

A philosophical ontogenetic standpoint on *superego* role in human mind formation

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ABSTRACT: One of the most significant contributions of psychoanalysis to understand the human being is the elaboration of a model about the mind from a topical and dynamic perspective. Freud explains the mind by the constitution of the preconscious, conscious, and subconscious. Later, by three dynamic components: the id, the ego and the superego. Such an organization of the psychic apparatus supposes not only individual elements, but social influences along the process of hominization. In this paper, we recover the findings of the renowned anthropologist Lewis Morgan, trying to link some of them to the psychoanalytic theory. Especially highlighting the importance of superego in Haidt's social intuitionism.

Keywords: evolutionism, intuitionism, psychoanalysis, Freud, Haidt, Morgan

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the foremost contributions of psychoanalysis to understanding the human psyche lies in the development of a comprehensive model that explores the mind in terms of its structural and dynamic aspects.

At the beginning, according to Freud's work [1] [2], by an inferential methodology about how the mind is built, three structural components are discovered: preconscious, conscious and subconscious. Later, the founder of psychoanalysis extends his theory by identifying three other components: the id, the ego, and the superego.[2]

Considering an epistemological view, although the different philosophical principles that assist one and other theory: rationalist idealism in Freud, as quoted by Febbruaio&Celener [3], and linear evolutionism observed in Morgan's findings, we refer to this renowned American anthropologist in order to recognize intersections not necessarily around the insights coming from the deepest mind and mental experience, but over the influence of family constitution as a crucial factor of social and individual organization and source of shared intuitions and instinct interdictions. This paper reflects about the *superego* elaboration and its link to family as evolution of social organization.

II. NOTIONS ON SUPEREGO FORMATION AND CULTURE

1.1 *Superego, ego and id* dynamics

Freud [1] [2] emphasizes a conflict that emerges from opposing external and internal forces. This state presents a kind of battlefield between primitive drives (instincts) versus social regulations. The genesis of all this activity arises from the body's pleasure forsake quest. In such case, we refer to the *id* (it). However, there is another part of the psychological makeup that Freud called *superego*, which Freud described as a comprehensive collection of prohibitions established by culture to regulate human interactions. For Freud that was the touchstone of human being problem, because as result, individuals should stop their primitive motions and desires by the fact that social organization and living in civilization oblige to. Individuals then shape their personality by navigating the arena of the *id* vs *superego* through the *ego*, this latter, is the third component of the tripartite mental structuring. If the subject cannot manage the demands of the *id* and the *superego* impositions, the ego will fall to psychic anguish and suffering. In simpler terms, individuals develop a neurotic status.

This constitution of self, intrinsically associated with mind formation, is directed, according to Freud, by two primary principles: reality principle and the pleasure principle. Thus, concerning human mind is recognizable its economic organization because these structures and their manifestations lead towards the pain minimization and satisfaction and pleasure maximization. Usually, the unconscious dynamics in this scenario

create a compromise relationship between these antagonist forces by repressing and being repressed one another. Therefore, the undesirable “underground” motivations deposited in the unconscious are kept away from conscious as a defensive mechanism to avoid psychic suffering. [1][2] [4]

But how does the psychic apparatus generate these dynamic contents? Freud suggests that culture pushes individualsto admit, adhere and conform to an established social order, which is essential for community existence. These impositions aim to regulate the instinctual life, which is crucial for civilization functioning. The evolution into civilized society required the assimilation of rules derived from the exterior, that is say, from the others. Two are the fundamental for society: incest and murder interdictions, both are vital to preserve the humanity. [5]

1.2 Family, interdictions and *Oedipus*

According to Morgan [6], the transformation of the family structure is observed in the progression from savagery to civilization due to the transition from group marriage to monogamic marriage institution, and the assumption of the prohibition of endogamic sexual relationships. Freud’s notion about the force of the incest and the eradication of the *father* in primitive human life shape symbolically the mind of civilized man, although the mentioned interdictions are associated to the intricacies of the human psyche and the origins of its pathologies when an unprocessed veto appears.

Continuing with Morgan, the notion of a hominized and civilized family couldn’t have been possible if human life had been relegated to the mere instinctual aspects. Thus, the establishment of the consanguineous family was an enormous milestone in our civilization just by prohibiting sexual relationships between parents and children. Morgan noted that the prohibition and punishment also applied to siblings in the *Punalua* family, as well as other forms of repudiations seen in monogamous families [6]. This remains a benchmark of civilization, and it might remain, despite the emergence of alternative forms of parenting in the 21st century.

