Discursive Construction of Art as a Subject of Politics: 
Selected Notes on Polish Aesthetic Thought

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ABSTRACT
The study seeks to capture and explore the dynamic relationship between aesthetics and broadly understood politics as a cultural phenomenon. The entanglement of art in sociopolitical contexts (“politicization of art”) is discussed from the institutional perspective (development of Marxist thought in Poland after 1945) and within the domain of social activity – the structure of the ordinary (realization of aesthetic postulates of Marxism). The main objective is thus to analyze the effect of Marxism on the twentieth-century aesthetics in Poland with a special emphasis on the postwar period (after 1945), when the basic patterns of that school of thinking took shape. The main focus is on the approach to the Marxist concept found in the theory of Polish Socialist realism. The analysis also involves reflections on the reduction of Marxism to the ideology of Socialist realism and the ideology of art which is associated with it.

1. Background
Art as a system of representation documents certain imaginary relations that are created in response to a direct experience of sociohistorical circumstances. The social and political importance of art, and hence the fact that art constitutes an inextricable part of reality, may be viewed as politicization of this sphere of human activity. The preceding constatation has an effect on the process of redefinition of art, based on which art is recognized as something it has been since time immemorial: a distinct product of human activity affected by all historical and social parameters at play. This viewpoint exposes the discursive construction of art as a subject of politics – and points...
to the possibility of using instruments of the politics of art in the pursuit of social, political, and educational goals. It is precisely this process of identifying mutual relationships between the two dimensions outlined earlier – the artistic and political domains – that distinguish Marxist theories of art. Consequently, the foundations of Marxist aesthetics should not be searched for in contexts lying outside the sphere of social phenomena. Assuming that social functions of art are a problem that is featured prominently within social issues, an attempt can be made to present more detailed characteristics of its premises.

The endeavor to capture and explore the dynamic relationship between diverse types of art and broadly understood politics as a cultural phenomenon is, therefore, one of the key issues associated with Marxist aesthetics. The entanglement of art in socio-political contexts may be positioned within two realms: the institutional domain and the sphere of social activity (structure of the ordinary). The study later focuses on a discussion of key problems in Karl Marx’s thoughts on art and aesthetics, and on the development of Marxist philosophy in Poland. The primary objective is hence to determine the impact of Marxism on the twentieth-century aesthetics in Poland with a special emphasis on the postwar period (after 1945), when the basic patterns of that school of thinking took shape. The main focus of interest is on the approach to the Marxist concept which is found in the theory of Polish Socialist realism. The analysis will involve reflections on the reduction of Marxism to the ideology of Socialist realism and the ideology of art associated with it.

