

Current Issues in Transactional Analysis

The First International Transactional
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European Conference

Edited by

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Foreword

Twenty years ago, Eric Berne, M.D., creator of Transactional Analysis, held the first TA Seminar in his home in San Francisco on February 18, 1958. Seven therapists attended. Today the International Transactional Analysis Association (an outgrowth of the original "San Francisco Social Psychiatry Seminars") has 150 members from 43 countries. Seminars and workshops, as well as therapy, can be found in almost the entire non-Communist world.

TA is popular because it is a practical theory of intrapsychic and interpersonal behaviors that can be used effectively by laypersons as well as therapists. TA concentrates on the conscious, and proves that conscious intrapsychic material is all that is necessary for patients to cure themselves. Patients (we call them participants) are trained with their therapists, learn TA theory, and take an active role in their own treatment. TA therapists strive for autonomy, and help that human beings choose their own emotions, thoughts, and actions and can quite easily learn to choose more satisfying ones. We do not play transference, and establish with our participants specific treatment contracts. The first question asked by a TA therapist in therapy is, "What are you deciding to change about you?" We do regressive work only when it relates directly to a present problem, and after each piece of work we ask, "How are you using what you have found out to change you now?"

Most Teaching Members in ITAA pioneered in combining TA with treatment. At the Western Institute all participating therapists take turns leading the group, being a patient in the group, and criticizing the therapy. Therapists like TA because they can evaluate with their participants the therapeutic gains, and because they have learned to cure patients far more quickly than previously. Also, TA is easily taught.

with and understand cultural scripting a balanced focus on both unctonal and dysfunctional aspects will be necessary. Shulamit's article is a very worthwhile step in that direction. It is a documentation of the development of ideas first discussed by Shulamit in the summer of 1972 before the Eric Berne Memorial Seminar.

James and Barbara Allen's "Conflict and Dysharmony: A Transactional Typology" is a part of the trend toward integrating TA and other theoretical frameworks. In developing their typology they draw on transactional analysis, Gestalt, psychosynthesis and psychoanalysis. The April 1975 issue of the *Transactional Analysis Journal* was devoted to "Comparative Psychotherapy." The Allen's article goes a step further and integrates various therapies, as many TA trainers and practitioners are doing in their work. It also ties together concepts within TA and furthers TA theory.

Together these articles represent a significant advance in transactional analysis theory.

1

Rackets and Racketeering as the Root of Games

Fanita English, M.S.W.

Nowadays transactional analysts tend to focus on the rackets of their clients more frequently than on their games, even though Berne himself devoted only a few pages of his total writings to the concept, describing a racket as a feeling that is "habitually turned on" (1) by having been learned as a "favorite feeling" in childhood (2), linked to "exploitation" (3).

DEFINITION

In current TA practice the definition of rackets that is commonly used is based on two articles I wrote which were published in 1971 (4, 5). There I defined a racket as a *substitute feeling that replaces a more genuine feeling which would surface in a given person at a given moment were it not for the fact that during the person's childhood the individual was penalized or discounted whenever he manifested the genuine feeling that now seeks to emerge.*

Since the word "racket" is an American colloquialism, sometimes there is confusion both in defining the concept accurately and in translating it. This happens all the more since it has become the

* In the German translation of my articles on the subject of rackets the following explanatory words are used: Racket—*Ersatzgefühl*; Racketeering—*Ausbeutungstransaktionen*; Racketeer—*(Psychologischer) Ausbeuter* or *Streichel-Ausbeuter* (i.e., Racket—Substitute feeling; Racketeering—Exploitative transaction; Racketeer—Exploiter of Strokes).

fashion among some unsophisticated therapists to use the word in an accusatory manner to connote feelings or behavior they disapprove of, without addressing themselves to the facts that the patient who exhibits a racket or suffers from it internally is not doing it "on purpose"—i.e., within his present awareness, and that the racket cannot be cured simply by naming it, although *identifying* it is the first step to treatment.

In this paper it is my goal to define more precisely what constitutes a racket, to describe the process of racketeering (i.e., transactions in support of a racket), to discuss the treatment of racketeers (i.e., persons who chronically engage in racketeering), and to discuss the connection between rackets and games. I hope to communicate the flavor and meaning of these terms clearly enough so that they can be rendered precisely in other languages rather than their being used as confusing, untranslatable American words.*

RACKETEERS

Berne took the term racket from American slang, where it is short for "protection racket"—a practice initiated by Chicago gangsters who sold phony insurance policies. The protection racket went as follows: A gangster's representative would come to a businessman and demand cash in exchange for what he called an "insurance policy" against fire. If the businessman refused to transact, the next day there would be a "mysterious" fire in his establishment and the following day the gangster's agent would return with another, more expensive "insurance policy." After a few such experiences most businessmen would agree to buy the alleged "insurance," and "pay off" the gangster, knowing full well that it was not genuine insurance policies they were buying, in that they would never be able to collect any compensation if there were to be a fire, but also knowing that it was the only way they could avoid having their place deliberately set on fire.

Most of us have experienced people who subtly blackmail us in the same manner by "hooking" us into transacting with them and giving them strokes for feelings or thoughts that do not seem genuine and to which we do not really feel like responding; however, we might do so for a while as the easiest way out and to avoid being

penalized by being accused of being rude, unfeeling, or unappreciative. For instance, one person might corner us at a party or in a business situation and exploit us into handing him out sympathy strokes by telling us on and on about his problems. Or another might insist on giving us unasked for advice to extract a series of "thank you" strokes. In both instances we would be "paying out" strokes that we really don't want to give. I use the name "racketeer" for the person who indulges in such transactions, particularly if he invests a high proportion of his time and energy in the process of extorting ongoing strokes from others "by hook or by crook" for feelings or thoughts that do not ring true, just the way a gangster extorts cash for "insurance" that is different from regular insurance.

