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Some Theoretical Considerations Plus a Few Examples

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Article abstract

Tout en acceptant la subjectivité, on insiste, dans cet article, pour que la passion, l'engagement et la spontanéité soient des critères de qualité en traduction. On présente les conditions *sine qua non* d'une bonne traduction à partir de textes de Mann et de Block. La traduction jugée défaillante sera celle qui ne permet pas la spontanéité et le désir de logique du lecteur. On conclut qu'une bonne traduction est inévitablement une ode à la liberté.

WHAT IS A GOOD TRANSLATION? Some Theoretical Considerations Plus a Few Examples

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Résumé

Tout en acceptant la subjectivité, on insiste, dans cet article, pour que la passion, l'engagement et la spontanéité soient des critères de qualité en traduction. On présente les conditions sine qua non *d'une bonne traduction à partir de textes de Mann et de Bloch. La traduction jugée défaillante sera celle qui ne permet pas la spontanéité et le désir de logique du lecteur. On conclut qu'une bonne traduction est inévitablement une ode à la liberté.*

This paper is written from a position that is in keeping with the conceptual level attained in contemporary communication research. Paradoxically, this implies that the position taken here is not really a position, at least not in the traditional sense of the word.

Communication research is aware of what might be called the subjective relativity of human interaction including that of all speech acts and of all attempts at understanding one another. Each speaker and each listener has his/her own frame of mental reference which is inevitably non-identical from person to person. This has been reasoned about in so many different ways that it cannot be repeated here[1]. The consensus on this in communication research can be summarized by saying that the sedimentation of each person's life-experiences leads to the build-up of individually different ways of understanding and speaking. I think that this thought can be made plausible, *e.g.* by saying, either that each human being has a different personality, or, that human communication cannot be understood in terms of 100%-feedback-loops, or, that human speech involves interpretations that are inevitably subjective. Some people lament this latter circumstance by saying that, therefore, one person can never really understand the other. I, however, think that we can understand one another fully, though each one of us will do so in his/her own personal way. The alternative to this would be that we understand each other in an impersonal way. But, what kind of an understanding would that be?

Subjective relativity has, of course, its conditions and these are socio-historical ones. We know that eternally valid truth does not exist anymore (if it ever did). Its assumption by some is no longer binding for all of us. Even this insight itself cannot claim universal truth value; it itself is relative, in this case, to the social experience of our day and age. It is for this reason that the position underlying this paper is not a position in the traditional sense of being a definitely holding mental anchoring ground. Instead, this paper merely tries to communicate a few considerations of which it hopes that some readers will find them plausible.

The subjective relativity involved in all human affairs may easily be misunderstood as implying arbitrariness of interpretation, chaos in human interaction, or even a total opaqueness of the world around us. While I do not deny that the idea of subjective relativity can be interpreted as a license for egofocal individualism, *i.e.* for what we understand as liberty in contemporary society, it is at the same time a condition for the personal freedom of each one of us, provided other aspects of the human condition are not

ignored. In human communication, and thus also in acts of interpretation, we are constantly translating utterances into our individually unique terms of making sense. This is how we come to understand and thus to know. The creation of knowledge is a way of practicing both personal freedom and social togetherness, provided our acts, including our statements and interpretations, and the physical labor of making them, remain consciously grounded in what they have in common anyways, namely their material concreteness. In short, if our subjectivity does not forget that it is a part of the totality of nature, then this commonality of our subjectivities promises the communicability of what we are, do, say and understand without denying individuality to any one of us.

Understanding is always translation into one's own way of thinking and thus is inevitably an act of interpretation. We inevitably interpret irrespective of whether we try to understand the speech of a person, a text delivered in our own mother tongue, presented to us in our second language — or in translation. The latter case is a special one only in so far as we are dealing in it with an intermediary interpretation and not the original statement. Before we can inspect this circumstance more closely, a few additional remarks on interpretation, freedom and creativity in general seem to be called for.

Why is it that 100%-feedback-loops cannot be a criterion for the adequacy of human speech? The simple reason is that it would go against the peculiarity of human nature. We give meaning to what we say, hear, see, do, read etc. spontaneously; *i.e.* we cannot help but *load* signs (objects) with meaning and thus elevate them to symbols. At least since Kant's contemplations we know that this spontaneity is fundamental to our freedom and at least since G. H. Mead we know that this symbolizing spontaneity guarantees the uniqueness of the free human self.

This individual freedom is kept from turning into the chaos of liberty as long as this freedom is consciously grounded in the materially concrete, *i.e.* in the nature of things. Certainly, the human world is a symbolic world, but as such it can never leave behind nature as its material substrate. Our individual freedom and uniqueness in seeing, speaking, understanding, in short in our being, remain to be positive social forces, implying mutual surprises, creativity and the *forward-edge* (Ernst Bloch) of innovations and history as long as we take care not to distort the nature in us, including the one in our fellow human beings with all their words and deeds. The reason that we must not distort nature lies with the circumstance that we are nature ourselves.

This is to say that our communication must not distort the nature of those things that we talk about, nor can we afford in the long run to ignore or twist the nature of the words that come our way, *i.e.* the actual sound or light waves that reach our eardrums or retinas and ultimately our neuronal systems. Our studies of matter and mind may never be able to bridge the gap between the areas of concern in neurophysiology and in psychology, *i.e.* to explain the elevation of material signals to meaningful symbols[2], but we do know **that** we bridge that gap in the praxis of our attempts to understand, *i.e.* to give meaning to messages received. Furthermore, we know that the ones who speak to us or write for us give their own meaning to their messages. Since spontaneity and, therefore, freedom and uniqueness are involved in these acts as well, at least presumably in an undisturbed way, we have to allow our creativity to get the satisfaction of finding out about the sense that others make for us and for themselves. Being obedient to that curiosity means to be obedient to one's own inner nature as one listens or reads. In being obedient to that spontaneous urge of the inner nature in us and in fellow human beings we mindfully celebrate the natural commonality of all humans. Of course, even the hardest attempts of conveying one's own sense and of re-creating the one we think the other person is trying to make may still end up by those involved saying: *I don't get it*, or *That's not what I meant.* But, surely, this does not happen all the time. There are also those

moments where everything indicates that we are not mistaken in our feeling of togetherness. And even where we are mistaken in that feeling, or where we know that total commonality has not been reached, those involved may have learned something that may prove to be important and positive. Why should attempts at faithful understanding not result in new and unforeseen ideas, even though full mutual understanding has not been achieved?

Before trying to bring these considerations to bear on the questions raised in this paper, namely *What is a good translation?*, we have to bear in mind that translations are peculiar acts of communication. Broadly speaking, this special nature consists of the following: (1) the translated text has usually not been written by the translator, but by somebody else; (2) the translator tries to convey, in his translation, the sense of which he thinks — and nothing else is possible — that it is the sense the original author had intended. And particularly, (3) the translator puts the text into a language different from that of the original. These may be rather obvious aspects of the translations, and yet their closer inspection promises to be quite interesting when approached in terms of the foregoing theoretical remarks on communication.

A translator has obviously to understand the two languages he works with in his translation. Given that languages are not human subjects and seem to be rather peculiar as objects, I think it would be helpful to consider the question of what a language really is. What is its way of being? A related question that could be raised in this connection is, for instance, what is the form of existence of a language during those periods of time when it is **not** spoken, heard, read or written. Some people say that a language which is not at all spoken, read, or written anymore is *dead*. All there is left of a *dead* language is the knowledge about it. And yet, for an expert of such a language, this language may very well be alive, since he can speak, and/or read and write it; it exists for him, since he can *do* it and when he does not *do* it, it is somehow stored in his brain. This seems to suggest that a language has a way of being that it shares with the way of being of knowledge: it too seems to be of *zero-dimension* as Gregory Bateson[3] put it when he spoke of knowledge. This is to say that a language exists like knowledge, at least in some regard, outside space and time. And yet, is it fully correct to say that of a language (or a body of knowledge)? Obviously, it is a requirement for even the knowing of a *dead* language, let alone for bringing it back to life that some material remnants of it are left, be it signs chiselled in marble, painted on God knows what or recorded in some other form that is concretely accessible to a human subject. In other words, the existence of a language requires a material substrate without which it could not be. At the same time, if these material objects do not meet materially with the brain of a human subject, at least a part of the existence of that language is missing. This is to say that a language is alive only when its material substrate — sound waves when listening and speaking, or light waves when reading and writing — meet with the ability of a human brain to *load* that material substrate with meaning, *i.e.* to elevate these signs to symbols, as I have put it above. When not *done*, language (and knowledge) has a way of being that is inaccessible to our inspection.

