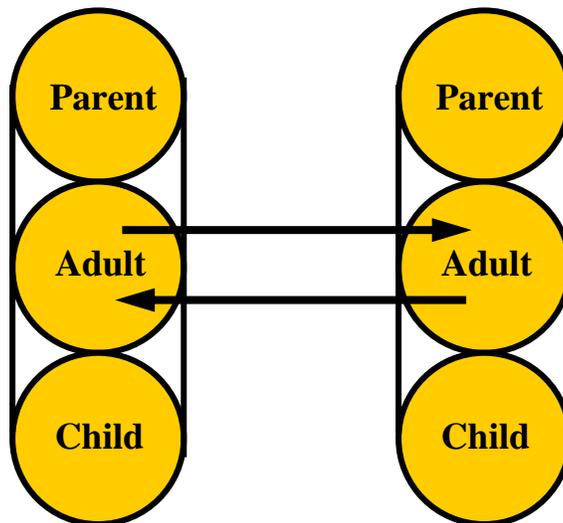


Fourth Millennium of the Alphabet and the Transactional Analysis Diagrams

The PAC's Meet the ABC'ers

by

Franklin H. Ernst Jr., M.D.

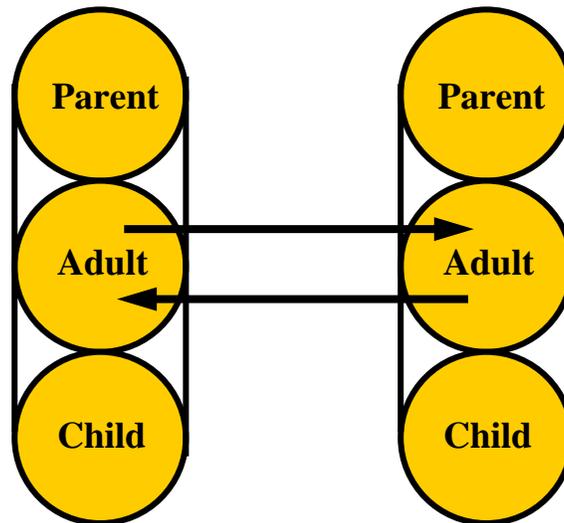


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During the 2,000,000 year history of mankind, it is reasonable to assume that only minor evolutionary changes have occurred in the anatomic, physiologic, and neurological apparatus of the human. Therefore, the burst of technical skills during the last 3,000 to 5,000 years is the result of other than physical or chromosomal change. It is proposed here that this burst has been the result of two sets of inventions and that Transactional Analysis may well be a third. The first is the relative simplification of the information codification process, and the second is the relative simplification of the dissemination of codified information.¹

Education is the process of providing skills and knowledge to others and includes techniques for imparting competence in these skills and knowledge.² It is often carried out by educators including teachers. Education is also the field of study concerned with the principles of instructing others.

The invention of the written phonetic equivalents, the phonetic alphabet, about 2000 B.C., and the decimal-zero system of ranking whole numbers, about 500 A.D. (completed by Stevin in 1585 with his invention of ranking partial whole numbers to the right of the decimal point) have provided the widest range of persons with a relatively small number of basic symbols to memorize in order to convert imagery, spoken words, knowledge and skills into a storable, codified (written) form which when decoded (read) will evoke similar imagery and actions into the learning of skills and knowledge in another person.

¹ Ernst, F.H. Jr., M.D.: "The Fourth Millennium of the Alphabet Fetes the Transactional Analysis Diagram", Transactional Analysis Journal, 1:4, October 1971.

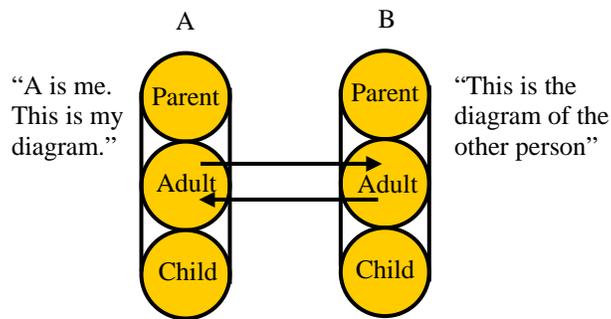
² Franz Alexander and other recognized writers placed increased emphasis on learning theory, educational, corrective emotional experience and use of the patients' intellectual faculties to bring about his cures in the 1950's and 1960's (American Journal of Psychiatry, Nov. 1963).



