ARTICLE

Reviewing the special issue 'Transactional Analysis and Politics': A reflective dialogue

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Abstract

This review article, written in the form of a dialogue between the editors of this special issue, offers some reflections on the various contributions to the issue. Following a brief introduction it offers some further thoughts on Eric Berne's relationship to and with politics, and acknowledges the current political climate in which we have edited this issue. It then presents some reflections on the articles and contributions to this special issue.

KEYWORDS
Eric Berne, politics, reflective dialogue, special issue, transactional analysis

1 | THE EDITORS

Keith: Well, Bill, here we are at last. First of all, nau mai, haere mai ki te whare nei | welcome to the house (in this case, the journal); ka mihi ahau i tō mahi rangatira mō transactional analysis | I acknowledge your leadership in transactional analysis; nō reira e taku hoa mahi, e taku hoa tūturu e kore e mutu ngā mihi, tēnā koe | and I greet you warmly as an esteemed colleague and a friend.

Bill: Hi Keith. Thanks for the wonderful greeting. It's been a pleasure working with you on this special project, which I know has been close to your heart and a central aspect of your professional work all of your life.

Keith: Thanks for that, Bill. That means a lot.

I said 'at last' as it's been quite a journey to get here, and I wondered if we might start our review of this special issue by saying something about our respective backgrounds, both in politics and in transactional analysis (TA), as well as our interest in bringing these two areas of our lives together?

Bill: … A journey and then some! My involvement with politics was tied from the very beginning with my education. I went to Reed College in Portland, Orgeon, a ferociously independent place of learning. That was

at the beginning of the Vietnam War, and nearly all men of my age were being drafted. I applied for conscientious objector status on moral and political grounds (refusing the religious requirement). I was offered a student deferment, which I refused. All through undergraduate and graduate schools, I was in a legal battle financed by the Quakers, who were deeply committed to objecting to the war in every way possible. I was finally granted the status, without explanation. I was in graduate school in Pittsburgh and dropped out to do my alternative service. I was able to do my service in a community mental health centre, of which I soon became the director.

Being in community mental health further cemented my understanding of the fundamental connections between social, economic, and political factors in mental health. The community mental health movement was started and funded at a federal level by President John F. Kennedy and continued under Lyndon Johnson. These were times in the U.S. that were nearly psychotic. Johnson was extending the tragic war in Vietnam, while at home promoting major legislation for the Civil Rights movement, the 'War on Poverty', and the funding of social and mental health services. Community mental health programs took high-quality services out of the office and into the communities, including the poorest communities. It was quite revolutionary in spirit. Then Nixon became President, running on his law and order platform (as Trump is doing now). The funding for community mental health was then channelled through law enforcement programs, fundamentally perverting the original intentions of the programs. In protest, I quit as director, entitling my letter 'How to be Richard Milhous Nixon's bedfellow without ever quite touching his cock'.

It took many years before I could clearly see how often mental health (now called behavioural health) services served to promote social normativity and compliance rather than health.

It was also in community mental health where I first started training in and applying transactional analysis.

Keith: That's interesting. I did not know that about your history. For my part, I do not know if you were aware that my father was a conscientious objector during the Second World War, a position that had an impact on me as I grew up; one which I know has influenced my ability to object—about which I have written elsewhere (Tudor, 2017).

Bill: I was not aware of that! To be a conscientious objector in England in that war must have taken extraordinary conviction and *courage*. My father was a war veteran, an experience that marked him for the rest of his life. He supported my conscientious objector efforts completely. Opposition in my home town was so fierce that the family moved.

It was also while at Reed that I discovered the work of Wilhelm Reich. Inspired by Reich, I trained as a body-centred therapist at the same time I was pursuing my transactional analysis training—strange bedfellows those two training models were! But more than body work, Reich's passionate, ferocious understanding of the political, social, and economic forces underlying human misery forever changed my thinking about psychotherapy.

