Postcommunist Capitalism, Culture, and History[1]

Michael D. Kennedy
University of Michigan

Michael Burawoy is justly renowned for his ability to pose among the most interesting questions and challenges for sociology. His invitation to postsocialist theory is no exception, but his opposition between Marxist and neoclassical sociology may get in the way of recognizing a critical, historical, and cultural sociology beyond Marx.

In this discussion, I like Burawoy's description of the difference between neoclassical and classical sociology. Neoclassical sociologists Eyal, Szelényi, and Townsley (1998) and Stark and Bruszt (1998) are more interested in exploring capitalism's possibilities through its plurality than in elaborating the classical concern for capitalism's systemic distinction. The neoclassical sociologists' interest in capitalist variety also attends insufficiently to the global articulation of national capitalisms. Burawoy especially uses the common concern of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim for the individual's estrangement from capitalism to cast postsocialist theory's critical difference with neoclassical sociology.

Burawoy's postsocialist theory shares a cultural disposition with the classics and the authors he reviews that limits sociology's critical capacities, however. Classical sociology does not just agonize over anomie, alienation, and meaninglessness. Wuthnow (1987, p. 27) also explains how this sociology treats culture as a "reflection" of something more real, which, through the "strategic application of skeptical scholarly knowledge," can conquer "self-estrangement primarily by extending its knowledge of the world." While Eyal et al. (1998) and Stark and Bruszt (1998) may not share Burawoy's normative concerns, they are closer to his cultural disposition, and to that of the classical tradition, than what some significant currents in critical social theory would recommend.

Calhoun (1995, p. 11) suggests that critical sociology might be organized around "theory that is self-conscious about its historicity, its place in dialogue and among cultures, its irreducibility to facts, and its engagement in the practical world." The starting point for any sociology, Pierre Bourdieu (1990, p. 177) argues, should be its own sociology: "All the propo-

[1] Direct correspondence to Michael Kennedy, International Insitute, 1080 South University, Suite 2660, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109.

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sitions that this science enunciates can and must be applied to the subject who practices the science." For these authors and others, sociology's critical cultural capacity depends on an extended engagement not only with the consciousness of history's subjects or the symbols of their world, but with the constitution of the problem that motivates theory and practice. Burawoy's review suggests one approach to this sociology of knowledge production, but his commitment to a Lakatosian scientific project in the Marxist tradition (1990, 2000) leads him to miss significant challenges to, and accomplishments in, the study of postcommunist capitalism.[2]

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN THE STREAM OF HISTORY

Burawoy opens his essay with reflections on the "end of ideology" in American sociology after both World War II and after communism's collapse in Europe and Northern and Central Asia. He identifies the intellectual transformation of two individuals with this transformation of American scholarship he finds troubling. Szelényi and Stark are no doubt leaders in the study of class and economy after communism, but Burawoy's introductory frame anticipates a recurrent problem in Burawoy's sociology. His theory focuses on the link between the ethnographic moment and a systemic tendency, in this case the scholar's biography and the ideological trend in American sociology. That theoretical strategy focuses one's gaze on the problem of the broader trend, and the actor's adaptation, or resistance, to it. Postsocialist theorists resist that ideological trend, while the neoclassical sociologists are trapped in capitalist hegemony. Burawoy's critique does not speak of any false consciousness, but he is not far away when he suggests that their optimism is "rooted more in faith than in reality" (p. 5). Here, however, I am afraid that Burawoy misses the reality of knowledge production by focusing on two individuals and their implication in his critique of ideology without attending to those mediations that structure their theory and practice.

