

## ART, SOCIETY/TEXT

### A FEW REMARKS ON THE CURRENT RELATIONS OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE FIELDS OF LITERARY PRODUCTION AND LITERARY IDEOLOGIES

ANONYMOUS (AUTHORIZED BY  
THE EDITORS OF *PROBLEMI-RAZPRAVE*)

At this time, when a certain escalation of the ideological struggle in the field of high culture has yet again brought the (idealist) “question of literature” to a point, where the dividing lines between idealism and materialism are being drawn, and where, in the last instance, what arises is a class struggle in this specific sphere of the social superstructure

— whereby the very idealist form of this question is such that it already forecloses the field of possible answers, that is to say, it is a momentary incidence of the function of general dominance that the bourgeois class ideology today perpetuates in the field of high “culture”—which is at the same time a sufficient warning to every materialist intervention, that in **this** area, materialism is moving in the opponent’s terrain; a terrain, where, at least for now, every confrontation, this one included, inevitably begins with the opponent’s attack —

---

“Umetnost, družba/tekst,” *Problemi-Razprave* XIII, nos. 3–5 (March–May 1975): 1–10.  
Translator’s note: The present text is stylistically rather difficult, perhaps in order to upset the “normalization” of language, which the authors attack in Section I. Here I have attempted to preserve the original style, particularly the authors’ preference for long sentences with multiple subordinate clauses. I have only broken up the sentences or varied punctuation marks when I felt that not doing so would introduce a new ambiguity. I have also followed the authors’ use of bold type and their occasionally inconsistent capitalization of theoretical terms. However, to ease the flow of argument, I have standardized their interchangeable use of double and single quotation marks as double quotation marks.

*Razprave* are introducing a new section of the journal, dedicated to dialectical-materialist theory of (mostly Slovene) literary production, and more generally dedicated to the problem of production in “language” (*langage*) (i.e., in spoken language: this includes the problems of criticism, translation, questions about “correct” and “incorrect” language, as well as the more explicit ideological questions of “style” and rhetoric),<sup>1</sup> and also dedicated to the struggle against the up-to-now dominant ideological conceptions in the field of “literary theory.” What is in fact hidden behind the regressive question of literature is the problem of language and—through it—the problem of a signifying practice and its effects—the social symbolic. The questions opened up by “literature” are therefore not solvable at the level where these questions are directly posed.<sup>2</sup>

In this essay we will, perhaps in somewhat disorganized fashion, draw attention to a few elementary points, which despite their “elementariness,” that is to say precisely because of it, belong to distinct conceptual planes.

## I

Today, what we call “literature”—or indeed the whole domain of “artistic” practices—occurs in the **conditions of class struggle** (if we are to use this sufficiently concise formulation from a discussion that appeared in *Komunist*). There is **no** universal-humanistic “human essence,” **no** “human heritage,” which is not in its very **kernel** marked with the split introduced by this struggle. Emphasizing universal humanism in whatever version is always only a specific effect of a

- 
- 1 One can easily see how deeply the bourgeois ideology has penetrated everyday speech by looking at this sentence at the beginning of some newspaper editorial, in which the author discusses the class struggle: “It is in man’s nature to protect his life and property.” Here, some such commonplace rhetorically serves as prosthesis, while at the same time one can clearly see the specific, class-based nature of this “generality” (man, nature, life, property): an ideological determination will intervene precisely in the most neutral and innocent claim.
  - 2 When these days people talk about critique, about how it is needed and how there is not enough of it, we should draw attention to two things: every materialistic intervention into this field must first deal with an understanding of the critical discourse as a **meta-language**, i.e. as a discourse that claims to possess the “truth” (“sense”) of the discourse, which it takes for its object. In relation to this much-discussed problem we merely want to emphasize that within the ideological struggle, this position of meta-language is **today** the main stronghold of bourgeois idealism. However, the materialist theory must specify the problem of the meta-language in the very field of literature, i.e. the way in which literature never wants to exclude this “meta” level from itself.

