

Transactional Analysis Proper—and Improper

Selected and New Papers

Keith Tudor



‘A magisterial summary and reflective critique of transactional analysis and its relationships to the psychodynamics of most of the last century, this latest book by Keith Tudor is truly revolutionary. This is for the serious student, teacher and practitioner of transactional analysis. It covers and evaluates all the developments in the field since Berne and their potentials as practitioners encounter different populations and circumstances. Yet all, as Tudor emphasizes, are rooted in the same philosophical and ethical principles. Notwithstanding its complexity, the book is written in simple and clear language. I especially appreciated the extraordinarily useful tables. They also highlight that transactional analysis is not a one-size fits all approach for true believers with one set of techniques, but a rich and generative background from which, within a contractual framework, to come alongside our clients. For future students, teachers and practitioners, this will be The Book!’

James R. Allen, MD, MPH, Teaching and Supervising Transactional Analyst, Formerly Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, University of Oklahoma Health Science Center Oklahoma City, USA and Past President of the International Transactional Analysis Association

‘This tour de force is an unfolding exploration of the core ideas of TA from philosophy to theory to methodology to practice. Keith Tudor constructs, critiques and examines the different views of the conceptual roots of transactional analysis, including I’m OK, You’re OK, thinking Martian, ego states, scripts, and much more. He explores the implications of concepts philosophically and politically, locating them in space and time within the wider field of psychological thought as well as within society.

It is a challenging book and also a deeply respectful, inclusive and even a gentle one. It is also erudite and stimulating – a wonderful resource for others writing in the field. I found that it was not a quick read. In every chapter there was something to make me stop and have a discussion with the author in my head, to look things up, to make notes, to agree and disagree, and much to muse about!

The collection of papers, some previously published and some new, also tracks the author’s own journey from his beginnings as a qualified transactional analyst in the 1990s through to the present day. At its heart, of course, are transactions – or, rather *present-centred relating* – from a deeply relational standpoint. There is a rich elaboration of Keith’s thinking about relating as well as his contribution to Stark’s (1999) modes of therapeutic action, namely “two-person plus” relating, which invites the reader to embrace a constant higher level of awareness of the wider world, including issues of ecological and intersectional importance on one hand, and on the other, the professional and personal identity of a transactional analyst.’

Professor Charlotte Sills, Teaching and Supervising Transactional Analyst, Ashridge Hult University, Berkhamsted, and Metanoia Institute, London, UK

‘Beginning with its title, the book *Transactional Analysis Proper – and Improper*, comprises a challenge from the author to transactional analysts to identify TA both in its “proper” form (traditional, classical and transactional) and its less proper form, i.e., one which is more deconstructive, and acknowledging of the incongruent elements of the original theory and methodology of TA.

Drawing on his personal and professional journey as a transactional analyst, and as someone who has worked with, taught, and reflected on TA for some 35 years, Keith Tudor offers this detailed analysis using both scientific method and philosophical analysis. In doing so, he has created an intense book, full of bibliographical references, through which he traces the evolutionary path of thought in TA and its different and sometimes opposing orientations.

In this volume, which comprises some of his previous publications, as well as seven new chapters, the author attempts to give some answers to the contradictions he identifies in TA theory, and, in doing so, poses many questions for the reader to reflect upon, including that of the paradigm of ego states which lies at the heart of TA. The author does this on various levels – conceptual, clinical, phenomenological, and existential level, inviting us to go beyond a “skin-to-skin” schema characteristic of the Western view of personality. The author proposes that we move towards a psychology of “we-ness” in order to replace the top-down anthropocentric and anthropomorphic psychology with one that restores the inseparability of the self from the world. Visible in this new paradigm is the importance of recognising the self, the other, others and the environment in a co-creative relational mode that is oriented towards collective well-being as well as individual autonomy. What this book proposes and demonstrates is that the construction of postmodern identities cannot be reduced to the action of intrapsychic determinants alone.

This important contribution is vital for the future development of TA on both a theoretical and a methodological level. In various chapters, the author attempts to identify a map within which to move in order to review the main theoretical and methodological assumptions of TA, starting from the use of words and their meaning. The text emphasises the importance of the clinical and environmental context and their influence in the construction of theory, a construction that cannot fail to take into account the context in which we live and form our psychological world, a context in which we are in deep and constant relationship. Last but not least, this important volume suggests that the future of TA must be fluid and oriented towards the present and the future, and free from a past (including its contradictions), within which the present cannot be imprisoned.’

Dr Gaetano Sisalli, *Clinical Transactional Analyst,
Teaching and Supervising Transactional Analyst,
and Psychiatrist, living and working in Catania, Italy*

‘In many ways reading Keith Tudor’s book feels like stepping into a craftsman’s workshop and watching him immersed in his work, assessing the weight of various

materials, measuring their length, finding out their melting point, or how easily they break if bent. The author takes Berne's pivotal ideas and critically observes them, playfully, but vigorously challenging them at times, turning them on their head and, ultimately, transforming them. His lens regarding the nature and purpose of TA, its practice, or the nature and purpose of transactional theory is often radical; however, it is not subservient to forms of radicalism, but remains (self) reflexive, committed to complexity and dialogue. Throughout the book, some passages convey echoes of either hopefulness, or disappointment in relation to the use or misuse of theory, yet each time the author's relentless curiosity remains in place, unwavering.

The reading of Keith Tudor's book becomes all the more meaningful when considered in relationship to other TA papers and in the broader context provided by philosophical and political writings. It is a reading that equally fosters the freedom to agree, as well to disagree with the content, the courage to exercise the craft of testing out the coherence of our theoretical frameworks. Therefore, it becomes a good companion for the reader's mind and heart alike.'

Diana Deaconu, *Psychologist and Certified Transactional Analyst, Bucharest, Romania*

'In his aptly titled book, *Transactional Analysis Proper – and Improper*, Keith Tudor has surveyed and updated six decades of transactional analysis (TA) literature. The title points to a clear discussion of, and a careful balance between, the two poles of TA critique – that it is an overly simple "pop" psychology, and that it has tried too hard to become complex, colonising other, particularly psychodynamic models. The book's layout in three, roughly chronological parts, makes it immediately accessible to readers with both beginning and sophisticated sensibilities, and, read in sequence (though they do not have to be), they take the reader on a philosophical journey through TA theory, from foundational ideas to a complex future. The book offers depth and informed perspective to both social studies (and particularly psychotherapy) students and experienced practitioners and academics. It is likely to become a standard text in the field, and deservedly so.'

Seán Manning, *Teaching and Supervising Transactional Analyst, Dunedin, Aotearoa New Zealand, and former President of the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists*



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Transactional Analysis Proper—and Improper

Transactional Analysis Proper—and Improper: Selected and New Papers offers a critical reading of transactional analysis (TA), which analyses, deconstructs, and reconstructs its foundational theory.

Keith Tudor's work is detailed, informative, and critical, and written with deep affection for TA and its founder, Eric Berne. Beginning with its philosophical foundations, Tudor considers TA's ontological assumptions about the essence of human beings, its method and methodology, and its treatment philosophy. A series of chapters then review and advance TA's theory of transactions, ego states, life scripts, and psychological games, and the book concludes with two chapters which both honour TA's traditions and look forward to what TA might do differently.

