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Transactional Analysis and Social Roles

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Abstract

In this article the most important TA concepts will be described in such a way that they do not automatically convey the ideas and attitudes of professional psychotherapists or even mere psychological descriptions of reality. Most of the methods of thinking or action familiar from classical TA have been retained, but are formulated in such a way that they can be specified in various areas of Society by varying professionals according to their respective roles and contexts.

The concept of role used here does not coincide with its common meaning in sociology and social psychology (e.g. Popitz, 1967). Roles are partially a question of social Standards in the sense of social patterns of expectation, but nevertheless role experience, role behavior and role relationships of people are seen as the individual's task of creating. Understanding how to deal with roles in our Society is considered essential for Professional encounters and professionalisation.

I will first describe the concepts from the perspective of the individual. Then I will follow the concepts from the perspective of relationships.

1. Personality as Role Model of a Person

In the following, person or **personality** shall be understood as a **person in their roles**. The operational entity of a person shall not be called ego state, but role. A person is seen as a protagonist of roles. In this model a person's humanness is expressed in the way they structure their roles. The way they live their roles is an expression of their essence. Being human or the essence of a person is not to be found beyond the roles, in an innermost core or anywhere else.

It is expressed as content and in the way roles are experienced and lived. Basically, this model is designed to prevent social roles and humanness being separated and then having to be put back together again. Human experience and behavior should be conceived from the very beginning as role

experience and role behavior. The model implies that people in their humanness can only exist and be experienced through their roles. Such anthropological statements are not primarily intended to contribute to a discussion on TA's image of human beings; the proposed categories of observation serve rather to conceptualize situations for pragmatic purposes. They should facilitate Professional positioning and intelligent and meaningful complexity control in the organisation of professional situations and roles.

In former articles I have developed a "**three world-model**" (Schmid, 1990 and 1991 a) in order to pose the question of personality in the light of dealing with three worlds. These are the **private world**, the **world of organisation** and the **professional world**. The distinction between the world of organisation and the professional world is particularly helpful for a better understanding and more autonomous definition of oneself in organisations. Many questions confront the same person in a different way depending on whether they are put from an organisational role (e.g. representative for women's rights), from a professional role (e.g. social worker) or from a private role (e.g. mother in sp6). The reader will find more examples that render this distinction plausible further on.

The proposed diagram (Figure 1) also contains the idea that development of personality has something to do with developing long-term, balanced relationships to these three worlds, learning and occupying roles in them as well as finding a sense in these roles.

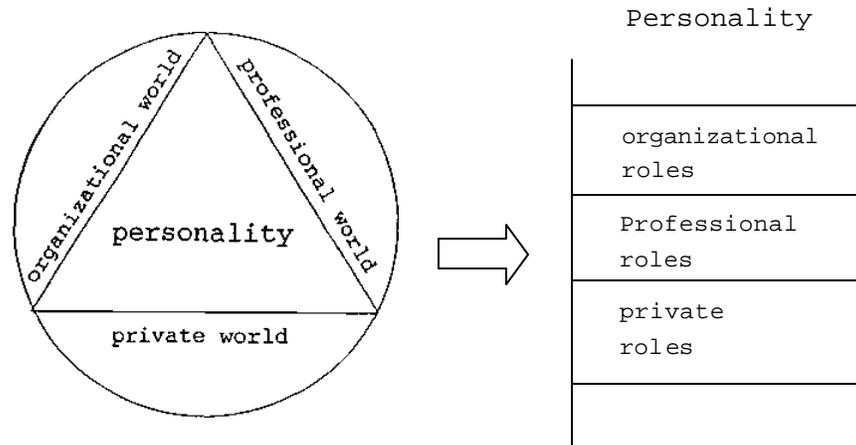


Figure 1: Three world-personality model and role-ladder-model

The diagram of my functional ladder model helps to illustrate interaction. A theoretical discussion of this model can be found in Schmid, 1986 and 1991b. In this functional model we can distinguish three categories of roles corresponding to the differentiation into three worlds. Contrary to BERNE's structural model, I suggest an open model to allow the addition of other worlds at top or bottom. According to the focus of inquiry it can be further differentiated by additional sub-divisions. Nevertheless, I want to draw a frame around this ladder, like BERNE, to emphasize that the variety of roles must be lived out in one body, in one gesture, in one schedule, in one energy budget, etc. All roles exist in one person. Their interaction must be managed. The functional model is conceived as a role model and, in accordance with the personality model, a distinction is made between organisational roles, professional roles and private roles.

1.1 The Role

Let me first give a definition of role. A role is a coherent System of attitudes, feelings, behavior, perspective on reality and the accompanying relationships. In this extension of the operationalizing of ego states the fact is taken into account that every role is linked with and refers to a certain sphere of reality and related frames of reference. The description of roles always contains the description of

relationships corresponding to these roles. From the view of the person every role entails ideas about the kind of relationships which can be shaped from and are suggested by this role.

The diversity and meaning of roles is immediately understandable when we imagine a road accident where we encounter the people involved, their neighbors, the President of the local Community Action Group, the Head of Operations of the Technological Relief Organisation as well as the doctor on emergency call, the police responsible for securing the scene of the accident and future evidence, and a colleague who happens to be passing by. We can imagine many other roles which - depending on the event - activate their own attitudes, feelings and behaviors, their own perspectives on reality. They are dealing mainly with certain aspects of reality and, on the basis of their role, have clear ideas on how they should structure their relationships to the other people present at the scene of the accident. If the Fire Department's Head of Operations happens to be a personal friend of one of the badly injured and also godfather to this person's son, who is also present, but uninjured, we can imagine that several roles are activated simultaneously and that their co-existence within this one person must be controlled in such a Situation.

