

Walter Benjamin An Introduction To His Work And Thought

Essays and reflections from one of the twentieth century's most original cultural critics, with an introduction by Hannah Arendt. Walter Benjamin was an icon of criticism, renowned for his insight on art, literature, and philosophy. This volume includes his views on Kafka, with whom he felt a close personal affinity; his studies on Baudelaire and Proust; and his essays on Leskov and Brecht's epic theater. Illuminations also includes his penetrating study "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," an enlightening discussion of translation as a literary mode; and his theses on the philosophy of history. Hannah Arendt selected the essays for this volume and introduces them with a classic essay about Benjamin's life in a dark historical era. Leon Wieseltier's preface explores Benjamin's continued relevance for our times. Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) was a German-Jewish Marxist literary critic, essayist, translator, and philosopher. He was at times associated with the Frankfurt School of critical theory and was also greatly inspired by the Marxism of Bertolt Brecht and Jewish mysticism as presented by Gershom Scholem.?

«Also nicht um seine Bedingtheit ihm nachzusehen, sondern die Art seiner Unbedingtheit erfassen zu lernen...» - die Formel, in der Benjamin Goethes

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Auseinandersetzung mit Calderon resümiert, darf als Motto den in diesem Band versammelten Aufsätzen vorangestellt werden. In ihren Themen spiegeln sich die wichtigsten Gegenstände und Bereiche des Benjaminschen Oeuvres. So bezeugen sie zugleich «den Integrationsprozeß der Wissenschaft, der mehr und mehr die starren Scheidewände zwischen den Disziplinen niederlegt», zu dessen Beförderung Benjamin selbst sich in programmatischer Absicht bekannt hat.

Walter Benjamin and the Corpus of Autobiography is not merely the most extensive and insightful treatment of Benjamin 's autobiographical writings.

An instant is the shortest span in which time can be divided and experienced. In an instant, there is no duration: it is an interruption that happens in the blink of an eye. For the ancient Greeks, *kairos*, the time in which exceptional, unrepeatable events occurred, was opposed to *chronos*, measurable, quantitative, and uniform time. In *The Moment of Rupture*, Humberto Beck argues that during the years of the First World War, the Russian Revolution, and the rise of fascism in Germany, the notion of the instant migrated from philosophy and aesthetics into politics and became a conceptual framework for the interpretation of collective historical experience that, in turn, transformed the subjective perception of time. According to Beck, a significant juncture occurred in Germany between 1914 and 1940, when a modern tradition of reflection on the instant—spanning the poetry of Goethe, the historical self-understanding of the French Revolution, the aesthetics of early Romanticism, the philosophies of Søren

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Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, and the artistic and literary practices of Charles Baudelaire and the avant gardes—interacted with a new experience of historical time based on rupture and abrupt discontinuity. Beck locates in this juncture three German thinkers—Ernst Jünger, Ernst Bloch, and Walter Benjamin—who fused the consciousness of war, crisis, catastrophe, and revolution with the literary and philosophical formulations of the instantaneous and the sudden in order to intellectually represent an era marked by the dissolution between the extraordinary and the everyday. The Moment of Rupture demonstrates how Jünger, Bloch, and Benjamin produced a constellation of figures of sudden temporality that contributed to the formation of what Beck calls a distinct "regime of historicity," a mode of experiencing time based on the notion of a discontinuous present.

Walter Benjamin is often considered the key modern philosopher and critic of modern art. Tracing his influence on modern aesthetics and cultural history, *Introducing Walter Benjamin* highlights his commitment to political transformation of the arts as a means to bring about social change. Benjamin witnessed first-hand many of the cataclysmic events of modern European history. He took a critical stance on the dominant ideologies of Marxism, Zionism and Technocracy, and his attempt to flee Nazi Europe ultimately led to his suicide in 1940. With its brilliant combination of words and images, this is an ideal introduction to one of the most elusive philosophers.

