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Transactional analysis and politics: A critical review

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Abstract

This article offers a critical review of the literature on transactional analysis (TA) and politics. It discusses Eric Berne's own relationship with politics, makes some distinctions between social psychiatry and social psychology, and comments on the influence of radical psychiatry on TA —especially in the 1960s and '70s. Finally, it offers a conceptual framework that categorises the interplay between TA and politics, and gives examples of these different aspects of TA and politics.

KEYWORDS
politics, radical psychiatry, social psychiatry, social psychology, transactional analysis

1 | INTRODUCTION

This article brings together two subjects, that is, 'transactional analysis (TA)' and 'politics', which are rarely joined. Eric Berne (1910–1970), the founder of TA was highly ambivalent about politics, and, indeed, in 10 years of the *Transactional Analysis Bulletin* (1962–1970), nearly 50 years of the *Transactional Analysis Journal* (1971–2019), and 10 years of the *International Journal of Transactional Analysis Research* (2010–2019), the phrase 'transactional analysis and politics' (or 'TA and politics') does not appear once. While Berne had an interest in the social world, especially in comparative psychiatry, for example, Bernstein (1939), Berne (1950, 1956, 1959a, 1959b, 1961), and defined transactions as 'The overt manifestations of social intercourse' (Berne, 1961/1975, p. 86), his view of the social was predominantly interpersonal, not political. In his first book, *The Mind in Action*, Berne (1947) included in an Appendix a piece on 'Man as a Political Animal', but dropped this in the revised edition of the book published 20 years later as *A Layman's Guide to Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis* (Berne, 1969/1971). At the same time, one of his leading disciples, Claude Steiner (1935–2017), who worked closely with Berne during the 1960s, was a radical thinker, a co-founder and proponent of radical psychiatry (see Steiner, 1975c; The Radical Therapy Collective, 1971) and somewhat involved in Left-wing politics, and, over many years, initially to a greater and then to a lesser extent brought the political as well as the personal into TA.

I should clarify that I use the word 'ambivalence' not in the sense of referring to a lack of interest in an object or subject (such as politics) but, rather, in the Freudian – and Bernian – sense of the ambivalent attitude of love and

hate towards object of love or, in this case, the subject of politics. Berne (1947), who undertook a training in psychoanalysis, described ambivalence as:

> The existence side by side in the same individual of two apparently 'opposite' feelings toward the same object, such as simultaneous love and hate of the wife or husband. Both feelings may be either conscious or unconscious, or one of the pair may be conscious and the other unconscious. (p. 331)

As I hope will be evident in this article, I think this describes Berne's relationship with politics rather well.

On a personal note, when, in the mid-1980s, and having completed a year's training course in Gestalt therapy, I was choosing a further psychotherapy training program, I was keen to find an approach that was compatible with my own radical politics and political activism. I chose TA, partly because of its connection with radical psychiatry (which I had come across previously), and partly because of its emphasis on group treatment or therapy. What I did not know at the time was actually how little influence radical psychiatry had on TA. Thus, Steiner's (1966) script matrix was taught without any reference to power dynamics, which had been part of his original analysis. In my association and engagement with TA and with Transactional Analyst (TSTA), which spans over 35 years, I have been both impressed with its (and their) radicalism as well as disappointed by its (and their) conservatism (see Tudor, 2010b) and, in some instances, outright reaction—and, of course, I have had to deal with my own ambivalence about TA, a point to which I return in the conclusion of the article.

In offering this critical review of TA and politics, the article begins, appropriately enough, with Eric Berne and a brief discussion of his own attitude to politics. This is followed, in the third part of the article, by some clarification of the terms 'social psychiatry' and 'social psychology', including examples of how these have been taken up TA, which leads into a discussion of the influence of radical psychiatry on TA. Drawing on Totton's (2000) framework of the interplay between psychotherapy and politics, the fifth part of the article summarises the interplay between TA and politics with reference to TA and its literature. The one disclaimer I make with regards to the scope of this critical review is that I have drawn only on TA literature published in English; I can only hope that other colleagues in the TA world will point out other connections between TA and politics both in theory and in practice in non-English-speaking countries and literature. In the context of this special, themed issue of *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, the article also aims to offer some historical background to the other articles in the issue.

2 | ERIC BERNE AND POLITICS

Berne's reputation, at least within the TA world, is that of an innovative and radical thinker—in terms of developing ego psychology (Berne, 1977), challenging psychiatric practice (Berne, 1968b), and making psychotherapy more accessible to the layperson (Berne, 1947/1971)—but a social conservative. From his observations of Berne, especially in the context of the San Francisco Social Psychiatry Seminars (1958–1962 and 1965–1970), Steiner (2010) reports Berne's lack of sympathy with any political statements made, his mocking of participants talking about 'arsacity' (our society), and his interpretation of participants in such conversations as playing a psychological game (of 'Greenhouse'; Berne, 1964/1968a). Neither the biographical sketch of Berne offered by Cheney (1971) following Berne's death, nor the transactional biography of Berne written by Jorgensen and Jorgensen (in 1984) refer to Berne's politics. Nevertheless, it is clear that he held strong values—of equality and individual freedom—which had and have political roots.

2.1 | Jewish background and heritage

Eric Leonard Bernstein was raised in the Jewish quarter of Montreal, Canada—though interestingly and significantly, in his own memoires of his childhood (Berne, 2010), he refers to the street to which his family moved when

he was 2 years old as 'unique in the city for the cosmopolitanism of its inhabitants' (p. 39). Berne goes on to explain: 'In those days, the peculiar geography of the town revolved around still unsettled questions about the nature of the Crucifixion' (p. 39). Lest the reader should be deceived by Berne's somewhat laconic, intellectual style, he gets more explicit about his experience of going outside the 'buffer area' of the Jewish community and into the English (Protestant) part or the French (Catholic) part of the middle-class residential belt of Montreal:

> O Woe, Woe, to a Jewish boy from the ghetto who crossed St Denis Street, for he would be instantly recognized, surrounded and stoned until blinded by his own blood and he staggered back across the boundary to his despairing Mother to have his cuts and bruises dressed, pursued by cries of 'Christ Killer!' and 'Cursed Jew!' (ibid, p. 40).

Berne himself describes a number of ways in which he and his family experienced anti-Semitism, including abuse (being harassed, spat on, and called names); restriction of assembly (from certain hotels and beaches in and near Montreal); discrimination (his mother lost a job due to being Jewish); and restriction of opportunity (of joining the Boy Scouts and being a section leader in the gymnastics team). Indeed, Berne's decision to leave Canada in 1935 to take up a medical internship at Englewood Hospital in New Jersey was driven by the restriction of internships in Montreal hospitals to only two Jewish medical graduates per year. This background is also noted by Jorgenson and Jorgenson (1984) and Hargaden (2003b) and discussed as an experience and example of a theme of loss in Berne's life by Heathcote (2016).