1.2 Integration of Roles

When diverse possible roles are stimulated, the problem of role integration emerges. Both situationally, as well as in personality as a whole, the question arises as to how people can integrate diverse roles and the corresponding attitudes, feelings, behaviors, perspectives on reality and relationships. From this perspective an integrated personality as the concept of a mature personality means a person who can integrate diverse roles in the different worlds - which often exist simultaneously next to each other - in a functional and essential way. A person expresses their essence, their distinctive characteristics in the form of integration as well as in the style of their roles.

1.3 The Acknowledgement of Roles and their Protagonists (O.K.-Concept)

An important stance of transactional analysts is that people are O.K. They start from the assumption that they themselves are O.K. and that others are to be considered as basically O.K. This concept requires specification in reference to the role approach. In principle the diverse roles in a society are O.K., or there are O.K. versions of them, and people are considered O.K. in their roles. We can, of course, according to the definition of these roles, also detect roles that we do not consider O.K., those of violent criminals, for example. On the other hand it is important for an O.K. stance towards society to be careful about disrespecting the roles existing in this society. In most mythologies good is not conceivable without bad. We may thus ask how what is expressed in social roles as bad or ugly can be acknowledged.

1.4 Autonomy and "Resource Policy"

Today people are challenged in ever -increasingly diverse roles and must also - in organisations, for example, combine various affiliations to different systems of reference. This renders it barely possible to identify oneself with one role or with a small, manageable bundle of roles. One must rather acquire an autonomous, professional attitude in the selection and shaping of roles, as well as in the decision on and control of affiliations. Getting used to the net of roles and references in ones own way is a great task in itself. However, we are additionally

confronted by the conflicts between diverse affiliations and roles. It proves essential to be economical with the available resources (including our own resources of energy and lifetime). In modern business, managers of corporations are generally eaten up by the great role demands made on them, unless they control complexity by means of their own autonomous identity and concentrate congruent role configurations into viable structures.

In traditional TA the concept of autonomy has a great deal to do with the question of **freedom from what**, that is from the egg shell of our own development and the no-longer-fitting traditions handed down to us. Here stress arises because someone cannot develop himself adequately in the face of these relicts and suffers an erosion of functioning and a diminished quality of life. In the model proposed here it is rather a question of **freedom for what**. Security can be established through selective reference and role integration. Mental burning out and loss of energy must be avoided and economy developed in dealing with roles in a way commensurate with the context. In the future this will be the greatest challenge for personality in reference to relief of complexity stress.

1.5 Congruity of Roles - (Synton/Dyston)

In the case of roles, we can distinguish whether we experience them as corresponding or alien to a person in the respective situation and context. Here the question of the perspective from which a person makes such a judgement at a particular moment plays a decisive part. From the psychological view point we speak of ego-corresponding (or ego-alien when a role is experienced as fitting and congruent with the conscious personality experienced as "I" (or not). This judgement can, of course, vary, depending on which role the ego feeling is located in. Thus many people know the experience of judging certain professional roles as not corresponding with them selves in a private situation, whilst experiencing the same roles as completely congruent as soon as they have found their way back into these roles and the appropriate identity. Such phenomena can be seen for example, on the threshold between the holiday and the working world.

Of course, such judgements also depend on the situation and context in which they occur. In the question as to what is congruent and what

is incongruent, we often feel the same as when we bring souvenirs, food or wine home from foreign countries. Once at home we often realize that they are out of place or we do not like them - although our judgement differs when we return to the place they were acquired.

Psychology not only starts from the conscious personality, but also from the essence of a person. We have a picture of how a person is shaped or developed, even though their conscious personality is wrong about this distinctive characteristic or develop it one-sidedly in the organisation of their personality. Intuitively people make **emotional Judgements of one another's essence**. They often form intuitive opinions on whether a role and/or style in which this role is enacted is suited to a person's essence or not. During training processes it is particularly important to ensure mutual communication about such judgements. This can help people to identify even well-mastered roles as not or no longer or not yet in accordance with someone's talents. Other roles - even if they cannot be enacted to a great extent yet - can often be recommended as more congruent and thus be better acknowledged or developed.

For example, in the course of a training program for educational specialists in companies it gradually becomes clear that a certain person is more congruent with themselves as a trainer, consultant and group leader, whilst appearing less congruent as a manager of the same field. For others this might be the other way round. In this case it can be a great help to dissuade someone for whom the role of theater producer is more congruent with their talents from going on stage as an actor, and vice versa. Even if the roles are experienced as congruent with the ego and are played successfully with the appropriate role competence, they will entail less self-expression and less meaning. Occasionally this can lead to conflicts in career decisions, for example when a role that would correspond better to someone's talents is paid much less than one rather alien to their talents. Within an organisation it is frequently only possible to achieve more prestige by going up in the hierarchy, even though a profession in which one would earn less - as mentor for young professionals, for example - might bring more fulfillment.

When inquiring into the essence of human beings, the problem is that people have preconceived ideas about where and how essence manifests itself. We

speak of the inner core, or of an essence located behind or deeper down. This preconceived idea occasionally leads to the intrinsic characteristics being split off from the role. Other preconceived ideas start instead from the assumption that essence is expressed in the role and is not located in its own space. In the same way as, in nuclear physics, the question of the nature of light (corpuscule or waves) is undecidable, this is also a matter of opinion. Different questions bring different answers corresponding to the questions. For our way of looking at things it is reasonable to look for essence in the unique overtones and undertones that accompany the melody. It is important whether and how someone is congruent with their role in their unique characteristics.

