

# Art and the Technosphere



# Art and the Technosphere:

*The Platforms of Strings*

By

Žarko Paić

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Dedicated to Luc Tuymans



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	viii
Introduction .....	ix
Chapter One.....	1
Picture—Sign—Event: Contemporary Art as Time without History	
Introduction: Aesthetic thinking and the technological circuit .....	1
1.1. Signs with no meaning: The picture in the age of the technosphere .....	29
1.2. The image as an event: The end of information and the beginning of life.....	55
Conclusion.....	70
Chapter Two .....	74
The Silence of Duchamp: Time without Event	
2.1. Signs of emptiness and the spatial turn .....	74
2.2. “Historical avant-garde” vs. “Neo-avant-garde”: Peter Bürger vs. Hal Foster and others.....	91
Epilogue.....	116
Chapter Three .....	118
If Language Is No Longer Spoken: Aporias of Conceptual Art	
3.1. Time as destruction: From “wire” to “wireless” .....	118
3.2. A question of language: Two approaches to conceptual art— Sol LeWitt and Joseph Kosuth.....	138
3.3. “Post-conceptual condition”?.....	161
Notes.....	172
Bibliography .....	175
Index of Names.....	186

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book tries to represent my theoretical *credo* and reflections on the relationship between the position of aesthetics in contemporary philosophy, the theory of contemporary art, and the notion by which I seek to understand contemporaneity as a whole—the *technosphere*. Over the years of exploring this complex relationship, the thought has matured that the new technoscientific epoch, devoid of metaphysics and fundamental ideas of beauty and the sublime, has confronted us with a zero point of radical turn. We are hovering over the abyss of technological nihilism, and in this position, we are abandoning the human dimension of rootedness in the earth. Therefore, it should be imperative to see how to preserve the trace of the presence of great art that has adorned the historical heritage and to open up access to the age of hyper-reality.

The assumptions that I outline here contribute to understanding the ontological and cognitive discomfort that the world is no longer subject to aesthetic enchantment-disenchantment but to the computation, planning, and construction of artificial reality and artificial life. Dealing with the rule of the *technosphere* in life without the metaphysical additions of “sense” and “dignity” to art signifies the openness of the last station on the path to the singularity of thought-life. I hope this book will inspire others to think even more deeply about what no longer has any depth and to develop completely different thinking on the relationship between the *technosphere* and creativity without the unnecessary phobia of the technological challenge of the posthuman condition.

I owe my thanks to friends and associates who have followed my research for all these years, and particularly to important thinkers with whom I have built in dialogue, at least I hope, in my way of talking and arguing about the aesthetic construction of the contemporary world: Prof. Dieter Mersch, University of Zürich; Prof. Giorgio Agamben, The European Graduate School; Prof. Wolfgang Iser, University of Jena; Prof. Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, John Cabot University, Rome; and Prof. Krešimir Purgar, University of Osijek.



## INTRODUCTION

In the analysis of the relationship between aesthetics and contemporary art, this book goes through the theoretical paradigms of hermeneutics, phenomenology and semiotics when it comes to the notion of the image and its new ontological status concerning the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde art of the 20th century, going in the direction of the analysis of the posthumanism/transhumanism of art today. Showing that we must begin to think of the aesthetic construction of worlds, rather than presenting and representing the idea in its eternal splendour, I conclude that synaesthesia requires a new form of cybernetic sensitivity, and contemporary art leaves the avant-garde procedures of shock, provocation and experiment and enters the uncertain area of the metatheory of visualization of the event. From the caves to the temples, the cathedral and the museums of contemporary art, and, finally, to the self-reflective event of creation and enjoyment in a digital simulation, a cycle of the historical development of art is closed. The problem is no longer “what” art is but “how” we should determine the difference between the aesthetic object and artificial life.

With the *technosphere*, Western metaphysics disappears in the autopoietic system of thought. Instead of the continuation of philosophical aesthetics in another modern sense and form, and instead of an apology of the ideas of contemporary art that have spread to the worlds of life in the global world, I would like to state the main assumption that we are leading the synthesis of “integral reality,” which means that aesthetic-artistic performance no longer applies to humans. Instead, we are encountering cyborgs and technologically dematerialized practices. Post-conceptual art deals with these issues.

In the first chapter, the new theory of the image is explained in the era of the *technosphere*. There are, consequently, two possible paths for that historical distinction and a multitude of images in an age that no longer has any spiritual need for art: (1) the path of the ontology of the sign as the substitution of meaning in semiotics/semiology, phenomenology, pragmatism and deconstructionism; (2) the path to the event of becoming (*Werden, devenir*) by transforming the condition within the image so that it becomes mobile and is corporally transformed into the construction of a new media reality in image science (*Bildwissenschaft*) and the digital aesthetics of visualization. Following the principles of cybernetic

management, the worlds based on the *feedback* system and the environment take place in the process of translating the language in the signal as a message. The sign always presupposes the existence of a “Big Other” in the form of reference to which it refers. The event, however, represents the emergence of the case (*contingency*) that cannot be explained by the initial cause(s) and ultimate end. In both cases, the sign of communication and events as information—which also means that the event has a hidden primacy in a non-ontological sense, just as it was formulated by early Derrida in *Of Grammatology* that writing preceded speech—pose the question of the image as a metaphysical issue about the meaning of Being. And there is no more an *a priori* form of the language, only the visual code.

The second chapter discusses the relationship between the avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde concerning the question of the extent of the basic ideas of shock, provocation and experiment as secularized concepts for the metaphysical notions of beauty and the sublime. The invocation of chaos and freedom with which the new art of “historical avant-garde” has opened up space for a paradoxical relationship of aesthetics and technology seems to have ceased to be the guiding principle even today when contemporary art seeks inspiration in the research of technoscience and “artificial life” (*A-life*). What denotes the loss of faith in history? It might not be a symptom of indifference towards political events. After all, without the world wars, civil wars, and the revolutions of art in the 20th century, it would have remained just an empty plate. The reason lies in the fact that after the death of God, what remains is to seek justification in politics *as* ideology and aesthetics *as* a mystical-technical way of exposing the Being. The turning point is yet to occur in the 21st century. Why? Simply put, art “today” is no longer witness to any other mission than the *re-politicization* and *re-aestheticization* of the world.

