

Walter Benjamin 15.7.1892 - 26.9.1940



Introduction to Walter Benjamin's life and work.

Markku Koivusalo

Friday 5th of May 2017, 9-16

Kurosawa Otakaari 7
ELO Film School Helsinki
Aalto University
School of Arts, Design and Architecture

Critic, reader, translator, philosopher, essayist

Intellectual during the “golden era” of the Weimar Republic

“Last European”

Ambition to be foremost critic of German literature

Failed Academic career → Freelance writer

Philosophy as Cultural criticism - Culture as Image of Time

Spiritual, Historical, Political

Historical experience - Fragments and Traces

Spiritual → Materialistic critique

Work

Short writings on the moment, reviews, press articles, speeches, suggestions.

Aphorisms, letters, fragments, essays.

Over eighty radio broadcasts in Radio Berlin and Radio Frankfurt

Work that would consist only of quotes

Major project: Passagenwerk

“Marx lays bare the causal connection between economy and culture. For us, what matters is the thread of expression (Ausdruckszusammenhang). It is not economic origins of culture that will be presented, but the expression of the economy in its culture. At issue, in other words, is the attempt to grasp an economic process as perceptible Ur-phenomenon, from out of which proceed all manifestations of life in the arcades (and, accordingly, in the nineteenth century.)”



Born 15.7.1892

Wealthy and assimilated haute bourgeoisie
German Jewish family

Father Emil Benjamin was wealthy businessman

Started as a broker and art dealer, later large-
scale investor

Seeing the other value and dimensions of objects

Mother Paula Schönflies, running the servants and
household, “Gnädige Frau” (Madam)



Will ich in mein Stüblein gehn, will mein Stüblein sehen,
Steht ein buchticht Männlein da, hängt sich an zu mir.



Will ich in mein Stüblein gehn, will mein Stüblein sehen,
Steht ein buchticht Männlein da, hat mein Töpflein zerbrochen.



Will ich in mein Stüblein gehn, will mein Stüblein sehen,
Steht ein buchticht Männlein da, hat mich halber gelassen.



Will ich in mein Stüblein gehn, will mein Stüblein sehen,
Steht ein buchticht Männlein da, hat mich halber gelassen.



Will ich in mein Stüblein gehn, will mein Stüblein sehen,
Steht ein buchticht Männlein da, tut mein Krug weggeschmeissen.



Will ich in mein Stüblein gehn, will mein Stüblein sehen,
Steht ein buchticht Männlein da, hat mich halber gelassen.



Will ich in mein Stüblein gehn, will mein Stüblein sehen,
Steht ein buchticht Männlein da, hängt sich an zu mir.



Wenn ich an mein Stüblein geh, will ein Stüblein sehen,
Steht ein buchticht Männlein da, hängt sich an zu mir:
Lieses Stüblein, ach ich bin,
Bei dich buchticht Männlein mit!

Nro. 69.

Veranstaltet und verlegt von Braun & Schneider in München.

Instead of Guardian Angel the Little Hunchback

When I go into my little room / To have my little sweet, / I find a little hunchback there / Has eaten half the treat”

“When I go up to my kitchen stove / To make a little soup, / I find a little hunchback there / Has cracked my little stoup.”

Markku Koivusalo



oldest child

Brother Georg and sister Dora

The last real bourgeois Berlin elite formed its own ghetto

“I remained confined within this prosperous district without any knowledge of a different world outside.

And the poor? As far as rich children my age were concerned they lived at the back of beyond”

travelling



Growing Metropolis - Berlin

A black and white photograph of a busy street in Berlin, likely the Kurfürstendamm area. The street is filled with pedestrians, horse-drawn carriages, and a tram. The buildings are ornate and multi-story, with a prominent sign for 'Fabrik' visible on the right. The overall atmosphere is one of a bustling, early 20th-century metropolis.

The rhythm of the metropolitan railway and of carpet-beating rocked me to sleep. It was the mold in which my dreams took shape -first the unformed ones, traversed perhaps by the sound running water or the smell of milk, then the long-spun ones: travel dreams and dreams of rain.

I have made an effort to get hold of the images in which the experience of the big city is precipitated in a child of the middle class.

I deliberately called to mind those images which, in exile, are most apt to waken homesickness: images of childhood. My assumption was that the feeling of longing would no more gain mastery over my spirit than a vaccine does over a healthy body.

Not to find one's way around a city does not mean much. But to lose one's way in a city, as one loses one's way in a forest, requires some schooling. Street names must speak to the urban wanderer like the snapping of dry twigs, and little streets in the heart of the city must reflect the times of day, for him, as clearly as a mountain valley.

Urban experience

Memories of cities where I found so many things: Riga, Naples, Munich, Danzig, Moscow, Florence, Baaseli, Paris. “

Every city is beautiful to me (from outside its borders), just as all talk of particular languages' having greater or lesser value is to me unacceptable. pw

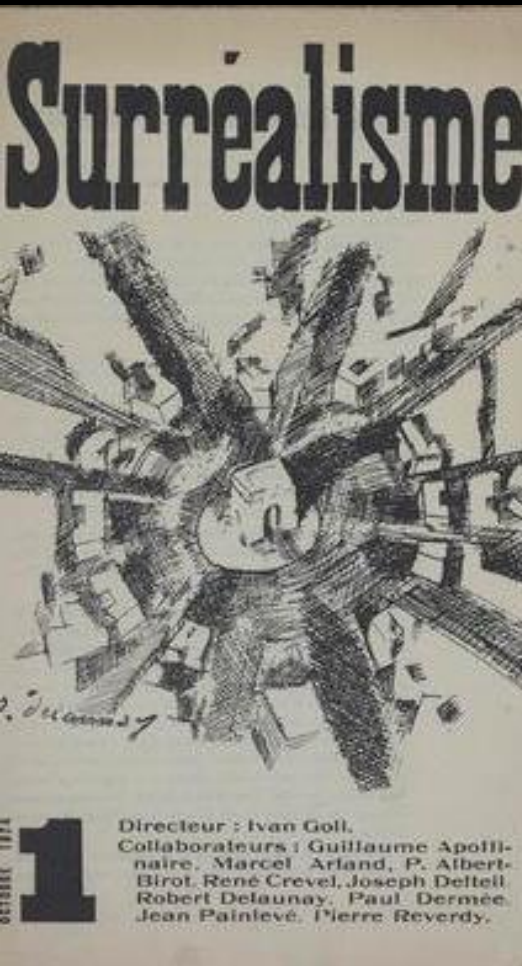
Experience of New Technologies

Automoniles, Telephones, Radio, Film

Benjamin ≠ Heigegger



Images (Bilder) as historical index



“What distinguishes images (Bilder) from the essences (unterscheidet) of phenomenology is their historical index. Heidegger seeks in vain to rescue history for phenomenology abstractly through historicity.

These images are to be thought of entirely apart from the categories of the human sciences, from so called habitus, from style and the life. For the historical index of the images not only says that they belong to a particular time; it says, above all, all they can attain to legibility only at a particular time. And, indeed, this acceding "to legibility" constitutes a specific critical point in the movement at their interior.

Every present day is determined by the images that are synchronic with it: each "now" is the now of a particular recognizability. In it, truth is charged to the bursting point with time. (This point of explosion, and nothing else, is the death of the intentio, which thus coincides with the birth of authentic historical time, the time of truth.) It is not that what is past cast its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a Flash with the now (Jetzt blitzhaft) to form a constellation.

In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill (Bild ist die Dialektik im Stillstand). For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation or what - has been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural

Spiritual awakening

1901 Kaiser Friedrich School in Charlottenburg - discipline and Hierarchy - no single good memory

Poor health → 1904 two years in country boarding school in Thuringia (Landerziehungsheim Haubinda)

Hiking and farm work, yet spiritual and philosophical awakening

Gustav Wyneken (1875- 1964) radical spiritual reformer taught at Haubinda (1903 -1906)

Spiritual renovation, non-hierarchical solidarity with teachers and students, “erotic” relationships.

Youth itself as new innovative potential, “New youth” as herald of the new cultural state, science and art

Benjamin studied German literature, interest in Philosophy

Become a protégé of Wyneken

First writings in the journal Der Anfang (The Beginning. Magazine for Rising Art and Literature) by the pseudonym Ardor

Contacts with expressionist avant-garde writers, the Neue Club (New Club)



Experience (Erfahrung)

In an early essay I mobilized all the rebellious forces of youth against the word 'Erfahrung.' And now this word has become a basic element in many of my things. Nevertheless I have remained true to myself. For my attack broke through the word without destroying it. It reached the center of the matter" (1929)

"In our struggle for responsibility, we battle someone who is masked. The mask of the adult is called "experience." It is expressionless, impenetrable, ever the same. The adult has already experienced (erlebt) everything: youth, ideals, hopes, woman. It was all illusion. - Often we feel intimidated or embittered. Perhaps he is right. What can our retort be? We have not yet experienced (erfahren) anything.! [...] our youth is but a brief night (fill it with rapture!); it will be followed by grand "experience," the years of compromise, impoverishment of ideas, and apathy. Such is life. That is what adults tell us, and that is what they experienced.

