TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

A NEW AND EFFECTIVE METHOD OF GROUP THERAPY

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There is need for a new approach to psychodynamic group therapy
specifically designed for the situation it has to meet. The usual practice is to
bring into the group methods borrowed from individual therapy, hoping, as occasionall
happens, to elicit a specific therapeytic response. I should like to present a
different system, one which has been well-tested and is more adapted to its purpose,
where group therapists can stand on their own ground rather than attempting a thinly-
spread imitation of the sister discipline.

Generally speaking, individual analytic therapy is characterized by the
production of and a search for material, with interpersonal transactions holding a
special place, typically in the field of "transference resistance" or "transference
reactions." In a group, the systematic search for material is hampered because
from the beginning the multitude of transactions takes the center of the stage.
Therefore it seems appropriate to concentrate deliverately and specifically on
analyzing such transactions. Structural analysis, and its later development into
transactional anayasis, in my experience, offers the most productive framework for
this undertaking. Experiments with both approaches demonstrate certain advantages
of structural and transactional analysis over attempts at psychoanalysis in the
group. Among them are increased patient interest as shown by attendance records;
increased degree of therapeutic success as shown by reduction of gross failures;
increased stability of results as shown by ;ong-term adjustment; and wider applica-
bility in difficult patients such as psychopaths, the mentally retarded, and pre-
and post-psychotics. In addition, the intelligivility, precision, and goals of the
therapeutic technique are more readily appreciated by the properly prepared
therapist and patient alike.

This approach is based on the separation and investigation of exteropsychic,
neopsychic, and archaeopsychic ego states. Structural analysis refers to the

intrapsychic relationships of these three types of ego states: Their mutual isolation conflict, contamination, invasion, predominance, or cooperation within the personality. Transactional analysis refers to the diagnosis of which particular ego state is active in each individual during a given transaction or series of transactions, and of the understandings or misunderstandings which arise due to the perception or misperception of this factor by the individuals involved.

I have discussed in a previous publication (1) the nature of ego states in general, and of their classification according to whether they are exteropsychic, that is, borrowed from external sources; neopsychic, that is, oriented in accordance with current reality; or archaeopsychic, that is,relics fixated in childhood. These distinctions are easily understood b patients when they are domonstrated by clinical material, and when the three types are subsumed under the more personal terms Parent, Adult, and Child, respectively.

As this is a condensation in a very small space of a whole psycho-therapeutic system, I can only offer a few illustrative stiuations, choosing them for their relative clarity and dramatic quality in the hope that they w ill drew attention to some of the basic principles of sturctural and transactional analysis.

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

The first concerns a patient named Matthew, whose manner, posture, gestures, tone of voice, purpose, and field of interest varied in a fashion which at first seemed erratic. Careful and sustained observation, however, revealed that these variables were organized into a limited number of coherent patterns. 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 upraised fingers. At other times he talked with another patient about carpentery problems in a matter of fact tome, 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
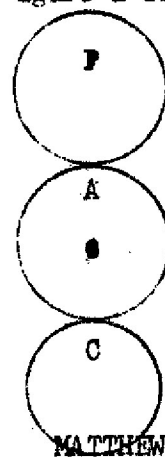
ostentatiously turned to the leader. The other patients soon became aware of these
shifts in his ego state, correctly diagnosed them as Parent, Adult, and Child,
respectively, and began to look for appropriate clues concerning Matthew's actual
parents and his childhood experiences. Soon everyone in the group, including the
patient, was able to accept the simple diagram shown in Figure 1 as a workable
representation of Matthew's personality
structure.

In the course of Matthew's
therapy, he asked the physician to examine
his father, who was on the verge of a
paraniod psychosis. The therapist was
astonished, in spite of his anticipations,
to see how exactly Matthew's Parent
reproduced the father's fixated paranied

Structural Analysis

Figure 1

ego state. During his interview, Matthew's father spoke in loud, deep, dogmatic tones
leaning back in h s chair with a stern gaze,
and counting off on his upraised fingers his accusations against the people around
him.

