

THE PROTECTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL AGAINST “TOTALITARIAN IDEOLOGIES”

VASILE MIFTODE¹
CAMELIA NICOLETA MORARIU²

Abstract

Nowadays, the contemporary world, whether in the East or in the West, in wealthy or in poor areas, is facing a powerful phenomenon: the reversal of values, the *offensive* of the lack of culture and the *dictatorship of ideologies*, totalitarian ones in particular. Generally, the values adopted by people to orient themselves and justify their actions change in the course of social interaction in various contexts.. The research is not empirical, but theoretical, and builds upon the authors' experience on the subject matter and upon the current debates regarding the social reactions and attitudes concerning the anomic phenomena. The hypothesis takes into account the subordination of the fundamental values (responsibility, dignity, work) to some ideologies of an unprecedented influence. In this paper, based on scientific evidence, we demonstrate the manner in which ideology destroys truth and that democracy is meaningless when stakeholders lack responsibility.

Keywords: *social welfare, social justice, right to individuality, ideological practices, political correctness, social and judicial correctness.*

Logical and philosophical foundations of social justice and welfare

Political correctness – an ideology?

The changes which have occurred in Romanian society after 1989 have caused the population to confront the increasing complexity of social, political and economic realities and hence a rise in uncertainty. Whereas, during the communist regime, “game rules” were known by each stakeholder in society, the changes in the 1990s generated the *de-institutionalisation* of the social order of the former regime and thereby a *need for new rules* (Figure 1). Consequently, one could argue that at the beginning of the 1990s, the expectations of the population fell into two categories (Berevoescu et al 1999:9):

- the first involved the frustrations which built up during the past regime and included expectations for improved living standards, greater freedoms and individual rights;

¹„A.I.Cuza” University, Faculty of Philosophy and Socio-Political Sciences, Bd. Carol I no. 11, 700506, Iași, România; vasilemiftode@yahoo.com.

²„A.I.Cuza” University, Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences, Bd. Carol I no. 11, 700506, Iași, România, camnicomorariu@yahoo.com;

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- the second focused on the establishment of a new order and of new operation rules of the social, economic and political systems, which would ensure the stability of society overall.

Today, due to *ideological practices* or arguments, those who work are often paid less than those who do not do anything, parents who educate their offspring through *work* are penalised ideologically, teachers who comply with school regulations are threatened with 112 emergency calls, while employers who seek to get rid of alcoholics or idle employees must face a vast *ideological bureaucracy*.

Gradually and stealthily, *political correctness* has infiltrated our lives more than ever before and has become increasingly visible. The fear of certain words or gestures that might run against it is equally or more powerful than the fear felt in the past regime. “For the first time in our history – according William S. Lind - Americans have to be fearful of what they say, of what they write, and of what they think. They have to be afraid of using the wrong word, a word denounced as offensive or insensitive, or racist, sexist, or homophobic”.