concealed affirmation of a **specific** pole in the class struggle. This is where the analysis must go all the way: in the most “neutral” themes, in impressionistic still life, in an innocent love poem, one must—as its “absent,” “negative” determination—recognize a historically specific class position; it ought to be noted that seemingly “neutral” and “universal” themes are especially appropriate for such an analysis, because here one may nicely show the “alienating effect,” which disperses the innocent neutrality into a web of historical concreteness.<sup>3</sup>

The question of humanist ideology is complex, since it is a relatively autonomous systematization of that very relation, which is, in the form of the legal term “the natural person,” the structural condition for the capitalist mode of production. What is especially important for our framework, however, is that the humanist ideology finds in literary production the specific structuring of its work process, which it may then use as its **particular fetishism**. The “factors” or elements of the labor process in literary production are linked in a way that is the opposite of the way in which they are linked in the **dominant** industrial production of material goods: and the fact that literary production is determined by the **craftsman’s** unity of labor power and the means of labor (in opposition to the mechanistic unity of technology, i.e. of the means of labor and the object of labor, which is typical for the capitalist industry)—this fact is the material basis for the ideological mystification, according to which the literary or any artistic “act” counts as a model of non-alienated labor (cf. Jameson’s analysis of Hemingway, in his *Marxism and Form*). The fact that the entire ideological privilege of literature is based on the societally nondominant structure of its specific labor process, retroactively acts upon the textual process, which then the ideology defines as **literature** (i.e. the specific historical structuring of the textual process) exclusively *per oppositionem* (and perhaps *per negationem*) in relation to the dominant capitalist process of production. This means that the cultural-idealist mystification of literature depends on the mystification of the radically excluded understanding of literature

3 A symptom of this is a recent review of Forte’s play about Tomáš Münzer, published in *Delo*: in the name of a polemic against a vulgar-economic simplification, against a disregard for psychological forces at play, etc., this review in fact argues against the very “distancing effect,” against a demystification of the particular fetish of “Western art”—i.e. “eternal internal problem,” “eternal themes of passion, love”; such fetishizing always only understands the specific-historical determination of “eternal themes” merely as a set of “external circumstances.”

as production similar to the dominant production: it is only on the basis of this opposition, which already recognizes the capitalist category of production as the basis for the comparison, that it is possible to culturally **fetishize** a text as literature and art. This fetishization, which is the active suppression of the textual negativization and its subversive action within the bourgeois organization of the social symbolic, has two main effects: it gives the bourgeois ideology of humanism a “material base”—and at the same time it allows for the literary structuring of the text only *sub specie* of the ideology, that is, a structuring already adapted to the interests of the ruling class.

This suppression, which always presupposes a Productivist understanding of literature, but can never enunciate it (first of all because Productivism as an ideology never wants to deal with production as a material social relation; and secondly because the—scientific—question of literary production already broaches the materialist question of negativization in the very production process), may of course never be properly overcome by the so-called contemporary “avant-garde” literary ideologies, which replace the old naturalist-“spontanist” vocabulary with the technicist-cybernetic one: this is an internal matter for the bourgeois ideology, completely relatable to the notions of the ideologues of the McLuhan type, and which directly corresponds to that which this same ideology calls the transition from the industrial to the postindustrial society (whereby the **regressive** ideal of literature remains typically untouched; we would recommend that literary history analyzes the Catalogue on the basis of **these** principles: its nonantagonistic syncretism clearly shows the limits of the ideology involved—and at the same time suppresses that which in fact happened within it; and which of course happily escapes the history in question).