At the time of the dominion of the *technosphere*, passages of time without events and spaces of contemporary art are devoid of content but become the pure form of the architecture of absolute deterritorialization/reterritorialization. We can see that the inadequacy of contemporary art is strongly related to the impossibility of “revolution” and “utopia” in an already altered modern world in which the only true “revolutionary utopia” has been realized in the technological construction of the “Real.” This primarily refers to the experiments in “*A-intelligence*” research, from which “*A-life*” is now being created. Instead of events that are awaiting both the neo-avant-garde movement called Situationism and fundamentalist messianic theologians, all that is on the agenda is the order of change in the technological environment itself. All that, with heavy

acceleration, might produce the preconditions for the emergence of the *posthuman condition*.

The third chapter opens the complex problem of conceptual and post-conceptual art today. Does contemporary art need the incessant proving of “revolutionarity,” “libertinism,” “subversiveness,” “critical participation,” “solidarity-in-community” and all the other features of re-politicization if the early avant-garde already solved the issue of God by searching for the anthroposophical, theosophical and mystical dimensions of the “*tertium organum*,” as was the case with Marcel Duchamp, Kazimir Malevich and Joseph Beuys? This question can be answered in the following manner. The detritus of history always ends up in a new museum. There is no need for cynicism here on the part of those arriving tardily. This is simply what it is. Rebellion against order and the preservation of order, change, and steadfastness have been inscribed into the essence of contemporaneity. Consequently, the combat against the end of art, in the age of the pseudo-synthesis of cultural needs for excess and experiment, should be understood merely as the other side of its necessary aestheticization. And yet, behind all of this, there is nothing more than the *technosphere* and its platforms, made of strings. It would be improvident to underestimate the role of conceptuality in this process of the transfigurations and transformations of the condition.

However, it appears that the exit from aporia of contemporary art primarily presumes the destruction of what is the impossible mission of art in confronting the essence of technology today. This is about abandoning the use of any prefixes and suffixes in the future such as *post-*, *neo-* and *re-*. What is philosophy left with if art becomes a concept? Have we truly reached the point of realizing that after such an event, both thought and production (*logos* and *poiesis*) lose their essence in a collision with the historically powerful negation of being, one that assumes authority over the occurrence of an actual event as the construction of worlds? The concept is information, and information—starting with *logos* and *poiesis*—ends up in the void of the *technosphere*’s endless rotation. *Téchne* is the last word of philosophy and art in the indifferent era, *téchne as tertium datur* beyond language and the image.

We will see how the realization of metaphysics in cybernetics is reflected in the historical development of art from caves and temples to museums and information files. The question of the essence of art today transcends the boundaries of what the meaning of art was: to open up the possibility of a new horizon of the world. We are at the end of historical time. Art, as well as aesthetics, becomes a part of the *technosphere* that calculates, plans and constructs fascinating worlds created to seduce and attract but also to think differently from a human being who had historically

metaphysical attributes and can no longer be as such. So, this book represents a thought journey through time that is disappearing in its entirety and leaving the question of how to preserve the dignity of art, without which one cannot fulfil an existential mission on Earth and in space. We are approaching a state of immediate immersion in the *technosphere* that lures and swallows us and without which nothing can exist.

## CHAPTER ONE

# PICTURE—SIGN—EVENT: CONTEMPORARY ART AS TIME WITHOUT HISTORY

The magic of painting is exactly in its eternal mystery we are trying to decipher, without asking for hidden reasons in everything we see, and therefore a multitude of meanings come from wooden canvas panel, drawing, copper, fresco. With one word, it's a picture that constantly sends the signs to us.

José Ortega y Gasset, *Revival of the Image* (Ortega y Gasset 2002, 367)

### **Introduction: Aesthetic thinking and the technological circuit**

Is there a picture of a metaphysical secret key that language cannot unlock? When we have moved away from the time when we at least have a reliable concept of the picture in close connection to the beauty that comes from art as an event from which arises the autonomous work, something very uncanny pervades our thoughts. Removal from the primordial sources means bringing the end of its impact closer. Plotinus came up with the stance of emanating the idea. The emergence or outbreak of something out of nothing, and in this emerging the upheaval work does not stop, has its resemblance with the picture in a volcanic crater. When magma breaks through directly from the burning crater to the land, traces just like geysers break out on the fiery surface. The emanation of the image that still inspires the idea of beauty can be found in the Baroque paintings created by Diego Velázquez. However, as José Ortega y Gasset correctly pointed out in his analysis, the problem of that form of painting is really that it was “painting for painters,” or, in other words, the form of painting that established the modern autonomy of the art.

The picture without a secret—it is as though it no longer deserves the name “image.” But what specifically is going on with the word “secret” as such? Is it just a mere expression of the mystic art, unlike in philosophy and science (and in harmony with myth and religion, without which it loses the reason for its survival), or does it operate with concepts, prospects and functions, only with percepts and feelings as expressed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their book *What Is Philosophy?* (Deleuze and Guattari 1991/2005)? Secrecy denotes an attribute of Being. It is not, therefore, just the wonder of existence that reaches its deepest foundation of “life” with its spell. The miracle refers to the fact that something exists as such. When the world in its disclosure of light opens up the wonders of all Being, we need secrets. We must be mindful of the fact that the mystery of Being is closely related to the human need for beauty. There is a need for the fulfilment of Being. When something unconnected with the need for unity, harmony and integrity inspires the movement to the goal that exists from the beginning as the purpose of Being all alone, then a moment occurs that maintains metaphysics. To paraphrase one wise contemporary theoretician of architecture who said that without beauty, a human is dying, we will add that without the mystery of the image, there are no reasons to continue to exist as we have for centuries. It could not be a matter of revealing the secrets in the understanding of the world as a miracle.

