

PRINCIPLES OF TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

By Eric Berne, M.D. 19

Carmel, California 15

Transactional analysis is part of a comprehensive system of individual and social psychiatry. It is designed to make maximum therapeutic use of the actual occurrences in therapy groups, which consist of the transactions between patients and the transactions between patients and the therapist. At present it has been systematically studied and tested by about fifty therapists in Northern California, and about a hundred others are familiar with its principles. It is being taught ~~at the Psychiatric Clinic~~ to group therapists at ~~the~~ Mount Zion Hospital in San Francisco, at the San Francisco Group Therapy and Group Dynamics Seminar, and at the Monterey Peninsula Clinical Conference in Psychiatry. It has been tested on neurotics, psychotics, alcoholics, mental defectives, ~~and~~ ~~prisoners~~ prisoners, ~~and~~ married couples, and mothers of disturbed children.

In practice it is carried through in ^{an} ^{sequence} ~~in~~ ~~orderly~~ ~~sequence~~ comprising the following phases: structural analysis, ^{simple} transactional analysis, game analysis, script analysis, and when indicated, relationship analysis. The first three phases have been described in three previous publications (Berne, 1957, 1958, 1959). Only the simplest outline can be given in a brief communication such as this one.

The system is based on the observation that psychic functioning and ~~human behavior~~ social behavior are related to states of mind which may be called ego states. ~~It can be further observed that there are three types of ego~~ An ego state may be described phenomenologically as a coherent system of feelings, and operationally as a set of coherent behavior patterns; or pragmatically, as a system of feelings

2

which motivates a related set of behavior patterns. It can be further observed that there are three types of ego states, each derived from a psychic organ: ~~the~~ extero-^{anatomy and}psychic, neopsychic, and archaeopsychic. The physiology of these organs is a neurological problem. Their function is manifested by the experiments of Penfield ~~in stimulating the cerebral cortex~~ and his associates (1954) in ~~stimulating the~~ electrical stimulation of the exposed cerebral cortex. In particular, the phenomena which occurred on stimulation of certain areas of the temporal lobes were the revival ~~of~~ not of isolated memories, but of complete ego states of former epochs. The psychological ^{characteristics} ~~aspects~~ of ego states were studied by Federn (1952) and his pupil E. Weiss (1950).

Colloquially, extero-^{replicas of the}psychic ego states are called collectively the ~~Parent~~ Parent. These are ~~manifested by bodily attitudes~~ ^{behavior} physical and emotional attitudes and social ~~transactions~~ ^{behavior} which are exact ~~replicas~~ functional replicas of parental figures. ~~Neopsychic~~ Neopsychic ego states are ~~called~~ called collectively the Adult. These are manifested by objective data processing and an alertness to the outside world of reality, including the psychological reality of other people. Archaeopsychic ego states are collectively called the Child. These are revivals of fixated ego states from earliest years. ^{Thus the} ~~structure~~ personality structure of any individual can be represented by a ~~structural~~ tripartite structural diagram as in Figure 4. It should be noted that Parent, Adult, and Child are ~~not~~ not concepts, like Superego, Ego, and Id, but phenomenological and social realities. ~~They are~~ Each is a complete ego state, including elements of Superego, Ego, and Id in its own structure. For example, Freud (1923) describes the id as ~~a~~ "a chaos, a cauldron of seething excitement..it has no organization and no unified will." The Child,

on the other hand, is an ~~autonomous~~ organized entity with its own systematic world view and its own unified will. Superego, Ego, and Id~~a~~ are constructs, while Parent, Adult, and Child represent real people whose names and addresses are on civil record.

The classical story which illustrates the relationship between the Adult and the Child concerns an eight year old boy who was vacationing at a ranch in his cowboy suit. He helped the hired man unsaddle a horse, and when they were finished, the hired man said: "Thanks, cowpoke!" To which his assistant answered: "I'm not really a cowboy, I'm just a little boy." The patient who told this story remarked: "That's just the way I feel. I'm not really a lawyer, I'm just a little boy." On the couch he was in truth a little boy, but in the court-room he was an effective, case-winning adult.

