

Jasmin Dall'Agnola, Jabbar Moradi (eds)

PC ON EARTH

The Beginnings of the Totalitarian Mindset

With a foreword by Josette Baer

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Acknowledgements

The idea for this book emerged in the aftermath of a conference about populism that took place in Prague in May 2018. I was the only participant who defended Professor Jordan B. Peterson's views on free speech during an evening panel of senior academics and could not believe my ears: instead of discussing my hypothesis about populism, the colleagues on the panel, all experienced scholars, immediately joined forces, attacking me for even mentioning Professor Peterson's name. I kept defending his defence of free speech until the chairman announced the end of the panel. It was quite an intellectual battle. At the usual *apéro* after the conference, three people approached me one after the other, congratulating me on my thoughts. For some reason, they were all whispering.

Among the conference public, some forty students and academics, Jabbar Moradi was the only one who stood up *in foro publico* and had the courage to agree with me. So we met up in January 2019, when I was back in Prague for my annual stint in the archives, and discussed the issue at hand: what makes people behave in a conformist way? Where to draw the line between conformism and political correctness? What do conformism and political correctness actually mean? We jotted down a couple of ideas and began to look for colleagues who would be interested in participating in our book project. Besides Jabbar as editor, I wanted my former student and teaching assistant Jasmin Dall'Agnola on board, as second editor.

Now that our journey has reached its destination, we are very happy with the result, and we would like to thank Valerie Lange at ibidem-Verlag for her kind and highly professional support. We are indebted to our authors, who were all enthusiastic about the project and fantastic to work with, and also to Qirrit, the renowned Belgian cartoonist, for his acerbically humorous contributions.

Peter Thomas Hill found the title *PC on Earth*, which also serves as the motto of our little book. Peter contributed a second

text about the shape of the world. He has also copy-edited all the texts written by those authors who are not native English speakers. David O’Kane, a senior anthropologist at the Max Planck Institute in Halle, enlightens us with his thoughts about British politics and Brexit. Jasmin Dall’Agnola, a PhD candidate at Oxford Brooks University, focuses on PC and tolerance in Kazakhstan. Jabbar Moradi is a soil scientist specialized in soil restoration ecology; Jabbar’s contribution deals with conformism and political correctness in science. Balázs Varádi, an economist at the prestigious Budapest ELTE, comments on how PC is perceived by the current Hungarian government. Adis Merdzanović, a political scientist and specialist in Balkan politics, makes a cogent argument in favour of PC. Citizen XY, a retired journalist, delivers a frightening prognosis of what could happen to European and world literature once PC is in full command. Citizen XY also contributed the joke about PC I quote in the second part of my introduction. Pavle Krsmanović, a medical doctor and specialist in pathological physiology, investigates the ethical dilemma of PC and minority rights.

Slovakia’s best-selling author Jozef Banáš’s travelogue about the Crimea offers a unique insight into conformism in the mainstream media in his native Slovakia and beyond. Marc Winter, a professor of Chinese Studies, explains why PC does not exist in the People’s Republic of China, still governed by the Communist Party. Lukas Joos’ satire describes how the mind of a PCnik works. Lastly, I hope that my introduction will be perceived as a defence of the key values of democratic societies: freedom of speech, respect of human rights, protection of minority rights, and secular, scientific thinking. Voltaire and the philosophers of the Enlightenment should not have lived in vain.

Josette Baer, Jasmin Dall’Agnola, and Jabbar Moradi
Zurich, Oxford and Prague, December 2019

Introduction

Josette Baer

The End of Culture? What Culture? Whose Culture?

“And so as we come to the end, barbarism replaces culture. In the shadow of the big word, intolerance and infantile behaviour increase. When it is not cultural identity restricting the choices an individual can make, using threats of high treason to silence expressions of doubt, irony, and reason—opinions that might separate him from the collectivity—it is the entertainment industry, the creation of the technological age, that reduces great works of art to drivel. The life of the mind has quietly moved out of the way, making room for the terrible and pathetic encounter of the fanatic and the zombie.”¹

The French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut (*1949), a graduate of the prestigious *école normale supérieure* and member of the *académie française*, was very pessimistic about the future of the free-thinking world when he published his essay *La Défaite de la pensée* at Gallimard in Paris in 1987. Indeed, were not the independent mind, free thinking and rational thought the pillars of Western civilization that had begun with the Enlightenment, with the texts of Kant, Voltaire, Rousseau and Mill, whose thoughts Jefferson and the founding fathers of the US constitution had put into practice? And were not those very pillars in danger from technology? Would technology used by the entertainment industry really turn man, hitherto bound by and to books, into a fanatic and a zombie?

