The New

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Describing the new as a poetological, theoretical and literary term is riddled with the same problems that always arise when attempts are made to narrow the meaning of a word which functions in general language so that it may be effectively employed in a specialist field. The new is often used to talk about literature and the literary scene; both in academic and literary discourse, as well as in critical and publishing (marketing) discourse.

By definition, each subsequent book published by a given writer is "new," and when the book responds to the current problems in political or social life, it seems reasonable to say that it is "new" literature, insofar as it focuses on issues that have not been addressed in literature before. Respectively, people in the publishing industry who regulate the processes of the commodification of literature and wish to sell literature as a product are guided by the demand and supply mechanisms which govern the sale of other consumer goods, eagerly emphasizing that a new publication purchased by the consumer is a unique product – a product that will provide them with strong stimuli; a product that will enrich their aesthetic experiences with experiences not offered by any of the previously published works (they often use different terms which, however, mean almost the same: "innovation," "breakthrough," or "discovery"). All these terms are consistent with the dictionary meaning of the "new" and as such cannot be rejected or denied, as they point to the way they are naturally used in language and allow one to highlight many of the important features of various works of literature and literature in

general. At the same time, however, the problem of the new refers to more complex issues and processes in the philosophical and aesthetic domain, which also manifest themselves in the field of literature and literary studies. In this essay, I intend to discuss the new in the context of these problems and not to exclude or question the more intuitive uses of the word itself.

While the new is used in reference to philosophy, aesthetics, and theory, it is seldom a subject of discursive interest in itself. It is not distinguished as a separate concept in the dictionaries of aesthetic, philosophical or literary terms, and the need for specifying its meaning in these fields of humanistic discourse is rarely expressed. One of the rather prosaic yet crucial reasons behind this is, as Stefan Morawski points out, that: "art has always been evolving, revealing new themes, contents and forms, and therefore no particular significance was attached to this phenomenon, i.e. the slow process of constant changes."[1] Especially in the dynamic 17th century, on which Morawski focuses in this quote, the focus was on tradition and deliberate actions aimed at emphasizing the inter-epochal continuity of individual aesthetic processes.

The new is therefore relatively rarely seen as a distinct theoretical problem, and as such it is possible to distinguish three tendencies associated with it, which will be represented in this essay by three specific, or indeed emblematic, texts.

1. The first tendency is represented by the above-mentioned essay by Stefan Morawski, *Perypetie problematyki nowości w dziejach myśli estetycznej* [The history of the new in the history of aesthetic thought], published in two parts in two successive issues of *Studia filozoficzne* [Philosophical studies] in 1984. This text both presents an in-depth long history of the new and locates this category in the wider context of temporality. Morawski shows that in order to understand the new, it is necessary to carefully reflect on how time and temporality were defined in different epochs. Morawski's take on the "history of time" is full of surprising, extremely counter-intuitive observations, which allow one to visualize, above all, how innovative the very concept of the new is.

2. The second tendency is represented by Derek Attridge's 2004 study *The singularity of literature*, in which novelty stems from "otherness," which, in turn, is inspired by Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy and thus rooted in a discussion on the ethics of literature.[2] Because these concepts have become part of theoretical discourse, I will not analyze them in detail in my essay.

3. In the third (and probably the most intuitive) tendency, the new is discussed in the context of the history of the avant-garde. In my discussion, I shall refer to an excerpt from Boris Groys's 2008 book *Art Power*, in which the Russian scholar formulates a specific philosophy of the new on the basis of Søren Kierkegaard's theological reflection, making it a useful tool for analyzing contemporary art.

[1] Stefan Morawski, „Perypetie problematyki nowości w dziejach myśli estetycznej. Rys syntetyczny" [The history of the new in the history of aesthetic thought. A synthetic outline], *Studia filozoficzne* 219, no. 2 (1984): 62.

[2] Derek Attridge, *The singularity of literature* (London: Routledge, 2004).