To be sure there is a lot more to be said about the existence of language than is being carried by these few remarks[4]. All I can do here is to study just one more condition for a language to be alive.

Doing a language, *i.e.* speaking, hearing, writing, and reading it, makes sense only as a social activity, *i.e.* as an interaction among different subjects. This is to say that the need for talking arises only where we notice that our subjectivity is aware of something and/or knows it in some way which is not shared by another human subject of whom we assume that that subject needs to know that the way we do. Speaking is a defiant attack

on our absurdity, *i.e.* language is deeply social in so far as it constantly aims at bridging the unavoidable differences among our subjectivities. It is also for that reason that it is thoroughly inadequate to conceive of language in terms of or as facilitating 100%-feedback-loops. We saw this already above in a different context. Language and community are co-existents, because a true community requires unique human subjects, and not the kind of uniformity among them of which those dream who have lost a sense for community and language.

Our species, in the meanwhile, comes in so many different speech communities and languages that translations from one into the other language have become part of day to day life. Translations carry with them complications over and above those that occur anyways in the communication among those who share — in whichever way — what we usually call the same language. Let us assume that we were dealing with literary publications of some subtlety and rank. On the occasion of their translation, the translator steps into the communication *flow* between the original author and that part of the audience into whose language the piece of writing is to be translated by the subjectivity of the translator. This requires that the translator understand the subjectivity of the original author. Let it be clear that the translator's understanding remains to a subjective matter as well, *i.e.* the subjectivity of the author is for the translator only that what the translator thinks it is.

On the other hand, though, the translator must be able to ground his understanding in objectively existing releases made by the author, not only in the words finally being published, but also in other material remnants of the production that had in fact come from the author's hand. What I mean to say here is that the translator has ideally got to have access to as much of the material — in the literal sense of the word — as the author has left from the creation of his work. It would not only be good for the translator to know the manuscript of the piece to be translated in its various stages of preparation, it would also be good for the grounding of the translator's understanding that he knows how the author has used certain words and phrases on different occasions like in letters, on tapes, in documented interviews, etc. How else would the translator get at the meaning the author had intended and, if necessary, document it? Of course, what philologists call a historical-critical edition of a piece of literature may oftentimes not be available to the translator, but there is no question that the translator can hardly afford it to limit his understanding of a publication to just that publication. The requirement of contextualizing a work also stems from the time-bound nature of language. Therefore, the translator has to know what a phrase, an imagery, a word, or an allegory meant at the time of writing for an author and his speech community.

There are, of course, other and rather obvious requirements of a good translation which need to be mentioned here, since they are not always being met. For instance, the translator must not leave out anything from, or add anything to, the text. Another requirement of a good translation is that the translator has a thorough familiarity with the two languages involved in the translation. However obvious this latter requirement may be, it is in my view a multifacetted one. Let us therefore dwell on it for a moment.

Reference to the language into which a piece is being translated brings to mind that there is an audience out there for the translator whose different subjectivities cannot possibly be known to him. While the translator may have come to know the individual subjectivity of the author, he can only know his audience in terms of what one might call the cultural homogeneity or intersubjectivity[5] of that audience. Given the complexity of most contemporary societies, however, it is quite doubtful that one can equate society and intersubjectivity or society and speech community. This kind of equation is problematic irrespective of the fact that by and large, all people in the U.S., for instance, speak

English, in Germany speak German, in Quebec speak French, etc. Depending on class, age group, educational level, ethnic affinity etc., practitioners of one and the same language will be quite different and will have a different openness to other forms of speech. Whether this implies that a translator best translates into the language of those among whom he lives, *i.e.* with whom he shares a speech community, is a question I do not dare to answer. But much speaks for it. It may very well be that one best translates into one's own mother tongue, particularly if that still is the language of one's own daily speech acts. At any rate, the translator must know what kind of an audience it is that he translates for. This implies that he also knows the language of this audience so well that he can put across what he takes to be the author's sense in such a way that he is satisfied for himself that he has said what the author's words would mean to that audience.

These considerations seem to suggest that the subjective relativity of human speech (and writing) plays havoc with us, particularly when it comes to translations. Given my approach to the problem it would appear to be doubtful that good translations were at all possible. And yet I certainly think that they are possible (and exist). But I also think we have to understand that a good translation has to be a true translation, not just a correct translation[6]. In fact, a translation that makes claims to sheer correctness is false in the sense that it distorts the concept of communication by ignoring one of its necessary conditions, namely the subjectivity of each involved: that of the original author, that of the translator and that of the reader. The idea of a sheerly correct translation is a fiction of a scientistically distorted mind. Would it not, therefore, appear that a good translation (like any human communication) would have to be judged in terms of both its objective material and its subjective *mental* criteria simultaneously?

If this simultaneity of criteria would indeed be a requirement — and much speaks for it — then the question arises how do we keep them together, or, how do we see the subjective in the objective manifestations? This again is a question which would require an answer of considerable complexity. Such an answer cannot even be attempted here. And yet, there are a few aspects to it which we need at least to mention. First of all, the translator should not be expected to make his own personality remote or even hidden from the translation and let only the original author speak. This is impossible, and any claim to it is false. What the translator should instead be expected to do is that he invests his full subjectivity into the translation in order to understand the original author and to transmit with all his conviction to his own audience what the original author is saying.

Does this expectation not imply some kind of a professional work ethic? I think it does, but if propositions regarding such an ethic could be made here at all, then they would have to be of a somewhat unusual kind given the philosophical 'position' of this paper. Otherwise, one could simply turn the cognitive requirements of translations as dealt with above, *i.e.* those of correctness, contextualization of a text, attention to different manuscript versions of it, the author's use of words, etc. into moral obligations of a professional translator. This, however, would imply a perpetuation of the separation between objective and subjective aspects of human activities against which I have spoken just a moment ago. Instead, it would be in accordance with my 'position' to propose a synthesis between the objective aspects and the subjective ones, here in particular the motivational dimension of the translator's subjectivity. It is not just so that the translator's subjectivity is obliged to meet the objective aspects of a good translation, the question is **how** does he meet them.

At this level, our concerns have to become highly personal. I think we have to ask questions that aim at the integrity of the translator (as they would aim at the integrity of any speaker or writer when it comes to judging them). The question then is: what do we mean by integrity? Do we have standards for it? I think we do, but not in the sense as if

they were objectivistically given. First of all, the translator has to ask himself whether he wants to be *really into it*, in this case into the task of translation. Is it indeed his spontaneous urge to understand the original author and to have him communicate to people in another speech community? If he does not have that desire, then the translation will already be deficient, because it lacks a genuine spontaneous urge to come to a true understanding and to convey it to others. Only where learning the sense of something to be translated and learning the language in which that sense lives have become acts of freedom, is the communicability of the translation a step closer to being taken care of.

Of course, and at the same time, a professional translator is, like any other professional, usually in a situation in which he has to work for money. But doing a job for money does not mean per se that that job is not going to be well done and that the job will not be a moment of freedom. The question is whether or not one gets possessed by the task so that one can possess the task. This is not only a criterion for good teachers and prostitutes, but also for good translators.

