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# Games People Play

The psychology of human relationships

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## Preface

THIS book is primarily designed to be a sequel to my book *Transnational Analysis in Psychotherapy*,<sup>1</sup> but has been planned so that it can be read and understood independently. The theory necessary for the analysis and clear understanding of games has been summarized in Part I. Part II contains descriptions of the individual games. Part III contains new clinical and theoretical material which, added to the old, makes it possible to understand to some extent what it means to be game-free. Those desiring further background are referred to the earlier volume. The reader of both will note that in addition to the theoretical advances, there have been some minor changes in terminology and viewpoint based on further thinking and reading and new clinical material. The need for this book was indicated by interested requests from students and lecture audiences for lists of games, or for further elaboration of games mentioned briefly as examples in a general exposition of the principles of transactional analysis. Thanks are due in general to these students and audiences, and especially to the many patients who exposed to view, spotted or named new games; and in particular to Miss Barbara Rosenfeld for her many ideas about the art and meaning of listening; and to Mr. Melvin Boyce, Mr. Joseph Concannon, Dr. Franklin Ernst, Dr. Kenneth Everts, Dr. Gordon Gritter, Mrs. Frances Matson, and Dr. Ray Poindexter, among others, for their independent discovery or confirmation of the significance of many games. Mr. Claude Steiner, formerly Research Director of the San Francisco Social Psychiatry Seminars and presently in the Department of Psychology at the University of Michigan deserves special mention on two counts. He conducted the first experiments which confirmed many of the theoretical points at issue here, and as a result of these experiments he helped considerably in clarifying the nature of autonomy and of intimacy. Thanks are also due to Miss Viola Lilt, the Secretary-Treasurer of the Seminars, and to Mrs. Mary N. Williams, my personal secretary, for their continued help, and to Anne Garrett for her assistance in reading the proof.

### SEMANTICS

For conciseness, the games are described primarily from the male point of view unless they are clearly feminine. Thus the chief player is usually designated as "he," but without prejudice, since the same situation, unless otherwise indicated, could as easily be outlined with "she," *mutatis mutandis*. If the woman's role differs significantly from the man's, it is treated separately. The therapist is similarly without prejudice designated as "he." The vocabulary and viewpoint are primarily oriented toward the practicing clinician, but members of other professions may find this book interesting or useful.

Transactional game analysis should be clearly distinguished from its growing sister science of mathematical game analysis, although a few of the terms used in the text, such as "payoff," are now respectably mathematical. For a detailed review of the mathematical theory of games see *Games & Decisions*, by R. D. Luce and H. Raiffa

—Carmel, California, May 1962

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# Introduction

## 1 SOCIAL INTERCOURSE

THE theory of social intercourse, which has been outlined at some length in Transnational Analysis may be summarized as follows.

Spitz has found that infants deprived of handling over a long period will tend at length to sink into an irreversible decline and are prone to succumb eventually to intercurrent disease. In effect, this means that what he calls emotional deprivation can have a fatal outcome. These observations give rise to the idea of stimulus-hunger, and indicate that the most favored forms of stimuli are those provided by physical intimacy, a conclusion not hard to accept on the basis of everyday experience. An allied phenomenon is seen in grown-ups subjected to sensory deprivation. Experimentally, such deprivation may call forth a transient psychosis, or at least give rise to temporary mental disturbances. In the past, social and sensory deprivation is noted to have had similar effects in individuals condemned to long periods of solitary imprisonment. Indeed, solitary confinement is one of the punishments most dreaded even by prisoners hardened to physical brutality, and is now a notorious procedure for inducing political compliance. (Conversely, the best of the known weapons against compliance is social organization.)

On that biological side, it is probable that emotional and sensory deprivation tends to bring about or encourage organic changes. If the reticular activating system<sup>8</sup> of the brain stem is not sufficiently stimulated, degenerative changes in the nerve cells may follow, at least indirectly. This may be a secondary effect due to poor nutrition, but the poor nutrition itself may be a product of apathy, as in infants suffering from marasmus. Hence a biological chain may be postulated leading from emotional and sensory deprivation through apathy to degenerative changes and death. In this sense, stimulus-hunger has the same relationship to survival of the human organism as food-hunger. Indeed, not only biologically but also psychologically and socially, stimulus-hunger in many ways parallels the hunger for food. Such terms as malnutrition, satiation, gourmet, gourmand, faddist, ascetic, culinary arts, and good cook are easily transferred from the field of nutrition to the field of sensation. Overstuffing has its parallel in overstimulation. In both spheres, under ordinary conditions where ample supplies are available and a diversified menu is possible, choices will be heavily influenced by an individual's idiosyncrasies. It is possible that some or many of these idiosyncrasies are constitutionally determined, but this is irrelevant to the problems at issue here. The social psychiatrist's concern in the matter is with what happens after the infant is separated from his mother. in the normal course of growth. What has been said so far may be summarized by the "colloquialism":<sup>7</sup> "If you are not stroked, your spinal cord will shrivel up." Hence, after the period of close intimacy with the mother is over, the individual for the rest of his life is confronted with a dilemma upon whose horns his destiny and survival are continually being tossed. One born is the social, psychological and biological forces which stand in the way of continued physical intimacy in the infant style; the other is his perpetual striving for its attainment. Under most conditions he will compromise. He learns to do with more subtle, even symbolic, forms of handling, until the merest nod of recognition may serve the purpose to some extent, although his original craving for physical contact may remain unabated.

This process of compromise may be called by various terms, such as sublimation; but whatever it is called, the result is a partial transformation of the infantile stimulus-hunger into something which may be termed recognition-hunger. As the complexities of compromise increase, each person becomes more and more individual in his quest for recognition, and it is these differentia which lend variety to social intercourse and which determine the individual's destiny. A movie actor may require hundreds of strokes each week from anonymous and undifferentiated admirers to keep his spinal cord from shriveling, while a scientist may keep physically and mentally healthy on one stroke a year from a respected master.

"Stroking" may be used as a general term for intimate physical contact; in practice it may take various forms. Some people literally stroke an infant; others hug or pat it, while some people pinch

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it playfully or flip it with a fingertip. These all have their analogues in conversation, so that it seems one might predict how an individual would handle a baby by listening to him talk. By an extension of meaning, "stroking" may be employed colloquially to denote any act implying recognition of another's presence. Hence a stroke may be used as the fundamental unit of social action. An exchange of strokes constitutes a transaction, which is the unit of social intercourse.

As far as the theory of games is concerned, the principle which emerges here is that any social intercourse whatever has a biological advantage over no intercourse at all. This has been experimentally demonstrated in the case of rats through some remarkable experiments by S. Levine 8 in which not only physical, mental and emotional development but also the biochemistry of the brain and even resistance to leukemia were favorably affected by handling. The significant feature of these experiments was that gentle handling and painful electric shocks were equally effective in promoting the health of the animals.

This validation of what has been said above encourages us to proceed with increased confidence to the next section.

## **2 THE STRUCTURING OF TIME**

Granted that handling of infants, and its symbolic equivalent in grown-ups, recognition, have a survival value. The question is, What next? In everyday terms, what can people do after they have exchanged greetings, whether the greeting consists of a collegiate "Hi!" or an Oriental ritual lasting several hours? After stimulus-hunger and recognition-hunger comes structure-hunger. The perennial problem of adolescents is: "What do you say to her (him) then?" And to many people besides adolescents, nothing is more uncomfortable than a social hiatus, a period of silent, unstructured time when no one present can think of anything more interesting to say than; "Don't you think the walls are perpendicular tonight?" The eternal problem of the human being is how to structure his waking hours. In this existential sense, the function of all social living is to lend mutual assistance for this project.

The operational aspect of time-structuring may be called programming. It has three aspects: material, social and individual. The most common, convenient, comfortable, and utilitarian method of structuring time is by a project designed to deal with the material of external reality: what is commonly known as work. Such a project is technically called an activity; the term "work" is unsuitable because a general theory of social psychiatry must recognize that social intercourse is also a form of work.

Material programming arises from the vicissitudes encountered in dealing with external reality; it is of interest here only insofar as activities offer a matrix for "stroking," recognition, and other more complex forms of social intercourse. Material programming is not primarily a social problem; in essence it is based on data processing. The activity of building a boat relies on a long series of measurements and probability estimates, and any social exchange which occurs must be subordinated to these in order for the building to proceed.

Social programming results in traditional ritualistic or semi-ritualistic interchanges. The chief criterion for it is local acceptability, popularity called "good manners." Parents in all parts of the world teach their children manners, which means that they know the proper greeting, eating, courting and mourning rituals, and also how to carry on topical conversations with appropriate strictures and reinforcements. The strictures and reinforcements constitute tact or diplomacy, some of which is universal and some local. Belching at meals or asking after another man's wife are each encouraged or forbidden by local ancestral tradition, and indeed there is a high degree of inverse correlation between these particular transactions. Usually in localities where people belch at meals, it is unwise to ask after the womenfolk; and in localities where people are asking after the womenfolk, it is unwise to belch at meals. Usually formal rituals precede semi-ritualistic topical conversations, and the latter may be distinguished by calling them -pastimes.

