

# Hegel and Freud: Between Aufhebung and Verneinung

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**Abstract:** The paper analyses two concepts, or conceptual operations, coming from very different traditions and contexts. One is Freud's concept of *Verneinung*, "Negation", developed in his short yet extraordinary piece bearing this title, and the other is the Hegelian notion of *Aufhebung*, "sublation", described by him as "one of the most important notions in philosophy". The methodological approach consists in proposing a parallel staging of the two conceptual operations, against the background of which come to light some of the singular, less obvious, yet absolutely crucial aspects of these two concepts, as well as of the broader theoretical settings within which they appear. The paper aims at demonstrating a perhaps surprising proximity between the Freudian method and what Hegel called "the speculative in act".

**Key words:** Hegel, Freud, *Verneinung*, *Aufhebung*, double negation, repression,

What I would like to do in this text is consider together two concepts (or two conceptual operations) coming from very different traditions and contexts. One is Freud's concept of *Verneinung* (developed in his short yet extraordinary piece bearing this title, and translated in English simply as "Negation"). The other is the Hegelian notion (operation) of *Aufhebung* – in all respects a crucial operation of dialectical movement; defined also as a "negation of negation", yet which does not bring us back to the thing from which we started, but instead produces something new and different. In the famous "speculative remark" in the *Science of Logic* Hegel refers to the notion of *Aufhebung* as "one of the most important notions in philosophy". Usually translated as "sublation" or "suppression", it remains notoriously untranslatable, since it unites several different, even opposite meanings: to negate/cancel/annihilate, to preserve, and to "lift" or elevate (to a higher level). ...

In his short spoken commentary of Freud's paper on *Verneinung*, which he delivered upon Lacan's invitation, Jean Hyppolite pointed out the extraordinary "philosophical" (speculative) dimension of Freud's paper. Hyppolite was also the one to hint, even if only in passing, at the way in which Freud uses the word *Aufhebung* in this text, relating it to how Hegel distinguishes between several kinds of negation in the "Lordship and Bondage" ("Master and slave") chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as well as more generally.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Hyppolite 2006.

I will take this hint seriously, and try to develop it further to see where this leads us – the wager being that the two concepts might shed some unexpected and productive light on one another. The idea is to propose a kind of *parallel staging* of the two concepts, against the background of which some of the singular, distinguishing marks of each of them could perhaps bring out some of the less obvious, yet potentially quite interesting traits of the other.

Freud's paper (from 1925) starts out from a series of very concrete and amusing examples of negation that one encounters "during the work of analysis". Here are two of them: "Now you'll think I mean to say something insulting, but really I've no such intention". And there is of course the most famous: "You ask who this person in the dream can be. It's *not* my mother."<sup>2</sup> It is crucial that the person denying something in this way unsolicitedly introduces, puts on the table, the denied content – what is at stake is not an answer to, say, the analyst's question; the analysand could simply not say what s/he says and denies. Which is why Freud concludes that this kind of negation is actually used in order for the analysand to introduce or bring forward, within its framework, a certain content. Furthermore, Freud suggests a kind of technique useful in analysis, as well as in other kinds of situations, and which consists of asking: "What would you consider the most unlikely imaginable in a given situation? What do you think was furthest from your mind at that time?" – If the person you are talking to lets herself fall into your trap and tells you what she considers to be the most unbelievable thing, that is what you have to believe.

It is clear, however, that we are not dealing simply with an inversion: if the other says no, this can only mean yes. What is at stake is that, considering the way it is used here, the negation is irrelevant for the content it accompanies: it does not deny this content, but transmits it, hands it over. In this sense the negation is both unessential and absolutely essential (because without it, this would never take place or "come out").

The blue-print of these examples, concisely formulated already by Hyppolite, is thus the following: it is "a mode of presenting what one is in the form of not being it"<sup>3</sup>. What comes across (or what we should hear) is something like this: "I am going to tell you what I am not; pay attention, this is precisely what I am."

