

FREUD AND BERNE: THEORETICAL MODELS OF PERSONALITY

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Summary

When studying TA within a tertiary institution, there is a demand for explanations of the theoretical models used in practice in more detail than is found in most TA texts. The following paper briefly examines the models of Freud and Berne and compares those models on the basis of hypothetical constructs versus intervening variables, structure of the personality and level of consciousness. Appreciation is expressed for the contribution of Associate professor Jay Bernbrauer, of Murdoch University in critically examining this paper.

Freud's Super-Ego, Ego, and Id

Freud (1940) states that the id contains "everything that is inherited, that is present at birth, that is fixed in the constitution—above all, therefore, the instincts, which originate in the somatic organization and which find their first mental expression in the id in forms unknown to us." He then says that the ego "has the task of self-preservation...it performs that task by becoming aware of the stimuli from without, by storing up the experiences of them (in the memory), by avoiding excessive stimuli (through flight), by dealing with moderate stimuli (through adaption), and finally, by learning to bring about appropriate modifications in the external world to its own advantage (through activity)...in relation to the id, it performs that task by gaining control over the demands of the instincts." Finally, Freud defines the super-ego as, "not merely the personalities of the parents themselves but also the racial, and family traditions handed on through them...an individual's super-ego in in the course of his development takes over contributions from later successors and substitutes of his parents."

Berne's Parent, Adult and Child

Berne (1961) says that an individual's personality is represented by three different ego states. Each ego state denotes a state of mind that has related patterns of behaviour (both verbal and nonverbal behaviour). In his descriptions of the ego states, he defines the Parent ego state as being "a set of feelings, attitudes and behaviour patterns which resemble those of a parental figure" (p. 75). It is basically a recording of the feelings, attitudes and behaviour that the child perceived his parental figures as exhibiting. According to Berne (1964) the parent can be exhibited directly or indirectly.

When the Parent is directly active, "the person responds as his own father (or mother) actually responded ('Do as I Do')" (p. 26). When the Parent has an indirect influence, "he responds the way they (his parents) wanted him to respond ('Don't do as I do, do as I say')" (p. 26). Berne (1961) states that the Adult "is characterized by an autonomous set of feelings, attitudes and behaviour patterns which are adapted to the current reality" (p. 76). He goes on to say that it is a partially self-programming probability computer which deals with the external environment. Berne (1964) says that the Adult is necessary for survival because it "processes data and computes the probabilities that are essential for dealing, effectively with the outside world" (p. 27).

Finally Berne (1964) states that, "In the Child reside intuition, creativity and spontaneous drive and enjoyment" (p. 27). In this ego state the behaviour patterns, attitudes and feelings are relics of the person's own childhood. These can either be the ones that come naturally to him or they can be a recording of his early feelings and how he reacted to them.

Intervening Variables of Hypothetical Constructs

Do Freud and Berne's theories employ intervening variables or hypothetical constructs? In determining this, the Mac Corquodale and Meehl (1948) definitions of intervening variables and hypothetical constructs are used. According to them, an intervening variable is a quantity that is obtained by the manipulation of the values of empirical variables. For example, habit strength is an I.V. because it can be obtained by solving the function of four variables—number of reinforcements, delay in reinforcement, amount of reinforcement and the synchronism between the stimuli and response. The crucial point is that habit strength is explained only by observable entities or processes; i.e. the number and delay of reinforcements are directly observable. Alternatively, hypothetical constructs designate theoretical concepts which do not meet the above stated requirements for I.V. Concepts that fall into this group may be self-actualization and self-esteem.

Even though Freud (1940) defines the characteristics of the super-ego, ego and id in such a way that they could be directly observed, Rapaport (1959) says that they are not meant to be understood that way. For example, he says that

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purely ego behaviour can not be observed as such, because all the three parts of the personality are involved in each behaviour. Therefore the super-ego, ego and id are not directly observable as discrete entities, thus they must be considered as hypothetical constructs.

However, McCormick (1977) says that Berne meant the ego states to be understood as discrete entities that could be immediately observable as behaviour. From the definition of ego states given above it could be confidently argued that they are in fact discrete observable entities.

The question of whether the ego states or the super-ego, ego and id were obtained by the manipulation of the values of empirical variables is answerable by looking at what data was used to develop the concepts. For example, both of the concepts were partially based on observations in the clinical setting and therefore, both Freud and Berne were not dealing with empirical variables because their data is dependent on the therapist's perception.

In summary, both the personality concepts would be considered hypothetical constructs according to the definition cited earlier. However, if a continuum could be thought to exist between the perfect intervening variable and the perfect hypothetical construct, then Freud's model would be closer to the hypothetical construct end.

Structure of the Personality

It is commonly misconceived that Berne's ego states are directly comparable with the super-ego, ego and id; in that the super-ego resembles the Parent, the ego resembles the Adult and the id resembles the Child. However, this is only true in a very superficial sense, as Berne says that each ego state has its own super-ego, ego and id. James and Jongeward (1971) illustrate this definition well, using the Child ego state. For example, firstly there is the id of the Child which is called the Natural Child; this is the untrained, impulsive, self-centred, pleasure loving part of the Child. Secondly there is the ego of the Child which is called the Little Professor and this part of the Child is creative, intuitive and figures out how to manipulate Mother. Finally, there is the super-ego of the Child which is called the Adapted Child and this part is a modification of the Natural Child's inclinations, i.e. it conforms to things like table manners, dress etc. Some followers of Berne such as Schiff et al. (1975) go on to what is called "third order analysis" which would look at the id of the id of the Child.

In summary, comparing the James and Jongeward (1971) definition of the Child to Freud's definition of the id, it could be argued that the

two definitions are unlike because the ego states have a far more comprehensive definition. This point is illustrated by McCormick (1977) who states "Berne did not mean to discard Freudian theory, but to enlarge it".

Level of Consciousness

The final comparison of these two models concern the level of consciousness that the different parts of the personality reside in. In relation to Freud's model, both Freud (1940) and Jones (1940) say that most of the id and super-ego reside in the preconscious and unconscious regions. The ego and small parts of the super-ego and id lie in the conscious area. McCormick (1977) states Berne's position by saying that at any point in a person's waking life, that person can decide by introspection which ego state he is in. Therefore, it must be concluded that all three ego states remain in the conscious and pre-conscious areas, assuming of course that the individual has sufficient information concerning ego states.

To conclude, from the comparisons made, it was found that:

- (1) Both models are hypothetical constructs with Freud's model tending to be more hypothetical.
- (2) The personality structure of the two models have considerable differences, however. Berne's model can be considered an enlargement of Freud's model.
- (3) The ego states reside more in the consciousness than do the super-ego, ego and the id.

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