

Unity Is Divided Into Parts, And Parts Into Changes

-- Analysis of the New Transmedia Path to Retain the Spiritual Charm of Dunhuang Culture in the Post-Mechanical Reproduction Era

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Abstract

In recent years, Benjamin's theory of spirituality has been newly interpreted in academic art theory research, and the previous logic of "mechanical reproduction - dissipation of spirituality" has been gradually dismantled in the context of the new era, and replaced by "mechanical reproduction". -Instead, a new logic of "mechanical reproduction and spiritual integration" has been created. Starting from this phenomenon, this paper takes Dunhuang culture as an example on the basis of the existing relevant theoretical research results, and points out from theory to practice that there are two states of "division" and "merging" of spiritual rhythms from the era of mechanical reproduction to the era of post-mechanical reproduction, so as to further discuss the role of transmediality in the reunification of Dunhuang culture. Based on the example of Dunhuang culture, we point out from theory to practice that there are two states of "separation" and "merging" from the era of mechanical reproduction to the era of post-mechanical reproduction, thus further discussing the role of transmediality in reuniting Dunhuang culture and art.

Keywords

Mechanical reproduction, Spirituality, Dunhuang's cultural, Intermediability, Unity is divided into parts, and parts into changes.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Against the background of large-scale industrial production in the last century, Benjamin's theory of spirituality constructed a set of logic of "mechanical reproduction - dissipation of spirituality", which generally describes the subversive changes that the emergence of mechanical reproduction technology has brought to traditional art. This logic has been recognized by many scholars and has become the theoretical basis for their silence on the spirituality of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. However, with the development of the times, especially the rapid development of modern science and technology, in recent years, some scholars have put forward different opinions on the logic of "mechanical reproduction - dissipation of spirituality", and have begun to re-interpret the theory of Benjamin's spirituality with a new vision different from that of previous researches to re-examine the spirituality of art in modern society. In the process of reinterpreting Benjamin's theory of spirituality, he also began to re-examine the existence of artistic spirituality and its living space in modern society with a new perspective different from that of previous studies, which, to a certain extent, broke

the traditional viewpoint of the theory of dissipation of spirituality and "gradually derived a new theoretical path towards the 'after the dissipation of spirituality' or the 'post-mechanical reproduction era'". and "gradually derive a new theoretical path towards 'after the dissipation of spirituality' or 'post-mechanical reproduction era'".

At the same time, Dunhuang culture, as a product of the intersection of Chinese and Western civilizations, has been under the double attack of the harsh changes in the climate and the impact of modern civilization since its reintroduction. Therefore, the construction of a new theoretical path of artistic spirituality can be said to be timely, which is not only conducive to the exploration of the mode of existence of Dunhuang's cultural spirituality in the post-mechanical reproduction era, but also helps to explore a "post-mechanical reproduction era". It is not only beneficial to explore the existence and survival space of Dunhuang culture in the post-mechanical reproduction era, but also helps to explore a new path to "retain" Dunhuang's cultural charm in the post-mechanical reproduction era.

1.2. Literature Review

Dunhuang culture, as one of the treasures of ancient Chinese culture, has a rich and deep artistic spirit, which is of great significance to the development of art and culture in the post-mechanical reproduction era.

From the perspective of domestic and international research, the research proposition of "Post-Mechanical Reproduction Era" has become a hot trend in recent years, and a total of 215 research papers have been searched on China Knowledge with the keyword of "Post-Mechanical Reproduction Era", of which 134 papers have been published in the last ten years. Among them, 134 papers were published in the past ten years, with topics including but not limited to the reinterpretation of Benjamin's theory of spiritual rhyme, the relationship between technology and art, the impact of postmodern technology on culture and art, and the development of culture and art in the post-mechanical reproduction era and the path of research. The study by Zhang Huiqin et al. explores the mediated nature of contemporary Dunhuang cultural heritage dissemination from a cross-media perspective, which in turn reveals the dissemination methods and influence of Dunhuang culture in the post-mechanical reproduction era. Sun Mingxue's paper analyzes the concept of aesthetic salvation in Benjamin's "Works of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," giving us a reflection on the aesthetic value of Dunhuang culture in the post-mechanical reproduction era.