2. Preliminary remarks on Polish aesthetic thought

In the heated debate which has been going on in European literature for decades, the aesthetics of Marxism is regarded as a serious alternative to competitive aesthetic positions. Similar discussions can be traced back in Poland to the 1950s. However, some attempts to associate Marxist beliefs with the aesthetic way of thinking were already present toward the end of the nineteenth century, even if they were not recognized as a separate branch of Marxism (Dziamski, 1973). Polish aesthetic thought has evolved entirely spontaneously in the spiritual culture founded on a deeply ingrained view of two distinctly different approaches to art. Based on them, art can be studied through its relationship to production as a process of generating new material values (art seen as practical activity associated with general social production) and/or as an act of reflecting the reciprocal relationship between life and art, and elucidating its expressive and ideological functions (Owczarek, 1979, p. 14). According to the sequential concept of the historical development of Marxist thought in Poland, a number of critical “turning points” can be identified in its course (Morawski, 2000, pp. 151–157). They were linked, on the one hand, to in-depth insights into Marx’s thought gained within multiple areas of study (philosophy, economy, sociology, political sciences) and views on culture which emerged already in the nineteenth century (Kaczocha, 1979, pp. 75–90) and, on the other, with political transformations which began to sweep through Poland in 1945 following the change in the country’s political system. Morawski distinguishes five stages in the reception of Marxism with respect to twentieth-century aesthetics. The first stage spanned the period from the mid-19th century until 1939, that is until the outbreak of World War II (1939–1945). Professional Marxist aesthetics at the time was nonexistent; it was implied in
literary and artistic criticism, and in the field of broadly defined philosophy of culture. The second stage, Morawski claims, encompassed the years from 1945 until 1949, when Marxism surfaced occasionally in academic literary criticism. During that period, the aesthetic ideas of Marxism were enthusiastically embraced and supported in the circles associated with “Kuźnica,” a weekly journal focusing on social and literary topics. The periodical promoted the criteria of realism interpreted in the spirit of ideas formulated by György Lukács, progress, rationalism, and a firm commitment of artists and authors to the new social reality. The primary role in the development of Marxist aesthetics in Poland is attributable to writers and literary critics. “Kuźnica” attracted a number of prominent Polish literary critics including Mieczysław Jastrun, Jan Kott, Adam Ważyk, Ryszard Matuszewski, Melania Kierczyńska, Tadeusz Drewnowski, Ewa Korzeniewska, and Kazimierz Wyka and soon-to-be political activists such as Włodzimierz Sokorski and Stefan Żółkiewski, who were responsible for shaping the models of Socialist realism (Zabicki, 1966). The third period (between 1949 and 1956) was marked by an intensive development of institutional Marxism and by the establishment of models of artistic praxis transplanted from Soviet culture. Particularly relevant here is the year 1949. It was the time when the 4th General Convention of the Polish Writers’ Union was held in Szczecin. The participants of the Convention agreed on the need for tighter links between art and social reality, and formally proclaimed Socialist realism as the aesthetic norm. The fourth stage (from 1956 until 1968) was characterized by a greater freedom of reflection, with Marxists formulating their own questions and answers, laying the foundations for the philosophy of art which differed from its Soviet Union counterpart. During the fifth period, which commenced in 1968, Marxist aesthetics gradually began to lose its momentum. It was a time when aesthetic problems were explored in a different historical context which contributed to the loosening of ideological constraints. The register of theoretical problems was markedly expanded together with the scope of areas and methodological positions covered, and attention was drawn to polemical stances toward “vulgar” interpretations of Marxism. As Morawski emphasizes, there were “various schools and styles of study, existing alongside one another, and lessons in tolerance for diverse points of view were learnt. In this sense the Marxist philosophy of art both fertilized and enriched the aesthetic culture in Poland, as well as learning a lesson in respect for other stances and achievements within its scope” (2000, p. 157).

In the early 1970s, a number of attempts were made to systematically reconstruct various facets of the Marxist heritage. The endeavors were partly complementary and partly competitive. In the philosophical circles, the task was undertaken by Stefan Morawski, Stanisław Pazura, Bohdan Dziemidok, Jerzy Kmita, Teresa Kostyrko, Alicja Kuczyńska, and Jan Kurowicki. What these scholars addressed, however, was Marxism purified of any questions concerning ideological equivalents of art and its class function. The following section seeks to illuminate the fundamental qualities of Marxist aesthetics. However, no discussion is attempted on alternative interpretations of the position.