This book offers a unique 'insider but independent' perspective on transactional analysis. It will be essential reading for students and practitioners of transactional analysis and encourages free, independent, and critical thinking about TA and its place in the world.

Keith Tudor is professor of psychotherapy at Auckland University of Technology, Aotearoa New Zealand where he is also a co-Lead of Moana Nui—Centre for Research in the Psychological Therapies. He has been involved with transactional analysis (TA) for over 40 years and is a Certified and a Teaching and Supervising Transactional Analyst in the field of psychotherapy. He is a well-published author and editor in the field, with over 100 publications about TA, including most recently an edited book: *Claude Steiner, Emotional Activist* (Routledge, 2020). He has a small private practice as a therapist, trainer, and supervisor, based in West Auckland.



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Keith Tudor

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Introduction

The best physician is also a philosopher.

(Aelius Galenus)

This book presents and develops a critical and reflexive perspective on transactional analysis (TA), informed by contemporary relational perspectives both within and outside TA. Comprising six previously published papers, and seven new chapters, the volume both represents my existing contribution to TA over some 35 years and offers further developments of TA.

The title of the book plays on a central piece of TA theory, the analysis of transactions, otherwise known as ‘transactional analysis proper’ or TA Proper, and confronts it, in the Bernean sense of the word, by developing what might be considered as TA ‘improper’, i.e., that which challenges the language and rhetoric of TA, some of its tradition and received wisdom, its authority and convention, and its claims to objectivity and universalism, as well as the conservatism of much of TA therapeutic practice. My own interest in critical thinking, criticism and critique is longstanding (for the background to which, see Tudor, 2018b), and, alongside some of my other writing in TA (Tudor, 1996, 2008d, 2010d, 2011e, 2016ca, 2016d; Tudor & Widdowson, 2008; Tudor et al., 2022), this book represents such thinking, applied to TA. Moreover, despite his own social conservatism, Berne appreciated independent thinkers—in *Principles of Group Treatment* (Berne, 1966a), he cites Karl Abraham approvingly in this respect—and himself advocates ‘the “Martian” approach’ (Berne, 1962, p. 32), which represents a way of thinking without preconceived ideas (see Chapter 13). In his commentary on this, Hostie (1982) refers to this as ‘that impertinence which prompts extremely pertinent questions’ (p. 169). Whilst this was very much part of Berne’s own style, and of some of the early discussions in the San Francisco Social Psychiatry Seminars, and, of course, of the radical psychiatry tradition in (and outside) TA, there is, with a couple of notable exceptions, i.e., Deaconu (2020) and Barrow and Marshall (2023b), now comparatively little Martian thinking, speaking, or writing in TA (for discussion of which, see Chapter 13).

I have been inspired by other critical thinkers in TA, and especially those who invite us all to think critically and reflexively about theory. These include Robert

Massey (e.g., 1986), William (Bill) Cornell (e.g., 1988), Marilyn Zalcman (1990), Graham Barnes (1994, 2000, 2004, 2005), James (Jim) Allen (e.g., 2009), Helena Hargaden (2016), Salma Siddique (2017), and, most recently, Victoria Baskerville (2003). I particularly appreciate Zalcman's (1990) critique of the (then) development of TA theory and practice, which she views as slowed down and misdirected, due to four trends:

- (1) The rapid generation of new TA concepts and techniques without adequate conceptual integration with what already exists;
- (2) The adoption of concepts and techniques from other methods without sufficient critical evaluation or integration into TA theory and practice;
- (3) The reframing of TA into psychoanalytic and neo-psychodynamic terms, often to make it 'more respectable', or presenting TA in pop psychology terms, often to make it 'more marketable'; and
- (4) More recently, the tendency to quote Berne and to proceed as if his words were gospel and not to be questioned (Zalcman, 1990, p. 5).

Thirty five years on, these trends are still trending. Thinking about this book in relation to Zalcman's observations, I think that, by considering the philosophical basis of TA (in Part I), I offer some clarity with regard to conceptual integration; by exploring and emphasising the frame that is transactional analysis, I present a depth and breadth that can hopefully inspire a renewed confidence in this analysis, rather than psycho-analysis or pop analysis; and, by researching what Berne wrote (throughout, but especially in Chapters 2, 6, 9, and 11), I provide both the old testament, or, at least a critical exegesis of it, as well as some contributions to a new testament. In this sense, I hope that this contribution addresses some of what Zalcman refers to as negative outcomes of such trends, and, in any case, is something on which I reflect in Chapter 13.

I refer to 'therapeutic practice' as, although TA has a number of fields of application (counselling, education, organisations, and psychotherapy), my experience, training, and practice has been predominantly in the field of psychotherapy, although, interestingly, my first article on TA, published in 1990, was an early attempt to understand organisational dynamics, and, nearly 35 years later, and as I am again working in an organisation, this time a university, I find myself returning to the application of TA to and in organisations—and continuing to value the independence, impropriety, and impertinence that gives rise to pertinent questions. Also, as someone who has been teaching—or, rather, facilitating the learning of—TA for 30 years, and as a full-time university lecturer (and now professor), my primary identity is that of an educationalist and academic.

For many, psychotherapy or soul healing is concerned with freeing the soul (or spirit), mind, heart, and body. Psychotherapy, however, is paradoxical; as Case-ment (2002) puts it: 'It can either free the mind or bind it. It can liberate creativity and spontaneity, but it can [also] foster compliance' (p. 1). This paradox may be expressed in TA terms as one between helping people to become autonomous,

that is, aware, spontaneous, and intimate (Berne, 1964/1968a)—and, I would say, homonomous and socially responsible; and, on the other hand, encouraging people to be self-controlled, to settle for symptomatic relief and short-term solutions, and to be compliant. Forty years ago, Lasch (1979) challenged what he analysed as the culture of narcissism. Unfortunately, psychotherapy has, by and large, contributed to a psychological and social/political culture that promotes such a culture of self-obsession and self-delusion based on an individualism which, arguably, is the narcissistic focus of mainstream therapy. As such, conventional and state regulated psychotherapy (see Chapter 10) is as much part of the problem as it is the solution to the psychological and social ills of this world. At worst, such therapy promotes isolation, mystification, and (internalised) oppression, which Claude Steiner and other radical psychiatrists identified as a formula for alienation (see Chapter 12). If we are to maintain and enhance psychotherapy—and other forms of ‘psy’ healing (clinical social work, clinical psychology, counselling, counselling psychology, psychiatry, shamanism, etc.) as a form of personal *and* social liberation for the interpersonal and interdependent human organism, then we need to address the threats to this project and process, such as dogma and fundamentalism (see Tudor, 2007b, 2018b). Given its origins in criticism of and opposition to psychoanalysis, and the positive influence of radical psychiatry on TA (see Althöfer & Riesenfeld, 2020; Althöfer & Tudor, 2020; Jenkins et al., 2020), TA should be in a good position to do this; yet it has become and is widely viewed as being conservative and conformist (see, for example, Kovel, 1976; Karpman, 1981; Tudor, 2010d). Another tension within TA—and that TA reflects—is that between action and reflection. As Berne (1966a) himself put it:

Transactional analysis is an actionist form of treatment, where psychoanalysis is to a much greater extent, a contemplative one. The transactional analyst says, ‘Get better first, and we can analyse later.’ Thus the transactional patient and his family benefit from the accomplishments that take place before the deeper analytic phase of his treatment, so that it is of relatively less consequence how long he remains in treatment after that. The psychoanalyst, on the other hand, may imply, ‘After you have been analysed, you will get better.’