In spite of what might look like to be the case, Freud does not precede here by simply dismissing the negation. He does not say: Once

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2 Freud 1984, p. 437.

3 Hyppolite 2006, p. 747.

it has handed over the content, we can forget about the negation, it is there only for the sake of the form, and it is only the content that matters. What he says is something else. Namely: the "'no' is the hall-mark of repression, a certificate of origin – like, let us say, 'made in Germany'"<sup>4</sup>.

The pivotal point of this statement – which is also the pivotal point of psychoanalysis, its crucial discovery – could be formulated as this: the repressed/unconscious content is not just like any other content (except that it is repressed), it doesn't have the same ontological status. In order to understand this we have to bear in mind the fact that the "repressed" is repressed even *before it (first) appears* (as something). This, for example, is what Lacan is aiming at in his seminar on *The four Fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis* with a series of intriguing claims, such as: "the unconscious is manifested to us as something that holds itself in suspense in the area ... of the *unborn*"; "the gap of the unconscious may be said to be pre-ontological" "the emergence of the unconscious ... does not lend itself to ontology"; "the unconscious ... is neither being, nor non-being".<sup>5</sup> Whenever we are dealing with an unconscious content, we are dealing with something which is *constitutively* unconscious, that is to say that it only registers in reality in the form of repression, as repression (and not as something that first *is*, and is then repressed). This is why if we simply focus on the content, we lose this specificity (we lose this dimension of not-fully-being as the very *mode of being* of this particular thing, which is precisely the mode of repression). Repression is not something that we can simply *lift* and get access in this way to the "unstained" unconscious content/representation. If we do this, we lose something quite essential. As a matter of fact, Freud describes this as a "bad", inoperative *Aufhebung*, which is already at work in the very mechanism of *Verneinung* itself: "Negation is a way of taking cognizance of what is repressed; indeed it is already a lifting (*Aufhebung*) of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance (*Annahme*) of what is repressed."<sup>6</sup> In other words, "taking cognizance of what is repressed" is not what analysis is really about.

One would be also wrong to assume, however, that the true (analytical) *Aufhebung* would amount to (for Freud) something like a conscious acceptance of the repressed content. For only a couple of lines further Freud adds: "In the course of analytic work we [often] succeed in conquering the negation as well, and in bringing about a full intellectual acceptance of the repressed; but the repressive process itself is not yet

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4 Freud 1984, p. 438.

5 Lacan 1987, pp. 23, 29,39.

6 Freud 1984, p. 438.

removed (*aufgehoben*) by this.”<sup>7</sup>

Freud came across this difference between the simple lifting of repression and a way of working through it (by working with it, to some extent at least) very early; this was already at stake in his rejection of hypnosis as a suitable technique by means of which we first – in the state of hypnosis – establish the repressed content, and then – when she is awake – make it known to the subject. Freud realised that this simply didn’t work.

Whatever the true Freudian *Aufhebung* (as, say, a successful outcome of analysis) may be, it is clear that it cannot be simply an operation performed *on* the repressed content, but something that actively involves the repression (repressive process) itself, drawing it into a kind of dialectical movement, using it against itself, so to say; the dialectical movement being in this case a movement that preserves and works with what is neither being nor not-being, with something that does not count (not even “for nothing”).<sup>8</sup>

Now, if we consider Hegel’s repeating insistence that *Aufhebung* means to both negate and preserve, is it not rather striking how the *Verneinung* itself seems at first to be an almost comical (“mechanical”) embodiment of this very definition? Defined as “a way of taking cognizance of what is repressed”, while preserving “what is essential to the repression”, *Verneinung* does indeed seem to function as a comedy of the *Aufhebung* (of the repression). Is this really what it is? Or does *Verneinung* rather correspond to what Hegel calls the “abstract negation”?