THE WHY OF RACKETS

In the matter of feelings rather than fire insurance, why would a person bother to transact with artificial, "plastic" feelings, rather than with real ones? As with a gangster's apprentices who are raised within that set of business practices and do not know how to operate successfully in legitimate business, the answer relates to a racketeer's early childhood history.

There are very few families or cultures where a full range of feelings is acceptable. For instance, in some families the expression of frustration is unacceptable. In others, the parents might have had difficulty dealing with a child's rage or grief or sexuality or excitement or dependency or, for that matter, independence. So messages were sent out signifying that certain expressions of feelings are "not nice," "bad," "wrong," or "dangerous." Sometimes these messages came overtly, in that a child was consistently told "don't you dare . . . (cry, or yell, or investigate or even laugh, or seek affection, or whatever)." Sometimes messages came covertly in that the parents might have turned away, or frowned, or quickly shifted gears when they experienced expressions of "unacceptable" feelings from their children.

By contrast, in each family certain feelings or attitudes are supported. These may be sadness, sulkiness, fearfulness, forced cheerfulness, or what have you, depending on the familial and/or cultural pattern.

As a result, certain unacceptable feelings exhibited by a given child might have been not only discounted at times, but also frequently mislabeled; other feelings might have been attributed to the child when he exhibited his real feelings. This can have been happening in a gross manner or in a subtle manner. For instance, a parent might have said to a child who was sobbing about the death of his goldfish, "Oh, you're just tired and need some rest." Or, "Oh, you should be happy because we're buying you a bigger one." Or, "You're just feeling mean—making all that noise to wake up your grandmother!"

A consistent pattern of having had certain categories of feeling mislabeled or discounted in early childhood results in a child's learning to *substitute* an acceptable or attributed feeling when he experiences what was an unacceptable feeling in his particular family. Hence the racket. It appears as a *substitute* feeling to replace or "cover up" another feeling that seeks to surface. Sometimes, in addition, this substitute feeling gets inflated or exaggerated for the very reason that it is a substitute, the way an impostor accentuates artificially induced behavior to appear more credible.

By age three most youngsters learn to repress the spontaneous expression of disapproved feelings or attitudes in favor of approved feelings or attitudes, which then become their principal outlets for the expression of *all* their emotions, including the "disapproved" ones. This becomes an emotional habit pattern and as a result, even as an adult, a particular individual might ward off his awareness of certain strong feelings if and when they seek to surface by assuming feelings or attitudes that were attributed to him in childhood and which now get churned up as artificial substitutes for what is really going on inside him. This is why an individual's racket sounds phony and "plastic," even though the person himself may not realize it.

All of us need strokes. But people who have inner permission for awareness and expression of their real feelings experience enough good transactions with others in the course of everyday life so they do not suffer from chronic stroke deprivation. However, people whose childhood experience has taught them to blunt their awareness of certain feelings tend to be particularly needy for ongoing

strokes even when grown, perhaps because they sense that a vital piece of them is "dead." They need extra reassurance to feel alive. So they become racketeers, seeking forced strokes to buttress their substitute racket feelings. Like American gangsters who still follow the ancient patterns of Sicily, racketeers are maladapted to their present-day circumstances; they continue to operate on the archaic premises of their childhood. They dare not bring certain underlying feelings into awareness. The Child of these individuals is terrified that these might be detected, or, worse, that they might be unable to stop themselves from acting out behavior that was unacceptable in their childhood.

In spite of the discomfort they experience, racketeers do not know that they substitute racket feelings for awareness of other underlying feelings, for they have gotten used to doing so since childhood; their substitute feelings seem natural to them, and other feelings seem strange or crazy. This is particularly so since what are substitute racket feelings in one context may very well be, to some extent, appropriate feelings in another.

Let us consider, for instance, a racketeer who chronically operates as "depressed" because he substitutes this feeling for, say, joy, or jealousy, or anger, if and when any of these feelings seeks to surface. To feel tired or sad at times would be normal, so sometimes his low feelings are genuine and appropriate. But when they are his modality for the expression of joy, jealousy or anger, they are artificial. Paradoxically, to justify chronically depressed feelings to himself, often he not only produces these as *substitutes* for other feelings, but also *exaggerates* them at the times when he appropriately feels tired or sad, either wallowing with these feelings internally or presenting them as urgent demands for strokes. Consequently even a racketeer's genuine feelings often have a phony ring to them, like the alarm of the little shepherd who cried "wolf" too often.

RACKETEERING

However exasperating his apparent artificiality may be to some of us, the racketeer suffers as a result of his rackets. He tries to indulge himself by spending much of his time mentally transacting with imaginary persons in his past or present who condone his racket.