Compared to the thousands of written characters to memorize, one for each word in some written languages, the phonetically keyed alphabet offers a drastic reduction in the amount of time spent learning-memorizing and consequently a proportionately much larger amount of time freed to master (read) previously encoded (written) knowledge and then to write of one's own knowledge and skills gained at the frontiers of information. This later writing could then be done using the same basic set of phonetic equivalent symbols with their relative universality (within each language).

Additional acceleration of information codification and dissemination came about with the invention in 1440 (Gutenberg) of the alphabet-letter, movable type for use in a printing press where it took a supply of less than 100 unique character shapes, the alphabet letters and decimal numbers, to represent the widest possible range of information equivalents, concepts and instructions. (The Chinese invented a printing press with movable type about 200 A.D., but the thousands of characters, one for each word, precluded its general usefulness.)

A third set of steps in education was started with Juan Luis Vives, 1492—1540, an educator turned psychologist. He studied extensively and wrote of the impediments to successful educating arising from the emotions, “the passions,” impinging into the instructing arena. Freud elucidated the childhood and unconscious basis of “the passions.” These have paved the way for what is here considered the third major set of educating tools, starting with the twin set of three stacked circles, the TRANSACTIONAL DIAGRAM. (See Figure No. 1)



Transactional Diagram

Figure No. 1



In addition to being a method of psychotherapy and an organization, transactional analysis is a scientific theory of social behavior and a theory of personality structure. As a theory it meets the criteria of (1) duplicability of results by different persons, and (2) teachableness to students. The main advantage of teaching this theory of the pair of three stacked circles is that the complexities of almost any (social) situation can be vastly reduced. The use of this alphabet-type diagram (this schematic representation of human and social events) is worth a “thousand words.” (See Figure No. 2)

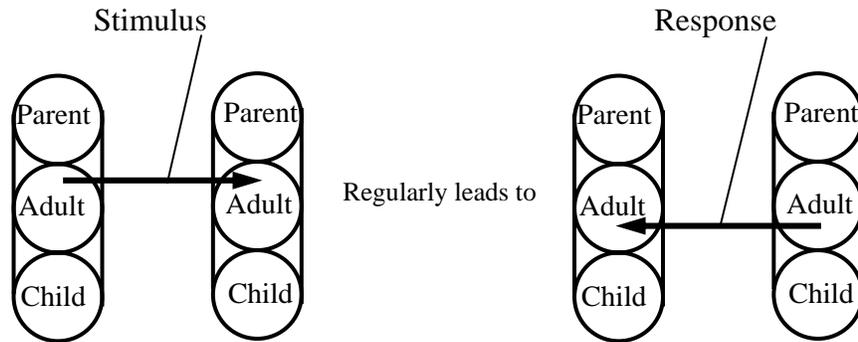


Figure No. 2

The Transactional Analysis Theory with its diagrammatic representation is teachable, comprehensible, usable, and is assimilated person to person as attested by the meteoric rise in the numbers of its (untreated) users, users living in alphabet using countries. English speaking and Spanish speaking countries are the two best known to the writer, although “Games People Play” has been translated into many languages (about a hundred). It continues to be one of the fastest spreading bodies of knowledge. (See Figure No. 3)³ after translation into other sets of vocal-imagery equivalents, i.e., into other alphabet using languages.

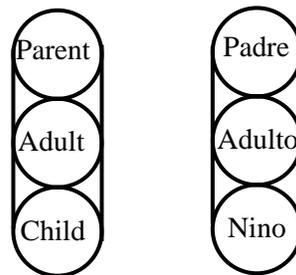


Figure No. 3

³ Berne, Eric M.D., “Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy”, Grove Press, New York, NY, 1961.



