

## APPENDIX

### A spoken commentary on Freud's *Verneinung*, by Jean Hyppolite\*

To start off with, I must thank Dr Lacan for his insisting on my giving you a presentation of this article of Freud's, because it gave me the occasion for a night's work; and of bringing you the fruit of this labour.<sup>1</sup> I hope that it will prove worthy in your eyes. Dr Lacan made sure to send me the German text with the French. That was a wise thing to do, because I don't think I would have understood anything in the French text, if I hadn't had the German.<sup>2</sup>

I wasn't familiar with this text. It has an absolutely extraordinary structure,

\* [Originally published as 'Commentaire parlée sur la *Verneinung* de Freud', *La Psychanalyse* 1, 1956, 29–40. Reprinted as Appendice I to Lacan's *Écrits*, pp. 879–87, and also in Jean Hyppolite, *Figures de la pensée philosophique, écrits de Jean Hyppolite*, Paris: P.U.F. 1971, vol. I, pp. 385–96. We would like to thank Presses Universitaires de France for permission to translate this text.

It will be clear from what follows that the task of translating this talk is a peculiarly complicated one, since Hyppolite is sometimes commenting on the German text (in French), sometimes commenting on the French translation of the German text, and English readers will wish to rely upon the English translation of SE. On occasion, Hyppolite's rendition of the German text differs considerably from that of SE; notes will indicate this where necessary. The SE translation has been relied upon and often adapted (see p. 292 n10 below for a major inaccuracy in it).

There is an additional complication owing to the lack of fit between key terms in German, French and English. As Strachey notes, the translation of '*Verneinung*' by 'negation' was chosen to distinguish it from 'denial', which had previously been used to translate '*Verleugnung*', but which SE renders with 'disavowal'. (There is also the third term in this series, '*Verwerfung*', translated in SE by 'repudiation'.) While Hyppolite explicitly recognises the value of translating '*Verneinung*' by '*dénégation*', rather than by '*négation*', he does not appear to hold consistently to this practice; hence, where 'negation' appears in the text, it corresponds to '*dénégation*'; where '*négation*' was used in the original, the French word appears in square brackets afterwards.

Having been translated from the Appendix prepared in 1966 for the *Écrits*, this is the one passage in the Seminar with annotations supplied by Lacan and by the editor of *Écrits*, Jacques-Alain Miller. Notes added for the English edition are to be found in roman square brackets; annotations and additions already present in the body of the French text are to be found in < >.]

<sup>1</sup> 'Je t'apporte l'enfant d'une nuit d'Idumée.' (J. L.) ['I bring you the fruit of a night of Idumée' – reference unclear.]

<sup>2</sup> The French translation of Freud's *Verneinung* appeared in volume VII, no. 2 of the official organ of the Société Psychanalytique de Paris, in 1934, under the title *La négation*. The German text first appeared in *Imago* IX, in 1925, and has been reproduced in several collections of Freud's works. It can be found in GW XIV, as the second article, pp. 11–15. [The English translation, entitled 'Negation', is to be found in SE XIX 235–9; the newer German edition is Stud III 373–7.]

and deep down it is extremely enigmatic. Its construction is not at all that of a professor. The text's construction is, I don't want to say dialectical, so as not to abuse the word, but extremely subtle. And it obliged me to give myself over, with both the German text and French text (in which the translation is not very accurate but is, in the end, when compared with others, honest enough) to a genuine interpretation. And this is the interpretation I am going to offer you. I think it is valid, but it is not the only possible one and it is certainly worth talking over.

Freud begins by introducing the title *Die Verneinung*. And I realised, making the same discovery Dr Lacan had already made, that it would be better to translate it by '*la dénégation*'.

In the same way, further on you will find *etwas im Urteil verneinen*, which is not 'the negation of something in the judgement',<sup>3</sup> but a sort of readjudication [*déjugement*].<sup>4</sup> Throughout this text, I think one must distinguish between the negation [*négation*] internal to judgement and the attitude of negation [*négation*]; otherwise it doesn't seem possible to understand it.

