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VINDICATING THE HISTORICAL CONDITION OF ART AND ITS CONSEQUENCES: HEGEL'S INFLUENCE ON DANTO'S PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM

Abstract

While Hegel's influence on Arthur Danto has been examined in relation to specific parts of his thought, an overall analysis of said influence is still wanting. In this article, I analyze the presence of Hegelian influence in Danto's complete thought from three perspectives: (1) Danto's acceptance of Hegelian assumptions when it comes to the conception of history, narrative realism and historical progress, which allows him to combine timeless essentialism with historicism, (2) the cognitive aspect of art and the conception of art as an embodied symbol, as well as the historical quality of said embodiment, and (3) the assumption that art's trajectory coincides with the Hegelian prophecy that art will give way to philosophy, on which Danto's "end of art" thesis is based. This examination not only illuminates the interrelation between the different parts of Dantian philosophy, but also reveals its systematic character.

Arthur Danto's work stood out in areas such as the analytical philosophy of action, history, knowledge and art. However, his body of work goes beyond the disciplines and categories by which his philosophy is usually classified. For a long time, Dantian philosophy was partially studied, but, after his death, scholars increasingly began to take into account a more global view of his theories' and their overall coherence (Cometti 2016; Thomas-Fogiel 2016; Cascales 2019). I argue that the Dantian desire to realize a whole philosophical system has not been sufficiently taken into account. Some scholars have rightly pointed to the influence of George Santayana and his work, *The Life of Reason*, as Danto revealed at the end of his life (2013a: 29). As several authors have already argued— Carrier (2012), Rollins (2012: 2), Lavagnino (2013: 88-89), Snyder (2018: 148-150) or Goehr (2018)— this system was based on reflection on the human being as *ens representans*, as a being who uses a variety of representations to interact with and understand the world. From this perspective, representation is a fundamental part of Dantian philosophy and lends coherence to his entire philosophical system.

For my part, in this paper, I will demonstrate that the Dantian system is based on Hegelian presuppositions. Many scholars have questioned this Hegelian influence, and the ones who defend it usually focus on particular aspects: on his historicism (Solomon, Higgins 1993; Carroll 1993; Carrier 1998; Hilmer 1998; Kelly 1998; García Rodríguez 2018) or on the “end of art” thesis (Domínguez Hernández 1996; Gaiger 2000; Sobrevilla 2003; Houlgate 2015; Iannelli 2015; Hulatt 2016). Here, I argue that Hegel influenced Danto’s philosophical trajectory as a whole, especially when it comes to three aspects that are important distinguish: 1) the acceptance of Hegelian assumptions of history, 2) the symbolic character of works of art, and 3) the “end of art” thesis. I will also show that Hegelian influence is not just found in the origin of Danto’s philosophical theories, but in his whole system, which reveals its interwoven nature. Indeed, examining the influence of the most systematic author in history unveils the scaffolding of Dantian thought. This further reveals a system of thought in which diverse philosophical theories (of history, of the mind, of art) support one another. This is especially significant for understanding Danto’s end of art thesis as the culmination of his entire philosophical system.

1. Accepting a Hegelian reading of history

The Dantian philosophical system begins with history rather than with a theory of knowledge *stricto sensu*. Danto’s aim in developing the philosophy of history was not just to offer historical statements of a scientific nature, but also to elucidate the conditions of possibility for historical knowledge since the historian illuminates the meaning of events. Determining the best way to approach the past and understand it is necessary for understanding the conditions of possibility for human knowledge in general. As early as the 1960s, Danto believed that narration is the category of representation that best allows us to understand history’s unfolding.

In light of this research, he tried to understand what had happened in the recent history of art. In the first place, it was clear to him that there had been a transformation in the artistic practice. Secondly, he believed that analytical tools were not sufficient to explain this change or to account for art as representation. Both of these reasons led him to study Hegelian philosophy more closely, thus shifting his intellectual trajectory.

Solomon and Higgins’ famous article on Danto’s Hegelian turn has led many to think that Hegel’s influence is especially focused on the question of history and even on a specific part of it.¹ However, Hegelian influence on the

¹ García Rodríguez highlights the influence of Hegel’s historical acceptance, but without sufficiently distinguishing among its consequences on history, the definition of art and the end of art theory (García Rodríguez 2018: 154-169).