(pp. 303–304)

Me and transactional analysis

I first came across TA in the late 1970s when I was undertaking social work training at the University of Kent at Canterbury in the UK. The social work training was one informed by critical thinking and radical politics (Bailey & Brake, 1975; George & Wilding, 1976; Sayers, 1976), and it was in this context that I came across the literature on radical psychiatry and radical therapy: Wyckoff (1970, 1976b), The Radical Therapist Collective (1971), The Rough Times Staff (1973), and Steiner et al. (1975). During a placement in a community social work agency in South London, I met two inspiring community activists who were part of a TA study group

run by Dr Roger Kreitman and Lily Stuart, a group I joined and attended regularly during that placement. I did my first introductory 'TA 101' course in 1985 with Dr Petrůska Clarkson and Dave Gowling at what was then called the Metanoia Group and Training Institute, and another one in 1987 with Susanna Ligabue at il Centro di Eric Berne in Milan when I was living in Italy. On my return to the UK in 1987, I began training at Metanoia and had the good fortune to train with Maria Gilbert and, later, Charlotte Sills, as well as a number of other, visiting trainers, including Frances Bonds-White, Vann Joines, Gisela Kottwitz, Carlo Moiso, Hank Nunn and Jenny Robinson, Alice Stevenson, Ian Stewart, and George Thomson. I also attended conferences where I had the good fortune to meet many luminaries who, indeed, illuminated my thinking about and practice of TA. I also began writing about TA, and, in 1991, had my first article published in the international *Transactional Analysis Journal*, on the subject of children's groups I had run with two TA colleagues.¹ I passed my certifying TA exam in 1994 in Maastricht, and my accrediting exams as a teaching and supervising transactional analyst in 2004 in Rome. In both these journeys I was both supported and challenged by my supervisors: Dr Brian Dobson, Maria Gilbert, Sue Fish, Dr Ian Stewart, Dr Adrienne Lee, and Robin Hobbes. I have also had the good fortune to have made and maintained close collegial relationships in TA and I especially want to acknowledge Dr Helena Hargaden, Professor Charlotte Sills, and Graeme Summers, both individually and collectively, for their personal and professional support, intellectual stimulation, and sustained and sustaining friendship over more than a quarter of a century. For seven years, we met as a peer supervision group, which not only fulfilled its purpose of supervision but which also led to the elaboration of different perspectives on relational TA: firstly, an article Graeme and I wrote about co-creative TA (Summers & Tudor, 2000), which was published in the *Transactional Analysis Journal*, and for which we received the Eric Berne Memorial Award in 2020; secondly, Helena and Charlotte's book *Transactional Analysis: A Relational Perspective* (Hargaden & Sills, 2002), for two chapters of which they received the Eric Berne Memorial Award in 2007; and, thirdly, other work that Graeme and I produced over subsequent years which we later published in *Co-creative Transactional Analysis: Papers, Dialogues, Responses, and Developments* (Tudor & Summers, 2014).

TA has a strong and international community and I count myself fortunate to have many colleagues and close work friends not only here in Aotearoa New Zealand but all over the world and specifically, in the UK, where I have presented many times at conferences and meetings, but where I have also been invited to present (in 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007) and, notably, to give the keynote speech to the Annual Conference of the United Kingdom Association for Transactional Analysis (in 2015), an invitation I was honoured to accept. I have also been invited to present in Lithuania (2000 and 2002), Australia (2006, 2012, 2015, and 2019); Aotearoa New Zealand (2006, before emigrating here in 2009, since when I have taught on several training programmes in this country); in India (2007 and 2019); Italy (2008, 2011, 2018, 2020,² and 2023); Spain (2011); Japan (2014); to online international colloquia (2014 and

2015); in Slovenia (2015 and 2023); Singapore (2015 and 2018); Germany (2016); Croatia (2018 and 2023); Brazil (2019); Kyrgyzstan (2019); and Romania (2023). Most recently, and due to travel restrictions as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, I have also presented at workshops and conferences online ‘in’ Brazil, India, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, South Africa, the UK, and Ukraine. I have been both honoured and humbled by the interest in my work and ideas about TA from colleagues in these and other countries, especially amongst students/trainees, and it is to this next generation of transactional analysts that I dedicate this book.

I am an enthusiastic researcher, writer, and editor. I tend to write from experience; thus, for instance, my first publication on TA in organisations was as a result of working in a social services department and wanting to understand some of the dynamics I was experiencing and observing in terms of TA, in which I was training at the time (Tudor, 1990). I am also a critical thinker, a perspective that has been informed by education (in the disciplines of philosophy and theology, social work, psychotherapy, and mental health, and at various levels); experience (in the various professions of social work, counselling, psychotherapy, and academia); and politics (for further details of which, see Tudor, 2017a). Thus, when faced with a situation, for instance, with regard to practice, policy, or theory, I have been and still am interested to explore this from a critical perspective, grounded in practice (see Tudor, 2018b). In this, I am inspired by Berne’s (1972/1975b) elaboration of ‘the map-ground problem’ whereby an aviator flies according to a map but doesn’t check this against the ground, as a result of which he gets lost. Berne concludes: ‘The moral is, look at the ground first, and then at the map, and not vice versa’ (p 409).

My areas of interest have been quite diverse and this is no less true within TA: from the personality of organisations (Tudor, 1990) to a transactional group analysis of war (Tudor, 2023).³ I have also written about different aspects of TA theory, i.e., transactions and the therapeutic relationship (Tudor, 1999b), ego states (Tudor, 2003b, 2010c), and scripts (Tudor, 2001b, 2008d), as well as about TA theory and meta-theory (Tudor, 1996, 2008d, 2009a, 2010e, 2016b, 2016d, 2016e); and several chapters that offer introductions to TA, i.e., Clarkson et al. (1996), Tudor (2000), Tudor and Hobbes (2002, 2007), Summers and Tudor (2007), Tudor and Sills (2006, 2012), and Sills and Tudor (2017, 2023). All of this writing has been done, in a sense, writing forward: that is moving from one interest and subject to another. Sometimes, one article leads directly to another as, for instance, was the case with my article on “‘Take It’: A Sixth Driver” (Tudor, 2008c), which, in turn, led to a broader critique of the process model and the theory of personality adaptations in an article I co-authored with Mark Widdowson, which was published later in the same year. However, in thinking about and putting this book together, and in applying some of the analysis I offered in my book *Psychotherapy: A Critical Examination* (Tudor, 2018b) to TA, I have had the benefit of time to look back and to see both the themes in my writing as well as new areas on which I want to focus in order to provide a comprehensive critical review of TA. In this sense, the book is both a retrospective as well as a prospective.