The French text doesn't bring out the extremely concrete, almost entertaining style of the examples of negation with which Freud starts off. To start off with, take the following one, which contains a projection whose role you can easily locate given the analyses this seminar has engaged in, in which the patient, let us call him the person being psychoanalysed [*psychanalyse*], says to his analyst: 'Now you'll think I mean to say something insulting, but really I've no such intention.' 'We realise', Freud says, 'that this is a rejection, by projection, of an idea that has just come up.'<sup>5</sup>

'I came to realise that when, in daily life, as frequently happens, we want to say "assuredly I do not want to insult you by saying what I am saying", one should translate this by "I want to insult you." Such an intention is never lacking.'<sup>6</sup>

But this remark leads Freud to a very daring generalisation, through which he will address the problem of negation in so far as it might be the very origin of

<sup>3</sup> [SE: 'to negate something in a judgement']

<sup>4</sup> As is sufficiently indicated by the following sentence, in making the *Verurteilung*, that is the condemnation that it designates as the equivalent (*Ersatz* [SE: substitute]) of repression, whose very *no* must be taken as a hall-mark, into a certificate of origin comparable to the *made in Germany* impressed upon an object. (J. L.) [The phrase 'Made in Germany' appears in English in the original German (and in the French), thus highlighting that the hall-mark of repression is written in a foreign language. There is a historical aspect to this: the requirement that German goods display a hall-mark of origin (written in English) was imposed on the governments of Germany and Austria following the First World War (and hence a few years before Freud was writing); the ruling was intended to facilitate discrimination against German goods by stigmatising them. In fact, it had the opposite effect, since goods bearing the stamp 'Made in Germany' thereupon became sought after.]

<sup>5</sup> [SE XIX 235]

<sup>6</sup> [It is not clear why this passage is in quotation marks, since it is not a quotation from Freud's text.]

intelligence. That is how I understand the paper, in all its philosophical density.

In the same way, he gives an example of someone saying: 'You ask who this person in the dream can be. It's *not* my mother.' In which case, the question is settled, we can be sure that it is indeed her.

He goes on to cite a procedure which is useful to the psychoanalyst but in addition, we would say, to anyone, for clarifying what it is that has been repressed in a given situation. 'What would you consider the most unlikely thing in that situation? What do you think was furthest from your mind at that time?' And the patient, or it might just as easily be anyone you happen to be talking to, at a party or over supper, if he lets himself be caught in your trap and indeed tells you what he considers to be the most unbelievable thing, then that is what one has to believe.

So this is an analysis of concrete goings on, generalised until its basis is encountered in a mode of presenting what one is in the mode of not being it. Because that is exactly how it is constituted: 'I am going to tell you what I am not; pay attention, that is exactly what I am.' That is how Freud engages with the function of negation and, in order to do this, he uses a word which I could not but feel at home with, the word *Aufhebung*, which, as you know, has had a variety of destinies; it is not for me to say it . . .

DR LACAN: But if not you, then who else will it fall to?

M. HYPPOLITE: It is Hegel's dialectical word, which means simultaneously to deny, to suppress and to conserve, and fundamentally to raise up. In reality, it might be the *Aufhebung* of a stone, or equally the stopping of my newspaper subscription. At this point Freud tells us: 'negation is already an *Aufhebung* of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed.'

This is the start of something truly extraordinary in Freud's analysis, whereby what emerges from these anecdotes, which we might well have taken for nothing more than anecdotes, are implications of prodigious philosophical importance, which I will attempt to summarise in a moment.

Presenting one's being in the mode of not being it, that is truly what is at issue in this *Aufhebung* of the repression, which isn't an acceptance of what is repressed. The person speaking says: 'This is what I am not.' It would no longer be repressed, if repression signified unconsciousness, since it is conscious. But in its essentials, the repression persists,<sup>7</sup> in the form of non-acceptance.

Here Freud is going to lead us through an argument of extreme philosophical subtlety, in which it would be a gross lapse of attention to overlook the remark that Freud makes, simply on account of its everyday use which we never reflect on, that 'in this the intellectual function is separated from the affective process'.

