

Workshop

Critical Theory and Jewish Thought

All welcome!

On May 30-31, 2013, the Department of Theology & Religious Studies, University of Nottingham, organizes a workshop devoted to the relationship between Critical Theory and Jewish Thought.

Description

Gershom Scholem once described Walter Benjamin as a theologian who wandered into the sphere of the profane and took all the hazards incipient in this bold maneuver. For Scholem, however, even these hazards were of theological nature: they belonged to the antinomian heritage of Jewish messianism, most of all the Sabbatean and Frankist movements which walked ‘a thin line between nihilism and religion’ in order to overthrow the rigid doctrine of the Law in the name of a ‘blessed life.’ Walter Benjamin himself remarked that he, indeed, felt a close affinity with Jacob Frank. But Benjamin was lucky to have a friend like Gershom Scholem, who immediately reacted to his religious, however non-normative, Judaic sensibility. Max Horkheimer, less lucky, had to do it himself: many years later, in a famous interview for the German radio, he quite suddenly declared that all the early Frankfurt School was really about was a ‘Judaism undercover.’ This ‘Marrano’ characteristic, which at the same time betrays and covers its traces, applies all the more to Theodor Adorno who was the most reluctant of the three to confess his religious indebtedness, yet all his works, at least from *Minima Moralia* on, have a distinctive pathos of the Hebraic prophet who preaches to the strayed hosts in the midst of the wilderness. In his later essay, “Reason and Revelation,” Adorno only confirms the importance of Scholem’s diagnosis about theology which needs to jump into the abyss of profanation: “Nothing will last of the traditional theological contents; they must take on themselves a risk of contaminating itself with the secular and the profane.”

The workshop will explore various points of contacts and connections between Critical Theory and Jewish thought with particular attention to the projects of Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Siegfried Kracauer, Leo Löwenthal, Hannah Arendt, Herbert Marcuse, and Erich Fromm.

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Location: Highfield House, A1: Thursday (11am – 6 pm), Friday (10am – 5 pm).

PROGRAM

30th May Highfield House, A1

11.00 Welcome and Introduction by Agata Bielik-Robson and Willi Goetschel

11.15 Willi Goetschel, *Theory-Praxis: Spinoza, Hess, Marx, Adorno*

12.00 Asaf Angermann, *Redemption ex negativo. Critical Theory and the Mystical History of Heresy*

13.00 **Lunch**

14.30 Agata Bielik-Robson, *Disenchantment or Exodus? Adorno and Horkheimer on the Hidden Dimension of Enlightenment*

15.15 Daniel Weiss, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomianism of Classical Rabbinic Law*

16.00 **Coffee break**

16.15 Michael Fagenblat, *Frankism and Frankfurtism*

17.00 Adam Lipszyc, *Siegfried Kracauer and the Materialist Theory of Photography*

19.30 Dinner

31st May Highfield House, A1

10.00 Peter Thompson, *Ernst Bloch, Critical Theory and Concrete Utopia*

10.45 William Large, *Philosophy of Religion, Judaism and Critical Theory*

11.30 **Coffee Break**

12.00 Cain Elliott, *Jewish Noise: Adorno and Schoenberg*

13.00 Lunch

14.30 Orietta Ombrosi, *Reason as nomination: another chance for the reason according to Max Horkheimer's Critical theory (Raison comme nomination: une autre possibilité pour la raison selon la Théorie Critique de M. Horkheimer)*

15.15 Petar Bojanic, *What is the victory? Mesianism and the victory. Benjamin, Scholem.*

16.00 **Coffee Break**

16.15 Paula Schwebel, *Lament and the Transmissibility of Teachings in Scholem and Benjamin*

17.00 Closing Remarks

19.30 Dinner