However, the modern age has been technically secularizing the notion of the miracle. It becomes more and more recognizable in the mystic of life created by technological engineering and the manipulation of the genetic resource instead of in the mystery of elevation in architecture. From that viewpoint, it becomes clear that mystery belongs to the communion of Gods and people as *ethos*, while the descent into the underworld of the soul signifies the decadence of the mystic of the subject. Sculptural art, therefore, should be understood as having quite a different task than the aesthetic need to decorate our inner space. Accordingly, the miracle demands its “public secret.” It differs from the secret, but the *logos* in the apophantic style of speech did not derive from the rationality of a thinking machine that chaotically reveals the riddle of the Sphinx. However, the secret of its own life remains very opaque. All the problems that are present in “nature” should be solved pragmatically-constructively thanks to the skills and knowledge of empirical nature. But questions about “history” cannot be answered without preliminarily opening oneself to failure, even to the danger of falling into chaos without the hope of returning with the eternal cosmic order.

In terms of disclosure, simultaneously, the necessity of the occurrence of Being lies in the possibility of “Being” and the possibility that the act of

disclosure did not reach the interpretation of its visible and invisible features. Hence, time has a significant role in upholding the truth. Otherwise, modern archaeology, with all its technological theories of “secrets,” for example, allegedly dating the period of the Greek Dark Ages to the end of the century, would be as utterly unnecessary as any other forensic science to examine the age of an object excavated from the depths of the earth in the light of day. The possibility of misunderstandings about the meaning of an object and its cultural use in “our time” inevitably emerges when we try to interpret its meaning and go beyond the time in which it originated. Hermeneutics assumes that there should be something like universality in the judging of things, regardless of the timing and distinctions in the notion(s) of the meaning of the substance of the things. The statue of the goddess Athena in the Parthenon during the Age of Pericles and its reconstruction today in the age of digital aesthetics are certainly not quite so different events if we look at them as observers and without the further education acquired by art history.

The significance of this statue affirmed as the uniqueness of the experience of artistic creation is an event in which the work and its understanding of the historical space are acquired. The statue’s time belongs to the time of the mythical-religious cult as a feast. Hence, the meaning of something from antiquity is lost in the depths of history. Certainly, given that, there could be still some substitute for that source in the present time. On these issues, the most significant insight into the relationship between hermeneutics and the philosophy of art as well as aesthetics is certainly given by Hans-Georg Gadamer. He showed, for instance, that, based on Plato and his thought about art as imitation (*mimesis*), there always exists something else that belongs to the metaphysical organization of fallen history. And we can add that this is also true for all high cultures outside of the West (such as Indian, Chinese, or Japanese). To put it simply, the idea of imitating the originals, without which art as a depiction of beauty in Greece would not have cause for survival, is based on the persistence of Being. Its immutability and divine order (*taxis*) in the world order witnessed occasional changes. The order in the cosmos determined order in nature (*physis*) and, consequently, order in the state (*politeia*). No other order, as a perfect model of the world, divine and human, would be possible without the mystery of the art with a cult-religious event, which appears as the “imitation” of Being in its eternal and immutable order, being manifested as the appearance of the beauty. What, then, denotes art as *mimesis* at all? We can find the answer in Gadamer’s assumption at the end of his discussion in his essay “Art and Imitation”:

The testimony of order seems to be valid forever and ever, because every piece of art, even in our world that is increasingly changing into uniformity and seriality, testifies to the spiritual power of the order that constitutes the reality of our life. In art, what we all do is exegetically what we are doing here: the constant construction of the world. In the middle of this common and intimate decomposing world, it stands as a pledge of order, and perhaps all the forces of maintenance and preservation that bear human culture are based on what we exemplify in the artist's work and the experience of art: by always re-arranging what is falling apart. (Gadamer 1993a, 36)

The miracle is not just about the persistence of the world, regardless of its changes. On the contrary, the miracle is happening as a secret of Being itself. And that event might be magnificent because nothing is guaranteed in advance to answer the question of the meaning of Being. There are at least two miracles, and each would always be amazing in its singularity. Some, however, will say that it could be yet another wonder even more wonderful than the last. First, it is a miracle that Being might be open to existence, and it is another miracle that what we can see, hear, touch, feel and think of in its fullness of time has its meaning precisely as a remembrance of the past in the present with a view to the future. What happens thanks to the thinking of saying has never lost its meaning. Undisclosed in the time of the present, the length of service again breathes other life memories. The secret of the relationship between Being and thinking can never be released until someone appears who will tremble by thinking and lives like those of Pascal's "bulrush in the wind." Yes, it always has its own Antigone, and, at all times, the need for its own Oedipus also exists. The paradox of modern art, which completely belongs and adheres to the idea of the scientific construction of Being, thus assumes for its "established foundation" the idea of the experiment and the method instead of the beauty and exaltation of the work itself in seeking the redemption of the beginning of the sovereignty of the new. By the way, this is nothing more than a possible mimicry of the religious-social mystery of Christ's sacrifice. For Christians, art at the end of history, as Georg W. F. Hegel perfectly described, has lost its prophetic content. Consequently, the spiritual need for art, once so respected, has disappeared forever. Art, thus, has become only a conceptual tool to "preserve the past" (Marquard 2003, 64-81 and 113-121). Was the sublime sacrifice not thus ultimately useless?

Without the historical sacrifice, without which the art of the image of the Western circle could not have been justified from the Middle Ages until its condemnation by Impressionists and Paul Cézanne, the aesthetic sacrifice turns into an act. That sovereignty of the body assumes what Georges Bataille called the "solar economy" of the non-capitalist exchange



event (Bataille 1989). It seems that the image of the miracle and mystery of grace and helplessness has been left from the very beginning for something that goes beyond its pictorial meaning. Those images were revealed by Plato's concept as *mimesis*, but the ordinary meaning of the term as an imitation of nature or ideas that allow the image its existence will not satisfy us. *Mimesis* might not be a mere imitation but a possibility of creating the world as a semblance and as beauty. What seems to be just another medium of "creating" the idea of the divine God from Plato to St. Thomas Aquinas when it comes to the idea of "art" should not mark a map and some ideological "nature" of things. Instead, it should be presumed that *mimesis* in its essence works like the generative principle of placing art into the technical production of appearances as "truth."