In January 1941, on the same day as he was naturalised as an American citizen, Eric Bernstein formally shortened his last name to Berne, according to his sister, Grace, because Berne himself felt that Bernstein was 'no name to make a name for himself with' (quoted in Jorgenson & Jorgenson, 1984, p. 35). This has led to some discussion within the TA community about the impact of anti-Semitism on Berne; the extent to which he denied his Jewish heritage; the significance of what might be understood as shame (Heathcote, 2016) or internalised oppression on Berne himself and for TA (Hargaden, 2003b)—and, indeed, whether this is a suitable topic for reflection and discussion (Hargaden, 2003a; Steiner, 2003). What is clear is that Berne was conscious of being Jewish, was aware of what was happening to Jews in Europe in the 1920s when he was a boy (Berne, 2010), and maintained some Jewish customs throughout his life (Jorgenson & Jorgenson, 1984), and that all this did contribute to his thinking about TA being a social force for good in the world.

2.2 | Political persecution

What has not been clear—or, at least, was not clear until just over 15 years ago—is the fact that Berne was persecuted by the US government in the form of its House of Representatives Un-American Activities Committee, later known as the McCarthy Committee. When he appeared in front of the Committee, he did so with a paper bag over his head. In an interview with Bill Cornell, Terry Berne (Berne's youngest son) told the story:

> **Terry:** ... And you know, an interesting outcome of his travels and international research was that he suffered persecution during the McCarthy era.

> **Bill:** I didn't know that!

> **Terry:** Among his papers I found a file related to him being investigated by the House of Representatives' Select Committee on Un-American Activities, which began in the late 1940s and was the precursor to the McCarthy investigations. My dad lost his job with the government—he was a psychiatric consultant to the US Army—because he was considered a security risk.

Bill: Wow!

Terry: Yes, he was interrogated over a period of several years and even had his passport rescinded. He had to justify and give his reasons for travelling to places like Turkey and Russia. It's really amazing … He also signed a petition circulated by prominent scientists calling for the US government to stop politicizing scientific research. At that time, the government was pressuring private research foundations that were financially supporting scientists that the government deemed to be too liberal. Again, just like now. The Central Intelligence Agency even requested a list of all the maps in his possession. The ironic thing was that my father was, if anything, anti-Communist (T. Berne & Cornell, 2004, p. 6).

Steiner (2007) considered that Berne had been 'badly frightened' by this experience, as a result of which, as far as TA was concerned, he took 'an absolutely apolitical stance' (p. 309).

2.3 | Politics and personal values

Nevertheless, there were and had been signs of Berne's liberal politics. As early as 1947, when he published his first book *The Mind in Action*, he had written:

Nowadays, it is the duty of every citizen to interest himself in world events, lest they overwhelm him and all his fellow citizens … It is no longer wise for scientists to refrain from expressing strong opinions and bringing strong influence to bear in a vigorous attempt to change the trend of history … Psychiatrists … should and must concern themselves with political affairs (p. 292).

In this piece (a short Appendix), Berne, who defined politics as 'speculation about the future and about men's characters' (ibid, p. 293), emphasised the importance of acting in accordance with reality and, specifically, the Reality Principle. He also acknowledged that in this 'all-important field of politics' (p. 292), people acted more in accordance with their images of reality than with reality itself. This led him to focus on the manipulation of people's selfishness, in the course of which Berne reveals his utilitarian inclinations (laws that will bring 'the most benefit to the greatest number' [p. 293]); and on how political images, including those of different peoples and nations, affect political feelings (for a contemporary vision of which, see Nussbaum, 2013). Finally, Berne offered an analysis of how what he referred to as 'evil men' gain and hold followers. In doing so, Berne identifies three types of people to whom the evil leader must appeal: Egoists, 'the cold and power-hungry'; Ego-searchers, 'those who were weak and searched for security in leaning upon a stronger personality'; and Egocentrics, 'those who sought not power and not decisiveness, but approval' (ibid, p. 295).

Berne writes about a good leader as someone who demonstrates truth through the Reality Principle, who appeals to people's superego and physis, as well as their sense of the common good and complexity. As he put it succinctly: 'Life is complicated, and the evil leader holds his followers by making it appear simple' (p. 297). Earlier this year, Cornell (2020) wrote an article about this piece of Berne's work in which he both acknowledges the historical context of Berne's concerns, and offers a contemporary perspective on his ideas, citing as an example of the oversimplification of life Trump's slogan 'Make American Great Again'. As Cornell observes: 'Trump is a true master at reducing the complex and the painful to simple, empty slogans' (p. 6).

Although, following his experience at the hands of the McCarthy Committee, Berne became—as Cornell puts it—'publicly and professionally apolitical' (p. 5), as Steiner later discovered and reported in the late '60s, Berne was expressing liberal political views—in Carmel (where he lived), though not in San Francisco (where he worked) either

openly or privately: 'It is my impression now that Torre (Berne's third wife) revived Berne's cryptically buried political instincts' (Steiner, 2010, p. 213).

Steiner also saw in TA the manifestation of Berne's politics, which he (Steiner) summarised as: 'deeply populist, anti-elitist, libertarian, and egalitarian' (ibid, p. 213), the first example of which he gave as Berne's approach to staff-patient staff conferences (Berne, 1968b):

> Nowhere did this fact manifest itself more clearly than during his weekly therapy groups in the closed ward of St. Mary's Hospital in San Francisco, groups that I observed in the late 1960s. For an hour Berne led a therapy group for the inpatients of the ward, with the staff seated around the group observing. Next, switching chairs, Berne conducted a staff discussion of the group therapy session with the staff sitting in the inner circle and the inmates observing. This was a dramatic and radical upending of the usual boundaries that required staff discussions to take place beyond the patients' hearing. It was a clear anti-elitist statement to both staff and patients that he saw them as equal human beings. Not only did he emphasize that both staff and patients were to be taken seriously, he expected them to speak to, and about, one another in understandable language (Steiner, 2010, p. 213).

Steiner also highlights other key aspects of TA as emanating from Berne's liberal values and, in effect, his politics, including: the emphasis on the contract (and, I would say, the bilateral nature of the contact), and the centrality of OKness, as well as Berne's advocacy of lay practitioners and his ability to absorb disagreement.