It would seem so at first. “Abstract negation” is defined in *The Science of Logic* as what a determinate Being *is not*. And we can see how this resonates with the Freudian “This is what I am not.” (For example: “I am not the person who wants to insult you.”) We can indeed say that, in both cases, what a Determinate Being *is*, is dependent on what it is *not* for its own determination. However, we can also immediately see that with *Verneinung* this means something slightly different from what it means in the case of Hegel’s abstract negation. Quickly put: what (I say)

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7 Ibid. This, again, would be a “bad” version of the Hegelian “negation of negation”, the way *not* to understand it...

8 If we reduce the Freudian notion of the unconscious to the difference between a content that is present to the conscious and a content that is “repressed from it”, if we reduce it to the opposition between being or not being *conscious* of something (or between consciously *accepting* or not accepting something), we lose it entirely. The repressive process is something different from the repressed content. (And, to be said in passing, this is also a crucial lesson to keep in mind in these politically heated times. We could say that whereas the “liberal left” has been for a long time preoccupied by “lifting the repression” and making us *accept* the repressed content (accept and tolerate the Other, the differences...), the repressive process remained absolutely intact. If anything, it has intensified.)

I’m not, determines me not only negatively (like in the abstract negation: I am the *other* of this), but also in its own right, directly. In a way, *I am* what I say I’m not. We are actually closer here to a “negation of negation”.

In this sense *Verneinung* is already an *Aufhebung* (albeit a “false” one), and not simply an abstract negation. We could also say: the unconscious is structured like a false *Aufhebung*. The other important thing, however, is that if *Verneinung* thus appears as a false *Aufhebung* of the repression, whereas analysis should bring out its proper *Aufhebung*, we should not forget that *Verneinung* is at the same time the very thing *from* which the analysis develops in a direction that will effectively do something to and with the repression. Or, in other words: the “true” *Aufhebung* necessarily starts out as a “false” one, it necessarily starts out as a comedy of itself. Freud’s practical and theoretical break-through was to take this comedy very seriously. And something similar could be perhaps said for Hegel: is not the *Phenomenology of Spirit* actually a *Comedy of Spirit*, taken with all philosophical seriousness?<sup>9</sup>

This ambiguity of *Verneinung* (the fact that it appears as a comedy of the *Aufhebung*, such that it already carries in itself a true *Aufhebung*) becomes even more evident if we put side by side the following conceptual elements of Freud and Hegel. In the case of *Verneinung* the very indifferent, universal symbol of negation, is the *carrier* of the “stain” of the singular, of the distinguishing mark similar to the label “made in Germany”. (It is because of the “not” that this or that particular content turns out not to be simply indifferent; at the same time, the negation, the “not” somehow bears the scent of the Thing the “not” of which it is.) What is *preserved* in it of that singular content (“mother”) is its *specific character* (“property”) – that of the *repressed*. In other words, what Freud gets out of this particular *Verneinung* is not: “oh, but in truth it was the mother” (as if this were something deeply significant in itself), but rather: “something appeared here, in this nexus, that is of the order of the repressed”. (“Mother” becomes interesting for analysis because she is marked by repression and not because “mother” is supposedly always significant in analysis. In other words, what Freud gets out of this episode is not this or that thing (“mother”), but a peculiar quality/property of it (“repressed”).

It is quite amazing how very similar to this is the configuration in which the first *Aufhebung* takes place in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, when the initial quandary of the sense-certainty is “sublated” on the grounds of “perception”. What is this quandary? Hegel famously

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9 No wonder, then, that a good many of the chapter titles in *Phenomenology of Spirit* read as perfect comedy titles: “Lord and Bondsman,” “The Unhappy Consciousness,” “Pleasure and Necessity,” “Dissemblance or Duplicity,” “The Beautiful Soul”...

starts with what usually seems to us most immediately certain, pointing to the impossibility of saying it. I see a tree and I say “This is a tree.” I look through the window and say “Now it is night.” Yet if I look in another direction (from the tree) or let some time pass, these statements will no longer be true. All that remains certain of the sense-certainty are words like “here”, “this”, “now”, which – in their very negativity – are the universal.