Burawoy misses the coauthors, collaborators, informants, institutions, and alternative publics shaping the work under review. These conditions of knowledge production are at best backstage, disappearing behind the tale of American sociology's retreat from class. East Central Europe is posed as "fertile soil" for growing an American sociology he dislikes, rather than as a site where history, and scholarship, has been made. It would be quite unfortunate to read these two books through the prism of American sociology at work. They are far more than that. The two volumes represent international collaboration in articulation with the practical en-

[2] The terminology varies. Stark and Bruszt (1998) and Burawoy and Verdery (1999) refer to those societies formerly ruled by communists as postsocialist, while Eyal et al. (1998) and others prefer postcommunist capitalism. The semantic difference is consequential, but deserves more discussion than I can provide here. For elaboration of this and other themes raised in this essay, see Kennedy (2002).

gagement of East Central European and especially Hungarian intellectuals in social change. I am sure Burawoy does not intend to reinforce the American ethnocentrism Hughes (1961) highlighted decades ago, but by missing the global articulation of knowledge production in making communism's collapse and postcommunist capitalism's alternatives, he misses an extraordinary opportunity for extending critical sociology.

In other contexts, Burawoy recognizes the importance of practical engagement in scholarship, most notably when he found one reason for Trotsky's superior theory of revolution to rest in his explanation from within the stream of history (Burawoy 1989). The authors whose work he examines here are also writing from within the stream of history, but apparently they are standing in the wrong part of the stream. Burawoy is distressed by Stark's and Szelényi's apparent abandonment of class, or at least their loss of grounding in or acknowledgement of the working class or subaltern. He does not like their apparent ignorance of social justice and their acceptance of capitalism. But in order to magnify the tragedy of their implicit optimism, he winds up writing a tale of individual transformation whose narrative is shaped more by the ideology he critiques than it is by the intellectual biographies he laments.

Although Szelényi et al. (1988) focused on peasant innovation, Szelényi's world reputation–making book with György Konrád (Konrád and Szelényi 1979) was not grounded in the deeply subaltern. It theorized an intelligentsia on the route to class power. Its ancestry owed more to Hungarian populism than to Marxism (Kennedy 1994), but Szelényi fit with the then-blooming interest in the critical sociology of intellectuals and knowledge (Gouldner 1979). Szelényi could thus be recognized as a part of Marxist inquiries (Burawoy and Skocpol 1982), even while both he and Gouldner were better characterized as "ridge riders" between Marxism and sociology. Stark's (1982) dissertation focused on new class configurations in capitalist and state socialist societies, but his later work on labor markets (1986) already anticipated his subsequent manifest institutionalism. I recognize far more continuity than does Burawoy in the work of these individuals, but I think Burawoy is quite right on another score. Class is not where it used to be, and socialism is not the counterculture to capitalism it once was (Bauman 1976). The intellectual field around social change has shifted dramatically, in part because Eastern Europe is far more important to American sociology than it ever was. But one misses the significance of that shift by focusing on what has happened to class analysis and socialism.

One of the most dramatic changes in sociology has occurred in the explosion of opportunity to conduct ethnographies in Eastern Europe. Communist rule severely restricted this kind of scholarship (Verdery 1996). In fact, one reason Burawoy wound up working in Hungary under communist rule was because he could not gain access to factories in Poland. Today, however, ethnographies are among the most important methodologies available for addressing the character of postcommunist capital-

ism. And ethnography is not limited to manufacturing sites or subaltern communities. The ethnographies in Burawoy and Verdery (1999) also address courtrooms, fiscal policies, and libraries. Verdery (1996) has argued elsewhere that one of the greatest challenges for understanding socialism and its sequel is the ethnography of the state. While some critical sociologists might be content to transport sensibilities of social justice directly to the postcommunist world, ethnographers have cautioned us that politics, from elections to gender, should not be read through a Western lens (Stukuls 1997, 1998; Gal and Kligman 2000). Given the hegemony of nationalism as a discursive formation (Calhoun 1997), especially in Eastern Europe, critical sociology also risks a great deal when it fails to address its articulation with the nation (Suny 1993; Suny and Kennedy 1999).

WHOSE POSTCOMMUNIST CAPITALISM?