For students of modern criticism and theory, Walter Benjamin's writings have become

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essential reading. His analyses of photography, film, language, history, allegory, material culture, the poet Charles Baudelaire, and his vast examination of the social, political and historical significance of the Arcades of nineteenth-century Paris have left an enduring and important critical legacy. This volume examines in detail a substantial selection of his important critical writings on these topics from 1916 to 1940 and outlines his life in pre-war Germany, his association with the Frankfurt School, and the dissemination of his ideas and methodologies into a variety of academic disciplines since his death. David Ferris traces the development of Benjamin's key critical concepts and provides students with an accessible overview of the life, work and thought of one of the twentieth-century's most important literary and cultural critics.

This collection explores, in Adorno's description, 'philosophy directed against philosophy'. The essays cover all aspects of Benjamin's writings, from his early work in the philosophy of art and language, through to the concept of history. The experience of time and the destruction of false continuity are identified as the key themes in Benjamin's understanding of history.

Walter Benjamin: Einbahnstraße Erstdruck bei Rowohlt, Berlin, 1928 Neuauflage. Herausgegeben von Karl-Maria Guth. Berlin 2016. Umschlaggestaltung von Thomas Schultz-Overhage unter Verwendung des Bildes: John Singer Sargent, Palastmauern (Ausschnitt), 1904. Gesetzt aus der Minion Pro, 11 pt.

A comprehensive study of education in the writings of Walter Benjamin. Walter Benjamin's

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Antifascist Education is the first comprehensive analysis of educational themes across the entirety of the critical theorist's diverse writings. Starting with Benjamin's early reflections on teaching and learning, Tyson E. Lewis argues that the aesthetic and cultural forms to which Benjamin so often turned—namely, radio broadcasts, children's theatrical productions, collections, cityscapes, public cinemas, and word games—swell with educational potentialities. What emerges from Lewis's reading is a constellational curriculum composed of minor practices such as poor teaching, absentminded learning, and nondurational studying. This curriculum carries political significance, offering an antidote to past and present forms of fascist manipulation, hardness, and coldness. Walter Benjamin's *Antifascist Education* is a testimony to Benjamin's belief that "everyone is an educator and everyone needs to be educated and everything is education." Tyson E. Lewis is Professor of Art Education at the University of North Texas. He is the author of several books, including *Inoperative Learning: A Radical Rewriting of Educational Potentialities* and *On Study: Giorgio Agamben and Educational Potentiality*.

Walter Benjamin and the Post-Kantian Tradition engages with Benjamin as a theorist of a historical and philosophical problematic, and demonstrates how Benjamin moves from an aspiring idealist philosopher to a politically engaged Marxist critic without abandoning the theoretical project he develops early on.

Drawing upon a wealth of journal writings and personal correspondence, Esther Leslie presents a uniquely intimate portrait of one of the intellectual giants of the twentieth century, Walter Benjamin. She sets his life in the context of his middle-class upbringing; explores the social, political, and economic upheaval in Germany during and after World War I; and

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recounts Benjamin's eccentric love of toys, trick-books, travel, and ships. From the Frankfurt School and his influential friendships with Theodore Adorno, Gershom Scholem, and Bertolt Brecht, to his travels across Europe, Walter Benjamin traces out the roots of Benjamin's groundbreaking writings and their far-reaching impact in his own time. Leslie argues that Benjamin's life challenges the stereotypical narrative of the tragic and lonely intellectual figure—instead positioning him as a man who relished the fierce combat of competing theories and ideas. Closing with his death at the Spanish-French border in a desperate flight from the Nazis and Stalin, Walter Benjamin is a concise and concentrated account of a capacious intellect trapped by hostile circumstances.

This first comparative study of the philosophers and literary critics, Walter Benjamin and Mikhail Bakhtin, focuses on the two thinkers' conceptions of experience and form, investigating parallels between Bakhtin's theories of responsibility, dialogue, and the novel, and Benjamin's theories of translation, montage, allegory, and the aura.

