

TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW ... CREEPING TOWARDS A POSTMODERN TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

Reference: Kellett van Leer, P. (2017). *Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow ... Creeping towards a Postmodern Transactional Analysis*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.psychamerica.info/home/publications>

Jacques-Alain Miller once mused that, “The most pertinent references are not always the most explicit ones, and no index of names will ever detect them. One would need an index of all that is not said: back-of-the-mind thoughts, cryptic allusions, resonances, and other *invisibilia*. Actually, I might just have a go at it one day ...” (2016: 191).

In putting the more pertinent thoughts on the side of the non-explicit, the invisibled, Miller is echoing the Freudian hypothesis that the most pertinent thoughts are the domain of the unconscious, and the psychoanalytic project that such thoughts can be detected and indexed. Such a project, of course, is notoriously vicarious; while we can rely on the unconscious to ‘speak its mind’ with no deference to our civilized manner nor reference to the burden of translation that such a speaking imposes, we cannot rely on any success with regard to the task of an indexing, whatever shape or form that might take. Perhaps the analytic project can be seen, in the end, as one of indexing; but then, as with so many such propositions, the value of such a notion hinges on how we define the process of indexing.

Miller’s words also refer us to the Foucauldian notion of the periphery, that population – of peoples or ideas, of forms of life – that form the event horizon of those dominant master discourses that comprise a social order at any given time. Again, in this sense, the most pertinent references, in this sense, are those that tend to be drowned out, marginalized if not pathologised; othered, in other words.

Postmodernism arose in recognition that such other discourses have pertinence, one that master discourses are forged to silence, just as psychoanalysis arose in recognition that the unconscious speaks the truth, one that conscious thoughts are forged to hide.

Transactional analysis, like any more-or-less coherent philosophy, theory and practice has its authorised center and its radical periphery, a fringe that is all too often invisibled. This collection of my own musings on what I have come to call ‘a postmodern transactional analysis’ represents a part of my attempt to have a go at indexing a resonance or allusion to such invisibilia within Transactional Analysis, or TA.

ANOTHER FINE MESS

Why bother with such an indexing? Well, in part, it is warranted due to the fine mess in which the center has led TA today.

In its barren, post-apocalyptic place of birth, North America, TA is largely extinct, and one can do little more than excavate the bones of its previous heyday here and there in those urban meccas where the fragments of a fossilized mantra can yet be unearthed. In Europe, one can come across pockets of a divergent resurgence; from a fledgling return to the orthodoxy of TA's early idealistic pseudo-pragmatism, discovered as if for the first time and buoyed by a naïve and oppressively normalizing cognitive-behaviorism, through the largely untranslated Italian project of a translation of Eric Berne's pseudo-Freudian roots, to the relational fetishists, led by a secessionist London whose post-colonial evangelical mission preaches a watered-down version of US relational and developmental psychoanalysis with fundamentalist fervor. If we head further eastward towards the oceanic edge of the Pacific Rim, we can hear the tangled echoes of each of these whisperings, amongst which the seeds of new life strain to see the light, such as the Cocreative perspective within TA, which continues to be nurtured by one of its original proponents, Professor Keith Tudor of Auckland University, someone to whom I owe a great deal regarding my own project.

In short, TA in the twenty-first century has withered to little more than a zombie, as Bruce Loria prophesized.

There are many reasons for this fine mess within TA. One reason can be found in the political 'will to power' that determines the authorised, *(in)corporated* face of TA. In this regard, the desire for legitimacy as defined by modernist, scientific values has resulted in a sterilized, impotent body of philosophy, theory and practice; a mirage of a coherent and lack-less body of 'knowledge' that nonetheless appears seductively attractive to students, practitioners and clients for a variety of reasons that coalesce around the desire for the comfort of an imaginary sense of mastery. The masquerade of truth with which this will to power endows this dogmatic fantasy is one that necessitates continuous, indeed increasing, defense against the ballooning disconnect from the demands of today's postmodern dynamics. We can readily see this in operation in most training institutes (I say most in fairness and optimism, since I'm not aware of any institutes that do not fall under this shadow) and those official publications that continue to cling to an ever-shrinking members only circulation (essentially, of course, there remains only one significant publication; one that has been straying from its original purpose for many years now). This will to power focuses mainly upon the maintenance of the center as the sole authorised voice, and the complementary silencing of any progressive voices, which are redefined as ... well, shall we say "fake", in honor of the US' most current perversion?

