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**THE NON-CHRISTIAN MODEL OF MAN
An Attempt at a Psychoanalytic Explanation**

1. Introduction

L. Nowak (1987) has recently reconstructed what he terms the Christian model of man and has at the same time shown some of its limitations suggesting an alternative, the non-Christian model of man. Although the latter has significant consequences for theories of social behavior and especially for the theory of revolution it nevertheless has a disadvantage: it is purely descriptive. The problem has not, to the best of our knowledge, been addressed: neither de la Sienra's (1989) critique of Nowak's model, nor Nowak's reply (1989), have dealt with it.

Presumably, there are many possible models which could be used in explaining the phenomena in question. We shall attempt to provide a Freudian explanation.

2. Freud's Basic Assumptions

In Freud's mature theory, three spheres of human mind can be distinguished: the super-ego, the ego and the id. The id, comprising basic drives and demanding their immediate gratification, works according to the uncompromising pleasure principle. Since the ego, being responsible for all conscious actions, has contact with reality, it is the medium through which the desires of the id can be fulfilled. Not all desires can be gratified immediately, however — some constraints are set by reality, others by our social reality internalized in the super-ego. Consequently, the ego seeks out a compromise — it works according to the reality principle.

We will also use the notion of anxiety. Freud describes it as the defensive force of the ego. When the ego finds itself in a situation of danger, whether internal or external, it develops anxiety. Produced as an effect of the ego's inability to cope with a situation¹ it may become very powerful: "... when [anxiety] is excessive it becomes in the highest degree inexpedient; it *paralyzes every action* [emphasis—MP], even that of flight" (Freud 1960, p. 402).

3. *Actions and Reactions*

Assuming the psychoanalytic approach we will attempt to analyze the attitudes and the behavior of two persons towards each other. We will make the following idealizing assumptions (which correspond to the ones adopted by Nowak). We limit ourselves to two persons only and abstract from their relations with the outside world. Every action by one of the persons is followed with a reaction by the other, and there exists a reaction to each action. To simplify the model, let us also assume that one person is acting and we will investigate the responses of the other person.² The acting person will be given the name "X" and the reacting person — "Y". Actions and reactions will be understood as any acts or expressions of feelings, etc., which can be recognized by the other person.

All human behaviors towards other people can be categorized into: a) negative (e.g. hostility, contempt), b) positive (e.g. friendliness, politeness). We need to assume further that no person can behave infinitely negatively or positively towards others. All actions described above are perceived by the ego and categorized into the following two groups: a) unpleasant, b) pleasurable. It may happen, of course, that some actions intended to be positive are categorized as unpleasant and, conversely, those intended as negative can be perceived as pleasurable. To make our model simpler, we will assume that every negative action will be categorized as unpleasant and every positive action will be categorized as pleasant. In other words, we will assume that X's actions (and his intentions) are transparent to Y. Accordingly, there will be two types of reactions:

- a) Actions categorized as unpleasant will stand in conflict with id's perpetual demand for pleasure and as such will create tension in the ego. Aggression will be a natural reaction to such a tension. "... [T]he conflict [in the ego] ... produces the inclination to aggression" (Freud 1961, p. 94).
- b) Actions categorized as pleasurable will satisfy the id. The ego will treat them as "useful" and will try to sustain situations in which they

occur. It seems reasonable to suppose that in the process of its development the ego discovers (by trial and error, or by accident) that the best way to sustain pleasant actions is to react in the same way.

4. *Interactions Between Two Persons*

Since we want to show that results similar to those obtained by Nowak can be derived from Freud's assumptions we need to investigate two general cases: reactions to positive and to negative actions.

4.1. *No superego developed*

To simplify, we will first assume that the superego is not developed. This incidentally corresponds to the development of Freud's own views, though here the historical remark is merely parenthetical. In the subsequent section (4.2), we will waive this assumption and see how the consideration of superego changes the picture.

4.1.1. *Reactions to negative actions*

As we have seen above, X's negative actions will cause aggression in the reacting person Y. Since we have assumed that the two persons are isolated from the surrounding world, Y's aggression will be directed "back" towards X.³

For the ego to operate most efficiently it has to balance the internal needs and the demands of the world. "Thus the ego, ... struggles to master its economic task of bringing about harmony among the forces and influences working in and upon it" (Freud 1974, p. 78). The tension between the external stimuli (here: X's action) and the internal needs will have to be removed by Y's response⁴ (here: aggression), of an appropriate degree. X's negative action towards Y will cause Y to experience an unpleasant feeling in a degree corresponding to that of the malevolence of the action (since we assume that Y is an ideal perceiver). Consequently, Y will develop an internal tension of the same degree. In order to reduce it, Y will react with aggression in the degree corresponding to that of X's initial action. Hence, the reactions of Y will exhibit a linear dependency on the actions of X.