### 3. Fundamental tenets of Marxist aesthetics as a theory of art

Arguably the most relevant preliminary question that needs to be addressed in relation to Marxist aesthetics is its underlying methodology. A reconstruction of the Marxist approach to art yields the following conclusions. The core of the theory is the division
of social life into three strata (levels): material (economic), institutional (political/legal), and consciousness-related (Marx & Engels, 1976, p. 263). Accordingly, the framework rests on three basic and familiar formulas: (1) the forces of production determine the relations of production, (2) the base determines the superstructure, and (3) the socioeconomic conditions determine social consciousness. The main difficulty associated with the abovementioned formulas is the type of determination they assume. The authors of The German Ideology saw the foundation of aesthetics in the domain of material production and the historical mode of production. Aesthetics itself, they claimed, was to be accommodated in the sphere of ideological superstructure. The starting assumption for the interpretation of aesthetic problems in the Marxist framework is the distinction between the dimensions of social phenomena and their hierarchical order. The ultimate formula defining the order of all elements recognizes economic life and material production as a decisive factor in the last instance. By analogy to material conditions determining social, political, and intellectual life, art is the subject of that determination, too. Herbert Marcuse in his monograph The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics presents a concise summary of the dominant aspect of Marxist aesthetics, stating that “there is a definite connection between art and the material base [of society], between art and the totality of the relations of production. With the change in production relations, art itself is transformed as part of the superstructure” (1978, p. 2). According to the Marxist theory, as socioeconomic foundations change, the entire society changes – including art as its distinct form of expression. An analysis of the manner in which Marxists explained the reciprocal relationships leads to a descriptive account of art. Therefore, there were no preconceived ideas about what art should be. Instead, it was explored what art essentially is. An important axis of synthesis here is constituted by processes mediating between the work of art and reality, and links between literature and its political and economic substrate. Art and literature are forms of social consciousness, which makes them reflections of social life and a manifestation of the worldview of the social class with which the artist identifies. Consequently, the justification for art is, in a certain sense, as profound as the rationale for cognition or ideology, for art strives to capture the whole essence of life – its entire richness and depth in a particular moment. As Fik wrote, “I am deeply convinced that the most important human reality is the ideological and social substance of a given time in history. At the same time, the most supreme and the most demanding task is finding a means of artistic expression for it” (1961, pp. 148–149). The primary mission of literary criticism is to translate the idea behind a work of art from the language of art to the language of sociology. The focus is thus on finding something that might be termed a social correlate of a given literary phenomenon. This is precisely why two aesthetic aspects are invariably recognizable and immediately compelling in the evolution of the discipline: production and ideology. Art is to be seen as production and ideology at the same time. The base and superstructure framework may be conceived of as the orders of (hierarchical and mutually intertwined) economic, ideological, and artistic practices built on the common foundation of labor. A particular form of art always emerges in a particular historical context, that is at a specified stage of development of productive forces, and its emergence is related to a distinct relationship between humans and nature, and the degree to which nature has been harnessed by people. It grows out of a distinctive economic base, and is
accommodated in specific relations of production, i.e., in relations of ownership (legal expression of productive relations), and in specific class relations. Marxism is a method of uncovering the laws which govern the evolution of literature. Hence, Socialist realism is a constituent of the superstructure corresponding to the socialism base, and it can (and should) contribute to the reinforcement of that structure.

4. Fundamental tenets of socialist realism as a practice of art

Socialist realism represents one of the key elements of theory and history of literature. Ongoing debates about the nature and roots of this style of art draw both on arguments derived from the theory of literature (theoretical Marxism) and observations based on the political history of the period under study (institutional Marxism). In line with James, realism is taken to refer to “… art that sets out to present a comprehensive reflection and interpretation of life from the point of view of social relations; ‘Socialist’ means in accordance with the policy of the Communist Party. Socialist Realism is therefore based on a direct relationship between the artist and the process of building a new society; it is art coloured by the experience of the working class in its struggles to achieve socialism” (1973, p. 88).

Although neither Marx nor Engels left behind any coherent concept of art, it can be stated quite firmly that art in this framework is endowed with two fundamental functions. Firstly, it is useful for reflection in the field of theory and criticism. Secondly, it exemplifies historical processes and phenomena which are comprised of artistic products. The characteristics for the description of Social realism are present not only in literature itself, but also in the broader domain of literary life, as a number of its elements were subordinate from the very outset to the state’s policy and oriented toward the realization of political goals. The Convention of the Polish Writers’ Union in Szczecin marks the beginning of the period of realism in Polish literature (Dąbrowska & Michałowski 2002, p. 7–8). Quoting the words of Jerzy Andrzejewski:

