Presentation Abstract

Surname
Olivier

Name
BETTACH

Other Authors
Dr. Pierre-François (Pierre) D'Haese

Field of Expertise
Organization

Name of National Association
IFAT

Other Affiliation
The Drawin Institute for Human Comprehension

Modality of Participation
in-person

Type of Presentation
Oral Presentation

Presentation Title

Psychic energy in Transactional Analysis: From clinical metaphor to testable conjecture

Abstract

Background & Objectives Transactional Analysis began with an explicitly scientific ambition: Eric Berne sought to "understand, predict, and change people's behavior." In its early years, TA developed a regulatory vocabulary — psychic energy, constancy, allocation, redistribution — connecting it to cybernetics and General Systems Theory. Following the emergence of script theory and the rise of atheoretical psychiatric frameworks in the 1980s, energetic models were progressively abandoned as scientific objects, even as they remained clinically operative. This paper examines why this question was left neither refuted nor validated, but simply suspended.

Methods / Approach Using conceptual and epistemological analysis, we map five convergent energetic formulations within TA: Berne's group energy formula, Dusay's Constancy Hypothesis, English's communicating vessels model of unconscious motivators, the phenomenology of blocked energy in survival conclusions, and Kahler & Capers' OK/non-OK battery model. We identify a shared implicit regulatory architecture and examine the conditions under which its core conjecture could become empirically approachable. This work emerges from a transdisciplinary collaboration between a TA researcher-clinician (Organisations field) and a neuroscientist with expertise in medical imaging and AI-assisted data analysis.

Key Findings / Expected Outcomes The five formulations share a common architecture: a constancy principle, motivational reservoirs, compensatory redistributions, and states of blockage and release — constituting an implicit regulatory model TA produced without testing. We argue that English's central hypothesis — that mental health depends on balanced investment across unconscious

motivators — may no longer be intrinsically untestable. Advances in multimodal longitudinal research, AI-assisted pattern recognition, and high-resolution neuroimaging now offer potential pathways from clinical metaphor to empirical conjecture, without premature ontological claims.

Conclusions & Implications This paper does not claim proof of psychic energy. It rehabilitates the question: from abandoned metaphor to a research-grade conjecture. It proposes a minimal testability framework and outlines a future research agenda connecting TA's theoretical heritage with contemporary neuroscience and AI methodology — a dialogue this conference's theme directly invites.

Professional Picture

