisekfrasis>: “I don’t see how a mild form of political correctness, one which originates from cultural liberalism and lacks excesses or extremities could be harmful. Instead, it could help improve morals and civility in public discourse”. See also Eva Stamou, ‘Το πρόβλημα με την πολιτική ορθότητα’ [The problem with political correctness], available at <https://www.athensvoice.gr/epikairoτητα/politikiokoikonomia/796222/to-provlima-me-tin-politikiorthotita/> *Athens Voice*, April 4, 2023, and Eleni Karantzola, ‘Λέτε κάποιον «βλάχο» ή «σακάτη»; Δύο Έλληνες γλωσσολόγοι μιλούν περί Πολιτικής Ορθότητας’ [Do you call someone a “bumpkin” or a “cripple”? Two Greek linguists talk about Political Correctness], available at: <https://www.lifo.gr/apopseis/idees/lete-kapoion-blaho-i-sakati-dyo-ellines-glossologoi-miloyneripolitikis-orthotitas>, *Lifo*: “Both as a linguist and a citizen, I believe it is on the right track not to use the item ‘negro’ because, for an entire era, the period of the slave trade, it registered the overall perception of these societies. As a language user, I do not wish to name a fellow human in this way. This is one of the basic meanings of political correctness”.

¹³ So long as all this is not the ‘easy solution’ out, which simply postpones dealing with the real problems. Cf. Francis Fukuyama, *Ταντότητα. Η απαίτηση για αξιοπρέπεια και η πολιτική της μνησικακίας* [Francis Fukuyama, Identity. The demand for dignity and the politics of resentment (translation into Greek by Stavros V. Gavalas, edited by Andromachi Spanou), Athens: Ropi Publications, 2018, p. 173: “University curricula can be modified so as to include texts by women and minority authors, more easily than the income or social status of any such groups can be modified.”

¹⁴ See Christos Paridis, ‘Do you call someone a “bumpkin” or a “cripple”? Two Greek linguists talk about Political Correctness’, available at <https://www.lifo.gr/apopseis/idees/lete-kapoion-blaho-i-sakati-dyoellinesglossologoi-miloyneri-politikis-orthotitas>, last accessed June 20, 2024.

¹⁵ Till Raether, Eine Liebeserklärung an die ‘Politische Korrektheit’ [A declaration of love to ‘political correctness’], available at <https://sz-magazin.sueddeutsche.de/leben-und-gesellschaft/politische-korretheit-87318>, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung Magazin*.

contemporary censorship”.¹⁶ As Stuart Hall, one of the most influential figures of the British Left suggests, political correctness forces many defenders of rights and social justice to fight on several fronts at once: on the one hand, to defend the importance of the issues raised; on the other, to keep a distance from the extremes committed “in the name of anti-racism, anti-sexism, or anti-homophobia by militant activists. We have more than enough enemies; God should help us from our friends”.¹⁷

2 “Mutual Tolerance” as a Social/Legal Imperative and Emerging Distinctions

Absolute freedom of speech entails “a demand for complete tolerance (nothing that is said can be deemed unacceptable), hence a generalized relativism of all values. [...] Yet every society needs a basis of shared values. Substituting them solely with the “I have the right to say anything I want” principle is not enough to establish communal life. [...] Obviously, the right for someone to be exempt from certain rules cannot be the only principle organizing community life!”.¹⁸ These principles, potentially described as “mutual tolerance” are not merely norms of social behaviour. They may also be projected at a legal level—especially when defining the limits of practicing constitutional rights of expression. This is where one should refrain from forbidding others to express themselves freely, even in ways completely different than one’s own; at the same time, however, others should not have the right to insult or disregard the sensitivities of fellow humans.

Applying these broad principles in practice requires subtle but important distinctions.¹⁹ For example, before someone decides to buy a book, listen to a song, or watch a film, a TV series, or a theatrical performance, they have usually been informed about its content. Reading or watching a work without prior knowledge of its content is only a rather theoretical possibility which—based on the principle of proportionality—cannot justify restricting freedom of expression or any artistic or scientific freedom.

