

Article

Political Correctness—Between Fiction and Social Reality

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Abstract: Nowadays political correctness (PC) is blamed by its opponents because of a failed model of multiculturalism, an influx of migrants and the threat of terrorist acts. Obviously, a definition of tolerance given by UNESCO in 1995 has lost its meaning. In order to argue a possibility of a global ethos based on new understandings of PC, the authors refer to contemporary achievements of semiotics, hermeneutics and philosophical anthropology. We use a critical method developed in the hermeneutical tradition of P. Ricoeur, J. Kristeva, Tz. Todorov and others. Criticism is directed at (1) paradoxes of postmodern philosophical attempts for justification the idea of political correctness; (2) the way of introducing new terminology, as on a language level it leads, not to inclusion, but to exclusion, of disadvantaged people because as E. Benveniste states, the third person is rather the non-person. The conclusion is that politically correct speech should be grounded on a basis which takes into account the three persons of verb conjugation. Similar philosophical and ethical ideas can be found in works of J. Kristeva, Tz. Todorov, P. Ricoeur. An example is given for how these ideas can be implemented in the fields of film and art. This is one of the possible ways of overcoming the exclusion of disadvantaged people who are only named in politically correct terms, and not as participants, in social and political dialogue.

Keywords: multiculturalism; terrorism; political correctness; semiotics; hermeneutics; ethics; censorship; art

1. On the Path to a New Global Ethos—From Ideology to Utopia

The wave of terrorist acts that have overwhelmed Western Europe over the last two years has given rise to a number of accusations against globalization processes, multiculturalism theories, and ideas of political correctness related to them. This criticism poses the question of a possibility of projecting such a kind of global ethos that would allow for the overcoming of existing forms of discrimination.

This paper supports the idea that such a project can be realized in the form of utopia—a genre referenced by authors such as J. Heinrichs [1], J. Attali [2], J. Kristeva [3] and others. The advantage of this type of text is the possibility of occupying a viewpoint of a “nowhere” from which a new vision of social reality can be obtained and new alternative modes of life can be revealed.

This is the reason that P. Ricoeur considers utopia as one of the main structures of reflexivity and of social (cultural) imagination [4]. In the phenomenological plan, Husserl’s eidetic variations of the imagination can be mentioned as its analogue [5], as well as projecting of the meaning of an act, or its *in-order-to* motives in Schutz’s phenomenological sociology [6].

One of the possibilities for projecting a new global ethos is presented in J. Kristeva’s views about a translator foreigner [3]. As inhabitants of a cosmopolitan communicative paradise, representatives of this ideal type will not be subjected to mechanisms of linguistic exclusion—a prototype of all other forms of social exclusion.

Another serious deficiency of politically correct speech is its inability to overcome substantiation of social processes through replacement of repressive terminology with a new non-discriminatory one. By means of examples from art, we point out how it is possible for discriminated individuals who are present only as a third person in politically correct speech to be taken out from anonymity and given a voice, i.e., to become subjects, rather than discourse references.

It is precisely at this point that a functional kinship of politically correct speech with ideology is revealed. In ideology—unlike utopia which is always personal—every name is anonymous. Because of that, *das Man* or the amorphous “they”, can be accepted as its author. An ideological position always remains foreign, because it is definitely of someone else’s, but not of one’s own [4].

A similar conclusion can be drawn with regard to politically correct speech. Like ideologies, it performs integrative functions which subsequently—because of the very structure of this phenomenon—degenerate into pathological or distorted ones. For example, proponents of political correctness aim to overcome various forms of discrimination, but afterwards, they become oppressors themselves. On this occasion, we can note that politically correct speech reproduces K. Mannheim’s paradox [4]: if every discourse is ideological, then its own exposition becomes impossible.

One of the most serious problems of politically correct speech is its inability to express the uniqueness of human existence—a problem that French poststructuralists already came upon in the 1960s. An alternative solution to this problem can be sought, not by inventing non-discriminatory vocabulary, but rather, by generating new types of non-discriminatory discourses, including artistic ones.