As essence is not a static concept and one usually assumes a development of essence, the question as to what is consistent with essence can be answered differently in different contexts and life stages. We can, for example, establish references to ERICKSON (1966), "Stages of identity development". There are, however, situational differences. For example, people sometimes experience different roles and styles as more consistent with their essence at home than when in contact with people in other countries. Similarly, the same can be experienced in a professional switch from the social to the economic sector.

1.6 Activating Roles (Energy Concepts/ Executive Power)

The problems summarized in classical TA under the term energy concepts are also of interest for the role concept. How are roles activated and deactivated? Does this happen at will, controlled by the person, or spontaneously, in reaction to exterior or interior triggers? Professionalism has a lot to do with the ability to activate and deactivate certain roles at will, whereby at will means deliberate choice. Besides that it can also be important to structure situations and contexts in such a way that they provide the appropriate triggers for activating roles. In order that they may have a complementary effect in a certain role structure, the structuring of situations and transactions aimed at other persons for the purpose of activating or deactivating roles is important.

The concept of an executive power in reference to roles can be analogous. The role that has first

priority in controlling experience and behavior at will and by spontaneous activation has executive power. For example, a private role could be cathected so spontaneously in a professional situation that it preeminently influences the focussed reality as well as relationships. This can happen even though this person locates their ego-consciousness in their professional role and would prefer to give this role first priority. The role that gains executive power can be experienced as ego-alien to the professional one.

In professional situations, such as organisations, people can hold several roles simultaneously in the institution (e.g. the role of specialist, friendly colleague, head of department or representative of the employer). This leads to the question as to how the diverse roles can be situationally combined and priorities formed. The inner formation of priorities is necessary in order to establish transparency and clarity within comparative over-complexity. The selected priority needs to be established consciously, stabilized adequately and defined clearly. This ensures the deliberate establishment of complementary role relationships.

1.7 Role Competence

Classical TA stands in the tradition of the profession of psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapists. This means that the formation of TA concepts are co-determined by the basic assumption that reality competence is triggered by the removal of disturbing influences. However, the new acquisition of competence to cope with reality plays an important practical role for transactional analysts, although it has not been adequately represented in TA concepts so far. A role concept of personality renders the necessity to acquire role competence obvious. When someone is voted into the works committee for the first time, they must first learn this role. Perspectives on reality and the structuring of relationships - in wage negotiations, for example - the appropriate feelings and behaviors are not in their role repertoire, but have to be acquired. If role competence is not available or incomplete this can be the most important reason why the function cannot be fulfilled.

I thus understand role competence as the availability or use of information specific to the role. In accordance with the systemic concept of information, information is the formation of differences that make a difference (BATESON 1972). It is therefore

a question of attitudes, feelings, behaviors, perspectives on reality and ideas about relationships that make a distinct difference to the corresponding elements of other roles. The problem of role competence puts the acquisition of the competence necessary for the development of personality in the foreground. Many personality problems have to do with the fact that the necessity to acquire role competence is not recognized or not taken serious or inadequate steps are taken on the way to acquiring it.

Role competence includes the ability to differentiate roles situationally and in reference to context. Here too, the systemic concept of information is the basis of the word differentiation. Differences are formed which are relevant situationally and refer to the context and the role, and other differences are ignored. Role differentiation promotes a differentiated method of dealing with situations. The reduction of unnecessary role differentiations creates transparency and condensation. Role differential and dis-differentiation are important dimensions of complexity control.

1.8 Role Economy

In the case of increasing demands on someone's competence, the question of role selection, structuring and role integration must also be considered under economical aspects. In the social sector the term economy often has a negative flair and is sometimes even seen as a counterpole to humanity. For this reason I would like to remind you at this point that economy basically means the optimal combination of resources for producing results. Ideally, economy serves to establish quality of life with as little consumption of resources as possible. Today psychic energy, time and attention count as the most scarce resources. Dealing uneconomically with these is often a form of human disdain and can result in strained human relations. For example, in professional associations the committees work can become so involved and take up so much energy due to insufficient role economy that they become unattractive for experienced colleagues. In their opinion, their lifetime experience is not made use of meaningfully, and this leads to them being excessively burdened in committees or they withdraw from them altogether. In this case, it is extremely difficult to achieve satisfaction in becoming effective in organisational

roles. The lack of efficiency means that within the professional role formations little time and energy remain for private relationships among colleagues and with the committee members. This can lead to committee work becoming stale official work due to lack of economy, or private relationship needs are given priority and the necessary fulfillment of organisational roles is neglected.

When roles lack economy, and role integration does not succeed due to lack of role competence, fulfillment in diverse roles simultaneously is barely possible. This can lead to inefficiency within committees and misuse or extreme burdening of committee members. Such committees, on the other hand, are important partners for the members of a professional association and shape organisational structures. They have a decisive influence on professionalism - for example in training groups or examinations - and thus also on the life quality of teachers and trainees. When we take these connections into consideration it is easy to understand that the question of economy is distinctly linked with the question of life quality and humanity in various areas of society.

In the business sector there is no less sinning against economy than in the sector of social or political organisations. There are, however, welcome attempts, e.g. in the governing principles of a small but very efficient business enterprise which stipulate, for example, that "Everyone should commit to deal responsibly with the working capacity and the time of others." Respect for work capacity and claims on the lifetime of other persons are important aspects of mutual human respect.