Dantian conception of history goes beyond the duality of contextualism and historicism, and instead is the center of his philosophical system. His acceptance of Hegelian presuppositions entails a shift in his conception of history, which leads him to proclaim the “end of art”. and which, in turn, allows him to give a definition of art.

Hegelianism was interpreted by Solomon and Higgins as a holism from which two essential features emerge: contextualism and historicism. The former is based on the belief that a phenomenon can only be understood “in terms of the totality of its relationships”. The latter simply states that history is the only source for understanding phenomena, “that a phenomenon can only understood in terms of its history” (Solomon, Higgins 1993: 175). The question that arises here is whether or not the development of history is where history is identified with the concept of story.

Both authors explain how history should be considered a metaphysical story that is teleologically organized and that deploys one of its parts up to its final meaning. This sense coincides with the Hegelian sense of historicity since, from within it, any phenomenon acquires its true meaning from the whole spirit. Furthermore, historical contextualism, which transfigures objects into works of art and delimits interpretation of the artwork, is endorsed by an ontology subject to the definition of art. This identification demands both theory and history of art— and is fundamentally contextual.

To understand Danto, we should consider his attempt to bring together this Hegelian sense and, at the same time, his differences with Hegel when defending narrative. Within the Hegelian sense, we must highlight his interpretation of Hegel through a particular prism; Danto read Hegel through Kojève’s interpretation and, of course, long before the publishing of the manuscripts that Gethmann-Siefert brought to light (Hegel 2003).² Kojève did an anthropological reading of *Phenomenology* in the form of a Bildungsroman; that is, like a novel that contains a learning process in which the spirit is the hero and the development of self-consciousness its battle:

The great philosophical work which has this form is Hegel’s astonishing *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a work whose hero is the spirit of the world –who Hegel names *Geist*– the stages of whose development toward self-knowledge, Hegel traces dialectically. [...] The culmination of Geist’s quest and destiny is, as it happens, philosophy, according to Hegel’s scheme, largely because philosophy is essentially reflexive, in the sense that the question of what it is part of what it is, its own nature being one of its major problems. (Danto 1986: 110)

² Interpretations of Hegel are changing given the student’s manuscripts published in the last years. In particular, she argues that Hotho painted the lectures in an excessively systematic light in contrast with the phenomenological character of the notes from other students.

This particular interpretation was applied to art history, complementing the arrival of self-consciousness with what later became known as the “end of art”. This allowed Danto to set aside other issues involved in the Hegelian system, assuming the past character of art as a fact that had actually happened. The relevance that Hegel gives to the historical factor and his progressive vision of art led Danto to read the history of art in Hegelian terms. In other words, Danto conceived of art history in parallel to the development of the spirit that Hegel disclosed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as well as in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*. Thus, starting from this approach to Hegel and leaving aside history in general, he understood that, at least in the history of art, historical progress has been such that it has culminated in the revelation of the essence of art (Campana 2016: 68). At the same time, he believed that, in his era, art had reached its peak of introspection and self-consciousness and thus had freed itself from the heteronomous elements that once conditioned it (Solomon, Higgins 1993: 119). Furthermore, if, as seen in the Hegelian approach, the development of self-consciousness and freedom go hand in hand, the reflexivity generated in artistic practice would increase freedom in the artistic field. Danto thus posits a kind of assimilation between “art history” and “art”. In this way, the fact that the history of art reaches self-consciousness (and therefore terminates its development) has an impact on artistic practice, which is why Danto recognized that Hegelian prophecy had been fulfilled when he was observing a work of art.

The second characteristic, historicity (narrativity), refers to the fact that a phenomenon can only be understood in terms of its historical narrative: “Historicity or narrativity, two pretentious terms that mean, ultimately, that one can understand a phenomenon only in terms of history, its story” (Solomon, Higgins 1993: 109). This statement would not be so controversial if it did not include the acceptance of narrative realism, in which historical narration reflects what happened. “I must say that I am likely today to take a more charitable view of substantive philosophies of history than I would have done in 1965... But that is because it has seemed more and more plausible to me that there are objective historical structures” (Danto 1997: 43).