In summary, the main ideas related to projecting a new type of global ethos can be presented by the following points:

- (A) the idea of a future global ethos requires linguistic justification;
- (B) such a project can be exposed only in the form of utopia;
- (C) theoretical value of utopia consists in disclosure of an alternative model of political correctness which:
 - (a) does not give rise to linguistic exclusion of the third person of verb conjugation but on the contrary, it gives them voice;
 - (b) emphasizes the idea that projecting of a new global ethos requires a shift of attention from terminological to narrative level;
 - (c) takes into consideration the role of works of art, which—contrary to ideological anonymity—are always a product of an author’s individuality;
 - (d) identifies mechanisms for overcoming social exclusion by focusing on functional, rather than substantive, ideas for society;
 - (e) overcomes anonymity of previous practices of creating a politically correct vocabulary based on instrumental views of language.

In the following text, we proceed to an argumentation of these ideas.

2. The Failed Model of Multiculturalism and the Crises of Political Correctness

A requirement of political correctness is directly related to the principles of tolerance found in West European Enlightenment ideas about equality of all human beings and the universality of human nature. According to Tzvetan Todorov, we have to acknowledge that people are equal in order to assume they remain different [7]. Only in this way can an ethical action be justified. Otherwise, it leads to an obliteration of individuality, which is typical for totalitarian regimes. The problem is that people may be equal in different respects. Even at the time of Greek philosophy, however, different modes of equality were being distinguished: equal respect (*isotimia*), equality in the eye of the law (*isonomia*), equal freedom of speech and of political act (*isogoria*), equality of civil rights (*isopoliteia*), equality in fortune and happiness (*isodiamonia*) [8].

Nowadays these distinctions begin to fall away under the influence of migrant flow and a danger of acts of terrorism. Many researchers attach the responsibility of these events to a multiculturalism model turned down by European politicians, as well as an accompanying requirement of political correctness. Apparently, UNESCO's definition of tolerance from 1995 has now lost its meaning, because a culture of peace cannot prevail in a culture of war [9] (p. 3).

The fight against terrorism inevitably requires the restriction of civil rights, including freedom of speech. Restrictive measures, however, are being criticized in democratic Western societies, as similar to methods used in totalitarian regimes. In these conditions, the number of critics of political correctness is growing. They take into consideration its powerlessness to overcome racial, ethnic and religious discrimination. Tolerance on a linguistic level cannot oppose physical intolerance in any way: from sexual violence against women, to the disregard of the human right to life.

This article makes an attempt to explore whether alternatives to justify political correctness exist. If political correctness is a linguistic phenomenon, then its philosophical and ethical grounds should also be researched on a linguistic level. The point is, that they should not lead to substantiation or exclude the other on racial, ethnic or religious basis—trends that are increasing nowadays.

Experience shows that politically correct speech does not cancel social exclusion automatically. Ghettos, inhabited by descendants of migrants who fail to socialize successfully, may be mentioned as an example. The fatal consequences that this tendency can have are envisaged by J. Kristeva in the form of literary fiction in her novel *Murder in Byzantium* (2006) [10]. It turns out that the nightmare of the protagonist comes true only a few years later and confirms Kristeva's psychoanalytical insight.

However, her literary prediction does not reach the addressee capable of taking the necessary measures. Because of that, they have to be taken with caution. On the one hand, one should analyze the reasons for what had happened, and, on the other hand, one should propose options for overcoming the conflicts raised by members of certain minority groups. This idea requires a revision of the current model of politically correct speech, which relies entirely on the semantics of certain words, without taking into consideration their dependence on the peculiarities of speech acts.

The main idea of this article is that political correctness can be effective only if the linguistic nature of human beings is taken into account. We use the method of hermeneutics, which concerns the constitution of an ethically responsible subject. According to P. Ricoeur [11], it includes a transition from: "I speak" through "I act" to "I tell". Similar views can be found in works of authors as Tz. Todorov [12], J. Heinrichs [1], and others. A possibility of overcoming racial, ethnic or religious discrimination based on language requires, as a first step, a review of the criticism of the current model of political correctness.

3. Criticism of Political Correctness

A requirement for political correctness is perceived in different ways in different societies.

Negative reactions towards political correctness in former socialist countries can be accounted for with still vibrant remembrances of political censorship. For example, in connection with the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia, the Bulgarian party and state leader T. Jivkov at a gathering of writers cynically stated that "it was necessary to catch some comrades at their delicate zones in order to make them turn back again to the right party line" [13]. In order to avoid such sanctions, a majority of authors turn to Aesopian speech, a peculiar case of politically correct speech.