Since no person can be infinitely bad, this dependency must come to its maximum at some point. If we assume that the acting person has a higher level of possible negative actions than the responding person, the linear dependency will hold until the maximum of Y's negative responses

is reached. From that moment on, all additional negative pressure cannot be counterbalanced: the ego recognizes the situation as dangerous and consequently produces the so-called realistic anxiety ("... anxiety ... awakened as a signal of ... [a] situation of danger" Freud 1974, p. 94). Since anxiety paralyzes the ability to respond with aggression (Freud 1960, p. 402) the level of negative responses decreases. Finally, when all of the aggression is suppressed by the increased level of anxiety the solution is found in the identification with the oppressor (this corresponds to captivity in Nowak's model, cf. Figure 1.)

The typical and deeply Freudian example of this kind of behavior is nothing else but the Oedipus conflict, where the ego develops castration anxiety and the conflict is solved through the identification with the father (cf., e.g., Freud 1974, pp. 85-95). From now on *Y* will respond with increasing "love" to increasing "hostility". It should be noticed that the dependency will remain linear.

4.1.2. *Reactions to positive actions*

When confronted with actions categorized as pleasurable the ego will try to sustain such a situation by giving a positive response. Thus *Y* will respond positively to *X*'s positive actions. Since the ego's main aim is to keep balance between the internal and the external forces, *Y* will not react more positively than *X* did. Such an "overreaction" would contradict the economic principle governing the ego. This again points to a linear dependency. When the maximum of *Y*'s possible positive responses is reached (we assume again that the maximum level of *Y*'s possible positive responses is significantly lower than the maximum level of *X*'s possible positive actions) the dependency becomes constant: *Y* is not able to respond more positively towards *X* no matter how good *X* is (cf. Figure 1).

Although we were able to capture the phenomenon of captivity (4.1.1) the other side of the non-Christian model remains without infurration. We shall now evoke the agency of the superego and attempt to account for the latter phenomenon.

4.2. *Superego developed*

4.2.1. *Reactions to negative actions*

In the case of negative actions, the admission of the supervising superego will not cause major changes in the general scheme described previously. It will nonetheless have the following corrective effects (cf. Figure 1):

a) Before the point of maximum, the level of *Y*'s negative responses to *X*'s negative actions will be decreased by "the urge towards union with others in the community" (Freud 1961, p. 98) as well as moral laws internalized in the superego. Thus the ego has to balance out one more force — not only does it have to satisfy the id but also the moralistic demands of the superego. Hence,

b) the point of maximum of *Y*'s negative responses will be reached later. Finally, after the point of maximum is reached:

c) the decrease in the level of *Y*'s negative responses to the increasing hostility of *X* will be slowed down by values internalized in the superego such as: self-respect, honor, pride, etc. By counteracting the paralyzing effect of the realistic anxiety aroused in the ego, the superego prevents the suppression of aggression.

4.2.2. *Reactions to positive actions*

In contrast, introducing the superego into the consideration of positive actions has a significant effect for the shape of the dependency in question. In general, again three effects of this internalized set of ethical norms can be distinguished (Figure 1):

a) before the point of maximum, the level of positive response will be higher than linear because of the altruistic attitude of the superego. Hence,

b) the level of maximum possible positive response will be reached earlier. Finally,

c) we observe large differences in *Y*'s behavior in comparison with the "no-superego" case beyond the point of maximum. With the increasing discrepancy between the level of *X*'s positive actions and the level of *Y*'s positive responses, *Y*'s superego starts demanding an equal goodness from *Y*'s ego ("Love thy neighbor as thyself").⁵ (And we will remember that after some point is reached *Y* cannot give more.) This places the ego in conflict with its ideal causing internal tension which in turn results in aggression. Under the assumption of *X*'s and *Y*'s isolation, *Y*'s aggression will be directed against *X* (see also note 3) although it will be partially suppressed by *Y*'s superego. This will cause a monotonous decrease of *Y*'s positive attitudes towards *X* until at some point the phase of infurration, to use Nowak's term, is reached. That is to say, *X*'s increasingly positive actions will meet *Y*'s increasingly negative reactions. This is so because the intensity of the mentioned conflict is so high that the generated aggression suppresses all positive actions.

5. Additional Corrections

It will be now easy to see that the model of human interactions presented above is relatively similar to the one presented by Nowak. There are many directions of developing it: depending on the choice of additional factors it can be concretized in various ways. We shall now attempt to introduce one such factor, the "civilizational" ego-experience, whose consideration will yield a model still more similar to the one presented by Nowak.

In its life-time the ego learns, first, that in most cases the attitudes of other people towards it are not exactly as they appear in their actions and, second, that reality and other people are rather more hostile than friendly (cf. Freud 1961, Marcuse 1962), hence the attitude of suspicion develops. This factor will modify the model as follows.