“Of course,” writes Hegel, “we do not *envisage* the universal This or Being in general, but we *utter* the universal; in other words, we do not strictly say what in this sense-certainty we *mean* to say. But language, as we see, is more truthful; in it, we ourselves directly refute what we *mean* to say (...) it is just not possible for us ever to say, or express in words, a sensuous being that we *mean*.”<sup>10</sup>

This is the first introduction of a fundamental discrepancy that will propel the dialectical process all through *Phenomenology*. It is the first “shape” of this divergence, which – as said above – is resolved through the passage from sense-certainty to perception. How? Here is the crucial quote that should remind us directly of Freud:

“This is, therefore, established as *not*This, or as something superseded (*aufgehoben*); and hence not as Nothing, but as a determinate Nothing, the Nothing of a content, namely of the This. Consequently, the sense-element is still present, but not in the way it was supposed to be in [the position of] immediate certainty: not as the singular item that is ‘meant’<sup>11</sup>, but as a universal, or as that which will be defined as *property*. Suppression (*Aufhebung*) exhibits its true twofold meaning which we have seen in the negative: it is at once a *negating* and a *preserving*.”<sup>12</sup>

Freud takes the *Verneinung* to be precisely such “a determinate Nothing” which can bring us, in analysis, *not* to the singular item that was “really” meant, but to a universal *property* of statements volunteered in this way, and this property is that of the repressed. The indifferent, universal symbol of negation *itself* has managed to bring forward, to produce some characteristic, of the dismissed/negated original content – yet a characteristic which was not simply there, discernible in this content at the outset.

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10 Hegel 1977, p.60.

11 As in Freud, this is not about whether the analysis really “meant” mother.

12 Hegel, p 68. Or, as Hegel put it in the “speculative remark”: “What is sublated is thereby not reduced to nothing. Nothing is *immediate*; what is sublated, on the other hand, is the result of *mediation*; it is a nonbeing but as a *result* which had its origin in a being. It still has, therefore, in itself the determinateness from which it originates.” (We are here borrowing Jean Luc Nancy’s translation from Nancy 2001, p. 25.)

What is preserved is thus something that *only came to light* (or, more precisely: that *only came to be* something, or part of something) *in the very process of its negation*. It is not that one of the properties of the “original” object is preserved; rather, it is that some essential property of the object first emerges (in reality) at this stage. We can therefore see that even if it starts out as a comedy of *Aufhebung* (or perhaps even *because* it starts as comedy), *Verneinung* – when looked at from the Freudian perspective – turns out to be much less superficial and more far-reaching than it seemed.

And this now allows us to raise the question of whether we could not also see the (Hegelian) *Aufhebung* as something essentially double: as a movement (a dialectical “operation”), but also as a *mode of being* of something that has no other being outside this movement (“operation”). In other words, and in this perspective, the question of *Aufhebung* would not only, or simply, be a question of the outcome (that is a question of what remains there after its operation), but also a question of something immanent to it: what is it exactly that this speculative, dialectical “operation” grasps, and gives some form of being to, with and *within* its own structure and movement? What is it that it keeps “preserving” (at every stage) – what is the status of this something?

Are we not dealing here precisely with something in being that is not fully being, something *unborn* that not so much waits to be born as it influences and shapes the being of what *is* born? Is it not because it involves this third element (which, by definition, “does not lend itself to ontology”, although it is inseparable from being) that, in a dialectical process, each “next” step brings about the truth of the previous one? This element is not the truth that is revealed in the next step, rather, it is the point of view (a singular perspective) from which a truth gets to be seen.

It is also not a kind of metonymical object that drives the dialectical movement ahead because it is the only point that cannot be *aufgehoben*; the movement of *Aufhebung* is not *after* this element/point, as if chasing it, rather, it is *generated* at/from this point (to which it also gives its form). It is generated at the point of the very gap in Spirit which, in Hegel, takes the form of a repeated, reoccurring *split in two* of the reality of the Spirit – and we’ll be returning to this. What is at stake is thus not “that which *remains*” (which is basically how Derrida and Nancy read this<sup>13</sup>), something that the spirit and its movement can never fully digest and liquefy (and which thus drives this movement further), but something that strictly speaking only comes to be in/with this movement – it comes to be (“is produced”) as a heteronymous element *of this* (and out of this)

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13 See for example Nancy 2001.

movement itself.