<sup>7</sup> [SE XIX 235–6]

<sup>8</sup> 'bei Fortbestand des Wesentlichen an der Verdrängung' [GW XIV 12; Stud III 374].

Because, in the manner in which he then goes on to deal with it there's a truly profound discovery.

Extending my hypothesis, I would say that, in proposing an analysis of the intellectual, he does not show how the intellectual is separated from the affective, but how it, the intellectual, is that sort of suspension of content for which the term, in rather barbaric language, sublimation<sup>9</sup> is not inappropriate. Perhaps what is born here is thought as such; but not before the content has been affected by a negation.

To refer to a philosophical text (which I once again ask you to excuse me for, although Dr Lacan is my surety here with respect to such a necessity), at the end of one of Hegel's chapters, the issue becomes that of substituting genuine negativity for that destructive appetite which takes hold of desire and which is there conceived of in a profoundly mythical rather than psychological manner, substituting, I was saying, for this destructive appetite which takes hold of desire and which is such that in the final outcome of the primordial struggle in which the two combatants confront one another, there would be no one left to remark the victory or the defeat of the one or the other, an ideal negation [*négation*].

The negation which Freud is here talking of clearly shows us, in so far as it is different from the ideal negation [*négation*] in which the intellectual is constituted, the sort of genesis whose vestiges Freud points to, in bringing his text to a conclusion [*moment de conclure*], in the negativism characteristic of certain psychotics.<sup>10</sup> And Freud goes on to give us an account of what differentiates this point from negativity, all the while speaking mythically.

In my view, this is what has to be acknowledged in order to understand what, in this article, is being spoken of, quite properly, under the name of negation, even though it isn't immediately visible. Similarly, one must take cognisance of an asymmetry expressed by two different words in Freud's text – which have been translated by the same word in French – an asymmetry between the emergence of affirmation starting off from the unifying drive [*tendance*] of love, and the genesis, starting off with the destructive drive [*tendance*], of that negation whose true function is that of giving rise to intelligence and the very starting point of thought.

But let us make our way with more care.

We have seen that Freud posits the intellectual as separated from the affective: whatever is yet to be added to this by the desired modification of

<sup>9</sup> We intend some day to establish a strict definition for analysis for this term – something which has not yet been done. (J. L. 1955). A promise since kept (1966).

<sup>10</sup> 'Die allgemeine Verneinungslust, der Negativismus mancher Psychotiker, ist wahrscheinlich als Anzeichen der Triebentmischung durch Abzug der libidinösen Komponenten zu verstehen.' ['The general pleasure in negation, the negativism of many psychotics, is probably to be understood as a sign of a defusion of drives that has taken place through a withdrawal of the libidinal components.' (GW XIV 15; Stud III 376–7; SE XIX 239 – translation modified; amongst other imprecisions, SE gives 'wish to negate' for 'Verneinungslust')]

analysis, 'the acceptance of what is repressed', repression is not, for all that, suppressed. Let us try to represent the situation.

First stage: this is what I am not. One concludes from that what I am. Repression still subsists in the guise of negation.

Second stage: the psychoanalyst obliges me to accept intellectually what I just denied; and Freud adds, after a dash and without any further explanation – 'the repressive process itself is not yet removed (*aufgehoben*) by this'.

Which seems very profound to me. If the analysand accepts, he renounces his negation, and yet the repression is still there! I conclude from this that one must do what Freud didn't do: call what happens here by a philosophical term – the negation of the negation. Literally, what appears here is intellectual affirmation, which is only intellectual, in so far as it is negation of the negation. These terms are not to be found in Freud, but I think that all we're doing is taking his thought one step further by formulating it in this way. That is what he really means.

At this point (let us be vigilant over a difficult text!) Freud finds himself in a position where he can show how the intellectual separates itself <in action><sup>11</sup> from the affective, to give a formulation of a sort of genesis of judgement, that is, in short, a genesis of thought.

