

Letters to the Editor

Editors' Note: The editors of the TAJ are very happy with the number and quality of letters we have received in response to Graham Barnes's article "Homosexuality in the First Three Decades of Transactional Analysis: A Study of Theory in the Practice of Transactional Analysis Psychotherapy" (April 2004). The breadth and intelligence of discussion are inspiring. Because of space limitations, we are publishing abridgments of the letters. If we have accomplished our intention, the core points made by each writer are included, although sometimes not under that writer's name, as several persons often emphasized the same ideas. We are reserving one letter for a future issue of TAJ. From Miran Mozina, it is in the form of a dialogue, witty and sharp, and deserves to be published in its entirety, which we do not have space for in this issue. We hope you will enjoy reading these contributions.

Dear Editor:

[Dr. Barnes's] article displays the huge effort he put into it. Not only is he knowledgeable about Berne's work in general, but his [study of] these specific cases and patients is most thorough and impressive. ... The article is analytical, yet poetic. The case of Mr. D seems more like it is out of a novel or play. ... I soon felt .. that Dr. Barnes touched on something universally true for society: To what we refuse to accept, we apply our own personal theory so as to explain it and invent an "acceptable" origin. ... If we refuse to accept a phenomenon, the easiest way of "changing" it, besides mere suppression, might be to apply a strong theory that forces some acceptable origin on the it. ... [I] wonder whether there are some parallels to this pattern of theory-psychopathology-psychotherapy that we, as individuals, force on ourselves as well. Are there aspects of our own personality and happenings in our lives that we choose not to accept but rather "change" with a theory that

constructs a new origin? And would not a new origin necessarily change our approach to such an "unacceptable" thing?

... Mr. D will stick with me, along with the other destinies I read and felt in Dr. Barnes's article. And the next time I see a whole community of people changing their attitude toward some unfamiliar or unacceptable phenomenon based on a theory from a respected person, I'll know that I've read about this before, and that story goes like this. ...

Paul Skage Dahlberg M.Sc., MFA, Oslo, Norway, molecular biologist, scriptwriter, and film producer with a keen interest in psychology

Dear Editor:

... Barnes is very clear about the epistemological premises his analysis is based on, constructing a concept of circular relationship between one's theory of psychopathology and its application in the practice of psychotherapy. In contrast to the transactional analysis authors and their narratives selected for his study, Barnes is reflective about his own narrative's authorship. ...

Barnes's punctuation of the turning points in the unfolding of transactional analysis theoretical ideas of psychopathology and psychotherapy of homosexuality brings forth an elegant, thorough description, a result of an experimental study in which the experimentalist, too, is included in his observation, thus offering an example of a postmodern, participatory science complemented with a rare aesthetic quality.

... The article reaches far beyond the theory-psychotherapy circularity of homosexuality as defined and treated by transactional analysis. ... It calls for an epistemological shift from a theory-based psychotherapy to a nontheory-based one in which the people we talk to, the suffering, are supported in their search for a desired change, empowered in being the experts for their life, for their vision of a desired future,

and becoming fully entitled participants in the process of creating new, viable, more satisfying meanings in a context of psychotherapeutic dialogue.

Lea Sugman Bohinc, Ph.D., senior lecturer and vice dean on the Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana; psychotherapist and teacher of psychotherapy at the International School for the Cybernetics of Psychotherapy, Department of Psychiatry, University of Zagreb

To the Editor:

To read Dr. Barnes's article on homosexuality in the April 2004 *TAJ* was an extraordinary experience. The way he applies second-order cybernetics in his model of the circular relationship of "theory-psychotherapy-psycho pathology" puts my medical knowledge and insight into a dramatic new perspective.

... The art of Western medicine today becomes more and more able to put a name and a diagnosis on what we are observing. Dr. Barnes is offering a different approach, by a totally different epistemology, where we as therapists are being invited into the world of "the patient," to understand his or her world and frame of reference—and to let go of making people "sick" who don't need therapy but rather acceptance for being who they are.

Bjørn Erik Dahlberg, M.D., Oslo, Norway

Dear Editor,

... Barnes describes a psychotherapy, in dialogue form, based on clients' own descriptions of their subjective experiences and using secondary cybernetic guarantees of the therapist's own self-reflection.

I am a specialist in pain medicine, especially psychological rehabilitation. ... Most of my patients come with a somatic diagnosis, where the stress component has been summarily dismissed in a humiliating manner. The somatic component can be partly relieved by powerful medicines and some limited surgery, but there are usually considerable side effects affecting the quality of life. An improved quality of life, with few or no side effects, depends on skilled

psychotherapy in dialogue in parallel with the somatic treatments, similar to what Barnes describes.

Gregory Bateson, Margaret Mead, and Milton Erickson—who inspired both Barnes and me—are unfortunately no longer with us. It is invigorating for me to read Barnes's writings and to feel akin to him in his scientific humanism.

Basil Finer, M.D., Ph.D., FRCA (London), associate professor, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden, specialist in anaesthesiology and intensive care, pain medicine, and hypnology

Dear Editor:

[Barnes's] article ... is an outstanding example of deconstruction of a theory. How does deconstruction apply here? The author shows us the historical development of the concept of homosexuality in transactional analysis theory and how it influenced the very practice of transactional analysis psychotherapy.

The author's [expert] ... epistemology ... allows us to perceive our constructs as just our constructs and to avoid reifying them, which is what happened in the case of ego states.