Yes, that is their experience, this one thing, never anything different: the meaninglessness of life. Its brutality. Have they ever encouraged us to anything great or new or forward Looking? Oh, no, precisely because these are things one cannot experience. [...] And herein lies the secret: because he never raises his eyes to the great and meaningful, the philistine has taken experience as his gospel. It has become for him the warrant of life's commonness. But he has never grasped that there is something other than experience, that there are values-inexperienceable-which we serve."

Historical and Material Conditions of Experience

Experience (*erfahrung*) - lived experience, sensation (*erlebnis*)

The destruction of the old experience → modern nihilism, the lack of experience

The art and experience

Crisis of Art - withdraw from experience - the empty art - does not mediate anything

The task of art - to create new experience

The loss of aura - the unique experience

Criticism against spiritualization of Art and against "L'art pour l'art"

The new technological means - Photography, Film, Radio

Capitalistic experience - the experience of commodity culture, Commodity as Phantasmagoria

Modern experience - the destruction of experience

Experience has fallen in value. And it looks as if it may fall into bottomlessness. Every glance at a newspaper shows that it has reached a new low - that our image not only of the external world but also of the moral world has undergone changes overnight, changes which were previously thought impossible.

Beginning with the First World War, a process became apparent which continues to this day. Wasn't it noticeable at the end of the war that men who returned from the battlefield had grown silent-not richer but poorer in communicable experience?

What poured out in the flood of war books ten years later was anything but experience that can be shared orally. And there was nothing remarkable about that.

For never has experience been more thoroughly belied than strategic experience was belied by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power.

A generation that had gone to school on horsedrawn streetcars now stood under the open sky in a landscape where nothing remained unchanged but the clouds and, beneath those clouds, in a force field of destructive torrents and explosions, the tiny, fragile human body.



Baudelaire (Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism)

“They embody, in ironic form, the same experience that Baudelaire put into the following sentence without any embellishment:

“ Lost in this base world, jostled by the crowd, I am like a weary man whose eye, looking backward into the depths of the years, sees only disillusion and bitterness, and looking ahead sees only a tempest which contains nothing new, neither instruction nor pain. ”

Of all the experiences which made his life what it was, Baudelaire singled out being jostled by the crowd as the decisive, unmistakable experience. The illusion of a crowd with a soul and movement all its own, the luster that had dazzled the flaneur, had faded for him. To heighten the impression of the crowd's baseness, he envisioned the day on which even the fallen women, the outcasts, would readily espouse a well-ordered life, condemn libertinism, and reject everything except money.

Betrayed by these last allies of his, Baudelaire battled the crowd-with the impotent rage of someone fighting the rain or the wind. This is the nature of the sensation/experience [Erlebnis] to which Baudelaire has given the weight of experience [Erfahrung] . He named the price for which the sensation [Sensation] of modernity could be had: the disintegration of the aura in immediate shock sensation [Chockerlebnis] . He paid dearly for consenting to this disintegration-but it is the law of his poetry. This poetry appears in the sky of the Second Empire as " a star without atmosphere"

Literature and avant-garde circles





Philosophy and Metaphysics, Philosophy of Culture

1912 Albert Ludwig University in Freiburg,
department of philology

1912 Albert Ludwig University in Freiburg,
department of philology

Neokantianism: Heinrich Rickert - "a pupil of
Rickert" - other pupil Martin Heidegger

Berlin: Georg Simmel - Sociology of Urban
experience



Figure of student

Free student movement

1914 president of the Berlin Independent Students

Spiritual renewal of the Studies

Criticism of career students, as well as academic institutions and families
A creative spiritual learning community against old institutionalized knowledge

True scholarship does not lead to a profession, rather it excludes this possibility

“Is it really the right which could thus be invoked against myth in the name of justice? No, [...] The right which is studied but no longer practiced is the gate to justice.

The gate to justice is study. Yet Kafka doesn't dare attach to this study the promises which tradition has attached to the study of the Torah. His assistants are sextons who have lost their house of prayer; his students are pupils who have lost the Holy Writings.

Now there is nothing to detain them on their empty joyful journey.”

(1934)



Dora Sophie (Kellner) Pollak

1914 meets Dora Sophie (Kellner) Pollak, married in in 1917.

1918 Benjamin's only child, Stefan Rafael Schoenflies Benjamin, is born

World War I

Suicide of Fritz Heinle and Rika Seligson
Breaks relationships with Wyneken





Jewish thinking

1915 meets Gerhard (Gershom) Scholem

Messianism

Benjamin: Profane Messianism

“The earthly order can not be built on the idea of the divine kingdom and therefore the theocracy has no political but only religious significance.” TPF, p. 155

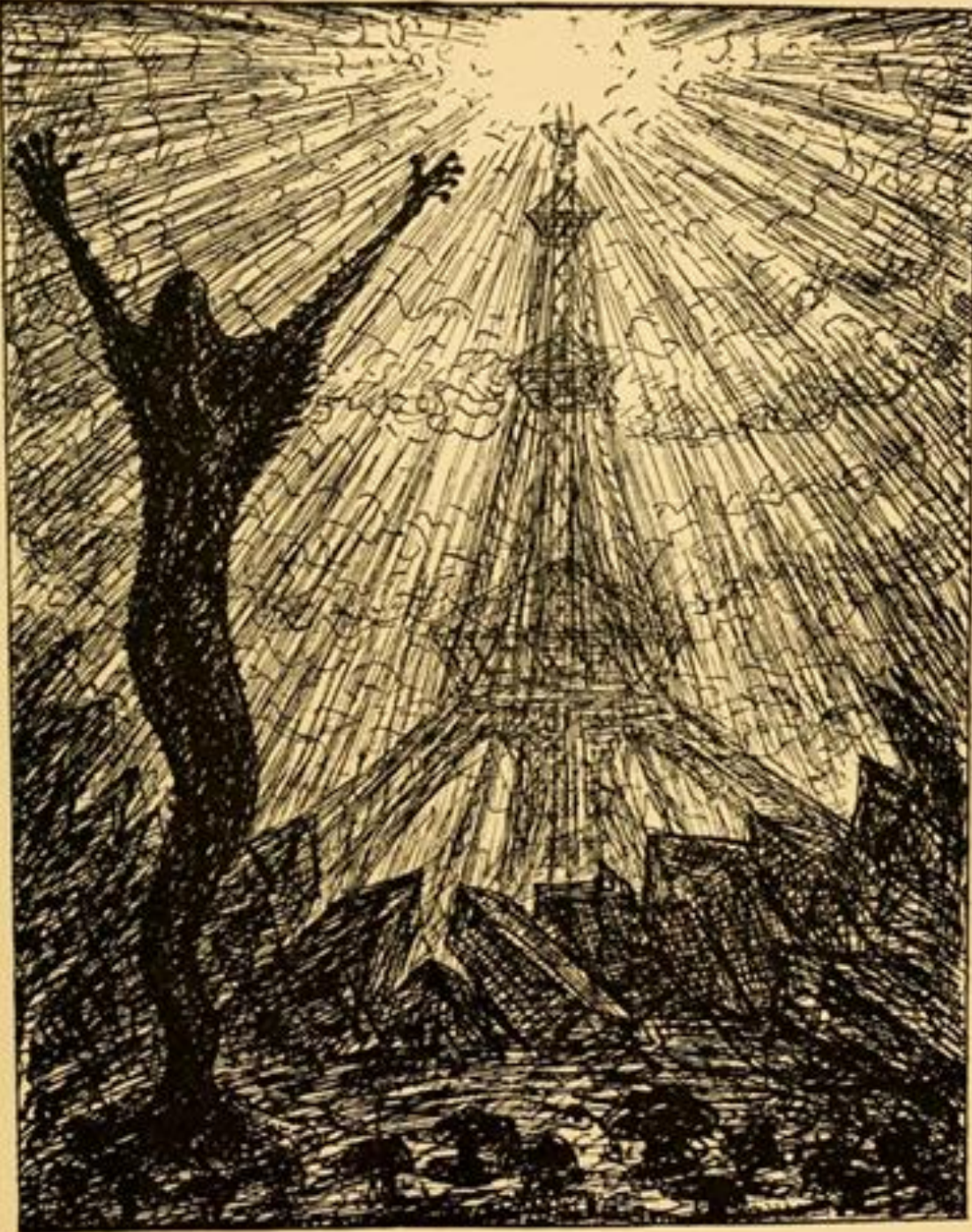
Earthly order should be built for the idea of happiness.”
TPF, p. 155

Fantasy and Utopia

Paul Scheerbart: "Lesabéndio"

Switzerland

Ernst Bloch: The Spirit of Utopia



Benjamin's Early Expressionist Philosophy of Language



Every expression (Äußerung) of human spiritual life (Geisteslebens) can be understood as a kind of language.

All announcement/imparting (Mitteilung) of the spiritual contents is language, imparting in words being only a particular case of human language

It is fundamental that this spiritual essence imparts itself in a language and not through a language. Languages, therefore, have no speaker, if this means someone who imparts through these languages.