A well-educated group soon noticed that Matthew, a new member, exhibited three ^{characteristic} ego states ~~in~~ at the meetings. When he was discussing his wife, he spoke in loud, deep, dogmatic tones, leaning back in his chair with a stern gaze and counting off the accusations against her on his ^{up}raised fingers. At other times he talked with another patient about carpentry problems in a matter of fact tone, leaning forward in a companionable way. On still other occasions, he taunted the other group members with a scornful smile about their apparent loyalty to the therapist, his head slightly bowed and his back ostentatiously turned toward the leader. The other patients correctly diagnosed these three ego states as Parent, Adult, and Child respectively, and began to look for appropriate clues concerning Matthew's actual parents and childhood experiences. Soon ~~Matthew~~ Matthew was able to accept the diagram shown in Figure 4 as a useful representation of his personality structure.

This structural analysis was validated when the therapist had occasion to interview Matthew's paranoid father. The old man spoke in loud, deep dogmatic tones, leaning back in his chair with a stern gaze and counting off on his upraised fingers his accusations against the people around him. Thus Matthew's Parent exactly reproduced his father's fixated paranoid ego state. There is not time to explain the therapeutic value of making Matthew aware of these three aspects of his personality.

After patients (or therapists) become somewhat adept at diagnosing between extero psychic, neopsychic, and archaic psychic ego states, they may proceed to ^{simple} transactional analysis. The problem here is to distinguish ~~simplex~~ direct transactions from complex transactions. The latter are of two kinds: crossed, ~~transactions~~ and ulterior, ~~transactions~~.

Two types of ^{direct} ~~simple~~ transactions are illustrated by the following dialogues.

(1) "This wall isn't perpendicular."

"Okay, let's find out what's wrong."

As illustrated in Figure 1, both the transactional stimulus and the transactional response ^{in this example are adult to adult,} ~~are~~ and oriented toward the objective world of reality. The vectors are complementary, and ~~there~~ there is no crossing.

(2) "Never be content with poor workmanship, son. It's immoral."

~~Obey, son.~~ "Yes, sir."

As illustrated in Figure 2, the transactional stimulus here is Parent to Child (in terms of ego states and not of actual relationship), while the transactional response is Child to Parent. Again, the vectors are ~~simple~~ complementary, ~~and~~ ~~signifying~~

signifying a well-structured relationship,

~~the~~ The following ^{dialogue} illustrates the most common form of crossed transaction.

(3) "The plumb bob says this wall isn't perpendicular. Let's find out what's wrong with it."

~~"You're always criticising me. I'm quitting."~~

As shown in Figure ~~2~~ 3, the transactional stimulus here is ~~derived from object~~ Adult to Adult, concerned with ~~the~~ the objective reality of the plumb bob, while the transactional response is Child to Parent, showing an archaic disregard of the reality problem with a reaction of child-like sulkiness, so that the vectors are crossed. This particular type of crossed transaction, in which the stimulus is Adult to Adult and the response is Child to Parent, is probably the most frequent cause of misunderstandings in marriage and work situations, as well as in social life. Clinically, it is typified by the classical transference reaction, which is a special case of the crossed transaction. In fact this particular species of crossed transaction may be said to be the chief problem of psychoanalytic technique. Since psychoanalysis ^{concentrates on} ~~is concerned with only one type of crossed transaction, while transactional analysis recognizes several~~ aims specifically at eliciting this type of crossed transaction, while transactional analysis deals with ~~several~~ all possible types, it may be seen that transactional analysis is more general than psychoanalysis. Hence attempts to fit the former into the latter will only give rise to skepticism, ~~and~~ difficulties, and unfair criticism on both sides, just as will any attempt to fit the ^e general into the particular. On the other ~~hand~~ hand, psychoanalysis

6

smoothly and fits quite snugly into the framework of transactional analysis, to the mutual satisfaction ~~(to)~~ both parties.

It is evident that crossed transactions ~~are~~ of any type are a manifestation of poorly structured relationships. Thus both the inverse ~~and~~ and the converse of example (3) will cause difficulties. as in example (4), The inverse typifies the counter-transference situation if it is the ~~the~~ patient who ~~is~~ functions as Adult.

(4) "This wall isn't perpendicular. Let's find out what's wrong with it."

"There's no excuse for your sloppy workmanship. It's immoral!"

Here the stimulus is Adult to Adult, and the response is Parent to Child, as in Figure 4.

While this inverse is depressing, the converse is exasperating.

(5) "Nothing goes right on this job. I'd like to tear the wall down and throw the plumb bob in the river. I'm going to leave it the way it is. Nobody cares about good workmanship ~~anyway~~ nowadays anyway!"
"The plumb bob doesn't lie."