Looking back on my writing in TA, I realise that I tend:

- To return to source, usually Berne—I do this partly because I focus on transactions; partly because, as a scholar, I tend to go back to original sources; and partly because I am interested in the history and development of ideas (for which reason and where possible, I tend to note citations in chronological rather than alphabetical order). In this sense, I am quite Classical and I note with interest that in her work on the schools of TA, Lee (2001) associates me with the Classical as well as the Constructivist School.
- To re-read these sources—I am constantly surprised at how much I get from re-reading a book, including what appears ‘new’. One example of this for me was with regard to Berne’s four requirements for a complete ego state diagnosis, i.e., that it is based on behavioural, social, historical, *and* phenomenological analysis, which he outlined in his book *Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy* (Berne, 1961/1975a) and which I first read in the mid-1980s. However, it was only in re-reading this book some years later, and partly influenced by my interest and reading in person-centred psychology, that I really ‘got’ that, while the behavioural and social diagnosis could be made by the clinician, the historical and phenomenological diagnoses could only be made by the client. In this sense, these two requirements do centre on the client and can only be ascertained in dialogue with the client (and could, therefore, be viewed as being client-centred). These requirements reflect Berne’s radicalism in the same vein as his insistence on staff–patient staff conferences (Berne, 1968b). Moreover, this theory of diagnosis means that any statement that a client is ‘in their Child’ (or Parent or Adult) based only on behavioural observation and social reaction is, by definition, an incomplete diagnosis. I’m not saying that I didn’t understand this on my first reading of the book; I am saying that I get more of the theory when I re-read it and do so in the context of reading other theory. Elsewhere, I have noted the challenge and the benefit of re-reading this particular book of Berne’s with regard to different views of ego state theory in TA (Tudor, 2010b, and Chapter 6).
- To think about TA both philosophically and politically—in an interview Di-ana Deaconu conducted with me in 2016, she said (with reference to herself and her collaborators) that ‘we did catch that edge of philosophy and politics in your writing’ and was kind enough to say that I was ‘an astute observer of the philosophical and political side of things’ (Tudor, 2018a). This is related to my background, having studied philosophy (and theology), and having been a political activist (and now being an activist scholar). This includes an interest in and attention to language (rhetoric) and the philosophical basis of theory, concepts, models, and practice, which involves referring to certain philosophical concepts. In the Preface to *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?*, Berne (1972/1975b) suggests that conventional psychotherapy uses different dialects, i.e., therapist–therapist, therapist–patient, and patient–patient, and states that he

favours the *lingua franca* of basic English [as it] increases the “communication” which many therapists... court’ (p. xv).⁴ He then goes on to justify his choice of openness and simplicity (with which I agree) by saying in a somewhat cynical vein (with which I don’t agree):

I have thrown in with the ‘people,’ tossing in a big word now and then as a sort of hamburger to distract the watchdogs of the academies, while I slip through the basement doors and say Hello to my friends.

(p. xvi)

While retaining Berne’s challenge to be open (see Chapter 2) and straightforward (see Chapter 13), I think there are times when we need to engage with ‘big’ words and concepts, which reflect the complexity of life,⁵ and, with regard to psychotherapy, as, globally, this is predominantly a post-graduate activity and discipline, we should be able to do so. In this sense, I think it is important to develop other dialects, such as educator/trainer–educator/trainer, theorist–theorist, philosopher–philosopher, researcher–researcher, theorist–educator/trainer, and the multiple variations thereof, not least so that we develop the theorist-practitioner (see International Transactional Analysis Association [ITAA] International Board of Certification [IBoC], 2022),⁶ the therapist-philosopher (see Tudor & Worrall, 2006), the critical thinker-therapist (see Tudor, 2018b),⁷ and the researcher-practitioner (see Tudor & Francis, 2022).

- To be critical and reflexive (as noted above) and meta⁸—which, in this book, is reflected in two ways: (a) my use of TA to assess theory, for instance, applying Berne’s (1964/1968b) taxonomy of the advantages of games to assessing the advantages of theory (in Chapter 2); and (b) to reflex theory on itself, thus, to consider the life script of scripts (in Chapter 9), and the possible game invitation in the conflicting definitions of games (in Chapter 11). This reflexivity also extends to thinking about the education and training of transactional analysts. Originally, I had planned that another part of this book would comprise chapters on the philosophy of education, and its application to training and supervision (see Tudor, 2002, 2009). However, as this book became more substantial, I had to make some choices about the scope of this book, and those chapters will now form part of another book. Nevertheless, I have retained a strong thread in this book that links the ideas presented and critiqued to the training requirements for transactional analysts for certification in counselling, education, organisations, and psychotherapy. These are laid out in two handbooks: the *Teaching/Certification and Examinations Handbook* published by the International Transactional Analysis Association’s International Board of Certification (IBoC) (2022) and the *Teaching and Examinations Handbook* published by the European Association for Transactional Analysis’ (EATA) Professional Training Standards Committee (PTSC) (2022).⁹

The book

The book is arranged in three parts, each of which I preface with a brief introduction that offers an overview of the constituent chapters, both old and new. The first part comprises three chapters that discuss the **basic assumptions** of TA, which explore the ontological, epistemological, and methodological basis of TA theory and practice. The second part, entitled **new wine from old roots**, comprises two chapters (one original and one new) on each of the four fundamental pillars of TA, i.e., transactions, ego states, scripts, and games, which gives me an opportunity to revisit some of my earlier thinking about these fundamentals of TA, and to offer my latest thinking about them. The third part of the book **looking back, looking forwards** comprises two chapters, the first of which considers the various schools/traditions/approaches/sensibilities that are found within TA, and the second of which, based on a playful reference to Berne's independent, 'Martian view' of human interactions and life, offers a 'Vulcan view' of the future of TA.

Over the years, in my writing and editing, as well as my practice, I have sought to collaborate and, as a result, have appreciated and enjoyed both the co-creative process involved as well as the final outcome or output.¹⁰ In TA, this has been mostly with my friend and colleague, Graeme Summers, to whom I owe profound thanks for his part in the development of my thinking and practice. However, in choosing the six previously published contributions for this book, I have focused on my own sole-authored work, whilst acknowledging, of course, that this has been profoundly influenced by such collaborations. With regard to the book as a whole, the original papers have been reproduced as originally written and edited only to make them consistent with the house style of this book, i.e., predominantly using the present tense, first person rather than third person language, gender-sensitive language, and British/New Zealand English rather than US English (with regard to spelling and punctuation). I have taken the opportunity of editing them into the book as a whole adding to these chapters citations to work published since the original publication (noted in square brackets), and endnotes in order to address or reference more contemporary theory, to connect points to other chapters in the book, and to offer some reflections. Some repetition has been retained in order to facilitate the flow of a particular argument. Finally, in order to avoid undue repetition, and to promote the coherence of the book as a whole, the references of the original contributions and those of the new chapters have been combined in a single list.

