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The End of Philosophy: Aesthetics and Philosophy of Sport

Abstract

How could philosophy come to an end? Understood as love of wisdom, philosophy knew that it knew nothing. It started with examination of those who were supposed to know, and found out that they know nothing, but do not know that. Consequently, philosophy knows better because at least it knows that it does not know anything. Later, philosophy found out that people are enslaved because they do not question their own conditions. Therefore, its mission became to enable people to start thinking. When it started to believe that it knows, philosophy came to its end for the first time. The second end of philosophy may happen when it discovers that people, without philosophy's instructions, can think, and that philosophy itself should rethink its position of critique: presupposed innocence of its criticism. To demonstrate this need in contemporaneity, I will present two cases of philosophical criticism: that of the criticism of contemporary art, and that of the radical critique of sport.

Keywords

end of philosophy, critique of aesthetics, critique of contemporary art, philosophy of sport, radical critique of sport, philosophical disinterest and distrust

When history is wholly comprehended in “the recollection and the Golgotha of Absolute Spirit”,¹ the end of philosophy which comes with it can only be a comedy. If comedy is a second farewell when leaving things behind does not hurt any more, the first farewell is a tragedy: we have to leave something behind, but it leaves us with a feeling of guilt. The end of art comes with sadness, the end of philosophy with a satisfying smile. Or, that is how things stood with Hegel. With contemporary philosophising about the end of philosophy, we are at the other end, that of the sorrow of the world, or, more to the point, the philosophical sorrow of philosophy. For Hegel, such a state is just a moment of helpless sadness (*acedia*) which contemplates history as a slaughter-bench. Here, “a question involuntary arises – to what principle, to what final aim these enormous sacrifices have been offered.”² Hegel offers another sacrifice as a solution: just to proceed to the next moment of history,

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Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*. Available at: <https://www.marxist.org/reference/archive/Hegel/works/ph/phc4.htm> (accessed 20 May 2013). This passage in German is: “... die Erinnerung und die Schädstätte des absoluten Geistes...” See: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Available at: [\[chive.org/stream/phenomenologied00hege#page/524/mode/2up\]\(https://www.marxist.org/reference/archive/Hegel/works/ph/phc4.htm\) \(accessed 20 May 2013\).](https://ar-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

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Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (§24). Available at: <https://www.marxist.org/reference/archive/hegel/work/hi/history3.htm> (accessed 20 May 2013).

and the answers will be found. But what if, as in contemporaneity, one does not question the final cause because of horrendous means used to realise it? What if one thinks that the final cause, just for one tiny moment, was within the reach but history failed to move in the right direction and, consequently, all chances were lost forever? Along such line of thought one does not arrive neither at a tragedy nor at a comedy but at the mourning play (*Trauerspiel*) which is “the rejection of the eschatology”.³ While tragedy is a drama of hero, the mourning play is a drama of martyr. Benjamin revealed its secret: “The martyr-drama was born from the death of Socrates as a parody of tragedy.”⁴ The end of philosophy is a mourning play written by philosophy about philosophy’s grim destiny. The best way out of it would be to stick to humanity as the only hero of philosophy’s contemplations, but that can’t be done if philosophy does not allow its objects to have a voice of their own.

1. The philosophical critique of art, and aesthetics

Reduction of art to Fine Art, and reduction of aesthetics to philosophy of art are entwined processes, one conditioning the other. Together, they represent a core of the disenfranchisement of art, as Arthur Danto called it.⁵ Disenfranchisement means that a person is deprived of his or her right to vote, or, more broadly, of the right to have rights.⁶ This measure comes usually with an accent: “For your own good.” When no good comes from it, whom to blame?! The end or death of art is a story quite similar to an ancient anecdote about the ideologue of Yugoslav self-management Kardelj and his treatment of a sick cow. After the first three of his sophisticated medicaments were applied to cure it, the cow just died. “What a pity”, universal doctor says, “I have so many other ideas to try!” From the point of view of the ideologue, a failure is not an option – therefore, the cow is to blame. From the point of view of the critique of ideology, the doctor is to blame in the first place because he is the real cause of illness. Contemporary criticism of art and aesthetics has a similar structure. But what is visible at the first glance is an unexpected abundance and flourishing of both art and aesthetics.

In 1991, Wolfgang Iser announced contemporary trend: “Ästhetik hat Konjunktur.”⁷ To use a term which denotes cyclical ups and downs of capitalist economy and in everyday language its growing part only, is not accidental. It is not art that is growing and expanding, and it is not just growth of entertainment (post)industry that he had in mind. His point was that the aesthetic value has become universal and most important component of a commoditised global economy and of a postmodern way of life: it is yeast which makes them rise. Aesthetics should follow this expansion to become aesthetics beyond aesthetics of art, beauty and creativity.