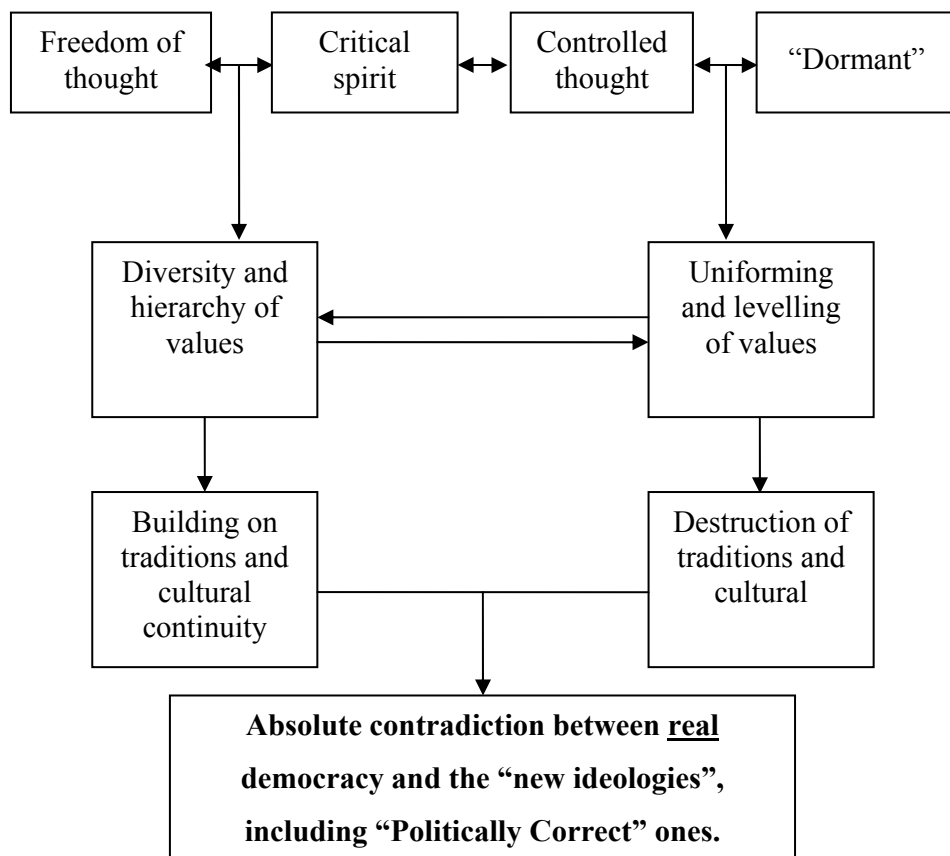


Figure 1: Paradigm of the “spiritual state” of the pre “post-modern” era

Despite the warnings of history, we tend to forget too easily that ideologies, regardless of their nature, physically destroy people or harm the societies they affect. The current trend in suprastructural events “is the great disease of our century, the disease that has left tens of millions of people dead in Europe, in Russia, in China, indeed around the world”, to quote the same author. This *political correctness* “vehemently anti-communist is no less a breeding ground for doubts than the grim Stalinist dogmatism which destroyed “a Left”, yet is powerless before Mozart’s *Jupiter*” (Cosașu 2010).

As we watch televised political debates, we may notice the conspicuous manner in which *ideology kills the truth*, as when it succeeds in transforming a genuine intellectual into a slave to political interests. His behaviour is based, hypothetically, “on a dogmatised refusal of reality and of common sense in favour of what is considered to be correct, not in connection with any aspect of reality but with the ideology supported by members of the elite” (Sildan 2009:12).

In paradigmatic terms, we may outline *PC (Political Correctness) ideology* as follows:

1. *Social levelling*, similar to the *homogenisation* planned by the former regime, and the *dismantling* of existing structures, in the manner of Leninist proletkult, two “democratic” objectives of PC.
 - Promoting *envy* as social pathology;
 - The practice of generalised *suspicion*;
 - Money – the only social bond, according to PC;
 - The enforcement “through violence, manipulation and intellectual lynching” of a new vocabulary that meets PC exigencies (Horațiu 2009:16);
 - Paradoxically, in the name of humanity, ideology destroys differentiation, identity, value and creativity, specific of people who are all “differently endowed”.
2. Everyone’s *freedom* to live “as they wish” is so deeply original – PC supporters claim – that it can justify “even immorality, murder and the ideology of injustice, however radical” (ibid.).
 - Absolute freedom can only ever result in terror (Hegel, referring to the French Revolution among other issues);
 - Cultural and scientific relativism promotes anarchy and indifference (these two states are highly topical in the current Romanian context);
 - The limits of freedom requires the cultivation of *duty* and of *individual responsibility*;
 - There are no freedoms without constraints or rights without obligations.
3. American author James Finn Garnet has responded in particular manner to the taboos issued by PC, lambasting “a society infested to the core by this tumour of post-modernity, namely political correctness” (Garner 2007).

Old enchanting tales, enjoyed not only by children but by adults too – Dragoş Moldoveanu writes – have been reinterpreted by the above-named American humorist – “to be compatible with the idiosyncrasies and the elucubrations of the new Inquisition” (Moldoveanu 2009:13). The sleep of reason produces monsters, as Goya proved artistically.