Here the stimulus is Child to Parent, and the complementary response ~~is~~ would be Parental encouragement. The ~~objective~~ Adult response is only going to cause difficulties because ~~of the crossing, as illustrated in Figure 5, it sounds~~ in this situation and it sounds ~~rather~~ supercilious rather than objective ~~and~~ makes a crossed transaction, as shown in Figure 5.

Ulterior transactions are those which take place at two levels simultaneously. ~~at the superficial~~ they usually appear to be ~~the~~ social level ~~is~~ Adult to Adult, while ~~at the~~ deeper psychological level they involve Parent or Child.

(6) "Come and see how perpendicular that wall is."

~~to build that. It's really~~
"My, you're a clever man ~~that~~ perpendicular, isn't it?"

"Come and see the side away from the house. That's perpendicular too."

"This reminds me of how the boys used to show us the barn when I was a little girl."

"We used to do that too."

The analysis of this ulterior transaction is shown in Figure 6.

(7) Hyacinth: The next example is from the proceedings of a therapy group and involves several people.

Camellia: "Why doesn't he ~~build~~ take a course in building?"

Hyacinth: "Yes, but he doesn't have time."

Rosita: "Why don't you buy him a plumb bob?"

Hyacinth: "Yes, but if I did he wouldn't use it."

Heather: "Why don't you have your building done by a builder?"

Hyacinth: "Yes, but that would cost too much."

Iris: "Why don't you just accept what he does the way it is?"

Hyacinth: "Yes, but the wall might fall down."

Therapist: ^{What} ~~What~~ do you ^{all} think of this?"

Rosita: "There we go, playing 'Why don't you...Yes, but' again. You'd think we'd know better by this time."

Here Hyacinth presents what is ostensibly an Adult problem, ~~and~~ the others respond with what are ostensibly Adult suggestions, and Hyacinth counters with what are ostensibly Adult objections. Now let us see what happens next.

Therapist: "Did anyone suggest anything you hadn't thought of yourself?"

Hyacinth: "No, they didn't. As a matter of fact. I've actually tried everything they suggested. My husband did take a course and I did buy him a plumb bob."

Therapist: ^{"It's interesting that Hyacinth said"} ~~"Well if he did take a course why did you say~~
he didn't have time to take ^{a course} ~~one~~."

Hyacinth: ^{Well} ~~Well~~, while we were talking I didn't realize what we were doing, but now I see I was playing 'Why don't you...Yes, but'
~~so I guess~~

8

again, so I guess ~~that~~ I'm still trying to prove that no Parent can tell me anything."

Ulterior transactions ~~usually constitute~~ are usually parts of a game, as indicated by both Rosita and Hyacinth, and ~~the~~ study of such transactions is part of game analysis. In the writer's experience, "Why don't you... Yes, but" is the commonest of all the games which can be observed in groups, whether they are social groups, ~~social~~ ^{organization} meetings, or therapy groups. This is a game which can be played by any number. One player, who is "it," ~~presents a problem. The others~~ makes the first move by presenting ^a ~~problem~~ /problem. The others respond by ^{offering} ~~presenting~~ solutions, each beginning with "Why don't you..." To each of ~~which~~ ^{these} the one who is "it" ~~objects~~ presents an objection beginning with "Yes, but..." A good player can stand off the rest of the group for a long ~~period~~ ^{it} time, until they all give up, whereupon "It" wins.

The ^{structure} ~~analysis~~ of Hyacinth's game is represented in Figure 7, which was drawn and analysed for the benefit of the new members of the group. In the guise of an Adult seeking information, Hyacinth inveigles the other members into responding nd like sage parents advising a helpless child. Although a transcript of this game ~~always~~ sounds Adult, the subtle change in ego state whereby the one who is "it" becomes a helpless Child, inadequate to deal with the problem, while the others become sophisticated, benevolent elders, is easily detected by an experienced observer. The snare is shown in Hyacinth's case by the fact that not only had she herself ^{already} ~~thought~~ of everything that was suggested, but that she knew in advance that no one would be likely to suggest anything she hadn't thought of. Furthermore, she maintained the impracticality even of suggestions which were practical enough to have already been carried out.

