

ЛОРЕНЦО КАЛЬЦЕТТА

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ИСКУССТВО КАК ПАРАДИГМА: КРИТИЧЕСКОЕ ПРОЧТЕНИЕ КОНЦА ИСКУССТВА У Ф. НИЦШЕ

Настоящая статья призвана предложить прочтение темы конца искусства у Фридриха Ницше, с помощью которой можно реконструировать разработанную концепцию искусства. Эта тема особым образом встроена в линию обсуждения германского девятнадцатого века, ей посвящен широкий спектр источников, по которым она может быть прослежена: в случае с Ницше тема находит проявление в четырех афоризмах (221-223) «Человеческого, слишком человеческого». Эта последняя работа была расценена критиками как вступительный текст фазы ницшеанского Просвещения: с этой критической точки зрения мы попытаемся прочесть Ницше как цельного мыслителя, который, даже если демонстрирует разные концептуальные мыслительные периоды, достигает фазы окончательного оформления мысли, включающей все предыдущие этапы. Конец искусства как раз представляет один из случаев, когда возможна эта ретроградная реинтерпретация.

Настоящая статья является выдержкой из диссертации «Конец искусства у Фридриха Ницше. Метафизика для художников», которая будет обсуждаться 16 июля 2019 года.

Ключевые слова: конец искусства, смерть искусства, смерть Бога, нигилизм, Ницше, Гегель, перспективизм, Человеческое, слишком человеческого, трагедия, искусство, знание, воля к власти, декаданс, культура, истина, греки, XIX век

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ART AS A PARADIGM: A CRITICAL READING OF ART'S END IN F. NIETZSCHE

This article aims to propose a reading of the theme of the end of art in Friedrich Nietzsche through which to reconstruct the conception of art elaborated by the same thinker. This theme is particularly inserted in the line of discussion of the Germanic nineteenth century and it has a wide range of sources to which it can be traced: in the case of Nietzsche, it finds manifestation within four aphorisms (221-223) of Human, All-to-Human. This latter work was considered by critics as the inaugural text of Nietzsche's *Enlightenment* phase: in this critical proposal we will try to read Nietzsche as a unitary thinker, who, even if he shows different phases of elaboration, reaches a final structuring that reabsorbs all the various pre-

vious phases. The end of art represents exactly one of the instances through which this retrograde reinterpretation is possible.

This article is an extract from the thesis to be discussed on July, 16th 2019, titled «The end of art in Friedrich Nietzsche. A metaphysics for artists».

Keywords: End of art; Art's death, God's death, Nihilism, Nietzsche, Hegel, Perspectivism, Human, All-to-human, tragedy, Art, Knowledge, Will of power, *Décadence*, Culture, Truth, Greeks, XIX Century

The concept of the end of art has become famous in its Hegelian formulation. In fact, within the Hegel's system, this instance represents an essential moment both for spirit's history and art's history. The elaboration of an «end of art» is not, however, derived exclusively by Hegel: how Dino Formaggio points out, it's in the «cultural climate of the last years of the Germanic eighteenth century that clearly sinks his roots in the hegelian idea of “art's death”» [3, p. 60]. This is a notion which acquires a proper formulation with *Lectures on Aesthetics*, but it starts developing since the very moment in which *Critique of Judgment* is implemented and discussed. This idea, in short, is born around the end of the eighteenth century, it crowds all philosophical-aesthetic discussion of the nineteenth century, and in the twentieth century it becomes unavoidable, so much so that even today it is the subject of discussion and a tool for understanding contemporary conceptual art. Even Arthur Danto has taken care to return a reading of this particular notion nowadays.

It's essential to understand that romantic Hegelian contributions shaped that philosophical-aesthetic background in which Nietzsche inserted himself, and to which he had to answer. The Nietzschean formulation of the art's end, indeed, constitutes a special case within this scenario: Nietzsche is inserted in a historical-philosophical context according to which the idea that art has come to its end is a matter of fact. In addition to this, as we can reconstruct through its fragments, notes and especially his works, Nietzsche himself identifies art of his day as affected by *décadence*, and he's also the one that sees in the Bayreuth adventure the collapse of all his hopes towards a reflowering of German culture and art in general.

Besides, the notion of the end of art is the subject through which it is possible to read the art's conception in a unified and systematic way within Nietzschean thought. Using this perspective, it's possible to understand how the Nietzschean evaluation of art has remained crucial throughout the course of his literary production but also, at the same time, to comprehend how the way that art itself is understood has changed. The end of art represents exactly the moment when the Nietzschean understanding of the artistic phenomenon changes and art shows its paradigmatic nature of each form of knowledge.