4. According to PC, “the concept of family is outdated and rigid; marriage is enslavement or submission, given man’s tendency to turn the woman into his slave, while heterosexuality is only viewed as a remnant of the dreadful past. (Moldoveanu, idem)
5. In keeping with the new ideologies, children and people in general are to be “defended” from the influences or manipulations of the Church or even of Father Christmas! “Agnosticism and the refusal to exhibit religious signs or symbols – according to the same researcher – are encouraged based on the tolerance to all social categories. Father Christmas is the embodiment of the typical bourgeois, an exploiter of reindeers and elves, discriminating between men and women”. Any historical exploration, all the more so one focused on rural communities, would highlight the *socialising and defensive functions* of the Church, school and community existing in their neighbourhood or immediate proximity, which entail ever-changing and complex forms of interaction between freedom and dependence. For supporters of PC, the above-named institutions and community stakeholders “have had their day” and have now become enemies of “post-modern” human liberty and equality (indeed of the collectivisation).
6. The phenomenon we refer to endangers the *actual protection* of the individual, especially of children, due to the dismantling of *traditional mechanisms* – built over the course of millennia – which regulate the social system and the degradation of *educational institutions* – i.e. the family, school, community, etc – in favour of the ridiculous ideologisation of rights versus responsibility, social control, or educational norms (Miftode 2007:7).
7. PC, this “social dementia” – according to Philip Atkinson – is a new form of concerted tyranny “to enforce new sacred and inviolable directions of thought. Freedom of action, expression or thought will soon only be relics of the past. Society will oversee every aspect of our public and private life, just as in communism” (Moldoveanu, *op.cit.*, p.14).
8. The *alienation of children*, of all consumers of media and ideological norms and requirements, through the slavery of mass publicised games, the false socialising in front of a computer and the waste of time tinkering with one’s mobile all yield the results expected by PC ideologues and imagined by Aldous Huxley: illiteracy, degradation, failure to respond to the challenges of the “real world”, and finally symbolical or physical suicide.

A. Huxley, in *Brave New World*, wrote that it was convenient that people knew as little as possible to enable them to be genuine and happy members of society. The alienating effect of TV shows or advertisements formulae such as “Watch and win”, “Sleep peacefully, FNI (note: an investment fund) watches over you”, etc is obvious.

In our view, the school should spread the “light”, not darkness. Yet darkness should not be equated with stupidity or obscurity. Rather, it is the mystery of “do not examine, but believe!” “The task of the school is to instil in students the pride in the earlier achievements of mankind; to amaze them, not by what we do not yet understand, but by what we have come to learn; to incite them to make further discoveries, to explore, to search and to wonder. To challenge theories that predate them, never taking them for granted and to process them in their minds throughout their lives” (Mândruță 2009).

Recent sociological research (Mihu 2008:232) highlights some of the ways in which the media affects the proper socialisation of children and youth:

- They expect their own lives and those of people around them “to be as hectic and interesting” as lives portrayed on television;
- There are signs that “television can impoverish creative imagination” of youth;
- Violent films may incite youth prone to such behaviour to effectively become violent.

9. *Pathological conformity*, as promoted by PC, is in fact a form of *mind control* and hence of the destiny of human personality. The free and responsible man of Christianity, for instance, is – based on PC ideology – a “happy slave”. The new religion of globalisation announces the impending “bright” future of *uniformisation* (which Bolsheviks dreamed of too). By hijacking beautiful concepts such as *democracy*, *human rights* or *tolerance*, the new ideologies “conceal their true totalitarian and extremist face” (Hurduzen 2009:9).
10. While the notion *civilisation* is rejected as discriminatory (!), offensive, nefarious and, obviously for PC, old-fashioned, the notion of *bureaucracy*, which estranges man from the essence of social environment and generates *dependence* on the state, fully meets the expectations of the new ideologues. The ideal of PC is *equality* understood as eradication of differences. “I am fully aware – writes Vladimir Volkoff – that a world of clones is the only just world” (Volkoff 2002). Essential socio-human terms – happiness, pride, hierarchy, superiority, virtue, environment, family, etc – are eliminated or marginalised.
11. Paradoxically, the *philosophical foundations* (Rousseau 2001) of PC may be traced back to the “Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among