Although very few psychotherapists today probably would regard homosexuality as a less mature form of sexuality or as a deviant behavior, the problem has not ceased to exist. ... The problem has gone underground and is still implicit in our theories (transactional analysis as well as others) and influences how we think about homosexuality and how we deal with it in our psychotherapeutic work.

This article lights up the history of making our own prejudices into a legal diagnostic category for other people's behavior and consequently producing pathology. But the history of science is, in a way, an unfortunate history of prejudices; it is also a story of outstanding persons and their fight for ideas, living accordingly. That is why I found this article important for more than one reason.

... To go out of theory-centered psychotherapy by applying theory to itself is the act of a hero. ... Barnes invites us to read

this article as a metaphor for all our psychotherapy theories and to start seeing and hearing our clients rather than hallucinating about them ... keeping our mind flexible in order to do less harm to our clients.

And last, but not least, the author comes “out of the closet” in more than one way: as a person with his private life and as a scientist with second-order epistemology. To understand that means joining the world of diversity and human dignity.

Inka Miskulin, clinical psychologist and psychotherapist, teacher and supervisor at The International School of Cybernetics Psychotherapy, Rijeka, Croatia

Dear Editor,

... Despite the present-day more liberal legislation and the fact that the American Psychiatric Association in 1973 decided that “homosexuality no longer met the criteria of a psychiatric disorder,” nonheterosexuality has continued to be regarded as an individual psychological problem. Psychological research generally still excludes the experiences of lesbian women, gay men, and bisexual women and men from “ordinary” investigations, just like women historically have been excluded from research on human beings.

... This ... illustrates the importance of carrying our theories lightly or we run the risk that they become straightjackets limiting our flexibility, intuition, and empathy. Although Eric Berne, in some ways, had a “relational” approach, he viewed homosexuality as a structural (ego state) problem and much in that way subscribed to a one-person psychology. ... What happened to Berne’s social psychiatry mission?

Berit Roberts-Jones, Accredited Clinical Specialist by The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, Trainer and Supervisor of Psychotherapists, Nordic Training & Developing Centre

Dear Editor:

Congratulations on ... the frank treatment of the position of Eric Berne himself, which is directly addressed and strongly challenged

in the contributions by Carole Shadbolt, Graham Barnes, and Robert Trett [in the April 2004 issue of the *TAJ*]. This openness about an error in our history appears most thoroughly in Barnes’s revealing historical study, based not only on the published literature but on Berne’s extensive notes on group therapy sessions in 1952, which show how his own expression of the homophobic position both of society and of the medical and therapy professions of that time blinded him to the human emotional needs of his clients. The historical part of Trett’s paper provides important additional information and a valuable alternative theoretical viewpoint.

The position of candor taken by the *TAJ* and its authors makes amends for the mistakes of our discipline in the past and gives a measure of how far we and the society around us have come. Even more, it provides an extraordinary example in action of the profound value of a position of openness in which we can acknowledge with ease the errors of our own past without hiding or defensiveness.

... One of the two or three most profound moments for me with the first good therapist I ever had came when he reversed himself about something he had said to me months before. I expressed surprise, and he said, very simply, “Well, I realized I had made a mistake.” He really could listen to me and accept my reality. And he could be human and let it be seen. ...

This issue of the authority mode in therapy is at its most acute in dealing with gay and lesbian clients. Their whole life history has usually been embedded in family, social institutions, and peer-groups hammering out the message that they all “know best,” and that what the gay or lesbian individual feels at the deepest level of being about his or her very self is simply untrue and absolutely unacceptable. To counteract the massive self-disbelief of the Adapted Child position under these assaults, the client needs to develop a confident self-belief and not just accept a more benign preachment from a new authority figure. In this process, the therapist can provide more effective guidance by

avoiding an authority position, becoming a validator, supporter, and helper in the client's exploration and a role model for living, illustrating how he or she can live as an openly gay self in confidence and comfort without hiding or shame.

... Once a gay person has come to accept his gayness and live comfortably with it, he has the liberating integrity of knowing for sure that he is who he is because of the deepest parts of himself, and not because it is what other people want him to be.

Berne's position looks to me like a very serious countertransferential mistake, probably projecting his own Child confusion and terror on the wrong target: his clients. This is one of the classic perils of the treatment of homosexuals by a therapist whose hidden homosexual conflicts have never been worked through. When these mistakes occur they will usually not be recognized by the therapist, and they will certainly be very damaging for the progress of therapy.

It is interesting that Berne's own theory of the Child ego state and its often hidden contamination of Adult or Parent ego state communications serves so well in developing a plausible understanding of his own difficulties in dealing with homosexual clients. All this confirms the experience of almost 5 decades of transactional analysis practice regarding the value of Berne's ego state model of human thinking, feeling, and communications. This was his big and lasting accomplishment. The fact that he was unable to deal well with homosexual clients was partly a consequence of the time in which he worked, but more importantly, I suspect, the result of a severe and unhealed childhood wound unknown to us. We are entitled to temper our anger at Berne's mistakes with anger toward those a generation earlier who did severe and unknown hurts to an innocent child and with sadness for that child.

Felix T. Smith, San Francisco, California, USA

Letter to the Editor

... I agree with Barnes that psychopathology is often generated by the very process of psychotherapy and that this is

especially true of homosexuality. My comments are on Berne's and my attitude about homosexuality and the trends about gay and lesbian issues within the transactional analysis movement.