To confirm this, in 1997 Mario Perniola started his account on the aesthetics of the 20th century with:

“It is unusual to consider 20th century as the century of aesthetic. Still, no other historical period had seen such abundance of aesthetic texts of great importance. Perhaps this is true for any philosophical discipline. During 20th century, all branches of philosophy organized themselves through their journals, associations, international meetings and specialized bibliographies.”⁸

Perhaps we cannot take this proof of expansion as seriously as we would take real speculative richness, he continues, but again, it is true that aesthetics has become much more than just philosophical theory of beauty and good taste. Reduction of aesthetics to philosophy of art, usually out of touch with artistic contemporaneity, was over.

But expansion and de-reductionist move did not end troubles of aesthetics. When Michael Kelly was editing the *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*,⁹ he found out that people whom he invited to write entrances for this huge project which went well beyond traditional aesthetics and extended its scope to aesthetics on the other side of art, were reluctant to accept his invitation, and many turned him down saying: we do not do aesthetics, and we do not want to do aesthetics. So he asked himself “What is it you *don't do* when you don't do aesthetics?” and “What it is that you *do do* when you don't do aesthetics?”¹⁰ He re-examined aesthetics of the 20th century, and “began to worry that the critics of aesthetics were right after all.”¹¹ What they were right about is that there is a tension between the universality of philosophy and the historicity of art, and that in this tension, universality always wins over historicity with aestheticians, including those of such a dignified posture as Heidegger, Adorno, Derrida and Danto. “What I discovered”, he concludes,

“... is that this tension is itself symptomatic of an even deeper problem in their aesthetic theories, namely, *iconoclasm*, by which I mean a combination of *disinterest and distrust in art* that stems from a tendency to inscribe a deficiency into the very conception (or ontology) of art.”¹²

To put it more simple than Kelly might want to, this inscribed deficiency is there to make sure that philosophy comes out of its encounter with art as a winner – as one who knows better, as one who is supposed to know, or, as Lacan calls him, “the God of the philosophers”.¹³ In his latest book *A Hunger for Aesthetics: Enacting the Demands of Art* Kelly offers the third way to overcome a gap between aesthetics and art:

“The ultimate aims of the regeneration of aesthetics here is to find a third way between the total rejection of aesthetics entailed by the anti-aesthetic stance and the uncritical restoration of the status quo ante implied by some of the recent revivals of aesthetics.”¹⁴

The proposal for a third way, as we well know from political experience, gets less elegant and attractive when we find ourselves between Scylla and Charybdis, but then, it is already too late.

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Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (transl. John Osborne), Verso, London/New York 1998, p. 81. Available at: http://rebels-library.org/files/benjamin_drama.pdf (accessed 20 May 2013).

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Ibid., p. 113.

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Arthur C. Danto, “The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art”, in: Arthur C. Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, Columbia University Press, New York 1986, pp. 1–21.

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Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Meridien, Cleveland/New York 1958, pp. 296–297.

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Wolfgang Iser, *Ästhetische Zeiten? Zwei Wege der Ästhetisierung*, Deutscher Werkbund/Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken, Saarbrücken 1992, p. 5.

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Mario Perniola, *L'Estetica del novecento*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1997, p. 7.

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Encyclopedia of Aesthetics in Three Volumes, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1998.

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Michael Kelly, *Iconoclasm in Aesthetics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003, p. ix.

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Ibid., p. xi.

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Ibid.

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Jacques Lacan, “The Mistaking of the Subject Supposed to Know”. Available at: <http://www.missouri.edu/~stonej/mistak.pdf>, p. 7 (accessed 20 May 2013).

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Michael Kelly, *A Hunger for Aesthetics: Enacting the Demand of Art*, Columbia University Press, New York 2012, p. 2.

One of the recent revivals of aesthetics could be what art critic Donald Kuspit had to say about art in *The End of Art*. His account on *postart*, an expression which covers what postmodernity and contemporaneity have to offer, sounds quite scary:

“Postart is completely banal art – unmistakably everyday art, neither kitsch nor high art, but an in-between art that glamourizes everyday reality while pretending to analyse it. Postart claims to be critical of everyday reality but in fact is unwittingly collusive with it. Postart is art in which the difference between creative imagination and the banal reality that it uses as its raw material has become blurred, so that the mechanical reproduction of raw social material is mistaken for an imaginative triumph.”¹⁵

He confronts this kind of art with the New Old Masters, naming just a few of them, who surpass postart because they continue with the old masters’ visionary humanism. Kuspit is professor of art history and philosophy, and he uses aesthetic tenets of modernism to refuse aesthetic approach of postmodern and contemporary art. Contemporary art is a result of perversion which entered art long ago, primarily through Duchamp’s ready-mades. Nowadays, it reached its culmination:

“For with difference obliterated, art becomes a perversion masquerading as a philosophical puzzle – not to say ironical gamble against the odds of non-art – which is why a good deal of contemporary art is of no interest to anyone except its narcissistic practitioners and aficionados, both persistently perverse and thus retardataire. Everyone else goes to the movies, where looking is openly voyeuristic and fetishizing, to satisfy their perverse impulses.”¹⁶

In “The Contemporary and the Historical”, Kuspit explains where banality of contemporary art comes from:

“But only the art that money pours through it passes through it: economic value has become historical value. Passing the market test, the art passes into history.”¹⁷

Kuspit is involved with the mainstream criticism of contemporary art.