The postulate of Social realism put forth by the Party in January 1949 meant, on the one hand, a determined offensive of Marxist thought in the sphere of art, which was previously neglected in that respect, and on the other – an intensified campaign in the field of literary creation with idealistic elements of the old superstructure. (1952, p. 26)

In the declaration drafted after the Convention, it was stated that the new socialist reality called for its own unique expression, and it was expected to find its artistic voice eventually, while art should become involved in the struggle for a new reality. The problem of the overall direction of transformations can be regarded as theoretically explained within the framework of Marxism, if one notes that the most relevant aspect here is the status of relations between economic and ideological elements which elucidate the nature and role of cultural or symbolic power wielded through the mediation of art.

The starting premise for the interpretation given later is an attempt to clarify the distinction between the aesthetics of Marxism and Socialist realism. The aesthetics of Marxism is perceived as a tool to explore, evaluate, and understand art as a product conditioned by the society, whereas Socialist realism is attributed with a prescriptive and utilitarian attitude toward art, demanding that art should reflect socially desirable
ideas with a potential impact on the society. Whereas the conceptual interpretation of Socialist realism refers to the questions what art should be and what purposes it should serve (didactic objective), Marxist aesthetics is perceived as a tool for verifying how a work of art came about and lays no claim to setting out criteria required for the constitution of criticism which is meant to dictate the “correct” artistic method. In this framework, Marxist aesthetics is a descriptive method of explanation, the primary goal of which is to examine works of art in the light of historical materialism. Furthermore, Marxist aesthetics does not provide support for the utilitarian approach to art, works of art or art-related ideas which, similarly to Socialist realism, assign artistic products with a goal external to itself. These evident dissimilarities even led to the search for the origins of Socialist realism far away from Marxist aesthetics as an underlying theoretical concept. What is more, the scholars who analyzed the two approaches to the role and meaning of art unanimously argued for their complete discordance. One of them is Terry Eagleton who, in *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, provides the argument that the idea of politically engaged (utilitarian) literature is derived from the writings of nineteenth-century Russian revolutionaries rather than Marxist aesthetics which he compared to the “sociology of literature ... [whose] aim is to explain the literary work” that “is rarely if ever accompanied by an insistence that literary works should be politically prescriptive” (1976, p. 3 & pp. 43–33). In another study, entitled *Marxist Literary Theory*, Eagleton confirmed the argument, stressing that Marxist aesthetics was descriptive in nature, while Socialist realism represented a prescriptive approach (1996, pp. 7–14).

5. Aesthetics of Marxism and social realism. Theory vs. practice

The core of Marxist aesthetics was developed in different directions by a number of authors. For scarcity of space, only some of their proposals are sketched out later. The key issue to be addressed here is the problem of art and its social relevance. Although the tenets of Social realism are well-known and well-documented, its significance and, most of all, its links to Marxist aesthetics remain an open question. It transpires that the decisive role in defining realism may be attributed to Marxist aesthetics understood as a set of distinct ideas on art and culture comprised in its theory. The perceived opposition between Socialist realism and Marxist aesthetics is based on the recognition of one of the major dogmas of Marxism. Even though the fundamental concept of Marxist aesthetics – art as a reflection of consciousness conditioned by social and material requirements – presents itself to be purely descriptive, in fact it contains a very concrete and particular view on the society and its development. This ultimately determined the critical dimension in reflection upon art which is so relevant for Marxist aesthetics and, indeed, for the entire critical tradition of the twentieth century. Marxist aesthetics encompasses aesthetic principles derived from the Marxist theory and may be essentially regarded as Marxist art criticism.

This is because art – similarly to politics – is an intrinsic filter in the flow of symbolic contents. Its overriding goal is the transformation of patterns of thinking and behaving via the agency of social forms and techniques pervading the orders of culture (aesthetic, intellectual, and political). This approach accentuates a quite distinctive form of
politization of art as an element of a broader tendency to use particular forms of creativity in the form of management techniques.