Education, the process, now has a simplified, handy behavioral tool with a universality of use by which both instructor and pupil can symbolically represent and gauge the quality of stimulation and response for content of “passions,” the presence of which may be impeding the educating process whether by decreasing the competence of the instructor or by decreasing the rate at which the student gains competence in a skill or both.⁴

The reader, using the pair of transactional stacked circles, can very likely diagram and have imagery evoked with the following (1970) report by a junior high school student about his own educational setting. “They sure bug you for being late to class. The teachers send you to the dean's office if you are late three times, and he gives you a lecture and detention and makes you write sentences. The dean sentences the student to writing sentences. Here the rebel Child of the student and the disciplining Parent of the dean and teacher can be visualized. (Figure No. 4)

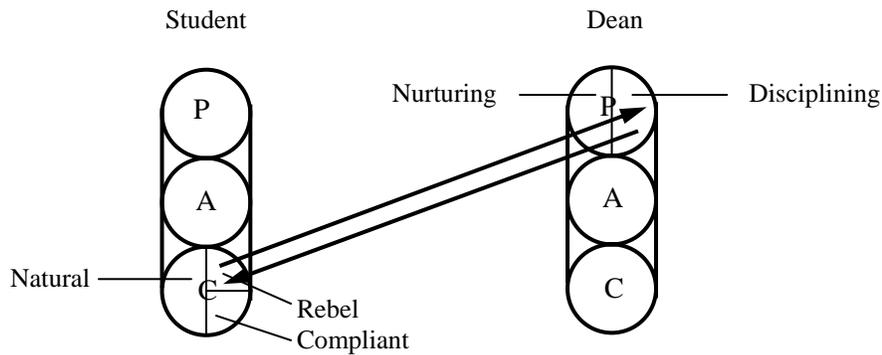


Figure No. 4

In this instance the method of Parental disciplining, consciously or unconsciously, was well adapted to stimulate further rebelliousness and intensification of playing the games of "Stupid" and "Make Me," toward the dynamic of "getting-away-from" school.⁵ Could it be that this antiquated schoolroom practice of being sentenced to write sentences as a PENALty contributes to the continuation of writing and reading handicaps? The transactional analysis (T.A.) theory and diagrams can and has been taught to both teachers and pupils in high schools with benefit to both.

⁴ Ernst, F.H. Jr., M.D.: “Third Circle – The Diagramed Parent, Eric Berne’s Most Significant Contribution”, Addresso’Set Publications, Vallejo, California, 2008.

⁵ Ernst, F.H. Jr., M.D.: “Transactional Analysis in the OK Corral – Grid for What’s Happening”, Addresso’Set Publications, Vallejo, California, 2008.



Now we can identify: (1) the "passions" of the Child ego state of the pupil that interfere with learning and the education process in the person (student), and (2) the corollary Parental involvement by the teacher can be objectified. When objectivity (Adult) prevails, less time will be spent by pupil and teacher in "passions," distracting tangents. (See Figure No. 5)

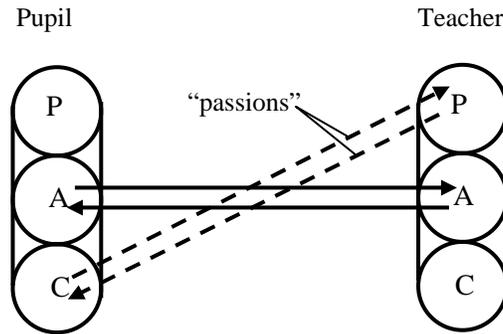


Figure No. 5

This writer does not advocate complete discontinuance of the expression of the "passions" (games ⁶) by either teacher or pupil, because of the biologic stroke value derived from the periodic exercise of these. Rather, the use of the transactional diagram tool itself lends to balance in the classroom. A game with its vitality-stimulating denouement (payoff) leads to the stimulating and exercising of both the psychological imagery and the physiologic mechanisms of internal homeostasis. (See Figure No. 6)

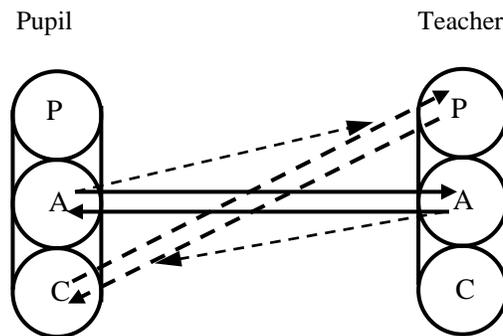


Figure No. 6

⁶ Berne, Eric M.D.: "Games People Play, The Psychology of Human Behavior", Grove Press, New York, NY, 1964.



