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THE AMBIVALENCE OF SOCIAL CHANGE IN POST-COMMUNIST SOCIETIES

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PLENUM 4: THE 'GREAT TRANSFORMATION' OF POST-SOCIALIST SOCIETIES

The author attempts to construct the theoretical model that would fit the experiences of East-Central European societies (with a focus on Poland, as an illustration) for the nineteen years that have passed since the "revolutions of 1989". He is particularly concerned with the mental (psychological) and cultural (axiological) dimensions of transition, and its meaning and implications for the everyday life of the citizens. He claims that there is a persistent ambivalence, with the tremendous liberating benefits of democracy, market economy and freedom of thought, being unfortunately partly counter-balanced by the persistent social and cultural traumas. The traumatic sequence is described in detail, as well as the set of coping strategies adopted by the people to overcome traumas. In effect the mobilizing potential of traumatic experiences is argued to provide the opportunity for consolidating the new regime and completing the yet unfinished revolution.