In a paper entitled "Art as Semiotic Fact," delivered in 1934, Mukařovský stated that "the two semiotic functions, autonomous and informational, coexisting in the representational arts, constitute together one of the essential dialectical antinomies of the evolution of these arts; their duality makes its effect, over the course of evolution, in constant oscillations of the relationship to reality."\(^1\) Almost ten years later, however, in a paper entitled "Intentionality and Unintentionality in Art," Mukařovský appears to have expanded his notion of the dialectical relationship between the autonomy of the work of art and reality by suggesting an even more direct and fundamental linkage between the two. Employing the terminology of phenomenology, Mukařovský stated that "intentionality allows the work to be perceived as a sign, unintentionality as a thing," adding that "if the work of art is understood only as a sign, it is deprived of its direct incorporation into reality."\(^2\)

Such direct incorporation into reality, through the agency of "unintentionality," is important in Mukařovský's view for basically two reasons. First of all, "it is precisely as a thing that the work is capable of affecting what is universally human in man, whereas in its semiotic aspect the work always appeals eventually to what is socially and temporally determined in him."\(^3\)

\(^*\)An earlier version of this essay was delivered at the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Moscow.


Second, "mere intentionality does not suffice for an understanding of the work of art in its entirety, nor does it suffice for an understanding of development, for it is precisely in the process of development that the boundary between intentionality and unintentionality constantly shifts."\(^4\)

Basically, then, Mukařovský saw unintentionality as functionally that element in a work of art which both corresponds to the universally intersubjective aspect of the work, and provides, we might say, the raw power to drive stylistic transformation or development. A full understanding of unintentionality, then, would obviously be of great utility. Unfortunately, however, although the significant presence of unintentionality in works of art is clearly demonstrated by Mukařovský, and its dialectical relationship to intentionality is cogently argued, his treatment of unintentionality remains too general for certain critical or descriptive applications.

In this regard, perhaps the most challenging puzzle facing the art historian remains the sequence and timing of large scale stylistic changes. And of the various episodes that constitute the history of art, there is perhaps none more intriguing than the line of development whereby, paradoxically, the "realism" of Malevich in the 1910s can be seen as an outgrowth of the "realism" of Courbet in the 1850s. Thus, it is with the hope of eventually providing a systematic account of this latter developmental series that the following attempt at further refining Mukařovský's notion of unintentionality is undertaken.

It is, of course, the notion of the work of art as an intentional structure that gives semiotic theories great explanatory power. By showing that the work of art is both autonomous in its structure and dialectically rooted in its surrounding reality, the Prague School theorists were able to preserve the kernel of truth contained in both formalistic theories and the "positivistic" theories these stood in opposition to. They accomplished this through proposing a more comprehensive conception of the work of art as a multifaceted sign complex, or super sign.

The key to the linkage of the work of art to its surrounding reality, at least in Mukařovský's 1934 formulation, is the mediating process of signs. It is precisely this mediating process of signs which is also a key to the autonomy of works of art, as it is mediation which gives the work an equivocal relationship to re-

\(^4\) Ibid.