

TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

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The transactional analysis and its role in the efficiency of communication.

The transactional analysis is, firstly, a philosophy, a point of view about human beings. Secondly, it is a theory of personality, of psychological function and interpersonal behavior, so it is a theory of communication as well. Thirdly, it is a creative and powerful instrument used to facilitate the change and development at personal and professional level, having applications in four fundamental areas: conciliation, education, organizational and clinical.

The transactional analysis is an expositive theory of human personality, which creates and develops concepts and ideas that help us to understand better what we, human beings are, in point of psychological structures and behavior reactions.

From another point of view the transactional analysis is a theory of human communications, which allows new techniques and new instruments which can help improve the communication ability between people, we can correct psychological and behavior deficiencies or the ability to communicate in a couple or a group can increase.

In the complex process of communication, we distinguish the idea of agreement, as a fundamental unit of human relationships.

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1.WHAT IS TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS ?

The transactional analysis is, firstly, a philosophy, a point of view about human beings. Secondly, it is a theory of personality, of psychological function and interpersonal behavior, so it is a theory of communication as well. Thirdly, it is a creative and powerful instrument used to facilitate the change and development at personal and professional level, having applications in four fundamental areas: conciliation, education, organizational and clinical.

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A transaction is defined as the situation where there are two people and one says something and the other one replies. In order to maintain the emotional and psychological balance, people need to send and receive 'strokes', to make transactions, with other words – to communicate one with another. The transaction presumes a change of the stimulus-answer type, in return sense, and a change in contractual sense: "I give if you give back" and "I do something to you and you do something back". An inter-human relationship represents a chain of transactions, where the states of the ego succeed and attract or reject each other like the poles of a magnet.

The transactional analysis deals with the understanding of the reasons and states which make each participant, at the transaction, to act the way he does it.

The transactional analysis (TA) rose in the 50s, through the work of an American psycho-therapist, Eric Berne, with the purpose of making accessible the most complex concepts of psychology and psycho-analysis to the great public. It was imposed itself rapidly at all the levels of the commercial structure (from shopkeepers to managers), which respond without difficulty to the daily communicative and professional needs, even if TA

sometimes has the shortcomings of being too simplistic, it can be considered a real key for communication. From this perspective, the transactional analysis has numerous and efficient applications in diplomacy, in protocol, in sales, in business negotiations, political negotiations, as well as in the study and harmonization of the relationships within the organizations.

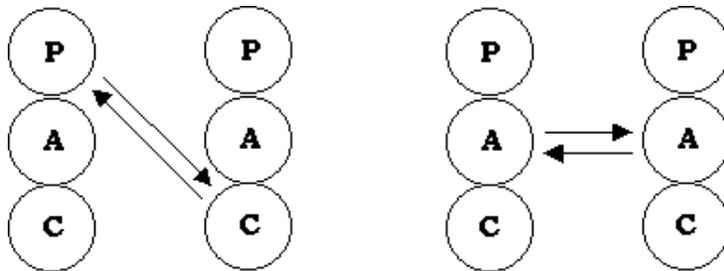
The transactional analysis (TA) describes 3 states by means which we exteriorize our thoughts and emotions – parent, adult and child states.

- The parent state: at this level exterior events are registered, lived from birth and up to the age of 5 years old: the education received from parents, educators and teachers.
- The adult state: here the education assimilated through his own experience is registered, by attempt and error. Here, the experiences are transformed into thoughts, he can see what is pro or against, and decisions are made. It is the rational component. The adult state usually activates when the person wants to solve a problem, to decide objectives, to assume responsibility, to make a decision, wants evaluation of some results etc.
- The child state: at this level, inner events are registered – feelings lived as a response to exterior events, from birth and up to the age of 5. It is the emotional component. It appears to the adult in leisure activities.

