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## **Biographical Learning and Social Transition**

### *The East-European Case*

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The central topic of this paper is the inherent link between micro-level processes of informal, biographical learning on the one hand, and macro-level social transitions on the other. Social transitions cause not only changes in the social environments of the actors thus providing them with the opportunity to make new experiences. In addition, transitions normally make existing habits, worldviews, and self-views inadequate. In order to be successful, transitions require changes of these habits, worldviews, and self-views; with other words they require learning processes, which are not limited to adaptations to the new social environments, but which also entail a dimension of “biographization”, of constituting biographic meanings of the new experiences that social changes cause. This dimension of biographical learning means basically to establish a dynamic and open unity between one’s own past, present and future by an activity of the individual, within which she first develops her actual commitments by her working through her past experiences, and she, second, links these commitments to visions about her personal future and about the future of her society.<sup>1</sup>

In my following considerations I am going to make use of the so sketched concept of biographical learning, in order to explain a remarkable phenomenon in Eastern Europe today, namely a wide gap between the systemic-institutional and the subjective levels of the transition from totalitarian socialism towards liberal democracy that takes place there during the last two decades.

One could sketch out this gap as follows: The post-socialist transition in Eastern Europe appears on a first, directed on the political macro-level sight as a successful story. The core demands and goals that have been formulated in the course of the “velvet revolutions” of 1989-1990 seem to be now completely fulfilled. Formal principles and rules of representative democracy as well as of rule of law are now well established in most former socialist countries in the region. They have successfully managed the transition from socialist plan economy to functioning market economies with respectable growth rates. And perhaps most important, all those countries except several Ex-Soviet and Ex-Yugoslav republics joined first the NATO and than the EU. Probably the most important ideal of the “velvet revolutions” in all those countries seemed to be fulfilled by their entry in the EU, namely the ideal of becoming (again) a member of the “civilized world”, which is shaped by the common values of liberal democracy like freedom wealth, and public reason.

However, the success of the transition on the system level is paradoxically combined with signs of a deep political alienation, with a widely widespread disappointment

from politics in general in recent Eastern Europe. Indicators for that are very low rates of electoral participation, voting for populist, anti-liberal parties, a deep distrust to governmental bodies and institutions as well as a strange revival of political attitudes that have been dominant in the real-socialist past.

In this article I will search for a possible explanation of that contradiction between successful system transformation and spread of political alienation in Eastern Europe. In order to achieve that task I will focus on the dialectics between institutional transition at the social macro-level on the one hand, and micro-level process of transforming and re-building of self-identities on the other. My attempt to offer such an explanation will consist of the following steps: First, I will discuss some concrete indicators of political alienation in Eastern Europe today (1). Second, I will argue that the phenomenon of political alienation in Eastern Europe is due to an uncompleted status of processes of biographical learning which build up the subjective dimension of the transition. My claim will be here that these processes of learning and identity development can be performed only under condition that the new central values and ideals that underline the system transition can get articulated within the political realm (2). Then I will briefly recollect central claims and proposals of the “velvet revolutions” in Eastern Europe around 1989-1990, which clearly contrast the actual state of political culture there (3). In a next step, I will approach the question, why those claims and proposals were not able to get a leading position within most East-European societies, and so to initiate successful collective processes of identity development in these societies (4). My conclusion would be that overcoming political alienation in Eastern Europe does require a re-articulation and recognition of the specific values and ideals of the social movements that triggered out the transition from totalitarian socialism towards liberal democracy as an important contribution for the global political discourse (5).

## **1. Forms of Political Alienation in Recent Eastern Europe**

By talking about “political alienation” I mean a state of affairs, at which most fellows of a society view not only major political institutions of that society, but even the processes of political decisions-making, as building up an outer reality, which is disconnected from those fellows, or which even oppressed them. This stands in a clear contradiction with the fact, that under democratic conditions they as people are ex-

pected to be the collective sovereign of all political institutions and decisions in their society.