Opponents of politically correct speech note that it is impossible to talk correctly about persons who do not know correctness, i.e., who do not pay any regard to tolerance. Furthermore, the politically correct speech itself uses discrediting terms for a description of its opponents [14,15].

In addition, the wording of "political correctness" is not appropriate because of the emphasis it puts on the political domain. It follows from this that the choice of a new vocabulary that respects individuals' and groups' dignity has to be made for political reasons, and not for moral ones [16].

3.1. Political Correctness and the Development of Language

However, as F. Saussure used to say, nobody can influence a language development history [17] (p. 123). The same conclusion applies for the wording of “political correctness”. Attempts at substitution for the term *linguistic tact* have been made. But their great delay has led to a failure because the PC movement has spread all over the world and the term has been firmly inscribed in speech practice. This failure evidences that a ratification of a politically correct vocabulary requires at least two necessary, but insufficient conditions: (a) institutions that possess power in order to canonically impose a new terminology; (b) a presence of persons whose dignity or whose rights are in some way involved because of an outdated vocabulary. In the case of the term “political correctness”, the second condition is not fulfilled. The term is applied the way it originated—in relation to obtaining political rights by minority groups in multicultural USA, and later, regarding international relations, too, as far as English becoming the language of international and intercultural dialogue and representatives of different nations and races beginning to lay claim to clearing the language of offending descriptions [18].

Even in the 1960s, postmodern authors such as M. Foucault [19] and R. Barthes [20] observed a direct relation between language and power. It can be studied regarding politically correct speech too.

In one of his *Five Moral Pieces* U. Eco, for example, draws a distinction between integrism and fundamentalism—the most evident examples of intolerance which are usually considered as mutually relevant conceptions. From a historical point of view, however, *fundamentalism* is a *hermeneutical principle* related to an interpretation of a *holy book*. Because of that, it does not advocate a violent imposing of its outlook to others. In contrast, *integrism* contains a position of *political* belief and attempts to unite them by turning the first one into a basis of a foundation of a *new society*. In a temporal aspect, *fundamentalists* can be defined as *traditionalists*, while *integrists* are considered *progressive* and *revolutionary* [18] (pp. 70–71).

Proceeding from the distinction that Eco notes, politically correct speech begins to take on a mode of fundamentalism in the country of its origin, USA, because almost in a ritual way, it is normalized into daily language. Speaking ironically of its proponents, Eco remarks that the ones mostly subjected to discrimination are those who do not abide by the rules of politically correct speech. For example, naming a blind man by the word “sightless” can lead to sanctions by fundamentalists to the one who makes such a statement [18] (p. 71).

3.2. Semantic Problems

Another problem arising in regards to politically correct speech is related to the difficulties it faces in terms of new vocabulary. Its founders apparently proceeded being oriented mainly to a semantic level, without taking into consideration the significance of syntax. Probably because of this reason, a great number of misunderstandings arise, requiring a replacement of a politically correct terminology with a new and more correct one, that could in turn, be found to be incorrect again. For example, the term *invalid* was replaced with *handicapped*, and then later on with *disabled*, *differently abled* and finally—but perhaps not for the last time—with *physically challenged*. The following question therefore emerges: must one constantly inform oneself about linguistic innovations hastily implemented by somebody else in order to avoid blows by “linguistic fundamentalists”?

It is no coincidence that the PC movement launched just as deracialization has reached such epic proportions, that it cannot be compared to anything in the world’s linguistic history [16]. By this token, it has been reproached in different ways. In any case, the reproaches cannot be reduced to a common description such as “conservative”, as has been done by Jung Min Choi and John Murphy, authors trying to state PC movement’s philosophical grounds [21].

Opponents of political correctness notice its hypocrisy and that is why: (a) a politically correct truth and (b) a factual truth have to be kept distinct. Political correctness is “intolerance disguised as tolerance” and its language is inevitably repressive and censoring, and yet not in the sense H. Marcuse refers to [22]. Since language always is a mode of power, the following reasonable question arises:

“Who guards the guardians?” [23]. A separation of power, typical for modern democracies, cannot be applied to the field of political correctness and for that reason, some authors like S. Žižek consider it a “dangerous form of totalitarianism” [24].