Although Berne was clearly protective of his fledging theory and, later, organisation (first, the San Francisco Social Psychiatry Seminars and, later, the International Transactional Analysis Association) toward the end of his life, he wrote:

> It is now 13 years since the reading of the first formal paper on transactional analysis (at the annual meeting of the Los Angeles Group Psychotherapy Society), and the Seminars are 11 years old and the Bulletin eight. We are sufficiently well established to undertake one, or even two crusades, or rather the Editor feels that he can take it upon himself to do so (E. Berne, 1969, p. 7).

He went on to suggest crusades against infant mortality, war, and oppressive governments, what he summarised as 'the Four Horsemen', that is, war, pestilence, famine, and death.

It is against this background that TA and some TSTA have engaged with the social world.

3 | SOCIAL PSYCHIATRY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

As TA has been referred to as a social psychiatry and a social psychology, this part of the article defines these terms and considers these claims, and reviews the engagement of TA and TSTA with the social if not so much the political world.

3.1 | TA, a social psychiatry

Although Berne (1961/1975) referred to TA as a social psychiatry—his book *TA in Psychotherapy* is subtitled '*A Systematic Individual and Social Psychiatry*'—he defined this simply as denoting: 'the study of the psychiatric aspects of specific transactions or sets of transactions which take place between two or more particular individuals at a given time and place' (p.12)—and, as Steiner (2010) pointed out, 'not of society at large' (p. 212). In a unique article on the subject within TA, Massey (2007) pointed out that 'Berne delimited his conceptualisation of social psychiatry to inner

experiences of specific transactions between individuals with an accent on the possible pathological qualities' (p. 52). Reviewing Berne's work on group process, family processes, the structure and dynamics of organisations, and culture, against the background of the existing literature on social psychology, Massey went on to argue that:

> Berne's stance split lived experiences of humans as beings-in-the world into analysable dimensions removed from their ongoing interpersonal and sociocultural contexts. It reflected a viewpoint based on attentiveness to psychopathology in preference to an inclusive search for the dynamics of human development with balanced attention to growth and dysfunction involving the interconnecting of self, others, and communities over the life cycle [concluding that] Berne's themes of experiencing, transacting, and diagnosing pathology within the therapist-client relationship have endured in the TA literature (p. 60).

Although some within TA have seen the concept of 'social psychiatry' as a coat peg on which to hang an argument for greater social consciousness and action—notably Moiso (1995), when he wrote that 'ideological and political involvement is crucial … to foster Berne's idea of TA as a model for social psychiatry' (p. 75)—this is a misreading of Berne's own approach to social psychiatry. In this context, it is perhaps significant to note that in 60 years of TA, there has been only one major international TA conference on the theme: the 1980 International Transactional Analysis Association (ITAA) Winter Congress, one of the hopes for which was an exploration of 'how to take ego state analysis beyond narcissistic introspection' (Wagner, 1979, p. 8). As Barnes (2003) put it: '[Berne] redefined social psychiatry so that it focused on intrapsychic metaphors rather than relationships' (p. 323).

In addition to Massey's major critique of Berne's concept of social psychiatry, two other commentators have weighed in on this: 'TA proposes to be a system of social psychiatry, yet is no more social than almost every other theory of personality and change which are a reflection of our predominant cultural values of individualism, privatism, and hedonism' (Baute, 1979, p. 171); and, arguing that the present major divisions of TA—that is, the structural analysis of ego states, TA proper, script analysis, game analysis and racket analysis (the last two of which she separates)—Zalcman (1990) stated that these '*are not sufficient* to establish TA as a comprehensive theory and method of social psychiatry' (p. 4, original emphasis).

3.2 | TA, a social psychology

Social psychology refers to the branch of, or approach to, psychology that concentrates on human behaviour in its relational field and context: others, groups, institutions, and society as a whole. Wihelm Wundt (1832–1920), the 19 century philosopher, physiologist and founder of experimental psychology, proposed that both a collective and an individual psychology were necessary for understanding the human condition. However, following Wundt's distinction between experimental psychology and *Volkerpsychologie* or social psychology, the differences between these two branches became sharper—with sociologists such as Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) claiming the focus on the social for sociologists. Nevertheless, social *psychologists* have drawn freely on ideas, models, and methods from other sciences and particularly sociology and, since the early 1980s, there has been a particular interest in integrating the theories, methods and applications of these two disciplines. In response to this, Holland (1988) commented that: 'for both disciplines language has taken on great importance. Potentially this provides a meeting point for social and psychological (sociopsychological) study' (p.1). For Berne, the direction toward this meeting point emanates from the individual:

> The inner causes and motives that result in specific transactional stimuli and responses are the individual's private concern and lie within the field of social psychiatry. The study of the outward effects

of such stimuli and responses is the science of social dynamics. Both of these may be considered to be branches of sociology or social psychology (Berne, 1963, p. 176).

As with social psychiatry, there are few discussions of TA as a social psychology—the exceptions being two articles by Price (1978) and Massey (1996) which, by now, are respectively over 40 and nearly 25 years of age. There are, nevertheless, a number of applications of TA to social systems such as nations (Orten, 1973); the 'dependency cycle' (Symor, 1977); modern racism (Batts, 1982); and notably, in the work of Jacobs on power (Jacobs, 1987, 1994), nationalism (Jacobs, 1990), and autocracy (Jacobs, 1991). As three of these articles were cited as evidence for Jacob's Eric Berne Memorial Award (in 1996) for his work in the area of TA and social psychology (Jacobs, 1997), this is not insignificant. Indeed, in his interview, Terry Berne reflected:

> That brings to mind how TA can be applied to society and culture as a whole as opposed to just the individual—in the spirit of something like Freud's Civilization and Its Discontents or the work of Erich Fromm. The way TA can be applied to broader societal and political patterns is of particular interest to me (in T. Berne & Cornell, 2004, p. 7).

The application of the psychological to the social is not without its problems or critics. For instance, applying an ego state analysis to an organisation implies that an organisation has a personality. The major problem with applying theory in an area far, far away from the discipline and/or place in which it was originally created is known as 'the magnification of error', a problem Rogers (1959) summarised as:

> When the theory is projected to explain more remote phenomenon [an] error may be magnified … Thus every theory deserves the greatest respect in the area from which it was drawn from the facts and a decreasing amount of respect as it makes predictions in areas more and more remote from its origin (p. 193).

Thus, Karakashian (1974) objected to Orten's application of TA theory to nations on the basis that 'theories developed to explain one level of organisation (in this case, the psychological) can be uncritically applied to another level (the governmental). To do so is to seriously warp reality' (p. 45).

