

'SS OF HISTORY, OR  
 APHYIN NUCE:  
 ATTENUATION OF  
 NEGATIVE

D S. FERRIS

*for the cultural-historical dialectic ... The  
 ment will appear distinctly only in so far as  
 negative. On the other hand, every negation  
 'for the delineation of the lively, the positive.  
 ince that a new partition be applied to this  
 ponent so that, by a displacement of the  
 aterial), a positive element emerges anew in  
 a what was previously signified. And so on,  
 st is brought into the present in a historical*

N1a, 3

to the posthumous text 'On the Concept of  
 Dialectical Image', Walter Benjamin borrows  
 Monglond in the introduction to his 1930  
 while speaking of the ability of a literary text  
 at the time of its conception, Monglond  
 (epic plate from which an image may be  
 sentence of this fragment, Benjamin recalls  
 reads: 'If one looks upon history as a text, then  
*ihn*) is what a recent author says of literary  
 as which can be compared to those held fast  
 238/SW 4: 405). The comparison is called  
 g of history in terms of the process used to  
 njamin's account, the comparison, however,  
 ing phrase of this sentence indicates: 'if one  
 usequence of this conditional phrase, history  
 photography is said to do more than any

its local habitation is the  
nd 1900, captured Paris  
been justly said that he  
me scene, also, is devoid  
its evidence. With Atget,  
n the historical process  
significance [*Das macht*  
: 485/SW 4: 258)<sup>3</sup>

scenes recorded by Atget  
le but also superior signi-  
fication value of the image,  
es. Photography not only  
ng it out of concealment.  
concealed in the photo-  
nconcealment occur? Is it a  
e the attraction of such a  
ography), the example of  
ing out the political does  
as if, by its nature, photo-  
Rather, Benjamin derives  
of comparison: they are  
ch the human subject is  
ch a scene. The political  
strictly in accordance to  
igs out this significance  
um. Atget's photographs  
hem because of a choice  
r human presence.<sup>4</sup> As a  
rd of a street from which  
excluded rather than the  
onstration of exhibition  
ing within the medium.  
y given this exhibitional  
n', an 'abode' or a 'place'  
reveals the crucial place  
istory. The question will  
al since it is through the  
al significance of history  
in the passage just cited  
is a question of how the

*object*, Benjamin locates  
following manner: 'The

t). The image  
 appearance in  
 the point of an  
 recognized not  
 photograph – but  
 used in this case  
 use.

change in the  
 'producibility'  
 'For the first  
 artistic tasks  
 now devolved  
*in ins Objektiv*  
 This freeing  
 an event ('for  
 time in world  
 age is that art  
 technical art is,  
 but claimed by

which Benjamin  
 describes this  
 exhibition value

quite emphasis  
 magic which  
 the absolute  
 comes a form  
 (W 4: 257)

instrument of  
 'ons'. In each  
 a value that  
 only known  
 with an under-  
 ce of a work  
 question is, if  
 p, what is in  
 a there is no  
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 the image – *das*  
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Benjamin writes: "What  
 determine my course.  
 disturb the "main lines" of  
 usage Benjamin uses here,  
 of returning through the  
 as the sentence preceding  
 l by this disturbance does  
 such a return. Benjamin  
 the undertaking of a sea  
 the magnetic North Pole.  
 North Pole – Benjamin's  
 r the source of deviation;  
 ag at the North Pole go  
 deviation is exhibited for  
 d from the photographic  
 same image as any other  
 understood as the image  
 though, in the fragment  
 difference to the future  
 the image in all its details  
 therefore the passage of  
 developer. Time does not  
 ture. However, time as a  
 : possible for this future,  
 wo events – a condition  
 gative and every print is  
 e, the defined time of its

