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Dimitri Ginev. *Die Geisteswissenschaften im europäischen Diskurs: Band 2: Osteuropa.* Wien: StudienVerlag, 2010. 231 S. ISBN 978-3-7065-4426-9; ISBN 978-3-7065-4657-7.

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D. Ginev (Hrsg.): Die Geisteswissenschaften im europäischen Diskurs

The previously released volumes â*(Re)Writing History. Historiography in Southeast Europe after Socialism*â and â*Narratives Unbound. Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*â offered ample information on and numerous in-depth analyses of recent historiographical trends in various East Central and Southeast European countries. Ulf Brunnbauer (eds.), (Re)Writing History. Historiography in Southeast Europe after Socialism, MÃ¼nster 2004; Sorin Antohi / PÃ©ter Apor / BalÃ¡zs TrencsÃ©nyi (eds.), Narratives Unbound. Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe, Budapest 2007. The second volume of â*Die Geisteswissenschaften im europÃ¤ischen Diskurs*â, a bilingual (German and English) edition focusing on Eastern Europe, aims to cover greater thematic ground and broader temporal horizons but also a more widely defined geographical area. Its overarching themes are the status, relevance and legitimacy as well as the deepening current crisis of the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*) as a whole.

Thematic sections of the volume are devoted to the political context, cultural history and theoretical underpinnings of eastern European humanities. In accordance with the academic profile of the large majority of the contributors, the discussion of philosophical and, more particularly, phenomenological and hermeneutical questions and developments largely dominate its pages though. Several studies such as Dragan JakovljeviÄâs on Mihailo MarkoviÄ from the *Praxis* school or LÃ¡szlÃ³ Ropolyiâs on the narrativistic interpretation of theories are eminently philosophical interventions. In contrast, historical scholarship, more narrowly defined, receives hardly any attention. Similarly, the volume fails to offer quantitative indicators of the profound ongoing transformation of the humanities: the reader has to look elsewhere to read precise figures on questions of funding, on student numbers or the level of international cooperation. Next to philosophical discussions, local considerations of and specific research programs on culture receive the most sustained attention.

Volume editor Dimitri Ginev managed to recruit scholars from seven different eastern European countries that are, in alphabetical order, Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Slovakia besides additional contributors active in Austria, Germany,

United Kingdom and the United States. Taking into account the current level of underrepresentation of scholars from eastern Europe in wider European discussions, this is a laudable achievement indeed, even if in this particular case it yields some eminently *spectateur engagÃ©* perspectives and even the occasional laudatory self-reference.

While none of the authors submitted sustained comparative investigations, the object of more fleeting comparisons tends to be the West. Reflections on the transnational embeddedness of local scholars emphasize Western influences too, while intellectual contacts with neighboring countries seem to play only rather marginal roles â the most notable exceptions being the cases of Lithuania and Belarus, post-Soviet countries where the towering presence of Russia and the local role of Russians prove impossible to overlook. At the same time, neither existing empirical works, nor the connections, overlaps and differences between cultural studies, culturologies, *Kulturwissenschaften, kultÃºratudomÃ¡nyok*, etc., are systematically explored. Both the rather strict division of the material into national chapters and the tendency to prioritize extra-regional intellectual inspirations over intra-regional comparisons make the conception of the volume rather conventional.

The temporal horizon of the studies included greatly varies. Some, such as the study on theories and methodologies of the *Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften* in Slovakia by Jozef VicenÃk, VÃ¡clav ÄernÃk and Emil ViÅ¡ÅovskÃ½ or the coverage of main trends in Soviet and Russian cinema by Yana Hashamova, provide overviews of the past hundred years. Others, such as Dariusz Alexandrowiczâs polemical presentation of the variety of cultural studies in Poland where his particular target is PoznaÅ-based cultural studies scholar Jacek SÃ³jka, or Valentin A. Bazhanovâs ruminations on the simulation of a philosophical culture and, more generally, of academic practices in present-day Russia, offer discussions of the contemporary situation.

Still others can be considered more conventional historical explorations. The insightful introduction by Ginev on the philosophical foundations of and earlier reflections on the specific character of the humanities in four countries clearly belongs here. It introduces the various ways larger trends intersected in different countries and presents notable individuals such as Adalbert Fogarasi, Gustav Shpet, Roman Ingarden and Jan PatoÄka. So does Galin Tihanovâs perceptive study on the inter-war period that explores the thought of Mikhail Bakthin both in the context of German sociological and hermeneutical traditions, the thought of Hans Freyer and Hans-Georg Gadamer in particular, and the relation of its evolution to the pathogenesis of mature Stalinism in the 1930s. Ginevâs presentation of original eastern European doctrines and Tihanovâs sensitive intellectual historical reconstructions are certainly among the highlights of the volume and so is Tomas KaÄeusauskasâs coverage of Lithuania, arguably the richest overview included here. The contribution of KaÄeusauskas simply titled âCultural Studies in Lithuaniaâ has marked theoretical aspects as well as substantial empirical components and pays equal attention to the precursors of present-day cultural studies active primarily in independent Lithuania of the interwar years as well as its leading current practitioners.

As such impressive studies are published alongside less intriguing and stylistically less accomplished ones such as Bazhanovâs abovementioned contribution on the anomalies of the Russian situation or Cristian Ciocanâs on Romanian publications, which offers a listing of important original Romanian philosophical books, translations and journals (not to mention that it in parts directly overlaps with another featured study, that of MÄdÄlina Diaconu and Victor Popescu), the quality proves highly uneven.

In sum, the new volume of â*Die Geisteswissenschaften im europÃ¤ischen Diskurs*â series dealing with eastern Europe presents, above all, developments in philosophy and philosophical discussions of the humanities of this multifaceted region and foregrounds phenomenological and hermeneutical directions of inquiry. In spite of the evidently strong scholarly affiliation between many of the contributors, the studies included are rather disparate both in terms of their themes, ambitions and time frames and ultimately also their quality. This should only partially distract from the fact that the volume presents some excellent studies.

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