

Baudelaire's Question and Answers

Q1. Is alienation in the city always negative? Could anonymity also be liberating?

No, alienation in the city is not always negative on one side, it makes you seek a crowd for attention and work for your desires and stops you from day-dreaming. On the other hand, it increases your productivity, doing the same work again and again makes you consistent and working harder makes you successful. Absolute of anything is not good, like if we fully alienate ourselves from the society or the city we may feel low and not good but in the same time if we always remain in the crowd we can become just the lifeless robot in the crowd.

Q2. Does Baudelaire's idea of love at “last sight” still resonate today in our digital-first, swipe-right society?

Love at first sight still exists, but in today's digital-first world, it's often **commodified and superficial**, as Benjamin might say—part of a society that has “progressed” at the expense of moral depth. Platforms like Tinder or Instagram reduce love to *appearance*, not personality. Even **breakups are commodified**, turned into content or branding moments—every emotion becomes a performance.

Q3.. Are we more like the flâneur today—or the man of the crowd? Do we *observe* society or are we consumed by it?

We are more like the **Man of the Crowd**. We lose ourselves in the noise, constantly seeking validation from others. Like Benjamin suggests, we move through life in repetitive routines, hoping to achieve “success,” while gradually **sacrificing our individuality** to blend into the crowd. Instead of observing society like the flâneur, we're consumed by it—addicted to attention, algorithms, and external affirmation.

Q4. What role does modern media (like Instagram or TikTok) play in continuing the shock and spectacle Benjamin describes?

Modern media like Instagram and TikTok continue the cycle of **shock and spectacle** Benjamin described. These platforms **codify our personalities into digestible vibes**—aesthetic templates, trending sounds, curated identities. Every scroll delivers another **jolt to the senses**, fragmenting attention and replacing lived experience with a loop of images, edits, and effects. As Benjamin warned, the more technology mediates our world, the more *reality becomes a performance*.

Q5. Could poetry today still reflect shock and fragmentation the way Baudelaire's did? Or has that role shifted?

Yes, poetry today can also reflect shock and fragmentation.(I could not guess this answer further if you can please tell me this i would be grateful 😊)

Q6. Can there be a digital flâneur today—just endlessly scrolling instead of strolling?

Yes, a digital flâneur can exist today—someone who scrolls not to perform, but to observe, reflect, and learn. These individuals often train themselves in private, cultivating deep

knowledge rather than chasing likes or clout. Yet paradoxically, even these thoughtful figures are commodified by the system—turned into “influencers” or intellectual aesthetics by platforms like Instagram and TikTok. In a world where even introspection can be monetized, the digital flâneur becomes both outsider and product, admired by the very crowd they try to stand apart from.

Q7. Are we numb to important things because of overstimulation—news, war, catastrophe, ads, content?

According to Baudelaire, strollers armor themselves by desensitizing themselves and keep their composure and calm. While the people who are not able to do so become the “Man of the crowd” in Poe’s writings. People who react instantly without thinking about it even for a while are the “Man of the crowd”. We see there is a significant amount of growth of such people in India. Where they follow their leaders without even thinking.

We can also relate it to the “Friend-Enemy concept”, people identify themselves as the member of communities very easily and against another community very easily nowadays to be a part of a crowd.

Q8. What does it mean that attention itself is now a commodity? Would Benjamin see us as hyper-commodified flâneurs?

Indeed nowadays, attention is now itself a commodity, if we see carefully everywhere we go we are supposed to pay attention, every app like Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter(X), Facebook can be seen as the worth of attention and we can see that they are worth millions of dollars. We can also relate to the need for tele-communications. But I will try to stick to Baudelaire. In our context the attention can be commodified as the more you give attention to someone or something the more important it becomes.

Like we see in India, The question you asked in class :-

Why children in India choose science and pursue it even when they don’t like it?

In start, it is just a pressure from the parents or peers but with time and attention it grows and with increasing pressure and tension and inability to do work effectively makes a person depressed and sad and now he doesn’t think of leaving it, because he is afraid he has to start from beginning (The gambler has placed too much of a bet)

Q9. Can poetry, art, or storytelling still survive in a shock-driven world? Or do we need to rethink these mediums?

Yes it can but it must also be commodified. (I think it can but don’t have a perfect sort of answer...)

Q10. How do current digital practices—scrolling, selfies, ghosting—relate to Baudelaire’s vision of modernity as fragmented and haunted?

Like what Baudelaire said these things provide us with “shocks” when we see them and each and every shock is unique in its own and fragmented to the others. Like a gambler, for whom every bet is fragmented and unique.