This latter is in the report of a skilled teacher also versed in transactional analysis (T.A.) especially with the game of “Stupid,” as he good-naturedly asked his class: “Come on! Now, how do kids miss 19 out of 21 spelling words in a test? It takes something extra to do that!” A precocious Stupid player (student), quick to raise his hand, brightly responded: “I know, I know, teach. First you have to practice spelling them not right,” (with laughs around the room) continuing about copying the misspelled words over, “That’s not learning, that’s copying.” Whereupon this professional educator replied: “Oh, I see. Having you copy, that’s really stupid, huh? That would make me a stupid teacher then.” (bigger laughs) This was a Get-On-With dynamic to the event. When the second transactional analysis diagram is added, we can understand the dynamics at work (the social forces). (See Figures No. 7 and No. 8)

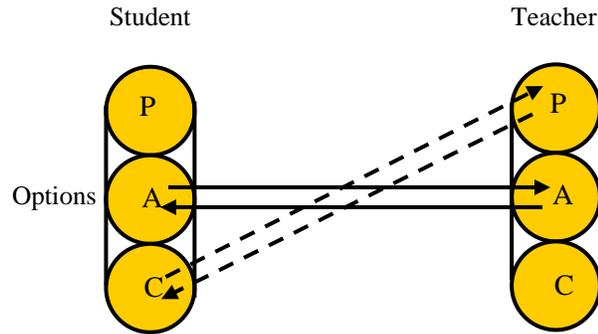


Figure No. 7

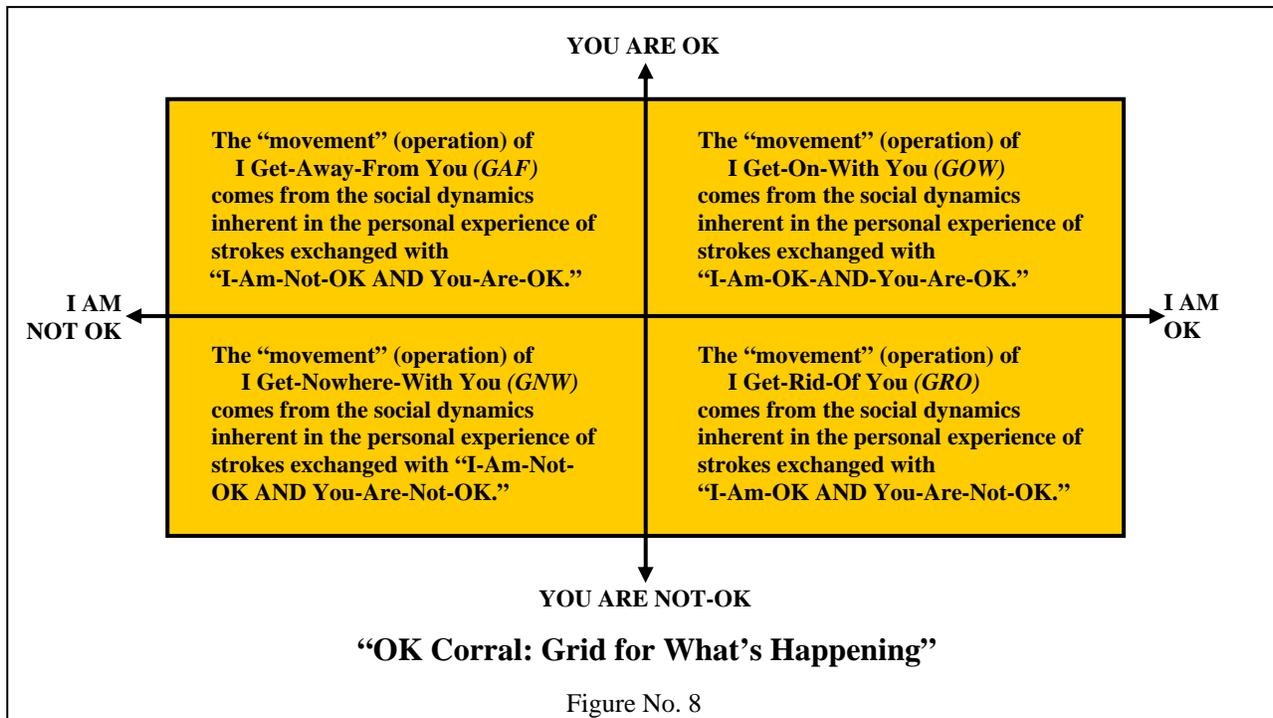


Figure No. 8



Grading of student work is a measure of three variables: (1) the competence of the pupil in the particular knowledge or skill, (2) in the transactional analysis sense, the Adult ability of the pupil to adapt to the-now-and-the-here of the classroom, especially the teacher, and (3) the competence of the instructor at doing his job; i.e. imparting the particular skills and knowledge. Instructors unwilling to grade the performance and competence of a pupil are probably having difficulty with the third variable whether because of Child contamination into the professional's Adult or Parental overlapping into his own Adult. (See Figure No. 9)

"Schools without Failure" is a laudable concept and probably making a significant contribution to the education process. The seating arrangements and vocal exchange elements of this concept are conducive to an increased level of student activity, movement and conversational exchange. This concept unquestionably does lead to a more stimulating classroom experience for the individual student and when adequately and skillfully guided will be productive of an increased learning rate.

When, in addition, there is the introduction of explicit transactional analysis data into the classroom setting, then not only is there more activity and learning, but the participants also know what they are doing and why.

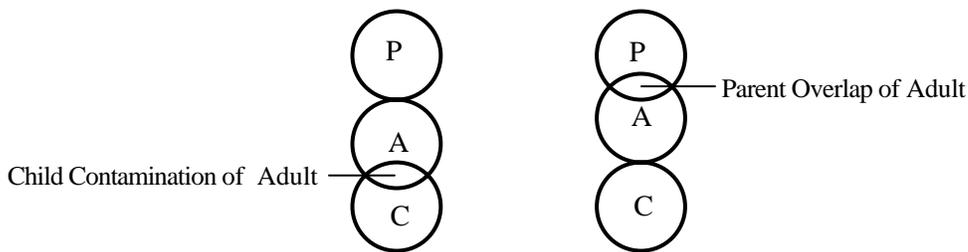


Figure No. 9