Following the spirit of Benjamin's Arcades Project, this book acts as a kaleidoscope of change in the 21st century, tracing its different reflections in the international contemporary while seeking to understand individual/collective reactions to change through a series of creative methodologies.

Offers letters from a leading German literary critic to the editors, Bertoldt Brecht, and others and recounts his long exile from the Nazis

The essays compiled in this book explore aspects of Walter Benjamin's discourse that have contributed to the formation of contemporary architectural theories. Issues such as technology and history have been considered central to the very modernity of architecture, but Benjamin's

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reflection on these subjects has elevated the discussion to a critical level. The contributors in this book consider Walter Benjamin's ideas in the context of digitalization of architecture where it is the very technique itself that determines the processes of design and the final form. This book was published as a special issue of *Architectural Theory Review*.

Walter Benjamin is often viewed as a cultural critic who produced a vast array of brilliant, idiosyncratic pieces of writing with little more to unify them than the feeling that they all bear the stamp of his “unclassifiable” genius. Eli Friedlander finds an overarching coherence and a deep-seated commitment to engage the philosophical tradition.

Few twentieth-century thinkers have proven as influential as Walter Benjamin, the German-Jewish philosopher and cultural and literary critic. Richard Wolin's book remains among the clearest and most insightful introductions to Benjamin's writings, offering a philosophically rich exposition of his complex relationship to Adorno, Brecht, Jewish Messianism, and Western Marxism. Wolin provides nuanced interpretations of Benjamin's widely studied writings on Baudelaire, historiography, and art in the age of mechanical reproduction. In a new Introduction written especially for this edition, Wolin discusses the unfinished *Arcades Project*, as well as recent tendencies in the reception of Benjamin's work and the relevance of his ideas to contemporary debates about modernity and postmodernity.

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), longtemps méconnu du public français, parce que

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desservi par la transmission de ses textes, ne cesse de nous surprendre par la force plurielle de sa pensée. Son impact dans le champ intellectuel contemporain ne cesse de progresser, avec insistance. Souvent lu que de façon fragmentaire, une introduction qui fasse droit à l'ensemble de son œuvre s'avérait urgente et nécessaire.

An introduction to the writings of Walter Benjamin.

Views from one of the most original cultural critics of the twentieth century, Walter Benjamin

This Companion offers a comprehensive introduction to the thought of the highly influential twentieth-century critic and theorist Walter Benjamin. The volume provides examinations of the different aspects of Benjamin's work that have had a significant effect on contemporary critical and historical thought. Topics discussed by experts in the field include Benjamin's relation to the avant-garde movements of his time, his theories on language and mimesis, modernity, his significance and relevance to modern cultural studies, and his autobiographical writings. Additional material includes a guide to further reading and a chronology.

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A bibliography of books and articles by and about Walter Benjamin.

Walter Benjamin (1896-1940) has been called by Hannah Arendt the "greatest

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critic of the century." While an increasing number of Anglo-American literary critics draw upon Benjamin's writings in their own works, their colleagues in the philosophical community remain relatively unacquainted with his legacy. In the European intellectual world, by contrast, Benjamin's critical epistemological program, his philosophies of history and language, and his aesthetics have long since become part of philosophical discourse. The present collection of articles, many of which were contained in earlier versions in the Winter 1983 special issue of the journal *The Philosophical Forum*, initiates the project of establishing Benjamin's importance to philosophy. A balance of original work by Benjamin and important commentary on his works, this volume includes the crucial chapter from Benjamin's magnum opus *The Arcades Project*, his "Program of the Coming Philosophy," and "Central Park," as well as essays by leading scholars (including Theodor W. Adorno, Leo Lowenthal, and Rolf Tiedemann) that treat single philosophical themes and relate his ideas to those of other thinkers such as Gadamer, Goodmann, and Rosenzweig. Gary Smith's introduction to the volume provides an extremely useful and sophisticated entrée for readers unaccustomed to the breadth of Benjamin's philosophical allusions, as well as an informative summation of the contents of the volume. This book will be of interest to philosophers, literary theorists, art historians, anthropologists, and other social

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scientists.