Nevertheless, it is this reading—of TA as a social psychology—that has been both promoted and accepted within TA, as evidenced by the following:

1970, July (at the ITAA Summer Conference): the establishment of a Women's Caucus, which agreed on a list of 15 recommendations for the ITAA (Levin, 1977). In 1973, it was organised by Terri White, who, over the next 2 years, wrote a regular column in The Script 'All About Women in the ITAA', which, in 1976, was discontinued in favour of a column 'All About People in TA', a change that suggests that the analysis of oppression that leads to support for autonomous groups and columns had been challenged, or was no longer accepted in TA, though the caucus met again in 1980 (Levin, 1980; Levin & Fryer, 1980). Notwithstanding these changes and interruptions in the regularity of meetings, the Women's Caucus not only influenced the establishment of a Social Action Committee within ITAA (see next point), it also led to the women's journal issue of the Transactional Analysis Journal (TAJ) in 1977 (White, 1977b), and, even though it no longer meets formally as such, it did establish the tradition of autonomous group and caucus meetings at TA conferences, which still continues from time to time.

1971: the establishment of a Social Action Committee, with Pam Levin as its first chair (Levin & Fryer, 1980). As Maxwell (1974, December) noted, the Committee 'is charged with the responsibility of making suggestions on social and political matters for the Association' (p. 4). In 1975, this Committee established two Task Forces, one on TA and minority groups, and the other on prisons. Also, in 1975, the Committee

(which had held its first social action day) presented a number of issues to the ITAA's Board of Trustees, including that:

1. 'In the event of adoption of National Health Insurance, [the] ITAA should go on record as supporting re-imbursement of non-medical practitioners' [and]
2. '[The] ITAA should continue to support advanced clinical members as practitioners of Transactional Analysis treatment, irrespective of state and federal licencing law' (Maxwell, 1975, October, p. 6).

The Board of Trustees affirmed its support for both.

The Social Action Committee also took the initiative in recommending (in 1977) that the ITAA should not hold meetings in states (of the United States America) that had not ratified the *Equal Rights Amendment*, a decision that was taken and implemented by the Board of Trustees, but also led to some considerable discussion in the pages of *The Script*—both for and against. Reports on the Committee appeared in *The Script* in June 1975, October 1977, and October 1978; it was mentioned in a list of ITAA committees in May 1978 and March 1979; but, after, a short report in March 1980, it appears to have discontinued.

1973–1975: A graduate program in psychotherapy and social change was initiated and conducted by the Southwest Institute in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA, which included coursework on social theory and social issues (see Lessler, 1977).

In addition, numerous ITAA conferences with social themes took place, such as 'Alternatives and Responses to Violence' (held in San Francisco, 1977); 'Strategies for Cooperative Change' (Santo Domingo, 1985); 'Common Heritage & Cultural Perspectives' (with the European Association for Transactional Analysis [EATA], Brussels, 1990); 'Freedom with Responsibility' (with the United States of America Transactional Analysis Association [USATAA] and EATA, Philadelphia, 1998); 'Reconciliation: Restorative Processes, Relationships' (Sydney, 2001); 'Violence—Let's TAlk' (Utrecht, 2002); 'Freedom and Responsibility' (with the EATA, Edinburgh, 2005); 'Coopera-tion and Power: Relationships, Choices, and Change' (with the USATAA, San Francisco, 2007); 'Cradled by Culture' (Johannesburg, 2008); 'The Dance of Culture' (with the SAATA, Kochi, 2018); and 'Promoting Equality and OKness: Healing the Divisions in Our World' (with the Southeast Institute and the USATAA, Raleigh, 2019).

1989, March 21: a day of Global TA Action took place (see Gilpin, 1989; Steiner, 1988a).

2010: An international network of TSTAs for Social Responsibility was formed. Their mission statement was and is:

> We are a worldwide network of TSTAs who support the development of socially responsible appli-cations of TA. Our common goal is to apply the principles and tools of TA to foster positive social change in all cultures. For this purpose, we use our effective leadership to respond publicly and constructively to address issues of socially unjust behaviour in our communities. This includes such issues as personal and institutional prejudice and harmful intergroup conflicts that interfere with peaceful relationships. To achieve our goal of positive social change, we encourage TSTAs to become actively involved in using their intervention skills and expertise to work cooperatively with com-munity leaders in government, education, business organizations, and religious institutions (Campos, 2011, p. 5).

Interestingly, when Campos launched the TASR at the 2010 World TA Conference, 40% of the ITAA mem-bership present voted against it, arguing—and, in effect, against Berne—that a 'professional' organisation should be 'apolitical' (Leonard. Campos, personal [email] communication, 8 August 2020).

Leonard Campos, the instigator of this network, lead it actively for 3 years. Since 2013, any reports of initiatives and/or action with regard to social responsibility have appeared in *The Script*. Campos' work in this area was recognised this year when he received the Goulding Social Justice Award.

Commenting on the ITAA awards, van Beekum (2016) observed that 'The ITAA honours outspoken (socially) active members of the community with three awards: the Muriel James Living Principles Award (established in 1994), the Hedges Capers Humanitarian Award (established in 1988), and the Robert and Mary Goulding Social Justice Award (established in 2004)' (p. 130). He went on to comment:

> The Muriel James Award is the most nonpolitical of these, whereas the Hedges Capers Award has a political undertone in that it honours 'an enduring contribution to humanity' (International Transactional Analysis Association, 2015). The most political award, however, is the Goulding Social Justice Award, which involves 'promotion of social justice … by disclosing, challenging or confronting unfair practices and encouraging, facilitating, funding of social movements' (International Transactional Analysis Association, 2015).

However, van Beekum concluded, 'It is probably telling that since 2002 there were 12 recipients of the Muriel James Award, six recipients of the Hedges Capers Award, and [as at 2016] none of the Goulding Award' (ibid, p. 130).

3.3 | Social justice

Other than Campos, who wrote about redecision therapy and social justice (2010), not many people in TA talk or, at least, write about justice. A rare exception to this was Graham Barnes, who, over 40 years ago, made the following plea:

> A task for the future is to find a nexus between psychotherapy and social justice, and to explore how the institutions and profession of psychotherapy, especially the discipline of TA, can reduce the impersonal forces that contribute to destructive personal experiences, alienation, and human oppression. Psychotherapy that does not enhance awareness of pathological aspects of economic, national and social groups encourages a distorted view of reality. But psychotherapy must do more than enhance awareness. People also need help in finding ways to influence the policies and actions of the major institutions that encroach upon their lives daily (Barnes, 1977, p. 24).

