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Two Concepts of Art:
Art as Affirmation and Negation of Reality
and as Interaction with the Recipient

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" ... either the world is sane (heil), then art is not really necessary; or the world is insane (unheil), then art is really too weak: it is superfluous or unable to change anything."
(Odo Marquard)

Lothar Bredella

TWO CONCEPTS OF ART: ART AS AFFIRMATION AND NEGATION OF REALITY AND AS INTERACTION WITH THE RECIPIENT

Is it possible to overcome the dilemma expressed in the epigraph by Odo Marquard? In order to find an answer to this question I would like to compare two different concepts of art. The first one, art as affirmation and negation as developed by Herbert Marcuse and Theodor W. Adorno explores the ambivalent nature of art in an insane world. Art which does not fulfill the critical function of changing or negating reality is accused of being "affirmative" because it serves to maintain this insane world. I shall attempt to explore the possibilities and limits of this concept of art.

The second approach foregrounds the relationship between the art work and the recipient's values, experiences and attitudes towards reality. Here, I will concentrate on Jan Mukařovský's aesthetics. But before I analyse his concept of art I will refer to Hans Robert Jauß and Stanley Fish. Jauß stresses the communicative and rhetorical function of art and thus highlights what Adorno's aesthetics rejects. Stanley Fish severely criticizes the concept of interaction. For him the meaning of a literary work lies neither in the work itself nor is it created in the interaction with the recipient but instead is imposed on the work by the reading community. While for Adorno the recipient has "to vanish in the aesthetic experience," for Fish the aesthetic experience is a complete appropriation of the art work by the reading community. The critique of Fish's position is the presupposition for the concept of art as interaction.

1. Herbert Marcuse: The Innocence of Culture - Lost and Regained

In his influential essay "The Affirmative Character of Culture" (1937) Marcuse stresses that art, as part of the realm of freedom, fulfills an inhumane function in society as a whole. It serves to maintain and even justify the unjust and repressive realm of necessity in which most people are exploited.

Marcuse argues that Greek philosophy up to Plato intended to shape social reality in accordance with reasonable insight. The idea that the world should be regulated by philosophical knowledge is also expressed in the opening phrase of Adorno's *Negative Dialektik*: "Philosophy which appeared to be out-dated stays alive, because the moment of its realization has been missed." [1] Although Marcuse recognizes that Plato's ideas in *The Republic* are problematic, he praises Plato for his intention to organize the world on the basis of philosophical insight and criticizes Aristotle for having betrayed this intention. According to Marcuse,

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[1] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1966), p.13.
(Quotations from publications in German were translated into English by Sharon Wotschke)

Aristotle - facing the inhumanity of the world - confines philosophy to the realm of culture, in which only a few are able to strive for the good, the beautiful, and the true. Philosophy no longer feels responsible for the reasonable organization of the world as a whole, but concentrates on the realm of culture. Thus culture becomes a luxury of a few based on the exploitation of many.[2]

Although Marcuse regards Aristotle as a bourgeois philosopher, he does not make him a representative of affirmative culture. The Greek bourgeois philosophers openly admit that the world of truth, goodness and beauty exists only for a few. But this good conscience of the Greek philosophers disappears in modern bourgeois culture. Now those things that were conceived for only a few are to be available to everyone. Thus culture becomes affirmative:

> Aristotle did not assert that the good, the beautiful, and the true are universally valid and obligatory values which should also permeate and transfigure "from above" the realm of necessity, of the material provision for life. Only when this claim is raised are we in the presence of the concept of culture that became central to bourgeois practice and its corresponding *weltanschauung*.[3]

Culture becomes affirmative when it demands of the exploited that they disregard their miserable material existence and turn to the true, the beautiful, and the good. Affirmative culture teaches that material happiness is not really important, and that the only important thing which deserves our attention is the beauty of the soul:

> Culture means not so much a better world as a nobler one: a world to be brought about not through the overthrow of the material order of life but through events in the individual's soul.[4]

Affirmative culture is, as described by Marcuse, inhuman and cynical.

> To the need of the isolated individual it responds with general humanity, to bodily misery with the beauty of the soul, to external bondage with internal freedom, to brutal egoism with the duty of the realm of virtue.[5]

Marcuse, stressing the repressive reactionary character of culture, develops a reductive approach to culture. We must not look at the individual work of art but consider its function in reality, and this function is affirmation of an unjust and oppressive social order, irrespective of the meaning of the individual work. Marcuse, however, counteracts this reductive approach when he points out that art can transcend its reactionary function and gain a progressive one. Art not only affirms but can also change the world in which most people suffer.

The realm of the soul can be a form of protest against misery and the dominant bourgeois virtues of efficiency. In it, ideals are embodied that - as Marcuse stresses - are worth being realized. On the one

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[2] Cf. Herbert Marcuse, "The Affirmative Character of Culture," in *Negations. Essays in Critical Theory*. Co-translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon, 1968), p.88.

[3] Marcuse, "The Affirmative Character," p.91.

[4] Marcuse, "The Affirmative Character," p.103.

[5] Marcuse, "The Affirmative Character," p. 98.

hand, art is used to make people ignore their material misery. But on the other hand, art can become the model for a better world so that people will no longer tolerate injustice and suffering and change the realm of necessity. The idea of a better life, as embodied in art, can turn into an explosive revolutionary force. Affirmative culture, says Marcuse,

> certainly [...] exonerated "external conditions" from responsibility for the "vocation of man," thus stabilizing their injustice. But it also held up to them as a task the image of a better order.[6]

But how can we explain that art has sometimes an affirmative and sometimes a negating effect? And is it not idealistic to assume that the world of necessity can be affirmed or negated by the realm of art?

The dialectic of affirmation and negation Marcuse develops is based, as Peter Bürger emphasizes, on the model of Marx's critique of religion. According to Marx, religion is the expression of a false consciousness, yet it contains an element of truth in distorted form. Happiness, which man desires to find on earth, is postponed by religion until after death. In this respect religion is false consolation, which prevents people from changing their miserable conditions. But it is also an expression of man's need for happiness and a "protest against real misery" (Marx). Therefore, the critique of religion must not simply abolish religion, but insist on redeeming its moment of truth. It must see to it that the happiness religion promises in heaven is realized on earth.[7] If this model of critique is applied to art, then art must end in the same way as religion. Art is false consciousness and has a compensatory function as long as it is enjoyed as art. Therefore, art as art must be abolished. As religion will cease to exist as "superfluous" when the happiness promised in heaven is realized on earth, art will end when its utopian content is realized and the division between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom is overcome.

Yet, when revolutionary groups in the 1960s demanded that art as art should be abolished, Marcuse did not take their side even though the demand was put forward with arguments that might have been taken out of the essay on affirmative culture.[8] At first it seems that Marcuse is only fending off "a false abolition" of art which means that art might cease to exist without the realization of its human content in the world of necessity although the tone of his defense already indicates that the affirmative function of art is receding into the background:

> The "end of art" is conceivable only if men are no longer capable of distinguishing between true and false, good and evil, beautiful and ugly, present and future. This would be the state of perfect barbarism at the height of civilization - and such a state is indeed a historical possibility.[9]

Art is a state of true consciousness and its disappearance would make the realm of necessity absolute. Art no longer has a transitory significance but is permanent. This new concept of art is already indicated by the

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[6] Marcuse, "The Affirmative Character," p. 120.

[7] Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), p.11.

[8] Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (London: The Penguin Press, 1972), p.91.

[9] Marcuse, *Counterrevolution*, p.121.

title of his next book on aesthetics: *Die Permanenz der Kunst. Wider eine bestimmte marxistische Ästhetik.*[10] Here, Marcuse argues that art is permanent, because even in a socialist society in its "most democratic form" people will still suffer from conflicts between the individual and society and from the fear of death and will still be entangled in guilt.[11] Does this new concept of art imply that art takes on a compensatory function - a function which Marcuse so severely criticized in "The Affirmative Character of Culture"? Marcuse develops his new concept of art by criticizing what he calls orthodox Marxist aesthetics.

Marcuse attacks orthodox Marxist determinism in order to save the dialectic between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity or, in Marxist terms, the dialectic between superstructure and basis. As he points out, for orthodox Marxists bourgeois art is determined by the basis and thus cannot help but affirm the interests of the ruling class. In this concept there is no room for the dialectic between the affirmative and the negating critical function of art. Marcuse vehemently attacks such determinism which would have made it impossible for Marx and Engels to transcend their class interests. But if we admit, Marcuse stresses, that the "classics of socialism .... could break through class limitations" then the same "should also be valid for great artists." [12]

Marcuse also attacks the orthodox Marxists for identifying justice and humanity with the ideas of one class, the proletariat. Even if we were to disregard the fact, he argues, that the proletariat of today does not have a revolutionary consciousness in a world of manipulation, its "consciousness would not be the privileged or the sole force which could preserve and reshape the truth of art." [13] The orthodox Marxist position, Marcuse argues, too readily ridicules concepts such as individuality, subjectivity, and soul as an expression of class interests. Such a critique of ideology is not so much a sign of liberation from affirmative culture, but rather a sign of barbarity:

> Today, the rejection of the individual as a 'bourgeois' concept recalls and presages fascist undertakings. Solidarity and community do not mean absorption of the individual. They rather originate in autonomous individual decision; they unite freely associated individuals, not masses.[14]

What is valid for the bourgeois individual is also valid for bourgeois literary figures: They cannot be reduced to class interests: "The inexorable entanglement of joy and sorrow, celebration and despair, Eros and Thanatos cannot be dissolved into problems of class struggle." [15]

For Marxist aesthetics, great art has to mirror reality objectively but for Marcuse art creates another world which questions "the monopoly of established reality" [16]:

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[10] The English translation was published under the title *The Aesthetic Dimension. Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*.

[11] Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension. Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*. Translated and revised by H. Marcuse and Erica Sherover (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), pp.71 ff.

[12] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, pp.18-19.

[13] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, p.31.

[14] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, pp.38-39.

[15] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, p.16.

[16] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, p.9.

> The aesthetic form changes reality in a way that breaks the pressure of normality and the weight of the established. Men and things appear in a different light: their own.[17]

When Marxist thinkers criticize bourgeois literature because it does not describe characters realistically, for Marcuse their "unrealistic behavior" does not have a reactionary but rather a revolutionary function:

> Mimesis is representation through estrangement, subversion of consciousness. Experience is intensified to the breaking point; the world appears as it does for Lear, Anthony, Berenice, Michael Kohlhaas, Woyzeck, as it does for lovers of all times. They experience the world demystified.[18]

According to Marcuse, we as readers, experience the necessity of revolution when we identify with the rebellious characters of bourgeois literature. Therefore works of art do not need to bring up the subject of revolution: "It seems that in these works the necessity of revolution is presupposed, as the *a priori* of art." [19] The works of art, however, which want to support revolutions and give up their autonomous character are in danger of betraying the revolutionary cause.

In the new concept of art the affirmative function of art has completely disappeared. In "The Affirmative Character of Culture" Marcuse argued that art takes on an affirmative function because it presents the recipient with a utopian world in order to make him forget the inhumanity and injustice in reality. In *The Aesthetic Dimension*, however, Marcuse stresses that great works of art do not overlook the injustice and suffering in the realm of necessity. Works of art no longer deceive the recipient by showing him a sane world. On the contrary, they confront him with injustice and suffering. This even applies to a work of art with a happy end. "It [the work as a whole] preserves the remembrance of things past. They [sorrow and unfreedom] may be superseded (aufgehoben) in the resolution of the tragic conflict, in the fulfillment attained. But though superseded, they remain present ..." [20] Marcuse now emphasizes that Goethe's *Iphigenie* highlights that humanity is only an ideal in the world of necessity:

> Moreover, we have known for a long time that pure humanity does not redeem all human afflictions and crimes; rather it becomes their victim. Thus it remains ideal ... [21]

However, for Marcuse art is still under the suspicion of being subject to "infamous affirmation" on account of its form and beauty. But he rejects this suspicion by arguing that the "reconciled" always recalls the "unreconciled." [22] And he justifies the autonomy of art by insisting that it is an expression of sensuality which the "petty bourgeois" pursues with hatred and condemns as "infamous sensuality." [23] In *The Aesthetic Dimension* art no longer needs the critic of ideology or a critical theory to separate the affirmative from the

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[17] Herbert Marcuse, *Die Permanenz der Kunst. Wider eine bestimmte marxisitsche Ästhetik* (München, Wien: Carl Hanser, 1977), p.18.