Electoral abstinence is most clear and elementary form of political alienation. The statistics about the last EU-parliament elections shows that the voting rates in the new EU-countries are very low both absolutely (for example 17 % in the Slovak Republic, 21 % in Poland, 28 % in the Czech Republic), and in relation to the “old” members.<sup>2</sup> This is on a first sight a big surprise, since the EU-membership was most superior and passionately persecuted goal in all East European countries in transition; a goal that has been shared by the overwhelming majority of their peoples. Indeed, those low electoral rates speak not primarily for a disappointment from the EU-institutions in particular, but for a disappointment from democratic politics and institutions in general. According to some recent polls only one third of Eastern European citizens say they trust democracy. The rates of those polled who think that their voice matters are even lower.<sup>3</sup>

Another, probably even stronger expression of political alienation is the rise of extreme anti-liberal, totalitarian parties in the 90-es and their recently increasing influence in several countries of the region. The central enemy of these parties is the principle of pluralism both in political and in cultural terms. They see that principle as “alien” and hostile to the homogeneous telos of one’s own organic nation understood as collective political organism whose monolith identity is based on unquestionable historic narratives. The Polish parties “Self-Defense” led by Andrej Lepper and “League of Polish Families” led by Roman Giertych that were parts of the previous ruling coalition in Poland are perhaps the most known examples of that renewal of totalitarian ideologies within a formal-democratic system. The populist and racist “Slovak Nationalist Party” is currently a partner in the coalition that executes the political power in the Slovak Republic.<sup>4</sup> There are still significant political movements sharing anti-liberal and extreme nationalist ideologies in Hungary where these movements played a significant role at the street protests against the Socialist Government in 2006 and 2007<sup>5</sup>, in Romania (“Greater Romania Party”), not to mention countries like Russia (“Liberal-Democratic Party”, “National Bolshevik Party”) or Serbia (“Serbian Radical Party”). The Bulgarian presidential elections in 2006 approved the leader of the extreme nationalist and racist party “Ataka” (“Offence”) Volen Siderov as the most serious challenger of the ruling president Georgi Parvanov from the Socialist party (the former Communist party).<sup>6</sup>

Finally, a very strong indicator for the alienation from democratic principles and institutions is a strange renaissance of an understanding of political action itself, which was dominant in the totalitarian society of “real socialism”. I would like to call it “Post-Leninist conception of politics”. According to that conception any kind of politics is nothing but a tool for pursuing and promoting of particular, mostly economic interests of exclusive groups (classes). So for example interpreting the very process of law making as a form of “real politics” the former chief prosecutor of the Republic of Bulgaria between 1999 and 2006 Nikola Filtchev makes the following statement in his last monograph that he published in 2007: “There is no doubt that the criminal code is socially conditioned. It reflects objective social needs and subjective interests of the ruling class.”<sup>7</sup> According to Filtchev, what is taken to be “criminal” in a society, respectively what is taken to be “right” or “just”, is nothing but a matter of ideology that mirrors the economic “base” of that society as well as the interests of its ruling class. Therefore societal assumptions about justice and rightness have nothing to do with democratic deliberations on moral norms. Thus, there is no surprise at all that Filtchev continuously misused his office as tool for political power struggles: a practice, which by the way seems to be now very common in Putin’s Russia.

The spread of the so sketched post-Leninist conception of the political must go hand-in-hand with one’s disability to identify oneself with those processes of democratic deliberation, with one’s lack of motivation to participate at them, to view them as opportunities for one’s own political self-realization.

How we can explain those forms of political alienation? After all, weren’t the “velvet revolutions” exactly about mass political participation and about institutionalizing of the principles of democratic deliberation? Is the Eastern European citizenry simply not yet ready for the demands of democratic participation? Has this citizenry failed to absolve the learning processes, which democratic participation presupposes?

## **2. Biographic Learning as the Subjective Side of Social Transition**

Several commentators observe that the system transition from socialism towards political democracy and market economy could not be performed without some radical cultural changes.<sup>8</sup> Change of culture means basically change of habits, so that an adjustment and re-adjustment of individual behaviour to new social environments can take place. In our case this would mean in first instance that the actors in the post-

socialist societies changed their habits from the model of a *gemeinschaft*-type towards the one of contractualist social action. Probably one can best sum up the whole process of post-socialist transition as replacing the homogeneous and authoritarian structured collectives by individualistic interactions based on formal principles. The fact that formal-democratic political system and market economy have been now established in these societies can be seen as a clear sign that the majority of their fellow citizens successfully absolved a learning process of adjusting to the new forms of social and political life.