On the basis of these studies, Su's paper further discusses the dissipation and remodeling of luminosity in the age of mechanical reproduction, and explores the manifestation and impact of luminosity in Dunhuang culture in the post-mechanical reproduction era. Cai Lingyu's study, on the other hand, centers on Benjamin's theory and discusses the two major transmutations of art audiences in the era of mechanical reproduction, which provides us with ideas for understanding the characteristics of Dunhuang culture's audiences in the post-mechanical reproduction era. Yang Mingfei and Xue Cuiwei's study reveals the aesthetic picture of Dunhuang culture after the disappearance of the light rhyme by analyzing the aesthetic characteristics of the era of mechanical reproduction in Benjamin's context. Among all these studies, the one with more theoretical research value is Liu Yi's *After the Dissipation of Spiritual Rhythm: The Cross-Media Reconstruction of Art Production and Aesthetic Experience*, which starts from the correlation between technology and art, combines with the current context and the status quo of art development, rethinks and reinterprets Benjamin's spiritual rhyme, and analyzes Benjamin's "Mechanical Copying - Spiritual Rhythm" in the era of mechanical reproduction. In addition to dismantling the logic of "mechanical reproduction and dissipation of spirituality" in the era of mechanical reproduction, it also discusses the general logic of the post-mechanical reproduction era, and analyzes the cross-media reconstruction of artistic production and aesthetic experience in the post-mechanical reproduction era at the

macroscopic theoretical level, which will undoubtedly help us to grasp the way of existence and space for survival of Dunhuang's cultural spirituality in the modern society from the theoretical point of view. This will undoubtedly help us to theoretically grasp the mode of existence and living space of Dunhuang culture in modern society, and thus further consider the path of reuniting its spirit.

1.3. Problem Statement and Objectives

Although academics have made a lot of achievements on the proposition of "artistic charm in the era of post-mechanical reproduction", at present, the research on Benjamin's theory of charm is still stuck in the deconstruction of old theories and the construction of new theories, and there is a lack of evidence on relevant practical examples. Therefore, this paper takes Dunhuang culture as an example, combines the case of Dunhuang culture's expression in the new era on the basis of existing relevant research results, and supplements the ancient Chinese idea of "division and integration as change" to analyze the new cross-media path of "retaining" Dunhuang culture's spiritual rhythm in the post-mechanical reproduction era from theory to practice, and also tries to provide some cases for the current new theoretical research. At the same time, it also tries to provide some case studies for the current new theoretical research.

2. Main Body of the Paper

2.1. The Dividing and Uniting of Spiritual Rhythms: From the Age of Mechanical Reproduction to the Post-Mechanical Reproduction Era

2.1.1. The Idea of "Dividing and Combining for Change" and Benjamin's Theory of Spiritual Rhythm

As the saying goes, "In division there is unity, and in unity there is division". Divide and merge wisdom as early as in the "I Ching" has been explained clearly, indicating that the interconnection between things and conversion; "Sun Tzu's Art of War" is clearly put forward the "divide and merge for the change" idea, emphasizing innovation and development, as Zheng Youxian, a scholar of the Southern Song Dynasty, said: "The Sima Law" to benevolence as a foundation, Sun Wu to fraudulent establishment; "Sima Law" to righteousness, Sun Wu to move; "Sima Law" to positive, positive does not get the intention is the right, Sun Wu to share the power Sun Tzu's idea of "divide and conquer for change" is based on the inheritance and accumulation of the ideas of his predecessors. It can be said that the philosophies of "division" and "unity" discussed in both the I Ching and Sun Tzu's Art of War are reasonable responses to the changes of the future, which are precisely compatible with the current situation of art development in today's era, and are also the basis for interpreting Benjamin's "Mechanics of Change". This is the key to explaining Benjamin's complex attitude toward spirituality in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.