What comes light at this point is also the difference between (correct) knowledge and truth. On the one hand, there is knowledge which, albeit correct, has no implications or consequences (for analysis). This is the situation where we can “bring about a full intellectual acceptance of the repressed; but the repressive process itself is not yet removed (*aufgehoben*) by this.” And, on the other hand, there is knowledge as truth, knowledge that “makes place” for the very negativity that has produced it.

In order to hopefully illustrate this more efficiently, let us now introduce yet another one of Freud's short but brilliant pieces of writing, his paper on *fausse reconnaissance* (“wrong recollection/memory”). As we'll see, the phenomenon of *fausse reconnaissance* has a structure that is homologous to that of *Verneinung*, negation, although it takes the form of affirmation.

Let me quote the first paragraph of Freud's paper, which is also a very good example/outline of what we may call Freud's *dialectical* process in analysis:

“It not infrequently happens in the course of an analytic treatment that the patient, after reporting some fact that he has remembered, will go on to say: ‘*But I've told you that already*’ – while the analyst himself feels sure that this is the first time he has heard the story. If the patient is contradicted upon the point, he will often protest with energy that he is perfectly certain he is right, that he is ready to swear to it, and so on; while the analyst's own conviction that what he has heard is new to him will become correspondingly stronger. To try to decide this dispute by shouting the patient down or by outvying him in protestations would be a most unpsychological proceeding. It is familiar ground that a sense of conviction of the accuracy of one's memory has no objective value; and, since one of the two persons concerned must necessarily be in the wrong, it might just as well be the physician as the patient who has fallen a victim to a paramnesia. The analyst will admit as much to the patient, will break off the argument, and will postpone the settlement of the point to some later occasion.”<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, this reads almost like the beginning of the “Lordship and Bondage” (“Master and slave”) dialectics: truth can only come about through a postponement (of the decision about who is right and who is wrong), by way of putting things in motion, and thus allowing them to develop their own truth (which is not simply there at the outset). Neither of the two convictions should be “put to death” (defeated) if

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14 Freud 1955, p. 201.

we are to arrive to the truth of what is actually at stake. Moreover, the truth will come out from the *development of the “wrong”* conviction (the development of the slave's position in Hegel's case), whereas an insisting assertion of the “right” conviction can only end up as empty, useless, indifferent (albeit “correct”) knowledge. (As Hegel puts it: if the struggle ends in the killing of one or both parties involved, “the two leave each other free only indifferently, like things.”<sup>15</sup>)

But what interests us first and utmost here is the *logic* of the phenomenon of *fausse reconnaissance* (which includes things like *déjà vu*, *déjà éprouve*, *déjà entendu*, *déjà raconté*), for this logic is indeed strikingly similar to that involved in *Verneinung*. This is how we could put it to make the point as clear as possible: like in the case of *Verneinung*, the repression persists *not* simply *in spite of the acceptance* of the repressed, but rather *with its help*. What happens in the case of *fausse reconnaissance* is that a present, con-temporary “event” of the unconscious (a surprising, unexpected finding) takes place in the form of a memory of a *fait accompli* (of something that seems to be “found again”), that is to say in the form of something that is of no immediate concern (to us). Something that has just arisen is thus looked at as belonging to some other time (or temporality). We are looking straight at it (it is right there, in front of our noses), yet we see it as coming from far away, as strange and indifferent. The *fausse reconnaissance* thus paradoxically maintains the unfamiliar (strange, foreign, other, indifferent) character of what appeared by means of the very *feeling of recognition* and familiarity. (The peculiar form of affirmation accomplishes the same task here as negation does in the case of *Verneinung*). We could also say that it maintains it by means of cutting the thing from its possible articulation as presence (in the present time) in reality: for this articulation appears already the first time as its own memory. And Freud's point is, again, that what comes to us in this estranged, indifferent way, is usually something essential.