The path that art takes in Nietzsche's thought «it is a long and dramatic peripetous [...] which is constantly dealing with the world of image» [23, p. 41]. It's possible to notice a significant change of direction during the evolution from *The Birth of Tragedy* to *Twilight of the Idols*, which is «an initially unexpected valorisation of modern culture and a reversal of the judgment against it» [23, p. 42]: the profound alienation that modernity generates is first perceived as entirely negative by Nietzsche, but subsequently it is positively accepted and acquired by him.

Along this path two meanings can be traced to which the term «art» refers to. For convenience, said meanings will be called from now on art¹ and art². Art¹ refers to the historical role that art has played: this meaning is the one used in almost all the juvenile production of Nietzsche and it designates the historical function that has been acquitted by artistic creation. Art, in this sense, is a figure derived from culture, that depends from culture and that reflects the conception of the world which is expressed from culture.

Art², instead, is the way of conceiving the artistic essence which makes its first appearance in that posthumously published writing *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, but which is thoroughly formulated only in the mature phase of Nietzschean production, maintaining these characterizations until the moment of mental collapse. Art² is an expression of true human gnoseological function: it is the organization of chaotic data in a sense structure, which allows understanding, vivification of the activity and social functions. In this way, art is a paradigm of every form of human speculation: within it one can summarize all existing forms of knowledge and structuring of reality, from science, to religion, morality and up to art¹.

«It is almost inevitable that, in a development such as the one reported, art becomes a function beyond the form it has historically assumed and from which it needs to emancipate itself» [7, p. 41]. Art's end represents exactly the moment when art¹ ceases to exist, due to the unveiling of the nihilistic nature of the world. In this collapse it reveals itself as art², getting rid of the historical role it had hitherto played. What is happening in this stage is a discovery of true artistic nature, which is so significant because it characterizes the nature of the most important instance within Nietzschean thought. Traces of the significance that belongs to art can be found in *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which Nietzsche repeats three times that life can only be aesthetically justified, as well in the *Nachlass*. In *Will of Power's*, in fact, Nietzsche writes: «Art and nothing but art! It is the great means of making life possible, the great seduction to life, the great stimulant of life» [16, p. 465].

The path that leads to the enunciation of art's end begins already in the first work completed by Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, within which, as commonly recognized, tragedy's death is affirmed, despite of the title. In this work Nietzsche exposes his first formulation of a theory of art. Nietzsche writes: «de-

velopment of art is bound up with the duality of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, just as reproduction similarly depends upon the duality of the sexes, their continuing strife and only periodically occurring reconciliation» [15, p. 21]. The presentation of these two instances represents the focal point of the entire work. In their dialectical relationship [cfr. 2], Apollonian and Dionysian animate artistic creation and allow the Greek people to resolve the negative of their existence, which is an element considered to be unavoidable and unjustifiable. This artistic structure collapses in the moment of the birth of Socratism, which empties the tragic representation of his content since it denies the Dionysian knowledge and consequently art no longer has a true subject. Once tragedy and art in general (of which the tragedy is a model) are deprived of content, they do not have anything to fill the representation with and what is left is the mere representation. This is the suicidal death of the tragedy: suicidal as it was carried out by Euripides, tragedian who gave artistic realization to the Socratic teachings. The Socratic position is the first expression of that process of rationalization which in the modern era is embodied by science. It consists of an optimistic metaphysical conception, according to which the world is understandable and as such is justifiable: suffering, apparently senseless and unjustified, is thus linked back to a reason that resolves it through the understanding of this. This rationalism means that art modifies its structures and its own conception of itself: if before art was the expression of that Dionysian spirits and presented itself as a resolution of the negative, now artistic creation is representation of reality, illusory creation as opposed to the truth provided by science. Nietzsche composes his *Untimely Meditations* opposing this latter instance: with these four essays he gives voice to a critique of society and to his hopes for the Wagnerian adventure. Nietzsche's attention is particularly placed on German culture, which is regarded as affected of *décadence*; the art belonging to this culture is no longer able to stimulate that festive desperation typical of Dionysian feasts, but it is structured as a creation that reconfirms the knowledge of the German bourgeoisie, exactly like the Euripidean tragedy. According to Nietzsche, nothing in German culture shows typical traits of artistic creation, nothing except the Wagnerian works; but this hope will come to an end too.

The artistic image has no longer content, it has no more symbolic reference and so does the culture that depends on it: the identity that can be obtained, as a cultural product, is only phantasmatic in his nature within this aestheticized culture; it's pure appearance without belonging which is placed anywhere and nowhere; in this way the historical culture looms «as an "ocular" culture and intently devoted to perspectivism» [23, p. 48]. It is considered possible to look at all ages from within it, one has the purely illusory claim to take on every past. The Socratic knowledge, as well as the modern scientific one, is a knowledge that eradicates instincts and that leaves no room for that profound unifying feel-

ing. «The extreme outcome of modern Socratism embodied by historical culture is reached. An aestheticized culture is now proposed which is self-produced as an illusionistic universe of masks without living substance, as a sort of enormous proliferation of subjectivistically based perspectives» [23, p. 48]. The aim of modern historical culture is to objectify the world, to unveil its true nature beyond the mythical narrative, which is abandoned for this reason: but by doing so it discovers that the alleged objective nature which is trying to unveil is actually an anthropomorphic construct, subjectivistically founded.