We therefore must firmly occupy the position that art **reflects** (mirrors) its social content. However, it is crucially important that when following this formula we do not fall in with an empiricist and/or idealist mechanism, which is often attached to it—that is, our process should remain worthy of the materialist dialectic. This means:

It is not the case that art is a sign “on the one side,” and that such a sign reflects some social content, which would be on “the other side.” On the contrary, art as a “sign” is **internal** to the social practice, or in other words, this very relation of being external, which is typical for art in its relation to social practice (exteriority, which only allows art to appear as “sign,” “appearance,” etc.), is **an internal exteriority**, so that

only through this exteriority is the “social content,” which is then “reflected” in art, constituted.

The relationship of exteriority, in which we find art in relation to the field of the Social, therefore does not suggest that we remain on the level of **mechanistic** reflection, whereby for example literature “imitates” “real” reality, which is outside literature and which literature in vain attempts to capture; it does not suggest this because this exteriority is an “internal exteriority”:

What the Social excludes, and through the exclusion of which the Social is constituted, is not—as many would have us believe—some sort of “pre-human chaos,” some undeterminable abyss of “nature”; rather it is **an already determined practice, a signifying practice**, “the actual basis” of that which Freud calls “the unconscious.”

From the point of view of the materialist theory we should understand that the “emptying,” or the “disinvesting”—through which spoken language manifests itself as an empty/neutral form, as a form external to the content—is the very act through which this “content,” i.e. the field of the Social, or the field of the social “reality,” **is first constituted**.

The signifying practice “reflects” its “social content,” but so that **it is already at work in the very “social content,”** as its “negative, absent determination,” since the very field of “the social” is constituted through the expulsion of its own level of the signifying practice. In other words: because there is a void in the midst of the Social, because the very “positivity” of the Social contains some “non- . . . ,” it has to be defined “negatively.”

The exclusion of the signifying practice is the “existential condition” for the social—and precisely because of this, “art” reflects something different from and other to it, because art is itself the space for representing the other within the same, because it is—as “one among” the practices in the field of the social—the very practice, which in this field represents its excluded **other**, the differentiating-rearranging, the constituting (i.e. the oppositional, the same/other) negativization; it is understandable that this representational instance will contradict that discourse, which establishes the unity of this field as a noncontradictory generality, whereby this generality itself posits some **already established** “illusory” completeness of the social against its constant and **pre-existing** constitutive negativity—the negativity at work in this very field, but only in a tension between a dominant instance and other

instances, a negativity at work within a distance (even though this is an “internal,” and therefore all the more radical, distance) between the dominant and the determinant, that is to say, within overdetermination—that is to say, within the contradiction of the social itself. The discourse, which supports generality, is nothing self-standing, but is instead—except in the pretentious fullness of the ideological discourse—a marker inseparable from every discourse, a marker of the fact that every discourse belongs to some totality, it is its **politicality**, general shadow, in which every particular discourse obtains its specific “weight” — — and so: 1. Politicality is present in “art” primarily as an ideology, but is always also the “object” of specific treatment within an “artistic process”; 2. “Art,” even though it cannot be reduced to a pure ideological discourse, therefore depends on ideology, lives from it and “within” it; 3. In opposition to its “illusory” belonging to the totality, the specificity of literature, and its articulation through other practices—instances, is revealed within this totality as a textual subversion.

The signifying practice is what the field of the Social needs to exclude, if it is to be constituted, and is allowed only within marginal, governable fields, already marked with an ideological falsification: as the field of the “sacred,” religion, “art,” “madness,” etc., whereby every actual determination of these marginal fields is always historically determined: from the mythical opposition “sacred/profane” to the modern schism between the “logic of the heart” and “logic of the mind.”

It is not for nothing that already Freud compared religious rituals with obsessive neurosis: permitted/counterfeit forms of the signifying practice, art, religion, etc., are all literally the “**return of the repressed**” social processes of production. They are the “return” of those processes that need to be repressed, so that this field can be at all constituted.

In this way the signifying practice, for example a “work of art,” “reflects” the social content, delivers the “truth” about the society through the fact that it is not its bare “reflection,” but rather that it “**reflects the social content in its own medium, which is the medium of that which the society represses.**” The truth about society is not the truth of the society itself, but rather the truth of that which the society needs to “kill” if it is to exist.