Men”: “Whoever sang or danced best, whoever was the handsomest, the strongest, the most dexterous, or the most eloquent, came to be of most consideration; and this was the first step towards *inequality*, and at the same time towards *vice*.” The two effects – to which the French philosopher refers – can be “solved” by means of levelling, homogenising or uniformisation. Within this framework:

- *Sincere thought* is neutralised by self-censorship;
- *Freedom of expression* is annihilated by cunning or virulence;
- *Value judgments* are ignored or eliminated;
- *Feelings* are repressed and rendered inconsequential;
- The traditional “*old order*” will dissolve by itself;
- *Manipulation* and *disinformation* substitute violence or physical constraints;
- The *victim* is forced into self-censorship (as in past regimes);
- *Heritage traditions and values* are denounced;
- *Moral obligations* are pointless or “outdated”;
- *God is desecralised* by being universalised.

The “class” enemy of PC is not a social class, but “any ordinary thing, the entire traditional social and cultural network, ranging from the family to classical literature or to religion, from holidays or customs to education” (Platon 2009:13).

12. The *antidote* for this illness of the social body is – for Volkoff – freedom of thought, owing to its function as *antithesis of conformist thought*. “If you ban an idea, he writes, it means you have poured a can of oil over the building you are defending. Make no mistake about it – as Dostoevsky anticipated – in due time it will burst into flames”. Out of Pandora’s Box – overflowing with errors – this “can of oil” escaped or – as Volkoff states – this plague upon mankind, PC (ibidem).
13. As a matter of fact, the *new mythology* (of political correctness) does not aim for equality and non-discrimination, but rather to replacing “the power of the traditional world” (of perennial values, of cultural values, of norms and responsibilities, of hierarchies and elites, etc) with the power of the levelled, silenced and obedient masses, manipulated and dehumanised by the media and ultimately “marginalised” (Miftode 2004). The new man of PC is reminiscent, hypothetically, of “the Manichean socialist realist literature, the setting of a vicious struggle between the well-off and workers” (Petrache 2009:12).
14. The *sin* of being a Christian, part of a majority, more hard-working, intelligent, level-headed and reasonable, a male or heterosexual etc., can be overlooked, according to PC ideology, once you become a *relativist*, a follower of the “new collectivisation” and, obviously, an *irrationalist*. Differences between individuals must be erased, while the recruitment of elites must be overturned (Petrache, *op. cit.*, p.12).

15. The *indoctrination of children*, within the framework of “sin” and of the above mentioned solution, must be conducted ever since “kindergarten”, because “fairy tales of Prince Charming saving the beautiful princess in distress from a fierce dragon are a *signal of sexism* and induce a state of social passivity in girls, who all their lives will expect to be rescued by some Prince Charming from all sorts of troubles” (ibidem.).
16. PC imposes a *change in language*, which is not accidental, because language can *objectivise* aspirations, untruths, ideologised formulas, mass distributed programs and, ultimately, to generate a “new reality”, obviously a false one, yet already inculcated in the spirit of the masses. By using pre-established formulas – according to Orwell – the totalitarian state distorts the mind, ideologising it, due to the *monopoly on truth*, appropriated by PC through the enforcement, among other things, “of the obligation to use certain language and the ban on using another” (Petrache).
17. More than the Inquisition, PC had victims since its beginnings, in ancient Israel, as the old Mosaic Law was substituted by polytheism: local traditions were wiped out, the children of Jews were sacrificed on the shrines of the new faith, fortunes were confiscated, assassinations and other arbitrary acts were perpetrated. Slightly more moderate, ancient Greek cynics “were loathed people and civilisation itself, being a sort of hippies of their time” (Sildan 2009:12).
18. The “explosion” of the media and of communication technologies generate “daily and in mass numbers”, to paraphrase a formula used in the Leninist period, “spiritual” mass changes, behavioural imbalances, illiteracy, psychological breakdowns, family tensions and even “unexplainable” suicides, amid the launch of political and (non)cultural absurdities. “It would appear that people are no longer reluctant to being *irrational* and do not think it unreasonable to expect society to be led by the wildest dreams *instead of reality*.” Under the influence of PC, certain Swedes claim that their country lacks a civilisation and expect Muslim immigrants to civilise it (!). In the same context, an American young man asked president Obama to increase the unemployment benefits to the average salary level (!). Obviously, he was told that this would not be possible.
19. The increasing influence of *manele* on the Romanian spirit stands as proof, to the benefit of PC, that “economy of effort” or “intellectual laziness”, especially among young people, the significant abandonment of traditions, the “sub-cultural” homogenisation of groups and populations (much more successful than in the past) etc. The representative of a minority – writes Cristian Sildan – stated, in keeping with the new ideology: “we are angels, the majority population are paranoid, they hate us *without reason*, we are flawless and you in your madness are only looking for scapegoats” etc. And those in attendance were cheering him on!