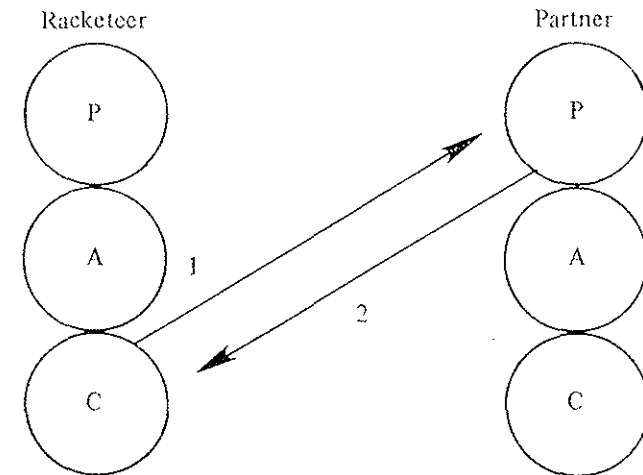
Eventually indulging his racket internally makes the racketeer desperate for a real live person who will deliver actual ongoing strokes. Unfortunately he then seeks strokes in support of his racket rather than reaching out to others spontaneously. Like an addict looking for a "fix" with which to soothe what may be a different internal need, the racketeer moves back and forth between alienation from the outside world that results from his being overinvolved internally with maintaining the racket to cork up his mysterious underlying feelings, and a search for partners who will support his racket by stroking it. If the function of his racket or rackets is to cover up a host of strong feelings, an individual becomes a "hard-line," "third degree" racketeer. Then most of his short-term or long-term transactions consist of racketeering for strokes, of extorting from others the sustenance that will buttress up his racket and give him recurrent relief from the pervasive discomfort of holding down other feelings that are roaring underneath. However, this process does not significantly take care of his real needs, and sooner or later his chosen partners go off or abscond or turn against him. Sometimes, in anticipation of this eventuality, the racketeer temporarily switches his ego state, thereby quickly concluding a particular set of transactions with a partner as a Game, in a manner that I shall describe later in this paper. If there is a great deal of such escalation, a racketeer's condition in life gets aggravated, perhaps to ultimate destruction. The analogy is to a gangster's helper who knows of no other way to earn a living than to keep going for "pay-offs" to his racket; often he ends up hurt or killed as a result of the very activities that were earning him a living.

THE TWO TYPES OF RACKETEERS AND THEIR RACKETEERING

There are two types of racketeers, Type I and Type II, and each type conducts his racket in accordance with his preferred method. Within each type are two subdivisions, referred to as (a) and (b).

Racketeer Type I initiates racketeering from a Child Ego State, and seeks to elicit a response from a Parent ego state. I call Type I (a) "Helpless" and Type I (b) "Bratty." "Helpless" and "Bratty" responses can appear interchangeably, although the process of "Helpless" racketeering exploits for positive strokes, and the process of

"Bratty" racketeering brings on negative strokes. In either case the racketeer's goal is to maintain a parallel transaction with the Parent Ego state of a partner, and to keep extracting strokes on and on through such parallel transactions, thus:



The following dialogue is typical of racketeering for Type I:

Racketeer (C to P): "I'm so unhappy."

Partner (hooked into Parent Ego State): "What's the matter?"

Racketeer: "I don't know; I feel awful."

Partner: "I'm sorry."

Racketeer: "I need comfort."

Partner: "Is there anything I can do to help?"

Racketeer: "I don't know. I'm sure you can."

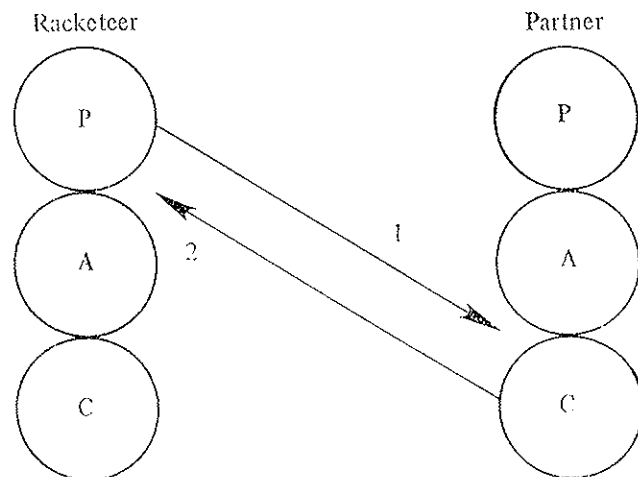
Partner: "What would you like?"

Racketeer: "Well, maybe. . ."

And so on. As the dialogue develops the racketeer might become "bratty"; for instance the partner might offer some help and the racketeer might reject it and ask for different help. As long as the partner continues to respond from a parent ego state, the racketeer will continue on and on in his Child ego state, because his goal is

to extract as many strokes as possible for his racket rather than to be aware of what he really wants or to obtain Adult information.

Racketeer Type II operates in reverse. Here the racketeer comes on with a phony imitative Parent ego state; he seeks an Adapted Child who will keep responding, thus:



I call Type II (a) "Phony Helpful" and Type II (b) "Bossy." These racketeers initiate a transaction with a chosen victim by offering "help" or instructions in order to extract "thank you" strokes. A dialogue might go as follows:

Racketeer (Phony P to Adapted C): "Are you sure you're comfortable?"

Partner: "Yes, thank you very much."

Racketeer: "Let me get you a drink."

Partner: "Well, thank you."

Racketeer: "Is this enough ice cubes?"

Partner: "Yes, thank you."

Racketeer: "Give it back, I'll get you another."

Partner: "No, thank you, really."

Racketeer: "Yes, I insist."

Partner: "Well, thank you. . ."

This dialogue can also go on and on with a possible shift from positive stroking ("helpful") to negative stroking ("bossy") whereby the racketeer tells the partner what he should or should not have, what he should or should not do, and so on.

FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD DEGREE RACKETEERING

In the examples given above, the partners are not necessarily racketeers; they could be "innocent bystanders" who got cornered, like the businessman caught by a gangster. Any one of us might meet Type I, and we might find ourselves handing out a collection of Parent to Child strokes, such as "poor dear," "yes, yes," "that's tough," "there, there." Or we might get stuck with Type II and be saying things like "thank you," "you're great," "you're so . . . (smart, helpful, useful, important, etc.)." For a short while we might be willing to indulge a racketeer, especially in a social situation, and most of us go in for a little racketeering ourselves, here and there, as an easy way to extract a few extra strokes from friends or strangers at times of depletion.

