

operates from relatively early stages of the industrial society on. An overview of all art in the 20th century points to a conclusion that the existence of mass culture and huge transformations of artistic production depended on each other. They were part of the world, within which the mass perception of reality in a mutual confluence with artistic products worked as a dispersed agency that generated a movement of constant complex changes. Benjamin's emphases on the effect of "mechanical reproduction" epistemologically structured the understanding of this condition. Curiously, this structuring of theory did not happen immediately after the text was first published. "Benjamin craze" among philosophers and related theoreticians, as I pointed out a few times in the different contexts in the previous chapters in this book, actually erupted about thirty years later in the 1960s.¹ Nevertheless, a special importance of film within mass culture in Benjamin's conceptualisation cannot be circumvented as a presupposition for any thinking about the effects of recent technological leaps.

Benjamin's simultaneously aesthetic and epistemological breakthrough signalled particular dialectics between technology, art, and such social agency as politics. In view of these dialectics, how a work of art is produced became especially important and, even more, how it is re-produced, which includes also the mode of perception that he described as "distracted" (Benjamin, 1969: 239). These dialectics are what concerns us most in the digital age and not just in a mental construction of the repetition of a technological effect on a new "higher" stage of an imagined progress. Therefore, the effects of the digital technology on film, and indeed, on all visual representation, cannot be simply explained in an analogy of effects of the mechanical reproduction on a work of art in Benjamin's times. Of course, a mode of production containing technology cannot be taken separately from its consequences, which imply aesthetics as well as politics. Hence, when we discuss the "digital revolution" and its meanings in and for cinema as art, we should understand it strictly dialectically – not as an "end of cinema", but as a transcending of the art of cinema, which turns into the historical core of something yet inconceivable in the future.

1 Actually, Benjamin's essay became an important and widely cited reference not before 1960s in Germany and after 1968, when the selection of Benjamin's essays (edited by Hannah Arendt under the title *Illuminations*) was published in the "non-German" world. Therefore, a whole range of film theorists in the period of some two decades after the Second World War, were not aware of the existence of the essay.