As people become better acquainted, more and more individual programming creeps in, so that "incidents" begin to occur. These incidents superficially appear to be adventitious, and may be so described by the parties concerned, but careful scrutiny reveals that they tend to follow definite

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patterns which are amenable to sorting and classification, and that the sequence is circumscribed by unspoken rules and regulations. These regulations remain latent as long as the amities or hostilities proceed according to Hoyle, but they become manifest if an illegal move is made, giving rise to a symbolic, verbal or legal cry of "Foul!" Such sequences, which in contrast to pastimes are based more on individual than on social programming, may be called games. Family life and married life, as well as life in organizations of various kinds, may year after year be based on variations of the same game.

To say that the bulk of social activity consists of playing games does not necessarily mean that it is mostly "fun" or that the parties are not seriously engaged in the relationship. On the one hand, "playing" football and other athletic "games" may not be fun at all, and the players may be intensely grim; and such games share with gambling and other forms of "play" the potentiality for being very serious indeed, sometimes fatal. On the other hand, some authors, for instance Huizinga, 9 include under "play" such serious things as cannibal feasts. Hence calling such tragic behavior as suicide, alcohol and drug addiction, criminality or schizophrenia "playing games" is not irresponsible, facetious or barbaric. The essential characteristic of human play is not that the emotions are spurious, but that they are regulated. This is revealed when sanctions are imposed on an illegitimate emotional display. Play may be grimly serious, or even fatally serious, but the social sanctions are serious only if the rules are broken.

Pastimes and games are substitutes for the real living of real intimacy. Because of this they may be regarded as preliminary engagements rather than as unions, which is why they are characterized as poignant forms of play. Intimacy begins when individual (usually instinctual) programming becomes more intense, and both social patterning and ulterior restrictions and motives begin to give way. It is the only completely satisfying answer to stimulus-hunger, recognition-hunger and structure-hunger. Its prototype is the act of loving impregnation.

Structure-hunger has the same survival value as stimulus-hunger. Stimulus-hunger and recognition-hunger express the need to avoid sensory and emotional starvation, both of which lead to biological deterioration. Structure-hunger expresses the need to avoid boredom, and Kierkegaard<sup>10</sup> has pointed out the evils which result from unstructured time. If it persists for any length of time, boredom becomes synonymous with emotional starvation and can have the same consequences. The solitary individual can structure time in two ways: activity and fantasy. An individual can remain solitary even in the presence of others, as every schoolteacher knows. When one is a member of a social aggregation of two or more people, there are several options for structuring time. In order of complexity, these are: (1) Rituals (2) Pastimes (3) Games (4) Intimacy and (5) Activity, which may form a matrix for any of the others. The goal of each member of the aggregation is to obtain as many satisfactions as possible from his transactions with other members. The more accessible he is, the more satisfactions he can obtain. Most of the programming of his social operations is automatic. Since some of the "satisfactions" obtained under this programming, such as self-destructive ones, are difficult to recognize in the usual sense of the word "satisfactions," it would be better to substitute some more non-committal terra, such as "gains" or "advantages."

The advantages of social contact revolve around somatic and psychic equilibrium. They are related to the following factors: (1) the relief of tension (2) the avoidance of noxious situations (3) the procurement of stroking and (4) the maintenance of an established equilibrium. All these items have been investigated and discussed in great detail by physiologists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts. Translated into terms of social psychiatry, they may be stated as (1) the primary internal advantages (2) the primary external advantages (3) the secondary advantages and (4) the existential advantages. The first three parallel the "gains from illness" described by Freud: the internal paranoic gain, the external paranoic gain, and the eplnosic gain, respectively.<sup>11</sup>

Experience has shown that it is more useful and enlightening to investigate social transactions from the point of view of the advantages gained than to treat them as defensive operations. In the first place, the best defense is to engage in no transactions at all; in the second place, the concept of

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"defenses" covers only part of the first two classes of advantages, and the rest of them, together with the third and fourth classes, are lost to this point of view.

The most gratifying forms of social contact, whether or not they are embedded in a matrix of activity, are games and intimacy. Prolonged intimacy is rare, and even then it is primarily a private matter; significant social intercourse most commonly takes the form of games, and that is the subject which principally concerns us here. For further information about rime-structuring, the author's book on group dynamics should be consulted.

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# **PART I**

## **Analysis of Games**

### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### **Structural Analysis**

OBSERVATION of spontaneous social activity, most productively carried out in certain kinds of psychotherapy groups, reveals that from time to time people show noticeable changes in posture, viewpoint, voice, vocabulary, and other aspects of behavior. These behavioral changes are often accompanied by shifts in feeling. In given individual, a certain patterns correspond to one state of mind, while another set is related to a different psychic attitude, often inconsistent with the first. These changes and differences give rise to the idea of "ego states".

In technical language, an ego state may be described phenomenologically as a coherent system of feelings, and operationally as a set of coherent behavior patterns. In more practical terms, it is a system of feelings accompanied by a related set of behavior patterns. Each individual seems to have available a limited repertoire of such ego states, which are not roles but psychological realities. This repertoire can be sorted into the following categories: (C) ego states which resemble those of parental figures (2) ego states which are autonomously directed toward objective appraisal of reality and (B) those which represent archaic relics, still-active ego states which were fixated in early childhood. Technically these are called, respectively, extero-psychic, neopsychic, and archaeopsychic ego states. Colloquially their exhibitions are called Parent, Adult and Child, and these simple terms serve for all but the most formal discussions.

The position is, then, that at any given moment each individual in a social aggregation will exhibit a Parental, Adult or Child ego state, and that individuals can shift with varying degrees of readiness from one ego state to another. These observations give rise to certain diagnostic statements. "That is your Parent" means: "You are now in the same state of mind as one of your parents (or a parental substitute) used to be, and you are responding as he would, with the same posture, gestures, vocabulary, feelings, etc." "That is your Adult" means: "You have just made an autonomous, objective appraisal of the situation and are stating these thought-processes, or the problems you perceive, or the conclusions you have come to, in a non-prejudicial manner." "That is your Child" means: "The manner and intent of your reaction is the same as it would have been when you were a very little boy or girl." The implications are:

1. That every individual has had parents (or substitute parents) and that he carries within him a set of ego states that reproduce the ego states of those parents (as he perceived them), and that these parental ego states can be activated under certain circumstances (extero-psychic functioning).

Colloquially: "Everyone carries his parents around inside of him."

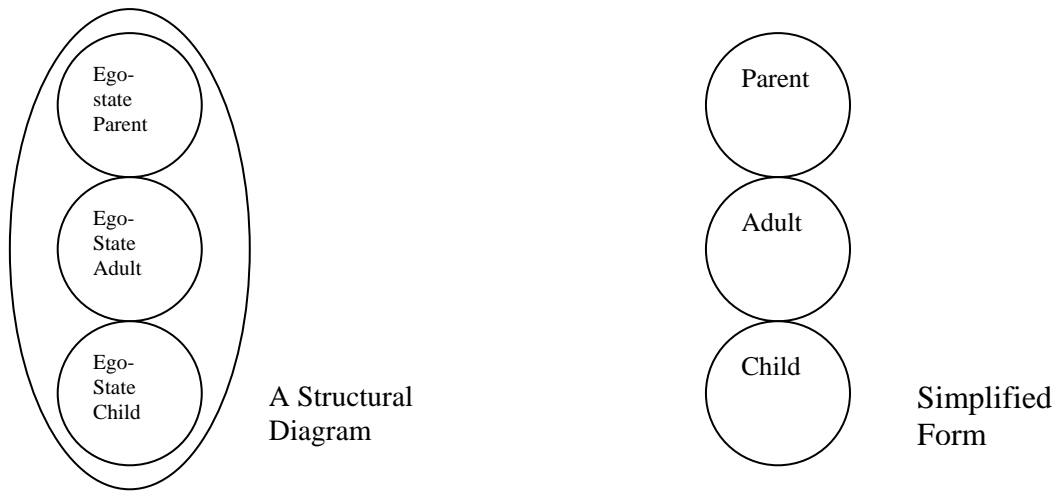
2. That every individual (including children, the mentally retarded and schizophrenics) is capable of objective data processing if the appropriate ego state can be activated (neopsychic functioning).

Colloquially: "Everyone has an Adult."

3. That every individual was once younger than he is now, and that he carries within him fixated relics from earlier years which will be activated under certain circumstances (archaeopsychic functioning). Colloquially: "Everyone carries a little boy or girl around inside of him."

At this point it is appropriate to draw Figure I (A), which is called a structural diagram. This represents, from the present viewpoint, a diagram of the complete personality of any individual. It includes his Parental, Adult, and Child ego states. They are carefully segregated from each other, because they are so different and because they are so often quite inconsistent with each other. The distinctions may not be clear at first to an inexperienced observer, but soon become impressive and interesting to anyone who takes the trouble to learn structural diagnosis. It will be convenient henceforth to call actual people parents, adults or children, with no capital letters; Parent, Adult and Child, capitalized, will be used when ego states are referred to. Figure 1(B) represents a convenient, simplified form of the structural diagram.