Yet more fundamentally, however, the fossilization of TA arises from a resistance to evolve from a modernist paradigm towards a postmodernist one, a resistance that is much more visible if just as long running, in the efforts of great stalwarts such as Claude Steiner, the self-proclaimed son and heir of the TA mantle. TA is, of course, not alone in this amongst the humanistic psychotherapies (or, indeed, several psychoanalytic strains) even though the challenge of such evolution is at the very heart of the analytic principle and process, epitomized in the notion of working through, as opposed to that of repetition. As Roustang has so painstakingly charted in *Dire Mastery*, this resistance recruits and is at one and the same time generated by a curdled 'love' of the father, and consequent rancid devotion to the rotting corpse of a once vitalizing revolution.

Attempts at shedding a postmodern light upon TA began in the early '80s; championed by the likes of Barbara and Jim Allen and Bruce Loria, and have continued to be developed by such as Graeme

Summers and Keith Tudor, to name a few of those who have been most influential on my own development. Yet these attempts have been silenced to such an extent that we currently hear only the faintest gravitational echo of a postmodernist sensibility in the sanitized discourse that (pre)dominates our TA training institutions and publications. This silencing takes many forms, from the invisibilizing of journal submissions that are declined the voice of publication, to the standardizing of training syllabi under the sway of the established educational discourse that prizes a profitable infantilizing spoon-feeding of easily-digestible yet barely nutritious rote learning, a discourse that itself follows from the mind-numbing mantra of a mind-filled relationalism that sanctions the analysts' transference-as-feeling over thinking, and misrecognizes the imaginary for the 'real'.

And yet, in line with the Foucauldian principle of marginalization, it is no surprise that the postmodernist endeavor should find itself already/always relegated to the periphery, just as psychoanalysis and transactional analysis find themselves side-lined as countercultural within the wider zeitgeist of contemporary psy-practices. Perhaps this is a *necessity*, in the Lacanian sense. After all, the search for ways to develop theory and practice that acknowledge this dynamic of normative oppression while, at the same time, refusing to submit, offers a fertile and potentially enjoyable drive to creativity and originality, if nothing else.

SILVER LININGS

One of the many opportunities afforded by the fearfully asymmetrical postmodernist worlds we inhabit (and from which we cannot retreat) is the circumvention of master discourses and the decentering of those institutions that attempt a consolidation of power and authority. I have already referred, for example, to the tyranny of *editorial homogeneity*, and while it is uncertain at present that this is something self-publishing will cure, it is apparent that this is something self-publishing can actively *decenter*, speaking a truth to a power that fears its disavowed and subsequently projected impotence.

The internet is a 'place' where a far greater diversity of voices may be raised and heard by a far greater readership when compared with subscription-only journals, journals whose profits benefit the publishing house more than the authors whose work is bound thereafter in the wrongs of copyrights. And while, on the one hand, the internet can famously give voice to lies and distortions in the name of some #realtruth – the Trumpery of perversion – nonetheless, the internet can also give voice to the periphery, to the invisibled, and thus, to “the most pertinent”.

It is for these reasons, primarily amongst other, that I have chosen to publish this collection of papers online.

RAGTAG

The musings you'll find here are generally regarded as heretical at present. And, as such, have been *invisibled* by those who lay claim to define the mainstream within TA, those who lay claim to define the *authorised* body of knowledge of TA; the 'truth'.

These most pertinent references, then, are amongst the unauthorised invisibilia of the TA of tomorrow.

It is in this context that this ragtag collection of papers sketches out a panorama of what I have called *postmodern transactional analysis*. Not *the* postmodern *school* of transactional analysis, for such a definitive claim to a meta-narrative is contrary to a postmodernist project, but rather *a* postmodern transactional analysis, not a *school*, not a dogma, but rather a way of introducing postmodernist ethics and philosophy into a transactional analysis that, as this collection of papers demonstrates, has become ossified, if not petrified.

