

## **Mill, Grote, Freud**

The argument for freedom of opinion presented by Mill in *On Liberty* rests on the result of a long investigation of the nature of Socratic dialectic. Central to Mill's argument is the notion of criticism of opinion, a theme which he placed at the centre of the relations between Civil Society and the State. The work of investigating this notion had largely been done by Mill's friend George Grote in his *Plato and the Other Companions of Socrates*, and in his *History of Greece*.

Freud in 1879 translated the lengthy review of Grote's *Plato* that Mill had published in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1866. Particularities of the style of his translation reveal connections between the terminology used by Grote and Mill and some of the central concepts used by Freud in his setting up of psychoanalysis.

Three themes are carried over into Freud's work. The notion of defence based on "negative" dialectic; dialectical enquiry as the basis of the psychoanalytical setting; and a notion of knowledge transmitted in fixed forms from previous generations. The "cross-examination" of established opinion is applied to sexual phantasy by Freud, where Grote and Mill had located it in the struggle between liberty and authority.

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