The definition frameworks sketched earlier give rise to four main implications. Firstly, they have shifted the emphasis from the history of art, a proposed interpretation of the evolution of art, to a more in-depth analysis of the goals and priorities of politics toward art. Secondly, the social functions of art should not be viewed as an optional addition to the theory of art but rather as its central element. Thirdly, the research perspectives which are developed within aesthetics may influence the functioning of individuals and serve very specific purposes. Fourthly, the changes have led to the emergence of dialogue between the theory of art and broadly defined philosophy of culture. It can thus be concluded that Marxists regarded the domain of art and ideas as inextricably linked to the political and economic forces which shape it and provide it with critical constraints. Hence, the concept of ideology is so central to Marxist aesthetics. Indeed, the first basic variant of the argument can be found in Marx’s The German Ideology:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production [...] The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships. (Marx & Engels, 1961, p. 50, emphasis added)

One of the most salient observations made by Karl Marx, which played a decisive role in discussions on the topic of art and its significance, was the argument that art is not an abstract concept relating primarily to the theory of art, i.e., aesthetics, but rather an anthropological notion expressing a particular way of life characteristic of a given social class. Therefore, aesthetic consciousness was equivalent to the consciousness of materialistic products of knowledge about the world and culture. However, “consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process” (Marx & Engels, 1949, p. 53). The abovementioned idea is expressed by Stefan Żółkiewski in the following manner,

The first rule is not to consider the relation of the work under study to other books, but instead focus on its relation to social reality understood in class terms; to be able to state precisely its political sense and its addressees, the class whose interests it expresses, and the manner in which it reflects class conflict (...). Due note must be taken in the process of the fundamental principle of Marxist aesthetics: the unity of content and form. Reaching the essence of a literary work means to interpret everything – to the fullest extent possible – that the work expresses through specific artistic means. The Marxist method has already greatly enlivened the discussion of the problems of aesthetics in Poland. Marxist discussions have presented the crucial aesthetic problem of the struggle for realism in our time – the fight for a new type of realism: Socialist realism. The discussions necessitate a review of the criteria defining an aesthetically valuable attitude to nature and other motifs of art, the emotional qualities of a work of art, and the artistic expression of personal experiences of its author. Marxism has brought with itself a great renewal in problems of aesthetics – and the principle dictating that judgment should not be based solely on a subjective impression, but on the relationship between the critic’s response and the intellectual concept of reality – the concept of deliberate, historically appreciated human aspirations, the concept
of life that explains and changes them in the spirit of the real man – truly modern, free and dignified. (Żółkiewski, 1950, pp. 312–313)

However, if the concept of art as social (class) experience is superimposed with the processes of imagining and giving meaning and form of communication, interactions, and symbolic representations within which the processes take place, then the broad concept of art appears to be more justified. The concept of art does not refer exclusively to material production practices. It must also include symbolic (signifying) systems. One can say that art becomes a “map of meaning” – an instrument which makes reality more intelligible and serves as a means to render an individual a social individual. All aspects of social life are shaped by networks of representations – narrative structures, images, texts, etc. As Stefan Morawski points out, this interpretation of art is exposed by the semantic roots which turn our attention to the fact that the process of art reception is possible thanks to the underlying system of signs, with art creating systems of social and linguistic relations within which individuals are constituted (Morawski, 1976, pp. 359–402).

Jerzy Kmita provided valuable insights into art within the domain of cultural studies, viewing it as one of the varieties of social practice founded on symbolic worldview-related communications (Kmita, 1984, p. 145; Kmita, 2007). In Kmita’s proposed framework, culture creates a very particular type of reality, namely mental reality (belief-related), supra-individual in nature, the scope of which is delimited by sets of normative-directive beliefs, commonly respected (though not necessarily accepted) in a given community, which indicate – in its normative form – specific values as goals to be pursued, and in its directive form – determine ways to realize these values (i.e., means of action) (1982, pp. 63–64). The artist undertakes certain reasonable (rational) actions in accordance with the pattern of values approved by a given social group. Based on cultural interpretation rules, the products of such actions are recognized as works of art. Art is a channel via which people communicate their worldview beliefs.