[18] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, p.45.

[19] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, pp.13-14.

[20] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, p.48.

[21] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, p.58.

[22] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, pp.59f.

[23] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, p.67.

critical function of art. Art is *a priori* revolutionary, but it has given up the claim of being able to overcome the division between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom.

Let us return to the dialectic of affirmation and negation. Marcuse is certainly right in criticizing orthodox Marxist aesthetics because it makes a dialectic between superstructure and basis impossible. But is his own concept dialectical? While for orthodox Marxists the basis determines the superstructure, for Marcuse the superstructure determines the basis, because the realm of necessity as a place of mere exploitation and inhumanity is unable to bring about change so that redemption must come from the outside, the world od fredom or the superstructure.

The dialectic based on the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom does not give room to what one might call the realm of praxis in which people interact with others and in which they decide about their way of life and their actions. Thus the realm of necessity ignores the cultural element inherent in every social order. This devaluation of the social world corresponds to an overestimation of the realm of philosophy and art, which is supposed to redeem the world from the outside.

When Marcuse praised Plato for his intention of organizing the world in accordance with philosophical insights, he could have realized that it is not enough to put philosophy into practice in order to create a humane and just reality. One could easily quote more examples which all give evidence to the insight that reasonable "praxis" is more than putting ideas into practice. Marxism itself seems to be the victim of such a concept. Therefore we need another concept of the realm of necessity as well as another concept of art. But before we turn to such concepts we have to explore the most impressive attempt to understand art from the concept of the dialectic of negation and affirmation.

2. Adorno: Art as Reconciliation and Its Failure

In contrast to Marcuse, Adorno right from the beginning rejects the idea of art as ideology. In "Lyric Poetry and Society" he says:

> The greatness of works of art lies solely in their power to let those things be heard which ideology conceals. Whether intended or not, their success transcends false consciousness.[24]

While for Marcuse in "The Affirmative Character of Culture" art fulfills an affirmative function by making people forget the misery of reality, Adorno stresses that art cannot help but reveal the misery and suffering in the realm of necessity. Even if Stifter claims that it is possible to portray the right way of life, through his transfiguring portrayal "shines the hidden, repressed suffering of the alienated subject and thus the unreconciled nature of real life." [25] For Adorno, art cannot be affirmative and reactionary. The critical concept of society is inherent in it:

> All works of art, including the affirmative ones, are ipso facto polemical. The very notion of a conservative work of art is somehow absurd. By emphatically severing all ties with the empirical world, art in an unconscious way expresses its desire to change that world.[26]

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[24] Theodor W. Adorno, "Lyric Poetry and Society," in *Telos*, XX (1974), p.58.

[25] Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London, Boston: Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1984), p.331.

[26] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.253.

So, even art which tries to exclude unreconciled reality points to it because that which has been excluded as unacceptable from art is indirectly present. The distance of the lyric poem from society is "a protest against a social condition which every individual experiences as hostile, distant, cold, and oppressive ..." [27] Thus the radical absence of the social world in a poem indicates the alienation of the lyric "I" from society: "Its detachment from naked existence becomes the measure of the world's falsity and meanness. Protesting against these conditions, the poem proclaims the dream of a world in which things would be different." [28] It is this dialectic between absence and presence which characterizes Adorno's method of interpretation. The world of suffering is always painfully present in the attempts to exclude it.

If art negates the world as it is, what is the world it presents like? According to Marcuse in *The Aesthetic Dimension*, art presents us with the rebellious individual. For Adorno, however, art does not take sides with the subject against society but attempts the reconciliation between subject and object.

Language is the medium for this transformation. It enables subjectivity to turn into objectivity.[29] Reconciliation is possible if the poet does not use language in order to express himself, but rather gives himself up to it, so that his language "comes to full accord with the language itself, i.e. with what language seeks by its own inner tendency." [30] The instrumental use of rational language mutilates things by subsuming them under concepts. Therefore, true art must undo this injustice by the poet devoting himself completely to language.

With these formulations, Adorno comes close to Heidegger's concept of language. He seems to be aware of this proximity when he emphasizes, that, on the other hand, one must not make language an absolute voice of existence, as is the case in "some current ontological theories of language":

> The moment of self-forgetting in which the subject submerges in language is not a sacrifice of himself to Being. It is not a moment of compulsion or force, not even of force against the speaking subject, but rather a moment of reconciliation, ... [31]

In a world that would be different from ours the subject would give up its "stubborn self-assertion" and would no longer be an agent of suppression.

How critical Adorno is of our use of everyday language and what he expects from art can be highlighted in comparison to the structuralists' concept of language and art. Structuralists would agree with Adorno that language imposes its order on nature. However, Adorno and the structuralists diametrically differ in evaluating this situation. While the structuralists take a certain pride and perhaps even delight in demonstrating that language imposes its order on the world and consigns meaning to it, for Adorno this imposition of order and meaning is a sign of barbarity and the continuation of the mythical cycle of domination and suppression. In this respect Adorno could argue that structuralism is an expression of the violent attitude inherent in Western culture which does not tolerate the particular, the non-identical and the

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[27] Adorno, *Lyric Poetry*, p.58.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Adorno, *Lyric Poetry*, p.62.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

heterogeneous. While structuralism excludes as irrelevant what escapes language, Adorno expects art to atone for the violence and injustice inflicted on an amorph nature by language.

The structuralists, however, dissolve the distinction between instrumental language and art. Since all forms of language confer meaning on the world, literary texts have lost their privileged status. If literary texts have a distinguished status, it is because they do not disguise that they are nothing but language. They openly admit their fictionality and do not pretend to be more than a system of signs. For Adorno, however, art has to give expression to the particular and the heterogeneous which evades our concepts. We shall encounter a special form of structuralism when we discuss Stanley Fish's concept of art.

Adorno and the structuralists, however, agree in their demotion of the recipient although for different reasons. For the structuralist, the system determines the rules by which people speak and write and understand. Heidegger finds unanimous approval among structuralists when he says: "Language speaks. Man speaks only in so far as he historically 'complies with' language."[32] For the structuralist, the distinction between "langue" and "parole" seems to be no longer an analytical one, but an absolute one. The system absorbs the individual who is nothing but an intersection of various roles defined by the system. Jonathan Culler quotes Levi-Strauss: "The goal of the human sciences is not to constitute man, but to dissolve him."[33] According to the structuralist method things have to be taken apart in order to isolate their parts and to determine the rules by which they are composed. This is the scientific attitude which Adorno and Horkheimer seem to have in mind when they say that "enlightenment behaves towards things as a dictator towards man. He knows them in so far as he can manipulate them."[34] The structuralists want to abolish the human subject because he is nothing but "a series of conventions, the grids of regularity and intersubjectivity."[35] Adorno wants to abolish him because he is the agent of suppression who does not acknowledge what is different.

In order to understand Adorno's critique of the subject and his concept of art we must view it in the framework of the dialectic of enlightenment. The aim of enlightenment is, as Horkheimer and Adorno emphasize, to free man from the fear of nature. Man should no longer be subject to its overwhelming power. But this aspired liberation failed and instead brought about new domination and submission. Reason itself which had aimed to free man from the power of nature becomes a brutal force, subsuming nature as well as man:

> In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant.[36]

By proclaiming man as the ruler of the earth, enlightenment leads to total domination over nature which is degraded to mere material for man's manipulating power. In this context it is the task of art to atone for the

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[32] Quoted in Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics. Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (London: Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1975), p.29.

[33] Quoted in Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, p.28.

[34] Max Horkheimer & Th.W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer, 1969), p.9.

[35] Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, p.258.

[36] Horkheimer, Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufkärung*, p.3.

injustice inflicted on nature by reason and to break out of the mythical cycle of domination and submission. Adorno takes up the romantic concept of art which says: "Art must become nature again." For him, this dictum contains a moment of truth as well as of non-truth:

> Truth, because it demands of art that it speak out for the oppressed of all kinds of domination including the rational kind; non-truth because such language cannot be imagined in contrast to rational language which is mediated through the totality of culture.[37]

These words already indicate why the desired reconciliation between reason and nature will finally fail. Art itself contains an insolvable contradiction: It speaks out against reason and civilization, which mutilate nature, but it can only speak for the oppressed through rational language. Art wants to become a natural object, but cannot escape being constructed. Thus we face a dilemma:

> ... every act of making in art is an endless endeavor to articulate what the makeable would not be and what it does not know, that is the spirit of art. This is where art has its place as a restorer of historically repressed nature.[38]

Enlightenment has entangled thought in a vicious circle, with disastrous consequences. It began by freeing man from his fear of nature, but now it is destroying nature. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the disaster of our world is a product of unrestrained thought based on enlightenment which forces the unconditional surrender of nature to its categories:

> Enlightenment behaves towards things as a dictator towards man. He knows them in so far as he can manipulate them. The man of science knows things in so far as he can make them. In this way their potentiality is turned to his own ends. In the metamorphosis the nature of things, as a substratum of domination, is revealed as always the same.[39]

According to Adorno civilization has not yet been achieved because our civilization is still based on the mythical cycle of domination and submission and thus has been unable to overcome barbarity:

> Civilization, historically leading out beyond barbarity, has also promoted it to this day through repression which exercises its principle of dominating nature.[40]

In our enlightened world in which the cycle of domination and submission has not been broken, art points to a world in which things would be different. But on the other hand there is the danger of art turning into a "fetish." Art, therefore, can only remain true if it attempts to articulate a world in which things would be different and at the same time expresses the failure of this attempt. In a world dominated by false consciousness, art itself cannot escape ideology; therefore, according to Adorno, philosophy is necessary to examine the inherent contradictions in art. Only this self-reflection prevents art from becoming ideology.

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[37] Theodor W. Adorno, "Zum Klassizismus von Goethes Iphigenie" in Adorno, *Notizen zur Literatur IV* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), p.10.

[38] Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie. Gesammelte Schriften Band 7* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p.198.

[39] Max Horkheimer & T.W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), p.9.

[40] Adorno, "Zum Klassizismus von Goethes Iphigenie," p.23.

Yet, art can only articulate and thus liberate the non-identical and the heterogeneous by creating a whole. Form is the promise of such a whole, the unity of a manifold. But this unity is not without repression. Form selects and cuts off so that things fit into the whole. Thus Adorno comes to the conclusion:

> We can see here how repression is carried from reality into art works. They would rather shake it off, but they cannot. Form is this amoral essence. The more they emphasize form, the greater is the injustice they perpetrate.[41]

It is the inherent intention of art to escape the general and do justice to the particular, but it is doomed to failure: "The unity of art works cannot be what it must be, i.e. unity of a manifold. By synthesizing the many, unity inflicts damage on them, hence also on itself."[42] Art wants to escape the domination which governs the world but is itself a form of domination. Dialectical thinking tends to dissolve contradictions in a higher unity. Adorno, however, puts the emphasis on the particular and heterogenous. For him the integration of the particular into the whole is a violent act. He stresses that the reconciliation is always gained at the expense of the particular. This allows him to criticize those who proclaim that contradictions have been overcome in art as well as in reality.