In the era of large-scale industrial production, Benjamin departed from the purely contemporary critique of modern art, such as the "negative discourse" held by members of the Frankfurt School, such as Adorno and Horkheimer, towards modern art and the cultural industry [Zhao Yong, *Inside and Outside the Frankfurt School: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*, Peking University Press, 2016, p. 13]. Page 13] In his critique, he still gives modern art the possibility of reasonable existence, treats this art influenced by industrial culture with a rational and moderate attitude, and presents a kind of foreshadowing in his discourse, from which he "grows a set of 'affirmative discourses' of the theory of popular culture, and consequently This "grows a set of 'affirmative discourse' of popular culture theory, and consequently constructs a 'subversive mode' of popular culture." [Zhao Yong, *Inside and Outside the Frankfurt School: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*, Peking University Press, 2016, p. 14]. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin takes movies as

an example, acknowledging both the tremor and the powerful destructive power that mechanical reproduction technology has brought to traditional art, pointing out that "the qualitative change that has taken place in the field of art in the modern world, namely, the dissipation of the spiritual rhyme" [Liu Yi, *After the Dissipation of the Spiritual Rhyme - The Transmedia Reconstruction of Art Production and Aesthetic Experience*, Nanjing Social Science, No. 12, 2020, p. 125]. [Liu Yi, "After the Dissipation of Spiritual Rhythm - Transmedial Reconstruction of Aesthetic Experience", *Nanjing Social Science*, 12, 2020, p. 12], also commented positively on the technique of mechanical reproduction, "By making many copies, it replaces the unique with a multitude of reproductions, and by enabling the copies to be appreciated by the recipient in his own environment, it gives reality and vitality to the object reproduced." [Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, China City Press, 2002, p. 10]. This shows his complex attitude towards spirituality in the age of mechanical reproduction: on the one hand, spirituality is a concept he proposes to describe what is lost in traditional art in the context of the innovation of mechanical reproduction technology; originality, uniqueness, cult value, authority, all of these elements that constitute the basic content or characteristics of the spirituality of traditional art, are all dispersed in the face of the mechanical reproduction technology; on the other hand, the concept of spirituality is not proposed in order to criticize the traditional art, but rather to criticize the traditional art. On the other hand, his concept of spiritual rhythm is not to make a simple distinction between traditional and modern art, but to "mark out a new starting point, or to predict the future direction of art with 'a process of symptomatic significance'" [Liu Yi, "After the Dissipation of Spiritual Rhythm --The Transmedia Reconstruction of Art Production and Aesthetic Experience", *Nanjing Social Science*, No. 12, 2020, p. 125]. . In other words, Benjamin seems to regard the dissipation of spiritual rhythm as a signal, and his focus is not on the dissipation of spiritual rhythm itself, but rather on where the mechanical reproduction technology will take traditional art after this signal is given. Therefore, he did not regret the dissipation of traditional art's spirituality in the era of mechanical reproduction, which explains why he chose to defend modern art in the midst of all the criticism, and his purpose was precisely to make a predictive judgment on the future direction of art in the era of mechanical reproduction.

2.1.2. Shortcomings of Benjamin's Spiritual Rhyme Theory

Due to historical limitations, Benjamin's exposition suffers from two shortcomings: first, the idea of the dissipation of spiritual rhythm. In the book, Benjamin's description of the spiritual rhythm is not clear in many places, and different chapters have different statements, but no matter which statement he conveys, he conveys the meaning that the mechanical reproduction technology leads to the lack of the spiritual rhythm in modern art that is found in the traditional art, that is, he uses the logic of "mechanical reproduction - dissipation of the spiritual rhythm" to In other words, the logic of "mechanical reproduction - dissipation of spirit" is used to describe the development of art in the context of large-scale industrial production. However, does the arrival of the era of mechanical reproduction really mean the dissipation of spiritual rhythm? Are spirituality and mechanical reproduction really "incompatible"? These questions are not only related to the connotation of spirituality and the relationship between art and technology, but also to the transformation of mechanical reproduction technology, and therefore need to be viewed from the perspective of historical materialism.