In case of negative actions before the point of Y 's maximal negative response is reached, ego-experience will increase the level of Y 's negative responses. Since Y 's ego will perceive the acting person X as more hostile than X in reality is (suspicion), when X acts with a certain degree of hostility Y will react with a higher degree of hostility. Beyond the point of maximum, the ego-experience will have the opposite effect decreasing the intensity of aggression. Since Y 's ego perceives X 's actions to be more hostile than they really are, Y develops a greater degree of anxiety which then paralyzes his own aggression to an even greater extent.

On the other hand, before the point of Y 's maximal positive response is reached, the ego-experience will have the effect of decreasing the degree of Y 's positive reactions. This is because, as before, Y 's ego will perceive X 's actions as less friendly than they really are. Beyond the maximum, the ego-experience will postpone the process of infuriation: the conflict between Y 's ego and its ideal will be diminished by the distorted perception of X 's actions thus decreasing the level of aggression.

After all these additions we can summarize the dependency between actions of X and responses of Y in the following graph.

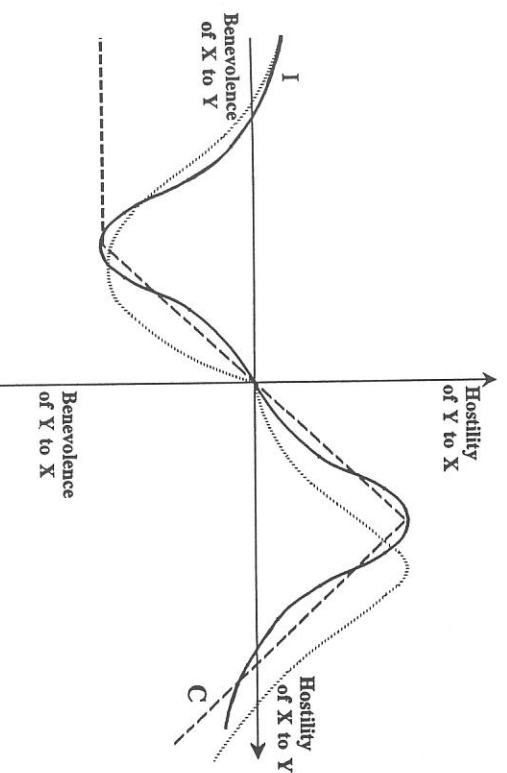


Figure 1. Responses of Y to X 's actions. Notation: broken line – no superego developed, no ego-experience; dotted line – superego developed, no ego-experience; continuous line – the final model: superego developed, ego-experience. C – area of captivity. I – the area of infuriation.

6. Conclusions

Relying on some of Freudian intuitions we have presented a model of interhuman relations, which yielded a model very similar to the one postulated by Nowak. The above considerations could thus serve as a possible explanation for the phenomena described by him.

There are, however, some reservations that should be mentioned. First, although the Freudian principles employed here seem to provide an explanation of the phenomena in question, they make use of Freud's concepts which not only lack precision but in addition change throughout his writings. Second, although the shape of the final model seems symmetrical it is explained in a non-symmetrical way. The explanation provided for the case of negative actions seems to be rather straightforward, whereas that of the positive actions involves a much more complicated mechanism. Third, one must remember that there is not a single way of reading Freud's writings. The interpretation of his views was still more difficult in the present undertaking since we developed the model using a set of very strong idealizing assumptions, and Freud's theory is not (explicitly) idealizational.⁶ What we have tried

to do is to point to passages from his writings which could support our interpretative decisions. Finally, as the presented model is idealizational in nature it neglects many factors and it would require a much more systematic work to develop it fully.

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NOTES

¹ "If the ego is obliged to admit its weakness, it breaks out in anxiety" (Freud 1974, p. 78).

² The proposed model is a statical one. Hence the time factor is excluded. We investigate ordered sequences of independent actions and responses to them.

³ As a digression it would be interesting to stress what, according to Freud, is the importance of our ability to direct aggression towards other things or people. "... [If] the aggressiveness... [is] not able to find satisfaction... it will perhaps retreat and increase the amount of self-destructiveness... [hence] it really seems as though it is necessary for us to destroy some other thing or person in order not to destroy ourselves..." (Freud 1974, p. 105).

⁴ "The dominating tendency of mental life... is the effort to reduce, to keep constant or remove internal tension due to stimuli" (Freud 1985, p. 329).

⁵ The superego consists not only of internalized ethical rules (the demand of being as good towards other persons as they are towards us is common to most cultures) but it "...is also the vehicle of the ego ideal by which the ego measures itself, which it emulates, and whose demand for ever greater perfection it strives to fulfil [emphasis - MP]" (Freud 1974, pp. 64-65). This seems to suggest that confronted with something more perfect the superego will demand the same level of perfection from the ego.

⁶ There are nonetheless a number of places where Freud uses idealizational technics (for example, Freud 1960). Analyzing his use of idealization, however, is a task in its own right.

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