Why, then, the mentioned above phenomena of political alienation occur and became so strong in the course of the transition? Or, to put the same question in other words: How one can grasp and explain the gap between the “objective” and the “subjective” dimensions of the transition, if most Eastern European citizens are meanwhile well adjusted to the demands of market economy and formal democracy?

In order to approach these questions in a profoundly conceptual way we should develop a more precise account of informal political learning as describing the subjective-biographical site of social transitions. In this account a central distinction should take place, namely the one between learning as adaptation to new environments on the one hand, and learning as a deep biographical transformation of political self-identities on the other. As I already stated above, a *biographic* process of political learning is not simply about adaptation to the changes in the environment. Biographic learning entails also a core dimension of self-renewal, and that dimension implies a participative public articulation of new attitudes and values.

The first and most obvious feature of learning in general is that it goes hand-in-hand with making new experiences by the learner. According to John Dewey’s famous pragmatist approach to learning and human development in general these new experiences should be indeed understood in *first instance* as acts of adjustments and re-adjustments to changes in the social environment of the subject. On the other hand, since social environments reproduce themselves through subjects who are acting within them, those changes can be maintained only if they get transmuted in corresponding modes of social action. That is why every social transition both triggers out processes of subjective adjustment and re-adjustment, and is depending on those processes being successful.<sup>9</sup>

However, if we are willing really to follow the great insights of Dewey’s philosophy of education, we would realize that processes of *biographic* learning entail at least

two further dimensions that are deeper than a superficial adaptation to new environments. First, every sustainable learning process, that is, every learning process that reaches the status of education, of *Bildung*, is one of self-renewal. Sustainable learning processes refer not only to the environment but also to the self of the learner. Self-renewal means changes of the subject's attitudes; changes that manifest themselves in the emergence of new worldviews, values and ideals. These new worldviews, values and ideals cause themselves transformations of the subject's self-identity.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, this learning *as identity development* is according to Dewey only possible, if the subject is able to communicate these new worldviews, values and ideals in an open public realm, which transcend any fixed borders of local communities and predefined groups. Here is the point where Dewey's famous mutual link between education and democracy as a *form of life* is rooted in: a form of life that means "...the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity."<sup>11</sup>

This formulation entails the claim that the very process of self-renewal, of identity development and identity re-building presupposes not only the subject being exposed to various social-interactive experiences that serve as sources of new worldviews, values and ideals, but also the subject articulating these new, identity-rebuilding worldviews, values and ideals in a discursive, context-transcending public realm. Evidently, this is only possible, if that realm is itself open for the mentioned process of articulation, that is, if the emerging worldviews, values and ideals do receive public recognition.

Now, what follows from these considerations is that, first, political alienation in Eastern Europe can be spell out as a crisis of biographical learning, of political self-renewal, of identity re-building; and second, that that crisis is likely to be caused by a failure of trans-contextual, public articulation and recognition of the specific ideals, values and worldviews of the popular movements that triggered out the post-socialist transition. That is why it is now crucial to recollect these specific ideals, values and worldviews.

### 3. Leading Values of the “Velvet Revolutions”: “Living within the Truth”

In 1990 Jürgen Habermas argued that the “velvet revolutions” have a purely “compensating character”. According to him they are characterized by an almost complete lack of innovative, future-orientated ideas, and they are backwards orientated.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, the overwhelming majority of the popular movements in Eastern Europe around 1989-1990 did not develop visions of new social macro-models. Instead, these movements usually proclaimed Western type liberal democracy and market economy as the goals they were struggled for. However, while those movements did not draw up big social utopia, they did articulate new and innovative ideals and values on the deeper level of *social life forms*. Most of these ideals and values can be subsumed upon the famous conception of “living within the truth” that Václav Havel has articulated relying on the philosophical work of Jan Patočka.