¹⁶ Nikolas Sevastakis, ‘Πολιτική ορθότητα: εύλογες διορθώσεις, παράλογοι δογματισμοί’ [Political Correctness: Rational corrections, irrational dogmatisms], available at <https://mag.frear.gr/politiki-orthotitaeyloges-diorthoseis-paralogo-dogmatismoi/>, Frear, last accessed May 10, 2025.

¹⁷ Stuart Hall, ‘Περιδιάβαση σε ορισμένες «πολιτικά μη ορθές» ατραπούς της πολιτικής ορθότητας’ [Exploring some “politically incorrect” pathways through political correctness, translated into Greek by Grigoris Ananiadis], *Synchrona Themata*, issue 160–161 (April–December 2023), p. 141 [147].

¹⁸ Tzvetan Todorov, *Οι Εσωτερικοί Εχθροί της Δημοκρατίας* [*The Inner Enemies of Democracy*], translated into Greek by Soti Triantafyllou and Marianna Koutalou, Athens: Patakis Publications, 2013, pp. 180–181.

¹⁹ Even from the point of view of the person being expressed, see Stevi Kitsou, ‘Ποιος χρειάζεται την πολιτική ορθότητα;’ [Who needs political correctness?], available at: <https://popaganda.gr/postscripts/pios-chriazete-tin-politiki-orthotita/>, Popaganda, March 22, 2017: “The importance of discourse (and any responsibility attributed to it) varies depending on where it comes from, be it an institutional body, a journalist of a widely circulating newspaper, a hierarch who preaches before a congregation or even a citizen who happens to occasionally or opportunistically acquire access to a public forum”.

In other words, the question of unintentional infringement can hardly arise, in such cases. If anyone feels offended by a work, they should simply refrain from seeing or reading it. However, they cannot make a constitutional claim that others, who may wish to view or read it, should not do so, merely because it conflicts with one’s beliefs. This does not apply to works which one encounters against their will (e.g., advertisements in public spaces). The theoretical suggestion and the one put forward by the United States Supreme Court jurisprudence—“let them look away”²⁰—is hardly convincing. What is the point in urging someone to look away when they have already seen what offends them^{21,22}?

The “key word” here is tolerance. On the one hand, those who feel offended must exercise tolerance by allowing the creator to share their provocative work with people who wish to read, see, or hear it. On the other hand, the creator must also show

²⁰ See Stavros Tsakyrakis, *Θρησκεία Κατά Τέχνης* [Religion vs. Art], Polis Publications, 2005, pp. 147–148.

²¹ See Tzvetan Todorov, *Οι Εσωτερικοί Εχθροί της Δημοκρατίας* [*The Inner Enemies of Democracy*], translated into Greek by Soti Triantafyllou and Marianna Koutalou, Athens: Patakis Publications, 2013, pp. 181–182: “Our approach and expectations towards a book we should buy and read (a rare and hard action), a newspaper article or a TV show or even a satirical article are different [...] An incident can describe this difference in relation to the image: in autumn of 2006 a museum of photography in Charleroi, Belgium organised an exhibition of a Japanese photographer who photographed tied-up, naked women. The exhibition was announced with a large banner on the front of the museum. Some residents protested, but the museum director declared he would resist and that the censors will not claim admission. Yet, the difference between these two situations—the photographs in the gallery and the photographs on a street poster—is clear: entering a gallery is a voluntary act; seeing the poster only requires passing by the area”.