Yet, even if a genuine reconciliation could be achieved, it would not be truth, but ideology, because it could only be brought about by distancing art from the realm of necessity and thus leaving this realm as it is. Art can only be art by "foreswearing intervention in reality." Therefore "art becomes culpable precisely because it refuses to intervene."[43] While for Marcuse in "The Affirmative Character of Culture" in analogy to Marx's critique of religion art can finally overcome the division between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom, Adorno makes clear that this intention is doomed to failure. The dialectic of affirmation and negation starts from the assumption that art should not only interpret the world but change it, yet finally it has to admit that art is inherently affirmative and ideological. "In fact, it is art's truth itself - reconciliation of the kind that real life denies - which is the accomplice of ideology, since it pretends that reconciliation is a fact."[44] Thus art finally falls prey to "infamous affirmation":

> At present, all works of art including radical ones have a conservative tinge, for they help reinforce the existence of a separate domain of spirit and culture whose practical impotence and complicity with the principle of unmitigated disaster are painfully evident.[45]

All works of art are laden with guilt, including the radical ones, because they are unable to abolish the division between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom but rather deepen it:

> Art is an exodus from the world which never succeeds in leaving the world behind. Conversely, the world remains untouched by art since the latter merely reflects the former.[46]

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[41] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.208.

[42] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.212.

[43] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.194.

[44] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.195.

[45] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.333.

[46] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.481.

For Adorno, art is the only protest against the world as it is and a sign of a world in which things would be different, but the reconciliation it promises fails. This is the "truth of art" which Adorno's aesthetic theory reveals.

Käte Hamburger accused Adorno of constantly speaking about the truth of art without being able to say what he means by "truth."[47] She calls the sentence "True is what does not fit into this world" Adorno's "credo" and finds the same idea in the following statement: "In the rise of the Non-Being, as if it existed, the question of art's truth takes its impulses." If the truth of art lies in what is not, then Käthe Hamburger also comprehends Adorno's criticism of Plato whose "ontology was annoyed by art's illusionary character." But she cannot comprehend Adorno when he, at the same time, accuses art of lying. Thus she comes to the conclusion that the question as to the truth of art "obtains no answer."[48]

But what Hamburger rejects as meaningless makes sense within the context we have reconstructed. For Adorno, truth is indeed what does not fit into the world: the reconciliation between the particular and the general, between the subject and the object, and between nature and reason. But art cannot fulfill the "objective" promise to break up the mythical cycle of domination and submission. Therefore Adorno can accuse art of lying. In contrast to Käthe Hamburger's view, one could argue that the problem of Adorno's aesthetic theory is not that the concept of "truth" remains "empty", but rather that the truth of art is too narrowly defined in the dialectic of enlightenment.

Adorno's concept of art is part of a comprehensive philosophy of history in which art gains its significance. How the concept of history determines the concept of art is also underscored in Adorno's severe criticism of Lukacs's aesthetics in "Erpreßte Versöhnung. Zu Georg Lukacs *Wider den mißverstandenen Realismus*." (Forced Reconciliation: On Georg Lukacs's *Against Misunderstood Realism*) The way both authors evaluate modern literature is closely connected with their interpretation of the historical development.

For Lukacs who believes in the historical development as predicted by Marx, art fufills its mission if it portrays reality realistically. Therefore he accuses modern literature - which is mainly represented by the works of Kafka, Proust, Joyce and Beckett - of being "ontological" and "solipsistic." The first reproach implies that modern literature portrays man as an essentially lonely being, and the second one means that modern literature denies the existence of an objective reality. Lukacs concludes that an ontological and solipsistic description of reality prevents people from understanding the true sources of the their plight in modern society and thus prevents them from taking the necessary political action. Therefore modern art fulfills an affirmative, reactionary function.

Adorno agrees with Lukacs' phenomenological description of modern literature. It presents us with an ontological and solipsistic world, but he accuses Lukacs of not being able to think historically. When we encounter loneliness and isolation Adorno expects us to interpret it historically, no matter how it is presented in art: "But precisely Lukacs, who claims to think radically historically, would have to admit that this

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[47] Käte Hamburger, *Wahrheit und Ästhetische Wahrheit* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1979), p.89.

[48] Hamburger, *Wahrheit*, p.83.

loneliness [...] is mediated socially and has major historical content."[49] But Lukacs could raise the objection that Adorno's argument misses the point. It is no question of how he, Lukacs, and Adorno interpret loneliness, but how modern literature interprets it.

Another objection Adorno raised against Lukacs's position is more to the point. Adorno accuses Lukacs of being blind to the difference between philosophy and art. Adorno agrees with Lukacs that ontology and solipsism are affirmative and reactionary in philosophy but stresses that they are progressive and polemic in art:

> Beckett, who most often seems to eliminate all concretely historical content and merely tolerates primitive situations and behaviour, uses the non-historic facade as the provocative rebuttle of what is idolized by reactionary philosophy. [...] Concepts such as Beckett's are objectively polemic.[50]

For Adorno, solipsism in art is objectively polemic because it expresses our longing to overcome the division between subject and object, but it does not present it as a "fact": "... the work of art criticizes reality through the power of the contradiction between the object as reconciled in the picture by the subject spontaneously absorbing the object, and the actually unreconciled exterior."[51] Adorno demonstrates the same dialectic in his interpretation of the inner monologue. For Lukacs it symbolizes the worldlessness of modern art, which prevents us from understanding the world we live in. For Adorno it expresses our desire for reconciliation as well as the failure of this reconciliation because in an atomistic society "man is ruled by estrangement and because he -as one must accredit Lukacs with - becomes a shadow through this."[52] For Adorno art which mirrors reality is no longer an expression of true but rather of false consciousness because it conveys the illusion that an historical development is still possible. True art, however, must go beyond reality as a place of disaster, but at the same it must not deny this reality. Otherwise, it would make us forget reality and become affirmative. Only art which negates reality and demonstrates the failure of this negation can be an expression of true consciousness. In such a concept of art there is no room for the recipient. Art as negation and affirmation is an aesthetics without a recipient. Adorno severely criticizes the recipient who uses the work of art to satisfy his needs and stresses that the recipient has to subordinate himself to the art work:

> The subjective experience of an opposition to the ego is a moment of art's objective truth. To those who obsessively relate art works only to themselves, the avenue of lived experience is closed...[53]

Adorno would have been a severe critic of a subjective criticism as developed by David Bleich[54] and Fish, as we will see below. He would have interpreted it as an expression of our violent culture which is unable

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[49] Theodor W. Adorno, "Erpreßte Versöhnung. Zu Georg Lukacs 'Wider den mißverstandenen Realismus'," in *Noten zur Literatur II* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1961), p.162.

[50] Adorno, "Erpreßte Versöhnung," p.166.

[51] Adorno, "Erpreßte Versöhnung," p.164.

[52] Adorno, "Erpreßte Versöhnung," p.165.

[53] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.348.

[54] David Bleich, *Readings and Feelings. An Introduction to Subjective Criticism* (Urbana/Illinois: TCTE, 1975). David Bleich, *Subjective Criticism* (Baltimore: University Press, 1978).

to acknowledge what is different and what cannot be controlled. Yet Adorno not only criticizes the recipient who imposes his concepts on the work of art and uses it to satisfy his needs, but pleads for the negation of the recipient so that the work of art can develop its inherent objective dialectic:

> Pre-artistic experience is based on projection. By contrast, real aesthetic experience is a movement against the subject for the sake of the subject and its *a priori* primacy. Real aesthetic experience requires self-abnegation on the part of the viewer, the ability to respond consciously to what art works say and what they keep to themselves.[55]

Adorno stresses that it is not the task of art to please the recipient: "The bourgeois wants his art luxurious, his life ascetic. It would make more sense if it were the other way around."[56] Yet, Adorno is aware of the consequence of such a radical rejection of the enjoyment of art: "Let us acknowledge a limitation of this critique [of enjoyment of art], though: if the last trace of enjoyment were expunged from art, we would face the embarrassing question of what works of art are for."[57] Although Adorno admits that the question of what works of art are for cannot be answered without reference to the recipient, it is obvious that his aesthetic theory has no place for him because his philosophy of history decides how works of art are to be understood.

The rejection of the recipient is not surprising if we consider that he is part of the insane world and that he is an agent of domination. Art should therefore overcome the recipient as well as the world:

> What is called "communication" today is the adaptation of spirit to useful aims and, worse, to commodity fetishism. Similarly, the equally popular term "meaning" is also enmeshed in these sorry developments.[58]

If it is the function of art to negate reality, it is logical that the art work should also negate the recipient who should "vanish in the work of art."[59] Adorno finds only one emotion appropriate to the aesthetic experience, tremor (Erschütterung), because it makes the recipient disappear:

> A legitimate subjective response to art is a sense of concern (Betroffenheit). Concern is triggered by great works. Concern is not some repressed emotion in the recipient that is brought to the surface by art but a momentary discomfiture, more precisely a tremor (Erschütterung), during which he gives himself over to the work.[60]

Against the background of contemporary response theory which subordinates the literary work to the recipient's strategies and needs, Adorno's emphasis on the art work is a useful correction. Adorno is right when he stresses that the aesthetic experience is not identical with projection, but it will not come about without projection. The recipient's cooperation is needed to produce "the aesthetic object" as we shall see when we discuss Mukařovský's aesthetics.

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[55] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.474.

[56] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.19.

[57] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, pp.18f.

[58] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.109.

[59] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.19.

[60] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.346.

One could argue that Adorno contradicts his own aesthetic theory when he interprets individual works of art. His interpretations reveal how they are determined by *his* concept of history. But such an attempt to integrate his aesthetic theory into Mukařovský's would have to ignore that Adorno explicitly denies that the meaning of the art work is created in the interaction with the recipient and that he demands that the self as part of the insane world should be overcome in the aesthetic experience.

When Adorno stresses that "tremor" (Erschütterung) is the only legitimate subjective response because it makes the recipient give himself up to the art work, he refers to Kant's concept of the sublime and re-evaluates it. In *Critique of Judgement* "tremor" in connection with the experience of the sublime makes us conscious of our indestructable inner self. In the face of the overwhelming force of nature we experience how insignificant we are as physical beings, but this experience initiates a counter movement which makes us aware of the sovereignty of our inner self as spiritual beings.[61] Thus the experience of the sublime deepens the division between our physical and our spiritual nature. For Adorno, however, tremor should not make us aware of our indestructable spiritual self, on the contrary it should efface the sovereignty of the self:

> The utopia anticipated by artistic form is the idea that things at last ought to come into their own. Another way of putting this is to call for the abolition of the spell of selfhood hitherto promoted by the subject.[62]

While for Kant we experience the sublime in the face of overwhelming nature which makes us aware of our spiritual self, for Adorno we experience it when we overcome the spell of selfhood and give ourselves over to the work of art.

Recently Wolfgang Welsch has attempted to interpret Adorno's aesthetic theory as an aesthetics of the sublime, as the title of his essay indicates: "Adorno's Aesthetics: An Implicit Aesthetics of the Sublime." He argues that Adorno had to give up the concept of reconciliation because reconciliation presupposes form and form means selection which will suppress and mutilate what does not fit. Welsch is right when he stresses Adorno's critical explorations of form. Yet, he is mistaken, I think, when he assumes that Adorno replaced the concept of reconciliation by the concept of the heterogeneous. Welsch does not do justice to Adorno's aesthetic theory when he divides the aesthetic theory into a first phase, concentrating on reconciliation, and a second one, concentrating on the heterogeneous.[63] Adorno is aware of the fact that Hegel's dialectic demonstrates the triumph of the spirit which appropriates the non-identical. The negative dialectic attempts to put a stop to this appropriating movement in which the non-identical disappears in the whole. Thus he takes sides with the particular, but this gesture would become ideological if it were not to demonstrate its failure. The promise of reconciliation and its failure are basic elements of Adorno's aesthetics and cannot be separated.

