

## Decolonizing Eastern Europe: Beyond Internal Critique

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The social and cultural history of the "postcommunist transition" has been marked throughout the region by the return of two dominant phenomena of modernity: capitalism and coloniality. The fall of the Iron Curtain meant to a significant degree the re-absorption of the socialist bloc into larger and long-durée structures of world history. In this sense, the "postcommunist transition" has been a process of structural and segmented integration of the former socialist bloc into Western or Western-lead formations of political, economic and military power such as the European Union, World Bank and IMF, and NATO. Accordingly, I proposed elsewhere conceiving the meaning of transition as the top-to-bottom alignment of East European governmentality into the order of Western governmentality, of local economies into the world system of capitalism, and of local knowledges in the global geopolitics of knowledge, at the cost of the general population.<sup>1</sup>

If this is the case, then the possibilities of developing a critical theory of postcommunism depend logically on movements and critical reflections on capitalism and coloniality, coming from as different a body of critical theory as Marxian studies and decolonial thought. Marxism does not suffice to open an option, and neither does postcoloniality, but both are relevant. However, the power of capital and the coloniality of power took on specific forms in Eastern Europe, given its recent history of seeking modernity differently, and such powers were countered during the transition by particular forms of resistance. Moreover, without giving currency to the ubiquitous theme of the "stolen revolution", one can argue that the process of transition itself instituted a radical change in the horizon of expectations, placing in a different frame the historical experience and aspirations of the popular movements that brought the revolutions of 1989.

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<sup>1</sup> See also Ovidiu Țichindeleanu, "Towards a Critical Theory of Postcommunism?", *Radical Philosophy* #159, 2010, and "Vampires in the Living Room. A View of What Happened to Eastern Europe After 1989, and Why Real Socialism Still Matters," in Corinne Kumar (ed.), *Asking We Walk. The South As New Political Imaginary*, Vol. III, Bangalore: Streelekha 2011.

One can thus identify a crucial and unique task for critical post-communist thought and artistic practices: the continuous public creation of an epistemic space of resistance and alternatives to both capital and coloniality, articulated from the location of Eastern Europe, which could be based or could fortify a form of regional internationalism and solidarity. In other words, I propose a sort of Pascalian wager on the historical experience of Eastern Europe, by way of a project that gives epistemic dignity to expressions of resistance and difference towards both capitalism and coloniality. The goal is moving towards a philosophy of transition, a border epistemology that embraces the specificity of Eastern Europe as location of thought for critical visions, with the hope that such a space of criticality will avoid the pitfalls of both internal critiques of Western modernity, and of externalist critiques of hegemony, imperialism, and domination. Here, the problem with internal critiques is not as much that they are not right, but of where they stand, when they are right. To give an example, even in the case of a committed philosopher like Foucault, one can point to the lack of a theory of resistance complementing his great studies of power formations; one can also argue that Foucault's model of the specific intellectual "recognizes structures but fails to confront them."<sup>2</sup> An additional and very different precaution, related to the political potential of internal critiques, can be observed in Eastern Europe, and particularly in Romania, where prominent anticommunist dissidents renounced the pursuit of resistance after 1989, becoming supporters or direct partners of new governmental and capitalist powers. As for externalist or dominationalist critiques, particularly poignant in anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist movements, my issue is with the recurrence of a certain failure to recognize the interconnectedness of struggles and oppressions and the constant fallback to the nation-state as the fundamental framework of the political. Therefore, the practical issue is not the "abandonment" of European critiques of Western modernity, and neither the legitimation of some judgment that everything about Europe is bad, but the ethical concern for speaking truth to power, articulated here by giving epistemic dignity to a major transformation and considering it in its own immanence or concrete historical forms.

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<sup>2</sup> See George Ciccariello-Maher, "European Intellectuals. and Colonial Difference. Césaire and Fanon beyond Sartre and Foucault," in Jonathan Judaken, ed, *Race after Sartre. Antiracism, Africana Existentialism, Postcolonialism*, Albany: State University of New York Press 2008.