Keith: For myself, I had the benefit of good, liberal parents and a good, liberal education. I was more radicalised by my experiences as a temporary (trainee) probation officer (1976–1977) when I saw and learned about the injustices of the justice system. At the same time, I was learning, more personally, about feminism. Both these influences led me to apply to study on a social work training that was known for its advocacy of radical social work (Bailey & Brake, 1975). It was on this course that I studied Marx, Marxism, feminism, and cultural studies, and became a political activist, initially with regard to education and student politics, then, later, when I moved to London, with regard to housing and community politics. In 1979, I joined Big Flame, a revolutionary socialist organisation (see Big Flame, 2020), and spent the best part of two years as a full-time political activist, before taking up my first post as a counsellor, since which time in my

various positions, I have tried to balance my interest and work in the intrapsychic as well as the extrapsychic worlds—and, of course, the relationship between the two.

In the interests of brevity, I'll leave it there for now. Elsewhere, I have written about the relationship between my life experiences, including living in Italy for two years in the mid-1980s, and immigrating to Aotearoa New Zealand in 2009, and my professional work and writing (Tudor, 2017).

2 | ERIC BERNE

Keith: As we were planning this special issue of *PPI*, and I was writing my own article for it, I think we both realised not only our debt to Eric Berne but also to his son, Terry, and to the International Transactional Analysis Association (ITAA) for their efforts to preserve and organise Berne's personal archives at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF); archives which contain papers that have revealed more of Eric Berne's own history and relation to politics.

Bill: Yes. In 2004, I interviewed Terry Berne for the ITAA's newsletter *The Script*. The interview was, in many ways, a revelation of Berne as a person and unknown elements of his professional history. In the interview, while discussing his father's early trips and research at psychiatric hospitals all over the world after World War II, Terry revealed:

> 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 1940's and were 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.... He was interrogated over a period of years and even had his passport rescinded. (T. Berne & Cornell, 2004, p. 6)

Looking back now, it is shocking to re-read what Terry said as I commented, 'Kind of like it is now in the United States':

> You're right! He also signed a petition circulated by prominent scientists calling for the US government to stop politicizing scientific research. At the time the government was pressuring private research foundations that were financially supporting scientists that the government deemed too liberal. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) even requested a list of all the maps in his possession. (p. 6)

Four years later, Terry wrote an article for *The Script*, 'Reflections on War and the Origins of Transactional Analysis' in which he offered his reactions after seeing an anti-war movie, *In the Valley of Elah*, about the psychological impact of war on veterans returning to their small hometown. Terry then went on to describe his father's experience of the impact of World War II on returning soldiers:

> Thus, the problems and psychic responses of soldiers—either those who had yet to experience the trauma of war or those returning from battle with various degrees and typologies of mental distress—unquestionably marked the evolution of my father's thinking about human psychology.

> It is to be hoped that psychology, by helping individuals, can help society in general, and perhaps it is the task of psychologists to alert society to the dangers that wait us if we do not change, and quickly.

> Maybe that is the real message of the emancipation from destructive scripts about which Eric spoke so passionately. (T. Berne, 2008, p. 7)

All of this is information about his past Berne held in silence, a silence that came to have a profound and lasting impact on the evolution of transactional analysis. However, Berne's writings also give us a key to understanding how his silence came to be formed as part of his own traumatic shutdown of his shocking post-war investigations by the US government. In *The Structure and Dynamics of Organizations and Groups*, E. Berne (1963) foreshadows his own fate and the unconscious consequences of both his silence about his governmental interrogations, and his subsequent declaration that transactional analysis was to be a-political:

> The most important hero psychologically is the one who is traditionally regarded as the founder of the group and thus may be called its primal leader. Primal leaders are canon-makers. … After his death, a primal leader tends to become subject to a process which may be called euhemerization. In fact, the impact of a primal leader may be measured by the degree of his euhemerization, i.e., by the mythical qualities that were attributed to him after he is dead. (p. 98)

Berne understood the complex, unconscious functions of the euhemerus for a group's cohesion and longevity. He (E. Berne, 1963) observed, 'Since there seems to be a kind of euhemerus hunger in most groups, it would be psychologically incredible if a group survived more than two generations without euhemerizing someone' (p. 101). In this book, Berne articulated the complex, interdependency of the psychological cohesion of a group or organisation with its identification with the euhemerus and the group canons established by the primal leader. These can provide the deeply stabilising functions of identity and meaning, and at the same time can begin to inhibit or limit the forces in a group leading to individuation and innovation.

