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## How Many Times Can One Die? The Death of Art

### Introduction

The general thesis of this paper is that the end of art is possible only in a particular metaphorical framework where art is considered either a character or a process. Theorists do not claim that art is a person, character, or process. It occurs in a deep semantic structure. Art (like a character in a role play) speaks, acts, moves, and can die, which means its story ends as a process art goes through stages and finishes. Both narrative frameworks are metaphorical and deeply rooted in discourse and everyday speech. This paper aims to recognize and describe fundamental metaphors in the discourse on art, using the tools of cognitive theory of metaphor. It shows that the end of art or the end of art history is not a fact but just a product of a metaphorical constellation inscribed in our language.

The phrase the end of art is more general and presumes that art was a process with its forms and structure. On the other hand, the death of art is more specific, yet it enables the metaphorical projection of the category of art onto character and organism with its process of life. These issues, of course, are not discussed by critics and theorists, as they do not consider metaphors. At the deep level of semantic and cognitive struc-

tures, it is evident that art as a process ends because every process comes to an end. Furthermore, if art can pose a question, represent, go a step forward, or speak (metaphorically), it can also die.

Nevertheless, the end or death of art is not a fact. It is a product of the semantic structure. That is why the discourse about the end of art seems so natural and widespread. The theorists of art like Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Gianni Vattimo, and Jean Baudrillard are talking about end of art or death of art. Some performances thematize the end of art. For example, Supergroup Azzoro (Oskar Dawicki, Igor Krenz, Wojciech Niedzielko, Łukasz Skąpski) introduced the performance End of Art, where they try to wake up one of the characters screaming: Wake up, the art has ended! They created CD-ROM named SMART, which stands for "Stop Making Art".

## 1. How many times can one die?

It used to be thought that the question of the death of art has been appearing in aesthetic theories since Hegel's times. In fact, it is the author of *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts* who puts forward the famous thesis on the refusal to recognize the fetishistic worship of artefacts by Christianity and its contemporary science: "it is certainly the case that art no longer affords that satisfaction of spiritual needs which earlier ages and nations sought in it, and found in it alone, a satisfaction that, at least on the part of religion, was most intimately linked with art".<sup>1</sup>

However, the thesis about the end of arts was not new in Hegel's times. Earlier, Giambattista Vico ponders upon similar issues when in *The New Science* he describes the fall of cults and art associated with the barbarian raids. As Mieczysław Porębski suggests, we can locate the initial reflections on the end of certain historical formations as early as the time of the destruction of Troy. Since that historical event, it has started to dawn on people that even the most remarkable human masterpieces have their end.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the thesis on death, decay or end is nothing

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<sup>1</sup> Georg Wilhelm Hegel, "Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts", in: *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*, Georg Wilhelm Hegel, vol. 1, transl. by Thomas Malcolm Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Mieczysław Porębski, "Fugimus Troas", in: *Już się ma pod koniec starożytnemu światu... Zmierzch, schyłek, upadek w historii sztuki. Materiały Seminarium*

else or nothing more than an expansion of the topos *o tempora* extended with examples of spectacular and famous falls of empires, cultural cities which those empires created, and finally arts and works of art.

Although it was not new, Hegel's concept of the death of the arts was very popular in the philosophy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At first glance, it seems paradoxical. Why should art be dead when there are so many artists who probably produce more works of art than in any other period in history? The concept of the death of art in Hegel's work is usually interpreted elliptically. Art is not dead or has not reached its end. Only a certain period of the philosophy or understanding of art has come to an end. The expression "death of art" therefore does not mean that art no longer exists, but only that the understanding or role of art has radically changed. The ellipsis leaves the particular understanding or historical role unsaid. Knox, a translator of Hegel's *Aesthetics*, explains, "Hegel's main thesis that not only has art a meaning but that we can now state in plain prose what that meaning is".<sup>3</sup> Thus, throughout history, art loses its monopoly on expressing something that transcends our everyday experience. No longer do drama, painting or spoken myth reveal the absolute in metaphysical feelings, as Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz used to call the experience of the true arts.<sup>4</sup> Hegel claims not only that "art no longer affords that satisfaction of spiritual needs which earlier ages and nations sought in it",<sup>5</sup> but also that "[f]or art has still a limit in itself and therefore passes over into higher forms of consciousness. This limitation determines, after all, the position which we are accustomed to assign to art in our contemporary life. For us art counts no longer as the highest mode in which truth fashions an existence for itself".<sup>6</sup>

This schema of thinking about arts repeats the well-known history of metaphor in philosophy. Rhetorical figures lost their role as the only medium of truth. Hans Blumenberg, in his Preface to *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, notices:

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*Metodologicznego Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki, Nieborów 5–7 listopada 1998*, ed. Maria Poprzęcka (Warszawa: Arx Regia, 1999), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Malcolm Knox, "Translator's Preface", in: Georg Wilhelm Hegel, "Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts", in: *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*, Georg Wilhelm Hegel, vol. 1, transl. by Thomas Malcolm Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), v.