Since not many of us were allowed full awareness of our complete range of feelings when we were children, we tend to substitute what we believe are acceptable feelings for unacceptable feelings. An accumulation of what we internally consider unacceptable feelings is likely to bring on pressure in each of us to racketeer for strokes in accordance with one method or the other, rather than to be completely open with ourselves and others. All this can go under the heading of "first degree racketeering" and operate as a pastime. Though technically outside the person's immediate awareness, first degree racketeering is so light a cover-up or substitution for other underlying feelings that the individual can often recognize by himself what he is covering up if there is a friendly confrontation of his racketeering.

Chronic racketeers, however, are desperate about disguising from themselves their underlying feelings and self-image, and frantic about racketeering to meet an increasingly devouring need for strokes to the racket that helps them stay away from self-awareness. They don't let go; no sooner does one partner escape than they find another, both for short-term transactions and long-term relation-

ships. In such cases I refer to second and third degree racketeering, by analogy to burns and addiction. (A small skin burn is an unimportant occurrence, whereas third degree burns destroy tissue and can cause death.) As their transactions escalate to more and more racketeering, the blackmail of these individuals can go all the way up to threats of suicide or homicide. Further, even though the justifications they offer are based on their rackets and are artificially concocted or escalated, their increasing desperation may become so great that they may finally implement their threats, unless they have the opportunity for effective treatment.

CASE EXAMPLES OF RACKETEERS

Thea was a Type I (a) racketeer, with racket feelings of depression and sadness. She was 65 years old when she came into treatment and had spent a lifetime seeking relief by going from one therapist to another to get "supportive treatment" and tranquilizers. Her diagnosis of chronic depression was based on her behavior and her history, which included the fact that her mother had been a bedridden invalid during most of Thea's childhood. Within a short period of my working with her it became obvious that Thea had no permission for spontaneity, joyfulness or creativity. She was the typical "spoilsport" in that she would escalate her racketeering in the service of her alleged feelings of hopelessness most particularly when she had occasions to be joyful, such as at an outing she had successfully planned.

When Thea was a little girl she was treated like a pariah by her father if he came home and found her having fun with her friends. How could she be unfeeling and make noise when her mother was so sick! However, if she looked like his "sad little girl" he would liberally stroke her for being sensitive, distressed and unhappy over her mother's illness. So Thea learned to express feelings of sadness and depression at times when she was wanting to feel ebullient. Later in life she married a husband who was a racketeer Type II because of his own background; he was a doctor, and stroked Thea for sickness and depression, but discounted her and went to his laboratory when she was feeling cheerful. Fortunately, he himself was not as heavy a racketeer as she was, and her "depressions" had begun to wear him down, so it was possible to cure Thea of her depression racket without serious disruption in her marriage. However,

during treatment, her husband became anxious, discouraged and berated her as "manic" when she sounded spontaneous and joyful, and himself later required help as Thea changed.

Stanley was a racketeer Type I (b) with a Bratty hostility racket. He would invite people to give him negative strokes from their Parent Ego States, particularly at times when he was feeling hurt, by calling himself a "hostile son-of-a-bitch" and then by provoking them with obnoxious behavior and with his *Rebellious Child*. Even when he obtained nurturing strokes from would-be rescuers he still responded with hostility. His mother had died when he was three. His father had remarried almost immediately; both stepmother and father had felt very threatened by the little boy's expressed love and grief for his dead mother. These were seen as indications of hostility to the new marriage, particularly since the stepmother tried very hard to be a "good" mother. So Stanley's crying was chronically discounted, as was any sign of unhappiness. Instead, anger and temper tantrums were liberally stroked as evidence of how much disturbance the "new" mother could take, how much patience and tolerance she showed to the "hostile little brat." Thereby Stanley learned to express yearning, loneliness, grief and love through a hostility racket.

Suzy was a racketeer Type II, sometimes in the (a) category and sometimes in the (b) category. As the oldest of many children, she had been stroked for being responsible, generous and kind—a "little mother." She had a sister two years younger whom the family saw as more beautiful and intelligent than Suzy, but Suzy had never been allowed any feelings of jealousy, envy, frustration, or anger, whether in relation to this sister or in relation to the burden of responsibility which she carried so "easily." In group, her racketeering consisted in being overly helpful and occasionally critical of another patient whom she might have had reason to envy. She had no awareness of her envy, and initially she expressed shock and horror that anybody could attribute such a feeling to her. Yet, ultimately, when she was able to get in touch with her feeling of envy, her racketeering diminished substantially.

DISTRIBUTION OF TYPICAL RACKETEERING

In my experience I have encountered as many Type II racketeers as Type I. However, rackets determine whether one seeks help and what occupation is chosen, so there are more Type I racketeers as

identified patients and more Type II racketeers in the helping professions, including therapists of all kinds, as well as lawyers, company managers, cooks, and fashion experts.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN RACKETEERING AND THE EXISTENTIAL POSITION

Elsewhere (6, 7) I have described how most people establish a "defensive existential position" at about age three. This position is based on the type of parenting they have had so far. Children who have had rigid, overbearing, or highly controlling parenting develop a world-view from a stance that can be called "I'm not OK, you're OK" and, correspondingly, they will develop a Type I racketeering pattern ("helpless" or "bratty"). Children whose parenting has been overanxious or over-indulgent or negligent or who have otherwise had to "raise themselves" develop a stance that operates as "I'm OK, you're not OK" and, correspondingly, they will teach themselves to racketeer as Type II ("helpful" or "bossy").

The degree and intensity of each racketeering pattern in a grown individual correspond not only to the extent to which he seeks to suppress his awareness of underlying feelings, but also to the rigidity with which he seeks to maintain his defensive existential position because it, too, is used to ward off underlying feelings, particularly the awareness of existential despair which is experienced by some people as a total flooding of "not OK" feelings. Thus, the rigidity of a person's defensive position, in contrast to an "I'm OK, you're OK" position, can also be empirically measured as being on a first, second or third degree level.