This mainstream was expressed in French public polemics about and against contemporary art in the 1990s, which already offered much of the same argument as Kuspit’s a bit later. Yves Michaud thoroughly analysed the polemic in which many intellectuals of different philosophical, artistic, and political background took part. He found out that in spite of their colourful provenience which did not have any common ideological denominator, all the participants shared three arguments: first, for contemporary art, there are no aesthetic criteria one could apply; second, it is separated from the audience which is flabbergasted, not capable of understanding of what is going on; third, not being the pure aesthetic any more, it is the pure market-product.¹⁸ This end of utopia of art, as Michaud calls it in his next book on art in gaseous state, is a result of collapse of enlightened and democratic common sense which supported utopian and lofty status of art. General reproach is that modern and avant-garde art promised something contemporary art is no more able to deliver because it fell under the law of market economy.

Contemporary art is dismissed because, while still exposing its negativity and subversion, it does not dwell on the other side of the market. Its critical attitude is feigned, because it is just a moment of the capitalist production, a part of creative (post)industries, delivering new blood into the market production which sells lifestyles. The ideology of Modernism promised artistic redemption of humanity; the ideology of avant-garde promised revolutionary comeback of art into life which will turn society upside down. Now, after these promises failed, art is blamed for becoming part of the global economy.

When we speak about an artistic work as something special which can solve conflicts of bourgeois society, we treat artistic work as a concrete work, and put this one special kind of work high over all the other which are under command of the capital already. This was possible when the artistic production was more or less unprofitable, or organised in traditional artistic institutions which never reached over the manufacture kind of production. After art entered the realm of serious capitalist industrial and post-industrial production, artistic work achieved its market importance; but this does not mean that it achieved this importance just because the artistic work is something special and of higher value than any other work (i.e. because it is something special as a concrete work). The artistic work, as any other work, is useful for capitalist economy only as abstract work, i.e., as a work which produces surplus value. The criticism of contemporary art insists that artistic work should never become abstract work. Such criticism misses the point, because in the contemporaneity all kinds of concrete work are functional for the market and the capital only in their appearance as an abstract work. Criticism of the abstract work should criticise abstract work, not concrete artistic work; criticism of the concrete work of art should not attack its ability to feature as an abstract work in the orbit of capitalist production – these two appearances of work cannot be mistaken one for the other, if we want to avoid the inverted artistic ideology of modernism, which the contemporary philosophical criticism usually represents, i.e., it is a criticising contemporary art for not being able to sustain and support its modernist ideology of the aesthetic subversion and redemption. The end of art, artistic decadence, banality of art – all these notions express a belief that art failed to redeem humanity because it became market production under command of the capital, which means that if art would stay out of the realm of the capitalist production it could eventually deliver ideologically proscribed results. The same illusion which served as an artistic apology of modern and avant-garde art is now used as an invective against contemporary art, while neither of them could fulfil these expectations irrespectively of art's position at the market and in the capitalist production.

Art is criticised because it cannot support aesthetic eschatology of philosophy any more, or, it is criticised because aesthetic eschatology belongs to the past; aesthetics is criticised because it disenfranchised art, disabling its voice of redemption; or, it is criticised because it itself cannot get rid of the false idea of redemption. The discussion on the end of art is a dispute on martyrdom: who is the martyr, aesthetics or art?

To add some more substance to critique of the philosophical criticism of art, we will now pass to the radical criticism of sport.

2. The radical critique of sport

The philosophy of sport belongs to philosophy of culture as much as philosophy of art does, but it is much younger, as it started as a discipline of

15 Donald Kuspit, *The End of Art*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, p. 91.

16 Donald Kuspit, "Perversion in Art". Available at: <http://www.artnet.com/magazine/features/kuspit/kuspit6-10-02.asp> (accessed 20 May 2013).

17 Donald Kuspit, "The Contemporary and the Historical". Available at: <http://www.artnet.com/magazine/features/kuspit/kuspit4-14-05.asp> (accessed 20 May 2013).