As Walter Mignolo and other collaborators emphasized, decolonial thought brings a necessary challenge to contemporary critical social theory: moving from internal critique – such as it has been practiced in many forms of Marxism, postmodern theory and poststructuralism, but also in liberal human rights and technocratic feminism – to what could be called an "actually existing transformative knowledge". To paraphrase one of Giovanni Arrighi's teachings: internal critique only criticizes the weakness of a certain power structure: the point, however, is to counter its strength. Thus, the unfolding vision of decolonial thought is not one of alternative modernities (reaching the same goals through other means), but of an "other modernity,"<sup>3</sup> as it can be glimpsed also from the World Social Forum slogan, "another world is possible." If Eurocentrism, North-Atlantic universals and neoliberalism tend to eliminate all options, the horizon of criticism of decolonial thought is based on the intellectual commitment for a transcultural and pluritopic ecology of knowledges, and the principle that political resistance needs to be premised on epistemic resistance.

Much in this sense, I propose the elaboration of a critical theory of post-communism at the intersection of decolonial thought and what I would call epistemic materialism. The historical experience of actually existing socialism, the revolutions and fall of socialist regimes, and finally the post-communist transition to capitalism compose such a radical history of collective transformation and opening of differing paradigms, accompanied by such quick enclosures of possibilities, that in light of these major changes, the ongoing and slowly unfolding crisis of the world, together with the political rise of the Global South, could be seen as an immense and immediate site of opportunity. Instead of seeing in the new-found postcommunist situation of dependency a throwback to the 1970s, and thus yet another retrograde and predictable devolution of Eastern Europe, I propose considering the recent transformations as a movement that raises questions and brings to visibility crucial directions taken from the 1970s by global capitalism and global political powers, to the effect of limiting the direct dialogue and relations between socialist and decolonization movements.

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<sup>3</sup> Walter Mignolo, *Desobediencia epistémica: Retórica de la modernidad, lógica de la colonialidad y gramática de la descolonialidad*, Ediciones del signo, Buenos Aires, Argentina 2010. See also Walter Mignolo, "Delinking", *Cultural Studies* Vol. 21, Nos. 2-3, March/May 2007, pp. 449-514.

However, defining the locality of one's thinking is no easy task. After two decades of postcommunist transition, "Eastern Europe" is disappearing as a category of analysis, becoming simply "New Europe", a "part of Europe" or a "semi-periphery" of global capitalism. Brian Holmes recently deconstructed the binarity of Donald Rumsfeld's famous distinction between "Old" and "New" Europe, bringing in the same time an update to Wallerstein's categories of the world-system (core, semi-periphery, periphery): he proposed conceiving the process of expansion of EU as a new hierarchical distribution of citizens between Core Europe (Germany, France, etc), New Europe (Poland, Czech Republic etc.), and Edge Europe (Moldova, Ukraine, Turkey etc).<sup>4</sup> In this sense, one can argue that an integral part in the constitution of the new European identity was assumed also by Libya, whose new-found postcommunist identity can be glimpsed from Colonel Gaddafi's reported words from Rome, on August 30, 2010, about Lybia's role as a "defense for an advanced and united Europe," a bloc against the "barbaric invasion of starving and ignorant Africans."<sup>5</sup> In direct relation to this, the official disappearance of borders, as part of the process of EU integration, has also meant the unprecedented rise of an international web of European policing, a gigantic industry of confinement and control whose size is visible even in the imposing headquarters of FRONTEX, the European Union agency for exterior border security, situated not accidentally in Warsaw, Poland. One can further refine the sense of East European locality by referring, as Marina Gržinić proposed, to the "former Eastern Europe," namely a region subjected to reduced identity or epistemic relevance, transformed into a borderland of Europe, or more generally a borderland of "the Western world,"<sup>6</sup> both in the sense of a buffer zone to non-European territories and as a territory defined by the condition of border-crossing and checking points. In this sense, one can notice that the differences between New Europe and Edge Europe are overdetermined by Core Europe.

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<sup>4</sup> Brian Holmes, "Invisible States. Europe in the Age of Capital Failure," in Simon Sheikh (ed.), *Capital (It Fails Us Now)*, b\_books/NIFCA 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Hama Tuma, "Of Gaddafi and Arab racism towards Blacks", *The Other Afrik*, Friday 3 September 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Marina Gržinić, Communication in the workshop *Critical and Decolonial Dialogues Across South-North and East West*, Middelburg, The Netherlands, 7-9 July 2010.

