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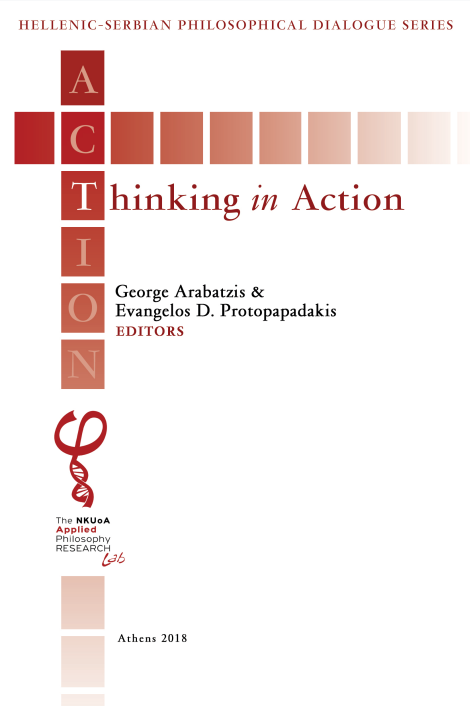

Chapter

Aesthetics in Serbian Philosophy

Una Popović

Thinking in Action

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AESTHETICS IN SERBIAN PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract: *This essay is going to discuss the character and development of aesthetics in Serbian philosophy. Apart from presenting the main philosophers and problems, I will address the main question of Serbian aesthetics, namely the question of methodology. Research is orientated towards comparing the work of several main Serbian aesthetitians, as well as towards the histories of Serbian aeshtetics, which serve as a meta-position of research. Such analysis confirms the thesis that the very distinctive feature of Serbian aesthetics is its orientation to the question of aesthetics as such, that is to the question of its methodological character. In consequence, such result allows for a coherent analysis of various theories within Serbian aesthetics, as well as for the understanding of its development during the 20th century.*

Keywords: *aesthetics, Serbian philosophy, methodology, normative character, hermeneutic analysis.*

As a branch of philosophy, aesthetics is one of the most developed and most infulential domains of philosophical research in Serbia. Aesthetics earned such a prominent status during the second half of the 20th century, under most interesting circumstances. The period of its ascent is of some importance, while it could be said that philosophy in Serbia in general gained its impetus only after the Second World War. Although aesthetics was not seen as one of the major areas of philosophy at the very start of this period, nevertheless it reached such position slowly, but in continuous development. Today, we see that aesthetic research is represented by many influential philosophers in Serbia, and that such research is often highly valued in terms of recognition and various prizes given to philosophical autors. Therefore, it is easy to conclude that aesthetics is a good representative of contemporary philosophy in Serbia in general.

The main issue I will adress in this paper is the position and character of aesthetics in Serbian philosophy. The main goal of the research is the presentation of Serbian philosophy in some of its most interesting features; in this context aesthetics is chosen as an especially convinient example.

Aesthetics in the History of Philosophy in Serbia

Philosophy in Serbia, as it was previously mentioned, was mainly developed during the second half of 20th century. Although prominent figures and ideas in philosophy can be traced back even to the period of Middle Ages, before the founding of the first Serbian university – the University of Belgrade was founded in 1808 – we could hardly speak of a consolidated academic endeavour. Apart from the founding of the University, the most important event regarding the development of philosophy in Serbia was the establishing of the Serbian Philosophical Society in 1898, which is the first society of philosophers ever to be set up in the Balkans.[1] In terms of these two important events, philosophy in Serbia finaly gained its institutional background; however, the consequences of these events reached their peak only after the Second World War. The flourishing of philosophy in the era of former Yugoslavia was partly an outcome of marxist and socialist politics of the state, which also meant significant financial and institutional support.