Somewhere in the mix of social and emotional forces that shaped the adult, professional Berne, must also have been his emigration as a Jew from Canada to the U.S. and his repeated experiences of himself as an outsider (E. Berne, 2010). His struggles undoubtedly shaped his creativity, passion, brilliance, neurosis, and defiance that gave birth to transactional analysis.

For those of us who got involved in transactional analysis in the years just after Berne's death, we all witnessed and experienced the intense idealisation of Berne as leader and the canonisation of his positions. Certain of his declarations and catchy aphorisms were embraced unquestioningly as representing the heart of transactional analysis and core beliefs that distinguished transactional analysis from other modalities (especially psychoanalysis). Berne's declared position of transactional analysis being a-political was one of those (a group canon), and no one at the time seemed able to wonder what was behind Berne's declaration. There were those, like Claude Steiner, Hogie Wyckoff, and the radical psychiatry movement, who defied Berne and took decidedly political positions, but theirs was mostly in opposition to Berne rather than conversation. It came to be more than 30 years after his death that we learned the circumstances of Berne's political and professional life, a new voice emerging from his archives. With the assistance of Terry Berne, the ITAA, and the staff of the archives at UCSF, we are able to finally publish some of Berne's most personal statements on war, politics, and human psychology.

Keith: I agree with your point about that rather easy and uncritical acceptance of Berne's slogans and aphorisms, although, when I trained in transactional analysis at the Metanoia Institute in London in the mid to late 1980s, some of his work, especially on games, was presented to us with some degree of criticism. While none of the founders of that institute—Petrūska Clarkson, Brian Dobson, and Sue Fish—were explicitly or actively political, it was significant that they were all émigrés from Apartheid South Africa and

they certainly supported trainees who were political and activists. By the way, I do not agree that the radical psychiatrists took political positions in defiance of Berne; most of them were and had been political before they met transactional analysis and Berne. Indeed, in his 'Confessions', Steiner (2020) described his role as Eric Berne's 'right-hand man' and his radical psychiatry and activism as very separate (see also my contribution to this issue). I actually think Claude was quite protective of Berne and was only critical of aspects of transactional analysis after Berne's death (see Steiner, 1973).

Bill: Thanks for this more personal perspective on the relationship between Claude and Eric. You spent a great deal of time with Claude, especially in the preparation of his 'Confessions' (some of which are published in Tudor, 2020). My own encounters with Claude—and they were often encounters more than discussions—were more about the internal politics of the ITAA and theory. The early papers we're publishing here, long lost in boxes in Berne's study, and now your book by and about Claude, give us so much more insight into the human sides of these guys.

3 | THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

Keith: Before we get into reflecting specifically on the issue that we have compiled and edited, I want to acknowledge the political background in and against which we have done this. I know that you have been particularly distressed about the situation in the States and in Pittsburgh where you live, especially over the last four years and, more recently, leading up to the recent presidential election.

Bill: The situation here is grim; the United States is in dire straits. Pittsburgh is a liberal, working class city built by waves of immigrants coming here to work in the mines and the mills. It was once 'The Steel City' but is now a major centre for computer technologies and medical research. August Wilson was born and raised here, and his stunning cycle of plays are all (but one) set in Pittsburgh and tell the story of the structural racism that has permeated our city's history, even though it is both working class and liberal (see Biography, 2020).

I have worked for over a decade with a dedicated citizens' group that has worked diligently to revive a black, working class neighbourhood that had collapsed into a dangerous ghetto. It has been amazing to witness, and be a part of, what this community has been able to do for itself. And yet, these past few months, with the impact of the pandemic, many members our community have lost their jobs, families struggle to eat and pay for their housing, numerous local shops and businesses have been forced to close. Marginal communities are held together by very fragile threads. I've written about the work in my community in the *Transactional Analysis Journal* (Cornell, 2018).

As our current election has unfolded, it has become ever more obvious how Trump will use any device to foster fear and division to promote himself in his desperate attempt to maintain his bloated self-importance. Somewhat more than half the American voters are finding immense relief and hope in Biden/Harris' victory. This is like witnessing again all the forces that Reich (1933/1970) wrote about in *The Mass Psychology of Facism*.