Both sets of authors under review and Burawoy minimize the challenge of this national articulation. Of course the authors and Burawoy are writing about different national spaces, but they treat them primarily as *sites* for comparison rather than as different *grounds* for knowledge production, much less subject formation. Consider, simply, Hungary's centrality. This was Michael Burawoy's first country for learning about communist rule. David Stark began in Yugoslavia, but he has worked mostly in Hungary since the late 1980s. Iván Szelényi is one of the leading figures of Hungarian social science. László Bruszt is not only the former acting rector of Central European University in Budapest, but was himself a participant in the Hungarian Round Table negotiations of 1989. If one considers a broader sociology of postcommunist change, one is struck by the degree to which Hungarian research, Hungarian data, and Hungarian intellectuals in diaspora or at home, shape the debate in the United States. János Kornai's (1992) political economy provides the point of departure for many assessments of socialism. József Boröcz, Martha Lampland, Ákos Róna-Tas, and Szonya Szelényi, all leading figures in the American sociology of postsocialism, are grounded in Hungary.

Burawoy challenges the centrality of Hungary in discussion by introducing Russia. But why Russia? Its size, military power, and position as the home of the October Revolution certainly elevate its significance, but it is also a place that encourages deep pessimism about capitalist futures. As Burawoy and Krotov (1992) argued after the Soviet Union's collapse, this was mercantile capitalism at best. Perhaps Burawoy is drawn to a more "critical approach to capitalism in order to rescue the positive potential of socialism" when capitalism is so badly done (p. 30). At the same time, however, Russia hardly produces much optimism about socialist possibilities either. While its communist party may call for a return to the rights of state socialism, they have little sense of how this could be achieved in the new economic and political environment (Cook, Orenstein,

and Rueschemeyer 1999). But perhaps we should not be looking at socialism in terms of feasibility. Perhaps we should look at it in terms of resistance and look to the country best known for mobilizing opposition.

Poland is the nation in the world once ruled by communists with the greatest tradition of labor movements. Solidarity, its independent self-governing trade union of 1980–81, was an emancipatory movement embodying all sorts of alternatives that were themselves "rapidly closed off" when martial law was imposed (Kennedy 1991). When we seek to exhume socialism, we cannot forget that it was communist state violence that destroyed alternatives—some of them socialist—many times, most notably in Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and in Poland in 1981. This history matters, especially in Poland. It forms part of a tradition that is recalled to shape the politics of protest, the politics of parties, and the politics of the labor movement itself (Kennedy and Stukuls 1998; Ekiert and Kubik 1999). And these different histories affect the plausibility of theories that overlook the articulation of the nation in their argument.

Konrád and Szelényi's (1979) anticipation of intellectuals on the road to class power was grounded in Hungarian social conditions and history, even though its reference was to state socialism (Kennedy 1992). When Eyal et al. (1998) write that this class project has been realized, made manifest in the coalition government between the parties descended from the dissident cultural intelligentsia and communist party reformers, they elevate Hungarian experience in generalization. Poland has not (yet?) managed such a coalition at the national level, and only very occasionally at the local level. Indeed, the controversy attending the individual decision by the prominent Solidarity activist Barbara Labuda to work in the cabinet of the very popular president Aleksander Kwaśniewski, a former communist, suggests that Polish cultural politics remain very different from those in Hungary. While we might find evidence for the success of this fourth new class project in Poland, it is not a question that Polish scholarship would emphasize. The enduring significance of "us and them" in the popular, and sociological, imagination suggests that the communist past remains very much a part of the present, at least in Poland.

Burawoy may counter that I commit the same mistake as the authors he reviews. I focus too much on the various origins of communism's collapse and too little on the relations that are defining capitalism. After all, as Burawoy notes above, capitalism's "systemic logic effectively wipes out origins," which then calls for study that subordinates "the study of historical paths and trajectories to careful in situ analyses of actual social relations. . . ethnographic data that will reveal the day to day world of strategic action bound by changing constraints" (p. 23). In this framework, national articulations appear hardly relevant given the globalism of capitalism and its emergent class dynamic. Marx thus can be reborn in socialism's wake. *That* optimism, however, requires another kind of faith, and a compatible set of historical interpretations. Burawoy writes, "Capitalism's early history was no less horrific than communism's but it man-

aged to cultivate its potentialities and handle its contradictions by reconstituting itself. Socialism did not have such a chance—for world historic reasons rather than internal limits—to refashion itself before it was overrun" (p. 30).

