

German Philosophy Reading Group: Translation as Comment, Critique and Utopia

The 125th Birthday of Ernst Bloch

IGRS, Senate House, University of London

Monday 20 September, 15:00-18:00

Room G32, ground floor.

The first of three sessions of the German Philosophy seminar on translation. We focus on the philosophy of Ernst Bloch, which will be considered from the point of view of translating it into English, but also for its potential as a basis for a philosophical understanding of (aspects of) translation, including those beyond the strictly linguistic. Translation will be examined as a utopian praxis in the context of ideas and discussions regarding the coming community.

Bloch's texts are notoriously difficult to translate – a matter which itself invites reflection: “Adorno named Bloch as one of the great German prose writers, an often incomprehensible claim to the reader of Bloch in English translation” (from a book review). In this first session we will examine Bloch's inaugural lecture at the University of Tübingen (1961): *Kann Hoffnung enttäuscht werden?* / Can hope be disappointed? We will compare the German text in detail to the English translation by Andrew Joron.

This lecture was one of the first public appearances of Ernst Bloch after he had left the GDR at the moment the Berlin Wall was being erected. It became the starting point of his influence in the 1960s as a guiding inspiration for the student movement in Germany.

Bibliographical information:

Ernst Bloch, „Kann Hoffnung enttäuscht werden?“ in: *Literarische Aufsätze*, Gesamtausgabe Bd. 9, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1965, pp. 385-391.

--, “Can hope be disappointed?” in: *Literary Essays*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, pp. 339-344.

Participants should read the texts in advance of the meeting. Participants who do not have access to these texts prior to the seminar can contact the convenor (johan.siebers@sas.ac.uk).