«The objectification of the world is therefore a counterpart to its extreme subjectivization. This is the Nietzschean paradox that introduces us to his definition of nihilism and at the same time of "death of art"» [23, p. 49].

The idea that science is contributing in the work of unveiling begins to loom, that science is revealing to us that what appears as an object is nothing but the result of an objectification and it is therefore nothing other than a subjective fiction.

At the dawn of his Enlightenment phase, which starts with the writing of *Human, All-to-Human*, Nietzsche re-evaluates the characteristics of science considering it no longer as an adversary but rather as an ally, that helps in judging the real status of that "truth" that belongs to modern culture. Nietzsche realizes that the rationalistic search for truth can be directed against rationalism itself and thus science no longer hides its characters of objectification, but it rather makes them evident. Through this process the alleged objectivity shows its true nature as a set of looks perspectively oriented towards the world, each of them subjective, partial and illusory. If among these perspective glances there was a common orientation, if their focus was commonly oriented in the end we would find ourselves on a transcendental level, where despite not having a form of objectivity one has a common ground on which to base knowledge. This conventional level, however, can only be given based on a centre, a focal centre of the gaze from which one can orient his representations of the world. During this phase of his own thoughts, Nietzsche becomes aware «of the loss of the centre that goes under the name of "God's death"» [23, p. 51]: God dying [cfr. Aphorism 125, in 14 p. 162] means the collapse of the last point of perspective aggregation left and at the same time of the very possibility that this unification of perspectives can recur.

«If the points of view on the world multiply in the absence of a centre that coagulates them, then objectivity fails too as a conventional agreement between individuals who see the same world in the same way» [23, p. 52].

The end or death of art makes its appearance at this point: when the death of God is announced, art¹ cannot manifest itself any longer, so it must come to an end, it must die too. Art dies due to the lack of a cultural centre that serves as a support for the world, without which reality itself fails as an object and can only be given as a mere representation. In the moment of death, art goes through a phase of glory, in which it shines due to its past role, now lost, but which still

characterizes it in the eyes of its users; the moment of death, however, is not a historical accident, but is inherent in its essence.

Nietzsche uses the word *Abendröte*, instead of the usual *Untergang*, for the word «sunset» in the title of the aphorism in which he announces the end of art, and this clearly indicates that the essence is revealed in the instant of death, like the sun that, in the «evening» [*Abend*], shines «red» [*rot*] as it sets [4, p. 219].

It is a metaphorical image with a very precise meaning: in the moment of death, which is a prelude to a rebirth, it is revealed what art has been, up to that moment and also what its true nature is without any historical covering. In short, twilight is the last light that, thrown on things, gives them back to us in their glory that is, in their truth; and this happens a moment before they definitively perish [4, p. 220]. This passage represents the end of greatness and of a golden age in the eyes of those who know the past glories of art; but to the «firstborn and premature sons of the next century» it will rather seem that «a new genus [...] of light, happiness, refreshment, reassurance, encouragement, of dawn [*Morgenröthe*] has arisen» [4, p. 221, cfr. Aphorism 343, in 14].

Art¹ contains in itself its own mortality, which is implied by the fact that it is dependent on that focal centre which is God, who is also doomed to die. As art¹ dies, the true soul of art manifests itself: it is no longer a historically played role, but a nihilistic construction of reality and a paradigm through which one can read the various forms of human speculation.

«If, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the theme of the death of tragedy is presented as the presupposition of its rebirth in the Wagnerian *Wort-Ton-Drama*, the death of art in its historical form is the prerequisite for art itself to cast its reflection on philosophy» [7, p. 41].

Modern historical culture inherits what art has been, which means that he takes note of his frailty: this is in aligned with that status of lie that Nietzsche had already recognized in *The Birth of Tragedy*. But with that, it becomes a constructive and negative principle on which to measure every speculative activity of man. If art is undoubtedly the work of mankind, even science, morals, religion, etc. reveal themselves as forms of human speculation, that is artistic constructs inevitably suffering from the contagion of arbitrariness and gratuitousness of artistic creation itself. «That art represents the constitutive principle of morality and science is the idea that guides Nietzsche's thought until the last period of his conscious life» [7, p. 45].

The death of art thus opens up a re-qualification of art itself, in a sense that will gradually become more and more inclusive and that finally in the *Will of power*, based on this redefinition, it will restore that absolute priority of art.

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