< FIGURE 1 >

Before we leave the subject of structural analysis, certain complications should be mentioned.

1. The word "childish" is never used in structural analysis, since it has come to have strong connotations of undesirability, and of something to be stopped forthwith or gotten rid of. The term "childlike" is used in describing the Child (an archaic ego state), since it is more biological and not prejudicial. Actually the Child is in many ways the most valuable part of the personality, and can contribute to the individual's life exactly what an actual child can contribute to family life: charm, pleasure and creativity. If the Child in the individual is confused and unhealthy, then the consequences may be unfortunate, but something can and should be done about it.

2. The same applies to the words "mature" and "immature." In this system there is no such thing as an "immature person." There are only people in whom the Child takes over inappropriately or unproductively, but all such people have a complete, well-structured Adult which only needs to be uncovered or activated. Conversely, so-called "mature people" are people who are able to keep the Adult in control most of the time, but their Child will take over on occasion like anyone else's, often with disconcerting results.

3. It should be noted that the Parent is exhibited in two forms, direct and indirect: as an active ego state, and as an influence. When it is directly active, the person responds as his own father (or mother) actually responded ("Do as I do"). When it is an indirect influence, he responds the way they wanted him to respond ("Don't do as I do, do as I say"). In the first case he becomes one of them; in the second, he adapts himself to their requirements.

4. Thus the Child is also exhibited in two forms: the adapted Child and the natural Child. The adapted Child is the one who modifies his behavior under the Parental influence. He behaves as father (or mother) wanted him to behave: compliantly or precociously, for example. Or he adapts himself by withdrawing or whining. Thus the Parental influence is a cause, and the adapted Child an effect. The natural Child is a spontaneous expression: rebellion or creativity, for example. A confirmation of structural analysis is seen in the results of alcohol intoxication. Usually this decommissions the Parent first, so that the adapted Child is freed of the Parental influence, and is transformed by release into the natural Child.

It is seldom necessary, for effective game analysis, to go beyond what has been outlined above as far as personality structure is concerned.

Ego states are normal physiological phenomena. The human brain is the organ or organizer of psychic life, and its products are organized and stored in the form of ego states. There is already concrete evidence for this in some findings of Penfield and his associates.<sup>1-2</sup> There are other sorting systems at various levels, such as factual memory, but the natural form of experience itself is in shifting states of mind. Each type of ego state has its own vital value for the human organism.

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In the Child reside intuition,<sup>3</sup> creativity and spontaneous drive and enjoyment.

The Adult is necessary for survival. It processes data and computes the probabilities which are essential for dealing effectively with the outside world. It also experiences its own kinds of setbacks and gratifications. Crossing a busy highway, for example, requires the processing of a complex series of velocity data; action is suspended until the computations indicate a high degree of probability for reaching the other side safely. The gratifications offered by successful computations of this type afford some of the joys of skiing, flying, sailing, and other mobile sports. Another task of the Adult is to regulate the activities of the Parent and the Child, and to mediate objectively between them.

The Parent has two main functions. First, it enables the individual to act effectively as the parent of actual children, thus promoting the survival of the human race. Its value in this respect is shown by the fact that in raising children, people orphaned in infancy seem to have a harder time than those from homes unbroken into adolescence. Secondly, it makes many responses automatic, which conserves a great deal of time and energy. Many things are done because "That's the way it's done." This frees the Adult from the necessity of making innumerable trivial decisions, so that it can devote itself to more important issues, leaving routine matters to the Parent. Thus all three aspects of the personality have a high survival and living value, and it is only when one or the other of them disturbs the healthy balance that analysis and reorganization are indicated. Otherwise, each of them, Parent, Adult, and Child, have right to be respected. Each has legitimate place in a full and productive life.

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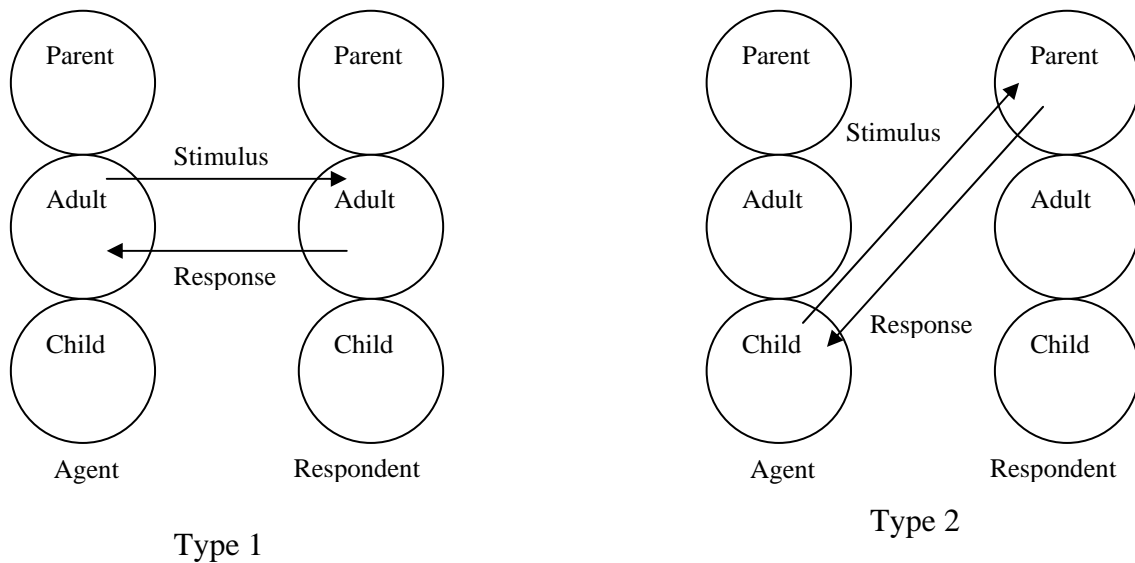
## **CHAPTER TWO**

### ***Transactional Analysis***

THE unit of social intercourse is called a transaction. If two or more people encounter each other in a social aggregation, sooner or later one of them will speak, or give some other indication of acknowledging the presence of the others. This is called the transactional stimulus. Another person will then say or do something which is in some way related to this stimulus, and that is called the transactions/ response. Simple transactional analysis is concerned with diagnosing which ego state implemented the transactional stimulus, and which one executed the transactional response. The simplest transactions are those in which both stimulus and response arise from the Adults of the parties concerned. The agent, estimating from the data before him that a scalpel is now the instrument of choice, holds out his hand. The respondent appraises this gesture correctly, estimates the forces and distances involved, and places the handle of the scalpel exactly where the surgeon expects it. Next in simplicity are Child-Parent transactions. The fevered Child asks for a glass of water, and the nurturing mother brings it.

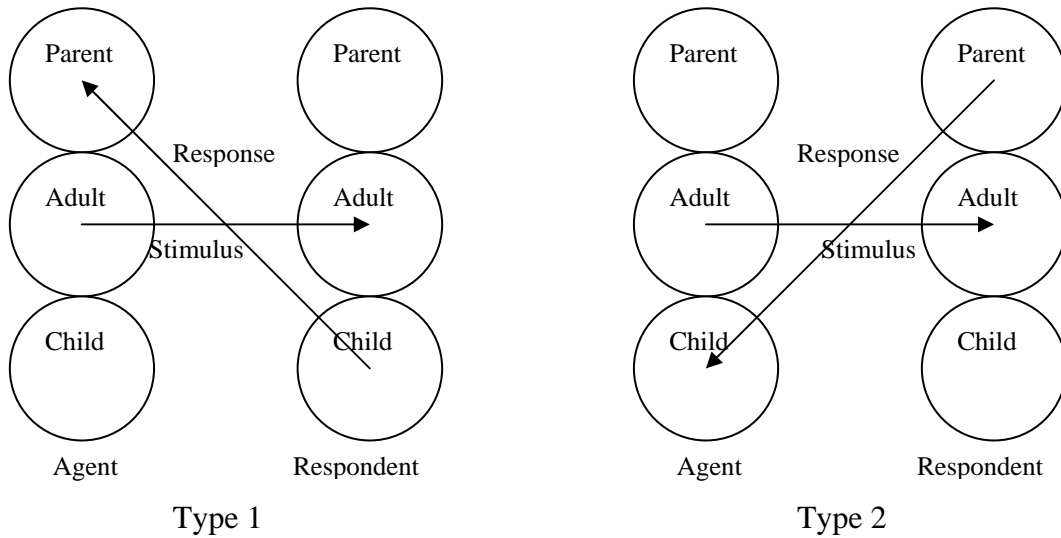
Both these transactions are complementary; that is, the response is appropriate and expected and follows the natural order of healthy human relationships. The first, which is classified as Complementary Transaction Type I, is represented in Figure 2A. The second, Complementary Transaction Type II, is shown in Figure 2B. It is evident, however, that transactions tend to proceed in chains, so that each response is in mm a stimulus. The first rule of communication is that communication will proceed smoothly as long as transactions are complementary, and its corollary is that as long as transactions are complementary, communication can, in principle, proceed indefinitely. These rules are independent of the nature and content of the transactions; they are based entirely on the direction of the vectors involved. As long as the transactions are

complementary, it is irrelevant to the rule whether two people are engaging in critical gossip (Parent-Parent), solving a problem (Adult-Adult), or playing together (Child-Child or Parent-Child).

