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F. Javier Sigüenza R.: The reception of Walter Benjamin in Latin America

The reception of Walter Benjamin's thinking in Latin America began in Argentina in 1967, with the Spanish translation of some of his essays. From that date on, his work's reception has increased constantly, specially during the last two decades; moreover, some of the most complex ideas exposed by this philosopher from Berlin have acquired a central role in Latin American discussions in domains such as philosophy, literary criticism, and art criticism. A first sign of this reception is the constant Spanish translation of Benjamin's work in Latin America and Spain; a second one is that each translation brings forward not only the translator's interpretations—in Mexico, and maybe in all of Latin America, these translators are authors themselves: philosophers, writers, sociologists, etc.—, but also whole discussions of the issues exposed in the translated works, thus influencing discourse in the places that receive these works. The reception and influence of Walter Benjamin's work in Latin America is ever-growing and immeasurable, so it would be impossible to capture it all in the time available for this current research. Thus, I will study the reception of Benjamin's work through one of the texts that has been most translated and discussed in Latin America: *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* (translated into English as *On the Concept of History* or *Theses on the Philosophy of History*). The reception and discussion of these theses is a good example of the circulation of social sciences between Europe and the global South, in this case Latin America. I am also interested in the influence of Walter Benjamin's thought on the critical theory of Bolívar Echeverría and his theory of the “quadruple ethos” of modernity. Bolívar Echeverría exemplarily brings together the qualities of the rigorous translator, the sharp critic, and the deep-thinking philosopher. He not only translated and commented on Benjamin's work, but analyzed it critically—in the sense of the analysis and discussion of his ideas—, as well as that of other authors; furthermore, he revisits some of their theses in order to discuss in an equally critical way—now in the wider sense of putting hegemonical discourses through a crisis—the peculiarities of modernity in Mexico and Latin America compared to European modernity and its North American extension.

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