

Interview:

On the Early Years of Transactional Analysis
- Eric Berne and his disciple Claude Steiner -

Dr. Claude Steiner, Berkeley/U.S.A.

interviewed by

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Preface

From the very beginning of my T.A. career I have been especially interested in the theory and practice of Strokes. So I was glad to meet Claude Steiner personally at the European T.A. Summer Conference in Enschede/Netherlands in 1976.

At the International T.A. Summer Conference in San Francisco/U.S.A. in 1977 we met again. Since then we stayed in close contact and Claude has been accepting my regular invitations to run workshops in the Black Forest for my T.A. Training Institute.

It's now more than 14 years that we have been talking about and discussing T.A. topics, so it was a great pleasure to me to be able to interview Claude Steiner.

The first to act upon the idea to interview some of the people from the early days of T.A. who were around Eric Berne was my T.A. colleague Bernd Schmid, who interviewed Fanita English.

For me, Claude, who developed part of the basic T.A. theory (e.g. script matrix, stroke economy, banal scripts of women and men), is not only one of the most important men around Eric Berne, but also an active transactional analyst who is constantly adding political and social dimensions to his theories. Some of these ideas are embodied in his books, such as: *A Manual on Cooperation*, *The Other Side of Power*, and *When a Man Loves a Woman*.

I interviewed Claude Steiner on Dec. 14, 1989 in Zürich/Switzerland and on Dec. 3, 1990 in WaldkirchGermany.

The following brochure is the result of a cooperation between Claude and myself.

Waldkirch, June 1991

Dr. Anne Kohlhaas-Reith

On Claude's Relationship with Eric

Anne: Maybe you'd like to tell me something about your beginnings with T.A., your meeting with Eric Berne.

Claude: I was getting a Bachelor's degree in psychology at the University of California at Berkeley and I was a counselor at the Berkeley Jewish Community Center, working with children. My supervisor, Ben Handelman, was a social worker and occasionally we'd go out in the evenings. One day he said, "I just went to a meeting in San Francisco, with this funny psychiatrist, kind of interesting, and he has meetings every Tuesday, so why don't we go?" And I said, "Sure, let's go", so we went. There was an apartment house, a few blocks from Chinatown and people were meeting in the living room sitting on couches and chairs. After the meeting we stood around and talked and he asked me to come back and I did regularly -until he died, except for five years when I was getting my psychology doctorate in Ann Arbor.

Anne: But at that time, wasn't Berne living in Carmel?

Claude: His main house was in Carmel, but he rented an apartment in San Francisco, and he saw clients there. So every Monday evening he would come from Carmel, and spend until Wednesday in San Francisco. Tuesday evening was the seminar. Eventually he asked me to drive him on Wednesday mornings so I was delighted and I began to pick him up every week and drove him to St Mary's hospital where he had a group supervision session with the staff, followed by a group therapy session on the closed ward and then an outpatient group. Then we had lunch at the hospital cafeteria and I drove him back to his apartment.

Anne: What kind of relationship did you have with Eric?

Claude: As long as I was with him, I followed him around, and listened to everything he had to say. Taking every opportunity I had to be present, to see what he did and how he did it. And I would go to one after another 101, I didn't care how many times I heard him say the same thing because it was always different.

I don't think he thought that he was training me. I would observe his group, we would talk about the group afterwards, he would let me take his group, he would have me present on his group and my groups and he would comment on it. And while I was observing, he would let me gradually do more and more. At first you just had to listen and then maybe you could say a few things and then maybe you could take a whole half-an-hour of the group. That's the way he trained. And that's the way I train. And then of course going to the seminar was a constant training situation.

Anne: Did he expect that his trainees have personal therapy? Or did he do it sometimes?

Claude: No I didn't have personal therapy as part of my training. And for a long time that wasn't a requirement for T.A. It was up to you, not to the training.

Anne: That's still true today but it's an unofficial requirement. I think also it's a useful requirement for becoming a psychotherapist.

Claude: Its professional elitism that somehow believes: "I am different, I am a therapist, I don't need therapy. Therapists don't need therapy." It's part of the professionalism that requires that you be above the patient. That as far as the patient is concerned, you don't have a private life, you don't have any feelings, you're just a kind of a...

Anne: non-person.

Claude: But Eric was really not that way, you know, he was as unpompous as it was possible for somebody of his age to be at that time. I don't think he ever trained anybody any other way but I don't think he trained that many other people. I made myself more or less indispensable. I took care of all the recording at all the Tuesday seminars, so I was always there at the beginning, always there at the end, always there. If he needed to be driven anywhere, I would do it so we would then have a chance to talk. During the time that I was with him we were like pals, like friends, talking about things. He enjoyed my personality, I enjoyed his. And I would ask him questions, and we would talk. It was one of the most absolutely wonderful things that anybody could ever have, that kind of a relationship with a teacher.

Anne: So you had a close and friendly relationship?

Claude: It was a discipleship. It was close, it was friendly and it was not acknowledged. It was not like, "Here's my friend, Claude," that was not something he would say. It was typical of Eric that he wouldn't talk about such things. It just was.

Anne: So in some way you were like a friend and in some ways...

Claude: I was like a chauffeur. I was like an apprentice and I was like a confidant about his little sexual peccadillo's, you know. I helped him buy a car; a big sexy Maserati convertible. He was a teacher, father, big brother, sexy kind of kidding around type of pal. But most of all I was there, I was available.

Anne: So the picture I get is that you were very close with him, and from some of the things you said, and that I read about him, he didn't talk about his private life. So the closeness came out of professional discussions and of actually being together.

Claude: But I have to say, occasionally his defences would break down and he would talk about his private life, about his son, his daughter, or his wife, he would break through and then it would be over.

Anne: The next day it was like nothing had happened?

Claude: He wouldn't continue. I think he knew that he said what he said, and it was okay with him.

Anne: What kind of people were getting training from him? What kind of professions did they have? ... Did that matter?

Claude: Psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists, probation officers, nurses...

Anne: What do you think was his greatest influence on your life?

Claude: He gave me permission to write. It would have never occurred to me to write. Eventually, he prefaced *Games Alcoholics Play*, something he did for only one other writer, Jacqui Schiff. He really let me know that he thought that I was very intelligent and creative, so he gave me permission to write and to think about creative things. He stimulated my creativity with his attitude. The first thing he did is ask me to write a chapter in his third edition of the laymen's guide, he asked me to write something about alcoholism, and I did, and I thought it was OK, and he thought it was terrible. 'It may really have been very badly written because I really didn't know how to write. He said he spent hours and hours rewriting it and making it possible to use it. And then he decided to only use parts of it and, in my opinion at the time, he didn't credit me properly for it... I was very mad at him. So we had a big argument about that, I brought the matter up at the seminar. And the way he dealt with it was that he told a story about an Indian chief that asked one of his braves to collect some leaves for a fire. The brave came back with some leaves that were all wet, and the chief tried to start a fire with them but he couldn't. He never told me, "look you didn't write well, you made grammatical errors, etc". He never dealt with it directly. He was quite an eccentric. He also taught by negative example, in a way, by doing things I decided I would try not to do.

Anne: How do you define yourself with respect to T.A.? Like co-founder of T.A.?

Claude: No. I'm definitely not a co-founder. He founded T.A. without any co's, there were no co's. I was, I am a disciple. Period. I took his theory and extended it in a creative direction.

Anne: Well, anyway you had a large influence on the development of T.A.

Claude: I had an influence while he was inverting it and, certainly after he died, but in relation to him, I was his disciple. But a disciple is not a passive person, a disciple contributes, a disciple argues and a disciple makes problems and has his own point of view, but still it's all within a discipleship, I mean it never for a second occurred to me to abandon him or go away or contradict him or secede; he was my teacher.

Anne: He was the authority?

Claude: Yes, but that's the least of it you know? He was an admired, loved, wise teacher. In fact the authority part I didn't like at all, I rebelled against it. He was just so smart, so wise, so clever, so admirable, so devoted and so willing to teach me, that I was totally his. Completely at his disposal.

Anne: How did you earn your living in these days when you were very occupied?

Claude: I was a therapist, very busy, but I kept days open to spend with him, Tuesday evenings and Wednesdays I was devoted to whatever he needed from me and if he needed anything on the weekends I would make time. But he also kept that within limits and rarely extended our contact beyond the usual routine. And by the way, there was never any question of paying him or him paying me.

I used to have dreams about Eric, but I haven't had one in a long time. I would suddenly run into him in the street and it was as if he had gone on a trip and now was back. They were very vivid and emotional dreams, I would cry on his shoulder and tell him that I loved and missed him. I have a friend, a woman who was in the seminar in the later years and was good friends with Eric too.

She's a little bit of a witch, and thinks that I should call Eric and try to have a dream about him again. "Put something next to your bed that will attract him," she suggested. I decided on a can of Seven-Up. But I've never done it.

Anne: It's a very special relationship.

Claude: Fascinating, fantastic. I have had that relationship with a few people, where I was the teacher. It seems there are always people, who, for some amazing reason, do not care how many times they have heard me say something. That's how I felt about Eric. When I see that I have somebody who is like that, then if I think they are really talented, then I just make myself available, and I'll ask them, "Will you take my group? Will you read this paper? Will you help me with this paper work?", and they're just delighted to do it and to follow me around just as I did Eric.

Anne: Hm. It sounds like he was your master like in the eastern philosophies.