It is a form of analytical essentialism based on necessary conditions, as I will point out in the next section, although not on Hegelian foundations. In addition, the acceptance of objective historical structures brought him closer to the substantive philosophy of history that he had rejected from the beginning. Danto could have therefore reformed all his philosophy of history, but he never went so far as to affirm that the substantive path is the correct philosophy of history; rather, he limited himself to confirming that Hegel’s prediction had been fulfilled in art. This conception of art history accorded with his observations of artistic practice, but it did not lead him to assume the entire Hegelian dialectical system.

Danto assumed many Hegelian theses, but he only and exclusively applied them to the history of art and art itself, leaving aside –although also taking into account– the rest of the system. For Danto, events in artistic practice, especially Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box*, were factual confirmation that art had come to an end; yet, art had no awareness of doing so or intention of publicizing it. At that point, Danto had read Hegel's *Phenomenology* and *Philosophy of History*, but not his *Aesthetics*, so it was not actually Hegel who led him to the idea of the end of art. Instead, he formulated it based on artistic practice of the moment. For this reason, Danto does not seem to have wanted to evaluate or reformulate the Hegelian philosophical system, but rather to merely point out the parts of Hegel's theses that he considers fulfilled, finding the strongest evidence thereof in art. In fact, it was not until later, after hearing David Carrier speak, that he studied Hegel and realized their similarities and differences (2013b: 480).

The partiality with which Danto assumed some parts of the Hegelian system and ignored others is clearly questionable and, in many cases, the main point of scholarly criticism. Some criticize his approach in broad strokes, including Rutter, who sees him among non-specialists interested in Hegel (Rutter 2010: 6) or Campana who classifies him among those who read Hegel externally (Campana 2016: 58-69). On the other hand, some authors criticize more specific aspects that their interpretations of Hegel clearly impinge upon. For example, Houlgate reproaches Danto for cutting the Hegelian aesthetic down to its historical dimension alone (Houlgate 2015: 280-286). Curiously, Ianelli, based on Gethmann-Siefert's research, affirms that Danto is far from the historical-cultural function in which Hegel left art (Ianelli 2015a: 131).

However, some authors, like Hilmer and Vilar, believe Danto's approach can be seen as advantageous and reasonable if his claims are taken into account. At first, Hilmer criticized the simplicity of the Hegelian argument, but later affirmed its relevance: "Not only does this make the philosophical procedure more manageable, but it also seems a legitimate expansion of the ultimate purpose of Hegel's philosophy: progress in the consciousness of freedom" (Hilmer 1998: 74). For his part, Vilar believes that Danto's position is a revitalization of Hegel and, furthermore, has the advantage of not having to face the great Hegelian problems since Danto "does not place himself in the position of absolute knowledge, but of a modest analytical philosophy" (Vilar 2009: 193).

In fact, the American philosopher supports his thesis on Hegel, but without the pretension of becoming a Hegelian interpreter or hermeneut. Danto limits his analysis to the history of art, stating that, in this context, Hegelian predictions came to fruition. To solve the problems this point presents, it could be said that Danto does not reform philosophy of history, but rather starts a new discipline,

namely philosophy of art history.³ This perspective also solves the apparent contradiction, which Carroll points to, between his analytical consideration of history and defense of the end of art (Carroll 2013: 433-452). Danto himself replied to Carroll that his thesis on the “end of art” was not teleological and so it did not imply a contradiction with his previous philosophy: “Now the end of art is not really teleological at all. It does not even claim that there will be no more art. It just says that a certain way of seeing the history of art has lost its validity” (Danto 2013b: 456).

Although I will analyze the definition of art in the next section, I think that it is worth highlighting here that the second condition, embodiment, is coupled with its historical condition or “historicity”. History provides conditions of possibility without which, on the one hand, a work of art would not become what it is and, on the other, a good interpretation of it would be impossible. Given the connection between a work of art and its theoretical-interpretive context, interpretation is inherent to the concept of art. In this way, expanding Wöflin’s idea that not everything is possible at all times, the historical moment influences both an artwork’s realization and interpretation. Relevantly, interpretations depend on theories of art, which constitute the art world in which they are inscribed (Danto 1981: 135). In the next section, I will dwell on this analysis in more detail.

