

# Partners and Breakups

Jeroným Klimeš

XEROSTOMUS



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## Introduction

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It is said that a treated flu lasts for a week, and an untreated one for seven days. Breakups are similar. Everyone would like to have it over with as quickly as possible, but make no mistake, breaking up is simply a process that takes a certain period of time and it is not possible to significantly speed it up.

However, when you think about the saying about the flu you will find that it is only two-thirds true. Yes, a treated or an untreated flu lasts for a week, but a neglected flu may last for seven months. It is the same with breakups. They also have to last for a certain minimum length of time. However, one may ensure that they are not neglected, for „neglected“ breakups can plague you for the rest of your life. The goal of this book is to show the reader how handle a breakup, to understand what kind of forces are working with them in the game, what he or she must do so that the situation does not worsen further, all the things that may happen.

This book is intended for „regular people,“ and therefore describes normal, natural reactions to a breakup. I am not describing cases here where the divorcing partners display major psychopathology – psychosis, psychopathy, dementia, serious drug addiction, or the like. In such cases, I recommend consulting with an expert in these areas.

While writing I was thinking of two groups of readers: mostly those who are going through a breakup and would like to understand what is going on, why this had to happen to them, and what they can do about it. The second group is comprised of my colleagues – specialists who are trying to guide these individuals along their difficult paths.

Satisfying both of these groups is not an easy task, and therefore I have tried to write a readable text without, on the one hand, an excess of scholarly terminology and references to the professional literature, but on the other, I want to describe things in such depth that the reader can truly grasp the nature of the problem and will be able to effectively take action. In any case, there is a glossary included at the end of the book that explains the basic terminology.

### III. 1



The book begins with a description of the stages people go through when their relationships are falling apart. Here we run into many phenomena which we will deal with in greater detail further along in the text. These are the forces of attraction that hold a relationship together and the forces of aversion that break it apart. Of the forces of aversion we will mainly concentrate on manipulation and degenerated communication. We will also get acquainted with fantasy figures; i.e.: with the way that former partners are preserved in our thoughts, and what kind of damage they can do.

Wishing readers much success in solving their own and other people's difficulties,

JK

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## Acknowledgements

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Completing a book is usually an opportunity to thank all of those who directly or indirectly contributed to its creation. I'm therefore pleased to take advantage of this opportunity to honor the support from those closest to me: my wife Michaela and daughter Judita, and parents on both sides. Among my friends and colleagues I would like to mention Jitka Marelová and Hana Kubíková whose careful editing, pertinent and humorous comments. I would also like to thank all the doctors and nurses who took such good care of me during my own health difficulties, especially "lymphomabuster" MUDr. Kateřina Benešová from the Institute of Hematology and Blood Transfusion.

I also want to thank the named authors as well as the anonymous ones who drew the cartoons with which I illustrate abstract processes. They are wonderfully able to make these visible. Thanks are also due to Vojtěch Kučera from the publishing house Portál for his patient editing work.

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## Chapter 1

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### Displaced Stages of the Breakup

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*In the first part of the book we will go over the stages that partners most often experience during their breakups. We will show how these stages are mutually displaced, what impact that has on communication, and how the methods of manipulation and other forms of interaction between the partners change, including fantasy work. The function of the psychologist will also be emphasized during the given stages of the breakup, and the criteria by which it is possible to evaluate whether or not a partner relationship has hope of being salvaged. Particular phenomena are only described here. Their explanations will be found in further parts of the book.*

There are a great many types of breakups, but they all have one thing in common. They are preceded by a period in which the partners try and see whether it is still going to work out for them together. Therefore, they invest time, money, effort, fantasy, and compromises into the relationship; in short, they sacrifice all kinds of things to give the relationship further possibilities to develop and live. This is understandably risky, but even those who have the feeling that they do not love the other partner, and that they would like to send them away the next day, or that they are only sort of passively being pulled along by events invest in their relationships. Even these people think over and imagine how life with the partner could possibly be.

One's own breakup brings the necessity of simply forgetting about these investments and cutting one's losses. The losses are always on both sides, but they are not necessarily symmetrical. One of the partners may lose much more than the other. Because of this fact, refined forms of manipulation and fantasies of revenge are often played out between the two opponents.

Relationships fall apart for external and internal reasons. The external reasons are often difficult to influence. It is hardly possible to prevent a partner meeting someone at work. We also cannot stop disease or unavoidable separation. We will dedicate more attention to the internal reasons for the aversion of a relationship, because they are possible to influence. (Though even this is not an easy task).

Partners, like drowning people, usually cannot be reproached for not having tried to be rescued. Rather, with their persistent attempts they inflict damage that hastens the breakup rather than prevents it. In the cases where someone does not pursue any activity at all, it is usually from resignation that stems from a feeling of futility, the sense that these attempts will gain nothing, and from their having no idea what they should do.

The task of the psychologist is to judge the viability of the relationship, to understand the stages the partners are going through, and protect clients most of all against their own defensive reactions that go against their interests.

#### Conditions of the Stages

One of the most common commissions by clients is answering the questions: „Can I still save this relationship? Do we have to split up? Can we remain friends?“ It is possible to find answers to all these questions, but it is usually not easy. The reason is surely the following: the more the partners are mature personalities, the less they need to break up, and rather are likely to find a common *modus vivendi*. If, despite this, they do go their separate ways, their breakups tend to be polite, dignified, and protective of children and of both of the partners. The breakup itself then has had a serious and understandable reason, it is quick, and without manipulation or a war over property and children. The partners are not caught by surprise by forces of attraction after the breakup because they knew from the beginning what they are getting into and what they are losing. In this form, a breakup is, in its way, a joint decision. But how many of these breakups are there?

For example, in the Czech Republic and in the USA, more than 50 % of marriages end in divorce, and most of these divorces are just as foolish and immature as the reasons that once brought the partners together. Immature decisions at the beginning of the breakup increases the likelihood that the breakup

can be averted and the relationship saved. We are, of course, working within a vicious circle, because the more immature the decision (and therefore the personality), the less the partner is able to create, maintain, renew and paradoxically, even to end a relationship. Fortunately, and also unfortunately, we live with partners not because they are a mature personality, but because we love them. We share with them not only the good, but also the bad, such as their own and even our own immaturity.

The explanations put forth here suppose a certain degree of immaturity that is in fact the condition for the origination of all the stages described. The following features are the most frequent and prevailing attributes of an immature breakup.

**1. Asymmetrical decision-making.** The breakup is not a joint decision, but a one-sided act coming from one of the partners. For example, Petr Uhl after having been sentenced to imprisonment for fifteen years for his dissident activities for fifteen years, offered to his wife Anna Šabatová<sup>1</sup> that she did not have to wait for him. This is an offer of a breakup that is a joint decision. Their relationship even lasted through about five years of separation, even though, as A. Š. told me: „It wasn't easy.” That is evidently the mark of great personal maturity and ability for self-sacrifice. In the description of the stages, we will be assuming, however, that one of the partners approaches the other with the suggestion of breaking up, that it is against the will of the second partner, and that it is unexpected. This forms the starting asymmetry of the decision and divides the partners into the initiator of the breakup and the defender of the relationship.

**2. Manipulation.** Not only the beginning of the relationship (courtship), but also its end is accompanied by heightened tendencies for manipulation, which were weaker, and may have even seemed to be sleeping during the relationship. The partners' crisis brings on a situation of war, and the necessity of portioning out everything held in common into his things and her things. Suddenly it's as if there was twice as little of everything. Before the breakup one vacuum is enough, after the breakup two are necessary. The family home and children of course cannot easily be divided into halves...

For these and other reasons, there appears „either-or” thinking and distribution of guilt: whose fault is everything? Thus, a game develops of determining who is stronger, there is chronic manipulation, perceptions of who's „up” and who's „down,” etc. The manipulative war also leads to underestimating the forces of attraction.

**3. Underestimating the forces of attraction.** The initiator of the breakup expects at the outset that by breaking up he or she will mainly get rid of what bothered him (or her) in the relationship. They do not surmise what the relationship and the partner continuously and unknowingly provide, because they take it all for granted. They do not know that when breaking up, the most difficult thing to overcome are long-term forces of attraction. These forces awaken in the fantasy and paradoxical stages, when the initiator of the breakup is then surprised by their strength. Thus originates another chance to renew and rescue the relationship. Underestimating the forces of attraction is a common illusion, as seen in the film Kramer versus Kramer.

Immaturity in the relationship, which is indicated by these three characteristics, is the prerequisite for the stages described below. There exist many other types of immaturity in personalities that can complicate a relationship and also the progression of its breakup; for example, an inability to make definite decisions, self-hatred, a need for symbiotic relationships, and psychopathic reactivity (see Glossary).

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<sup>1</sup> Petr Uhl and Anna Šabatová are well known dissidents in the Czech Republic who struggled against the communist regime, similar to, for example, their friend former president Václav Havel. Anna Šabatová became Deputy Ombudsman after the Velvet Revolution in 1989.

Graph 1

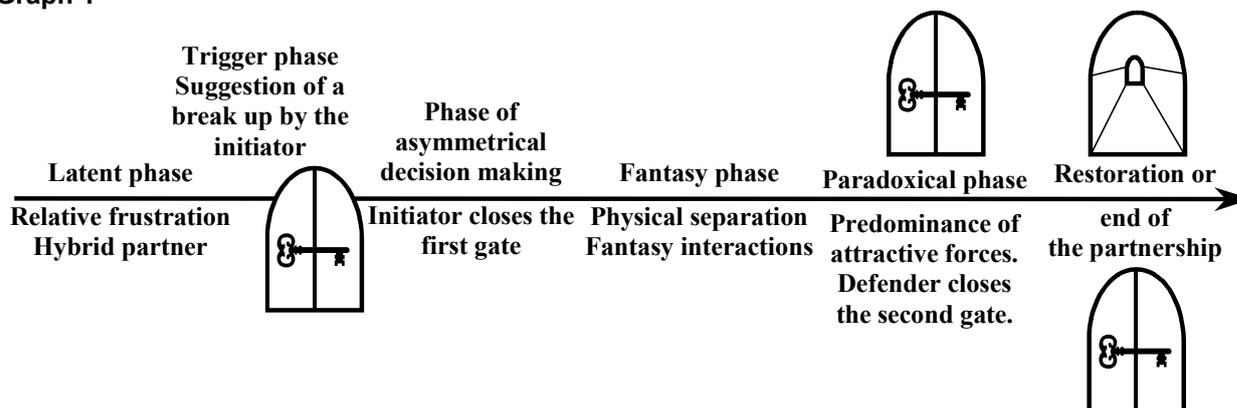


Diagram of individual stages and the main processes going on in them. Each stage brings questions and answers, offers certain possibilities, and takes others away. Typically, these stages are displaced and experienced asymmetrically by the partners.

## Latent Stage

It is possible to view partnership as a two-sided offer of a common life path – mental and physical. We ought to reconceptualize stumbling blocks that appear along the way as crossroads from whence the fateful paths of the partners lead in different directions. This divergence can be apparent at the mental and the physical levels. At the physical level this is represented by forced separation, work in a faraway place, and the like. At the mental level it is represented by disagreements, situational and systematic misunderstandings, different expectations and worldviews. In the boundaries between mental and physical separations are illnesses, from somatic through mental. When the degree of divergence exceeds a critical value, one of the partners will begin to propose a formal breakup. This moment usually comes only as the culmination of a longer-running crisis that the partners either underestimated or else simply did not know what to do about.

Every relationship is made possible when the partners' forces of attraction are stronger than the forces of aversion. The strength of the chain is given by its links; the relationship falls apart when the forces of aversion overcome at least one member of the couple. He (or she) gives way first and suggests a breakup. Thus originates the asymmetry between the initiator of the breakup, who wants to end the relationship, and the defender who wants to preserve it. The terminology of initiator – defender is useful because it is gender neutral, for the initiator and also the defender may be either the man or woman in a couple.

The latent stage manifests itself in the growth of an internal feeling of moving apart which one partner suddenly realizes. The other partner often does not reflect it at all, pushes it aside, undervalues it, or overlooks, for example, the influence of his own ill-tempered outbursts on his partner. Some of them are aware of such things, but they do not know what they should do. This kind of resignation appears outwardly in rhetoric such as: „That's not my problem, it's my partner's. He should work it out for himself.” These are exactly the kinds of transfer of responsibility that lead to chronic blindness and de facto also to an inability to seek professional help at this stage. Nonetheless, even in this phase when one partner is more threatened by the problem, a decision to break up can crystallize. (Precisely according to a psychological law: problems, in this case the breakup, are brought on by the one who feels him or herself to be disadvantaged.) This phase tends to last for a long time. It often comprises several years, during which both of the partners may grow increasingly distant from one another.

Each of the two partners, of course, experiences the time in this stage differently. The future initiator of the breakup is in the greater tension at this point, and therefore his subjective time passes more quickly. The opponent – the defender who stands up for the relationship – is for the time being relatively at ease, though in the future they will claim that nothing unusual was going on during this period and everything seemed fine.

The therapist should thoroughly, albeit retrospectively, map what was going on in this stage, because the partner who will be speaking about it the most is the one who decided upon the breakup – the initiator. The defender will not remember this period, will not consider it important, and probably will

reproach the initiator that he is bringing up dirty laundry from the past, as though there were nothing good in their relationship.

This stage is when the relationship stands its greatest chance of being rescued, but at the same time, there is the least opportunity for doing so. The partners simply are not yet going to visit a psychologist at this time.

### Relative Deprivation

One friend came to consult with me about her intention to leave her present partner. She had the possibility of beginning a new relationship with a very well-positioned man who had offered her a luxurious vacation abroad. She didn't want to two-time her original partner, so she thought over whether it would be better to end the first, not very functional relationship. When analyzing her situation I expressed her feelings thus:

„Better two birds in the bush than one in the hand.”

„Of course!” she cried out, „That's the old saying!”

„No way, you've got it backwards,” I corrected her.

„Yeah? Really? Better a bird in the hand than two in the bush? Ahhh...aha!” my friend exclaimed in surprise.

However, this mistake she had made exactly described her story in the latent phase.