18 Yves Michaud, *La Crise de l'art contemporaine*, Presses universitaires de France, Paris 1997, pp. 16–17.

philosophy not earlier than in the 1960s, not at the departments of philosophy but at the academies and faculties for sport and/or physical culture. Therefore, the philosophy of sport is still in love with its object, building many reasons and explanations both for its high estimation as an object for philosophy and for its lofty status in human and social life as such. Still, on the other side of mainstream philosophy of sport, more or less unrecognised by philosophers of sport, the radical critique of sport has been developed. This kind of sport criticism has to be clearly distinguished from the usual criticism because its position is not that this or that is wrong or false in sport. The radical critique does not only find that sport as such is a false kind of entertainment, it argues that sport is the central point which makes alienated, manipulated in ideologically contaminated world stick together and survive. Its position is that sport is a new opium for or of people.

For examination, we have taken four radical critics of sport: Ljubodrag Simonović, Jean-Marie Brohm, Roman Vodeb, and Douglas Kellner, all of them our still active contemporaries from the different national and cultural traditions, including various sport traditions as well. Ljubodrag Simonović (Serbia) was a basketball player of the highest rank who left Yugoslav national team during the Munich Olympic Games of 1972 as a protest against the doping scandal of the Philippines. After he concluded his active sport career, he became a radical critic of sport. Jean-Marie Brohm is French professor of sociology who devoted his life to the radical critique of sport, starting during the student revolt of 1968. Roman Vodeb is from Slovenia; he used to be elite gymnast and coach, to become Freudian (not Lacanian!) radical critic of sport. Douglas Kellner is American leftist from the UCLA who studied in Frankfurt and Paris, and developed a combination of critical theory with post-structuralist initiatives and cultural studies. As one of the rare public intellectuals known for his criticism of both Bush's presidencies, he was engaged in new media studies, which his radical critique of sport is part of. These authors, taken together, create a field of differences and similarities of which two circumstances deserve an accent: persistent presence of 1960s ideas, and of allegedly Marxian claim that religion (and now sport) is "the opium of people".

The period of 1960s is more than two generations away, but origin of both radical critique and of sport as global phenomena can be traced back to it. Three moves came from those times: New Left theories and ideologies, appearance of the global media spectacle and the radical criticism of it, including sport spectacle and change in the body politics from asceticism to pleasure. New Left theories and ideologies can be described with their three connected concepts: ideology, alienation and manipulation.

Ideology is an old concept coined by Destutt de Tracy in 1796 to signify the science of ideas, but used against him and the other liberal thinkers by Napoleon who used it as a designation of illusory ideas abused to construct a system of false consciousness which had no practical value. Marx explained that consciousness is illusory because reality itself is false reality. Radical critique of sport is shifting from one of these meanings to another, but prefers Napoleon's definition. Simonović does not use the term really, but he exposes competitive fundament of sport as its false consciousness, and attacks the ideology of Pierre de Coubertin. Jean-Marie Brohm says similar things about the competitive sport and the Olympic ideology, with false consciousness in mind even in a chapter title "La fausse conscience sportive",¹⁹ where sport appears to be "a pernicious ideological vision of the World".²⁰ In his use, *ideology*

has postmodern flavour of the phantasmagorical simulation which prevents people to see their reality as it is. That is what ideologies do:

“... a transposition of the principle of reality into a mystifying phantasmagoria under primacy of wishful thought, here appearing as a magic metamorphosis of the capitalist society with its social conflicts, class struggles, destructive and self-destructive violence, into exotic universe, charming and seductive, into oneiric oasis with its mirrors, hallucination, legendary heroisms and its mythological narrations.”²¹

Here, ‘ideology’ is not about ideas and their logic system any more, it testifies to the drug addiction and obscured conscience of masses. Roman Vodeb is specifically critical of the ideology of sport when it demands state support to prescribe sport as an obligatory choice of its citizens, especially in the obligatory and higher education. He approves, however, of the ideological effects when they help to balance societies which would otherwise be destroyed by destructive pleasure principle.