Havel developed this conception in his well known essay “Power of the Powerless” that served as the central programmatic paper for the dissident “Charter 77”- movement in Czechoslovakia. Moreover, that essay was written within the context of a vital exchange between Czechoslovak and Polish dissidents, many of whom saw Havel’s text as a conceptual fundament also for the “Solidarity”- movement.<sup>13</sup>

“Living within the truth” is of course not primarily a denomination of a particular social model but rather a principle of social conduct. However, this principle has crucial, yet mostly indirect implications for the macro-institutional order of the society. In order to clarify these implications we need first to reconstruct the main features of the “living within the truth” as a political conception.

Following Havel we can first negatively state that “living within the truth” emerges at the moment, at which the social actors refuse to live within a lie. But what does “living within the lie” exactly mean?

Havel approaches this question by using the example of a greengrocer, who places in the window of his shop, among the onions and carrots the slogan “Workers of the World, Unite!”<sup>14</sup> Everyone who lived in a society of the “real socialism” knows that the public realm of these societies was occupied by posters with such contents so that the example is indeed very representative.

Havel asserts that the greengrocer evidently does not carry about the unification of world’ workers; in fact he normally even does not think about the content of the posted slogan. Such slogans are characterized by their semantic emptiness, and se-

mantic emptiness is what distinguishes the public realm of the societies of real socialism in general. By posting the quasi-appeal “Workers of the World, Unite!” our greengrocer simply takes a part in a ritual, and so declares his loyalty to the dominant ideology. In that sense he lies that he is concerning about world’s proletariat; in general he lies that he believes in the postulates of the official socialist ideology.

Now, the decisive point in Havel’s argument is that almost nobody in the latter real-socialist societies – including the leaders of the Communist Parties – really believed in the propositions of the ideology, but nevertheless almost everybody in these societies contributed to the reproduction of that ideology *as ritual* – for example by posting slogans like the one of our greengrocer. And this is exactly what a collective living within the lie means.<sup>15</sup>

So described, living within the lie being a live within a collective, supra-personal ideology gives to the individuals a feeling not only of stability and security but also of identity in the sense of being a part of a societal whole. Nevertheless according to Havel it contradicts the central aims of human life, namely diversity, perfectibility, and freedom: “Between the aims of the post-totalitarian system and the aims of life there is a yawning abyss: while life, in its essence, moves towards plurality, diversity, independent self-constitution and self-organization, in short towards the fulfillment of its own freedom, the post-totalitarian system demands conformity, uniformity, and discipline. While life ever strives to create new and “improbable” structures, the post-totalitarian system contrives to force live into its most probable states. The aims of the system reveal its most essential characteristic to be introversion, a movement towards being ever more completely and unreservedly itself, which means that the radius of its influence is continually widening as well. This system serves people only to the extent necessary to ensure that people will serve it. Anything beyond this, that is to say, anything which leads people to overstep their predetermined roles is regarded by the system as attack upon itself.”<sup>16</sup>

In order to understand why and how the fulfillment of these central anthropological features of human existence presuppose a live within the truth, it is crucial to see that their equivalent on the level of social action is what Paul Ricoeur calls with regard to Havel’s mentor Jan Patočka “political socratism”: intersubjective-public questioning as path to the truth, which should be understood as opening the meaning of the given through transcending it.<sup>17</sup> According to Patočka human existence fulfills itself authentically indeed only as live in the truth and that live is originally given in the very

practice of the phenomenological epochè. In that practice the individual distances herself from the appearances of the particularities surrounding her in order to discover their significances as being elements of the world.<sup>18</sup> Exactly this process of regaining the meaning of the human phenomena including social facts and social actions is what essentially characterizes the living within the truth.

So understood, the dissident movements like Charter 77 and “Solidarity” that proclaimed the ideal of “living within the truth” have been struggling against the semantic emptiness of the political realm of the real-socialist societies in the name of a meaningful human communication.

