

Letter from the Coeditor

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It is a great pleasure, as well as a daunting task, to write my first editorial letter for the *Transactional Analysis Journal (TAJ)*. The *TAJ* is the flagship publication of the ITAA and for transactional analysis and is read by about 1700 people worldwide. Being part of the team that helps to shape the literary tradition of transactional analysis is an honor and a responsibility. After all, this year's *TAJ* articles are potentially quoted in next year's student essays and are the subject of questions on Teaching and Supervising Transactional Analyst theory boards and during Certified Transactional Analyst exams. They can be taught and referenced. Accordingly, their quality and relevance needs to be assured by a rigorous peer-review process. They may or may not be in keeping with an individual coeditor's views, such is the diversity of the theory and application of transactional analysis today, but they must be of a quality that journals in the field of psychology strive to attain.

The current issue is an example of one with a more psychotherapeutic orientation. It contains challenging and thought-provoking work demonstrating the evolution of the ideas of people who have been part of the TA 101 "canon" for decades as well as from more contemporary writers who are shaping the development of transactional analysis as we speak.

One of the reasons this issue focuses so much on psychotherapy is that several of the articles were held over from the April 2008 issue on the relevance of the unconscious to transactional analysis today. In our view, the large number of submissions for that issue demonstrates the increasing interest in our community in reviving the, until fairly recently, almost unacknowledged tradition of integrating nonconscious processes within transactional analysis.

Innovative thought, as well as "taking a stand" on uncomfortable issues, necessarily creates tension and often, at least initially, is met with resistance and objections. An article in the January 2008 issue elicited such a response, and I draw the reader's attention to the exchange of letters in this issue between Taibi Kahler, Steve Karpman, and Keith Tudor as well as the one between John Parr and the *TAJ* editorial team.

But before that, let me introduce you to the present articles, which no doubt will be challenging in their own right.

In Ken Mellor's article "Autonomy with Integrity," he evocatively charts his progression as a transactional analyst from his early enthusiasm through his eventual dissatisfaction to the evolution of his own integration of the transcendent and the worldly. He draws the reader's attention to the fact that the spiritual realm is sorely underrepresented in transactional analysis writing and adds integrity to the three Bernean hallmarks of autonomy. His work has been concerned with meaning and purpose. In several figures, Ken illustrates his belief, informed by Eastern spiritual teachings, that we are all connected and also connected to everything in the world around us. He speaks of splitting within a person (e.g., the Cartesian split between body and mind) as well as the sense of being split off from connecting to other people and the world. He describes the concepts of aliveness and centeredness, setting the scene for his interpretation of awareness (which he links to the concepts of being grounded in the here and now, as well as being centered), spontaneity (linked to the flow of life energy, which is restricted by unresolved history), intimacy (with an emphasis on how self-knowledge is needed before an "other" can be known), and his own addition of integrity (which is connected to wholeness, grounding, and the clearing of emotional baggage). Those four components are seen as keys that naturally follow on from one another, with integrity, or "oneness with everything," being the ultimate key.

Cornell and Landaiche, in "Nonconscious Processes and Self-Development," continue their exploration of Berne's concept of protocol as one factor in their fascinating comparison of the work of Eric Berne and Christopher Bollas. At first, Berne and Bollas as theoreticians seem to have little

in common, even though Bollas is often cited in the transactional analysis literature, especially in connection with his phrase “the shadow of the object.” Cornell and Landaiche emphasize the shift that occurred in psychoanalysis in the United States during the generation that lay between the two men. They describe how this meant that Berne tended to write, in part, from a defiant and concretizing standpoint, whereas Bollas has had the leisure of staying more with uncertainty and tentative formulations. Cornell and Landaiche contrast the way in which Berne and Bollas describe the implicit knowing of the body and other nonconscious ways of processing. They link Berne’s description of intuition to protocol as an example of this implicit knowing, pointing to his emphasis on its relational nature, and go on to connect these with Bollas’s concept of the unthought known. Quoting extensively from Berne’s early works, Cornell and Landaiche illustrate his natural assumption that nonconscious processes continuously inform our interaction with others. In a bold move, they link Bollas’s concept of the transformational object to Berne’s intuitive function and Bollas’s counter-transference readiness to Berne’s instructions for how to listen. Lastly, they compare and contrast Berne’s and Bollas’s attitudes toward growth and self-formation and find Berne to be the generally more pessimistic author. However, his concept of physis and the aspiration arrow are seen as similar to Bollas’s idea of a destiny drive toward a truer self.

In their article “From Client Process to Therapeutic Relating,” Tudor and Widdowson challenge the diagnostic systems that have recently become prevalent in transactional analysis. I see their work as being very much in Berne’s spirit, eschewing traditional diagnostic labels in favor of the individually tailored ego state diagnosis based on phenomenological experience and relational phenomena. They acknowledge the usefulness of Kahler’s process communication model and Joines and Stewart’s personality adaptations in certain circumstances, but challenge the stance those authors take as not congruent with a humanistic approach and suggest that the models are, at the same time, simplistic and overly complicated. They argue for a continuum, ranging from traits to adaptations and disorders (similar to Johnson [1994]). In particular, Tudor and Widdowson challenge certain advised interventions for identified personality adaptations as being untherapeutic and counterproductive. They also see these diagnostic categorizations as coming from a one-person psychology stance (Stark, 2000). One of their main challenges relates to narcissistic and borderline processes, which, they suggest, are too common to be relegated to pure pathology. They also challenge Joines and Stewart’s developmental hypotheses.