A question I would like us to address as we reflect on this special issue of *PPI*, is how and why it is that the social and political aspects and implications of psychotherapy only seem to come to the fore during periods of war and crisis (see Cornell, 2016). It is as though suddenly professionals are jolted into some sort of shocked awareness or self-consciousness about social and political realities; awareness that appear to be all too short-lived. It seems to me that at its heart psychotherapy (and its definitions of 'health') serves to reinforce and maintain social and economic norms.

Keith: That's a great question, Bill, and one which I think—or, at least, hope—we've begun to address in this special issue, mainly through what we have brought together, which we'll shortly be introducing. Nevertheless, your question prompts me to make a couple of comments by way of an initial answer.

First, I do not think that students/trainees are generally or specifically introduced to the political context and background of psychotherapy and its origins, whether that's psychotherapy as a whole (field, discipline, profession, etc.) or a specific modality, such as transactional analysis. As someone who came into transactional analysis through radical psychiatry and as a political activist, this has always seemed strange—though sadly true. I do not think that students/trainees or many of their educator/teachers/trainers realise that many of the founders of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy were critical thinkers, socially minded and even politically active. As Jacoby (1986) commented: 'Today it is easy to forget how many early psychoanalysts identified themselves as socialists and Marxists' (p. 12); and it is worth noting that Jacoby wrote that some 35 years ago! As you'll be aware, Freud (1919/1955) himself was interested in how psychoanalysis could respond to social realities and argued for access to assistance for the mind, for the establishment of free clinics, and for the provision of a 'psychotherapy for the people' (see Aron & Starr, 2013). I make this point because I think that if people did get this political history of psychotherapy, they would find it easier to understand the importance of the interplay between psychotherapy and politics *at all times*, and not only in periods of war and crisis.

Second, I agree with your point that psychotherapy and, more broadly, health (which, in any case, usually refers to illness) serve social and economic norms and normalisation; as Preston (1943) put it: 'Mental health consists of the ability to live … happily … productively … [and] without being a nuisance' (p. 112)! Unfortunately, there are too many examples of how psychotherapy and other forms of therapy have not only encouraged adaptation but been positively oppressive and even abusive. I am wary of what you describe accurately of colleagues' 'shocked awareness' as I think it represents something of a wilful ignorance that we (in transactional analysis) would understand as a discount at the level of the existence of the stimulus (i.e., poverty, injustice, racism, etc.).

Third, and following on from these two points, I think there's some work to be done to reclaim the radicalism of psychotherapy and its various modalities. In transactional analysis, I think this is well represented by the work of our colleague and friend, Leonard Campos (1975):

> Commitment to TA means liberation for both individual and culture. It means a commitment to challenging discriminatory practices of the cultural Child and Parent that disqualify the OKness of the sexes, children, teenagers, the elderly, 'minority' racial and ethnic groups, and any category of the so-called 'social deviant' groups such as homosexuals. (p. 61)

Later, in the same article, Campos aligns transactional analysis with liberation movements:

> TA is probably the only extant effective treatment system that is compatible with contemporary liberation movements which confront the arbitrary oppressive Parent in our culture. In this perspective, therapy becomes liberation from discounting institutional structures. (p. 61)

> Although I agree with the sentiment of this, I suspect that Leonard's was an overly optimistic view of transactional analysis even for its time. I know that you, Bill, have been concerned about transactional analysis training and examining for some time and, with reference to your experience of a particular set of qualifying examinations, wrote: 'I finished those exams with the thought that our organization is teaching doctrine rather than theory and thinking' (Cornell, 2000, p. 270).

Bill: … and that's a great answer, Keith.

4 | THE CONTRIBUTIONS

Keith: OK, so having set the scene, as it were, let's reflect on the issue. By the way, I appreciate your suggestion of writing this article as one that reflects on the issue and is placed at the end, rather than the traditional guest editorial that introduces the special themed issue of a journal. I think this creates more space for the reader to find their own way through the issue and to have their own responses first before reading ours. In that way, I think it is more egalitarian—which is both appropriate to our subject and reflective of our politics.