PC proponents refer to E. Fromm in order to defend their position from accusations of being totalitarian, because their theory is not about an annihilation of individuality through its full subjection to a higher authority [21]. The fact that a language is a mode of power is not on their agenda. In addition, a meager vocabulary of politically correct speech inevitably simplifies modes of thinking and means of expression.

3.3. Political Correctness and the Mass Media

The main way of imposing politically correct speech is through the media. It is noteworthy, however, that the media lapsed into silence as regards the events in Cologne, Germany at the end of 2015 [25], because it could not find a politically correct way of differentiating between a piece of news and commentary, between an impartial reporting of facts, and their evaluation.

Reasons for acts of terrorism in Belgium are ascribed to political correctness. There, a cult of political correctness has been made and problems have been passed over in silence in the hopes of being resolved by themselves. The main mistake is by politicians, who have too naively adopted multiculturalism theory. An interesting issue is in Marcuse’s problem, formulated in his analysis of tolerance [22], which has not been raised until now, namely, that in spite of the prosperity of modern democracies, they have not yet dispensed with their repressive character and perhaps most of their problems are related to that. As R. Laing, a philosopher and a psychotherapist, observes, in modern societies there exists a rule that forbids discussing the rules confining our experiences [26]. In the same way, political correctness and multiculturalism model have been turned to be a “scapegoat” so that other problems are not put on the agenda—namely, that of the repressive character of modern democracies.

4. Criticism of Philosophical Argumentation of Political Correctness

4.1. Disadvantages of Linguistic Reasoning

At the same time, the present situation inevitably requires a re-examination of the conception of political correctness. In 1992 Jung Min Choi and John Murphy tried to disclose its philosophical and historical grounds referring to some statements of postmodernism. Lacking a necessary depth and reflexivity, they have in fact contradicted themselves. On one hand, they support pluralism of opinions and freedom of speech, while on the other hand, they generalize all criticism addressed to them as “conservatism” considering themselves liberal and progressive. They insist on having critical discussions, yet they do not specify a language in which these will be held [21]. They state that these discussions must be set free from strict rules, yet they do not pose the question of a dominant discourse. The following question therefore arises: if there is no subject of power, and participants in all discourses are equal in their rights, who supports politically correct speech in public life?

One of the main shortcomings of Jung Min Choi and John Murphy is their incomprehension of a relation between language—which, as Hegel notes in *Phenomenology of Mind*, contains only the common [27]—and speech about the singular or an individuality. For this reason, postmodernists, referenced by PC proponents, invent paradoxical linguistic forms that require an interpretation. This is the only manner for naming the singular without dissolving it into common meanings. It means giving an opportunity to an addressee to decipher and disclose a coded idiosyncratic meaning that can be appropriate only in regard to a certain situation or a person, but that cannot be generalized.

4.2. Linguistic Relativity and Ethical Universalism

PC proponents do not understand nominalism’s role in postmodern texts, as well as the possibility of finding linguistic universalism, although they state that everything—truth, reality, facts—is a linguistic

construction. The statement that everything is relative and subjected to an interpretation makes the constitution of a politically correct postmodern ethics rather difficult.

As far as U. Eco speaks about universalia, on a semiotic level, he would be named a “conservative” by PC proponents, because he points out that in all cultures there exist concepts related to our body. The fact that it could become an object of force as well as of physical or mental torture gives us a chance to enter the field of law and order. Semantics essentially changes when a second person appears on the stage. At this point, ethics arise because someone else’s body requires respect. Freedom of speech and thought belongs to that right too. According to Eco, these “bodily rights” have not been respected during all mankind’s history [18]. The problem is that their relation to semiotics remains uncomprehended, even by PC proponents themselves, and they have been reproached because of that.

According to S. Fish [21], cited by J. M. Choi and J. Murphy, an absolute truth does not exist, but rather, a great number of private truths do, on the basis of a presence of a multitude of points of view. This statement does not indicate relativism or agnosticism, but instead, a necessity of disclosing individual outlooks of reality, as conception of truth depends on them [21]. It is not clear how particular truths can be commensured without any objective standard. It seems for Choi and Murphy, making one’s way into another’s world is not a problem. However, they do not take into consideration that socially and culturally determined “subjective truths” are a part of a narrative identity, wherein description is not an easy task.