In the image that marks and conceals the traces of what is depicted in the illustration-representation as "truth," we are presenting a dispute between two lines that should be almost the same. In other words, *mimesis* has historically marked the emergence of art as something that in principle means much more than "truth." Therefore, what Martin Heidegger spoke about in his lectures concerning the essence of space and the idea of art in the sharp differences between the Greek and the Modern seems appropriate. He said that the Greeks did not require the theory of the fine arts such as modern art given what was necessary at the very beginning of philosophical aesthetics. So, the reason lies in the fact that in Greek statues and paintings, we recognize the *polis* as being inhabited by living gods, not chimaeras and illusions, the fictions and the substitutes of the divine. The lively presence of the gods in the paintings and their mere representation, therefore, signify an essential difference in the essence of the art. The immediacy of spiritual-bodily singularity must be vivid, and what is "dead" is what lies behind the scenes of the idea of a divine representation in the image (Heidegger 2010, 193-195).

Heidegger's approach to the history of Being as the history of the Western thought called philosophy in the early days of Greece came to the standpoint of Being as truth in un-concealment (German *Unverborgenheit*, Greek *aletheia*) (Heidegger 2000, 263-288). The wonder and secret of Western metaphysics is that truth is always "here," not "there." It belongs to the delusion of Being itself. The event—as seen in the epochs of the history of Being from Greek and Roman antiquity and the Christian Middle Ages to the modern age of science and technology and the planetary era—points out the possibility of interpretation based on its disclosure. Searching for truth cannot be the core of the mental research that someone selectively undertakes, such as with the secrets of Gnostic sects. Quite the contrary, Hermeticism is represented by the feature of secret knowledge as

knowledge of the secret itself. It swears by the name of the god Hermes. Traditionally, he had a significant role as the messenger of the gods among humans. Understanding the meaning of the essence of the world seems to pinpoint that he is placed on the verge of symbolizing truth through the indirect speech of the symbol and by concealing what its fracture might be by seeing into the “other nature” of the things. Hermes was, therefore, truly represented as a mythologically performed God and, of course, as understanding and mediating meanings that are not accessible to the one whom they addressed.

Therefore, every single notion of an attempt to interpret the signs in speech or imagery had to take a form in which it could already appear. Given the inflation of interpretative modes of speech is still inevitably coming, we are almost largely thrown in the world of that original thinking. However, the eclectic periods in the history of Hellenism were synthetically driven by the delirium of many interpretations of the world. That surely means that the world in its complexity can no longer understand itself, either directly or intuitively. One of the key features of such a world lies in its hybridity. It cannot be further disassembled without a deconstruction of the whole range of diverse knowledge that is compulsory for special tools to retrieve the very core of reality.

What is the term *aletheia* that Heidegger draws attention to in his thoughts on the paths of philosophy as metaphysics and matches to the “second beginning” (*andere Anfang*)? It should suffice to say the following. The un-concealment of truth does not only happen as a *consonance* with the thinking of Being, as it was “rightly” logically judged by the medieval definition of truth by setting an *adequatio intellectus ad rem*. If that were the case, then we could say that thinking already has a hidden primacy over Being. The miracle could not exist without its excitement in the sense that it can then be argued that the subject of truth has determined the object of its knowledge as truly what exists as such. Nor is it even important that the mind determines boundaries, as in Hegel’s remarkable definition of philosophy. Kant’s metaphysics of idealism started from the conception of Being as *positum*. Therewith it might be set by the act of thinking and what should be already connected as *thing-in-self* (*Ding-an-sich*) (Heidegger 1976b, 445-480).

We know how much such a form of ontological “subjectivism” as solipsism in the sense of George Berkeley’s *esse est percipi* is credited to the nominalism of medieval ontology. In Heidegger’s turn of the road to the truth as the fundamental words of Western metaphysics, it is about instilling the very thing that, mysteriously and miraculously, hovers before everyone in front of their eyes. And because of the fact that everyone might be

currently present, somehow it immediately disappears from the perspective. In the un-concealed place, everything becomes a semblance of things as such, like the scene from *The Odyssey* when Athena, the patron goddess of Odysseus, made him not known to the people until he reached the court of King Alcinous, even though he was very familiar to them. The truth in its disclosure cannot have its “objective validity” simply because it happens that, in the historical-epochal moments of the events of Being, language as saying is determined by boundaries. Or, to put things differently, it is true that, in its apophantic event, the encounter between the source of emanation of the image and its mediation in language has already been addressed to someone in the historically one-way street. It might be called the secret of its singularity and contingency, but not of its eternity and necessity. In Hegel’s thinking, the decay of the absolute spirit was, among other things, in the breakup of “objective validity.”

When it comes to knowledge in the subjects of exact natural sciences (mathematics and physics), there must be a sign that the subject became the substance. The reflection on nature simultaneously becomes a self-reflection of nature’s cognition. The end of rationalism, hence, conveys Friedrich Nietzsche’s view of the perspectivism of truth, which, thanks to art, reveals the truth and the lie of “Being” in the sense that goes beyond the moral. And that means that with a sublime cycle of Being as becoming (*Werden, devenir*), in its necessity, it takes place in the freedom of glory as the eternal recurrence of the same. It is no longer a matter of subjecting man to overcoming “goals” and “purposes” as values in the service of that alliance. What humans generously bestowed upon the gods throughout Western history has been coming back, and so the beginning of the truth of “that” world now has the character of the inevitable illusion of the eternal “truths” because, metaphysically speaking, “God is dead” (Heidegger 1977, 209-267).

What, then, represents the image (*eikon, icon, Bild*) in that miracle of Being if not some mysterious sign of gods as the imitation of the true world or, indeed, an event that tells what the image reveals, whether something or someone, nothing or anyone, until the very occurrence of the dizziness of the signs constructed as an illusion of conceit, as a pure illusion of the reality? And does that happen just in the way that the image gives a new meaning that it could never have had before, even for such a picture, despite the massive remnants of the fantasy? In any case, the image as a sign indicates the emanation of an idea that language cannot express in its logical-historical possibilities. The picture as an event, however, announces the upcoming one that lies beyond language and the picture. In both cases, it might be evidence that the image did not have its autonomy, although

modern art cannot be established without the modern idea of a self-conceptual mind. What, consequently, is meant by the expression “the autonomy of the picture”?

