

Title: Simon Frank on Pushkin, and the Problem of Ontology for Literature

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Since Mark Edmundson's strong defense of poetry against philosophy (1995) the ontological realization that literature merely *is* started to gain in strength. Simon Critchley's book on Wallace Stevens (2005) celebrates the "mere there-ness" of poetic things (Critchley, 73-75) while Stanley Cavell sees that future of philosophy would be in its momentary lyricism caught in the life of the ordinary. In Pushkin studies as well, especially after his bicentennial, we may observe a slow but steady, philosophically informed, interest in his involvement with Being. This paper will offer the first systematic discussion of Pushkin against a single philosophical system taking the example of Simon Frank's attempt to interpret Pushkin's poetry and worldview as a case of fundamental ontology. The burden of this paper will be to demonstrate that poetry qualifies philosophy. Much like Heidegger attempted to rescue his ontology after 1945 by means of poetry, and much like the leading philosophers of today attempt to take flight into poetry from the *idée fixe* of critical theory, so did Frank resort to Pushkin in order to rescue the primordial ground and first principles of philosophizing. Rather than answering the obscure call of metaphysical intuition, Frank's path to Pushkin and his use of Pushkin in his thinking belie the received opinion that philosophical explanations of poetry deliver ironclad and logically superior arguments. Perhaps the opposite may be correct should we allow ontology to serve as the methodological and heuristic vehicle in sorting out the relationship between poetry and philosophy. As he was rejecting one by one the answers supplied by other artists, Russian and foreign, Frank sought out his Pushkin to overbear the inconsistencies of philosophical thought, get out of the nightmare of history, and escape from the clutches of religious and political nationalism.

Bibliography

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