Sadly, this task remained largely unfulfilled until relatively recently, with the advent of two projects and a statement which may mark a new turn in social activity and even activism within the ITAA.

In 2018—the launch of Project TA1010, a progressive initiative by which a TA101 (introductory) course, run by TA trainers and respected leaders in applying TA concepts to social and cultural change (namely, Valerie Batts, Graham Barnes, Felipe Garcia, and Vann Joines), is made freely available and accessible to communities of learners all over the world who may otherwise not be able to access such a course and resource (USATAA, 2020).

In 2020—the establishment of a Committee for Social Engagement chaired by Di Salters, which, in June, hosted an international online webinar on anti-racism.

Also, in 2020—the publication of a statement from Elana Leigh, the President of the ITAA, on anti-racism (ITAA, 2020). Given its significance, it is worth quoting in full.

> At a time when black people and their Allies in the United States are raising their voices and putting their bodies on the line to declare 'Black Lives Matter', we wish to affirm our support for this anti-racism movement in the United States and now across the world.

> We completely reject white supremacy in all its forms—whether personal, social or institutional. We see and support the need to oppose violent racism as well as implicit and institutional discrimination that is ongoing.

> We do this because of our core human values captured in the popular TA phrase I'm OK, You're OK, We're OK, and They're OK. We need to ensure that this is not simply a slogan but is a challenging, meaningful, and transformational guide to action.

> Our professional ethical stance is very clear in being not only non-discriminatory but actively asserting human rights and our responsibility to uphold them (see ITAA (2014) Ethics guidelines).

> We further acknowledge that, while many of our members are people of colour, this is not true in those countries where white supremacy and colonialism originated. Furthermore, we realize that domination by white culture has affected many countries and that the legacy from slavery, colonialism and indenture continues.

> We undertake to renew and deepen our work in the direction of ensuring more diverse and equitable access to membership of the ITAA, the services offered by our members, and training in TA.

3.4 | TA literature—The transactional analysis journal

Berne's ambivalence about politics extended to his writing: in none of his books does he discuss politics or the 'political'. This is also true of others since Berne. In a hand search of some 150 TA books, I found only two references to politics. The first was to an ego state diagram referred to as the 'political passivity matrix' (Barnes, 1977) which describes how 'many patients (and therapists) have not incorporated principles of social ethics in their Parent ego state'. Barnes continued:

> They need to be taught social concerns that may have been neglected by their cultural traditions … By doing this therapists consciously accept their responsibility to transmit and transform the best of the culture and to critique cultural scripts that breed privatization and political quietism and that leave incipient totalitarian forces unchecked (p. 26).

The second is in a chapter on ego states by Shmukler (2003), in which she wrote about 'political contexts' as she felt 'an ever increasing sense of urgency for social scientists of all persuasions to address the larger issues confronting us as a species at this time' (p. 137).

However, in order to represent and critique the TA literature more thoroughly than a hand search allows, I turned my attention to the international *TAJ*, now in its 50th year and which is electronically searchable. From time to time, the *TAJ* has organised the articles that appear in its issues under section headings, such as 'Theory', 'Applications', and so on. In four issues, such headings included: 'Community Application' (four articles; Everts, 1974); 'Social Awareness' (four articles; James, 1979); 'Social Psychology' (three articles; Trautmann, 1983); and 'Social Applications' (one article; Porter-Steele, 1999). Beyond this, over the years, a number of special issues of the *TAJ* have appeared on themes associated with social psychology, which have included some references to political issues and/or concerns:

1975—On 'Social Action', edited by Jacqui Schiff (1975b).

A special announcement about this issue and a call for papers was published in *The Script*, the newsletter of the ITAA, in February 1974, and stated boldly:

> The purpose of this special issue is to share our expertise in TA for the purpose of social and political change. Questions such as these will be addressed: (1) How does TA address itself to war, violence, crime, punishment, capitalism, imperialism, and racism? (2) What are ways that TA can bridge the gap

between personal and social change? (3) Behaviour Control (4) The use of TA in industrial psychology which serves to produce good feelings, acceptable behaviour, increase worker productivity, but which does not address itself to the overall social, institutional and ethical issues, and (5) What are the ethical implications of using TA in prisons, schools, banks, etc? (Doughty, 1974, p. 1).

Unfortunately, the issue itself did not live up to the scope of this vision and call. Despite the promise of the editorial in which Jacqui Schiff wrote that 'This issue of the *TAJ* is our first venture into expressing our conviction and caring, our first step in declaring our acceptance of a role in formulating the world we live in' (J. Schiff, 1975a, p. 6), the issue was more inward-looking than outward-facing. It did have articles on ego states and social issues (James, 1975), the original article on cultural scripting (J. D. White & White, 1975), and shame and social control (English, 1975), but, in a section on 'Therapists Make Change', two of the articles focus on running groups without charging (M. L. C. Haimowitz, 1975b), and how to structure reparenting groups, with an emphasis on physically holding regressed clients (C. Haimowitz, 1975a), hardly the stuff of social action.

1976—On 'Social Issues', edited by Mary Boulton (1976).

Although this was slated as a special issue on social issues, less than a third of the articles in the journal were concerned with social issues, with one on socially responsible therapy (Steiner, 1976) and five on various aspects of what were referred to as 'Street Games'.

1977—Named 'The Women's Journal', edited by Terri White (1977b).

This comprised 23 articles and 12 personal statements by women and was so well subscribed that five further articles by women appeared in the following issue of the *TAJ* (Zechnich, 1977).

1983—On cultural scripts, edited by John James (1983).

This was also so well subscribed that six further articles on this subject appeared in the following issue of the *TAJ* (James, 1984).

1984—On 'Nuclear Disarmament', edited by Rebecca Trautmann (1984).

1996—On 'Social Applications', edited by Theodore Novey (1996).

2004—On 'Gay and Lesbian Issues', edited by William Cornell and Terry Simerly (W. Cornell & Simerly, 2004).

2015—On 'Conflict: Intrapsychic, Interpersonal, and Societal', edited by Sylvie Monin and William Cornell (Monin & Cornell, 2015).

2017—On 'Gender, Sexuality, and Identity', edited by Brad McLean and William Cornell (McLean & Cornell, 2017).

2018—On 'Social Responsibility in a Vengeful World', edited by William Cornell and Sylvie Monin (W. Cornell & Monin, 2018).