1.9 Restrictions (Pathologies)

The concept of pathology, mentioned in the heading in parenthesis, is merely intended to point out the corresponding custom of labelling in classical TA. In non-psychotherapeutic approaches to TA the term pathology (the theory of disease) is out of place. I speak instead of restrictions of personality and mean limitations or unused abilities in dealing with roles. Judgements of this kind have to do with definitions on the side of the observer, of course. As far as roles are concerned it is easy to see that the definition of differentiation, morality, congruity, functionality and economy of roles is a question of social definition processes. Which roles are to be

distinguished from each other? And how should social processes be organised and this organisation controlled within the personality? On closer consideration this is no different in the clinical field. They depend on context and culture.

1.9.1 Role fixation and exclusion

In classical TA we speak of fixed and excluded ego-states. Analogous to this, in the role concept we can consider role fixation and exclusion as particular limitations of role activation and deactivation. In organisations, for example, we can observe that, in a seminar situation led by someone else, a head of department cannot detach himself from their prerogative to speak and define, which is a part of their understanding of their role as head of department. They often cannot even do it when specialist questions need clarification in discussion or outside the official sessions in informal conversation in private roles. Such a person can be regarded as fixed in certain roles or role areas. Another example is a member of the work's council who manifests their commitment to the class struggle in all situations, or the colleague who behaves and argues in a chronically private manner even in official roles.

On the other hand we can also observe someone who alternates flexibly between various role areas and roles, but excludes specific roles or role areas. Example: Although Eric has been voted chairman of the committee responsible for strategy in a professional association, for example, an official avoids the guideline initiative and competence belonging to this role as well as the definition of certain procedures and relationship rules. Instead he tries to fulfill the necessary functions from the perspective of peer cooperation or friendly relationships with others. The institutional role that is requested as more appropriate or even merely more economical for fulfilling the particular function is excluded from his repertoire.

1.9.2 Role Contamination

Analogous to the structural concept of contamination (BERNE 1961) in classical TA, role contamination is a chronic inclusion of elements from other roles in a role, without the person being aware of it. The protagonist considers the inclusion of elements alien to the role as appropriate to it. For example, in the shaping of institutional roles - e.g. that of a

bargaining agent in wage negotiations - feelings of indignation can seep in, arising from this person's consternation as a private person at the expected wage reduction. These feelings are easily mistaken for the appropriate feelings of the role of negotiator to balance out the diverse problems and interests and, if necessary, to set them in contrast to the conflicting interests of the other negotiating party. In another example, someone may activate behaviors in a private argument which would be more appropriate to a psychotherapeutic treatment of patients, without identifying them as alien to the private role relationship.

In dealing with role contamination, the reliable methods of thinking and procedure of classical TA can be used analogously. First of all, we must define which role is to be the object of analysis and which kind of perspective on reality is considered by it. After this decision has been made, we can identify role elements that do not fit this role. These role elements need not be inadequate in themselves. They may even be beneficial in certain situations. And yet they manifest a disturbance when they are not understood as the conscious enrichment of a specific role, but are regarded as a constituent element of it. This can lead to misdirection.

The aim of **decontamination** is to activate other role elements instead of chronic interference, and to enable decisive role elements to be set off against less fundamental elements. This can occur by means of conscious identification of the interfering elements. It often helps to give these elements adequate expression in other roles. If they are lived out in these, the motive for interference fades.

1.9.3. Role Confusion

We can speak of role confusion - taken more broadly than in classical TA - when roles are organized inconsistently in themselves. They are then not a plausible, coherent system of attitudes, feelings, behavior, perspectives on reality and ideas on relationships, but are rather confused. This can go so far that it is barely possible for a partner in communication or for an observer to shape diverse attitudes, feelings, behavior, perspectives on reality and formation of relationships to a relatively coherent role picture. For this reason it is often impossible to establish to which roles or role areas the role elements can be ascribed.

Confusion is first and foremost a categorization of observed experience and behavior and, for a competent observer, conflicts with clarity and comprehensibility of roles. Disentanglement or deconfusion aims to establish coherence within roles.

Whether it is better to depict a muddle between roles as confusion or as contamination is of necessity a pragmatic decision. It is certainly often more plausible not to start from the removal of confusing disturbances, but from the necessity to establish ordered relationships. Role confusion can be an expression of lacking role competence. It is thus not primarily a matter of removing confusion, but of creating order.

1.9.4 Role Habits and Conventions (Rackets)

As role habits are dealt with under the subtitle 'Restrictions', here role habits are meant which do not correspond with the situation, the context and the assumed or necessary role.

Habits have a power to control and coordinate complexity. There is a wide range of role habits that facilitate life and render it functional. Role habits only become a problem when they are not identified as such and transformed creatively when this is necessary, more satisfying or more economical. This may be the case, for example, when a psychotherapist's professional role habits are enacted in business enterprises with the reference to reality and plausibility appropriate to the view of the psychotherapist's profession. In organisational consultation, legal, structural, economical and market-orientated focusses are often more relevant for the requested professional work. If psychotherapeutic focusses of inquiry are automatically put in the foreground, this can be destructive or at least uneconomical and use up the client's already scarce resources of coping power.

Analogous to discussion of the various racket definitions and their meanings, the question of role habits can be combined with many focusses of inquiry and the corresponding procedures. Detailed discussions of racket concepts can be found in standard textbooks. They will not be repeated here.

1.9.5. Functional Limitations

The concept of functional limitation has been selected as analogous to the functional pathology of the ego states in classical TA. It must, however, be redefined.