Iris Murdoch also re-interpreted Kant's concept of the sublime which at first sight is similar to Adorno's re-interpretation. In "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited" she says:

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[61] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1963), p.154.

[62] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.195.

[63] Wolfgang Welsch, "Adornos Ästhetik: eine implizite Ästhetik des Erhabenen," *Das Erhabene zwischen Grenzerfahrung und Größenwahnsinn*, ed. Ch. Preis (Weinheim: VC, 1989), pp.185-213.

> Kant's man stands alone in confronting mountains or the sea and feels defiant pride in the free power of his reason ... whereas the man that I have in mind facing the manifold of humanity, may feel, as well as terror, delight, but not if he really sees what is before him, superiority. He will suffer that undramatic, because un-self-centered, agnosticism which goes with tolerance.[64]

For Iris Murdoch the experience of the sublime is closely connected with the experience of contingency. We dislike contingency because it questions our power to control things. In her first novel *Under the Net* the protagonist, Jake Donaghue, hates contingency and constructs a world in which everything is necessary, but finally he has to realize: "I felt ashamed ... of having conceived things as I pleased and not as they were." [65] It is our inherent tendency to distort reality because we want to control it. The consequence is "totalitarian man" who does not tolerate anything beyond himself.[66] It is the task of art to liberate us from this need to appropriate what is different: "It is important, too, that great art teaches us how real things can be looked at and loved without being seized and used, without being appropriated into the greedy organism of the self." [67]

To a certain extent Murdoch's and Adorno's aesthetics are similar, but finally they differ radically, because for Adorno art has to overcome reality as a place of disaster while for Murdoch art has to make the recipient accept reality. She attacks the New Critics who demand from the work of art that it should liberate us from the messy contingent reality:

> What is feared is history, real beings and real change, whatever is contingent, messy, boundless, infinitely particular and endlessly to be explained; what is desired is the timeless, non-discoursive whole which has its significance completely contained in itself.[68]

I have already indicated that Adorno's aesthetic theory subordinates art to philosophy, because the recipient as part of the insane world is unable to understand the true significance of art. The aesthetic experience must be replaced by philosophy:

> Truth content is not what art works denote, but the criterion which decides if they are true or false in themselves. It is this variant of truth content in art and this variant alone which is susceptible of philosophical interpretation because it corresponds to an adequate concept of philosophical truth. The present state of mind, fixated as it is on immediacy and tangible concerns, is unable to establish this kind of link with art, the only link that opens a window upon the truth content of art. Aesthetic experience must pass over into philosophy or else it will not be genuine.[69]

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[64] Iris Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited," in *The Yale Review* (49,1960), pp.268-269.

[65] Iris Murdoch, *Under the Net*, (London: Penguin, 1964), p.247.

[66] Lothar Bredella, "Wirklichkeitserfahrung und Erzählstruktur in den Romanen von Iris Murdoch," in *Miscellanea Anglo-Americana: Festschrift für Helmut Viebrock*, eds. K. Schuhmann, W. Hortmann, A.P. Frank (München: Karl Pressler, 1974), pp.6-7.

[67] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignity of Good* (London: Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1970), p.65.

[68] Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited," p.260.

[69] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.190.

This seems to imply that philosphy and art coincide and that art illustrates the insights of philosophy. Adorno rejects this reductive consequence by pointing out that philosophy alone cannot determine what is true and false in a work of art. The philosophical analysis has to be complemented by a formal one: "what one has to do is to understand its inner crystallization."[70] The formal analysis Adorno recommends resembles that of the New Critics. But the question arises of how the formal analysis and the philosophical interpretation can be related to each other. If both of them confirm each other, then there seems to be a pre-established harmony. Adorno himself is aware of this possibility, but assumes that it can be avoided: "Speculative thought is easily duped into thinking there is a pre-established harmony between society and works of art, courtesy of world spirit. Their true relation is different, however."[71] But it is hard to demonstrate that the formal analysis does not presuppose the result of the philosophical interpretation and vice versa.

Rüdiger Bubner points out in his critique of Adorno's aesthetic theory that we have to put the aesthetic experience - the interaction between the work of art and the recipient - at the center of our interest if we want to do justice to art.[72] Hans-Robert Jauß tries to do precisely this in his book *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik* (*Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*), although he defines the aesthetic experience differently than Bubner does. He directs our attention to what Adorno's dialectics of Affirmation and Negation rejected:

3. Hans Robert Jauß: The Communicative Achievement of the Aesthetic Experience

According to Jauß, we cannot understand the significance of literature if we assume that literary works either affirm or negate the social norms and orientations. Such an approach ignores that literary works articulate norms and attempt to change the recipient's consciousness. For Jauß, art creates "an objectively binding meaning."[73] Thus, art works not only oppose society but also have an effect on it by trying to influence the norms that guide man's actions in society. Jauß uses a number of examples from Western history to illustrate how art plays an important role in developing, justifying, and changing social norms. One of his examples is *Minnesang*. Jauß admits that the praise of the aristocratic mistress can be interpreted as an affirmative transfiguration of the noble class, but such an interpretation would overlook that a new love ethic was articulated.[74] Minnesang negates the church's norms of marriage. Insofar we have a negation of norms, though this negation does not condemn the world as a place of disaster, but rather tries to change our understanding of love and marriage from within the world. Art does not negate the world but transforms our concepts of reality.

How can art succeed in making the recipient adopt new norms? Jauß takes up the Aristotelean concept of catharsis. Adorno had strongly criticized catharsis because it fulfills an affirmative compensatory function. He accused it of serving "the function of providing aesthetic-illusory substitute gratification in place

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[70] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.479.

[71] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.335.

[72] Cf. Rüdiger Bubner, *Ästhetische Erfahrung* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), p.58.

[73] Hans R. Jauß, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*. Translated by Michael Shaw (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p.17.

[74] Jauß, *Aesthetic Experience*, p.18.

of real bodily gratification of instincts and needs."[75] Adorno as well as Marcuse in his earlier period are very suspicious of the possibility that art might make life bearable and thus affirm the insane world. To Jauß, however, Adorno's rejection of catharsis is just another sign of the prejudice in modern theories of art which exclusively concentrate on the work of art itself and ignore the role of the recipient. A consequence of such a concept of art is that the effect becomes detached from the work itself and is left to psychologists who measure the effect without considering the form and content of the work of art. Therefore, we need a concept of art which regards the effect of art, not as an alien element but as an essential part in the interaction between the work of art and the recipient.

While for Adorno identification with the hero means that the recipient subsumes the work of art under his needs, for Jauß it is more adequate to say that this identification means that the recipient steps out of his pragmatic context and takes the role of another. In order to feel pity and fear, the recipient must take interest in the hero's fate. Thus, according to Jauß, the Aristotelean catharsis achieves what Adorno believed could be attributed only to autonomous art, namely that it breaks the "spell of obdurate self-preservation."[76] This is, of course, too rash a conclusion because Adorno is not interested in a recipient who extends his scope of experience through art. Such an interpretation of the aesthetic experience would not negate the world but involve us in it. It would not overcome the self but strengthen it. Before we continue with the analysis of Jauß's concept of the aesthetic experience let me refer to Arthur Danto who pursues the process of identification one step further. He interprets an art work as a metaphor and comes to the conclusion:

> ... the greatest metaphors of art I believe to be those in which the spectator identifies himself with the attributes of the represented character and sees his or her life in terms of the life depicted: it is oneself as Anna Karenina, or Isabelle Archer, or Elizabeth Bennett, or O: oneself sipping limetea; in the Marabar Caves, in the waters off East Egg; in the Red Chamber ... where the art work becomes a metaphor for life and life is transfigured.[77]

If the work of art is a metaphor which allows us to see our world transfigured, then we can learn something about ourselves. But we can only do this if we know that we are not completely identical with the character we identify. Identifying with Anna Karenina, one does not forget

> that one is not a Fine Woman or necessarily a woman at all, let alone a Russian and a nineteenth-century person. You cannot altogether separate from your identity your beliefs about what that identity is: to believe yourself to be Anna is to be Anna for the time you believe it, to see your life as a sexual trap and yourself as a victim of duty and passion.[78]

Danto relates the art work to the world of the recipient in such a way that it allows the recipient to step out of his own world to take the role of the other and extend his scope of experience:

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[75] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.338.

[76] Jauß, *Aesthetic Experience*, p.95.

[77] Arthur D. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace. A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge/Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), p.172.

[78] Danto, *Transfiguration*, p.173.

> Art, if a metaphor at times on life, entails that the not unfamiliar experience of being taken out of oneself by art - the familiar artistic illusion - is virtually the enactment of a metaphoric transformation with oneself as subject: you are what the work of art ultimately is about, a commonplace person transfigured into an amazing woman.[79]

This concept of art as metaphor allows Danto to reconsider the severely criticized concept of the art work as a mirror and to point to the cognitive properties of mirrors which the critics of this concept might have overlooked:

> ... since there are things we may see in them we cannot see without them, namely ourselves. And fixing upon this asymmetry of mirror images, Hamlet made a far deeper use of the metaphor: mirrors and then, by generalization, art works, rather than giving us back what we already can know without benefit of them, serve instead as instruments of self-revelation.[80]

We, as recipients, do not vanish in the art work but these help us to understand the world and ourselves. But now let us return to Jauß and his interpretation of the Aristotelean catharsis. It is controversial as to how the Aristotelean concept of catharsis should be interpreted.

O.B. Hardison points out that the phrase "catharsis of incidents arousing pity and fear"[81] has been translated in three different ways. In one translation "catharsis" means "purgation." This would imply that Aristotle accepts Plato's premise "that emotions ('passions') are threats to the intellect" but that he, Aristotle, would set him at ease by assuring him, Plato, that art arouses emotions such as fear and pity not in order to be overwhelmed by them but on the contrary, in order to get rid of them.[82] If we, however, translate "catharsis" with "purification," then emotions are no longer something which we have to get rid of but something we have to accept as part of ourselves.[83] Yet, Hardison argues, both interpretations ignore the cognitive element. Emotions are not mechanically aroused but depend on what we perceive and how we perceive it. Therefore Hardison translates catharsis with "clarification" and relates this meaning to Aristotle's concept of art as imitation. Hardison interprets imitation in the same way as Danto interprets the mirror image. Imitations do not merely give us back what we already know but rather serve as instruments of learning and self-revelation. Therefore even imitations of painful experiences produce pleasure in us. According to this interpretation, "catharsis" is closely connected with understanding and self-revelation.[84] Jauß's interpretation ignores this cognitive element and stresses that the aroused emotions are a means to put the spectator in such a state of mind that he is willing to accept new attitudes and norms.

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Danto, *Transfiguration*, p.9.

[81] O.B. Hardison Jr., "A Commentary on Aristotle's Poetics," in *A Transfiguration of Aristotle's Poetics. A Translation and Commentary for Students of Literature*, ed. Leon Golden (Englewood Cliffs/New Jersey, 1968), p.134.

[82] Cf. Hardison, "A Commentary on Aristotle's Poetics," p.135.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Lothar Bredella, "Literary Texts and Intercultural Understanding: Arthur Miller's Play *Death of a Salesman*," in *Understanding the USA: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Peter Funke (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1989), pp.201-202.