²² The issue takes on broader dimensions with the public burning of the Quran in European cities. In fact, in several European countries such as Denmark, acts like burning, desecrating, or trampling on religious texts in public, or with the intent of widely disseminating images of such desecration, have been criminalized. See Alex Rühle, ‘Was Dänen verbieten wollen, geht Schweden zu weit’ [What the Danes want to ban goes too far for Sweden], *Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin*, 2-3 September 2023 and the press reports of December 2023 (e.g. ‘Η Δανία ποινικοποίησε το κάψιμο του Κορανίου’ [Denmark criminalizes Koran burning], available at: https://www.efsyn.gr/kosmos/eyropi/414426_i-dania-poinikopoiisekapsimo-toy-koraniou, *Efimetida ton Syntacton*, December 7, 2023). In Greece, however, Article 191A of the Penal Code penalizes public destruction of a flag or emblem of state sovereignty, but not of a religious symbol, unless the act takes place in a site of particular religious significance. More broadly, it is particularly noteworthy that the restrictive provisions found in European legal systems are no longer aimed at protecting the Christian majority, but rather religious minorities and primarily Muslims. See also Dimitris Christopoulos, ‘Λογοκριτικά συμφραζόμενα’ [Censorship context], in Pinelopi Petsini and Dimitris Christopoulos (eds.), *Λεξικό Λογοκρισίας στην Ελλάδα. Καχεκτική δημοκρατία, δικτατορία, μεταπολίτευση* [Dictionary of Censorship in Greece: Stunted democracy, dictatorship, transition to democracy, Athens: Kastaniotis Publishing, 2018, p. 279 [287]]: “Paradoxically, it is no longer only majorities that are protected by the legal tool once known as blasphemy, but also minorities who must not be provoked. Blasphemy makes a comeback through the back door, cloaked in the guise of ‘anti-racism’ and the fight against hate speech. Once, it was the Christian majority that would be outraged; now, it is the Muslim minority that issues threats”. See also Geoffrey Hughes, *Political Correctness: A History of Semantics and Culture*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2010, p. 285, who points out that while *The Guardian*, the British newspaper opposed the publication of the Muhammad cartoons in Denmark, arguing that they were offensive to Muslims, it would often refer to Pope Benedict as ‘God’s Rottweiler’.

tolerance by making sure that no one is exposed to offensive material without their will. It thus becomes clear that mutual tolerance is not only a fundamental principle of social coexistence, but also a means of resolving constitutional conflicts.²³ Upon closer examination, one may find that tolerance constitutes the very foundation of modern parliamentary democracy. That is, a democracy which does not rest upon the ‘tyranny’ of the majority, but instead protects the rights of minorities. A democracy that is founded on deliberation, dialogue and the synthesis of differing viewpoints.²⁴ Is it not, after all, the very essence of a parliamentary process? All of this presupposes tolerance, respect towards different views, a constant questioning of the correctness of one’s own political beliefs and an absence of mental ‘shortcuts’ fostered by the various manifestations of political correctness. The question is whether all this can be achieved when, in political circles, the value is not on bridges of understanding and compromises, but on classifying people into opposing ‘camps’ and drawing absolute lines between ‘good’ and ‘evil’.²⁵ Perhaps, in the end, political correctness aligns all too well with this distorted conception of politics. For although political correctness “is right to be concerned with these broader cultural and social issues, it is incapable of understanding the importance of [...] the educational perception of politics and the achievement of consensus. It may have radicalized the political agenda, but it remains attached to an outdated and discredited notion of the ‘political’”.²⁶

Tolerance—towards both different individuals and different opinions—is not merely a central concept of modern constitutional law. As Aristovoulos Manesis reminds us, “the kind of freedom that truly matters and holds practical significance is not so much the freedom of those who agree, but rather the freedom of those who disagree”.²⁷ Tolerance is also gaining ground in the field of philosophy²⁸ and it represents a necessary step towards the ‘self-purification’ of political correctness

²³ See Spyros Vlachopoulos, ‘Art and Religion: mutual tolerance as a means of resolving constitutional conflicts’, *Public Law Review* (DtA), 2016, pp. 45 ff.

²⁴ See also Panos Kazakos, ‘Από την ανάπτυξη στην αφύπνιση (wokeness). Παράδοση και πολιτισμικές αλλαγές από τη μεταπολίτευση ως σήμερα’ [From growth to wokeness: Tradition and cultural shifts from the transition to democracy era to the present], *The Books’ Journal*, Issue 151 (March 2024), p. 24 [27]: “The coexistence of different values and ideas periodically leads to explosive tensions. The question is how compromises can be achieved when values and ideas collide. The answer points to the need to cultivate a culture of dialogue, compromise, and consensus—centered, however, around a shared core of values”.

²⁵ See Gregor Gysi, *Was Politiker nicht sagen. Weil es in der Demokratie um Mehrheiten und nicht um Wahrheiten geht* [What politicians don’t say: Because democracy is about majorities, not truths], Berlin: Ullstein, 2023, p. 233.

