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Introduction: A Decade of Transformation

Roseanne Gerin and Petra Jedlicková

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the profound political, economic and social changes that have taken place in the former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. As with all anniversaries, 1999 is a year to look back and assess the progress that has been made and to reflect upon the developments that have yet to take place as the transformation continues. As scholars attempt to make sense of the rapidly changing societies in the emerging democracies of Central and Eastern Europe as well as in the mature democracies of both Western Europe and the United States, the few remaining divisions between East and West – the last faded and dilapidated remnants of the Iron Curtain – are gradually disintegrating and being replaced by the striking, multicolored banner of a globalized society.

The swift pace of the developments of the past ten years has prompted thoughtful analysis and lively debate among politicians, economists, academics, philosophers, journalists and artists. And so, too, this decade of change compelled discussion among the scholars from Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and the United States who participated in the Junior Visiting Fellows seminars and conference during the January-June 1999 semester at the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen (IWM) in Vienna. Their research projects covered a diverse range of topics from political theory to international relations to new media - all relevant to the overarching theme of the decade of transformation.

This volume is divided into three sections based on the major divisions of the research topics undertaken by the junior fellows. The first section contains contributions with political themes. In "Political Liberty in the Social Contract," Matthew Simpson analyzes the meaning of political liberty in Jean Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract*, emphasizing the relationship between the state of nature and civil society. Through a close reading of the text, he reveals Rousseau's meaning of the term "state of nature" and shows how a special kind of agreement between individuals - the social contract - allows them to substitute political liberty in civil society for natural liberty in the state of nature.

Iulia Voina-Motoc examines the role of ethics and the law in international relations in "Moral Rule and the Rule of Law in International Politics: Common, Sense, Political Realism, Skepticism." In her analysis of the evolution of international relations theory she embarks on a journey through the annals of history from the Peloponnesian War to the League of Nations and the Versailles system in an attempt to answer the question "Can a state be moral?" Motoc resolves that morals are identical to politics in international relations in that the former imposes on states to fulfill their calls, and namely to increase their power.

Dan Dungaciu's article, "East and West and the 'Mirror of Nature': Nationalism in West and East Europe - *Essentially* Different?" offers some methodological preliminaries about the problems that arise when comparing Eastern and Western nationalisms. He outlines the relevance of the relationship between so-called "Eastern nationalism" and "Western nationalism" as far as these concepts or relations induce, produce or perpetuate essentialism.

The second part on philosophy includes four contributions. Aneta Gawkowska's article "Neutrality, Autonomy and Order: Amitai Etzioni's Communitarian Critique of Liberalism Under Scrutiny" analyzes the theory of communitarian social scientist Amitai Etzioni by questioning its major premises. While analyzing Etzioni's attempts to raise the neglected side of liberal theory, she deems his treatment of autonomy and order inadequate and his proposed layer of loyalty implausible. Although Gawkowska concludes that Etzioni's picture of the self is inherently contradictory, she proposes some solutions to the discussed dilemmas.

In "Conservatism as an Answer to Liberalism in Politics: The Case of Contemporary Poland," Piotr Korys focuses on the conception of conservatism as a political ideology and compares it to liberalism to show that the differences between the two ideologies are superficial in contemporary political practice. He argues that conservatism's main weakness - that is, a lack of complex positive answers for a number of contemporary economic and political problems - often causes it to become a foot-

note to liberalism as a political ideology. Koryœ then illustrates his thesis by discussing the historical and political background of Polish conservatism and analyzing conservative programs concerning the economy by citing specific examples from present-day Polish politics.

In "Power, Subject and the Concept of Rational Action," Szymon Wróbel compares Michel Foucault's genealogy of power with Jürgen Habermas's discourse ethics to answer the question of whether social norms claim legitimacy through those who internalize them or if they merely stabilize relations of power? In his inquiry of the concept of power, he further questions if the approbation of power is part of a wider rationality in which it may be understood as a means of the achievement of an overall "good" or in terms of a struggle, conflict or war before it is analyzed as a legitimacy to be established.

Last in this section, Daniel Vojtech examines the relationship between Czech philosopher Jan Patočka's focus on art and his philosophical work. While considering Patočka's approach to myth and placement of art within historical spirituality, he discusses the differentiation between the two phases of Patočka's reflections on art – an early phase in which art represented a specific layer of the approach to the idea of "*Bildung*" and a later phase, where art was revisited as a topic of philosophical-aesthetical discussion related to a new phenomenological endeavor at an articulation of human existence in the late 1960s.

The final section concentrates on culture and the media. Paulina Bren's "Envisioning a 'Socialist Way of Life': Ideology and Contradiction During Czech Communism, 1969-1989" examines the period of Czech "normalization" by evoking the contradictions of official and unofficial discourse as they pertained to the production of ideology through television. She focuses on a popular state-authorized television series to show that some of the most ubiquitous façades that made up the imagery and the backdrop for normalization's style of communism were state-authorized popular cultures in communist Czechoslovakia during the 1970s and 1980s. She concludes that an analysis of Czech television in the envisioning of normalization suggests that we can begin to understand better the last decades of Czech communism by questioning the "official" versus "unofficial" paradigm, which at first glance seems true to the situation, but reveals its inherent contradictions upon deeper inquiry.

Petra Jedlicková's paper "From Monasteries to the Informational City, From Manuscripts to the New Media" deals with the development of the information society based on the layered model of the informational city to show historical parallels in the introduction of the new media. She argues that while our quality of life

is determined by accessibility to information communication technology and the ability to use it effectively and strategically, the necessity of acquiring relevant mobility and orientation becomes crucial for living and working in the informational society. Therefore, the transition towards the information society introduces a new social stratification based on access to information and relevant education.

In "'The Personal Is Political' Are Daytime Talk Shows Feminist?" Karin Wetschanow tackles the question of whether daytime talk shows are feminist with regard to the fulfillment of the motto of the second women's movement, "the personal is political." Despite their allegedly democratic structure in giving a voice to formerly speechless groups and in challenging the dominant position of experts in the media by discussing personal experiences in a public forum, she concludes that the question cannot be answered with a definitive "yes" or "no" since the answer depends on the manner of representation, contextualization and reception of the matters discussed.

Melita Zajc's article "The Concept of *Dispositiv*: Studying Technology in Terms of Its Use Because of the All Yet-To-Be-Written User Manuals" examines the relationship between technology, society and the self through the concept of the *dispositiv* as the means of comprehending technology in terms of its use. The concept of the *dispositiv*, she argues, permits us to study the aspect of an individual person as well as the variety of uses of a given technology without the dangers of oversimplification in enabling us to understand the functions of communications technology.

The diversity of the contributions shows the scholars' eagerness to tackle a variety of subjects pertaining to the debates and discussions that have shaped the new political, economic, ideological and media landscapes that have developed since 1989. They also illustrate the writers' attempts to grapple with the myriad changes that have occurred in the post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe and to rethink the roles and functions of western institutions in light of the global society that has emerged at the end of the twentieth century. Finally, the contributions indicate the young scholars' success in continuing to fulfill the IWM's mission of providing a forum for active intellectual exchange and promoting interdisciplinary research and societal understanding in order to eliminate the last remaining barriers between East and West.

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