We're starting, appropriately enough, with Eric Berne himself and a piece he wrote or at least published in 1947 'Man as a Political Animal' (E. Berne, 1947a). This originally appeared as an Appendix in his book *The Mind in Action* (E. Berne 1947b) but, interestingly enough, Berne did not include it in the revised edition of that book which appeared under the title *A Layman's Guide to Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis* (E. Berne, 1969/1971). I'm glad we've reproduced this particular piece of history partly as it points to the need for, as Berne (E. Berne,1947a) described it, 'a separate department of "political psychiatry"' (p. 292), but, given its focus on political images and emotions in the context of elections, partly as it has a particularly contemporary resonance.

Bill: I agree. Re-reading Berne's 'Man as a Political Animal' is both moving and chilling; and it's a powerful, heart-felt piece of writing. We can see so vividly his distress after the war and his alarm at the human costs of Hitler's rise to power; and we witness the power of governments to silence opposition, or even moral reflection and accountability. I can look back on Berne's decision to remove this section from subsequent editions of this book and his subsequent public positioning of transactional analysis as a-political as an effort to protect his new model and his transactional analysis colleagues—and I can look back and see the consequences of the silence that follows trauma. Of course, it is impossible to read Berne's essay without thinking of Trump and the tragedy of his period as US President. Even though he has been defeated in our recent election, he still has a huge following of angry, marginalised, true believers.

I am very proud to have the original edition on my bookshelf. It sits in my study about two feet away from Reich's brilliant *Mass Psychology of Fascism*.

Keith: As the next article in this issue is one of mine, I'll leave you to comment on it …

Bill: In your article, 'Transactional Analysis and Politics: A Critical Review', you offer readers a sweeping, comprehensive history and critique of the place of politics in the course of the evolution of transactional analysis. I have been a member of the ITAA since the beginning of my training in 1972. I have been among the more socially conscious and politically active members of the Association and an editor of the *Transactional Analysis Journal* (*TAJ*) for many of its most recent years; yet, I was surprised (delighted really) to read your detailed review of the literature bringing back articles and authors who swam upstream in their efforts to address the political implications of working in the fields of human relations. Claude Steiner was always the loudest and most outspoken voice both inside and outside the ITAA. Claude was un-ambivalent with regard to the centrality of politics in psychotherapy; his ambivalence was much more in relationship to Berne himself as evidenced in the compelling, and quite moving discussion you proffer. Nevertheless, other voices are brought to the fore: Bob Massey, Graham Barnes (who sadly died earlier this year as we were preparing this issue), Len Campos, Terri White, and Pam Levin, among them. Your review captures the ambivalent relationship of transactional analysis theorists to the political and social factors that shape and limit the mental and emotional wellbeing of individuals, groups, and societies. You trace the history of emergence and rather frequent disappearance of themed issues of the *TAJ*, of international transactional analysis conferences, and social action groups and committees. I know well from my involvement in other

professional associations, that this ambivalence or avoidance of the political is not unique to transactional analysis. Nonetheless, I cannot help but think that this complicated and sometimes contradictory history within transactional analysis is an expression of the spoken and unconscious 'canons' introduced by Berne.

Reading your article brought back many memories, some sweet, others bitter or disappointed, as I remembered and reconsidered the struggles and the questions you raise in your review; and I felt a pride in seeing the increased presence of political and social consciousness and theorising in contemporary transactional analysis.

You conclude your article with a conceptual schema drawn from Nick Totton to further facilitate discussions and critiques of political factors in psychotherapy theory, practice, and training, which you then apply specifically to transactional analysis.

Keith: Thanks for that, Bill. It's lovely to have your reflections on a subject that is close to both our hearts and minds. I appreciate them—the reflections, and the hearts and minds.

In a number of ways, I see the next article, on transactional analysis' philosophical premises, by Karen Minikin, a fourth generation transactional analyst, as she puts it, and an Associate Editor of this journal, as complementary to mine. In it, she also acknowledges some of our history, focussing on Berne's radical beginnings. She then reviews what are commonly viewed as transactional analysis' philosophical premises; that is, that people are 'OK', that people can think, and that people can change. She subjects each premise to some scrutiny and some political analysis and application, weaving in the death of George Floyd; slavery, and radical psychiatry and its focus on alienation; and racism, respectively. Minikin is critical of the somewhat superficial slogans of 1960s—in transactional analysis and, by implication, in politics—and concludes by acknowledging that contemporary transactional analysis or, at least parts of it, do pay greater attention to context and concerns of our time, and to relational and contextual complexity.