Alienation provides similar supply of differentiated concepts, but its champion is Hegel who insists that the way to emancipation goes through alienation. There is a strong opposite accent though: that identity, previously solid and authentic, has been lost in alienation. In the 1960s, to fight against alienation was a must, intended to produce an authentic person. This idea of alienation persists in the radical critique: sport is seen as a field of total alienation of individuals and of masses, a field understood as a “melting pot” where individualities and authenticities are completely lost. For Simonović, sport is something totally opposite to the free play of human abilities. The athletes are alienated into robots. Vodeb does not acknowledge any essence of the human being, but he accepts Freud’s view of the sexes quite dogmatically and therefore concludes that the women in sport are an alienated aberration, because they try to impress the Father not with their sex-appeal but with their physical abilities, i.e., they turn themselves into men. Brohm and Kellner have more elaborated concept of alienation, but their positions are far apart. For Brohm, sport is a total social fact (term taken from Marcel Mauss) because it cuts all social institutions from the religion to the economy, from the culture to the politics, and includes “an alienated mass psychology of the sport spectacle with its mortifying violence”.²² There is no separation of good and bad in sport: the de-alienation of sport necessarily means the destruction of sport. In short: the sport is alienation as such, a total social fact of total alienation. Kellner’s presentation of the alienation in sport is more sophisticated. While he depicts sport alienation of the masses, he stands up against essentialism, because to suppose the existence of non-alienated previous essence is wrong, as it is wrong to see in any activity, even if it is mediatised, just an alienation. There are multilevel and manifold effects of transformation which are here “either to produce forms of alienation or contribute to disalienation”.²³ For the concept of alienation to make sense, says Kellner,

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Jean-Marie Brohm, *La Tyrannie sportive: Théorie critique d’un opium du peuple*, Beauchesne, Paris 2006, pp. 129–142.

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Ibid., p. 115.

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Ibid.

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Ibid., p. 84.

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Douglas Kellner, “New Technologies and Alienation: Some Critical Reflections”, in: Lauren Langman, Devorah Kalekin-Fishman (eds.), *The Evolution of Alienation: Trauma, Promise, and the Millenium*, Rowman & Littlefield, Oxford 2006, p. 58. Also available at <http://www.greis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/technologyalienation.pdf> (accessed 20 May 2013).

“... one must specify what one is being alienated from, how this is happening, what, if anything, is wrong with this, and how one might overcome what is discarded as alienation.”²⁴

What is really interesting in his examination of the case of Michael Jordan is not only a fact that processes of alienation are examined in concreteness (in relation between “real person” and its “media presentation”, between media product and fascinated consumers, between sport and market values etc.); what is even more interesting is a fact that these alienating processes are themselves contrastive and even contradictory and transgressive.²⁵

As a term appearing in a discourse, *manipulation* is used less, but it appears everywhere as a silent concept. Vodeb’s explanation is cynical, because the primordial desire to please/attract the Father already opens a way for all the other grips of manipulation which are needed because the desire has to be calmed down if society is to survive. Simonović attacks the manipulation of the professional athletes very thoroughly, therefore he calls these athletes – robots.²⁶ Brohm elaborates on “the mediatised manipulation”,²⁷ which is included in an ontologisation of the invisible hand which has become a tyrannical power respected by everybody. Kellner is focused on the media spectacle which “is becoming one of the organising principles of the economy, polity, society, and everyday life”.²⁸ Each of these basic structures of social life is turned into entertainment, passingly losing its traditional logic and purpose to become an entertaining commodity of the media culture. He starts from Debord’s idea. His focus, however, is different, because

“... while Debord presents a rather generalized and abstract notion of spectacle, I engage specific examples of media spectacle and how they are produced, constructed, circulated, and function in the present era.”²⁹

This is really a difference in the general theory. Debord presented his case as a “society of the spectacle”, which is manipulating crowds with the help of recuperation to pacify radical ideas and possibilities; Kellner is analysing concreteness to make visible its dialectic potentials by exposing media culture as a field of conflicting and manifold tendencies. Manipulation becomes enculturation into the contemporary society’s basic values and into its way of life as “a social system predicated on submission, conformity, and the cultivation of marketable difference”.³⁰ Manipulative character of the media culture is not a monolithic one-way system:

“Thus, the spectacle is always contradictory, ambiguous, and subject to reversals and flip-flaps so that a political administration and celebrities can never be sure if they will be beneficiaries or victims of the vagaries of spectacle politics.”³¹

The manipulators turn into the manipulated, and vice-versa. There is no definite division of society between one and another, and the system is not monolithic but exposed to reversals, which opens it to *détournement* – turning media culture against its manipulating intentions.

All radical critics attack new media spectacle, but the media spectacle was and is also a target of many other kinds of criticism. What is interesting about the radical critique of sport is a status of body, because it takes some ambiguous origins from 1960s as well: on one side, body is supposed to be allowed to enjoy without the restraints of culture and its control systems; on the other, body can become a victim of the disciplinary practices which subscribe under “repressive desublimation”, i.e. controlled pleasure which substitutes *jouissance* with socially disciplined body movement. In the first case, what is desublimated is Eros; in the second case, what is desublimated is Thanatos. Radical critique of sport insists that sport with its massive media presence

and enormous attraction to the masses is a repressive and disciplinary body practice, a biopolitics which diminishes human body into the machine. The exception is Vodeb who, as Freudian, claims that sport as a kind of disciplined body pleasure is good for society, but adds immediately that this does not allow the ideologues of sport or the state bureaucrats to promote sport into an obligatory activity, or, to put the health reason in front of sport as socially useful activity, because man's will to dominate over the others and not their health is what makes sport attractive.