Under this concept we can, for example, consider activating or deactivating times for roles, or rather the necessary psychic effort. This can refer to the fact that people sometimes find it increasingly difficult to come to terms with well-known roles. Thus the time and energy a psychotherapist needs on Monday mornings to find their way back into their professional role, to locate their attention, intuition and inner commitment in this role, can get longer and longer. Or it may be increasingly difficult for them to achieve the transfer into private roles after work and to break away from the experiences of professional roles. This phenomenon, sometimes casually called "lingering", can, for example, be a sign of one-sided life orientation or increasing burning out. We might also ascribe the functional limitations to uncontrolled priority shifts in the selection of roles and in the control of experience and behavior from diverse roles. It is certainly necessary here to contemplate on whether the heading "functional limitations" can be filled with meaningful concepts and ways of looking at things, or whether the focus is on ways of looking at things that portray the more or less dynamic aspects of other focusses of inquiry which have already been included in other concepts.

1.9.6 Role Model and Psychological Structural Model of Personality

When necessary the classical structural model of ego states can be combined with the role model of personality and specified for specific psychological focusses of inquiry. When analyzing roles you can ask, as customary in classical TA, whether the manifested thoughts, feelings and behaviors are related to the present and to reality (neopsychic system), whether they were generated earlier and have to be understood as related to earlier realities (archeopsychic system), or whether they have been taken over from others (extereopsychic system).

It makes sense to focus on this kind of inquiry in the areas of professional and organisational roles, too.

In the sphere of organisational roles we can imagine that when strategic decisions have to be made, for example, a personnel manager who used to be a member of internal auditing activates viewpoints of the earlier organisational role - i.e. the thinking, feeling and behavior of an auditor - and in this way lives ego states from the archeopsychic system of their organisational roles. As the son of a pastor he might even take over his father's organisational role towards the head of the parish and copy his way of justifying himself, emphasizing individual human concerns and questions of faith over questions of budget and policies. Without realizing it - possibly triggered by external similarities to the situation in which he experienced his father - he might even live out his father's role style, which never came to the surface in his professional and private world before and has no further significance either.

In this way we can enquire into the origin of ego states or roles under the specific focus of the classical structural model. In so far as it is suitable in a given professional situation, we can then activate methodical procedures pertaining to these diagnoses.

2. Role Model and Reality In Relationships

From the perspective of relationships, the following represents an attempt to describe transactions, games and dysfunctional symbiotic relationships with the help of the role model. From the systemic perspective communication is a **co-creative process of inventing reality**. Communication is not only an exchange of messages, but also a definition of the roles in which we communicate, the contexts we refer to or create, as well as the pertaining relationships. A lot of this happens so automatically and with a mutually safeguarded preconception that this process often escapes our attention. Careful attention to the beginning of communication as an embryonic situation and guiding force for communication outcomes has a good tradition in TA and should thus be extended to the confirmation or non-confirmation of preconceptions and/or new definitions when communication begins.

"If I should ever say to any moment: Tarry, remain! - you are so fair! then you may lay your fetters on me, then I will gladly be destroyed!"¹ May the reader observe for yourself what reading this sentence does to you. This will perhaps make it clear that this

sentence, which is a common expression of the cultural spirit of the times, creates one particular kind of world. It might create the perspective of reality of a drama of destiny with a deeper philosophical and metaphysical meaning. It defines the personality and the world of its speaker (Faustus) who plays a particular role in this play. We develop a preconception of the complementary roles (Mephistopheles, Gretchen, etc.) and the expected course of events. On a wider level of observation, ideas on the style of the production, the interpretation of the characters, the stage set, the costumes, the kind of audience and similar things ensue. On another level, the description I have given in this section depends on whether the reader is familiar with the play and agrees with my characterization. Does it elicit ideas that cause you to acknowledge the metaphor as plausible and endorse my attempt to describe reality?

The example of this metaphor shows that any such statement is an invitation by the authors to contribute to the definition of roles, the description of characters, the definition of relationships and plots as well as to the theme of a play put on stage. The addressees of this invitation are simultaneously co-authors of the play to be performed. Quite often they are also co-directors of the performing institution or protagonists of the company.

Analogously, staging a communication situation and the communicating partner's statements can be understood as contributions to the invention of realities. In a barely pre-defined space it is particularly easy to observe how dialogues and multilogues between the authors involved serve co-creation. The ensuing relationships and the realities in which they are described are the object of observation from the perspective of relationships. Here we can distinguish whether the participants in the communicative process stage reality habitually or generate it anew. By employing our role model we preclude the assumption that individuals as such are in charge. When observing people in their roles, social and system powers come into view. They have a far greater determining influence on the roles than the protagonist of the role is aware of.

The necessary specification of the roles involved in the communication process alone raises a number of useful questions. The sender can ask himself in which role area they actually wishes to commence communication. Prior to reacting, the receiver can

orient himself about the offered role level and make their own decisions on complementary or non-complementary responses. When commencing communication we ought to focus our attention first and foremost on establishing the proper role level in the relationship and on addressing the partner effectively in this role area. This can be managed by way of meta-consciousness, by the participants' mutually agreeing on the selection of the level of communication. If meta-comments are not appropriate, the sender can try to establish the desired communication level by addressing certain roles, or, if this is not possible, decide whether the goal of communication can be achieved within reasonable expenditure of time and energy. Similarly, the reliable considerations and procedures for activating and addressing ego states apply here, too.