This book provides a highly original approach to the writings of the twentieth-century German philosopher Walter Benjamin by one of his most distinguished readers. It develops the idea of 'working with' Benjamin, seeking both to read his corpus and to put it to work - to show how a reading of Benjamin can open up issues that may not themselves be immediately at stake in his texts. The defining elements in Benjamin's writings that Andrew Benjamin isolates - history, experience, translation, technical reproducibility and politics - are put to work; that is, their utility is established in engaging the works of others. The question is how utility is understood. As Andrew Benjamin argues, utility involves demonstrating the different ways in which Benjamin is a central thinker within the project of understanding the nature of modernity. This is best achieved by noting connections and points of differentiation between his work and the writings of Adorno and Heidegger. However, the more demanding project is that 'working with' Benjamin necessitates deploying the implicit assumptions within his writings as well as demanding of his formulations more than is provided by their initial presentation. What is at stake is not the application of Benjamin's thought. Rather what counts is its use. Working with Benjamin engages with the themes central to Benjamin's work with deftness, daring and critical insight while at the same time situating those themes within current academic and cultural debates.

The introduction (pp. 7-29) discusses Nazi denigration of "Jewish philosophy, " from

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Spinoza to Bergson and Husserl, and the elevation of "German" philosophers, particularly Eckhart and Nietzsche, to the role of forerunners of Nazism. The chapters on the work of the four Jewish philosophers mention briefly their murder by the Nazis (in the case of Benjamin, his death while fleeing the Nazis).

Few modern thinkers have been as convinced of the necessity of recovering the past in order to redeem the present as Walter Benjamin (1892-1940). Benjamin at once mourned and celebrated what he took to be an inevitable liquidation of traditional culture, and his determination to think both of these attitudes through to their conclusions lends his work its peculiar honesty, along with its paradoxical, antinomial coherence. In a landmark interpretation of the whole of Benjamin's career, John McCole demonstrates a way of understanding Benjamin that both contextualizes and addresses the complexities and ambiguities of his texts. Working with Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the "intellectual field," McCole traces Benjamin's deep ambivalence about cultural tradition through the longterm project—an immanent critique of German idealist and romantic aesthetics—which unites his writings. McCole builds a sustained reading of Benjamin's intellectual development which sheds new light on the formative role of early influences—particularly his participation in the pre-World War I German youth movement and the orthodox discourse of German intellectual culture—and shows how Benjamin later extended the strategies he learned within these contexts during key encounters with Weimar modernism, surrealism, and the fiction of Proust. The fullest

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account of Benjamin available in English, this lucid and penetrating book will be welcomed by intellectual historians, literary theorists and critics, historians of German literature, and Continental philosophers.

One of the most significant cultural documents of the Weimar Republic and Nazi era, Walter Benjamin's unfinished Arcades Project has had a remarkable impact on present-day cultural theory, urban studies, cultural studies and literary interpretation. Originally designed as a panoramic study chronicling the rise and decline of the Parisian shopping arcades, Benjamin's work combines imaginative peregrinations through the changing city-scape of nineteenth-century Paris with passages that read like a blueprint for a new cultural theory of modernity. *Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* provides the first comprehensive introduction to this extraordinary work accessible to English-language readers. The diverse range of issues explored include the nature of collecting, the anatomy of melancholy, the flâneur, the physiognomy of ruins, the dialectical image, Benjamin's relation to Baudelaire, the practice of history-writing, and modernity and architecture. Contributors include Susan Buck-Morss, Stanley Cavell, Jonathan Culler, Brigid Doherty, Barbara Johnson, Esther Leslie, Gerhard Richter, Andrew Benjamin, Howard Caygill, Beatrice Hanssen, Detlef Mertins, Elissa Marder, Tyrus Miller, and Irving Wohlfarth