The premise that racketeering patterns are established at about age three may seem contradictory to the definition of Type II racketeers as operating primarily out of a Parent ego state, considering that, developmentally, the Parent ego state is not operational until after age seven. The fact is that Type II racketeers operate not only with artificial feelings, but also with a partially contrived Parent ego state that actually reflects a mini-Parent in the Child. Later in life this contrived Parent Ego State aligns itself with the more fully developed Parent. For instance, in the earlier example, Suzy sounded as if she were coming on with a Parent ego state when

she made "helpful" or bossy contributions or gave support, instructions or advice. The vocabulary was that of a Parent ego state, but underneath it was the frightened Child who was doing her best to sound as though she knew all the answers, just as she might have tried to sound or act at age three holding a baby bottle for her one-year-old brother, or speaking to her psychotic mother, seeking strokes for being, herself, a "good little mother."

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN RACKETEERING AND GAMES

In *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?* (8) Berne emphasized that it is not just "cons" and "pay-offs" that identify a game, rather that the term game properly applies only to a series of transactions that do include the con,* but also, importantly, include a *switch* in the ego state of a player prior to the crossed transaction that ends the game. Berne was not as explicit in his insistence on this point in his earlier book, *Games People Play* (9), particularly since the psychological purpose for racketeering as a goal in itself was not identified at the time. This has led to a blurring in nomenclature between racketeering and games in that many of the names used for so-called games apply more appropriately to racketeering. For instance, "Wooden leg" can represent Type I racketeering; "I can get it for you wholesale" Type II racketeering; "Yes but" can be Type I or Type II depending on the Ego State with which it is initiated.

The con is an intrinsic part of the process of racketeering, rather than the game, since the precise purpose of racketeering is to obtain ongoing pay-offs in the form of extracted strokes. The significant difference between racketeering and a game is that the latter ends by means of a crossed transaction resulting from a switch in ego states in the player, whereas racketeering proceeds as a series of ongoing complementary, dyadic transactions for as long as the player's partner cooperates by proffering the desired strokes.

* The word con—short for confidence—also comes from gangster language, meaning an enlistment of another person's trust or confidence for ulterior purposes. Similarly, pay-off represents payments that are extracted illicitly from others, which is precisely what happens through racketeering.

RACKETEERS AS PARTNERS

Ah, now we have put our finger on the racketeer's problem as he goes through adult life, which is analogous to the gangster's problem. It is not always easy to find enough people to con into handing out pay off after pay-off, even in the form of ritualistic, contrived strokes, and, besides, these are not sufficiently substantial for big-time racketeers. Well, there's another possibility, which Chicago gangsters also discovered—to wit, "buying into" someone else's enterprise such as a dry-cleaning establishment and conducting some of it as a "legitimate" business, perhaps even teaming up with the owner to extort from other parties.

This is how Type I and Type II racketeers find each other, and, for a while, they have a good time racketeering together. Many marriages and partnerships start out this way and maintain themselves quite well for a period of time on this basis. However, eventually such relationships lead to increasing dissatisfaction, even though it looks as though both partners are still stroking each other. The dissatisfaction occurs because most of the stroke exchanges are for racket feelings, so the underlying needs of the racketeers are not being met, and they experience growing, diffuse frustration. Just as a gangster cannot offer protection from real life hazards but only from hazards that he would himself generate artificially, so strokes to rackets are not useful responses to what goes on within a person. As time goes on, each racketeer feels increasingly cheated, dissatisfied and "empty." Thereupon each partner racketeers all the more furiously, often moving more and more to negative-stroke racketeering, i.e. from (a) to (b) transactions. Thus sweet "Helpless" becomes more and more rebellious "Bratty," and kind "Helpful" becomes more and more angry "Bossy" until one or the other gets ready to walk away from the escalation of negative stroke exchanges. This can happen with increasing frequency following short-term, five-minute racketeering. On a broader frame, one or another of the partners may get ready to pull away from the total relationship. This is when the switches of Ego States occur, leading to what can properly be called game endings.

GAME ENDINGS RESULT FROM RACKETEERING THAT FAILS

Contrary to previously held theory which posits that games are started as such for the purpose of a "pay-off" at the end in the form of bad feelings that reproduce the past, I have become convinced that more often than not even what are seen as "hard-line" game players do not initiate games for the sake of what they experience at the end. Rather, game endings are, each time, the *unpremeditated*, but pathetically recurring *results of internal panic* within the racketeer when he senses that a racketeering partner looks like he is about to pull away, either by walking off or by crossing the racketeer's invitation for further complementary transactions.

It is at that moment, or in anticipation of that moment, that his panic gets the racketeer's glandular system going and energizes him into switching his ego state, following which he "jumps the gun" on his disappointing partner and crosses the ongoing set of transactions himself, to be the first to fire, or else to "quit before he gets fired." Thereby he gets a temporary sense of power from having taken an initiative, even though it cuts off the stroking process on which he depends desperately; briefly, he settles for a consolation prize in that he can at least give himself an internal stroke that says, on the basis of past, contaminated experience, "I knew this couldn't last." The secret (or not-so-secret) smile that appears on the player's face following the crossed transaction that signifies the end of a game is not because there was a pay-off—the previous racketeering process was offering the pay-offs—rather it represents a bittersweet replay of experience from a period of life that was a good bit later than the three-year-old stage within which he learned to racketeer. With the smile he gives himself a "consolation prize" in the form of a minor stroke from some nurturing source that he internalized at a later stage of development—perhaps after age seven. Like a perfunctory parent talking to a hurt child it says, "There, there, I told you so, there's always disappointment in life." Thereby the poor racketeer regains a little bit of courage which maintains him for a brief while (seconds, or days) until his need re-emerges and he resumes his racketeering attempts all over again, either with the previous partner or with another.