20. If the reaction of the “real society” does not occur in due course and with optimal force, mankind will return to “origins” through the *dissolution of rational society*. The fact that people, however manipulated or threatened, cannot be satisfied with an “ideological diet” is plain to see, in our time, in Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria, more generally in falsely democratic countries, including, based on certain developments, in Romania.

The problem of the danger presented by ideologies, in particular PC ideology, for the defence of children and vulnerable groups and populations, has emboldened our focus on a range of relevant social phenomena and realities, on the one hand, and on the progress of suprastructural factors, especially the “aggressiveness” of media-disseminated ideologies, on the other hand.

My lecture at a conference in Tour, France (2006) was prompted by the idea that a topic related to *minorities* (ethnic, religious, linguistic, sexual, economic, social, etc.) can only be approached in terms of “sociological correctness”, hence science-based correctness, and certainly not from the perspective of “political correctness”. The great service that sociology is ready to offer to people’s individual life and coexistence is the promotion of understanding and mutual tolerance, understood as prerequisites of common freedoms (Bauman 2008:255).

At present, two dangers are observed in the area of the protection of national minority groups:

- *ignoring their rights* or simply *denying* the existence of a certain minority. There are countries which officially assert that all citizens share the same nationality or where *nationality is identified with citizenship*. In Greece there are ... only Greeks! The Romanian prime minister was recently criticised by Bulgarian media for “daring” to state that “we must look after the minorities in our countries, the *Bulgarian minority* in Romania and the *Romanian minority* in Bulgaria ...” The statement caused disagreement because Bulgarians that there is no Romanian minority in their country!

- the other *extreme* is equally illegitimate and harmful: the practice of *minority isolationism* or of “full autonomy”, whereby the minority is separated from the majority and made to enter an “ivory tower” or a “social greenhouse”, actions which impact negatively mainly on the *minority* (as has been proved by the *experience* of many minorities in recent decades).

A critique of the latter perspective, that of PC, can be found in the chapter *Protecția minorităților și devianța socială* (Protection of minorities and social deviance, published in the volume *Sociology of vulnerable populations*, 2004; in the study *Legitimacy and Illegitimacy in the practice of social rights and discriminations*; in the magazine *Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială* (2007); in the university course text *Social assistance of minority and discriminated groups*, published in the volume *Social Assistance*, Editura Universității „Al. I. Cuza, Iași, (Miftode, Morariu 2007:169), and in the analysis *Functional bureaucracy and dysfunctional (hyper)bureaucracy*, in *Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială* Iași, vol.1, 2003, pp.9-25.