In order to develop this dimension of the aesthetic experience further, Jauß takes up ideas of the Sophist Gorgias. As Jauß points out, Gorgias is aware of the effects that tremor (phobos) and misery (eleos) can evoke in the listener. In contrast to Aristotle, Gorgias is not only interested in arousing the recipient's feelings, but in what is made possible through this process. While modern aesthetic theories, which regard a work of art as a self-contained whole, have ignored or suppressed the rhetoric function of art, Jauß stresses that for centuries art has been evaluated by the effects it was supposed to bring about. But he also adds that often it was accused of not being able to bring about the intended effects because of the ambivalent nature of the aesthetic experience. In order to understand this ambivalence Jauß refers to St. Augustine.

In *Confessions* St. Augustine differentiates between the use of the senses for lust (voluptas) and for inquisitiveness (curiositas). The former directs our attention to positive perceptions and the latter to negative ones, such as the fascination of a mangled corpse. For Jauß, however, another distinction becomes even more important in order to explain the ambivalent nature of the aesthetic experience: the distinction between the good use of sensual pleasures, which directs them towards God, and the bad, which directs them towards the world.[85] In the first case, the world is presented as God's creation, and thus our belief in God is strengthened. In the second case, we enjoy the work of art for its own sake. Thus the rhetorical or practical function is replaced by the delight in the things themselves. St. Augustine reproaches himself for forgetting God while shedding tears on account of Aeneas's and Dido's tragic fate.[86] In a similar way Rousseau attacks the aesthetic experience. The spectator feels pity with the unlucky characters but does not help them. Art makes us enjoy things for themselves and thus negates the rhetorical or practical function of art:

> The spectator is not moved to aid the sufferer but merely to be sorry for him, and the more the author of these fictions makes the audience grieve, the better they like him.[87]

Strangely enough we find the same reproach in "The Affirmative Character of Culture." We enjoy, Marcuse argues, the justice and humanity embodied in art and forget to change the world. Even Adorno accuses art of becoming "culpable precisely because it refuses to intervene."

I think that Jauß's rediscovery of the rhetorical function of art leaves us with a basic problem. He subordinates the aesthetic function to the rhetorical one so that it becomes impossible to distinguish between an art work and a religious or political treatise. Thus the work of art becomes a means for making readers accept certain values. This reduction becomes clear when Jauß describes Brecht's intention in the following words:

> The problem was not just how the theater could again become both entertaining and instructive, how [disfamiliarization] could bring pleasure, but also how the solitary spectator could be motivated to pass from critical reflection to solidary action, and this means how norms of action could be suggested to him without their being overtly or covertly imposed.[88]

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[85] Hans R. Jauß, *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), p.74.

[86] Cf. Jauß, *Ästhetische Erfahrung*, p.175f.

[87] Quoted in Jauß, *Aesthetic Experience*, p.104.

[88] Jauß, *Aesthetic Experience*, p.107.

Jauß's reduction of art to rhetorical or practical functions makes a closer analysis of the aesthetic experience necessary. Having started with Jauß, we should now turn to Wolfgang Iser, the second main representative of the Konstanz school. In his book *The Act of Reading* Iser gives a detailed description of the interaction between the literary text and the recipient. However, I have dealt with Iser's aesthetics in another paper [89] and Mukařovský's considerations of the aesthetic experience as an interaction between the art work and the recipient are of special significance in the context of this paper. But the concept of interaction has recently been severely criticized by Stanley Fish. Therefore it seems necessary to deal with his criticism, in order to find out whether or not we have to give up the concept of interaction.

4. Stanley Fish's Criticism of the Concept of Interaction

In his essay "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser" Stanley Fish accuses the concept of interaction of wanting to have it both ways:

> He [Iser] criticizes theories 'which give the impression that texts automatically imprint themselves on the reader's mind' but his theory cannot get off the ground unless it claims exactly that for the set of directions that guide the reader's "meaning assembly." [90]

According to Fish we are either objectivists and assume that the meaning is in the text, or we are subjectivists or conventionalists and assume that the meaning is imposed on the text by the recipient or the reading conventions of the community. Interaction, Fish complains, evades this clear-cut alternative: "To the question informing much of contemporary literary theory - what is the source of interpretive authority, the text or the reader - Iser answers 'both'." [91]

Fish attempts to demonstrate the shortcomings of Iser's concept of interaction by demonstrating that the distinction between determinacy and indeterminacy will not hold. Why is this distinction, Fish asks, so crucial for Iser? It allows him, Fish points out, to distinguish what is given and thus restrains the reader's sense-making activities and it allows him to highlight what the reader supplies to the text. Fish, however, argues that spots of indeterminacy or gaps "are not built in the text but appear (or do not appear) as a consequence of particular interpretive strategies." [92] Therefore he concludes that the reader does not supplement what the text left unsaid but that "he supplies everything." There is no "given":

> Perception is never innocent of assumptions, and the assumptions within which it occurs will be responsible for the contours of what is perceived. The conclusion is the one I have reached before: there can be no category of the "given" if by given one means what is there before interpretation begins.[93]

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[89] Cf. Lothar Bredella, "Leseorientierte Literaturtheorie und Literaturunterricht," in *Anglistik heute: Perspektiven für die Lehrerfortbildung*, ed. Albert-Reiner Glaap (Frankfurt/Main: Scriptor, 1990), pp.167 ff.

[90] Stanley Fish, "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser," in *Doing What Comes Naturally* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p.107.

[91] Fish, "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser," p.69.

[92] Fish, "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser," p.77.

[93] Fish, "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser," p.78.

If there is no "given" and the reader "supplies everything," one might draw the conclusion that the reader is free to impose arbitrary interpretations on the text. Yet, Fish forestalls

> this conclusion by arguing that the strategies in question are not his [the recipient's] in the sense that would make him an independent agent. Rather, they proceed not from him but from the interpretive community of which he is a member, they are, in effect, community property, and insofar as they at once enable and limit the operations of his consciousness, he is too.[94]

Thus the community determines the meaning of the text, and in this respect we can conclude that "everything is given." Fish accepts both cases: We can say "everything is supplied" or "everything is given." But we are not allowed to say "something is given" or "something is supplied":

> Earlier I concluded that the distinction between what is given and what is supplied won't hold up because everything is supplied, both the determinate and the indeterminate poles of "the aesthetic object"; now I am arguing that the same distinction won't hold because everything is given. There is no paradox here. It is just that "supplied" and "given" will only make sense as fundamental categories of classification if the entities to which they refer are pure, if, at some level, we can speak meaningfully of a text that is simply there, waiting for a reader who is, at least potentially, wholly free.[95]

I agree with Fish that perception includes interpretation and that there is no unmediated reality. Whatever we understand is shaped by our concepts and categories. Yet, if the world were nothing but diffuse material for our categories, our experience of the world could not question and refute them. Fish is right when he says that the distinction between determinacy and indeterminacy is not fixed but dependent on the interpretive strategy the reader supplies. It is obvious that a reader who interprets a literary text within a psychoanalytic frame of reference will encounter different spots of indeterminacy than a reader who interprets it within a Marxist frame of reference. But in both frames there is a given which demands understanding. The concept of interpretation without something to interpret is absurd. The alternative between objectivism and subjectivism does not do justice to what is going on in an interpretation which can be explained by the model of questions and answers: Our questions partly determine what the answer will be like, but there is the possibility that answers might make us revise our assumptions and expectations so that we build new ones. As Bernhard Waldenfels points out:

> In the interplay between question and answer we not only come across a given of which something must be made, but also across a given which challenges us, stimulates us, invites us, and also intimidates us.[96]

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[94] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge/Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp.13-14.

[95] Fish, "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser," p.83.

[96] Bernhard Waldenfels, *Der Stachel des Fremden* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), p.64.

If we play a flute or throw a ball, we not only impose our structure on something diffuse but have to acknowledge the shape and momentum of the object. Our response to something is neither determined by the object alone nor is it determined by our strategies alone.[97]

"The persuasive model" forces Fish to reduce the concept of interpretation to the application of conventions and interpretive strategies and to dispute that the interpretation is the product of the interaction between the given and the recipient. But only if we acknowledge this interaction can we understand the productivity in interpretation which is more than the text alone and the reader alone.

Fish is so much concerned with demonstrating that interpretations are determined by the reading community alone that he comes to the conclusion that there is nothing uncertain in an interpretation. An interpretation becomes a closed system which cannot be questioned in a community:

> What I have been saying is that there is no subjectivist element of reading because the observer is never individual in the sense of unique or private, but is always the product of the categories of understanding that are his by virtue of his membership in a community of interpretation.[98]

Fish does not allow the possibility that the same reading strategies produce different interpretations with different texts, because the text is mere material for these strategies. He reduces the concept of interpretation to the demonstration of rules and strategies in the same way a teacher in the foreign language class room would when asking his students to produce sentences to demonstrate that they know the rules. But not all sentences produced by the same rules and conventions have the same meaning.

It is true, there are no facts independent of theories, but having established theories in fields such as physics or sociology we encounter "facts" which force us to modify old theories and to develop new ones. What is a "fact" in the physicist's frame of reference is not necessarily a "fact" in the sociologist's frame of reference. But it would be too rash a conclusion to infer from this insight that the physicist and the sociologist do not encounter "facts" or a "given."

In one of the examples Iser uses to demonstrate the interaction between the literary text and the reader, he points out that the chapter title "Arcadian Simplicity" in *Vanity Fair* is "explicitly ironic." Fish raises the objection that "the irony of 'Arcadian Simplicity' is not explicit in the sense that it announces itself before interpretation begins; it will be ironic only in the light of an interpretation - a specification of the author's purpose - already assumed."[99] Of course, Fish is right, the irony is not given in an absolute sense but presupposes a complex process of interpretation. But this insight does not imply that Iser cannot take for granted that the readers he has in mind know what a chapter heading is. It is "a given" in his interpretation he uses to illuminate what a reader will do who encounters "Arcadian Simplicity" as a heading in *Vanity Fair*. If the chapter had another heading, the irony would not come about. Understanding presupposes a "given." This does not mean that the "given" is absolute and cannot be questioned. It is "given" in a certain frame of reference.

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[97] Cf. Bernhard Waldenfels, *Ordnung im Zwielicht* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1987), pp.44-45.

[98] Fish, "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser," p.83.

[99] Fish, "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser," p.77.

A consequence of the position Fish develops is that we cannot experience uncertainty because there is no "given" which invites interpretation. In his book *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics* Robert Jervis also points out that we cannot have "facts" without assumptions and theories:

> Pure empiricism is impossible: facts do not speak for themselves. It is not wise -- indeed it is not possible -- to follow Thomas Huxley's injunction to "sit down before the fact as a mere child, prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever nature leads, or you will learn nothing" [100]

Yet the conclusions Jervis draws from this insight differ from those Fish draws. For Jervis there is a "given" which we have to interpret and therefore we have to cope with uncertainties. When for example leading politicians of another country threaten our own country, should the politicians of our own country take the threat seriously and immediately start a preventive war or should they interpret the threat as a sign of weakness which should not be taken too seriously? Of course, the threat will be interpreted within certain assumptions and interpretive strategies because the politicians have no immediate access to reality, but this does not imply that there is no "given" and that there is no uncertainty. If they ignore what is given they may produce fatal illusions. The breakdown of illusions indicates that there was a "given" which should have been taken into consideration.