In 1952-1953, when Eric was treating Mr. D., being gay in America was a horror show. Undercover police were entrapping and arresting gay men in restrooms, anti-gay violence was rampant, there were no hate crime laws, public opinion about homosexuality was unmitigated revulsion, and conventional psychiatric wisdom was that homosexuality was a form of psychopathology.

Berne was not yet a transactional analyst; in 1952-1953 he was training as a psychoanalyst, and his transactional analysis views had not been fully formed. Berne's first frank and well-formed transactional analysis paper, "Ego States in Psychotherapy," appeared in 1957. Allowing for publication lag, it is fair to say that transactional analysis was born circa 1954, so the first 30 years of TA would be roughly 1955-1985. Given the pervasively demonizing environment of the times, it seems to me that Berne's view regarding homosexuality—for all of its shortcomings—was actually a progressive stance. He certainly did not share the view of Wilhelm Reich and other psychoanalysts that homosexuality was a "schweinererei"—some sort of swinish dirtiness. Instead, he was experimenting with the view that it was a gravely mistaken lifestyle choice given the suffering that being homosexual was likely to attract to a man's life.

His usual zany and oddly misogynistic views expressed themselves in the statements that homosexuality did not exist, that what a homosexual needed was sex with a good woman, or that the women who participated in the homosexuality script were dangerous, hateful, schemers, or weird. These views did not persist into the beginning years of transactional analysis.

The notion that homosexuality was a flawed choice of lifestyles did persist, along with the corollary that a gay man could, if he wished, redecide his choice. That is what I

learned from Berne, and until my political work put me in contact with a different perspective, that was my view for the decade 1955 to 1965.

However, regarding my statements in *Games Alcoholics Play*, written in 1967-1968, I was already aware that homosexuality was usually not a matter of simple choice. I made the mistake of giving a case example in which homosexuality had, in fact, been a choice with one of my patients. . . . In my next book I realized that this was a poor choice of examples and used the dubiously more appropriate script of "Beautiful Woman" instead. What can I say? Sexism and heterosexism, although subtle in many of us, were rampant in those days

By this time—the early days of the radical psychiatry movement—it was fully clear to me that gay and lesbian people were an oppressed minority. In 1971 I participated in protests by women, mental patients, and gays at the APA convention in SF in which gay men penetrated the conference and disrupted lectures on homosexuality by kissing and making out in the audience. At that conference's general meeting, efforts were made to take homosexuality out of the category of psychopathology, and because of the disruptions, these efforts finally succeeded in 1973.

... I became the target of criticism by members of the gay community. I was made aware of my uncomprehending attitude about gay sex and was questioned about my homophobia. I had to agree that I suffered at a certain gut level prejudice not unlike the racism and sexism that afflicted me in spite of my clear awareness of the issues. I was asked to write an article in which I agreed that a straight male was very likely to suffer from homophobia and that it would be unwise for a gay man to seek therapy from a straight therapist. I wrote the article, and I still think, to this day, that this is a valid view because homophobia, like racism, runs deep and is not easily overcome.

... The silence that reigned over transactional analysis regarding homosexuality has a simpler explanation. . . . The fact is that there were a number of gay

men and women in transactional analysis who chose to stay "in the closet." Even though their gayness was an open secret, we were loath to broach the subject for fear of offending in some way. Stephen Karakashian in New York and Laurence Collinson in London deserve credit for leading the way, by coming out and giving the rest of us permission to discuss homosexuality openly. The *TAJ* issue on gay and lesbian issues represents further progress in this grievously difficult aspect of human life, especially now that the U.S. government has been taken over by a thoroughly homophobic faction of the Right Wing.

Claude Steiner, Berkeley, California, U.S.A.

Dear Graham Barnes,

... When I came into transactional analysis in the late sixties . . . it seemed almost everyone was jumping around trying to prove that they had more Free Child than anyone else. I wondered then why Berne had formulated primary processes as a Child ego state and formulated secondary processes as an Adult ego state. I admit that Berne still puzzles me. . . .

To quote you ... "Berne constructed the concept of the homosexual differently than anyone before him: He transformed it into the concept of the Child ego state and construed the homosexual as a child and thus as an ego state." That revelation on the first page set the tone of the article for me anyway.

In my early transactional analysis training sex was defined as "the domain of the Child." I still do not understand why Berne allowed this to happen, but your article satisfies me as to how it happened. Many thanks.

Ken Woods, Belfair, Washington, U.S.A.

Dear Ken Woods,

... I, too, am concerned about the problem of the evolution of transactional analysis theory and the problem of dogmatism. I just do not see how a theory that gets surrounded by dogmatism can evolve. I hope I'm wrong.

... We might have a happy outcome if we apply to Berne's theory what he said about his relationship to psychoanalysis. He could

not understand in 1957 why he could not disagree with Freud and with psychoanalysis and still remain a member of the club. He argued that Federn and Erikson had done it. Why couldn't he?

... If we apply what Berne said to ourselves, would that help?

... At the level of theory . . . how do we address the issues ... to question, amplify, modify, disprove?

Over the years, especially during the past 20 years, I have often felt alone. Colleagues who have been willing to continue talking about the theory have been few. At times I just gave up, but then something always seemed to pull me back.

Thank you for your heartening remarks and thoughtful letter.