Claude: It's obviously a very ancient and effective way of teaching. And for the teacher it's wonderful, because you're giving the most intimate, the most secret knowledge with a real loving feeling; in exchange you're getting a person who will help you do things with great joy. Of course, you have to treat a disciple with respect, I mean, you don't exploit them, but you share things that are really useful for them, and for you.

Anne: So it's a very personal way to train people.

Claude: It's as serious as a five to seven-year love affair with somebody.

Anne: Hm. Like raising children, but in a professional field.

Claude: Eventually, they find their own way, and they may even slightly reject you, you know and for a while they may not talk to you, but then they come back. You do it because here's a very intelligent, very eager person, who's willing to help you, and who's willing to talk to you about things and discuss things, listen to you, read your stuff and give you feedback. It's very utilitarian, it's a very, very, useful, and at the same time it's a very soulful relationship. And when, if at the end, they leave, that's okay, you don't expect more than that. And if they're mad at you it's a little bit amusing, you know? You wonder, "Why, are they mad at me?", but then you realize that people who are dependent have to get mad to get away, so it's all kind of alright.

On Eric's Views on Therapy

Anne: Did Eric believe that you can cure people?

Claude: He said to me once he didn't think you could change your script. And yet he also seemed to believe in people just giving up their script, immediately. "When you stop playing games, you're game free, spontaneous, aware and intimate." So he was ambivalent. I really think that was a part of him, the Adult believed you could, and another part, probably the Child but also maybe the Parent did not believe that people really changed. I think that's typical of a person who's got a static view in which, in order to encompass reality, you have to choose between contradictory points of view. He did not have a dialectical attitude about the process of cure. But that's how people looked at reality in those days. He didn't strike me as being different from any of my professors, he was just a brilliant and interesting person.

Anne: What is the aim of therapy in your opinion?

Claude: Well, in Eric's opinion, which is also my opinion, it's to cure the patient or to be a little less flamboyant, to complete the contract.

Anne: Flamboyant?

Claude: Flamboyant means colorful. Eric was colorful, you know, he said everything in the most colorful possible way. To say "to cure the client, to cure the patient" was almost sacrilegious in the days that he was saying it.

Anne: At that time only improvement was expected.

Claude: I don't know what the task of the therapist WAS but it certainly was NOT to cure the client. And anyone who said that would be accused of having delusions of grandeur.

Anne: Can you give a definition of cure?

Claude: If you make clear what the contract is, then the cure is when the person says, "Yes, I believe that what I wanted to have, whatever it was: to be happier or to stop drinking or whatever has been accomplished."

Anne: So cure does include a change?

Claude: Well it has to. If a person comes in for therapy I assume that he or she wants to change something, otherwise I wouldn't be interested. So, yes a significant change.

Anne: And what do you think can be changed in the person's life or what cannot be changed?

Claude: Well, there are few things that can't be changed. They are organic as in organic brain damage or organic biochemical imbalance or genetic diseases. I'm speaking of schizophrenia in the few cases when it is genetic, or bipolar mood disorders which may be biochemical and

even genetic in origin, or mental retardation. But even in those cases significant changes can happen but the diseases themselves can't be cured through psychotherapy. But I want to add that those types of diseases are uncommon and also very dramatic. Often curable conditions get labelled incurable, a lot oftener than vice-versa.

Anne: And what do you think concerning psychological changes like the psychological structure of a person or to say it in T.A. words: concerning script changes?

Claude: I think that people can make script changes, very significant script changes. There's some kind of a character pattern that won't change but you can make really profound changes within that.

Anne: If I could have asked Eric Berne the same questions how would he have answered them?

Claude: He would have said that the purpose of therapy is to cure the patient and he would have said that cure has to do with the contract, I am sure of that.

Anne: In the literature Berne's sentence "cure him or her in one session" is mentioned.

Claude: This was another flamboyant expression designed to give the message that we should keep the objective of therapy-cure-in the focus of our awareness. He felt that some kind of magic could occur wherein a sentence would somehow penetrate to the core of the neurosis and turn it around on it's head.

Anne: Like a positive trauma?

Claude: Yes, but it's much more elegant and based on information rather than on a physical impact. Like an informational key that opens the door to the magic kingdom. He believed that. I think that after you do therapy for a while and if you're very good at it, on occasion you experience that people will change based on one, two or ten well placed words that you say. But from my point of view the reason for that is that they were absolutely ready to make a change. They were ready to jump across the gap and you just gave them the extra push. So you were lucky to be there at that moment and they were lucky you were there because if you might have said the wrong thing it would have pushed them back instead. But that's not magic. I don't know whether he realized that or not. I think he might have thought that there's some very mysterious power of the word that could really change things, very very dramatically. So those were the one-word cures. On the other hand he seemed to also believe that you can't really change your script at all. So he was definitely split.

Anne: My explanation for his sentence cure done in one session was in connection to a specific contract and a specific goal for change.

Claude: He believed that the therapist should be constantly concerned about curing the patient and should plan to do it in the shortest possible time. So when he says "in one session" he just means think about the cure and try to do it as quickly as possible, if possible in one session. But that does not exactly mean that he expects you will succeed every time.

Quite the contrary, in 99% of the cases it will not but you should continue to try to cure the patient in the very next session.

Anne: Did he ever give examples of quick cures?

Claude: Not really. It was clear that he was not trying to say "I can cure people in one session and you should, too." He did give examples of saying magical things that brought about major changes. I think he even presented, in one of his seminars, a one-session cure as an example of how you can do that but it was never in some way to show that he could do it and that everybody should.

I have done that. For instance, I had a client who was an artist and wanted to become a responsible bread-winner. I mean he was an artist and he would get drunk and depressed and sloppy and spend money he didn't have, you know. One day he asked "What should I do?" And I said, "Get a wristwatch and wear it every day." "What?", he said and I said, "Yes, put on a wristwatch and I think your life will change." He hated the idea because it was totally not him, it was completely against his style of life to wear a watch. So this was really a bull's-eye; in America we call a direct hit a bull's-eye. He finally put on a wrist-watch and it wasn't a one-session cure but five years later he came to me and he said, "The most important thing you said to me was put on a wrist-watch because it completely changed my attitude about everything and I suddenly understood what it was like to earn a living."

Anne: He changed his frame of reference in putting on the wrist-watch?

Claude: He still had to do a lot of work in therapy but somehow it made a tremendous difference; it changed the way he looked at everything.

Anne: I think that there are many influences for or against change, the biological aspects of a person, the society he lives in, his intelligence, his environment ... If I live in Eritrea, I have only a few chances for change.

Claude: Well that's true too. The fact is, that people often don't have the opportunity for change. But even if you have all of the opportunities and teachings, there are still certain things that are not going to change.

For instance, I am very thrifty with money. I don't spend money easily. So I started out being "Geizig" and "Kleinlich" - the words are from my childhood - and now, fifty years later, I still don't spend money easily, but I'm not geizig and kleinlich anymore although I still have that character trait of being financially conservative, I would say. I don't think I'm ever going to change that. I've worked very hard on being generous, and not worrying about money, but, you know, it's still there, and that doesn't go away. I hoped it would, but its OK, I've changed it from a bad feature to something which is an asset to a certain extent. Now the woman I live with is the one to be generous: she helps me spend my money and I help her save hers.

Anne: In some way the change is really: deal with it differently.

Claude: Eric seemed to think about character traits that you either have them or you give them up. But I think that people modify the script rather than give it up. It's like a spiral thing, you go round and round and with every turn you are in the same place but higher, or lower. You've always got the same script, but it becomes less and less harmful.

Anne: It also depends on whether you use the word script only for pathology or also for healthy information or experiences. I'm also impressed by the point that script change is very important with seriously ill people. For over 15 years I've been doing psychotherapy.

I met people, many of them were not my clients, but when I worked in the hospital. I met people with alcohol problems or other types of abuse, and many of these people died in the meantime, when they were clean and sober, of cancer. So I said, they've stopped drinking, but they're not cured. They went on to their destructive script end, which they fulfilled not by abuse but by illness, accident, etc. instead. So I really believe it's a serious point to look at when doing therapy with clients, and not to be satisfied with superficial changes.

Claude: I see that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree in the case of scripts either. People can only go so far away from where they started and I think that's also what happened with Eric. He started as a psychoanalyst and didn't end up so far away from that. He got as far away as he could, and somebody else had to go further. And I can't go so far away from where I started either. That's how it is. But in the process you can make some tremendous changes and improvements. I don't know, psychologically or emotionally, what improvements Eric made in his personal life. I don't know that much about his personal life, but I read in his biography (*Eric Berne; Master Gamesman* by Elisabeth W. and Henry I. Jorgensen) that he did some very strange stuff with his first wife, it appears. And he seemed to be still doing strange things with women when he died. But maybe he was better, I hope so.

Anne: Even today, many people don't believe that you can change.

Claude: Things have improved though. The cultural background against which people are practising therapy these days is so different from what it was when he started working on his theories. I think at this point it's even gone a little overboard, in the direction of people believing any change is possible, that you can do anything. I went through that phase for a short while but don't believe that anymore. I've come back to realizing that people actually don't change, in a certain sense. There are certain things that get transformed, but-you know, if the person is a certain way, then they're gonna be that way, and there's no point in trying to change that. The point is to make the person effective, given that immutable core. And by this I mean effective; I don't mean resigned or brave as in "living with alcoholism or schizophrenia." That is one of the things Eric emphasized; that he thought that we should try to cure schizophrenia not just make "brave schizophrenics."