An advanced introduction to Benjamin's work and its actualization for our own times. Im ersten Satz erklärt dieses umfassende, facettenreiche Porträt Walter Benjamin zu

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einem »der wichtigsten Zeugen der europäischen Moderne«. Damit ist das Programm des Buches vorgegeben: Detailliert wird der Zeuge in seinen Suchbewegungen verfolgt, wie er in herausragender und parteiischer Form den Geist seiner Zeit artikuliert, schwankend zwischen Jugendbewegung, Zionismus, Marxismus und Messianismus. Benjamins Hoffnung, einmal »erstrangiger Kritiker der deutschen Literatur« zu werden, erfüllte sich zu Lebzeiten nicht. Subjektive Dispositionen und objektive Verhältnisse drängten diesen Autor zunehmend in eine randständige, wenngleich von Freunden und Bewunderern geachtete Existenz. Wirtschaftliche Not, Verfolgung und Flucht prägten seine letzten Lebensjahre. Die Auseinandersetzungen um die Deutungshoheit über Benjamins Werk (und Leben) setzten bald nach Kriegsende ein: Wer vollstreckte das Testament in seinem Sinne - Theodor W. Adorno oder Hannah Arendt? Gershom Scholem oder die Neomarxisten Berliner Prägung? Oder gar die Studentenbewegung? Die nun endlich in deutscher Sprache vorliegende, vielgerühmte und reich bebilderte Biographie verarbeitet sämtliches verfügbare Material in einer der Objektivität verpflichteten Weise und stellt auch die unterschiedlichen Haltungen zu Benjamin auf den Prüfstand. Sie gilt schon jetzt als Standardwerk. The works of Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) are widely acclaimed as being among the most original and provocative writings of twentieth-century critical thought, and have become required reading for scholars and students in a range of academic disciplines. This book provides a lucid introduction to Benjamin's oeuvre through a close and

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sensitive reading not only of his major studies, but also of some of his less familiar essays and fragments. Gilloch offers an original interpretation of, and fresh insights into, the continuities between Benjamin's always demanding and seemingly disparate texts. Gilloch's book will be of particular interest to students and scholars in social theory, literary theory, cultural and media studies and urban studies who are seeking a sophisticated yet readable overview of Benjamin's work. It will also prove rewarding reading for those already well-versed in Benjaminian thought.

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), one of the most original and perceptive thinkers of the twentieth century, offered a unique insight into the profound impact of the media on modern society. Jaeho Kang's book offers a lucid introduction to Benjamin's theory of the media and its continuing relevance today. The book provides a systematic and close reading of Benjamin's critical and provocative writings on the intersection between media - from print to electronic - and modern experience, with reference to the information industry, the urban spectacle, and the aesthetic politics. Bringing Benjamin's thought into a critical constellation with contemporary media theorists such as Marshall McLuhan and Jean Baudrillard, the book helps students understand the implications of Benjamin's work for media studies today and how they can apply his distinctive ideas to contemporary media culture. Kang's book leads to a fresh appreciation of Benjamin's work and new insight into critical theoretical approaches to media. The book will be of particular interest to students and researchers not only in