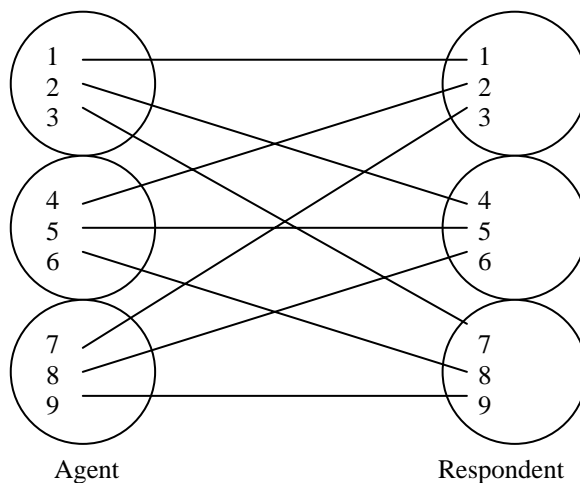


< FIGURE 2 > Complementary Transactions

The converse rule is that communication is broken off when a crossed transaction occurs. The most common crossed transaction and the one which causes and always has caused most of the social difficulties in the world, whether in marriage, love, friendship, or work is represented in Figure 3A as Crossed Transaction Type I. This type of transaction is the principal concern of psychotherapists and is typified by the classical transference reaction of psychoanalysis. The stimulus is Adult-Adult: e.g., "Maybe we should find out why you've been drinking more lately," or, "Do you know where my cuff links are?" The appropriate Adult-Adult response in each case would be: "Maybe we should. I'd certainly like to know!" or, "On the desk." If the respondent flares up, however, the responses will be something like "You're always criticizing me, just like my father did," or, "You always blame me for everything." These are both Child-Parent responses, and as the transactional diagram shows, the vectors cross. In such cases the Adult problems about drinking or cuff links must be suspended until the vectors can be realigned. This may take anywhere from several months in the drinking example to a few seconds in the case of cuff links. Either the agent must become Parental as a complement to the respondent's suddenly activated Child, or the respondent's Adult must be reactivated as a complement to the agent's Adult. If the maid rebels during a discussion of dishwashing, the Adult-Adult conversation about dishes is finished; there can only ensue either a Child-Parent discourse, or a discussion of a different Adult subject, namely her continued employment.



< FIGURE 3 > Crossed transactions



< FIGURE 4 > A Relationship Diagram

The converse of Crossed Transaction Type I is illustrated in Figure 3B. This is the counter-transference reaction familiar to psychotherapists, in which the patient makes an objective, Adult observation, and the therapist crosses the vectors by responding like a parent talking to a child. This is Crossed Transaction Type II. In everyday life, "Do you know where my cuff links are?" may elicit: "Why don't you keep track of your own things? You're not a child any more."

The relationship diagram in Figure 4, showing the nine possible vectors of social action between an agent and a respondent, has some interesting geometrical (topological) qualities. Complementary transactions between "psychological equals" are represented by  $(1-1)^2$ ,  $(5-5)^2$  and  $(9-9)^2$ . There are three other complementary transactions:  $(2-4)$   $(4-2)$ ,  $(3-7)$   $(7-3)$  and  $(6-8)$   $(8-6)$ . All other combinations form crossed transactions, and in most cases these show up as crossings in the diagram: e.g.,  $(3-7)$   $(3-7)$ , which results in two speechless people glaring at each other. If neither of them gives way, communication is finished and they must part. The most common solutions are

for one to yield and take (7—3), which results in a game of "Uproar"; or better, (5—5)<sup>2</sup>, in which case they both burst out laughing or shake hands. Simple complementary transactions most commonly occur in superficial working and social relationships, and these are easily disturbed by simple crossed transactions. In fact a superficial relationship may be defined as one which is confined to simple complementary transactions. Such relationships occur in activities, rituals and pastimes. More complex are ulterior transactions—those involving the activity of more than two ego states simultaneously—and this category is the basis for games. Salesmen are particularly adept at angular transactions, those involving three ego states. A crude but dramatic example of a sales game is illustrated in the following exchange:

*Salesman: "This one is better, but you can't afford it."*

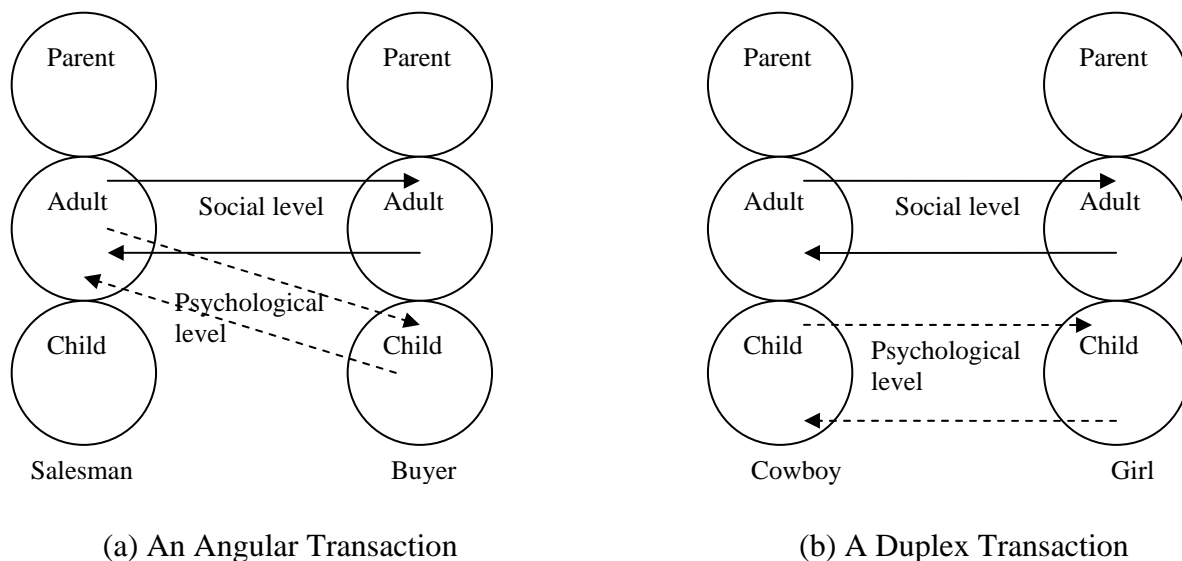
*Housewife: "That's the one I'll take."*

The analysis of this transaction is shown in Figure 5A. The salesman, as Adult, states two objective facts: "This one is better" and "You can't afford it." At the ostensible, or social, level these are directed to the Adult of the housewife, whose Adult reply would be: "You are correct on both counts." However, the ulterior, or -psychological, vector is directed by the well-trained and experienced Adult of the salesman to the housewife's Child. The correctness of his judgment is demonstrated by the Child's reply, which says in effect: "Regardless of the financial consequences, I'll show that arrogant fellow I'm as good as any of his customers." At both levels the transaction is complementary, since her reply is accepted at face value as an Adult purchasing contract.

A duplex ulterior transaction involves four ego states, and is commonly seen in flirtation games.

*Cowboy: "Come and see the barn."*

*Visitor: "I've loved barns ever since I was a little girl."*



< FIGURE 5 > Ulterior Transactions

As shown in Figure 5B, at the social level this is an Adult conversation about barns, and at the psychological level it is a Child conversation about sex play. On the surface the Adult seems to have the initiative, but as in most games, the outcome is determined by the Child, and the participants may be in for a surprise.

Transactions may be classified, then, as complementary or crossed, simple or ulterior, and ulterior transactions may be subdivided into angular and duplex types.

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Procedures and Rituals**

TRANSACTIONS usually proceed in series. These series are not random, but are programmed. Programming may come from one of three sources: Parent, Adult or Child, or more generally, from society, material or idiosyncrasy- Since the needs of adaptation require that the Child may be shielded by the Parent or Adult until each social situation has been tested, Child programming is most apt to occur in situations of privacy and intimacy, where preliminary testing has already been done.

The simplest forms of social activity are procedures and rituals. Some of these are universal and some local, but all of them have to be learned. A -procedure is a series of simple complementary Adult transactions directed toward the manipulation of reality. Reality is defined as having two aspects: static and dynamic. Static reality comprises all the possible arrangements of matter in the universe. Arithmetic, for example, consists of statements about static reality. Dynamic reality may be defined as the potentialities for interaction of all the energy systems in the universe. Chemistry, for example, consists of statements about dynamic reality. Procedures are based on data processing and probability estimates concerning the material of reality, and reach their highest development in professional techniques. Piloting an airplane and removing an appendix are procedures.