Importantly, all these three tendencies narrow down and limit the meaning of the new, especially in relation to the meaning assigned to it within the framework of ordinary language. As opposed to the intuitive, and therefore rather broad and popular, uses of the word "new," in theoretical texts which explore the new – that is, in texts in which the new is seen as a problem – this term has a much narrower meaning. And because the meaning of the new is thus narrowed down, it comes across as a remarkable and revolutionary concept. In order for something to be described as new, it must lead to a radical undermining, revising, or transforming of the same or the old; something "truly" new is thus almost scandalous. Indeed, the new is inextricably linked to complex and paradoxical ontological and epistemological questions. In terms of ontology, the new, defined as a problem, is connected with metaphysics, because its roots are not in the same or in the old (phenomenologically accessible world). Neither is the new originally connected with it. In the field of epistemology, on the other hand, it is difficult to recognize the new as new because it may not be reduced to a familiar system of references, and as such may not be described in a discursive manner – in Attridge's and Groys's radical approaches, it is seen as internally dialectical and only identified with the help of the Derridean concept of difference without difference.

A short history of the new

The first, somewhat unusual, observation to be made in the discussion of the new is that it has a relatively short history, which dates back to the time we customarily describe as the beginning of the modern era. Morawski convincingly proves in his study that the new may be sensibly discussed only in the context of other quintessentially modern terms, which only appeared or only established their relevance in the intellectual dictionary of European culture at the beginning of the 15th century. We are talking mainly about categories such as subjectivity, temporality and (singular) originality.

Drawing on Claude Lévi-Strauss's canonical distinction into "cold" and "hot" societies,[3] Morawski points out that the new in pre-modern cultures could not have developed (neither could it have been appreciated), because the possibilities of change, which is by definition one of the conditions of the new, were limited. Archaic societies functioned in mythical time, i.e., time which "stood still," and consequently art (as a rule, indistinguishable from religious or ritual activity) served to reinforce and reproduce the established order. Creativity and originality, in any form, were not celebrated. Creativity was the domain of the mystical world. Only the act of establishing the original order, creating the world, was, as we would say today, creative:

> [...] mythical awareness silences the awareness of historical change. In this primitive cultural system, there is no need to address and create products for a diverse audience, because everyone *a priori* shares a connection with the artist that is based on the cult of the ancestors, the belief that there are eternal truths and that they need to be expressed. Intra-social (inter-personal) connec-

[3] *Cf*. Georges Charbonnier, "Clocks and steam engines", in: *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), 32-41.

> tion is determined by the supernatural world, and it is impossible to disregard or break the sacred code not so much because for fear of alienation, but simply because primitive peoples cannot create art otherwise. Although the dispute over the basic motivations and meaning of Paleolithic art has not been resolved [...], scholars agree that explanations may primarily be found in the sphere of the magical, the totemic, the cult of fertility and expression connected with material production, which of course did not exclude innovation and inventiveness, but they clearly marginalized or completely silenced newness.
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> [...] Ethnologists, ethnographers, and the natives they interviewed, as well as research hypotheses made by anthropologists reconstructing the troglodyte consciousness, indicate that the new is seen in terms of being inventive; the possible source of originality, i.e., the Creator of the World; or certain (pre)existing considerations.[4]

In the Middle Ages, the ways of understanding temporality underwent a radical transformation, but they were still not radical enough to allow one to see the new in amodern light. Drawing on Aron Gurevič's monumental study in medieval consciousness,[5] Morawski points out that, indeed, it was in the Middle Ages that time was set in motion, thanks to which history could "get going." However, it was still a closed history, and its beginning and end were clearly defined by Christian mythology. Medieval time was therefore by no means similar to modern "open-ended" time:

> comparing archaic culture with medieval culture, A. Gurevič aptly proves that Christian consciousness did not eliminate mythological time. Although the concept of the cycle, regulated by the rhythms of nature and the related concepts of regularity and repetition, was replaced by a historical vision, whose key moment was the birth of Christ who was sent to Earth to save humanity, within this concept, history was essentially bicyclic. From the beginning of the world to the turning point, which was the revelation of the Son of God and the spread of "Good News," and then from Golgotha and Christ's resurrection to the end which was the redemption from original sin. In this vision, only the *New Testament*, this original authentic religion, is truly new. The other alleged new may only exist in historical time; still, it only exists there as a shadow of eternity, the equivalent of which is God's truth.[6]

Medieval philosophy and aesthetics were distrustful of, if not openly hostile to, innovation, because only the divine work of creation could be truly original, authentic, and new. Artists were supposed to, and expected to, imitate the perfect world of nature, and mastery could be acquired through and judged in relation to the skill and the ability to reproduce the established canonized rules and codes of art. This is the theoretical and aesthetic justification behind the predominance of religious themes in medieval art, which were closely related to the dominance of the Christian paradigm in the political, symbolic, and ethical sphere. The purest, model, the emanation of such a philosophy of art was, according to Morawski, the iconostasis, which he discusses in relation to Pavel Florensky's thought. In this approach,

[4] Morawski, „Perypetie problematyki nowości w dziejach myśli estetycznej. Rys syntetyczny", 45–46.

[5] *Cf*. Aron Âkovlevič Gurevič, *Categories of Medieval culture*, trans. by G. L. Campbell (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

[6] Morawski, „Perypetie problematyki nowości w dziejach myśli estetycznej. Rys syntetyczny", 47.

theology is the artist's most reliable tool, thanks to which he can focus on objective beauty, unquestionable truth with its roots in the divine realm, and create "true art" – creativity in its eternal, universal and perfect form. It also protects the artist from the temptations of the material world and its random, chaotic, and vain pursuits. Not only is it a source of the rules of art, but also a source of guidelines that the artist should follow in their life. According to Florensky, the best artist is at the same time a creator, a saint, and a philosopher.[7] Of course, the philosophy of icons cannot be considered universal in the European Middle Ages. The dispute between iconoclasts and iconodules is undoubtedly one of the bloodiest and most dramatic doctrinal theological disputes in history. However, this philosophical and theoretical foundation of creating and contemplating icons which Florensky developed in his writings at the turn of the 20th century allows us to understand the medieval mechanism according to which the categories of originality and inventiveness turn out to be undesirable, while imitation is cherished.

The new in today's modern understanding was only born at the beginning of the Renaissance – simultaneously with the emerging concepts of subjectivity, which were later discussed by Descartes. It is at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries that the very thought of admitting that man may be endowed with creativity, and especially that an artist may be able to create *ex nihilo*, ceases to be seen as heresy. The artist's competences and rights are no longer limited to reflecting the "one original" work of God and creative imagination begins to be appreciated. Only then are the categories of individual talent, inspiration, and genius accepted in European culture without any precautions or reservations. In the same period, the first texts appear which suggest that aesthetic canons are relative and temporal, i.e., diachronic. Beauty gradually ceases to depend on a set of codified, formal requirements, and begins to be perceived as a result of various expectations conditioned by current socio-political, moral, and philosophical processes. It is in this context that the concept of modern genius is formulated, understood henceforth as the artist's ability to capture the atmosphere of a given epoch as shaped by these processes and thus the artist's ability to meet the expectations of their times.[8]

The turning point in the formulation of the aesthetic and theoretical notion of the new was, as Morawski also points out, the quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. This dispute, initiated at the French Academy at the end of the 17th century, influenced all discussions in the field of literary and aesthetic theories over the following decades all over Europe. In his 1970 study devoted to the aesthetics of Romanticism *У истоков романтической эстетики. Античность и романтизм* [The beginnings of Romantic aesthetics: antiquity and romanticism; Polish translation was published in 1978], Boris Reizov explains the relationship between the Ancients and the Moderns (defined as trends, schools, formations, etc.) and the broadly defined ancient tradition.[9] This relationship also in a way anticipates the paradoxes of the new and imitation discussed throughout the 20th century. As far as literature was concerned, the Ancients and the Moderns took the work of Homer as their point of reference, arguing in favor of one of the two different ways in which it influenced modern creativity.