First of all, regarding the spirituality, in Benjamin's view, originality is its core, which determines uniqueness, cult value and authority, and originality is the unity of "here and now" and "historical continuity", and he pays more attention to "historical continuity" than "here and now", from which the originality of a work of art is determined. The authenticity of a work of art is determined by the fact that he emphasizes "historical continuity" more than "here and now", and that the medieval Madonna became "authentic" at a time other than the time of its birth, as he explains in his discussion of the "authenticity" of medieval Madonna. This can be

seen in his statement that the medieval Madonna became "authentic" at a time other than its birth. Benjamin's theory of the dissipation of spirituality argues that, compared to traditional art, modern art lacks precisely the "here and now" and the "continuity of history" that it is supposed to possess; in other words, he argues that mechanical reproduction cannot provide modern art with these two things, and that "what modern art brings to the people" is not the same as the "authenticity" that it brings to the people. In other words, he believes that mechanical reproduction technology cannot provide these two things for modern art, and that the "sense of reality" that modern art brings to people [Benjamin, "Artworks in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", translated by Wang Yong, *Three Essays on the Sociology of Art*, Nanjing University Press, 2017 edition, p. 51]. It is impossible to equate the "here and now" and "extendibility", so he draws an equivalence between mechanical reproduction technology and the dissipation of spirituality. But in fact, in light of the development of the present era, especially with the rapid development of modern technology and the emergence of various new things, such as digital museums, AI paintings, etc., it is clear that technology has already subverted our lives and our perception of life, and it has a significant impact on various fields such as the field of art. In this social context, the emergence of the discourse expression "everything can be immersed" seems to be a natural result of the rapid development of science and technology, which satisfies people's need for a sense of "reality" in art. Then, for the "here and now" and the "continuity of history", does it also fulfill the same need? Obviously, for the former, it cannot satisfy, because there is only one "here and now" and "here" in the original work, but for the latter, which determines the original authenticity of the work of art, i.e., "historical continuity", it can be satisfied through the multi-moment sensation of "reality". But for the latter, which determines the original authenticity of a work of art, i.e. "historical continuity", it can be satisfied through the simultaneous and continuous interaction of multi-moment sensations, because "continuity is the coexistence of the diversity of different moments occurring at the same time, the complexity of interpenetration between the moments, as well as the continuity of the temporal unfolding" [Liu Yi, "After the Spiritual Rhythm Disappears. Transmedia Reconstruction of Art Production and Aesthetic Experience", *Nanjing Social Science*, No. 12, 2020, p. 125]. . From this perspective, "historical continuity" can actually be given a new contemporary connotation, i.e., it can be changed from emphasizing historical distance and time continuity to valuing sensory experience or aesthetic experience, so that the "originality" of artworks repeatedly mentioned by Benjamin can be redefined as the "original authenticity" of artworks, which can be redefined as the "original authenticity" of artworks. Benjamin's repeated reference to the "originality" of a work of art can be redefined as a "uniqueness", the "cult value" can be redefined as an "appreciation value", and even the "spiritual charm" can be redefined as an "appreciation value". Even the concept of "spirituality" itself needs to be re-conceptualized, i.e., to be transformed from the state of "dissipation" to the state of "dispersion" according to Benjamin. In other words, the era of mechanical reproduction has not "eliminated" spirituality; it has only been dispersed in various corners, and the "division" of spirituality is the state of "dispersion".

Secondly, there is not enough awareness of the prognosis of the future direction of art. Benjamin's positive assessment of mechanical reproduction technology lies in the fact that it provides new means of expression for art, as the book states, "Technical reproduction has reached a level where it not only reproduces all heirloom works of art, thus enduring the most profound changes with its influence, but it has also gained a place for itself in the artistic treatment. What is most instructive in the study of this level is that his two different functions - the reproduction of works of art and the art of cinema - are permeated by each other." [Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, China City Press, 2002, p. 7]. Obviously, due to the fact that the film had just flourished at that time, Benjamin's prediction of the future direction of art was still tentatively stuck in the mechanical reproduction

technology in the means of artistic expression can bring innovation to traditional art, thus expanding the space of its expression of the objective world and the space of artistic communication, and emphasized the instrumental reproduction function of the mechanical reproduction technology, and for the role of the mechanical reproduction technology in the generation of new forms of art, artistic aesthetic experience, and so on. The discussion of the role of mechanical reproduction technology in the generation of new art forms and artistic aesthetic experience is slightly insufficient, ignoring the productive reproduction function of mechanical reproduction technology.