Now, regaining the meaning of social phenomena, actions and interactions is a task, which is not to be described in the terms of the usual political vocabulary resting on a left-right-center semantic topography. This topography presupposes already articulated values that are competing with each others within the political realm. On the contrary, “living within the truth” demarks a program that aims to develop a political culture, within which the articulation of these competing values is first possible by stepping out of ideological rituals and of predefined roles that subject the members of a society to parts of a homogeneous whole.

However, “living within the truth” is not only about establishing a public realm of value articulation. It has been also conceptualized as a kind of an “existential revolution” that should radically change the character of human interactions and the mode of human being in general. At the end of the day it should be understood as a communicatively transmitted practice of self-transcendence, that is, a transcendence of the factuality of particular social environments, affiliations, and role definitions of the individual; a transcendence which is according to Havel the deepest feature of human existence.<sup>19</sup>

According to Havel this practice is possible only within a social model, which he calls “Post-Democracy”. By that he understands a society that consists of small and informal, self-managing communities, within which a life according to values like trust, openness and solidarity can be lived.<sup>20</sup> These communities are at odds with the structural logic of a institutionalized macro-political system; a logic that relies on the distinction between public and private spheres thus ascribing friendship and empathy, without which a mutual openness is not possible, exclusively to the private sphere. Consequently, Havel describes the “living within the truth” as a pre-political phenomenon. However, according to him this phenomenon could serve also as a powerful

impulse for reforms in the political sphere in the narrow sense.<sup>21</sup> And this is obviously only possible, if the principle of “living within the truth” becomes translated in political terms. But would not this translation contradict the inherent bounds of this principle to pre-political modes of social relations?

To sum up: “living within the truth” should be seen as the superior ideal of the movements that triggered out the post-socialist transition. Thus this ideal – and only this ideal – can serve as fundament for political identity building and identity rebuilding in recent Eastern Europe. However, in order to play that role the ideal of “living within the truth” must get articulated in the political public realm of the Eastern European societies in transition. The crucial question is then, whether this articulation is possible at all, and if it is possible, which are the conditions for its fulfillment.

#### **4. The Failure of “Living within the Truth” as Political Principle**

From my considerations in the previous three sections ultimately follows that since in the context of the post-socialist transition a public-political articulation of the ideal of living within the truth must be seen as the main prerequisite for biographical learning in the sense of identity transformation, the stand of collective biographical learning processes remaining uncompleted indicates a failure of that articulation; a failure that should be seen as the main cause for the widespread of political alienation in Eastern Europe today. The crucial question now is how we can explain that failure, considering the fact that “living within the truth” principle was a very powerful political driving force in Eastern Europe in the 80-es and the 90-es.

I think that we first should distinguish between internal and external obstacles to the political articulation of that principle. Regarding the internal barriers we should recall again Havel’s concept of “post-democracy” as describing the proper environment, within which that principle can flourish. It is obvious that this concept has a clear anti-institutionalist touch, whereas a political publicity is necessarily institutionally mediated. It is not accidental that almost all dissident movements in Eastern Europe have been characterized by their central emphasis on “informality”, that is, on “informal” social relations and unions without fixed rules, statuses and role definitions. Such fixed rules, statuses and role definitions would be at odds with Havel’s (and Patočka’s) notion about central aims of life like self-constitution, diversity, perfectibil-

ity. Living according to these central *anthropological* features, which implies transcending the external social identifications of oneself, is not just – and not primarily – a matter of individual heroism, but of having support by the mentioned above small communities of interpersonal thrust, empathy and friendship. Since institutionalized political macro-structures contradict the norms of interpersonal thrust, empathy and friendship, a live that is responsive to those anthropological features per se cannot be translated into the language of political institutions.

However, apart from this anthropological reading of the principle of “living within the truth”, there is also possible an alternative, deliberative interpretation of it. Let’s recall again the marker “political Socratism” which Ricoueur applied to the conception of Patočka. Indeed, “living with the truth” does entail the mode of Socratic, public questioning, within which truth should be understood as a regulative idea of a kind of social interactions that are designed by practices of argumentation of claims and of public justification of different, meanwhile contradicting each other values and worldviews. Therefore “living within the truth” converges here with the model of deliberative democracy.<sup>22</sup> From this perspective the scope of that principle is not limited to small, informal face-to-face communities. Rather, it presupposes the unlimited, universally structured arenas of public discourse. To live within the truth requires one to search for propositions and arguments that can pass the public test of universalization. Thus this live requires one to transcend not only ideological postulations and static identifications but also the limitations of any local contexts of thinking and action.