I apologise to the psychologists here, but I do not much like positive psychology in itself; one might take this genesis for a positive psychology. To me its implications seem more profound in belonging to the order of history and of myth. And I think, given the role that Freud has this primordial affectivity play, in so far as it is the progenitor of intelligence, that it should be understood in the way that Dr Lacan teaches: that is to say that the primal form of relation known psychologically as the affective is itself situated within the distinctive field of the human situation, and that, if it engenders intelligence, it is because it already, from its beginnings, brings with it a fundamental historicity. There is no pure affective on the one hand, entirely engaged in the real, and the pure intellectual on the other, which detaches itself from it in order to grasp it once again. In the genesis described here, I see a sort of grand myth. And behind the appearance of Freud's positivity, there's this grand myth sustaining it.

What does that imply? Behind affirmation,<sup>12</sup> what is there? *Vereinigung*, which is Eros. And what is there behind negation (careful – intellectual negation will be something more)? The emergence of a fundamental asymmetrical symbol. Primordial affirmation is nothing more than affirming; but to deny is more than to wish to destroy.

The process which leads to that point, which has been translated by *rejet* [rejection], without Freud having used the term *Verwerfung*,<sup>13</sup> is still yet more forcefully accented, since he uses *Ausstossung*, which means expulsion.

<sup>11</sup> Words added. These will be indicated from now on by similar brackets.

<sup>12</sup> *Bejahung*. <sup>13</sup> [See p. 43 n8 above.]

Here, then, in some way one finds <the formal couple> of two primary forces: the force of attraction<sup>14</sup> and the force of repulsion, both, it appears, under the domination of the pleasure principle, which in this text cannot but strike one.<sup>15</sup>

So, here judgement has its primary history. And at this point Freud distinguishes two types:

In conformity with what everyone learns concerning the elements of philosophy, there is a judgement of attribution and a judgement of existence. 'The function of judgement . . . affirms or disaffirms the possession by a thing of a particular attribute, and it asserts or disputes that a presentation has an existence in reality.'

And Freud then shows what lies behind the judgement of attribution and behind the judgement of existence. It seems to me that in order to understand this paper, one should consider the negation [*négation*] of the attributive judgement and the negation [*négation*] of the judgement of existence as being on this side of negation [*négation*] when it appears in its symbolic function. At bottom, judgement doesn't yet exist in this moment of emergence, rather there is a primary myth of the outside and the inside, and that is what has to be understood.

You can sense the implication of this myth of the formation of the outside and the inside: that of alienation, which is founded in these two terms. What is translated in their formal opposition becomes, beyond, alienation and hostility between the two.

What makes these four or five pages so dense is that, as you see, they put everything in question, and in them one is led from concrete remarks, seemingly so slight and yet so profound in their generality, to something which sweeps away an entire philosophy, by which we should understand an entire structure of thought.

Behind the judgement of attribution, what is there? There is the 'I should like to take in (to myself) [(*m'*)*appropriier*], introject' or the 'I should like to eject.'

In the beginning, Freud seems to be saying, but in the beginning means nothing more than the myth 'once upon a time' . . . Within this history, once upon a time there was an ego (by which we here should understand a subject) for which nothing as yet was alien.

Distinguishing between the alien and itself is an operation, an expelling. Which renders comprehensible a proposition which, having emerged rather abruptly, seems for a moment to be contradictory:

'*Das Schlechte*, what is bad, *das dem Ich Fremde*, what is alien to the ego, *das Außenbefindliche*, what is external, *ist ihm zunächst identisch*, are, to begin with, identical.'

<sup>14</sup> *Einbeziehung*.

<sup>15</sup> The seminar in which J. L. gave a commentary on *Beyond the pleasure principle* took place in 1954–55.

Now, just before, Freud had said that one introjects and one ejects, that therefore there is an operation which is the operation of expulsion <without which> the operation of introjection <would have no meaning>. So that is the primordial operation upon which the judgement of attribution is founded.