Graham Barnes, Stockholm, Sweden

Dear Editor:

I am a complete novice when it comes to the field of psychotherapy and a bit of a nonbeliever as well. I was given a copy of this issue of the *TAJ* by Dr. Barnes, who is an old friend and classmate from our days at Harvard Divinity School in the late 1960s. I am also a homosexual who has lived his entire adult life openly as such.

I was impressed . . . that [Barnes] was able to dissect his own profession and subject it to such devastating criticism ... a credit to both his abilities and the willingness of the *TAJ* to publish the article.

... The articles by Conley and Shadbolt ... taken in conjunction with Dr. Barnes's article ... [provide] ... much for transactional analysts as well as psychoanalysts to consider. I ... agree with Dr. Barnes's characterization of homosexuals as living in two worlds while heterosexuals live only in one. This is a factor often overlooked by heterosexuals, and it supports the other writers' view that it is important for homosexuals to be treated by gay therapists, since most straight therapists cannot understand the worldview of a homosexual. I have always assumed this to be true, so it is nice to see a professional validate that idea.

... Even though I was reared in a fundamentalist atmosphere within a small

and stifling New England town, I never felt that my innate homosexuality was, in itself, wrong. . . . [But] it would not be accepted by the community, and I also knew that the church I attended strongly disapproved of it.

...

... [Despite] all the mental anguish I experienced trying to sort out the issues of faith and religion, I managed to become a fairly healthy and stable adult homosexual.

... Between the academic pressures at Harvard, the confusion and stress over religion, and finding my way in the world as a homosexual—all at the same time—I think it is nothing short of a miracle that I came through all of that with any sense of “normality” at all. And I did it on my own without any therapy or counseling. I did not even have any gay friends during those years.

... I have been very fortunate to work in an environment that not only accepted my homosexuality but valued it and celebrated it. Likewise, I have also been fortunate to live in perhaps the one part of the world (the San Francisco Bay Area) that truly accepts homosexuality on a par with heterosexuality and provides an environment in which we can live our lives openly without shame or guilt or embarrassment. As for Ned's “inner child,” I had heard this concept mentioned a few times in the past, and I always thought it was a lot of nonsense. It is good to see the idea being criticized and, hopefully, abandoned.

... Barnes's splendid article ... certainly stirred up some thoughts and memories in my own mind. I think that his article may do a lot of good, especially if it causes members of your profession to rethink their approach to their gay clients. Dr. Barnes has written well and lucidly.

Dennis G. Young, Sonoma, California, and Cairo, Egypt

Dear Graham:

... Congratulations on a well-thought-out, timely, and well-researched article. ... Not only is it of great value for its central topics ... it is important also to show in general “what theory does to practice” and that “theory is already practice.”

This leads me to once again emphasize the perniciousness of the narrow concept of “script.”... [The] early rigid concepts of script (and script matrix) had (and still have) the potential to do incredible harm in affecting treatment of any clients. ...

... I believe it can . . . be dangerous for therapists to believe that the goal of treatment is for clients to become “script free.”. . . Our scripts offer tentative structures that support our growth.

... Certain specific “survival conclusions” (acquired and/or implanted during childhood because they seemed useful then but that now inhibit or prevent someone from blossoming and reaching full potential) may need to be changed or discarded ... not ... a person’s entire script!

... I find your own references to “script” still reminiscent of the idea that a person’s “script” is primarily negative, constricting, and harmful rather than (as I see it) an essential structure for one’s identity, including one’s sexual preferences.

... When [*What Do You Say After You Say Hello?*] was published posthumously in 1972, to my surprise I found that Berne had already slightly modified his earlier definitions of scripts by referring to “overscripting,” which, he stated, went “far beyond the cravings of (a child’s) script hunger” (pp. 290-291). This implies that Berne saw that the development of a script is a necessity rather than a pathology, since it meets a basic “hunger”. ... He had also . . . included my discovery that pathological “hot potatoes” can be passed on under certain circumstances and thus form episcripts in certain vulnerable recipients (p. 292). Thus, he ... distinguished between normal scripts and episcripts, which, as he stated, may indeed be “hamartic” (p. 292).

... In seeking to define scripts, Berne stated: “Any definition will be subject to alteration with advancing knowledge in the field.”

... I keep bringing up my definitions of scripts whenever I can because, like you, I have experienced all too often how inflexible, erroneous theory can do damage to clients even when practiced by well-meaning

therapists.

... Over the years I have found that the only way to get rid of whatever inappropriate shame one has lived with since childhood is to confront it head on by “bragging” about it overtly, thence my recommendation [to wear a Gay Pride button]. After such “bragging” and the discovery that there are no horrible consequences for being overt about the issue, whatever it may be, such “bragging” becomes an important stepping stone to self-acceptance “as I am” and “as I truly want to be” rather than as my Parent believes I should be.

... The social climate of a given society or other circumstances may not ... permit this. Mr. D., for instance, may not have felt suicidal had he been able to experience full social acceptance of himself as a homosexual man, but this would not have been possible in 1952. ... Before 1970, even as a therapist who is herself free of cultural prejudices about homosexuality, I would not have made such a suggestion. Instead, I would have sought to honestly evaluate, with the client, the realistic social pros and cons of being overt in each given situation.