2.1.3. The Possibility of Transmediality in Reuniting Spiritual Rhythms

In the rapid development of Internet technology, the instrumental reproduction in the era of mechanical reproduction can no longer fully satisfy people's aesthetic needs, and the productive reproduction in the era of post-mechanical reproduction is the new demand and the new growth point, which actually embodies a kind of "second-degree creativity", mainly manifested in the production of cross-media sex. The so-called transmediality refers to "the relationship between media, and this concept is thus used to describe a wide range of cultural phenomena that exceeds one medium" [Zhou Xian, "Art Transmediality and Art Unity - Methodology of Knowledge Construction in the Discipline of Art Theory," *Literary and Artistic Studies*, 2020, pp. 3-4]. *Literary and Artistic Studies*, No. 1, 2020]. . Cross-media production is the new demand of art in production in the post - mechanical reproduction era, and it is also a new way to reunite the spirit of art. According to Benjamin's point of view in "The Art Work in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", the previous artistic aura requires historical distance, i.e., the extension of time, and if there is no historical distance, the artistic aura will also dissipate. From the previous discussion, we can see that this historical distance can be satisfied by the simultaneous and continuous interaction of multi-moment sensations, and the aura is in a state of dispersion rather than dissipation in the era of mechanical reproduction. Then, in the post-mechanical reproduction era, transmedial production is able to reunite the dispersed artistic aura and put it into practice with concrete immersive experiences, that is to say, the artistic aura changes from the dispersed state in the mechanical reproduction era to the aggregated state in the post-mechanical reproduction era, and "division" and "unity" are the key elements of "division" and "unity" in this era. The "division" and "merging" are the two states in which the spiritual rhythm of art coexists.

Summarizing the above, from the mechanical reproduction era to the post-mechanical reproduction era, the spiritual rhythm exists in two states of "division" and "merging", and the cross-media production is to reunite the artistic spiritual rhythm in the form of division and merging, which reflects a kind of "division and merging for change", which is a kind of "division and merging for change", and a kind of "division and merging for change". The cross-media production is to reunite the artistic spirit in the form of division into unity, reflecting the idea of "division and unity as change". Therefore, the idea of "division into unity, division into unity as change" can be a theoretical guide to reunite the artistic charm in the post-mechanical reproduction era, and thus provide an entry point for the reunification of the charm of Dunhuang culture, which has different civilization deposits.

2.2. Problems facing Dunhuang culture

As a product of the intersection of Chinese and Western civilizations, Dunhuang culture has been immortalized for thousands of years in the flow of history, and has become an incomparable pearl in the cultural and artistic treasury of Chinese culture and even the world, known as the "treasury of oriental art", and its unique cultural charm not only shines on the Great Northwest of China, but also spreads to Japan and Europe, making many people overseas fascinated by it. Its unique cultural charm not only shines in the northwest of China, but also spreads to Japan and Europe, making many overseas people fascinated by it. However, although

this pearl has focused the attention of people from all over the world, by the state and the government's attention, but also got the corresponding protection and development, but when faced with the harsh changes in the climate environment and the rapid development of the times, it still exists in the "dust" of the hidden danger. The "dust" here no longer refers to the past because of its body was buried under the sand, its value was also abandoned in the river of time, silent for several years, but refers to its reappearance, especially in the rapid development of modern science and technology at the present time need to face from the impact of modern civilization and its brought about by such as the spirit of the charm has been eliminated, the inheritance of the lack of talent and the lack of inherited talents.