Psychotherapy is a procedure insofar as it is under the control of the therapist's Adult, and it is not a procedure insofar as his Parent or Child takes over the executive. The programming of a procedure is determined by the material, on the basis of estimates made by the agent's Adult.

Two variables are used in evaluating procedures. A procedure is said to be efficient when the agent makes the best possible use of the data and experience available to him, regardless of any deficiencies that may exist in his knowledge. If the Parent or the Child interferes with the Adult's data processing, the procedure becomes contaminated and will be less efficient. The effectiveness of a procedure is judged by the actual results. Thus efficiency is a psychological criterion and effectiveness is a material one. A native assistant medical officer on a tropical island became very adept at removing cataracts. He used what knowledge he had with a very high degree of efficiency, but since he knew less than the European medical officer, he was not quite as effective. The European began to drink heavily so that his efficiency dropped, but at first his effectiveness was not diminished. But when his hands became tremulous as the years went by, his assistant began to surpass him not only in efficiency, but also in effectiveness. It can be seen from this example that both of these variables are best evaluated by an expert in the procedures involved—efficiency by personal acquaintance with the agent, and effectiveness by surveying the actual results.

From the present viewpoint, a ritual is a stereotyped series of simple complementary transactions programmed by external social forces. An informal ritual, such as social leave-taking, may be subject to considerable local variations in details, although the basic form remains the same. A formal ritual, such as a Roman Catholic Mass, offers much less option. The form of a ritual is Parentally determined by tradition, but more recent "parental" influences may have similar but less stable effects in trivial instances. Some formal rituals of special historical or anthropological interest have two phases: (1) a phase in which transactions are carried on under rigid Parental strictures (2) a phase of Parental license, in which the Child is allowed more or less complete transactional freedom, resulting in an orgy.

Many formal rituals started off as heavily contaminated though fairly efficient procedures, but as time passed and circumstances changed, they lost all procedural validity while still retaining their usefulness as acts of faith. Trans-actionally they represent guilt-relieving or reward-seeking compliances with traditional Parental demands. They offer a safe, reassuring (apotropaic), and often enjoyable method of structuring time.

Of more significance as an introduction to game analysis are informal rituals, and among the most instructive are the American greeting rituals.

1A: *"Hi!" (Hello, good morning.)*

1B: *"Hi!" (Hello, good morning.)*

- 2A: *"Warm enough for ya?" (How are you?)*  
 2B: *"Sure is. Looks like rain, though." (Fine. How are you?)*  
 3A: *"Well, take cara yourself." (Okay.)*  
 3B: *"I'll be seeing you."*  
 4A: *"So long."*  
 4B: *"So long."*

It is apparent that this exchange is not intended to convey information. Indeed, if there is any information, it is wisely withheld. It might take Mr. A fifteen minutes to say how he is, and Mr. B, who is only the most casual acquaintance, has no intention of devoting that much time to listening to him. This series of transactions is quite adequately characterized by calling it an "eight-stroke ritual." If A and B were in a hurry, they might both be contented with a two-stroke exchange, Hi-Hi. If they were old-fashioned Oriental potentates, they might go through a two-hundred stroke ritual before settling down to business. Meanwhile, in the jargon of transactional analysis, A and B have improved each other's health slightly; for the moment, at least, "their spinal cords won't shrivel up," and each is accordingly grateful.

This ritual is based on careful intuitive computations by both parties. At this stage of their acquaintance they figure that they owe each other exactly four strokes at each meeting, and not oftener than once a day. If they run into each other again shortly, say within the next half hour, and have no new business to transact, they will pass by without any sign, or with only the slightest nod of recognition, or at most with a very perfunctory Hi-Hi. These computations hold not only for short intervals but over periods of several months. Let us now consider Mr. C and Mr. D, who pass each other about once a day, trade one stroke each—Hi-Hi—and go their ways. Mr. C goes on a month's vacation. The day after he returns, he encounters Mr. D as usual. If on this occasion Mr. D merely says "Hi!" and no more, Mr. C will be offended, "his spinal cord will shrivel slightly." By his calculations, Mr. D and he owe each other about thirty strokes. These can be compressed into a few transactions, if those transactions are emphatic enough. Mr. D's side properly runs something like this (where each unit of "intensity" or "interest" is equivalent to a stroke):

- ID: *"Hi!" (1 unit.)*  
 2D: *"Haven't seen you around lately." (2 units.)*  
 3D: *"Oh, have you! Where did you go?" (5 units.)*  
 4D: *"Say, that's interesting. How was it?" (7 units.)*  
 5D: *"Well, you're sure looking fine." (4 units.) "Did your family go along?" (4 units.)*  
 6D: *"Well, glad to see you back." (4 units.)*  
 7D: *"So long." (1 unit.)*

This gives Mr. D a total of 28 units. Both he and Mr. C know that he will make up the missing units the following day, so the account is now, for all practical purposes, squared. Two days later they will be back at their two-stroke exchange, Hi-Hi. But now they "know each other better," i.e., each knows the other is reliable, and this may be useful if they should meet "socially."

The inverse case is also worth considering. Mr. E and Mr. F have set up a two-stroke ritual, Hi-Hi. One day instead of passing on, Mr. E stops and asks: "How are you?" The conversation proceeds as follows:

- IE: *"Hi!"*  
 IF: *"Hi!"*  
 2E: *"How are you?"*  
 2F (Puzzled): *"Fine. How are you?"*  
 3E: *"Everything's great. Warm enough for you?"*  
 3F: *"Yeah." (Cautiously.) "Looks like rain, though."*  
 4E: *"Nice to see you again."*

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4F: "Same here. Sorry, I've got to get to the library before it closes. So long."

5E: "So long."

As Mr. F hurries away, he thinks to himself: "What's come over him all of a sudden? Is he selling insurance or something?" In transactional terms this reads: "All he owes me is one stroke, why is he giving me five?"

An even simpler demonstration of the truly transactional business-like nature of these simple rituals is the occasion when Mr. G says "Hi!" and Mr. H passes on without replying. Mr. G's reaction is "What's the matter with him?" meaning: "I gave him a stroke and he didn't give me one in return." If Mr. H keeps this up and extends it to other acquaintances, he is going to cause some talk in his community.

In borderline cases it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between a procedure and a ritual. The tendency is for the layman to call professional procedures rituals, while actually every transaction may be based on sound, even vital experience, but the layman does not have the background to appreciate that. Conversely, there is a tendency for professionals to rationalize ritualistic elements that still cling to their procedures, and to dismiss skeptical laymen on the ground that they are not equipped to understand. And one of the ways in which entrenched professionals may resist the introduction of sound new procedures is by laughing them off as rituals. Hence the fate of Semmelweis and other innovators.

The essential and similar feature of both procedures and rituals is that they are stereotyped. Once the first transaction has been initiated, the whole series is predictable and follows a predetermined course to a foreordained conclusion unless special conditions arise. The difference between them lies in the origin of the predetermination: procedures are programmed by the Adult and rituals are Parentally patterned.

Individuals who are not comfortable or adept with rituals sometimes evade them by substituting procedures. They can be found, for example, among people who like to help the hostess with preparing or serving food and drink at parties.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Pastimes**

PASTIMES occur in social and temporal matrices of varying degrees of complexity, and hence vary in complexity. However, if we use the transaction as the unit of social intercourse, we can dissect out of appropriate situations an entity which may be called a simple pastime. This may be defined as a series of semi-ritualistic, simple, complementary transactions arranged around a single field of material, whose primary object is to structure an interval of time. The beginning and end of the interval are typically signaled by procedures or rituals. The transactions are adaptively programmed so that each party will obtain the maximum gains or advantages during the interval. The better his adaptation, the more he will get out of it.

Pastimes are typically played at parties ("social gatherings") or during the waiting period before a formal group meeting begins; such waiting periods before a meeting "begins" have the same structure and dynamics as "parries." Pastimes may take the form described as "chit-chat" or they may become more serious, e.g., argumentative. A large cocktail party often functions as a kind of gallery for the exhibition of pastimes. In one corner of the room a few people are playing "PTA," another corner is the forum for "Psychiatry," a third is the theater for "Ever Been" or "What Became," the fourth is engaged for "General Motors," and the buffet is reserved for women who want to play "Kitchen" or "Wardrobe." The proceedings at such a gathering may be almost identical, with a change of names here and there, with the proceedings at a dozen similar parties taking place simultaneously in the area. At another dozen in a different social stratum, a different assortment of pastimes is underway.

Pastimes may be classified in different ways. The external determinants are sociological (sex, age, marital status, cultural, racial or economic). "General Motors" (comparing cars) and "Who Won"



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(sports) are both "Man Talk." "Grocery," "Kitchen," and "Wardrobe" are all "Lady Talk" —or, as practiced in the South Seas, "Mary Talk." "Making Out" is adolescent, while the onset of middle age is marked by a shift to "Balance Sheet." Other species of this class, which are all variations of "Small Talk," are: "How To" (go about doing something), an easy filler for short airplane trips; "How Much" (does it cost), a favorite in lower-middle-class bars; "Ever Been (to some nostalgic place), a middle-class game for "old hands" such as salesmen; "Do You Know" (so-and-so) for lonely ones; "What Became" (of good old Joe), often played by economic successes and failures; "Morning After" (what a hangover) and "Martini" (I know a better way), typical of a certain kind of ambitious young person.