It should be emphasized that Parent, Adult, and Child, are not synonymous
with superego, ego, and id. The latter are "psychic agencies," (2) while the
former are complete ego states, each in itself including influences from superego,
ego, and id. For example, when Matthew reproduced the Parental ego state, he not
only behaved like a stern father, but also distorted reality the way his father did,
and vented his sadistic impulses. And as cathexis was transferred from the Parental
ego state into that of the scornful Child, the planning of his attacks and the
accompanying guilt-feelings had a childlike quality.

In therapy, the first task was to clarify in Matthew's mind what was
Parent, what was Adult, and what was Child in his feelings and behavior. The next

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phase was directed toward maintaining control through the Adult. The thire phase was to analyze the current conflicts between the three ego states. Each of these phases brought its own kind of improvement, while the ultimate aim in this pre-psychotic case was to enable all three ego states to cooperate in an integrated fashion as a result of structural analysis.

There were two contra-indications in this case. The first was the universal indication against telling the Child to grow up. One does not tell a two-year-old child to grow up. In fact, from the beginning it is necessary in every case to emphasize that we are not truing to get rid of the Child. The Child is not to be regarded as "childish" in the derogatory sense, but childlike, with many socially valuable attributes which must be freed so that they can make their contribution to the total personality when the confusion in this archaic area has been straightened out. The child in the individual is potentially capable of contributing to his personality exactly what a happy actual child is capable of contributing to family life. The second contra-indication, which is specific to this type of case, was against investigating the history and mechanism of his identification with his father, which was a special aspect of his parental ego state.

SIMPLE TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

A patient named Camelia, following a previous train of thought said that she had told her husband she wasn't going to have intercourse with him anymore and that he could go and find himself some other woman. Another patient named Rosita asked curously: "Why did you do that?" Whereupon Camelia, much to Rosita's discomfort, burst into tears and replied: "I try so hard, and then you criticize me."

This transaction may be analyzed according to the diagram in Figure 2. This figure was frawn and analyzed for the group as follows. The personalities of the two women are represented structurally as comprising Parent, Adult, and Child. The original transactional stimulus is Camelia's statement about what she told her husband. She related this in her Adult ego state, with which the group was familiar.

It was received in turn by an Adult Rosita, who in her response exhibited a mature, reasonable interest in the story. As shown in Figure 2a, the transactional stimulus was Adult to Adult, and so was the __transactional response.__ If things had continued at this level, the conversation might have proceeded smoothly.
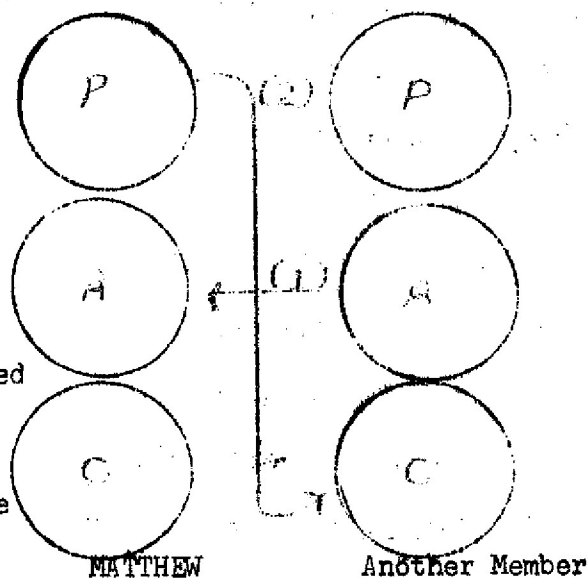

