

The Integration of Transactional Analysis with the Mythos and Logos of the Love Relationship

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THE MYTHOS AND THE LOGOS

The ancient Greeks recognized two ways of thinking, speaking and acquiring knowledge. The mythos and logos¹ were both considered essential, equal and complementary. The logos² was the word – reasoned, logical and scientific – that was needed to create, organize and plan ways of controlling the environment, improving old insights, or inventing new processes. It was the order and knowledge in the world. We find reference to the Logos in the Gospel of John:

The Word (Logos) was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one. Everything was created through God; nothing – not one thing! – came into being without God. What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by. The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; that darkness couldn't put it out.³

In this context Logos incorporates Theos, which goes beyond the ancient Greeks' original meaning by including the mythos. The earlier meaning of logos could not "assuage human grief or find ultimate meaning in life's struggles"⁴ and so needed the complementary processes of mythos to assist people in living effectively in our confusing world, through a different way⁵ by "telling stories involving the more elusive, puzzling, and tragic aspects of the human predicament that lay outside the remit of logos"⁶. As a primitive form of psychology the mythoi were not understood to be factual stories but "designed to help people negotiate the obscure regions of the psyche, which are difficult to access but which

profoundly influence our thoughts and behaviour"⁷.

Mythos was something that had happened once but that also happens all the time.⁸

It is not necessary to believe the facts of the story but rather to find out its relevance by putting it into practice. The value of any myth is determined by the action of faith⁹ either in real life or in ritual and ceremony. Without the action of faith, the myth remains abstract and incredible – 'as opaque as a musical score until it is performed'¹⁰ and beyond the limits of reason¹¹. The complementary combination of the logos and mythos can be likened to a violin¹² – the logos describes the instrument, works out the score and fixes the strings; but until combined with the mythos to perform its magic of music and transport us to places we cannot adequately describe¹³, the instrument is only mechanical. Often people find it hard to explain how rituals and practices work, but just that, after practice, they do. In the modern western world, a new form of logos, governed by scientific rationality and driven by technology and economics, has resulted in tremendous human advance but has also attempted to discredit and ignore the mythoi¹⁴. Religious knowledge has become theoretical rather than practical and often religion emphasizes beliefs in creeds and dogmas rather than the praxis of faith. The logos-rationalized interpretation of religion has resulted in fundamentalism which has erupted in almost every major faith during the

1 J.Sloek (1996) *Devotional Language*, pp.53-96.

2 K.Armstrong (2009) *The Case for God*, p.xi.

3 John 1:1-3. All quotations are taken from "The Message": *The Bible in Contemporary Language* unless otherwise stated.

4 K.Armstrong (2009) *The Case for God*, p.xi.

5 K.Armstrong. (2005) *A Short History of Myth*.

6 K.Armstrong (2009) *The Case for God*, p.xi.

7 M.Eliade (1958) *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, pp.453-455.

8 K.Armstrong (2009) *The Case for God*, p.xi.

9 J.Campbell (1949) *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

10 J.Sloek, *Devotional language*, pp.75-76.

11 D.Turner (2004) *Faith, Reason and the Existence of God*, pp.108-115

12 G.Steiner (1989) *Real Presences: Is There Anything in What We Say?* p.217

13 G.Steiner (1967) *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature and the Inhuman*, pp.58-59

14 Plural form of *mythos*.



twentieth century¹⁵ and the helpfulness of the mythoi has been diminished and ignored in modern western cultures.

Perhaps responding to the logos-dominated twentieth century thought, Eric Berne proposed that the counselling process of Transactional Analysis was a “scientific approach to counselling”. In the classic Transactional Analysis (TA) text “I’m OK, You’re OK”, a psychiatrist, Dr. Thomas Harris confessed that he had become impatient with the “cartoon image of psychiatrists and their mystical couches” attempting to help by finding the “elusive person within”. Instead of focusing on ill-defined, internal issues, Transactional Analysis focuses on the basic unit of social intercourse - the transaction (words and behavior) between people – which has the advantage of being external, observable and scientific supply of authentic data¹⁶. However, this approach could be said to neglect the power of the mythoi. A more sophisticated approach would be to utilize the tools of analysis available to TA and to examine the Scripture and draw out parallels for today. This paper will attempt to integrate the concepts of TA with 1 Corinthians 13¹⁷ which is commonly recited at wedding ceremonies and widely recognized as helpful in the context of marriage relationships.