The structural-transactional classification is a more personal one. Thus "PTA" may be played at three levels. At the Child-Child level it takes the form of "How Do You Deal with Recalcitrant Parents"; its Adult-Adult form, "PTA" proper, is popular among well-read young mothers; with older people it tends to take the dogmatic Parent-Parent form of "Juvenile Delinquency." Some married couples play "Tell Them Dear," in which the wife is Parental and the husband comes through like a precocious child. "Look Ma No Hands" is similarly a Child-Parent pastime suitable for people of any age, sometimes diffidently adapted into "Aw Shucks Fellows."

Even more cogent is the psychological classification of pastimes. Both "PTA" and "Psychiatry" for example, may be played in either projective or introjective forms. The analysis of "PTA", Projective Type is represented in Figure 6A, based on the following Parent-Parent paradigm:

A: *"There wouldn't be all this delinquency if it weren't for broken homes."*

B: *"It's not only that. Even in good homes nowadays the children aren't taught manners the way they used to be."*

"PTA," Introjective Type runs along the following lines (Adult-Adult):

C: *"I just don't seem to have what it takes to be a mother."*

D: *"No matter how hard you try, they never grow up the way you want them to, so you have to keep wondering if you're doing the right thing and what mistakes you've made."*

"Psychiatry" Projective Type takes the Adult-Adult form:

E: *"I think it's some unconscious oral frustration that makes him act that way."*

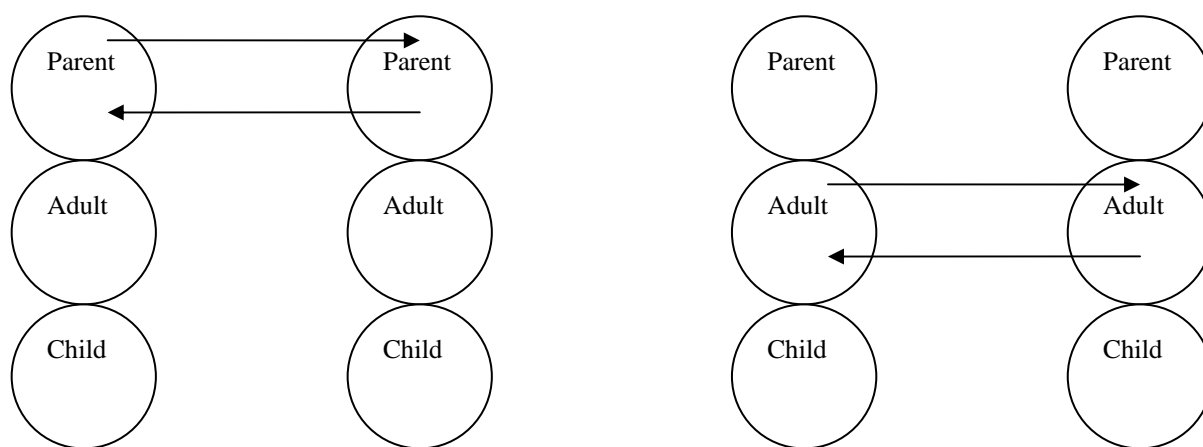
F: *"You seem to have your aggressions so well sublimated."*

Figure 6B represents "Psychiatry," Introjective Type, another Adult-Adult pastime.

G: *"That painting symbolizes smearing to me."*

H: *"In my case, painting is trying to please my father."*

Besides structuring time and providing mutually acceptable stroking for the parties concerned, pastimes serve the additional function of being social-selection processes. While a pastime is in progress, the Child in each player is watchfully assessing the potentialities of the others involved. At the end of the party, each person will have selected certain players he would like to see more of, while others he will discard, regardless of how skillfully or pleasantly they each engaged in the pastime. The ones he selects are those who seem the most likely candidates for more complex relationships—that is, games. This sorting system, however well rationalized, is actually largely unconscious and intuitive.



(a) Projective "PTA"  
"Juvenile Delinquency"

(b) Introjective "Psychiatry"  
"Psychoanalysis"

< FIGURE 6 >

In special cases the Adult overrides the Child in the selection process. This is most clearly illustrated by an insurance salesman who carefully learns to play social pastimes. While he is playing, his Adult listens for possible prospects and selects them from the players as people he would like to see more of. Their adeptness at games or congeniality is quite irrelevant to his process of selection, which is based, as in most cases, on peripheral factors—in this instance, financial readiness.

Pastimes, however, have a quite specific aspect of exclusiveness. For example, "Man Talk" and "Lady Talk" do not mix. People playing a hard hand of "Ever Been" (there) will be annoyed by an intruder who wants to play "How Much" (for avocados) or "Morning After." People playing Projective "PTA" will resent the intrusion of Introjective "PTA," although usually not as intensely as the other way around.

Pastimes form the basis for the selection of acquaintances, and may lead to friendship. A party of women who drop in at each other's houses every morning for coffee to play "Delinquent Husband" are likely to give a cool reception to a new neighbor who wants to play "Sunny Side Up." If they are saying how mean their husbands are, it is too disconcerting to have a newcomer declare that her husband is just marvelous, in fact perfect, and they will not keep her long. So at a cocktail party, if someone wants to move from one corner to another, he must either join in the pastime played in his new location or else successfully switch the whole proceeding into a new channel. A good hostess, of course, takes the situation in hand immediately and states the program: "We were just playing Projective 'PTA.' What do you think? Or: "Come now, you girls have been playing 'Wardrobe' long enough. Mr. J. here is a writer/politician/surgeon, and I'm sure he'd like to play 'Look Ma No Hands.' Wouldn't you, Mr. F"

Another important advantage obtained from pastimes is the confirmation of role and the stabilizing of position. A role is something like what Jung calls persona, except that it is less opportunistic and more deeply rooted in the individual's fantasies. Thus in Projective "PTA" one player may take the role of tough Parent, another the role of righteous Parent, a third the role of indulgent Parent and a fourth the role of helpful Parent. All four experience and exhibit a Parental ego state, but each presents himself differently. The role of each one is confirmed if it prevails—that is, if it meets with no antagonism or is strengthened by any antagonism it meets or is approved by certain types of people with stroking.

The confirmation of his role stabilizes the individual's position, and this is called the existential advantage from the pastime. A position is a simple predicative statement which influences all of the individual's transactions; in the long run it determines his destiny and often that of his descendants

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as well. A position may be more or less absolute. Typical positions from which Projective "PTA" can be played are: "All children are bad!" "All other children are bad!" "All children are sad!" "All children are persecuted!" These positions might give rise to the role of the tough, the righteous, the indulgent and the helpful Parent, respectively. Actually a position is primarily manifested by the mental attitude to which it gives rise, and it is with this attitude that the individual undertakes the transactions which constitute his role.

Positions are taken and become fixed surprisingly early, from the second or even the first year to the seventh year of life—in any case long before the individual is competent or experienced enough to make such a serious commitment. It is not difficult to deduce from an individual's position the kind of childhood he must have had. Unless something or somebody intervenes, he spends the rest of his life stabilizing his position and dealing with situations that threaten it: by avoiding them, warding off other certain elements or manipulating them provocatively so that they are transformed from threats into justifications. One reason pastimes are so stereotyped is that they serve such stereotyped purposes. But the gains they offer show why people play them so eagerly, and why they can be so pleasant if played with people who have constructive or benevolent positions to maintain.

A pastime is not always easy to distinguish from an activity, and combinations frequently occur. Many commonplace pastimes, such as "General Motors," consist of what psychologists might call Multiple-Choice—Sentence-Completion exchanges.

A. *"I like a Ford/Chevrolet/Plymouth better than a Ford/Chevrolet/Plymouth because. . . ."*

B. *"Oh. Well, I'd rather have a Ford/Chevrolet/Plymouth than a Ford/Chevrolet/Plymouth because. . . ."*

It is apparent that there may actually be some useful information conveyed in such stereotypes. A few other common pastimes may be mentioned. "Me Too" is often a variant of "Ain't It Awful." "Why Don't They" (do something about it) is a favorite among housewives who do not wish to be emancipated. "Then We'll" is a Child-Child pastime. "Let's Find" (something to do) is played by juvenile delinquents or mischievous grown-ups.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Games**

#### **1 DEFINITION**

A GAME is an ongoing series of complementary ulterior transactions progressing to a well-defined, predictable outcome. Descriptively it is a recurring set of transactions, often repetitious, superficially plausible, with a concealed motivation; or, more colloquially, a series of moves with a snare, or "gimmick." Games are clearly differentiated from procedures, rituals, and pastimes by two chief characteristics: (1) their ulterior quality and (2) the payoff. Procedures may be successful, rituals effective, and pastimes profitable, but all of them are by definition candid; they may involve contest, but not conflict, and the ending may be sensational, but it is not dramatic. Every game, on the other hand, is basically dishonest, and the outcome has a dramatic, as distinct from merely exciting, quality.