Yet, here again, we must not commit the mistake of projecting everything into the (traumatic) content, as if this content were a full being (fully constituted being) that the subject is defending, shielding herself against. Rather, we should take this *shield* itself as the very *mode of being* of the “unborn” (that is of this specific content), as its genuine manifestation. We are not dealing with something that is prevented, by some other agency, to articulate itself as presence and in present time; it is prevented from doing so *by its own* paradoxical ontological (non-)status. This is precisely the difference between the unconscious understood as the subject not being aware of something, and the

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15 Hegel 1977, p. 114.

unconscious in the stronger Freudian sense, which *actively creates* different formations of the unconscious. This is also why the unconscious can only appear as something that interrupts, discontinues the presence and the present time, and not simply as an alternative content.

Also, the unconscious is not something that is “always-already” repressed – as if repressed in some unattainable past, or in the mode of a “transcendental constitution”; the mode “always already” does not properly describe its ontological status: it is not that it can never be “present”, “contemporary”, “actually happening”, that it can never take place as being – rather, it takes place *all the time*, but it takes place precisely as a *discontinuity* (of the present, and of being). It appears as a complication, torsion of the (present) being as such.

What is thus crucial to emphasize in relation to this kind of *fausse reconnaissance* is, like in the case of *Verneinung*, the following: it is not simply a way of holding something back, keeping it cut off from the reality in spite of (or by the very way of) recognizing it; it is also a means by which what is repressed *belongs to* (is part of) this same reality (influencing its very structure).

The screens of false memory, or the “not” of *Verneinung* do not mediate between my conscious and the thing (“mother”); rather, they make something that starts out as a (mere) thought (of my mother) a *thing*: they im-mediate it, make it im-mediate. If things are always mediated by our thinking them (if they are thoughts), then here we witness another process, or the same process from another direction: that of a thought becoming a thing. And we have to take (and follow) it from there, instead of trying to conceive it (and ourselves with it) as “a mere thought” (or merely a wrong, mistaken memory). The mistaken memory IS the objective and immediate presence of this Thing, the latter doesn’t get to be any more “objectively present”.

The *Fausse reconnaissance* is not a way in which something (which would be too traumatic in its immediate presence) is mediated by the screen of false memory. What is at stake is rather that the false memory IS the immediate presence (it is the very externalisation, Hegelian *Entäu erung*) of the essence of the traumatic knowledge itself, of the traumatism as such.

This move or shift of perspective is of course profoundly Hegelian. If we look, for example, at the Hegelian dialectics of lord and bondsman, what would correspond in it to the Freudian move in his reading of the *Verneinung* and of the phenomenon of *fausse reconnaissance*? What corresponds to it is the following description by Hegel of what the life-and-death struggle presupposes: “its [self-consciousness] essential being is present to it in the form of an ‘other’, it is outside of itself and

must rid itself of its self-externality.”<sup>16</sup> This appearing of one’s essence in the form of an “external other” is the very form of *Verneinung*. It is not, as we may be tempted to think, the move to strike the other, to annihilate (kill) him that corresponds to the movement of (the Freudian) “negation”, but the very *setting* that this configuration implies, and presupposes: namely the self-conscious as split in two, and my essence appearing as independent being outside myself.

However – and this is really Hegel’s stroke of genius – the point is not simply that whereas it *appears* to be an exterior, independent being, it is *in truth* only a “projection” of one (and only) self-consciousness’ own interior essence (it is not that we have to “recognize” ourselves in this other). Hegel’s point is on the contrary that this exterior has its own reality, it exists as another being. (Similarly to this, Freud, in the case of someone saying “Now you’ll think I mean to say something insulting, but really I’ve no such intention”, does not put an end to the discussion by asserting: “Oh, but this is YOU, YOU want to insult me”. Or: “This memory of yours is wrong, you’ve never told me about this thing before.” He does not try to deny the reality of what appears here. Instead, he takes this reality as it appears and follows it from there.) Which is why – back to Hegel – the latter insists, all along and with some intensity, on the structure of *Verdopplung* and of *Doppelsinn*: a double movement of one thing as a movement of two things, which is itself redoubled.