In analogy with the “autonomy of art,” which becomes a condition for the possibility of emancipating an image from language, it is necessary to show that it might be an autonomy that has the same metaphysical status as, for example, Antonin Artaud’s performative-conceptual art, or in Stéphane Mallarmé’s poetry, where language could not be in the service of meta-language to “make sense” of, for instance, medieval epics and Baroque descriptions but rather releases its own logical and rational shackles and becomes a pointless picture of its auto-referential meaning. Just like “painting for artists” in the manner of Velázquez, Mallarmé also created great symbolic poetry for entirely excellent educated poets. Art without foundation in the divine revelation of the Absolute regarding plain and visual art such as painting, sculpture, and architecture must necessarily be found in something “inward.” How could we take that operation quite seriously? The transmission of the underdetermination principle from Werner Heisenberg’s theory of quantum physics must be transferred to the uptake of theoretical reflections on modern art doomed to the emptiness of its own self-determination. That is the way in which one could reach the final goal (Ranciére 2011).

Art in its “autonomy” as a language needs to pass down the path to liberation from the rational grid of senses. In the case of an image, it might be obvious that, in theoretical terms, it is the abandonment of the notions of historical iconology whereby the image cannot itself impose rules of meaning even when there is no longer an “iron law,” such as the central perspective used from the Renaissance to Cézanne (Belting 2009, 9-20).

That crucial assumption had to be witnessed by an act of radical art practice as a way of overcoming the differences between life and art, technology and production. But, as Friedrich Schelling had long been aware regarding the event when the art is determined by the destiny of God’s son, it was necessary to fall into the abyss of the technical idolatry of all ages or to open up the possibility of a substitute strategy for the creation of the sacred for art to save humanity from transformation into a non-human machine. This was probably the reason why modern philosophy was so fully trusted with art, although the art itself, regarding some of its “excesses” and “nonsenses” in the 20th century, did not deserve it. Many distinctive artists of the 20th century, with the avant-garde stamp, were searching for a substitute position in the divine image as a sign and/or the event—Malevich, Duchamp and Beuys, to name a few (Paic 2021). There are, consequently,

two possible paths for that historical distinction in an age that no longer has any spiritual need for art:

- (1) the path of the ontology of the sign as the substitution of meaning in semiotics/semiology, phenomenology, pragmatism and deconstructionism; and
- (2) the path to the event of becoming (*Werden, devenir*) by transforming the condition within the image to make it mobile and corporally transformed into the construction of a (new) media reality in image science (*Bildwissenschaft*) and in the digital aesthetics of visualization.

The sign has been reduced to communication and information. In the discourse of modern science, it is called reductionism. Hence, it should also be kept in mind that there are tantalizing and inescapable areas of Being to which the reduction categories can be applied. What is fundamentally inescapable could be ultimately reduced to itself, such as life that cannot be exhausted in the way that biology determines, where it begins and ends its life in the singularity of the species and its mutations. According to cybernetic principles, the worlds based on the *feedback* system and the environment take place in the process of translating the language in the signal as a message. The sign always presupposes the existence of a “Big Other” in the form of reference to which it refers. The event, however, represents the emergence of the case (*contingency*) that cannot be explained by the first cause(s) and ultimate end. In both cases, the sign of communication and events as information—which also means that the event has a hidden primacy in a non-ontological sense, just as it was formulated by early Derrida in *Of Grammatology* that writing preceded speech—pose the question of the image as a metaphysical issue about the meaning of Being. And there is no more an *a priori* form of the language, only the visual code (Paić 2013, 484-520; Paić 2014, 11-61; Derrida 1967).

From the previously stated lines, something seems obvious. We encounter two miracles and one secret. The secret lies in its paradox. But it can be considered inaccessible because it exists on the horizon of historical-epochal evidence that always requires a new interpretation and, of course, understanding. That interpretation is in giving the right direction. With the arrival of monotheistic religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, all that becomes so-called dogma that is related to close readings of the books containing everything that has always existed—from primordial *arché* to the end of the world. It should be obvious from the preceding assumption that there have been two ways of understanding the image in the history of

Western metaphysics. The first starts from the above statement about the viewpoint of the Absolute in the determination of God, and the second is derived from the aforementioned intervention by Nietzsche, according to which the first and last “truth” concerning the axiom of the death of God must be negative. The former belongs to the metaphysical assumption of the transcendental notion of history as a universal law. The latter assumes, however, what Deleuze, in his book *Difference and Repetition*, called human evolution tendencies in life itself to be the main principle of difference (Deleuze 1994).

Why did we begin by saying that leaving the source in the sense of emanating the meaning of images increasingly leads to a return of beauty despite the matter of fact that indicates that its disappearance is essentially a path of contemporary art? Undoubtedly, we are exposed to the aesthetically producing reality everywhere. Rather than encountering a miracle and secret beauty, its “actuality” can hardly be experienced elsewhere except in the memory of the “great painting” of times that disappeared forever. It is not the 20th century anymore. In a true sense, we may share a common attitude about the previous century not as the golden age of painting but as the production of images created technologically by the construction of the reproductive reality of photography and film. Walter Benjamin’s paradox of losing the aura of the artistic image was determined by simultaneous departing from and approaching the original and, in all of that, referring to the metaphysical tradition of God, the first cause, or the transcendental signifier (Benjamin 1996).