... My work with [my first overtly homosexual patient] was useful, not only for him (as he later attested), but also for me personally, for ... eventually I saw that in the course of my own “training analysis,” which lasted for 8 years—1956 to 1964—my own therapist had been erroneously pathologizing me in areas in which I was particularly vulnerable—until I finally extricated myself at great cost. ... He totally sided with what I now know was my Critical Parent, who was shaming my Child for failing to meet the stereotypical cultural norms of my background for a proper middle-class wife and mother.

My central struggle, for which I never got understanding or support from my analyst, was that I wanted to be both a sexual, feminine woman and a fully competent, successful professional. Such aspirations do not sound conflictual for a young woman in the present-day United States, but believe me, they seemed incompatible for women of my generation and my culture of origin, even

in the United States in the 1950s. I well remember a lecture by Anna Freud who, on visiting Yale at that time, expressed shock and indignation about how young female graduate students in child psychology expected “the impossible”—to marry, have children, and yet work professionally. So, in fairness to my benighted analyst, his attitudes corresponded even to those of Anna Freud.

... After reading *Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy* (Berne, 1961) and going to Carmel to train in TA, I ... gained the permission I needed when I heard Berne state that women can be just as potent as men. ...

... I am glad that nowadays the transactional analysis concept of contracting can protect patients to some extent from inappropriate treatment goals being foisted on them by narrow-minded therapists. ...

In defense of Berne, Mr. D’s case dates back to 1952, when Berne was still trying to operate with the hubris offered by the psychoanalytic banner and its omnipotent claims of being able to radically change, “improve,” or deny human nature, which led him to state, as you quoted: “As for homosexuality, I don’t believe there is any such thing”. ... The idea of homosexuality was eliminated from transactional analysis (except that your article and the *TAJ* issue it is in are now appropriately resurrecting it as well as someone like Stephen Karakashian, who has been doing so with his practice and his writings since the 1970s (Karakashian, 1973). ...

I do not understand an aspect of your interpretation of the case of Ned (and, partially, Diana). Do you mean it when you suggest that Berne “transformed the homosexual into the Child ego state?” By equating Child only with homosexual, are you denying the existence of a Child ego state in all of us and, thus, by implication, denying us all the use of structural analysis with PAC as a useful tool?

... Ego states are abstractions, not necessarily “phenomenological realities.”. . . Brain imaging does prove that different areas of the brain and nervous systems are affected differently by particular stimuli. ... Abstractions can be useful symbols to help us

distinguish among the different systems for feeling, thinking, and acting that do seem to exist within all of us, whether homo- or heterosexual, male or female.

... Berne chose Child, Parent, and Adult for his colloquial nomenclature. He could have chosen different names, or maybe distinguished among four or five such systems instead of three. But . . . I do not understand how “a Child writhing with embarrassment” or a “writhing Child standing naked before adults” is necessarily a gay individual or a homosexual.

You ... refer to my articles on shame (English, 1975, 1994). What I spell out there is that developmentally speaking, starting at the age of 2 to 4, all of us have the normal tendency to become ashamed about a variety of issues. ...

In Western culture, to this day, unfortunately, there is still shaming of young children about their sexual organs and their sexuality and, often, about their gender. ... A heterosexual female or male may also have ... feelings of “writhing with embarrassment” if/when, as an adult, she or he is shamed about a sexual issue or gender or ethnicity or whatever. ... I, also, have often felt the “writhing” of my “embarrassed Child.”

... I am grateful to Berne’s theory for having taught me that my Child is “OK,” even when she feels “bad” and her Parent tells her she is “wrong” just because others say so. I am happy with the concept of ego states and most particularly with the idea that even as a grown-up, sometimes I feel, think, and/or act like the little girl I used to be—after which I can nevertheless feel sympathetic with my Child and ask my Adult to decide on the next course of action. (Yes, I goofed! Now what can I say or do to fix the situation?)

... My objection to your equating the Child ego state with homosexuality does not mean that I view either one as pathology, but rather that I do not want to equate apples with oranges, although both are OK.

... I do not think the Child ego state can be placed exclusively in the province of homosexuals, as is evident from the fact that in *Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy*,

Berne (1961) can discuss Mr. Segundo's case without reference to homosexuality.

... I cannot agree with you when you state that the idea of the homosexual was replaced by Berne's idea of the Child ego state, and I believe it would be a disservice to transactional analysis to do so.

I do agree that it is worth considering why, in Berne's subsequent writings (and in early transactional analysis) "the idea of the homosexual disappeared"—but this can have many explanations. ... This is a topic worthy of more investigation.

Fanita English, San Mateo, California, U.S.A.

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Dear Fanita:

I am delighted with your reflections and comments on my article (Barnes, 2004). ...

... I agree with you about the pain that theory-centered psychotherapy induced on women and others not very long ago. My concern is that theory-centered psychotherapy is still doing this sort of thing, not only to women and gay people but to different kinds of people it is making up (Hacking, 1999). Lewes (2003) is cautious about a "gay-friendly" psychoanalysis. I am cautious about a gay-friendly psychotherapy in the context of a theory-centered practice. There is the likelihood that even gay-friendly psychotherapy will bring forth new psychopathologies for gay people. We can see this happening in the otherwise admirable work of our colleagues in the April *TAJ*. I can cite two regrettable examples. Shadbolt (2004) devises a psychopathology that locates within gay people an "internalized homophobia." And Trett's (2004) queer psychotherapy turns Berne's idea of a

thwarted physis into a new psychopathology. I think we psychotherapists have to take seriously the proposition that any theory-centered psychotherapy is likely to do this sort of thing. Meanwhile, I think gay people need to be aware of what they could be facing when they go into a theory-centered psychotherapy, even one that is gay-friendly.