Needless to say then that a good translator is creative. Reference to creativity should allow us to see that ethical expectations have, from the point of view of this paper, little to do with repressive moralism. A translator who is possessed by his task will be creative. He need not be told to be creative. Being creative, the obligations of language skills, of correctness, etc., will cease to exist as such for him; they will be met anyway. This is why we have very different and yet very good translations of one and the same piece.

Of course, different translations may receive very different evaluations from different people. But I do not think there is any problem with that. The only question is whether or not a translation, true in our sense of the word, is stimulating and helpful in making more people move forward than could be reached by the original text. It may even be that a translation is more stimulating in its new speech community than in the one in which it was conceived. But then again I wonder what is the problem with that. There are numerous examples for this, for instance, the reception of Hermann Hesse in North America in the last few decades and his low popularity at the same time in Germany.

Difficult problems arise when an original author objects to the translation of his piece. Of course, there is no problem in accepting such an objection, if the translation is objectively wrong or incomplete. The problem becomes painful, however, where and when it is hard to ground subjective discrepancies between the author and the translator in material evidence. It is not even my intention to make an attempt here at resolving such a dilemma, particularly when posed at such a general and de-contextualized level. Maybe it would be the best in such a case to either withhold the translation or to publish it as an entirely new piece stimulated by the original author. Whether a legal foundation exists for the latter possibility is beyond my knowledge. And yet, it should be pointed out that this whole problem arises in the context of historically peculiar laws on property, in this case on so-called mental property. How these laws jibe with what I had to say about the ways of being of language and knowledge, is a matter beyond the scope of this essay.

In the final part of this essay, I would like to present two pieces originally published in German, together with two English translations of each of them. My comments on these translations are far from being exhaustive, since I approach these pieces merely as a reader who has no access to any other materials like manuscripts or different drafts that may pertain to these publications. I must admit, though, that I know considerably more about these authors and their other publications than just these writings, while I do not know anything about the translators and their other work. This says, so I assume, a bit

about the subjectivity of my comments. And, if necessary, I should assure the reader that not English but German is my native tongue.

This, of course, implies quite a bit of a cultural baggage which cannot be unpacked here. And, as a matter of course as well, this baggage will be brought to bear on what I have to say on these translations. I can only hope that my comments on the translations selected here will be found stimulating by my readers.

Here are three versions of the first paragraph of Thomas Mann's "*Der Tod in Venedig*" or "Death in Venice". The first one is taken from the German version as published in the 1963 edition of Thomas Mann's *Sämtliche Erzählungen*. The second one is taken from the 1954 edition of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice and Seven Other Stories* translated by H. T. Lowe-Porter and with a copyright dating back to 1930. The third version is from Kenneth Burke's translation of *Der Tod in Venedig* published as *Death in Venice* in 1973. I do not know how these editions relate to one another. Most importantly, I do not know whether the German version as excerpted here is identical to the one(s) used by the translators. It is also not known to me whether Burke had knowledge of Lowe-Porter's translation. All I am planning to do here is to compare the English translations to the German original as they came into my hands. Here are the three texts.

The German version:

Der Tod in Venedig[7]

Erstes Kapitel

Gustav Aschenbach oder von Aschenbach, wie seit seinem fünfzigsten Geburtstag amtlich sein Name lautete, hatte an einem Frühlingsnachmittag des Jahres 19.., das unserem Kontinent monatelang eine so gefahrdrohende Miene zeigte, von seiner Wohnung in der Prinzregentenstraße in München aus allein einen weiteren Spaziergang unternommen. Überreizt von der schwierigen und gefährlichen, eben jetzt eine höchste Behutsamkeit, Umsicht, Eindrin glichkeit und Genauigkeit des Willens erfordernden Arbeit der Vormittagsstunden, hatte der Schriftsteller dem Fortschwingen des produzierenden Triebwerkes in seinem Innern, jenem «motus animi continuus», worin nach Cicero das Wesen der Beredsmkeit besteht, auch nach der Mittagsmahlzeit micht Einhalt zu tun vermocht und den entlastenden Schlummer nicht gefunden, der ihm, bei zunehmender Abnutzbarkeit seiner Kräfte, einmal untertags so nötig war. So hatte er bald nach dem Tee das Freie gesucht, in der Hoffnung, daß Luft und Bewegung ihn wiederherstellen und ihm zu einem ersprieß lichen Abend verhelfen wurden.

The Lowe-Porter version:

Death in Venice[8]

Gustave Aschenbach — or von Aschenbach, as he had been known officially since his fiftieth birthday — had set out alone from his house in Prince Regent Street, Munich, for an extended walk. It was a spring afternoon in that year of grace 19 - -, when Europe sat upon the anxious seat beneath a menace that hung over its head for months. Aschenbach had sought the open soon after tea. He was overwrought by a morning of hard, nerve-taxing work, work which had not ceased to exact his uttermost in the way of sus tained concentration, conscientiousness, and tact; and after the noon meal found himself powerless to check the onward sweep of the productive mechanism within him, that *motus animi continuus* in which, according to Cicero, eloquence resides. He had sought but not found relaxation in sleep — though the wear and tear upon his system had come to make a daily nap more and more imperative — and now undertook a walk, in the hope that air and exercise might send him back refreshed to a good evening's work.

The Kenneth Burke Text:

Death in Venice[9]

On a spring afternoon of the year 19 - -, when our continent lay under such threatening weather for whole months, Gustav Aschenbach, or von Aschenbach as his name read officially after his fiftieth birthday, had left his apartment on the Prinzregentenstrasse in Munich and had gone for a long walk. Overwrought by the trying and precarious work of the forenoon — which had demanded a maximum wariness, prudence, penetration, and rigor of the will — the writer had not been able even after the noon meal to break the impetus of the productive mechanism within him, that *motus animi continuus* which constitutes, according to Cicero, the foundation of eloquence; and he had not attained the healing sleep which — what with the increasing exhaustion of his strength — he needed in the middle of each day. So he had gone outdoors soon after tea, in the hopes that air and movement would restore him and prepare him for a profitable evening.

Beginning with the Lowe-Porter version, I am not sure whether it is worth mentioning that she does not translate the definite article of the German title; it simply reads "Death in Venice", not "The Death In Venice". It surprises me, however, that she ignores "*Erstes Kapitel*". There is no indication for the English reader that this whole, though relatively short, story is subdivided into various chapters. This English translation is just one uninterrupted piece.

Leaving aside as perhaps unimportant as well that Lowe-Porter uses the English version for the German name Gustav, the first problematic translation occurs when she tells us that Aschenbach's name had been *officially* changed to von Aschenbach. First of all, there is more to this change of name that needs to be said in German. For the German reader, Aschenbach had been granted a new status in society by this change, in this case the status of lower nobility. This is not expressed in the translation and, therefore, will be missed by most English-speaking readers. Besides that, it is doubtful that the English word *officially* conveys the meaning of the German *amtlich*. The latter term means that some administrative branch of government had, at least in appearance on its own volition, bestowed that status on Aschenbach, while the English word *officially* means that a change of name had been recognized by some official, grantedly also administrative body. For an English understanding, however, such an administrative body was part of a civil service system that was vastly different from the one that existed in Germany. I shall return to this difference in a moment.

Let us also bear in mind that in North America, more so than perhaps in England, the word *official* oftentimes means that some informally established practice had become recognized by the general public (whatever that means) as acceptable or *official*. A reader who projects this latter meaning into "Death in Venice" has, of course, additional difficulties to *get a feel* for that aspect of Thomas Mann's story or, rather, Lowe-Porter's translation of it.

Understanding the meaning of *amtlich* requires *a feel* for an Absolutist social order. This sense can hardly be conveyed by the translation of one word. Therefore, I can only try to point out that difficulty here. By the same token, I do not think that the translator could have done justice to the clarification of the meaning of that word either. Or should she have put in a footnote? If so, it would have turned into a lengthy one.