On Eric's Therapeutic Method

Anne: Tell me some more how Berne did therapy. How he used contracts and how he used theory like in his mind.

Claude: He would come in to group and there was no really particular way in which he would start. Maybe he wouldn't say anything. Maybe he would say something to somebody, ask a question. It was very random. A conversation would start, maybe somebody would say something, and he would ask a question to investigate more, and then he would sit on his hands, he would have his pipe clenched in his mouth, he would close his eyes and drop his head and listen to what the person was saying, just sitting there -until the person was done, and then he would look up, and he would say something like, "I think you should stop wearing white socks" or he would give a little T.A. lecture at the blackboard explaining what he saw. "Look: You said this and this is your Child, and you said this as an Adult and if you do this and this and this then this will happen." What he said was usually fascinating and often surprising. And then he would sit down and somebody else might talk. But he would tend to concentrate on one person at a time.

Anne: And the others were still?

Claude: Yes. There was a period of time where they didn't talk. But then after a while they started talking. It was like, first he talked but then somebody might make a comment, he was very open to people speaking and he would pull back if they did and he would listen to what was going on. And then some other person would start to work. It was a very informal process. Any time there was a comment that would possibly be an occasion to talk about a game that was being played; if somebody was playing Rescuer or Victim he would allow a period of interaction because it would be a source of data for him.

Anne: Is it true that Eric Berne secretly continued to do psychoanalysis?

Claude: Secretly?

Anne: Yes, or openly?

Claude: More openly than secretly. He called it script analysis. He would have the patients lie down on the couch and tell him things. Technically speaking, was that psychoanalysis? I don't know, but it was on the couch, one to one and had a strong psychoanalytic flavor. I think he believed that you did transactional analysis in groups, and psychoanalysis with a strong script analysis flavor on the couch.

Anne: And in the group did he do mainly group treatment, like dealing with the group process? Or is it like many today, who do individual treatment within the group?

Claude: I often observed his groups, and also took over his group when he was gone, and yes-one person would talk, he might spend a whole hour with one person. If somebody didn't speak up, that was their problem but most of the time he would go from one person to the next. I'm different, I let everybody have a turn, limit each person's time and try to take care of everyone. He had no such feelings.

Anne: And didn't much care about the group interaction?

Claude: He was interested, but he didn't much care about making it happen. It happened anyway. He would let anything happen, and then take it philosophically if someone got mad at him. The group was like an event, during which he did therapy with people.

Anne: Adult-Adult?

Claude: Yes, Adult-Adult discourse, but a lot of intuition on his part. He didn't explain much, though. Like when he said:

"What I think you should do is stop wearing white socks."

"What? What do you mean? Why do you say that?"

"Think about it! Do it, see what happens!"

Or he'd get up and draw a diagram, saying what I think you're doing is... So he was either didactic or cryptic.

Anne: And how did he make the decision who went to group or individual therapy?

Claude: I don't know, I think everybody went to group. His practice was a group therapy practice.

Anne: The idea of using contracts-how did this develop?

Claude: I don't know. I think that the whole thing started from the feeling of exasperation that he had in psychoanalysis where there was no expectation of cure. When he left psychoanalysis and he started doing therapy, I think he said, "In my theory we're going to cure people." Plus he also had an attitude about psychiatrists vis-a-vis other physicians. He told a joke: "What's the difference between an internist, a surgeon, and a psychiatrist? An internist knows everything and does nothing, a surgeon does everything and knows nothing, and a psychiatrist knows nothing and does nothing." So he had this feeling that psychiatrists didn't do anything, that they just sat there, and he didn't like that, and he also said that a real doctor cures people. So whoever cures people is a real doctor and whoever doesn't cure people is not a real doctor, even if he's a physician. And so anybody can be a doctor if she or he can cure people. That's how psychologists, and social workers, and anybody who cures people was a real doctor in his mind. And then at some point he must have said, the contract is to cure people. And then I think from there he went to how do you make a contract? Or what's a cure? I don't know when it first comes up, the idea of a cure. It may have been during the time that I was gone in Michigan or maybe earlier.

Anne: Because at some time you wrote about contracts.

Claude: Once he wrote about contracts I decided that we should talk about them in the legal sense. That article about contracts was a very fruitful little exploration, basically an exercise in analysis.

Anne: It's still useful today.

Claude: He was very encouraging with that kind of a thing; **you** take something and you play with it intellectually and try to figure out where it goes and where it comes from and what happens to it. There are always good results from those types of exercises and intellectual games, as long as you don't take them too seriously; I've seen people try to write whole books from a little exercise like that.

Anne: I'll come back to the group therapy Berne was doing: did he also give home exercises?

Claude: Homework? Yes. That was definitely his idea. People were supposed to do things between sessions. His homework was not very consequent necessarily. It was part of the magical approach. It wasn't like the kind of homework I would do. For instance, if the homework is getting strokes you go to the coffeehouse and you start conversations with several people, that type of sensible approach. His, again, was a little more cryptic: "I want you to go home and I want you to stand on your head for three minutes," or something that had a connection with the problem in his mind but it wasn't so clear why.

Anne: Was he interested in the social context the person was living in? Family, work, income and things like that?

Claude: In a transactional sense he was definitely interested in the people that you were with. Your wife, your father, your mother, your sister, your brother. But not in a social context sense: what kind of neighbourhood, was it poor, middle class, or rich. I don't think he found that terribly meaningful though he might be interested in it.

Anne: Did he take into account what kind of influence the therapy might have on the social life of the client?

Claude: Oh absolutely, that was the whole point of it. Therapy would affect your social life, your interactions, your transactions.

Anne: That's why you said in the supervision today, "I would invite her husband, I want to see her husband." You take into account that there is a social system which is important.

Claude: Yes, I think that's part of it.

Anne: How was the therapy room in which Berne was doing therapy?

Claude: It was his living room. His individual therapy he had up in one of the bedrooms he had made into a little office. There was a couch, and a desk, and some objets d'art, à la Freud.

Anne: Did he sit behind the desk?

Claude: No, he had a chair that he sat on.

Anne: And his clients sat on a chair, too?

Claude: Yes or they lay on the couch.

Anne: But lying on the couch he did transactional analysis?

Claude: I think he did script analysis. Exactly what he did I don't know; I think it was some kind of a modernized psychoanalysis.

Anne: Do any tapes of his therapy exist?

Claude: I don't think so. Of his group work there must be some tapes.

Anne: Do you know where or how to get them?

Claude: I think the archives in San Francisco would be the place to go and find out. Everything's been put there. There may be some tapes. No one knows what's in that box. It's a box of tapes and no one knows all that's in it. But maybe somebody has already archived it. There's a film of a therapy session that he did at a conference on a stage, but after it was released, one of the people that he worked with refused to have it shown any more so it was taken away. But I'm sure it could be gotten privately.

Anne: I'm interested to know more about how Berne dealt with the feelings of patients.

Claude: His attitude about feelings was characterized by one of his famous phrases: "Feelings, smeelings, as long as you love your mother... ", you know, "Feelings are not what we're interested in." That was theoretical though he certainly mentioned them, he did not focus on them or have major discussions about them.

Anne: Did he talk about transactions?

Claude: He might talk about an angry transaction or a seductive transaction, a core transaction. In his responses to feelings his attitude was one of attentive tolerance. You felt that he was responding to the emotional content without talking about it. And he was kind; he wasn't rejecting like some people in the "rational" or cognitive therapies are about feelings. He was accepting of people's feelings as they were expressed but he didn't work with them.

Anne: So my picture is ... he was sitting there silently, friendly, when the person was crying or upset but not encouraging the expression of those feelings.

Claude: No, and he also wouldn't come up and hold your hand or get close. He would observe and he would wait until it was over and then he would make an Adult comment. He didn't encourage feelings, he didn't particularly analyse them, he let 'em pass.

Anne: Did he talk about himself to clients?

Claude: Never! Never!

Anne: Like a traditional psychoanalyst!

Claude: Never!

Anne: No information?

Claude: Not only that, he would never talk about himself in his books. Yet, lot of the stories in his books are himself. And if you went up to him and said, Eric, is this you? ... Are you talking about yourself here?", he would never say "yes it's me," he might say, "Well, perhaps" or something that would indicate to you that it was, but that you couldn't quote him. I think that was part of his professionalism. But it was also convenient for him; he wasn't comfortable talking about himself in any case.

Anne: And how did he call his clients, with their first names or their family names?

Claude: In his books he called them Mr. this and Mr. that, but in the session he called them by first name.

Anne: What kind of clients did he have?

Claude: Well-to-do, middle-class people, he also had a few very rich people, but he also worked in the hospital. He may have taken on a couple patients that didn't pay very much. I don't think money was a big issue for him, though he was a thrifty man.

Anne: Did he charge less than other psychiatrists charged their clients?

Claude: I think it was in the middle, it was less than some and more than others. The middle range, he was very middle of the road when it comes to money.

Anne: And how often did he see his clients?

Claude: Once a week, in group for an hour-and-a-half, which was absolutely guaranteed not to have enough time for everybody.

Anne: But he chose one-and-a-half hours and eight people.

Claude: That's why I changed my groups to two hours and often had seven people instead of eight.

Anne: I have eight or nine people but for three hours.

Claude: That's better but three hours seems a bit long.