2. TYPES OF TRANSACTIONS.

In the process of communication the usual transactions are:

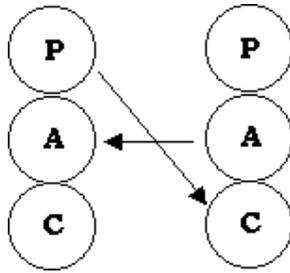
- Simple transactions – when a partner proposes a certain type of communication and the other one respond. Thus, a chain of transactions is created, in which one's response represents the stimulus of the other one.
- - the double transaction (hidden) – when the conversation does not take place on a single level, the declared one, called apparent, it is accompanied by a message hidden at a psychological, non-verbal or para-verbal level. Almost any kind of transaction requires a social and a psychological level. Most part of them superpose. The distinct analyses of each transaction, from a chain of any kind of length, is called transactional analysis.
- The parallel transactions. – when the transactional vectors stay parallel, and the state of the ego related to the vector stimulus is the one from which the vector response leaves from. In this case the communication can continue freely no matter for how long, as long as this state of vectors parallelism is maintained. In the complementary transaction we respond to the interlocutor from the state he required.



The 1st rule of communication, after Berne: 'as long as the transactions stay parallel, the communication can continue unlimited.'

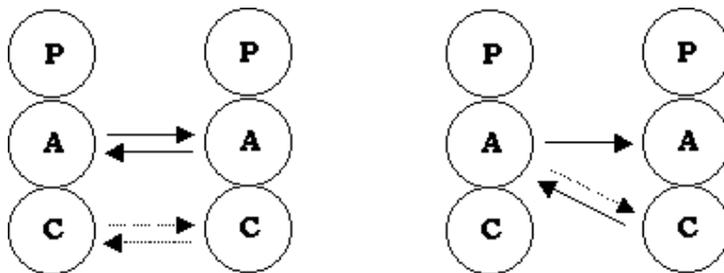
- The cross transactions in which the vectors of the transaction cross, and the state of the ego targeted by the stimulus is not the same with the one the response leaves from. In this case the thread and the fluency of the conversation break and for its restoration one or both partners are needed in order to change the state of the ego;

When the transactions are not parallel (someone talks from the state of parent and the interlocutor respond from the state of an adult) a cross transaction takes place.



The 2nd rule of communication, after Berne: ‘When a transaction is crossed, the communication is interrupted’.

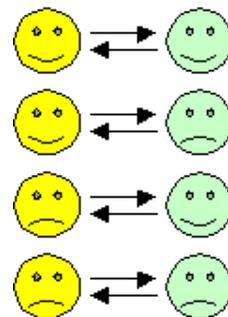
d. The hidden transactions (double) – when the conversation does not take place on a single level, the declared one, called apparent, it is accompanied by a message hidden at psychological level, non-verbal or para-verbal. In this type of transactions, beside the explicit message – direct verbal stimulus, hidden messages are also transmitted – at emotional, non-verbal level. It always involves at least two states from the three described previously. The apparent message is often directed from Adult to Adult, while the psychological message is given by the Parent or by the Child.



The 3rd rule of communication after Berne: ‘The behaviour which appeared as a consequence of the hidden transactions is determined at a psychological level and not social’.

Types of behaviour in the transactional analysis

- Type 1:** I am OK. You are OK
- Type 2:** I am OK. You are not OK
- Type 3:** I am not OK. You are OK
- Type 4:** I am not OK. You are not OK



3. PHILOSOPHYCAL CONCEPTS OF TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

The individual is the one who decides his own destiny and his decisions can be changed by himself. All the people have the capacity to think. People are OK (Steward and Joines). The fundamental postulate is the one according to which WE, in other words YOU and I have value, importance and dignity as human beings.

People are OK. This means that each one has value and dignity as the person. I accept myself like the person and I accept you like the person. I sometimes might not like it or accept what you do but I always accept your essence as a human being.

Each individual has the capacity to think. Each person has the capacity to think except the situation of some major damages of the brain. That is why it is each of us responsibility to decide what we want from life and to live with the consequences of our decisions.

People decide their own destiny and these decisions can be changed. Any belief can be changed. Most of our ways of interaction with the world were shaped in childhood, rethinking and changing these decisions being possible. This statement is a key concept which eliminates the accusation of others and places the responsibility on his own person. As a consequence, the TA philosophy frees and stimulates.