Figure 2
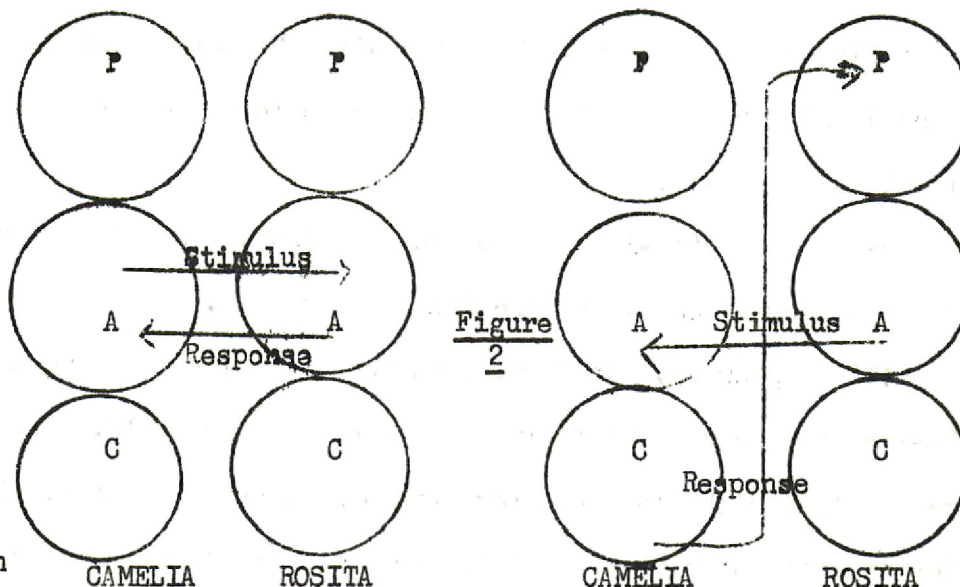
Rosita's question ("Why did you do that?") now constituted a new transactional stimulus, and was intended as one adult speaking to another. Camelia's weeping response, however, was not that of one adult to another, but that of a child to a critical parent. Camelia's misperception of Rosita's ego state, and the shift in her own ego state, resulted in a crossed transaction and broke up the conversation which now had to take another turn. This is represented in Figure 2b.

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.

In Matthew's case, when he was talking about his wife, the crossing was reversed. If one of the other members, as an Adult, asked him a question, expecting an Adult response, Matthew instead usually answered like a supercilious parent

talking to a backward child, as represented in Figure 3.

Therapeutically, this simple type of transactional analysis helped Camelia to become more objective about her Child. As the Adult gained control, and the Child's responses at home were suppressed for later discussion in the group, her marital and social life improved even before any of the Child's confusion was resolved.

MATTHEW   Another Member

Crossed Transaction - Type II.

Figure 3

THE ANALYSIS OF GAMES

Short sets of ongoing transactions may be called operations. These constitute tactical maneuvers, in which it is the other members of the group who are maneuvered. Thus the conversation between Camelia and Rosita, taken as a whole, is an operation, and has to be analyzed again at a deeper level, when it soon appears that the need of Camelia's Child to feel criticized was one of the motives for telling this particular story to the group.

A series of operations constitutes a "game." A game may be defined as a recurring series of transactions, often repetitive, superficially rational, with a concealed motivation; or more colloquially, a series of operations with a "gimmick."

Hyacinth recounted her disappointment and resentment because a friend of hers had given a birthday party which she herself had planned to give. Camelia asked: "Why don't you give another party later?" To which Hyacinth responded: "Yes, but then it wouldn't be a birthday party." The other members of the group then began to give wise suggestions, each beginning with: "Why don't you..." and to each of these Hyacinth gave a response which began: "Yes, but..."

Hyacinth had told her story for the purpose of setting in motion the commonest of all the games which can be observed in groups: The game of "Why don't you... Yes buy..." This is a game which can be played by any number. One player, who is "it," presents a problem. The others start to present solutions, to each of which the one who is "it" objects. A good player can stand off the rest of the group for a long period, until they all give up, whereupon "it" wins. Hyacinth, for example, successfully objected to more than a dozen solutions before the therapist broke up the game. The gimmick in "Why don't you... Yes buy..." is that it is played not for its ostensible purpose (a quest for information or soluction), but for the sake of the fencing; and as a group phenomenon it corresponds to Bion's basic assumption "F" (3).