The language of a spiritual essence is immediately that which is impart-able in it. Whatever is impart-able of a spiritual essence, in this it imparts itself. Each language imparts itself.

The bourgeois conception of language [...] holds that the means of imparting is the word, its object factual, and its addressee a human being. The other conception of language, in contrast, knows no means (Mitteil), no object (Gegenstand), and no addressee of imparting. It means: in the name, the spiritual essence of man imparts itself to God.

Language is the spiritual essence of things.



Naming and Revelation

The name is that through which, and in which, language itself imparts itself absolutely.

The highest spiritual region of religion is (in the concept of revelation) at the same time the only one that does not know the inexpressible.

In the word, things were created, and God's linguistic being is the word.

Man was the only being that was not named, he was given the creative power of naming

Proper name is the word of God in human sounds.

The human word is the name of things

• Translation is the carrying over of one language into another through a continuum of transformations

Because she is mute, nature mourns. Speaks in human naming

Man imparts himself to God through the names he gives to nature and (in proper names) to his own kind; and to nature he gives a name according to the imparting he receives from her, for the whole of nature, too, is imbued with a nameless, mute language, the residue of the creative word of God.

All higher language is translation from the lower, until in ultimate clarity the word of God unfolds, which is the unity of this movement of language



What is Critique ?

A life-long attempt - What are its tasks, forms, conditions etc.?

1919 Dissertation: The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism

Friedrich Schlegel's view as the final word of the Romantic school

Romanticism is an effort to dispel the difference between criticism and poetry - Criticism as supplement (Ergänzung)

Criticism immanent to the movement of art itself - not external, but indispensable part of art, supplement

Benjamin's own redeeming criticism

Criticism is about the truth content of art - Commentary only about its theme

There is no art without criticism, artwork is from the beginning critical work

Artwork is always open work, there is no closed truth in it, critical work is open work

There is no absolute art - No external redemption.

Instead of mystical ecstasy, a sober, prosaic, critical art

The ideal of art, its truth-content, can only be explored in its multiplicity as in philosophy the ideal can be only expressed in its plurality.

“Critique of Violence” of 1921

The relation of violence to the Right (Recht) and Justice (Gerechtigkeit).

Justice (Gerechtigkeit) = principle of ends

Right (Rechtmäßigkeit) = principle of means

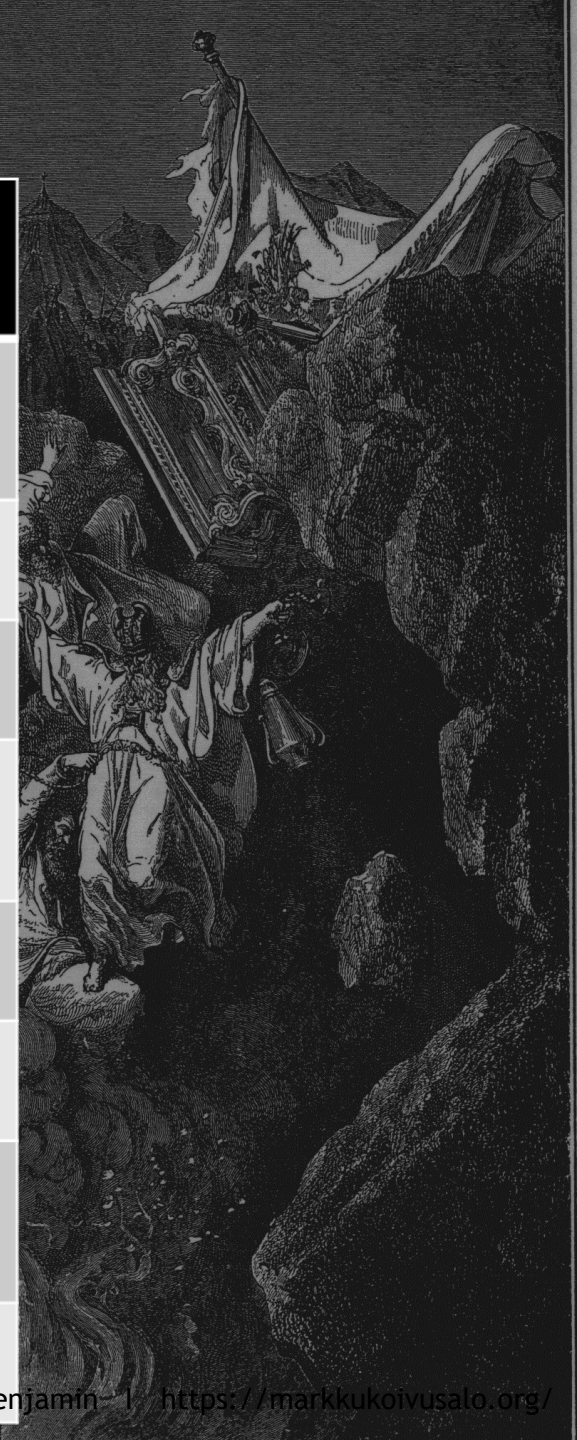
Independent criteria both of just ends and of justified means

Political strike ≠ revolutionary general strike

Critique of both law-making and law preserving violence.

Mythical and divine violence

MYTHISCHE GEWALT Mythical Violence	GÖTTLICHE GEWALT Divine Violence
Power (Macht) as Principle of lawmaking	Justice (gerechtigkeit) as Principle of end setting
Lawmaking - rechtsetzend	Law-destroying (Rechtsvernichtend)
Sets boundaries (grenzen)	Boundlessly destroys (vernichtet) them
Brings guilt (verschuldend) and retribution (sühnend)	Only expiates (entsühnend)
Threatens (drohend)	Strikes (schlagend)
Bloody (blutig)	Lethal but unbloody (unblutige)
bloody power over mere life (bloße Leben) for its own sake	Pure power (Reine Gewalt) over all life for the sake of the living (Lebendigen)
demands sacrifice	accepts sacrifice



WALTER BENJAMIN

URSPRUNG

DES

DEUTSCHEN

TRAUERSPIELS

Aus dem Inhalt:

Misfabeurung und Mißdeutung der Barocktragödie
Barocke Theorie des Trauerspiels • Tyrann als
Märtyrer, Märtyrer als Tyrann • Die Ehre • Der
Göfiling als Heiliger und Intrigant • Tragischer,
professueller und platonischer Dialog • Trauer und
Tragik • Haupt- und Staatsaktion, Puppenspiel
Die Geisterstunde und die Geisterwelt • Trübsinn
des Fürsten • Die Lehre vom Saturn • Hamlet
Sprachverrückung • Die Leiche als Emblem
Götterleiber im Christentum • Die Schrecken und
Verheißungen des Satan • Grenze des Tiefsinns

Trauerspiel - Sorrowplay

Habilitation thesis: Origin Of German Sorrow play

Baroque theatre

"The statement that the object of knowledge is not identical with the truth will prove itself to be one of the profoundest intentions of philosophy in its original form, the Platonic theory of ideas...Ideas are to the objects as constellations are to the stars."

Tragedy: Myth - heroic sacrifice - transcendence

Trauerspiel : History - anti-transcendence - sadness, melancholy, disaster

Habilitation becomes disaster, sorrow play

End to the hopes for academic career

ERNST ROWOHLT VERLAG • BERLIN W35



Frankfurt School

1923 introduced to Siegfried Kracauer and to Gretel and Theodor Wiesengrund (Adorno).

Links to the Frankfurt School (Institute for Social Research)

Benjamin loosely involved - some funding

Adorno's friendship

Dispute over the right kind of methodology



Gambling

Constant money problems

Father's pressure on bourgeois profession

Seller of old books ?

Gambling

Spiritual hope → Mechanical hazard

Even in mechanical hazard Fortuna favours the rich



Love affair with communism

Meets 1924 at Capri Asja Lācis, communist theatre maker. Later founds the proletarian children's theatre in Russia

"What has happened was not in the best interests of my work, which was dangerously interrupted, and was also perhaps not in the best interests of that bourgeois rhythm of life which is indispensable for every project. . . . I made the acquaintance of a Russian revolutionary from Riga, one of the most splendid women I have ever met"

Splendid women makes Benjamin acknowledge the actuality of radical communism

"For had she touched me with the match of her eyes, I would have gone up like a powder keg."