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Finally, as it takes a whole village to raise a book, I'd like to acknowledge and thank those colleagues, friends, and family who have formed the village for this particular book, notably:

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Notes

- 1 Interestingly, when I came to submit this article, a number of colleagues, including some supervisors and trainers, said that I couldn't (and shouldn't) be published in the *TAJ* as I wasn't (then) yet qualified (as a transactional analyst). This was presented as a fact rather than a prejudice which, fortunately, was not part of the journal's submission criteria. While the article was peer-reviewed, published, and well-received, these responses were one of the first times I had experienced this Parental prejudice and discounting of adult—and Adult—experience in TA, though sadly it was not to be the last (for discussion of which, see Tudor, 2008/2017d).
- 2 Which, sadly, was first postponed and then cancelled, due to the outbreak and spread of the coronavirus pandemic (see Tudor, 2024/in press).
- 3 In between which, I have published on: working with children (Tudor, 1991, 2008a) and Gjurković and Tudor (2018); ending psychotherapy (Tudor, 1995b); shame (Tudor, 1995a, a paper which forms Chapter 8); integration (Tudor, 1996; Tudor & Widdowson, 2002); contracts (Tudor, 1997b, 1997d, 2006); groups (Tudor, 1999a, 2013a); brief therapy (Tudor, 2002c); citizenship (Tudor & Hargaden, 2002); supervision (Tudor, 2002b); creativity (Tudor, 2003a, 2014a); culture and identity (Naughton & Tudor, 2006; Minikin & Tudor, 2016; Tudor et al., 2022); ethics (Cornell et al., 2006); change (Tudor, 2007a, 2011a); teaching (Tudor, 2009); statutory regulation and state registration (Tudor, 2010b, 2011e); empathy (Tudor, 2011b, 2011g); research (Tudor, 2013b); politics (Tudor, 2009a, 2016c, Tudor, 2020g); treatment planning (Gjurković & Tudor, 2018; Tudor & Widdowson, 2002); religion, faith, and spirituality (Tudor, 2019); courage (Tudor, 2022a); and ecotherapy (Clare & Tudor, 2023).
- 4 The irony of Berne using a French phrase (which he doesn't translate) to justify using 'basic English' is not lost on this reader and commentator.
- 5 When I first use such words (big or otherwise), I tend to offer a translation of them, thus: ontology (the essence of things).
- 6 One of the two aspects of the purpose of the certified transactional analysis (CTA) written exam is that the candidate 'works effectively and ethically as a theoretically based transactional analyst' (ITAA IBoC, 2022, Section 8.1.2). Moreover, when it comes to the oral exam, one of the criteria refers to the capacity to conceptualise the particular application or field of TA (i.e., counselling, education, organisational, or psychotherapy) in terms of different TA theoretical concepts/models, and with reference to 'different trends and approaches as well as recent developments' (ITAA IBoC, 2022, Section 12.7.9).
- 7 In my inaugural professorial lecture, I extended this to include the argumentative therapist (Tudor, 2016a).
- 8 In epistemology, the prefix meta- is used to mean about. In its definition of the word meta, the Urban Dictionary (2017) puts it well as being 'about the thing itself', explaining it as 'seeing the thing from a higher perspective, like being self-aware' (para. 1). It also offers some useful clarification of the incorrect use of meta. Thus, making a film about the film industry isn't meta; making a film about making films is. This highlights the reflexive sense of meta-activity, thus, in TA, offering a transactional analysis of transactional analysis; an ego state analysis of ego states; a script analysis of script theory; and a game analysis of games. Having a meta-perspective is one of the assessment criteria for the certification of transactional analysts (see ITAA IBoC, 2022, Section 12, Form 12.7.7; and Chapter 11).
- 9 The two handbooks overlap considerably, though there are some differences. They are also updated regularly and publicly available at: <https://www.itaaworld.org/iboc-certification-examinations-handbook> (ITAA IBoC, 2022) and <https://eatanews.org/ta-training-2/> (EATA PTSC, 2022). In this book, I tend to refer to the one published by the ITAA IBoC.

- 10 In TA, 20 out of my 68 peer-reviewed publications in TA to date (i.e., 30%) have been co-authored.
- 11 I note this not only to acknowledge my colleagues in this respect, but also because, in some academic and administrative circles, books are not rated as highly as peer-reviewed articles in high-impact journals. Whilst I and many other colleagues disagree with this (see Harley, 2019, Tudor, 2021e), I now make a point of noting how books I write are peer-reviewed (e.g., Tudor, 2021b)—and more so than many journal articles. Also, I have included a number of points my colleagues raised in reviewing these chapters and am grateful to them for allowing me to do so as I consider that it supports and, indeed, enhances the reflexive perspective and flavour of the book.



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Part I

Basic assumptions

The three chapters in this first part of the book discuss the basic assumptions of transactional analysis (TA) and explore the methodological basis of TA theory and practice, that is the ‘ology’ or study of method. This includes its assumptions about ontology (the essence of things); epistemology (the knowledge of things); and, specifically, how we know what we know; and axiology (or the value of things), which generally refers to ethics. Not many writers directly address the philosophy of TA. The principal exceptions to this are Oden (1974) who discusses the theology of transactions; Weinhold (1977) who offers a philosophical analysis of various TA treatment styles; Brady (1980a, 1980b) who discusses both Kant and Hegel with regard to the Adult ego state; Grant (2004) who discusses how the philosophical assumptions of TA complement the theory of adult education; and Rotondo (2020) who offers a philosophical context to Berne’s theory of bilateral contracts. Novellino (2012) refers to TA literature as ‘a series of themes expressed by Berne [which are] half-way between methodology and philosophy’ (p. 103), but does not elaborate either the methodology or the philosophy of the themes he (Novellino) identifies, and, indeed, equates methodology with method, i.e., techniques and tactics, decontamination and deconfusion.

From an early age I was interested in philosophy (see Tudor, 2018b), and had the good fortune to study philosophy and theology as the subjects of my first degree. This education and intellectual training has given me an interest in ideas, where they come from, how they are or may be organised, and how different ideas may be understood in relation to each other—and, as noted in the Introduction, my interest in philosophy and politics has been acknowledged and commented on by others, notably, Bill Cornell about *Conscience and Critic* (Tudor, 2017a), Diana Deaconu (in Tudor, 2018a), Donna Orange about *Psychotherapy: A Critical Examination* (Tudor, 2018b), and Richard House (in Tudor & House, 2019). This interest in ideas and their organisation, as well as meta-theoretical analysis informed an article I wrote on integration—or, as I referred to it, *intragration*—in TA (Tudor, 1996), in which I offered a paradigm analysis of different aspects of TA theory. Since then, in undertaking further research for this book, I came across Weinhold’s (1977) analysis of metaphysical theories underpinning different TA treatment styles, on which I have drawn in Chapter 2.

Taking my starting point as ontology or the essence of things, in Chapter 1, I advance an interdependent, pluralistic, ‘we’ perspective as a starting point for human beings and, indeed, being human, as distinct from one that is based on ‘I’, ‘I’m OK’, and, more broadly, a ‘me’ psychology. Margaret Thatcher (British Prime Minister, 1979–1990) (in)famously said about society ‘There is no such thing!’ (Thatcher, 1987/2022). I am more with Donald Winnicott (1947/1957), the British psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, who said that ‘there is no such thing as a baby’ (p. 137). This chapter provides a different ontological basis for thinking about the essence or existence of things and, especially, of human beings, than the predominant individualistic and anthropocentric one found in the Western—and Northern—intellectual tradition. The original article, “‘We are’: the fundamental life position”, was originally published in the *Transactional Analysis Journal (TAJ)*, 46(2), April 2016, pp. 164–176, © International Transactional Analysis Association (ITAA), and is reprinted with permission.

Transactional analysis is based on the contractual method, i.e., ‘an explicit, bilateral commitment to a well-defined course of action’ (Berne, 1966a, p. 362). Whilst this is clear, what is less clear is the methodological and epistemological basis of this method—and, indeed, the ‘course of action’ or process of the contract or, more accurately, *contracting*. Moreover, there is confusion and, often, elision between method and methodology. In an attempt to clarify some of this confusion, in Chapter 2, I elaborate the theory of knowledge (epistemology) that underlies the contractual method of TA. The reason I focus on this area of TA is that Berne asserted that transactional analysis is based on the ‘contractual method’, i.e., a mutually agreed statement of change, as well as on ‘open communication’ (also see Chapter 4).

