



Jeroným Klimeš

Partners and breakups

I look for a publisher in any English speaking country.

Contact:

<http://breakup.klimes.us>

Jeronym.Klimes@gmail.com

Phone: +420.608.221.075

The book has big success in Czech republic, as it is written in readable and understandable way. Even a person without psychological education can understand it. Everybody who goes through a breakup can find an clear description of phases, which he or she has already gone through, as well as what awaits him or her. Except of a description of process of a breakup, the inner logic and mechanisms are explained which rules partners live and communication.

Readers likes not only easy-to-read style but also that it is not populist and does not offer "cheap" solutions. Divorces and breakups are though a common phenomenon, but common sense is not capable for their solving. Cognition of partners is distorted by many processes during a breakup, and they are divided into a few separated phases. It is unfortunately usual that partners start to be interested in theory of breakups only when the breakup is already fully running. More exactly speaking they has not come to a psychologist until the breakup is in a third phase, when one partner is firmly decided for the breakup and the other strives for a restoration of a relationship with all his or her energy. This asymmetry is followed by sophisticated manipulation and creates stalemate situation at that time. From this simple reason it is advisable to be interested in theory of breakups rather two years earlier than two days too late.

The book analyses mechanisms of interaction of partners during running partnership as well. A reader will understand rules of manipulative fight, thinking of a manipulator, his or her feelings and love. There is explained invisible fantasy figures (in English literature known as so called imaginal others) which represents real partners in time when they are already separated and no longer in physical contact. The last chapter is devoted to degenerated communication, i.e. reasons why partners cannot communicate despite the fact they both have a good will.

Success in Czech Republic:

The book was published in 2005 as the author's first monograph in 2000 pieces - it is a common printing in Czech republic. Just in the first year, there was a first reprint and another one a half year later and few others later. To date, there has published and sold 7000 pieces. The readers are mostly people in breakups.

Annotation of the author:

PhDr. Mgr. Jeroným Klimeš, Ph.D. – well known psychologist in Czech Republic – studied hydrogeology and psychology at Charles University in Prague and University of Texas in Austin USA. He was a family and partnership therapist in step family care (foster care and adoptions). He teaches psychology at Charles University for USA and international students. He is psychological adviser of Czech Ombudsman in Brno and the Minister of Social Affairs in Prague. He publishes a lot in daily press on psychological topics.

Bibliography:

KATALOGIZACE V KNIZE - NÁRODNÍ KNIHOVNA ČR

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The Hybrid Partner

Once the future initiator begins to consider breaking up, gradually his or her idea of the partner, or more precisely, the mental representation of the partner breaks down. It is as though they were living with two partners: one is real and present, but this one isn't worth much in the eyes of the future initiator. The second is potential; that is, mostly based on fantasy and idealization. Thus the hybrid partner has appeared – a partner comprised of the real partner and the fantasy figure of a new potential partner.

This process is typical even in other areas of psychology. For example, with infertile couples the mental representation of the child they are unable to conceive breaks down: into their own dreamed-of baby that they cannot have, and the real one that is offered to them in adoption, and which seems unattractive to them (too old, handicapped, stupid, black, afflicted with “bad” genes, ugly, or whatever). Ultimately, even the bird in the hand and the two in the bush in the old adage represent a hybrid object – both are real and also fantasy representations of satisfying hunger.

The hybrid partner therefore suffers from many distortions. Mostly all the bad things that have afflicted the dissatisfied partner are ascribed to the current, real partner. And, on the other hand, all possible good things seem to represent the promise of brighter tomorrows offered by a new partner. Even if the real partner does something nice, the action is connected with the new partner like a promise: “I could also have this with a new partner, and much more of it.”

During this breakdown the forces of aversion come to bear very intensively, but they work at a close range and within a short span of time – that is, they affect only those who are close by, i.e.: the real partner. The forces of attraction are weaker, but they work at a distance and over a longer time span – they are ascribed to idealized, non-present fantasy partners.

Relative frustration distorts the perception of the breakup. The future initiator takes the current state of things as a matter of course; something to which he or she is entitled. They only consider what more she or he could gain or take away by force.

We can express daydreams with a "mathematical" equation in this period:

$$\text{prospective partner in fantasy} = \text{current partner in reality} + \text{bonus}$$

The future initiator takes for granted that all the services of the current partner are going to be provided and will be retained in the future with a new partner.

These feelings are very awkward or difficult to get a handle on and are generally connected with a manipulative attitude. It thus follows that every person suffers from them to a different degree. Unfortunately, the more someone suffers from these feelings, the less he or she is able to realize that this is so. Usually, only after a succession of very similar disappointments and breakups there is some realization of the peculiar process that makes two birds in the bush into one in the hand merely by getting out of the bush and examining one's hand. This is, however, a very painful path to walk, and it leads through difficult personal losses.