Sayings like this often express the exact opposite of what people feel. They can be wise counselors, rising above our short-term and often impetuous deeds, and serving as a counterbalance. It's no different with this adage – it also helps bring people's feelings back to equilibrium. The horizon of a new relationship is more attractive than the security of the old one. Future initiators often have this feeling. It is very intense and they are willing to do practically anything in order to prove that they have sufficient reason to break up their relationships. This is a phenomenon that is humorously illustrated in the following picture where a swan is barking in order to convince himself that he is a dog and must therefore leave his wife.

#### III. 2



© United Media/Bulls

In reality, though, these things are not a laughing matter. They are often described in fairy tales (for example, in Jan Werich's Fimfárum): a woman who wants to get rid of her husband gives him impossible tasks to fulfill. The uncompleted task then becomes the supposed grounds for their breakup. To give a further illustration, people often perceive domestic violence as a taboo, so it is incomprehensible to them that, for instance, hysterical and manipulative wives may provoke arguments that devolve into physical violence. Hysterical women mind physical violence less than boredom in a relationship. The violence provoked by them is not the reason for a breakup, but it serves as self-persuasive memory and subjective proof that it is time to change partners, as well as serving to persuade those around her that this man was truly rotten. The behavior of hysterical women is theatrical and extreme, but even in the normal population we meet with the same thing to a lesser degree.

The theory of relative deprivation explains these dispositions (Kunzick, 1995). This theory, originally sociological, explores the relationship between objective frustration and how it is subjectively experienced (i.e.: the relationship between objective and subjective frustration.) It demonstrates that it does not depend on an absolute measure of suffering, but on the comparison (relation) with another condition, with other possibilities, and eventually with the situation of the reference group. The greater the awareness and the hope that one can improve the present situation, the more the given frustration is

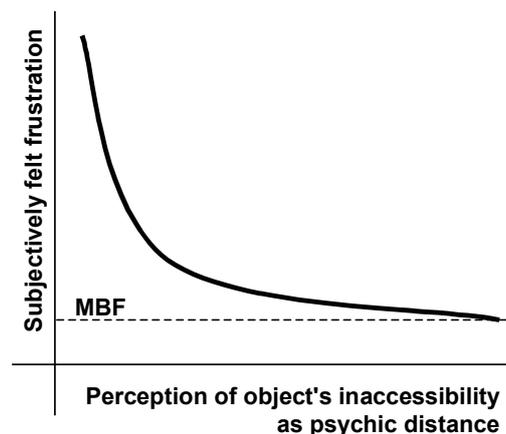
aggravating and the more energy they put into changing their present situation. There is, therefore, no direct measure, for example, the greater the hunger, the more a person complains. What is important is the situation of the reference group of the person. So long as, for example, people around them also suffer hunger, they will take hunger to be a normal part of life. Looking at his or her hungry fellows imparts the information that it is not possible to do anything about hunger. In other words, the degree of consciously-experienced deprivation is proportional to the perceived possibilities to eliminate it. If someone is suffering from some unpleasantness it will subjectively bother them more the more they are convinced that it is possible to eliminate the problem. The most frustrating thing is the inaccessibility of the goal that is practically within reach.

Relative frustration can explain much of the illogical behavior not only of people, but also of animals. For example, it is said that hunters in the rainforest use a peculiar trap for monkeys – they place a banana into a small hole. The monkey can put its hand in, but when it grasps the banana it cannot remove its hand from the opening. The hunters are taking advantage of the fact that the monkey is not capable of letting go of the banana that it holds in its hand. From the external perspective is it absurd to risk one's life for one banana. Even a monkey would not do this if the banana was two meters away, but the relative frustration of its value simply inflates to unrealistic proportions so long as the monkey has it within reach, or even holds it in its hand.

This example illustrates what is happening in breakups. In the latent phase relative frustration has a destructive influence on the initiator of the breakup. This partner, as a rule, suffers from the unpleasant traits of the partner, but the degree to which they irritate her and whether they seem unbearable depends on how much she is considering the possibility of breaking up. If a man says to himself: „I will divorce my wife and then have peace,“ at that moment his partner begins to seem simply impossible and any more living together as insufferable. He begins to act in accordance with this feeling, and thus the family situation goes downhill.

Sometimes it is curious to listen to the scurrilous allegations with which otherwise very intelligent people support their assertion of the utter uselessness and the dark sides of their partners whom they wish to break up with. For example, a man argues that his wife never brewed him tea. She protests that even at the time of their worst marital crisis, she often poured hot water onto a teabag left in a mug and brought it to his work desk. He then in all seriousness claims that that is not brewing him tea because he put the teabag there. These absurd debates serve only for one goal – to convince myself that there are sufficient reasons to break up. The partner's behavior is only a pretense that justifies my plans. A similar example of the effect of relative deprivation can be found in the battles of parents over visitation rights with their children. Here the slightest inconsistency in the court's execution of judgment lays the foundation for hope to prevail in a manipulative conflict that rages out of control and mostly harms the children.

**Graph 2**



The curve illustrates the increase in subjectively experienced frustration as compared with absolute frustration as the object becomes more accessible. Absolute frustration is objectively definable. For example, being hungry for a day, going for a month without sex, or not having an MP3 player. People perceive these absolute measures of frustrations differently. The degree to which they are subjectively burdened by their frustration correlates with the hope they have of alleviating it. The most frustrating thing is having the feeling that the source of frustration can be easily removed. They mind it the least when they are convinced that nothing can be done with the situation. The accessibility of the objective is deduced to a great extent by looking to their reference group. If all of the subject's classmates have an MP3 player, then why don't I have one? If no one has an MP3 player, its absence does not weigh upon me.

The dotted line shows minimal basal frustration (MBF). This is the minimal perceived frustration without regard for the distance of the objective. Primary needs have a nonzero MBF. For example, going hungry for a day is unpleasant without a view to whether those around one are suffering from hunger or not. Next to this, secondary needs, for example, the aforementioned ownership of an MP3 player, have a zero MBF. If no one has the device, we do not even know that we are missing out on it.

Relative deprivation can appear in some of the following daydreams (in the case of a woman, analogous for a man):

1. Fantasizing about the qualities of a potential partner (whether real or imaginary);
2. Fantasizing about relief from the bad qualities of the current partner after breaking up with him (or, on the other hand, contemplating the potential losses);
3. Comparing her situation with the life of a friend, neighbor, co-worker (comparing her current husband with other men within the framework of her reference group).

When this comparison does not favour the current partner, the future initiator begins to consider making a change. First these are thoughts that cannot be easily dismissed. Then occasional waves of serious deliberation and doubts. Towards the end, flirting, infidelity, a series of arguments and similar behavior ensue, and eventually lead to beginning the breakup.

## 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:

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

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.

### **Inability to Name Negative Feelings**

Another treacherous aspect of the latent stage that makes it undetectable is the inability of clients to name the negative sides to their partnership. Again, we begin with a simple example from another field. Anorexic girls have a problem distinguishing negative feelings. Whatever happens to them, everything boils down to the one sentence: „Hmm, I'm too fat, if I was thinner everything would work out.” They repeat this sentence when they meet with something unpleasant – when they hear their parents in the living room having an argument, when their boyfriends leave them, when they feel sad, when they are alone, when they are tired. They react to all of these situations with only one sentence: „I'm too fat.” It is necessary to realize that these girls do know the word „tired,” but they are not able to describe their own experience with it.

Most readers will understand the definition of hypervigilance (heightened watchfulness) but it is unlikely that they imagine any of the concrete experiences being described by this term. It is possible that they have even suffered from hypervigilance at some point in their lives, but they never knew that this bizarre and quite unpleasant state of mind has been given this term by psychiatrists. Similarly, small children do not have the words to describe sexual encounters. They learn these when they reach puberty (therefore, during questioning it is necessary to illustrate sexual abuse on anatomically-correct dolls (called Jája and Pája in Czech). Similarly, not every adult can correctly name the experience termed „heartburn.”

Such gaps in the vocabulary carry tragic consequences for partnership. Clients are not able to describe their partners as they truly are, how they function, and with what forces are moving them. The psychologist only hears what problems the client has with the partner. The client describes his or her partner as an unpredictable generator of nonsensical actions: „But Doctor, just imagine what he did...” – „And why did he do that?” – „I don't know. He's just stupid!” Parents of bulimic girls react similarly uncomprehendingly: „Devouring two sticks of butter in one sitting – that just isn't normal!”



Psychology originated when humankind discovered they could not just make do with the term "blockhead"!

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When the psychologist runs into problems of this type, it is usually not possible to limit intervention to counseling only, because clients literally do not speak the same language. It would be as though the psychologist were giving them advice in Martian. In such cases it is necessary to work through over the longer term with the client, so that he or she can understand the partner's behavior and motives, and so that they become able to name their own negative states of affairs with their rightful names, or, if the case so requires, eliminating a bad habit of trying to solve all their problems by „burning bridges”.

#### Example 1

One intimate friend described her problems with her lover at our occasional meetings. She could count ten lovers on each finger, and still did not know whether and how she should leave her husband. It simply took my breath away when after the three years that we know each other, it came out that her husband constantly mocks her and puts her down publicly in front of their friends. I tried to find out why she never spoke of this earlier. She was able to describe any kind of sexual eccentricity and extravagance without inhibition. Even though her husband had been behaving like this since the beginning of their relationship, it took several years until she was able to put a name to his behavior. If she had begun working with this abusive communication three years earlier, I think that it would have been possible to save her marriage. The man in question loved her, and other than the above-mentioned caddish vice, he was very capable of taking good care of his family, a trait she highly valued. The problem was that this rot at the core of their relationship had been hidden. Neither she nor those around her could see it. Even her husband considered it an innocent, playful way of communicating, proof of his sharp wit, of which he was quite proud. For similar reasons it is often very difficult in therapy to disclose the source of problems, because the client him or herself does not see it, does not spontaneously refer to it, is ashamed of it, does not consider it important, has the feeling that they have to just put up with it, etc.

### Trigger Stage

The trigger stage begins with the announcement of the breakup. The partners' divergence in this stage usually appears as an unwelcome surprise or as opposition on one side and an ambiguous decision on the side of the initiator. It often takes the form of a condition or ultimatum: „If you do not change, we will break up.” The possibility of intervention is at this point small, but for another reason than in the previous stage. Now there is a speeding-up of subjective time. One action or hasty decision follows another in quick succession so the psychologist does not usually have the possibility to effectively intervene.

Usually the couple's closest friends are able to intervene, because the partners usually confide in them first. They are not, however, usually wise counselors. When giving advice, they generally look back only to their own stories, their experiences, principles and views which correspond to their own momentary position and do not reflect the current position and stage of the client. A great danger is to be found with friends who only nod their heads, mirroring the position of the client and more or less repeating what he or she says. When they complain and express momentary dissatisfaction they

recommend: „To hell with him, you can do better...” They do not in the least anticipate the forces of attraction that are momentarily hidden and will emerge a few months after the breakup.

The basic therapeutic recommendation at this stage is – no big demonstrative or injured gestures, but rather a mental answer. In reality, however, things are usually the other way around. The rejected partner take offense, runs away, for three days is not seen or heard from, moves out quickly, etc. Such external defensive reactions, however empathetically understandable, destroy the relationship. They confirm the ambiguous decision made by the other partner in a more or less formalized manner and make it irreversible.

It is necessary to realize that the suggestion of breaking up is often an example of degenerated communication. The literal meaning of this word says the opposite of what is meant (for more detailed explanation see the Degenerated Communication section.) Here is the challenge: „Let’s break up” means rather „Come, please do something so that we can stay together.” It is perceived paradoxically as much more heartless: „I don’t care about you. I don’t love you. You disgust me.” It would be good if the partners could see the basis of this degenerated communication. Therefore we can (but only in this phase), even though it is paradoxical, sometimes recommend behaving as though „nothing happened.” If a partner comes with the suggestion of breaking up at three-thirty in the morning when he is just returning from the pub, the best solution is not to pick oneself up, run away from the apartment, wander around the city, sleep in the garage, car or office, not show one’s face at home for three days, move into a friend’s home, refuse or demand sex, and so on. It is better to react to the partner’s real message and try to get to the heart of the problem that is troubling him or her.

The quiet tactic – acting on the outside like nothing is going on and reacting to what is bothering the partner, however, is not usually a spontaneous, naturally-felt defensive reaction of partners who find themselves in this phase. Rather, the typical reactions are hot-headed, impulsive actions that represent the period of nonspecific defense according to Kübler-Ross (see below). For example, the initiator of the breakup may be speaking about a breakup, but is at the same time tender and wants to stroke the girl on the cheek or hug her. His behavior is contradictory, because he himself is not entirely clear on what he wants. The girl, however, resolutely refuses these tendernesses and forces her partner into an unequivocal position: „Do you want to break up with me? Yes or no? Then don’t caress me!” She thus hastens the process of breaking up even though she may want the opposite. Paradoxically the same girl will try the „as if nothing happened” tactic in the following stage when it is not nearly as appropriate.

In this phase it pays to seek professional help as soon as possible. The therapist must quickly perform an analysis of the relationship from the following three points of view:

1. Positive and attractive forces – reasons why both partners love each other;
2. Negative and destructive forces which either do not suit one of the partners or both of them;
3. Defensive reactions to what is playing out in the moment, which may be confusing and chaotic and may harm more than help.

On the basis of this analysis various kinds of recommendations may be formulated. Against non-functioning defensive reactions: „If you don’t want to break up, don’t throw your partner out of the apartment, don’t force him into taking an unambiguous position that he does not really feel.” Against the negative forces: „Lock your lips and at all costs do not be ironic (do not taunt or accuse them, and so on.)” For the positive forces: „If your partner liked your game of tickling each other, use it at an appropriate moment. If your partner has a tendency to caress you, write text messages to you, or just be near you, don’t throw her out, don’t refuse her.”

#### **Example 2**

It is good to show that in the beginning there doesn’t even have to be a formal suggestion of breaking up. I witnessed a case where a man did not suggest breaking up with his partner formally. He just began discussing with his partner at two o’clock in the morning on New Year’s Eve that he had never really loved her. There ensued a series of confrontational „clarification” discussions that ended with his partner getting very intoxicated and moving out. I found out about the breakup in the following email:

„Hi, I now have this kind of really basic problem, after a year and half that jerk notified me that he has fallen in love somewhere else and that he never loved me, and was never in love with me, so I’m now asking my friends for tolerance and patience if I’m acting a little strangely. I feel so terrible, especially because I loved him...p.s. I have been through alcohol poisoning and almost had two guys in one bed.”