Anne: Oh we have a break in between and have a little dinner.

Claude: That's great.

Anne: That's wonderful, people love it.

Claude: It's not a good way to make money though; usually what people do is they do two groups in an evening and you can't do two, three groups in an evening.

Anne: Yes, that's true. And in individual therapy did he see the people once a week?

Claude: I think he saw some people two or three times a week, some of them.

Anne: And do you have an idea how long, how many sessions he did therapy with a client?

Claude: He believed that the analysis, the therapy should be terminable, you know. But I don't think he had any kind of limitations, and I know he had seen people for years and years.

Anne: Seriously disturbed people?

Claude: Not necessarily. some people just didn't stop, you know, who didn't get better, people whose script was still not clear, or people who got attached to him. It was a very normal practice, there was nothing unusual about it. The only unusual thing is that he felt that group therapy was really an effective way of dealing with people's problems, and just as effective as individual therapy, and this was really unheard of; I mean that you can cure patients is bad enough, but that you can cure them in a group, that's really going too far.

Anne: And what kind of diagnosis, did the clients he took have or what kind of people did he refuse to treat?

Claude: What he said, is that he would take anybody who would come to the meetings and pay his fees. He believed in a heterogeneity; he didn't believe in homogeneous groups.

Anne: So he didn't differentiate between which type of clients you could treat with T.A. and which you could not.

Claude: Not if they could come to his office and make an appointment. Occasionally, some of the clients got medication from him.

On Eric's 'Intellectual Attitudes and Similarities with Claude

Anne: Did he like to fight about theoretical ideas?

Claude: He was not somebody who liked to fight. He hated fighting.

Anne: How about discussing it?

Claude: He had his point of view. Since he was the chief, what could you do? But we'd disagree, and he'd listen; he was flexible, but he also had his point of view. I remember one thing he said, (just to give you an idea of his flexibility, because at the same time that he was so rigid, he was also flexible) he was talking about schizophrenia and was saying that one of the symptoms of schizophrenia is having dreams about sex with mother. So I said "I don't know what you're going to do with this, Eric, but I have had dreams about having sex with my mother so am I schizophrenic?", and he says, "Hm, well I guess that takes care of that theory." The session before the one at which I was going to present the stroke economy, he had introduced a new book he was writing which was basically about schizophrenia. And we all said, "How can you write a book about schizophrenia, this is ridiculous, you know, it's so outmoded, etc." That's on tape, you can actually listen to the session. To my amazement, even the doctors and psychiatrists in the group agreed that he shouldn't write that book. They just didn't see the point of getting into the whole thing. It seemed like stepping backwards, you know. Just weeks before he had had his 60th birthday and finished all of his books, and it seemed to me that he was going to take a break, which is what I thought he should do, stop and relax. But something came to his mind, and the next session he's started writing three new books! One about schizophrenia and another one which was a training book for residents, and I thought "Oh my God, what are you doing? I thought you were going to rest." Within weeks he died. That certainly taught me a lot of things. Taught me what not to do.

Anne: Structure your life in a different way.

Claude: So I know what to do when you're about to be 60 years old and you're stuck. But what am I going to do when I'm 70 years old and I'm stuck? I have no one to learn from.

Anne: But there are other people around. I'm very interested in looking at how older people live. I have a number of older friends.

Claude: The other thing that's really curious about Eric and me is that people say "God, you look more and more like Eric."

Anne: Fanita said it.

Claude: But the funny thing is that I'm living my life more like Eric as well. And I'm certainly not trying to. Yet, he was spending four days in Carmel three in San Francisco, I'm doing the same thing only in the northerly direction. I also ' have a much younger companion and also would like to have a couple of more children. I find myself doing things the way Eric did, but I don't think they have anything to do with him, particularly.

Anne: Perhaps your attraction to him had something to do with similarities.

Claude: But I don't want this connection to be too close. Does this mean that I'm going to die when I'm sixty? It's a scary idea. I think the most important connection between Eric and me was that he had an idea and I said: "Oh boy, that's good." and then I added ideas to his but unfortunately he died before he saw much of it carried out. Which is too bad. He did see some of the things, like the script matrix, and he liked it; he was always very positive.

Anne: So your vision of Berne living ten years longer is not that he would have developed T.A. areas further, but that he would have watched the people around him develop his theory.

Claude: Yeah, I think that would have been very hard for him because he was extremely stuck. He used to say, "I'm going to change my name to Joe Waterhouse and start a seminar in Chinatown." On the day of his birthday he said, Now I think I can start having some new ideas." He was stuck, he wanted to have new ideas. I haven't had a single new idea in T.A. or in radical psychiatry in the last ten years. I can develop new applications but my new ideas are in propaganda, deceptive communication and the New Information Order. It's not so easy to get new ideas in an established theory. Suddenly you're inside of your theories and you have to get outside of them. It's not enough for me, just to apply old ideas. And I don't think it was enough for him either. I think that he felt he wasn't that good as a therapist, maybe he felt that we were better therapists than he was. While we were really curing people, he only talked about it. He said things, and we did them. He said: "T.A. therapists cure people," and I think he was exaggerating a little but we took him seriously and we said: "OK, we'll cure them... " and we did and I think he was surprised and pleased.

What probably would have happened if Eric had lived longer is that he would have been caught up in all of the struggles and political T.A. problems. It's amazing to me that he did his seminar every Tuesday night without fail. He probably would have gone on with that.

On Eric's and Claude's Relationship to the T.A. Organization

Claude: In one of the lectures he gave about sex, the lectures became the *Sex in Human Loving* book, I was in the audience, he had been having depressive thoughts, and I was looking at him and thinking he was so sexy in a way. He was talking about permission and I wrote on a piece of paper, "You will live to be 90 years old and lie on the beaches in Carmel." I was already thinking about how he was not planning to live that long. I think if he had lived to 90 he would have had a hell of a time with T.A. He would have probably withdrawn. But if he'd gotten involved he would have had issues with a number of people for example Fanita English, Jacqui Schiff, the Gouldings and the Harris' they'd all have bones to pick with him, be on his case for different reasons, in search of recognition, power or fame. So he missed a pretty hard time. But I noticed that at the end he wasn't presenting papers at the conferences, he would drift into the presentations and sit or stand in the back. Then he'd say "They are all talking about T.A.," as if it was hard to believe. All he would do is correct the canon, set things straight: "This is how I want you to look at this," or "This is what I meant when I said that." For example, at one of the conferences he divided the Parent into nurturing and critical. Which, incidentally, as far as I know was just a passing thought he never repeated again at any seminar. I mentioned this because that very casual statement became a different way of looking at scripts.

Anne: So from what you are saying it sounds like maybe his death was not so bad for T.A. Some other say or think that he should have lived longer and that this would have been very good for T.A.

Claude: In the best of worlds, he would have lived on, he would be 80 now, and would have become involved in the organization and said: "OK this is how we're going to run things." He was the only person who could say: "That idea or method is good, it can become part of T.A." That would have been helpful and he would have done a good job, because he was intellectually honest. Nowadays any new idea has to fight like crazy to become known. Since Eric died almost 20 years ago a very few ideas, the egogram, the drama triangle, the stroke economy, and a couple of others have been accepted as new ideas.

Anne: The racket system... ?

Claude: I think he would have said that's a good one. But as for original ideas, there have been very few in T.A. in the past years.

Anne: How do you see changes in the T.A. Society since his death concerning the individualistic point of view as opposed to taking society more into account?

Claude: On one hand there's been a steady movement in the conservative direction. People have made his theories even more individualistic and conservative than his were. On the other hand there has been systematic work in the direction of egalitarianism and concern with social issues like racism, sexism and elitism. The last I.T.A.A. conference was different in that it was cheap, so that all could afford it, no banquet, a mood to economize. But it still continues to be a middle of the road organization.

Anne: What do you think of Jacqui Schiff's work?

Claude: I don't have a very kind opinion. I think that in the process of taking in people who are extremely disturbed, and applying a method, she sometimes abused them. It seems to be a pattern with that kind of work. Bruno Bettelheim had the same problem. I think that some of her theories are very good. Sometimes I couldn't see the connection between her theories and their application in her methods. I think passivity confrontation is an abusive technique though maybe a very kind person in a very special situation might be able to use it in a non abusive way. But it invites abuse. I think that in the end she was exaggerating the diagnoses of her patients. Like an auto mechanic who says "Throw the car out it's finished. But let me see what I can do... " and then fixes it. People she cured may not have been as disturbed as she claimed to begin with, she used psychological tests somewhat recklessly to prove great pathology. But it was her use of violence that I totally disagreed with. Denton Roberts and I were sitting around talking about the violence and we decided that the thing to do was to suggest to the Board that the next summer conference would be about violence. That was all we had to do and at that conference there was the big confrontation where J. Schiff eventually left the organization. Jacqui used to say that Eric was fascinated by her but I remember it very differently. I remember him being uncomfortable with her personally, in her presence, although he respected her intellect. He loved anybody who made him bigger. He would be extremely happy with the way things are now internationally. He wanted I.T.A.A. to be international.

Anne: But how do you think, since he was looking at the individual, that this has influenced T.A. until today?

Claude: When he died, there was no guidance. All he said is I want us to be international. He did make it clear that he didn't want people to profit tremendously from T.A. But he never sat down and structured the future of T.A. The Institutes became money cows, courses, workshops, and training programs at high prices selling the T.A. fad. He never made any statements about that, so that there was nothing to stop people from being greedy. When he died I tried to introduce some socially conscious attitudes, tried to run for president but was rejected by the Board. But I took this as exile, and left the organization.