<sup>4</sup> Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, "O sztuce czystej" ["On Pure Form"], in: Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, *Nowe formy w malarstwie. Szkice estetyczne. Teatr* (Warszawa: PWN, 1974), 12–15.

<sup>5</sup> Hegel, "Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts", 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, 102–103.

The traditional classification of metaphor among the ornaments of public speech is hardly fortuitous: for antiquity, the *logos* was fundamentally adequate to the totality of what exists. Cosmos and *logos* were correlates. Metaphor is here deemed incapable of enriching the capacity of expressive means; it contributes only to the *effect* of a statement, the ‘punchiness’ with which it gets through to its political and forensic addressees.<sup>7</sup>

Poets and speakers are no longer bailees of truth. Poetry and ornamental prose cannot reveal the truth of being. They are, at least, not the only way of revelation. Yes, they can help, but they can distort as well. Thus, Arthur Danto explains Hegel’s idea of the end of art using the metaphor of a go-cart or middle point:

The end of art in Hegel thus has nothing to do with the decline of art but with the fact that we no longer require that ideas be communicated in sensuous form. So art could be glorious and it would still be over, as far as Hegel is concerned. In a way, his objection to art is something like Kant’s objection to the use of examples. Examples are, as Kant puts it, ‘the go-cart of the understanding’. For Hegel, art was the go-cart of spirit. We enter the highest stage of what he calls Absolute Spirit when we no longer require art to satisfy our ‘highest needs’.<sup>8</sup>

The schema is still the same; art loses its monopoly on playing a particular role. It is deposed. According to Danto’s interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy, art is as dead as Latin or steam engines are – it is no longer the only game in a town. When speaking of the death of art, Danto claims that it means that art came to the point where it seems apparent that it cannot reveal its own essence. It has no purpose anymore, and narration about art is impossible. So, according to Danto, this is the end of the history of art, not the end of art itself. Noël Carroll notices that the history of art can be seen as a history of specific linear achievements. For example, the verisimilitude project, embraced by Greek artists, ends with photography, and the drama project ends with computer technology in movies. Carroll claims that “[n]arratives like this have a definite structure. They posit a goal; events are included in the story inasmuch as they contribute to the realization of the goal. Moreover, insofar as the

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<sup>7</sup> Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, transl. by Robert Savage (New York: Cornell University Press and Cornell University Library, 2010), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Arthur C. Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art* (Chicago–La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Press, 2003), 94.

goal is well-defined, it is conceivable that it could be achieved".<sup>9</sup> The story of art ends with attempts to create conceptualizations of art within art itself, and such attempts must ultimately fail.

The idea of the death of art, whether understood as the final loss of meaning and uniqueness of artistic creativity, the consequence of the permanent crisis into which it fell, or – in a slightly milder version – as the end of a certain narrative on art, or finally, as the end of the art history project<sup>10</sup> is an important landmark for philosophical reflection on art. Meanwhile, the so called "death of art" is the result of the popularity of certain authors (Hegel, Croce, Witkiewicz, Eco, Vattimo, Baudliard, Belting, Kuspit, Danto) and – as I will try to show in this text – equivocation in reading the metaphor of death as a descriptive category.

So, in this interpretation, it is not death of art but the end of a particular historical role of art or a certain understanding of art. There is a bunch of rhetorical figures here.

First, there is *pars pro toto*: part of art is taken as representative or essential for the whole world of arts. Hegel understands the essence of art as Romantic art. Knox notices in this context that "If, as he [Hegel – M. W.] thinks, Romantic art has the doctrines of the Christian religion as its content, then these are known independently of art, and their expression by art is unnecessary".<sup>11</sup> Art ended because one of the latest art movements (romantic art) lost its monopoly on expressing Christian content. The same figure of thinking is characteristic of Danto's theory. According to Carroll, Danto's argumentation contains, among many others, one weak assumption it "equates art with painting".<sup>12</sup> That is Danto's primary *pars pro toto*. Art (here it is the synonym of the avant-garde painting of the 60s) cannot advance the definition of art because "once artists like Warhol posed the question 'What is art?' in its proper philosophical form [...] they could make no further theoretical contribution".<sup>13</sup> That is why art must die – it reaches its *ultima Thule*.

But it is rather why the narrative about a particular period in visual art must reach its end. So here we find the elliptic part of the expression. Within *pars pro toto* comes the *ellipsis*, culminating in the *end-prod-*

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<sup>9</sup> Noel Carroll, "The End of Art?", *History and Theory* (Theme Issue: "Danto and His Critics: Art History, Historiography and After the End of Art") 37(4) (1998): 18.