1 Alain Finkielkraut, *The Defeat of the Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 135.

A fanatic is defined by frenzy, as through divine or demonic possession, marked by excessive enthusiasm and bereft of reasoning.² A zombie is a reanimated corpse in the voodoo cult or a slow-witted person.³ Thus, Finkielkraut was convinced that technology put the mind in grave danger, ending mankind's independent power of reasoning because neither the fanatic nor the zombie is capable of thinking.

In 1987, the world was still separated into two political blocs, the Socialist and the Capitalist, or the totalitarian and the free, although politics in the Soviet bloc had seemed to soften up a little under General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party Mikhail S. Gorbachev, in power since March 1985—at least in regard to Soviet foreign policy.⁴ The citizens in Erich Honecker's East Germany, Gustáv Husák's Czechoslovakia, Nicolae Ceaușescu's Romania, Wojciech Jaruzelski's Poland and János Kádár's Hungary were still imprisoned when caught attempting to flee to the West.

Now, why would the mind be under threat in the free Capitalist world, an independent mind in the free part of the world? In Paris in 1987, you could sit in the Café de Flore, sip red wine and complain about the government in public to your heart's content—nothing happened. The police had no right to arrest citizens for complaining, since the rule-of-law state granted and protected their civil rights. Not so in Prague or Budapest.

Finkielkraut conceived of the mind (*la pensée*) as *per se* independent, hence free because there had been no such thing as a

2 "Fanatic", in *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 344.

3 "Zombie", in *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Word Origins* (London: Bloomsbury, 1990), 583.

4 William Taubman, *Gorbachev. His Life and Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017).

dependent or unfree mind since the Enlightenment.⁵ He addressed a disturbing phenomenon he believed was attacking the process of reasoning, causing its defeat: the theoretical conflation of cultures, the rise of identity politics and, as a consequence, multiculturalism. Finkielkraut's main tenet is his criticism of identity politics and the consequences they prompted: they put the collective over the individual and conflated two areas of political theory whose division had been an achievement of European political thought: natural rights, that is, rights believed to have been given to mankind by God, and historical rights,⁶ the positive rights sovereigns and rulers had enshrined in their countries' constitutions in the centuries prior to the Enlightenment, that is, man-made rights, set by men to rule over men. To ignore the natural—now referred to as inalienable—human rights of the individual, and prefer the historical rights of a nation or national, social, sexual or political minority, led to the belief that the collective counted more than the individual, that one had to give preference to the group at the expense of the individual. With this, Finkielkraut wrote, the adherents of multiculturalism and identity politics brought back Marx's servant, the miser beaten with a knout—and they were not even aware of what they were doing:

“But what if culture teaches people to inflict corporal punishment on delinquents, to reject barren women, to kill adulterous women, to consider the testimony of one man

5 In his precise use of philosophical concepts, Finkielkraut reminds me here of the German-born political theorist Hannah Arendt (1906–1975). She argued that, ever since Plato, thinking about politics was not neutral towards its subject of investigation, like philosophy of nature, for example, or philosophy of music. In thinking about politics, political thinkers are always looking for the good and just order of society; Hannah Arendt in an interview with Günther Gaus conducted in German in 1964, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9SyTEUi6Kw>; accessed 7 June 2019.

6 Finkielkraut, 105.

the same as the testimony of two women, to give a sister only half as much inheritance as her brother, to perform female circumcision, to forbid mixed marriages and permit polygamy? If the answer is yes, then we seem to be saying that the serf should be able to benefit from the knout, that to deprive her of this would mutilate her being, threaten her dignity as a person, give evidence, in other words, of our racism.”⁷

Those who criticize the French philosopher here for his alleged hostility to Islam are not only wrong, but should understand Finkelkraut’s engagement for human rights not only as based on his political-philosophical conviction of the equality of individuals, hence an element of the French Enlightenment, but also look at his thought with a historical eye. In the mid-1980s, Paris had to endure terrorist attacks by Islamic fundamentalists.⁸ Thirty years prior to the outrages at Charlie Hebdo and the Bataclan, Muslim terrorists attacked the French way of life. Finkelkraut reacted to this attack with his book, stating that any apologetics, any weak stance against the attacks was proof of the defeat of the mind; the mind was hence under attack by something that had gone really wrong. I think he addressed the lack of political will to defend civil liberties and *la pensée* behind them, to defend these historical liberties and condemn the attacks for what they were—barbaric acts, murdering and maiming civilians.