TA, even if it has the short-coming of being too simple, it can be considered a real key for communication; therefore I want to present the main concepts, trusting your own capacity in finding examples and applications.

The Transactional Analysis contains:

- I. The Structural Analysis which allows the understanding of the person's ego state
- II. The Analyses of the Transactions, which studies thoroughly what happens in the inter-personal communicative changes;
- III. The Analysis of the Life Position, with other words, the ways used by other persons, more or less conscious facing life.;
- IV. The Game Analysis, which allows the understanding and finding solutions in some series of typical situations, in an effective way.

I. The structural analysis

The One-Self States.

The one-self state is defined as a system of thoughts, of behaviour and emotions that places each individual in relationship with the environment (the environment can be another individual, a family, a group or a company).

In order to understand the behaviour of a person in TA, three states of the ego are described: the Parent, the Adult and the Child, which differ from the supra-ego, ego and id, by the fact that they are not manifestations of the ego, but they represent visible behaviour and not hypothetical concepts.

Freud's model and the model of the ego states do not superpose and they are not the same thing either; they do not contradict either, they are just two different manners of presenting Personality. An ego state is a coherent ensemble of behaviour, thoughts and feelings. It is our way of expressing our Personality at a certain moment.

When I think and I feel the way I used to do when I was a child, I say that I am in the Child state. When I behave, I think and I feel in a way taken from the parents or from another parent figure, I say I am in the Parent state. When I behave, I think and I feel in a way which is an immediate reaction, here and now, at the events happening around me, using all my capacities as an adult, I say I am in the Adult state.

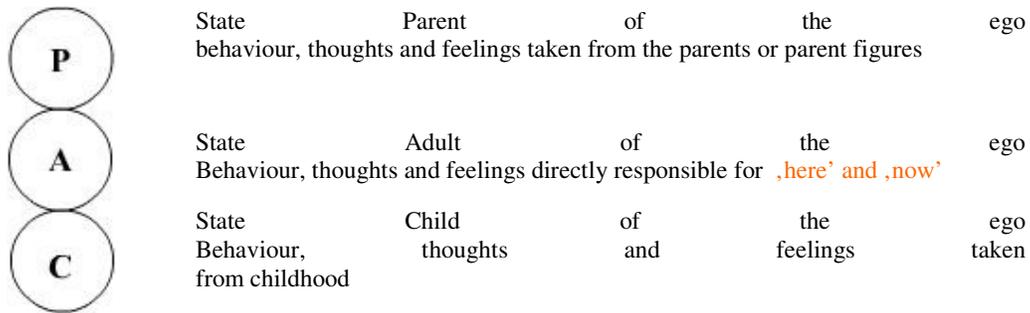
In order to have a healthy and balanced personality, we need these three states of the ego. We need the Adult to solve the problems here and now and to approach life in an adapted and effective manner. In order to be in harmony with the society, we need the Parent set of rules. And in our inner Child we find again the spontaneity, creativity and intuition we enjoyed when we were children.

The Ego states.

Eric Berne defined an ego state as a 'constant model of feelings and experiences directly connected with a proper model of behaviour'.

We have 3 ego states which correspond with the constant models, separated and distinct from feelings and behaviour. These 3 states are called: Parent ego state, Adult ego state and Child ego state.

In order to differentiate them from the parents, adults of real children, the ego states are used in TA literature with the first letter capitalized. A simplified diagram of the ego states is presented below.



The Parent ego state is a collection of behaviour, thoughts and feelings which we took from 'those who took care of us'. The expression 'those who took care of us' is used to show that the Parent is taken not only from the parents but it can also include the attitude of brothers and elder sisters, grandfathers, teachers, etc.

The Parent State

It is the reflex of the received education, which impress upon the childhood and adolescence, continuing to act on the adult, too. The transmitted values refer to:

- Good and evil;
- What you must do and what you mustn't do;
- Beliefs;
- Professional fulfilment;
- Marriage;
- Traditions etc.