Fish's position destroys the identity of the text. For him a text exists only in the reader's mind. He points out that *Lycidas* has been interpreted in so many different ways that "one of us might be tempted to complain to the other that we could not possibly be reading the same poem (literary criticism is full of such complaints), and he would be right, for each of us would be reading the poem he had made." [101] Thus, according to Fish, the interpretive strategy turns one text into many. But it is also possible, he argues, to read various texts in such a way that they all become one text. As we have seen, the orthodox Marxist aesthetics reduce all literary texts to class interests. And if we follow Marcuse and Adorno, all literary texts have to negate an unjust social order. Fish refers to St. Augustine who urges us to read everything in such a way that it points to "God's love for us and our answering responsibility to love our fellow creatures for His sake." [102] From this insight Fish draws the conclusion that "the notions of the 'same' or 'different' texts are fictions." [103] Fish's assumption that we as readers alone produce the difference between *Lycidas* and *The Wasteland* or any other text leads to the absurd consequence that we produce what Milton, Eliot or any other author has written. This makes reading superfluous because we already have in us what Milton and Eliot wrote, so that we can project it into the text we read. The result of Fish's theoretical position is that we are all are caught in a solipsistic universe in which interaction with others is impossible. For Fish we cannot describe, we can only prescribe, we cannot find but only invent. The distinctions between these alternatives may often be difficult to draw but this does not justify negating them. Fish's reading community is Iris Murdoch's

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[100] Robert Jervis, *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics* (Princeton/New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), p.158.

[101] Stanley Fish, "Interpreting the *Variorum*," in *Reader-Response Criticism. From Formalism to Post Structuralism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp.180-181.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid.

"totalitarian man" who only tolerates and accepts what he has produced. The significance of the text is reduced to a mere stimulus which only sets the reader in motion but cannot tell him anything.

Fish himself has often shown convincingly how a particular formulation of a text makes the reader respond in a certain way. It was Fish who attacked the notion of the "Affective Fallacy" and demonstrated that we have to take the reader's responses into account, because the meaning is not embedded in the text but produced by the reader responding to it. Let us consider one example which Fish uses to demonstrate that the meaning is not produced in the interaction but imposed on the text:

> He must not float upon his wat'ry bier
> Unwept... [104]

Having read the first line, Fish argues, the reader will have formed "an expectation that something will be done about this unfortunate situation, and [he] the reader anticipates a call to action, perhaps even a program for the undertaking of a rescue mission." [105] But then the word "unwept" will disappoint his expectations, and Fish adds that "the realization of that disappointment will be inseparable from the making of a new (and less comforting) sense: nothing will be done; Lycidas will continue to float upon his wat'ry bier ..." [106] So far Fish describes an interaction between the text and the reader. Therefore, he accuses himself of having treated the ending of the line as a "fact of nature" and corrects his interpretation. He argues that his interpretation presupposes the convention of line endings, so that the line ending is not a "fact," but was produced by the interpretive strategy he applied: "The truth I think is exactly the reverse: line endings exist by virtue of perceptual strategies rather than the other way around." [107] But the reader can only apply the convention of paying special attention to line endings because poets have internalized this convention and produced poems that can be read this way. Thus the reader encounters a "given." This also implies that an author can break the conventions and thus force the reader to develop new ones in order to understand the text. These experiences indicate that an interactive model is more appropriate than Fish's model. While for Adorno art is "a restorer of historically repressed nature," for Fish it is mere material for demonstrating the power of the community which imposes its will on the work of art. Adorno can do without the reader and Fish can do without the text.

5. Jan Mukařovský: The Anthropological Significance of Art

With Mukařovský the emphasis shifts from the question of how a work of art negates or affirms reality to the question of how it affects and challenges the recipient. For him the tension between the implicit outlook of the art work and that of the recipient becomes important:

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[104] Fish, "Interpreting the *Variorum*," p.177.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Fish, "Interpreting the *Varivorum*," p.178.

> Only a tension between extra-aesthetic values of a work and the life-values of a collective enable a work to affect the relation between man and reality, and to affect is the proper task of art.[108]

This "tension between the extra-aesthetic values of a work and the life values of a collective" becomes also important for a critique of Jauß's subordination of the aesthetic function to the rhetorical one.

In order to understand how art affects our attitudes towards reality we must examine the concepts which Mukařovský mentioned in the title of his significant study *Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts*.

5a) Aesthetic Function as the Dialectical Negation of Practical Functions

What is characteristic of the aesthetic function and how does it relate to other functions? The aesthetic function is not limited to art, it also plays an important role in other aspects of human life. It is not an attribute that adheres to certain things, but is dependent on the recipient's attitudes. This means: "any activity, whether natural or human, may become a vehicle of the aesthetic function." [109] If we look at an object aesthetically, we do not use it to achieve other goals. We turn our attention to it for its own sake. Thus the aesthetic function is based on the negation of practical functions. Kant called this attitude "disinterested pleasure." "Disinterested" does not mean indifference, but on the contrary, expresses the fact that we do not subordinate things under our practical, moral, or intellectual interests but appreciate them for their own sake.

In practical realms, such as clothing, living, eating, religion and science, etc. the aesthetic function accompanies other functions and can strengthen them. It can serve to represent power and prestige. It can also be used to replace other functions which have lost their significance. Thus the Christmas tree, which has lost its religious function, can gain an aesthetic function. A scientific work, which may have once fulfilled an intellectual function, can later be read for its aesthetic function. Here we might also refer to the Bible which many people nowadays read aesthetically. These examples of practical realms must suffice at this point. Let us now turn to the realm of art. While the aesthetic function accompanies practical functions outside of art, it is dominant within the work of art. What does the dominance of the aesthetic function in an art work mean?

Mukařovský takes up the traditional concept of aesthetics - "the aesthetic function ... will make the object itself a purpose, whenever and wherever it manifests itself" [110] - and transcends it when he calls the aesthetic function the dialectical negation of the practical functions. What is meant by this characterization?

In his essay "Poetic Designation and the Aesthetic Function of Language" Mukařovský refers to the three linguistic functions as Bühler described them in his language model: the representational, the expressive and the appellative function. He calls these three functions the practical ones and confronts them with a

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[108] Jan Mukařovský, *Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts*. Translated by Mark E. Suino (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979), p.93.

[109] Mukařovský, *Aesthetic Function*, p.1.

[110] Jan Mukařovský, *Kunst, Poetik, Semiotik*. Translated by Erika and Walter Annuß (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), p.118.

fourth one: the aesthetic function. Yet, the aesthetic function has no content of its own. Its content instead results from the process of negation of the practical functions.

Mukařovský illustrates what it means when the representational function is dialectically negated with the phrase "dusk is approaching." [111] Mukařovský wants to demonstrate that the aesthetic quality of this phrase does not lie in the language itself but in the way we perceive it. For this purpose the utterance is ill chosen, because "dusk is approaching" has a certain aesthetic quality in itself. But let us pursue how Mukařovský distinguishes between the aesthetic and the practical function.

When we hear the phrase "dusk is approaching" as a part of a message in a pragmatic situation, Mukařovský argues, we focus our attention "on the relation between the designation and the reality signified."[112] Thus the question may arise whether it is really getting dark or whether the speaker is merely trying to deceive the listener. Whichever question will be asked depends on the meaning this message gains for each respective context in everyday life.

According to Mukařovský we react differently when we read this phrase within a literary work. Then we will not ask if it is really getting dark, but instead consider the phrase within its context and explore its relation to other elements of the work. When the representational function is negated, we focus our attention on the statement per se and its context. In the essay "Dichterisches Wort und Wirklichkeit" Mukařovský examines the phrase "spring is coming" in a number of poems in order to illustrate a wide range of different meanings this phrase takes on in the particular contexts in which it is used.[113] Thus we can summarize: The negation of the representational function of language implies that we do not ask whether events which are presented are true. In the same way the negation of the expressive function implies that we do not ask whether the poet has really experienced the feelings and thoughts he represents.

Yet, if the negation of the practical functions of language directs our attention to the internal relations between utterances one could ask whether Mukařovský does not confirm the traditional view of aesthetics which asserts that the art work has no connection with reality. Mukařovský himself responds to this question:

> If the answer to this question were affirmative, art would be reduced to a game, the sole purpose of which would be aesthetic pleasure. Such a conclusion would, however, be obviously incomplete.[114]

The negation or weakening of the relation between the sign and the particular reality it refers to is only the presupposition that the art work refers to reality as a whole. Thus a portrait, if it is received aesthetically, does not inform us about a particular individual but expresses a certain attitude toward reality as a whole. It is not a document referring to a certain person who lived in a certain place at a certain time but directs our attention to "a unifying attitude toward reality":

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[111] In Jan Mukařovský, *The Word and Verbal Art. Selected Essays by Jan Mukarovsky*. Translated and edited by John Burbank and Peter Steiner (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), p.65.

[112] Mukařovský, *The Word and Verbal Art*, p.66.

[113] Cf. Mukařovský, *Kunst, Poetik, Semiotik*, pp.269-270.

[114] Mukařovský, *The Word and Verbal Art*, p.71.

> No matter how minute is the segment of reality which it represents, and even when it does not represent anything at all - as a musical work, for example - the work of art as an aesthetic sign has the capacity to refer to reality as a whole and to express and evoke man's relation to the universe.[115]

When we read Dostojevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*, Mukařovský argues, we are not informed about a particular reality, events that happened a long time ago in a foreign culture, but perceive in it a certain attitude toward reality which concerns us:

> It is highly probable that the majority of those who have read or will read this novel have never committed or will never commit murder. It is equally certain that no crime today could be committed in a social or ideological situation identical to the one which gave birth to Raskolnikov's crime. Nevertheless, those who read Dostojevsky's novel react to their reading with the most intimate of their experiences: every reader feels that *sua res agitur*.[116]

We shall take up this example again when we discuss the aesthetic value. Here it serves to highlight what is crucial for Mukařovský's aesthetics, namely that the weakening of the practical functions of language strengthens the interaction between the art work and the recipient's experience of reality, so that the recipient responds with his or her total set of values to the art work:

> The weakening of the immediate relation of poetic designation to reality is counterbalanced by the fact that a poetic work as a global designation enters into relation with the *total* set of the existential experiences of the subject, be he the creative or the perceiving subject.[117]

For Mukařovský the autonomy of art directs our attention from "the relation between designation and the reality signified" to the relation between the art work as "a global designation" and "the total set of the existential experiences of the subject":

> ... the autonomy of the art work and the dominance of the aesthetic function and value within it appear not as destroyers of all contact between the work and reality - natural and social - but as constant stimuli of such contact.[118]

Thus works of art acquire the capacity to refer to a reality which is different from the one in which they were produced and can refer to a set of values and experiences other than the one from which they arose.[119]

So far I have shown how the negation or weakening of the practical functions of language makes it possible that the art work refers not only to a particular reality but to reality as a whole and to the recipient's total set of values, but the situation is more complex. The art work has two semiotic functions, an autonomous and a communicative one. As a communicative sign art refers to a particular reality.

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[115] Jan Mukařovský, *Structure, Sign and Function.* Selected Essays. Translated and edited by John Burbank and Peter Steiner (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), p.21.

[116] Mukařovský, *The Word and Verbal Art*, p.71.

[117] Mukařovský, *The Word and Verbal Art*, p.73.

[118] Mukařovský, *Aesthetic Function*, p. 90.

[119] Cf. Jan Mukařovský, *Kapitel aus der Ästhetik*. Translated by Walter Schamschula (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p.78.