In this context, aesthetics was largely neglected. Namely, during the 19th century, up until the beginning of the Second World War, the philosophical education in Serbia was mostly situated in high schools, and subjected to the secondary education goals and role in society: it was mainly orientated towards logics, psychology and ethics, and mixed with religious teachings. In this context, the aesthetical problems, such as beauty, were seen as ethical: as we can read in documents from that period, the *aesthetical education* was supposed to enhance the pupils' understaning of their religious and moral duties to themselves[2]. On the other side, at the University itself, aesthetics was not, at first, given any import: first lectures in aesthetics were held in 1852 by Aleksa Vukomanović, but this did not mean that such lectures were held regularly nor did they become a fixed part of the curriculum. Aesthetics became a subject of specific and separate course of lectures only in 1906[3], but it was not untill the second half of the 20th century that it was fully accepted as an important discipline of philosophy.[4]

However, after the Second World War, aesthetics slowly but steadily became one of the most developed fields of philosophical research in Serbia. In the past three decades, Serbian aesthetitians showed specific interest in this development, an interest which resulted in several studies that investigate the history and character of aesthetics in Serbia. It should be noted that such studies, up until recently, were not to be found in cases of other disciplines of philosophy, such as ethics and logics, but only – and rarely – in the case of the history of philosophy in Serbia in

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[1] http://www.srpskofilozofskodrustvo.org.rs/index.php?page=istorijat (25.09.2017).
[2] *Privremeni nastavni plan i programi za više razrede realnih gimnazija u Kraljevini SHS* (Beograd: Državna štamparija Kraljevine SHS, 1927), 7.
[3] И. Марић, *Филозофија на Великој школи* (Београд: Плато, 2003), 126, 133; С. Жуњић, *Историја српске филозофије* (Београд: Плато, 2009), 208.
[4] М. Ранковић, *Историја српске естетике* (Београд: Завод за уџбенике и наставна средства, 1998), 58.

general.[5]

The first study, dedicated to the history of aesthetics, was written by Dragan Jeremić, former professor of aesthetics at the Department of Philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. Entitled *Aesthetics among the Serbs* (*Estetika kod Srba*) and published in 1989[6], the book covers a wide period from the Middle Ages to the end of the 19th century, more precisely, to the period of Svetozar Marković, one of the most important philosophical and political figures in Serbia of that time. The second important study dedicated to the history of aesthetics was written by Milan Ranković, professor of aesthetics at the University of Arts in Belgrade and former Serbian minister of culture. Published in 1998 under the title *History of Serbian Aesthetics* (*Istorija srpske estetike*)[7], the book covers every aspect of aesthetics in Serbian philosophy, including its development in the 20th century; on the other hand, it is not as voluminous as the one written by Jeremić.

As an influential figure in aesthetical circles in Serbia, Ranković also initiated a conference dedicated to the development of aesthetics in Serbia in the 20th century. The conference was held in Belgrade in 1999 and 2000, and it was organised by the Aesthetical Society of Serbia. The proceedings of the conference, edited as *Serbian Aesthetics in the 20th century* (*Srpska estetika u XX veku*) and published in 2000[8], present us with various problems and philosophies of Serbian aesthetics. Although these proceedings are not an integral study of the 20th century Serbian aesthetics, they give an account of many previously neglected aestheticians and their work, and therefore are very valuable to the research of this topic. It is even more important to notice that this conference, together with the proceedings, made a significant impact on researchers: from then onwards, the problems of the history of Serbian aesthetics are constantly in the focus of researchers, so that today we are in position not only to strive towards shere mapping of names and facts, but also to evaluate the character of Serbian aesthetics as such.

Such interest, evoked by the mentioned conference, happily coincided with another similar interest of philosophers in Serbia that can be noticed in the past ten years. Namely, in the past decade, there is a significant focus in Serbian philosophy on investigating its own history, partly stimulated by the government, i.e. by the guidelines defined for the scientific projects financed by the Serbian Ministry of Science and Education. Resulting in numerous articles and studies dedicated to the problems and themes arising from the history of Serbian philosophy, ranging from its presence in secondary education to the systematic expositions of works of the most important philosophers, such efforts gave way to the investigation of Serbian aesthetics as well.