Anne: And this was in connection with not having a social conscience?

Claude: Yes, and also because the president at that time was not being elected by the members but by the board and I thought that to be very wrong. So I had made a number of things I found wrong clear and all of those things were then fixed over the years. So it was very effective to leave.

Anne: Then you concentrated on radical psychiatry?

Claude: Yes, I was always showing up and making trouble and dramatic political gesture. There was always a small group of people that were friendly to my purpose. Since I wasn't able to work from within, I could do it from outside. I didn't have to go to anything official and some people resented this, perhaps rightly so. At first the T.A. institutes were certified by the I.T.A.A. I said they're corrupt, you have to straighten them out, but instead the I.T.A.A. no longer certified them which may have been a wise decision. But what happened then was that

each major city had two institutes, and fights between them. Eric could have avoided that if he had postulated ethical standards for I.T.A.A. institutes.

Anne: Do you remember when I.T.A.A. invented the ethical standards?

Claude: I wasn't involved with that, that came later on. I don't know what started their development, maybe the Schiff affair.

Anne: Did you present things at the conferences?

Claude: Yes, I continued to go to conferences. The large membership liked me because I'd written a book, *Scripts People Live*. But the small leadership didn't because I had grown over their heads and I kept picking on them. I took pleasure in that. We had some very heavy fights, like the one about the firing of the staff in the San Francisco office. The Board hired a man to run the office and the first thing he did was fire several senior staff members. I said you can't do that. I believed that they fired them because they had connections with me. It was a period for lots of political dirty stuff which I think we could have avoided if Eric had taken T.A.'s future after his death seriously. "If I die I should have this organized."

On Strokes

Anne: One of my great interests in T.A. is the stroke theory. I've done several stroke workshops and lectures and I'd like to hear about developments in this area from you. Many people don't take strokes very seriously and I think that it's very important to take them seriously because lack of strokes leads to consumerism. I think strokes are a very important factor that influence one's whole world and not only some nice present I can get.

Claude: In *T.A. in Psychotherapy* strokes aren't mentioned; they came rather late in the development of the theory. In *Games People Play* strokes come up for the first time. He asks: "Why do people play games?" For one reason, strokes, the biological advantage of games; when people stimulate each other. He talks about Spitz and how strokes are needed for survival, but he doesn't say much more.

Anne: How come you elaborated on Eric's stroke theory?

Claude: Because I wanted to touch people and it wasn't allowed. When the controversy started about touching one's clients, while Fritz Perls in Big Sur was having sex with his clients and getting into the hot tub with them, and Eric was suspecting Bob Goulding of picking up on this, he decided and declared it was very unprofessional and wrong. He decided that the Gestalt approach was going in the touchy-feely direction, but T.A. was going to be more professional. He said: "Transactional Analysts don't touch their patients. If you're going to start touching your patient, touch them once with the back of your index finger. Then watch for the next month and observe what happens. Then you can touch them with the front of your finger and watch for another month to see what happens. If you're going to do research on strokes, you have to be scientific about it." Once he remarked on therapists, usually men, who put clients on their laps and how usually they are beautiful 18 year old girls. They never seem to do it with 80 year old men.

Anne: So did he distinguish between touching clients and having sex?

Claude: He didn't. As far as he was concerned you don't even shake hands, except when they leave therapy. And I thought, I like what they're doing in Esalen and I want to do some of that stuff too. And so I started these groups in Berkeley, permission groups, led by my wife, where the people would touch. Eric came and visited one of these groups and thought it was OK. Then I started doing experimental stroke theory groups. It was a legitimate Adult activity which produced the ideas of the stroke economy but my child agenda was to get strokes for myself. Eric had talked about people needing strokes, and collecting stamps, but it didn't seem to occur to him that people could give strokes directly, without a game. For him practically speaking the only way to get strokes seemed to be playing games. Of course he did talk about intimacy, the absence of withdrawal, pastimes, games or activity, but intimacy in his mind was very hard to achieve. A person might not have more than about 15 minutes of it in a lifetime.

He was thinking of the pathology of stroking, I suppose. I asked myself: "Why play games to get strokes if you can get them directly?. Why wait for a game to unload brown stamps? The whole idea that people were stroke-starved came from this thinking and led to the notion of a stroke economy which was a fairly political theory which had its roots in Wilhelm Reich's sex economy.

He never knew this and I kept it away from him because I didn't think he was sympathetic to my politics. For him politics was something you did aside from psychiatry. If you brought politics into it, you were playing a game in his opinion. So topics like oppression and women, blacks, war, was not something to talk about. For him it was "Ain't It Awful", or some other game or pastime.

Anne: So he left out society as an influence completely?

Claude: Yes, in fact he made fun of people who spoke of "Arsacity." When Vince Gilpin, who is a political person, was looking for examples of Berne's political statements he could only find one short article he wrote about the four horses of the Apocalypse. Eric wrote something about an index of child mortality and how it is legitimate to get involved in some kind of political work. He just wasn't political. When I got to Berkeley in '65 I got very involved in anti-war activities, and he would say "leave war to the generals, we are therapists." But I kept pushing, and public opinion began to change, he began to see some of the points. I remember that demonstrators in a Californian city set a bank on fire and somebody was shot. The first story was that the demonstrators did it, but it turned out to be a police bullet. That had a strong effect on Eric and he was beginning to change his mind. When I saw him do that I thought it's time to start introducing my new concepts like the stroke economy. I was saying that there was a conspiracy to keep people stroke starved in the system of America 1969. I was encouraging liberation of strokes as a rebellion against the conspiracy to keep people stroke starved, to keep them compliant, à la Wilhelm Reich. So I thought Eric was ready for this, and on the day I was supposed to read the stroke economy paper, he had a heart attack. So he never heard about it and I don't know what he would have said about it. I had given him the *Warm Fuzzy Tale* to publish in the Bulletin years before and he wouldn't. But just before he died, without telling me, he decided to publish it and to my surprise it appeared in the next bulletin after his death.

Anne: Could you say something about stroke hunger with relevance to society and political issues?

Claude: Well I think it's irrational to think that you can change the world or large political structures or huge global complexes by means of psychological theories. I remember when someone made a presentation saying that if everyone knew T.A. there would be no more war. I said "I think this is crazy and you're making a fool of yourself and making us look foolish." Who believes that? Yet the understanding about strokes, that the effect a more stroke-conscious society might have on consumerism, I think, is true; propaganda that uses strokes to sell cosmetics, clothes, etc. is very effective. But a lot of consumerism is just power - people striving for power and comfort, and even that would be lessened by a society that was not as structured as far as strokes go. But on the basis of small groups, there is no question of the influence of the stroke economy on the group. Strokes are a positive influence on the well-being of people. They probably ultimately have the effect of making them less vulnerable to consumerism and making them less vulnerable to political propaganda. People are innocent, they believe what they read, whether they're stroke hungry or not.

Anne: I was impressed by a point you made that the ability to control strokes is a much more powerful influence than direct forms of power and violence. So I think it's useful to teach more about the importance of strokes. I think the idea of strokes is used as a powerful means of control.

Claude: I never went so far as to say that there are people controlling strokes. There was a period when young people were breaking the rules and being punished for it. But there's no one planning to keep it that way, it's just a naturally conservative phenomenon. So if anyone tries to break the stroke economy, he will feel pressure, but it's not a scheme or program.

Anne: In Germany in the last few years the economy developed well, but the number of unemployed stayed the same. I think they could have done something about it, but they need that to keep work scarce. There are two million people out of work.

Claude: That is a much more economically based thing. Unemployment keeps inflation down. Why? Because wages don't go up. A government economist says, "Let's keep unemployment high and inflation low. We can control that with public funds." They are just thinking of the numbers though. But with the stroke economy there aren't those self evident connections being manipulated between strokes and the stroke-hungry.

Anne: In Germany last year, industry made a lot of money, but for many years they refused to admit it.

Claude: During the Nazi regime, according to Wilhelm Reich, there was an attempt to control the sexual expression of the large masses. The question is did Hitler and Goebbels have a meeting in the Propaganda Ministry and draw up the plans for the manipulation of people's sexual lives or was the curtailment of sexuality that Reich observed the result of the racial, family, national and religious ideology of the Nazis? In any case I don't think that the stroke economy is consciously programmed by any one group. It just exists and the state and other groups will resist any change of it and punish those who try.

Anne: Nobody says let's people get stroke starved and then we can control them.

Claude: Maybe it will happen in the future because I think it would work as Reich says, it would generate passivity and masochism. Its true that people will do things for strokes that profit other people and that some people take advantage of others's stroke hunger. The stroke hunger exists and people cleverly use that stroke hunger to sell. Advertisers are totally aware of the fact that people will buy something that is associated with something they need. So now there's a lot of ads with nature, because we all need nature. It used to be women. It's bio this and bio that, bio everything. Bio cigarettes, bio cancer. But I think it's important not to get overly paranoid about it, like Reich did about the sex economy. It's a condition like hunger, it just happens to be. In Fascist societies, they know that people should not be allowed to talk to each other or congregate in groups. It's about talking, communicating. In those cases there is definitely an attempt to control the stroke economy but that only happens in extreme societies, where people are not allowed to be educated or to spend time with each other.