> Thus a literary work functions not only as a work of art but also and simultaneously as *parole*, expressing a state of mind, a thought, an emotion, and so forth.[120]

Yet, even as a communicative sign an art work does not raise the claim that the thing signified exists, although it is not unimportant for the structure of the art work whether "it treats its subject as 'real' (sometimes even as documentary) or 'fictive,' or whether it oscillates between these two poles." [121] The situation is further complicated by the fact that the dialectically negated practical functions do not simply disappear but are present in the art work:

> ... consequently, every poetic work is - at least virtually - simultaneously a presentation, an expression, and an appeal. Often it is precisely these practical functions which manifest themselves to a considerable degree in a work of art: for example, the presentational function in the novel, the expressive function in lyric poetry.[122]

Thus tensions between the practical functions and the aesthetic function can arise. For example the negation of the expressive function makes us receive a poem in such a way that we do not take the represented thoughts and feelings of the "lyrical I" as those of the author, but there are poets who want us to take the represented feelings and thoughts as their own. For Mukařovský such tensions between the aesthetic function and the dialectically negated functions increase our interaction with the art work:

> From the standpoint of art, a strong polar tension is optimal between functional multitude and functional singularity, or, in other words, between the dominance of the aesthetic function and that of the extra-aesthetic functions, which most intensely become valid in the work of art.[123]

This insight into the tensions between the practical and the aesthetic functions allows us to correct Jauß's concept of the aesthetic experience which reduces art to the practical or the rhetorical function. For Jauß, Brecht faced the dilemma "how norms of action could be suggested to him [the solitary spectator] without their being overtly or covertly imposed." Yet, in order to explain the effect of Brecht's plays we have to consider the tension between the rhetorical and the aesthetic function. And this makes it possible to say that the rhetorical function in Brecht's plays heightens the aesthetic function and vice versa.

In her book *On the Margins of Discourse. The Relation of Literature and Language* Barbara Herrnstein Smith develops a concept of art which comes close to Mukařovský's aesthetics. She introduces the distinction between "natural" and "fictive" utterances. She defines the "natural utterance" in the following way:

> By 'natural discourse' I mean here all utterances - trivial or sublime, ill-wrought or eloquent, true or false, scientific or passionate - that can be taken as someone's saying something,

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[120] Mukařovský, *Structure, Sign and Function*, p.85.

[121] Mukařovský, *Structure, Sign and Function*, p.86.

[122] Mukařovský, *The Word and Verbal Art*, p.69.

[123] Mukařovský, *Kunst, Poetik, Semiotik*, p.79.
Cf. also Jan Mukařovský, *Schriften zur Ästhetik, Kunsttheorie und Poetik*. Translated by Holger Siegel (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1986), pp.9-11.

> somewhere, sometime, that is, as the verbal acts of real persons on particular occasions in response to particular sets of circumstances. In stressing all these particularities, I wish to emphasize that a natural utterance is a historical event: like any other event, it occupies a specific and unique point in time and space.[124]

In contrast to the natural utterance the fictive utterance has no place in space and time. It is not "historically determinate." This has far-reaching consequences for our understanding of fictive discourse. In order to understand a natural utterance, Smith argues, we have to reconstruct its historical context. Thus the historical context is more than a kind of physical setting in which the utterance occurs but a complex set of forces which "occasions" the utterance. When we, however, want to understand a fictive utterance, we cannot *reconstruct* the historical context but have to *invent* a context in which the utterance could have been plausibly uttered. In order to do that we, as readers, have to activate our knowledge about language and human behavior. Thus the literary work as fictive discourse weakens the relationship between designation and the reality signified and strengthens the relation between the art work and the recipient's total set of experiences.

When we attempt to invent a context for the utterance we will make inferences, supplement what has been left unsaid and make conjectures which will be modified or replaced by more adequate ones. This process in which our cognitive faculties are activated and in which we can make new discoveries about ourselves is what we, as Smith points out, call interpretation:

> And what we mean when we speak of *interpreting* a poem is, in large measure, precisely this process of inference, conjecture, and indeed creation of contexts. But these contexts - "meanings" - that we half create and half perceive, can be no *more* than "plausible," for the poem is a *fictive* utterance and its context can be neither discovered nor verified in nature or history.[125]

There are biographers and literary historians who claim that we should not invent the context for the fictive utterance but reconstruct the author's life and time and make sense of the fictive utterance in this context. Thus they change the fictive utterance into a natural one. Smith regards such an approach with suspicion:

> The interpretation of a poem as a *historical* utterance may serve the special purposes of the literary historian or biographer, but it is likely to appear shallow, reductive, or "literal-minded" precisely to the degree that it restricts the context of the poem to historical particulars and suggests that the meanings of the poem are to be located exclusively in a historically determinate context.[126]

Smith stresses in the same way as Mukařovský that literary texts do not inform us about a particular section of reality but appeal to the reader's total set of experiences and values. Smith constructs the following example in order to demonstrate what it means to read a poem as a "fictive" and as a "natural" utterance:

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[124] Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *On the Margins of Discourse. The Relation of Literature to Language* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.15.

[125] Smith, *On the Margins of Discourse*, p. 33.

[126] Smith, *On the Margins of Discourse*, pp. 34-35.

> A close friend tells us that he has just composed a poem, and asks us to read it; in the "poem" we discover what appears to be an allusion to his poor health or domestic troubles.[127]

How are we supposed to read the "poem"? Should we read it as an art work and thus negate the allusions to our friend's personal griefs and problems? Or is such a reading insensitive to the expressive function of language? Did our friend only use the form of a poem to inform us about his personal troubles? But if we take his "poem" only as a disguise for a natural utterance and attempt to comfort him, he might accuse us of violating his privacy and of being unable to understand a poem as a work of art.[128]

As a poet the author does not express *his* griefs and troubles but - to use another term by Smith - *represents* griefs and troubles. This also implies that the author is no longer personally responsible for what the lyrical "I" says and he can express and explore thoughts and feelings which he would not dare to express as personal utterances. Thus literary works allow us to extend the realm of what can be expressed and explored.[129] In spite of the similarities between Smith and Mukařovský, the concept of the aesthetic function as the dialectical negation of the practical functions is more flexible than the concept of "fictive discourse." While for Smith there is only the alternative between natural and fictive discourse, Mukařovský allows us to acknowledge the tension between them.

Both Smith and Mukařovský emphasize that literary works fulfill their function in initiating a complex process of reception in which the reader can respond more freely than in everyday life. Smith assumes that we as human beings have probably "survived because of our epistemic hunger and irritability, our itch to know and our capacity to learn" and that we therefore take pleasure in cognitive activities.[130] Yet, in everyday life the display of our cognitive activities is "not always rewarded with discoveries and revelations" since the natural utterances, we have to understand, "are often obscure and fragmentary, or predictable and monotonous." [131]

Smith takes up an idea by Nelson Goodman who argues in *Languages of Art* that there is an affinity between science and art and directs our attention to the similarities between the cognitive activities of the scientist and the artist. Smith agrees with his description, yet also stresses that there is a distinction between the exploration of nature and society on the one hand and an art work on the other. Nature and society are not created to be explored by the scientist but the art work is created "precisely to encourage and reward such exploration":

> My point here is that we - that is, human beings, but perhaps not uniquely among organisms - do indeed take pleasure in what Goodman calls cognitive activity, and that this pleasure or satisfaction may be diminished or enhanced by various circumstances, and that the artist is one who is skilled at fashioning such enhancing circumstances, and that we call circumstances so fashioned *works of art*.[132]

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[127] Smith, *On the Margins of Discourse*, p.112.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Smith, *On the Margins of Discourse*, pp.116-117.

[131] Smith, *On the Margins of Discourse*, p.13.

[132] Smith, *On the Margins of Discourse*, p.12.

This anthropological interpretation of art is the opposite of Adorno's theory. Here the recipient need not "vanish in the work of art" but instead the work of art allows him to take pleasure in the display of his or her cognitive faculties. Works of art gain their significance by the complex process of the reception they initiate. Yet, while Smith emphasizes the recipient's cognitive activities, Mukařovský stresses the recipient's values which are activated by the art work. These two aspects, however, do not exclude but supplement each other. The emphasis on the recipient's values prevents the reception of an art work from becoming mere play.

Smith as well as Mukařovský put the emphasis not on historical or psychological but on hermeneutical understanding. In this respect they would agree with Hans-Georg Gadamer who says that it

> would be an inadmissable abstraction to contend that we must first have achieved a contemporaneousness with the author or the original reader by means of a reconstruction of his historical horizon before we could begin to grasp the meaning of what is said.[133]

For Gadamer, historical and psychological understanding prevent us from being challenged by the art work and putting our concepts and values at risk. We bridge the gap between the past and the present by bracketing our concepts and values and transposing ourselves "into the spirit of the age, think with its ideas and its thoughts, not with our own ... "[134] But for Gadamer, "of all things that confront us in nature and history, it is the work of art that speaks to us most directly" [135] and thus demands from us to think with our own ideas. This is the presupposition for having them challenged:

> The intimacy with which the work of art touches us is at the same, in enigmatic fashion, a shattering and demolition of the familiar.[136]

Thus the weakening of the connection between the art work and its historical context does not imply that there is "no task of understanding." [137] On the contrary, this weakening is the presupposition of the intense interaction between the art work and the recipient. In order to pursue this interaction in more detail, let us now turn to Mukařovský's second term:

5b) Aesthetic Norm

The terms aesthetic function, norm, and value are interdependent. Mukařovský himself points out:

> The concept of norm is inseparable from the concept of function, the realization of which the norm implements. Because such a realization presupposes an activity tending toward a specific goal, we must admit that the limitation by which this activity is organized has in itself the character of energy as well.[138]

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[133] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Translated and edited by David E. Linge (Berkely, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1976), p.101.

[134] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. Second, Revised Edition. Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroads, 1990), p.297.

[135] Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p.95.

[136] Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p.104.

[137] Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p.96.

[138] Mukařovský, *Structure, Sign and Function*, p.49.

Thus the norm can be regarded as "a regulating energetic principle." Yet the individual who applies the norm will experience it "as a limitation on the freedom of his action." But on the other hand a norm also opens up the possibility to decide "whether to subordinate his judgment to the constraints of this pressure" and in this process the norm will not remain constant but will be subject to change.

> Because of this dynamic nature, a norm is subjected to continuous changes. We can even consider that every concrete application of a norm is at the same time necessarily a change in norm.[139]

What we said so far is valid for all norms, legal, moral or aesthetic. What is characteristic of the aesthetic norm?

> First of all, we should recall that the aesthetic norm is in opposition to these others because it does not tend toward a practical goal but rather aims at the object itself which is its vehicle so that this object becomes the only immediate goal of the activity.[140]

If aesthetic appreciation is based on the particular and unique shape of an art work, the aesthetic norm seems to be problematic. Does the uniqueness of the art work preclude the application of a norm? Mukařovský argues that the uniqueness of an art work is not absolute and that its uniqueness can only be experienced by the violation of aesthetic norms. While there are "rules of taste" whose violation will be punished, in autonomous art the aesthetic norm, as Mukařovský points out, "tends to be violated rather than to be observed." Thus he comes to the conclusion: "It [the aesthetic norm] has less than any other norm the character of an inviolable law." [141] This also makes Mukařovský wonder whether one should not give up the concept of the aesthetic norm. But he argues that the aesthetic norm fulfills an indispensable function in art. Norms force art to transcend them and to develop new ones in order to renew art. At the same time Mukařovský is convinced that aesthetic norms have constant features, "common to all human beings regardless of differences of time, place, and social position." [142] Yet, when Mukařovský stresses basic aesthetic norms we should not forget that the fulfillment of a norm does not determine the quality of an art work:

> All these "anthropologically" motivated postulates, which we have mentioned as examples, have not only been frequently violated in art, but their perfect realization makes the arousal of aesthetic pleasure impossible. The absolute regular rhythm of running machines puts us to sleep, the perfect symmetry of an isoceles triangle is aesthetically indifferent.[143]

If the aesthetic norm does not determine the quality of an art work, another concept is needed: one which is able to do justice to the art work "as a unique fact." [144]

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[139] Mukařovský, *Structure, Sign and Function*, p. 50.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Mukařovský, *Structure, Sign and Function*, p.52.

[142] Mukařovský, *Structure, Sign and Function*, p.55.

[143] Mukařovský, *Structure, Sign and Function*, p.56.