Short engagement with Soviet culture and literature

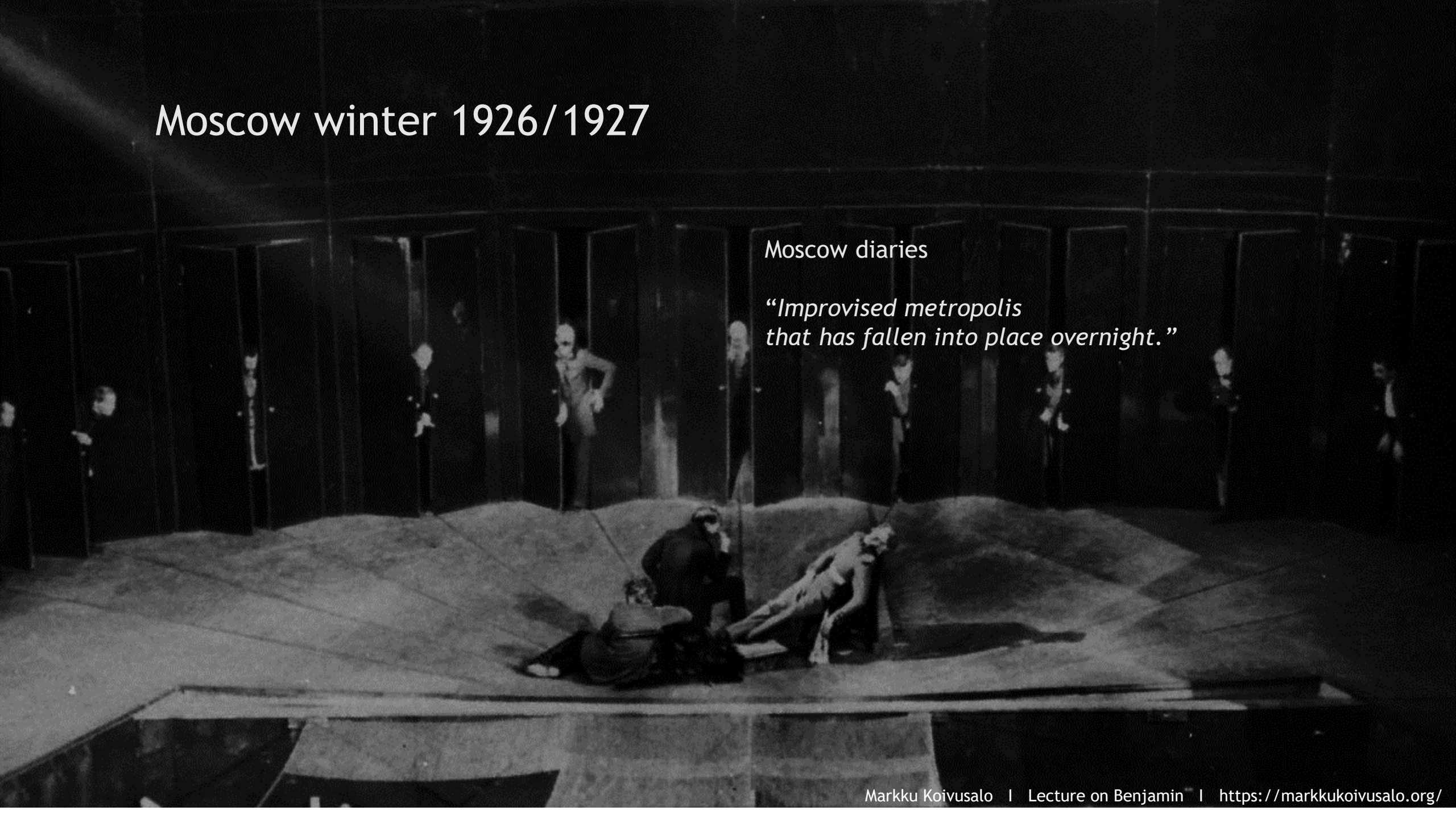
Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*,

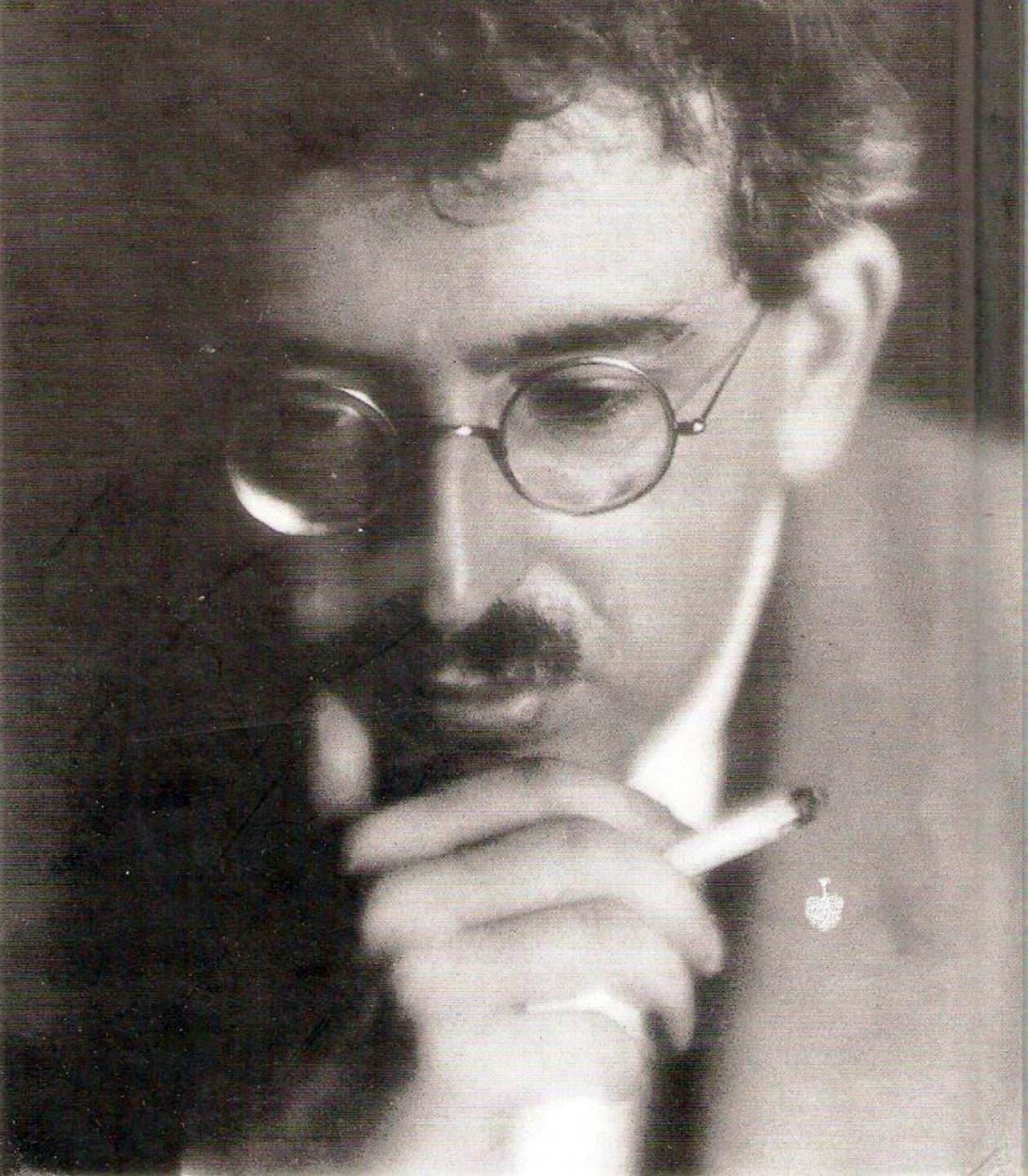
Historical materialism - Capitalistic culture as alienation

Moscow winter 1926/1927

Moscow diaries

*“Improvised metropolis
that has fallen into place overnight.”*





Experimental experiences

Writing “truly exceptional book about hashish”

Keeping notes and writing down his impression

Experiments also with opium and mescaline.

Sessions with doctor friends.

Interested in changes in the experience of time and space

Inner experience - how strong and what duration ?

Better profane illumination from books

Bertolt Brecht



1929 meets Bertolt Brecht

Visits often in Sweden and then in Denmark

Writings about Brecht

Epic theater - Product of historical imagination

Against tragedy - material dialectics

Analysis of historical-material conditions

Alienation (verfremdung)

Halted now-moment (Jetztzeit) - Dialectics in the standstill

Tactics of attrition (ermattungstaktik)