This woman took tranquilizers, she hardly slept or ate for a week, because she was vomiting everything back up. The last of her things that remained in their apartment were her passport, dictionaries, and CDs. An inability to eat and sleep is the result of stress that accompanies every threat. Increasing the distance along with an increase in activation corresponds to the definition of appetite. We have to consider the

shock stage and acute stress as having ended after the following text message: „Just awhile ago I ate a bowl of pasta. The first normal food since the breakup (14 days). Tomorrow I'm going to the hairdresser, so I'm going to be a hot babe again. :-)”

Even if she had taken stock of the events with a cool head, she told herself that it didn't make sense to stay with this person, her feelings told her the opposite and had a suggestion: she didn't want to break up with him despite everything. It is all the more paradoxical that she, rather than he, was the driving force of the fast succession of events that followed. These events – the „clarification” discussions, drunkenness, „These events – „moving out,” removal of things from the apartment – actually gave form to his originally unspoken, possibly not entirely clear dilemma between two women. From the partners' crisis, a breakup was created where he was identified with the role of the initiator, and she became the defender. With her utterly natural and understandable defensive reaction, which was supposed to protect her, she achieved the complete opposite. During one week she led the breakup from the trigger stage into the phase of asymmetrical decision making, so that after one meeting during which she tried to keep her emotions under control she sent me a text message: „It's OK now. He wants to help me with work and I should call him on Monday. He says that I should not hold out any hope, and that he wants to try it with the other woman anyway. Asshole.” The man at this moment is already determined to break up and will play the role of the initiator. We are now passing into the phase of asymmetrical decision-making, when there is practically no chance to renew the relationship. A negligible possibility of return is also in the fantasy stage, and it is only in the paradoxical phase that a true small light of hope shines.

## Phase of Asymmetrical Decision-Making

During the trigger phase degenerated communication preponderates, and at this point neither of the partners has a true interest in breaking up. This phase ends at the moment when the ambiguous decision of the initiator crystallizes and he or she personally identifies with it. This is the first gate that the relationship has closed behind itself. The following stage of asymmetrical decision-making is defined by one partner being fairly firmly resolved to break up, and the other partner is firmly resolved to maintain the relationship. It is good to realize that with both partners (the principle of parallelism, see below), we are looking at the well-known phenomenon of coping with a serious loss. Its stages according to Kübler-Ross (1997) are:

1. **Acute shock** reaction with many typical defensive reactions (for example: denial);
2. **Nonspecific defensive reactions** (for example: non-directed aggression);
3. **Specific and directed attempts** to handle the problem (for example: negotiating, manipulation);
4. **Reactive depression** stemming from the realization of the futility of one's own efforts;
5. **New identity**, reconciling oneself to reality, with a return to the basal level of well-being.

Nevertheless, both of the partners go through these phases at different times and they take significantly different forms. Whereas the initiator more or less mourned the relationship in the latent and trigger phases, the second partner was in the stage of denial during the latent phase and went through a period of aggression mostly during the trigger phase. The asymmetrical stage of the breakup is thus a peculiar mixture of the stage of reconciliation with the initiator and the stage of negotiating with the opponent. Likewise, later acceptance of reality does not usually take the form of calming down, but rather is commonly an aggressive demarcating of boundaries.

## Subjective versus Objective Victory

In the eyes of the couple, there is a deeply ingrained idea that the initiator of the breakup is „up” and the defender is the one who is „down.” It is necessary to realize that this lens is manipulative and does not represent an overly healthy approach to the matter. From the point of view of developmental psychology it is on the mental level of preschool children, and perhaps this is why it is so deeply rooted.

It is good to demonstrate to the defender that the initiator's momentary position is similar to the feeling of victory experienced by a pickpocket when he has stolen a wallet. He may laugh into our faces because he has gotten some money at our expense, without having to work for it. We know, however, that we are the ones who are able to earn money, unlike him, and we live a life that we have chosen, where he does not. Essentially, we are aware that we have the possibility of either earning money or stealing it, but we have chosen the first option. He is able to steal, but he steals because he is not able to earn money honestly.

In the same way, the initiator may now strut and swagger and demonstrate how great he feels, as though the breakup had nothing to do with him, but this is all just a manipulative game of who is stronger that will end with him in the paradoxical stage. In reality, he has also lost out on a relationship, and everything he had been planning in its context has come to nothing. From this perspective, it is usually the one who tries hardest to show to those around him or to the former partner how they are feeling fine, who most of the time ultimately comes out the worst after a breakup. Understandably, demolishing a mendacious self-image hurts more and requires more effort than building it up.

Nevertheless, the defender must appreciate that she has no hope of renewing this relationship - at least until the time when the initiator grasps this simple truth and makes it his own. At this stage no one will convince them him that he is not „up” and that the heady feeling of victory is only a manipulative illusion. It is necessary to go through two more long stages, depending on how strong the initiator’s tendencies to manipulation are. On the other hand, if the asymmetry is not fed by tendencies to manipulation but the decision to break up is backed by a truly firm decision to break up without any manipulative aspects then the chance for renewing the relationship is minimal.

## **Splitting of Experience**

The splitting of experience is usually connected with its early development. Here it appears by and large in a particular form. When we talk with both of the partners separately we can get the feeling the feeling that the initiator mentions only the forces of aversion that broke the relationship apart, and the defender only talks of the forces of attraction that kept the relationship together. In close examination, however, we discover that both of them are going through a generally depressive period when neither of them are truly happy. Only their outer rhetoric describes the changed status of one of the pair. For example, all the negative feelings of loneliness, sorrow and depression, just like the forces that are arrayed for the preservation of the relationship are projectively ascribed to the defender. Thus, even when the initiator, other than occasional euphoria, is in a lasting foul mood and suffers from anhedonism, generally he or she is not aware of the state of things in this form: „I’m sad and I miss her.” Much more often we hear the following projection: „Poor (defender,) she must really be suffering.” Likewise, the defender also has the feeling when observing the initiator that everything beautiful, and all happiness and good fortune have been carried off by the initiator and he or she has retained only the bad.

During these exacerbated experiences, any comments by the initiator can very easily wound the defender. They can be innocent comments that are blown out of proportion or misunderstood, or even narcissistic reactivity of the initiator, who is not able to come to terms with her true feelings. She projects them onto the defender. For example, the initiator may claim: „I don’t love you anymore, but you still love me. You are trying to come back, but I’m not.” In both cases it is a painful little speech that during the course of the fantasy stage leads to the defender outwardly shutting down even when he feels inside that he still loves the initiator. Later, in the paradoxical phase, we hear the following: „I do not want to let myself be humiliated anymore and I don’t want to be hurt. It doesn’t get me anywhere anyway.”

## **Manipulation and Antimanipulation**

It is necessary to emphatically explain to clients that in this phase of asymmetrical decision-making that it is not possible succeed with the tactic of „as if nothing had happened.” As a rule, that begins to appear with the defender as part of their specific defenses (see the above-mentioned stages according to Kübler-Ross). The initiator has already made up his or her mind and returning to the relationship would have to be at least partially a new decision. This can be helped situationally – by surprises, sweet behavior, old endearments. However, it happens much more often that the initiator can easily see through the partners intentions and attempts at a return. He or she identifies them correctly as manipulation; i.e.: attempts by the defender to get around the initiator’s feelings and will, and to reverse their decision to break up. As a defensive reaction, they may adopt an antimanipulative stance. Such antimanipulative stances consist in concentrated expectation and identification of attempts by the partner who would like to influence them or bring them back.

Antimanipulative expectations have another, very unpleasant, result for the defender. They prevent the initiator’s becoming aware of and acknowledging their positive feelings. These are buried under aversive memories of the latent phase and the initiator always then chalks up positive experiences to the defender’s attempts to control him or her. The therapist often finds this phenomenon in the form of

questions by the still-trying defender: „And is (the initiator) happy at all?” The answer is not straightforward: „No, but unfortunately for you, all of her bad feelings (of missing you, etc.) are taking shape in her head not as her own feelings, but she thinks they are only your attempts to manipulate her. For example, she does not say: „I miss him,” but „The poor guy is unhappy, he would like to come back.” (See the below-mentioned principle of complementarity and the above-mentioned divergence of experience.)

Here again both manipulating partners are trying to take advantage of this sympathy for their own advantage, which is very tricky. With sympathy and playing on feelings it is possible to attain one-off goals (individual meetings, etc.), but as a rule these tactics do not lead to a change in the situation because charitable indulgence does not create partners' love. To the contrary, from an evolutionary perspective it is clear that partners' love anticipates support during future childrearing, thus sympathy for the weaker one brings up a vision of an incompetent, impotent partner and not a pillar of support. Thus, even manipulation that calls upon the partner's sympathy will usually not lead to the renewal of the relationship. For the same reason, the suppliant defender is perceived by the initiator as unattractive. Thus, we hear sentences of this type: „But I don't want a weakling who cannot face reality.”

In any case, it's good to remember that manipulation and the antimanipulation that counterbalances it are only temporary, typical for the asymmetrical stage, and they disappear in the paradoxical phase.

### **Principles of Parallelism and Complementarity**

We have already indicated two principles above: the principle of complementarity and the principle of parallelism, and now we will discuss them in greater details. Both of these principles arise from the fact that during the period of living together, the partners grow together. Each knows the other very well, knows his strengths and weaknesses, and is able to predict with great precision what the other will do or think. In other words, one's mental representations or fantasy figure of the other is usually an accurate representation. Both, as the Bible poetically describes, become one body and one mind. This growing together is rather a function of time than of the intensity or polarity of their experiences (see the research by Monahan, Murphy and Zajonck, 2000), and it is not a matter of willful decision. We can see this, for example, when victims unconsciously identify with their aggressors in relationships where they have been abused. In this perspective, a breakup represents the sundering of a live body into two parts. It is not possible for this „unkindest cut” not to hurt a lot, and not to leave scars on both sides.

The principle of parallelism flows from this vantage point. Both sides, despite the potential transfer, go through roughly similar states at the same time (parallel), and it does not matter with what defensive arguments, manipulations or projections they deny their experiences. The reliability of this principle stems from the theory that mental needs are just as inflexible as biological needs, for example, the need to eat. Just as we would not believe a person who did not eat for two days and claimed that he was not hungry, we do not believe someone who lived in a marriage for twelve years and now claims that he does not feel anything, does not care about his former wife, and that he had never loved her. He has to feel something, and he has to formulate a stance, perhaps towards the „wasted 12 years of his life.” Processes must be running in his head that represent acceptance of the physical separation. We may assume the absence of such processes perhaps only in the case of dementia and other organic disorders, in which case the integrity of the ego has been destroyed.

Nonetheless, how can the apparent paradox be resolved: we assume and expect an experience that, however, one of the partners categorically denies? In such cases, taking a look at the other partner suffices. An assumed feeling has been ascribed to this partner. We still see that the experience of the given person is split, that his or her awareness of it is incomplete. What is missing, the complement, is always ascribed to the partner, or more precisely, it is displaced into a mental representation or fantasy figure of him or her. We will call this principle, where after a breakup the couple continues to represent a whole comprised of two parts that complete each other, the principle of complementarity.

The principle of complementary characterizes the entire breakup, but it is most obvious during the stage of asymmetrical decision-making. It can appear, for example, when verbalization of problems, so-called clarification discussions at this stage do not lead to a rapprochement of points of view and opinions, but rather to their polarization. The one whose stance was at first „Probably,” polarizes into a stance of „Definitely,” and the other partner defines their position as „Definitely not.” This comes up in questions of the type: „Should we try getting together one more time?” When verbalization leads to a

polarization of opinions, it is an unpleasant sign that at least one of the partners, perhaps unconsciously, fears manipulation, and thus reacts with an antimanipulative defense. These polarizing, clarification discussions disappear in the subsequent stages.

### **Subjective Time**

The experience of time has also changed. While time flows rather slowly for the initiator, for his or her former partner, it has speeded up (thus, a reversal of how it was in the trigger phase). The defender is unusually activated, and feels an urgent compulsion to take some steps and make attempts at manipulation. This difference in experience is again dangerous for the defender. His or her unusual activation stemming from the threat leads to exaggerated actions that after some time begin to vex and annoy the initiator. They do not have to be unpleasant in and of themselves, but there are simply too many of them: constant telephones under transparent pretexts, writing long letters, confessing old sins, clarification discussions, attempts at convincing the other one to give it a second chance, confessions of love, and even telephone calls made by friends and acquaintances who call on request by the defender.

For the defender it is nearly impossible during this stage to realize and accept the truth at this time his or her greatest allies are time, calmness and patience. According to the principle of parallelism, the other partner is also losing a relationship and everything that goes with it – the questions of family, future, shared old age, common friends, and also the parents of the partner who may substitute for one's own dysfunctional family. Both of them are losing out on all of this. However, in the moment of asymmetrical decision-making it is the defender who is much more conscious of this burden. Additionally, she or he has the feeling that none of this is of any value to the initiator. This is not the case. The initiator is only more focused on defending his or her position which has been won with difficulty, and which was really only an emergency escape route, a desperate act. Their attention and attempts are orientated towards defense against manipulation by their former partner and they do not have time at this point to think about their fate and their priorities. All of that will come in the fantasy and paradoxical phases when it will be the defender who will be taken into consideration as the first potential partner.

### **The Double Role of Pride**

In these phases, pride has a big role to play. Its influence on the course of the breakup is ambiguous. Sometimes it helps to bring about a good result, but in most cases it only hastens the end. For example, the defender goes to the initiator and tries pleading with him. This behavior generally repeats tactics that may have been successful in the period before the breakup began, but now they are ineffective because the initiator has steeled himself with antimanipulative expectations. The defender insists, and the initiator objects with a hurtful outburst that is meant to convince himself rather than the defender. He may, for example, mention some conflict in the past or the defender extrapolates from the initiator's statements some cruel extreme that he did not intend to say, such as that their he never loved her, or that their „love” was only a cheaper kind of codependence, sympathy, or a gesture aimed at infuriating the former partner, etc.