2. *The symbolic nature of artwork*

Danto generally went beyond the approaches that were common in the analytical philosophy of his time. In contrast with other contemporary anti-essentialist analytical philosophers, Danto sought an essentialist definition of art. In *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (1981), Danto presents a more mature reflection on what art is and, following his systematic project, conceives of it as representation. At the same time, Danto strives to avoid giving a regulatory definition, and rather offers one that only stipulates conditions of possibility. Although he did not reach the essential definition he was looking for, he proposed valid universal and necessary conditions, such as “aboutness” and “embodiment” (Danto 1996: 285). These conditions can be summed up as an “embodied symbol”, which, as Rush argues, is a Hegelian remnant (Rush 2013: 455-477). In this section, I want to focus on two aspects. First, that art belongs to the field of knowledge and not to that of sensibility, as the first condition maintains. Second, I will analyze the historical component that constitutes embodiment.

³ As reflection about how we have understood and explained art history, not in the sense that to give a new all-encompassing narration. I think Gilmore understood well Danto and followed his footsteps at *Life of Style* (2000).

Firstly, Hegel's influence on "aboutness" is visible in the Dantian rejection of simplistic interpretation of art through mere visual aspects (Goehr 2021: 10). In contrast, Danto gives weight to the content that makes up artworks and inscribes art in the field of knowledge, as Hegel did. As he himself said, "Hegel and I speak as one in putting content first" (Danto 2013c: 481). In the Hegelian distinction between natural and artistic beauty, the artistic field is superior to nature or crafts because they are created by a consciousness. The conscious artist introduces concept in a sensuous object, generating a symbol and allowing the Spirit to recognize himself and to progress. In Hegelian terms, this means that the object is born and reborn from spirit and is why Hegel distinguished between "the content of art", the concept, the idea, and "the work of art's means of presentation" as the sensuous or material part (Hegel 1975: 11).

Similarly, Danto distinguished between an ordinary object and an artistic object, like the *Brillo Box*. The Warhol box is an artistic object because it has a meaning incorporated by the artist. Ordinary objects or elements in nature "are", yet we do not talk about their meaning, while works of art are entirely focused on what they mean. In Danto's words, "I thought that what was distinctive of a work of art as against a natural phenomenon, was that it had some kind of meaning, which would go some distance toward rendering into somewhat contemporary terms Hegel's idea of something being born of the spirit and born again" (Danto 2003: 13). Thus, for something to be art, the first condition is "be about something" or, better said, "a work of art's being is its meaning" (Danto 2001: x). This is sometimes also described as having a theme or meaning.

With this first condition, Danto highlights the semantic nature of art and its cognitive function. For this reason, artwork can become a source of understanding for self-consciousness and, in turn, because of that reflexive quality, can become an ideal path toward self-knowledge. As Hilmer argues, the cognitive function of art in the Hegelian sense helps Danto to account for art's self-consciousness and the freedom that it often enjoyed in his then contemporary era (Hilmer 1998: 73). This is true for the artist's self-knowledge, for the viewer's knowledge of the artist and for the temporal and timeless matters that the work conveys, as well as for the viewer's own self-knowledge when aware of himself through the artwork.

The second condition for speaking about art is found in embodied meaning. The embodiment of meaning refers to referentiality as a way of talking about a given thing, rather than as a mere description or allusion to something else, a characteristic shared by other objects that are not art, such as signs. It is not just that meaning and materiality are related, but that "embodiment" is essential for meaning. For Danto, works of art are symbols or vehicles of ideas, which always have a sensible, specific configuration, i.e., they are embodied symbols. Danto himself pointed out that this conception of an embodied symbol is in tune with the Hegelian understanding "in that it consists of giving sensuous or material embodiment to what Hegel would certainly have called Idea: it is Idea

made flesh, so to speak, and accordingly involves a special kind of understanding” (Danto 1992: 62). Danto understands the correlation between content and the mode of representation expressed in Hegel’s words as an “embodiment” of meaning. Hence, art’s eidetic character can never be separated from materiality. Through this and through the sensible embodiment of a material work, artists transmit ideas, concepts and feelings. It is important to bear in mind that content itself, embodied in different ways, can project different points of view. In this way, modifications to the way a work is embodied can modify the meaning that embodiment ultimately conveys.