Exile in Paris 1933 -

The Experience of a Refugee

Outsider, working intensively in Bibliothèque nationale de France

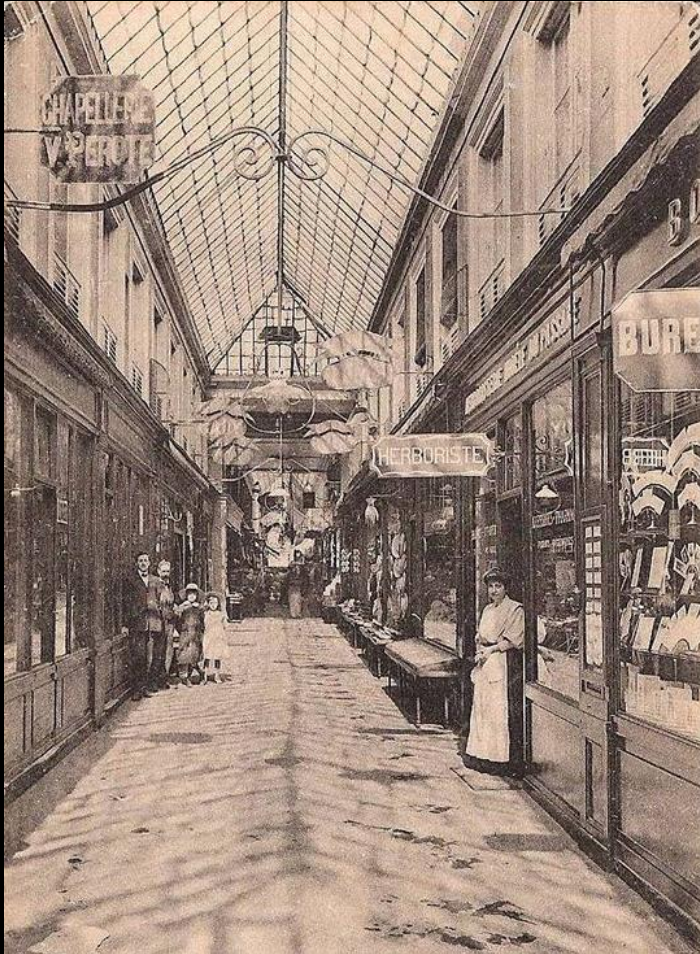
Georges Bataille there as librarian → friendship

Critical comments on Collège de Sociologie - Sacred sociology is working for Fascism

Friendship with Hannah Arendt, Hermann Hesse and Kurt Weill



Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century 1935

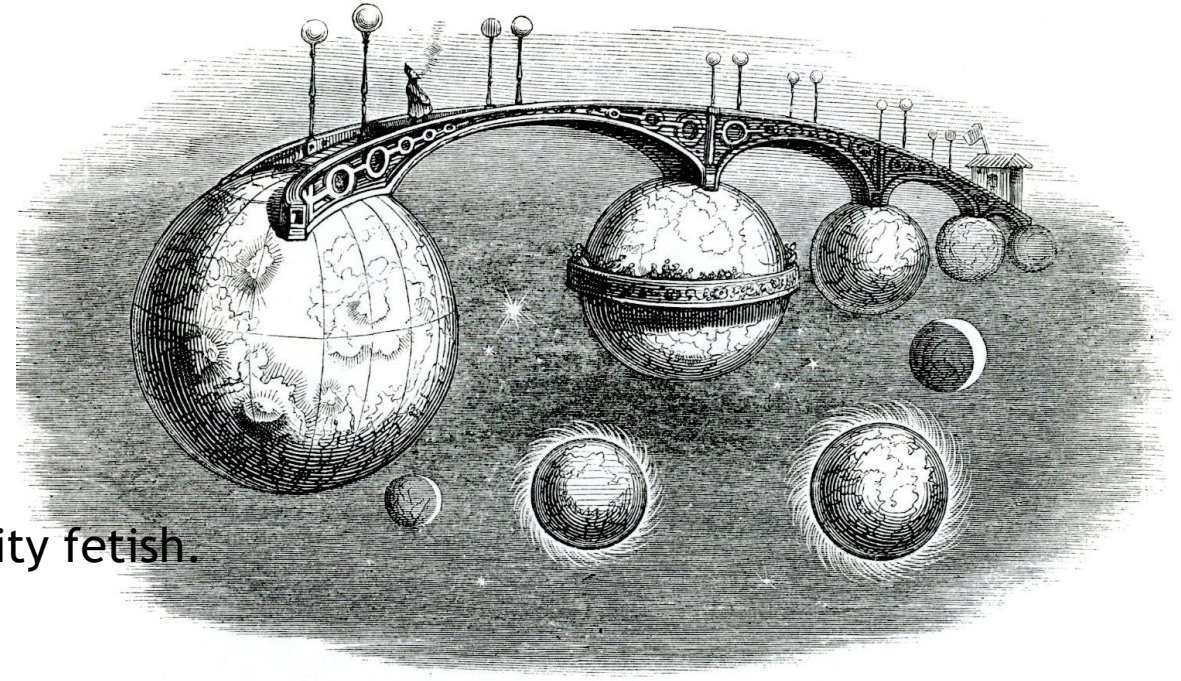


*Most of the Paris arcades come into being in the decade and a half after 1822. The first condition for their emergence is the boom in the textile trade. **Magasins de nouveautes**, the first establishments to keep large stocks of merchandise on the premises, make their appearance. They are the forerunners of department stores.*

*The second condition for the emergence of the arcades is the iron construction...For the first time in the history of architecture, an **artificial building material appears: iron**. It serves as the basis for a development whose tempo accelerates in the course of the century.*

*Corresponding to the form of the new means of production, which in the beginning is still ruled by the form of the old (Marx), are **images in the collective consciousness** in which the new is permeated with the old. **These images are wish images**; in them the collective seeks both to overcome and to transfigure the immaturity of the social product and the inadequacies in the social organization of production*

Phantasmagoria



World exhibitions are places of pilgrimage to the commodity fetish.

The worker occupies the foreground, as customer.

World exhibitions glorify the exchange value of the commodity.

They create a framework in which its use value recedes into the background.

They open a phantasmagoria which a person enters in order to be distracted.

The entertainment industry makes this easier by elevating the person to the level of the commodity. He surrenders to its manipulations while enjoying his alienation from himself and others.-The enthronement of the commodity, with its luster of distraction, is the secret theme of Grandville's art

Ruins of bourgeoisie

The development of the forces of production shattered the wish symbols of the previous century, even before the monuments representing them had collapsed.

In the nineteenth century this development worked to emancipate the forms of construction from art...A start is made with architecture as engineered construction. Then comes the reproduction of nature as photography. The creation of fantasy prepares to become practical as commercial art. Literature submits to montage in the feuilleton. All these products are on the point of entering the market as commodities.

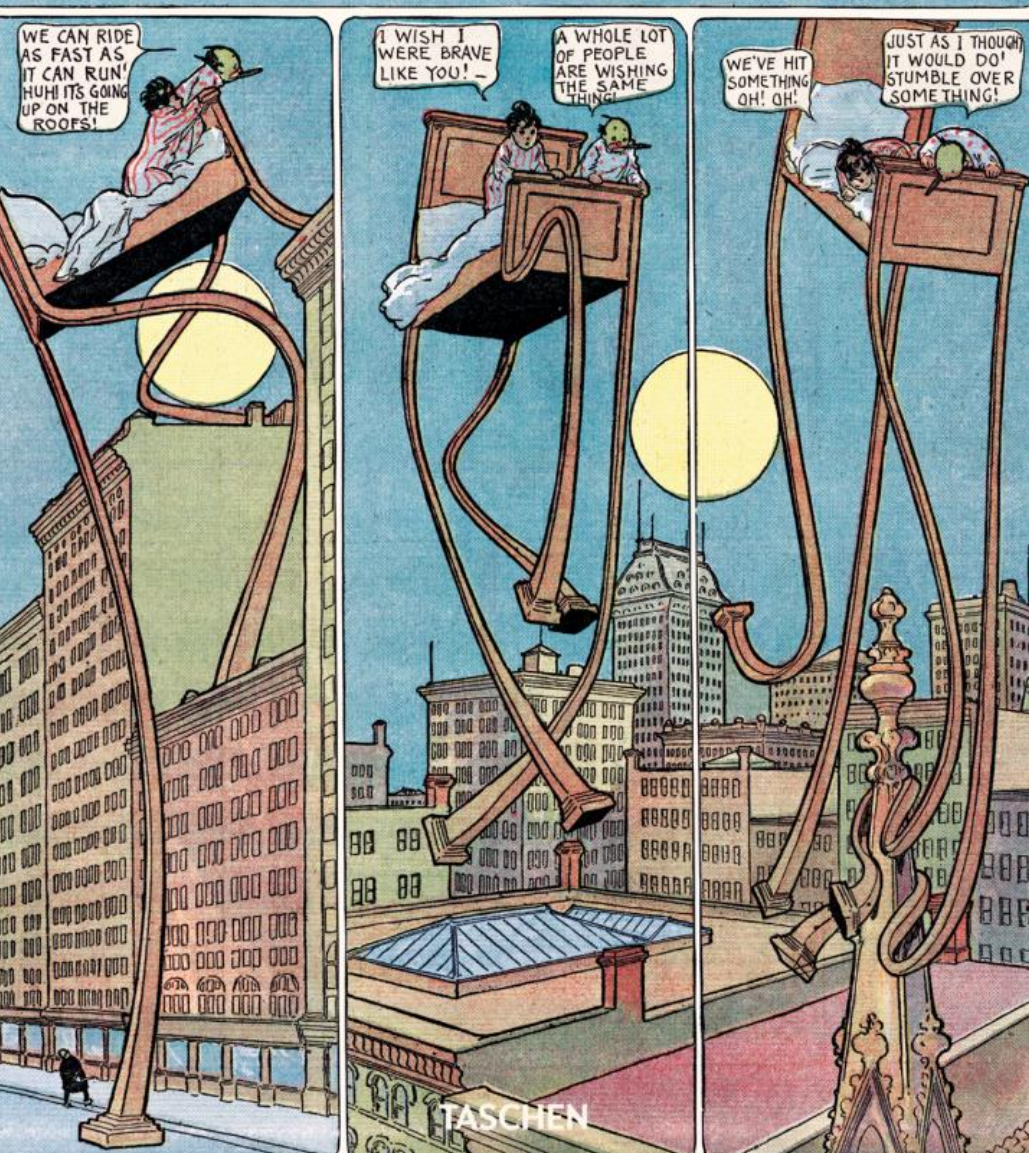
But they linger on the threshold. From this epoch derive the arcades and interieurs, the exhibition halls and panoramas. They are residues of a dream world.