5. A Possible Way of Overcoming the Exclusion of the Other

5.1. Personal Pronouns Model

In this perspective, we consider that there exist possibilities for overcoming PC’s weak theoretical background, as well as for overcoming the imposing of a politically correct vocabulary by power. The main problem of politically correct speech is that it is introduced for naming persons absent from a communicative stage. It means that one can speak about them as in the third person which, according to Benveniste’s theory, is really more of a non-person, unlike the first two ones [28]. Hence, whatever vocabulary is invented by PC proponents, a linguistic form of discrimination is already present. Their only “interlocutors” in a debate are a “diluted multitude” of the so-called conservatives. In this way, reifications of disadvantaged people are indirectly introduced too.

According to N. Elias, a system of personal pronouns is the most simple expression of “a fundamental sociality of every human being”, of a relation of every human being to others. This coordinate system is intrinsic to all human societies and groups. Applying this system allows for the overcoming of objectification of our own socially inscribed acts of distancing. At the same time, the system of personal pronouns allows us to disclose forms of dependence as well as a level of integration that are found in every human society [29].

Elias’s ideas about a substantializing of differences between us and others, and about overcoming artificially naturalized distances through referring to three modes of a verb’s conjugation, are supported by other representatives of social sciences and humanities, as well as by artists.

5.2. Presentation of Narrative Identity in Art

We can give as an example, Eleonora Zbanke, a filmmaker, human rights activist and speaker at the 2015 World Forum for Democracy on “Freedom vs Control” [30]. Zbanke opens her speech with a classical question “Who am I?”. She admits afterwards she cannot give a definite answer. The problem is a variety of narratives about herself that could be told depending on interests, education, culture, and expectations of an audience. At first, Zbanke introduces herself at the forum in two totally different ways.

Her first narrative sounds so formal that it resembles a curriculum vitae. Her self-description is carried out in an impersonal role and in institutional terms. She unexpectedly changes this style just

in her conclusion adding an emotional point of view of generalized others: “Nothing much to hate. On the contrary, I bet a lot of people would even love to have such a description” [30].

This change is completely motivated because the aim of the speaker is to describe a notion given to others on the basis of her impersonal self narrative. Her audience might add to the picture some typifications from daily life. As Zbanke is a producer, she tries to envisage the image verbally projected to others. “Now you have this image of me: a young woman with an interesting life—scripts, shoots, actors, and international relations” [30].

The second narrative is completely different: “I was born in the poorest country in Europe, I’m black, I’m a lesbian and I’m currently unemployed”. The speaker’s assumption is that an image of herself created by the audience this time will be quite different from the first one. The question here is not an epistemological one, as Foucault would say, because it is about relating to a subject talking about themselves to a truth of their narrative. Can we define, in this case, which narrative of the two is authentic and which one is not?

Zbanke applies different modes of talking about herself in order to show how easily one can jump to a conclusion about others and judge them only on the basis of previously learned social models of perception. She refers to her own narrative identity in order to call the audience’s attention to her future plans about working with people who, similar to her, have been cast out by society without being objects of any care or interest.

A third, new and considerably more personal self-narrative follows. Because of her skin color, Zbanke had been called “monkey” or “nigger” in her early childhood. When she was ten her family moved to Russia, but her life did not get better there because of other social reasons. As she did not understand the local language, she perceived herself as a lonely “dumb monkey”. She longed for acceptance and love, but had no friends, because nobody was interested in her.

When such interest is lacking, an individual begins to perceive themselves as being invisible, i.e., as existing on the edge of being. This is what happened to Zbanke. For her, if you were different, it was normal to be invisible. In this way, on the basis of her personal experience, Zbanke discovered ideas that can also be found in theoretical form in the works of authors like J.-P. Sartre [31], M. Ponty [32], Ts. Todorov [12], U. Eco [18], and others.

After discovering she was lesbian and sharing it with her family, Zbanke experienced a new crisis, a more painful one, because she was cast aside by her immediate family. This situation of hers led to suicidal thoughts. The hatred that had been experienced as coming from outside up until that point, overwhelmed her from within and she was cut up about it, because it was coming from people who were close to her, and with whom she strongly identified.