Now, how is Finkelkraut’s political thought of the late 1980s related to our book, which we planned as a collection of essays and contributions about conformism and political correctness? I think that back in the late 1980s, Finkelkraut already had a vague *angst*,

7 Finkelkraut, 105.

8 https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/11/18/terrorisms-long-history-in-paris-where-the-french-ask-how-the-story-ends/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.d3a88cf97865; accessed 9 June 2019.

or better, an inkling of how multiculturalism, identity politics and its concomitants, that is, the blurring of the clear boundaries between natural rights and historical rights, might affect individual liberty—and with that, human rights, my rights as an individual.

Sir Isaiah Berlin⁹ (1909–1997) conceived of liberty, that is, political freedom of the individual, as two-fold: positive and negative liberty. Positive liberty (freedom to) allows me to run for office, to participate in the political process, while negative liberty (freedom from) protects me from the intrusion of the government into my private life. Hence, for an individual to enjoy liberty, and for a government to call itself democratic, there must be a clear barrier between the state’s sphere and my private life as a citizen. The act of speaking (up) in public is not only an expression of freedom of speech, but also a private, personal matter because I speak about matters that I, as an individual, am concerned with. If I have to self-censor my words in public to avoid legal persecution and can speak freely only in my kitchen, liberty has died. What we have then is Nobel Laureate Svetlana Alexievich’s famous Soviet kitchen talks—but now in a Californian or Bostonian mansion, and this almost 30 years after the collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union in 1991!¹⁰ Free speech in the spacious kitchen of a Palo Alto mansion does not differ one bit from free speech in the decrepit kitchenette of a suburban flat in Moscow.

Bill C-16,¹¹ adopted by the Canadian government in 2016, clearly infringes on this important barrier between state and citizens because it not only dictates to citizens how to speak, but

9 Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty”, in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 118–172.

10 Svetlana Alexievich, *Secondhand Time. The Last of the Soviets* (New York: Random House, 2016).

11 The senate hearing on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Knl-AAkSNtqo>; accessed 23 May 2019.

makes it a criminal offence if the citizens do not act upon this law, that is, refuse to obey the language dictate issued by the state.

The very idea that the individual is oppressed by a collective—by well-meaning but badly informed people exercising a mistakenly understood crusade on behalf of the protection of minorities by policing the language of the majority—seems to run counter to PC today, in 2019.

Today, gender issues are everywhere. Is the LGBT community not well protected in Western societies? Did US citizens not elect Barack Obama, the first black president, for two legislative periods? Are Western European societies, and those societies which survived the Socialist nightmare in Central and Eastern Europe not deeply committed to the values of the EU, to human rights, the protection of minorities and free speech? Was Finkelkraut wrong in his analysis in 1987?

I do not share Finkelkraut's pessimism about technology and the entertainment industry that allegedly would turn us into zombies or fanatics, as he expressed it in 1987. On the contrary, I observe that the advance of technology has not only made our lives as scholars easier and more effective, since research is so much simpler today than in the late 1980s. I further observe that the Internet is a source and inspiration of free speech for everybody—whether one likes the contents or not. Free speech is just that—free. It doesn't have to be intelligent, moral or appropriate. Free speech can be vile, offensive and stupid. It is not so much content that is at issue here, but much more the constitutionally granted possibility to express oneself—even if what I have to say is mere idiocy, conspiracy theory or 'fake news'. In this regard, the buzzword 'fake news' is nothing new: in the decades of the Cold

War, ‘fake news’ was usually referred to as ‘propaganda’ or ‘disinformation’ issued by the enemy.¹²

What is different now is that PC, usually pushed forward by a social, sexual or political minority, dictates how one should properly express oneself in public and private life. But can a minority really oppress a majority? Can we speak of the tyranny of a minority? Hannah Arendt addressed this issue in her lucid thoughts about the students’ movement of 1968 and the violence-stricken atmosphere on US campuses and at European universities:

“The extreme form of power is All against One, the extreme form of violence is One against All. [...] To claim, as is often done, that a tiny unarmed minority has successfully, by means of violence—shouting, kicking up a row, et cetera—disrupted large lecture classes whose overwhelming majority had voted for normal instruction procedures is therefore very misleading. [...] What actually happens in such cases is something much more serious; the majority clearly refuses to use its power and overpower the disrupters; the academic processes break down because no one is willing to raise more than a voting finger for the *status quo*.”¹³

I think that Arendt’s analysis is spot on and applies to the current situation we address in this book. The majority refuses to stand up for its interests, in the case of law bill C-16, the freedom of speech of every Canadian citizen, regardless of his or her sexual, ethnic or political orientation or identity.