Such pronouncements are very painful and it is understandable that the wounded partner will further harden their heart. One offense is paid back by another, one insult by another. Later, this scene will be continually replayed in fantasies, and there will be endless thinking over the best defense against the fantasy figure of the partner. This figure, because it is itself only a memory, will be in this construction, always the same and always relentless. They will ferociously repeat the same hurtful phrase. And the defender will not know any defense against these fantasies. She will listen to the advice of her friends: „To hell with him. You can do better. Keep your pride” and by the force of will and despite all the pain, she will avoid contact with the initiator.

The recommendation of a psychologist does not have to be so primitive. Above all, we know that this is not a discussion with a real partner, but with a fantasy image of that person. A fantasy figure is something like a puppet that we pull by its strings but we are not aware that we do so. Therefore we can ask that he sit next to us when we are working. We can make him apologize in the fantasy, to express support and take back or else restate the things he has said, which often only represent degenerated communication and their message does not correspond to the literal meaning of what was said.

The treacherousness of wounded pride lies in its relatively positive external impact at this stage – it does break the relationship’s cycle, but in the paradoxical phase this will be harmful. In the stage of asymmetrical decision-making the defender’s pride lets the initiator in peace and also allows him become aware of what he is forfeiting in the breakup. With this, there is a movement into the following, fantasy phase, and this is beneficial. Unfortunately, pride on the other side hardens the defender so that in the coming stages he will not be able to apply any useful measures, however much he still may wish to renew the relationship.

### **Narrowing of Attention to the Former Partner**

Precisely according to the principle of parallelism the attention of the initiator and the defender are unwillingly focused on the other partner. The rule of proportions states, however, that to the same extent that the defender has manipulatively attempted to renew the relationship, the initiator will try and prevent this. The result will be only a stalemated game accompanied by insults and humiliation.

The recommended behavior in this phase is to relax this unwillingly obsessive attention and temporarily focus on other people rather than the former partner. For example, one partner, the initiator of the breakup, is afraid to go alone to the office where his former girlfriend works, so he always brings a friend along. His former partner ignores the friend, and wants to see him alone and follows his movements around the office like a hawk. It is no wonder that the former partner tries to leave as soon as possible. The recommendation is, however, the opposite. We already said that in order to renew the relationship at this stage, the initiator would have to make a new decision. That is to say, he has to partially go through all the phases of courtship, which begin with admiring observation of the future partner in interaction with other people. If the here-mentioned partner wants to renew the relationship she will have to enter a heart-to-heart discussion with a male friend. Her former partner can observe her at a time when he does not feel threatened. Besides this, evolutionary psychology shows that a woman is more attractive to a man when she is in the company of another man than when she is alone.

What’s important is that this behavior, although it is not spontaneous, is not motivated by pride and wounded vanity, but rather by the wish to help the partner to choose her again. To show him the best that is in her. Behavior motivated by pride will later demand satisfaction just at the moment when the initiator will show signs of rapprochement. It could come in the form of the sentence of the defender: „Well, now you’re sucking up, aren’t you? But I don’t care about you any more, I can do better.” And thus the successful renewal of the relationship has been rendered impossible.

A certain hope that by controlling these tendencies the fleeing initiator can be brought back can be kindled with the awareness that the forces of attraction can be awakened in the paradoxical phase. Then, the initiator may be more in his power than the defender.

### **Unprincipled Behavior of the Initiator**

Because of the asymmetry of decision-making, the manners of manipulations also polarize. The defender has a tendency to utilize indirect, tactical maneuvers. The initiator is more likely to employ direct coercion (see the Glossary at the end of the book for definitions). For this reason, the initiator can negotiate from a position of power and inflict her decisions and ultimatums upon the defender. Her behavior often goes beyond the boundaries of decency and an incredible amount of anger, aggression, and cold-hearted cruelty. She behaves toward her partner as she would not even to the lowest street beggar. This behavior is generated by the weakness of her decision or her ego. She is convincing herself that she has made the right move. For example, she prevents her former partner from seeing their child, she makes scenes, takes lovers to her bed when her former partner is expected to return from work, she insults and humiliates him, and unfairly slandering him in front of their mutual friends; in short, she seeks the most effective ways to maximally injure him. This is how initiators of either sex behave in this phase.

It is partially that they do not want to shoulder the consequences of their decision. Although they may have committed at their wedding to stay together for better or for worse, and also to share their property, despite all this, suddenly there are considerations that sharing everything in halves is unjust because the initiator earns three times more money than the defender and does not want to share the house, the land, the workshop, motorcycle, pictures, child, and so on. And so all hell breaks loose at home in order to make the defender give up and flee from the home with just some meager alms. But the

defender did not want to break apart the relationship, did not want to lose their home and children. Why should she be the one who has to leave their home? On the contrary, it is the initiator who wants to break up, but at the same time does not want to give up these advantages, does not want to bear the responsibility for his decision. This is how mental terror and an unprincipled battle against the defender begins, in order to impose his will on her and drive her out of their home and take away every last advantage and keep it for himself.

However, after the asymmetrical phase peters out, the memories of it remain and the initiator will be well aware that his or her behavior was beyond the pale of acceptability. They will have to wrestle with feelings of guilt for a very long time, defend themselves against their own accusations, and against their family and friends that they have actually done the right thing, even though they know that they have not. They will have problems forgiving themselves, because they will have to put up with the aftereffects of the pity. This battle in and of itself may last up till the point when the question of satisfying a lust for revenge becomes moot – the children grow up, questions of property become meaningless. But this may last for more than twenty years.

As we said in the beginning, most breakups are caused by personal immaturity. The greater the immaturity, the more difficult and complicated the process, the more the partners lose their way there and then back again. There is a risk of setting up a vicious circle and stagnation in the breakup which lead to even more creeping, subjectively difficult to observe, personality degradation.

### **The Psychologist's Recommendation**

What is the role of the psychologist in this stage? If we were able to observe a car from a bird's eye view, we would see that the defender is pressing for all he's worth on the gas pedal, and the initiator for all she's worth on the brakes. The psychologist meanwhile hesitates to decide whether or not to remove the brick that is lying on the clutch. It is obvious that he or she cannot do this until the cramp which is freezing both partners' feet on the pedals subsides.

If the defender wastes their chance in the trigger stage – no outward action, but immediately, as though nothing had happened, beginning to work on what is bothering the partner – then there is a second chance in this stage. They should not manipulate or project pride, but patiently wait until the initiator stops paying attention to them and then begin to put their own life back together. It is useless up until this point to try and press oneself on the initiator. Even this chance goes against the natural tendencies of the defender, and against their accelerated experience of time and narrowed focus of attention. Therefore, they will not succeed in this phase without the support of a therapist or wise friends.

Besides not pressing himself on his former partner, he must also intensively weigh and evaluate the causes of the breakup. It is necessary without excessive self-blame to realize one's one, often denied, share. The psychologist should translate often unclearly-formulated messages from the initiator into words that may be understood by the defender. For example, the sentence: „I have the feeling that we do not live together, but next to one another,“ often saturated with irony and sarcasm on the man's side. On the other side, the uncontrollable tendency of a woman to remonstrate and argue gives the man the impression that his wife is unattractive, and it leads to physical revulsion from her, her body, sex with her, and leads to an uncritical enhancement of the attractiveness of other women in his eyes. If the psychologist sees these tendencies as grounds for the breakup, it is necessary to lead the client to a quick understanding of the destructiveness of these tendencies and to a policy of: „Do not mock, do not humiliate, do not make fun, do not blame, do not be jealous!“

In this period generally it is only the defender who seeks a psychologist. The initiator at this point is not interested in consultation (unlike in the latent stage), because he has the feeling that he does not have a problem, it is the defender's. Though the principle of parallelism states that they both have a problem, but therapy must be voluntary, and it is not possible to force anyone.

Questions appear: „Should the psychologist also do therapy with initiators, even when they claim that they are only doing it for their former partner?“ The answer is yes, but carefully. This is not true altruism, but a degenerated understanding of their own need for rapprochement (for more details, see below). The reasons for „yes:“ denial or projection themselves are not an impediment to therapy even in other areas of psychotherapy. Besides this, both partners are still connected and they stand before a long process of separation from one another.

Reasons for cautiousness: the psychologist should take stock of whether in time he or she will be able to show the initiator that participation in therapy „only for the former partner’s sake” is mostly a sign of the attractive forces for the partner and of interest in him or her. If over the long term it does not seem to be working out, the psychologist ought to answer the initiator in the negative: „Do not come to therapy only for the defender’s sake.” The initiator is not able to realize the forces of attraction working in him. In the better scenario, he will live in the illusion that he is not sorry for anything, but the poor second partner is suffering. In the worse scenario, in the later phases (especially the paradoxical) he will retain the former partner at the halfway point on their journey and will with his clumsy attempts prevent the conclusion of the breakup and the possibility to begin a new relationship.

This does not mean, however, that it is not necessary to work with the initiator and the defender separately. In this period the initiator’s world is filled with considerations of what to do with their newly-won freedom, and with preparations for a new life or new relationship. Unlike the defender, she is returning to the period of the latent phase when she defended herself and developed arguments that led her to the breakup. She is also full of misgivings and antimanipulative expectations that her former partner will force her over to his side, persuade her to return and manipulate her. She would have to consciously make a new decision, and this is up to her. Her own therapeutic work consists of the attempt not to bring old bad habits into a new relationship; that is, to balance the old relationship and the powerlessness that led to the breakup.

In this stage generally the initiator is not able to look realistically into the future, and to consider values and life goals. That will be his task in the following phase. Here there are only unrealistic fantasies about how he will be able to enjoy himself, how he will finally be free and how he will be able to return home when he wants to. It is good to leave the initiator to enjoy this period of freedom, because after adolescence, people get their fill of such freedom fairly quickly. The psychologist should also prepare the initiator for the following stages, especially the paradoxical, when the clarity of his decision clouds, and when the antimanipulation falls away and forces of attraction come to the fore, which he has no inkling of at the moment. It is not necessary to emphasize that in this stage the initiator does not want to hear much about this. It depends more on his personal maturity than on the therapist’s communicative skills whether he understands and grasps this message.

### **Assessment of the Relationship’s Viability**

We try to assess the viability of the relationship from the very beginning, but this assessment is necessary to continually re-evaluate. The greatest danger is forming an opinion based only on the first impression or halo effect; therefore it is good to somewhat formalize the process of assessment. I recommend an analysis of the above-mentioned three categories: forces of attraction, forces of aversion, and dysfunctional defensive reactions. Defensive actions are a temporary and transient phenomenon and they do not influence the relationship’s working in the long-term perspective without regard to whether they are functional or non-functional. By contrast, bad communication habits such as mocking and reproaching are chronically destructive and keep the relationship below the freezing point over the long term. Then only a small impetus is necessary to break it apart. Among the most important factors belong the forces of attraction which are usually very suppressed in this stage as though they were buried under endless discussions, manipulations, and a prideful game of who is stronger.

The psychologist should therefore dust off, and point towards what is good, whatever is still left in the relationship. Even though clients often speak of a definitive end, this phase does not bring it. It is only the first gate that is closed. Only the initiator is more firmly resolved. The relationship still exists in their mutual interactions and in fantasies. Among its high points belong nonmanipulative apologies for wrongs committed, attempts to retain those habits or interactions that the other partner liked, and not refusing positive emotional support.

One of the things that indicates against the maintenance of the relationship are single-mindedness on the part of the initiator – cases where the initiator does not display any signs of doubt about the breakup, and does not signal in any way the possibility of returning and also does not display manipulative exhilaration from the breakup. He behaves calmly, does not take offence, and does not put down the defender, has an unchanging view of the relationship’s past, but at the same time clearly says „No.” This kind of single-mindedness can also be caused by the integrity of this person’s selfhood or by a pathological personality, but in either case it leaves little hope for renewing the relationship. A

somewhat pathological version can appear, for example, with an introverted man who had persistently tried to gratify his girlfriend. He did everything for her that he thought she needed. She took advantage of the situation at his expense, but he was not able to speak about his negative feelings. The girl had the feeling that nothing was going on up until the moment when her boyfriend suddenly and directly told her that he was breaking up with her. From this moment, his former obligingness has suddenly shifted into a cold, hard-hearted reserve. Even in this case, the man's decision cannot be changed by someone else (see the chapter on Processes Hidden by Ordinary Activities).

Among those things that indicate a possibility of renewing the relationship is non single-mindedness of the „no,” and frantically, demonstrative, often self-destructive activities which have convincing the initiator of her own decision as their goal than displaying any internal logic. These rash deeds sometimes have irrevocable consequences: pregnancy and wedding shortly after a breakup, etc.

When assessing the viability of the relationship it is necessary to keep an eye on the couple's asymmetry. For example, bearers of guilt (intropunitive individuals) need to be supported so that they comprehend the real working of the relationship and do not assume too much blame, for it prevents their seeing the true state of things. This is the case with partners of alcoholics, aggressors, sexual abusers, hysterical personalities, manipulators and others suffering from personality disorders where their partner often ought to have left a long time ago in their own interest and also that of their children if they have them.

Assigners of guilt (extrapunitive individuals) often bring their partner to a psychologist so that, expressed in slang, they get „fixed.” These assigners are difficult to lead to a new point of view because in addition to transferring guilt to others, they also have a tendency to shift it to professionals and manipulatively force their vision of the solution. It is always a great dilemma for a psychologist to what degree she may use assertiveness and forcefulness in order to keep the therapeutic coalition on the one hand, and on the other hand truly help and not become the manipulator's puppet. Manipulative people, playing a game of who is stronger acknowledge only so-called strong individuals. We can help them only with a resolute approach that forces them out of the rut from which they view the world.