<sup>10</sup> Hans Belting, *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte: Eine Revision nach zehn Jahre* (München: C.H. Beck, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Knox, "Translator's Preface", v–vi.

<sup>12</sup> Carroll, "The End of Art?", 20.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, 19.

uct of an argument – hyperbole about the death of art. But this formula seems to be very disappointing after all. It means only the end of a monopoly of particular teleological narration on a specific discipline of art.

Here arises an interesting philosophical problem: Why use a sequence of such exaggerated figures of speech that can be interpreted easily as an equivocation? One is not dead if one is retired or has quit the job. There was no end (or death) of transport when we learned how to build flying machines. Why did the end of arts occur when only one of its domains (or historical forms) had reached a culmination point?

The answer lies, I think, in the power of metaphor and foundational elements of philosophical language. Here, I think we have to contend with absolute metaphors in Hans Blumenberg's sense. The symbolic image of art as an organism (or body) offers many possibilities for interpretation and is deeply inscribed in philosophy and everyday language metaphors. It is tough to avoid, even though the risk of equivocation, hyperbole, or misunderstanding arises. "Art is Body" is an absolute metaphor in the philosophy of art as well as such metaphors as "understanding is seeing" in epistemology or "the world is a mechanism" in ontology. Absolute metaphors, according to Blumenberg, are "*foundational elements of philosophical language, 'translations' that resist being converted back into authenticity and logicity*".<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the end or death of art cannot be taken as a wrong (equivocating) logical consequence, the strange observational conclusion of an expert on arts, nor hyperbole. It is just a byproduct of philosophical imagery inscribed in the absolute metaphors of philosophical language.

## 2. Death and metaphor

To describe what is called the death of art, I will use the rudimentary tools of the cognitive concept of metaphor created by Lakoff and Johnson. "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another".<sup>15</sup> In our case, one of these things – art – is the target domain, which we describe by means of terms assigned to the source domain. "As a rule, metaphor ("X is Y") links an abstract and complex target domain (X) as explanandum with a more concrete source domain (Y) as explanans, which is more simply struc-

<sup>14</sup> Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, 3.

<sup>15</sup> George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago–London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 5.

tured and open to sensual experience".<sup>16</sup> The target domain can be described and understood thanks to source domains whose predicates can be used to describe the target domain<sup>17</sup> because "the metaphorical transfer [is] having an unequivocal direction"<sup>18</sup> from the source domain to the target domain. Thanks to this projection, it is possible to understand abstract concepts and even abstract reasoning.<sup>19</sup> Metaphors form image-schemas which mediate between abstract propositional structures and imaginative images.<sup>20</sup>

Lakoff and Johnson continue this tradition and offer useful tools for analyzing the origins of philosophical problems. In their maturity theory of metaphor, they not only single the domains out but also postulate the cognitive unconsciousness of a conceptual system. This system shapes our reasoning as well in everyday life as in philosophy and is mirrored in the natural language. In *Philosophy in the Flesh*, they write that:

The cognitive unconscious is vast and intricately structured. It includes not only all our automatic cognitive operations, but also all our implicit knowledge. All of our knowledge and beliefs are framed in terms of a conceptual system that resides mostly in the cognitive unconscious. [...] It thus shapes how we automatically and unconsciously comprehend what we experience. It constitutes our unreflective common sense.<sup>21</sup>

The structure of the cognitive unconscious consists of three classes: embodied concepts, projections of embodied concepts, primary and complex metaphors. Embodied concepts are "literal", because their meaning is intuitively clear according to how the human body is shaped and what it can do. Because of the spatial dimension of the body, concepts like close, behind, in front of, up, inside, outside, and down are intuitive. According to the body's position, its functions (such as hearing or seeing), and the typical repertoire of its movements such as grasping,

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<sup>16</sup> Olaf Jäkel, "Hypotheses Revisited: The Cognitive Theory of Metaphor Applied to Religious Texts", *Metaphoric.de*, 02.2002, 21, access 29.10.2018, [https://www.metaphorik.de/sites/www.metaphorik.de/files/journal-pdf/02\\_2002\\_jaekel.pdf](https://www.metaphorik.de/sites/www.metaphorik.de/files/journal-pdf/02_2002_jaekel.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> George Lakoff, "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor", in: *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 245.

<sup>18</sup> Olaf Jäkel, "Hypotheses Revisited", 22.

<sup>19</sup> George Lakoff, "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor", 244.

<sup>20</sup> George Lakoff, Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago–London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 61.