But what lies at the origin of the judgement of existence is the relation between representation and perception. And here it is very difficult to miss the sense in which Freud deepens this relation. What is important is that, 'in the beginning', it is of no importance to know whether something exists or doesn't exist. The subject reproduces its presentation of things from the primitive perception it had of them. Now, when he says that this exists, the question is <not><sup>16</sup> one of knowing whether this presentation still preserves its state in reality but if it can or cannot be refound. Such is the relation which Freud stresses: he founds [the testing] of the presentation by reality in the possibility of its object being refound once again. This emphasis on the source of repetition shows that Freud is working in a more profound dimension than that of Jung, the latter's dimension being more properly that of memory.<sup>17</sup> At this point one must not lose the thread of his analysis. (But it is so difficult and detailed that I am afraid of losing you.)

What was at issue in the judgement of attribution was expelling or introjecting. In the judgement of existence, it is a question of attributing to the ego, or rather to the subject (it is more comprehensive), a presentation to which its object no longer corresponds, although an object had once corresponded to it, through a retracing of its steps. What is here in question is the genesis 'of the external and of the internal'.

Hence this offers us, Freud tells us, 'an insight into the origin' of judgement, 'from the interplay of the primary drive-impulses'. So here there is a sort of 'continuation, along lines of expediency, of the original process by which the ego took things into itself [*appropriation au moi*]<sup>18</sup> or expelled them from itself, according to the pleasure principle.'

'*Die Bejahung*, affirmation, Freud tells us, *als Ersatz der Vereinigung*, in so far as it is simply the equivalent of unification, *gehört dem Eros an*, belongs to Eros': this is what lies at the source of affirmation. For example, in the judgement of attribution, there's the fact of introjecting, of taking into ourselves [*nous appropriier*] instead of ejecting outside.

<sup>16</sup> Words added by the editor, in line with Freud's text: 'Der erste und nächste Zweck der Realitätsprüfung ist also nicht, ein dem Vorgestellten entsprechendes Objekt in der realen Wahrnehmung zu finden, sondern es wiederzufinden, sich zu überzeugen, daß es noch vorhanden ist.' [GW XIV 14; Stud III 375] ['The first and immediate aim, therefore, of reality-testing is, not to find an object in real perception which corresponds to the one presented, but to refind such an object, to convince oneself that it is still there.' (SE XIX 237–8)]

<sup>17</sup> Is the author here referring to Platonic reminiscence? (J. L.)

<sup>18</sup> [The term in the German text at this point is '*Einbeziehung*', earlier rendered as 'attraction', whereas the earlier use of '*appropriier*' was a rendering of '*einführen*'; SE renders both '*Einbeziehung*' and '*einführen*' by 'take into'.]

For negation [*négation*], he doesn't employ the word *Ersatz*, but the word *Nachfolge*. But the French translator translates it by the same word as *Ersatz*. The German text gives: affirmation is the *Ersatz* of *Vereinigung*, and negation [*négation*] the *Nachfolge* of expulsion, or more exactly of the instinct of destruction (*Destruktionstrieb*).<sup>19</sup>

As a result this becomes entirely mythical: two instincts which, as it were, are mixed together in this myth which bears the subject: one of unification, the other of destruction. A grand myth, as you see, and one which repeats others. But the little nuance, whereby affirmation in some way only comes to substitute for unification, whereas negation [*négation*] ensues well after expulsion, only this nuance appears to me capable of explaining the sentence which follows, in which it is simply a question of negativism and of the instinct of destruction. In fact this explains how there can be a pleasure in negation, a negativism which results straightforwardly from the suppression<sup>20</sup> of the libidinal components; that is to say, what has disappeared in this pleasure in negating (disappeared = repressed) are the libidinal components.

As a consequence, does the instinct of destruction also depend upon <the> pleasure <principle>? I think this is very important, crucial for technique.<sup>21</sup>

Except, Freud tells us, 'the performance of the function of judgement is only made possible by the creation of the symbol of negation'.<sup>22</sup>

Why doesn't Freud say: the functioning of judgement is rendered possible by affirmation? Because negation [*négation*] has a role to play not as a tendency to destruction, no more than within a form of judgement, but in so far as it is the fundamental attitude of symbolicity rendered explicit.