### **Duration of the State of Asymmetrical Decision-Making and Allowing Free Choice**

The phase of asymmetrical decision-making is full of manipulation and games of cat and mouse in which the roles are precisely written and it is not possible to snap out of them. For the defender it is difficult to realize that this phase will as rule last as he is going to continue entreating the initiator. An undirected phase of asymmetrical decision-making thus generally lasts until the defender is completely exhausted and resigned. It leads through feelings of futility and depression into gradual acceptance of the breakup when there ceases to be interest in renewing the relationship. It is difficult to acknowledge that renewing the relationship does not depend on one's own efforts and frantic attempts. The only thing that they should do is to make a clear and accommodating gesture. To answer for what had brought the other partner to the point of suggesting the breakup. Telling him that you are sorry, and what you will do so that it will not happen again in the future. All the rest must be left up to the initiator. To allow him time to make a free choice even if his decision will be to the defender's disadvantage and the future would show that the initiator's decision was the wrong one from the beginning. Relationships are a question of the free choice of people (who are not machines) and who cannot control one another.

Allowing the initiator free choice assumes a great degree of personal maturity in the defender. Not every person is capable of this. However, if the defender succeeds here, it will shorten the period of the frantic stage of asymmetrical decision-making without him falling into wounded resignation and hopelessness. This allows him sufficient wisdom and strength in making a decision until the initiator reaches the paradoxical stage and will possibly want to renew the relationship.

### **Physical Separation and Fantasy Stage**

This stage has four typical features:

1. Physical separation;
2. Temporary preservation of the last status quo;
3. Predominance of fantasy interactions over real ones;
4. Predominance of the forces of attraction over the forces of aversion.

The beginning of this stage is defined by a greater or lesser physical separation of the partners, which preserves in their minds the state of things in which both of them had been before the physical separation. The preserved former state is only sometimes modified by occasional or unavoidable meetings. Real interactions are substituted with fantasy ones, and that is why we call this the fantasy stage.

They have moved out, divided their things, do not see one another, do not contact one another, and so the question of „OK, so what next“? begins to appear all the more insistently. This question, according to the principle of parallelism, must be asked by both of the partners. Gradually, the spasmodic black and white divisions of the preceding stage ease up. The manipulative pressures also lessen. The intensiveness of the shock reaction and the mental shakiness are less pronounced, so both partners can begin to function in normal life.

Another characteristic of this stage is the decrease in aversive interactions. The forces of attraction gradually begin to emerge, though they are not able to naturally express themselves, and so they run into degenerated communication which is not usually understood correctly by the other partner. This stage passes and as a rule gets out of control in the paradoxical state. The boundaries between the two are set by a shift in the way the defender is experiencing events.

## Fantasy Figures

The amount of fantasy activity and its disproportion to real interactions is possible to illustrate with the following fragment of conversation: „Did you see or speak with him in the past fourteen days?“ – „No.“ – „But do you think about him for at least four hours every day?“ – „Yeah, probably more...“

Because of this intensity of experience, fantasy figures are revived. Fantasy figures are mental representations (introjects) of the other person with whom the subject has the feeling that they behave autonomously, as though they had their own will and power of reason. Even though this is not a schizophrenic illusion or (pseudo)hallucination - because their general view of things is maintained - we are not far from the truth when we will consider them a forerunner of schizophrenic perception which was invoked by the above-mentioned process of splitting. The concept of the fantasy figure is difficult to clarify for someone who has not experienced it for themselves. It is similar to the monologue that accompanies it. Someone who has at some point had a conversation with an imaginary companion knows how realistically their experience of that fantasy figure's virtual presence may be, and how it is practically impossible to stop the flow of quarrels or internal arguments (a more detailed explanation follows below).

Very often people come to a psychologist with the request that she or he help them get rid of a persistent fantasy partner, but this is not a simple matter. Fantasy partners are created by people's minds and their frustrated needs keep them alive – the dreamed-of partner is summoned up in order to make up for the dreamer's real isolation or another need. Therefore, it is not possible to drive away the fantasy partner until such time as a real isolation has reached in real life. Unfortunately, mere insight into the basis of fantasy interactions does not rid the defender of his or her tormenting fantasy figures.

The journey leads through a view into this basis for the fantasy figures, through paradoxical intentions and of the paradoxical intentions and two principles being brought to bear, which are:

1. *Fantasy figures cannot be exorcised by willpower.* We can only transform them and they gradually disappear on their own.

2. *There is a direct correspondence between what mental state the subject is in, and how fantasy figures will behave in his or her mind.* As the old Czech adage has it: how you call into the forest is how it answers back. Fantasy figures have more negative energy the more their creators try and grab hold of them and change or control them.

The defender's natural tendency is to argue with a fantasy figure, to persuade it to return, or to try and drive it away as something unbearable. We explain to him that a fantasy figure is only a personification of loneliness and recommend another approach: if a fantasy figure of the partner appears, he should welcome her, not blame her for anything, not drive her away, but be kind but neutral. (In the chapter on Mental Representations as Models of Real People – is an example of how not attacking externalized projections helped one client progress in her work.

## Diagramming the former partner and the proportion of forces of attraction and aversion

Fantasy figures, in the cases where their real referent is physically non-present change in time. They lose their details, become generalized diagrams, polarize, and fossilize in stories and narratives that are always told in more or less the same manner and represent something like an official version of the breakup. Polarization is, however, surprisingly two-sided: the former partner is idealized in some aspects and vilified in others. The idealized aspects are wept over and their loss is usually blamed on the other partner.

Greater emphasis is paid to vilification because its goal is to balance out the forces of attraction. They are already stronger in this stage. We must be aware that although the forces of aversion are in principle stronger, they work over short distances and time spans. The forces of attraction are weaker, but they do not fade away as quickly and they work over a much longer span of time and over greater distances. Therefore, in the fantasy phase they disappear under the influence of the physical separation and the forces of attraction begin to gain ascendancy.

If the relationship is to fall apart, these forces of attraction have to permanently compensate for something. This systematically built-in counterbalance is rightfully described as diagramming and non-objective vilification. Since this is an intuitive defensive reaction that stems from internal needs, couples who do not sling mud at one another after a breakup are rare indeed. Sometimes they even do it with the support of their friends. Sometimes a new, relatively peaceful meeting with the former partner during which new sparks blaze up can start it up. This blazing up is usually understood as a mutual warranty that no return is possible.

With some simplification it is possible to say that in this stage reason is reining in emotion. The feelings say: „All is forgiven. Come back!” Reason counters: „Only over my dead body.” This variance is difficult to bear with composure and therefore we see a whole constellation of defensive reactions. We will divide them into the areas where they play out, into two groups:

**1. Defensive reactions in reality – acting out.** One of the partners tries to make occasional contact, even though these occasional attempts always end in a fiasco. The partner walks by and observes their former apartment from the street, sends text messages and emails, even if they are only files with jokes without any message attached. He is still trying to resolve something or at least to open a discussion. There can also be systematically planned hateful and vengeful actions, just like the superficial inconsistency of the initiator that airs out her momentary feelings and she does not realize what impact they have on the defender. These are all weak echoes of the previous stage without any great hope of success. However, fantasy interactions have a much worse impact on mental well-being.

**2. Defensive reactions in fantasy.** When the relationship was working the partners turned to each other in the times when they needed support. The physical separation does not mean that these habits immediately disappear, but the interactions have shifted from reality to fantasy. The physically absent partner is therefore still substituted for by a fantasy figure which as a rule appears at the moments when the person he represents would have usually contacted the real partner, i.e.: at the moments when the subject needs help, emotional support, or they feel tired and lonely. The real person would have reacted to the signs of the partner's need with a complementary offer of help. The fantasy figure, however, does not play a complementary role, but has symmetrical behavior to that of its creator. The behavior of the fantasy figure is determined by his or her current state and habitual manners of communication and behavior. A frustrated state in the creator therefore generates cruel, hurtful behavior in the fantasy figure of the former partner. Instead of getting emotional support, the person summons up old indignities. Instead of help, they get a slap in the face. The former partner can even become a mental symbol for any kind of failure or suffering.

The question, however, is, what mechanism symbolically links the former partner with any other kind of failure: why does she summon him up during other types of failure as though this were a law of nature? It's fairly simple: just as her former partner appeared earlier during every failure in order to assist and serve as an emotional support, he continues appearing now for the same reason. Because of the breakup, however, the fantasy figure is working in the opposite way – the memory of him, experienced as frustration, intensifies. Waves of anger and aggression repeatedly come forth, and they are somewhat euphoric and temporarily remove the feelings of emptiness and depression. This behavior in time changes into a habit of a vice – summoning up the former partner for every failure, cursing him again, criticizing him, slandering him, showing how he has aged, etc. He then, in retaliation, serves as a

universal symbol for frustrating situations; that is, as a kind of symbol of one's own screwed-up life. Despite the occasional relief, this mechanism is pathological, and so we should not support it with clients – in the long-term perspective it will harm them.

Sometimes it is good to distinguish this cursing of the former partner from so-called fortification of selfhood. As a result of injuries, the egoism of clients may be unclear and they have a tendency to regress to childlike, passively dependent behavior. Anger at the fantasy figure of the former partner does not stop this regression. The client needs most of all to rest, calm down, and stabilize (for example, with the help of friends). Only after he has rested can his ego be strengthened and he can pluck up. But the best way to achieve this goal is self-encouragement and not cursing and being angry with the former partner. She is still too bound up with the subject's ego, so attacks on her are also attacks on oneself. Many times, clients are cutting a branch out from under their own mental stability.

### **Example 3**

One client after the tragic death of her husband talked with his photograph at home, but in therapy she did not complain that she felt worse after these conversations than she did before. She tried to do the same thing with fantasy figures that she had done with her real partner – to talk with him after work about her life. Only the fantasy partner in this fantasy only stood there and said nothing, and the client began to drown in even stronger depression.

It is necessary to realize that during a confrontational breakup more injuries will be added to the dysfunctional fantasy interaction. That means that the former partner will not just passively stand there, look sad and mirror the tired state of his creator. A client will still remember an accidentally overheard conversation when her partner said to their mutual friends over the telephone: „That bitch fucked up my life...” At the beginning she missed how she was able to summon up the fantasy partner so that he could bring her pleasure, but instead of this she has gotten from her fantasy figure is another (metaphorical) slap in the face. Another fantasy argument takes off that ends in her empty apartment with crying, cursing, despair, and hatred. Suddenly, she needs to tell him what she thinks about him. So, still furious she picks up the telephone and tells him „the truth.” But now she is speaking with the real partner, and he does not even have an inkling of the fantasy partner. He takes the behavior of his former partner as yet another groundless outrage and so he also tells her „the truth” of what he thinks about her. These truths, however, will certainly not be victorious...

At the same time, let us observe with what mechanism fantasy interactions create fantasy figures with worse qualities than their real referents possess. The sentence quoted above came after an intractable argument when he was angry with her. However, his fantasy figure insensitively repeated the scene when the real woman was alone and feeling at her worst, and not at all in the mood for arguments. The real man would not have said such a thing at that point, but despite this, the insensitive behavior of the fantasy figure has been ascribed to him because „he can't deny that he said it that time”.

## **Compulsive Sociability, Drugs and Inability to Go To Sleep on Time**

In this stage defenders usually find themselves unable to be alone with their thoughts, and therefore they do not lose any opportunity to escape from their oppressive solitude. They are always in the company of others, they are planning some binge or activities to fill all of their free time. This phenomenon is called compulsive sociability and it is generally harmless so long as it is not accompanied by secondary self-destructive activities, such as inability to work, risky promiscuity or increased consumption of alcohol or other drugs. It is necessary to realize that alcohol is abused for its ability to dissolve anxieties (anxiolytic). The fantasy stage is typically full of anxieties, and therefore seems to invite alcohol abuse. The wise therapist therefore tries to put the brakes on these declivities to drinking and taking drugs.

In this stage the as well as the previous one, it is typical not to be able to eat, drink, and sleep sufficiently. The client's body reacts to the loss of the close partner with a chronic stress reaction that prepares them for physical activity – fight or flight. In the context of the breakup this kind of readiness is useless and even downright harmful because the inability to eat prevents falling asleep and also lowers the body's immunity. In short, clients feel fatigue at, say, ten o'clock in the evening, but despite this do not fall asleep – they wrap themselves up in a blanket and nod off in front of the television, even if they never did this before. (In the professional literature there is sometimes reference to the so-called delayed sleep phase syndrome.) The general weakening of the client's organism of course prolongs the reactive depression.

These two phenomena lead in tandem to the client having an aversion to his own apartment – hating the four walls between with he – although set free – is imprisoned. These bizarre states are not easy to overcome. Clients then futilely request that their psychologist somehow infuse them with a

stronger will. Traditional relaxation methods are also usually similarly ineffective. It seems that unblocking these states induces the undesirable effects rather than making them less severe.

Because these states are brought on by social separation, there should be effective methods that bring in either real or fantasy social support. Real interactions are, however, problematic for two reasons: mostly because the subject may have an aversion to other people. Although she may miss her former partner's touch, her skin crawls in horror with the thought of someone else touching her. The second reason is related to this. Despite possibly feeling a certain longing for contact with another person, her capacity for receiving affection from another person is very limited. For example, one girl after five minutes of making out with a - so she said - very nice boy suddenly felt such disgust that she immediately, and without any reason, insulted and injured him. The moral hangover that then followed convinced her that she should not undertake any more such experiments.

The psychologist does not have to be so categorical. In the future some other real person will have to replace the former partner and these painful beginnings are only an unavoidable accompanying phenomenon. The moral hangover in the case above would have been possible to prevent by honestly and authentically informing the other party of what had happened and in what kind of state the girl had been in, and what kind of phenomena accompany these. A reasonable person would be able to judge whether he would want to get involved under such circumstances.

Fantasy methods have the advantage of always being at hand, even though their effectiveness is not so great. The client, for example, decides that he should go to sleep, so he begins to talk softly to himself, as though with a small child that he wants to convince to go to sleep. He can soothe himself just as he would soothe anyone else who had the same problem. (In other words, with this guided monologue he has adopted not a symmetrical, but a complementary stance; see the chapter on How to Work with Fantasy Figures – Guided Monologues.) It also helps to stop the natural tendency to summon up the former partner after lying down. The best alternative activity is going over what happened during the day and preparing for tomorrow. Balancing out hour by hour what they did that day, what worked out well, and what did not. What they will do better next time, and what they would like to achieve tomorrow. All of this using a method of taking small, realistic steps.

Compulsive sociability usually fades away slowly. It often takes as long as a year until the individual is able to lie down in the afternoon, relax and enjoy it without having a dread of lying down in bed and of the empty walls at home.

