

ABSTRACT

Religion and the Expressionless – A Religious Perspective on Art in Benjamin

In this article, I investigate the relationship between religion and art in the work of Walter Benjamin. I demonstrate how this relation is embedded in Benjamin's understanding of a dialectic of secularization, which has recently been examined by Sigrid Weigel and Daniel Weidner. Within this context, I focus on the "expressionless" and its relation to the holy in Benjamin's thought. I follow different applications of the expressionless in Benjamin's texts from different periods and analyze their overall significance. My thesis is that the expressionless is a specifically aesthetic category that can rescue the difference between the holy and the profane, granting both spheres their own rights and thereby resisting any sacralization of art in an aesthetic cult. Therefore, with reference to the holy and to the expressionless, one can claim with Benjamin that a religious perspective on art in a secular context is of irreplaceable value, while the expressionless simultaneously safeguards the autonomy of art.