

Benjamin's Notion of Mass Culture and the Question of Emancipation

The phenomenon of *mass culture* as such certainly is not a new fact in the realm of social reality, especially within the range of social sciences and particular interdisciplinary theories. At the same time, the notion, which is related to this phenomenon, has been grasped by a multitude of different concepts, many of which were and still are “intentional”. That is to say that many concepts, judgements, descriptions and so on, which are confronting the phenomenon of mass culture, try to place it in a context, from which they derive some kind of emphasis, for example, regarding its social meaning or the ethical or aesthetic consequences. A common denominator – the meaning of the term *mass culture* – is related to connotations and notions of (post)industrial or (post)modern society, as opposed to the pre-industrial and traditional society. Apparently, “masses” (of people) have become perceived as such only during the period of urbanisation and the “liberated” labour force. When “cultural goods” became accessible to the masses, the phenomenon that we are talking about came into existence. In a historical context mass culture as an actually established entity is almost entirely situated in the 20th century. Only from the viewpoint of this century were its earlier manifestations traceable to a time of the development and breakthrough of capitalism, along with the industrial and political revolutions. Speaking in broadly accepted general sociological terms, mass culture is made possible by a range of structurally interdependent components such