The realization of dream elements, in the course of waking up, is the paradigm of dialectical thinking. Thus, dialectical thinking is the organ of historical awakening. Every epoch, in fact, not only dreams the one to follow but, in dreaming, precipitates its awakening. It bears its end within itself and unfolds it-as Hegel already noticed-by cunning. With the destabilizing of the market economy, we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled.

ALEXANDER BRAUN

THE COMPLETE LITTLE NEMO

BY WINSOR MCCAY



Dream world and fairy tales

The fairy tale is the tradition of the victory gained from the power of the myth

The history of the dream remains to be written, and opening up a perspective on this subject would mean decisively overcoming the superstitious belief in natural necessity by means of historical illumination.

Dreaming has a share in history. Dreams have started wars, and wars, from the very earliest times, have determined the propriety and impropriety-indeed, the range-of dreams.

Collecting



"Every passion is confined to chaos, but the collector's passion is confined to the chaos of the remembrances ... For what else is a collection than the disorder that the habit has put on itself to such an extent that it affects the order."

Children's books, books by mentally ill

Toys - passion for miniatures - historicity of things

Everyday objects - forgotten things - seemingly irrelevant facts and events

Taking things out from their usual context

Redemption of things from both use and exchange value

Writing: citations taken out from their context

Blasting the continuity of context



Ragpicker and poet

“Here we have a man whose job it is to gather the day’s refuse in the capital.

Everything that the big city has thrown away, everything it has lost, everything it has scorned, everything it has crushed underfoot he catalogues and collects.

He collates the annals of intemperance, the capharnaum of waste. He sorts things out and selects judiciously: he collects like a miser guarding a treasure, refuse which will assume the shape of useful or gratifying objects between the jaws of the goddess of Industry.

This description is one extended metaphor for the poetic method, as Baudelaire practised it. Ragpicker and poet: both are concerned with refuse. “



aestheticizing of politics

The increasing proletarianization of modern man and the increasing formation of masses are two sides of the same process. Fascism attempts to organize the newly proletarianized masses while leaving intact the property relations which they strive to abolish.

It sees its salvation in granting expression (Ausdruck) to the masses -but on no account granting them rights (Recht).

The masses have a right to changed property relations; fascism seeks to give them expression (Ausdruck) in keeping these relations unchanged. The logical outcome of fascism is an aestheticizing of political life.

The violation/rape (vergewaltigung) of the masses, whom fascism, with its Fuhrer cult, forces to their knees, has its counterpart in the violation of an apparatus which is pressed into serving the production of cult values (Kultwerten).

Fiat ars-pereat mundus

All efforts to aestheticize politics culminate in one point. That one point is war. War, and only war, makes it possible to set a goal for mass movements on the grandest scale while preserving traditional property relations.

Only war makes it possible to mobilize all of today's technological resources while maintaining property relations.

" Fiat ars-pereat mundus, "says fascism, expecting from war, as 'Marinetti admits, the artistic gratification of a sense perception altered by technology. This is evidently the consummation of 'art pour 'art.

Humankind, which once, in Homer, was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, has now become one for itself.

Its self-alienation has reached the point where it can experience (erleben) its own annihilation as a first class aesthetic pleasure (Genuss). Such is the aestheticizing of politics, as practiced by fascism. Communism replies by politicizing art.

Mechanical Reproduction / Decay of aura

The masses are a matrix from which all customary behavior toward works of art is today emerging newborn.

The technological reproducibility of the artwork changes the relation of the masses to art.

Mechanical reproduction of a work of art represents something new.

In even the most perfect reproduction, one thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art-its unique existence in a particular place.

Aura = the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be - also looking back

The earliest artworks originated in the service of rituals-first magical, then religious. And it is highly significant that the artwork's auratic mode of existence is never entirely severed from its ritual function.

for the first time in world history, technological reproducibility emancipates the work of art from its parasitic subservience to ritual.

Instead of being founded on ritual, it is based on a different practice: politics.

The public is an examiner, but a distracted /absent-minded one.



Baudelaire

Preparing book on Baudelaire

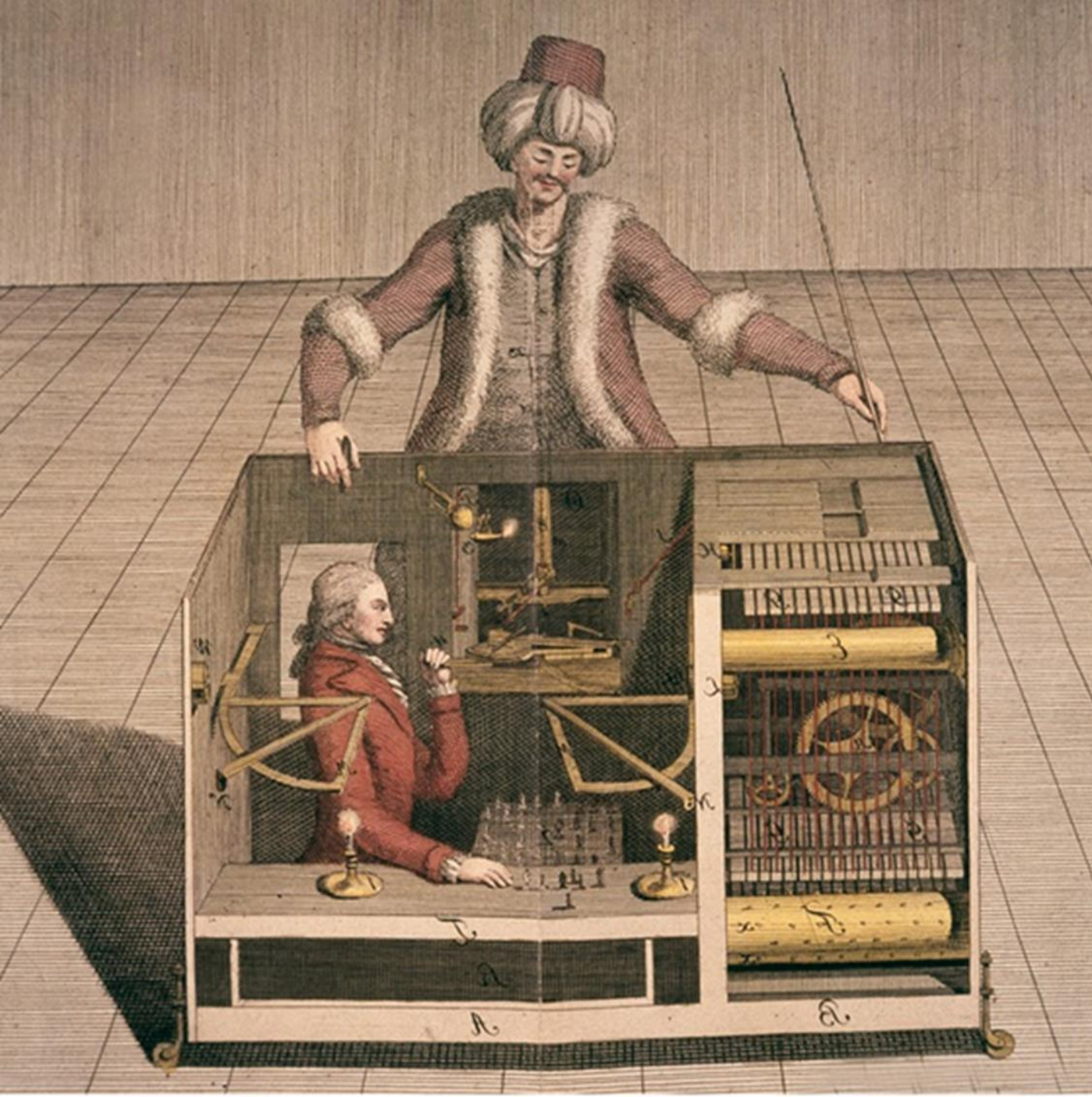
The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire

On Some Motifs in Baudelaire

Es ist die Stoffmenge der Tücher zur Vorbereitung ...
... zu wollen in einem Tücher abfolgt zu ...
... ist es eine ...
... Politik ...
...
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On the Concept of History

Twenty years of thought in 18th dense thesis on the concept of history
German attack in the western front
Did not want to publish, because will cause huge amount of misunderstanding



Historical materialism and Jewish Teology

The puppet, called "historical materialism" is to win all the time.

It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is small and ugly and has to keep out of sight.