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[5] In 2012 Slobodan Žunjić published a voluminous study about the history of logics in Serbian philosophy. See С. Жуњић, *Прирок и суштаство: историја појмовне логике код Срба I-IV* (Београд: Службени гласник, 2013).
[6] Д. М. Јеремић, *Естетика код Срба. Од средњег века до Светозара Марковића* (Београд: САНУ, 1989).
[7] М. Ранковић, *Историја српске естетике* (Београд: Завод за уџбенике и наставна средства, 1998).
[8] M. Zurovac (ed.), *Srpska estetika u XX veku* (Beograd: EDS, 2000).

The most important novelty of the contemporary research about the history of Serbian aesthetics, in my view, is the peviously mentioned fact that such research is now furthermore focused on the specific character of Serbian aesthetics. That is to say that the main problem now is the question: is there some specific feature that marks aesthetical research in Serbia, common to all aestheticians and their enedavours? Is there a distinctive problem to which most of them are trying to find solutions? Is there a peculiar methodology which they all embrace in their dealings with the aesthetical problems? In a word, is there a common ground which can be found and investigated?

Although these questions are not formulated as some kind of plan for research, they can nevertheless be traced in almost all contemporary studies and articles dedicated to the history of Serbian aesthetics. A stellar example of such research is the recent study by Nebojša Grubor, professor of aesthetics at the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. Published in 2015 and entitled *From Aesthetical Exactness to the Meta-aesthetical Scepticism: Studies in Contemporary Serbian Aesthetics* (*Od estetičke egzaktnosti do metaestetičkog skepticizma. Studije o savremenoj srpskoj estetici*)[9], the book presents five separate investigations dedicated to the five more important Serbian aestheticians – Milan Damnjanović, Mirko Zurovac, Sreten Petrović, Milan Ranković and Anica Savić-Rebac. However, these five investigations are all governed by the same idea - namely, the search for the methodology in the aesthetics of these philosophers.

Therefore, Grubor presents us with a carefully developed study of the methodological background of otherwise very different aesthetical projects, implying that the perspective of methodology should be the one leading the historians of Serbian aesthetics in their research. Moreover, such implication is not restricted to the mere question of how should one investigate the history of Serbian aesthetics, but for Grubor it represents the very common ground of all these aesthetical perspectives as such. That is to say that, in Grubor's view, the main question of aesthetics in Serbia is the question of a proper methodology of aesthetical research, the question of a proper way of thinking within aesthetics as a branch of philosophy. This aggregate further implies that the main question of Serbian aesthetics is, in fact, the question of aesthetics as such – the question about the very possibility of the philosophical and argumentative analysis of the aesthetical domain.

The aim of the study is, in Grubor's own words, to resolve „the question of how did our prominent aestheticians understand the concept of aesthetics and the nature of aesthetical research, both in the perspective of its methodology and its subject."[10] Its results, as we have seen, imply that all analyzed philosophers share

[9] N. Grubor, *Od estetičke egzaktnosti do metaestetičkog skepticizma. Studije o savremenoj srpskoj estetici* (Beograd: Institut za filozofiju Filozofskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Beogradu, 2015).

[10] Grubor, *Od estetičke*, 7 (English translation by Una Popović).

the same conviction, namely that aesthetics should once more be questioned and defined in terms of its scientific and/or philosophical character. This question of aesthetical methodology is, as Grubor rightly observes, the one that preoccupied Milan Damnjanović. Therefore it could be said that it was he who made it popular within the research of the other three philosophers - Zurovac, Petrović and Ranković, who were all in some respect his followers and under his infulence.

However, if this was the sole result of Grubor's study, it would merely be a matter of an interesting observation concerning only few philosophers. Namely, these four aesthetitians are all very prominent and influential: they practicly defined the development and character of Serbian aesthetics from the seventies onwards. Nevertheless, in their approach to aesthetics they are very different. For example, Mirko Zurovac – Grubor's predecessor and the sucessor of Jeremić on the position of professor of aesthetics at the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade - is mainly interested in the systemathic understanding of aesthetics as a branch of philosophy: he is an advocate of beauty as the main concept and problem of aesthetics. On the other hand, Sreten Petrović – retired professor of aesthetics at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade – has chosen art as the main problem of his research. However, apart from these differences, which are surely great, Grubor has found the common ground of these philosophers in terms of the above discussed question of the methodology of aesthetics.