~~This guide~~

9

which is the essential feature of the game,
This guile on the part of the Child, however, is unconscious while the game is proceeding, and may remain unconscious forever unless it is brought into awareness by game analysis. Similarly, the other players are not aware that they have been conned unless the game is analysed. The game can proceed indefinitely because there are no crossed transactions. At the superficial level, it is ^{apparently} Adult to Adult both ways, and at the deeper psychological level it is also complementary, Parent to Child stimulus eliciting Child to Parent response at each move. It will have been noted that what broke it up in this case was Rosita's maintenance of an Adult ego state. She refused to be conned; ignoring ~~Rosita's~~ Hyacinth's plea to her Parent, she ~~responded~~ ^{instead} gave an Adult response to Hyacinth's Child. As shown ^{wh} in Figure 8, ^{which is the same as Figure 6,} this made a crossed transaction. That broke up the game and afterward matters had to take a different course.

It should now be clear that in this game, the Child has some other motive than ~~obtaining information~~ the ostensible one of obtaining information. This ulterior motive, as Hyacinth said, is to confound the Parents one after the other. The Child who is reassured by playing this game is one who is afraid of her own suggestibility. These are among the patients who sooner or later ask the therapist why he does not use hypnosis or "truth serum." The validity of the ~~game~~ ^{of this game} analysis can be tested by this prediction, namely, that patients who play "Why don't you...Yes, but" will sooner or later ask for ^{some form of hypnotic} ~~treatment~~ treatment.

Game analysis is directly related to the attainment of social control, whose essential feature is option. After a game has been analysed, the players are in a much better position to keep their Adults in control and play or not play that particular game as they

see fit, so that they are no longer compelled by ~~the~~ needs of the ^{Child} ~~Parent~~ or the ^{Parent} ~~Child~~ to ~~play~~ start it or to go along with it. Thus Rosita, who had attained partial social control, soon pulled herself up short and realized what was happening. This option can be profitably applied in more intimate relationships. In the therapy group, it enables the sophisticated members to control which new patients will continue in therapy and which ones will withdraw.

Since the frustration of a game leads to a ^{more} ~~more~~ or less serious state which is called in transactional analysis "despair," patients will continue in the group if they can play their games, ^{tend to} and withdraw if they cannot. In the latter case, it is the therapist's problem, if the other patients will let him, to ^{help the new} ~~strengthen the~~ catharsis of the Adult so that the patient ~~can~~ tolerate the frustration until the ^{aborted} game can be analysed. In this particular group, when a new patient started a game of "Why don't you... Yes, but" the others would decide ~~whether~~ whether they wanted the newcomer to stay or not. If they did not, they would break the game up abruptly, ~~and they~~ ~~and~~ and unless the therapist took appropriate measures, the ~~new~~ new patient would withdraw from the group. If they wanted her to stay, they would play along with her for a few weeks, quite aware of what they were doing, and when they felt she was able to tolerate the anxiety, they would eventually demonstrate to her what was happening.

Other common games are "How am I Doing?" "Uproar," "Alcoholic," "P.T.A.," "Ain't ^t it Awful?" and "Schlemiel." "Schlemiel" offers a convincing, but dangerous, opportunity to see what happens if a game is broken up. In this game, the one who is "it" breaks things, spills things, and makes messes of various kinds, and each time says: "I'm sorry!" This leaves the inexperienced person

11
in a helpless position. If a sophisticated individual says: "You may break things and spill things all you wish, but please don't say 'I'm sorry!'" the game is broken up and the underlying hostility of the Schlemiel is likely to come strongly to the fore. In fact breaking up this game is a good way to make an enemy. ^{Perhaps} ~~Imagine~~ at this point many of you are thinking of Stephen Potter, but the games described here are more serious; and some of them, like "Alcoholic," with all its complex rules published by various rescue organizations, are played for keeps. "Alcoholic" is complicated because in its full form it requires four players: a persecutor, a rescuer, a dummy, and the one who is "it." ~~It will be noted that Alcoh~~ The fact that people who play a certain ~~game~~ game can potentially play any of the roles in that game explains ~~why~~ the success of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The organization cures individuals of drinking, but does not cure them of playing the game of "Alcoholic." What ^{happens is that the member switches} ~~they do switch~~ to the role of rescuer in this particular game, instead of playing the one who is "it." It is known that if there arises a scarcity of individuals to rescue, those who have been "cured" are likely to ~~relapse~~ relapse, which in the language of game analysis means that they switch back to their original roles in the ^{of "it"} ~~game~~ ^{Alcoholic game!}

^{From the psychodynamic point of view, there}
Games may be classified in various ways. ~~There~~ are oral games like ~~similarity~~ "Obesity" and "Alcoholic," anal games like "Colonic Irrigation," and genital games like "Frigid Woman." By number, there are two handed games like "Frigid Woman," three handed games like "Let's go Out in the Barn to Get away from Mother," ~~and~~ four-handed games like "Alcoholic," family games like "Uproar," and many-handed games like "Why don't you...Yes, but." And just as there are games played with dice and games played with cards, so there are games played with time and games played with money. And so on.