The difference between the social orders familiar to English speaking people and that of Germany makes itself also felt in the translation of *Prinz-regentenstraße* into *Prince Regent Street*. The status of a *Prinzregent* in the Absolutist tradition of Germany is very different from that of a *Prince Regent* in England where it hardly ever existed and

where the condition for its existence, Absolutism, had lost out to Constitutionalism so early.

We read, in the translation, that Gustave von Aschenbach left his *house*. This suggests to most English-speaking speech communities that he had left a single dwelling. But this is not so according to the German original. There, von Aschenbach leaves his *Wohnung*, and this means to almost all Germans that he had left something similar to what the English may call a flat. Mind you, though, that a *Wohnung* in the *Prinzregentenstrasse* in Munich, or better *zu München*, rented by someone of von Aschenbach's status was probably a very spacious and luxurious place. This is the impression that the German original evokes. Whether the English version, by using *house* for *Wohnung*, succeeds in creating a similar impression in the reader's mind is not clear to me. It would have to emerge for him after reading ahead, but whether this impression would in fact emerge would also depend on who it is that reads the text. Some may come to see that *house* in the context of this novel means *apartment* similar to the ones that one finds in an inner city like Montreal or New York. But even those with that impression would get that meaning of *house* only after reading several more pages and then they may still believe that *house* means something like *condo*; this way they will miss that the Munich one was rented. Obviously, it depends on the particular kind of subjectivity what the reader will get from the English text at this point. The translator, however, can hardly anticipate a particular subjectivity in the audience. Like the original author, he can only take his own subjectivity into account and hope for acceptance of it by others. This, incidentally, is not only the fate of a writer or a translator, under contemporary conditions it is the fate of almost all of our activities. In the absence of a shared *Weltanschauung*, we can never be sure how our actions will be received by others[10].

Turning to what is the second sentence in the translation, I must first note that that second sentence is a part of the first sentence in the German original. Moreover, that second sentence is constructed from a portion of the German first sentence which is grammatically speaking only a modifier of time followed by a relative clause. This is to say that the English reader has to add the placement of von Aschenbach's walk into the appropriate time period **after** he had been informed about the factual occurrence of that walk. The German reader hears about that qualification at the same time as he comes to know that von Aschenbach took a walk; von Aschenbach's walk has immediately a particular quality in the German text.

The translator, instead, takes the freedom to lead the English reader step by step to the awareness that the story is set in a spring afternoon, and then he adds that the walk occurred *in that year of grace 19 - -*. Here we have to note that there is no equivalent for *of grace* in the German original. Also the word *Europe* does not occur in the German text; it is referred to as *unserem Kontinent, i.e. our continent*. Maybe the formulation used in the translation was intended to make the English reader have a greater sense of distance to the people on the Continent. Could it then also be that speaking of *that year of grace* makes that continent appear in a light of which Lowe-Porter thought that it would make Europe more familiar to her readers' conceptions of it?

While the German text says that it was the year of 19 - -, which showed a threatening face, the English text changes that so that it is no longer the year of 19 - -, which shows a threatening face, but something anonymous does that during that year. This is how the English text reads: "...Europe sat upon the anxious seat beneath a menace that hung over its head for months". There is very little objective ground for this translation.

In the German text, there is no mentioning of an *anxious seat*, or of something *that hung over its head.*

Under all these conditions — a change of a name, a spring afternoon, a seat beneath the menace, the coincidence of which is emphasized by them being presented in one sentence in the German original — von Aschenbach sets out for an extended walk. I leave aside that using *walk* as a translation of the German *Spaziergang* has its own problems, since there are other more significant differences between the English and the German versions. The German text switches in its second sentence immediately to a description of von Aschenbach's personal inner situation and returns to a description of what he actually does in the opening part of the last sentence of the whole paragraph. The English version, however, turns what is only a part of a sentence that appears much later in the German original into a short independent sentence of its own. That short sentence says what von Aschenbach is in fact doing: it is placed at a point before von Aschenbach's personal state of mind is described. In the English text, that sentence reads: "Aschenbach (not *von Aschenbach*, F.W.S.) had sought the open soon after tea." In the German original, this information only comes much later, but when it comes it says: "*So hatte er bald nach dem Tee das Freie gesucht...*", meaning, by using the word *so*, that it was in this state of mind that von Aschenbach had sought *the open.* In German, von Aschenbach has sought *das Freie.* The German word *das Freie* does mean the outside or the outdoors, but the German word is closely related to *Freiheit*, *i.e.* freedom in English; thus the German text quite strongly suggests the liberating aspect of von Aschenbach's walk. This meaning is hardly carried by the English translation.

As far as the description of von Aschenbach's state of mind is concerned, the German text again creates a much stronger sense for the various aspects of that state of mind than the English text does. Where the German text uses participles to construct one long sentence, the English version breaks this sentence up into more than one and by the use of a semicolon, the word *and*, and relative clauses suggests a mere addition of aspects in von Aschenbach's feelings. The translator seems to expect of his readers that they will integrate all these single aspects into one whole sense of the situation. It may very well be that this expectation is justified. It has been said that what comes as a whole in a German sentence is taken apart in English into a sequential presentation so that the speakers of the latter language have to turn around at the end of a descriptive sequence and tie its parts together.

This necessity of looking backwards and of tying together what has been said sequentially is even emphasized in the present English text by the circumstance that it has to add a whole phrase to the story, namely *and now he undertook a walk* for which there is no equivalent in the German original. In the German original the renewed reference to von Aschenbach's walk does not come up as a repetition but as an indication of how von Aschenbach feels. This is done by the sentence already referred to above, "*So hatte er bald nach dem Tee das Freie gesucht*", which the translator, as we saw, moves ahead in the description of von Aschenbach's mood.

When we turn to the translation of particular words and metaphors, matters become even somewhat more surprising for someone who knows the German original. I do not think that a single one of the German words *Behutsamkeit*, *Umsicht*, *Eindringlichkeit* and *Genauigkeit des Willens* is 'correctly' translated. One could perhaps argue that the sense of these terms has been compounded and then been broken down into different and new parts. For instance, the word *conscientiousness* could be seen as pulling together the meanings of *Behutsamkeit* and *Umsicht.* But then we have to note that the word *conscientiousness* is certainly less concrete than the two German words which mean *care* and *prudence* respectively. If one accepts such a move away from concreteness, which

probably has a somewhat distancing effect again on the imagination of the reader, then one is left with seeing *concentration* as a translation of *Eindringlichkeit* and *tact* as a translation of *Genauigkeit des Willens*. The German word supposedly translated into the English word *concentration* means, however, something closer to 'penetration', *i.e.* something that may be the result of concentration. *Tact* though, as a translation of *Genauigkeit des Willens* is thoroughly unacceptable. And yet, whether a more literal translation of that phrase into something like *precision of will* would make sense in English is unclear to me; I doubt it. A speech community that is so much more influenced by Hobbes' idea of limiting the individual's will than by Rousseau's ideal of cultivating the will has probably little sense for what *precision of the will* could mean. *Tact*, at any rate, does not carry the sense of the German original.

Not being able to inspect all the cases where the translator's sense and my sense for a formulation differ, I can still not resist to at least point out a few additional examples for these discrepancies. I do not think that *relaxation in sleep* gives the sense that *entlastender Schlummer*, *i.e.* something like *relieving slumber*, evokes in a reader. Even more problematic is the translation of *zu einem erspriesslichem Abend verhelfen* into *send him back refreshed to a good evening's work*. The German text does not speak of work at all. It instead expresses von Aschenbach's hope that the walk would *help him to a beneficial evening*. The German reader does not come to know at this point whether or not von Aschenbach will go back to work after his walk.