In other words: it is only in this “reflection” that society arrives at its own truth. The “reflection” of the society in art is not a **reflection of truth**, it is rather a reflection through which the reflected itself **arrives at its own truth.**

Of course, none of this is to suggest that art is some kind of unmediated/nonalienated “measure,” an exalted viewpoint, from which we should judge society; on the contrary, artistic practice—as a form of historical specification of the signifying practice, as an intra-social, permitted re-presentative of the signifying practice, which has been suppressed with the arrival of the Social—is the “medium” in which the contradictions of the Social are most sharply “expressed,” **including** that contradiction which constitutes the Social itself.

Here we have a specific dialectic of art: as Adorno already claimed, it is both social and extra-social. If abstracted from the Social, art would fall into a “pre-phallic regression,” into fetishism, which would be bare negation (*Verneinung*) of the Social; however, without the extra- and presocial, art would no longer be art; it would change into a pure sign, which would “sublate” the materiality of the signifying process into empty ideological mist.

The basic assumption is an irreducible “dualism” of practices: the social-productive practice and the signifying practice. This dualism had several names throughout history, beginning with the split between the “sacred” and the “profane.”

The relation of the artistic practice to the totality of social practices is therefore not equal to the relationship of “part and the whole”; it is not the Hegelian relation of the whole, which is expressed/reflected in each of its parts; one has to maintain a kind of **exemption** of the artistic practice from the field of the “social” as a whole.

We could also put it this way: these marginal fields (the artistic practice, the religious practice, the erotic practice, etc.) each act within their own historical-social determination as **replacements** for the absent signifying practice, which had been repressed with the arrival of the social. In other words: the social-productive practice can never encompass the whole, it remains in the field of the “finite,” its **totality** is always “totality with a lack,” decentered, elliptical totality, within which there is always a void, a void that always prevents it from filling itself out into a “circle of circles,” a “set of sets,” etc. And this constant, socially permitted form of the signifying practice (religion, art, sexuality—the organization of the field of the “infinite,” enjoyment, “the general economy”) acts as a “plug,” which allows an imaginary “completion of the circle,” which as such “holds together” the Totality and without which that same totality would fall apart. It is in this way that we can call art, religion, etc., an “imaginary supplement” to the “earthly mis-



ery,” a supplement to the structure of the social-productive process; it is from this viewpoint that one should reinterpret Marx and Engels’s sentences, which address this problematic.

Precisely as a plug or a stopper does, literature acts as a reception center for the kinds of ideological investments that are most concisely described by the well-known demand that literature should be the mirror of its time. As the kind of production in which the lost unity of the craftsman artist is preserved—for just a little, little longer—literature becomes that very hook, upon which the most intimate desires of every bourgeois can be hung: in the civil society, literature performs that same function as the state performs in the sphere of political representation—and thereby it enables the individual to recognize himself in an imaginary way as a potato in the sack of the nation. In this way, literature becomes the chosen means of class domination in the field of the social symbolic.

It is quite clear that once the bourgeoisie loses its nation state it will turn to literature to support its class struggle, and more generally to “culture,” i.e. to “its own” organization of the social symbolic. The aesthetic-elitist ideology, which complains about the overintellectualized abstraction of philosophy, prefers to put literature in the place of the most exalted (i.e. dominant) discourse (for this ideology, literature performs the function of philosophy, i.e. the function of representing the **political** in the field of theory); the ideology escalates its struggle just when it loses its “social basis” (the regressive nationalist bourgeoisie in power): because the “social basis” of some “fact” of the superstructure is not a substratum, but a **relation**, an economic relation, which is shown (represented) as the relation between the classes and as the class struggle.