Modifying the Marxist model of accounting for social phenomena, Kmita proposed a model of genetic-functional interpretation, on the premise that aside from the objective system (comprised by economic and social conditions) and the subjective elements (need to realize values), it also had to incorporate a description of the result achieved (effect of action). What the above entails is that the function of a given work of art in specific conditions must be taken into account. Consequently, the function is always mediated by the attitudes and views of the creator and the recipients. Art, Kmita highlights, is claimed to fulfill some objective truth, however what is meant here is not truth in a strictly cognitive sense (as in science), but rather in the categories of worldview orientation. The truth is valid in the context of practical historical premises on account of a particular state of consciousness of the here-and-now. Consequently, one can distinguish worldview knowledge, i.e., a set of beliefs encompassing all norms (standards, values) that are culturally sanctioned in a community and regulate the involvement (actions) across the diverse fields of social life, with every such image of the world being evaluative in nature. So it is perfectly valid to speak of the worldview-oriented valorization of art and beauty, however the sphere is perceived in strict genetic and functional connection with the phenomena taking place in the cultural reality. Art
transmits worldview beliefs which endow individuals with an all-encompassing vision of the world and motivate them into action.

A characteristic feature of another possible tendency in interpreting art is the perception of art in the categories of intentionality and its presentation as a specific type of symbolic capital and hence a valid area of activity. Moving the discussion to the political level, one might assert that art identifies the relations at play between the individual and the system (See Piotrkowski, 1999). It is a process of seeking universal points of reference in the field of artistic praxis elevating the autonomy of the work of art to the very top of the cultural hierarchy, with an ability to sustain the resistance toward ideology and promote the attitude of critical engagement. Every authority formulates its ideological objectives. One remedy to such strategies may take the form of an outright analysis of ideological foundations underpinning its operation.

Stefan Morawski expounded the theoretical foundations of the Marxist-oriented approach to art in his *Inquiries into Fundamentals of Aesthetics*, in which he critically interpreted the basic concepts, placing an emphasis on selected themes including the relationship between form and content, motifs of dealienation and universal values, contestation and avant-garde. The core point in his “liberally oriented Marxism” is the assumption of historicism which he shares with classical Marxism (Morawski, 1973, pp. 206–212). Even though Morawski’s interests shifted toward the problem of the so-called crisis of culture (identified with the sphere of “spiritual values” regulating the practices of expression and symbolic communication) against the background of contemporary triumphs of civilization (identifiable with the sphere of practical rules and values), it is also for this reason that he analyzes manifestations of contemporary art (new avant-garde, post-art, and post-modernism) in the context of more general sociohistorical transformations, thus continuing the Marxist worldview orientation. In Morawski’s view, historicism offers a possibility to conduct studies from the perspective of general social processes of humanity, i.e., the functions of art in human life (Morawski, 1973, pp. 119–120). One particularly noteworthy example of these functions is the contra-alienation dimension of artistic practices. At a later period, the observation prompted Morawski to explore the topics of avant-garde and neo-avant-garde (Przybysz & Zeidler-Janiszewska, 2007, p. XVI) which, despite negating the aesthetic *sacrum*, did not eliminate socio-political and moral problems from the domain of art. Most importantly, one of the characteristic features of avant-garde art is the fact that it arises in the sociopolitical context, hence the manifestations of open ideological involvement or expressions of protest against the status quo (Morawski, 1974b, p. 10). Since art not only mirrors or expresses a previously reached consensus but also reconstructs the definitions of situations which promoted and sanctioned the existing structure of things, even though it initially appeared to have a reinforcing function only (Socialist realism), it would be apt today to redefine the role of art in the creation of that status quo and, above all, its critical and emancipatory functions. Art both reflects the spirit of social consciousness and serves as one of its constituent blocks.
6. Concluding remarks

Art is a multi-contextual concept, which is why it is not possible to formulate a singular definition of art that would be valid in every possible context without a loss of meaning. The above applies in particular to the concept of politics understood in structural terms, that is as an ability to create frames of reference for relations between subjects and as a possibility to determine people’s ways of thinking.