What are called game players are actually unsuccessful racketeers who started out scrounging for pay-offs in the form of live strokes from living, breathing partners—even very reluctant ones. No game starts out as a game in intent, even unconsciously, although the sequence of transactions I described above may happen in quick succession if the racketeer becomes more and more desperate and “trigger happy.”

Granted, racketeers try (as all of us do to some degree) to transform the people of their current lives into replicas of people from their pasts because their view of human beings is based on those they knew when they were young. But this does not invalidate my experience that whenever a racketeer can get a living person to keep stroking him in the style to which he was accustomed in early childhood, he much prefers that to cutting off the source of strokes to his racket and experiencing the jolt that follows the crossed transaction which ends a game. But the jolt does bring on a consolation prize, which is better than nothing. Game endings result from the racketeer's sense of deathly terror when he discovers, over and over again, that even when he believes he is well-matched with a complementary partner for what may at first look like the total security of unlimited guaranteed ongoing strokes, somehow (a) these strokes are not nourishing enough—he continues to feel emptiness, and craves more and more, and (b) even his unsatisfactory partner (who may happen to be less invested in the complementary racketeering process than he is) is about to abscond or “cross him up” and deprive him of live support for his principal, though misguided, vehicles for ventilation and self-expression. In short, pay-offs are sought by racketeering. Games offer only consolation prizes, which is why each person spends a much higher proportion of his time racketeering in accordance with his type than in the ego state that follows the end of a game.

The escalation of transitions from racketeering to Game endings can be seen as an indicator that the individual's previous “solutions” about how to live his life are collapsing. Even racketeering fails to sustain him sufficiently from the total “not OK” position of alienation from himself and others that he was defending against by seeking strokes for his rackets. Is there a way out? If there is no useful

therapeutic intervention this process leads, of necessity, to a tragic ending.

ONLY TWO TYPES OF GAME ENDINGS—PLUS “UPROAR”

As a result of this new view on Games it becomes clear that just as there are only two patterns for racketeering, Type I and Type II, basically there are only two patterns for Games, whatever fancy names we might give them in each context. One is “NIGYYSOB” (“Now I've got you, you son of a bitch”) that closes off Type I racketeering, and the other is “Kicked” that concludes Type II racketeering. Each Game ending results from a switch in the Ego State of the racketeer so he ends in the opposite Ego State from which he initiated the process of racketeering.

In addition, there is “Uproar” whereby, following the escalation of racketeering one way or another, both partners switch almost simultaneously and each marches off by a different door holding on to his/her own consolation prize of frustration, prior to seeking another partner with whom to racketeer by telling him/her about the disastrous episode that just happened.

THE MOVEMENT FROM RACKETEERING TO GAME ENDING

When racketeer Type I panics and switches ego state from his helpless or bratty Child to his Parent, he crosses the previous set of ongoing transactions and attacks his partner's Child more or less vehemently with his now energized Parent, saying, in effect, “Your Parent is no good”—i.e. “NIGYYSOB” (“Now I've got you, you son of a bitch”) —or “Blemish.”

In the same manner but in reverse, a Type II racketeer will switch from his contrived “helpful” or “bossy” Parent to his unhappy primitive Child, admitting, more or less pathetically, “In spite of my bluff, I'm just a hurt baby.” This Game ending is referred to in the literature as “Kick me” but I prefer to refer to it as “Kicked down,” which represents the spot in which the player experiences himself after the final or anticipated rejection of his ongoing “helpfulness” or controlling behavior.

Examples

Racketeer Type I: (He has been transacting as a "helpless" Child for strokes from his partner's Parent.) "Oh, please explain this again."

Partner: "I don't know how" (said from any Ego State but showing bodily indication that he's about to move off).

Racketeer: (He panics about forthcoming loss of strokes and switches to his own righteous Parent with which he now NIGYYSOBs his partner's Child.) "Oh, you don't know anything."

Now the previous set of ongoing dyadic transactions has been crossed, and for a brief period (seconds or days), the racketeer can clutch on to his tenuous consolation prize of having bettered his partner.

Racketeer Type II: (He has been transacting as a pressured "helpful" Parent for strokes of gratitude from his partner's Child.) "You should let me carry this for you."

Partner: "Thanks, but it's not necessary" (said from any Ego State but with bodily movement away).

Racketeer: (He panics about forthcoming loss of "thank you" strokes and reveals his unhappy "kicked" Child.) "Why do you reject me?"

Here, too, the previous dyadic transactions have been crossed and for a brief period the racketeer at least has the consolation prize of recognizing the unhappiness of his Child which was covered over by his exhausting racket, but eventually he, too, finds his naked Child feelings unbearable; because of his background he does not know how to obtain strokes for his scared Child, so he reverts again to his contrived sense of competence.

In this context, it is worth noting that often racketeers Type II appear to be very successful people, because their rackets lead them to cover up feelings of uncertainty and anxiety, but they are greater candidates for death by suicide than racketeers Type I, who are likely to threaten suicide, but manage to be saved. When their artifi-

cially sustained self-assurance deflates, racketeers Type II get hit by powerful despair. Often they don't know what to do when they become overwhelmed with such feelings, having invested themselves too much into taking care of others, so they have nothing left but their "competence," with which they kill themselves effectively.

The above examples of Game switches by racketeers illustrate from still another angle why it is important for a therapist to distinguish between the two types of racketeering in order to predict the kind of Game switch that is likely to take place.

