



Press Release
May 6, 2015

Famous anthropologist and writer Michael Taussig hosted by Boğaziçi Chronicles

A journey across 'Passages' on the concept of bodily unconsciousness

'Boğaziçi Chronicles', Boğaziçi University's international guest program, hosted Michael Taussig , the famous anthropologist and writer who introduced a new language to the world of philosophy with his unusual stage expression, as its eighth guest. He discussed his world-shaking concept of "bodily unconsciousness" which he has developed on Walter Benjamin's passages with his followers at Boğaziçi University in the scope of Boğaziçi Chronicles.

Influenced by critical theory and post-structuralist thought, the Australian anthropologist Michael Taussig shared his world-shaking quality comments on Walter Benjamin's passages, from a commodity fetishism point of view, with his followers at Boğaziçi University in the scope of Boğaziçi Chronicles. Taussig, who introduced a new language to the world of philosophy with his unusual stage expression, took us on a journey across "Passages" on his concept of "bodily unconsciousness" through his theatrical expression. As the eighth guest of Boğaziçi Chronicles, offering us the unusual performance watched by the entire world with great interest, Michael Taussig wandered through "Passages" with the Walter Benjamin allegory above, exposing the fault of mythical theories of history.

With Berlin Sun Theater: the mastery of non-mastery, reading out his texts while, on the other side of the page, that is, the stage, bringing his comments on his writings to the stage accompanied by dances and music, Taussig started his conference at Boğaziçi University by telling how he had developed the idea of expressing the transformation of shamanistic magic into bodily unconsciousness through the simile of twilight between the sun and darkness.

Stating that magic is the art of faking out physical phenomena under dim light, Taussig emphasizes that every day we learn an optical lesson during sunset and he calls twilight the hour of magic. Expressing this vague transition between day and darkness as an image of one's physical process of learning, Taussig depicts this situation with the story of the juggler Rastelli and the dwarf hidden inside the big yellow show-ball. In the story, even if the dwarf, who made Rastelli's juggling acts with the ball possible, is one day no longer inside the ball, Rastelli realizes through the subconscious process of learning which we call "practice" that he is now able to perform the acts without help. With a moment imagined as "twilight", the body embeds movement abilities in the subconscious and can send them back to the organs when they are needed.

Another passage interpreted by Taussig in this framework is about the “Chess Automat of the Turks”, an automat that always wins the game by giving the most correct response to every move by its rival. A chess master humpy dwarf inside moves the arms of the puppet dressed in Turkish clothes by means of strings. While the mirrors on the sides make the space beneath the table look as if it is empty from every direction, the Turkish puppet is always the winner in the chess game.

While enlightening his audience about analyzing the association between theology and historical materialism, he likens this relationship to a dwarf (theology) setting a mechanical gigantic chess player (historical materialism) in motion. In other words, the puppet named “historical materialism” fearlessly battles every player and wins all the time provided that it puts theology, which today has clearly become an amorphous dwarf, and which anyway must stay away from sight, in its service.

Stating that the real image of the past is volatile, Taussig underscores the state of twilight between day and night, and says that the past can only be captured as a snapshot that suddenly flares and lights up at the very moment when it exposes itself not to be seen ever again.

Press Information: Ebru Kalu / desiBel Agency – 0532 691 82 56 – 0212 231 06 73