Consequently, reflections upon the nature of art should incorporate two key aspects. One of them is concerned with the degree to which art is relational in nature and hence to what extent it is linked to the problem of influence, and the degree to which it is perceived as a structure and hence to what extent it is associated with ideology. The other aspect relates to the degree to which art echoes other systems of social authority, and the freedom of art to be ruled solely by its own creative logic.

Adopting a distinctly eclectic approach, proponents of the Marxist idea of art define their position as an alternative way of thinking to a methodology based on assumptions expressed in abstract categories. Art performs a regulatory function, for it represents one of the platforms for the articulation of rules, and the development of schemes of thinking, understanding and reconfiguration of space (See Banaszak & Kmita, 1994). In addition, art can be ascribed a normative value, as its permanence over time depends on how long recipients are inclined toward accepting the values articulated thanks to and through art. Also, the path of art’s evolution depends to a certain extent on its relations with individuals, as it is molded by ideas, values, and beliefs which are present in the social space (Kubicki, 2013). Finally, art has a communication function by giving identity and creating conditions in which people construct their common discourse. The generation of cognitive and discursive conditions for the construction of the sense of social “I” culminates in the provision of identity-defining situational frameworks. Art can also be used for promoting social integration and combating political discrimination. In that sense, it may delineate the area in which marginalized individuals are free to engage in forms of activity that are conducive to development, acquisition of social skills and construction of new possibilities for the articulation of individual claims to being present and visible in that space (Compare Żmijewski, 2006), thus fulfilling its legitimizing and, above all, emancipatory function.

Notes

1. In this context, Morawski mentions literary critics – Ignacy Fik and Andrzej Stawar, and artists – Władysław Strzemieński and Mieczysław Szczuka. Fik and Stawar adopted Marxism with a special emphasis on two aspects: autonomy of literature and its functions to capture key social problems of a given period in history. The concept of “autonomy” here refers to specific historically defined meanings, and should be linked to equally specific political processes, representing the opposite of the policy pursued by the authorities to appropriate cultural life and artistic creativity, and use them for their own ideological and propagandistic goals. Strzemieński attempted to combine his distinctive theory of unism with historical materialism which served as a system of reference for the transformations of color forms and rules of composition. Szczuka, drawing on constructivism and productivism, placed an emphasis on tightening the links between artistic production and material production, which was intended to closely reflect the connection between social being and consciousness. See Morawski (2000, p. 151).
2. The topic of the Szczecin Convention is addressed and discussed in detail by Bikont & Szczęsna (2006), Czernik (1993), Dąbrowska & Michałowski (2002), and Smulski (2002).

3. However, it is important to note that even though the postulate about social realism did appear in oral presentations and statements, and also in debates, it is not to be found in the concluding resolution or, indeed, in any other documents prepared during or after the Convention. In the opinion of Krzysztof Woźniakowski, the culminating point in the offensive of Socialist realism was reached during the 5th Convention of the Polish Writers’ Union held in Warsaw on June 24–28, 1950. The doctrine, which has previously been promoted without any formal administrative pressures, was then elevated to the status of the only official aesthetics advanced by the Polish Writers’ Union. See Woźniakowski (1990, p. 37), and Zawodniak (2000).

4. Some of the most important studies in this area include Morawski (1974a), Pazura (1967), Kuczyńska (1976), Dziemidok (1980), Kmita (1975), and Kurowicki (1982).

5. This clear contrast between Marxist aesthetics and Socialist realism was noted by the Russian scholar M. Hayward and also by H. Arvon. See Hayward (1963, p. XIV), and Arvon (1973, p. 43 and p. 83).

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