The following examples show the use of the Transactional Analysis theory and diagram in two different types of educational settings. The education-in-action use of transactional analysis theory as represented by its diagram, this alphabet-type diagram tool encodes in a simplified, universally understandable form the entelechy of behavior information which can lead to personal, social and technical competence.



One public high school class observed by the writer was taught basic transactional analysis by the teacher; the class then began to hold group discussions led by one of the 12 member group of students. The teacher did not enter the group discussions but did conduct the post-group discussions of the 12 participants and the 15 other class members who took turns as observers when not group members. The students in this class used the transactional analysis (T.A.) terminology of "Parent, Adult, Child, Kid, rebel, compliant, natural, nurturing, prohibiting, disciplining, game, get-on-with, get-rid-of, get-away-from, and get-nowhere-with" correctly and accurately. They described new successes with old problems at home and became habitual users of the transactional analysis (T.A.) terminology. Many had read at least two of Berne's works, and some began to teach transactional analysis (T.A.) to their extramural friends. Teachers were able to teach the subject matter more efficiently and the students of this particular class learned the subject matter faster; and in addition knew what they were doing and why.

Another dimension of using transactional analysis (T.A.) in education has been added by Dr. Groder's initiatives of the Asklepieion Institute. Set up within a federal penitentiary, Dr. Groder began to use the emerging talents of his getting-well inmates to carry on work with other groups of inmates. He then offered the cured inmates the opportunities to refine their own transactional analysis (T.A.) skills and at the same time solidify their personal commitments to staying well by becoming advanced members of this transactional analysis institute. Some achieved faculty positions within the Asklepieion Institute within the particular federal prison. These faculty members under Groder's direction conducted introductory and advanced training sessions in transactional analysis (T.A.) for professionals and graduate students outside of the prison institution. They also conducted group sessions for outsiders of a contractual nature for transactional analysis (T.A.) education in personal behavior. Some of the outsiders traveled upwards of 20 miles to attend sessions.