4.CHARACTERISTICS OF TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

The self state is defined by a system of thoughts, behaviour and emotions which put each individual in relationship with the environment (the environment can be another individual, a family, a group or a company).

The transactional analysis postulates that each person has three states of his own ego, which in their totality define the personality. These states are: the Parent Ego (P), the Adult Ego (A) and the Child Ego (C). In each of us there are three states of Ego. They produce the dialogue with ourselves and with others.

The three ego states have no connection with the effective age or with the family relationship, but they refer to the behaviour models; we pass from one state to another depending on the situation.

The individual starts the effort of understanding the world, making order in himself by registering the inner events, with other words the individual reaction towards the outside stimuli. The Child (C) is the sum of these inner events. In C the experiences and reactions are stocked, registered from the first day of our existence, both positive and negative.

In general, the child ego state appears when we have to deal with the expressing of spontaneity, of feelings, desires, intentions and hopes, emotions. Due to C we can savour life, feel spontaneous, imaginative, creative, longing for friends, we can act spontaneously, timorously and revolted, but we adapt to the requirements of the environment.

There are situations when the C state troubles us: if, for example, it make us to give up at solving some problems, when we are stubborn, depressed and desperate, when we search guilt only at others, when we refuse to accept responsibilities, when we are scared about the future, when we are timorous.

For each of these situations we can distinguish models such as:

1. The adapted child - the docile child, obedient and who always behave according to the expectations of those around him. He submits and executes the orders received. E.g.: 'Excuse me if I bother you, I've brought you what you wanted'; 'I'd rather have some coffee, but if you cannot, it is not so important, anyway'; 'I'm sorry! Can I.....'. The adapted child accepts the rules of the group, quiet and reserved. His voice is sweet and moderated. The tone is balanced and hesitating.

Advantages: respecting the norms, social values are consolidated

Disadvantages: the excessive docility is the cause of indecision and doubt.

2. The rebellious child is characterized by a series of negative and polemical manifestations: aggressiveness, wants to be in the center of attention by saying 'no', the indiscriminating opposition. E.g.: 'I'm not in the mood right now!'; 'I don't need you, I can manage by myself'; 'Leave me alone!'. The gestures are sudden and from time to time violent; the voice is lively and furious.

Advantages: he protects himself against the authority of somebody else and against of power abuse.

Disadvantages: the communication with the outside can be interrupted

3. The little teacher – he is the center of creativity and invention. The individual proves to be curious of knowledge and of understanding and tries to solve all the problems that might appear. He trusts in his own capacity and he is always convinced he found the best solution. E.g.: 'I have an amazing idea'; 'who knows how it functions, I'm in the mood for disassembling!'; 'If you do it this way you'll succeed with no doubt'. The sight is lively and bright. He often destroys in order to understand a mechanism. His voice is seductive and meditative. He expresses himself tempestuous.

Advantages: the creative and artistic activity is stimulated.

Disadvantages: bewilderment with risk of superficiality.

4. The Spontaneous Child – is the expression of enthusiasm, mania, fear, discouragement. The individual has desires, needs, satisfactions, dissatisfactions. E.g.: He's ranting!'; 'Wow, tonight we're going to do crazy things...'; 'I'm hungry, buy a cake for me!'. He uses his body for expressing himself, he doesn't have too much bashfulness and acts freely. His voice is energetic; the tone is adapted to the situation: laughs, screams, cries.

Advantages: spontaneity and energy; pleasure and enthusiasm.

Disadvantages: lack of control can be harmful in some situations.

The Parent state (P) is the reflex of the received education, which impress on the childhood and adolescence, continuing to work on the adult. The transmitted values refer to:

- Good and evil;
- What you must do and what you mustn't do;
- beliefs;
- faith;
- professional fulfilment
- marriage
- traditions etc.

The Parent state divides in:

- The Controlling parent, with reference to the social norms and evaluation methods;
- The Nurturing (or the protector) is the one who protects, comforts and encourage.