... [Concerning] the concept of ego states ... my approach to theory-centered psychotherapy is to look at the relations created by the theory (or by theory-laden concepts). I investigate the relations implied in applying, for example, a concept of ego states that assumes that individuals have a personality, that the personality has states, and that specifies what those states are.

I am also looking at the relationship of psychotherapist and patient that arises from applying a theory in their discourse. For example, what relations are created by any given theory of transference? ...

In addition, I am asking how theory shapes "who" and "what" psychotherapist and patient are becoming through applying theory or theory-laden concepts. ...

The issues you raise that I will address in what follows are: (1) the use I make of script theory in my article, (2) ego states as abstractions, (3) the existence of the Child ego state, and (4) the concept of the Child ego state and how I conceptualize its relationship to the concept of homosexuality.

Script Theory. Your alternative to Berne's script theory offers a corrective to his theory, which, as you say, creates psychopathology. I agree that the concept of script is richer (and generally more useful) when it is separated from concepts of psychopathology.

You correctly note that my discussion of script is more in keeping with Berne's idea than with your more positive and updated version. The reason for that is that I am turning Berne's concept of script on the theory itself. ... Theory "acts as the script of the psychotherapy through the psychotherapist's application of the concepts of the theory" (Barnes, 2004, p. 129).

I suspect that Berne may have assumed that each of his concepts contained all its possible implications within itself. ... This

brings me to consider your comments about ego states as abstractions.

Abstractions. A problem in psychology (and psychotherapy) is the abstract concept. This problem of making the abstract concrete is what I think psychotherapy has to overcome. Berne tried modeling his theory on physical science, and that science begins with the assertion of the abstract concept. That science (as Berne knew it) also consists of the inseparable triad of mathematics, mechanism, and materialism; it begins with abstractness (Barnes, 2002; Collingwood, 1924).

Berne worked out a logic for his theory that comes close to mathematical precision. That is what makes his theory consistent, and it is also why it holds together. It is also why he could modify it and add to it: He knew its internal logic. Unlike most other psychotherapy theories that I have studied, Berne's is unique in its logical precision, and that is one of the reasons I continue to study it.

Berne gave materiality to ego states, but he did not accept what Collingwood (1924) said about abstractness: that it means materiality (pp. 166-168). ... He could claim that his theory predicts because he constructed it on a foundation of determinism, "an abstract law which determines every case indifferently from the outside" (p. 167).

Berne's theory takes us from the concrete individual to abstract objects that it locates inside individuals; the theory turns these abstractions into concrete objects. I think this led Berne (and us) into making some serious mistakes, and these are the kinds of mistakes that lead to dogmatism. Our mistake is to dogmatize. And again, I cite Collingwood (1924): "We err because we dogmatize—because we do not criticize our own assumptions—and we dogmatize because we err, because we think they are not assumptions" (p. 288).

If we have been burned by dogmas, we avoid them, and that is why I keep cautioning about the quest for certainty implicit in transactional analysis (Barnes, 1977). My quest is living without the certainty of authorities, such as creeds, beliefs, and

theory-centered styles of psychotherapy. I think a democratic society needs people who can live that way, and I think that is one thing that an autonomous psychotherapy is about.

The Existence of the Child Ego State. You ask, "Are you denying the existence of a Child ego state in all of us and, by implication, denying us all the use of structural analysis with PAC as a useful tool?" You also refer to ego states as helping distinguish different systems that seem "to exist within all of us."

Berne introduced many metaphors into psychotherapy. These metaphors, like Freud's, were creative works of art. What Freud did with his skillful use of metaphors was to induce feelings in his readers (and patients). Freud let metaphors do the work of telling people about their deep unconscious mental processes; the metaphors caused people to see one thing as another. These metaphors were made literal and declared literally true (Barnes, 1994, pp. 14-15).

We have the troublesome consequences of the literal application of Berne's metaphors of psychic energy (Barnes, 1999), and our collective experience gives us pause about what metaphors we import into our psychotherapy and how we use them. My concern is about how we theorists use our metaphors. For example, it is one thing to use the metaphor of a child or a parent to refer to an individual's actions (her actions are like those of a child), but to go from there and say that the grown-up, legal individual is a "child" is cutting our cloth from a different pattern. ... Berne (1961) insisted that his use of the metaphors of ego, the child, the adult, and the parent, should be taken literally. These metaphors shaped our ways of seeing people; they changed our discourse.

... Ego states may be patterns, but they are not things; they are concepts but they are not objects, except as concepts they become objects of thoughts, when we think about them. ... Neither my grandmother nor my Uncle Harry exists in my brain; and concepts that I call states do not either. Nor does my childhood as a thing (or as a relic) exist in my brain. There are no relics in my brain. Relics—that is a fascinating metaphor but it

is highly misleading when we talk about “relics from childhood.”

... Regardless of which of many metaphysical worlds we humans choose to believe we inhabit, it seems that the people we respect go on eating, working, and loving—and hoping for the survival of those ideas and practices that we think are fit for the survival of this planet and for encouraging free, democratic societies and diverse individuals.