Bill: As I read and began to edit the various submissions and the final manuscripts for this issue of *PPI*, I found it quite chilling that so many were rooted in efforts to comprehend the impacts and meanings of the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic, political, and social ramifications, as the next two articles in the issue reflect. Often efforts to bring political-social perspectives into psychotherapy (or vice versa) are rather theoretical, and either idealised and/or self-righteously polemical. In the months in which this journal has been taking shape (May–November 2020), the pandemic has brought the living meaning of socio-political thought into our public and professional discourse.

In his article, Marco Mazzetti, examines the unfolding, tragic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic in Italy by addressing the nature of the political communications that have formed the public's perceptions and understandings of the virus in ways that have intensified the public health crisis. Although written as he witnessed the advancing virus and subsequent lockdowns in Italy, his observations are chillingly relevant to what we have witnessed in many nations around the world in the face of this relentless pandemic. Mazzetti focuses on the parental (Parental), demeaning quality of the communications such that, 'we Italian citizens (and probably not only us Italians) have been treated by politicians and their scientific advisors as poorly responsible children'. Writing as both a public health physician and transactional analyst, Mazzetti argues for far more effective and responsible forms of public communication, shifting from Parent to Child positions to those of informed Adult-to-Adult engagements, drawing on the basic philosophical tenets of transactional analysis.

In her essay, 'Psychotherapy in the time of COVID-19', Carole Shadbolt, drawing from humanistic, feminist, radical psychiatry, and relational transactional analysis perspectives, addresses the shocking inequality of the impact of the pandemic among diverse ethnic and economic groups in the United Kingdom and the implications for the evolution of psychotherapy. Shadbolt, both in her personal voice and through a case example, brings alive the experience of therapists and counsellors—now often thrown into working

'remotely'—for whom the safety of the familiar structure of psychotherapy is bent out of shape when suddenly we are 'all in it together'. She sees the impact of COVID-19 as a demand, a challenge, and an opportunity for our frames as mental health professionals to expand and to have to consider economic realities, alienation, oppression, and shared vulnerabilities as essential in our ongoing therapeutic relationships.

Keith: I agree. I think you've summarised these two articles well; and I see the next two articles also as pair in terms of the application of transactional analysis to the social/political world; the first to a project and the second to a stance or psychopolitical posture to and in the world akin to Rogers' (1980a) 'way of being', especially with regard to 'the person of tomorrow' (Rogers, 1980b).

Bill: In their article, 'Migration as a risk and opportunity', Anna Rotondo and Susanna Ligabue provide an account of the work undertaken for the past 20 years by transactional analysis-based social cooperative, Terrenuove, with the immigrants who have come to Italy fleeing poverty and wars. In this article we witness a true integration and implementation of socio-political theory with actual practice. The challenges of facing these enormous ruptures of life, culture, and safety are addressed theoretically and systemically, and then brought to life with personal accounts. Although this article focuses on work with immigrants, the philosophical-political-social structure of the Terrenuove programs offer a powerful model for social-psychological programs providing structure and empowerment to any marginalised, traumatised population.

Finally, in a deeply personal, reflective article as a trainee in transactional analysis, witnessing from afar the devastation of China's aggressive overtaking her home culture of Hong Kong, Shin Chun Li uses transactional analysis as a lens through which to articulate her own determination to be a 'Resister' (Massey, 1987) rather than a 'Bystander' (Clarkson, 1987) and the implications of her political stance with that of being a psychotherapist. Li describes how her parents, in fleeing China's repression for a new life in Hong Kong, devoted themselves to the establishment of a base for survival and safety, thus creating a foundation that afforded Li the possibility of pursuing 'higher' values of justice and equality. For me, it was a pleasure to read her article (originally an essay) and to see an intense and challenging mind at work for personal and social understandings, drawing upon the more political voices contained within the transactional analysis literature.

Keith: Again, I agree with your reflections on these articles, Bill. It seems to me that these two articles represent the activism of transactional analysis or, perhaps more accurately, transactional analysis-informed practice. They remind me of a point you made in an article earlier this year published in *The Script* about the importance of building community and of community-building skills (Cornell, 2020). I also liked what you said in that article about changing the concept of the secure base to that of a 'vital base' as it carries both a sense that this is essential and that it encourages vitality, life, or physis (the force of and for life).

