

Developing Creativity

Trudi Newton TSTA(E)

My aim in this paper is to explore what we mean by the phrase ‘living creatively’, through the framework of Transactional Analysis (TA). I will use this model to comment on the concept of ‘creativity’ and to illuminate the phases of the creative process (Zelinger 1990).

First, a little about TA: its originator, Eric Berne, studied with Federn, himself a pupil of Freud. Berne’s core egostate model – Parent, Adult, Child – derives, via Federn, from Freud’s concept of super-ego, ego and id. Berne defined egostates as “consistent patterns of feeling and experience directly related to a corresponding consistent pattern of behaviour” (1961).

Parent, Adult, Child are thus not the same as Superego, Ego, Id. They are observable (we can identify the behaviours of each part of the personality); they are individual, not generalised concepts (my Parent egostate is mine alone, developed from my unique experience); they are responsive to change (I can update my Parent information, my Adult processing, and learn to access my Child enjoyment). This three-part model is shown in the diagram (Stewart & Joines 1987):

In his early writings, Berne noted four forces which act on the little person – the encouraging and the limiting influences from parents and parent figures, Fate, and ‘physis’ – the urge to life and growth, which enables us to overcome adversity and say “*This is what I want to do, and I’d rather do it my own way*” (Berne, 1972). This positive force derives from the energy of the Child egostate, the source of spontaneity, creativity and joy, and can be diagrammed as what Berne called the aspiration arrow:

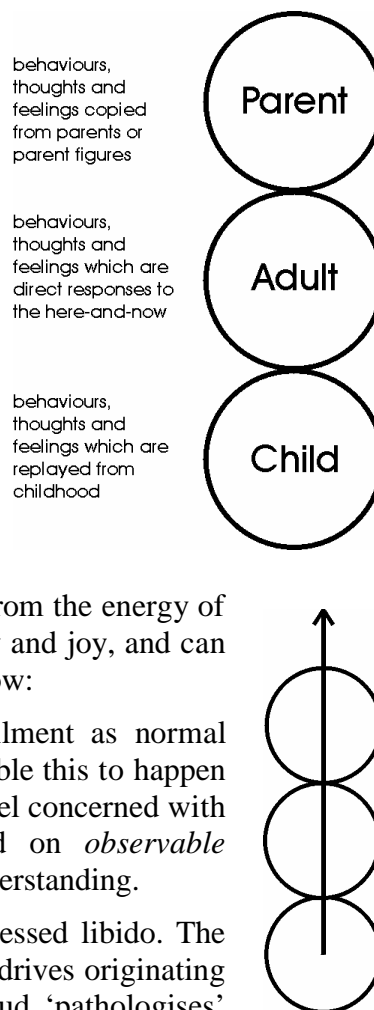
This liberating concept sees creativity and self-fulfilment as normal processes. The task of the therapist or teacher is to enable this to happen easily and naturally. TA is essentially a functional model concerned with *inter-* rather than *intra-*psychic processes, focused on *observable* behaviours and the possibilities for change through understanding.

Freud saw creativity as related to neurosis and a repressed libido. The ego, under pressure from the superego, suppresses the drives originating in the id, which may ‘escape’ through art. Thus Freud ‘pathologises’ creativity; in contrast to Maslow, for instance, who considered that the creative and the fully human person were the same.

The TA model, although Freudian in origin, takes the latter view. Creativity is a human characteristic shown by all small children. The pressure to withdraw from the creative mode or to discount one’s abilities comes from the Parent.

The Adult, said Berne, is in the service of the Child, enabling the individual to counteract this Parent pressure and find their own source of creativity. The *intention* of parents, carers or teachers is not to limit creativity; learners may, nevertheless, acquire Parent ‘messages’ linking creativity to skill and technique – an internal scale on which they see themselves as ‘unable’. A complex pattern of beliefs about self and ability begins in childhood and may be reinforced later. Grasping this concept and using it can be a potent tool for teachers.

The autonomous person is one who has, through good fortune or learning, come to balance her egostates and integrate the positive functions of each so that the vulnerable Child is



protected, but not hampered, by the Parent. The Adult works with the Child to make aspirations real.

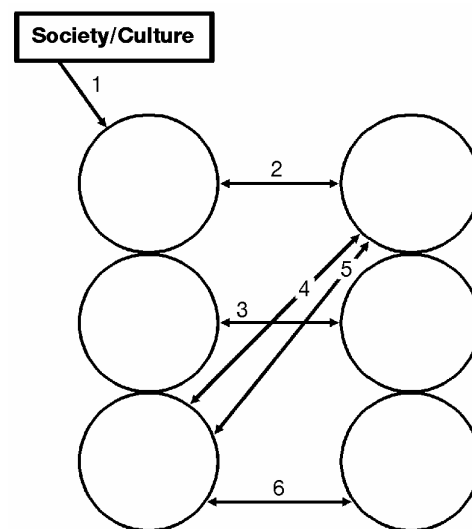
Zelinger (1990) describes eight phases in the creative process: ideas/stimulus, improvisation, elaboration, editing, integration, polishing, separation, development.

The first two are functions of the Child egostate. The person who has difficulty ‘getting started’ may be unable to access their Natural Child spontaneity, acting in Adapted Child in response to another’s Parent. The following three phases – elaboration, editing and integration – are functions of the Adult; the creative idea is considered, adjusted and ‘trimmed’, to reach a synthesis. This more detached phase requires the ‘here and now’ judgement of the Adult to change an inspiration into a work of art.

Polishing, separation and development are Parent phases. The work is prepared for presentation to others – Parent values, vision and experience are needed. In the separation phase the artist lets go of the work; in the development phase she sees the work as part of a whole, a unique personal contribution to the world.

What can the transactional model contribute to enable this process in which all parts of the personality are engaged? As an example I have chosen White & White’s ‘Education in a Therapeutic Community’ (1975).

This model envisages the person as receiving cultural messages about creativity which become part of the content of Parent and may be limiting or damaging (1). The first step is to healthily up-date Parent values: “everyone has potential” (2). Adult information-giving follows: “here’s how to get started” (3). At the same time the teacher’s Parent protects the student’s Child: “it’s safe to experiment here” (4) and gives permission: “you can do it your own way” (5). Finally, the Child of the teacher shows enjoyment and excitement at the result: “I love the way you use colour” (6).



Living creatively means having the capacity for intimacy, spontaneity and awareness – Berne’s definition of autonomy and the goal of psychotherapy and education.

References:

Berne, Eric	<i>Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy</i>	Grove, 1961
	<i>What do you say after you say Hello?</i>	Corgi, 1972
Stewart, I. & Joines, V.	<i>TA Today</i>	Lifespace, 1987
White, J.D. & White, T.	<i>Cultural Scripting</i>	TAJ, Jan 1975
Zelinger, Jacob	<i>Charting the Creative Process</i>	BJPP, 1990