But, Grubor's claim that the question of methodology is the very question of Serbian aesthetics is by no means restricted to the influence of Damnjanović. The fifth philosophical figure he analyzes, Anica Savić-Rebac (1892-1953), lived and died much before Damnjanović turned this question of methodology into the object of his philosophy; therefore she could not possibly be under his influence. Given such perspective, Grubor's claim now gains a more substantial meaning: in fact, he claims that the question of methodology, as a question of aesthetics as such, is the main question of Serbian aesthetics in general. In this respect, the philosophy of Anica Savić-Rebac is „an overture and antitipation of the aesthetical research of our prominent philosophers."[11]

As we can see, aesthetics in Serbian philosophy is mainly developed during the 20th century. If we accept Grubor's findings, we can also claim that its main focus was not some specific aesthetical problem – such as beauty or art, but its own character, the very aesthetics as such. Bearing this in mind, we can now proceed to a more precise analysis of the reasons for this feature in the development of aesthetics in Serbia, that is, to the presentation of its most prominent philosophers and their work.

[11] Grubor, 8 (English translation by Una Popović).

Serbian Aesthetics in the 20th Century

As we have already seen, the aesthetics in Serbia developed mostly in the period after the end of the Second World War. In that period it was shaped by various influences, which were mostly accepted from abroad: Serbian aesthetics, as it was often stated, walked hand in hand with the development of aesthetics in general. However, the specific local circumstances also defined its development, and made marxism and phenomenology the key perspectives for the Serbian aesthetics in the 20th century.

Namely, Serbian aesthetics was mainly under the influence of these two philosophical schools: although it was the aesthetics of Benedetto Croce that mostly marked its development before the Second World War, the second half of the 20th century was, without a doubt, the phase of (western) marxism and phenomenology. Aesthetics originating from english speaking philosophers is also to be found amidst the influences, but to a lesser degree. Of great significance in this context was the philosophy of Susan Langer, and also the 18th century British aesthetics of Hume, Shaftesburry and others; it was Leon Kojen and Iva Draškić Vićanović who introduced these aesthetics to the Serbian philosophy to a large extent. Iva Draškić Vićanović, profesor of aesthetics at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, published the first and so far the only study in Serbian aesthetics dedicated to the 17th and 18th century British aesthetics.[12] During the past decade there was also an increase of interest in analytic aesthetics, mostly due to the work of researchers from the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. Postmodernist approaches to aestehtics are also present in Serbian philosophy, but not as its leading trend, although it could be said that in the past two decades they are more present than ever. The leading philosopher of postmodernism in Serbia is Miško Šuvaković.[13]

It sholud also be noted that the development of Serbian aesthetics during the 20th century culminated in 1978, with the founding of the Aesthetic Society of Serbia (Estetičko društvo Srbije, EDS). The Aesthetic Society of Serbia was for many years, apart from the Serbian Philosophical Society, the only society for philosophy in Serbia, and it was the first such society that was exclusively focused on the development of a specific branch of philosophy. From the 1978 onwards, ASS (EDS) acted as the true *spiritus movens* of aesthetics in Serbia[14]; its most recognisable activity are the regular annual conferences, usually held in December. These conferences and related proceedings – up until now no less than thirty-six volumes of them – cover a wide range of aesthetical problems and perspectives, continuously enhancing both the public and the philosophical understanding of

[12] I. Draškić Vićanović, *Estetsko čulo: studija o pojmu ukusa u britanskoj filozofiji 17. i 18. veka* (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 2002).
[13] М. Шуваковић, *Постмодерна* (Београд: Народна књига, 1995); M. Šuvaković, *Pojmovnik suvremene umjetnosti* (Zagreb: Horetzky, 2005).
[14] M. Vidaković, „EDS - spiritus movens razvoja estetike u nas“, in *Estetika, umetnost, moral*, ed. B. Milijić (Beograd: EDS, 2002), 183.

aesthetics in Serbia.