Following these seven peer-reviewed articles, we have some 'shorts' in the form of two articles and two reviews.

The two articles appear as 'Notes From the Front Line', a regular section of *PPI*. The first is a note from the newly formed ITAA Social Engagement Committee which briefly describes its vision and offers biographies of its current members. The second takes the form of an open letter from Becky Simpson, to the psychotherapy and counselling profession about the politics of training and practice for practitioners with Tourette's syndrome. Simpson, whose core model is transactional analysis, writes personally, poignantly, and powerfully; her experience and work poses an important challenge, in this context, to the transactional analysis community which I hope we are strong enough to pick up.

The two reviews are of *The Leap of Power* (Viva Press, 2019) by Robert Schwebel, who was part of the Radical Psychiatry Collective in the 1970s, which Johnny Dow, a colleague and friend of mine, I have reviewed; and the second, my own book about *Claude Steiner*, *Emotional Activist* (Routledge, 2020) which has been reviewed by Di Salters.

When you and I were discussing the running order of the articles and contributions in this special issue, just as we decided we wanted to give Eric Berne the first word in the form of an article, so we decided that we also wanted to leave him with the last word.

Bill: Yes. In Berne's unpublished essay, 'Human Nature in Peace and War', we witness a style of writing that became so familiar to the public as he developed his ideas that formed transactional analysis. While speaking as a war psychiatrist and addressing the meaning and forms of 'psychoneurosis', he does so in ordinary, humane language, speaking directly to the soldiers for whom he is concerned. There was not yet the language of post-traumatic stress disorders that became so tragically common during and after the Vietnam War, but clearly Berne was trying in this piece to bring self-respect and some alleviation of shame and suffering to the victims of combat.

Keith: I agree—and, that, as they say, is a wrap!

In reviewing this and the other articles, and in your description of some of the politics in the contemporary world, I am interested in your use of the word witness. I wonder if, in putting this issue together, we are offering what Alice Miller (1997/2020) referred to as an 'enlightened witness'—or, in this case, some 16 enlightened witnesses—in and perhaps to society.

Thanks again, Bill, for agreeing to edit this special issue at what has been an extremely difficult time for you, your family, and your country. I want to acknowledge that. Just as I was finishing this, I went to see the Bruce Springsteen's film *Western Stars* (Springsteen & Zimny, 2020), which is great on a number of levels. In it, he comments poignantly on what he sees as two sides of the American character: the solitary side and the side that yearns for connection and community—and that that has been a lifetime trip for him: 'trying to figure out how to get from one to the other, how to reconcile those two things'. That seems to me a pretty good summary not only of what many of us hope can happen in the United States in the present and near future, but also of the human endeavour, personally and socially, and, of course, politically.

Bill: So, Keith, as you say, we are at the 'wrap' stage. Whew! It's been quite journey, and I am proud of the results contained here. I think these papers are testimony to the changing canon and ethic in transactional analysis. You write, 'I went to see the Bruce Springsteen film', which suggests that you went out of your house and to a movie theatre—one of those little, everyday signs of New Zealand having competent leadership and an ethic of community. It will be many more months before anyone in the United States will enter a theatre. The distinction Springsteen makes is so very true. It was enacted throughout our whole election process—the needs of the community versus the rights of the individual. I've just finished reading Lynne Layton's (2020) *Toward a Social Psychoanalysis*. In the concluding chapter, 'Transgenerational Hauntings', she makes a compelling distinction between the radical Freud and the conformist Freud. She suggests that ego psychology, the American version of psychoanalysis that reigned supreme here for much of the 20th century, represents the conformist Freud. Layton refers to Erich Fromm when she argues, 'The conformist Freud of ego psychology, he [Fromm] felt, fit with the common sense of an historical era in which a radical bourgeois liberalism had itself become coopted by a consumerist, individualist ethic' (Layton, 2020, p. 265). Berne's psychoanalytic training was that of ego psychology, and we can see the implicit orientation toward and idealisation of the autonomous individual. Your writings, both in and beyond transactional analysis, have been among the most important over the years in challenging the emphasis on autonomy in transactional analysis and arguing for a socio-centric ethic and practice.

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