In order for Burawoy to retain that optimism, he has to work within "Marxism as Tradition" (Burawoy 2000). For the living tree of Marxism to survive, its proponents must cut off the malignant limbs in hope that the disease has not spread (Burawoy 2000, p. 156). That, however, is the cultural point: he constitutes his science within a tradition of inquiry that relies on interpretations of history that preserve its core. Those who view Marxism as rotten to the roots, or who find it but one element of a critical intellectual tradition, *could* entertain the idea that "socialism did not have a chance" *because of its own internal limits*. Who, after all, overran socialism? Certainly in 1956, 1968, and 1981, communist rule overran socialism's promise. Confronting this history invites us to consider Marxism's "nightmare questions" (Gouldner 1980).

Marxism can avoid the "nightmare questions" that challenge its core presumptions by focusing on those scientific problems, like capitalism's trajectory and class relations, that it does best. And this is quite appropriate for a Lakatosian approach to science (Burawoy 1990, 2000). But if Marxism's core rests in the struggle for socialism itself, as Burawoy seems to imply, Marxism's most critical challenge does not lie in exhuming socialism. If Eastern Europe matters to socialism's viability, Marxism's most critical challenge lies in addressing socialism's cultural effect. For those who have not lived in a society ruled by communists, socialism can function as "an ontologically absent but epistemologically structuring desire" rather than a lived experience with great emotional effect and very different national meanings (Kennedy and Galtz 1996). Even after this generation passes, the connotations of communist rule will not disappear from memory. That memory will affect the ways in which socialism, even if based on resistance to capitalism, can be articulated. If socialism is an unnamed form of resistance to capitalism using the organizational forms left by communist rule, then, perhaps, ethnography unbound can suffice. If, however, socialism is a counterculture that requires a postsocialist theory elaborated by East Europeans, the meaning of communist rule cannot be overlooked. Engaging the history of communist rule matters more than Marxism as Tradition appears to emphasize. Understanding its implication in cultural politics is critical "to rescue the positive potential of socialism." But what of another nightmare question? What if the focus on socialism stands in the way of critical sociology?

To the extent that Marxism's theoretical and scientific core remains identified with the struggle for socialism, it may face unnecessary barriers to developing a critical sociology for, and out of, Eastern Europe. To the extent that Marxism, or critical sociology, is about the relationship between knowledge and practice, about the empowerment and disempowerment of various social actors, and about the relationship between culture

and power, the postsocialist world is more than fertile soil or a laboratory. Some have argued that it is genesis itself (Jowitt 1992), although that is a bit more hyperbole than I can manage. But I do find the invitation to think with my colleagues from Eastern Europe about social and intellectual change both compelling and liberating. Calhoun's (1995) emphasis on theory's place in dialogue among cultures is therefore central to the mission of critical sociology, and critical for theory's relevance to practice.

In this sense, our authors may represent the critical tradition of sociology more accurately than does Burawoy. Socialism is no longer a vision of the future, nor much of a guide to action in Eastern Europe. Transition from plan to market, from dictatorship to democracy, is hegemonic as it never was before. Of course there are alternatives. China's economic growth has been relatively spectacular, and Burawoy (1996) suggests that Russia should be viewed through its lens. China's record on democracy and human rights hardly inspires the emancipatory hope that socialism did at one time for very many people, however. Our Hungarian authors and their colleagues have been at the heart of social change itself, and social change in these times is based on variations in capitalism's configuration, democracy's institutionalization, and civil society's mobilization. Bauman (1992) argued that critical intellectuals have for the most part become the "interpreters" for dispossessed groups, but over the last decade in the postcommunist world, they have played an invaluable role in legislating alternatives for better or worse. Eyal et al. (1998) and Stark and Bruszt (1998) were looking in the right place to develop critical sociology. Eyal et al. even define their sociology of social change by it.