The circumstances of the founding of ASS are also indicative for the understanding of the development of aesthetics in Serbia during the 20th century. Namely, ASS was founded as an institutional backing for the organisation of the *IXth International Conference for Aesthetics*, which was held in 1980 in Dubrovnik (today in Croatia)[15]; the main theme of the conference was *The Problem of Creativity*.[16] Many philosophers, but also many artists and theoreticians were present at the occasion of its founding: in that same spirit, ASS continued its activity during the first decade of its activity – predominantly philosophical, it remained open to interdisciplinary research. This was changed during the nineties, when ASS turned more to the field of philosophy in the strict sense, only to open its activities for interdisciplinary research once again at the beggining of the 21st century.[17] The first president of ASS was already mentioned, Milan Damnjanović, and he was succeeded by Mirko Zurovac; the current president of ASS is Divna Vuksanović.

However, the fact that Milan Damnjanović was the first president of ASS is of notice, since it was he who „introduced in our aesthetics the philosophy of the second and third generation of phenomenologists, which was already known in Europe."[18] That is to say, Damnjanović acted as a promoter of phenomenological aesthetics, and that he is responsible for the imense influence of this school of philosophy on the development of Serbian aesthetics. The fact that he shaped the profile of ASS ment that phenomenology was largely recieved as a new trend in aesthetics.

Damnjanović was followed by many. For example, Mirko Zurovac was, in his early years, also a proponent of phenomenology; in the third generation of Serbian aesthetitians its main proponent is Nebojša Grubor. The PhD thesis of Zurovac was dedicated to J.-P. Sartre; during the first two decades of his work, Zurovac published also studies on Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty.[19] Grubor's main interest is Heidegger, although he also published on Plato and Kant. Another example of the influence of phenomenology in Serbian aesthetics is presented with Milan Uzelac, one of the most important philosophers from the generation of Zurovac.

However, the fact that phenomenology was introduced in the Serbian aesthetics, as such a great influence is very unusual. Namely, at the time marxism

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[15] USA and USSR gave the largest number of participants: there were 69 of them from the USA, and 61 from the USSR. Italy was represented with 41 participants, France with 26, Greece with 23 and Romania with 21. Other participants came from Hungary, Germany, Spain, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Belgium, Japan and Netherlands; also from England, Canada, Switzerland, Austria, Israel, Brazil, Norway, Egypt, Turkey, Zaire, Netherlands and Argentina. See Vidaković, „EDS - *spiritus movens*", 185.

[16] J. Aler, M. Damnjanović, eds., *The Problem of Creativity* (Beograd: EDS, 1983).

[17] У. Поповић, „Естетичко друштво Србије: улога у развоју естетике у српској филозофији", in *Историја српске филозофије I*, ed. И. Деретић (Београд: Evro-Giunti, 2011), 599-604.

[18] B. Milijić, „Prisutnost fenomenološke misli u srpskoj estetici", in *Srpska estetika u XX veku*, ed. M. Zurovac (Beograd: EDS, 2000), 51.

[19] M. Zurovac, *Umjetnost i egzistencija: vrijednost i granice Sartrove estetike* (Beograd: Mladost, 1978); M. Zurovac, *Umjetnost kao istina i laž bića. Jaspers, Hajdeger, Sartr, Merlo-Ponti* (Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 1986); M. Zurovac, *Djetinjstvo i zrelost umjetnost* (Novi Sad: Književna zajednica Novog Sada, 1994).

marked philosophy and aesthetics in Serbia and Yugoslavia. Due to various, mostly political and social circumstances, it was seen as the sole and proper paradigm of philosophy. The divergence from such a model of thinking is, surely, a political act in itself: a testament of this is given by Branislava Milijić, one of the most devoted students of Damnjanović and a very important figure in the early years of the ASS. She wrote that „the presence of phenomenology for us has the meaning of the begining of the plurality of thought, which in our circumstances and in that time meant a detour from ideological dogmatism and more freedom to be allowed to different other views."[20]