When we spoke of emanation in the meaning of Plotinus, we had the persistence of Being in all epochs in mind, as imagined in the term *philosophia perennis*, but simple necessity creates some of them by fictionally generated thoughts. Language, of course, has its special ability to distinguish the past from the present and the future. For that reason, it should be assumed there is something permanent beyond the passing of time. Something must be set as unchangeable and eternal so that we can reach the shores of change and finality. In his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, René Descartes distinguishes the existence of God, and the human soul and body have already been introduced into the problem. The metaphysics of the mind cannot exist without the assumption of the infinity of the universe and the eternity of the idea of God. Hence, any evidence of human thought as the initial subjectivity has been derived from the idea of the infinity of the spiritual substance. A subject in contrast to material or physical substance (*res extensa*) thinks of its infinity in the world of ideas. Taking all that into account, we can say that the relationship between the mind and the body, or the two different substances, is already shown

through the connection of rationality as infinity and sense as finality. It might be obvious that analogical thinking prepared a path for a digital apparatus in advance. The true reason for that is based on the similarities and differences between the first and the second, the original and a copy. The same goes for the main part of contemporary art—the picture is articulated in two distinctive ways of showing: *event* or information and *sign* or communication.

But what precedes their relationship and destroys any credibility of ontology related to images in modern times that derived from self-configuration techniques? The answer lies in Being transformed into the assemblage of beings in the constant process of transformation and the essence of man in the existential project of deconstruction without a first cause and ultimate purpose. It is not necessary to specifically mention the end of metaphysics in the onto-theological sense. When language no longer stands for its point of reference in Being as nature and the cosmos, it remains to paint its imagination and to turn it into an information system. The technical prerequisite of language in contemporary art might be one of the consequences of the aesthetics of beautiful art. The term no longer corresponds to actuality. Nobody is talking about “beautiful art” anymore, except philosophers and classical humanists when they want to warn of the distinction that emerged in the duality of high culture and the massive need for imitation and decoration at the end of the 18th century. What did not come out of the Being and does not emanate a sense of beauty must be replaced by the aesthetic construction of reality.

For such a thing, it would be necessary for science to claim the throne of religion and use a technique of travesty for its own sake in the seduction of the audience. The truth of the modern age is indeed just what, in the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud, comes through the flash of insight in *A Season in Hell* (*Une Saison en Enfer*). Beauty was subjected to insults because it was afflicted. In addition, labour takes the place of the honour and pride of nomadic beauty. Ultimately, the industrial production of the machine and the techniques of aesthetic design combine and homogenize modern society and its hunger for new artificial shapes (Danto 2003).

In my next endeavour, I would like to talk about the end of all metaphysical possibilities for the image to come from the “highest levels” and “from below” and to consign contemporary art and its sovereignty to history without returning to what “lost dignity” means at the end of its path to nothingness. At the same time, this will mean that we have tried to think of the image as the “essence” of contemporary art from its orientation to the primacy of illumination and darkness, loudness and opacity, explosion and implosion. When an event becomes information and a sign becomes

communication, then all that remains for the idea of art is that it might transform the digital code. That could be a prerequisite for the existence of the world in the network of events and the network of meanings with tendencies of the infinite circle of the same in differences. What connects the possibility of one of the initial sources (*arché*) as all beings with what happens as the “objective” and “purpose” (*telos*) of all history might be nothing other than the idea of infinity. We encountered the paradigmatic expression of this in Gottfried Leibniz’s concept of the *monad*. It is about the idea of a singularity in the cosmological uniqueness of Being. Leibniz once said that monads do not have windows. Everything can, therefore, be framed by the limits of the human ability to think with the model in the exactness of the mathematical points, but in their infinity, they remain eternal and unchanging differences and can only be thought to start from the perspective of metaphysical points (*le points métaphysique*).

The heterogeneity and insatiability of the substances they represent relate to their infinite production due to the desire or metaphysical need for God as the source of the creation of everything that exists. Hence, the image can be understood from two mutually contradictory and at the same time related philosophical concepts of infinity—mathematical or rational and metaphysical or intuitive. Rationality refers to materiality and objectivity, the immateriality and unpredictability of the frame within which it is defined in its three-dimensional appearance, while intuition refers to the visualization of the emergence of a new reality from the technological construction. In Spanish Baroque painting, intuition had the metaphysical character of the “spiritual eye.” To see directly into what might not be visible and belonging to the usual human experience of rational knowledge represented the culmination of mystical experience. It is by no means accidental that the thinking of great German mystics like Angelus Silesius and Meister Eckhart and the great mystics of Spain like St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Ávila was directed towards the overlapping tendencies of the event inspired by interconnected networks of language and image (Stoichita 1997).

What does the notion of aesthetics mean at the end of philosophy as metaphysics? The question has an excess of Heideggerian “pathetic” thoughts of the end and the new or “second/other beginning.” It is therefore necessary to re-address that issue in its new context. Firstly, if philosophy were to be realized in cybernetics as a completion of the technical possibilities of philosophy, the one at the height of Hegel’s signification of absolute knowledge in *Aufhebung*, then its ability to continue within the bounds of cyberspace could be set precisely by becoming a *techno-genesis as the aesthetics of communication*. In the calculation in aesthetics with the



brave new meaning given to it by its “inventor” Alexander Baumgarten between 1735 and 1750, it is assumed that the two types of knowledge must be reconsidered. Both are included in what Baumgarten thought about when he introduced a new discipline into the development of philosophical thought within Western metaphysics. The rationalism of the 18th century and its cult of science and technology contributed to the concept of a beautiful divine Being created by God from being effective as practical doings (ethics and politics). But the form of that self-preservation is not the one developed in Greek philosophy in the ancient days of Plato and Aristotle. The Being belongs to a place in which beauty in the spiritual life of humans spread in the 18th century to the “natural” area as a result of the progress of the natural sciences. It may already be obvious that aesthetics appeared through the modern construction of “nature” in the sense of the subject’s knowledge of beauty. Subjectivity, therefore, cannot be located beyond aesthetic knowledge. It means its entry into the idea of the object’s construction. However, it might be precisely determined by the scientific approach to Being as the whole and related to beings. The two kinds of insights that Baumgarten had in mind are (1) *cognitio sensitiva* and (2) *ars pulchrae cogitandi*. As Gadamer once precisely wrote, there is a sense of consciousness—a sensible and beautiful thought—in the concept of the mind that unites logical and practical abilities in the understanding of the world:

Aesthetics as a philosophical discipline only came into being in the 18th century, in the age of rationalism, apparently induced by the very novelty of rationalism, which rises on the foundations of constructive natural sciences, as developed in the 17th century, and to some extent the shape of our world, so that it is all converted to dizziness in technology. (Gadamer 1993a, 107)

The emergence of aesthetics from the source of a technically designed mind must be taken seriously. It is a “science of beauty” based on the traces of the rationalist utopia of the world. The aim of that utopia could be realized in contemporary art as the outbreak of the historical avant-garde of the first half of the 20th century. It is about the visualization of the Being as a thing marked by technology and the aesthetics of the world. What the avant-garde thinkers had for their project were Russian constructivism and the Berlin School’s dadaism, the connectivity of the structure and corporeality in the idea of bringing art to life as a social event, realized in an assemblage of ideas related to posthumanism/transhumanism as the main paradigms of the rule of technoscience today (Biro 2009). Their revelatory character is thereby assumed—just as the modern mind should be guided by a sensitive arrowhead that today goes further towards re-politicization and re-

aestheticization—since they might be the only remaining alternatives concerning the scientism of posthuman conditions in which they are destined to be “involved” even in the operation of planetary technology and when they are opposed to that rational viewpoint concerning that matter of fact.

If we get even closer to the problem on the trail of Heidegger and his thoughts on the technology and destiny of art, as Gadamer turned his attention from a hermeneutic perspective—which does not help too much in the penetration of the puzzles of the performative-conceptual turn from Duchamp to post-genomics—we would be able to effectively see something uncanny. Art almost no longer differs from the aestheticization of the world if, by the latter term, we were to understand the process of designing the surrounding world (*Umwelt*) as a technologically arranged network of interactions between the system and the environment in the digital age. What does that mean? We assume that distinguishing art and aesthetics from those of Baumgarten, and especially from those of Kant, might make something of a mockery of the notion of an image that will be extensively dealt with here. The art whose traces we explicitly have in mind here is related to the fine arts (*beaux arts*, in which *belles lettres* take primacy because poetics is represented as the culmination of rhetorical art, referring to the French language of high culture that belonged to the aristocracy in the hierarchically divided feudal society) and was determined in the 18th century by nature. In that sense, rationalism and romanticism are paradoxically linked in an almost occult alliance. The nature invented by Baron d’Holbach’s mind structure and nature as an aesthetic experience of elevation, which is similar to Caspar David Friedrich’s aspiration, has united inhumanity and humanity.

The machine and the uncanny sensation of human suffering (*Unheimlichkeit*) link poetry and science to a technological mediation apparatus. Using that condition, Lyotard redirected his attention in an attempt to justify the drift deep inside postmodern aesthetics (*différend*) that lies between the mind and experience of the sublime. Where we should search for a place of reconciliation against power, knowledge will be nothing more than a place of the immateriality of information technology. That is, indeed, exactly what might appear to be displaying the ineffectiveness of the technological event, such as the effect of laser technology on the human body and its environment (Lyotard 1983; Lyotard 1991, 78-88 and 89-107; Paic 2014, 261-302; Zima 2005).

The aesthetics of genius, as is well known, are the aesthetics of Kant and also of the paradigmatic figures of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and William Shakespeare. Therefore, art cannot be determined as merely

decorating and ornamenting the high lifestyle of a decadent class, motivated by the aristocracy and its habits with which modernity achieved the complex phenomenon. That can be called the production of works and creation in language games and, ultimately, in the image. Thanks to what has been mentioned above, the world has welcomed the rational nature of human literacy. But beauty did not become a concept without the slightest help of the extravagance with which nature at the beginning of the 18th century entered into the space of the uncanny power of the unattainable point. The difference between art as a work of creation and the creation of aesthetics as a (scientific) sense of the world, and, within that, the *beaux arts*, emerged as a result of the frenzy between emotion and the notions of that sense and rationality. That space in between the experience of creating the world and its contemplation, which is undeniable to logical and ethical-political knowledge, is determined space from which the technological form of the world emerges.

Like the freedom of artistic creation and the freedom of experimentation in science, it should be necessary for that bargain without which both were reduced to mere craftsmanship or rhetoric, as in the era of Rome in replication of the Greek spirit, or at the expense of the utopian field of the future, without which it could be doing more than the power of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*). The aesthetic origin was evident in the emergence of modern technology, as it unites the creativity and inventiveness of scientists to elevate themselves to the highest degree of sensory perception, no longer in contemplation of what it is (*quidditas*) but in the productive synthesis of what is “going on” (*quoddittas*) (Mersch 2015, 131-186). That “ontological difference” between analogue and digital seems to be crucial for all further considerations of contemporary philosophy and art as such. When we no longer have “Being” in the sense of its persistence and substantive truth, the time of the transformation and mutation of becoming or eternal Being is emerging.

History is accelerating. It disappeared, in a crumpled contour in a black hole without a bottom, along with time as a set of past, present, and future. Only time has no starting point of its “own” within the circle of open possibilities. It seems that the time of the closed structure has appeared. If the upcoming has no more secret experiences or expectations of miracles, what is left? Instead, we have a container, a gentle field of the emergence of the new in the process of becoming. And it is not associated with the optimal control condition. Thus, chaos might be predictably deterministic on the fundamentals of physical-cosmological order variables. Entropy, in the two ways of understanding it—the statistical and informational, Boltzmann’s and Shannon’s—, takes up the place that occupied teleology a

long time ago. The purpose and aim are shifted to the infinite movement towards the future like on a linear line with increasing acceleration and an increasing implosion of information (Bailey 1990).

If it has become difficult to distinguish the inscrutability of art as the creation of a new world of aesthetics as a sense of knowledge in its determination of beauty with the concepts of taste, harmony, experience, perception, beauty and sublime, it becomes clear that the disappearance must be aesthetically replaced by categories from cybernetics and technical sciences. That also applies to the language of aesthetic thinking, which has become almost scientifically shaped as of today. The loss of difference leads towards the two concepts of art and science—creativity and inventiveness—used synonymously or, in turn, in the substitute games of pragmatic knowledge. Let us not think it is a mess and utter confusion or that we are presenting a comedy of confusion. Not at all! The process of the aestheticization of the world truly synthesizes the power of imagination and productive innovativeness. From technology, it follows that three fundamental concepts—namely *calculation*, *planning* and *construction*—have translated the analytical operations of thinking into the synthetic activity of *artificial intelligence*.

