

*10th Anniversary of the International Workshop Series:*

## **MEDIAL | MEDIUM IN WALTER BENJAMIN'S PHILOSOPHY**

**UNIVERSITÉ SORBONNE NOUVELLE – PARIS 3  
PARIS, 14-15 JUNE 2024**

Ich denke an die Farben der Kinder. Wie ist sie dort überall  
das rein Empfangene, der Ausdruck der Phantasie. [...] Und  
scheint es dir nicht, daß diese eigene Welt der Farbe, die  
Farbe als Medium, als Raumloses, vortrefflich durch  
Buntheit dargestellt war?

(Walter Benjamin, *Der Regenbogen*, 1915)

I am thinking of children's colors. How, in childhood, it is  
everywhere received in a pure manner as the expression of  
fantasy. [...] And doesn't it appear to you that this, the  
proper world of color, color as a medium, as spaceless, was  
best presented by motliness?

(Walter Benjamin, *The Rainbow*, 1915)

From the very beginning of his intellectual itinerary, Walter Benjamin was deeply fascinated by a pivotal element of experience that he singled out as “the medial”. Especially in his essay on language (1916) we can clearly notice how he invites us to shift our perspective from the contents of experience to its intimate and immediate texture. One could argue that this might be seen as the origin of Benjamin's own philosophical research: throughout his remarkably diverse writings he consistently comes back to the question of the medial – although this happens mostly in an implicit manner. It is precisely in his non-instrumental conception of language as “medium” of communication, as well as in his fascinating idea of a “politics of pure means” that we can find the origin of his unyielding interest for mass media like radio, photography, and film.

This two-day workshop will develop along two main axes: first, we will try to shed some light on the origins of the concept of the “medial” by going through some of the early writings on phantasy, language, and the Romantic theory of art; then, we will try to understand how Benjamin's later reflections on the “medium of perception”, as well as on various forms of media (including newspapers, radio, photography, cinema, but also architecture, urban landscapes, and advertising), are inspired by his peculiar idea of the medial.

Since the event focuses on close-reading sessions, some prior knowledge of Benjamin's writings is strongly encouraged. Bilingual, German-English copies of the texts will be provided. To facilitate the discussion, the number of participants for this workshop is limited.

For this workshop we will be joined by Sigrid Weigel.

If you are interested to participate, please send a message and a brief biographical note to the organisers before **15 April, 2024**.

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