It remains to distinguish games from the one remaining type of social action which so far has not been discussed. An operation is a simple transaction or set of transactions undertaken for a specific, stated purpose. If someone frankly asks for reassurance and gets it, that is an operation. If someone asks for reassurance, and after it is given turns it in some way to the disadvantage of the giver, that is a game. Superficially, then, a game looks like a set of operations, but after the payoff it becomes apparent that these operations were really maneuvers; not honest requests but moves in the game. In the "insurance game," for example, no matter what the agent appears to be doing in conversation, if he is a hard player he is really looking for or working on a prospect. What he is after, if he is worth his salt, is to "make a killing." The same applies to "the real estate game," "the panama game" and similar occupations—Hence at a social gathering, while a salesman is engaged in pastimes, particularly variants of "Balance Sheet," his congenial participation may conceal a series

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of skillful maneuvers designed to elicit the kind of information he is professionally interested in. There are dozens of trade journals devoted to improving commercial maneuvers, and which give accounts of outstanding players and games (interesting operators who make unusually big deals). Transactionally speaking, these are merely variants of *Sports Illustrated*, *Chess World*, and other sports magazines.

As far as angular transactions are concerned—games which are consciously planned with professional precision under Adult control to yield the maximum gains—the big "con games" which flourished in the early 1900's are hard to surpass for detailed practical planning and psychological virtuosity.

What we are concerned with here, however, are the unconscious games played by innocent people engaged in duplex transactions of which they are not fully aware, and which form the most important aspect of social life all over the world. Because of their dynamic qualities, games are easy to distinguish from mere static attitudes, which arise from taking a position.

The use of the word "game" should not be misleading. As explained in the introduction, it does not necessarily imply fun or even enjoyment. Many salesmen do not consider their work fun, as Arthur Miller made clear in his play, *The Death- of a Salesman*. And there may be no lack of seriousness. Football games nowadays are taken very seriously, but no more so than such transactional games as "Alcoholic" or "Third-Degree Rapo".

The same applies to the word "play," as anyone who has "played" hard poker or "played" the stock market over a long period can testify. The possible seriousness of games and play, and the possibly serious results, are well known to anthropologists. The most complex game that ever existed, that of "Courtier" as described so well by Stendhal in *The Charterhouse of Parma*, was deadly serious. The grimmest of all, of course, is "War."

## **2 A TYPICAL GAME**

The most common game played between spouses is colloquially called "If It Weren't For You," and this will be used to illustrate the characteristics of games in general.

Mrs. White complained that her husband severely restricted her social activities, so that she had never learned to dance. Due to changes in her attitude brought about by psychiatric treatment, her husband became less sure of himself and more indulgent. Mrs. White was then free to enlarge the scope of her activities. She signed up for dancing classes, and then discovered to her despair that she had a morbid fear of dance floors and had to abandon this project.

This unfortunate adventure, along with similar ones, laid bare some important aspects of the structure of her marriage. Out of her many suitors she had picked a domineering man for a husband. She was then in a position to complain that she could do all sorts of things "if it weren't for you." Many of her women friends also had domineering husbands, and when they met for their morning coffee, they spent a good deal of time playing "If It Weren't For Him."

As it turned out, however, contrary to her complaints, her husband was performing a very real service for her by forbidding her to do something she was deeply afraid of, and by preventing her, in fact, from even becoming aware of her fears. This was one reason her Child had shrewdly chosen such a husband.

But there was more to it than that. His prohibitions and her complaints frequently led to quarrels, so that their sex life was seriously impaired. And because of his feelings of guilt, he frequently brought her gifts which might not otherwise have been forthcoming; certainly when he gave her more freedom, his gifts diminished in lavishness and frequency. She and her husband had little in common besides their household worries and the children, so that their quarrels stood out as important events; it was mainly on these occasions that they had anything but the most casual conversations. At any rate, her married life had proved one thing to her that she had always maintained: that all men were mean and tyrannical. As it turned out, this attitude was related to some daydreams of being sexually abused which had plagued her in earlier years.

There are various ways of describing this game in general terms. It is apparent that it belongs in the large field of social dynamics. The basic fact is that by marrying, Mr. and Mrs. White have an

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opportunity to communicate with each other, and such an opportunity may be called social contact. The fact that they use this opportunity makes their household a social aggregation, as contrasted with a New York subway train, for example, where people are in spatial contact but rarely avail themselves of the opportunity and so form a this-social aggregation. The influence the Whites exert on each other's behavior and responses constitutes social action. Various disciplines would investigate such social action from different points of view. Since we are here concerned with the personal histories and psycho-dynamics of the individuals involved, the present approach is one aspect of social -psychiatry; some implicit or explicit judgment is passed on the "healthiness" of the games studied. This is somewhat different from the more neutral and less committed attitudes of sociology and social psychology. Psychiatry reserves the right to say, "Just a moment!" which the other disciplines do not. Transactional analysis is a branch of social psychiatry, and game analysis is a special aspect of transactional analysis.

Practical game analysis deals with special cases as they appear in specific situations. Theoretical game analysis attempts to abstract and generalize the characteristics of various games, so that they can be recognized independently of their momentary verbal content and their cultural matrix. The theoretical analysis of "If It Weren't For You," Marital Type, for example, should state the characteristics of that game in such a way that it can be recognized just as easily in a New Guinea jungle village as in a Manhattan penthouse, whether it is concerned with a nuptial party or with the financial problems of getting a fishing rod for the grandchildren; and regardless of how bluntly or subtly the moves are made, according to the permissible degrees of frankness between husband and wife. The prevalence of the game in a given society is a matter for sociology and anthropology. Game analysis, as a part of social psychiatry, is only interested in describing the game when it does occur, regardless of how often that may be. This distinction is not complex, but it is analogous to the distinction between public health and internal medicine; the first is interested in the prevalence of malaria, while the latter studies cases of malaria as they come up, in the jungle or in Manhattan. At the present time the scheme given below has been round the most useful one for theoretical game analysis. No doubt it will be improved as further knowledge accumulates. The first requisite is to recognize that a certain sequence of maneuvers meets the criteria of a game. As many samples as possible of the game are then collected. The significant features of the collection are isolated. Certain aspects emerge as essential. These are then classified under headings which are designed to be as meaningful and instructive as possible in the current state of knowledge. The analysis is undertaken from the point of view of the one who is "it"—in this case, Mrs. White.

**Thesis.** This is a general description of the game, including the immediate sequence of events (the social level) and information about their psychological background, evolution and significance (the psychological level). In the case of "If It Weren't For You," Marital Type, the details already given will serve (pp. 50-51). For the sake of brevity, this game will henceforth be referred to as IWFY.

**Antithesis.** The presumption that a certain sequence constitutes a game is tentative until it has been existentially validated. This validation is carried out by a refusal to play or by undercutting the payoff. The one who is "it" will then make more intense efforts to continue the game. In the face of adamant refusal to play or a successful undercutting he will then lapse into a state called "despair," which in some respects resembles a depression, but is different in significant ways. It is more acute and contains elements of frustration and bewilderment. It may be manifested, for example, by the onset of perplexed weeping. In a successful therapeutic situation this may soon be replaced by humorous laughter, implying an Adult realization: "There I go again!" Thus despair is a concern of the Adult, while in depression it is the Child who has the executive power. Hopefulness, enthusiasm or a lively interest in one's surroundings is the opposite of depression; laughter is the opposite of despair. Hence the enjoyable quality of therapeutic game analysis. The antithesis to IWFY is permissiveness. As long as the husband is prohibitive, the game can proceed. If instead of saying "Don't you dare!" he says "Go ahead!" the underlying phobias are unmasked, and the wife can no longer turn on him, as demonstrated in Mrs. White's case.

For clear understanding of a game, the antithesis should be known and its effectiveness demonstrated in practice.

**Aim.** This states simply the general purpose of the game. Sometimes there are alternatives. The aim of IWFY may be stated as either reassurance ("It's not that I'm afraid, it's that he won't let me") or vindication ("It's not that I'm not trying, it's that he holds me back"). The reassuring function is easier to clarify and is more in accord with the security needs of the wife; therefore IWFY is most simply regarded as having the aim of reassurance.

**Roles.** As previously noted, ego states are not roles but phenomena. Therefore ego states and roles have to be distinguished in a formal description. Games may be described as two-handed, three-handed, many-handed, etc., according to the number of roles offered. Sometimes the ego state of each player corresponds to his role, sometimes it does not.

IWFY is a two-handed game and calls for a restricted wife and a domineering husband. The wife may play her role either as a prudent Adult ("It's best that I do as he says") or as a petulant Child. The domineering husband may preserve an Adult ego state ("It's best that you do as I say") or slip into a Parental one ("You'd better do what I say").

**Dynamics.** There are alternatives in stating the psycho-dynamic driving forces behind each case of a game. It is usually possible, however, to pick out a single psychodynamic concept which usefully, aptly and meaningfully epitomizes the situation. Thus IWFY is best described as deriving from phobic sources.