In Chapter 3, I (re)turn to method, i.e., what transactional analysts *do*, and discuss what transactional analysts refer to as the three ‘Ps’ of TA treatment philosophy, that is, permission and protection (from Crossman, 1966), and potency (from Steiner, 1968). In the chapter, I discuss the history of these three concepts, identify what I refer to as four groups of permission, and, from a perspective of ‘two-person psychology’ (Stark, 1999), critique and reconsider all three. My aim in doing so is to enhance the praxis of therapeutic—and other—relationships that emphasise engagement in relationship and, as such, sets the scene for the rest of the book. The original article, ‘Permission, protection, and potency—The 3 Ps, reconsidered’, was originally published in the *TAJ*, 46(1), January 2016, pp. 50–64, © ITAA, and is also reprinted with permission.¹

Note

- 1 I have a particular fondness for this article, and, in reviewing it for this book, was delighted to see that, according to the statistics available on Taylor & Francis Online, it is currently the fourth most read article in the *TAJ*, with, to date (July 2024) 5,471 views.

‘We are’

The fundamental life position (2016)

This chapter argues that the existential statement ‘We are’ most accurately describes the fundamental life position of human beings and identifies some ontological, epistemological, methodological, and practical implications of this. Taking the phrase ‘I’m OK, You’re OK’ and its variants as its theme, the chapter critically examines the three elements of this central aspect of transactional analysis theory and philosophy, that is, in terms of the person, OKness, and existential life positions. In doing so, it offers some clarification regarding Melanie Klein’s influence on Berne and some variations that are informed by and advance ‘we psychology’.

The chapter takes the view that the individual can only be understood in the context of society, the group or groups, and the other, and that, developmentally, socially/politically, and philosophically, ‘I’ comes from and comes after ‘we’. Rather than working from the individual outward, which implicitly privileges the individual, many—arguably most—cultures in the world conceptualise human beings from the outside or wider context inward (see also Chapter 7). This perspective resonates across cultures, societies, and time as encapsulated in the following words, phrases, and statements:

- ‘Man is a naturally a political animal’ (Aristotle, 350BCE/2004, section 1253a).
- Ubuntu (from the mid-19th century), which Eze (2010) interprets as meaning ‘a person is a person through other people’ (pp. 190–191).
- ‘It takes a village to raise a child’ (African proverb).
- ‘There is no such thing as a baby... A baby cannot exist alone but is essentially part of a relationship’ (Winnicott, 1947/1957, p. 137).
- ‘No organism is self-sufficient... There is always inter-dependency of the organism and its environment’ (Perls, 1947/1969, p. 38).

The person

In his original article on the ‘Classification of Positions’, Berne (1962b) states that ‘the subjects of all positions are particulars of the polarity I–Others’ (p. 23), formulating ‘I’ as including ‘we’ and ‘you’ as including ‘they’. Some ten years later, in *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?*, Berne (1972/1975b) shifted this somewhat

by extrapolating ‘they’ as a third-person position distinct from the second-person other ‘you’. As a result, he identifies eight life positions, which he summarises as follows (pp. 90–91) (+ meaning ‘OK’; – meaning ‘not OK’):

- I + You + They + which represents the position of a democratic community
- I + You + They – the prejudiced snob- or gang-position of a demagogue
- I + You – They + the position of the agitator or malcontent and sometimes missionaries
- I + You – They – the solitary, self-righteous critic position
- I – You + They + the self-punishing saint or masochist, the melancholic position
- I – You + They – the servile position
- I – You – They + the position of servile envy and sometimes of political action
- I – You – They – the pessimistic position of cynics or those who believe in predestination or original sin.

Berne (1972/1975b) justifies this expansion by using the metaphor of an accordion ‘which can expand enough to include a vast assortment of attitudes besides the basic four’ (p. 90). I have always thought that the third-handed (i.e., third-person) life position represented Berne’s social psychiatry and that, as an aspect of transactional analysis (TA) theory, it has been somewhat overlooked and underrated both in the literature and in practice.¹ Although Berne himself does not view the personal pronoun ‘we’ as describing anything more than the plural ‘I’ and does not use the phrase or concept ‘We’re OK’, a number of others writing in transactional analysis have done so.

In an editorial for a special issue of the *Transactional Analysis Journal*, Zech-nich (1975) uses the phrase to acknowledge that TA does not have all the answers and that other theories and clinicians have much to teach us, hence, ‘We’re OK and They’re OK’ (p. 105). To Berne’s ‘They’, Groder (1977b) adds ‘We’ and ‘It’, arguing that ‘to be really, really OK, one must pass the test of an “I’m OK, You’re OK, We’re OK, They’re OK, It’s OK” analysis’ (p. 162). He continues: ‘This 5-OK analysis can be very chastening, especially for OK therapists who don’t care what effect they have on the world at large’ (p. 162). Citing Groder’s extension of the basic life positions, Barnes (1981) clarifies that ‘even the child who decides that “I’m not-OK, You’re not-OK” can make exceptions and make the “We” OK’ (p. 24).

In an article about protection and what they name *nutritional nervosa*, Karp-man and Callaghan (1985) refer to health fanatics as operating from a ‘We’re OK, They’re Not OK’ position. Micholt (1992) uses the phrase in the context of elaborating three-cornered contracts, a use Fischer (1993) picks up in addressing the changing organisational Parent. Clarkson (1993) uses the phrase ‘We’re OK—They’re not OK’ to describe the position confirmed by one of 12 Bystander games she identifies as ‘I’m Just Keeping My Own Counsel’ (or ‘I’m All Right, Jack!’). In an article on facilitating OKness-based groups, Steele and Porter-Steele (2003) refer to ‘We’re OK’, stating that ‘sitting calmly and quietly is a powerful nonverbal assurance’ of these life positions. (They also referred to ‘It’s OK’.) Drego (2009) uses the term in the context of describing an ecopsychology and ecotherapy that models ‘an attitude cum praxis of “I’m OK, You’re OK, We’re OK, They’re OK, [and] planet Earth and

its ecosystems are OK''' (p. 205). Following Berne, all of these authors use the pronoun 'we' to represent the first-person plural, that is, 'I' and another 'I'.

Other writers within transactional analysis, however, have used 'we' to represent something more than this. In his article on autocratic power, Jacobs (1987) places 'We're OK' at the heart of his master-follower projection system and, significantly, separate from 'I'm OK, You're OK'. Although he does not explain this directly, he indicates that he views this kind of 'we' as symbiotic: 'The effort then, is to forcibly repress the "Not OK" feelings while simultaneously creating the illusion of being rid of them. It is at this moment that the crowd forms; when I and You become WE' (pp. 66–67). In a rare use of 'we' in a four-handed position, involving 'I', 'you', 'we', and 'they', and in the context of discussing gay and straight sexual identities, Kellet (2004) refers to the existential position of 'I'm OK, You're OK/Not OK, We're OK, They're Not OK':

For a straight man, this position may be part of a defence against homoerotic desire by keeping threatening aspects of the self split off and located in the other-group imago. For a gay man, this position may (additionally) represent a defense against heterosexism whereby persecutory cultural values are more properly located as individual-other and group-other. Either way, the individual maintains a 'clean' sense of sexual identity.