This stage of her self-narrative gives a chance to Zbanke to address her audience in the following manner: “We have freedom of speech, but some people confuse freedom of expression with insult” [30]. E. Canetti describes the traumatic impact of some words as that which is similar to needles stuck into the body’s flesh. The soul cannot live by cruelty and needle pricks. The human being also needs “tender filaments” [33]. According to E. Zbanke, the pain caused by some offensive words is so strong, that sometimes it can be so unbearable, that a sufferer of hate speech would choose death over life. This was the case of an 18 years old Russian boy who committed suicide because of a cruel revilement of his criticism of Russian politics in the Ukraine [30].

As a person who has been put through the wringer, Zbanke insists, not on discussions with representatives of an impersonal multitude called “conservatives”, but rather, on personal presentation of one’s narrative identity: “Each of us has a real personality and our own story to tell. We want to be heard, not judged” [30].

For this reason, Zbanke does not try to be like “fundamentalists” of politically correct speech who, while being fighters against discrimination, inadvertently become discriminators themselves. It is important for her to clarify the reasons for raising hate speech so that she can find a way to fight back. She numbers among them: (a) ignorance; (b) lack of information and (c) inability to listen. They can be fought back only by “love speech”. Probably on the basis of her experience of being “invisible”,

Zbanke adds to this expression a new meaning—attention to the human soul. Such an examination can be carried out in a narrative manner. Zbanke finds her way of doing that—by giving the floor to people with lively and important stories that otherwise would not be heard in “a cacophony of information” [30].

5.3. Translator–Foreigner as a Regulative Idea for Political Correctness

To achieve her goal Zbanke, assisted by non-governmental organizations, works out projects about telling such stories. Having these ideas, she comes close to J. Kristeva’s utopic conception of the role of the translator–foreigner in an ideal communicative paradise [3].

In contrast to proponents of politically correct speech, Zbanke takes into consideration that giving the floor to disadvantaged people would have for them more favourable effects than inventing euphemisms for naming them while being absent from a communicative stage. As a narrative structure, a narrative is considerably more effective than words isolated from their context.

M. Foucault examines historically the initiation and development of modalities of truth-telling and their corresponding personages [34]: a prophet, a sage, a technician and a parrhesiast (in Ancient Greece: one who speaks frank speech (*parrhesia*)). A philosophical reference to a concept’s history allows us to better understand our present situation. According to Foucault, our moral subjectivity is at least partly inscribed in these practices. That is why his main interest was, not in structures of discourses that have been (claimed to be) perceived as true, but rather, in the manner in which an individual constitutes themselves and is being constituted by others as a subject of true discourse, because this is a mode in which they present themselves, both as a subject to themselves and to others. In contrast to Antiquity, when a parrhesiast and a frank speech had great significance, in modern times, this modality can be found only mixed with the other ones.

A parrhesiastic modality of truth-telling can be found nowadays: (a) in revolutionary discourse as “a critique of existing society”; (b) in philosophical discourse as “analysis, as reflection on human finitude and criticism of everything which may exceed the limits of human finitude, whether in the realm of knowledge or the realm of morality”; (c) “scientific discourse when it criticizes existing forms of knowledge, of dominant institutions, of current ways of doing things” [34].

In a specific way, Zbanke develops a method of art in which many of Foucault’s conclusions made in his historical and philosophical research can be found. She gives a person a chance to tell their truth, constituting themselves as a subject. An interlocutor during this communicative event is Zbanke herself.

After the narrative ends it is time for its art processing. An author now takes a new role (in J. Kristeva’s terms, the one of a translator–foreigner [3]). The author has to be able to envisage—the way Zbanke does in the beginning of her speech—an audience’s disposition, expectations, and reactions as being a generalized addressee of a film’s text. At this moment, the absent spectators (“they”) become “you” (singular or plural) who, having a role of “I” have to be able to have a dialogue—indirectly though—with them. The most important point is succeeding in showing that which, in a “cacophony of information”, would not be heard. Because of that, the mediating role of the filmmaker is of great importance.

In the end, there is a presentation of artistically processed documented self-narratives. It is no coincidence that in the beginning of her speech Zbanke pays attention to a moment of a partial identification between a speaker and a listener, that someone could wish having a life like hers means that they have fictionally put themselves in her shoes.

A similar chance of being in someone else’s shoes is given in a movie theater too. This is a premise for creating a partial identification with the other and for empathy. In the beginning of her speech Zbanke allegorically hints that an audience has to put themselves in her shoes in order to create a communicative situation with the documented person who in their own words tells about themselves, i.e., presents their own truth to others. If the filmmaker has succeeded in her purpose then the audience

would have her point of view, shifting from being the anonymous “they” to becoming the virtual “you” (singular or plural) to the person telling the story.