Now, it seems to me quite obvious that there is a strong tension between the political-deliberative implications, and the anthropological founding of the “living within the truth” principle. It is a common place that the model of deliberative democracy should be independent from any kind of comprehensive doctrines about good human live because these doctrines seem to be context-dependent and to exclude people and groups that do not share them. This clearly contradicts the inclusive model of deliberative democracy. That is why most authors argue for a political rather an ontological grounding of that model.<sup>23</sup> This political grounding normally runs as follows: The norms of deliberation are implicit in the general framework of liberal democracy, since this framework presupposes a plurality of peacefully co-existing but competing values and worldviews. If we take the framework of liberal democracy as an unquestionable given, we can draw out from that given in a purely reconstructive way the core deliberative norms like the argumentative weighing of different options of col-

lective, mostly institutionalized action from the standpoint of an unlimited discursive community, or like recognizing the power of the better argument only.

However, the clue of the whole story about the post-socialist transition is exactly that in the era of the totalitarian socialism there was no such “given” like formal liberal democracy. Therefore the re-constructive way of articulating the ideal model of deliberative democracy was simply non-existent. Hence that model that without doubt played a crucial role as a motivating ideal for the popular resistance against the totalitarian socialism could not be grounded in political presumptions. Instead, it *had* to be founded in broader philosophic-anthropologic conceptions about the nature of human existence in general. However, this kind of founding shifts the deliberative model away from the realm and the language of political institutions and ties it to small, “informal” communities.

From all these considerations follows, that the public, that is, the political and institutional articulation of the leading principle of “living within the truth” is a very difficult, even paradoxical task under post-socialist conditions. For the following reason it cannot be probably achieved at all without external help: As I stated in the second section of this paper new ideals and worldviews can only then get articulated and thus serve as vehicles of biographical learning processes, if these new ideals and worldviews receive public recognition. However, in the societies of breaking down totalitarian socialism of the 80s and the early 90s there was obviously no discursive-political public realm, within which the “living within the truth” principle could get that recognition. Therefore the latter has to come from outside, from the Western societies with developed liberal democracy.

But unfortunately that didn't happen. Rather, in the course of the EU-enlargement the East-European citizen movements have been forced by the “old” European political parties and bodies to identify themselves with the traditional left-right-center political map. These movements have been subjectivated to the West-European division between Christian-Democratic, Social-Democratic, Socialist, Liberal, and Green-Reformist parties. However, as I already mentioned, the political articulation of the principle of “living within the truth” is not compatible with that division. This principle is not to be identified with a particular left, right, or centrist political doctrine. In first instance it could be understood as an opposition to the post-Leninist understanding of politics as being solely a tool for pursuing and promoting of particular, mostly economic interests of exclusive, closed in themselves groups. This understanding it-

self can be linked to both leftist and rightist doctrines. More generally speaking “living within the truth” principle aims at regaining semantic richness of political concepts, positions and statements by truth-related dialogical interactions.

Since semantic emptiness of political language is often a problem also for the political arenas in the West, the articulation of the principle of “living within the truth” has had actually to be recognized as an *original* and important contribution for the global political discourse. However, the major Western political parties just tried to transfer their own programs and values to the “growing democracies” of the East, and to identify or even simply to create their own “twins” there.<sup>24</sup> That practice was simply disastrous, because it is equal to a refuse of recognition for the original ideals and values of the “velvet revolutions”. Consequently, those ideals and values that altogether were parts of or at least were linked to the principle of “living within the truth” (ideals and values like semantic richness, publicity, diversity, trustfulness, authenticity of political actions and interactions) were not capable of public articulation in the East-European national contexts either. Thus they were not able to become driving forces of collective biographical learning processes of the East-European citizens. As a consequence, many of the latter become frustrated, begun to feel colonized and finally alienated from democratic politics.