Is this lack of congruence between the English version and the German original an indication of a low quality in translation? I do not think so. Naturally, the two texts are not the same. But we should remember that their non-identity is by far not the only reason that these texts create non-identical reactions in their various readers. As I have tried to say, an expectation of such an identity is a product of a thorough misunderstanding of what we are and what goes on in human interaction. Each of these texts will evoke its own different responses in each of its different readers. This is naturally so and it is good that it so. Each gives to the readers food for thought in a hopefully rich way.

As far as I understand the English language spoken around me, Lowe-Porter's text is a quite cultivated one. It strikes me as trying to appreciate the circumstance that the plot is inevitably different for a mind working in English than for the one thinking in German. Keeping this difference in mind, I think that in both versions, the first paragraph of the story succeeds in placing an individual into a scenario of considerable dimensions; a sense for the breadth of history is there in both of them and still they are both attentive to an individual's state of mind at a particular time in a particular place. I can relish both versions, but then I would not know whether I read the English text with German eyes or not. In other words: also the translation is a piece of good literature. What does it matter that it is not an *original* (or identical with it)? It being different from it does not make it a piece of writing unworthy of being read.

By the same token, Kenneth Burke's translation of the same paragraph is for me a distinct piece of literature in its own right. His sentences are longer, flow differently from the ones in Lowe-Porter's text and condense more information into each one of them. Like the German original, it too consists of only three sentences, and, also in this regard, is closer to the original than the Lowe-Porter version is. In addition, it retains the subdivision of the whole story into various chapters. On the whole, Burke seems to have tried to keep the English reader closer to the events of the story and their locality than Lowe-Porter does. He speaks of *our continent* not of *Europe*, he does not anglicize von

Aschenbach's first name, and he does not translate the street name into English. This is not to say, however, that he has not exercised his own freedom in his translation.

The first sentence, while of about equal length as the German one, sequences modifiers of time and also subclauses quite differently from how the German text does that. It gets them out of the way, so to speak, by putting them at the beginning of the sentence, so that the main clause gets more of the typically English subject-predicate-object structure. This way, the modifier of time *On a spring afternoon* can still be connected to a subclause and together with it can set the stage for von Aschenbach's walk, about which the English reader comes to know in the latter part of that first sentence. Leaving aside that Burke translates *Wohnung* by *apartment*, which is not without problems, as we saw above, I have to say that his use of *officially* for *amtlich* in the form of *read officially* conveys at least to some extent the passive role that von Aschenbach had to play in the change of his name under German conditions. It is quite daring, however, to translate *gefahrdrohende Miene*, meaning something like *threatening face* into *threatening weather*. There were greater threats involved for people in Europe at that time than even an upcoming thunderstorm would imply. But, I am told by more than just one native English speaker that the translation used here implies more than just bad weather.

The second sentence of the German original is translated in such a way that the sequence of its main clauses and subclauses is basically retained. This together with the use of at least one participle reflects the simultaneity of aspects in the state of mind of von Aschenbach in a way quite similar to the German version. The semicolon in Burke's translation hardly disrupts that sense of simultaneity, certainly much less so than in Lowe-Porter's translation.

Minor problems arise in Burke's version when it comes to the translation of particular terms or phrases. As regards the first one among these problematic translations, I would like to offer my own translation, not with the intent of improving Burke's translation, but in order to allow the reader who does not read German to see the *literal* German meaning and then to see what Burke instead makes of that in English. Leaving aside that subclauses are related in the translation in a different way from the original, the German text says something like "the writer had not been able to stop the continuous humming (or vibrating) of the productive motor (or engine) in his inside", or, in German: "... *hatte der Schriftsteller dem Fortschwingen des produzierenden Triebwerkes in seinem Innern... nicht Einhalt zu tun vermocht ...*". In my sense of it, *impetus of the productive mechanism* is something quite different from the continuous or continuing vibrations or humming of an engine that keeps producing, *i.e.* keeps on putting out (Latin: *producere*). Furthermore, *mechanism* is too vague a translation of *Triebwerk*, particularly given the circumstance that for the modern ear, *Triebwerk* in German is associated with the jet-engine of a modern airplane.

It should also be clear that *impetus* is not a word that implies a continued process, like the German *Fortschwingen* does. The Latin phrase *motus animi continuus* used in both the German and the English version suggests the idea of a continuous movement as well, but this equivalency is lost in the English translation of the German *Fortschwingen*. The *motus* that Cicero once spoke of is, according to the original, the *Wesen der Beredsamkeit*, *i.e.* the essence of eloquence; it is not its *foundation*, as Burke translates the term *Wesen*.

This same sentence also refers, in English, to "the increasing exhaustion of his (von Aschenbach's, FWS) strength". This sounds plausible as a possible physical state of a human body, but it is not what Thomas Mann says in German. *Zunehmende Abnutzbarkeit seiner Kräfte* means *increasing wearability of his forces*. This is to say that the time that it takes to exhaust his forces gets shorter from occasion to occasion of their

mobilization. This, in turn, leaves von Aschenbach in need of sleep *in the middle of each day*, as Burke says. But the German original is more vague here; it says that von Aschenbach needs sleep *once during the day*, meaning during the working or daylight hours: *einmal untertags*.

Finally, it may very well be that I do not understand the English word *profitable*. To me, it means gain, mostly if not always, economic gain. This, however, is not what the German original says and yet this is what Burke uses, when he offers: *...prepare him for a profitable evening* as a translation of *...ihm zu einem erspriesslichem Abend verhelfen würde*. That is to say Thomas Mann lets von Aschenbach hope for a *beneficial* evening. It seems that Lowe-Porter as well as Kenneth Burke relate what means beneficial in German either to work or to profit (or both) in English.

It is obvious, I think, that the Lowe-Porter translation and the one by Burke differ widely from one another. The former keeps the reader at greater distance from the events of the story, not only in a geographical and social sense, but also in terms of making descriptive terms less concrete or less sensual. Lowe-Porter gives the reader a feeling that these things happen *over there* in Europe and it keeps the references to the hero's mind at a general, almost vague, level. Burke's translation is oftentimes much more literal, thus resembling the preciseness of Thomas Mann's wording. He also retains much of the complexity by which the original author conceives his sentences, thus drawing the reader much more into the simultaneity of concrete moods and events. The difference between the translations suggests that Burke and Lowe-Porter have each read their own Thomas Mann. I would be surprised, if not also each of their readers has his or her own Burke or Lowe-Porter. It does not matter that Kenneth Burke presents, in my estimation, the better translation and that for me his sentences have a better flow to them. Instead I want the reader to be aware that I read both translations with the German original in the back of my mind. And yet, I think that both translations are, regardless of their obvious flaws, good pieces of literary work.

I cannot say the same about both of the two different translations made of one and the same piece by Ernst Bloch. One of the translations is bad and, at times, incorrect, while the other one is good. The German text presented here is a first part of a section of chapter 40 of Bloch's monumental *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*.
The German text:

Die Wunschlandschaft Perspektive in der Ästhetik; Rang der Kunststoffe nach Maßgabe ihrer Tiefen-und Hoffnungsdimension[11]

Das Wort legt von vornherein anders an, wenn es sehr weit zielt. Es ist gespannt, hat eine Ahnung, die noch nirgends fest und betretbar gewordenist. Dichterischer Ausdruck läuft seit vierhundert Jahren perspektivisch, und es ist falsch, dies ***sich schwer begrenzende*** *Wesen nur als romantisch zu verstehen. Noch falscher ist es, die Wunschbewegung und jene, welche tendenziös ist und bleibt, aus Kunst ausschalten zu wollen. Auf klassizistische und später ganz epigonale Art dergestalt, daß der Wille in der Kunst schlafen geht und diese «überall am Ziel ist». Wonach Kunst also keine eigentlichen Wunschlandschaften enthielte und auch nicht nach diesen, als ihren heftigsten Gegenständen, jeweils zu gliedern sei. Der Grundzug der so entstandenen, der bürgerlich-klassizistischen Ästhetik ist nicht Hoffnung (und durch sie erregter Wille), sondern Betrachtung (und durch sie stillender Genuß). Das Schöne vertilgt hier den Stoff illusionär durch die Form, und zwar durch die zu dem Stoff, gar zu einer Tendenz des Stoffs gleichgültige.*

