Transactional Analysis and Social Roles

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Bernd Schmid (2006) introduces the concept of roles, distinguishing between private, professional and organisation worlds. He defines a role as "a coherent system of attitudes, feeling, behaviour, perspective on reality and the accompanying relationships". (p 34).

He goes on to consider roles in many of the ways we analyse ego states, such as:

♦ How well do we integrate our roles?

♦ Are specific roles regarded as OK or not OK?

♦ How autonomous we can be within our roles?

♦ Whether our roles are ego syntonic or dystonic? (e.g. are we congruent as an educator but not as a manager?).

♦ Which role(s) has executive power? How does energy (cathexis) shift between roles, especially when we hold several roles simultaneously?

♦ How do we differentiate roles; how competently do we act within each role according to the situation?

♦ How reasonable are the demands (time, energy) of various roles? (e.g. the frustration of committee roles that do not use our resources efficiently).

♦ Role fixation, role exclusion, role contamination, role confusion – all as for ego states.

♦ Role habits as an analogy with rackets.

♦ Functional limitations, as when we need much time and energy to get back into our work role on Monday morning, or vice versa.

♦ Structural elements of roles – are they neopsychic and here-and-now, generated earlier and archeopsychic, or taken over from others and exteropsychic?

♦ The impact of the "co-creative process of creating reality" (p 47). Here we may consider transactions between roles as complementary or non-complementary, overt or covert – he likens the latter to foreground or background levels of communication.

♦ Games, as "a series of unnoticed, complementary transactions on a background level with a predictable relationship result" (p 54) Schmid refers also to constructive games, that enrich relationships whilst running in the background.

♦ Symbiosis, such as between people in their roles but also between different roles held by one person (e.g. a freelancer using their consultant role with their own staff to deal with problems that belong to their role as manager of such staff).

Reference

Schmid, B (2006). Transactional Analysis and Social Roles, in Möhr, G & Steinert, T (eds). *Growth and Change for Organizations: Transactional Analysis in New Developments 1995-2006*, Bonn: Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft (32-61)