With this note we are left with a new perspective on Serbian aesthetics – the one of its political significance. This should not be overrated; the previously mentioned marxist paradigm by definition implied such a position for philosophy in general, and also for aesthetics. However, in the case of aesthetics this had peculiar implications: namely, during the first decades of former Yugoslavia, it was usual for philosophers to be engaged in public debates with artists, and to shed light on their work from the perspecitve of its desired or non-desired ideological implications. Perhaps this was mostly the case with Dragan Jeremić, who was engaged in a debate concerning one of the most important works in the Yugoslavian literature of the time – *A Tomb for Boris Davidovič* (*Grobnica za Borisa Davidoviča*), authored by Danilo Kiš in 1976.[21]

However, the political significance of phenomenology as a new perspective for Serbian aesthetics meant more the possibility of departure from such political engagement than a new political paradigm. In other words, it meant the possibility for the development of aesthetics apart from any political struggle, aside from the demanded necessity of its ideological implications. This is evident in the activities of the phenomenologically orientated aestheticians: they had almost never engaged themselves in political disputes concerning questions of art. For example, in the past two decades, Zurovac sometimes acted as a political figure, but he never mixed this with his work in aesthetics. On the contrary, it could be said that Zurovac, as the main figure of aesthetics at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, made a sharp differentiation between the aesthetics and its possible political (mis)use. From early on, he made clear in his lectures that aesthetics should be investigated and thought of in strict philosophical terms, with respect to the history of philosophy, metaphysics and epistemology – and nothing else. Given that professor Zurovac forged almost all of the third generation of Serbian aestheticians, as well as some of the fourth generation, one can clearly see his influence in the consequence of proliferation of highly academic aesthetic endeavours.

In terms of influence on Serbian aesthetics, the most significant

[20] Milijić, „Prisutnost fenomenološke", 51 (English translation by Una Popović).
[21] Ранковић, *Историја српске естетике*, 85-86; D. Jeremić, *Narcis bez lica* (Beograd: Nolit, 1981).

phenomenologically orientated philosophers were Nicolai Hartmann, Jean-Paul Sartre, Roman Ingarden, Martin Heidegger and Mikel Dufrenne. Hartmann's *Aesthetics* could be considered as almost the canonic book for Serbian aesthetics: it is still a necessary part of almost any curriculum on aesthetics. J.-P. Sartre and R. Ingarden were more popular up until the end of the 20th century, while Heidegger's thought on art is continuously of interest since the seventies. Although one could ask if Sartre, Hartmann or Heidegger were phenomenologists at all, nevertheless they are accepted as such in the horizon of Serbian aesthetics. Hartmann, however, is a special case in this respect: for example, Zurovac claims that his aesthetics results from the application of the phenomenological method to aesthetical problems and that it is essentialy phenomenologic, while Damnjanović – and, following him, Grubor – consider Hartmann's aesthetics as ontological.[22] Damnjanović claims that even the method of Hartmann's aesthetics is ontological.[23]

On the other hand, the most influential marxist philosophers, apart from Marx himself and Engels, are surely Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Georg Lukacs. Marcuse and Lukacs were more influential during the first few decades after the Second World War, while the interest in Adorno's philosophy is increasing from the eighties onwards. This is very stimulating because Adorno's and Horkheimer's understanding of popular culture and culture industry during the years became a ground for contemporary Serbian philosophy of media, which is best represented by the work of Divna Vuksanović, professor of aesthetics at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade.[24] Bearing the stamp of aesthetics, this research in contemporary mass media is also under the influence of Walter Benjamin.