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media and communication studies but also in cultural studies, film studies and social theory, who are seeking a readable overview of Benjamin's rich yet complex writings. Walter Benjamin wird oft als Kulturkritiker angesehen, dessen überwältigendes Aufgebot an herausragenden und eigenwilligen Werken nicht viel mehr zusammenhält als der Eindruck, sie trügen den Stempel seines nicht weiter zu spezifizierenden „Genius“. In Eli Friedlanders Darstellung ist Benjamins OEuvre ein einzigartiges kohärentes philosophisches System, das fest in der philosophischen Denktradition verankert ist. Friedlander findet bereits in Benjamins Frühwerk die Grundgedanken vorformuliert, die für die unterschiedlichen Schichten seines philosophischen Vorhabens charakteristisch sind. Er führt den Leser von da aus zu Benjamins Überlegungen zum „dialektischen Bild“, einem Schlüsselbegriff des Passagenwerks, zur Natur der Sprache, der Beziehung zwischen Schönheit und Wahrheit, der „Verkörperung von Ideen“, zu Traum und geschichtlichem Erwachen, zum Verhältnis von Mythos und Geschichte sowie dem, was Benjamin „Nachleben“ und „Verwirklichung der Bedeutung“ nennt. Diese Ideen werden sowohl systematisch aus sich selbst heraus wie auch in Bezug auf Schlüsselgestalten der Philosophiegeschichte untersucht. Im Zentrum steht das Passagenwerk. Friedlander begreift dieses unvollendete Werk als die zentrale Bühne, auf der die

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früheren philosophischen Grundgedanken ihren Auftritt haben. „Friedlanders klare Darstellung bringt zum ersten Mal die konzeptionelle Einheit, Tiefe und Originalität von Benjamins philosophischem Denken ans Licht.“ David E.

Wellbery

The striking actuality of Walter Benjamin's work does not rest on a supposed "usefulness" of his philosophy for current concerns, but rather on the high "legibility" to which his oeuvre has come in the present. Indeed, this legibility is a function of critique, which unearths the truth-content of a work in a constellation of reading with the present, and assures thereby that the work lives on. Following this methodological tenet, this book approaches Benjamin's work with two foci: the actuality of his critique of violence, a central and unavoidable topic in the contemporary political-philosophical debate, and the actuality of his critique of experience, which perhaps is not as conspicuous as that of his critique of violence but constitutes, nonetheless, the bedrock upon which his whole philosophy rests.

Seven decades after his death, German Jewish writer, philosopher, and literary critic Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) continues to fascinate and influence. Here Uwe Steiner offers a comprehensive and sophisticated introduction to the oeuvre of this intriguing theorist. Acknowledged only by a small circle of intellectuals

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during his lifetime, Benjamin is now a major figure whose work is essential to an understanding of modernity. Steiner traces the development of Benjamin's thought chronologically through his writings on philosophy, literature, history, politics, the media, art, photography, cinema, technology, and theology. Walter Benjamin reveals the essential coherence of its subject's thinking while also analyzing the controversial or puzzling facets of Benjamin's work. That coherence, Steiner contends, can best be appreciated by placing Benjamin in his proper context as a member of the German philosophical tradition and a participant in contemporary intellectual debates. As Benjamin's writing attracts more and more readers in the English-speaking world, Walter Benjamin will be a valuable guide to this fascinating body of work.

The legendary correspondence between the critic Walter Benjamin and the historian Gershom Scholem bears indispensable witness to the inner lives of two remarkable and enigmatic personalities. Benjamin, acknowledged today as one of the leading literary and social critics of his day, was known during his lifetime by only a small circle of his friends and intellectual confreres. Scholem recognized the genius of his friend and mentor during their student days in Berlin, and the two began to correspond after Scholem's emigration to Palestine. Their impassioned exchange draws the reader into the very heart of their complex

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relationship during the anguished years from 1932 until Benjamin's death in 1940.

"Hanssen's exacting, expansive study of the ways Benjamin reconceives history and nature in one another's presence, or distance, is part of the increasing recognition of what it must take intellectually and imaginatively to come to terms with this thinker's soaring innovations."—Stanley Cavell, Harvard University "In this profoundly learned book Hanssen interprets Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* as the key to understanding his entire corpus. . . . Many books about Benjamin are impenetrable. This one is not." —S. Gittleman, *Choice*