The Negative Controlling Parent (NCP). It is the parent who underestimates the child. E.g. : " You don't know to do anything!"; "It is not the right way to do it!"; " At your age I used to get better results than yours!"...

The Positive Controlling Parent (PCP). It is the parent who gives orders and sets limits, checking if they are respected. E.g.: " Go to bed, you have to get up early tomorrow!"; "Finish wolfing or you'll make an indigestion"; " Go and say hello to the neighbour!"; " You don't have to say lies!". In both cases the conduct is strict and the sight is cold and dominating. The voice is sharp and rough.

Advantages: it sends moral principles facilitating the individual integration in his social environment.

Disadvantages: his rigidity can inhibit and censor creativity and imagination.

The Negative Nurturing Parent (NNP). It is the exaggerated nurturing parent, becoming hyper-protector and blocking the child natural development. E.g.: "I'll do the job in your place, so nothing might happen to you"; " That friend is not good for you".

The Positive Nurturing Parent (PNP). It is the parent who helps, gives advise and looks after his child, respecting his autonomy. E.g.: "It's dangerous this way, wait till I'll teach you something safer"; "Today it's quite cold, you'd better put on something". From a physical point of view, the gestures are generous and open. The voice is soft, sweet and comforting.

Advantages: it creates favourable conditions for a natural and secure development of the child
Disadvantages: the hyper-protection can suffocate and inhibit any initiative.

The Adult State. The characteristic of the adult state consists in receiving a series of information in order to put together and to develop it in a logical, rational and objective way.

The Ego Adult State is not in a strict relation with the individual age, but it is autonomous and independent. Also, the adult state does not replace the ego states which I talked previously, but evaluates their solutions and check the validity for the present situation. The Adult (A) stocks, processes, evaluates information, making decisions on their basis and selecting behaviour.

(A) shapes starting with the moment when the child checks the model about the world which he created on the basis of the information from (P) and of emotions from (C) and compares it with reality.

The adult state usually activates when:

- An opinion is expressed, or questions appear (why, where, how, who etc.),
- Objectives are to be decided
- He assumes his own responsibility,
- A decision is made,
- A solution is taken
- A negotiation starts,
- Some results requires evaluation
- Conciliation is required.

The typical phrases are: "It is possible to..."; "I think that..."; "We conclude that..." . Their sight is direct and neutral. The body posture: straight and relaxed. The voice is normal and neutral. The tone is clear but inexpressive.

The advantages of this state: the information is elaborated logically and objectively.

Disadvantages: it can become cold and emotionless, he disturbs when a spontaneous solution is required, he can curb in situations which cannot be postponed.

As I have already mentioned, we pass continuously from one state to another in different situations, with no connection with the age or family relationships. Obviously when we communicate with somebody and he is in a special state of his ego, this situation can raise great series of combinations; the study of all these possibilities of communication makes just the object of the Transactional Analyses.

We shall analyse how this information is used in practice: in fact I have anticipated that some standard situations make room for the "games", the respective analyses being very interesting and funny.

So far we can notice that the excessive development of the "Negative Controlling Parent" state causes a "Persecutor" type of personality. In the same way, the over-adapted Child state causes a "Victim" behaviour, while the exaggerated Nurturing Parent state will cause a "Saviour" type of personality.

But the archetypes triangle the "Persecutor", the "Victim", the "Saviour" stays at the basis of each novel, film, transaction, event, doesn't it?

To the psychologists who, under the excuse of research, have fun noticing the mice behaviour and try to draw useful conclusions in comparison with the human behaviour, it can sometimes happen to them to discover interesting things.

Let's return to the basic notion of the transactional analysis, at the above mentioned "coin", used by the TA; that word with no equivalent in the Romanian language, namely stroke. Let's say that a compliment, a greeting, a kiss are positive "strokes", while an insult, a slap are negative "strokes" (if we want to continue with the example with the food, we can say that a "stroke" gas the same value with a "psychological calorie").