The second text represents the same piece taken from the translation of Bloch's book that was published under the title of *The Principle of Hope*, by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight. The text reads:

The Plaice, Plaice, Knight version:
The wishful landscape of perspective in aesthetics; status of the matter of art according to its dimension of depth and hope[12]

The word points differently from the start when it aims very far. It is taut, has a premonition which has nowhere yet become solid and enterable. Literary expression has been running along perspective lines for four hundred years, and it is wrong to understand this phenomenon, *which has difficulty in limiting itself*, merely as romantic. It is even more wrong to want to eliminate this wishful movement, and that which is and remains tendentious, from art. In a classical and later very epigonic fashion; so that the will in art goes to bed and this art 'has everywhere reached its goal'. Whereby art would therefore contain no authentic wishful landscapes and would also not have to be classified respectively according to these, its most vehement Objects. The essential feature of the bourgeois-classical aesthetics which has arisen in this way is not hope (and will aroused by it), but contemplation (and enjoyment satisfying through it). The beautiful here demolishes the subject-matter in an illusionary way through the form, and moreover through the form which is indifferent to the subject-matter, even to a tendency of the matter.

The third text has appeared in the book *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*, which, as its title page says, presents selected essays written by Ernst Bloch, and translated by Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg. The text does not make a conspicuous reference to Bloch's *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* as the source of what is portrayed here as an essay. It reads:
The Zipes and Mecklenburg version:

The Wish-Landscape Perspective in Aesthetics: The Order of Art Materials According to the Dimension of Their Profundity and Hope[13]

The word has another intention from the very beginning if it aims very far. It is intense, has an inkling that has not become fixed anywhere or touchable. For four hundred years poetic expression has maintained a perspective, and it is false to designate this essence, which cannot be dismissed merely as romantic. It is even more false to want to exclude the wish movement and that which is tendentious and remains tendentious from art in the classical and imitative manner. Here the will in art falls asleep, and art "reaches its goal everywhere". Thus, art is not supposed to contain its own wish-landscapes and cannot be arranged according to them as their most powerful objects. The basic feature of bourgeois classical aesthetics that originated in this way is not hope (and as a result, the aroused will); rather, it is contemplation (and as a result, passive enjoyment). Here beauty eradicates material in an illusionary way through form, and to be sure, through form that is different to the material, even to the tendency of the material.

Before I take up my study of these translations, I would like to mention that the length of the paragraph chosen for the present inspection is determined by the length chosen for that paragraph in the Zipes and Mecklenburg translation. In the original and in the Plaice, Plaice and Knight translation, a paragraph is not made where Zipes and Mecklenburg make one. Instead, the first paragraph in the original and in the Plaice, Plaice and Knight translation has a length of approximately five pages. It would seem to

be expectable that the Zipes and Mecklenburg translation did not want to have a five page paragraph in what claims to be merely an essay.

In the Plaice, Plaice and Knight translation (from now on abbreviated as the PPK translation), the first part of the title appears to suggest that the chapter that follows will scrutinize a perspective in aesthetics that has, as its property, a wishful landscape. Whatever that could mean, it is, in no way, what the title says in German. There the title announces that the text will be about the perspective of the *Wunschlandschaft*. This apparently is meant to indicate that the text will single out that particular perspective as the focus for its treatment. Furthermore, *Wunschlandschaft* is not a *wishfull landscape*, *i.e.* a landscape full of wishes like wishful thinking is a thinking full of wishes. The German *Wunschlandschaft* means a landscape for which one has a longing. So the title should read in English as something like *The Perspective of the Wished — For — Landscape in Aesthetics.*

In order to evaluate the PPK translation properly we have to bear in mind that the containment of a perspective in the material of art, in this case the perspective of a wished-for-landscape, is the focus of attention. We are alerted to this circumstance by the second part of the title. It is the material of art, *i.e.* the sound of a word, the quality of paint, the kind of rock or wood for a sculpture, which is investigated as regards the question of what it materially **contains** as a perspective. It is that immanent perspective of which Bloch says, a little bit further down in the PPK translation, that it *has difficulty in limiting itself.* The perspective immanent to the matter of art is even seen here as a premonition. The reader of the PPK translation and of the original is prepared for this particular understanding of *perspective* by the ending of the section preceding the one under scrutiny here. Given that contextualization, the opening sentences of this section of the chapter with its implied reference to archery poses few difficulties for the reader of this translation and the original; however, the omission of this context in the essay version presented by Zipes and Mecklenburg creates serious problems for the reader of that version, as we shall see.

Besides the above mentioned flaw in the title for which few additional examples can be found throughout the almost 2000 pages of the entire text of the book, the PPK translation runs with remarkable precision and gives a good sense of the rhythm, flow and imagery of the original text. I do not think that there is any serious problem in the paragraph under consideration here. Wherever I am trying to make a few suggestions regarding possible improvements, I do not imply to say that the translation is not acceptable as it stands. But there are also problematic cases.

One could take as an example for these the translation of *Dichterischer Ausdruck läuft seit vierhundert Jahren perspektivisch.* The translation of the adverb *perspektivisch* into *along perspective lines* does not bring out that Bloch means indeed to say that it was the running of literary expression that was doing so *perspectively.* The translation does not fully imply that the perspectives were for Bloch immanent to the running; for him, the running did not occur along perspective lines. The translation suggests that these lines were, so to speak, externally provided rails laid down for the running. Also, in the same sentence, the translation of *Wesen* by *phenomenon* makes it not as clear as it could have been that the having of a perspective was essential to the running; it belonged to its *essence* and thus it was a bit more than a *phenomenon.*

It may be less important that the English word *classical* is not exactly what for an educated German speech community is carried by the word *klassizistisch.* But then it appears to be debatable whether Bloch himself should not have used the word *klassisch* instead of *klassizistisch.* When one reads beyond the limits of this paragraph, one learns that Bloch sees the disappearance of a sense for the perspectiveness in art as having

emerged with Kant's aesthetics. Kant's aesthetics, however, is classical, not *klassizistisch*, as Bloch says.

The last sentence of this paragraph is, in the PPK version, not as lucid as it should be. I am referring to the translation of *Stoff* with *subject matter*. *Stoff* means for Bloch the materially or objectively given, be it the factual side of events used as a plot for a novel, a given theme in a piece of music, or even the natural material for a sculpture. The problem is that the word *subject* is easily misleading in English, while the original text is so particular in distinguishing *subject* from *object*. In English, one may speak of the subject of a talk, meaning the matter under consideration in it, although for a native English speaker, a *subject matter* is quite distinct from the individual subject delivering the talk. And yet, *subject matter* is only in part what is *Stoff* for Bloch; for him, it is not only the story, the contents of a talk or a sculpture, but it is also the raw material of it, *e.g.* the sound or the stone respectively.

But there is yet another aspect involved in Bloch's use of *Stoff* that is not brought out in the English translation. Bloch wants to say that the *Stoff* is not demolished by beauty as a form externally imposed on the *Stoff*. I note again: had *raw material* been used for the German *Stoff*, the English speaker would have been allowed to understand less ambiguously what Bloch means to say here. Bloch wants to point out that an artistic form may *demolish* a tendency as it is inherent in the nature given material of art, *i.e.* sound, wood, stone etc. In a later portion of the text not presented here, he argues against a Hegelian formalism to which not even a Marxist like Lukacs was immune although Lukacs should have had a sense for the tendencies intrinsic to the various **materials** of art, not just for its *subject matter*.