Other common games are "How am I Doing?" "Uproar," "Alcoholic," "P.T.A." "Ain't it Awful?" and "Schlemiel." In "Schlemiel," 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 played in a helpless position. The skillful opponent, however, says: "You can break things and spill things all you like; but please don't say 'I'm sorry!'" This response usually causes the Schlemiel to collapse or explode, since it knocks out his gimmick, and the opponent wins. I imagine that at this point many of you are thinking of Stephen Potter, but I think the games I have in mind 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 the official form requires at least four players: a persecutor, a rescurer, a dummy, and the one who is "it."

The transactional analysis of Hyacinth's game of "Why don't you...Yes but is represented in Figure 4.* This figure was drawn and analyzed for the group. In the guise of an Adult seeking information, Hyacinth "cons" the other members into responding like sage parents advising a helpless child. The object of Hyacinth's Child is to confound these parents one after the other. The game can proceed because
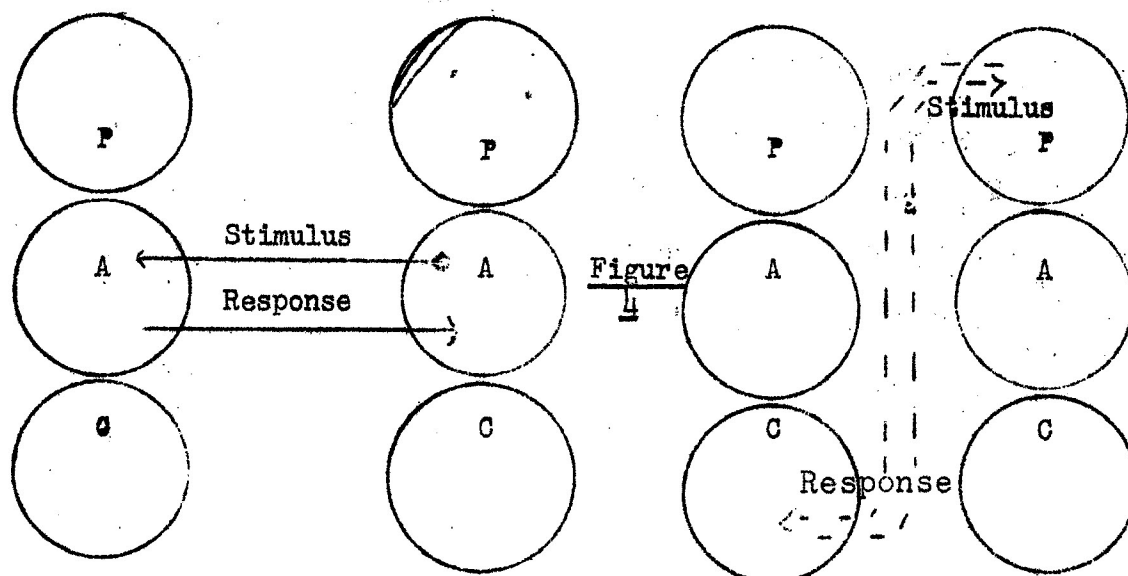
|			
HYACINTH	CAMELIA	HYACINTH	CAMELIA
Social level		Psychological level	

A GAME

at the superficial level, both stimulus and response are Adult to Adult; and at a
deeper level they are also complementary, Parent to Child stimulus ("Why don't
you...?") eliciting Child to Parent response ("Yes, but..."). The second level is
unconscious on both sides.

The therapeutic effect of this analysis was to make Hyacinth aware of her
defensive need to confound, and to make the others aware of how easily they could be
conned into taking a parental role unawares. When a new patient tried to start a
game of "Why don't you... Yes but..." in this group, they all played along with her
in order not to make her too anxious, but after a few weeks they gently demonstrated
to her what was happening. In other words, they now had the option of playing or not
playing this game, as they saw fit, where formerly they had no choice but to be drawn
in. This option was the net therapeutic gain, which they were able to apply
profitable in their more intimate relationships. In structural terms, this

improvement is represented in Figure 5.