Anne: What happens in our society is that the control of strokes or stroke economy rules are passed on from one generation to another. It starts in the hospital with the newborn, saying that you're spoiling the baby by holding it all the time. Or when I tell people that our daughter comes to our bed very often and has her place there, people are silent in amazement and think we're strange.

Claude: That will be seen by some as child molesting. There was a theory about that in the States, the family bed. The next thing was a very dramatic focus on child sexual abuse. I'm worried about allowing my daughter into my bed now that this divorce has happened even though she slept with us all the time. I'm afraid that it could be used to split me away from her. So I give her my strokes in other ways. This new awareness about the seriousness of child sexual abuse is very important but has it's tragic aspects. The whole way in which children are spoken to in the US is sad, I for instance, cannot speak to children on the street.

Anne: Here too, the idea is, don't talk to strangers. A few days ago I read an article in which they stated that 75% of sexual abuse is within the family itself.

Claude: In the States that has become a total media message. It's a kind of mass phobia of strangers.

On Eric's and Claude's Intellectual Relationship

Anne: Tell me some more about your intellectual relationship with Eric.

Claude: *What do you say after you say hello* was almost finished when he died, but there was nothing new in that book. I had extended his theory in my book *Games Alcoholics Play*. He may have been jealous and competitive that I'd done that because he took some of my ideas for himself but at the same time praised me for others and gave me credit. For instance he said that the script matrix was one of the most important diagrams of the 20th Century in the social sciences. I had a big argument with him because he wanted to rename some of my concepts. He wanted to rename the counterscript and call it the antiscript and he had rewritten a number of my ideas with different names though still giving me credit. I said: "Eric, you're going to hopelessly confuse people; even if these are not good names, you can't change them anymore." So he decided not to, stuck to the old names, and came up with some new ones. Still in the case of the gallows laugh, which was my idea he gave himself credit. He didn't have any new ideas, he was frightfully stuck.

Anne: What do you think was the reason for this?

Claude: Well first of all his relationship to his third wife was falling apart. He had wanted to have some more children but Torre wouldn't get pregnant. He had other relationships, but he was so paranoid about them that he hid them. He was afraid he would get sued. He was lonely, felt he was dying mentally as well as physically, I guess...

Anne: A kind of desperation maybe?

Claude: Yes, so when I got stuck like that myself, he was an example of what not to do. So instead of staying in T.A. and radical psychiatry, I had to do something different. That's when I started studying propaganda.

Anne: When you went to South America?

Claude: I travelled to Central America as a part of my research into the subject and I was involved in starting the Propaganda Review magazine and all of that got me unstuck. Now I feel I can go back to T.A., but Eric wasn't that flexible. He was unhappy because he didn't have a loved person but he couldn't figure it out. He went to a psychoanalyst for therapy. He never told us his problems in a thorough way. Occasionally he might sit with you after a meeting in a car and suddenly tell you something that troubled him, but that was all. And that's something I learned; when I am deeply troubled I will tell the people that have learned from me and ask their help and advice.

Anne: I think these are the two ways of good learning, to copy something good or avoid something bad.

Claude: I learned a bad thing from one of his books. In *Structure and Dynamics of Groups* he says that a good leader must know how to kill and I suppose he meant that in a metaphorical

way but it was open to misunderstanding. For a while as a leader, I thought I had to know how to get rid of people.

But it took me a while to realize that that is wrong at a lot of levels. It doesn't work, and it is morally wrong. You cannot get rid of people in a free society. You must live with them, reason with them, negotiate with them. So for a while this particular teaching caused me lots of problems. I learned from him in a lot of ways, mostly good though.

On T.A. Membership and Exams

Anne: We didn't talk about David Kupfer yet.

Claude: He was a nice German guy, he was no creative genius, sort of an organizer person, very close to Eric, and got sick very quickly after Eric died and died too. He was basically a Mensch.

Anne: Was it him who did a lot of work around the training structure for T.A.? Or who invented that?

Claude: Eric did. He had a conception, and it was based on the psychoanalytic organizations. For instance when there were too many people in the room and some people always got to speak, and some didn't there was dissatisfaction over the situation. He wanted to try to take turns by pulling names from a vase. He tried that once and I think we refused to do it but I later found out that this was the method used in Freud's meetings. He had ideas based on the psychoanalytic society; being international, training and having examinations for membership. So the first thing we instituted was different kinds of memberships for teachers, practitioners, and regular members. I remember working it out in the seminar. He designed the 101 course to become a regular member. Then you took a certain amount of training to become a clinical member and more training to become a teaching member. These were all Eric's ideas, we only kind of modified it and I was a Teaching Member, all that anybody could be, from the beginning without any exams. And then after he died the system of testing got more and more complicated and weird. And that's when I decided I didn't want to be a Teaching Member, because I became aware that I would not be able to pass the test myself, so how could I pretend to examine anyone? And I also didn't like the way people were being treated in the exams; people were much too worried and anxious and oppressed by this system. So I was saying to people, "Don't take this test unless you really want to. You can do therapy without that test."

Anne: Did you get your T.A. status back sometime?

Claude: First of all I gave it up. Then years later someone wanted me to be an examiner. So I said: "I can't, I'm not a Teaching Member any more." And then I was told that I couldn't give up my Teaching Membership. Because I.T.A.A. wasn't taking it back: "It's yours so you can't give it up." I thought that was funny, so after a while I thought the reasons for which I had given up the membership were no longer current, so I started to pay my dues again. They were very clever with me. Instead of playing a "Now I've got you" game, they said, "OK, we'll humour him." That was a good thing to do.

On Claude's Contribution to T.A.

Anne: What do you think Eric Berne would say about your ideas about cooperation?

Claude: He probably would think that it's a little bit social-workerish, sort of like he used to make everything chicken-soupish. So who cares about cooperation, what's the point? But then again why not?

Anne: Things developed differently for you.

Claude: Yes, two things happened to me. One was feminism that came to me through a relationship in which my partner said: "You will feel things and you will tell me what you feel or you will have to live without me." So there was a demand that there was no escape from. And on the other hand, seeing how Eric's emotional life somehow trapped him and I think, prematurely killed him, I just wasn't going to do that to myself. I really made an effort to break away from the stroke economy, all of the prohibitions about strokes. I was already rebelling against his stroke prohibitions before he died. He had said: "A transactional analyst doesn't touch his patients." So I said, "OK fine, I believe that's right so I'm going to start some groups in which I'm going to touch my friends. They're not clients, I'm not a transactional analyst in those groups and we're going to see what happens."

So I accepted his restriction but somehow found a way to do whatever I wanted to do. That was even before I decided that emotionally, I did not want to live my life the way he did. I think it was more the fact that he was under all of these emotionally painful situations and never told me about them. I thought, "This is crazy! Here I'm a friend and a disciple of his, and he doesn't tell me. I'll never do that," so whenever something was wrong with me I went to my students, my friends and I told them what was wrong. And expected them to respond. And so that's how come I changed in that direction and then with opening up the stroke economy - it just naturally led to other feelings and emotions. I realized then that Eric had put a limitation on us, about feelings, that had to do with his personal life.

Anne: Do you think this limitation of feelings still has an influence on T.A. today?

Claude: Oh, I'm sure it does. I think there's a real strong tendency for T.A. to be overly rational. T.A. attracts rational people because it's a rational system. So here you have people attracted to the system because it's rational, no indications at all that emotions are important so, of course you'll get an organization that does not really involve itself with emotions. So far as I know, I'm the only person in T.A. who made a really strong push in the other direction and I don't know how much that is being accepted.

People have accepted the idea that cooperation in T.A., but people will not accept the Pig Parent. It's something that is not being accepted by the larger group. And having not accepted the Pig Parent and the stroke economy in its fun meaning, the relevance of emotions and the idea of emotional literacy is probably not clear to people. But in my opinion it all depends on the fact that the Pig Parent is preventing people from being fully emotional as well as rational persons.

Anne: I think the idea of the Pig Parent is misunderstood by many because it sounds like very bad parents and in German "Schweine-Eltern" sounds really different than "Pig Parent".

Claude: Yet, I don't think that it sounds bad is the problem. It's interesting because the Pig Parent as an idea will not die; people, especially clients, like it. They think it's good. I've had many ideas that came and went and I've never talked about them again. And I would be glad not to talk about the Pig Parent but everybody else wants to talk about it all the time. So I think the reason why people don't like the Pig Parent is because philosophically it is a completely different point of view. The point of view being that there is such a thing as a totally negative parental presence. And that totally negative parental presence is an external, oppressive entity. That, for some reason, bothers people. And I don't exactly know why.

Anne: Maybe some identify with the Pig Parent so that means they are bad parents...

Claude: Definitely. My mother had that reaction at first. Maybe they don't want to give up that part of their personality that is "critical parent". They think it's good and important. Maybe they think that they have to give up their Adult critique. The best I can say is that when I first started talking about the Pig Parent, I was saying, "children are oppressed beings, they are princes and princesses and they are turned into frogs - this was Eric's idea - because of parental oppression." And that oppression is what the Pig Parent is all about. It's a political statement, you know. Oppression of children, oppression of women, oppression of gays, of fat people, of single people, of old people; all of these types of oppression are carried out by the Pig Parent. I had thought at first that maybe the reason people don't like it is because it's really a political statement. It's a statement about power, about the abuses of powerful people upon powerless people, and maybe people don't like political sounding points of view in T.A. I just don't think that it's the name alone that bothers people.

