

## Historicizing Post-Socialism. Continuities and Ruptures

Balázs Trencsényi (CEU)

East Central European political and cultural history has often been inserted into a narrative framework of long-term continuities, even though the interpretative models and the moral drawn from the story could be highly divergent. One type of this narrative (most well-known in its neo-Marxist version in the 1960s) focused on the semi-peripheral status of these societies and cultures. Another perspective proliferating in the region, present already in the interwar period” has focused on the recurrent presence of (post-)romantic nationalism. While the first narrative focused more on socio-cultural and socio-economic aspects, and the second mostly on ideologies, one might formulate another possible framework linking political culture and ideas, tracing the ups and downs of democratization and Europeanization. One can also establish another genealogical thread, linking the post-1989 developments directly to the anti-modernist ideological radicalization reaching its climax in the interwar years. In contrast to the narratives of center-periphery or post-romanticism, such a perspective points at a fundamental rupture, separating the 19<sup>th</sup> century dynamics from what came later. In view of the emerging historical distance, but also in view of the various time layers—“*Zeitschichten*”—contained by the post-89 period, it is thus expedient to sketch out a variety of historical frameworks of interpretation, bearing in mind that rather than absolutizing them as one privileged story to tell as against the other “inadequate” renderings, it makes more sense to place them next to each other as components of a more complex and multidimensional texture of possible genealogies and structural analogies. Obviously, there is some urgency of this reflection beyond the drive of scholarly curiosity, namely the radicalization of authoritarianism in many countries of the region during the last years, which cannot be conveniently placed any longer into the model of “post-accession hooliganism,” but calls for a radically different descriptive and interpretative framework recognizing its *sui generis* nature and raising many questions about the lasting legacy of earlier authoritarian regimes and ideological configurations in the region.