'The creation of the symbol of negation which has permitted an initial degree of independence in relation to repression and its consequences and, with it, from the compulsion (*Zwang*) of the pleasure principle.'<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> [For this sentence, SE XIX 239 gives: 'Affirmation – as a substitute for uniting – belongs to Eros; negation – the successor to expulsion – belongs to the instinct of destruction.']

<sup>20</sup> The German *Abzug*: deduction, deducting, withholding, docking, 'what is withheld in the pleasure in negating are the libidinal components'. Its possibility is referred to the *Triebentmischung* which is a sort of return to a pure state, a decanting of drives which is commonly – and mediocrally – translated by: '*désintrication des instincts*' [SE: 'defusion of instincts'].

<sup>21</sup> The admirable way in which M. Hyppolite's presentation at this point presses close to the difficulty appears to me all the more important given that I had not as yet produced the theses that I was to develop in the following year in my commentary on *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, on the death instinct, which is simultaneously both so elusive and so present in this text.

<sup>22</sup> Underlined by Freud. [There is no emphasis of this passage in the German text. Here, the passage is translated directly from the French, since it differs markedly from SE: '*Die Leistung der Urteilsfunktion wird aber erst dadurch ermöglicht, daß die Schöpfung des Verneinungssymbols dem Denken einen ersten Grad von Unabhängigkeit von der Folgen der Verdrängung und somit auch vom Zwang des Lustprinzips gestattet hat.*' (GW XIV 15; Stud III 377) 'But the performance of the function of judgement is not made possible until the creation of the symbol of negation has endowed thinking with a first measure of freedom from the consequences of repression and, with it, from the compulsion of the pleasure principle.' (SE XIX 239)]

<sup>23</sup> [See previous note.]



A sentence whose meaning would not have created any problem for me, if I hadn't started off by linking up the tendency to destruction with the pleasure principle.

Because here there is a difficulty. From then on, what does this asymmetry between affirmation and negation [*négation*] signify? It signifies that all of the repressed can once again be taken up and used again in a sort of suspension, and that, in some way, instead of being under the domination of the instincts of attraction and repulsion, a margin of thought can be generated, an appearance of being in the form of non-being, which is generated with negation, that is to say when the symbol of negation [*négation*] is linked up with the concrete attitude of negation.

~ Because that is how one should understand the text, if one admits its conclusion, which at first seemed so strange to me.

"This view of negation fits in very well with the fact that in analysis we never discover a "no" in the unconscious . . ."

But one certainly finds destruction there. So one must make a clearcut distinction between the instinct of destruction and the form of destruction, otherwise one won't understand what Freud meant. In negation, one should see a concrete attitude at the origin of the explicit symbol of negation [*négation*], which explicit symbol alone makes possible something like the use of the unconscious, all the while maintaining the repression.

Such appears to me to be the meaning of the end of the conclusion cited above: ' . . . and that recognition of the unconscious on the part of the ego is expressed in a negative formula'.

That is the summary: in analysis there is no 'no' to be found in the unconscious, but recognition of the unconscious on the part of the ego demonstrates that the ego is always failure to recognise [*méconnaissance*]; even in knowledge [*connaissance*], one always finds, on the part of the ego, in a negative formula, the hall-mark of the possibility of being in possession of the unconscious in refusing it all the while.

"There is no stronger evidence that we have been successful in our effort to uncover the unconscious than when the analysand reacts with the phrase: "I didn't think that", or (even): "I didn't (ever) think of that.""

So, in these four or five pages of Freud's – and I apologise if I myself have demonstrated some difficulty in finding in it what I believe to be its thread – there is, on the one hand, the analysis of that kind of concrete attitude, which emerges simply from observing negation; on the other hand, the possibility of seeing the intellectual dissociate itself <in action> from the affective; finally, and above all, a genesis of everything which occurs on the level of the primal, and in consequence the origin of judgement and of thought itself (in the form of thought as such, since thought is already there before, in the primal, but it does not figure as thought there) – grasped by means of negation.