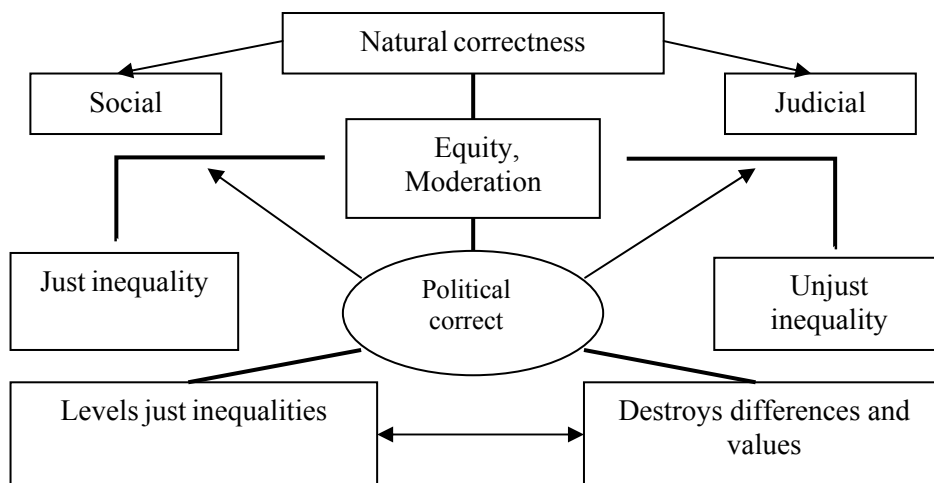


Figure 2: The paradigm of the concepts of social and judicial correctness
 “The guarantee of freedom is the responsible embrace of freedom”

The magazine *Verso* has inspired me to broaden the perspective on the “social protection” of vulnerable, dependent or disadvantaged persons or groups, proposed in the *Treatise on Social Assistance*, all the more so since the texts of quoted authors are involved in and present a particular interest for the precise assessment of *welfare policies* currently in place in the Romanian society.

In a normal society, the right to social welfare or security is inconceivable outside the acceptance of certain natural individual commitments: the obligation to attend school and work training programs, the obligation to abide by social norms and laws, the obligation of family and institutional integration, the obligation to participate in the life of the community and, chiefly, the obligation to contribute something useful, to work, to pay taxes, etc.

A significant part of the population, including certain deviant groups, ignore or fail to comply with these obligations, which explains the increasing poverty in Romanian society and the overall state of destitution of families, communities and whole areas in the country.

The right to individuality. Brainwashing – an anti-cultural and anti-educational strategy

Liviu Cuțitaru, a researcher based in Iasi, argues that „the moment one turns political correctness into a tool for the (authoritarian!) domination of everyone, for brainwashing and manipulating minds, at that point, from a permissive exercise it evolves into a repressive one. Its followers cease to be

ideologists and turn into propagandists. Their insolence defies all rules and any restraint. To them, the great cultures, the great traditions, the great religions mean nothing compared with their own lobotomy.”

The efforts by the new “commissars” of thought to minimise and to desacralise any trace of the spectacular in history and mankind is a rudimentary drive to uniform life. The grounds of their claims lie in the so-called “radical liberalism”, of absolute human “rights”, which is a front for abusive extremism. A careful observation of the way in which the new political correctness spreads its tentacles will expose techniques and strategies used in the past, rather successfully, by fascists and communists. This desire for uniformisation and levelling (in mediocrity!) of mankind contains a seed of totalitarian absurdity, ideologically akin to 20th-century dictatorships. The starting point of this mad descent could be somewhere in the indoctrination policy and in the exacerbation of “good” political correctness, which allegedly became “bad” due to the excesses of certain less astute followers.

In a recent interview in the magazine *Dilemateca* (nr.8/2007), Andrei Pleșu made the following remarks with respect to the negative aspects of political correctness: “Now that we have broken free from the criminal ideologies of the past century, I can see the emergence of a sort of need for a soft ideology which increasingly turns into a second nature. It appears to me that a human type has emerged who cannot live without an ideological dependence, without being enrolled. As the other types of enrolment in traditional world – such as religion, for instance – seem to be insufficient, a host of secondary missions are developing, whose dogmatism is indeed worrying. This has spawned the crowds of committed individuals all around us these days. Yet the problem is that, by urging action, ideologies leave no place for reflection and are not, in fact, forms of thought but simply reductions of thought to basic levels, enough for immediate needs. As ideologies multiply, people think less. A man of conviction is one who builds his own convictions, who has reflected on matters of concern and subsequently commits to a certain form of thought and behaviour. Ideologies are gregarious, there is something ready-made about them. The man of ideologies is not a true explorer or a genuine thinker, acting on his own; he is only an enthusiastic fellow traveller”. We could take this line of reasoning a step further and observe that the “man of ideologies”, the new commissar of brainwashing, sublimates, through “enrolment”, his complete lack not only of original thinking but of thinking in general. The robots of political correctness – *tabula rasa* in intellectual terms – were born to serve (regardless of doctrine, they may be both radical liberals and Stalinist infiltrated agents) not to create. The forceful imposition of previously “chewed” and “digested” ideas is more convenient for them than the state of contemplation.