Image of Happiness (Bild von Glück)

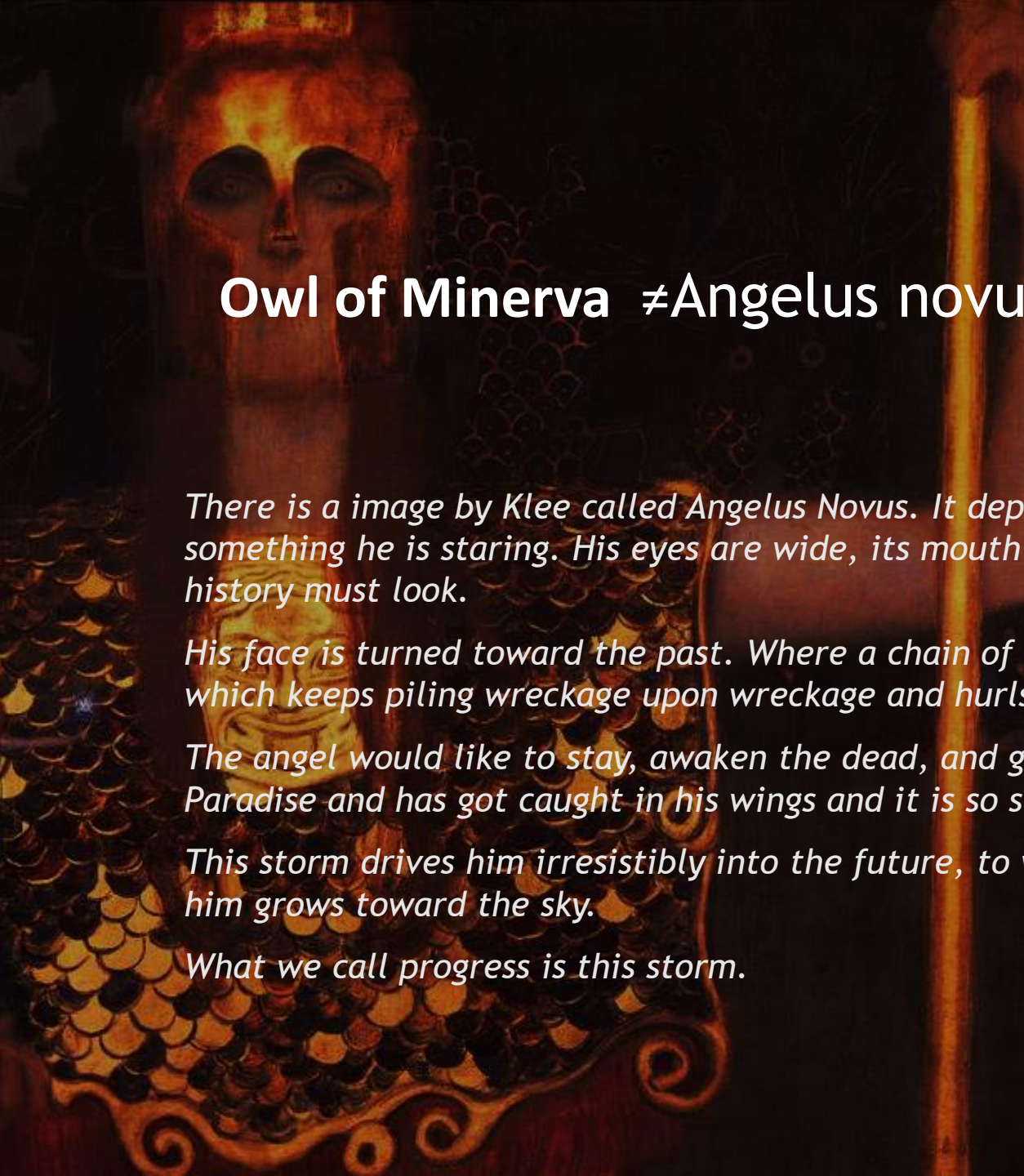
The image of happiness (Bild von Glück) we cherish is thoroughly colored by the time to which the course of our own existence has assigned us.

The kind of happiness that could arouse envy in us exists only in the air we have breathed, among people we could have talked to, women who could have given themselves to us.

Onnen ajatuksessa toisin sanoen värähtelee erottamattomasti ajatus lunastuksesta.

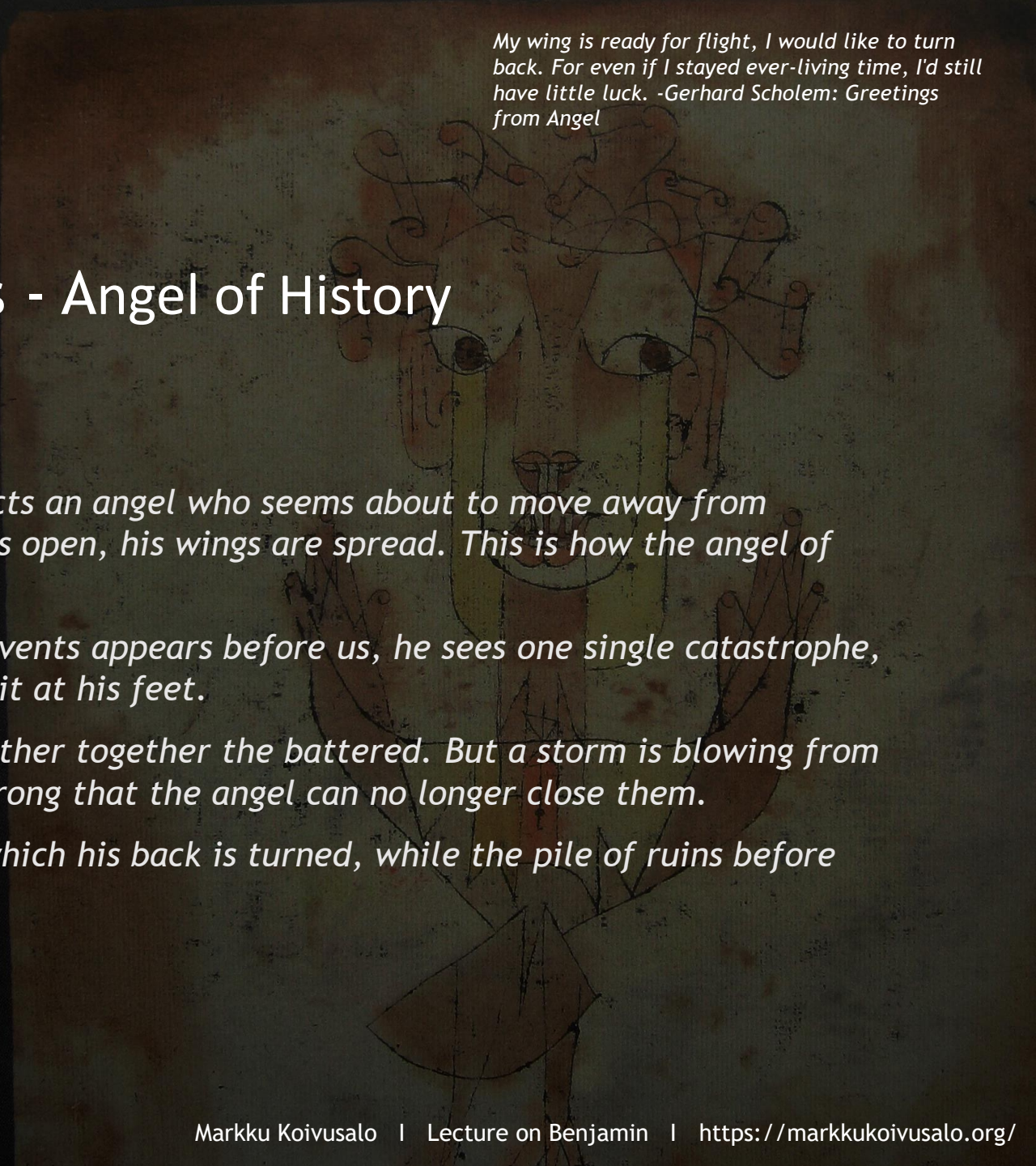
The same applies to our view of the past, which is the concern of history. The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption.

Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim.



My wing is ready for flight, I would like to turn back. For even if I stayed ever-living time, I'd still have little luck. -Gerhard Scholem: Greetings from Angel

Owl of Minerva ≠ Angelus novus - Angel of History



There is a image by Klee called Angelus Novus. It depicts an angel who seems about to move away from something he is staring. His eyes are wide, its mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how the angel of history must look.

His face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears before us, he sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet.

The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and gather together the battered. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings and it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them.

This storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the pile of ruins before him grows toward the sky.

What we call progress is this storm.



State of exception - Sovereignty and Messiah

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of exception" in which we live is not the exception but the rule.