2.1 Transactions

BERNE has defined a transaction as the smallest observable unit of communication, i.e. stimulus by a sender and the corresponding response by the receiver. I would like to maintain this definition, while extending it to the levels described above. To do this I use the role ladder model with the three areas of organisational roles, professional roles and private roles already introduced, and will for the time being keep to the simple version of two communicators. First of all it is necessary to define from which role area a stimulus is sent and to which role area of the opposite party it is directed. If the receiver responds from the addressed role area and directs their response to the role area which triggered the stimulus, we have - in reference to role areas - a **complementary transaction**.

The branch chief of an educational department, for example, sets an employee the task of preparing an educational pamphlet which is to be published in a certain format and should be kept within a certain cost limit. If the employee then enquires into the criteria of presentation in accordance with the strategic goal of the department, into possible review criteria by relevant receivers and so on, that will be a complementary reaction. Stimulus and reaction can be presented in figure 2 as a complementary transaction in the area of organisational roles (1 and 2.).

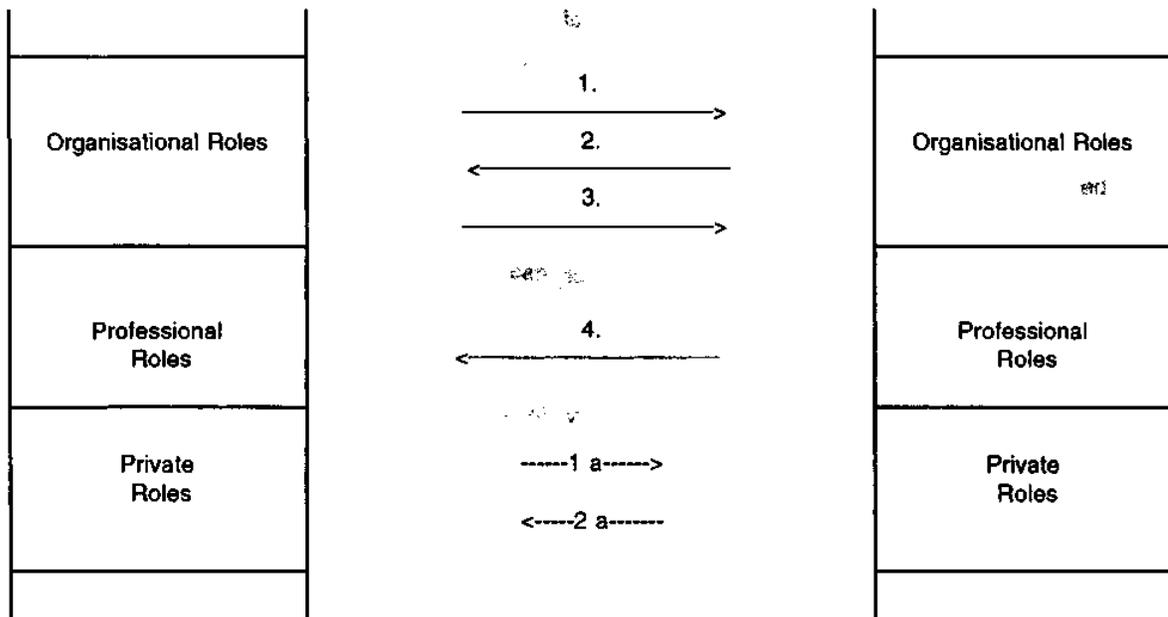


Figure 2: Presentation of transactions with the help of an example of the role model of personality

If we assume that the branch chief then names some of the criteria, such as occupation of certain areas of responsibility within the enterprise, presentation of the usual activities under a new label and design (3.), this could be regarded as an answer corresponding to the role relationship between training chief and employee. The next question might be whether the aim is to illustrate the department as a whole or differentiated areas of responsibility of individual department employees. Or the question might be raised as to whether active advertisement or rather a discreet reference to opportunities of participation is required.

Far less important for this kind of inquiry is the profession of the employee - whether a technical trainer or employed in organisational development - not to mention their private outrage over too much advertising through the post.

Let us assume, however, that the employee reacts as an ADP-specialist at this point and rejects their branch chief's idea as completely antiquated, because it is much easier to adapt such incentives

to situational changes using electronic media. The employee is much better able to assess the requirements of the time than the branch chief, who as an educationalist has no idea of technology (4). Such a reaction - in reference to the role area from which the response comes in relation to the role area addressed - would not be complementary, Stimulus and response - pertaining to role areas - result in a non-complementary transaction,

Another example might be a psychotherapist who stimulates the patient as a private person, but with the intention of establishing a psychotherapeutic relationship. This patient would relate to the therapist and the therapist's professional roles from their own private roles. In this case a **complementary role relationship** would be diagnosed. If the patient consults their opposite from their own private role, but as a private person instead of as a psychotherapist, we would have a **non-complementary role relationship**. The fact that psychotherapists take reactions from their private roles into consideration in their work does not imply a transfer to private roles. Aspects of the private world can and

often must - controlled in accordance with the stand-points of professional roles - be an element of professional work.

Whether a transaction is considered complementary or non-complementary depends on the differentiation within the ladder model. Thus complementarity can be established in reference to the role area, whilst non-complementarity is established within roles. Should they not have enough time to complete the whole task, an employee could ask the supervisor for clarification of priority. If the supervisor then - by giving an assessment of the employee's efficiency - responds from the role of an efficiency assessor instead of from the role of someone deciding on priorities, we have a case of non-complementary transaction in the area of the organisational relationship. Finally, if we differentiate further, it is conceivable that the boss responds complementary to their role as someone deciding on priorities, but does not manifest the desired complementary reaction within their role. However, instead of setting up a series of priorities for the task, the boss defines all tasks as matters of priority and appeals to the employee's willingness to do their duty.