Anne: And what do you think about the stroke economy? Do you think this is taken seriously or the importance of strokes is really seen?

Claude: I think people see the importance of strokes but people don't really get beyond that. As long as you don't understand the Pig Parent you can't understand the real significance of the stroke economy. You can understand strokes easily without the notion of the Pig Parent, and you can even understand the stroke economy in the sense that there's always an economy of some sort. What's your stroke economy like? Do you have lots of strokes? or not many? But to me an economy is a dynamic process. It's connected to the fact that the Pig Parent is suppressing all the different ways in which people interact with strokes. So because of that suppression you then have a scarcity, and because of the scarcity you have an economy. And within that economy you have commerce, there's traffic in strokes and there's bartering, and there's buying and selling, and there's accumulation, and stealing and exploitation and all of those negative outcomes. It's a very political point of view. I think people just like to hear about the strokes and not get into the politics perhaps.

Anne: The concept of emotional literacy - do you understand this as a concept within a T.A. framework or where do you put this idea or also your ideas concerning power and power plays?

Claude: Well I think power is certainly a completely transactional concept, it's a development of T.A. The script matrix is a transactional idea. It contains the Pig Parent.

The next idea was the stroke economy which is wholly connected to the script matrix and the Pig and it is a transactional idea. Power plays, which is the next point, is totally connected to transactions, the Pig Parent, and to the script matrix. Emotional literacy begins to perhaps not be a transactional idea. It becomes transactional because the way to develop emotional literacy is through transactions.

Anne: Yes, and your basic steps, your training wheels, are transactions.

Claude: They're all transactions. Every one of them is a transactional event. But why emotions became important to me is really from outside T.A. The early emotional literacy ideas were transactional, really, because giving and taking strokes is a part of emotional literacy, and that is transactional. And then the getting rid of stamps. Remember that the idea was that you have stamps, and you accumulate them and, why not give them away? Why not get rid of them? Then after I developed all these different transactions I came up with the idea of emotional literacy. In any case when I applied to the Eric Berne Memorial Award with these two concepts - Pig Parent and Emotional Literacy - neither of them was considered to fit the criteria of the Award.

Anne: Maybe this will change now. I'm still in the editorial board till the end of this year and there hasn't been an award for several years now. The editorial board is working on a new structure concerning what the Eric Berne Memorial Award is given for and how it's done.

Claude: I think it was a good idea to keep it for original ideas. I hope they don't make it less strict because then it just becomes a kind of political football.

Anne: One idea at this stage is that it's only for articles, not for books. But it's a pity, I think. That might be changed. And then there are good practical ideas, creative ways about how to put theory into practice. This couldn't be awarded before and thus it's in the discussion too. I think how you would put it is interesting. And I really would like to have your ideas about emotional literacy, cooperation, etc. more distributed in the T.A. world.

Claude: Well they're all right there in the books. Either the people are reading my books and not hearing what I'm saying or they're just not reading my books. Or they read and they say: "This is not true. I don't like it."

Anne: My impression is that many people are reading, are interested, and get enthusiastic. Richard and I are very often presenting your ideas, and with success, but my overall impression is that it's like something aside of the regular middle-of-the-road-T.A. apart from the official T.A. theory.

Claude: So what's in the middle-of-the-road-T.A.?

Anne: The classic concepts that are taught in the 101 ... for instance.

Claude: It stops at scripts.

Anne: Yeah. Games, scripts, strokes, and stroke economy are taught too, ego-grams, drama triangle, discounting, and contracts. Maybe it has to do with the fact that you aren't so active...

Claude: I'm not pushing my ideas...

Anne: Or do not influence I.T.A.A. I thought one evening I asked you about workshops in the United States and you said: "Oh, you were not invited so you don't do any," and that's very astonishing because you are very well known and you show up in all the 101 courses because of stroke economy, script matrix and so on. So you are well known, one of the first and very intimate disciples of Eric Berne. So my fantasy how this could be changed is that you show up and present your thoughts and concepts.

Claude: A friend of mine in Zürich said: "There's a group of T.A. people in Zürich. Don't they call you up when you're here, are they not interested in you?" I didn't even know they exist. They don't come to my workshops or send any people. They certainly never call me for any reason whatsoever. So I don't know. That's how it is.

Anne: Some aspect may be that people are shy, that you are a famous person.

Claude: No, I don't think so.

Anne: Perhaps you are this strange, political guy, you are not a proper man with a child and a wife.

Claude: That could be. I think people may have come to the conclusion that I misbehave sexually, perhaps. Which I think, is partially true, there was a time in the 60's, when I was on the radical side, sexually as well as politically; it's a possibility, that that reputation is with me.

Anne: It's a long time ago.

Claude: It is quite a long time ago, but those things don't go away, there are people who don't know that you've changed. Maybe I should put an ad in the newspaper and say, "I've changed" I'm no longer naughty, I'm a very normal sexual person now!

Anne: Very funny. What do you think was your most important input or influence to T.A.?

Claude: Well, I think when I gave up my Teaching Membership and let it be known that I was unhappy with voting procedures, the institutes and other political issues, it somehow helped the organization change. The changes that were made, I think, had something to do with me. As far as theory goes, the suicide contract is one, for instance. Most people don't know that it was really my idea, it's an idea that didn't exist when I brought it up, now it's accepted in the whole profession, really.

Anne: Yes, that's not known.

Claude: The script matrix has been accepted, but interestingly, not really in the way that I conceived of it. The way people use the script matrix has very little to do with what I believe in.

So, people use the script matrix diagram and use it differently than I would mostly by filling in large numbers of ego state subdivisions and arrows. But the diagram isn't the important thing, really, to me.

Anne: What's important to you?

Claude: The important thing about the diagram is the power differences, one up, one down, the fact of two parents oppressing a child and the messages that they press on the children. The Pig Parent is an essential part of the script matrix, and people don't accept that, so that's how little has been taken from what I have to say. And the work about strokes, about cooperation, and power plays is being used but again not necessarily in the way that I thought about them either.

So, in a certain vague way my ideas on scripts, strokes and cooperation, have been accepted, but not in the precise way in which I believe, and the Pig Parent, power plays, and emotional literacy have been passed over. Of course there are plenty of people who really like my point of view, on the other hand. On the whole I believe that I have had a strong and healthy influence. I think that people think of me as Eric's intellectual heir or Eric Berne's next person down. But I don't know what they think of my contribution; it's an interesting question. There's certainly some kind of resistance, that I feel, but I suppose that's natural.

Anne: I think that some of your ideas are easy to understand or to explain on one level, and the difficulty is to live it, and to do it differently. With things that can be explained so easily, like step 1,2,3, the importance is discounted because it's not so complicated to explain. So it seems too easy and simple and that's not worth much, and the importance is not seen but the difficulty is to put it into practice. It's easy to understand your cooperation rules, but really do it, that's another thing.

Claude: I think that I may be partially responsible for that because when I write, I make a real conscious effort to write a very simple statement so that anybody who reads it once can get something out of it. And then, there's a second and third level of difficulty, complication, which I intentionally write into things so that you could read it once and think you've understood it completely because you got the first layer, and didn't even see the second layer let alone the third.

Anne: Yeah, so maybe people look at the first layer, and say, oh how simple, nice and easy.

Claude: To get the whole complicated picture you have to really read all of it, and you have to see the connections, and you have to read it over at least once.

Anne: Another reason, might be I think, that your ideas are really political, and if you really go and take the stroke economy seriously, you really have to change your life, like not collect more than you need and things like that, so that's the more difficult part.

Claude: If you take my theory seriously you have to, at the very least, attempt to deal with sexism, racism and crude capitalism.

Anne: And exploitation of nature, other nations, whatever. When you present yourself today as a therapist do you say you are a transactional analyst?

Claude: Definitely, I am a transactional analyst. And that's because that's what I do, I analyze transactions. I'll say, I'm a transactional analyst and I'm a radical psychiatrist.

Anne: What do you think about discussions in T.A. about the theory as being, too simple, not profound enough, that the theory has to be rewritten or refined, or whatever?

Claude: Well, I agree the theory should be brought forward and refined. I don't think that can ever be done from within T.A., you know, systems like that have a way of becoming encapsulated and can't work their way out of themselves. Anybody who really changes the system is seen as an outsider and is pushed away, actually rejected. There's something conservative about a system; it can't really assimilate change.

So, I think it's perfectly OK for T.A. to be what it is, which is an organisation of people who are still interested in transactional analysis which at this point is a very large group that has all sorts of interesting ramifications, but basically the theory really doesn't get changed. Yet there's all this ferment, all this cycling inside, and people trying to have new ideas, but the organization is really an enclosure for ideas, it doesn't really encourage you to have new ideas very well. For new ideas you have to get out of the system and have your ideas.

Anne: Look from outside.

Claude: Look from outside and find people who think you're having a great idea and then create a group of those people. Which is what I did, but then understandably, that whole thing, radical psychiatry was not accepted as part of T.A. Interestingly I am in the exact same position in radical psychiatry. We have an organisation and everybody's thinking we have to have new ideas, and we really can't, we can't even find a new name and we're very conscious of the fact that we are restricted theoretically. It has a lot to do with the fact that Eric is gone. If he were alive he might say, "I think emotional literacy is great let's go in that direction" then the whole group would go that way.

Anne: So when the leader is dead, the tendency is to keep it like it is.