Freudian theory places great meaning on the incest interdiction, particularly in relation to the formation of *Oedipus*. The prohibition surrounding the death of the father continues to influence the development of the psyche. Symbolically, this is portrayed through the first rebellion of the sons against the father and the symbolic restoration of the father’s authority (totem). Thus, the rejection on incest and proscribing the conscious idea of killing the father is the transition into a social civilized life.

However, this transition comes at the expense of suppressing desire through punitive actions of the law and civilization. Hence, the human mind carries social codes are conveyed through language, but their correlation is not linear or univocal. Instead, they blend with the complex web of cathexes, representations, symbolisms, and libidinal investitures that define human psychic existence. Because of the culture and its nomological references in the superego such as impairing sexuality and aggression, inexorably, human beings live in discomfort. [5]

1.3 Intuitionism, rules and *supergo*

The emergence of the superego can be seen as a necessary set of rational rules for social life, but its relationship to other factors could be nuanced by logic and no logic circumstances. The law (as impositions) is introduced variably, elaborated within the internal environment, and rocketed by the personality. Originally emerging from intuitive rather than rational means. The formation of ethical intuition begins in infancy through a complex process of perceptions and assimilations, mediated by moral symbolism, without relying forcibly on explicit rules. [7]

Referring to *Oedipus*, the father doesn’t openly punish or threaten his son by saying, “If you look at your mother, I will punish you because she belongs to me.” The perception of the law does not reflect this viewpoint, as humans have developed an intricate bond that is also rooted in intuitive capacities. This bond assumes the existence of internal inherent knowledge that comes before the process of formal verbal reasoning (which is facilitated by speech). This will lead to a life that is more adaptable or, in its negative form, result in neurosis.

Thus, as pointed out by Haidt in his theory of social intuitionism [7], intuitive judgments represent fundamental constructs within a broader framework of rapid, context-specific, and metaphorical actions linked to emotions. These judgments play a crucial role in the formulation of beliefs and the regulation of initial human relationships. From childhood, human beings are dynamic and very active agents. As part of their psychological development, they are motivated by their curiosity to initiate making up theories regarding family members, intersex differentiation, etc. [8]

In that line, depending on the way the children formulate his questions and answers they received or generate, they might be captured in psychological complexes, like an unresolved *Oedipus*. In consequence, children will find the answers naturally, because answers are in the first interactions of their family life. When

these interactions are dysfunctional, for instance, when a child is treated wrong by dad or mum, the minor could be trapped in the meaning of such interrelationships that cannot be symbolized. In other words, when this happens, children elaborate their theories wrongly and with dysfunctional affection over their inner and outer world, a condition that could persevere until adulthood. Most of the time, such concerns alter the reality by mistaken interpretations grounded in the unconscious. As a quick note, Nietzsche [9] referring to the tyranny of factual positivism, asserts that "...there are no facts, but interpretations...".

To continue with, the construction of the *superego*, in my understanding, opens a vast space for interpretations and subjectivity that allows the differentiation of individuals' mental life. Freud [10] believed in the relativity of the concrete experience of the fact, reversing his theory of seduction to focus on the subjectivity of the unconscious recreation as a promoter of psychic discomfort.

In this process, intuitions do not have to be exact representations or infallible solutions to reality. Rather, they are formations of the humanized mental life and shaped by the repression and censorship that are placed at the service of the psyche from the first years of life. They are not susceptible to the logic of the formal thought, because their time and service are before the building of formal structures which normally are under the powers of the conscious and the unconscious defense.

But if culture with its *superego* determinations leads to the chimera of human happiness, for Freud [11] it is hard to reach happiness itself, since human life is permanently threat by inherent dangers and weaknesses related to organism itself (the body) and the nature of the social interactions. After all, individuals have their unique way to picture the world, to live and even to get neurotic.

III. CONCLUSION

Evolution has bonded social life to mind representations. This narrow relationship starts by internalizing rules aimed to govern instinctual drives which operates from individuals' unconscious. Thus, when *superego* emerges not only as external impositions but as an internal constitution, individuals are able to organize their social lives in families from where perceptions and intuitions continue growing and shaping their interactions not necessarily in an explicit way but in non-speak insights about the main interdictions against the incest and the paternal murder. In other words, thanks to these regulations centered in the *superego*, mind leads to build civilization. However, this is a hard process because intuition and interpretation of the sense of this dynamic are susceptible to be altered by the type of relationship individuals have since they were born. For instance, if the children do not reach to elaborate the Oedipal complex, because of inappropriate parenting relations, it is possible they remain trapped in neurosis. Therefore, from intuitionism and evolutionism interplay it is possible to depict these singular aspects as a kind of harmonization between subjectivity and objectivity; conscious and unconscious to understand human nature.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to my loved ones for being endless source of support and motivation.

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