Turning from here to the Zipes and Mecklenburg translation, we have first to remember that the readers of this translation do not have the benefit of having been exposed to the preceding 39 chapters of Bloch's book. They are led to believe that they just read an essay. This decontextualization would appear to have called for particular care, if not for explanatory footnotes or even a glossary added to the translation. In the absence of these, the burden on the translation when it comes to making sense out of the text, becomes quite heavy.

While the title of this *essay* is quite well translated, actually better than in the PPK translation, a problem though minor in appearance nevertheless does arise here. It contributes to the likelihood that the reader will later on get a sense from the translation which cannot be construed by anybody as the one Bloch had intended. This relates to the translation of the German word *Rang* by *Order*. *Ranking* would have been a better choice than *Order*. *Order* may still occur only in one plain, while *ranking*, or *status* as used in the PPK translation, would have implied the vertical ordering intended by Bloch.

Problems of an even more serious nature arise in the first sentences of the text itself. They read in German "*Das Wort legt von vorneherein anders an, wenn es sehr weit zielt. Es ist gespannt, hat eine Ahnung, die noch nirgends fest und betretbar geworden ist.*" In the English translation, we find: "The word has another intention from the very beginning if it aims very far. It is intense, has an inkling that has not become fixed anywhere or touchable". As mentioned above, problems in understanding arise here, since the imagery of archery that underlies Bloch's original is lost completely in this translation. And yet, so far it still seems that the first sentence of this translation carries some sense. This sense may even extend into the first part of the second sentence. But in the second part of the second sentence, Zipes' and Meclenburg's decision to ignore Bloch's imagery of archery forces them, from then on, to distort the meaning of the original text. They translate the word *betretbar*, *i.e.* something that can be entered, by *touchable*. Whatever willingness to make sense the English text has triggered so far in the reader,

that willingness is forced to disappear now. To the extent that the notion of *betretbar*, wrongly translated by *touchable*, is preceded by using *inkling* for *Ahnung*, and that the German *noch* is not translated at all, Bloch seems to lament, in the English translation, that an inkling, *i.e.* some kind of a vague anticipation has not taken shape yet and therefore cannot be touched. Leaving aside that an anticipation cannot be touched, it needs to be noted that this is not at all what the German text says. It speaks, instead, of the possibilities inherent in art materials or, more specifically, inherent in words which aim, like an arrow on the string of a bow, at a goal but have not travelled the distance to it yet. One is not yet certain where the words of a writer or speaker will take one. Therefore, the realm through which his words will travel waits to be delineated; one cannot yet enter it. This is to say that, according to Bloch, the words at the beginning of a text may already give the reader a feel for what it is that they are aiming for, without the reader being able to see the destination of these words clearly. The reader feels that the words aim far and stake out a vast territory soon to be entered. Nothing of such a sense for the inherent possibilities of words is left in the words of this translation. This translation is not influenced by the message of the text with which it deals. The reader may have been willing to accept the sense promised in the first one of the translated sentences, but at the end of the second sentence, he has not been able to enter that promised land of sense; he is lost.

The third sentence does not provides the reader with much help in this situation either. Maybe its first part restores the reader's hope to be able to make sense of this text, but this hope is frustrated before he has finished reading that sentence. Let us first see how the text is translated, and then determine what sense, if any, it makes.

While one may accept that *dichterischer Ausdruck* is translated by the much more narrowly defined English words *poetic expression*, the translation of *läuft... perspektivisch* as meaning *has maintained a perspective* is a highly dubious one. As we saw above, Bloch thinks that each manifestation of *literary (rather than poetic) expression* carried, for four hundred years, in itself a tendency, or a perspective, regardless of its initial fluidity. Bloch does not say, in my reading, that all of these pieces shared, for four hundred years, a specific perspective. If one, however, accepts this (Zipes' and Mecklenburg's) reading of Bloch, then one wonders what is happening to this singular perspective. Why does Bloch not characterize it for us? The answer is that it is this *running perspectively*, and not a common perspective which gives all of these literary expressions a peculiar kind of commonality. Therefore, that commonality does not require further characterization.

We have also to note that the words *sich schwer begrenzende* in the first part of the third sentence have not been translated at all, even though they are put in italics, *i.e.* are emphasized in the German version. At the same time, I do not know where, in the same sentence, an equivalent for the English words *Which cannot be dismissed* could be detected in the German text. If one still accepts these kinds of liberties in the translation at hand, though they do not make Bloch's sense, then one may still wonder what and whose sense they are trying to trigger. What sense is one supposed to make for instance, when one reads that the translators designate an essence (which one? the essence of having a perspective?) as false and yet refuse to dismiss this essence as merely romantic?

With the fourth sentence, we are not much better off. In fact, it does away with whatever sense it initially seems to make. It does so by including into that sentence a phrase that does not belong to it in the original. In German, we read: "*Noch falscher ist es, die Wunschbewegung und jene, welche tendenziös ist und bleibt, aus Kunst ausschalten zu wollen. Auf klassizistische und später ganz epigonale Art;*" The English translation says: "It is even more false to want to exclude the wish movement and that which is tendentious and remains tendentious from art in the classical and imitative manner".

Admittedly, Bloch's own wording is unusual here, but there is no objective foundation for including into the fourth sentence what is in Bloch's own text the beginning of the fifth. Bloch separates these phrases by a full stop. Again, I leave aside that it is not precise to translate *klassizistisch* with *classical* (and *epigonale* with *imitative*). But I cannot ignore that the English text is demolishing Bloch's sense without replacing it. The English reader could think that Bloch says it would be false to exclude "the wish movement and that which is tendentious and remains tendentious from art in the classical and imitative manner". The original, however, says, quite unequivocally, that it is false to want to exclude from art the wish movement and that what is tendentious in art. Bloch does not qualify this statement. The sentence stops there in German, because Bloch wants to make first a general statement. He does not speak about an art in the classical and imitative manner. The placement of *Auf klassizistische and spater ganz epigonale Art* into the next sentence allows Bloch then to emphasize that the talk is about one particular **manner** of excluding the wish movement. It does not make sense to suggest, as in the English version, an exclusion of the wish movement from classical art, if that style of art does not even contain that wish movement. It is quite possible though to read the English translation as suggesting just that, particularly since the previous sentences have not done much to enlighten the reader about the general tendency of Bloch's argument.

The translation of *dergestalt* in the fifth sentence carries the misconceptions further. It looks to me that the word *here* is supposed to be the equivalent for *dergestalt*. *Dergestalt, i.e. in such a way*, picks up on the thought of *Auf klassische ...Art* by making reference to the **modality** of the exclusion of the wish movement. *Here*, however, does not suggest a statement on a modality of the process of exclusion. It makes reference to *art in the classical ...manner*, (where the wish movement is missing in the first place). The translation of *dergestalt* with *here* obviously reinforces the confusion that the English text had already created in the previous sentences.

It is not only the single word *here* but also the whole sentence of *here the will in art falls asleep, and art 'reaches its goal everywhere'*, which poses serious obstacles to the reader's good will to get some understanding at all about what is going on in this text. He must wonder how something, the driving force of which has fallen asleep, can still reach its goal everywhere? By *running on empty*, as they say? In the German text, Bloch says that an art in which the wish movement (or the will) has been excluded is one which merely **claims** to **be** at its goal and to have come to its rest. This claim is, of course, a pretense for Bloch and, therefore, he puts *überall am Ziel ist, i.e. reaches its goal everywhere* in quotation marks. In the English version, though, and for the *sense* it claims to make, there is no reason for the quotation marks to show up, except their sheerly objective visibility in the German original.