From what has been said here one might also want to illuminate the issue of the so-called “crisis of language,” which in Slovenia we all too often address in the naïve belief (which is actually merely an automatism of a particular class ideology) that language is something objective, general, and neutral—and that therefore we might “solve” the “problems” of language with a direct, “conscious” action (this position is not too far from the no less naïve and perhaps even more rigidly ideological conviction of the avant-garde poet that with every little poem he “invents” a language). The linguistic degeneration brought about by the upwardly mobile petite bourgeoisie is in direct structural relation with the linguistic purism of the “traditional” bourgeoisie. The



ideologues of each side can relax or constrain the linguistic “norm”; however, the Marxist analysis is only interested in what structures this relation. Let us merely recall at this point that the crisis of the linguistic norm—in this instance, we need to establish a kind of immediacy—is merely the crisis of a class, which is existentially linked to this norm as a linguistically-signifying normativity; and if this class was once “established” with the establishment of the norm, the norm will now collapse together with the demise of the class; and with the norm, and this we should really emphasize, the **sign itself**, its ideologeme will fall—and the Saussurean *langue*. Therefore, the “crisis of language” cannot be solved—quite the opposite: it is our present task to escalate the crisis until the end, until the end of *langue* as a normalizing, normative language that follows the ideologeme of the sign. Until then, however, we find the present situation important especially because it shows ever more clearly the **specific class nature** of that which has been up until now presented as the **general**, all-binding, and therefore the neutral-totalizing “linguistic norm.” The Slovene bourgeois ideology, even though it still dominates the sphere of the social symbolic, is no longer capable of ensuring a fundamental unity of this sphere in its “infrastructural” organization, in the organization of spoken language as a normal, neutral means of communication between individuals-persons.

It should be clear that we are not here concerned—in our understanding of the reflection of the duality of the signifying and the social-productive practices—with any kind of “revision” of Marxism-Leninism, nor with a revision of dialectical and historical materialism; after all, not only do we accept all, even the most “radical,” positions/pronouncements on the class-based nature of art, about art as a reflection of the social content, in addition we even demand that these positions be radicalized; we care to show—together with the dialectic starting point—those conditions and assumptions that enable artistic reflection in the first place, and through which it is possible to constitute the distance between the reflected “content” and the “medium” of reflection—the conditions that are necessarily overlooked in the direct, fetishistic inclination to study merely the reflected “content.”<sup>4</sup>

---

4 Some will complain at this point that what is ultimately at stake here is an age-old, irrational understanding of art as an effect of asocial/unconscious forces. In reply, we must immediately emphasize that we are here only interested in a **particular** interpretation of

## II

Today it is possible to talk about “art”—without losing ourselves in ideological mystifications—only if one starts out from a basic historical breaking point that determines the entirety of our relationship to art, the breaking point which can be noted in all of the artistic “disciplines” at the end of the 19th century: in literature, that is the end of “realism” in the most basic sense of an artwork’s direct-naïve “quasi-realism,” the direct, naïve belief in language as a neutral medium for expressing the “interior” or the reflection of an “objective reality”; in painting, the end of imitating the “objective reality”; in music, the end of the classical tonal structure; etc. This breaking point may be quite clearly delineated with names: in poetry the late Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Mallarmé (**not yet** Baudelaire); in prose fiction we find the border (one of the borders) within Joyce’s oeuvre itself, from *Ulysses* onward (**not yet** *Dubliners* nor *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*); in painting Cézanne (**not yet** the Impressionists); in music Schönberg (**not yet** Debussy). This breaking point is a “commonly known” fact, and yet here the question of how to theorize this “fact” remains open, as does the question of its scope. Here we will not attempt to develop the thesis, already well-developed within “structuralism” and “poststructuralism,” about the parallel between this breaking point and the breaking points of Marx/Nietzsche/Freud, but one should note that even as of this day, this dividing line has not been completely thought through, and that its scope is still suppressed. Today, these breaks may seem like mere beginnings, long since “overcome” and “radicalized” (what does a Schönberg amount to—of course, when it comes to being “radical”—in comparison to contemporary electronic music; what does a Mallarmé amount to in