It is important to notice that the aesthetics of Kant, Hegel and Schelling also have a prominent place in the context of Serbian aesthetics. Interestingly enough, such prominent place for this aesthethics is a consequence of the wide acceptance of Classical German Idealisam in the Yugoslavian philosophy in general, on the basis of the influence of Hegel's philosophy on Marx. Nevertheless, attention that was given to Kant, Hegel and Schelling is noted both among marxist and phenomenologist aestheticians, and is still much present in Serbian aesthetics. While almost every prominent aesthetician in Serbia published on Kant and Hegel,

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[22] М. Зуровац, „Естетика Николаја Хартмана", in *Ка филозофији уметности: у спомен Милану Дамњановићу*, ed. Б. Милијић (Београд: Универзитет уметности у Београду/ЕДС, 1996), 214; M. Damnjanović, *Strujanja u savremenoj estetici* (Beograd: Fond za izdavačku delatnost Univerziteta umetnosti, 1984), 70; N. Grubor, „Lepo kao odnos pojavljivanja. Osnovna ideja Hartmanove estetike", *Theoria* 52, no. 3 (2009): 63-64.

[23] Damnjanović, *Strujanja*, 70.

[24] D. Vuksanović, *Filozofija medija I: ontologija, estetika, kritika* (Beograd: Fakultet dramskih umetnosti/Institut za pozorište, film, radio i televiziju, 2008); D. Vuksanović, *Filozofija medija II: ontologija, estetika, kritika* (Beograd: Fakultet dramskih umetnosti/Institut za pozorište, film, radio i televiziju, 2011); D. Vuksanović, *Filozofija medija III: ontologija, estetika, kritika* (Beograd: Fakultet dramskih umetnosti/Institut za pozorište, film, radio i televiziju, 2017).

[25] S. Petrović, *Negativna estetika: Schellingovo mesto u estetici nemačkog idealizma* (Niš: Gradina, 1972); S. Petrović, *Šeling protiv Hegela: Šelingova temeljna misao i 'meke forme'* (Beograd: Albatros plus, 2015).

it is Sreten Petrović who published more on Schelling.[25]

Sreten Petrović was also one of the main proponents of marxist aesthetics, at least in his early works, such as *Aesthetics and Ideology: Introduction to Meta-aesthetics* (*Estetika i ideologija: Uvod u metaestetiku*), *Marxist Aesthetics: Critique of the Aesthetic Mind* (*Marksistička estetika: kritika estetičkog uma*) and *Marxist Critique of Aesthetics: Contribution to Marx's ontology of creation* (*Marksistička kritika estetike: prilog Marksovoj ontologiji stvaranja*).[26] Recently, he is more interested in problems of contemporary art and new practices within its development, as well as in the question of the position and meaning that aesthetics should have within the horizon of new artforms.

Another author that was of marxistic orientation was Milan Ranković. As with Petrović, marxism marked his early works, such as *The Marxist Investigation of Art* (*Marksističko proučavanje umetnosti*), *Art and Marxism* (*Umetnost i marksizam*) and *Culture in Question: Current Problems of the Yugoslavian Culture* (*Kultura u pitanju: aktuelni problemi jugoslovenske kulture*).[27] Both of these prolific authors also contributed largely to the development of sociology of art in Serbia.[28] Together with Zurovac, they defined Serbian aesthetics after Damnjanović, but in opposition to him they were both especially interested in problems of art and culture. Ranković published a number of novels, while Petrović is more interested in painting and sculpture, often forging his philosophy through direct contact and comunication with the most famous Serbian artists.

As we can see, during the second half of the 20th century Serbian aesthetics gained both academic and institutional ground and position in the shaping of public views on art and culture. Although it was mainly developed under the influence of the most important tendencies in aesthetics in general, mostly the ones from Germany and France, gradually it reached the status of autonomous endeavour that only partly relies on great names in aesthetics and that present us with original accomplishments. Aesthetics gained such status in Serbia mostly through the work of the above commented Damnjanović, Zurovac, Petrović, Ranković and Uzelac. However, once gained, such status allowed for younger researchers, such as Grubor, Vuksanović and Draškić Vićanović, to extand their own investigations toward new fields and problems of aesthetics.

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[26] S. Petrović, *Estetika i ideologija: Uvod u metaestetiku* (Beograd: Vuk Karadžić, 1972); S. Petrović, *Marksistička estetika: kritika estetičkog uma* (Beograd: BIGZ, 1979); S. Petrović, *Marksistička kritika estetike: prilog Marksovoj ontologiji stvaranja* (Beograd: Prosveta, 1982).