There are two parts to discussion of Danto’s definition of art. Firstly, we must examine if cognitivism rejects the affective part of art. Costello (2008, 244-266), Alcaraz (2015), Costa (2018) and Lojđová (2019) criticize Danto for not developing an affective, sensible and aesthetic dimension of artistic objects. Costello and Alcaraz are the most representative defenders of including the aesthetic dimension as a defining feature of artwork. I believe that their critique and proposal are relevant, but, at the same time, embodied meaning and its historical dimension, as we have seen here, allow us to better understand the sensible aspect of art. This perhaps represents another way to develop the sufficient conditions of the definition of art.

Finally, linked with the previous point, we must consider the Kantian influence on Danto’s definition of art. Although it is true that, in his last works, Danto seems to approach Kant’s theories, as Vilar (Vilar 2016: 123) and Costello (Costello 2008) have pointed out, in most cases, he focuses on aspects that Danto had already inherited from Hegel. Indeed, the Kantian theories that Danto takes up refer to the concept of the “aesthetic idea”, which is closely related to the concept of embodied meaning, to the idea of the spirit understood “as “the animating principle of mind,” which consists in “the faculty of presenting aesthetic ideas”” (Danto 2013d: 123), and to the theory of genius “to find sensory arrays through which these ideas are conveyed to the mind of the viewer” (Danto 2013d: 123). However, as Danto himself repeatedly stated before realizing the similarities with Kant (Danto 2013a: 129), the ideas included in his philosophical definition of art are found in and based on Hegel.

3. The end of art: The fulfillment of Hegelian prophecy

The starting point of the “end of art” thesis is the Hegelian line about the past character of art: “In all these respects art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past” (Danto 1975: 11). Danto was convinced that Hegel’s words were prophetic and were being fulfilled when he himself was trying to account for what was happening in the history of art. However, it is impossible to stop here if we want to deeply understand the Dantian conception.

Danto's "end of art" thesis is a complex matter, especially since he never explained it in one definitive text; it can only be fully understood by compiling parts of texts. As his work rose in prominence, many authors began to analyze the "end of art", but they usually only addressed it as developed in one of his books. Thus, they exclusively based their understanding on the paradigm Danto was exploring in that specific moment, whether Hegelian, historiographical or postmodern.⁴ I am convinced that the apparent contradictions that arose from those fragmented approaches are less problematic than they at first appear. Now that we have the historical distance that allows for a systematic explanation of his different works, we see that his theory about the "end of art" is marked by expansion and gradual development rather than by contradiction.

Having analyzed his complete philosophical corpus, I argue, as I have also contended in other works, that there are at least three different and complementary senses associated with this "end": 1) The Hegelian sense, i.e., the conversion of art into philosophy, 2) the historiographical sense, i.e., the end to narratives within art history, and 3) as the beginning of a new period in history, where Danto's philosophy of art is fully valid (Cascales 2018: 131). These senses are complementary rather than mutually exclusive, and all of them reveal both Danto's original thought and the Hegelian influence on it. I cannot explain here in detail these three senses, but I will clarify how "before end of art" is the culmination of his entire philosophical system and where to locate the interweaving of the different parts of the Dantian system.

To understand the thesis of the end, we must keep in mind two elements that Danto assumes from Hegel: 1) the teleological development of history in which the spirit becomes aware of itself, attaining freedom, and 2) how the culmination of that development implies a passage to philosophy, which is then able to account for the process.

Danto raises the narrative of the historical development of art in *Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (Danto 1986). There, he explains how art history presents rational and necessary internal progressive development that points towards an end, namely reaching full self-consciousness and finding its essence. This self-consciousness is conceived, as could not be otherwise, as cognitive development. Here it is not a question of the spirit acquiring self-consciousness based on artistic development, as Hegel affirmed, but rather of art— understood as artworld in terms of a set of artists, theories and artistic practices, rather than as a subject—beginning to search for its own conditions of possibility and becoming an object unto itself. In this work, Danto especially emphasizes how

⁴The Hegelian sense can be found in the following texts: Carter 1993; Carrier 1998; Hilmer 1998; Snyder 2018; Goehr 2021. The historiographical one in the following texts: Tozzi 2007; Parselis 2009; Bacharach 2013. And the postmodern sense in the following texts: Crowther 1990; Herwitz 1993; Wenninger 2005; Ortiz 2015.

this self-consciousness was acquired throughout twentieth-century art, which witnessed increasingly reflexive and conceptual artistic development.