Processes Hidden by Ordinary Activities

The existence of the hybrid partner does not have to be too obvious – it can appear as chronic dissatisfaction with the relationship, comparisons of the current partner with other people who are around, an urgent need to “escape” from the relationship, the feeling that it is not possible to hang in there any longer, and so on. All of these manifestations can be successfully masked by assigning blame - guilt distribution, which we will discuss later on, and in the meantime nothing is necessarily going on with the couple – at least nothing visible to outsiders.

Many people complain after a breakup that they were most hurt by their partner saying up to the last minute that he or she loves them, and then five minutes later announcing that they want to end it all. All of the considerations about the breakup may have been only running through the mind of the future initiator, who until the last moment, outwardly keeps up all of his or her former activities: displays of love, affection, touches, hugs, etc.

We can also find this breakdown of behavior and thinking in other areas of psychology, for example in religious or ideological conversion when crossing from a more into a less normative environment (Klimeš, 1996). We can thus assume that when breakups come like a “bolt out of the blue” in couples whose interactions have been formalized to ritualized communication, one of the partners has a strong fear of abandonment, or is afraid to share their real feelings, and instead outwardly keeps up their show of sweet little rituals.

Asymmetry in Guilt Distribution (<http://breakup.klimes.us>)

Key Question:

To whom are assigned the blame for unhappiness and problems that the couple has been through?

In morality or in law, one is considered guilty when one has acted badly and by free will; that is, voluntarily and with full awareness of the consequences of their bad deed (for more see Klimeš 1996 and 1997b). Psychology, however, works with subjective guilt; that is to say feelings of guilt. In contrast to objective guilt, feelings of guilt are something like a trophy cup or a backpack that can be worn by anyone. This asymmetry is, in my opinion, the worst and even in small amounts has a negative impact on a couple's overall satisfaction.

Let us show the pith of the matter of distribution of guilt in the simplest example: a boy and a girl arrange a date. Both of them arrive but do not meet up. Why? When they clear things up it becomes clear that each of them had a different understanding of the sentence "We will get together like we did last time." She was waiting for him in a café where they had spent an entire evening. He waited by the fountain where they had made their rendezvous. It is clear why they could not meet, even though both had arrived in time. At that moment, a tension arises and one of them may attempt to reduce it by saying: "It's still your fault, you didn't understand correctly." And at that moment it is clear who is the bearer of guilt and who is the distributor. At the same time, we may assume that the bearer of guilt is going to be a deflector and the distributor is a retroreflector.

In this example the situation is set up such that it should be clear that the guilt does not belong to either party, but in most normal situations this clarity is lacking. The distribution of guilt develops according to which of the partners has tendencies toward extrapunitivity and which of them tends toward intropunitivity (Rosenzweig 1978). The distribution of guilt thus becomes a relatively independent variable that, along with questions of dependence and dominance (submission) characterize every couple. The one who is more dependent on the other, however, by no means must necessarily be submissive or the bearer of guilt. In real life we may find any possible combination of these three variables.

A general estimate of the measure of distribution of guilt in a given couple can be inferred by the reactions of the bearer of guilt:

1) *This partner increases his own efforts to accommodate the distributor, to ingratiate himself and satisfy his partner's wishes.*

2) *He becomes resigned and withdraws into himself, avoiding conversations and contacts with the distributor. The typical case is a man who comes back late from work (or from the pub), then closes himself into his workshop, sits down at the computer, goes out to take care of his beehives, etc., while his wife complains of being lonely, and of the feeling that they are living next to one another and not together.*

3) *He loses his interest in sex and begins to prefer falling asleep on the couch in front of the television in order not to have to go into the bedroom, and he may also request a separate bed. Paradoxically the attraction of extramarital relations grows.*

4) *He ceases to be jealous, and is unconcerned and apathetic towards the thought that the distributor would take a lover.*

5) *He commits acts of impulsive physical violence.*

When we ask wives to determine how long the first stage lasted, they often say that it was brief: "At most half a year, when we got together." Therefore, they have the impression that it really didn't happen at all. At the same time, we see the willingness of the husband to help neighbors or acquaintances. He had the same tendency to help his partner at the beginning of the relationship, and perhaps she was enraptured – she had the feeling that she had finally found what she was longing for. Unfortunately, after the first enchantment wears off, people often find that they are in relationship where one person uncontrollably accuses the other and the other is the bearer of guilt.

Let us also notice that in the first phase the reproaches are very effective, then they gradually stop working and becoming harmful. In this way, they are similar to the effects of drugs. The first dose is generally experienced as very pleasant and comes virtually without any withdrawal symptoms, but with increasing dependence the ratio reverses. The drug ceases to bring the expected high and, additionally, the unpleasant withdrawal symptoms increase.