## At the Frontier of Change

In the process of European integration, what actually disappeared is the articulation of knowledge from a position of non-ethnocentric locality or epistemic autonomy. During the Cold War, the differences between Western and Eastern Europe referred to two radically different epistemic spaces, relatively autonomous in their own right, and which could not be reduced to a difference between nation-states. As opposed to that situation, the European integration coincides with the tendential reduction of differences to a mode of colonial difference, which draws distinctions between what is modern and what is non-modern, resting on the overarching image of thought of Western universality. Simpler put, in the workings of the postcommunist transition, the European identity of East Europeans is lesser than the European identity of West Europeans. Against this prejudice, by articulating knowledge from the location of the European borderland, Eastern Europe can also be understood as a crucial space of transformations of the meaning of European identity itself. Thus, contrary to the fears of ethnic-nationalists, who came to fore throughout the region immediately after 1989, the process of integrating states from Poland to Bulgaria into the European Union did not shatter as much the nationalist identity and national symbols, as it did with the *regional* sense of the former socialist bloc. After the integration into EU, racist ethnocentrism has been on the rise throughout Eastern Europe, but instead of being directed against neighbors of different ethnicity, as it was the case in the 1990s (Romanians vs. Hungarians, Serbs vs. Croats etc.), it currently tends to be expressed in forms reproducing the global, eurocentric idea of race,<sup>7</sup> namely in expressions of radical disaffection towards African, Asian and Arab peoples and individuals. Such gestures range from intellectual dismissals of multiculturalism and political correctness in favor of "objective European values," to blatant offense and abuse. The negative disposition against the global "non-Europeans" is accompanied in the public sphere by racist resentment (and policies) against the local Roma people, who are subject to systematic portrayal, in the postcommunist culture industries, as the local

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<sup>7</sup> For the idea of race see Aníbal Quijano, "Colonialidad del Poder, Eurocentrismo y América Latina", in Edgardo Lander (ed.), *Colonialidad del Saber, Eurocentrismo y Ciencias Sociales*, Buenos Aires: CLASCO-UNESCO 2003. Translation in English by Michael Ennis, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1.3, 2000, Duke University Press, pp.533-556.

model of "non-Europeans."<sup>8</sup> These model dialectical images are integral dimensions of *postcommunist racism*, that is, of a specific phenomenon situating the emergent postcommunist middle-class within the global matrix of the colonality of power. Fundamental to this construction of white identity is the idea of *passing*, the assumption that East-Europeans can "become European" or are "essentially European" because they can pass as white - as opposed to Roma, blacks or arabs. For East Europeans then, passing overdetermines *integration* (which I consider the operative concept of transition), which means both that local whiteness is continuously subjected to tests of passing, and that the postcommunist subjective identities are open to experiments of passing. However, on the dark side of such transformations, postcommunist racism, through its construction of image of the self, entitlement and the racial Other, provides a particular sense of the open world for East-Europeans, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, defined by the idea of social domination at global scale, where the process of "becoming European" through "integration" is the royal road of subjectivity.

It can be said that a parallel phenomenon traverses Western Europe, where the figure of the immigrant worker, especially from Eastern Europe or Africa, has emerged during the postcommunist transition as a category informing the vision of the European Union itself, as a negative presence which justifies the return to the model of fortress-Europe, to a Europe of the master/subject relation and of many ethnocentrism. In this sense, one can point not only to the rise, during the postcommunist transition, of populist right-wing politicians in the West, united in their hatred for immigrants (Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, Jörg Haider in Austria, Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands, Filip Dewinter in Belgium, Nick Griffin in England), but also to what Okwui Enwezor called the "official disappearance of immigrants in Europe from its cultural institutions," as well as the established policies of "integration" viewing immigrants and native black people as a "them" who must become "like us," such as the color-blind French *modèle d'intégration*, which stresses the individual over community, race or culture, placing thus subjects in

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<sup>8</sup> For more details see the series of articles on the Romanian online journal *Criticatac*: Cristina Rat, "Locuințe anti-sociale à la Cluj. Nu se știe cină dă și cine primește," *Criticatac* 25 March 2011; Iulia Hașdeu, " Sexism, rasism, naționalism – privire dinspre antropologia feministă", *Criticatac* 24 February 2011.

direct relation with powerful institutional structures.<sup>9</sup> The pressure of such policies was not met without resistance, and one can argue that the French revolts from 2005 were preceded by the emergence, in the independent pop culture of the 1990s and 2000s, of a manifold of multiracial political artists such as *Islamic Force* in Germany, *Asian Dub Foundation* in England or *La Rumeur* in France.