To date, there has been no special themed issue on the subject of TA and politics, and, whilst there have been themed issues of the *TAJ* on various other schools of and approaches within TA—redecision (M. Goulding, 1995; Kadis & Pearson, 2010), as well as a special section in another issue on research on redecision therapy (McNeel, 1982), integrative psychotherapy (Novey, 1996), constructivism (Novey, 1997), and psychoanalysis (Hargaden, 2005; W. F. Cornell & Hargaden, 2006)—there has not been one on radical psychiatry. Overall, it does appear easier and less controversial in TA to refer to the 'social' as distinct from the 'political'.

4 | RADICAL PSYCHIATRY AND TA

Radical psychiatry was a movement and an approach to 'soul healing' (which was how radical psychiatrists translated the words 'psychiatry' and 'psychotherapy') that developed in the mid-1960s. Steiner (2001) reported that he first heard the term in 1968 at a meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in Miami, Florida, at which a group of young medical residents, in opposition to the Vietnam War and critical of the psychiatric

profession's support for it, called for a radical psychiatry as an alternative to what they saw as a conservative, even reactionary, profession. Prompted by his growing awareness of psychiatric power abuse, and radicalised by his experiences in Florida, on his return to California, Steiner began to teach a course on radical psychiatry at the Free University at Berkeley. In parallel with other courses on offer, this course dealt with the patterns of power abuse in psychiatry and the oppressiveness of the practice of psychiatry, psychology, psychotherapy and other helping professions. A critical analysis of power and oppression was to become a cornerstone of the theory and practice of radical psychiatry and its version of radical therapy—see Steiner (1975a, 1975b, 1981, 1988b) and Roy (1988), and for a review of which, Althöfer and Tudor (2020). For the best part of 20 years, from the early '70s to the late '80s, Steiner and others established a collective, produced various magazines and four books, and established a Radical Psychiatry Centre. Steiner himself wrote about men's liberation; cooperation; power; alienation; socially responsible therapy; coupleism, monogamy, non-monogamy, and omnigamy; feminism for men; and propaganda, for details of which see Tudor (2020b) and for a history and assessment of which see Jenkins, Morrison, and Schwebel (2020) and Tudor (2020a).

At the same time as he was involved in radical psychiatry, Steiner was also studying with Eric Berne and practicing TA. As he put it in his autobiographical *Confessions*:

> During those years, I led a double life. On Tuesday and Wednesdays—my San Francisco life—I was Eric Berne's right-hand man, posing as a buttoned-down psychologist and transactional analyst with a successful group and individual psychotherapy private practice, a wife, two children, a suburban home, a station wagon and a sports car, trying to fit in with the psychiatric establishment. The rest of the week—my Berkeley life—I was a rebel, a radical psychiatrist involved in anti-war and liberation activism, a hippy … In between these two lives, undisturbed but informed by both of them I carried on my psychotherapy practice (Steiner, 2020, p. 83).

Radical psychiatry was informed by TA (see Steiner, 1973; Wyckoff, 1970, 1975), and TA was informed by radical psychiatry—notably with regard to the script matrix (Steiner, 1966), potency (Steiner, 1968), and the stroke economy (1971, 1975c), as well its emphasis on gender politics (see Wyckoff, 1970, 1971, 1974, 1975) which, amongst other things, helped challenge sexism in TA at the time (see Levin, 1977, 2010). The main overlap between radical psychiatry and TA was expressed in Steiner's work on the script matrix (Steiner, 1975c), the Pig Parent (Steiner, 1978, 1979b), and cooperative contracts (Steiner, 1988b); and both radical psychiatry and TA also informed Steiner's development of emotional literacy (Steiner, 1984), for an assessment of which see Oberdieck (2020) and Tudor (2020a). While radical psychiatry was practiced more outside TA than inside TA, insofar as it was also part of TA, and, indeed, it was recognised as a 'School' of TA by Woollams and Brown (1978), it was, in effect, the political wing of TA—or, at least, the political Left-wing of TA.

However, as Steiner himself moved away from TA and spent more time promoting and teaching and training people in emotional literacy, the influence of radical psychiatry in and on TA declined.

5 | TA AND POLITICS—A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In his ground-breaking book *Psychotherapy and Politics*, Nick Totton (2000) suggested four ways of understanding what he referred to as the interplay between these terms and field:

a) **Psychotherapy *in* politics**—which, according to Totton (2000), 'comprises a range of interventions by psychotherapists in the political process itself' (p. 6) and may involve therapists acting as therapists or as citizens or both. Totton himself cites the examples of what he refers to as the 'Left Freudians', including the older

analysts, that is, Paul Federn (who analysed Berne), Ernst Simmel, and Herman Nunberg, as well as younger and more active militants, that is, Geza Róheim, Otto Fenichel, Wilhelm Reich, Edith Jacobson, Eric Fromm, Annie Reich, and Marie Langer, as well as radical therapy and radical psychiatry and other forms of what I would refer to as political therapy or politically informed forms of therapy such as anti-psychiatry (Laing and Cooper), encounter (Rogers), emotional literacy (Steiner and Antidote), social action psychotherapy (Holland), world work (Mindell), and ecopsychology (Rust, Totton, and others; for a critical review of which, see Tudor & Begg, 2016).

b) **Psychotherapy *of* politics**—which 'covers a range of attempts to understand and to evaluate political life through the application of psychotherapeutic concepts' (Totton, 2000, p. 6). Examples of this date back to the analyses of politics and culture offered by Freud's (1930/2001) *Civilisation and its Discontents*, Reich's (1933/1972) *Mass Psychology of Fascism*, and includes Marcuse's (1955/1966) *Eros and Civilization* and more recent applications to gender, sexuality, permissiveness, hatred, racism, and power.

c) **Politics *of* psychotherapy**—in which Totton includes two kinds of material that is, 'the power relations and power structures that operate within the profession of psychotherapy … [as well as] attempts to reform and reshape institutions of psychotherapy' (ibid, p. 7). Examples of this include the acknowledgement and analysis of the role of psychotherapy under different forms of totalitarianism—in the USSR (in the 1920s), in Nazi Germany (in the 1930s), and in Argentina (in the 1970s); psychotherapy in the public sector; and the institutionalisation of psychotherapy, as well as various challenges to different institutions of psychotherapy.

d) **Politics *in* psychotherapy**—which refers to 'the various ways in which political concepts and viewpoints are used to criticise or to change the theory and practice of psychotherapy' (ibid., p. 7), examples of which in the wider psychotherapy world include mutual analysis (Gross and Ferenczi), leaderless groups (Red Therapy), feminist therapy, and gay affirmative therapy.