If frustration has not yet completely drained the motivational resources of the English reader, then he has to brace himself for further futile struggles with the text. There are at least two or three additional flaws left that need mentioning. The German text, by making reference to views prevailing in classical art (theories), says "*Wonach Kunst also keine eigentlichen Wunschlandschaften enthielte und auch nicht nach diesen, als ihren heftigsten Gegenständen, jeweils zu gliedern sei.*" The translation of this sentence reads "Thus art is not supposed to contain its own wishlandscapes and cannot be arranged according to them as their most powerful objects." It is here where the lack of precision in the translation of the German word *Rang* in the title of this section makes itself felt. Certainly *gliedern* can be translated by *to arrange* and it makes sense to speak of art as being arranged. But is the talk here about a piece of art that is internally arranged according to *powerful objects*? I do not think that even the English translation tries to stimulate the creation of that sense; there is no mentioning of *piece of art*. Had the word

jeweils of the German text been translated, that sense would have become a bit more plausible, but the word *jeweils* remains untranslated. The English text simply says that *...art ...cannot be arranged ...according to ...powerful objects*. The translation may convey the irony with which Bloch speaks here, but it does not say that Bloch wants to establish a **ranking** order among products and styles of art. To express the need for the ranking of art pieces not for *arranging* them is the intent of this whole section of the book, as the title of this section states in German.

When it comes to the meaning of Bloch's criterion for the ranking of artistic products, the English reader can hardly make the connection between that criterion and the will. He is told that art can be arranged *according to ...their most powerful objects*. The German word for *most powerful* is *heftigste*. This German word suggests a notion of being impulsive, *i.e.* of being full of drive and wish. From here, the German reader can easily understand Bloch's criterion for judging art, since he can readily connect that criterion to the wish movement contained in art. The English reader is, instead, led to think about power; he does not see the **impulse** behind power and thus will have difficulties in understanding Bloch's argument, namely that good art has a wish movement, *i.e.* a drive, and thus a *forward-edge* contained in its material.

Finally, there is yet another section in this translation of which it is hard for me to say that it is helpful in making Bloch's sense, or that it fits with the rest of what is presented here as an *essay*. I am referring to the clause that reads in German *...sondern Betrachtung (und durch sie stillender Genuss)*, and in translation *...rather, it is contemplation (and as a result passive enjoyment). Passive enjoyment* is apparently intended as a translation of *stillender Genuss. Enjoyment*, however, is much too tame a word in English to carry the meaning of the German *Genuss*; first of all, it would be better to translate *Genuss* as *pleasure*. While *enjoyment* is also used in the PPK translation, its modification there by an appropriate adjective, namely *satisfying*, (in addition to a plausible overall context), rectifies the problem to some extent. In the Zipes and Mecklenburg translation, however, the adjective chosen, namely *passive*, distorts Bloch's idea completely; *passive* cannot possibly be used for German *stillend*. *Stillen* means in German that a mother breastfeeds her seemingly insatiable baby and thus lets him/her become calm and quiet. *Satisfying* would have been the better word for *stillend*, since *satisfying* presupposes the active desire without which no pleasure can be. The word *passive* does obviously not stimulate the reader to think of *active*, let alone to make him see the contradiction inherent for Bloch in bourgeois contemplative art: bourgeois art could only grant *satisfying pleasure*, if it related pleasure to an urge or will. Will and wish, however, are not supposed to exist in bourgeois art, according to its own claims.

Let us now ask ourselves what is it that makes this paragraph an example of a poor translation. It is not so much that Bloch's sense is not reflected in it, the problem is that this paragraph does not make sense at all, neither Bloch's or anybody else's. I cannot believe that the translators have allowed their spontaneity to reach out into Bloch's text and to create their sense of it for themselves. Not having done that, this translation is unable to ignite anybody's spontaneity and will to make sense.

In view of the other three translations inspected here, I have to remember that I have problems with each of them, sometimes serious ones, but each of these other translations is a creative piece of work in itself. Each allows one to create some sense, although these texts differ from each other, and, of course, from the original.

On the other hand, none of these translations claims to be an original. The translators rightfully bear in mind that they are *only* mediating a work already in existence. What, however, does it mean to speak of an artistic (or philosophic) work *to be in existence*? That what really exists of such pieces is only print on paper. The existence of the

sense they make can only be in the minds and hearts of human beings. Thus we have Thomas Mann's and Ernst Bloch's printed texts and we, as translators and/or readers, can only bring the meaning of that objectively existing print to life, *i.e.* give it existence, as we think that sense, each one of us for him- or herself. The making of sense is a communicative and thus a communal effort in which each of the participants has both to activate and to enjoy his or her spontaneous freedom. If this is not being done, then sense does not exist anywhere; it belongs to the realm of non-sense.

In the work of the translator, creativity and freedom are not constrained at all, not even by the *original* text. In a good translation, where the translator truly desires to make sense of the original, spontaneous freedom is celebrated. If such a celebration is not seen as a form of freedom then there is something wrong, not only with our views of freedom, but also with our ideas on the existence of human thought and human speech. This freedom does not mean the liberty to distort someone else's and/or one's own sense; it means that we grant spontaneity to one another so that we can detect the sense in the sense that others make of us.

Notes

1. ADAMS, Richard N. (1975): *Energy and Structure: a Theory of Social Power*, Austin, The University of Texas Press, pp. 107, 109, 114, 123ff.
   ADAMS, Richard N. (1988): *The Eighth Day: Social Evolution as the Self-Organization of Energy*, Austin, The University of Texas Press, pp. 83, 90.
   BERNSTEIN, Basil (1964): "Elaborated and Restricted Codes: Their Social Origins and Some Consequences", in: *American Anthropologist*, vol. 66, pp. 55-59.
   HABERMAS, Jürgen and Niklas LUHMANN (1971): *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, pp. 12, 43, 75.
   LUHMANN, Niklas (1978): "Soziologie der Moral", in: Luhmann, Niklas and Stephan Pfürtner (Eds.), *Theorietechnik und Moral*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, pp. 45/7.
   MEAD, George H. (1938): *Mind, Self and Society*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, passim.
   MEAD, George H. (1938): *The Philosophy of the Act*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, passim.
2. ADAMS, R. N. (1988) pp. 10, 81.
3. BATESON, Gregory (1972): *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, New York, Ballantine, p. 408.
4. For further considerations, see SIXEL, Friedrich W. (1988): *Crisis and Critique: On the 'Logic' of Late Capitalism*, Leiden, New York, Brill Publ., pp. 87, 91ff, 116ff.
5. Re "intersubjectivity" see: HABERMAS, J. and N. LUHMANN (1971), pp. 51/2, 195-201; HABERMAS, Jürgen (1973): *Legitimationsprobleme im Spätkapitalismus*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, p. 102; HABERMAS, Jürgen (1976): *Zur Rekonstruktion des Historischen Materialismus*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, passim.
6. I am using the dichotomies of true/false and correct/incorrect (or wrong) in a sense that was appropriated from Jürgen Habermas; see HABERMAS, J. and N. LUHMANNM (1971) pp. 209, 228/9; also, HABERMAS, J. (1973) pp. 19ff and HABERMAS, J. (1976) pp. 338ff.
7. Publ. in: MANN, Thomas (1963): *Sämtliche Erzählungen*, Frankfurt, S. Fischer Verlag, pp. 353 ff.
8. Publ. in: MANN, Thomas (1954): *Death in Venice and Seven Other Stories*, translated by H. T. Lowe-Porter, New York, Vintage Books, pp. 3ff.
9. Publ. as: MANN, Thomas (1973): *Death in Venice*, translated by Kenneth Burke, New York, Alfred A. Knopf.
10. This uncertainty is, of course, an implication of the self-other-differentiation. This has been elaborated upon in a multitude of sociological writings. As a summary, see LUHMANN, Niklas (1982): *The Differentiation of Society*, New York, Columbia University Press, *passim.*
11. Publ. in: BLOCH, Ernst (1979): *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag, (first publ. 1959), vol.II, pp. 945ff.
12. Publ. in: BLOCH, Ernst (1986): *The Principle of Hope*, transl. by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight, Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press, vol. III, pp. 794 ff
13. Publ. in: BLOCH, Ernst (1988): *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature, Selected Essays*, translated by Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg, Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press, p. 71.