Consequently, the expansion of the European Union with ten new members after 2004, a collective postcommunist transformation that engaged together Western and Eastern Europe, and institutionalized the disappearance of the latter, cannot be separated from a global history of drawing hierarchies based on metonymic distinctions between "Europeans" and "non-Europeans", understood respectively as "moderns" and "primitives" who are following the same order of development, but in different rhythms, either by natural necessity (unfortunate and passive long run) or through political coercion (willed short run). In this sense, the "integration" of the former socialist bloc into Europe re-actualized the assumption that "they" must become "like us", or that all non-European peoples are in a sense pre-European, and brought, in the same time, the category of the "internal other" to a new level of generality, which justifies the extraordinary rise of internal security in the order of Western democratic governance. The same process that transformed Eastern Europe into a borderland of the Western world, brought also the border within the West, with the effect of heightening internal security, but also resistance and the consciousness of new enclosures and marginality.

In relation to capitalism, East European governments have engaged after 1989 in a "catch-up" game with the developed market economies. Capitalist power did not emerge in the postcommunist transition only as a negative force of violence and repression, but through spectacle, seduction and the productive colonization of the spheres of social life and the inner lifeworlds. In the process, Eastern Europe emerged in reality, during the two decades after 1989, as a new laboratory of neoliberal experiments, including shock therapy, radical austerity, privatization of commons, flat tax, wage cuts, flexible employment and forced vacation. Through the reforms of the EuroPact and the Stability

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<sup>9</sup> Fred Constant, "Talking Race in Color-Blind France: Equality Denied, 'Blackness' Reclaimed", in Darlene Clark Hine, Trica Danielle Keaton, Stephen Small (eds.), *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*, 148-149.

and Growth Pact, some of these ideas are poised to redefine the meaning of the whole European Union in the summer of 2011.<sup>10</sup> The exceptional austerity measures against the "temporary crisis" could be transformed thus into a permanent basis of economic governance in EU, and in the process, more European citizens will be accommodated to precarious conditions hitherto reserved to the immigrant worker and the borderland European. Such a chain of events would confirm David Harvey's recent thesis on the flow of capital, according to which capitalism never really resolves its major crises, providing instead new roles within the system to the determinants of the crisis,<sup>11</sup> while also restating the role of colonial difference as a pillar of historical capitalism. As Salma James and Mariarosa Dalla Costa have showed already in 1972, the politics of austerity are based on pushing the exploitation of unpaid or underpaid labor, whether that of women or immigrant workers or workers beyond the borders of colonial difference. And indeed, capitalism does not to reduce all forms of labor to the wage-capital relationship, but on the contrary, is a form of global power that works by integrating completely different forms of labor, fragmented by imperial, colonial and gender differences. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos put it, a society is not capitalist because all the social and economical relations are capitalist, but because the capitalist relations are determining how the economical and social relations existing in society work.

In this sense, East-Europeans should be understood if they profess a sense of déjà vu upon hearing pleas for "austerity" and "a return to normal" coming from world leaders,<sup>12</sup> as this is all they heard during the postcommunist transition, and even in the decade before the Revolutions of 1989. In fact, with the global crisis of capitalism which exploded in 2008, Eastern Europe is confronted with the third depression in three decades, with barely any period of recovery, after the socialist slump of the 1980s and the destructive market-reform years of the 1990s.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in an ironic twist of the narrative of transition, it would seem that instead of Easterners catching up with the West,

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<sup>10</sup> See "Business Against Europe", Corporate Europe Observatory, 23 March 2011.

<sup>11</sup> David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism*, London: Profile Books 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Brian Holmes, "Fault Lines & Subduction Zones: The Slow-Motion Crisis of Global Capital," *Occupy Everything*, July 28, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> In Romania, according to the very conservative measurements of the World Bank, during the austerity poverty rose from an estimated 6% of the population in 1987-1988 to 39% in 1993-1995. Victor Axenciuc, *Introducere în istoria economică a României. Epoca modernă și contemporană*, Bucharest, Editura Fundația România de Măine, 2000. See also World Bank reports on Romania from 1995-1996 retrieved from <http://www-wds.worldbank.org>.



precariousness has caught up with the Western world. Considering such collective transformations of Europe during the postcommunist transition, as seen from the borderland of Eastern Europe, it appears that the struggle against capitalism cannot be separated from resistances against the coloniality of power.

