

**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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- “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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(Kant: *Anthropology*, 1798)
- Distraction (dissipation) is a distributed attention.

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II. Distraction as distributed attention

➤ „L’attention, sous le deux formes, est un état exceptionnell, 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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➤ Forming of a metropolitan mass audience

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➤ **Siegfried Kracauer: Cult of Distraction (1926)**

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III. Sites of Distraction

- 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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- ADHS
- Cpa: continuous partial attention
- Multitasking