

HISTORY / PHILOSOPHY / APPROACHES OF TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

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Transactional Analysis is a theory of personality and a systematic psychotherapy for growth and personal change.

The goals of TA can be described as two fold:

1. To reach autonomy including the use of all the ego states in awareness; Ego states are described in full later, however one simple way of thinking about ego states is to think of them as different states of the self.
2. Developing intimacy which in TA. Is described as the free exchange of strokes without ulterior transactions and allowing for spontaneity.

Eric Berne, borne in 1910, in Montreal, Canada, was a pioneer and a radical in the field of psychiatry. Berne died on the 15th July 1970 aged only 60 years of age. He left behind him a profound and systematic theory of personality and a range of tools which have been used throughout the world to promote health and growth. Berne was initially trained in psychoanalysis, and he developed Transactional Analysis. First writing about TA in the 1950's and he continued to develop his theory and practice till his death. Berne started in analysis with Paul Federn in 1947, later he became the analysand of Erik Erikson. Both of these analysts influenced Berne's theoretical development of ego states. Berne first mentioned TA. in writing in 1957, later that year he started a seminar in San Francisco, and thus started the growth of Transactional Analysis. San Francisco is still the headquarters of the International Transactional Association. For an excellent summary of the life and work of Berne see Ian Stewart's book... Eric Berne, Sage publications 1992.

Berne's best known work is Games People Play (1964), an international best seller which has altered the way every day people think and how they understand relationships. The idea of the inner Child, of Games, and of Strokes and Life Scripts are now widely used terms far outside of the TA community, and have entered everyday language.

Another popular book was published after his death... "What do you say after you say Hello" This summarises much of his theory and his latest developments of TA theory. The book opens with 4 questions:

1. What do you say after you say hello?
2. How do you say hello?
3. What do you say after others say hello?
4. Why do we and others spend so much of our time not saying hello?

These questions are answered in an enjoyable and profound way throughout his work.

The contrast between autonomy... and independence is often used to illustrate the way that transactional analysts think:

Autonomy is where an individual is in tune with them selves, others and their environment and is acting freely, Berne described this as being Script free. This is in contrast to individualism or independence in which the person is acting within their dysfunctional life script, maintaining a belief that others are not Ok.

Recent developments within TA have also emphasised people's needs and desire to belong, alongside the need for autonomy.

- ▶ TA uses a cognitive – behavioural approach in teaching clients to change their thinking and the related behaviours. TA practitioners often teach clients the concepts being used.
- ▶ TA is a social psychology in that it analyses the interactions and relational process within the social context.
- ▶ TA works with the affect, helping people let go of their 'old' feelings and expressing their emotions in the here and now in order for them to be more fully alive in the here and now.
- ▶ TA is relational... this is reflected in the current emphasis on relational psychotherapy.
- ▶ TA is contractual in its approach.
- ▶ The contractual approach which Berne emphasised is one of the differentiating markers which defines TA from other psychotherapy approaches.

Berne deliberately used simple metaphors and language in order to make his approach to psychotherapy accessible for all... and so he described people as basically being OK. However, in their early life they make decisions, which lead them to the not OK position or a position of believing others are not OK (or both). He talked of the OK 'PRINCE' and the not OK 'FROG'. "OKness" can be described as having intrinsic worth and value.

Berne believed that every person:

- ▶ Can change.
- ▶ That people are responsible for their own lives.
- ▶ That everyone is born OK.

These are the foundation principles of TA and profoundly effect the way Transactional Analysts operate in their practice.

International and national Organisations:

There are regulating organisations which control training standards, and ethics as well as being the focus for practitioners throughout the world. (see the EATA website and ITAA websites for further details).

- The Institute of Transactional Analysis, (ITA). (The ITA is a member of the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy - UKCP)
- The European Association of Transactional Analysis, (EATA).
- Internationally the International Transactional Analysis Association, (ITAA).

There are four fields of application:

- Psychotherapy: "Healing the hurts of the past to live freely in the here and now."
- Counselling: Coaching, team development, conflict resolution, and mentoring, as well as family, relationship and pastoral care and what is described as psycho-social counselling.
- Organisations: The organisation is the client and the contract is for development of the organisation as a whole.
- Education: TA applied in education.

EATA and ITAA have an official handbook which contains all the requirements and guidelines regarding TA practice and training.... Section 5 of the handbook contains the detailed core competencies developed for each field of application and training for each area. (See the EATA website for the complete handbook).

The breadth of application of TA, along with its simple and at the same time profound ideas is its main strength.

Three traditional schools of TA: The classic School, The Redecission School, and the Cathexis School. These three schools were named after their originators; today practitioners of TA use an integration of the three schools.

Recent developments :

- A fourth school of TA is emerging... the “TA relational school”
- There is also an approach to TA practice which is described as Integrative psychotherapy which is closely related to the relational approach.
- There are some practitioners who also emphasise the need to work with the client’s body in psychotherapy... “TA body psychotherapy”
- There are those who emphasise the psychodynamic approach to TA psychotherapy.