In this way, Danto narrates the history of art as an evolutionary process in which art returns to itself and becomes aware of its possibilities. In this context, history is not independent of art since artistic practice internalizes its own history. Art progressively “becomes self-conscious of its history as it has come to be in our time, so that its consciousness of its history forms part of its nature, it is perhaps unavoidable that it should turn into philosophy at last” (Danto 1986: 16).

Although Danto assumes Hegel’s historical development, following Ianelli’s suggestion (Danto 2015b: 17), we can see three moments of the Dantian history of art as Hegel established: the traditional or mimetic period, the modernism period and the post-historical period. Nevertheless, Danto evidently departs from Hegel in concrete interpretation of the facts. Danto purports that the history of art has been traditionally articulated through philosophy’s dominion over art, which ebbs as art begins to understand itself as an object, and as reflection on the question of what art is emerges.

The first period started when philosophical submission arose based, above all, on Socrates’ rationalism and Plato’s mimetic theories, denying art’s intellectual capacity and guaranteeing philosophy’s exclusive hold on the truth. There is room for criticism of Danto’s mimetic view and of the historical account he presents, but there is also enough evidence to maintain that the mimetic theory of art remained unquestioned for centuries to be established as official in the Renaissance—with Vasari—as he explained in *After the End of Art*. After many centuries of submission, artistic consciousness began to peek out during Romanticism, which is why Hegel could venture, without risking too much, that art would become increasingly reflexive and that it would further stimulate our thinking.

However, it cannot be said that the second period starts until the arrival of Modernism. Danto believes that Modernism tried to purify art and to find its essence, as Greenberg explained. But only the historical avant-garde were able to break with the mimetic and hegemonic narrative. At the same time, they tried to impose a new and exclusive point of view on what art should be (Danto 2014: 34). Even cinematographic technique or Duchamp’s ready-mades were insufficient in Danto’s eyes because, although in practice they overthrew mimetic theory, they did not manage to capture art’s essence or sufficiently stimulate philosophy to do so (Kelly 1998: 33-34).

The *Brillo Boxes* started the third period of art, leading art to self-consciousness by posing, through purely artistic means, the question of the nature of art. For Danto, “a given movement of art must be understood in terms of a certain historical necessity, and in my view, Pop Art was a response to a philosophical question as to the nature of art that had more or less energized the whole of twentieth-century painting” (Danto 1987: 208). Because Warhol’s work was indiscernible from its commercial counterpart, it debunked once and for all

the mimetic conception of art. Its importance lies in the fact that it adequately states the question at the heart of art. The *Brillo Box* does not ask why it is a work of art; rather, it asks why it is a work of art and the supermarket item is not. The very way this question is asked leads us to the answer that the essence of art lies in being different from reality, in being a representation. In this way, the discovery of essence clearly brought about a change in art.

Therefore, for Danto, Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* was the greatest milestone in the history of art precisely because it accomplished this task. Warhol's work revealed that art's essence is not found at the perceptual level, but rather at the intellectual level, showing once again that art involves knowledge rather than sensibility, provoking reflexivity and achieving philosophy's independence. Indeed, Danto argues, in line with Hegel, that only when art became reflexive could philosophy reflect on art: "Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is" (Hegel 1975: 11). Similarly, Danto notes, "Only when it became clear that anything could be a work of art could one think, philosophically, about art. Only then did the possibility arise of a true general philosophy of art" (Danto 2014: 14).

In Hegelian terms, by turning into philosophy, one might say that art had come to a certain natural end. (Danto 1987: 209) But here it is important to note, as mentioned at the beginning of this section, that Danto establishes a kind of assimilation between art and art history. This assimilation led him to proclaim the "end of art" since Hegelian discourse termed it that way, when in fact he should have deemed it the "end of the history of art". Danto interprets historical facts philosophically, which allows him to decree that the history of art, understood in narrative terms, has come to an end (Danto 2014: 37).