... Does it matter what we believe about ego states or how we talk about them, if we talk about them at all? . . . Psychotherapists, of all people, would be among the first to say that it . . . matter[s] . . . especially psychotherapists who have worked with people who confuse the name and the thing named, the symbol and the thing it symbolizes, who do not distinguish between hallucinations of their grandmothers and the chairs in a room.

The metaphors of psychotherapy are like dreamwork; they are the dreamwork of the psychotherapy discourse (Barnes, 1994, pp. 13-15). . . . I expect transactional analysts to continue using metaphors like ego states, using metaphors of the Child like other metaphors are used in meaningful ways in everyday life. . . .

The Concepts of the Child Ego State and Homosexuality. You ask if I mean to suggest that Berne “transformed the homosexual into the Child ego state?” No. Here is what I (Barnes, 2004) wrote: “Berne constructed the concept of the homosexual. . . . He transformed it into the concept of the Child ego state and construed the homosexual as a child and thus as an ego state” (p. 126). I respectfully call attention to my use of “concept of” before both “homosexual” and “Child ego state.” I am writing about the transformation of concepts.

Where Berne mentions “the writhing child,” it is in the context of his discussion of homosexuality or sexual confusion. (I will discuss this in a moment.) I think your argument is with Berne, but it may help if I remind you that Berne was building a specific argument and not talking about all “writhing” children.

... That what I have written leads you to make the three comments [at the end of your letter], regarding homosexuals and the Child ego state, brings me to restate my argument, which, I trust, thanks to your comments, will be in a form that will be easier to follow. First, I will cite the critical texts where I connect the concept of the Child ego state with the concept of homosexuality (Barnes, 2004).

“Berne constructed the concept of the homosexual differently than had anyone before him: He transformed it into the concept of the Child ego state and construed the homosexual as a child and thus as an ego state” (p. 126).

“I describe how Berne’s construction of the Child ego state obliterated the concept of the homosexual, with the concept of the Child ego state replacing the concept of the homosexual as a grown-up individual” (p. 127).

“Berne did not ‘believe there is any such thing’ as homosexuality. . . . Thus the idea of homosexuality was eliminated just as Berne’s theory would obliterate the idea of the homosexual” (p. 135).

“With the erasure of the idea of homosexuality, something else disappeared: the idea of the homosexual, which was replaced by Berne’s idea of the Child ego state” (p. 139).

“Berne’s construction of the Child ego state deleted the idea of the homosexual that his theory constructed, replacing the gay individual with the theoretical homosexual, which, in turn, was obliterated. It became, instead, ‘a child writhing with embarrassment’ ” (p. 140).

“Thus, in Berne’s theory the homosexual individual is not a grown-up but a Child. With this the identity of the person as a homosexual individual (i.e., a lesbian or gay male) ceases to be legitimate” (p. 140).

“Berne might have grasped then and there that his concept of the Child ego state was a substitute for the concept of the homosexual” (p. 141).

“Berne constructed the concept of the Child ego state. There was not one until he made it up. . . . One of the ways he went about

making up the concept of the Child ego state was by turning his images of the seductive homosexual into images of a ‘writhing child standing naked before adults’ ” (p. 152).

These excerpts stand on their own. They point up a transforming process, which is, of course, conceptual. Now I turn to the basis for my argument, noting the conceptual steps in Berne’s activity of constructing his theory of the Child ego state.

1. Berne was already working in the psychotherapy (psychoanalytic) context that had produced the psychopathology of homosexuality.

2. Berne directed his “intuitive gaze” on lesbians and gay men (who already had the psychoanalytic diagnosis of homosexuality).

3. Berne transformed their psychopathology of homosexuality into a primal image, which was shaped by psychoanalytic theory. It was, as Berne (1957/1977) described it, “Remember the homosexual and anal conflicts” (p. 104).

4. Berne then transformed his primal image into a primal judgment: “This is a woman with strong homosexual conflicts and strong anal strivings” (p. 103).

5. He converted his judgment into an “intuitive” ego image. What he then saw (constructed) was “a child, writhing with embarrassment” (p. 104).

6. From there, Berne transformed his ego image into an ego state: the Child.

Berne transformed the psychopathology of homosexuality from the (concept of) the homosexual into the (concept of) a child. And what is interesting to watch is what these transformations do when Berne applies his theory to the patient who is diagnosed “homosexual” (or “sexually confused”): The “homosexuality” disappears and in its place the “Child ego state” emerges.

7. Berne transforms the image of the “writhing child standing naked before adults” into a child, and he transforms that child into an ego state. Thus, “the homosexual” becomes a child (and, ipso facto, an ego state: the Child).

“Sexual confusion and sexual conflicts led Berne to construct ego images and what he took to be actual ego states. His

conceptualization of the homosexual was of someone else. ... For Berne the homosexual was hiding the Child ego state” (Barnes, 2004, p. 139).

I want to be clear that I am not saying that the Child ego state (or, more precisely, the concept of the Child ego state) equals (the concept of) homosexuality. So, please do not read me as saying “Child ego state = homosexuality.” Instead, I set forth a hypothesis about the development of Berne’s concept of the Child ego state. I am not implying that anybody has ego states, including Ned. ...

For my reading of Berne’s text, I draw one of my methodological approaches from Megill (1985), distinguishing between a literal reading and an ironic reading of a text. First, my reading is literal; following the most meticulous rules of interpretation of a text, which is to understand it on its terms, reading it as a consistent body of theory.