## **Reactive Depression and Unusual Feelings Toward Other People**

Even a decision never to return to the former partner does not rid a person of reactive depression. Food tastes like Styrofoam, books are boring, on television there are only colorful spots jumping around, but worst of all, we don't care about other people. They are only figures that are flitting around. When they are, by chance, close by, one can somehow pass the time thanks to them, but when they go, it is as though they never existed.

This way of treating other people is typical for manipulative psychopaths (for more about manipulative using see the Manipulation section). They chronically find themselves in a mental world where other people do not exist as stable objects, and as soon as the others have left their sight, the emotional experience of them also disappears, as though the others had never existed. For a normal, mentally healthy person, such states are disconcerting. They do not know what to do about it, so they try to squeeze them into one of these two extremes: they reproach themselves for not feeling anything and for being cynics and they blame themselves for being apathetic, or else they go to the second extreme, and give in to these feelings. They say that people are bad, and they will also be bad. When other people take advantage of them, they will also take advantage. Neither of these solutions is optimal, but fortunately their influence on the character of the person working through this is probably going to be temporary. As soon as the situation of a healthy person stabilizes, deeper emotional ties again develop and these extreme resolutions fade away and are put out of his or her mind.

These attempts to give new, unusual feelings some kind of form – whether categorizing them with other old experiences, or going for some kind of extreme interpretation – are labeled as manipulation by emotions. It is a defensive reaction that is not too healthy, for a variety of reasons:

1. It is not authentic;
2. It is fed by fear of the unknown;

3. Mental efforts to relabel these feelings only deepen the client's fatigue.

The psychologist's recommendation is aimed more at getting rid of the client's fear of new, unknown feelings. He or she explains that they are temporary, they are not dangerous, and it is general exhaustion that brings them up. The psychologist warns that so long as they are going to try and change them by force, the exhaustion will only deepen. Among the most effective methods for mastering these feelings of emptiness are the kinds of relaxation techniques that aim at simple or revealing observation of these states without efforts to control and change them, for example focusing, but not Schulz's autogenic training.

Among other techniques that can help with these states are balancing. Thus, the client may become aware of a certain paradox. Even though he seems not to feel anything towards other people and he is emotionally indifferent to them, he is still controlled by compulsive sociability, that is, he feels constantly compelled to be among them and to never be alone. It is good to realize that a feeling of indifference towards other people and at the same time an urgent need to be near them are not mutually exclusive. The poverty of the emotional accompaniment does not change anything about the need to have people physically close by. Thus, expressions of gratitude for the support those around (even unconsciously offer) would be more in place than contempt for others.

### **Paradoxical Stage**

The paradoxical stage begins with closing the second gate – at the moment when the defender accepts that the former relationship is definitely over. This stage is called paradoxical because in the course of time both of the former partners seem to have changed roles. Now it is the initiator who begins to express the forces of attraction, even though this does not have to lead to a renewal of the relationship. Thus, the defender overtakes the initiator in the process of ending the relationship. The paradoxical stage may appear fairly late after the breakup. I have seen cases where it has appeared a half year later, but also after two years.

### **The Defender Overtakes the Initiator in Ending the Relationship**

Until this point it was always the initiator who began new changes – she initiated the breakup, pushed for the physical separation, and the defender did not want the breakup to happen and tried to prevent the initiator from leaving. This history has been preserved as a mental representation of the other partner. The initiator is still projecting his need for rapprochement with the defender, expects manipulation from him, and so is on guard with antimanipulative expectations. Thus the initiator has gotten stuck in his own developmental trajectory.

The defender has already broken her teeth with unending attempts to renew the relationship. She gives up because the continual real or fantasy rejection by the initiator has wounded her beyond what is bearable. In time, she resigns herself to it, loses motivation, and closes the second gate and becomes indifferent towards the former relationship. The initiator does not observe this change directly because he is already mentally and physically distant. He will see the changes, but after some time has passed. Then he will realize that no attack is coming, that the defender is no longer trying to renew the relationship, and he pulls up short and finally begins to deal with his own true feelings and realizes his own need for rapprochement. But the defender has already resolved these things some time ago. In other words, at this moment, the defender has overtaken the initiator in ending the relationship.

It would seem that the defender's closing the second gate would have to be the definitive end of the relationship – both gates are now closed, but this is not the case. Now two types of forces are at work on both partners – forces of attraction and of aversion. As a result of the asymmetry of the breakup, each of the partners had expressed only one of the pair: the initiator the disintegrative, and the defender the attractive. Now the defender's long-term refusal has brought them to an acceptance also of the forces of aversion. However, the initiator still has not experienced the forces of attraction because he thinks that they do not work on him, and that he lost out on them at the beginning of the breakup in the latent or the trigger phase. But this is not true, the forces of attraction have not disappeared, they were only temporarily drowned out by the forces of aversion, which have now subsided. The defender has accepted the fact of the breakup and understands the decision of the initiator to be definitive and irrevocable. With this, the manipulative pressure to renew the relationship has disappeared. At this moment the initiator is

gradually surprised at the intensity of her own forces of attraction. Suddenly, to his astonishment he finds that he has convinced the whole world about this breakup, but not himself.

The degenerated way in which the initiator experiences things, expressed in rhetoric of this type: „I don't have a problem with the breakup, it is only the defender who has a problem” begins to break down. Now the initiator begins to realize that she has also lost out on a relationship. First she begins to get angry with the defender, because he had often blamed her for the relationship coming apart. But useless rage at someone who is not physically present is rage against a fantasy figure, and therefore at oneself and at one's wasted life. This kind of anger at someone who is not present leads to exhaustion and ends in grief and depression that is impersonal (i.e.: it is not related to any one person). With this mechanism the originally split experiencing of the whole process has transformed into impersonal depression, in which the initiator also begins to call out for help.

This shift takes place according to a general rule, but in practice does not have to mean anything. In better cases, the initiator may realize what he is losing with the breakup and try for a real return and a renewal of the relationship. In worse cases, she begins to prove that she still has a chance and could return any time if she only wanted to. She therefore tries to send positive signals of rapprochement to the defender, and pulls him back into the previous stages. Unfortunately, these signs of rapprochement do not have to be a real attempt to renew the relationship, but only a manipulative attempt to show their own superiority, control over circumstances, and the possibility of a return. In this time, it often is not possible to decide which of these variants will win out. The following text message of a defender where she describes an incomprehensible telephone call by the initiator bears witness to the phenomenon: „Just now he called me and we talked for 20 minutes. He was sweet, thoughtful, and understanding. Do you understand?”

The defender has been burned several times, and has protected himself internally with his loss of interest. He has truly lost interest in the initiator. This internal alienation will be greater the more the initiator is an extremist and a manipulator. Really extreme and manipulative initiators who require strong stimuli partially utilize a breakup as kind of self-stimulation and in their way experience it as a game that they enjoy. They do not react to the gentle signs of change in the defender because they are not very exciting and not very definitive. Only with the defender definitively closes down, is alienated, and begins to hate them do these initiators realize that the game is over. This seems like a pity, and so they try to renew it.

The defender either sporadically enters into this game or refuses it according to what condition they are in and what possibilities they have for beginning new relationships. In any case, the second gate has been definitively closed and the relationship has irrevocably ended. If the relationship will ever be renewed in the future, both partners would have to make a new decision. It would be a new relationship rather than a continuation of the old one.

## **Paradoxical Phenomena**

The defender's overtaking his former partner is not the only one of the peculiarities of breakups that is caused by the couple's asymmetry. The initiator, because she came forward with the suggestion of the breakup, has not worked through the forces of attraction, but only those of aversion. The forces of attraction because he has defended the relationship are ascribed to the defender. The defender has the opposite role. He has worked through the forces of attraction because he has defended the relationship, but he is not prepared for the appearance of the forces of aversion in the case that the relationship should be renewed. Analogously, the defender ascribes these forces of aversion to the initiator. However, in the fantasy and paradoxical phases there is not such a great problem with the forces of aversion because they have for the most part faded away.

The forces of attraction are the strongest. The initiator is paradoxically the one who can express the greatest amount of these attractive forces: he will uncontrollably call under transparent pretexts, send funny text messages and emails, look for reasons to get together. He will defend his behavior with the words „even if we have broken up, we can still be friends and see each other. There's no reason for enmity.” Again, this is just rhetoric rather than truthful words that would accurately describe what the initiator is up to. His expression of the forces of attraction is, however, persistent and does not take the defender into consideration. This is probably going to be harmful, because the past traumas are still rankling in him. Such cases are a sign that the initiator is troubled by the forces of attraction, and does

not know what to do about them. The insensitive sending of signs of rapprochement „without a guarantee” egoistically ignores the wishes of the defender that the initiator would finally show his true colors – either by renewing the relationship or with a definitive end. Sometimes even the defender has to plead with the initiator to finally leave him alone, but the initiator needs a certain amount of time in order to reach this stage. Generally there is not any hope of renewing the relationship so long as the initiator does not realize his bias and does not himself take control of his tendencies to uncontrolled expression of the forces of attraction.

There are many reasons (besides the already-mentioned self-stimulation) why the initiator would refuse to claim the forces of attraction, that is, even to wield and control them:

1. She ascribes them to the defender – they are not his, therefore she has no responsibility for them.
2. They were drowned out by the forces of aversion and she believed that they did not exist at all. She ignores them as though they had no right to existence (denial).
3. The unexpected forces of attraction represent an unexpected emergent complication that she does not want to admit to. They are telling her that the breakup is still a long way from being over, even though she had believed it to be already an accomplished fact.
4. Claiming one’s own forces of attraction would mean rethinking the whole manipulative balance according to which the victor is the one who had first expressed rejection; that is, the initiator. Taking responsibility for the forces of attraction means reevaluating the gain from the manipulation and acknowledging one’ tied or even minus score.

#### **Example 4**

One of my clients was stagnating in a relationship with a narcissistic man who was constantly giving her hope, and then taking it away again. He did not really want to get back together, nor did he want to definitively end the relationship. After one pleasantly-spent afternoon the client could not hold in her emotions any longer and began to cry. He took care of her nicely, but did not give off any signs of coming closer. The emotional expressions flattered him but he did not feel any pressing need to return. After this event, the client began to understand the further unsustainability of this game, as well as its destructiveness. Almost the entire session we searched for the most appropriate manner in which to put an end to this wavering back and forth. We arrived at the following solution.

We started with the fact that the man concerned does not subjectively want to hurt his partner, but actually perceives all of his behavior as helping. Thus, in the next week my client asked him for help, which clearly flattered him, but it he was utterly blown away when he found out that what she was asking of him was that he not contact her about personal matters, that he not send her text messages from the airport, and that he ask her for help with business questions only during normal working hours, etc. What was important here was that in this request there was not the slightest sign of manipulation or a feinting strategem. It was really only a request when she told him that she would probably always love him but that he could see for himself how his kind behavior hurt her. She also described his holding out for a sense of subjective certainty with the idea that this could even last for several years, but nothing has been lost. They could try it again one more time if they want to but she could not live in this kind of eternal uncertainty. It could end with her having a nervous breakdown and doing something terrible to him. They would then hate each other, and she didn’t want that.

In this illustration we have seen a tremendous change from the previous stages. In the paradoxical stage the client had practically no need for manipulation, and did not play a game of pride. She was able to express her positive feelings towards him without trying to hide or mask them, as is typical in the manipulations of the asymmetrical stage. He was even able to admit that he missed her and longed for her. All of this indicates that both of them are fully in the paradoxical phase of the breakup when the manipulation falls aside and the forces present are almost exclusively the attractive ones and the partners are kept apart pretty much only by memories from the past, the consistency of the ego, and the initiator’s waiting for a feeling of subjective certainty.

Another characteristic sign of the paradoxical stage in the example give was that she was closer to definitively ending the relationship than he was – the defender had thus overtaken the initiator. It is necessary, however, to point out, that therapy played a great role in this mutual shift, and that otherwise the relationship would probably have ended in these two hating each other. The fact that she (the defender) went to therapy, and he did not, had as a result that she always had a good overview of the stages they were going through, and was brought to realize the characteristic transformations in her and her partner’s words and behavior. She was also warned against possible dangers – mutual enmity, stagnation in the relationship, the partner’s waiting for a sense of subjective certainty, etc.

This had as a result that her partner was not able to keep up with her development. He was so surprised by her forthright requests that he put his head down on the table and left it there for nearly the

entire time of her monologue. He rationally grasped her requirements, but was not able to process them emotionally. His first reaction to his own confused feelings was a wounded gesture, but he was not able to keep it up, because the wishes of his partner were not offensive or derogatory – it was really just a request. Therefore, he behaved like a gentleman because many former partners in moments like these would have brushed off and refused even such a frank and ingenuous request with a hurtful remark that they can do whatever they want and nobody is going to tell them what to do.

So defenders should not offer this approach as a manipulative tactic or intrigue for winning their former partners back because it would almost certainly not succeed. It is much better for the defenders themselves than for the initiators, because the defender allows them to keep their shields intact, to define their path into the future, and prepare themselves for all kinds of contingencies related to the breakup. That in this case we are not looking at manipulation is also confirmed by what my client experienced after the scene described above. She described it as a very unaccustomed feeling where there was nothing – neither sadness nor joy, but a kind of serenity and emptiness. Ultimately it helped when she huddled into the embrace of her friend and regressed into infantile behavior.

This emotional anecdote confirms that what was going on was not manipulation, but exhaustion after difficult dealings. In the case of manipulation, there would have been a brief high appearing which would have been accompanied by a nervous suspense in waiting to see how the partner would react, followed by a plunge into depression if he did not react quickly enough or according to expectations.

### **Absence of the Paradoxical Stage**

Sometimes the paradoxical stage does not appear at all during a breakup. Thus, it is necessary always to remember that the stages of breakups described here are contingent to a certain degree upon the immaturity of the partners. If this immaturity is greater or lesser than is defined, then the process of breaking up is modified, for example, thus:

1. Neither the defender nor the initiator is capable of making definitive decisions. Everything they do takes the form of faltering half-decisions that change over a period of three days or sometimes even less. In such cases instead of the paradoxical stage a kind of „fibrillation” or fitful jittering that presages stagnation in the relationship. The partners are not able to be together, or apart either, to speak nothing of beginning new meaningful relationships.