This is why Danto's thesis of the "end of art" can be understood as a historiographical thesis, as Tozzi (2007), Parselis (2009) and Bacharach (2013) affirm. But, at the same time, it was not simply one narration of art among others that ended with the "end of art". Its narrative-constructive-component ended the possibility that any other narrative could be presented as hegemonic ever again. There can no longer be a narrative to determine what works of art should be like and, for that reason "the history of art, structured narratively, had come to an end" (Danto 2014, 126). Or to put it more explicitly, "all that one can predict is that there will be no narrative direction. And that is what I mean by the end of art" (Danto 2001a: 430). Now, as Carrier points out (1998), a question remains related to the possibility that history ends as a narrative, and yet we should accept the thesis of the end of art as a narrative statement. Danto responds to this criticism saying that more narratives than ever will emerge, but metanarratives are no longer possible: "There will not be a part because the previous metanarratives excluded so much in order to get themselves told" (Danto 1998: 140). Precisely this rise of consciousness, in the Hegelian sense, results in the impossibility of going backwards. For this reason, although it supposes a different way of interpreting the "end of art", it does not contradict

the former. On the other hand, as a consequence, Danto began to speak of the post-historic era. However, without the history of art, how is it possible to evaluate works of art? Does Danto fall into relativism?

The fact that hegemonic narratives no longer exist in history means that an entire way of understanding art has come to an end, thus founding a new era, namely the post-historical era, characterized by freedom and plurality. Artistic possibilities increase, meaning that “there is no longer a corner of history for works of art to be left out of it. Everything is possible. Everything can be art” (Danto 2014: 127). Far from the risk of falling into relativism, here it is important to point out the relevance of his essentialism. From my point of view, Danto stresses the need to maintain a strong criterion, and he finds it in his essentialist definition of art based on two conditions (“aboutness” and “embodiment”) that are not subject to historical vicissitudes. In turn, this definition is guaranteed by the “end of art” thesis. Thus, since hegemonic theory has come to an end, this definition should be valid for all time, giving us a minimum criterion for distinguishing what is art from what it is not. Judging the value of works is done by analyzing how their content is expressed in material conditions, as Hegel did in his historical explanations and as Danto wrote in his innumerable art critiques.

For years, Danto wrote art criticism and helped spectators to judge art, showing that it is possible to value art in post-historical times. His criticism reveals that, in order to understand the works in question, looking at them is not enough. Works stimulate our minds, not just our senses. Therefore, as a critic, Danto did not offer theory on art, or on the history of art, but rather on our relationship with art and, through it, on our understanding of the world. As Entzenberg sustains, this shift is not primarily about art, but about our relationship to it: “It is a thesis about human beings, whose progress in self-understanding means that we can never again relate to art as our predecessors did” (Entzenberg 2013: 69). This leaves the door open for future critics and philosophers to go beyond Danto in the same way that he went beyond Hegel. But there is simply no turning back from their contributions to our understanding of art and art history.

4. Conclusions

This article has examined the Hegelian influence on Danto’s philosophy in light of a variety of aspects. First, it sought to understand Danto’s acceptance of narrative realism and progressive conception, which is fundamental for understanding his so-called “Hegelian turn”. Second, it delved into a little-examined aspect of Danto’s system by taking into account this Hegelian influence on his conception of the work of art. Following his systematic project, Danto conceives of it as representation and defines it as an embodied symbol, just as Hegel had argued before him. The idea of embodied symbol implies that art belongs to

the field of knowledge and not to that of sensibility. However, this point does not imply rejection of the sensible side of art. As I have argued, it is important to develop the consequences associated with the historical component of the embodiment of artworks.

Third, Danto's acceptance of the progressive conception of art history in the Hegelian sense and his conception of both art history and art are the basis of his thesis on the "end of art". Danto could have directly defined art as representation, but I tried to show how Danto instead followed Hegel to the point of describing the entire history of art as Hegel did, from beginning to end. This end is genuine if the essence of art has truly been found. Discovering this essence supposes that art's historical progress is complete, and it is not possible to enclose the essence of art in a given style. With these circumstances, Danto saw himself as in a position to provide a definition of art. In turn, defining art is only possible if the "end of art" has taken place and, in that way, is only valid at all times, both in the past and in the future, if the theory of the "end of art" is still valid in the future. This conception is based on the Hegelian belief that awareness cannot go back.

All of this points to the fact that Hegelian influence is not just found in the origin of Danto's philosophical theories, but is also part of his whole system, revealing its interwoven nature. In this way, examining the influence of the most systematic author in history unveils the scaffolding of Dantian thought. This unveiling further reveals a system of thought in which diverse philosophical theories (of history, of the mind, of art) support one another. This is especially significant for Danto's end of art thesis, which represents the culmination of his entire philosophical system.

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