While there are some overlaps between these interplays, it is nevertheless a useful taxonomy or conceptual framework in terms of the focus of concern, that is, on psychotherapy itself (c) and (d) above or, for our present interest, TA (in all its fields of application), and/or the political/social world (a) and (b) above. In the rest of this part of the article, I apply this framework to TA.

5.1 | TA *in* politics

In terms of TA *in* politics, Moiso (1995), an Italian Teaching and Supervising TSTA, wrote about his commitment to active social/political involvement:

> What does it mean to have an intense approach to therapy? To me this means to keep on being enthusiastic about new ideas and perspectives, not only in terms of therapeutic techniques and strategies, but also regarding related aspects of life, such as sociology and philosophy. It also means to be actively involved in politics, in environmental protection, and in mental hygiene. By mental hygiene I mean, in TA terminology, helping people to create and promote an OK personal and social environment. Going on television programs and talking about the sense of OKness in TA or the meaning of autonomy is an example of what I am doing, together with accepting unpaid invitations to talk in public or private situations, such as hospitals or cultural societies (p. 75).

Other examples include Wagner's (1975) brief script analysis of and for social action committees; and McFarren's (1998) report of relating TA to social/political concerns in Bolivia which, he noted, 'was commented on favourably by government and political leaders' (p. 244). In his writing, Cornell has emphasised the need for building

community and for community-building skills (W. F. Cornell, 2018, B. Cornell, 2020); and, currently, Günther Mohr, another TSTA, serves on the local city council in Frankfurt, Germany as a member of the Green Party.

Of course, having a view and a commitment about TA *in* politics means that the TSTA has a political analysis such as Turner's (1981a, Winter), that:

> TA must address itself to the cruelty, oppression, nastiness, and injustice of the society in which we live, its national and international perspectives. TA should be out on the streets of Southall and St. Pauls (in London and Bristol, UK), on the picket lines, in the refugee camps (p. 19).

Examples of specific programs that reflect this interplay are the Asklepieion psychiatric program in the United States correctional services (Groder, 1972; Windes, 1977), Drego's (1994) family systems work in India, and Salters' (2005) work in bridging racial divides in South Africa (all of which van Beekum, 2016, links back to Berne's social psychiatry and Steiner's radical psychiatry, and to which I would add Cornell's (2018) community work.

5.2 | TA *of* politics

From Berne (1947) onwards, TSTAs have been offering analyses of the political/social world in terms of and/or with reference to TA theory. These include:

- Analysing 'evil men' in terms of ego and physis (Berne, 1947)
- Developing and applying the concept of the cultural script (Campos, 2015; Drego, 1983; James & Jongeward, 1971/1978; J. D. White & White, 1975; J. James, 1983, 1984), including women's scripts (M. James, 1973; Wyckoff, 1971), and lesbian identity (Johnson, 2004)
- Applying TA to nations in terms of structural (ego state) analysis, international transactions, and national positions, scripts, and games (Orten, 1973)
- Applying game theory to organisations and identifying political games (Poindexter, 1975)
- Applying TA (especially script theory) to racism (Batts, 1982, 1983)
- Contracting for peace (Roberts, 1974)
- Analysing the Master-Slave relationship (English, 1987; Jacobs, 1991)
- Analysing the contribution and potential of TA psychotherapy in enhancing citizenship (Tudor & Hargaden, 2002)
- Developing a social matrix of globalisation using ego state theory (Mihailovic & Mihailovic, 2004)
- Viewing the political arena as a source of learning for leadership (van Peolje, 2004)
- Questioning how relational TA concepts (Summers & Tudor, 2000) can address and challenge oppressive dynamics (see Rowland, 2016)
- Offering a transactional analysis of war and peace using TA proper and game analysis (Campos, 2014)
- Applying the concept of mystification to politics (Minikin, 2018)

Notwithstanding the caution of applying theory founded in individual psychology to the wider social/political world (see Karakashian, 1974; Rogers, 1959; and 3.2 above), these analyses have merit. Furthermore, some TSTAs, especially those in the organisational field, have been developing field-specific theory, that is, an analysis of organisations, their pulsations (Mohr, 2006), imago (Suriyaprakash & Mohanraj, 2006), and roles (Schmid, 2008), based on *organisational* analysis, a strategy which, I suggest, perhaps points the way to a more politically informed TA of politics that may even become another field of application of TA as has been suggested by Mohr (personal communication, 28th June 2020).

5.3 | The politics *of* TA

If we think about politics as being concerned with the *polis*, originally (from the Greek), meaning the city state, or, more broadly, the community, then everything in and about TA is or may be considered to be political. As Steiner (1981) put it: 'every transaction has political consequences, every message has a meta-communication, a message about the message' (p. 171). Here (in this and the next section), I focus on perspectives based on an analysis of power (relations and structures) and oppression, not least those that derive from radical psychiatry, but also those represented in the work of Totton (2000, 2006), and Proctor (2002/2017), and (in this section) reference and discuss examples under two broad headings: organisation and theory.

5.3.1 | Organisation

Like all other branches of psychology, TA has had and still has its fair share of organisational politics: from the shutting down of women's voices by men, especially in the early days of TA (see Levin, 1977), to current debates about Black—and other—Lives mattering, a debate which, I suggest, benefits from a clear analysis of alienation and oppression, and, therefore, a clear understanding of the difference between equality and equity, and, preferably, a clear commitment to anti-racism.

Although an early proponent of TA (and, as he used to say, a 'disciple' of Eric Berne), Steiner was also an early critic of TA with regard to its organisation, lack of democracy, and franchising (Steiner, 1973). The system of certifying and accrediting trainers and supervisors in TA tends to promote a hierarchy that appears to value training and supervision (embodied in the person of a TSTA) over clinical practice (a CTA). Moreover, as trainees need 300 training hours and 75 supervision hours with a TSTA (or a Provisional TSTA) in order to fulfil the training and supervision requirements for certification as TSTAs, TA is open to accusations of pyramid-selling. These and other issues of access to training and supervision remain the source of some concern and criticism: Tudor (2014) has been critical of the infantilisation of adult learners; van Beekum (2016) has commented on the overadaptation of TA to market demands; and Cornell (personal communication, 19ᵗʰ June, 2020) on certification programs that are 'rife with power and money-making—in contrast to meaning-making'.