THE CULTURE AND PRACTICE OF POSTCOMMUNIST ELITES

Eyal et al. (1998) proclaim a new sociology based on a theory of the fourth new class project of the East Central European intelligentsia, on the one hand, and social mobility surveys of elites, on the other. Their sense of social change is based explicitly on patterned attributes of economic, political, and cultural elites at different points of time, primarily in Hungary but to some extent in Poland and the Czech Republic, and to a much lesser extent but for stark contrast, in Russia. Their sense of capitalism is based on the qualities of these agents and their theorized relationships to others, primarily within their class. The authors argue against a quite complex theory of political capitalism that they have refined to allow evaluation through elite surveys. Action primarily takes place through individual adaptation of elites with different forms of capital—when, for example, socialist technocrats and anticommunist opposition from the days of communist rule ally to find a new place as the hegemonic managerial bloc presiding over postcommunist capitalism.

This is much less a theory of social change than it is an account of changes in elite capital and habitus at different times in recent East European history. Postcommunist capitalism's alternative futures are un-

derstood in terms of the dominance of different fractions of the elite—the technocratic-managers, foreign investors, and their "comprador intellectual allies" and new entrepreneurs. These are not collective actors in the sense of the term most theorists of class struggle or social movements know. These are collective actors whose collective action can be found in the cumulation of individual strategies. True to Weberian sociology, the analyst is the one best situated to recognize classes in the identification of common patterns. You apparently cannot rely on their organization or coordinated effort to show their class formation, although others have offered an alternative account doing just that (e.g., Gianoplus 1999).

Culture is quite important to Eyal et al.'s (1998) argument. The civilizing project of the East Central European intelligentsia serves as the spirit that travels through history to provide different versions of the intellectuals' mission. Bourdieu's invocation tempers the Hegelian impulse, as the authors (p. 17) emphasize the "dialectical interaction between agents (their dispositions, habits, biographies, collective memories) and their positions (in institutions, class relations, and networks)." The *cultural* bourgeoisie is also building the postcommunist capitalist order. The "spirit of postcommunism" (see also Kennedy and Gianoplus 1994) drew on the idea of civil society and monetarism to become the power bloc's ideology. That power bloc uses three rituals—purification, sacrifice, and confession—initially to purge postcommunists from power and later society from socialist pollution to build the rational economy.

Culture is, however, also marginal to the argument. Following Bourdieu, Eyal et al. (1998) treat culture as a form of capital and use the dominance of different types of capital to distinguish social structures. But this Bourdieuian notion of capital fails to recognize its mediating function in the constitution of actors or in the coordination of action (Calhoun 1995, p. 155). Consider, for instance, how the complicated biographies one might find in life histories are understood through *categories* of actors. Eyal et al. (1998) distinguish dissidents, whose degrees of opposition go unmarked, from socialist technocrats and managers, all with different allocations of cultural capital. Their kinship ties, friendship networks, early career trajectories, and personal memories during communist rule and its end go unmarked before their classification, whose class base in turn shapes the action that gets theorized. We learn about ideologies that reflect those class positions and about rituals that help make capitalism without capitalists, but the individual strategies themselves disappear beneath class. Instead, things happen, based on global imitation and path dependence, that alter the value of certain types of capital. In their words, "Those who are able to adjust their trajectories to meet social change most successfully are those who possess the most diverse portfolio of different kinds of capital" (39). The authors do not really explain under what conditions the imitation or the path is chosen, but that, apparently, is a matter for their individual agents to decide, in a way befitting Bour-

dieu's habitus. One might recall the words of János Kenedi (1982) in this: "Do it yourself."