[7] *Cf*. Morawski, 46–50.

[8] *Cf*. Morawski, 51–52.

[9] Boris Reizov, „U źródeł estetyki romantyzmu: antyk i romantyzm" [The beginnings of Romantic aesthetics: antiquity and romanticism], trans. by Zbigniew Maciejewski, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 69, no. 1 (1978): 291–309.

Interestingly, the division into the Ancients and the Moderns was misleading, insofar as the Ancients developed and discussed attitudes, models, and concepts which allowed the new to thrive, while the Moderns constituted a conservative force. The praise of modernity articulated by the latter implied that ancient aesthetics was seen as inferior to contemporary aesthetics and was only meant to be presented as such, as, for example, in Charles Perrault's poem *The Age of Louis XIV*, which triggered the quarrel.[10] Even then, the entire domain of aesthetics was inscribed in the same logic of growth, improvement, and progress as the scientific, technical, economic, and political spheres. For the Moderns, the supposed aesthetic perfection of their age was an extension of the perfect monarchical system, while the Ancients, who called for a faithful imitation of antiquity, were republicans. Reizov argues that the ultimate failure of the classicist static aesthetic program had to do with the failure of the feudal monarchy as a system:

> The question of antiquity evolved as the epoch evolved; it changed its functions, inspired creativity, and opened up new horizons. In the great quarrel, the Ancients, who considered artistic values to be timeless, won, while the Moderns, who favored progress, suffered a defeat. In the course of the historical process, it turned out that the progress of the Moderns was in fact political and artistic stagnation, and the eternal categories of the Ancients promoted the development of art and society.[11]

It was the Ancients, therefore, who allowed art to truly develop, which, by definition, cannot take place without the emergence of new artistic and philosophical trends. The Ancients believed in the indisputable genius of Homer, arguing that in order to achieve perfection one must recreate the conditions in which his genius could flourish – and not his work itself:

> The train of thought developed by E. Young in *Conjectures on Original Composition* was conducive to this, as if paradoxical, but completely natural process: in order to create an original work of art, one has to imitate not the *Iliad*, but Homer, learn from him to observe nature, to show not abstract truths, but the truths of nature.
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> What, so to speak, lies behind a given work is lost after it is created – all the ideas and conditions that define the nature of a given civilization. This gives rise to peculiarities which future generations accept as rules that supposedly apply to all nations and species, which stunts the development of original poetry. Homer was free. Those who modelled their works on the *Iliad* were under the pressure of necessity. To imitate Homer, you have to be free like him and recreate your own truth, and not somebody else's. Thus, imitating Homer ultimately involved moving beyond him, and art which imitated ancient art turned into national art.[12]

Reizov therefore argued that the ideas promoted by the Ancients promoted the emergence and development of national literatures; and this development, respectively, is by definition associated with new phenomena in aesthetics, theory, and philosophy.

[10]*Cf*. Reizov, 292–94.
[11]Reizov, 307.
[12]Reizov, 299.

One of the most significant consequences of the development of national literatures in relation to the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns and the related issues discussed above, is – and this applies to different countries – the interest in folk tales and native mythology which manifested itself at the beginning of broadly defined romanticism. What all, both declared and undeclared, Ancients had in common was that they rejected the limitations of taste, appropriateness, canon, etc. It was natural, therefore, to search for new aesthetic categories. Once non-elitist, non-codified, and thus diverse and dynamic culture was acknowledged, non-elitist, "popular" art was for the first time recognized in the theoretical and aesthetic discourse. Reizov again discusses this issue in the context of antiquity:

> In the past, the works of great ancient poets were models of rationalist poetry; ancient poets were the teachers of reason, they lived in a certain Cosmopolis, with no links to local customs and history. This "dazzling loneliness" was their destiny; the Moderns saw many faults in them, and the Ancients had to refer to national history and traditions to be able to defend them. Then, as democratic thought developed, ancient poets became folk poets, they merged into one with the nation and the epoch they described. In its search for national character, homeland, and state, this strange, conflicted, inquisitive 18th century turned to Homer, Pindar and Aeschylus.
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> The almost century-old struggle for the Greeks against the French contributed to the creation of a completely new image of ancient poetry, and thus a new aesthetics and theory of art. The folk character of ancient literature, which passed through the cleansing fire of primitivism, brought it closer not only to the oldest forms of world poetry, ballads and psalms, but also to the mature works of European theater. It was only possible because Aristotle's principles no longer determined the shape and form of the ancient drama, proving to be a technical result of place, time, and tradition. Consequently, Shakespeare could no longer be seen as the opposite of ancient playwrights, and the connection between the English playwright and the great Athenians was problematic only in the opinion of the Moderns, French 18th-century neo-classicists, who stood by their principles, themes, and ideals.[13]

Thus, a new image of the "great artist" was born as well as specific expectations and tasks he was supposed to fulfill; he became everything that he could not be in a feudal monarchy:

> The ancients imitated nature and were not concerned with literary tricks. They were "naive poets;" this is where their secret lies. This is the secret of their language. The ancients, children of nature, in their primordial purity thought and spoke like poets. The original language, whether divine or human, "nominal" or "adjectival," was naturally a poetic language. In the middle of the 18th century, everyone was talking about it, from Vico to Hamann.
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> The superiority of ancient poetry was perceived in such terms. Homer was the greatest poet because he was an ancient poet.[14]

[13]Reizov, 304.
[14]Reizov, 299–300.

Respectively:

> Homer thus again becomes a model and "measure of human genius" [...], but not because he went against the dominant current of his nation and times, but because he was the same as everyone else, he thought as his contemporaries. "Homer's wisdom was no different from folk wisdom," Vico wrote, "He understood and expressed the feelings of the Greek people, and as such understood Greek folk customs." To understand Homer, Herder wrote, one must perceive him as inextricably linked with the times which gave birth to him. Poetry belongs to the entire nation. Homer as a national poet expresses the concerns of his times.[15]

The most important and lasting result of the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns was a complete reevaluation of art and the nature of the creative process. The academic dispute regarding the 17th-century reception of Homer had transformed in the following decades into a pan-European dispute on aesthetic principles – all artists who felt responsible for the shape of the emerging new culture were involved in it. Once the process of the gradual secularization of the artistic sphere was completed (the beginnings of this process may be considered one of the many symptoms of the transition from the medieval to the modern era), a space appeared where reflections on creative autonomy, agency, individuality, and originality could be deepened. It is from this space that the very institution of literature emerges, and it is in this space that attempts are made to create, capture, and visualize the new in literature (I refer here specifically to the influence, and not power, that this space exerts because literature often defined itself by going beyond what was considered literary at a given time). Only after the processes of the formation of literary awareness (or perhaps the awareness of literature) were completed in a continuous and direct reference to the dynamic changes in society and politics was it possible to permanently root the notion of literature in language. Regardless of the complexity, elusiveness, or even volatility of the concept itself, it is only from this moment on that we can speak of literature as we understand it today. In his famous interview with Derek Attridge, Jacques Derrida broadly defined literature as an institution "which allows one to say everything:"

> All the same, this motif of totality circulates here in a singular way between literature and philosophy. In the naïve adolescent notebooks or diaries I'm referring to from memory, the obsession with the *proteiform* motivates the interest for literature to the extent that literature seemed to me, in a confused way, to be the institution which allows one to *say everything*, in *every way*. The space of literature is not only that of an instituted *fiction* but also a *fictive institution* which in principle allows one to say everything. To say everything is no doubt to gather, by translating, all figures into one another, to totalize by formalizing, but to say everything is also to break out of [*franchir*] prohibitions. To *affranchise oneself* [*s'affranchir*] – in every field where law can lay down the law. The law of literature tends, in principle, to defy or lift the law. It therefore allows one to think the essence of the law in the experience of this "everything to say." It is an institution which tends to overflow the institution.[16]

[15]Reizov, 302.