"Beatrice Hanssen has provided an arresting new reading of Benjamin, based on a wide range of materials and a subtle understanding of theoretical issues, both in his time and our own. Her interpretation is informed by contemporary deconstructionist approaches to the fundamental questions raised by Benjamin's texts, which she demonstrates anticipate many of the concerns of Derrida, Levinas and other recent thinkers."—Martin Jay, University of California, Berkeley

"Beatrice Hanssen elaborates Benjamin's extremely novel and complex notion of 'history' with unparalleled thoroughness, cogency, and clarity."—Samuel Weber, University of California, Los Angeles

How is it that American intellectuals, who had for 150 years worried about the

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deleterious effects of affluence, more recently began to emphasize pleasure, playfulness, and symbolic exchange as the essence of a vibrant consumer culture? The New York intellectuals of the 1930s rejected any serious or analytical discussion, let alone appreciation, of popular culture, which they viewed as morally questionable. Beginning in the 1950s, however, new perspectives emerged outside and within the United States that challenged this dominant thinking. *Consuming Pleasures* reveals how a group of writers shifted attention from condemnation to critical appreciation, critiqued cultural hierarchies and moralistic approaches, and explored the symbolic processes by which individuals and groups communicate. Historian Daniel Horowitz traces the emergence of these new perspectives through a series of intellectual biographies. With writers and readers from the United States at the center, the story begins in Western Europe in the early 1950s and ends in the early 1970s, when American intellectuals increasingly appreciated the rich inventiveness of popular culture. Drawing on sources both familiar and newly discovered, this transnational intellectual history plays familiar works off each other in fresh ways. Among those whose work is featured are Jürgen Habermas, Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Walter Benjamin, C. L. R. James, David Riesman and Marshall McLuhan, Richard Hoggart, members of London's Independent Group, Stuart

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Hall, Paddy Whannel, Tom Wolfe, Herbert Gans, Susan Sontag, Reyner Banham, and Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown.

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) was one of the most influential thinkers in the past century. His way of reading modernity by focusing his attention to ephemeral products of culture, industry and progress has still a great impact on different disciplines, such as history of art, literary theory, philosophy or political theory. This short introduction to the life and works of Benjamin presents itself not only as an encounter with his writings, but also with some of the places, cities, characters and images that make his materialistic approach to culture still relevant. "Sein Gesicht war eigentlich sehr ebenmäßig geschnitten. Er hatte aber zugleich etwas (...) von einem Tier, das in seinen Backen Vorräte sammelt." (Adorno über Benjamin) In seinen Schriften unternimmt Walter Benjamin (1892--1940) eine Standortbestimmung innerhalb einer als Kräftefeld verstandenen Gegenwart. Hegels berühmte Formulierung, Philosophie sei "ihre Zeit in Gedanken gefasst", trifft somit auch auf seine Arbeit zu - wenn auch mit wichtigen Verschiebungen. Philosophie, so könnte man mit Benjamin sagen, ist ihre Zeit in "Denkbildern" gefasst. Sein Werk lässt den Leser nicht nur durch die "Eiswüste der Abstraktion" wandern, sondern auch durch Städte, Kaufhäuser oder Passagen, neben eigenartigen Figuren wie dem Flaneur, dem

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Lumpensammler, dem Wartenden. Durch seine Texte richten wir den Blick gleichzeitig auf die vermeintlich hochwertigen Bildungsgüter und auf die flüchtigsten Kulturphänomene, um die implizite Gewalt, aber auch die unausgesprochenen Hoffnungen der Moderne in den Fokus zu rücken. Die vorliegende Einführung nähert sich durch eine Betrachtung dieser Orte, Bilder und Figuren dem Leben und Denken Benjamins - und dies für jedermann verständlich. Eine leichte Sprache, sowie die Kombination von Zeichnung und Text sorgen für hohe Anschaulichkeit, sodass sich auch Leser und Leserinnen ohne akademische Vorkenntnisse an eine der wichtigsten und zugleich schillerndsten Philosophien des 20. Jahrhunderts herantrauen dürfen.

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