Furthermore, unbeknownst to many academics who have not studied the history of Communism and do not speak at least one Eastern European language, language dictates existed in the power sphere of Soviet-type Socialism in Europe for many decades, that

12 I owe this important thought to A. Ross Johnson, conversation at the ASEES in Chicago, IL, November 2017.

13 Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harvest Harcourt, 1970), 42.

is, in a world bereft of freedom. The sad thing is that many Western scholars do not seem to bother: they have no idea how totalitarianism policed language under Socialism. The Czech playwright, co-founder of the Czechoslovak human rights group *Charter 77* and Czechoslovak and Czech president Václav Havel (1936–2011), a man who looked like a kind hamster but had the courage of a lion, in an essay from April 1985:

“Much like the concepts of ‘Socialism’, ‘home’ and ‘nation’, the concept of ‘freedom’ is but one rung of the ladder on which savvy individuals are moving upwards to advance their professional and political careers and, at the same time, a truncheon, with which they can hit anybody who refuses to obey.”¹⁴

I can see a clear parallel here to US university campuses, mainly liberal colleges, which, under the well-meant intention to establish, once and for all, equality, are instructing their students in identity politics and gender studies instead of teaching sound academic subjects such as sociology, political theory, and art history. Camille Paglia (*1947), the US art historian, feminist and author of the impressive *Sexual Personae*,¹⁵ was the first courageous scholar to contest this development already in the early 1990s; Paglia predicted to what the teaching of identity politics and gender studies would lead.¹⁶

The advance in technology has not created any Finkelkrautian zombies or fanatics but contributed to disseminating the values of

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- 14 Václav Havel, “Anatomie jedné zdrženlivosti”, in *Do různých stran. Eseje a články z let 1983–1989* (Praha: Knihovna Lidové Noviny, 1990), 65–91, 67. English translation by me.
- 15 Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae. Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (Vintage: New York, 1991).
- 16 Camille Paglia, “The MIT Lecture: Crisis in the American Universities”, in *Sex, Art and American Culture* (Vintage: New York, 1992), 249–298.

Western civilization with its positive sides, such as education, and its negative ones, such as terrorist networks and racist and antisemitic websites. Today, I can read the most important works of philosophy on my computer, I can browse digital libraries and read the world's newspapers online. I think that this unprecedented access to information is confusing some individuals, those who are seeking political orientation, thinking then, once they have found their holy grail, that they are morally entitled to teach people what to say and, at the end of the day, what to think. And therein lies the border between liberalism and tolerance on the one hand, and PC on the other, the latter being a dangerous first step towards the totalitarian mindset.

“The danger of conformism and its threat to freedom is inherent in all mass societies. [...] Under conditions of an already existing mass society—as distinguished from the class disintegration whose processes are accelerated by totalitarian movements—it is not inconceivable that totalitarian elements could for a limited time rely on conformism, or rather on the activation of a dormant conformism, for its own ends.”¹⁷

In the age of the Internet, we are inundated with information. Many individuals have problems orientating themselves, filtering the input and making a selection: whom and what to believe? To do this, one has to have a sound education in rational thought and the scientific principles of the humanities. Now, how are conformism and political correctness related?

17 Hannah Arendt, “The Threat of Conformism”, in *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954. Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 423–427, 425.

Conformism, Political Correctness and Decadence

Snow fell the whole night.

8:00 I am building a snowman.

8:10 The feminist neighbour drops by, demanding that I should build a snowwoman.

8:15 I am building a snowwoman.

8:17 The feminist neighbour leaves, complaining that the bulging breasts of my snowwoman would have a negative effect on other snowwomen that are not that gifted.

8:20 A married gay couple, also neighbours, drops by, hissing at me that I should build two snowmen.

8:22 A transgender person asks would I not rather build one snowperson with all male and female sexual organs.

8:25 The vegan family living at the end of our street accuses me of waste, complaining that the carrot is food and should not be used on snow buildings.

