

Ego states

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Monday, 27 July 2009

The contextual diagnosis of ego states

Eric Berne states that there are four types of diagnosis of ego states. They are the behavioural diagnosis, social diagnosis, historical diagnosis and the phenomenological diagnosis of ego states. For a complete diagnosis one needs to complete all four types. It has been subsequently demonstrated that there is in fact a fifth way of diagnosis. It is known as the contextual diagnosis of ego states. For example if a man says, "On July 5th, 2007 the alignment of the planets will create a magnetic field so large that there will be the biggest tides in half a century", what ego state would be diagnosed?

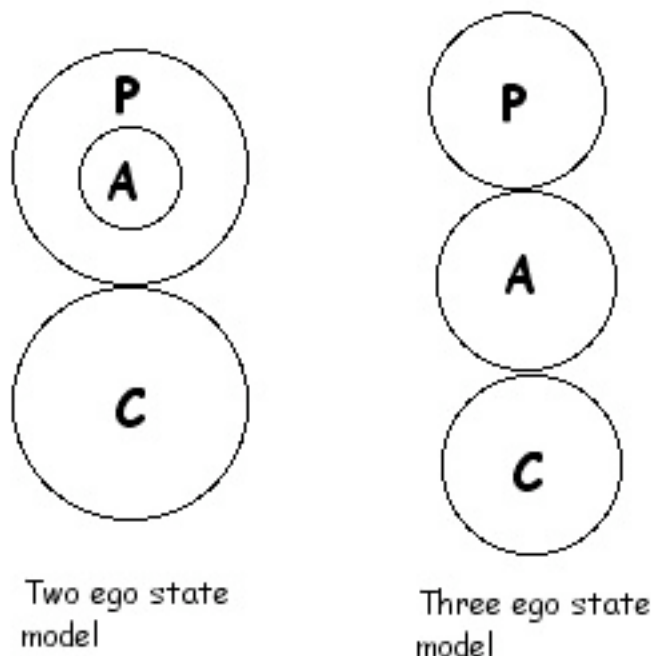


The context of the smile?

If that man was of a dishevelled appearance, had not shaven for 2 days and was sitting on a park bench drinking out of a bottle in a brown paper bag what ego state would be diagnosed?. Probably some kind of regressed Child ego state. If that man was in an observatory wearing a white coat and carrying a clip board what ego state would be diagnosed? Probably Adult ego state. The different contexts for the same statement would tend to result in a different diagnosis. The context in which the statement is made is central to the diagnosis of ego states.

Two ego state model

This ego state model has sought to correct inaccuracies in the three ego state model. Berne devised that there was an Adult, Parent and Child ego states. The two ego state model says that there is a Child ego state and a Parent ego state. The Adult ego state is placed in the Parent ego state. The Adult ego state is one part of the Parent ego state. The information we learn at school is all Parent ego state introjects. How we learn to speak, add up and learn how to think is all just copied from our teachers. Just like our morals and values are copied from our parents. There is no absolute truth where facts exist outside a person's own belief system. Berne mistakenly concluded that there was and thus mistakenly put the Adult ego state as separate from the Parent ego state.



Reference

Tony White. 1988. "The Two Ego State Model". Bulletin of the Western Pacific Association Of Transactional Analysts. Pp 45 - 55.

Two ego state model part 2

The two ego state model described above is the second last step from the end of the logic from which it flows.

And the last step is?

Many moons ago I wrote an article called "The paradoxical nature of knowledge -

Why solipsism cannot be a philosophical question".

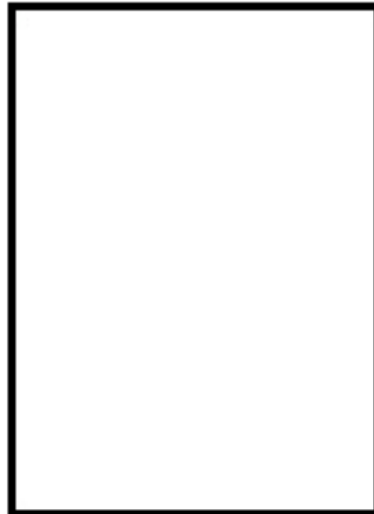
In the journals of philosophy one sees many arguments of logic about the question of solipsism.

Solipsism is = the view that the self is all that can be known to exist. The two ego state model is complete solipsism, there is nothing that can be known, that is, there is no absolute truth which means the two ego state model can not true. Thus we have the paradoxical nature of knowledge.

As you state the two ego state model says there is not absolute truth and thus how can it be true? If it is not true then it must be false.

Thus in the Paradox of knowledge one cannot debate the question of solipsism in the journals of philosophy. But they do and thus they are illogical in doing so which is one thing a philosopher does not like being called. The fact that I wrote the article - "The paradoxical nature of knowledge", is illogical.

But I believe I have found a solution. Indeed it seems quite a revolutionary concept in the study of philosophy. The two ego state model and the question of solipsism can exist. It exists below inside the square.