(p. 186)

In an article on the application of transactional analysis in South Africa, Salters (2006) uses the word 'we' to represent 'our common humanity' (p. 152) and, adapting Ernst's (1971b) OK Corral, presents a group version of what she referred to as 'The OK Kraal'. This usefully and visually distinguishes the positive 'We're OK, You (plural) are OK' and the 'we/they' of the other positions, commenting that, 'in my experience, the word "they" is used to convey a sense of troublesome otherness rather than just out-group difference' (pp. 153–154).

In his formulations of 'I'm OK, You're OK, They're OK', Berne used the personal pronouns in the role of subject ('I', 'you', and 'they'), to which I add 'we'. This accords with W. James' (1890/1981) concept of the personal self. James also identifies the social self, the respective pronouns of which are 'me', 'you', 'they', and 'us'. This is significant because, in human development, the sense of the social self and specifically 'me' (as in when a child says 'me do, me do') comes before the sense of the personal self. We may represent the development of personal and social identity as follows: We (i.e., mother–infant merged subject) → You (mother object) → You (mother subject) → Me (social self) → We (autonomous and homonomous plural subjects) → I (personal self) → Them (object) → They (subject).

We psychology

This sense and use of 'we' draws on we psychology, that is, a psychology that focuses on and, indeed, derives from a perspective that considers 'we' before 'I' or, as G. S. Klein (1976) puts it, 'we-ego' before ego. In Western psychology, this

perspective has its origins in the social psychology of Mead (1934) and Vygotsky (1962), the organismic psychology of Goldstein (1934/1995) and Angyal (1941), and has become the focus of research among developmental psychologists such as Stern (1998). As a term, *we psychology* is attributed to Fritz Künkel (1889–1956), who drew on the work of Freud, Adler, and Jung in synthesising an explicitly religious psychology (see Künkel, 1984).

The ontological assumption of *we psychology* is characterised by Winnicott's (1947/1957) famous phrase, 'there is no such thing as a baby' (p. 137). The most extreme example of this of which I am aware is reported by Alford (1994), who writes about the Wolini, a now-extinct tribe who lived in the Amazon rain forest on the border between Venezuela and Brazil. They were distinguished in the anthropological literature by the absence in their language of the first-person singular pronoun 'I'. The Wolini were known to each other by a combination of birth order and family name. Thus, 'Lowan' would be the third (Lo) child of the Wan family. The person's name thereby designated not an individual (as conceived) but a member's place in the tribal group. Thus, when Lowan said, 'Lowan did this and thinks that', it did not translate as 'I did this and think that' but, rather, was more akin to the statement 'the part of the group that is located here in Lowan did this and thinks that'.

It follows that the epistemological focus of *we psychology* is on the knowledge that derives from and is found in relationship. In a later version of his phrase, Winnicott (1960/1965) wrote, 'There is no such thing as an infant... without maternal care one would find no infant' (p. 39, note 1). Interestingly, he wrote this in an article entitled 'The Theory of the Parent–Infant Relationship'. This is significant because *we psychology* is interested in the theory of relationship(s)—parent–infant, individual–family, family–family, family–couple, and so on—and in drawing on and developing knowledge about knowledge from relationship(s). Taking this further, and paraphrasing Winnicott, we might say that there is no such thing as a relationship, only relationships-in-context. Thus, *we psychology* acknowledges context and, therefore, social and political worlds as well as personal and interpersonal worlds.

An example of the kind of inquiry that reflects this psychology is understanding how people, including a particular individual, might be alienated from a sense of themselves, others, and the(ir) world (as distinct from focusing on what is wrong with an individual, for instance, in terms of their psychopathology). In this sense, much radical psychiatry (The Radical Therapist Collective, 1971; Roy & Steiner, 1988; Steiner, 1975a; Wyckoff, 1976b) reflects a *we psychology*. The epistemological focus given to *me psychology* is perhaps most apparent when working with couples. For instance, in therapy, a couple was arguing. Abe was telling his partner, Bea, that she did not understand him. Bea responded by saying, 'But, actually, you...' The therapist interrupted, saying to both of them, 'It sounds like you're fighting about who's right and who knows what about the other. How about you talk with each other about how you know what you know and feel?' Abe and Bea were quiet for a while. Gradually, both began to speak about how they felt and

when they felt that the other did not listen to or understand them. This illustrates a common dynamic in couples therapy whereby each person separately argues what he or she knows and talks at the other with a view to convincing the other—and the therapist—of their case. The couple's willingness to move from this to a space in which they talk with each other not only about how each of them feels but, importantly, how they co-create meaning, represents a move from an individual(istic) basis of knowledge to a shared one and, thus, an epistemological shift.

The methodology of we psychology—that is, the philosophical underpinnings of the method—is reflected in theories of relationship. Various philosophers, such as Martin Buber (1878–1965) and John Macmurray (1891–1976) have contributed to our thinking about the centrality of relationship. In his work, Macmurray (1957/1969) challenges the assumptions of a theoretical and ego-centric view of the (reified) self:

Against the assumption that the self is an isolated individual, I have set the view that the Self is a person, and that personal existence is constituted by the relation of persons.... The idea of an isolated agent is self-contradictory. Any agent is necessarily in relation to the Other. Apart from this essential relation he does not exist. But, further, the Other in this constitutive relation must itself be personal. Persons, therefore, are constituted by their mutual relation to one another. 'I' exist only as one element in the complex 'You and I'.

(p. 12)²

As early as 1942, Rogers referred to his then newer psychotherapy as 'relationship therapy', a term he credits to Taft (1933/1973) and that prefigures the more recent relational turn in psychotherapy. Noel and DeChenne (1974) write about a we dimension in therapy that 'involves discussion of processes occurring between the client and the therapist, processes which are co-owned and must be dealt with collaboratively' (p. 253). Saner (1989) names the 'we'ness of the therapeutic relationship itself as the medium for human development and change, and more recently, Summers and I discuss 'we'ness as one of the principles that underpins co-creative transactional analysis and the practice of exploring and expanding new relational possibilities (Summers & Tudor, 2000).

The method or practice of we psychology that follows from this relational methodology focuses on working with and within relationships. As Schmid (2006) puts it:

Dialogue is an irreversible principle and condition of being human. Humans do not only substantially rely on dialogue, they are dialogue. [Moreover,] dialogue is the authentic realization and acknowledgement of the underlying We.... The restoration of the underlying We is the therapy in psychotherapy.

(p. 251)

Although it is possible to do this with an individual in individual therapy, it is more consistent with the approach to do this with different relational forms or complexes

such as a couple, a family, a group, a class, a community, an organisation, and so on. Indeed, we psychology questions the assumption that individual therapy is the form of therapy of choice (see Tudor, 1999b) and, indeed, recommends and prioritises working with groups.

To reflect this perspective and the reality of the third, relational element to any 'I-You' dyad or complex, I propose the addition to Berne's two-handed life positions of 'we', thus giving us, for instance, 'I'm OK, You're OK, We're OK'.