8:28 A while ago, somebody accused me of racism because the two snowmen are white.

8:31 The Muslim who lives on the other side of our street is demanding that the snowwoman should wear a burka.

8:40 The police arrive; allegedly, somebody has called them, complaining that my snowmen are offending them.

8:42 The feminist neighbour drops by again, demanding that I would have to take away the broom from the snowwoman, as people might think that women necessarily have to work in the household.

8:43 A while ago, a spokesperson from the village council, responsible for the equality of the sexes, dropped by, threatening that I could be removed.

8:45 A team from ABC TV has just arrived. They want to know the difference between a snowman and a snowwoman. I say: the snowman has snowballs. They accuse me of sexism.

- 9:00 I appear on the morning news as a suspicious element, potential terrorist, racist, homophobe, insensitive offender of visible minorities, who uses the difficult weather situation to damage society.
- 9:10 I am asked whether I have accomplices. Social services arrive and take my children away.
- 9:29 Extreme leftist demonstrators, offended by everything I have done, pour into my street and demand my immediate arrest, sentencing and strict punishment.

The moral of this story: there is none. It is just a reflection of the world in which we are living—and it's going to get worse.¹⁸

Is the unknown author of the joke above right? Is our world already in such dire straits that we have to expect worse to come? We hope not, but as one cannot be sure, we decided to publish a book about the times we live in and the intellectual absurdities of the 21st century.

What does political correctness (PC) mean? And what exactly is conformism? This book presents a compilation of various texts from European citizens, professionals and academics who care about our liberties in Western-type democracies. With this book, we are reacting to the controversy surrounding Toronto psychology professor Jordan B. Peterson's resistance to law bill C-16. Some of our authors consider PC and conformism fair instruments or procedures in a world in which minorities are still being harassed or persecuted, verbally abused or discriminated against by society, the majority. Others deem PC and conformism dangerous weapons since they aim to police language, that is, to set standards for how one should use language; such language control can be equated to the beginnings of the totalitarian mindset. Yevgeny Zamiatin's *We* and George Orwell's *1984* are child's play against the

18 I thank my friend XY for this joke, whose origins are unknown to me. The joke is in Czech, English translation by me.

totalitarian mindset of 2019 and the dominant influence of social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

A traditional argument of conformists who are not interested in serious discussion is always money or fame. At the 2018 Prague conference on populism mentioned in the acknowledgements, the panel participants, instead of discussing what Professor Peterson had or had not done for freedom of speech, argued that he was only interested in making money! Indeed, Professor Peterson is very successful touring the world and lecturing, but since he does not actually have the power to force people to buy tickets for his lectures or buy his books, this feeble and unfair *ad hominem* argument reminded me immediately of Václav Havel's famous essay *The Power of the Powerless*:

“(By the way, the representatives of power invariably come to terms with those who live within the truth by persistently ascribing utilitarian motivations to them—a lust for power or fame or wealth—and thus they try, at least, to implicate them in their own world, the world of general demoralization.)”¹⁹

He, who accuses another of utilitarianism, that is, being interested only in making money or seeking fame to make more money, reveals his own lack of fairness, tolerance and interest in serious discussion.

19 Václav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless* (London: Vintage, 2018), 50. Havel referred to the Czechoslovak government's reaction to the first declaration of *Charter 77* on 1 January 1977. The newspaper of the Czechoslovak Communist Party *Rudé Právo* published a harsh criticism of the human rights group, labelling them as “the failed and self-appointed”, and forced Czech and Slovak artists, intellectuals and citizens to condemn the group of dissidents by signing the so-called *anticharta*. Havel referred to *Charter 77* and its signatories as those, who were ‘living in truth’, a concept and idea he had borrowed from Soviet writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008).

Let me now define what we mean by conformism and decadence, and how these two concepts are related. Conformism as a concept *per se* is neutral; it means nothing other than to act in accordance with a pattern. Naturally, no society can function without a certain degree of conformism: I conform when I shake hands or offer my seat on the train to an elderly person. Negative conformism simply does not exist, since it is a *contradictio in adjecto*, a contradiction in terms. When I refuse to shake hands or offer my seat on the train to an elderly person, I am just a rogue, a selfish individual, not conforming to society's manners, not acting with common courtesy. But my selfishness is not negative conformism, it's just my deliberate disregard of societal norms.