2. The initiator's decision did not have a manipulative character. The paradoxical stage is made possible by illusions. The initiator does not know at the outset of the breakup what he is losing, and thanks to manipulation, has the impression that only the defender suffers. In the paradoxical stage, however, he wakes up to find himself waylaid by the forces of attraction. However, if there are clear nonmanipulative decisions made at the beginning and the initiator is fully aware of what he is gains and what he is losing, then the paradoxical stage does really arrive.

Nevertheless, if the paradoxical stage does arrive, it represents another chance for renewing the relationship. This is its value. It is a second period in which the initiator reevaluates her decision, this time taking into account not only the forces of aversion, but also those of attraction. Of course, at the beginning of the breakup it is not simple to estimate whether the paradoxical stage will, in fact, arrive. We also do not know how the initiator will ultimately decide during the paradoxical stage. We must allow her a free choice so that she will take the relationship as her own decision, but that does not mean that with accommodating behavior we may not favorably influence this choice. According to the initiator's decision the paradoxical stage either means the relationship's renewal or its definitive end.

### **Renewal of the Relationship – Seeking an Old-New Identity**

#### **The Tendency to Repeat a Trauma**

Sometimes defenders are surprised by the strength of the so-called love with which they try to renew the relationship. If they are honest with themselves, they are sometimes aware that they want to return in order to heal their wounded egos. In psychology this phenomenon is called uncompleted tasks, and in psychoanalysis it is described as the tendency towards repeating a trauma, and there will be more about it later (in the chapter Stagnation in the Relationship – Tendencies to Repetition). It is a tendency to repeatedly enter into an unsuccessful situation for so long as the individual remains unable to cope with it. That this is not true love is apparent at the point at which, if the relationship has been renewed,

the defender all at once determines that he no longer loves the initiator, and the strong love suddenly disappears like the steam over a pot on the stove. Suddenly, the defender has become the initiator and terminates the relationship. This scenario is typical for manipulative individuals because the balance has suddenly tipped in the favor of the former defender. Everything according to the rule: „The stronger one is the one who first expresses rejection – here, the instigation of the breakup.“ It is a question, then, of whether this course of events should be considered as two breakups, or one with a manipulative battle in the middle.

With sensitive psychological leadership, it is possible to stop or mitigate this manipulative escapade and renew the relationship for real. It is necessary to lead clients to an understanding that manipulative payoffs (E. Berne) and a wounded ego are not the highest values in comparison with the potential for a lifelong successful relationship. In any case, if the psychologist meets with an unusually or incomprehensibly strong longing to renew the relationship at any cost, he or she should warn the defender against this kind of scenario. Continuous and repeated warning is generally the best inoculation against this kind of progression and it can lead to the renewal of the relationship or to its dignified ending.

## **The Possibility of Return**

The forces of attraction, which are strongest in this stage, inspire questioning on both sides: „What if we got back together?“ Even if both partners are on their guard not to say these words aloud. But the possibility really exists and it is precisely at this moment that it is the strongest. The greatest obstacles that could prevent a successful return are of a triple nature:

**1. Long-term obstacles**, among which belong unresolved problems that broke the original relationship apart – drugs, quarrelsomeness, unfaithfulness, violence, blaming, mocking, humiliating, etc. Long-term obstacles are very serious. The psychologist should warn clients against pathological return to a chronic aggressor, alcoholic or manipulator. On the other hand, he or she should consistently help clients to rid themselves of their own unhealthy tendencies.

**2. Short-term obstacles** that are immediate reactions to the breakup. Foremost among these are playing proud and the need to take revenge on the partner for the wrongs inflicted on them. These reasons are petty in the long-term perspective. A long-term functioning relationship allows the partners to found a family, to raise children, to be each other's mutual support in difficult times and to grow old together. The value of such a relationship compensates many times over for the injuries of a partner crisis. We can also meet with put-on comedies where the defender renews the relationship with the initiator and then out of spite breaks up with them again in order to show that they were the one who had the situation under control.

Short-term consequences can be a serious obstacle to renewing the relationship. Sometimes it is difficult to free oneself from the humiliation and insults that the defender lived through during the breakup. They can persistently come back in memories, and it is necessary to square with the new discoveries that the breakup has brought: how many times the partner was unfaithful, which of their intimacies have been revealed to everyone around, that their intimate photographs and videos are circulating on the internet, and so on. Coping with these kinds of situations takes time. Sometimes it is no wonder that the defender in this period is not able to react without reserve to opening and welcoming gestures proffered by the initiator. Likewise, the number of such unsavory episodes during the breakup testifies to personal immaturity and de facto inability to create a functional relationship.

**3. The requirement of flexibility.** The previous two obstacles had to do with phenomena which increase mutual aversion, but there are also obstacles that are not primarily a matter of mutual aversion but rather of the flexibility of the participators. The requirement for a quick change in tactics is foremost among them.

Let us realize that in each of the preceding stages the client has been given contradictory instructions. In one stage we recommend acting as though nothing had happened, in the next we cancel this tactic and recommend waiting and relative independence. Suddenly, in the third, paradoxical stage, the partner begins to revive and the therapist begins to recommend what he or she had warned against in the previous stage: openness, doing things together, new dates, touching each other and games together. It is necessary to be aware that such a rapid change in behavior is possible only if the individual understands the processes in progress well, and if they have been continually explicated.

The main reason for breaking the process down into stages is the possibility of distinguishing needs that arise and giving targeted recommendations that can seem contradictory as the client moves between individual stages. In other words if the individual has burned his fingers many times in the previous stages and lost his nerve because of it, then we can exemplify that his partner is now finding herself in a different frame of mind and he does not have to fear emotional openness. In this stage it is much more likely that the partner will toss in some flippant comment that will wound the client again. Of course it is necessary to take the initiator's current state into account. If she is in a bad mood, which is possible to recognize after three sentences, it is better to let her be. But if she is in, as one client said, a „whiny mood,” it is possible to do almost everything as before – hugging, kissing, playing together, and so on, without fearing that she will be nasty to him again. The psychologist thus helps her gain the necessary flexibility to pull this off, and his or her role is to show the defender the possibility of returning and helping interpret the meaning of ambiguous gestures:

1. The therapist points out the value of a long-term relationship.
2. He or she warns against petty pride and compensates for in apt recommendations of friends, such as, for example: „And now you can relish him coming crawling back to you.“
3. He or she warns against repeating old mistakes and bad habits, and shows new ways to overcome these dysfunctional behavior patterns.
4. The therapist prepares the client for the last stage – renewal of the relationship.

According to how the individual concerned has made use of the chances offered in the individual stages, the breakup can work out in three possible ways:

- a) The second gate closes and the relationship ends for both partners.
- b) The relationship is renewed and the breakup will be relabeled as a partner crisis.
- c) The most unhealthy possibility is stagnation somewhere within the realm of the paradoxical stage.

## **The Problem of Therapy**

It is not entirely correct to suppose that therapy for the defender always helps to renew the relationship; i.e.: in achieving the defender's actual goal and the therapist's commission. Repeating meetings and balancing life events in regular intervals speeds the process of personality development. In the meanwhile, the other partner who is not going to therapy persists in her habitual thought patterns. Thus, the two of them are actually growing apart.

Even in marital therapy it can happen that one of the partners refuses to go to therapy. However, thanks to their living together the two are still influencing each other and so the entire system of their mutual interactions begins to change. The partner who does not go to therapy has to adapt to the changes that are brought about by the therapy. However, even if the partners are physically far apart, it has to happen as a rule that this influencing cannot happen, and so therapy with only one of the partners instead of bringing them closer together de facto estranges them. The personality of the partner in therapy begins to mature more quickly and the other one stagnates. Fortunately, clients will not usually complain about this fact, because they have the feeling that the therapy has brought them other, though primarily unexpected benefits.

Up until the paradoxical stage the relationship is preserved in a schematized form where the initiator rejects the relationship and the defender tries to bring about a return. In the paradoxical stage the situation may be entirely reversed. Thus, it does not at all mean that the initiator always has hope of succeeding when he comes back with the suggestion of renewing the relationship.

I once had a client who lived in this way for about a year separated from his family, and after internal struggles with a lover, decided to return to his family. He expected, despite having been warned, that he would be received with open arms. However, when the reaction of his former wife was very reserved, he was unpleasantly surprised and taken aback. I do not know how it was in this concrete case, but it can happen that even a defender, in this case the wife, can be surprised herself by her own chilly reaction, because at a conscious level she was convinced that she would definitely want him back. These paradoxes are caused by our being aware in a given moment only of our strongest need. Other needs, even if they are not met, do not penetrate into consciousness, seem to be sleeping, and so do not worm

their way into consciousness. Clients do not know that they even have these needs so long as the needs do not awaken. For example, a initiator cannot believe that the forces of attraction are working on her, and the defender does not notice the forces of aversion (see the law of the strongest conscious need in the chapter on Two Laws of Frustrated Needs).

However, for all that returns are possible it is often difficult to find a way bring them about. It can be said that a period of wooing and courtship. There are a whole range of possibilities: in shared moments they may realize that they feel good together, one indicated a need for help, and the other is obliging, does not resist inadvertent touches, caresses, baby talk, or other regressive behavior that they both enjoy.

In any case, after a certain time after the first rapprochement it good to have a serious talk, to evaluate the reasons for the breakup, now relabeled as a crisis, to make an expression of good will and a new decision to continue in the relationship. It is also appropriate to discuss the possibilities for being tougher and to say how to handle the situations that led to the breakup this time around.

Sometimes clients are afraid that when renewing the relationship they will also be letting the skeletons from the period of the breakup out of the closet. Yes, there is a certain danger of that, but it is much less than before, because both partners are now in a different stage. Both want to renew the relationship, and therefore these outdated embarrassments can be made light of and the partners are willing to forgive. In any case, the psychologist should warn against the tactic of „as though nothing ever happened,” which would certainly create a negative outcome.

Consultations with the psychologist should not end immediately after renewing the relationship, but they can lessen in frequency and just monitor the launching of the relationship in order to prevent making new mistakes or repeating the old ones. After some time the therapy can become unnecessary and we may wish the old-new partners good luck in their life together.

## **Stagnation in the Broken Relationship**

At the end of the fantasy or the paradoxical stage it is most important to free oneself from the previous relationship, which is practice means cutting one's losses. Reconciling oneself to the fact each partner ends the relationship in the red is one of the most difficult challenges that a breakup brings. People desperately look to substitutes with which they want to assure themselves that they are in fact the ones who are on top. These substitutes can be money, an apartment, the agreement of those around them, or gaining mutual friends on their side, or children into their care, etc.

Czech Ombudsman JUDr. Otakar Motejl alerted me to an interesting legal parallel. Previously, the court had determined guilt during divorce proceedings, and the practical consequences flowed from this such as, for example, the right to use an apartment, or alimony. This practice passed into disuse, but the need of the partners to shift the blame from one to the other still remains. Therefore the assignation of children or of property is used as a kind of official labeling of who is good and who is bad. This practice, according to O. Motejl, can be largely responsible for why men are trying to get their children into their care these days, which they did not do before.

But what no court can resolve is the real impact on a child who is forced into Sophie's choice: „You can either love mommy or daddy, but not both of them at the same time.” The behavior of partners who put a child into such a predicament is usually a sign of stagnation in a broken relationship. (More about court cases and divorces in the chapter on asymmetry in assigning blame – Distribution of Guilt and Expert Testimony for the Court.)

It is necessary to be aware that reflection on a former relationship and on all of the losses that went with it creates dependence, and is therefore potentially dangerous, and all the more so when the partners involved have a natural tendency to depressive thoughts.

The reason is simple. In the period of the breakup it is paradoxically this contemplation of the former relationship that brings the greatest subjective relief, because it subjectively lessens the mental distance. All other activities are pushed into the background and do not bring the usual experience that is otherwise typical for reactive depression. Thus, we suddenly see that the former partner may be complaining about how the other one is so terrible, but on the other hand is not doing anything to definitively separate from them, for example, moving their things out, taking pictures down from the walls, putting away present that they received from the partner. It is as though they are artificially maintaining the death throes of the relationship in this period of its breakup. A psychologist cannot

support this kind of behavior, nor forbid it, but should point out the aspect of dependence on the broken relationship. This kind of dependence can even continue for decades. The fantasy figure of the former partner is made to present at regular intervals, and hateful interviews with it are conducted in the person's thoughts, which, although they do not lead to any objective purpose (but rather deepen the mutual ill feelings), but subjectively relieve the feelings of emptiness and nothingness in the short term.

### **The Last Chance, and Futile Searching for a Feeling of Subjective Certainty**

During the fantasy stage manipulation, games of pride, and the preponderance of the forces of attraction are phenomena that usually peter out. Unfortunately, the initiator still does not feel strong enough to return. She can be clearly aware of her inclination to renew the relationship, she can be aware of her longing and her physical attraction to her former partner, but something intangible is still missing in order for her to renew the relationship. What is missing is the heady feeling of subjective certainty that removes her doubts about making the right choice. This waiting for a convincing feeling of certainty that she wants to return is, however, very deceptive, mostly because it is accompanied by the behavior of the other partner, which we will now describe.

The initiator in this ambivalence sends alternately welcoming and rejecting signs and keeps the defender at a mental distance. The problem now is not in the defender, but in the initiator. He is waiting for the moment when he will strongly subjectively feel that he wants to come back. This wishy-washy wavering can last for a week, or even for years. Precisely stated, he gets this feeling when the defender definitively shuts down and when the second gate is also irrevocably closed. The initiator tries in several attempts to verify that now he cannot return. Feelings of distress and depression set in, and suddenly he gets the long longed-for and awaited feeling of subjective certainty. Suddenly he feels that he really wants to return and try to renew the relationship.

This kind of linked behaviors are typical for individuals with personality disorders, especially for narcissists and for histrionic (hysterical) reactivity (see the Glossary), but for different reasons with each. With the narcissists it is mostly an inability to distinguish their own egos from the egos of their counterparts. They consider many of their own wishes to be the yearnings of their former partner and they do not actually know what they want themselves and what their partner wants. A definitive end surprisingly shows this boundary between You and Me. With the histrionic personalities the motivation is intoxication and excitement from this game of guessing and indeterminate gestures, because it takes away these people's feelings of emptiness and boredom that they suffer in any kind of stable environment – whether it is the environment of the relationship or its definitive end.