## The Historical Experience of Communism

Eastern Europe is an epistemic borderland between communism and capitalism, and it was defined as such also prior to 1989, when the state-socialist regimes devised their policies and five-year plans in order to complete the transition from capitalism to socialism. In fact, in so far as official ideology goes, no Eastern European socialist regime ever reached the level of Chapter 40 of the Polecon, the soviet textbook of Political Economy, namely the transition from socialism to communism. However, after 1989, the fall of the socialist bloc was widely interpreted from Western standpoints as a proof of the "death of communism" and definitive confirmation that there is only one option for development: the 1990s were, more so than Thatcher and Reagan's 1980s, the great years of TINA, There-Is-No-Alternative. It would be hard to find another moment in history when capitalism was identified with democracy to such an extent.

For leftist thinkers, the only way to keep alive other options, including the "hypothesis of communism," was to state that whatever happened in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was not communism, and neither socialism. The predominant views brought up to date C.L.R. James and Raya Dunayevskaya's thesis on state capitalism and the abandonment of workers' councils. Different forms of the same argument repeated that, since the workers councils lost control already from 1923, whatever followed in the Soviet Union and the socialist regimes was basically irrelevant for a positive renewal of leftist theory. However, a side effect of this direction of criticism, developed in different directions by theoreticians such as Perry Anderson and Alex Callinicos, was to accept the idea of failure as a framework and thus to abandon in final instance Eastern Europe as a valid category of positive analysis. Furthermore, through the incessant efforts of attaching an appropriate name for the recent history of Eastern Europe (state capitalist

regimes, Stalinist socialism, national-communism, centrally-planned economy or even centrally-managed consumerism etc.), the focus was moved away from the people, and towards a debate focused on superstructures and arts of governing. After the fall of socialist regimes and the conservative aftermath of the Revolutions of 1989, the irrelevance of the experience of Eastern Europe for Marxist, post-Marxist or other form of critical social theory, in any positive sense, tended to be generally accepted. There is a big difference in the way in which, for instance, the concept of class has ceased a long while ago being the master concept of Marxism, but retained great importance in theory and movements alike, while the unique experience of Eastern Europe ceased being a reference at all (except as a negative illustration). Whereas the *concept* was de-essentialized but kept its weight in connective frameworks such as the analysis of intersectorial oppressions, the *location* of experience was simply demoted of epistemic dignity and abandoned. Could it be that this happened because the locus of enunciation of most critical social theory is still subject to a logic of *discovery* rather than *connection* in the colonial matrix of power?

Meanwhile, in Romania and other parts of the former socialist bloc, anticommunism emerged as a dominant and institutionalized cultural ideology of transition. The postcommunist anticommunism was generally pronounced from the right, ignored leftist social theories and ideology critiques, but focused equally as much on superstructures and arts of governing. Thus, the meaning of "ideology" tended to be reduced to the ideology of the Communist Party (implying that the age of ideologies has ended in the present), and even oral histories tended to be reduced to histories of government abuse and representations of totalitarianism. In this sense, one can argue that the established anticommunism failed as a project of social justice: by defining history through the experience of trauma, and by accepting that the lives of people were simply "lost" or "sacrificed", what was actually lost and sacrificed was their epistemic relevance and dignity. Anticommunism emerged thus in the cultural history of transition as the main cultural ideology that tried to radically change epistemic references, by reducing the past to a homogenous totality identified as a bad deviation from the "normal" course of history. Through the cultural practices of its supporters, anticommunism also assumed a sort of proto-political role in the postcommunist public sphere, working as a principle for

the selection of new cultural elites and thus as a condition of visibility. Anticommunism was also the main orientation justifying the introduction of a new official history, sanctioned by state institutions such as the Presidency. Finally, one can understand anticommunism as the local instantiation and reconnection to the coloniality of power, in so far as it proposed considering communism as an essentially pre-modern past,<sup>14</sup> it introduced the idea of a lesser humanity of the "communist man"; instituted tribunal-thought (as in "the condemnation of communism" and "lustration" projects) as the undisputed way of considering the historical experience of Eastern Europe; and opened the way for the other two dominant cultural ideologies of transition, Eurocentrism and Capitalocentrism.

