

# Critique and Salvation

Atsushi HIRANO

In 1919 Walter Benjamin wrote a doctoral dissertation on the conception of art critique in German romanticism. This work meant to him a milestone in his career as a philosophical critic. Here he developed a unique notion of critique from German romanticism that a work or text can go beyond itself and reach a new dimension by means of critique and interpretation. In this concept critique is indispensable to the original, giving a critical work as much weight as the original. Benjamin put this notion into practice by making a critical approach to exploring the late novel *Chosen Relationships* by Goethe. His critique cast a light onto the dismal landscape of this work in which the cultivated heroes act as if they were totally blind. Benjamin considers this landscape in terms of all the characters but two young lovers in an independent short story which is put into the larger work being manipulated and operated on by nature and thus living in a world of myth without any salvation. This critique made a breakthrough not only in the mythical world but also in the interpretation of Goethe's work. I think this was surely an act of salvation and devotion to the original, which means that his interpretation was a daring attempt to read a work in order to create it again in a new dimension.