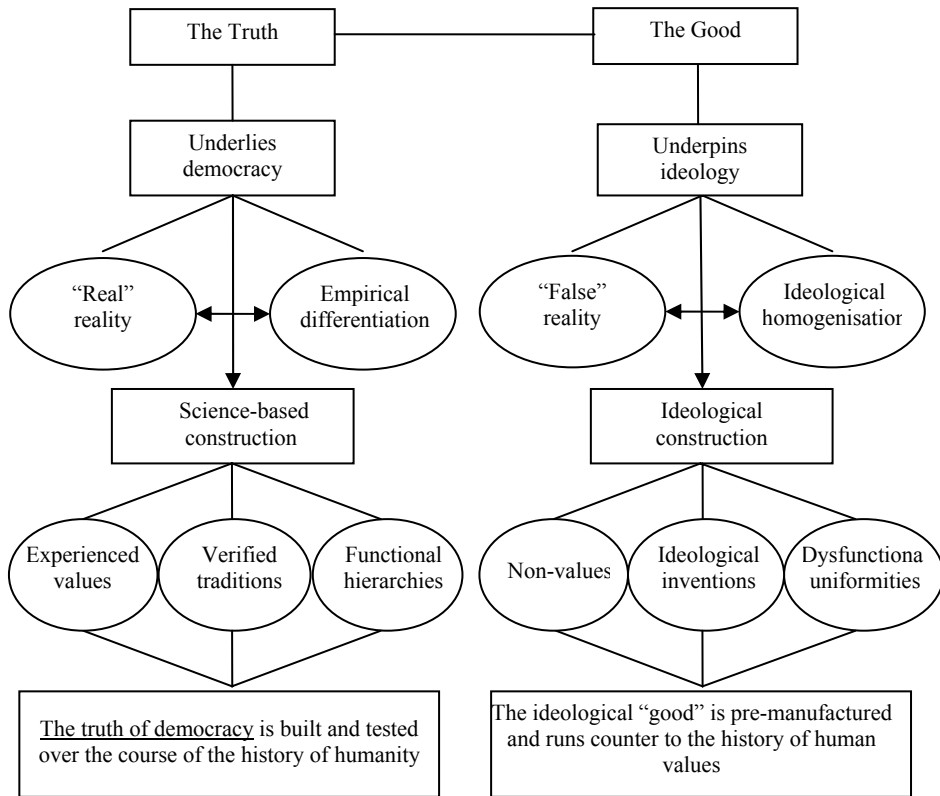


Figure 3: Democracy and ideology “Politically Correct”
From reality to dogma or from reason to brainwashing

We believe without a doubt that one may not discriminate through language (not words!), gestures and public opinion, any race, ethnicity, gender, religion, physical appearance, tradition, etc. In a democratic environment, one must embrace certain mental and behavioural patterns, to educate one’s respect (unless one already possess it by virtue of native common sense) for all the forms of freedom of the other. In terms of coexisting oppositions and differences, under the banner of “peace treaties”, political correctness and its positive dimension are justified.

From this perspective, one may realise why certain public figures – worthy of respect, most likely, yet lacking in general interest (S. Tănase, M. Macovei, R. Weber) are now listed in history textbooks and have replaced certain foundational historical myths or events. There are critical voices who deplore the fact that key historical figures in the history of Romanians, such as Stephen the Great, Michael the Brave or Vlad the Impaler, are given less coverage in history books. A textbook which is inaccurate in terms of its content is not approved by the national council for the assessment and distribution of textbooks. Yet members of the Education

committee of the lower chamber of the Romanian Parliament have received many complaints from teachers who argue that additional history manuals include topics that should not be included in an educational text. The *Hymn of hooligans* of the early 1990s would provide – for the authors of such textbooks – a “brilliant” instrument of education and “spiritual training”.

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