Claude: Because who's to say that something is good, you know?

Anne: And define whether it's T.A. or not.

Claude: Right, instead of that, there'll be 15 people, picking it apart saying "It's not good, I don't really like that, that's not really T.A.," so the only way to do it is to get out of the group and, start something on your own, which some of the people have done, they start their own institutes, with a lot of excitement around an idea, and then maybe, they even go back into T.A., and maybe T.A. gets excited about the idea. So I know of no way that this could be different, except for Eric to still be alive, saying, "Let's do that." With radical psychiatry, I have in fact done that a few times, I've said, "That's a great idea let's go that way," and we have and it's been very good.

Anne: What do you see as the strengths, and what do you see as the weaknesses of T.A.?

Claude: Well, to the extent that people really, take transactional analysis

seriously as the analysis of transactions that is its strength. But I see many people in T.A. who don't really even think that way anymore. They don't think about contracts, they don't think about ego states or transactions, either.

Anne: Yes that's true.

Claude: Another strength is that it's an international organization and that it's a wellmeaning, fairly liberal, good-people organization and that's a great strength. It has a euhemerous - a dead primal leader - it has a canon - all the books - it has people who believe in it and want to work for it and it's spread out - all over, it's a very interesting organization that in it's growing fringes, is young, whereas in the USA the people are just getting older and older and there's barely a young person in it anymore. So as it spreads out, it's getting older in the center; the center is going to start dying and then there'll be nobody left there.

Anne: So is something missing that attracts young people?

Claude: In the center? Yes, there's something wrong, but I don't know what it is. The fringes seems to be alive and well.

Anne: What do you think are the weaknesses of T.A.?

Claude: Considering that it's a transactional theory, a social theory, it's not political and I think that weakens it. But that could be a prejudiced view. Organizationally T.A., became weakened by the fact that it was part of a media blitz; it was, for a while a fad in the media and anything that becomes that popular in the media get's commercialized and damaged. That weakened it as an organization. It got discredited and cheapened because of greed; the money that people were making. The product that they were offering was not worth the price in a lot of different ways.

But that was a long time ago. I think T.A. is quite strong now. But I think that it might be stronger if it had a stronger political bent. Although the fact is that, as things become political these days they become less and less popular, so, you know, you lose members rather than gain members.

I think that T.A. has fallen in the proper middle place for a large organization; it's neither too political nor is it so unpolitical that it's disgusting, you know?

Anne: Do you have a fantasy about the future T.A. in 20, 50 or a hundred years?

Claude: Early when we started the organization, as a kind of flamboyant gesture, I would get up at every Winter congress and make a motion, that T.A. should self-destruct 50 years after its creation which would be about the year 2005. It would use cease to exist. Because I really don't think an organization like this can go beyond a certain point and keep its self-respect. So, what I have in mind for T.A., is that it will be part of the big soul-healing book, so to speak. Part of the tradition of psychiatry, Freud and Jung and Maslow and Rogers and Ellis and Perls; different people who became part of the progress of our craft incorporates in its usage although not necessarily being given specific credit.

In other words, people make contracts and don't not know that it comes from T.A. People will talk about the child inside of you and not really think that it's a T.A. concept. People will talk about scripts, and not necessarily credit T.A.'s work. T.A. has clearly affected psychiatry, and that's really the best that I can hope for, and that Eric Berne will someday be seen as having made a tremendous contribution.

Anne: And do you still think that T.A. is going to exist, after 50 or a 100 years or...

Claude: Yes of course, it's not going to self-destruct. There are still Jungian societies and there's still Freudian societies and there'll be Neo-Bernian, Neo-T.A. offshoots. Someone might say, "These people aren't practicing T.A., look at this, this is what T.A. really is," and then start a whole new school of Neo-.T.A.

Anne: Neo-Steiner.

On Eric-Claude Parallels

Anne: Last time you talked a year ago, you talked about also similarities between you and Eric.

Claude: Well, I find myself constantly amazed that, I suddenly discover I'm doing something that Eric Berne, did. For instance years ago I bought a set of jazz drums. And I put 'em up in my living-room, and I started playing them, and about six months later I realized that Eric had a set of drums in his living-room. So that keeps happening to me, you know, like for instance, I suddenly find that I have the exact same pattern of going back and forth between my place in the country and my place in the city. I find myself in a relationship with a much younger woman. And then when I look in the mirror, every day I look more like Eric Berne.

Anne: Yeah, even your hair is cut shorter.

Claude: And even my gestures because I'm myopic. As I become, far-sighted because of my maturity, so-to-speak, I do the same thing he used to. He used pick up his glasses and put his nose in the paper. That was a very characteristic gesture of his, and now I do it too. The reason for it is because I don't like to wear bifocals and I guess neither did he, which has to do with vanity, and also the fact that bifocals are bothersome. The only thing that I'm not doing is smoking a pipe and dying at age sixty, I hope.

Anne: I hope so too.

Claude: No I don't think I'm going to die at age 60, not of a heart-attack. It's scary to say that.

Anne: Yes, I believe you.

Anne: You also said that he got stuck, and a few years ago, you said that you also got stuck.

Claude: Yeah, but you know, you think you're escaping your destiny and maybe you're not, so who knows.

Anne: We will see what happens.

Claude: Surely.

Anne: And do you see yourself unstuck now?

Claude: Definitely, I was stuck. I'm unstuck now in that, I just got into a whole new set of ideas. Every time I get interested in something it's like, taking something I've said before and looking into it and amplifying it. *Scripts People Live* got me into power. So then I wrote *The Other Side of Power* book. And that got me into emotional literacy and then I did *When A Man Loves A Woman*, and then I got interested in subtle psychological power-plays, propaganda.

That started 5 years ago, and now after 5 years of really studying the problem I feel I have something very interesting to say, and I'm writing a book about it. Which proves my point that if you want to be creative, take anything you are interested in and work on it for 5 years and you will create something of value. But you have to work at it for 5 years, so it has to be really interesting to you. It has to be a 5 year obsession. I'm unstuck because I have this new idea that I can write about, and I'm also back to practising in a completely different, new way, which is very, very pleasant. I'm also unstuck because I went through the darkest night of my soul, and survived it. The divorce, the abandonment, the betrayal.

Anne: That's like a divorce without the legal ritual, you had.

Claude: I don't know what it was about that incident because I certainly wasn't the first person who was ever betrayed. I think I was betrayed, but that's not really so important. I wasn't the first person whose heart was broken. But, I took it, I made it my personal project. I was not going to let that diminish me. I was not going to repress the effect of it. And so, I was a flamboyantly heartbroken person, for two, two-and-a-half years before I started putting myself together. So I had to answer lots of hard questions like what I did to deserve it, how did I participate in it, what I needed to do to be different from the way I was. All this did really have an effect on me, a positive effect, and part of it was to unstuck me. But I think the biggest thing that intellectually unstuck me, is that I really, got into a whole new intellectual pursuit which Eric couldn't do because he was so committed to his seminar, and yet he did say, he wanted to start a seminar again somewhere else. Probably because he saw that he needed to start a whole new thing.

Anne: I think, from what you said the big difference between you and Eric is that you deal differently with your feelings.

Claude: Yes. I think he was much more devoted, he continued to have a seminar every Tuesday night. I couldn't possibly have a T.A. seminar or a radical psychiatry seminar every Tuesday night. Out of the question. He did right until the last minute. He never once stopped. So, that also gave the organization its strength in the end in addition to the books, and the theory. Yet the Tuesday night T.A. seminar goes on every Tuesday night in San Francisco, without him. So I don't know how essential that devotion was, but he couldn't get out of his Tuesday night groove.

Anne: So you got out of your routine when you stopped your practice.

Claude: Yes I developed this theory that if you are stuck, you have to throw a monkey wrench into the works. It's like, you're in a machine and you have to get a tool and throw it into the gears. So the gears break, everything falls apart you can't go back anymore, there's no way to fix the machine, so you have to get off and do something else. Which is what I did by giving up my practice and by deciding to travel in Europe which meant that my practice was finished, kaputt. It was great, I wasn't obliged to have groups every week, I was able to take a six-week trip by car to Nicaragua, and I was able to spend six weeks in Europe, and do workshops, and I could do all these things that I could have never done with a practice.

Anne: So in the near future we'll be getting your book on propaganda.

Claude: Yes, and it will be very interesting, I don't think anybody in T.A. will have the slightest interest in it though, because it really has nothing to do with T.A., it's not connected except in the most esoteric way, only because propaganda is a power play of some sort.

However some of the theories that I've had are very helpful. For instance I've come up with an idea that I think is brilliant, if I say so myself, which is, that just as there is stroke hunger, there is information hunger, and just as there is stroke scarcity and a stroke economy there's information scarcity and an information economy. And just as there are warm fuzzies and plastic fuzzies and cold pricklies there is true, valid, information, and there is false information, and there is junk information, a major capitalist enterprise. And that people will take any information if they can't get good information. That's just a very small part of the theory that I'm writing, but comes directly from T.A. which is very nice.

Anne: Yes, I am very curious to read that.

Claude: If this book does well then maybe there will be a possibility of an organization of some sort and conferences and so on. Party time! And, you know, it's beginning to be clear to me how much of people's scripts is really information, basically media representations of what life is supposed to be.

Anne: It's a TV show. I think it's an interesting topic, especially nowadays with all these tremendous political changes in the world.

Thank you for the interview Claude.