Tudor and Widdowson’s article will come as a relief to those who cannot “find themselves” in any of the diagnostic categories suggested by Kahler (1996), Ware (1983), or Joines and Stewart (2002); those who experience themselves as responding very differently in different situations (an aspect highlighted by Wachtel [2008] in his cyclical-contextual model); and those who as students have found it difficult to attach diagnostic labels to clients or are reluctant to do so. Tudor and Widdowson’s article will no doubt arouse strong reactions in some. Certainly, Tudor is no stranger to controversy (see the exchange of letters at the end of this journal). I look forward to a lively debate about the issues these authors raise.

In his article “A Transactional Psychoanalysis of Frodo,” Michele Novellino takes the character from J. R. R. Tolkien’s (1954-1955/1968) trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* as a starting point for his exploration of unconscious mechanisms involved in the transition from adolescent male to man. Many of Novellino’s deliberations have Jungian overtones, and he writes in the Bernean tradition of illustrating theory with the journey of mythical and literary characters. Novellino links Tolkien’s own history as a fatherless child in a new country to Frodo’s task of working through his own sense of alienation and the need for father figures. The author ends by discussing the necessity of integrating both the good and the evil in a person’s Parent ego state to successfully attain true adult maturity.

In her article, “Unconscious Drives Reimagined,” Fanita English begins with a clear and useful overview of the historical development of the concept of the unconscious, including how unconscious phenomena were regarded prior to Freud’s (1900/1961) work described in *The Interpretation*

of *Dreams*. English goes on to describe Freud's topographical model of the mind, the system unconscious, and his structural model, which to an extent found its way into Berne's development of transactional analysis theory. After an appreciation as well as a critique of the heavy focus in traditional psychoanalysis on dream analysis, she makes useful links to Berne's early writings. In hers, as well as in Cornell and Landaiche's articles, a trend is emerging that focuses on the reevaluation of Berne's early theoretical output and the links that can be found with his traditional psychoanalytic training of the time. English emphasizes the fact that Berne was part of the ego psychology movement, in which the dynamic unconscious had little or no place, thereby relegating any unconscious phenomena to an uneasy amalgam of "out of awareness" phenomena. A trained psychoanalyst herself, English gives a succinct summary of the development of Freud's changing ideas over the course of 40 years. Leaning, to an extent, more toward Jungian archetypal psychology, she confidently offers her own concept of drives or motivators based on a fictitious mythology. I hazard a guess that Berne would have delighted in her description of "Survia," "Passia," and the recently renamed "Transcia."

In a fascinating transcription of a roundtable discussion held during the 2006 Rome conference on the unconscious, entitled "Perspectives on the Unconscious in Transactional Analysis," the contributors share their varied views about and passionate endorsements of a revitalization of a theory of the unconscious with transactional analysis theory. Chaired by Maria Teresa (Resi) Tosi, the erudite panel discussed a great variety of related issues.

To begin, Evita Cassoni reminds us that some of the most innovative theory developments in the transactional analysis community have arisen from Italian authors, possibly because, like Berne or Freud, authors and theoreticians there are rooted in academic psychology and psychiatry and are intent on incorporating neuroscientific research of the day. Cassoni provides fascinating links between the latter and an emerging updated ego state theory, warning against the temptation of simplistic ties between the two. She is followed by Giorgio Cavallero, who accounts for transactional analysis as a group psychotherapy and makes a plea for a coherent TA theory of the unconscious.

Carlo Moiso, drawing on his own contribution to revitalizing the latter more than 20 years ago, emphasizes the pitfalls of mistranslation and brings to the debate his skills as a linguist. Freud's notion of "das Unbewußte" as a noun (and a theoretical construct) is distinctly different from that which generally remains, "unbewußt" = unconscious, for various reasons. Moiso discusses the confusion resulting from the interchangeable use of the terms in some of the literature. He goes on to elaborate on the problems arising from Berne's rejection of the hegemony of classical psychoanalysis as it was prevalent in his day in the United States while, at the same time, being steeped in its theory. One of the resulting confusions, with its lasting problematic legacy within transactional analysis, is the existence of different concepts of ego states (usually, but probably not exhaustively categorized as structural versus functional). Moiso makes a plea for a discriminating use of the various terminologies for ego states.

Michele Novellino then speaks to the political schisms that have troubled the transactional analysis community over that last few years and comments on politics within transactional analysis organizations, highlighting their authoritarian and competitive structure. On a more theoretical level, he warns against a too-quick move toward integration, stating that some theoretical idioms cannot be reconciled.

For her part, Laura Quagliotti echoes Novellino in warning against integration at the expense of theoretical cohesion, which can muddy the waters when concepts arise from very different theoretical viewpoints and require a different approach in technique. She particularly emphasizes the relevance of this for the practice of group psychotherapy. Sylvie Rossi comments on the lack of references to the unconscious in the *TAJ* between 1971 and 1998. She highlights the change in definitions of what transactional analysis is about, both quoting Berne as well as the mission statements of the ITAA. She goes on to discuss the relevance for the clinician, especially as far as the analysis of transference and countertransference is concerned.

The final person on the roundtable, Pio Scilligo, positions his self-confessed “revolutionary” stance squarely in the midst of the current dialogue between therapeutic paradigms and makes a plea for reevaluating Freud’s concepts in light of current neuroscientific research. He calls for an overhaul of the definition of the notions of “preconscious” versus “unconscious” according to emerging neuropsychanalytic theories. In particular, he challenges the Freudian notion of primary versus secondary process. He ends by emphasizing the relevance of attending to this process of reevaluation within psychoanalysis for transactional analysis, seeing Berne’s theory as directly derived from Freudian thought.

We close this issue with the series of letters I mentioned earlier. I hope you enjoy reading these interchanges as well as the stimulating articles that precede them.

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