## **5. Conclusion: Can Biographical Learning get Re-Started?**

It seems to me useful to recapitulate here the argument I tried to develop in the previous sections: Doubtless, there are several signs of a strong and widespread political alienation in Eastern Europe, despite a predominantly successful system transition in the most countries of the region. As most likely cause for that contradiction appears the uncompleted status of collective processes of informal biographical learning which every social transition presupposes, including the one from totalitarian socialism towards liberal democracy. Those processes, which basically entail development and re-building of the political identities of the social actors, require a public articulation of the specific values and ideals that played the role of driving forces of the transition. Regarding the post-socialist transition these values and ideals can be subsumed upon the central principle of “living within the truth”. This principle has large similarities to the well known model of deliberative democracy, but because of its anthropologic-ontological founding its translation into the language of political institutions,

generally speaking its articulation in the political public realm, is a difficult task. This articulation cannot be achieved without external support, that is, without the recognition of it by major Western and Trans-European political subjects as a potentially original contribution for the global political discourse. In a final account, since this recognition remained absent, the biographical learning processes of the East European citizens could not be fully completed, and this is a major reason for the widespread of political alienation in current Eastern Europe.

Now the question is: could the phenomenon of political alienation be overcome? That is to ask, could the collective processes of biographical learning get in motion again in Eastern Europe?

Let's remind that a major obstacle to the public-institutional articulation of the "living within the truth" principle was its anthropologic-ontological founding. This founding was unavoidable under totalitarian, non-democratic conditions. However, the norms and the procedures of formal democracy are now widely accepted and implemented in Eastern Europe. Under such conditions the principle of "living within the truth" does not need any supra-political founding anymore. Likewise the model of deliberative democracy, it can be derived from those norms and principles by the reconstruction of their semantic content: If a democracy presupposes a pluralism of competing values and doctrines, it does also imply an argumentative, that is, truth-related public discourse on the validity and the legitimacy of these values and doctrines. To bring democratic policies back to the citizens does mean the latter to become engaged in that public discourse, and so to become engaged (again) in processes of their own biographical learning.

However, the memories of the struggles against the totalitarian regime in the name of the ideal of "living within the truth" could be a very important supporting force for deliberative democratic participation. This participation could be experienced by the actors as a biographical continuation of their resistance against totalitarianism, and so it could serve as an identity-building drive. However, in order the memories of those struggles against totalitarianism really to become a motivating force for deliberative democratic participation, these memories must be kept alive. This requires that the specific ideals and worldviews that stood behind the "velvet revolutions" must be finally recognized as an original contribution to the value horizon of the global political discourse.

## Notes

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1 See Winfried Marotzki, *Entwurf einer strukturalen Bildungstheorie. Biographietheoretische Auslegung von Bildungsprozessen in hochmodernen Gesellschaften* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag, 1990), 135-138

2 European Parliament, “European Elections 10 – 13 June” , July 9, 2004, available at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2004/ep-election/sites/en/results1306/turnout\\_ep/index.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2004/ep-election/sites/en/results1306/turnout_ep/index.html)

3 Jaques Rupnik, “Eastern Europe’s Turn Right. Poular Front” in *Discarded Lies*, Feb 19, 2007, available at [http://discardedlies.com/entry/?26392\\_eastern-europes-turn-right](http://discardedlies.com/entry/?26392_eastern-europes-turn-right)

4 Marian L Tupy, “The Rise of Populist Parties in Central Europe. Big Government, Corruption, and the Treat to Liberalism”, in *CATO-Institute. Center for Global Liberty & Prosperity Development Policy Analysis*, No. 1 (November 8, 2006), available at <http://www.cato.org/pubs/dpa/html/dpa1/dpa1index.html> , 5-7

5 Daniel McLaughlin, “Nationalist riots mar anniversary of Hungarian uprising”. in *The Independent*, October 24, 2007, available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/nationalist-riots-mar-anniversary-of-hungarian-uprising-397718.html>

6 The very first claim of the party “Ataka“ is that Bulgaria is an „one-national, monolith“ state that is ethnically, religiously and culturally „non-dividable“. Its central political refrain is “To give Bulgaria back to the Bulgarians!”( see Politicheska partija Ataka, “20 totchki na partija Ataka 2004 – 2008” (Political Party Ataka, “20 Ponts of the Party Ataka 2004 – 2008) available at [http://www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=51](http://www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=51))  
The electoral campaign of that party in 2006 was designed by an extreme anti-Roma rhetoric that attracted violent far right groups like for example skinheads.