2.2 Transactions on Foreground and Background Levels (Open and Covert Transactions)

In the role model of relationships we can start in principle from the assumption of multilayered communication. When specific role relationships come to the fore, other relationships on other role levels are shaped or concerned parallel to these. Creative communication frequently identifies itself by doing good service to the various aims of communication on various role levels simultaneously. Communication of this kind is dense, effective and economical. It is only important that the participants - if necessary - consciously have a close look at the shaping and result of relationships when background role relationships become difficult or start interfering with foreground role relationships.

Difficulties can also arise when background role relationships, unnoticed by the communicators, determine the course of the official, foreground role relationships. Let us assume that in the above example, during discussion of the planned educational pamphlet, unnoticed by the participants, male rivalry is involved concerning a woman also present.

This would determine stimulus and response in the background (\rightarrow 1a and \leftarrow 2a in Figure 2). From the perspective of the person one might assume that activation of the private role occurs spontaneously in the two men. The role of the 'rival male' might gain executive power in both, and thus control the shaping of the relationship, while ego-consciousness remains located in their organisational roles.

However, we may also find the opposite case. Two employees of a department might have a problem between professions - let's say between communication trainer and training administrator. They deal with it from the opinions and habits of the respective professions and from the relationship between these professions. However, they might overlook the fact that the difficulties in the relationship are defined much more by the organisational structure, by incompatible, doubly defined areas of responsibility, than by the different professions. A lot would speak for this if the software trainers in the neighboring departments had similar relationship problems with training administration.

In organisational roles there can be relationship problems that control professional arguments from the background. The ego consciousness (real self) of those concerned may be located in the professional roles in the foreground. For the clarification of such situations it is important to bring the background relationship of the organisational role into the foreground and make it the focus of attention. Such arguments can influence the private relationships of those concerned and bring private reactions to each other to the foreground. This can increase relationship problems, because they are being dealt with on a level on which no solution is to be found.

Conversely, an exchange between foreground and background can represent a creative element. Even if it is not exactly the proper way as far as the organisation or profession is concerned, temporary emphasis of private relationships can instill a new dynamic in the relationship that loosens up the stereotype relationship patterns in professional or organisational relationships and opens up new possibilities. Thus mutual training in a team can further the professionalism of the individual on the one hand and mutual understanding and working together in the diverse professional roles on the other (effect of qualifying individuals). Mutual learning can also have a more or less intended secondary effect on the background organisational

relationships during training (effect of qualifying the system).

Many communication situations are distinguished by multilayered role relationships and communication strategies relating to complexity. The main question is when is it sensible to take the complexities of multilayered relationships into account simultaneously? As a safeguard against over-complexity it is often important to relegate some role relationships situationally right to the background. They can become the object of communication at another time and from another definition of the situation.

The formation of such priorities and strategies and their consideration belong to the repertoire of professional work. An organisational consultant has to consider, for example, how useful it can be for the organisation and its members to compensate for badly managed delegations and authorizations habitually by professional harmony and getting on well with one another privately. This can function well for a long time. However, communication can also collapse completely when the protagonists of these roles are no longer prepared or in a position to accept this compensation. The organisational relationships no longer function without role-alien 'lubricants'. It is often the role protagonists themselves who are unjustly held responsible for what is revealed and needs changing. It is considered to be their own (private) problem.

Questions of professional and organisational relationships arise, for example, in companies in the transition from the pioneer phase to the institutionalizing phase. In the pioneer phase people often work on something in a garage, go out together in the evenings and like each other a lot. However, the company grows, and the intensity of private relationships, which are frequently only congruent at the beginning, is used up. Instead professionalism comes to the fore. At some time representatives of other professions are included, e.g. businesspeople in an engineer office. In undeclared organisational relationships it is difficult to link the different professional ideas constructively. People feel alienated from one another and are less happy working together than the historically evolved self-image of the company suggests. Perhaps the difficulties are principally considered as conflicts between engineers and businesspeople. The role model presented here is suited to differentiated clarification of various problems and can serve to illustrate them.

2.3 Games

Whilst single transactions can be compared to photos, when looking at games we shift to film shots. We are looking at transactional relationship patterns which develop and reveal their shape in the course of the games.

Analogous to the classical definition of games by BERNE, a game is a series of unnoticed, complementary transactions on a background level with a predictable relationship result. This relationship result is not often noticed by the communicators until they become aware of its consequences. The development of relationship dynamics often go unnoticed before the result. The consequences can enter into the experience of the participants directly. However, we might also include consequences that evade the direct experience of the communicators and appear in others concerned. This opens up a wide field of ecological questions around communication.

In the classical concept of games it was assumed that psychological reproductions of difficult experiences in life and relationships take place in the background, unnoticed and complementarity matching each other. Its predictable result is the repetition of such experiences. If we follow this concept of games in principle, we come to the following definition of games: A game is complementary interaction on a background relationship level, which leads to predictable results for the relationship. This can interfere with the aim of communication on the foreground level, or overburden communication. The development of such a complementary, background relationship can lead to an uncontrolled shift in role-related priorities. Also background relationship dynamics can overburden or even dominate the control of foreground relationships unnoticed.

Professional coordination between a male and female consultant, for example, can come to an absolute standstill or not take place in accordance with professional criteria because both are playing erotic relationship games in the background without being aware of it. Even if erotic interaction is pleasing from the perspective of private roles, it can have negative effects on the forming of professional relationships and the perception of professional roles. It can also lead to the maintenance of professional relationships that have become unproductive, uneconomical or harmful. Relationship problems on

the erotic background level can also cause productive professional relationships to be undermined or even broken off.