“This movement of self-conscious in relation to another self-consciousness has in this way been represented as the action of *one* self-consciousness, but this action of the one has itself the double (*gedoppelte*) significance of being both its own action and the action of the other as well. For the other is equally independent and self-contained, and there is nothing in it of *which it is not itself the origin*.”<sup>17</sup>

Which is why “action by one side only would be useless because what is to happen can only be brought about by both.”<sup>18</sup>

This, I think, would also be a very good way to read Freud. The *Verneinung* (negation) induces two symmetrical realities (mother/not mother), both of which are real, and the fact that one is “wrong” makes it no less real (part of reality). And it is also crucial to emphasize that the unconscious is not simply one of these two realities (in the same way that “master” and “slave” cannot be seen as the conscious and the unconscious, or the “slave” as the unconscious (truth) of the master). The unconscious is not one of these two realities, it is *what makes them*

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<sup>16</sup> Hegel 1977, p. 114.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 112, my emphasis.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

two, and what links them (with its formations) in their very (logical and real) incompatibility. The subject of the unconscious is not the one who secretly thinks of his mother, but the subject of the mechanism of negation; or, if we take the simple configuration that Hegel also put at the very outset of the *Phenomenology*: I want to say something, but in fact I say something different. The unconscious is not simply the difference between what I want to say and what I actually say, but refers to the work/process taking place between the two, and which cannot be reduced to either of the two sides without the risk of losing something quite essential.

Psychoanalysis clearly proceeds by way of working with two realities or texts (“manifest” and “latent”). It takes the occurrences such as that of *Verneinung* seriously, and follows, even enforces the split they introduce in the narrative. It sees this split as a sign of conflict or contradiction that is not simply a contradiction between the two sides involved, but the contradiction that structures the very field in which their appear. This is why it is not enough to establish which side is right and which is wrong. Actually, the question who is right even turns out to be pretty much beyond the point. As it does in Hegel. What matters is that some knowledge comes to occupy a certain place (place of truth), and thus changes *the way in which* the repression belongs to (is part of) the reality of what is there.

This is precisely why Freudian proceedings fit perfectly what Hegel calls “the speculative in act”:

“The sublation of the form of the proposition must not happen only in *immediate* manner, through the mere content of the proposition. On the contrary, this opposite movement must find explicit expression; [...] This alone is the speculative *in act* [das *wirkliche* Spekulative], and only the expression of this movement is a speculative exposition [*Darstellung*].”<sup>19</sup>

If the mere lifting of the repression (inscription of the repressed content in the conscious reality) doesn’t change much, it is because it fails to locate and to name the point of repression *in* this very reality (which is the point of the unconscious). In other words, the crucial thing is never simply to reconstruct the other, repressed story, but to work in the direction of circumscribing the point *in the present reality* where the repression (of some aspect of this reality) is being actively sustained. It is only here that we arrive to something like truth.

Could this, in turn, not also be said for the Hegelian *Aufhebung*?

Whatever is preserved by *Aufhebung*, it is not preserved in the sense in which we take something and conserve it (as if putting it in a

box and then transmitting it to the next dialectical stage); it is preserved by being activated as the motor of dialectical movement. *Aufhebung* activates the very point that separates the two realities (like the points of *Verneinung* or of a wrong memory), puts this point to work. It relates something and its other in the same (new) Being. Not by encompassing them in a bigger whole containing both, but by a qualitative change/shift that “unites” them from the point of view produced by their very contradiction. By accomplishing this it changes the very way in which they are determined.

.....  
<sup>19</sup> Hegel 1977, p. 40.

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