In the case of a Type I racketeer who goes on and on with his Child ego state asking for help or admiring the therapist, sooner or later—unless there has been some good work done in advance—the patient will NIGYYSOB the therapist covertly or overtly, perhaps by suddenly going to another therapist. Similarly, the patient who is so competently helpful to others and seems indispensable in a process group may be a Type II racketeer who hands out strokes to others; after switching once too often into feeling "Kicked down" he may have a sudden psychotic break or "surprisingly" kill himself from despair, unless this move is anticipated.

This process also accounts for the high incidence of suicides amongst "successful, reliable" therapists who may have seemed very "helpful" to their Type I patients by functioning as Type II racketeers.

RACKETEERING AND GAME SWITCHES ALONG THE DRAMA TRIANGLE

By recognizing that game switches are not preplanned, although they are recurrent, that they result from the frustration or anticipated frustration of racketeering transactions which fail to collect the wished-for strokes, and that the Game ending offers only a flimsy temporary "consolation prize" for the loss of the yearned for strokes—we can better understand the dynamic processes that lead to role shifts in the Drama Triangle when the two types of racketeers enter into a complementary partnership.*

* In TA the Drama Triangle refers to Stephen Karpman's proposition that Game players travel along the three roles of Victim, Persecutor and Rescuer, taking turns at each spot and moving on from one role to the other, in regard to each other, sometimes bringing in third parties (10).

Racketeers Type I start out as Victims, racketeers Type II as Rescuers, sometimes as Persecutors. The role of Persecutor is sometimes also momentarily taken by racketeers Type I when they pull a game switch and NIGYYSOB a partner. Similarly, the role of Victim is occasionally momentarily taken by racketeers Type II when they have been "kicked down."

In the treatment of couples with dysfunctional marriages, it is not sufficient to identify role shifts along the Victim-Rescuer triangle, however useful that may be. It is more important to identify whether one or both partners tends to chronically racketeer as Type I or Type II, and whether the partner tends to racketeer in the complementary pattern. Once this is clear, the degree of racketeering by each partner must be assessed since it is likely that they would not be seeking help unless one partner is now far less interested in racketeering than the other. Similarly, it is important to check out the proportion of time or power that is used in the Persecutor role, and whether the Persecutor role is occupied more by the "Helpless" racketeering partner who switches to NIGYYSOB or by the "helpful" or "bossy" racketeering partner. Often the one who comes in as the chronic Victim and enlists more sympathy at the beginning is less likely to end up severely victimized than the chronic Rescuer, even if the latter is first seen as the Persecutor at the point of exacerbation in the partnership relationship.

In addition, the therapist must assess, on an ongoing basis, not only what role he/she is being invited to take, but also what rackets he/she is expected to stroke and what kind of retaliation is threatened, by which partner, when he/she does not "cooperate" with each one's racketeering demands.

DIAGNOSING RACKETEERS

Even in the case of patients who are already involved in many Game switches, I first seek to establish whether I am dealing with a Type I or Type II racketeer, because each type spends a much higher proportion of his time in racketeering than in the lull following the crossed transaction of the Game switch.

I diagnose racketeers with my Child when I feel like saying, "Oh, oh, not again!" in response to someone who seems about to say or

do something, and when it turns out that I have rather accurately anticipated that person's move. Thereby I become aware that there is a subtle demand for me to respond repetitively in a certain manner. Repetitive demands on my Parent indicate that I am dealing with a Type I racketeer (Helpless or Bratty). Repetitive demands on my Adapted Child indicate that I am dealing with a Type II racketeer (Helpful or Bossy). Then the question is: How intense is the racketeering process? First, second or third degree?

To evaluate the extent of racketeering I disentangle myself as fast as possible from any ongoing complementary transactions with a racketeering patient and cross his transactions with my Adult (I call this the "therapeutic cross"). My crossed transaction generates a momentary pause, as do all crossed transactions. I then listen carefully for the ego state with which the racketeer initiates the next transaction. He will do one of four things: 1) discount my Adult response and start all over again just like the previous transaction, in the hope that this time I will get hooked into responding with the complementary ego state that he seeks; 2) switch ego states and go immediately for a game ending; 3) look stumped and silenced; 4) respond with his Adult ego state, or, humorously, with his Natural Child.

If I get either variant of the last response, it proves that I am not dealing with a big-time racketeer and treatment will be easy. However, if I get any of the other three responses, chances are that this is a second or third degree racketeer. I must then be alert both to the patient's feeling reactions to my Adult response and to the frequency and/or intensity of Game switches that he/she might go for as a result of the frustration engendered by my refusal to participate in the racketeering process to which I was invited.

EXAMPLES OF "THERAPEUTIC" CROSSED TRANSACTIONS

1. *With a Type I racketeer (following a certain amount of verbal exchanges).*

Patient (Helpless or Bratty Child ego state, came in as Victim): "I'm so distressed, but I just know you'll understand me."

Therapist (Adult): "I'm not sure I will."

(Patient responds in one of the first three ways mentioned above.)

Therapist: "How do you feel now that I failed to offer you the reassurance you were asking for?"

2. *With a Type II racketeer* (also after some minor sparring):

Patient (phony nurturing/critical Parent, intervening in group as Rescuer/Persecutor): "I don't think you should be so tough on Rosie, poor dear."

Therapist (Adult): "I do."

(Patient responds in one of the three ways listed above.)

Therapist: "How do you feel now that I so curtly turned down your contribution?"

These examples illustrate how, with both types of racketeers, I check out with the patient how he feels immediately following the shock of frustration generated by my Adult-crossed transaction, however fleeting the feeling may have been. Many patients will deny any reactions and try to use my question as an invitation to start again exactly as before, or they will go for the "consolation prize" of a Game ending. Each patient's response becomes a valuable indicator, both as a double-check to my hunch about the type of racketeering and as to the degree and intensity of his investment in racketeering.