<sup>21</sup> George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh. The Embodied Mind & its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 13.

going, jumping etc. These concepts are projected onto other domains and build the corpus of primary metaphors, which are unconscious but necessary for understanding. One “inevitably acquire(s) an enormous range of primary metaphors just by going about the world constantly moving and perceiving”;<sup>22</sup> moreover, “it is hard to think of a common subjective experience that is not conventionally conceptualized in terms of metaphor”.<sup>23</sup> The projection of embodied concepts results in conceptualization primarily by metaphors like Happy Is up, Important Is Big, and Similarity Is Closeness. Basic embodied concepts (like up, close, big) build base domain, and abstract concepts (happiness, importance, similarity) are understood in terms of base, i.e., embodied, obvious concepts. Complex metaphors “are built out of primary metaphors plus forms of commonplace knowledge: cultural models, folk theories”.<sup>24</sup>

Metaphors not only allow us to conceptualize experience and build categories of the world, but they are metaphorical entailments that steer the understanding of certain phenomena. To give some instructive examples, if X is not a big thing but Y is, then it is better to be successful rather in Y than in X. Aristotle described such schemas under the name of Topoi. Topoi are commonplaces of argumentation, which are not logically correct (there are many exceptions) but are widely accepted. For example, “a greater number of good things is more desirable than a smaller”.<sup>25</sup> Lakoff and Johnson do not appeal literally to Aristotelian topics, but topoi in an Aristotelian sense populate their idea of cognitive unconsciousness. Authors of *Philosophy in a Flesh* are developing the tools of analysis of commonsense reasoning that can explain why topical reasoning is so convincing, although formally fallible.

This analysis in terms of metaphor can be applied here to the theories of art. Such an analysis does not support any of the theories, it answers only how such theories are possible and, what is most important here, why some problems arise in art theory. It will show that there is no issue of the end or the death of art. The problem arises when applying a particular metaphor unconsciously or at least uncritically. The metaphor of the death of art is probably one of the best examples of such conceptualization. Moreover, it does not enable us to make any conclusion because,

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<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, 57.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, 45.

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, 60.

<sup>25</sup> Aristotle, “Topics”, transl. by Arthur Wallace Pickard-Cambridge, in: *Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 1 (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), book 3.2, 117a16, 195.



according to commonsense topoi, there is no X anymore when X is dead (or came to its end). It does not play any of its roles or loses most of its essential features.

First of all, if we have an abstract domain, we need to find its source. Normally, an abstract domain can be conceptualized in with many different source domains. One of the conceptualizations here is ART IS ORGANISM. The other is ART IS PROCESS. Within these conceptualizations, art can be considered as a body or person. So it can inherit the features of a body or person. It can move in a certain direction and learn, which is why it is not surprising when speaking to say that art recognizes, sees, goes ahead, and dies.

The death of art is not a grounding metaphor, but the result of using a more elementary metaphorical image, according to which ART IS AN ORGANISM. Art (a target domain) is sometimes described by means of several predicates from a source domain (an organism), which are attributed to organisms, and therefore according to the metaphorical projection, some phenomena occurring in organisms will also allegedly be typical for art. They are, above all, life and death, as well as evolution and movement (we say that art rises, falls, escapes from problems); the health predicate is also very important here, and to be more precise, the concept of crisis – which stands for the decisive and final stage of the disease. The figure of personification in the description of art is definitely more popular than the metaphor of an organism. If one describes art as if it were a person, one assigns the following actions to art: speaking, walking, following rules, expressing emotions, etc.

For these considerations, the fact that life and death are attributed to art is the most important. It is possible only on the strength of the indicated metaphorical projections. Hegel writes that art “[h]as lost for us genuine truth and life”.<sup>26</sup> Gianni Vattimo in *The End of Modernity* points out that: “[t]he death of art [...] is something which we simply cannot ignore”,<sup>27</sup> and few pages further he claims that: “[t]he death of art is not only what will result from the revolutionary reintegration of existence; it is what we are already living in a mass culture”.<sup>28</sup>

If we assumed that art is really dead, how should this death be understood? Is there any life after death? Or perhaps its spirit undergoes

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<sup>26</sup> Hegel, “Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts”, 11.

<sup>27</sup> Gianni Vattimo, “The Death or Decline of Art”, in: Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 52.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, 55.

reincarnation? At this point, the most important as well as the funniest part of this considerations starts for a critical reader. How, after coming to terms with the fact that art is dead, shall we explain the undeniable fact that artistic creativity continues to do well? Since “[t]he death of art is a phrase that describes or, better still, constitutes the epoch of the end of metaphysics as prophesied by Hegel, as lived by Nietzsche and as registered by Heidegger”<sup>29</sup> why does so much activity continue to take place in the field we call art?

