A History of Distraction From a Media-Archaeological Perspective

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A HISTORY OF DISTRACTION

I. Problems with Distraction
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➢ “Distraction is a special kind of the obstacle of attention.” (Jean Pierre Crousaz: Logique, 1720)
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- “Therefore an agile mind is able to direct its attention to several and different subjects simultaneously by applying only a very little part of time to each of them... .” (Carl Heinrich Dzondi: *Aufmerksamkeit*, 1816)
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II. Distraction as distributed attention

“Distraction (distractio) is the state of diverting attention (abstraction) away from certain ruling ideas by dispersing it among other, dissimilar ones. If the distraction is intentional, it is called dissipation; but if it is involuntary it is absent-mindedness (absentia).” (Kant: Anthropology, 1798)
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II. Distraction as distributed attention

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➢ Distraction (dissipation) is a distributed attention.
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II. Distraction as distributed attention

➢ „L’attention, sous le deux formes, est un état exceptionell, qui ne peut durer longtemps, parce qu’il est en contradiction avec la condition fondamentale de la vie psychique: le changement.“ (Théodule Ribot: Psychology of Attention, 1889)
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- Attention is an abnormal state of mind.
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III. Sites of Distraction

i. Big cities: mobility, traffic, leisure
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ii. Panorama etc., Cinema
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➢ Forming of a metropolitan mass audience
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III. Sites of Distraction

➢ Siegfried Kracauer: Cult of Distraction (1926)
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- Siegfried Kracauer: Cult of Distraction (1926)
- Walter Benjamin: Reception in distraction (1935/36)
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IV. The Age of Distraction
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➤ ADHS
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➢ Cpa: continuous partial attention
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IV. The Age of Distraction

- ADHS
- Cpa: continuous partial attention
- Multitasking