[27] M. Ranković, *Marksističko proučavanje umetnosti* (Beograd: Prosvetni pregled, 1975); M. Ranković, *Umetnost i marksizam* (Beograd: Radnička štampa, 1975); M. Ranković, *Kultura u pitanju: aktuelni problemi jugoslovenske kulture* (Nikšić: Univerzitetska riječ, 1988).

[28] S. Petrović, *Estetika i sociologija: uvod u savremenu sociologiju umetnosti* (Beograd: Predsedništvo Konferencije SSOJ, 1975); S. Petrović, *Savremena sociologija umetnosti: estetika i sociologija* (Beograd: Privredni pregled, 1979); M. Ranković, *Sociologija umetnosti* (Beograd: Umetnička akademija, 1967); M. Ranković, *Opšta sociologija umetnosti* (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 1996).

Concluding remarks

The above mentioned specific character of the 20th century Serbian aesthetics could now, after the presentation of its main philosophers and influences, be analyzed in a more precise manner. Namely, following Grubor, we claimed that the main problem of Serbian aesthetics is not any of its traditional issues – beauty, art or aesthetic experience, but the problem of the methodology of aesthetics. That is to say that the original endeavour of Serbian aesthetitians, if one should talk of it in such broad terms, is to be considered in terms of this crucial question. The development and the importance of this philosophical discipline in Serbia should also, at least in part, be seen as a consequence of dealings with this precise problem.

If we are to understand the development of Serbian aesthetics in the 20th century, we should take notice that both marxism and phenomenology, as the most important influences, were here accepted more as specific ways of thinking within aesthetics than as some given and finished positions, not to be subjected to further development or criticism. That is to say, in both cases these philosophies were not understood as something to be imitated or simply advocated, but as a specific background, the horizon in the realm of which the researcher could develop his own methodology and conceptual matrix. In terms of our most important question about aesthetics, the question of its methodology seems to be consistent: marxism and phenomenology served as possible orientations for the understanding of what is aesthetics and what should it be, and not as already defined and given answers on that qusetion.

This can be seen in the above mentioned example of the political engagement once expected from the aestheticians in Serbia. This recquired not just the simple qualification of some work of art in terms of its ideological value, but also some kind of projection of what art should be and how should it relate to the theory of art. Also, it pressuposed a sort of hermeneutic analysis, given that accepted values and standards are to be applied to ever new artworks. Therefore, the researschers that were orientated towards marxism understood their task as the task of making sense and non-sense within the field of aesthetics and art, not simply as a task of judging the works of art. In the case of phenomenology, it is clear that the very method of phenomenology is the main influence here: relying on that method, developed aesthetics could in advance be transparent and non-judgemental.

Finally, the question of methodology as the main question of Serbian aesthetics should, as we already suggested, be understood as a question of aesthetics as such – especially in terms of its immanent philosophical character. That is to say that Serbian aesthetitians were, more or less, aware of the peculiar status of their discipline in the context of Serbian philosophy in general, and that they felt the need to show that aesthetics is philosophical in character. Moreover, they felt the need to accentuate this philosophical character of aesthetics in terms of the precise account of its methodology and importance, making it possible for aesthetics to

become one of the most important domains of philosophical research in Serbia.

Such commitment is also to be seen in present Serbian aesthetics. On the one side, there is an interesting, almost traditional problem that marks the variety of research positions – namely, the question of the possible normative character of aesthetics, opposed to the idea that aesthetics should merely follow the development of art and give its description. On the other side, there is an increase of interest in new artistic practices and new media; as we can see, these two sides coincide in part. In the past few years ASS recognized such tendencies, which resulted in several annual conferences dedicated to these problems: for example, one that took place in 2013 examined the question of the *Crisis of Art and New Artforms*,[29] and the one that took place in 2014 was dedicated to the problem of *Actuality and the Future of Aesthetics*.[30] Therefore, we can conclude that the present Serbian aesthetics, as well as its future development, are clearly under the influence of its 20th century problems: in years to come we will probably witness new transformations of the problem of methodology in this discipline.

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