Umberto Eco answers in Hegel’s manner, reporting on Fromaggio’s deliberations:

The careful analysis that he [that is Fromaggio’s – M.W.] devotes to these authors and to the evolution of the notion of the »death of art« shows that it would be much too simplistic to believe in »a historical end of art«, and that it would be much more reasonable to understand the formula in the Hegelian sense of »the end of a certain form of art«, part of a historical development in which the advent of a new idea of »art« must appear as the negation of what the same term meant for the preceding culture.<sup>30</sup>

If Eco is right, and we need to understand the metaphor in the Hegelian sense, the death of art seems to be hyperbole rather than metaphor. Now we need to explain the purpose of using such a figure of speech and why this figure is so stable in history. In other words, why use such a strong and obscure picture to express quite an obvious observation that styles and functions of arts change radically over time? Eco explains that death is just a figure of speech representing a radical change. This interpretation seems to be naive in the light of facts – more and more people make art, there are more institutions and digital tools that support artists, and the accessibility of classical artworks is unprecedented in the history of humankind. It does not explain the usage of the figure.

The figure of the death of art is used because it opens many possibilities for further development of speech thanks to the cognitive metaphor, on the one hand. On the other, it is well-grounded in tradition and culture, and in the cognitive unconsciousness. We speak about art as if it were a person who lives, reports, shows, and moves. Even if this person is dead, the story goes on – there is still a figure of trauma... explored by Danto as well:

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<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, 52.

<sup>30</sup> Umberto Eco, “Two Hypotheses about the Death of Art”, in: Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 172.

My sense is that with the trauma to its own theory of itself, painting had to discover, or try to discover, what its true identity was. With the trauma, it entered into a new level of self-awareness. My view, again, is that painting had to become the avant-garde art just because no art sustained the trauma it did with the advent of cinema.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, talking about the life and death of art triggers all of the ideas associated with death present in religions, theologies, the theory of evolution and popular beliefs. Death is only a change of form, a transition to another state etc. You can also exploit the metaphor of death by pointing to successive dead bodies:

So does the melancholy of making art and with it the death of art. Post-modern art often looks like the corpse of art – Neo-Expressionism looks like the corpse of Expressionism, Neo-Abstraction looks like the corpse of Abstraction, Neo-Conceptualism looks like the corpse of Conceptualism (all cosmetically embalmed). Ingenious, hyperactive corpses, but nonetheless corpses – robot-like corpses, going through the motions of life in dance of death.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from melancholy and corpses, there is also the whole range of elements related to dying, such as mourning:

One has the impression that some portion of contemporary art is engaged in a work of deterrence, mourning the image and the imagination, mourning aesthetics. This mostly failed attempt has led to general melancholy in the artistic sphere, which seems to perpetuate itself by recycling its history and its relics.<sup>33</sup>

### 3. How to understand dying in art?

What is important in the discourse on the death of art is a misunderstanding referring to the status of the founding metaphors. Theoretic-

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<sup>31</sup> Arthur C. Danto, "Approaching the End of Art", in: *The Symbolic Order. A Contemporary Reader On The Arts Debate*, ed. Peter Abbs (London: Routledge, 1989), 120.

<sup>32</sup> Donald Kuspit, "Mirror, Mirror on the Worldly Wall, Why Is Art No Longer the Truest Religion of All?: The God That Lost Faith In Itself", in: Donald Kuspit, *The End of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 159.

<sup>33</sup> Jean Baudrillard, "Aesthetic Illusion and Disillusion", in: Jean Baudrillard, *The Conspiracy of Art. Manifestos, Interviews, Essays* (New York: Semiotexte, 2005), 111.

cians fall victim to the famous categorial mistake<sup>34</sup> (Ryle, 2009, p. 6): they take a way of speaking for the phenomenon itself and reflect on it as if it could actually be a phenomenon. At first sight, those researchers resemble physicians who discuss the possibility of pronouncing dead a person dancing the foxtrot before their very eyes. However, they clearly forget that life (or death) is used here only in a metaphorical way of expressing thoughts and cannot be a feature of the examined object. Art can neither live nor die – because both its life and death are the consequence of using the ORGANISM metaphor, and to be more precise, a categorial mistake based on it. It is by no means an observable phenomenon. In short: the metaphorical death of art cannot be a phenomenon other than linguistic due to the fact that it is metaphorical.

This mistake makes it possible to maintain undecidable disputes. It oscillates between treating death as a descriptive category for art and persistent attempts to indicate the phenomena which could be included in this category. What is mentioned here is crossing from pleasure to the development of aesthetic consciousness in which “the way in which a work is constructed has become more important than the constructed work. [...] But if this is what Art means to contemporary aesthetics, then the intensely self-analytical trend I have just described can certainly be seen as a sign of the decline of art—more than that, of a concrete example of its death”.<sup>35</sup> Here, death is, in Hegel’s manner, identified with the transformation of the pleasure of being with the work, whereas “aesthetic pleasure has gradually changed from the emotional and intuitive reaction it once was to a much more intellectual sort of appreciation”.<sup>36</sup> If so, it should be assumed that everything that is merely intellectual enjoyment is dead, and life should be identified with the feeling of emotional pleasure, which is quite common *façon de parler*, but cannot be used as a scientific way to explain phenomena.