Indeed, the whole argument, apart from Bourdieu's invocation, resonates with the work emerging from Hungary more than elsewhere. The data, while initially from Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Russia, are mainly from Hungary in the latter years of the decade. When narratives, even with comparison, are elaborated, Hungary tends to provide the illustration (e.g. pp. 183–84). There is even a certain style to the argument. It reminds me of the argument that Ákos Róna-Tas (1997) made about the second great transformation, which was made in small incremental steps. I also recall József Boröcz's (1995) description of the dynamics of postcommunist capitalism with "fusion," the "creative reinterpretation of old and new elements, creating substantively distinguishable qualities of social experience," in which he uses the musical repertoire of Béla Bartók to produce the image. Citing the Hungarian pianist Zoltán Kocsis, "Bartók's oeuvre is a perfect synthesis between central east European folklore and composed music in the hands of a superbly creative individual." It even reminds me of Burawoy and Lukács's (1992) argument about painting socialism, rather than building an organization like Solidarity. While certainly Polish culture also had a sense of *załatwiać*, or to arrange for things, Polish sociology under communist rule, and even today, still struggles with a sense of social structure connected to that past in which Solidarity made "us and them." Hungarians hardly have that sense in their scholarship, or in their politics (Kennedy 1992). Indeed, Stark and Bruszt (1998) argue that this lack of a mobilized civil society enabled the Hungarians to leap ahead of Poland in negotiating a more democratic transition at the Round Table.

Perhaps because they rely as much on rather detailed stories of networks that produce unfamiliar actors taking the helm of a capitalism whose type we hardly know, Stark and Bruszt (1998) develop a sociology of social change that depends more on action than on classification. Even their categories—recombinant property or deliberative associations—are based much more on a model of communication than one based on categories of attributes. In this sense, they are much closer to the third generation of cultural theory that Wuthnow (1987) describes than are Eyal et al. (1998). Despite the latter's invocation of habitus, culture seems to reflect class in the argument's narrative much more than it creates possibilities for action. Stark and Bruszt (1998), by contrast, seek the possibilities and identities emergent in new accounts of action (Kennedy 1999).

Underlying both volumes, however, is a sense of social change that is very different from what it was when class struggle and social movements were our guide. Rather than making history, narratives are organized around adjustment to social change, with social change as the result of adjustment. "Making do" was certainly appropriate for describing the character of socialist entrepreneurs in the interstices of first and second economy, but is this really what elites do? This is certainly not a heroic

disposition, but it is a sign of the times, and a reflection of the culture that is structuring social action. In this, Burawoy is quite right. These two volumes reflect the times, not so much of American sociology but of East Central European praxis in a global transition culture.

A CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY OF POSTCOMMUNISM

Reframed this way, one can appreciate anew Burawoy's lament. It is not just that our authors focus on elites, but that these elites are not inspiring. They are only trying to create a normal society, based on some fusion of the past and Western examples. They are trying to make a better society than what they had. It is only a variation on what exists, however, and not an alternative modernity. But then again, they already had such an alternative that fell to great, if nationally and socially variable, applause within Eastern Europe. And of course another modernity, so far unmentioned, is not far away.

I am struck that theories of postcommunist social change can overlook the wars that have accompanied it. Neither of the books under review, nor Burawoy himself, addresses the wars in Central Asia, the Caucasus, or the Balkans. Is it because they are apart from transition? Is it because war is a result of nationalism and not of communism's end? All of the authors tend to structure their arguments within national societies engaging in relatively peaceful transition, but that is a part of the problem. Postcommunist capitalism is not only a national system. It is not just a global economic system. Transition is also a global cultural formation. Elite East Central European collective action is directed toward membership in transnational organizations, most prominently NATO and the European Union, not only because of Western hegemony but also because of a reasonable fear of political instability. Wars on postcommunism's southern tier are a good inspiration for seeking the security afforded by membership in the West. Thus, regardless of war's place in Durkheimian, Weberian, or Marxist traditions of sociology, it is absolutely central for thinking about the constitution of a culture that guides postcommunist capitalism's making.

Of course this alternative if barbaric modernity is hardly one that elites embrace. However, its existence shapes the culture in which decisions about alternative futures and visions of normality are cast. Within transition culture, the West is constructed as an alternative to ethnic cleansing, mass rape, terrorism, and bombing civilians, and that alternative in turn is linked to the unresolved end to socialism and its search for a new legitimating principle in nationalism. NATO's bombing of Serbia has of course complicated the normative calculus facing East European leaders, but Russia's second war on Chechnya has not assured them either. I agree with Burawoy that we need to look beyond variations on capitalism in imagining East European alternative futures. But we also need to look beyond the mode of production, and toward fundamental elements of

human security, in envisioning Eastern Europe. Indeed, against this background we might gain a better handle on the remarkable cultural hegemony of global capitalism.