Our literal reading of Berne’s text is to use it as our guide. We will read Berne’s text ironically when we do not accept his text as representing any reality except Berne’s; we will read him ironically when we recognize that his theory does not describe a reality independent of Berne’s experience, even if his experience might overlap with how others describe their experiences.

My article follows the first methodology for interpreting the texts with which I work. Then, after I have come to terms with Berne’s use of metaphor, his analogies and his turning abstract concepts into concrete objects, I switch and begin reading him ironically, not as a guide, but as a worthy opponent in theory, and still as a friend. When I want to grasp what his theory does to lesbians and gay men, my work “queers” his theory (Barnes, 2004, p. 128), laying bare its underlying assumptions, its ways of working; showing how homosexuality is a psychopathology construed by Berne’s theory-centered psychotherapy; showing how his theory makes up different kinds of people and populates them with states of a certain kind; showing how it has them playing its games and living their lives according to its script. ...

Regardless of what theories say and do, queer people never disappear, no matter what people believe and wish. We emerge (often at young ages) in families that do not always want us to be what we are becoming. We go to schools that do not always know what to do with us. We grow up with friends who love us, but when some of them recognize our queerness, they no longer abide us. We belong to religions that once stoned people who do the kinds of things we do—and some religions still do or they use their archaic codes to keep from accepting us just as we are. Our families, our religions, and our societies are not always successful in their efforts to make us conform. But they do not stop trying.

We are marked and singled out in the binary opposition of homosexual/heterosexual. By labeling us homosexual, society notices and marks us as different. All others—undifferentiated, unmarked, and unlabeled, even when called heterosexual—are defined as persons without regard to their sexual acts or desires. And we are still subject to scientific research and ethical and social discourse about gender and orientation in ways that other people are not. Nevertheless, we demand the human and civil rights to which we feel all people are entitled.

We are coming to understand what we have been made and who we now are, what we have done and what we may yet do, and resolve not to allow anyone to define who or what we are. ... Some of us say “I am what I am”; others, “I am being what I will be”; and still others, “I am becoming the queer things I do.” Yet the question of why we are what we are is an unanswerable one. And some of us prefer to leave it at that, just as we may not care to find out why we love whom we love. What we do makes us what we are (regardless of whether we call ourselves lesbians, gay men, queer, or something else). ... But what we do does not bring about a psychopathology nor does it turn us into the homosexual species. Even if society is heteronormative, we will do what we do even if our same-sex activities offend a homophobic or homo-hating public.

... Some of the question you raise in your last paragraph are anticipated in my more comprehensive study of homosexuality in Berne's theory and in transactional analysis from its beginning up to 1980 (Barnes, 2002, pp. 92-161). I am looking forward to continuing our dialogue.

Graham Barnes, Stockholm, Sweden

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Dear Graham:

I was touched and pleased by the lengthy, detailed response you offered to my letter. ...

As you eloquently state, homosexuals “emerge, often at young ages, in families that do not always want (them) to be what (they)

are becoming.” (Incidentally, this is also true, although perhaps not as painfully, for many other children, especially creative ones who do not “fit” the family mold or tradition.) For such children, a script, which he or she gradually develops on the basis of fairy tales or stories that have many ups and downs that illustrate such dilemmas, becomes all the more necessary as a support structure for growth.

Again, my definition of script is as follows: an imaginative sketch about the future generated in childhood on the basis of innate genetic factors and aspirations in addition to family and environmental influences. ... Thereby, a growing child can have some structural support for blossoming with his or her creative potentials. ... The basic script gets expanded, detailed, and often slightly revised in the course of lifelong development as the person gains new experience and information.

I ... want ... to emphasize ... that a narrow, erroneous view of a script as being generated purely from harmful unconscious messages (of the mother, as usual culprit) has contributed to what I call “therapeutic hubris”: the belief, in therapists of many persuasions, including some transactional analysts, that patients can be totally transformed into whatever the benighted therapist (maybe, also, a social group) happens to consider “normal,” even [if] this runs counter to that person’s very nature.

... Much as I agree with you about the dangers of theory-centered psychotherapy and the danger of circularity—where we may find the “proof” of what we believe in our clinical findings without being sufficiently critical of the theory—I must confess that I do find it useful to assume that individuals have a personality and that it is useful to connect patterns with “states,” although we must also be careful when we do so.

Yes, it is the human dilemma that we must live with uncertainty, much as the Child within us (if I may use that term!) keeps yearning for The Certain Answer to be offered by Mother, God, or the Commander. (That’s why religious fundamentalism is so attractive.)

And how to make the abstract concrete? How could we manage without metaphors and analogies, although admittedly they are dangerous when we assume they are “real”? Maybe the Hindus have it right with their pantheon of gods and goddesses, each supporting different human attributes and tendencies. How to visualize unconscious motivations? It is a topic I have been struggling with extensively.

... [I am moved] by your impassioned final paragraphs “about the position of lesbians and gay men in contemporary society” and your beautiful manifesto about “not allowing anyone to define who or what we are,” to which I can only say “Amen” with affection and admiration.

Fanita English

Dear Fanita:

I am honored by your letter and deeply moved by your comments about my response. ... I thank you for writing just what you wrote. ... “Affection and admiration” capture my feelings for you as well. So I close for now greatly indebted to you for turning your brilliant, compassionate intellect to my work, challenging me to probe deeper and reach further.

With gratitude, esteem, and affection.

Graham Barnes