OKness

Together with the propositions that everyone has the capacity to think and that people decide their own destiny (and that they can redecide it), the idea that people are 'OK' forms part of the basic philosophy of transactional analysis. As a concept, OKness has been widely discussed in the literature, notably by Harris (1967), Harris and Dusay (1967), Erskine (1995), English (1995), Hine (1995), Jacobs (1997a), White (1994, 1995a, 1995b), and Harley (2006). These authors and others have described OKness in a number of ways, which I have organised here into four categories.

The nature of OKness

Interestingly, there is little if anything in the transactional analysis literature about the general meaning of 'OK', which, in common usage, denotes approval, acceptance, agreement, assent, or acknowledgment. In other words, 'OK' (okay, okeh, 'kay, okie dokie, etc.) is more often used to mean that something is adequate and even mediocre (as in 'The food was OK') rather than exceptional or wonderful, and is, thus, a far cry from existential well-being. Indeed, used with a certain tone of voice, 'OK' can indicate doubt or disparagement. Berne's (1966a) hypothesis was that we fix on one life position that represents a pervasive attitude and on which we base our life scripts. Harris (1967) also views OKness as a decision but argues that the first one is 'I'm Not OK, You're OK' and that the three positions 'I'm Not OK, You're OK', 'I'm OK, You're Not OK', and 'I'm Not OK, You're Not OK' are unconscious early decisions, with 'I'm OK, You're OK' being a later, conscious, verbal decision.

By contrast, Ernst (1971b) argues that OKness shifts from moment to moment. Kahler (1979) identifies three positions (I+U-, U+I-, I-U-) as behavioural, whereas White (1994) uses the sign '?' to alter one of Berne's original positions and added three others to propose a total of seven life positions: 'I'm OK, You're Irrelevant' (I+U?), 'I'm Not OK, You're Irrelevant' (I-U?), 'I'm Not OK, You're Not OK' (I-U-), 'I'm Not OK, But You're Worse' (I-U--), 'I'm a Bit More OK Than You Are' (I++U+), 'I'm OK, You're OK' (I+U+), and 'I'm Not OK, You're OK' (I-U+). He argues that all positions are both a surface, minute-by-minute position and a character position. Linking OKness to Klein's positions or states of psychic organisation (see next section), Harley (2006) argues that the not-OK positions are

important developmentally and must be worked through and integrated in order for the fourth 'I'm OK, You're OK' position to be more than superficial and conditional.

The scope of OKness

In transactional analysis, OKness encompasses a number of psychological positions (M. James & Jongeward, 1971; Steiner, 1974); a total life direction or destiny (Berne, 1972/1975b); a conviction and 'faith in human nature' (Steiner, 1974, p. 2); and, beyond that, planetary OKness (Drego, 2006).

OKness as existential

The positions or life positions are frequently referred to as existential life positions, which, according to Steiner (1974), are 'feelings about oneself and others' (p. 2). Kahler (1979) argues that only the I+U+ position is existential. By contrast, Barnes (1981) views all four positions as an attitude or existential stance and not an emotional or psychological state. He also contends that the three positions (I+U-, U+I-, I-U-) are existential 'in that they describe the social order that in the best of families is far from the ideal or the reality of the existential position of OKness' (p. 24). I suggest that the existential statement, encapsulated in the use of the verb *to be*, is simply 'I am', 'You are', 'She is', 'He is', 'We are', and 'They are'. The attribution of OKness and not OKness is, in effect, a value judgment about these existential statements. Sills puts this succinctly when she said (personal communication, 6 May 2001) that OKness is a humanistic influence on the existential position 'I am, You are'.

One of the problems with OKness is that it is binary: a person is—or, rather, is viewed as—either OK or not OK, a polarity that does not account for the more subtle, ambiguous, or ambivalent evaluations of ourselves and our behaviour(s) by ourselves or others. Some of these subtleties are captured in White's (1994) use of the '?' and the double positive (+ +) and double negative (- -). In both therapy and training groups, I have seen and experienced OKness and the evaluation of OKness used, wittingly or unwittingly, as an avoidance of the existential, face-to-face encounter 'I am, You are'—or not: the philosophical version, as it were, of the intimacy experiment (Berne, 1964/1968a). For example, in a training group, in response to one member who consistently arrived late, several other members had been very understanding ('It's OK', 'We understand you're looking after yourself', etc.). Eventually, another member of the group said, 'No, it's not OK. I miss you. I want you to be here, with us, on time'. In debriefing this exchange, the person who had been coming late said that what had impacted him was when his colleague said, 'I miss you'. It was an 'I-You' moment in which the parties were, in effect, naming an 'I am, you're not (here)' relationship. In my experience, using or implying the verb *to be*, which, grammatically, shows the existence or condition of the subject, focuses people more directly on their existential relationship(s) with each other.

OKness as essentialist

There is a second set of definitions of OKness in transactional analysis that derives from and represents a different philosophical tradition, that of *essentialism*. This tradition, which, in Western thinking, dates back to the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, posits that for any entity (animal, group of people, object, or concept) there are attributes that are intrinsic and necessary to its identity and function. An example of this with regard to OKness is Barnes' (1981) description of the position 'I'm OK, You're OK' as 'a statement of essence that affirms the humanity, worth, dignity and the right each person has to live and grow by virtue of the fact that he or she exists' (p. 24). Similarly, Stewart and Joines (1987) define OKness in terms of the 'essential value' that one perceives in oneself and others (p. 117). Salters (2006) writes about OKness as a 'way of experiencing oneself and others in the world... and a statement of belief about the intrinsic value of human beings that is shared by many cultures' (p. 153). Also, when people describe OKness in terms of qualities such as strength, power, and dependency, as Harris and Harris (1985/1986) do; or as having the three aspects of thinking, feeling, and doing, as White (1995a) does; or as meaning that 'I am fair with myself and fair with others, I see myself and others as equal, that is, with equal rights. It is a moral position', as Jacobs (1997a, p. 198) does, they are describing something essential or that they consider to be essential about the concept.

Positions

It has been argued that Berne derived his terms *positions* and *life positions* from the work of Melanie Klein on psychic positions and that his four life positions reflect Klein's as follows: 'I'm OK, You're Not OK' (I+U-) (paranoid); 'I'm Not OK, You're Not OK' (I-U-) (schizoid); and 'I'm Not OK, You're OK' (I-U+) (depressive). To these Berne adds a fourth—'I+U+'—which might be viewed as the healthy, integrated, or integrating position (see Clarkson, 1992; Stewart, 1992).

In his book on *Eric Berne*, Stewart (1992) was specific that '[Berne] adopted both the term and the concept of "positions", with acknowledgement, from the child psychoanalyst Melanie Klein' (p. 49). However, reading Berne's (1966a) work, it is clear that this is a more general reference to the psychodynamics of early childhood pathology and not a specific reference to positions. Indeed, Klein's and Berne's own definitions of the term *position* reveal significant differences. In her preface to the third edition of her book *The Psycho-Analysis of Children* (which was originally published in 1936), Klein (1936/1949) explains that 'the term "position" was chosen... [to] represent specific groupings of anxieties and defences which appear and re-appear during the first years of childhood' (p. xiii), a definition she had first given in an article published in 1935. In contrast, Berne (1962) offers a more general view of position as 'the fundamental variable of human living' (p. 23) and later, that it 'involves a view of the whole world and all the people in it' (Berne, 1972/1975b, p. 85). He specifically distinguishes between this general view (e.g., futility) and its clinical manifestations (e.g., schizoid and schizophrenic).