Some studies support the opinion that **the man's resistance to sex with his wife** is usually dependent upon her excessive criticism. The wife, on the other hand, gets the feeling that the man is apathetic and there is nothing she can do or say to change this. This is, however, a misleading illusion. The reproaches have, on the one hand, a delayed effect that is additionally the exact opposite of what the wife would wish. After they are spoken, the man very often does not display any observable reaction. The effect appears later, however, when the man does not emerge from the garage for three days. Here, I sometimes recall a children's joke: A man goes

down the street pulling a string behind him. Children follow behind and say to him: “Mister, you’re pulling a string behind you.” He answers them: “I know, I tried pushing it but it kept wrinkling up.” Reproaches are similar attempts at pushing somebody somewhere but generally they do not lead to the intended effect – it is better to pull the other person along by positive motivation.

Another comparison can be made with paying debts. A person who is showered with reproaches does not get pleasure out of working on their relationship. If they do something well, it is as though they had paid off \$10 from a million-dollar debt. However, if they do something that hurts their partner it is as though they were deepening their debt by another million dollars. Therefore the bearers of guilt prefer to help others – to do something that is not expected from them, for which they are appreciated and praised and they feel good about themselves. If they do the same thing at home, it is only paying off the old debt, something that they should have done a long time ago anyway, it was more than time, and why the heck haven’t they hung up those hooks for the curtains yet?

The psychologist has to give separate advice to the distributor and the bearer of guilt. The bearer has to understand his or her own tendency to accept the guilt, as well as their own rigidity and contrariness. They need to define certain rules for themselves, which they do not necessarily have to share with their partner, but to which they will themselves adhere. They may create a translation dictionary for the meanings of various criticisms that the distributor regularly applies. For example, such a husband may make a commitment to speak to his wife every day for a half hour about their problems and to go with her once a month to a restaurant for dinner together. Similarly, he may realize that his wife is complaining that the telephone cord is coming loose at moments when she is tired and feeling lonely. At other times, this fact does not particularly bother her. Therefore, it is better to react to her loneliness than to fix the telephone cord on the wall. Similarly, it is necessary to send her criticisms back to her sensitively with the suggestion that she should express her needs in a healthier manner, and not in this degenerated way.

Example 1

Many women confess that they cannot discriminate between a request (complaint) and a reproach. A reproach is always connected with an (implicit) evaluation of the other partner. He is usually a catch person for the woman; i.e. a person whose mental representation is first activated when the woman is feeling upset. So it is quite logical that she is feeling angry with her partner at times when he is not ready or able to help her with any kind of problem, so at such times she makes snap judgments that he is good for nothing. This consequently makes the man feeling guilty. In order to break this habit, the woman must train herself to quit blaming her partner for her discomforts, as it is a dysfunctional habit born of degenerated communication.

Request without judgement	Reproach with judgement
My back hurts so bad today... Do you think you could find a minute later to give me a massage?	Poor me! My back hurts so bad today and you're too selfish to give me a massage!

Criticism, just like sarcasm, is a deep-rooted vice whose harmfulness people underestimate, just like ultimately they underestimate the harmfulness of all vices. It takes a fairly long time before they become aware of the relationship between them and their unintended harmful consequences. Rooting out vices is always hard work that a person is reluctant to undertake and it takes a long time until they realize that there is no other way. As Mark Twain advised: “Eat a live frog every morning, and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day.” or Czech adage: “take the largest slice of the bread you dislike (odříkaného chleba největší krajíc)”. Uncontrolled distribution of guilt leads to the couple becoming unable to understand what is going on under the surface of the constant criticisms. This blindness increasingly deepens the hopelessness of the situation. I therefore recommend to everyone that they take the guilt away from their counterpart whenever possible.

Example 2

A man who was sexually abused in childhood by his cousin has sexual identity disorders. He cannot find a relationship with women because he tends towards manipulative types like his mother. Even though he lives in a pathologically stable marriage, he still feels the need about once a month to sleep with some guy because men are the only ones from whom he is able to accept gestures of tenderness such as physical caresses. His wife suffered greatly because of this. Almost every morning she screamed at him: “You’re a whore! Who are you going to sleep with today?” She was jealous of every single man who was near him. In the evenings she would call him to chew him out again. However, when he came home, a scene would follow after which the exhausted woman would calm down, go after him into his separate bedroom and want him to caress her. She would say to him: “Even though you’re a whore, I still love you.” The man was not able to switch over so quickly and react openly. He would therefore stroke her automatically without any accompanying emotion. The behavior of this woman is clearly reminiscent of separation anxiety – two scenes related to changing distance – one when her husband is leaving, and the other when he is coming back (see the chapter on Asymmetry of Dependence – State of Separation Reaction). These scenes regularly develop when a departure is imminent, and she also resists accepting her husband again after a certain period of separation. When her resistance is broken, then her obvious need for intimacy reappears. This behavior indicates extreme dependence combined with degenerated communication.