Although a direct dialogue with that person is missing, an audience interested in the case would be able to ask questions and search for answers. In this way, a circle will be closed and everybody will pass consecutively through three modes of a verb’s conjugation.

5.4. Ethical Virtues and Verb’s Conjugation

It is not difficult to find here ethical aspects of this change of persons in a verb’s conjugation. In his book *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps* Tzvetan Todorov categorizes daily virtues on the basis of narratives of people who survived concentration camps [12]. His conclusion is that they depend on the character of the recipient of the message, or in broader terms, on interpersonal relations.

“With dignity an “I” refers to the self; with care—to a singular or plural “you”, i.e., to beings one relates to by reciprocity and a possible change of roles . . . and in the end, a spiritual activity is directed to more or less of them who however keep their anonymity and do not appear as participants in a present dialogue anymore. In this sense, virtues can be just three as the number of persons of a verb’s conjugation. It suggests a double relation between ethics and communication”. [12]

P. Ricoeur’s ideas are similar. A critical moment for a political philosophy comes from when an institutionalized mediation of a relation between “I” and “you” is needed. In this case, an immediate relation to the other is broken and the introduction of a “third” person or of “anyone” is necessary [11].

A mastery of personal pronouns is necessary because it creates a fundamental condition of a subject’s constitution as a member of a political society. Defining the other as “the same as I am” means a recognition of the other’s equal rights and obligations. This kind of identification is impossible without a linguistic exchange as described above.

According to J. Kristeva [35], an irritation by “traces of otherness” in foreigners’ speech is found even in the most tolerant attitude. However, she speaks about an *ideal type* (in the sense of M. Weber [36]) of a foreigner by the medium of which she explains her conception about language, culture and political problems of modern democracies.

Her foreigner is characterized as “a prophet of a utopia of a cosmopolitan paradise” where everybody will approach difference as enriching them instead of distancing themselves from it. In the original text, the pronoun “our” is used on purpose, because by its means literature’s polysemy is brought in: (A) An author gives a reader a chance of an identification; (B) Being a deixis, a personal pronoun always introduces a certain point of view—in this case, to a speaker of description who—as a third person—is excluded from a communication process; (C) On a semiotic level “our” foreigner is not opposed by “your” but by “their” foreigner. It is described below.

As Kristeva’s dreaming is impossible for the time being, there is for the foreigner, no other choice of a homeland, than the one of the writers because, they, in contrast to proponents of politically correct speech, are “the ones who build a language”: “Isn’t that the reason that since hoary antiquity until now a writer is a necessary counterbalance of a legislator, a “logotet” against a “nomotet”, the one who changes a language the way a lawyer changes laws?” [3].

The problem is that exclusion mechanisms function even in literature. For example, in France one who does not conform to established norms, and who speaks and writes in “another language”, is forced either to keep silent or join currently dominating rhetorics. Another option is departing abroad where one can become a translator of their own thoughts and ideas along with all the problems accompanying this figure. “Actually by its definition, a translator’s fate is open, endless, undetermined: perhaps exactly that is their salvation” [3].

6. Conclusions

This article shows some deficiencies of the current model of political correctness and the language that aims to overcome racial, ethnic and religious discrimination. A disadvantage of this language is a generalization that erases the uniqueness of human beings. Our thesis is that it is possible to overcome this model by building a bridge between hermeneutic grounded ethics and recognition of the diversity of the other.

In conclusion, we can say that there exists a version of tolerance that can be defined as a narrative one. Permeating into the other's identity can be compared to the reading of a text. Some of this text's words could sound strange or unfamiliar and yet a meaning of the whole text remains comprehensible. It is in contrast to politically correct speech, with its constantly changeable vocabulary and syntax changes, which often astonish foreigners or put them into a position of making discriminatory statements without meaning it.

One of the reproaches to a failed multiculturalism model is aimed at its hermeneutical grounds. Might it be that the conception of hermeneutics itself is outdated, and that its improvement and revision is necessary?

This article draws attention to the problem concerning the understanding of the other and linguistic recognition of their uniqueness. This is an issue that transcends politics and generalizing language forms. It requires the rethinking of our ideas about others and creating new attitudes toward them.

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