In his last work, Eric Berne wrote that for most of us, life is nothing else but a continuous/permanent search for "strokes" and the entire social frame, nothing else but a way to organize our production and distribution. In this process, we have three central needs: the need for position, the need to be comforted, as I have mentioned before, and the need to structure the time.

5. USE OF TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS FOR AN EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION

Our steps consist of analysing the basic principles of an efficient communication from the analysis perspective of the three states, of the types of games and transactions.

After some writers, the following would be important:

- The definition of the objective;
- The action strategy decision and its application;
- The results observation;
- Changing something that eventually did not work, until the required result is obtained.

The same model can and must be applied each time when reaching to a correct communication is meant. Therefore, first of all, we need to take into consideration that the main reason we communicate for is to obtain some certain behaviour from the interlocutor. This result (our "wanted state") should always be present in our mind and should be useful for us as a reference point and guidance. Thus we risk to get involved in psychological games, which would have as result – in the optimistic alternative – absolutely nothing. Therefore, before opening our mouth, we have to ask certain questions:

1. "What is my purpose?" or "What is the purpose of this communication?" Perhaps I want to clarify a situation, to ask something, to express a feeling, to thank, to seduce, to scold, to inform, to establish a relationship etc.

If what we want to say or what we want the other to understand is not clear, even to ourselves, then it is obvious we will succeed to send the message to our interlocutor only with big difficulty.

2. "Taking into consideration what I know about the person I'm talking to and his present state, what is the ideal way to obtain what I want?" There are infinite ways to express the same thing, but we have to find the right one for our interlocutor, otherwise we will speak just for ourselves. Is there anyone who met a doctor, a lawyer, a shopkeeper who overwhelmed him with technical words without being preoccupied if he was listened or not ?

It is also very important to take into consideration the interlocutor emotional state; if someone is tired, scared, absent-minded, angry, he could be receptive only with great effort. In such cases it is more useful to focus on the rapport and to listen, emphatically, postponing what we wanted to say for a better opportunity, instead of insisting in communicating a message which will be incomprehensible anyway.

3. "What I'm going to communicate is more valuable than my relationship (rapport) with that person?"

We often do not realise how much harm we can do with our words. We like it or not, we all suffer of a background insecurity- even if it is hidden with ability – and automatically we react aggressively, or we transform ourselves into "victims", if somebody provokes us in a way or another. Therefore, particularly, in case we must confront ourselves with personal reasoning, it is better to ask ourselves this question more often: "Is it really worth to harm my rapport with somebody else for the simple reason that I want to be right for a banality?" Sometimes yes, as sometimes it can be necessary to react with maximum harshness; what it is important is to do it consciously, and not to be surprised afterwards that we have to confront a situation which we did not intend to create it (I recall that we are responsible for the result, and not the listener).

Obviously, these questions will help us even then when somebody tries to communicate with us, especially if he does it in a negative manner. On the basis of what I've said before about the necessity of changing and about the "negative" strokes, it should be clear that the person who misbehaves, who is aggressive or impolite (let's recall that any behaviour means communication) does not do it because he has something with someone, but because he learned that way represents the way to obtain his own ratio of "strokes".

To react automatically would immediately involve us in one of the psychological games we talked about: any role activates another one (Persecutor – Victim, Victim – Saviour etc.) and a lot of self-control is needed not to let us involved in a negative situation.

Unfortunately, as I mentioned previously, there are no simple solutions; the best alternative is to activate our Adult state, firstly by imposing to ourselves not to start a game which would lead us into a negative situation and, secondly trying to bring back the communication to one of the positive ways.

The coin for transactions is the positive comfort and to minimize the quantity of negative comfort we receive.

The transactional analyses is an explicative theory of the human communication, but also of the human personality. It creates and develops techniques and tools, notions and concepts which help us to understand what we, the people, are and which can improve the capacity of communication.

The transactional analysis provides psychotherapies to adjust and to remake the interior psychical balance, to correct certain psychical, psychosomatal and behavioural shortcomings, to improve the capacity of integration in the group and society.

Last but not list, the transactional analysis is an effective and subtle work tool in the management of the human resources and in the advanced marketing.

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