---

psychoanalytic theory, within which we see the only properly preserved dimension of the psychoanalytic discovery, half-obscured even to Freud himself: that is, in the direction of Lacan, which understands the Unconscious as a specific **signifying** practice, and which sharply contrasts with the Jungian obscurantist revisionism. Here one may of course open the question of how Freud has been understood in Slovenia. The polemic between V. Zupan and T. Svetina is useful as an indicator of the level of this understanding: on the one side, we have cultured-and-complacent, pseudo-“objective” “refutations,” consistently blind to the central point of Freud’s discovery; on the other side, an entirely obscurantist, “Jungian” version of “deep archetypal forces,” etc., ideologically bound to **Lebensphilosophie**.

At the same time, some “radical” psychiatrists—with their symptomatically persistent denial of links to “anti-psychiatry”—try to sell us the “crisis” of psychoanalysis as their latest discovery, and demand a redirection toward a “socially” directed analytical revision of “neo-psychoanalysis” (Rapport, Horney, Fromm, Sullivan), the concealed ideological conformism of which has already been revealed by Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization*.

comparison to postwar Dadaism<sup>5</sup>), but all these “radicalizations” and “continuations” are after all mere practical **revisionisms**, mere specious “developments,” which mostly only obfuscate the fundamental point of the cut: that is, a break with the fundamental characteristic of “Western art,” that is to say with **art itself** in its concrete-historical determination, a break with the **suppression of its own productive process**; a break, which at the level of the signifying practice is made by this fundamental artistic cut at the end of the 19th century, which at the level of the analysis of the social-productive process is made by Marx, which at the level of the analysis of the “production” of ethical-ideological categories is made by Nietzsche, and which at the level of “production” of the unconscious is made by Freud.

“Such is the fright that seizes man when he discovers the true face of his power that he turns away from it in the very act—which is his act—of laying it bare” (Lacan). Everywhere—in “theory” as much as in “practice”—we witness the effects of a retroactive awareness, the effect of having overlooked the scope of one’s own act, of having overlooked this historical cut, and this very oversight is what allows the aforementioned revisionisms. It is only the field of “structuralism” and “poststructuralism,” more precisely (if we are to let go of these ideological nicknames) the field of **materialist theory of the signifying practice**, that is the field of this later awareness, a repetition/return of the historical cut; that is indeed the purpose of the whole conceptual apparatus, which concerns the de-centering of production in relation to re-presentation, “the process of enunciation” in relation to the “process of the enunciated,” the signifier in relation to the signified, geno-text in relation to the pheno-text; in relation to meaning as the later effect of “autonomous” signifying operations, in relation to textual practice as non-sense, which first produces sense, etc. etc.

These days, after the break, it is simply no longer possible to **write** (to write in the strict sense of the word, which this word acquires in the

---

5 In the “visual arts” we can also notice a deviation, that is a “radicalization,” that is a revision of the break: Cézanne is “radicalized” by Cubism; then Dada between the wars and partly after the war, this anticipation of the cultural revolution (which is necessarily double since it includes within itself not only the elements of the break but also elements of bourgeois liberalism, anarchism, etc.; in short, we must understand Dada as a coalition of “free thinkers,” within which we see both the realization of the break—e.g. in the works of Schwitters, Ernst, Picabia, Tzara—and the revision of the break—e.g. in the works of Arp, Chirico, and most of Dada after the war) is “radicalized” first by its “continuation” after the war, and then is finally deviated from by Surrealism and the Bauhaus.

theory of the signifying practice), without knowing the basic laws of the materialist dialectic—this is the end of the myth of the “naïve,” “pure” poetic “creativity,” “unsullied” by reflection. Consider **any** name which means anything within the avant-garde: Mallarmé, Schönberg, Pound, Brecht . . .—a “reflection” upon the practice is an **irreducible** component of each of their practices (internal to the practice, not external to it), a reflection, which aims, even if still in a “wild,” mystified form, to break up the fetish of the “work of art,” within which the process of its production is obfuscated.<sup>6</sup>

The dilettantism of Slovene literature, which especially comes to the fore in various modernisms and “avant-gardes,” should therefore be understood—today more so than any time before—to have **an entirely class-based meaning**.