The above process may need to recur many times around various issues in order to become diagnostically more precise, and it becomes a bridge to therapy. The initial importance of this process is that the therapist confronts the racketeer by *not stroking his racket*; on the other hand *he does stroke the person* by checking out with him how he feels in the immediate frustrating situation. If the "therapeutic cross" is not followed by a question about the patient's feelings at that moment, and with full permission to express his frustration, it is simply an insensitive, even cruel, reaction to the patient's expressed need, however "phony" he may sound.

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR TREATMENT

Obviously I do not recommend stroking rackets, but in extreme examples of much escalation to Games occasionally it becomes necessary to stroke a patient's racket as an emergency "first-aid" measure to keep him alive or, sometimes, to keep him coming for a few sessions until such time as there is a better sense of what suppressed feelings underlie his rackets. However, the unsuspecting therapist who gets sucked into long participation in ongoing racketeering under the guise of "supportive treatment" does harm in the long run, even though in the short run racketeers are full of praise for whoever strokes their racket. I often was hooked into unwittingly participating with a patient's racketeering longer than may have been useful until I learned to better heed my Child's intuitions and ask the following questions: 1) Am I responding to racketeering and, if so, to what type? 2) Do the feelings that are being presented right now truly move me, or do they seem artificial and exploitative? 3) What other feelings may have been triggered in this person by the present situation? 4) Are there bodily indications of fear or shame? 5) How might a free Child be responding in this person's spot, i.e., What might the patient express right now if he did not fear "rejection"?)

TREATMENT—AND WHAT ARE "REAL" FEELINGS?

Ultimately, the treatment of racketeers consists in identifying the "forbidden" feelings that underlie their rackets and giving permission for their expression and awareness, without debating what are "real" feelings and what are not.* The racketeer himself operates with a sense that his substitute feelings are genuine; for him they do have reality, for they have somatic components. His confusion is compounded by the fact that there are times when he "really and truly" experiences feelings in the category through which he expresses himself when he racketeers for strokes. Pointing a finger and labeling a racket do not help the racketeer, but simply lead him to feel misunderstood. In fact, the labeling of a racket can constitute

* "The problem of legitimacy in connection with such feelings has not been completely solved by the transactional analyst" (11).

a negative replay of accusations from parents at adolescence and incite his rebelliousness to no good purpose.

A patient in a depression racket or a hostility racket or a sweetness-and-light racket will insist that the feelings he exhibits are "real." And, indeed, the depressed patient may also have occasions when he has deep feelings of sadness, like other people; the hostile patient may have times when he is feeling genuinely irritated; the sweetness-and-light racketeer may have times of genuinely feeling joyful. The point is that the person who racketeers with depression may have been forbidden feelings of joy, the person who racketeers with hostility may have been forbidden feelings of love, and the person who racketeers with sweetness-and-light may have been forbidden feelings of jealousy. Rackets and the intense need for racketeering will dissolve when a patient develops awareness of his "forbidden" feelings and discovers that he can *choose*, by using his Adult, whether, when and where he expresses his inner feelings or acts on them. He must find out that awareness, expression and action are not synonymous, as his Child must have believed during the archaic pre-3-year-old period when his parents identified his feelings from the *outside* and he did not have the means to "know" how he felt *inside*, and when he could not determine his behavioral options with his Adult.

As a transition to such awareness the patient needs help, permission, needling, and even challenging in order to identify and express his "forbidden" feelings in public (i.e., in a group) and to discover that he will neither be destroyed nor destroy others by so doing—and that, in fact, strokes will be forthcoming for spontaneous expression. He must experience that it is *not* true—as his Child believed—that a lack of awareness of underlying feelings will protect him and that strokes in the "now" are available only on the basis of racket feelings that are artificially dredged up from the past.

Therapeutic assistance in this process can be offered in many ways. A first step is the identification of the here-and-now feelings that are hiding from the patient's present awareness because of archaic fears. Often it is not difficult for a therapist or a group member to offer an accurate hunch about how the patient is "really" feeling underneath when he comes forth with his racket.

Human beings have an enormous range of feelings, and guessing at another person's feelings which are outside his awareness may seem like an impossible task. Still, there are some broad general categories of feelings that are fairly representative of what many people tend to cover up, namely grief, pain, joy, sexuality, greed and rage (including envy). Additionally there are fear and shame, although these feelings operate more as motivators for the substitution of feelings rather than as actual feelings that get converted into rackets. By keeping these broad categories in mind, and by being sensitive to what is going on in the "now," a therapist or a group member can often sense the general category of feelings that a given patient might steer away from, and encourage him to communicate along this stopped-up channel.

If and when the patient develops the courage to express any "forbidden" feelings that surface in the "now," it is important for the therapist to actively stroke his Child's courage and expressiveness though not necessarily his emergent, underlying feelings, for these may be socially reprehensible, such as murderous rage, burning envy, or enormous greed, particularly if they are addressed or projected onto another group member or the therapist. Subsequently, the patient's Adult's power to control his *behavior* can be reinforced so he need not fear being driven into action by his feelings.

Sometimes skillful Gestalt work is required if the patient's emotional channels are so constricted by panic that he cannot otherwise become aware of alienated feelings and incorporate them as his own instead of projecting them outward as justifications for racketeering.

For a period of time following increased awareness and elasticity along an ever-broadening range of feelings, a patient may develop high anxiety or have frightening nightmares. This does not necessarily tie back only to the past. What happens is that following increased awareness of the suppressed feelings—however reprehensible they may appear—an individual often feels suffused also with loving feelings about himself and others; however, these bring on a renewed sense of vulnerability in his Child. Often he tries to resolve his emergent anxiety by jumping back and forth between increased spontaneity and reversion to the false "protection" of his racket—