

Forum on Language: Thinking frees itself - a reading of Freud's "Negation"

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Abstract Content (EN)

In 'Negation', Freud outlines the development of logical judgement and attempts to trace it back to instinctual impulses. Implicitly, this also addresses the constitution of reality, against which the truth of judgement must be measured. At a first stage, a reflex of rejection develops into the ability to assign attributes to things; at a later stage, the ability to 'reality testing' develops as to whether an ideational content can also be found in perception. Central to this is the 'negation symbol', which at the same time allows thinking to separate intellectual content from affect and, thereby, to set it free from the restrictions of repression. The text thus deals with the liberation of thought by means of language, which requires the recognition of renunciation and ultimately of one's own death. The lecture presents a commented in-depth reading of this difficult text and at the same time takes a prudent look at its most widely used English (Standard Edition) and French (Laplanche) translations.