I think that there is also another form, which I call pre-emptive obedience. This is much more dangerous to a free society. Why? Pre-emptive obedience, which my grandfather used to call cowardice, is to act without duress along the lines I believe are going to be a general pattern of behaviour, what I suppose the majority of my co-citizens are going to do. An example: in a democracy, citizens are discussing whom or what they are going to vote for in the next ballot. As a conformist, I am testing the waters. So, 90% of the citizens are going to vote for party XY. I let myself be influenced by the majority and I also resolve to vote for party XY—without using my democratic right to think things through and make up my own mind. Pre-emptive obedience is not just about the weak-willed decision to join the camp of the majority; it is to deliberately renounce exercising my right to vote in order to pre-emptively please. But to please whom? The majority of the electorate—people I do not know! Why would I want to please people I do not know?

We can call this cowardice, fear of rejection, or avoiding potential conflict, but at the end of the day, this anxiousness about being rejected by people I do not know and general eagerness to

please people I do not know—not to swim against the current—is to me a sign of incipient decadence. One renounces one’s rights in the *res publica*, to speak one’s mind on public matters. Citizens’ lack of interest in matters of state was one reason that led to the collapse of the Roman Empire. Today, there are no longer empires in the old sense, but certainly powerful states. What is the basis of their power?

“And finally, let’s remember that peace with justice depends on our ability to sustain both the security of our societies and the openness that defines them. Threats to freedom don’t merely come from the outside. They can emerge from within—from our own fears, from the disengagement of our citizens.”²⁰

Although the situation with PC and conformism is not yet as pronounced in Europe as it is in the USA and Canada, the first signs are visible already, in particular the increasing importance of gender studies. Do not get me wrong: as the author of two historical studies about women in Central Europe from the 19th to the 21st century, I have nothing at all against gender studies, but the method must be clear. Vague ‘methods’ such as ‘deconstruction’ of texts believed to be political are not helpful in solving the problems of modern societies.

For Europe, it does not bode well for freedom of speech if our universities, faculties and citizens uncritically copy the trends of PC and identity politics coming from the USA: a burgeoning administrative apparatus that prescribes how and what academics should teach; diversity and gender offices that produce annual reports nobody has the time to read; a blind eye for proper methodology in gender studies and, last but not least, the liquidation of important subjects such as Latin. I hold that a sound education in history,

20 Obama’s speech on 19 June 2013 in Berlin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-9ry38AhbU>; accessed 9 June 2019.

Greek and Latin, and the liberal arts generally, teaches our students much more than deconstructing texts, using the ‘method’ of, for example, Marxist scholar Louis Althusser.²¹ Thankfully, individual European academics are still too preoccupied with what is going on in our countries and the EU for them to uncritically copy nonsensical ideas such as “appropriating culture”.²² Let us hope it stays that way.

Our book is as diverse as an open society of friends and colleagues can possibly be. We hope you enjoy our essays, satires and analysis and laugh about the cartoons our friend Quirit has contributed to this volume.

21 The historian of ideas Tony Judt (1948–2010): “I was brought up a Marxist. [...] In charge of the teaching of philosophy at the *École Normale Supérieure*, the French elite academy for future teachers and leaders, Althusser was touted by everyone I met as a man of extraordinary gifts, who was transforming our understanding of Marx and reshaping revolutionary theory. His name, his ideas, his books were everywhere. But listening to him, at a crowded and sycophantic seminar, I was utterly bemused. For Althusser’s account of Marxism, to the extent that I could make any sense of it, bore no relation to anything I had ever heard. It chopped Marx into little bits, selected those texts or parts of texts that suited the master’s interpretation, and then proceeded to construct the most astonishingly abstruse, self-regarding, and ahistorical version of Marxist philosophy imaginable. The exercise bore no discernible relationship to Marxism, to philosophy or to pedagogy. After a couple of painful attempts to adapt myself to the experience and to derive some benefit from it, I abandoned the seminar and never went back.” Tony Judt, “Elucubrations: The ‘Marxism’ of Louis Althusser”, in *Reappraisals. Reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century* (London, New York: Penguin, 2009), 106–115, 106–107. For a detailed description of Althusser’s method see Tony Judt, “French Marxism 1945–1975”, in *Marxism and the French Left. Studies on Labour and Politics in France, 1830–1981* (New York, London: New York University Press, 2011), 169–238, 220–233.

22 Cultural appropriation in fashion on <https://www.theweek.co.uk/cultural-appropriation>; accessed 29 July 2019.