#### 4. The end and narration

Beside the death of art, there is another related expression, which is often synonymous to it, and it is *the end of art*. Obviously, every death is an end, but not every end means death. Talking about the end of art is based on a different metaphorical projection – namely: ART IS A STAGE

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<sup>34</sup> Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London–New York: Routledge, 2009), 6.

<sup>35</sup> Eco, *Two Hypotheses*, 170–171.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, 171.

IN A JOURNEY. This metaphor allows us to talk about the end of art without reference to personification. Theoreticians and critics who declare the death of art fall into a difficult situation: how can one argue that art has died or has come to an end since artistic creativity has taken on unknown dimensions, has gained new media, and tools have been created to help laymen effortlessly create new artefacts without the necessity of tedious learning and manual exercise (in graphic programs or music software). Thanks to the journey metaphor, the matter does not seem so dramatic and lost when you first look at it. After all, you can go a long way after you have reached the end of the beaten track:

[I]t is possible to suppose that art had come to an end. Of course, there will go on being art-making. But art-makers, living in what I like to call the post-historical period of art, will bring into existence works which lack the historical importance or meaning we have for w very long time come to expect.<sup>37</sup>

Indeed, if we initially state that the protagonist's story has come to an end, everything that she wants to do after the given time must be deprived of historical significance and thus post-historical.

The end of art means for Danto the end of exclusive narration about essence of art. The end of controversy about its essence.

Each of the movements was driven by a perception of the philosophical truth of art: that art is essentially X and that everything other than X is not – or is not essentially – art. So each of the movements saw its art in terms of a narrative of recovery, disclosure, or revelation of a truth that had been lost or only dimly acknowledged. Each was buttressed by a philosophy of history that defined the meaning of history by an end-state which consisted in the true art.<sup>38</sup>

This era came to an end and “[n]othing is any more true than anything else, nothing especially more historically false than anything else”.<sup>39</sup> This was possible because Danto treated the art as a period in history. Recalling Hans Belting's historical analysis, he claims that art begins around 1400, has its climax in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and ends in 1960's with Warhol's Brillo Boxes.

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<sup>37</sup> Arthur C. Danto, “The End of Art”, in: Arthur C. Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 111.

<sup>38</sup> Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 117–118.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, 116.

With [...] temporal entities, it at least makes sense to say that they have endings. My claim, on the other hand, is about *art* as such. But that means that I too am thinking about art itself as naming less a practice than a movement or even a period, with marked temporal boundaries. It is of course a fairly long movement or period, but there are a good many historically sustained periods or movements.<sup>40</sup>

There is only one objection to that. Danto claims that he describes the end of art as such on the one hand, but he stipulates on the other not speaking about the art market, creation, and artist activity. So there is curiosity in Danto's slogan of art's end. It means a closure in criticism and aesthetics, which is the end of art as such. After the end of art, it makes no longer any sense to describe the essence of true art and exclude any group of artworks as non-art. There is no place for a manifesto of genuine art that could fulfill any mission or reach the historical aim. The structure of controversy about real and true art, which comes to an end, is quite the same as a controversy about the end.

Both discourses (true art and the end of art) contain argumentation against and for real closure. In the first case, it is the beginning of real art: from now on, claim every manifesto, we do know what real art is, how to create it etc. In the second case, it is the end of the whole art and the story, why, and how it comes to an end. For Hegel, the end of art means that it does not awake immediate enjoyment. For Martin Heidegger, it is an inability to show the truth and influence history. Baudrillard's thesis is another very interesting example, this time exploring both metaphorical projections of the organism and the stage, and at the same time quite boldly playing with common sense:

I do not want anyone make me say that art is finished, dead [sic]. That is not true. Art does not die because there is no more art, it dies because there is too much. The excess of reality disheartens me as does the excess of art when it imposes itself as reality.<sup>41</sup>

And who will decide now whether the author is declaring the end of art or not? Perhaps, he is actually declaring the end but he does not want to be known as its author? I believe that tracking and pointing out elementary errors of argumentation is not as important as pointing out the

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<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, 108–109.

<sup>41</sup> Jean Baudrillard, "No Nostalgia for Old Aesthetic Values", in: Jean Baudrillard, *The Conspiracy of Art. Manifestos, Interviews, Essays* (New York: Semiotexte, 2005), 64.

mechanisms of persistent maintenance of similar contemplations. Let me introduce one more example.