Early in his work in the development of TA, Berne¹⁸ observed that as you watch and listen to people, you can see them change before your eyes.¹⁹ Berne observed that there were times that grown people would exhibit the facial expressions, vocabulary, gestures and even bodily functions of a child; then abruptly changing to appear like a harsh parent - critical, judgmental and dogmatic; and then assuming the reasoned, logical and grown-up posture of an adult. Berne went on to label these three ego-states as Parent, Adult and Child – the nurturing and caring part of the human personality he called the Parent, the reasoning part he called the Adult and the feeling part he called the Child. Each of these states can be appropriate and functional within a relationship but each of them can also become inappropriate and even dysfunctional. According to Berne²⁰ there were two parts of the “transaction” process between people – the Orientation determined by their “internal Parent” (the nurturing and disciplining voice), “internal Adult” (the thinking voice) and “internal Child” (the wanting and feeling voice); and the Interaction which are the words and behaviours that enable a Transactional Analyst to

15 K.Armstrong (2000), *The Battle for God.*

16 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, pp.xiii,3,13,15.

17 This is not a theological exegesis, rather it is an integration of Scripture (*Theos, logos and mythos*) with the concepts of Transactional Analysis.

18 E.Berne (1964) *Games People Play*, p. 29.

19 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, p.16.

20 E.Berne (1964) *Games People Play*, p. 29.

observe relationships and identify participants' voices as **Parent, Adult and Child**.

The Parent, Adult, Child voices come from the "archaic" models derived from parental modelling of the spoken word and deed as well as the survival strategies developed in childhood experience²¹. When allowed to play out in a marriage relationship the archaic Child is inadequate:

*When the Child is in-charge of planning the marriage, important dissimilarities are ignored, and a contract which reads 'till death us do part is based on such insufficient sameness such as 'we both love dancing', 'we both want lots of children', 'we both love horses', or 'we're both on acid'. Perfection is seen in broad shoulders, shiny teeth, big bosoms, shiny cars, or other somewhat perishable wonders ... the (couple) exist in a folie à deux in which they share the same delusions ... (and) soon become objects of their own bitterness.*²²

Berne suggested that classification of four basic transactions between oneself and others²³ allows an analysis of the interactions that can lead to a "scientific" view of the relationship:

I'M NOT OK, YOU'RE OK is the universal of early childhood²⁴ where the helpless child is cared for and needs stroking and recognition. Harris suggests that this archaic "life script" develops either "You say that I'm bad, so I'll be bad" misery, or the other position of "I can be OK, if..."²⁵. Within a relationship this person will either mistreat their partner (reinforcing feelings of NOT OK) or constantly and even pathologically seeking positive strokes and recognition from the "good" partner.

I'M NOT OK, YOU'RE NOT OK occurs after the first year of infancy when the stroking and recognition disappears. This is reinforced into an archaic life script that does not allow the Adult to develop and the individual becomes hopeless, gives up and simply "gets through life"²⁶ the best way possible - often lashing out at those who care including the

partner.

I'M OK, YOU'RE NOT OK emerges within the two to three year old infant who feels OK through "self-strokes" and concludes that others are NOT OK. For children growing up in extremely brutal circumstances, the life script is survival - "I did survive and I will survive" - and striking back by being tough and cruel. The problem with this life script is that the OK position is maintained by the individual and the "stroke is only as good as the stroker"²⁷. No amount of positive stroking by a partner or others around suffices.

I'M OK, YOU'RE OK emerges when the child is able to access the Adult and make conscious decisions that allow for the "not-yet-experienced possibilities or philosophy and religion. The first three positions are based on feelings, the fourth is based on thought, faith and the wager of action. The first three have to do with why. The fourth has to do with why not?"²⁸ People in an I'M OK, YOU'RE OK relationship are able to appreciate one another without allowing archaic child-like feelings or maladapted parental emotions to impact upon the present transactions within their relationships.

Armed with this information, Berne believed that TA analysts could make an analysis of the scientifically observable transactions and then lead the marriage partners to adopt better personal control over their ego-states and thus improve their relationships.

If unattended, the NOT OK positions and archaic Child and Parent life scripts destroy marriage relationships, described by Harris in the following excerpts:

The relationship of many couples is a complicated mesh of games, wherein accumulated resentment and bitterness have produced intricate, repeated versions of "Uproar", "It's all you", "Blemish", "So's Your Old Man"²⁹.

We then turned to an examination of the child in each. Her child was hungry for affection. His (archaic) Child was aggressive, self serving and manipulative.³⁰

It is the nature of the (archaic) Child to mistake disappointment for disaster ... this is what happens

21 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, chapter 2.

22 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, pp.124-125.

23 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, p.42.

24 G.S.Blum (1953) *Psychoanalytic Theories of Personality*, pp.73-4 elaborated on Adler's theory that sex was not the basis of human struggle but feelings of inferiority.

25 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, pp.44-45.

26 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, p.45-46.

27 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, p.46-47.

28 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, p.49.

29 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, p.133.

30 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, pp.128, 131.

*when marriages break. The child takes over in one or both partners.*³¹

*She had a strong (archaic) Parent which contained countless rules of conduct and many 'shoulds' and 'oughts'*³².

*The average marriage contract is a bad one, a fifty-fifty deal with emphasis on the bookkeeping ... They must keep the fifty-fifty thing going, or the economy goes bust. This kind of contract is made by the (archaic) Child*³³.