- Kellett, P. (2004a). *The Truth is Out There: Constructing Contamination*. The EATA Newsletter, 78: 6 – 10 and The Script, 34(1): 1 – 2
- Kellett, P. (2004b). *Queer Constructions: The Making of Gay Men and the Role of the Homoerotic in Psychotherapy*. Transactional Analysis Journal, 34 (1): 180 – 190
- Kellett, P. (2006a). Theory Papers from CTA written examination
- Kellett, P. (2006b). *The Enigma of Desire Part 1: Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. Transactions, 5: 18 – 32
- Kellett, P. (2007a). *Playing with Theory: a Relational Search for Self*. In: Tudor, K. (Ed) *The Adult is Parent to the Child: Transactional Analysis with Children and Young People* (238 – 249). Dorset: Russell House Publishing
- Kellett, P. (2007b). *The Enigma of Desire 2: The Development of Selfhood*. Transactions, 6: 15 – 33
- Kellett, P. (2007c). *Beyond Dogma: Playing with Theory*. ITA National Conference; York, 12 – 15 April 2007
- Kellett van Leer, P. (2009). *In Your Absence: Desire and the Impossibility of Intimacy*. Transactional Analysis Journal, 39 (2): 117 – 129
- Kellett van Leer, P. (2011). *Aspects of Selfhood*. In: Fowlie, H. and Sills, C. (Eds.) *Relational Transactional Analysis: Principles in Practice* (69 – 80). London: Karnac Books
- Kellett van Leer, P. (2015). *Variations on a Theme: Handling Transference from Freud to Laplanche*. In: Bonnigal-Katz, D. (Ed.) *Sitegeist: a Journal of Psychoanalysis & Philosophy*, 10 (Spring 2015): 35 - 53
- Kellett van Leer, P. (2016). *Postmodern Transactional Analysis I: The Development, Structure and Function of Identity*
- Kellett van Leer, P. (2017a). *Postmodern Transactional Analysis II: The Development, Structure and Function of Selfhood*
- Kellett van Leer, P. (in review). *Postmodern Transactional Analysis III: Decontamination & the Enigmatic Enquiry*
- Kellett van Leer, P. (in review). *Postmodern Transactional Analysis IV: Deconfusion & the Enigmatic Interpretation*

What I have been able to include here represents those of my writings that have not become ensnared within the publishing game. Those articles and book chapters in red are subject to copyrights that forbid their reproduction without payment to the publisher; and, as such, I regret that I have lost ownership over them. I have included a link to the respective publisher's website through the list of my publications on this page. Those in yellow are subject to copyrights that mean I also cannot publish them here, though I am permitted to send out limited copies to those wishing to read them without buying the books, or subscribing to the journals in which and to which they are bound (please contact me for a copy of those papers via the form on this website). Those in green you will

find available to download here (including those published by the now-extinct UK journal *Transactions*, and the less-zealous *EATA Newsletter*).

DECONTAMINATING TA

*Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?*

(T. S. ELIOT, 1963, *THE LOVE SONG OF J. ALFRED PRUFROCK*)

Casting my eye over these papers, these butt ends, I have come to see several threads that, you could say, bind this weave. One such thread is that of *decontamination*, immediately announced in the oldest article, and very much the focus *da capo* of the first of the series of four papers entitled “Postmodern Transactional Analysis”.

Might we not say that this towards postmodernism is, at least in part, a process of *decontamination*; the decontamination of a TA that has become contaminated with those strictures and restrictions of an outdated modernism and the constraints of the processes of standardisation and sanitization I outlined above?

One aim, then, that this creeping onwards attempts is the *decontamination* of TA. This echoes Jean Laplanche’s project of refounding psychoanalysis via a psychoanalysis of psychoanalysis, if not Jacques Lacan’s project of returning to Freud. Yet TA is no psychoanalysis, as Berne made clear from the outset; something that I have come to discover through my adventures in the consulting room and psychoanalytic training. TA is indeed a *preparatory*, and many of the problems that rent TA philosophy, theory and practice that I discuss in my papers are born of an attempted overreach, a stretching of TA beyond its remit to prepare analysands for psychoanalysis.

Thus, it is in the hope that TA might begin to evolve that I publish these papers here. As for who might be interested in reading them; frankly, I wait to find out. The trainee or practitioner who is looking for the Holy Grail of an integrated, complete theory of human nature that creates the illusion of intellectual, emotional and practical mastery will be inevitably disappointed, even if, at first, some tantalising promise is glimpsed. So too the unwitting client, who perhaps more honestly seeks relief from her or his anguish. Rather, the earnest *analysand* may find ways to play with the ideas put forward here; with one important caveat, something Berne was wistfully fond of pointing out, and something that invariably has fallen on deaf ears ... To return to Prufrock:

I am no prophet - and here’s no great matter