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7 Office of the Chief Prosecutor of the Republic of Bulgaria, “Zakon i tvor4estvo” (Law and Creation) (citation from *Zemja*, November 15, 2004), available at <http://www.prb.bg/php/publication.php?news=%20%20%20%20%20%20%20173&&press=1>

8 See Gyorgy Csepeli / Daniel B. German, “Applying the Concept of Political Culture to Political Realities in the US and East/ Central Europe” in Farnen/ Dekker/ German/ Meyenberg, ed., *Democracies in Transition: Political Culture and Socialization Transformed in West and East* (Oldenburg: BIS-Verlag 2000), 15 – 32; also, Daniel B. German “The Culture/ Socialization Context” In: Farnen/ Dekker/ German/ Meyenberg ,ed., *Ibid*, 3 – 14

9 John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Macimillian Company, 1916), 41-53

10 *Ibid.*, 1-4; 46-49

11 *Ibid.*, 87

12 Jürgen Habermas, *Die nachholende Revolution. Kleine Politische Schriften VII* (Frankfurt: Suhkamp, 1990), 181

13 See Steven Lukes, “Introduction”, in Václav Havel et al., *The Power of the Powerless* (New York: Sharpe 1985), 11 – 22

14 Václav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless”, in Václav Havel et al. , *The Power of the Powerless* (New York: Sharpe 1985), 25-27

15 *Ibid.*, 28; 31-35

16 *Ibid.*, 29-30

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17 Paul Ricoueur, “Einleitung”, in Jan Patočka, *Ketzterische Essays zur Philosophie und Geschichte und ergänzende Schriften* (Editet by Klaus Nellen and Jiří Němec) (Stuttgart: Klett-Gotta, 1988), 17-18

18 Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, translated by Erazim Kohák; edited with an introduction by James Dodd (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court Publishing 1998), 171-178

19 Vaclav Havel, “The New Measure of Man” in *New York Times*, July 8, 1994, available at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A01E5DB173FF93BA35754C0A962958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=3> (Opening: 3. Dec. 2008)

20 Václav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless*, 93-94

21 Ibid., 49-50

22 For a systematic description of the model of deliberative democracy see Seyla Benhabib, “Toward a deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy” in, Seyla Benhabib, ed., *Democracy and Difference. Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 67-94

23 See Seyla Benhabib, “Toward a deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy”, 73

24 I myself come personally in touch with that attitude a couple of years ago when I took part at several discussions within the German Green Party on the question who are the potential partners of the German Greens in Eastern Europe, and which political groups there should be invited to become members of the new European Green Party. To be sure, the Greens were perhaps most sensitive to the original approach of truth-related political deliberations that characterized the popular movements in Eastern Europe in the 80es and the 90es. Nevertheless, concerning the “partners-question” even the Greens accommodated the attitude of a superficial and somewhat cynic

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“Realpolitik”. In many cases they invited and/ or accepted as partners some parties that just proclaimed certain environmentalist values and simply imitated Western Green programs, but in fact were known to act as lobbyists of non-transparent post-communist business circles and hidden centers of power. These are parties which perform exactly the mentioned above post-Leninist notion of politics. Generally speaking, in the course of building up Trans-European parties like the mentioned European Green party, or like for example the centre-right European People’s Party all significant political groups in Eastern Europe have had fully to identify with and to adapt themselves to the programs of the major “old” Western parties. By that process of identification and adaptation almost all original impulses and impacts of the political movements that carried out the democratic change in Eastern Europe were completely left behind.