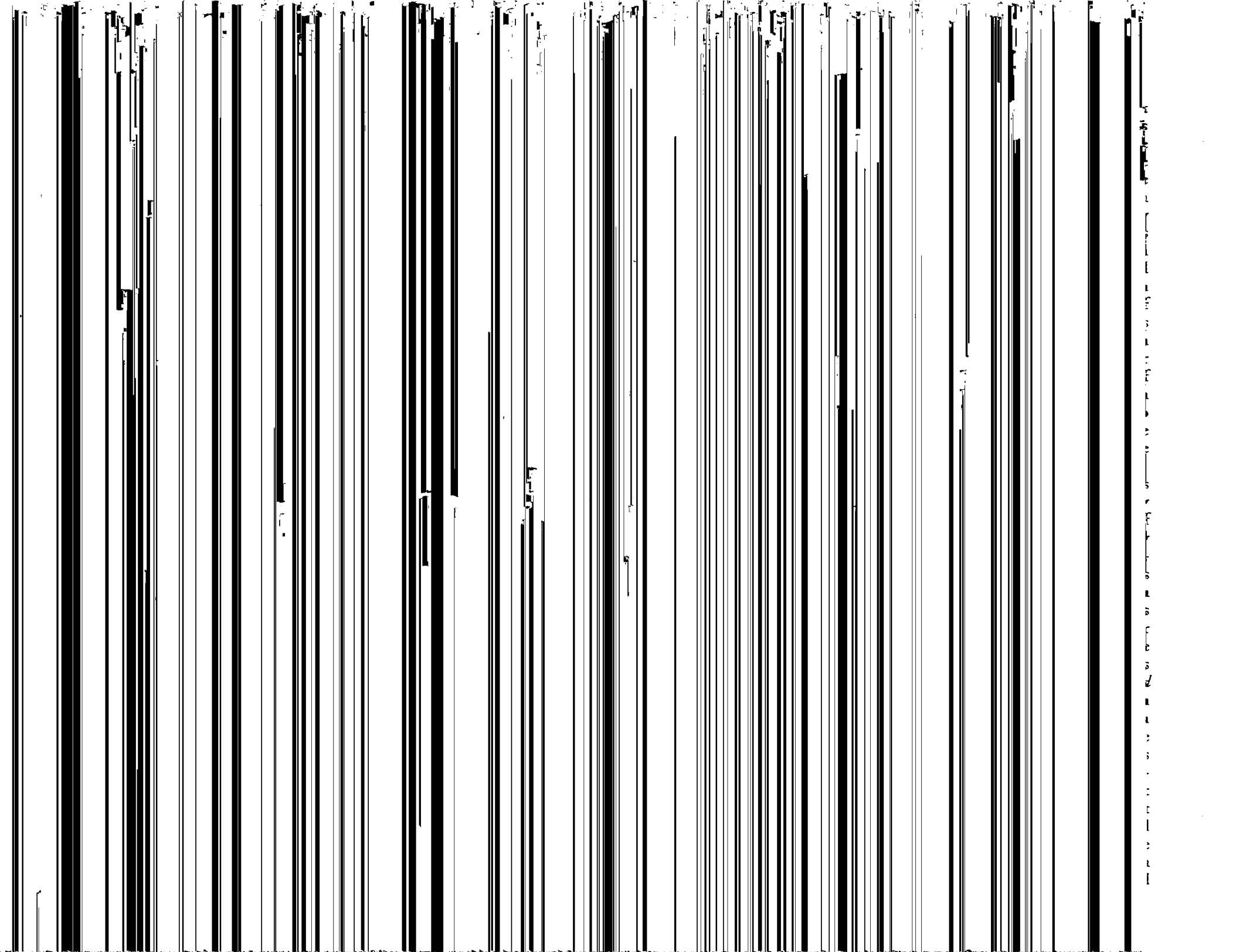
ct, Benjamin recounts a  
 ts to time as a technical  
 ce:

panoramas is brought  
 (with the well-known  
 ascends painting and  
 l condition [*technischen*  
 painting, can and must  
 und continuous segment  
 defineability [*chronolo-*  
 e of the photograph is

aimed by Benjamin on  
 or a different reason. In

ted image that can be made from it), defining property of exhibitionability Benjamin defines this ability when he e, for example, a multiplicity of prints (*möglich*); the question of an authentic (*W 4: 256*). This definition privileges since it is the print that possesses the negative – not with respect to what gain merely a local habitation, not a ct to its purpose: to produce reproduc- o one another and therefore no claim ic as the other. Here, the prints allow it is a negative whose property may pment into those prints. Monglond's tion, reminds us that photography, in a medium of reproducibility, is only or negative that permits it to possess ltiplicity is the effect of a difference The absolute emphasis on exhibition ich technology takes its first historical rning from this difference, Benjamin ariability of the image produced from solute exhibition value of the photo- nasis on the significance of an image, gical existence of such an image. Such er than the repetition of this process. d the 'Reproducibility' essay does this asis on exhibition value is what estab- e possibility of recognizing deviation at the auratic is already in a certain established, this exhibitional pole, in r than truth, is set against itself. To be h a deviation steps – and steps in the

as the image of history is maintained ent, 'The Dialectical Image', then the a bring out what could not have been ical moment in which the image was t the earlier essay on photography ('A e later essay, 'The Work of Art in the Benjamin explains the possibility of ast by reference to what he terms the ain describes the appearance of such



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*Walter Benjamin and History*

Edited by Andrew Benjamin

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