Despite the fact that, in the 1980s, the ITAA rejected the professional regulation of TA clinicians (psychotherapists and counsellors) in the form of state licencing in the United States of America, since then a number of national TA associations around the world have supported moves to statutory regulation and state registration, against the evidence and contrary to the TA value of autonomy (for a critique of which, see Tudor, 2010a, 2011). Some associations have even set up their own accreditation schemes, as, for instance, has the UK TA Association, with regard to registering training establishments and, thereby, creating a closed system of training.

5.3.2 | Theory

Also, like other branches, modalities, and schools of or approaches to psychology and therapy, TA has its distinctions. For many years after Berne's death (in 1970), TA trainees were required to have knowledge of its three 'Schools', that is, the Classical (Berne and his associates), Cathexis (J. L. Schiff et al., 1975), and Redecision (M. M. Goulding & Goulding, 1979). Nowadays, TA is viewed (at least from within) as having a number of approaches, in a recent review of which I identified 17! While such diversity is generally viewed as healthy, it can be confusing, especially for those new to TA, and, at other times, can be problematic, especially when genuine intellectual debate is replaced by ad hominem argument, personal attacks, and even hate mail.

Some TSTAs have discussed the politics of theory, notably Jacobs (1994) who critiqued Schiffian reparenting theory (J. L. Schiff et al., 1975), concluding that this theory and particularly the concept of passivity and the practice

of confronting passivity 'provides an example of how theory can become ideology and thus be used to support and promote totalism, thought reform, and the misuse and abuse of power' (p. 39). In a similar vein, Tudor and Widdowson (2008) criticised the process model (e.g., Kahler, 1979) and the theory of personality adaptations (Kahler & Capers, 1974; Ware, 1983) partly on the basis of the myth of universal explanation, that is, that everything can be explained by a single theory which is universally true and applicable.

Another example of the politics of theory was the attempt (in the late 1990s and early 2000s) by some senior TSTAs, including Claude Steiner, to identify 'core concepts' of TA in an attempt to conserve the traditional canon and to reject especially the integrative school/wing/approach (for the background and discussion of which, see Wadsworth & DiVincenti, 2003). However, in their desire to identify and conserve 'core' concepts, Steiner and others were, in effect, relegating all other TA concepts to the periphery—which was, literally, a conservatising and conservative project, which, ultimately and (for those of us who are more pluralistic) happily failed.

5.4 | Politics *in* transactional analysis

As this fourth interplay focuses on 'the various ways in which political concepts and viewpoints are used to criticise or to change the theory and practice of psychotherapy' (Totton, 2000, p. 7, my emphasis), this not only is reflected by specific examples, but also represents the methodology or philosophy underpinning the politics or political analysis of TA. For instance, in an open letter to the Committee of the United Kingdom's Institute of TA on the subject of TA and politics, Turner (1981a, Winter) questioned the motivation of some TA training programs which were, in his view, overly concerned with maintaining 'comfortable' relationships between management and workers and 'positive' customer–client programs. He contended that 'unless fundamental questions of power, political manipulation, and alienation are dealt with, then such programs, while apparently encouraging Adult behaviour, are developing Adaptive Child behaviour at the political level' (p. 19). He then went on to ask what he viewed as the 'crunch question': 'does any particular TA program enable this country to move towards a more just society, or does it reinforce the injustices, inequalities, and oppressions of capitalist society?' (ibid, p. 19). Clearly, these questions and concerns are based on a Marxist/class analysis of TA. Other examples include:

- Challenging sexism within TA (see Levin, 1977), and adding 'vigilance' to the radical psychiatry formula, thus: 'Awareness + Contact + Vigilance = Liberation' (p. 91)
- Challenging the classism and individualism in and of TA (Baute, 1979)
- Challenging cult-like phenomena in the TA community (English, 1987, 1998)
- Offering an examination of TA based on queer theory (Trett, 2004)

There is another aspect of this interplay which is concerned with how politics appears or is accounted for (and not discounted) in the clinic, organisation, and/or school. Writing about meaning-making in psychotherapy, Rowland (2016) argued that: 'Psychotherapy seems content to almost blithely accept the idea that reality is socially constructed without paying any conscious attention to how meanings are subsequently culturally produced within a particular psychosocial milieu and reproduced and sustained in the therapeutic encounter' (p. 282). As a way of addressing and changing oppressive dynamics, she suggests 'paying therapeutic attention to the role that psychosocial and sociopolitical discourses play in the production of personal meanings' (p. 283). Taking this further —and, in effect, addressing Turner's (1981a, Winter, 1981b, Spring) challenge—Mihailovic and Mihailovic (2004) asserted that:

> If, on the other hand, we are courageous and open enough to explore with our clients the root causes
> of what may appear to be individual problems, we may move toward developing a new political

position and eventually a protest instead of merely adapting ourselves to dysfunctional social contexts. In this way, TA could assume its social role at a broader level in order to achieve radical and long-lasting changes, thus returning to its true home—the social context (p. 348).

6 | CONCLUSION

From what has been presented and discussed in this article, it is clear that TA as a whole has been ambivalent about politics. van Beekum (2016) described the 'hate' side of this ambivalence well when he talked and wrote about 'the universe of TA with its current lack of political focus', giving the following example:

> This was painfully enacted during the delivery of Samuels's [2016] paper when in a little experiment, almost the whole audience expressed disgust and anger toward politics. Individually, we may be politically involved, however, as a collective, we treat politics as something to stay away from (p. 130).

It is arguable that this ambivalence and lack derives from Eric Berne and has been perpetuated by his more conservative and neoliberal followers.

For myself, this article has represented a journey from a position of criticism of the lack of politics and, specifically, of radical and/or progressive politics in and of TA, through the discovery of a lot of politics in TA, to, I hope, a more nuanced position that encompasses both a love and hate or, at least, a questioning of fixed 'positions'. In this sense, I hope that this article goes some way towards revitalising what Steiner (2010) referred to as 'Berne's cryptically buried political instincts' (p. 213). Moreover, when we look in a little more detail at Eric Berne's life, we may take some heart—as well as a greater understanding—from his story and remind ourselves of his views about our duty as citizens (to interest ourselves in world events) precisely so that we are not overwhelmed by them to the point of passivity, quietism, and inactivity. In the same piece of writing, Berne (1947) also encouraged psychiatrists and physicists—and, by implication, TSTAs—to take courage, that is, to

> tell the world what they know of its foreseeable future, even at the risk of becoming involved in outside affairs and of being criticized. It is no longer wise for scientists to refrain from expressing strong opinions and bringing strong influence to bear in a vigorous attempt to change the trend of history (p. 292).

Those words, written over 70 years ago, are still—and all too—relevant today. The struggle—for necessary, healthy ambivalence as well as civic activism—continues.

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