To consider a real “archetype” of the misunderstanding of what the breaking point means, we may turn to the book **The Structure of Modern Poetry** by H. Friedrich, also translated into Slovene—where the author says: “I admit that in the new edition I would much rather avoid the word ‘structure,’ because since the time when the first edition of this book came out, this fashionable word has spread through all kinds of academic disciplines” (foreword to the 9th edition). The “fashion” mentioned here probably refers to “structuralism”—but let us consider what this word means for the author himself: “‘Structure’ here means the common form of a group of several poems, which could not have influenced each other, but the particularities of which nevertheless do match and can be explained by reference to one another, and which certainly occur often enough and in the same order so that they may not be treated as mere coincidences.” Here, then, structure is taken to be a mere abstract generality of an “ideal type,” indifferent to real historical concreteness, and indifferent to its “particular” forms, something that, of course, is in its very formal-methodological aspect

---

6 In response to those naïve scientific ideologues who believe that here we are merely talking about a “scientification” of art itself, let us merely note that the necessary **other** side of this process is the “artification” of science itself; the process which—as the “crisis of critique”—has already been described by Roland Barthes, in sufficiently popularizing terms. However, this double relationship implies no symmetry: if science today takes over certain “functions” of art; if, for example in Slovenia, the so-called history of language occurs, to the extent that it does, mostly in the field of theory, and only here and there, in a completely secondary way, also in the literary practice (and even then mostly in **translation**, which has really become something of a tradition by now)—then the so-called scientification of poetry is merely an ideological counterattack, which ought to prevent, stop, and dismiss this entirely subversive rhythm of the historical matter.

far away from the “structuralist” notion of a structure as a **differential set**—indeed, it would be better for the author to avoid this word, since now we should worry that the author will be taken for a structuralist, at least here in Slovenia, if the current “understandings” of structuralism here are anything to go by!

It would be almost unnecessary to add that such an abstract-general use of the notion of “structure” always necessarily ends up in an ahistorical approach to the question, in a methodological understanding of “structure” as opposed to “history,” which the author himself often emphasizes. Therefore we also should not be surprised, when in the name of this emphasis on “structure” some of the **fundamental** writers of the break are excluded: “The notion of a structure renders quite redundant any attempt to gather a historically complete set of materials, especially when the materials in question merely offer us variations of the basic structure. This is for example the case with Lautréamont, who appears to be quite popular today, even though he is merely a weaker version of Rimbaud. . . .”

It is quite a comical sight, observing how Friedrich classifies “modern poetry” by means of merely repeating those markers which are recognized as typical of it by that very “ideological consciousness” that “modern poetry” tried to evade: Hermeticism, chaos, flight toward the unreal, magic/suggestive power of words that is independent of their everyday/literal meaning, etc.; how Friedrich still “measures” avant-garde poetry by the measure of the “classical”—it is for that reason that most of his fundamental classifications are negative. In this abstract-empirical enumeration of “features,” one easily loses sight of Friedrich’s occasionally quite incisive views on the difference between the classical and modern poetic use of metaphors, on the fundamental dissonance of modern poetry, etc.

Here we can see quite clearly how methodological **idealism** (here by using the notion of a “structure”) and **empiricism** support one another: because Friedrich lacks every **theoretical notion** of the breaking point of the “avant-garde,” he lists its “features”: and this may include **both** the real characteristics of the break and those characteristics that already belong to its ideological mystification, and especially to a certain spiritualist obscurantism.

TRANSLATED BY VID SIMONITI