2.3. Exploring the practice of division into integration

In accordance with the above idea of "division into unity and unity into change" and the cross-media characteristics of Dunhuang culture, in realizing the goal of reuniting the spirit of Dunhuang culture, cross-media production is the main body, and humanities IP and science and technology IP, which play a role in creating an immersive mode of business, are two wings, which synergize with each other to jointly assist the inheritance and dissemination of Dunhuang culture, so as to effectively protect and pass on intangible cultural heritage in a productive and living form. The two synergize to help pass on and spread Dunhuang culture, thus implementing effective productive protection of intangible cultural heritage and living inheritance of Dunhuang culture, so that the spirit of Dunhuang culture will not be extinguished. Nowadays, with the development of science and technology and the increasing material level, people pay more and more attention to spiritual civilization, socialist spiritual civilization construction has become an indispensable part of social development, thus, the humanities IP and technology IP gradually emerged and continue to get breakthroughs and development, embodied in the city of humanities IP, film and television culture IP IP IP to create and innovation. In recent years, Dunhuang cultural and creative products have emerged in an endless stream, and the number of film and television works with Dunhuang as the theme is also increasing, such as the release of the film "Dunhuang Legend", "Dunhuang Heroes", "Dunhuang, a thousand years of the banquet", "Dunhuang: Born Legendary", "Dunhuang Masters", and other documentaries on the air..... All of these are the manifestations of cross-media production, creating a new art form and a new culture. Dunhuang has created new artistic forms and new aesthetic experiences, bringing Dunhuang culture back into people's view, enabling people to bathe in the millennia-old Dunhuang culture, marveling at the wisdom of the ancient ancestors and feeling the endless artistic charm of Dunhuang culture, which is rekindled in the hearts of every appreciator.

So how do humanities IP and technology IP play a role in reuniting Dunhuang's cultural spirit? Combined with the aforementioned, it can be seen that in the context of the new era, there are two states of "division" and "merging" of spirituality, and the reunification of spirituality can be realized through the simultaneous and continuous interaction of multiple momentary senses. In other words, we can start from the visual, auditory and other sensory experiences to capture the spirit of Dunhuang culture in modern society, and furthermore, to use modern technology to realize the reunion of the spirit of Dunhuang culture on the basis of the preservation of Dunhuang culture itself. In the visual aspect, in addition to the technical preservation of the existing Dunhuang culture related image data through digitization, it should also be based on the principle of inheritance and innovative development of its content, such as attempting to "resurrect" Dunhuang mural paintings based on historical data, so that it can "walk" into modern life, and to make it more attractive to the public, as well as to the general public. "into modern life, interact with the public, so that their every move has become very vivid and lively up; in the auditory aspect, the use of modern technology to crack and try to "restore" Dunhuang murals contain all the valuable sounds of ancient China, such as the sound of rare musical

instruments, the voice of historical figures, Animal sounds, etc., so that the sound can "travel" through space and time and people resonate. In a sense, the reunification of Dunhuang culture not only lies in the protection and preservation of its cultural essence, but more importantly in the ability to apply its cultural content to modern life, so that Dunhuang culture can truly "live".

3. Conclusion

For Benjamin, the dissipation of spirituality is the "lost" side of modern art in the era of mechanical reproduction. Nowadays, this "lost" side has been gradually recovered under the development of the present age and technology, and the spirituality of art has been converged from dispersion to aggregation in the generation of new artistic forms and new artistic aesthetic experiences brought about by inter-media production, which is the "gain" side of art given by modern technology. Nowadays, this "lost" side has been gradually recovered under the development of the present age and technology, and the spirit of art has been converged from dispersion in the generation of new art forms and new aesthetic experiences brought about by cross-media production, which is the "gained" side of art endowed by modern technology. This also means that with the joint help of humanities IP and technology IP, the reunification of Dunhuang's cultural spirit can be realized through visual and auditory sensory experiences, and that the mechanical reproduction technology in the post-mechanical reproduction era has brought to Dunhuang culture and art not only instrumental reproduction, but more productive reproduction. In other words, the idea of "division into unity and unity into change" can help people "keep" the spirit of Dunhuang culture, so that it can continue to shine in the future, attracting more and more people to study and research Dunhuang culture, so that Dunhuang culture continues to play an important role in academic and other fields. Dunhuang culture continues to play an important role in various academic fields, and this is also a kind of Mr. Chen Yinke's "Dunhuang, our country's academic history of sadness" of the history of the pain of the new era to heal and respond to it.

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