12

Games are usually segments of larger, more complex sets of transactions called scripts. A script is an attempt to repeat in copy page (10. ~~the~~ (between marks 'x') to ~~yellow - red -~~ play their parts satisfactorily. There is not time here to go into the technique of script analysis.

Relationship analysis is a technique which is most often indicated in pre-marital or marital situations. It will be noted from Figure 9 that there are nine possible vectors in any relationship. In ~~a particular~~ ^{a particular} relationship some of these are inactive and some are active, and the active ones may have varying degrees of cogency. Active vectors may also be either conjunctive or disjunctive. ~~By vector analysis~~ Analysis of these vectors gives a rather clear picture of the dynamic potentialities of any relationship between two people, and implements both prediction and postdiction with gratifying precision.

This brief outline of elementary structural and transactional analysis may ~~be of some interest stimulate~~ ~~are some people into~~ stimulate some therapists into a conscientious and sustained attempt to understand what happens inside people and between people in ~~these~~ terms of ego states. In the writer's experience, ~~with this approach during the last four years~~, 107 patients were treated by this method in the last four years. 77% of the psychotics and 66% of the non-psychotics improved by both subjective and objective standards. There were four failures and the rest merely held their own. The method is easier to learn than psychoanalysis. With both patients and student therapists, it takes about six weeks to understand which phenomena are being described, about six months to obtain a feeling of conviction, and about a year to understand with some clarity what is going ~~on~~ ^{on} and to obtain some degree of effective social control.

Experience in using and ~~teaching~~ in teaching this system indicates that three ~~factors~~ need to be stressed for the ~~benefit~~ benefit of patients and students alike.

(1) It is necessary to discard conceptual thinking and to experience instead ~~the phenomenological~~ by introspection the phenomenological reality of Parent, Adult and Child, and to ~~confirm~~ ~~validate~~ validate what is experienced by genetic confirmation in the ^{early} actual life of the individual.

(2) The fashionable terms "childish" and "mature" are forbidden ~~in~~ in transactional analysis because of their unfortunate semantic connotations in this country. The Child is not ~~regarded as something~~ ~~to be got rid of~~ to be regarded as "childish" in the derogatory sense, but child-like, with many socially valuable attributes, potentially capable of contributing to the personality exactly what a happy actual child is capable of contributing to family life. On the other hand, the position of structural analysis is that there is no such thing as an ~~"immature" person~~, "mature" and "immature" people, but only personalities in which either Adult or Child is more highly cathected from time to time, the assumption being that every grown-up has a well-formed Adult which is potentially capable of ~~very~~ adequate neopsychic functioning if only it can be properly cathected.

(3) It may take some time to discover that games are not occasional occurrences, but take up the large bulk of time and effort spent in society. When it is noted that a patient plays a certain game, it will eventually be seen that this does not mean an occasional sally, once a week or once a month, but that the patient plays that game almost incessantly, hour by hour, day after day.

Summary

Transactional analysis is part of a comprehensive system of individual and social psychiatry. It offers an indigenous approach to group therapy by making ~~maximum~~ therapeutic use of the transactions which continually take place between those present. These transactions are analysed into exteropsychic, neopsychic, and archaopsychic components, called colloquially Parent, Adult, and Child, respectively. These components manifest themselves as ~~xxx~~ complete ego states which reproduce the ego states of parental figures, or are autonomous, or are revivals of fixated archaic ego states from childhood.

Patients are instructed ~~through~~ in the principles of structural and transactional analysis through the use of the clinical material in the group proceedings. They can then proceed to the more advanced phases of game analysis and script analysis with the therapeutic goal of attaining social control. They are then able to conduct their relationships with others in an autonomous way at their own options, and are no longer victims of unconscious uncontrolled compulsions to exploit or be exploited.