OK, OK I know you are thinking there is nothing in there. But be a bit expansive with your thought. Within it everything can exist including paradox. So one can consider solipsism and the two ego state model. They can exist and not exist at the same time. What is inside the square is not bound by the rules of logic and philosophical debate. There is everything and nothing at the same time. I have called this in the past, anti-philosophy. This is what you get when you take the study of epistemology (How we know what we know) to its final conclusion. We

end up with the content inside the square.

The four ego state model

It has long been recognised that human attachment is central to effective human functioning and development. Of course attachment occurs in all human relationships but it is in the attachment between a mother and young child where it achieves most prominence. Having worked in the psychotherapy business for 25 years I have earned a lot of my wages working with people on their attachments with their mothers. It is a very problematic area.

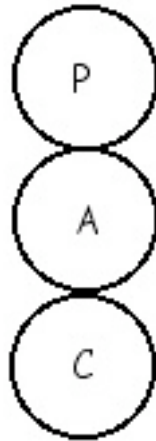
Why? It seems safe to say that of all attachments in all human relationships it is the mother-child attachment that is the most profound. Here we have one person growing inside another person, so there is a complete somatic, indeed one could even say a cellular connection or attachment. You don't get much more profound than that. As adults there are not many of us who really ever fully break that original attachment and hence people often end up in counselling due to the problems that such an unresolved attachment can produce and there are many of them.



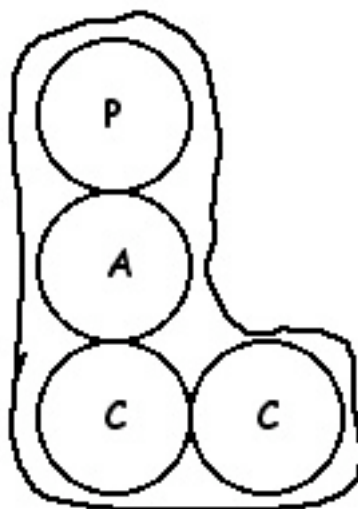
However at birth it is the task of the child to form a psychological attachment to the mother and the mother to form a psychological attachment to the child. If that does not happen or the attachments are significantly disturbed then that usually leads to some deep seated psychopathology on behalf of the child. That person will grow up with significant psychological disturbance if the basic attachment is appreciably damaged or malformed. This is a pivotal aspect of

human development.

As we know Eric Berne developed his model of personality as being the three ego states as such:



A long time ago I had a trainee therapist who developed the four ego state model. This woman worked with mothers and their very young children. She had two roles one as an educator to give the mothers information and the other as a counsellor of the mothers and the children. She devised the four ego state model to explain the attachment process of the mother to the child. It looked like so:



As we know when a child is born it only has one ego state, the Child ego state. The Adult and Parent ego states do not exist but develop later in life. Her thesis was that for the mother to develop a successful attachment to the new-born she had to take on that single Child ego state as part of her own personality. An interesting way of viewing a mother's attachment to a new-born.

Hence we end up with the 4 ego state model diagram where the mother has

introjected the newborn's personality as part of herself and thus the skin is drawn around the four ego states. She in essence ends up with two Child ego states, her own and the newborns. If achieved then there has been a successful attachment by the mother to the child and the mother has a sense of the boundaries between the two becoming blurry and the sense of the two identities merging.



This of course increases the possibility for intrapsychic conflict within the mother. We all have three ego states which can disagree and conflict with each other, but the new mother now has four that can conflict. Of particular importance are any conflicts between the mother's original Child ego state and the new introjected one that she now possesses.

So when mother has been sleep deprived for three days with a crying baby she can feel some resentment and anger at the new-born. With this 4 ego state model she can also feel anger at this new needy part of herself. Such a suggestion leads to some new and interesting treatment options for how to deal with a sleep deprived mothers anger in such circumstances.

As mentioned before in the four ego state model the mother introjects the child's personality into her self and this facilitates the attachment process. It can also be seen to have evolutionary basis for the survival of the species. For any species to survive it needs to have its new and young members looked after

so that they can grow into adults and reproduce the species them self. The introjection of the new-born into the mother's personality may help with this.

As the mother is tending to and looking after the young new-born she also has the same Child ego state in herself. Thus in the psychological sense she is also tending to her own Child ego state. She has a self interest in doing such activities which of course means she is more likely to do it and thus the species is more likely to survive. Thus the noble pursuit of mothering becomes an act of self interest on the mother's behalf.



This phenomena could also explain why parents tend to side with or believe their child over another. The ugly parent syndrome that we sometimes see on the sporting field. The father who abuses the umpire or another child in a game of football for unfairly dealing with his son on the field of play. Really he is defending his own Child ego state against perceived injustice as well as his son. He is said to be vicariously living through his son. He is nurturing his own Child ego state at the same time as protecting his son in the four ego state model. Thus the parent is more likely to do it and be more invested in doing it successfully.