***Transactional Analysis – modern day psychology***

Eric Berne was a 20th century American psychiatrist. He is the father of a theory called “Transactional Analysis” (TA) or “Script theory”. Berne was fascinated by the Greek classics and was convinced that the Greeks had discovered something extremely important about human behavior. Berne noticed that the Greeks believed with all their hearts and souls that the gods controlled the destiny of individuals. Berne researched the Greek heroes in the Trojan War and read Homer and analyzed Achilles and tried to figure out Oedipus and studied Sisyphus. Berne believes that all human behavior was planned out and scripted. Whereas the Greeks argued these behaviors were destined the gods, Berne believes our behaviors were scripted by our parents and their parent and their parents before them. Individuals have their own scripts; ethnic groups have their own scripts; groups and teams have their own scripts; and countries have their own scripts.

Script is your life plan. Our scripts are designed to last a lifetime. Scripts are based on 70% what we have seen and 30% on what we have been told. Scripts are based on what we have seen and heard since the day we are born. We spend our childhood memorizing our scripts and our adult lives acting out our life scripts. By the time we are eighteen, most of our scripts are already dialed in and then extremely difficult to change. Everybody has a script. The difference is some people have a *winner/healthy script*, while others have a *loser/victim script*. Because of this winners hook up with winners and losers hook up with losers; winners have winner friends and losers have loser friends. While these two different scripts will interact with each other, long lasting relationships are impossible because neither has memorized the rules of the other. All of us are heavily scripted by our parents and role models, just as our parents and role models were scripted by their parents and role models. The issue therefore in not who is to blame, but rather recognizing one’s script. Hence the Greek command, “Know Thyself!”

Berne believes that childhood and early adulthood (ages 2-18) is when we learn and memorize our scripts. We watch our parents and role models and just as an actor memorizes his lines, we memorize how we are supposed to behave. Just as actors memorize their scripts for the final performance, as children and young adults we rehearse our scripts for the final performance called adulthood. This means that the alcoholic or the lazy student or the abused woman or the abusive male or the loser has been memorizing and rehearsing their scripts since they were children. For this reason, the abused woman will be automatically drawn to the abusive male. Both of them have been learning the rules and acting out the behaviors their entire lives. And this is why the strong, classy, dignified woman will be not be attracted to the abusive male, and why the abusive male will not be drawn to the strong woman, because again, neither knows nor understands the script rules of the other. In the *Ode to Man* the Greeks wrote, “The sins of the fathers are visited on their sons.” It is for this reason that most of us grow up to be exactly like our parents. Girls become their mothers, boys become their fathers, and we raise our children exactly the way we were raised. Like Oedipus, boys marry their mothers; like Electra girls marry their fathers; like Achilles parents kill their children; and like Sisyphus our lives are one long *Ground Hog Day* where we repeat these behaviors over and over again. Teachers teach the way they were taught; coaches coach the way they were coached; preachers minister the way they were ministered and on and on and on…

The Greeks knew that change was possible but only through self-awareness or *gnothi seauton*. But to change one’s destiny, or in our context, to change one’s script, is very, very difficult. Like Sisyphus, we are destined, for better or worse, to repeat our behaviors for eternity, unless we know who we are and how we have been scripted.

For our next class, research the *Myth of Sisyphus* and summarize it below. Consider how it applies to Berne’s Script analysis…



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