Interestingly, 1 Corinthians 13 gives a similar list of the childish behaviours that are not expressions of love:

*Gives up
Cares only for self
Wants what it doesn't have
Struts
Has a swelled head
Forces itself on others
Insists on "me first"
Flies off the handle
Keeps score on the sins of others
Revels when others grovel*³⁴

The archaic feelings of NOT OK that contaminate the Adult in each partner, having nowhere else to turn, result in the partners turning on each other³⁵ and becoming the objects of their own bitterness³⁶. Clearly these relationships require restoration.

The scientific worldview initially sought in TA was found by Harris to be insufficient in extending "over questions of ultimate meaning and moral value"³⁷ and could not give any reason for people to move from their survivalist reactions to others. For this, TA instinctively reaches back to notions of love. Like the passage in 1 Corinthians and in spite of the "science" of TA, Harris acknowledges that "love" underlies the analysis:

An old French song goes: "L'amour est l'enfant de la liberté" (Love is the child of freedom). Love in a marriage requires the freedom of the Adult to examine the Parent, to accept or reject it on the basis of present-day contexts and also to examine

*the position of the Child and the troublemaking compensations, or games, it has devised to deny, or rise above, or throw off the burden of the NOT OK.*³⁸

First Corinthians, chapter 13 refers to both the logos and the mythos but immediately states that love is more important than either. The logos of speaking "with human eloquence" and "revealing all mysteries"; and the mythos of "angelic ecstasy" and "removal of mountains" is found to be insufficient without love³⁹. The logos and mythoi without love become "nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate"⁴⁰. The end result is that "no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love"⁴¹ and the relationship falls into NOT OK transactions. First Corinthians also expressly tells us to grow up and become Adult:

*When I was an infant at my mother's breast, I gurgled and cooed like any infant. When I grew up, I left those infant ways for good*⁴².

It is not until individuals become Adult that they are able to lovingly Parent their Child and leave their childish games behind. 1 Corinthians 13 states that love:

*Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth
Puts up with anything
Trusts God always
Always looks for the best
Never looks back
Keeps going to the end.*⁴³

Harris acknowledges that his "scientific" TA approach requires more than cold science and observation. He approvingly quoted Dr. Paul Scherer, Brown Professor Emeritus of Homiletics at Union Theological Seminary saying, "Love is a spendthrift, leaves its arithmetic at home, is always in the red"⁴⁴ as the basis of a good marriage and concludes the chapter by describing the limits of the "scientific" (logos):

One of my frequent questions to a couple in an impasse over 'what to do' is: 'What is the loving thing to do?' This is the reaching beyond scientific evaluation to the possibility of the evolution of something better than what has been before.

31 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, p.123.

32 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, p.125.

33 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, p.131.

34 1 Corinthians 13:4-6

35 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, p.124.

36 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, p.125.

37 S.J.Gould (2001) *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fulness of Life*, pp.6-7.

38 T.M.Harris (1970) *I'm OK, You're OK*, p.132.

39 1 Corinthians 13:1-2.

40 1 Corinthians 13:1

41 1 Corinthians 13:3.

42 1 Corinthians 13:11

43 1 Corinthians 13:5-7

44 P.Scherer (1961) *Love is a Spendthrift*.

What is loving? What is love?⁴⁵

The non-scientific “love” completes a marriage relationship. The partnership of marriage is a gradual discovery and knowing of the other in the I’M OK, YOU’RE OK position. This is also eloquently described at the conclusion of 1 Corinthians 13:

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood – so faith (logos), hope (mythos) and love (agape with theos) abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.⁴⁶

CONCLUSION

The emphasis on the western “scientific” logos has blinded many contemporary people to the benefits of the contemplation of the mythoi in the search for truth and wholeness. Without the logos, the world is not adequately observed and described. Without the mythoi, the meaning of life is an illusion. Although TA begins with the proposition that it is a “scientific”, logos-driven approach to relationship counselling, and also provides counselors with an extremely useful analytical tool, it becomes obvious that the mythoi is required for full understanding of relationships. In itself, TA does not indicate a source for the love required for the I’M OK, YOU’RE OK position. For that, we can turn to Scriptures such as 1 Corinthians 13 and accept that God (Theos) is the source of love⁴⁷. Christ (Theos), as the Eternal Word (Logos), combines the logos and the mythos required to “assuage human grief or find ultimate meaning in life’s struggles”⁴⁸. Through love, the basic requirement of becoming Adult is achieved so that the Parent and Child can be analyzed and restored. Both TA and Scripture can be used to heal broken relationships but the integration further enriches the analytical and therapeutic process.

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45 T.M.Harris (1970) *I’m OK, You’re OK*, p.139.

46 1 Corinthians 13:12-13 RSV (Italicized words inserted)

47 1 John 4:8

48 K.Armstrong (2009) *The Case for God*, p.xi.

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