It is not just a question of the number of foreign investors and intellectual comprador bourgeoisie. Regardless of numbers, the culture of transition has itself become hegemonic and so obvious that we hardly discuss *why* elites adjust to fit their societies into a global capitalist future. Although Stark and Bruszt (1998) note that Hungarian socialists lurched from their path as the public's caretaker in the mid-1990s to the imposer of financial discipline, they managed this observation without explaining *why certain postsocialist pathways seem obvious, and others appear impossible*. In this sense, we must attend not only to elites adapting to change, but also to how elites sort through the larger set of rules and resources that structure the adaptation. The authors all acknowledge it, sometimes referring to this sorting as a choice between the national path and the Western example. But they treat these phenomena far more obviously than they should.

As postcommunist capitalism's elites recombine property or reconstruct national path and Western examples in new ways of making do, they are not just creating novel combinations out of otherwise coherent cultural structures. Instead, these cultural formations are themselves emergent and filled with contradictions and possibilities that imaginative elites, and entrepreneurial activists, exploit. Agency, Sewell (1992) reminds us, derives not only from the confrontation of habitus and structure, or innovation through networks, but through the contradictions of structures themselves. And that, it seems to me, is the big challenge facing critical sociology.

Burawoy, in his plea for postsocialist theory, focuses on the search for alternatives. I, for one, would prefer to understand how postcommunist capitalism came to be so dominant. However, all of our authors, including Burawoy, assume that hegemony without explaining *how* it happened. Part of the answer lies in a refined cultural sociology that focuses on the constitution of the objects of inquiry and subjects of history in making transition across national articulations. It also depends on explaining why some cultural formations acquire the power that they do. Alternative modernities in the socialist past and in postcommunism's wars have made transition culture seem like a pretty good bet, at least to those who assume institutional responsibility. But I suspect that the Western alternative would not be so compelling if the world's commodification were not so overwhelming.

I would find it extremely helpful if Burawoy and others in the Marxist tradition would go to their deep roots in critical realism to explain capitalism's power. Exhuming socialism may be necessary for identifying injustice within a Marxist problematic, but one might pursue injustice in other terms that can be more consequential. Marxism is, however, a necessary point of departure for understanding capitalism's deep structure.

It would be extraordinarily useful for those interested in understanding, rather than assuming, capitalism's power if critical sociology might work a bit to explain the commodity and its fetish within postcommunist capitalism. Hungary's most renowned Marxist, György Lukács (1971, p. 84), put the question succinctly when he asked, "How far is commodity exchange together with its structural consequences able to influence the *total* outer and inner life of society?" Martha Lampland (1995) provides a critical, historical ethnographic foundation for this inquiry in her exploration of the commodification of peasant labor within socialist Hungary. Hungary is once again at the center, with Marxist inquiry at its heart. But that may be where I finish my selection from the Marxist legacy.

Instead of exhuming socialism, one might follow those critical traditions of sociology—feminism and pragmatism among others—that develop their scholarship in articulation with the language of actually existing struggles. One might even turn to a sense of critical theory that identifies its intervention with immanent critique. Here, freedom offers incredible potential. Transition culture is not just about new forms of property. Its normative power rests on its association with freedom. Fortunately for that immanent critique of global capitalism, Sen (1999) and others are developing a discourse around freedom that puts economic oppression, physical violence, and political repression, among others, at the fount of freedom's limitation. Rather than ask how social conflicts reflect socialism's positive potentials, we might instead organize our inquiry around how freedom's meaning might be extended to assure human security, broader democratic deliberation, and deeper social justice. Instead of having to argue against transition we might argue that freedom is what transition should be about. By constituting the problem of freedom's extension in transition culture, a critical, historical, and cultural sociology could help to make a different space for inquiry and practice around emancipation. And that space will not reproduce the opposition between socialism and capitalism that helps to limit freedom to its bourgeois sense in transition culture.

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