Since synthesis denotes a process of creating a new reality from the network of events as a transformation of energy and transferring information to a virtual update, one can conclusively agree with Heidegger's diagnosis of aesthetics and technology from the late 1930s that modern art has not only become a fully aesthetic experience or "experience" of the world as a technical object but is also on the road to disappearing in the loosing of the need for art. The time of the aestheticization of the world as a planetary technology takes place on the cybernetic principles of the system and environmental relations. And that means how the system has to be able to control the environment. It is no longer face-to-face or human-to-human communication. Instead of that, we are facing the interface constructed by the *posthuman condition*. Techno-genetically created selfhood produces and constructs itself in the act of aesthetic configurations of functions and structures. Just as writing precedes speech and the simulacrum becomes true in the media structure of the event, so, in the cognitive sense of observation, things will come to the last turn.

Metaphysics will end in cybernetics when the dualities between Being and beings disappear in the constant production of the numerical logic of things. The binary code is thereby represented by the condition of the possibility of the conversion of languages into the image. The latter denotes the turn of metaphysics into cybernetics, hence the radical substitution of the former with the latter, the knowledge and the sense of the work as a self-

reflective event of connection between artists and scientists. So, aesthetics can no longer be considered a mere *cognitio sensitiva* but explicitly as *ars pulchrae cogitandi*. Consequently, sensitivity can no longer be an empty body ruled by a higher instinct like the Cartesian life machine. Instead of that, the aesthetic experience might be effective in the aesthetics of the cognitive construction of reality. A place on the metaphysical distinction of categories and concepts for rank and hierarchy are introduced to non-linear contingent connections between condition and state. In other words, aesthetics no longer observes the essence of beautiful art to give it the foundation of religious-philosophical justification through experience and the sacred reflection and the notion.

The digital aesthetics of the non-linear order of events in the network of events is represented by the synthetic “logic” of the emergence of the new in an emerging environment. It connects nature and culture, traditionally, “the sublime” and “beauty.” From that viewpoint, the synthetic “logic” could not appropriate the logic of the presentation-representation of Being in its stability and order, of which Gadamer spoke in a glorious and nostalgic manner when he was contemplating the possibilities of Plato’s and Aristotle’s concepts of *mimesis* in the time of the dissolution of the metaphysical worldview.

The construction and deconstruction of binary oppositions that emerged from dialectics and phenomenology began in its place. And when it is no longer “here” or “there,” or a temporary suspension and neutralization, we must find a completely new categorical apparatus for a changed situation in which old words and a relatively new philosophical discipline no longer have their place and justification. Aesthetics no longer points to the world as the horizon of meaning, which, even for Heidegger, in *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*), had “more meaning,” starting from the understanding of primordial time. However, alongside the conception of Being as technology derived from *Gestell*, even the fundamental ontology through the idea of the destruction of history was rooted in the “bad infinity.” Setting the technology by which “Being” not only opens up understanding but also closes it at the end of the possibility of philosophy as such, it becomes obvious that *computing*, *planning* and *construction* decide a world in which, instead of primordial time and Being as an event, the sovereign rule of planetary mobilization sets up the constellations of technical relations between naturally and artificially created things.

Aesthetics, therefore, no longer contemplates the order of nature and culture in which art is displayed or represents the world as “will and representation.” Rather than contemplation and observation, the passive synthesis of time in the idea of the sensitivity of beautiful has nowadays

become something that Nietzsche in his thinking and Rimbaud in his poetry announced in the “darkness of the 19th century,” as Heidegger once pointed out. It is new and radical *emancipation*, new and radical *autonomy*, and new and radical *sovereignty*. But the mind cannot be separated from the body anymore and is traditionally superior to its performativity. The new aesthetics as technology has become the experience of the self-reflection and self-production of the artist himself as the world’s emergence of the “central perspective” of the body and its power to structure the system and the environment. That categorical change has emerged as a calling of revolutionary rebellion. But the turn was nothing without the turn of metaphysics itself, and hence it remained locked in its scheme. It was an “immanent transcendence” with which the aesthetic mind became the aestheticizing world as the constructed-deconstructed body in its neurocognitive unity. There is no doubt that it was perfectly described in the new concepts of movement-image and time-image by Gilles Deleuze in relation to the contemporary aesthetics of the cinema (Deleuze 1989).

Aesthetics survived its breakdown of meaning. Of course, it was not a unique and special case. Some might say that there have never been so many recent philosophical attempts at ethics for the information age. It is interesting, however, to consider what all these ethics are based on. It is no longer a rigorously carried out process of the legitimacy of the mind in history within a politically constructed community. Without the previously acknowledged rules of communication, the ethical principle of action requires that ethics can no longer be founded on the transcendental principle of moral law. But in its way of constituting a good life and common action in its specific culture, with its historically defined customs and norms, it takes the pragmatics of the situation or, in turn, the indivisibility of the decision that alters the law and the norm into a different order of culture. In general, the significance of a signifier in symbolic communication in the community is determined by the context and situation; for example, the acts of shock and provocation by contemporary artists, such as the submersion of an image in urine or orgasmic sexual acts in a public space. Here, performative art shows the goal/purpose of transgressions in the patriarchal society of modern liberalism within the limits of their prohibition; consequently, ethics are thus articulated in what has been related (for thousands of years for the Greeks) to the aesthetic experience of the art of tragedy—in sympathy or compassion (*Mitleid*) (Jonas 1984; Lévinas 2011).

The paradox of a modern ethic lies in the fact that the idea of “aesthetics” seeks to be ontological, but it cannot be realized as was expected. On the other hand, the paradox of contemporary aesthetics lies in its plurality and heteronomy, even though not only its field of validity but also and above all