Figure 5a shows the original contamination

of the Adult by the Parent, and Figure 5b

shows the decontaminated Adult which can.

how retionally control their behavior

in this particular situation.
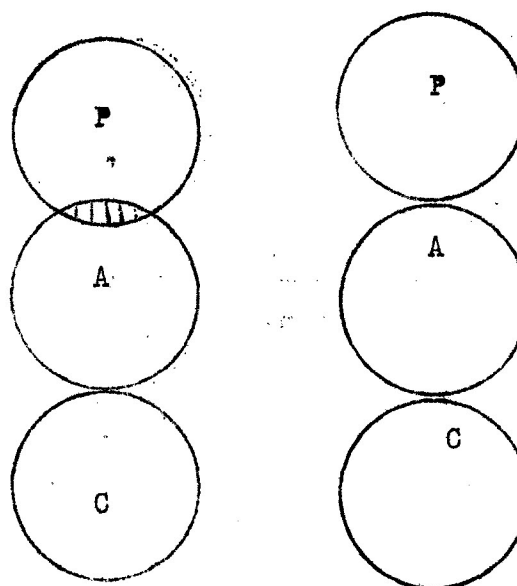
a. Before   b. After

Therapeutic Effect

Figure 5.

THE ANALYSIS OF SCRIPTS

A script is an attempt to repeat in derivative form not a transference

reaction or a transference situation, but a transference drama, often split up into

acts, exactly like the theatrical scripts which are intuitive artistic derivatives

of these primal dramas of childhood. Operationally, a script is a complex set of

transactions, by nature recurrent, but not necessarily recurring, sihce a complete

performance may require a whole lifetime. A common tragic script is that based on

the rescue fantasy of a woman who marries one alchoholic after another. The

disruption of such a script leads to despair. Since the magical cure of the

alcoholic husband which the script calls for is not forthcoming, a divorce results

and the woman tries again. A practical and constructive script, on the other hand,

may lead to great happiness if the others in the case are well chosen and play their

parts satisfactorily. A game usually represents a segment of a script.

The ultimate goal of transactional analysis is the analysis of scripts,

since the script determines the destiny and identity of the individual. Space,

however, does not permit a discussion of the technique aim, and therapeutic effect

of script analysis, and this topic will have to be reserved for another communication.

SELF-ANALYSIS

Structural and transactional analysis lend themselves to self-examination more readily than orthodox psychoanalysis does, since they effectively bypass many of the difficulties inherent in self-psychoanalysis. The therapist who has some knowledge of his own personality structure has a distinct advantage in dealing with his countertransference problems: That is, the activity of his own Child or Parent with its own favorite games, its own script, and its own motives for becoming a group therapist. If he has a clear insight, without self-delusion, as to what is exteropsychic, what is neophychic, and what is archaeophychic in himself, then he can choose his responses so as to bring the maximum therapeutic benefit to his patients.

I have condensed into this b ief communication material which would easil; fill a book, and which is best made clear b six months or a year of clinical supervision. In its present form, however, it might stimulate some people to more cardful observation of ego states in their patients, and to some serious and sustained experiments in structural interpretation.

SUMMARY

(1) A new approach to group therapy is outlined, based on the distinction between exteropsychic, neopsychic, and archaeopsychic ego states. The study of the relationships within the individual of these three types of ego states, colloquially called Parent, Adult, and Child, respectively, is termed stuctural analysis, and has been discussed in a previous publication.

(2) Once each individual in the group has some understanding of his own personality in these terms, the group can proceed to simple transactional analysis, in which the ego state of the individual who gives the transactional stimulus is compared with the ego stat of the one who gives the transactional response.

(3) In the next phase, short series of transactions, called operations, are studied in the group. More complex series may constitute a "game," in which some element of double-dealing or insincerity is present. In the final phase, it is demonstrated that all transactions are influenced by complex attempts on the part of each member to manipulate the group in accordance with certain basic fantasies derived from early experiences. This unconscious plan, which is a strong determinant of the individual's destiny, is called a script.

(4) Clinical examples are given, and the therapeutic gain expected from each phase of structural and transactional analysis is indicated.

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