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Goodism and Political Correctness: Practices, Effects, and Alternatives

Guest Editors:

Axel Rojas
Department of Anthropology
Universidad del Cauca
axelrojasm@gmail.com

Eduardo Restrepo
Centro de Investigación, Innovación y Creación
Department of Anthropology
Universidad Católica de Temuco
eduardoa.restrepo@gmail.com

Lía Ferrero
Instituto de Estudios Sociales en Contextos de Desigualdades,
Universidad Nacional de José C. Paz
Universidad Nacional de La Plata
liaferrero@gmail.com

In the early 90s, Stuart Hall analyzed the phenomenon of political correctness, starting with its origins as an ironical joke among hard left-wing students in US universities up to its evolution and appropriation by different political sectors (Hall [1994] 2015). In his increasingly relevant article, Hall describes how, at its onset, political correctness was used to ridicule and criticize racist and sexist behaviors, but it was soon co-opted by the right wing, particularly during the Reagan administration. Right-wing actors set up monitoring committees on university campuses, to oversee scholars' discourse, calling for political correctness as a tool to control and restrict what was allowed to state in the public sphere.

This phenomenon was not limited to the United States. In Great Britain, under Thatcherism, similar policies were established aiming to reconfigure social and moral consensus. Hall argued that political correctness is a symptom of fragmentation of the political panorama, as it shows some rejection towards traditional collective identities, such as class or labor (Hall [1994] 2015, p. 139). Thus, the ascent of the politically correct was parallel to the dominance of the New Right during the 80s and 90s, both in the United States and Great Britain.

Things have changed substantially to this day, since now the varied expressions of the right wing in Latin America and all over the world are the ones dismissing any statement questioning their naturalized privileges, using the label of “political correctness.” Affirmative actions, inclusive language, and multicultural and intercultural acknowledgements—tools that were often a flag of progressive spaces—are viewed by these right-wing actors as some dominance of what they claim to be “cultural Marxism” being imposed all over the world. Consequently, these right-wing actors see themselves as authentic challenging expressions (Stefanoni, 2021), which would be unmasking a scheme of harebrained euphemism with the disastrous consequences for what they view as the advance of privileges for social sectors aspiring to live at the expense of the State.

Moreover, in some political and theoretical imaginaries by militant and scholarly sectors that have presented themselves as left-wing or progressive, a set of intellectual practices have gained force that tend to moralize and level social analyses to match what they would like the world to be. In these cases, normative idealization by some subalternized individuals becomes common, since those individuals are viewed as that necessary embodiment of democratizing political stances, political positions, or epistemic *clairvoyants*. Such a behavior, informally circulating in some spaces of the so-called “social movements,” may also be expressed in bibliographic production, classrooms, militancy, and bureaucratic spaces. That behavior can be called *goodism*.

Goodism refers to an attitude that simplifies and moralizes intellectual work, based on the premise that certain political orientations and the effects of specific subjects and projects are good and appropriate per se. It not only presupposes the inherent goodness of political orientations and the effects by certain individuals and projects, but it also reacts radically to any expression of criticism or attempt to more complex analyses, when it unveils that there is not necessarily a correspondence between some individuals or collectives’ social, political, or economic places and some given practices, conceptualizations, or political stances. For goodism, the responses (and good people) are known in advance.

Despite the significant advances and valuable contributions by critical scholars, who have shown the heterogeneity and contradictions underlying subaltern political projects, goodism also embodies a paradoxical politics of representation. Often it is scholars from privileged sectors who vehemently defend the most conservative stances in support of political correctness assumptions.

With this *Tabula Rasa* issue, we expect to receive research or reflection articles that help us understand how the imaginary of political correctness has positioned itself, contributing to perceive right-wing scholars and activists as the alleged critics of political mobilization and scholarly work. Likewise, we welcome articles showing how “goodism” is linked to different subjects in their political articulation, how they have been built, which are their effects, and how they are interwoven with scholarly institutions in Latin America, particularly, how, goodism submits to productivism and to the geopolitics of knowledge, which are driven by scholarly bureaucracies’ anguish for generating “quality” indicators.

We expect articles that examine the rhetoric articulated against political correctness and account for changes in the political imaginaries and emotional landscapes enabling these specific disputes. Also, we invite to submit works tracking and exploring ethnographically the trajectories and effects of “goodism” in specific settings. Both the itching produced by political correctness, how it is read, and which reactions it provokes among those standing from right-wing viewpoints, such as moral censorship and political and scholarly effects of “goodism” in different political and scholarly products.

We welcome also articles that, drawing on specific research works, address how the politically correct and “goodism” narratives have changed political and emotional imaginaries. Some questions to guide the proposed articles are: How does “goodism” manifest itself in scholarly and militant spaces and how does it simplify and moralize social and political analysis? How can the trajectories of “goodism” be historicized and ethnographed in specific settings, and how are they related to productivist demands and the geopolitics of knowledge in the Latin American academia? What effects has “goodism” had on academic production and on building political imaginaries in Latin America? How does criticism and advocacy of political correctness affect political mobilization in Latin American current contexts?

References

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Stefanoni, P. (2021). *¿La rebeldía se volvió de derecha? Cómo el antiprogresismo y la anticorrección política están constituyendo un nuevo sentido común (y por qué la izquierda debería tomarlos en serio)*. Siglo Veintiuno Editores.

For further information or to submit your final drafts (in English, Portuguese, or Spanish), you should write to this e-mail: eduardoa.restrepo@gmail.com

The deadline for manuscript submission is January 28, 2025

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