[16]Jacques Derrida and Derek Attridge, "This Strange Institution Called Literature", in: A*cts of literature*, ed. Derek Attridge. London: Routledge, 1992, p. 16, emphasis original.

When this institution was established, works of literature (as well as other works of art in their own fields) began to be categorized in relation to the new. It was only then that the history of the new and the related issues of evaluating literature as either new or imitative began. Regardless of the views held, whether one emphasized the importance of novelty or rejected this category in its entirety, a discussion about the developmental concept of literature could only begin then. The new as a problem appeared only after literature was inscribed in the linear model of time, in which new individualities, unique events that irreversibly change the entire institution, successively appear.

This new institution, which "allowed one to say everything, in every way," thus daring one to create without prohibitions and against limitations, at the same time created a space that needed to be filled; the rapid increase in the number of works of literature which dates back to the Renaissance, and which had grown exponentially over the next decades, is thus seen as an attempt to fully realize the potential of literary expression encoded in this space. The institution of literature originally points to absence; it indicates empty places on the map of its own universe, thus requiring that they be filled; it is a scandal that must be addressed over and over again:

> [...] I'm brought more easily towards texts which are very sensitive towards this crisis of the literary institution (which is more than, and other than, a crisis), to what is called "the end of literature," from Mallarmé to Blanchot, beyond the "absolute poem" that "there is not" (*das es nich gibt* – Celan). But given the paradoxical structure of this thing called literature, its beginning *is* its end. It began with a certain relation to its own institutionality, i.e., its fragility, its absence of specificity, its absence of object. The question of its origin was immediately the question of its end. Its history is constructed like the ruin of a monument which basically never existed. It is the history of a ruin, the narrative of a memory which produces the event to be told and which will never have been present.[17]

The purpose of this historical review was to indicate a specific moment in history when it only became possible to analyze literature in relation to the tension generated by the opposition between novelty and imitation. It is also the starting point for the evolution of all the issues related to this tension, which conditions how (whether it exists or not) the new functions today; that is, taking into account the findings and re-evaluations made by post-structuralism and postmodernism. As the concepts related to exhaustion, radical intertextuality, repetition, then simulacrum, remix and hypertext became more and more popular in the theoretical discourse, the new began to appear problematic. The discussions which had been held throughout the 20th century also referred to the still ongoing cultural changes brought about by the avant-garde. At the present moment in this theoretical discussion the new is therefore marked by a paradox and controversy related to the realization of having reached an end in the development of experimental literature and art. Therefore, as Stefan Morawski also pointed out in the 1980s, this concept cannot be limited or forced to fit into a rigid terminological framework. Some of the disputes regarding the above-discussed problems are still ongoing, therefore it is often impossible to introduce any new solutions. Therefore, instead

[17]Derrida and Attridge, 42, emphasis original.

of a summary, which could only involve listing the main problems and questions that have already been mentioned here, I will present a certain way of thinking about the new (or perhaps thinking in terms of the new) that will both grow from and engage with them.

Novelty and identity

Søren Kierkegaard explicitly described the birth of Christ as the only moment of true novelty in history; the divine gesture of humiliation and descending into the world as an "ordinary person" was the only truly original gesture. Boris Groys writes about the importance of these strictly theological considerations for aesthetics in *Art Power*. He discusses "the new," drawing on the selected fragments of *Philosophical fragments*, Kierkegaard's extremely poetic and often metaphysical Christological essays. The Russian scholar focuses specifically on the paradoxical nature of the other, difference and the new.