Karl Marx is undoubtedly one of the most influential radical thinkers. Within radical critique of sport, surprisingly, the most used is a metaphor (allegedly his own invention) "opium of people".³² In Simonović's writings, "opium of people" enters critical discourse when he compares sport with the industry of death (a metaphor otherwise used for the concentration camps) and claims that it functions as a relationship between the religion and chains in Marx.³³ Taken both together, they mean that contemporary sport spectacles are analogous to Roman spectacles which were the rituals of death. Contemporary sport rituals are new sort of a mass religious movement which represents "flowers on the chains". i.e., it represents a consolation and a substitute, not a real pleasure or happiness. Vodeb consequently approves of desire and pleasure as opium of and even for people because such an opium enables social control of the destructive drives of individuals and masses. Brohm engages "opium of people" as one of the two most important theoretic categories of the radical critique (the other is false conscience³⁴): "Really, the term 'opium of people' with its evident Marxian if not Marxist connotation has no other meaning but in the language of the Critical theory of sport",³⁵ where it occupies a place of "a central thesis: sport, the opium of people".³⁶ Tirade which proves this centrality follows immediately:

"Indeed, the sport opium cannot be reduced to one of his multiple aspects – the fanaticism, the chauvinism, the xenophobia, the racism, the anti-Semitism, the sexism, hating of the opponents, the hooligan violence, the bellowing of fans, the mass emotions, the intellectual regression, the spectacle of gladiators, a taste for symbolic death executions, all these facets which I have tidily dissected because they represent a synthetic totality which Theodor W. Adorno described

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Ibid., p. 9.

25
Douglas Kellner, "The Sports Spectacle, Michael Jordan, and Nike", in: Douglas Kellner, *Media Spectacle*, Routledge, London/ New York 2003, pp. 63–91.

26
Ljubodrag Simonović, *Pobuna robota*, Zapis, Beograd 1981.

27
J.-M. Brohm, *La Tyrannie sportive*, p. 84.

28
D. Kellner, *Media Spectacle*, p. 1.

29
Ibid., p. 2.

30
Ibid., p. 3.

31
Ibid., p. 16.

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Karl Marx, *Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (transl. J. O'Malley). Available at: http://www.marxist.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Critique_of_Hegels_Philosophy_of_Roght.pdf (accessed 20 May 2013).

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Ljubodrag Simonović, *Filozofski aspekti modernog olimpizma*. Available at: <http://www.crvenakritika.org/filozofija/82-filozofski-aspekti-modernog-olimpizma> (accessed 20 May 2013).

34
J.-M. Brohm, *La Tyrannie sportive*, p. 14.

35
Ibid., p. 22.

36
Ibid., p. 23.

as ‘an exhortation to happiness’, ‘illusory pseudo-satisfactions because of which established order still can survive’ and which, precisely because they reinforce the established order by concealing exploitation, alienation, oppression and domination, are never discovered by positivist sociologists who belong to idea of the pre-established social harmony and to ‘values of the sport culture’.”³⁷

“Opium for people” is installed as a central category because it depicts fundamental reason for the persistence of existing (capitalist) order: without sport and his “doping” effect on people, people would get rid of capitalism. Surprisingly, even Douglas Kellner found something religious in the sport spectacle:

“Moreover, the sports spectacle is at the centre of an almost religious fetishism in which sports become a surrogate religion and its stars demigods. For many, sports are the object of ultimate concern (Paul Tillich definition of religion), providing transcendence from the banality and suffering of everyday life.”³⁸

This preoccupation with religion as a comparison to sport, and Marx’s use of the opium metaphor need some elucidation, especially in times of “war against drugs” and “zero tolerance”. First, “opium for people” does not belong to Marx or Marxism. It comes from the enlightenment’s critique of religion, expressed with this or similar metaphors before Marx. Second, Marx is saying something exactly opposite:

“For Germany, the criticism of religion has been essentially completed, and the criticism of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism.”³⁹

At a point where the criticism of religion arrived, the critique of (Hegel’s) philosophy of right takes over, entering into the criticism of human world, society and state without prejudice that these realms are regulated by divine laws. Religion is opium of people because it is “the fantastic realisation of human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality”.⁴⁰ Obviously, criticism of religion is not enough, and consequently, criticism of sport could be just a prerequisite for more substantial criticism of human affairs, if we take this Marxist transport of a metaphor (which is not Marx’s metaphor) into another atmosphere seriously. What radical critiques of sport do, however, is to claim that fantastic realisation of human essence is the real cause of human suffering, and the result of human inability to get at any true reality. Marx says even that critique “has plucked the imaginary flowers on the chain not in order that man shall continue to bear that chain without fantasy or consolation”.⁴¹ In the radical critique of sport, order of things is different than in Marx. The critique of sport is compared with (enlightened, not Marx’s) critique of religion, and sport with opium of people. At the same time, critique of sport is presented as the most important moment of all criticism, which makes sport under Marx’s terms parallel not to the religion but to right and political order (or, to political economy in later Marx).