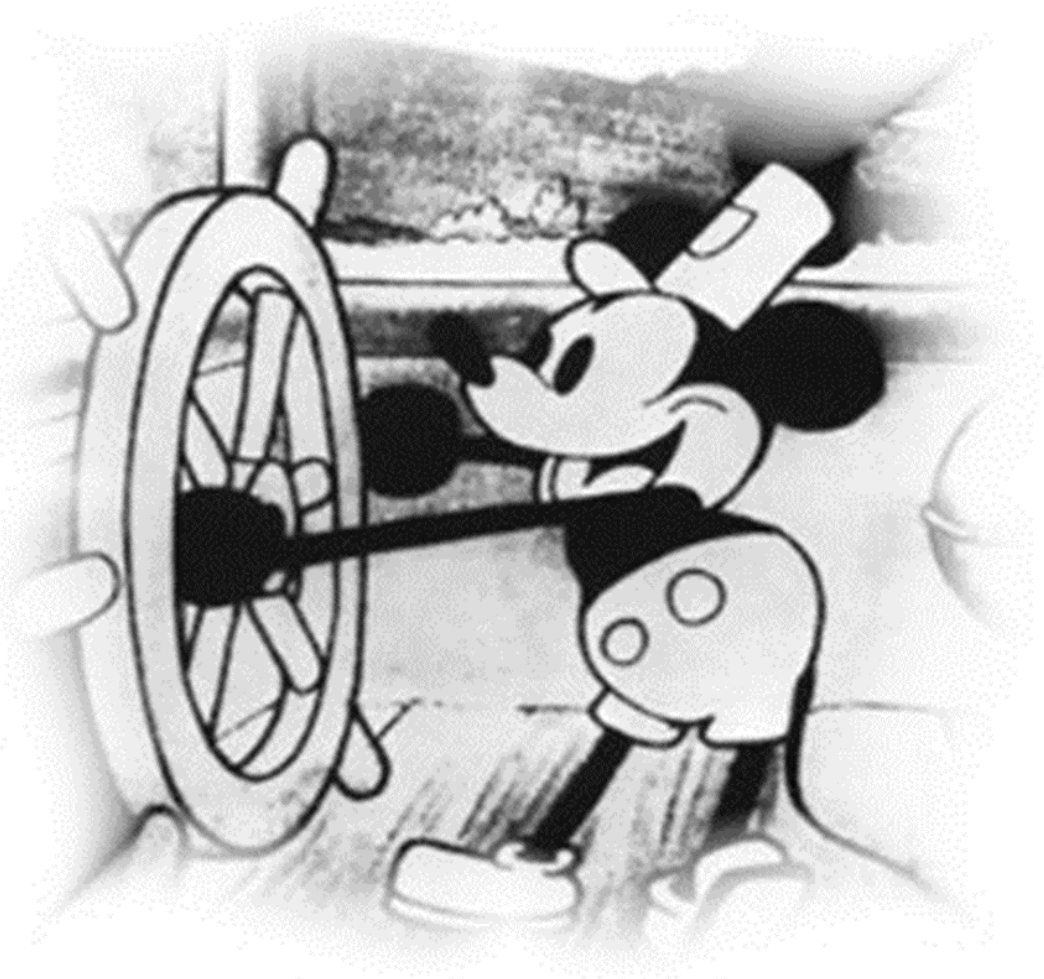
We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight.

Then we shall clearly realize that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against Fascism.

One reason why Fascism has a chance is that in the name of progress its opponents treat it as a historical norm.

The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are 'still' possible in the twentieth century is *not* philosophical

The Homeland of Mickey Mouse



Visa to the United States via Adorno

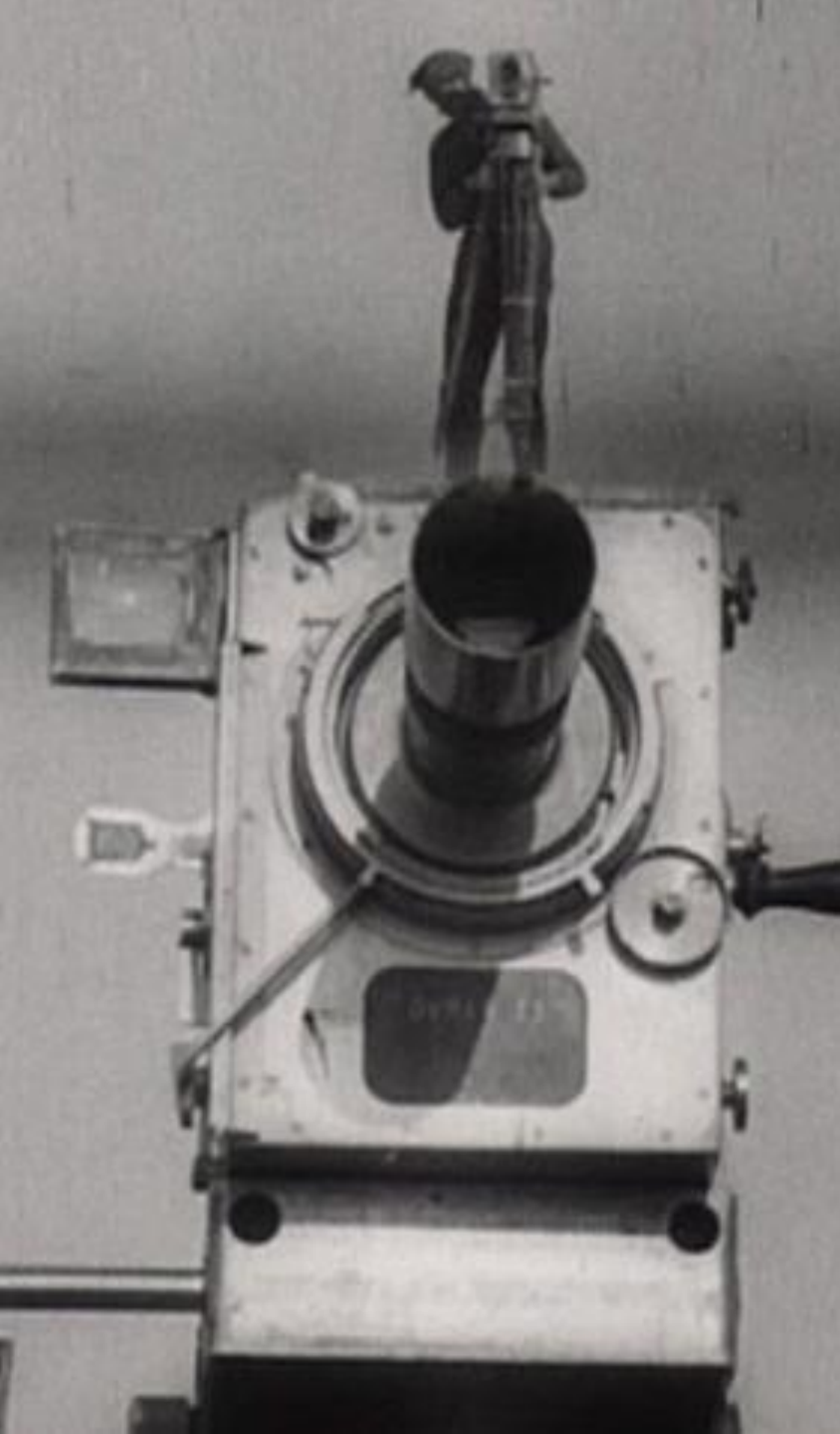
No other use than show around as “The Last European”

“In these films, mankind makes preparations to survive civilization. Mickey Mouse proves that a creature can still survive even when it has thrown off all resemblance to a human being. He disrupts the entire hierarchy of creatures that is supposed to culminate in mankind. [...] These films disavow experience more radically than ever before. In such a world, it is not worthwhile to have experiences. [...] All Mickey Mouse films are founded on the motif of leaving home in order to learn what fear is [...] So the explanation for the huge popularity of these films is not mechanization, their form; nor is it a misunderstanding. It is simply the fact that the public recognizes its own life in them.”

Port Bou, 26. 9. 1940

“Tilanteessa, josta ei ole ulospääsyä, minulla ei ole muuta vaihtoehtoa kuin lopettaa se. Elämäni loppuu pienessä kylässä Pyreneillä, jossa kukaan ei tunne minua. Pyydän teitä välittämään ajatukseni ystävälleni Adornolle ja selittämään hänelle tilanteen johon jouduin. Minulla ei ole tarpeeksi aikaa jäljellä kirjoittaakseni kaikkia niitä kirjeitä, joita haluaisin” (Port-Bou 25.9.1940, Walter Benjamin)





Last images

"I believe that whole life, which is said that it passes through the mind of the dying, consist of such images as those that the little hunchback in us all has. They swiftly pass by like those pages of tightly tied books, which were once the precursors of our cinematographs.

The little fellow also took pictures from me. He saw me in my hiding places and before the cage of the otter, on a winter morning and by the telephone in the pantry, on the Brauhausberg with its butterflies and on my skating rink with the music of the brass band, in front of the sewing-box, and in front of my drawer, and when I lay ill in bed, in Glienicke and in the railway station. Now it has done its work. Yet his voice, which is like the hum of the gas burner, whispers to me over the threshold of the century: "Dear little child, I beg of you, I Pray for the little hunchback too."

Posthumous Life