It is now difficult to resist the impression that »the end of art« – so often and so noisily announced, and just as vociferously rejected, during the 1960s – has finally come about, albeit surreptitiously, and “not with a bang but a whimper”.<sup>42</sup>

So the structure of theorizing the end of arts resembles the controversy of authentic art on a small scale. Danto points out that discussion about the essence of art after Hegel presupposes that art has its essence. Nevertheless, the debate about the end of art presupposes a possible end analogically. In both cases, there are metaphors behind the discourse – the metaphor of a quest and the metaphor of process with its extensions to the process of life where art is considered an organism. Metaphors give rise to problems.

Another argument turns out that the end of art is not false but somewhat naive. Today’s art has no history at all. Well, this is true about contemporary art in history. The futurist paintings had no history in the early stages of 20<sup>th</sup> century, and pop art had no history in the sixties. In that sense, the newest art is always post-historical. One cannot write the story of art for the present or tomorrow. That is why the art of yesterday has its history, but the newest art remains post-historical.

In order to explain why dwelling upon the death of art is basically a misconceived idea, one can actually use any number of examples. If I am right that talking about death or the end of art is only the result of the existence of a certain metaphorical projection in our language, then for any description of any trend it will not be possible to find a convincing conclusion as to whether it is a sign of death or the end of art or not. I have chosen two examples from music, which are important to me.

## **5. About what has died although it still lives – a typical program of a typical philharmonic hall**

Christian Neefe – Beethoven’s teacher – allegedly, described a musical experiment in his diary. It was a concert whose repertoire consisted of

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<sup>42</sup> Anselm Jappe, Donald Nicholson-Smith, “Sic Transit Gloria Artis: ‘The End of Art’ for Theodor Adorno and Guy Debord”, *SubStance* 28(3/90) (Special Issue: Guy Debord) (1999): 102.

compositions by deceased artists. At the time the experiment was declared to be *a violation of a history*. In any case, this violation, due to its typical classical and romantic repertoire of most music scenes, is still performed today. "The violation has become the norm of the 20<sup>th</sup> century reality of philharmonic orchestra, above all, cultivating the works of the past, pushing modernity into enclaves".<sup>43</sup> Today, there is absolute democracy in concert halls. In philharmonic halls and at various music festivals we can hear compositions representing every moment in history, compositions which are performed on contemporary and old instruments.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century one can observe the extraordinary popularity of early music. In the period of the most heated disputes about the end of art, an unprecedented thing takes place – a turn towards the past, which, resurrects deceased artists' compositions in music halls. The number of deceased artists' compositions definitely exceeds the amount of contemporary artists' music. "Today, historical music, [...] particularly music of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, forms the basis of musical life. Since the rise of polyphony, such a thing has never happened. [...] This kind of historical perspective is totally alien to a culturally vital period."<sup>44</sup>

However, can a situation in which musical repertoire is dominated by deceased authors' compositions be called the death of art? One can use other debatable terms here as well. But it must be mentioned that nothing is explained here. Equally probable and interesting is the common-sense and statistical explanation: along with the development of music (this applies equally to rock and roll, blues, opera and other artistic disciplines, such as cubist paintings), the number of acclaimed "classic" artists is on the rise. Obviously, the number of acclaimed dead artists also increases. At some point – quite quickly in any case – the number of acclaimed dead must exceed the number of the living who are usually seeking recognition at present. Perhaps this proportion is the referent of the category of the death of art (in this case "the death of classical music")? Regardless of the answer, this category does not add or explain anything so its use cannot be descriptive.

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<sup>43</sup> Andrzej Chłopecki, "Taniec postu z karnawałem. Co z muzyki XX wieku zabierzemy ze sobą w wiek XXI?", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19.01.2001, access 29.10.2018, <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75410,108683.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Nikolaus Harnoncourt, "The Interpretation of Historical Music", in: Nikolaus Harnoncourt, *Baroque Music Today: Music As Speech. Ways to a New Understanding of Music* (Portland–Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1988), 15.