How is it possible that equation of sport and religion comes hand in hand with the understanding of sport as a fundamental pillar of global capitalist order? One of two reasons is the need to explain why people do not revolt against repression and exploitation. Another is postmodern inclination to transfer the accent of criticism from the critique of political economy to the critique of phantasmagorias, fictions, and ideologies. Marx and Engels had an answer to that, when they wrote the first sentences of *The German Ideology* on then modern German philosophy of Young Hegelians, mockingly describing their fight against phantasmagorias, fictions and ideologies:

“The phantoms of their brains have got out of their hands. They, the creation have bowed down before their creation. Let us liberate them from chimeras, the ideas, dogmas, imaginary beings under the yoke of which they are pining away. Let us revolt against the rule of thoughts. Let us teach men, says one, to exchange these imaginations for thoughts which correspond to the essence of man; says second, to take up a critical attitude to them; says the third, to knock them out of their heads; and – existing reality will collapse. These innocent and childlike fancies are the kernel of the modern Young-Hegelian philosophy...”⁴²

The problem is neither critical radicalness nor dubious use of the opium metaphor but the insistence on imaginary and phantasmagoric side of sport and other spectacles of media culture as the only reality people know about, which leaves critique with just one and only “medicine”: to knock these images out of people’s heads. Another problem is lack of dialectics. For instance, dialectic approach would have to accept that alienation deserves philosophical critique not only because it is something negative in relation to human authenticity, but also because human authenticity is developed through alienation only, within its conflicting and contradictory history, which means that solution does not lie outside criticised phenomenon but inside it. Another problem is a consequence of the first one. When one paints masses enjoying their pastime, for instance sport, as lost in an opium effect, the only way out is to put them into the detoxification process, or, enter into the war against sport with zero tolerance. But how can people decide for such a treatment on their free will? They cannot. Radical critique of sport, confronted with this fact, cannot but patronise sport crowds and underestimate their critical abilities.

So, let me go finally to initial question. How could philosophy come to an end?

In ancient times when it started on its way into history, philosophy, understood as a love of wisdom, it knew that it knew nothing. Therefore it started with an examination of those who were supposed to know (politicians, sophists, artisans, merchants, scientists, artists...) to find out that they are no better: they know nothing, but do not know that. Consequently, philosophy knows more than all those who are supposed to know, because at least it knows that it does not know.

Later, philosophy found out that people are enslaved because they do not question their own conditions. Therefore, its mission became to enable people to start thinking, which cannot be achieved without enlightenment’s criticism spread around the world by devoted scholars of philosophy. Consequently, philosophers started to behave as those who are supposed to know, while ‘people’ in their discourse started to denote those who are supposed to know nothing.

Following this line of development of philosophy, the first end of philosophy happened when it started to believe that it knows, i.e. when philosophy

37
Ibid., pp. 23–24.

38
D. Kellner, *Media Spectacle*, p. 69.

39
K. Marx, *Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*.

40
Ibid.

41
Ibid.

42
Karl Marx; Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology: Critique of Modern German Philosophy According to Its Representatives Feuerbach, B. Bauer and Stirner, and of German Socialism According to Its Various Prophets, 1845/1846* (first published in 1932). Available at: <http://www.marxist.org/archive/marx/works/1945/german-ideology/> (accessed 20 May 2013).

became university discourse. This happened long ago. Nowadays, the end of philosophy could only happen if philosophy discovers that people can think without philosophy's support.

Philosophy should not come to an end without rethinking its position of critique, i.e. its relationship to people and to its objects of examination. Criticism of contemporary art, and radical critique of sport, testify to philosophical disinterest and distrust in contemporary art and sport, and disinterest and distrust in contemporary multitude, masses, or people who are supposedly caught into alienation, manipulation and ideology unable to get out of it without some external help. In both cases, it invests its wishful thinking into art and into people. With art, this wish insists on presupposed modernist mission of art, and in the radical critique of sport, it insists that people are so drugged with phantasmagorias that only philosophy can sober them. But both to underestimate people and to overestimate art is done just to install philosophy in position of a stronger partner which supposes that it represents knowledge of which both art and people are unaware and know nothing about. But from Lacan⁴³ we know the madman is not just somebody who thinks that he is Napoleon. The real madman is Napoleon who thinks he is Napoleon. And Bonaparte, says Lacan, does not think that he is Napoleon but when he is at his end, trying with all of his powers to prove to himself that he still is what he thinks he is. Philosophy who thinks that it is in possession of knowledge is at its end.