²⁶ Stuart Hall, ‘Περιδιάβαση σε ορισμένες «πολιτικά μη ορθές» ατραπούς της πολιτικής ορθότητας’ [Exploring some “politically incorrect” paths of political correctness, translation into Greek by Grigoris Ananiadis], *Synchrona Themata*, Issues 160–161 (April–December 2023), p. 141 [150].

²⁷ Aristovoulos Manesis, ‘Constitutional law as a technique of political freedom’, in *Constitutional Theory and Practice*, Athens: Sakkoulas Publishing, 1980, p. 11 [55].

²⁸ See Julian Nida-Rümelin, “Cancel Culture”. *Ende der Aufklärung? Ein Plädoyer für eigenständiges Denken* [Cancel Culture: The End of Enlightenment? A Plea for Independent Thinking], Munich: Piper Publishing, 3rd ed., 2023, pp. 128 ff., where he emphasizes that tolerance should serve as the emblem of modern politics and a core feature of every democratic legal order.

from its excesses, for returning to its original foundation: the demand for respecting minorities and diversity. After all, the problem may lie in the fact that we have become overly confident in ourselves and our own views, and overly harsh toward others, to whom we grant neither the right to be wrong nor the right to hold a different opinion. This absolute certainty about the validity of our views which we think reflect ‘The one and only Truth’²⁹ moves in the opposite direction of inclusion and respect for diversity. It favours a profound silencing of dissenting voices and restricting freedom of expression.³⁰ Herein lies the true problem with political correctness in its extreme forms: It is dominated by “a conception of politics as the denunciation of false ideas and meanings that should be replaced with true ones. This is a strategy shaped by the model of ‘politics as truth.’ Yet the last thing we need is to adopt a framework in which one authority replaces a set of identities or truths with another set of supposedly ‘more correct’ identities and truths”.³¹

Once again, literature has highlighted these concerns in the best possible way, like in *The Friend* by Sigrid Nunez. The author, an American woman living in New York, whose origins are traced in Panama, China and Germany realises the model of a multicultural society and respect for diversity, but in her novel she documents a prevailing lack of tolerance and a modern “cancel culture”, by using politically unorthodox words: “Here’s something else I have noticed about students: how self-righteous they have become, how intolerant they are of any flaw or weakness in a writer’s character. And I am not talking about overt racism or misogyny. I am talking about any slightest hint of insensitivity or prejudice [...] any eccentricity. If a writer does not pass the test of being someone they would want as a friend, which invariably means someone progressive and morally impeccable, then screw them [...] A novelist, like any good citizen, is expected to confine themselves, while the idea that someone might write what they want, regardless of anyone else’s opinion, was inconceivable to them”.³²

²⁹ See also Ioannis Mylonopoulos, ‘Μπορεί και ο άλλος να έχει δίκιο’ [“Perhaps the other person is right too”], *Kathimerini*, 28 April 2024: “This may well be the great problem of our time: an inability to acknowledge that our interlocutor, our political opponent, the one who disagrees with us, might be right—or at least partly right”.

³⁰ John Stuart Mill, ‘On Liberty’ (edited and introduced by Gertrude Himmelfarb), London: Penguin Books Classics, 1985 (first published 1859), p. 76.

³¹ Stuart Hall, ‘Περιδιάβαση σε ορισμένες «πολιτικά μη ορθές» ατραπούς της πολιτικής ορθότητας’ [Exploring some ‘politically incorrect’ paths of political correctness], translated by Grigoris Ananiadis, *Synchrona Themata*, Issues 160–161 (April–December 2023), p. 141 [152].

³² Sigrid Nunez, *Ο Φίλος* [The Friend, translated by Giorgos Lamprakos], Athens: Gutenberg Publishers, 2021, p. 224. See also the related review by Yiannis Papadopoulos, “Ό,τι χάνουμε και ό,τι πενθούμε” [What we lose and what we mourn], available at: <https://booksjournal.gr/kritikes/logotexnia/3493-o-ti-xanoume-kai-o-ti-penthoyme>, *The Books’ Journal*, August 31, 2019.

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Translation from the Original (in Greek Language) “Σπύρος Βλαχόπουλος, Πολιτική ορθότητα: Η σύγχρονη λογοκρισία;” 2024, Eurasia Publications

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