

**I giochi dell'analisi transazionale.
Come riconoscerli e liberarsene.
[The games of transactional analysis.
How to acknowledge them and how to
get rid of them.]**

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Sabrina D'Amanti is a trained transactional analyst, who initially worked in the field of clinical and school psychology. This book covers the history and the theoretical foundation of Transactional Analysis (TA), focusing above all on the theory of *mind* or psychological games, and offers practical examples that can greatly help practitioners and analysts - especially health psychologists - in their clinical work.

Canadian-born US psychiatrist Eric Berne (1910-1970) developed in the fifties an integrative approach of psychotherapy, termed as TA.¹⁻⁴ It is integrative since it uses approaches borrowed from Freudian psychoanalysis, clinical, social and cognitive psychology, unifying them in a unique conceptual framework. Being a highly integrated theoretical construct, TA can be interpreted as a psychological theory, devoted to the underpinning of the infra-psychic functions, the psychological hidden motivations and the inter-personal behaviors, as well as being focused on the study of the personality and its development. TA is also a communication model, since it emphasizes the analysis of the social aspects of everyday life and studies how and why people interact with each other.

The founder of TA started from developing a tripartite Parent-Adult-Child (PAC) Ego-State Model, as underlying core concept of the social interactions model.⁵⁻⁷ A Parent Ego-State is called also *exteropsyché*, it can be normative or nurturing, but usually it conveys injunctions and *must be-don't be* orders. An Adult Ego-State, or *neopsyché*, is the reflexive component of the personality, while a Child Ego-State is termed as *archaeopsyché* and can be adaptive or creative/spontaneous. A sound personality should have all these three components properly and adequately represented. In order to reach a stable equilibrium, an individual should satisfy three basic needs, termed *hungers* by Berne: stimulus, recognition and structure hunger. A way to meet with these needs is given by the transactions.

Transactions are a flow of communications which arise from a transactional stimulus (a gesture, an episode, a face expression, and so

on) and result in an exchange of strokes (that is to say, signs of recognition) between people. Transaction is the *molecular unity* of the social life.

Mind games can be defined as an organized series of ulterior and complementary (that is to say, reciprocal) transactions, which can take place on both levels of sociological and psychological dimension and are key elements of the life script (a decisional life plan, in the Eric Berne's jargon). They are highly structured, and always result in a dramatic and unpleasant outcome for both the players, who are unaware of the psychological and social meanings of the dynamics they are playing. Being structured, they differ from other ways of structuring time, like rituals (which are instead stereotyped), activities (in which strokes are not personal but related to contexts and facts), pastimes (which lack a precise purpose and direction). Being social they can be separated from withdrawal, not being authentic they differ from intimacy which is characterized by personal, and unconditional strokes.

There can be different degrees of mind games, depending on the intensity of the game itself, being the first degree a socially acceptable game (category of public games), the second one a less acceptable game (category of private games), the third one games being socially deprecable.

A psychological game offers some advantages like existential, psychological and biological pay-offs (avoidance of real problems and issues, a false state of well-being and so on). Each game has a thesis (that is to say, the basic premise of the game itself and how it is played out), as well as an antithesis (the way it reaches its end), a purpose, a dynamics and a series of pay-offs.

After a thumbnail sketch, the author guides the reader through a vast collection of practical examples, all carefully illustrated and explained, showing how to apply the powerful TA concepts to the daily routine clinical practice.

The author illustrates a list of psychological games under the labels of *the victim*, *the persecutor*, and *the rescuer*, collecting more than thirty clinical cases and situations, and discussing them under the light of Berne's TA (that is to say, category and type of psychological game, offered advantages, defensive dynamics and purpose, and so on).

However, there are some limitations of this book, such as the fact that is restrained to the classical address of TA, whilst the new schools and conceptual elaborations (such as Goulding, Erskine and Zalcman) are mainly ignored.⁸⁻¹⁰

Also other topics are not included in the book, like the historical evolution of the main concepts of Eric Berne's psychotherapy and his influences, as well as the important contribution to the group theory.

Nevertheless the book is very nicely written and is worth reading, and we do strongly recommend it to the readers, since they can become aware of their adopted strategies and psychological games by reading the book and only being conscious of this reality they can get rid of them. We recommend this volume as well to all psychiatrists and psychologists, since most books about TA have a theoretical approach and background, and this book, adopting a practical thread, fills this gap.

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