In Slavoj Žižek book *Living in the End Times*⁴⁴ one cannot find "philosophy" in the Index, but all philosophers from Plato to Jameson and Badiou and Rancière are there. End times? It is not about philosophy's fate, it is about people's destiny.

Lev Kreft

Kraj filozofije: estetika i filozofija sporta

Sažetak

Kako bi filozofija mogla doći k svome kraju? Shvaćena kao ljubav prema mudrosti, filozofija je znala da ništa ne zna. Krenula je s propitivanjem onih koji su trebali znati te saznala da oni ništa ne znaju, no da to ne znaju. Posljedično, filozofija zna više od svih njih jer ona barem zna da ništa ne zna. Kasnije je filozofija saznala da su ljudi porobljeni zato što ne propituju uvjete vlastita postojanja. Prema tome, njena je misija postala omogućiti ljudima da započnu misliti. Kada je počela vjerovati da zna, filozofija je prvi puta došla svome kraju. Drugi kraj filozofije može se dogoditi kada filozofija otkrije da ljudi mogu misliti i bez njenih instrukcija te da ona sama mora nanovo promisliti vlastitu poziciju za kritiku: pretpostavljenu nedužnost njene kritike. Kako bih predočio ovu potrebu u suvremenosti, predstavim ću dva slučaja filozofijske kritike: kritiku suvremene umjetnosti i radikalnu kritiku sporta.

Ključne riječi

kraj filozofije, kritika estetike, kritika suvremene umjetnosti, filozofija sporta, radikalna kritika sporta, filozofijska nezainteresiranost i nepovjerenje

Lev Kreft

Das Ende der Philosophie: Ästhetik und Sportphilosophie

Zusammenfassung

Wie könnte die Philosophie zu ihrem Ende kommen? Als Liebe zur Weisheit begriffen, wusste die Philosophie, dass sie nichts wusste. Sie begann mit der Prüfung jener, die es wohl wissen

sollten, und fand heraus, dass sie nichts wissen, sich dessen aber nicht bewusst sind. Folglich weiß es die Philosophie besser, da sie wenigstens weiß, nichts zu wissen. Später entdeckte die Philosophie, dass Menschen versklavt sind, weil sie ihre eigenen Existenzbedingungen nicht in Zweifel ziehen. Daher wurde ihre Mission, Menschen zu befähigen, ihr Nachdenken in Gang zu setzen. Als sie zu glauben begann, sie würde wissen, kam die Philosophie erstmals zu ihrem Ende. Das zweite Ende der Philosophie könnte passieren, wenn sie erspürt, dass Menschen ohne ihre Instruktionen denken können und sie selbst ihre kritische Position neu überdenken sollte: nämlich die vorausgesetzte Unschuld ihrer Kritik. Um diesen Bedarf in der Zeitgenossenschaft zu demonstrieren, werde ich zwei Fälle der philosophischen Kritik präsentieren: die Kritik der zeitgenössischen Kunst und die radikale Kritik des Sports.

Schlüsselwörter

das Ende der Philosophie, Kritik der Ästhetik, Kritik der zeitgenössischen Kunst, Sportphilosophie, radikale Kritik des Sports, philosophisches Desinteresse und Misstrauen

Lev Kreft

La fin de la philosophie : l'esthétique et la philosophie du sport

Résumé

Comment la philosophie pourrait-elle toucher à sa fin ? Comprise comme amour de la sagesse, la philosophie savait qu'elle ne savait rien. Elle a commencé avec la remise en question de ceux qui étaient censés savoir, et a découvert qu'ils ne savaient rien, mais ne le savaient pas. Par conséquent, la philosophie sait mieux car au moins elle sait qu'elle ne sait rien. Plus tard, la philosophie a découvert que les gens sont asservis car ils ne questionnent pas leur propre condition. Donc, sa mission est devenue celle de rendre les gens capables de penser. C'est lorsqu'elle a commencé à croire qu'elle savait que la philosophie a touché à sa fin pour la première fois. La deuxième fin de la philosophie pourrait arriver lorsqu'elle aura découvert que les gens, sans les instructions philosophiques, peuvent penser; et que la philosophie elle-même devrait repenser sa position de critique : l'innocence présumée de ses critiques. Afin de démontrer ce besoin dans la contemporanéité, je présenterai deux cas de critique philosophique : celui de la critique de l'art contemporain et celui de la critique radicale du sport.

Mots-clés

fin de la philosophie, critique de l'esthétique, critique de l'art contemporain, philosophie du sport, critique radicale du sport, désintérêt philosophique et méfiance