## 6. About what lives, even though it has died: historical performance

The beginning of the turn towards history in music coincides with the first attempts to make electronic instruments. The turn was a reaction to the emotional intensity of late Romanticism. Curt Sachs notes: "The reconstruction of ancient instruments as well as the critical editions of Complete Works were symbolic of a growing interest in the music of remote epochs. Also originally an outgrowth of the romantic period, the historical movement in music gradually became a leading force in neutralizing the excesses of the later romantic style [...] In about 1900 this neutralizing tendency found fertile soil in a young generation which came to despise sentimentality, individualism and overrefinement. [...] Moreover, the old music and its instruments, such as the recorder, were particularly suited to small musical gatherings where the youth played themselves instead of listening to concerts or emulating virtuosi on the piano".<sup>45</sup>

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ensembles playing early music on historical instruments, such as the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, founded by Nevill Marriner in 1958, are formed and became immensely popular. It becomes very fashionable to perform music on the instruments which come from the times when the music was first composed (period instruments). The fashion renders the use of the "period" instruments of a given era, in the opinions of radical supporters of the trend, for example, Malcolm Bilson – a pianist and a musicologist – more important than music performers' competencies.<sup>46</sup> Such an extreme approach raises objections among many distinguished musicians such as Harnoncourt and Elżbieta Chojnacka. In an interview Chojnacka says: "Early music has been taken over by the world of archeology, in which the instrument is a fetish, and the means and methods of performing become more important than the music itself".<sup>47</sup> Is the fact stated by Chojnacka subject to the end category or not? It is impossible to settle this dilemma.

The popularity of *Historically Informed Performance* (HIP, also known as *period performance*, *authentic performance*, *historically informed perfor-*

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<sup>45</sup> Curt Sachs, *The History of Musical Instruments*. (Mineola–New York: Dover Publications, 2006), 450–451.

<sup>46</sup> Malcolm Bilson, "The Viennese Fortepiano of the Late 18<sup>th</sup> Century", *Early Music* 8(2) (1980): 161.

<sup>47</sup> Elżbieta Chojnacka, "Rozmowa z A. Chłopeckim", *Studio* 9 (1998): 9.

*mance practice*) seems to be directly related to the popularity of electronic instruments in music (experimental and popular). The access to electronic technology and a lack of understanding for the work of composers experimenting with new sounds definitely fueled the fashion for the music of earlier times and HIP. The presence of complicated technology in the world of music and works of art created in the manner of “compilations”, quoting the work of other composers became the reason for the desire to return to what was considered simple and authentic.

## Conclusion

Death is a product of definition. Depending on how we define art or artistic movement, one can consequently decide on its end or death, or at least “predict” that it will take place one day. If we include periodicity or historicity in the definition of art or an artistic trend, or if we open the field to organic metaphors, then death or end (or at least their possibility) will arise from our definition. It must be remembered that the definition here is arbitrary, and consequently, a potential declaration of death must also be arbitrary. In fact, the discourse on the death of art is still up-to-date only because of Hegel’s authority, several contemporary authors, and above all, the metaphorical projection embedded in our language and the concept of art itself, which allows us to perceive organic features in art, thus contributing to the ease with which one can formulate a thesis about the life or the death of art. However, in the face of a simple description of any artistic phenomenon, these categories become highly problematic.

This organic metaphor is superimposed – as I have shown – by the previous one, a metaphor related to the stage (journey). Both support each other and influence the fact that the discourse on the end, death and dusk is still up-to-date. However, the discourse is only a product of the metaphorical and conceptual structure of our language. We fall victim to metaphors and a conviction that if we can say that Mesopotamian art, Babylon culture, Greek religion and Roman civilization have died or have come to an end, then it is possible to reasonably consider “the death of art” in general and use this term as descriptive or try to find phenomena that it would allegedly denote. Meanwhile, neither the fact that one can talk about the death of art, nor even the fact that such expression is the fruit of the metaphorical projection contained in our language suggests that this category means anything and can constitute a reliable element of description. To my mind, the fact that this is not a useful cate-

gory proves that it cannot be unambiguously and directly applied to any phenomena present in today's art.

The death of art in the light of cognitive metaphor (absolute metaphor in Blumenberg's terms) seems to be a self-fulfilling diagnosis (rather than prophecy). If the art is the person in the narrative who dies, there cannot be more stories about that character's adventures. The metaphor of death confirms the central thesis inscribed in the metaphor: there is no more narrative about art because art is dead. So introducing the metaphor of ART IS ORGANISM/PERSON and exploring its possibilities such as ART HAS COGNITIVE FUNCTIONS, ART MOVES, one can build narratives about how art sees or recognizes where art goes, etc. Though when we use the ultimate possibility of death, it must be evident that there is no movement recognition and vitality in art anymore. The metaphor closes the narration, and confirms itself.

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## Summary

This article deals with the problem of death and the end of art. The discourse on the subject is still ongoing only due to the authority of Hegel, several contemporary authors and above all – this is my main thesis – a metaphorical projection inscribed in our language and the concept of art itself. This allows us to perceive organic features in art, thus contributing to the ease with which one can formulate a thesis on end or death. However, as I point out, these categories become highly problematic when any artistic phenomenon is described. The aim of the paper is to shed the light on these metaphors.

**Keywords:** cognitive concept of metaphor, art, death of art, the end of art, Gianni Vattimo