

was confined to fragments and more or less unfinished short essays, quite often, as already mentioned above, it treated rather disparate (and desperate) subjects. However, especially the *Work of Art...* – along with some other probes in the same direction – opened some questions, which continue to bother us long time after the author's unfortunate death.

The Mystery of Non-mystery

The manner, in which the set of questions we have in mind was put forward in the *Work of Art...*, is somewhat schematic, but that is precisely the form of theoretical problems, which most often proves to be very productive for further development.³ The “mystery” of the effectiveness of such a type of discourse is not its depth, much less anything “hidden behind” its obvious meaning. Of course, what could be the “depth” of a “schematic” text, and how could anything be “hidden” under the surface of written words and sentences? Therefore, the “mystery” must be elsewhere. To put it simply: the mystery is that there is no mystery, the genius lies precisely in provoking a *deja vu* effect in the reader. Yes, everybody sees that the print, photography, cinema and so-forth are the result of an intellectual (or the aesthetic) endeavour, but at the same time they are the products of machinery, the products of the process of mechanical reproduction, and everybody feels that the possibility to bring close to public many works of art from secluded places, means a change in a way. But in what way? This is the question, which not “just anybody” could feel important to answer. Copies of the portrait of Mona Lisa⁴ suddenly became accessible and could decorate a wall in any home, no matter how humble, great novels of French realism are accessible in cheap editions, etc., so what? This is the point, where Benjamin's intervention proved to be fruitful. Simple as his discov-

- 3 The same may be said, for example, about Althusser's concept of the “ideological apparatuses of the state,” which caused a lot of controversy in the philosophical and political debate in the 1970s, but it has been also repudiated many times over on the ground of its “schematicism”. However, it looks as though, especially those among Althusser's critics, who tried to eradicate the concept itself, its life was prolonged by causing many Althusser advocating answers. Very often they admitted that a dose of schematicism is obvious in the Althusser's theory, but this cannot belittle the fact of “genius” of the scheme.
- 4 Mona Lisa happens to be the case, which was used for opposing points: “For Adorno, the fact that we might be happy to pin a postcard of the *Mona Lisa* to our wall only goes to show what the culture industry has done to us. It has reduced us to such a level that we are happy to be fobbed off with cheap copies; we feel absolutely no need to see the original because we think that it has nothing to say to us” (Tester, 1994: p. 49).