What both Western critics and Eastern anticommunists, either ignored or reduced to a secondary role, was the actual historical experience of the peoples of Eastern Europe. Both gestures, from left and right, reproduced thus a central tenet of coloniality: the historical experience of people is irrelevant. The actual lives of people have been generally subsumed to negative frameworks of analysis (such as "totalitarianism"), undermining the epistemic relevance of practices and knowledges emerged in their own right behind the Iron Curtain as well as during the postcommunist transition.

The historical experience of real socialism then, and not simply Marxism, should be the point of departure for the development of an *epistemic materialism*. In fact, this is a way of answering to Marx's early question: "Will the theoretical needs be immediate practical needs? It is not enough for thought to strive for realization, reality itself must strive towards thought."<sup>15</sup> The Revolutions of 1989 turned conservative, and the term "revolution" itself may be contested, but in reality the main forces of revolutionary pressure have been without doubt the workers from industrialized cities. Outside the worker movements, it is hard to find "organized resistance", but oral histories abound in recollections of people who were not resigned to the status quo or intimidated by the powers, and of real acts of resistance without infrastructure, which cannot be simply reduced retrospectively to forms of anticommunism or anti-totalitarianism. The regime may have acted like the owner of production units and labor force, but people developed

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<sup>14</sup> See *Red Tours* (2010), film by Joanne Richardson and David Rych.

<sup>15</sup> See Karl Marx, Introduction, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843).

independently a plethora of non-capitalist forms of economic activity: informal markets (bazaar, video market etc.), sustainable food and living systems (family and group gardens), friendship economies, long-term investments (house building and reparation, etc.), long-term savings, workplace exchange, barter economies of services, collectible values, gift economies, "gypsy banks", and so on. The immanent field of such alternative economies cannot be reduced to an undeveloped form of market economy or capitalism, since they reverse the basic order of institutions of capitalism, subordinating economy to social life. Similarly, the regime may have reproduced patriarchy, the bourgeois idea of nuclear family through mass urbanization and absurd reproduction policies, but life in real socialism abounded in non-bourgeois and non-nuclear forms of socialization and cultural exchange, of women networks and solidarity collectives that cannot be reduced to the state/civil society dichotomy. These are just a few examples of concrete forms of the historical experience of real socialism that have been subject to intense pressures by the new formations of postcommunist power, being either colonized and/or commodified (postcommunist anticommunism for resistance, pawnshops and micro-credit banks for friendship economies etc.), or reduced to forms of non-existence in the postcommunist transition and annihilated as social practices and basis of cultural memory.

Considering the epistemic dignity of such concrete forms of reality as they strive for thought in a process of radical transformation is the first step towards a positive epistemic evaluation of real socialism. At its turn, the latter is vital for achieving a sense of social justice and a healing reconciliation with the past that includes all its traumas, and which could offer collective self-confidence and a vision for future transformations. This is the first condition for a movement beyond internal or reactive critique.

The further development of epistemic materialism is important in a wider sense for the renewal of critical thought, since an actual transition beyond capitalism and coloniality can only start from alternative concrete historical experiences, only by considering the real lives and stories of people as a relevant epistemic site, worthy of an other modernity, whose sense emerges only in their interconnectedness. Resistance only stems from the past, and more precisely from the cultural memory of radically different historical experiences, and real socialism provides an abundance of such instances, which could only gain from being placed in relation with other global experiences of resistance. This

would be the condition for gaining an internationalist and non-ethnocentric sense of Eastern Europe as a region, beyond paradigms of dependency.

The establishment of anticommunism and the dominant cultural ideologies of transition gravitated in the direction of capturing, museifying or destroying the cultural memory of real socialism, leaving people with no other cultural life than the one offered through television, workplace and the new culture industry. The postcommunist colonization and capitalization changed minds and bodies, alienated existential territories and shattered the staying power of local epistemologies. However, there is also a resistant side of transition. By acquiring a sense of the evolution of concrete forms of resistance and alternative historical experiences, from real socialism to the postcommunist transition, one can start glimpsing the real possibilities of decolonizing Eastern Europe. And thus, as one can already get from this brief coup d'oeil, in spite of the forlorn affection of recent great transformations, what emerges is an enormously generous field for research, experimentation and creative change, which opens firstly to perhaps the last remaining generalist disciplines: philosophy and contemporary arts.