In dealing with such games we can similarly take recourse to the familiar repertoire of games analysis and confrontation in relationship games, or refute them by emphasizing constructive relationship levels. However, the focus of inquiry becomes even more complex when complex relationship possibilities are acknowledged. The professional who uses such descriptions to control their actions must decide on the focus and selection of priorities. The professional working on the relationships of others comes into view themselves. Accordingly, additional questions of adjustment and coupling arise, which have to be dealt with again and again under the standpoint of contract work.

There are bound to be very different assessments of what should be dealt with in the foreground and what in the background in professional situations. The impression that in a company many committees go on working together for years for the simple reason that some colleagues enjoy meeting up regularly with others that they like may be no problem for the cultural consultant of a company. The resources used for this can be seen as an optimal investment in the happiness of the colleagues in their place of work. Formal educational and communication measures seem unnecessary. For a rationalization consultant brought in from the outside the priorities may possibly be different. It depends on the standpoint from which they assess the connection between consumption of resources and effectivity. In all events, such focussing can point out the type of relationship control and the criteria on which resources are consumed to the decision makers, the co-workers and those concerned. This renders more autonomous decisions possible.

Up till now games have been treated as a problematic formation of communication. However, BERNE has already coined the term 'good games'. He never enlarged on this concept, though. **Constructive games**, then, are games that form relationships unobtrusively, in the background and complementarity so that they enrich and inspire foreground relationships in a surprising way. They can strengthen endurance and courage in relationships when problems arise. They can enable unproductive relationships to be renounced without losing harmony or mutual respect or possibilities of being

together completely.

2.4 Exploitation and Symbiosis Aspects of Relationships

We speak of dysfunctional symbiosis when responsibility is avoided and shifted in relationships, or the negative consequences of avoided responsibility are shifted, or when the activation and development of potentials is obstructed.

A dysfunctional-symbiotic relationship between the head of a department and one of his project leaders can look like this: The boss responsible for budget does not answer a request for clarification of which of the possible versions of the project could be financed and which not, but points out instead that other members of the department responsible for the project also have legitimate claims. The boss nonetheless demands clarification of the intended project strategy and noticeable progress at every opportunity. The project leader in turn attempts to clarify how the available budget can be divided amongst the different projects with the other project leaders. The chief gets caught up in an argument on the importance and professional tightness of the respective projects. The relationship between the boss and the project leader can be described as dysfunctional-symbiotic. The project leader tries to take on the avoided responsibility of the person responsible for budget according to their organisational role, and gets lost while attempting to clarify the situation with colleagues on the level of professional role relationships. The ensuing discomfort lands up with the chief and possibly with colleagues. From the organisational role of the project leader, responsibility is not demanded from the boss effectively. The attempt to shift discomfort back to the boss or to other persons who caused it, or at least to prevent it being shifted to others, is unsuccessful.

Many organisations have protective mechanisms sustained by all which prevent those responsible from carrying their responsibilities or encourage them to avoid responsibility. Mechanisms demanding a take-over of responsibility are blocked. This often happens unintentionally, but can be the product of lacking competence or misdirected understanding of roles.

According to the definition, a further aspect of

dysfunctional symbiosis is that the participants do not activate or develop their potential in this relationship. When the person responsible for the project does not activate their potential to constructively demand a budget decision in their organisational role, they are contributing to the non-development or non-activation of the boss's respective role competence. The project leader could counteract the take-over of discomfort in the following manner. They might not commission instructions from the boss for which they had no corresponding issuing authorization, but let the boss sign instead. This will not necessarily make the boss fulfill their responsibility competently, but the prospect of ensuing problems falling back on them are more likely to reduce their tendency to establish symbiotic relationships.

Symbiotic relationships are often lived out in a manner that establishes and nurtures mutual illusions or avoids them being confronted with reality. Here one might emphasize responsibility for the active reflection of reality. Frequently, someone else's irresponsible or illusionary manner of dealing with reality is tolerated out of blindness, lethargy, because of one's own illusions or opportunism.

If we play around with the above example a little, we might also imagine that the project leader attempts to take remedial action with a basically correct feeling for what is right, but on problematic role levels. They might cause their boss discomfort within the professional relationship and accuse them of lacking qualification on the specialist level. They might also risk harmony in private roles - e.g. in the community or such like - and create discomfort on this level. This could lead to further symbiotic entanglement. The boss is prepared to compensate on the level of private relationships, for example. They might take over responsibility that is in fact ascribable to the project leader in their private roles. Or they dispense with demanding professional development of their colleague. They might even protect the project leader where professional potential is lacking and discomfort ensues in the organisation, and so on. This results in alliances of incompetence and entanglement.

Dysfunctional symbiotic relationships between roles can also be imagined within one person. A freelancer, for example, must then deal with problems in their role as consultant that they caused themselves in their role as employer. They avoid developing the

role of offerer of consultation services in their business role and thus avoid creating the prerequisites for meaningful consultation situations. Instead they attempt to cope with misdesigned situations by means of situational virtuosity, or if this does not succeed, suffer self-doubt in their private roles.

Symbiotic dynamics within an organisation can present themselves as personal dynamics between the roles of its members. Conversely, key figures could spread their internal symbiotic role dynamics into the organisational culture as dysfunctional symbiotic patterns in organisational relationships.

Conclusion

The role model suggested here is primarily a contribution to the application of TA in professional fields other than psychotherapy and mere psychological work. It helps to open up TA as a framework for professionalism in general.

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¹ Key quote from J.W. Goethe's drama spoken by Dr. Faustus to Mephistopheles.