

Dialogue

Literature, Russian Literature



Dialogue between Walter Benjamin and Myself Me: The concept of Aura is among the most famous theoretical by Walter Benjamin. However, first describe who is Walter Benjamin is?

Benjamin: Walter Bendix Schonflies Benjamin is a German-Jewish essayist, literary critic, translator, broadcaster, and social critic. I am famous for combining Romanticism, Jewish mysticism, and historical materialism to make the influential contributions to Western Marxism and aesthetic theory. Within the communication realms, Benjamin is known for the ‘aura’ concept (Benjamin 19).

Me: That is a very amazing description. So what is the ‘aura’ concept?

Benjamin: In recent times, the concept of aura has had many definitions depending on the area of application. During the initial creation of the concept however, the term was synonymous to the traditional work of art, particularly in the field of cultural, visual, and literary studies. In essence, the term described the groundbreaking cultural shift from uniqueness to seriality, from authenticity to replication, and from the original artwork to its inherent soulless mechanical copy.

Me: As far as the communication and journalism is concerned, the concept has come under serious criticism, especially the lack of clear-cut and stable categorization from your writings (Benjamin 23). Indeed, a portion of the critics suggests that your writings provoke multivalent and ambiguous, rather than offering neat shorthand for transition from the traditional to modern culture. Your take please?

Benjamin: Well, I think their basis for criticism is rather vague. In my essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*, I specifically

emphasize on the concept of aura and the decline of photography, similar to other technological innovations. Further, I challenge the uniqueness and originality of photography due to the unprecedented replications.

Me: Please continue.

Benjamin: A programmatic analysis of the essay that I previously mentioned will show that I present the relationship between photography and aura as a clear-cut opposition. Thus, photography, as a medium of mechanical reproduction, is among the driving forces behind the decline, and thus destruction, of aura. I clearly assert that the element that withers in the era of technological reproducibility of artwork is its aura. In essence, the process is symptomatic, and perhaps extends beyond the boundaries of art. This is because photographic reproduction of original works of art endows them with accessibility and mobility, thus altering their fundamental mode of reception (Benjamin 24). In this regard therefore, the contemplation characteristic of the traditional spaces of museum and gallery submits to an eagerness for control and possession.

Me: That is a very sensational explanation. It is definitely beneficial to me as far as the concept of aura in photography is concerned. However, I have a further query concerning a portion of the essay where you seem to devote the photography as an entirely self-contained medium, instead of a reproduction tool. Please explain.

Benjamin: You seem to have an interest in my works, and for that, I will explain my position. Looking at the essay, I present a brief historical detour to the early portrait photography, noting the fleeting expression of the human face and the aura signaled from the early photograph. Thus,

photography may be considered both a tool of aura destruction and the last site of its appearance (Benjamin 27).

Me: I believe the clarification is clear now. Therefore, photography thus destroys aura.

Benjamin: Yes, and even after decades of the technological advancement, I would still reiterate that photography indeed destroys aura.

Me: Thank you.

Work Cited

Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*. London: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Video Link: <http://www.xtranormal.com/watch/13384340/dialogue-between-walter-benjamin-and-myself>

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