[144] Mukařovský, *Structure, Sign and Function*, p.50.

5c) The Aesthetic Value

In "Problems of Aesthetic Value" Mukařovský defines "function" and "value" in the following way: "By function we understand an active relation between an object and the goal for which it is used. The value then is the utility of the object for such a goal." [145] What must the aesthetic value of an art work be like in order to be useful for fulfilling the function of art?

For Jauß, the weakness of Mukařovský's position lies in the fact that he introduces the aesthetic value "as an objective third element." [146] Mukařovský also speaks of an independent or universal aesthetic value. In order to understand the objective, independent, or universal aesthetic value it is important to distinguish it from the actual process of evaluation. Just like Jauß, Mukařovský is convinced there is no such thing as an objective aesthetic evaluation. This is not only supported by the fact that we evaluate works of art differently, but also by the fact that our evaluations of the same artifact are based on different aesthetic objects which we produce in the interaction with the artifact:

> In the course of time a materially identical work can become several aesthetic objects radically different from one another, each corresponding to a different stage in the development of the given art.[147]

In order to distinguish between the aesthetic object we produce while reading the literary text and the evaluation of what we have produced, Louise M. Rosenblatt uses the terms "evocation" and "response." As she points out, we do not respond to the artifact but to the work of art we are evoking during the process of reception. "In our transaction with Dickens's text, *Great Expectations*, for example, we evoke the characters of Pip and Joe. We participate in their relationship and, at the same time, we respond with approval or disapproval to their words and actions." [148]

Our evaluations are variable because they are not based on the material art work, be it words, colors, lines or tones, but on their synthesis which the recipient accomplishes. Thus evaluations are always subjective. But behind these evaluations must be an energy which makes recipients from different periods and cultures respond to the art work:

> And it is precisely here that we find the universal value of the work of art furnished by its formal capacity to function as an aesthetically valuable object in very different social milieux, though value *itself* is qualitatively different in these various environments.[149]

Mukařovský, conceiving the aesthetic value as energy which makes the recipient evaluate, can acknowledge the changeablity of the aesthetic value. Thus he can do justice to the historical development without ending

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[145] In Mukařovský, *Structure, Sign and Function*, p.XXII.

[146] Jauß, *Aesthetic Experience*, p.116.

[147] Mukařovský, *Structure, Sign and Function*, p.62.

[148] Louise M. Rosenblatt, "The Transactional Theory of Literary Work: Implications for Research," in *Researching Response to Literature and the Teaching of Literature*, ed. Charles R. Cooper (Norwood/ New Jersey, 1983), p.38.

[149] Mukařovský, *Structure, Sign and Function*, p.66.

in relativism. The aesthetic value points to the capacity of the art work to activate the reader's most subliminal experiences and values.

> After all, universal aesthetic value is not exhausted by the aesthetic effectiveness of the work alone. The work that is its vehicle will also have the capacity to reach the deepest layers and the most various aspects of the mental life of a person who enters into contact with it.[150]

When we discussed the aesthetic function we stressed that it weakens the connection between the art work and the particular reality it refers to and intensifies the relationship between the art work and reality as a whole. Thus the reader of *Crime and Punishment*, as we pointed out, is not informed about a particular reality in Russia in the 19th century but gets the impression that the things presented concern him. Now we can add that the aesthetic value of the novel is the greater the more it can activate the reader so that he feels a strong relationship

> to the reality which [he] the reader himself is familiar with, to situations which he has experienced, or, given the circumstances in which he lives, he might experience, to feelings and unrestrained emotions which might - or actually did - accompany the situations, to actions on the part of the reader which might have been caused by the situations.[151]

In contrast to Adorno's aesthetics, for Mukařovský art should not negate the world and make the self disappear in the reconciliation between subject and object but should "reach the deepest layers and the most various aspects of mental life of a person." This aesthetic value refers to the recipient who creates the aesthetic object in the interaction with the artifact and is changed by this process.

Mukařovský's concept of the aesthetic value overcomes the opposition between form and content because both are judged by their contributions to the aesthetic value:

> An ethical or social value can be for example one way of presenting the relationships people have among one another and deciding about their importance in an epic work (cf. the famous difference between the good knight and the evil one.) [152]

Here, good and evil are formal elements which contribute to a complex whole. But all the formal elements of a literary work also embody extra-aesthetic values so that one can regard the art work "as an actual collection of extra-aesthetic values":

> If we ask ourselves at this point what has happened to aesthetic value, it appears that it has dissolved into individual extra-aesthetic values, and is really nothing but a general term for the dynamic totality of their mutual relationships.[153]

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[150] Ibid.

[151] Mukařovský, *Aesthetic Function*, p.75.

[152] Jan Mukařovský, *Kapitel aus der Poetik*. Translated by Walter Schamschula (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), p.36.

[153] Mukařovský, *Aesthetic Function*, p.88.

If the art work is "an actual collection of extra-aesthetic values" we must not forget that they are often arranged in an unfamiliar way so that they take on a different meaning from the one they have in everyday life:

> The influence of the aesthetic value is not that it swallows up and represses all remaining values, but that it releases every one of them from direct contact with a corresponding life-value. It brings an entire assembly of values contained in the work as a dynamic whole into contact with a total system of those values which form the motive power of the life practice of the perceiving collective.[154]

The aesthetic value breaks up the routine relationship among values and thus activates the recipient to create a new dynamic whole:

> We can therefore say that the degree of independent value of an artistic artifact will be greater to the degree that the bundle of extra-aesthetic values which it attracts is greater, and to the degree that it is able to intensify the dynamism of their mutual connections.[155]

Thus the aesthetic value makes comprehensible how the function of art to renew "the ties between man and reality as the realm of human action" [156] can be fulfilled.

Conclusion

The differences between art as affirmation and negation and art as interaction have far-reaching consequences for our understanding of the significance of literature in everyday life and in the classroom. But before I highlight this difference it is interesting to note that Stanley Fish asserts that his theory has no practical consequences.

> That is, it does not follow from what I have been saying that you should go out and do literary criticism in a certain way or refrain from doing it in other ways. The reason for this is that the position I have been presenting is not one that you (or anyone else) could live by.[157]

Fish is right: No one can live by his theory which destroys practice as he himself admits:

> With respect to what I have been saying, those consequences include the absence of any standard by which one could determine error, the impossibility of preferring one interpretation to another, an inability to explain the mechanisms by which interpretations are accepted and rejected, or the source of the feeling we all have of progressing and so on.[158]

Therefore it is no surprise if Fish recommends that we ignore his theory and instead go on as before:

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[154] Mukařovský, *Aesthetic Function*, p.89.

[155] Mukařovský, *Aesthetic Function*, p.91.

[156] Mukařovský, *Kapitel aus der Ästhetik*, pp.109-110.

[157] Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?*, p.370.

[158] Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?*, p.369.

> ... the general or metacritical belief (to which I am trying to persuade you in these lectures) does not in any way affect the belief or set of beliefs (about the nature of literature, the proper mode of critical inquiry, the forms of literary evidence, and so on) which yields the interpretation that now seems to you (or to me) to be inescapable and obvious.[159]

Theoretically we "know" that interpretations are unfounded and that our attempts to give evidence are self-deceptions because there is no "given," but this should not disturb us as long as we are conditioned by our reading community to find our interpretations "inescapable and obvious." Thus the "radical theory" does not interfere and leaves everything as it is. Fish, however, remarks that his "persuasive model" has a consequence in so far as it conveys "a greatly enhanced sense of the importance of our activities": "No longer is the critic the humble servant of texts whose glories exist independently of anything he might do." [160] But if for the objectivist the glories of the text exist independently of the critic, for Fish the critic's glories exist indepently of the text. But even more problematic is that the "greatly enhanced sense of importance" can only be experienced "in theory," in "practice" the critic is subject to the conventions of the reading community he cannot help but apply.

While for Fish theory does not interfere with practice, for Adorno theory should negate practice. The only form of practice is the refusal of practice, but even this form of practice becomes affirmative and ideological because it is unable to intervene" and leaves the world "untouched." For Adorno the promise of the comprehensive philosophy of history has failed and this failure is not only due to exterior but also to inherent causes. Reason itself is a form of violence and does not tolerate what is non-identical and particular. Yet Adorno's criticism of reason and enlightenment remains as general and totalizing as the criticized system. Although he negates the comprehensive philosophy of history, he remains bound to it. Yet art as interaction reveals a different kind of reason or rationality. In our criticism of Fish's subjectivism or conventionalism we have pointed out that the work of art is not merely material for the recipient to structure and order, but that it speaks to the recipient who responds to it. The relationship between question and answer points to "a responsive rationality" [161] which can break up what tends to become a vicious circle between negation and affirmation.

Yet an approach which directs our attention to the development and change of limited orders might be accused of losing sight of the fact that the world is "a place of disaster triumphant" and that the holocaust demonstrates the failure of civilization. But if we assume that the dialectic of enlightenment describes human history adequately, then there cannot be any change. Adorno himself admits that the historical inevitablity of the dialectic of enlightenment makes it appear ontological. It is indeed a kind of miracle that it is at all possible for Adorno in this world which is totally dominated by false consciousness to become aware of it as false and to unmask what appears to be ontological as historical.[162] In order to break up the circle of negation and affirmation we would have to acknowledge the recipient and the difference between the aesthetic and the practical functions. As long as art is subject to the objective dialectic of negation and

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[159] Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?*, p.357.

[160] Fish, *Is There a Text in This* Class?, p.368.

[161] Waldenfels, *Ordnung im Zwielicht*, p.46.

[162] Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, "Versuch, das Endspiel zu verstehen," in *Noten zur Literatur II* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1965), p.233.

affirmation, we first overestimate art and then accuse it of being too weak to bring about the change it has promised.

When Mukařovský defines the aesthetic function as the dialectical negation of the practical functions he does not expect the aesthetic function "to intervene." The negation only liberates the reader from the practical functions and thus creates the presupposition for the recipient to respond more freely to the work of art without being afraid of sanctions: Art claims not to change reality but the recipient's attitude towards it. There is, of course, always the possibility, as we have seen with Marcuse in "The Affirmative Character of Culture" and with St. Augustine and Rousseau that the aesthetic experience makes the recipient forget reality so that he or she enjoys the work of art for its own sake. Yet at the same time the aesthetic distance makes the recipient expose himself or herself to experiences which he or she would otherwise shun. For Mukařovský such an exposure which is brought about by the aesthetic function is necessary because the practical function

> if left alone impoverishes, makes one-sided, and inordinately simplifies man's relation to reality ... If man has to do battle with reality again and again he must keep approaching it from new directions, keep discovering unexploited aspects and possibilities.[163]

Such an effect of art, however, does not give instructions of how to change the world. It does not simplify but instead complicates our perceptions of the world. Therefore the objection to the aesthetic experience that it is affirmative can easily be raised, but such an objection often overlooks that the complex process of reception sharpens our sensibility and thus has a mediated effect on reality. Mukařovský can accept such a mediated effect because for him reality is not only the realm of necessity and a place of disaster which has to be negated, but also the realm in which we act with others according to certain rules and values. Yet this order which is based on selection and seclusion tends to make itself absolute. Therefore, art is needed to give shape to what is suppressed and to open up new perspectives. Thus art fulfills a critical function: the present order needs to be questioned and challenged but the new order will also be a limited one which needs to be transcended. Art cannot create the world in which it will no longer be necessary. It can only counteract the simplifications and suppressions of the existing order. This anthropological function of art demands an attentive recipient who creates the aesthetic object by responding to the artefact and his or her own experiences and values. Thus Mukařovský not only asks us, as teachers of literature, to illuminate the interaction between the art work and the recipient but also to encourage it.

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[163] Mukařovský, *Structure, Sign and Function*, p.22.