God, who wants man to love him, which in Kierkegaard's post-Socratic poetics means the same as "God wants man to understand him," must descend from heaven and become human: the teacher must be the same as his pupil. He must, moreover, become a human being, blend in, and become an "everyman;" he takes the form of a servant and voluntarily endures the suffering and torture described in the Gospel. If God appeared more powerful than man, it would falsify the feelings of love between them: first, because man would then love God's omnipotence and power, and not God himself, which would mean that his love for God would not be absolute and unconditional; second, because any advantage of God over man would require that man changes and submits to him, which would in turn mean that God does not want to love man but to dominate him. God must therefore not only become human but must also become a servant; he must humiliate himself.[18]

Thus, man who comes face to face with God is faced with the "absolute paradox:" Christ standing before him is the same as any other man, but it is precisely because man cannot find a visible difference between God and man that God and man differ. Christ is a man who is also God; the difference is so radical that it cannot be recognized:

> But it is impossible to hold fast to a difference of this nature. Every time this is done it is essentially an arbitrary act, and deepest down in the heart of piety lurks the mad caprice which knows that it has itself produced the God. If no specific determination of difference can be held fast, because there is no distinguishing mark, like and unlike finally become identified with one another, thus sharing the fate of all such dialectical opposites.[19]

Translating the above reflections into the language of aesthetics, Groys makes a clear distinction between "new" and "different," which should not be regarded as identical. The paradox is inherently inscribed in the nature of the new, because the new is "new" when it is impossible

[18]*Cf.* Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical fragments*, trans. by David F. Swenson (https://www.religion-online.org/book/philosophical-fragments/).

[19]Kierkegaard.

to recognize it as new. As Groys writes, the new is "difference without difference" or "difference beyond difference." Groys thus introduces a radical perspective in which the new in art is practically unattainable as long as it may be identified as a work of art (in which case it is only "different" from other works of art, which does not yet make it new).

The first mature artistic response to these theoretical paradoxes was, according to Groys, the readymade. Indeed, in the 20th century, the focus in artistic considerations shifted from the field of aesthetics and specific artistic solutions to the field of politics, where the boundaries between art and non-art were constantly being renegotiated. In this context, it is not surprising that for Groys the truly breakthrough moment in art was marked by Marcel Duchamp's works. As we know, Duchamp's *Fountain* is just like any other urinal, and it is a work of art only because it was introduced into the space (and the institution) of the museum. In this way, it introduced a new difference by negating difference – Duchamp's urinal is both just like any other urinal and completely different because it is a work of art, while all the other urinals are not.[20]

The analogy between the readymade and the figure of Christ has not only an ontological foundation (both evoke "difference without difference") but also an epistemological one. Recognizing God in an "ordinary" person poses the same or at least similar difficulties as recognizing a work of art in an "ordinary" profane object. Kierkegaard further writes about the problem of recognizing God in man and shows that any attempt at a rational solution must lead to the escalation of the paradox. Ultimately, he states that this recognition is possible only when "Reason collide[d] with paradox," and "the Reason yielded itself while the Paradox bestowed itself." Following in the footsteps of Saint Augustine, he comes to the conclusion that only faith may produce such a productive collision, which he calls passion attainable to man only by God's grace and will.[21]

Similar paradoxes govern the identification of readymades as works of art. In *Art Power*, Groys develops the concept of "equal aesthetic rights" and argues that art's continuing drive to shift the boundaries between art and non-art is its main political aspiration. It is in this field that art negotiates its autonomy and the freedom to set the rules of the field in opposition to the existing hierarchies and canons.[22]

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

[20] *Cf.* Boris Groys, *Art Power* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2008), 23–42.

[21] *Cf.* Kierkegaard, *Philosophical fragments*, trans. by David F. Swenson (https://www.religion-online.org/book/philosophical-fragments/).

[22] *Cf.* Groys, *Art Power*, 13–22.

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KEYWORDS

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THE NEW

Abstract:
This essay attempts to define "the new" as a poetological term. The new is discussed in relation to Stefan Morawski's seminal study *Perypetie problematyki nowości w dziejach myśli estetycznej* [The history of the new in the history of aesthetic thought], the so-called quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, and selected approaches to the concept in relation to avant-garde art.

Morawski

literature

avant-garde

Reizov

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