**Examples.** Since the childhood origins of a game, or its infantile prototypes, are instructive to study, it is worthwhile to search for such cognates in making a formal description. It happens that IWFY is just as frequently played by little children as by grown-ups, so the childhood version is the same as the later one, with the actual parent substituted for the restricting husband.

**Transactional Paradigm.** The transactional analysis of a typical situation is presented, giving both the social and psychological levels of a revealing ulterior transaction. In its most dramatic form, IWFY at the social level is a Parent-Child game.

*Mr. White: "You stay home and take care of the house."*

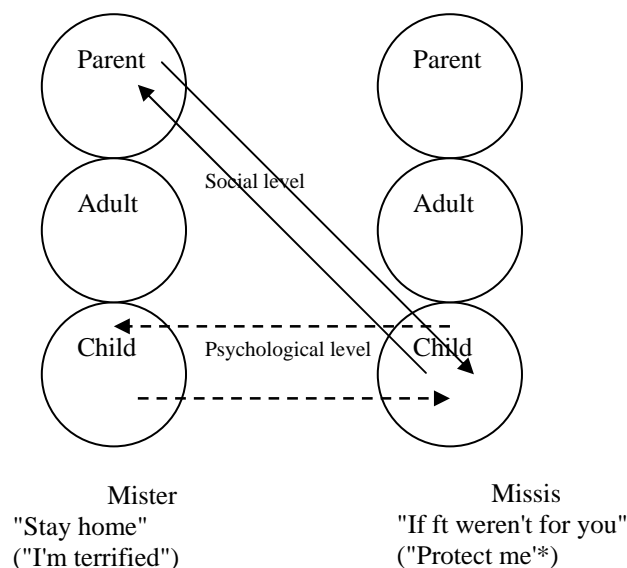
*Mrs. White: "If it weren't for you, I could be out having fun."*

At the psychological level (the ulterior marriage contract) the relationship is Child-Child, and quite different

*Mr. White: "You must always be here when I get home. I'm terrified of desertion."*

*Mrs. White: "I will be if you help me avoid phobic situations."*

The two levels are illustrated in Figure 7.



< FIGURE 7 > A Game

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**Moves.** The moves of a game correspond roughly to the strokes in a ritual. As in any game, the players become increasingly adept with practice. Wasteful moves are eliminated, and more and more purpose is condensed into each move. "Beautiful friendships" are often based on the fact that the players complement each other with great economy and satisfaction, so that there is a maximum yield with a minimum effort from the games they play with each other. Certain intermediate, precautionary or concessional moves can be eluded, giving a high degree of elegance to the relationship. The effort saved on defensive maneuvers can be devoted to ornamental flourishes instead, to the delight of both parties and sometimes of the onlookers as well. The student observes that there is a minimum number of moves essential to the program of the game, and these can be stated in the protocol. Individual players will embellish or multiply these basic moves according to their needs, talents or desires. The framework for IWFY is as follows:

(1) Instruction-Compliance ("You stay home"—"All right").

(2) Instruction-Protest ("You stay home again"—"If it weren't for you").

**Advantages.** The general advantages of a game consist in its stabilizing (homeostatic) functions. Biological homeo-stasis is promoted by the stroking, and psychological stability is reinforced by the confirmation of position. As has already been noted, stroking may take various forms, so that the biological advantage of a game may be stated in tactile terms. Thus the husband's role in IWFY is reminiscent of a backhanded slap (quite different in effect from a palmar slap, which is a direct humiliation), and the wife's response is something like a petulant kick in the shins. Hence the biological gain from IWFY is derived from the belligerence-petulance exchanges: a distressing but apparently effective way to maintain the health of nervous tissues.

Confirmation of the wife's position—"All men are tyrants"—is the existential advantage. This position is a reaction to the need to surrender that is inherent in the phobias, a demonstration of the coherent structure which underlies all games. The expanded statement would be: "If I went out alone in a crowd, I would be overcome by the temptation to surrender; at home I don't surrender: he forces me, which proves that all men are tyrants." Hence this game is commonly played by women who suffer from feelings of unreality, which signifies their difficulty in keeping the Adult in charge in situations of strong temptation. The detailed elucidation of these mechanisms belongs to psychoanalysis rather than game analysis. In game analysis the end product is the chief concern. Internal psychological advantage of a game is its direct effect on the psychic economy (libido). In IWFY the socially acceptable surrender to the husband's authority keeps the woman from experiencing neurotic fears. At the same time it satisfies masochistic needs, if they exist, using masochism not in the sense of self-abnegation but with its classical meaning of sexual excitement in situations of deprivation, humiliation or pain. That is, it excites her to be deprived and dominated. External psychological advantage is the avoidance of the feared situation by playing the game. This is especially obvious in IWFY, where it is the outstanding motivation: by complying with the husband's strictures, the wife avoids the public situations which she fears.

Internal social advantage is designed by the name of the game as it is played in the individual's intimate circle. By her compliance, the wife gains the privilege of saying "If it weren't for you." This helps to structure the time she must spend with her husband; in the case of Mrs. White, this need for structure was especially strong because of the lack of other common interests, especially before the arrival of their offspring and after the children were grown. In between, the game was played less intensively and less frequently, because the children performed their usual function of structuring time for their parents, and also provided an even more widely accepted version of IWFY, the busy-housewife variation. The fact that young mothers in America often really are very busy does not change the analysis of this variation. Game analysis only attempts to answer this question without prejudice: given that a young woman is busy, how does she go about exploiting her busyness in order to get some compensation for it?

External social advantage is designated by the use made of the situation in outside social contacts. In the case of the game "If It Weren't For You," which is what the wife says to her husband, there is a transformation into the pastime "If It Weren't For Him" when she meets with her friends over morning coffee. Again, the influence of games in the selection of social companions is shown. The

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new neighbor who is invited for morning coffee is being invited to play "If It Weren't For Him." If she plays, well and good, she will soon be a bosom friend of the old-timers, other things being equal. If she refuses to play and insists on taking a charitable view of her husband, she will not last long. Her situation will be the same as if she kept refusing to drink at cocktail parties—in most circles, she would gradually be dropped from the guest lists.

This completes the analysis of the formal features of IWFY. In order to clarify the procedure further, the analysis of "Why Don't You—Yes But," which is the most common game played at social gatherings, committee meetings and psychotherapy groups the world over, should be consulted (page 115).

### **3 THE GENESIS OF GAMES**

From the present point of view, child rearing may be regarded as an educational process in which the child is taught what games to play and how to play them. He is also taught procedures, rituals and pastimes appropriate to his position in the local social situation, but these are less significant. His knowledge of and skill in procedures, rituals and pastimes determine what opportunities will be available to him, other things being equal; but his games determine the use he will make of those opportunities, and the outcomes of situations for which he is eligible. As elements of his script, or unconscious life-plan, his favored games also determine his ultimate destiny (again with other things being equal): the payoffs on his marriage and career, and the circumstances surrounding his death.

While conscientious parents devote a great deal of attention to teaching their children procedures, rituals and pastimes appropriate to their stations in life, and with equal care select schools, colleges and churches where their teachings will be reinforced, they tend to overlook the question of games, which form the basic structure for the emotional dynamics of each family, and which the children learn through significant experiences in everyday living from their earliest months. Related questions have been discussed for thousands of years in a rather general, unsystematic fashion, and there has been some attempt at a more methodical approach in the modern orthopsychiatric literature; but without the concept of games there is little possibility of a consistent investigation. Theories of internal individual psychodynamics have so far not been able to solve satisfactorily the problems of human relationships. These are transactional situations which call for a theory of social dynamics that cannot be derived solely from consideration of individual motivations.

Since there are as yet few well-trained specialists in child psychology and child psychiatry who are also trained in game analysis, observations on the genesis of games are sparse. Fortunately, the following episode took place in the presence of a well-educated transactional analyst.

Tanji, age 7, got a stomach-ache at the dinner table and asked to be excused for that reason. His parents suggested that he lie down for a while. His little brother Mike, age 3, then said, "I have a stomach-ache too," evidently angling for the same consideration. The father looked at him for a few seconds and then replied, "You don't want to play that game, do you?" Whereupon Mike burst out laughing and said, "No!"

If this had been a household of food or bowel faddists, Mike would also have been packed off to bed by his alarmed parents. If he and they had repeated this performance several times, it might be anticipated that this game would have become part of Mike's character, as it so often does if the parents cooperate. Whenever he was jealous of a privilege granted to a competitor, he would plead illness in order to get some privileges himself. The ulterior transaction would then consist of: (social level) "I don't feel well" + (psychological level) "You must grant me a privilege, too." Mike, however, was saved from such a hypochondriacal career. Perhaps he will end up with a worse fate, but that is not the issue. The issue is that a game in statu nascendi was broken right there by the father's question and by the boy's frank acknowledgment that what he proposed was a game.

This demonstrates clearly enough that games are quite deliberately initiated by young children. After they become fixed patterns of stimulus and response, their origins become lost in the mists of time and their ulterior nature becomes obscured by social fogs. Both can be brought into awareness only by appropriate procedures: the origin by some form of analytic therapy and the ulterior aspect



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