Another reason for inability to end this constant wavering can be found in attitudes of either – or, which can be the result of parents' divorcing. The feeling of the child during the divorce, that it is possible to love only Mom or Dad, but not both at once transforms in adulthood from identification with the parents into the form of „Either I will be happy, or my partner will be, but we cannot both be happy. If we returned to each other, you would be happy but I would be unhappy.”

Endless vain waiting for a feeling of subjective certainty, however, is not typical only for breakups. In this age, we often find it as an accompanying phenomenon to an inability to establish a relationship, delaying marriage, refusing (adopting) children or other definitive decisions. It leads to creating makeshift and patchwork arrangements throughout life, waiting in vain for the right partner, etc. When looking back these people lament their wasted and lost opportunities. Suddenly, they do not themselves understand why they had so persistently refused marriage or children. This lack of understanding itself is expressed by the contentless evaluation: „I was stupid...”

### **Tendency to Repetition**

The defender's closing the second gate can bring on feelings of imperilment with the initiator who then opens up as a result. The defender, especially if she has tendencies to want to avenge herself, may relish the initiator's attempts and heal her wounded pride. Of course this can go too far, so that the initiator eventually gives it up and closes up into himself. This then immediately strikes the defender as a pity, so after a while she takes the initiative again. The merry-go-round spins around again, until the matter usually ends with mutual hatred. A graphic overview of all the stages helps to somewhat suppress these unhealthy cycles.

Subjectively, it seems to the defender that he has been the one who is losing many times more than the initiator in the breakup. This balance is dangerous in that it forms the above-mentioned tendency to repeat. That is then the cause of the incomprehensibly strong forces of attraction and the inability to end the relationship. It is enough for the initiator to smile and be nice, and the defender feels his resolution melt away like snow in the spring. The result is an inability to end the relationship and a need to keep coming back. If the defender is going to rid himself of these needs, he has to truly free himself internally from the need to avenge himself. If he is honest with himself, then he realizes in this stage that although he would like to return, but then end the relationship himself so that he has the feeling of being in control. It is not easy to get rid of this kind of motivation, even if one really wants to, and no less if we have left the other partner hanging or if we consciously long for them. There are several ways to help:

1. Realize that aggression, rage, and hatred towards the absent former partner are rage against one's own wasted years and lost investments, and thus like every type of self-hatred, they act destructively.

2. Behavior towards the fantasy figure of the former partner is closely bound in this stage with one's own experiences, and therefore any kind of fantasy about revenge or other manipulation leads in this period to a fairly quick worsening of one's mood.

3. Realize this and recall what a realistic balance looks like and distinguish it from manipulative games and illusions with which the initiator tries to impose herself not only on the defender, but also upon herself so that she can, as it were, survive because she is doing relatively better. To take part in this kind of a tussle makes about as much sense as a squabble between two drowning people over who has gulped down more water. It is a question of which of the two involved wants to voluntarily participate in such a farce.

4. A manipulative game of who is stronger and waiting for victory are, in their essence, the same as a gambling addiction. The pathological gambler looks at the slot machine, hates it, and loves it at the same time. He only wants it to return the money he has lost. The defender looks at the initiator in the same way, wanting to get everything back – the mental and the physical – that she has lost due to the relationship. Slot machines are programmed to return 80 % of the money put into them. We take perhaps a lot less away with us from former relationships. The former partners must be aware of this loss and mourn for it. According to Kübler-Ross, this is de facto part of the stage of accepting a deep loss, and both partners must experience it alone.

5. Informing the former partner about one's intentions to manipulate him. The basis of indirect manipulations is in the constant dissimulation of one's true intentions. This dissimulation requires a lot of effort and clients spend whole hours in fantasies about it. This time creates an addition and is the basis for the forces of attraction. Thus, if the partner comes forward and openly (repeatedly) expresses his – heretofore – hidden intention, it is as though he is throwing away his trump card and with this act, the manipulation that was built upon this unstated trump also disappears. The result is relief and a lessening of the forces of attraction. This kind of revelation of a hidden intention could sound like: „You know, I've been thinking about why I keep trying so hard to come back, and at the same time realize that I don't even know whether I would stay with you. Maybe for me this is about trying to attract you to me and then rejecting you to heal my wounded ego. But I don't care about that kind of a victory, so I'm telling you openly where this is coming from.” It is clear that this is not a natural reaction, but unfortunately, natural defensive reactions are self-destructive at this time, because they lead to cycling and stagnation in the relationship.

6. Try to understand that the initiator's suggestion of breaking up was at that time to a great extent a mutual decision of how to resolve a hopeless situation. Both of the partners towards their relationship's end have had enough. Neither of them had the situation in hand during the period of the breakup. The initiator has thus in a way expressed for both of them what each had secretly guessed – that it is not possible to go on like this. This insight also can be blocked by dichotomous thinking (see the Glossary).

## **The Principle of Authenticity versus the Principle of Reality**

During the period of the breakup, clearly ambivalent feelings towards the former partner are typical. In very quick intervals hatred alternates with love, and longing with aversion, especially when both partners for some reason have to remain in contact (common friends, employment, children, etc.).

The old pain and the awareness of loss have ended after the period of mourning have not transformed themselves into a typical stage of acceptance as we know it from Kübler-Ross, but the

increase in strength is usually accompanied rather by building up defenses against the other; i.e.: in the form of rage and aggression. This aggression has to appear and generally there are two extreme ways it is worked through which we can label as the principles of authenticity and reality.

### **The Principle of Authenticity**

Some clients do not repress aggression (often activators, see the typology below), but rather unscrupulously turn it towards their former partners. In a certain sense they are behaving authentically, because they truly say all of, often very unselectively, what they are feeling to others. On the one hand, they authentically express what is really going on inside themselves. On the other hand, they are not always right, and their behavior is often nasty and they can do plenty of harm which cannot easily be taken back in the future. They are well aware that they have overshot, but they are not able to apologize or otherwise distance themselves from their excesses. They have the feeling that the other partner has hurt them more, so they do not therefore deserve an apology. Conversations then take place in their fantasies where they dream up various loopholes and prevarications so as not to have to admit to their share of the blame. These fantasies are more harmful to these individuals than putting their pride aside and apologizing, because they go on and on and create a dependence on the former relationship. Thus, at least an internal, private apologize and admission of their own share of the guilt helps them to detach themselves from old traumas and hastens the end of the breakup.

### **The Principle of Reality**

The second extreme of working through aggression is shown by clients who are aware of, and experience their own aggression. They behave generally civilly with their former partners, not even commenting on their counterparts' possible aggression. In the background there may be a variety of possible motivations: it is their nature to take guilt onto themselves (intropunitivity), or they have an aversion to losing their temper and extreme excitement (inhibitors, see the chapter on Asymmetry of Distance and Activation – Partnership of the argumentative type), and sometimes they realistically grasp that throwing dirt at someone is pointless. Nonetheless, these clients also are unable to escape from their own heart of hearts. Feelings of desolation and aggression thus appear as the so-called pent-up affect and it is the people around who often bear the brunt of it – for example, in the form of hidden passive aggression – and at the same time this individual's own body shows the results in the form of unhealthy psychosomatization.

The goal of therapy is to warn clients against these two extremes and to enable them to express pain and aggression, but to channel these into acceptable forms. In therapy is possible to do this with the help of spontaneous cycles that move from a place where the client expresses aggression for a while and then into a discussion of his or her wishes not to unnecessarily hurt the other one, as their moods naturally swing. The main problem is that the other partner is not too open at this point, so even the very best expressed truth will not be accepted openly.

In preparing for real meetings with a former partner and in correspondence with him or her, two principles should be applied – both the principle of authenticity and the principle of reality. Not covering up what I truly feel, but at the same time not playing a comedy, not trying to avenge oneself, and so on. Achieving this goal is not simple because the individuals involved are not entirely free of manipulative tendencies and they are afraid of further injuries.

In correspondence, if there is enough time, it is best to let the individual write several versions of the letter with the intention of expressing what he or she feels as exactly as possible. The first two drafts are generally unusable. They are full of uncontrolled emotions which they client does not actually claim as their own and which are ephemeral. From the third draft on, the communication is more civil and these versions generally contain the things that the client will still want to express after several days or weeks. It is of course possible to take the best from what has been written in all the drafts.

Personal meetings are difficult for the client because it is necessary to react immediately to the former partner's behavior. If the therapist or another neutral party who could somewhat moderate the meeting is not to be present, then it is best if the client prepares all the possible ways that the former partner may react. From those which the client would most welcome to those that he or she is most afraid of. But with all of these possibilities the client should say how she has a tendency to react, and how she would like to react. Expressing all of these wishes for herself helps to ensure her success in the upcoming meeting.

Actual performance in verbal negotiations often disappoints previously-prepared fantasy communications that the client has either created herself or with friends. One client lied to her former partner about having a relationship with a well-situated man and that maybe they would get married (manipulation with the curve of appetite, see the chapter on Asymmetry of Distance and Activation – Preference Curve – Appetence and Aversion). In therapy she told me that she doesn't know what got into her. I had to remind her that in the session before the previous one she had mentioned thinking up this foolishness „with a friend at the sweet shop over donuts and we really had a laugh over it.” These fantasy preparations are quickly forgotten and do not seem to belong to real events until they appear as though by coincidence or as a sudden idea. It is, however, a vivid illustration of cryptomnesia.

#### **Example 5**

An insecure partner can be a great burden, especially when she is the initiator of the breakup. Her indecisiveness is often perceived as calculating when she is constantly keeping her former partner hanging. But in reality, her indecisiveness is caused by immaturity, fear of definitive decisions, and a feeling that she has not yet experienced enough, „adolescent” friends or simply fear of the partner and his character, inability to establish a long-term relationship, and so on. Unfortunately, a partner like this does not realize that with her indecisiveness she is harming her counterpart more than if she would definitively decide – whether positively or negatively. One client who had a partner of this kind told me that she feels as though she lives in under a cloud of narcosis with his constantly alternating noncommittal answers sounding like yes and then again no. Supposedly he was not able to say for sure whether he should return. Unfortunately, natural tendencies in these kinds of situations do not tend to be constructive. Should she provoke an argument so that he would say what he wanted, or force him to a clear declaration of whether or not he wanted the relationship, or whether they should renew it? The problem of all of these actions is that they are not binding. Even if a partner says that he wants to renew the relationship during such a debate, it still does not mean that he may not write a text message that evening with: „Good night...” in which his partner interprets the ellipsis as the word „Love” where he always wrote it before. In other words, any kinds of verbal agreements are of little effect because even the other partner is being pulled along by the forces of attraction and aversion and has actually gotten stuck in the paradoxical stage. When this client indicated rapprochement, he reacts with rejection. When she wanted to just pass by him on the street with a simple greeting, he stopped her and wanted to chat „just as friends.” He was not able to find a suitable partner and he was filling in the gaps with lovers who were „below his level,” which he then neglected and they repaid him by being unfaithful. The problem here lay on the one hand with the forces of attraction working within the client who could not get them under control, and also in the watered-down personality of her partner who patched and cobbled together his whole life and will continue to do so in the future.

### **The Previous Relationship as a Means for Autostimulation**

The decision to end a relationship naturally does not mean the end of memories and fantasies. They continue to flow and come back with ever less frequency and intensity. The psychologist should provide the means for reducing the painfulness of memories such that they do not transform into chronic hatred. This hatred is then sometimes used even for entire decades as a means for self-stimulation by the former partners. When they fall into feelings of boredom and emptiness, they remember their former partner, get upset, curse him or her several times, and thus rid themselves of their depressive feelings.

This kind of self-stimulation is very harmful because it is self-destructive. Attacking and cursing the former partner is actually attacking and cursing their common life, and thus, the individual's own life. It is an attack against oneself. Besides that, this behavior also disrupts their relationship to the opposite sex and we are not even going to speak about their aftermath for the children these two have together.

The psychologist should help his or her client close the second gate if it is in the client's interest and this is what they themselves want. They should certainly not support unending wavering because this is the most harmful thing for mental health.

It is possible to take some event, for example, an unsavory quarrel as a dividing mark, as a symbol of behavior that the client is no longer willing to tolerate. From this time forward, the relationship is considered as finished, even though it will still be possible to analyze old or new interactions. Sometimes it is good to show the client that even if the former partner strode into the room wanting to return, he would feel aversion towards her because he had already gotten used to the breakup.

#### **Example 6**

From the beginning of therapy I had taken pains to emphasize to this client that she should relax and become aware of her tense muscles and various bodily focal spots for stress. The value of this approach was also demonstrated by the following experience that happened after about a half year of therapy in the paradoxical stage.

After one generally calm session when she was tired after a celebration of some kind, I brought up the topic again of physical experiencing. She went through several parts of her body and then said: „I have tense muscles in my legs.” „Good, now try to relax them.” Then in the moment when she tried to do so, tears began to flow, and she curled up in the chair into a ball and began to cry. The abreaction was short-lived, because she clearly it clearly did not have any deeper psychological root. After perhaps ten minutes passed she was more at ease than before. In other words, tense muscles in her thighs had in a sense compensated for her tendency to want to cry, but paradoxically, the tension had only been prolonged by this.

Until this point she had „not believed that such a thing could be possible”. It was only after this experience the client began to systematically monitor her tense muscles because „it really pays off.” Here it is possible to clearly see how much time and patience we have to have in therapy waiting for the right moment when the client is ready to take things in. It is not until they have such a personal experience convinces clients of the usefulness of concretely recommended techniques. Tensing up of muscles is a typical defensive reaction to feelings of fatigue or loneliness in the evenings during the breakup’s last stages as it flickers out. Tense muscles also prevent a natural circadian alternation of activation and inhibition and lead to chronic fatigue and a feeling that one is at the edge of exhaustion (see the chapter on Characteristics of Fantasy Figures – Fantasy Figures and Daily Rhythm).

## **The End of the Relationship – Establishing New Relationships**

The damage already done, pride, physical separation and final resignation eventually cause both partners to begin living their own lives. The obsessive concentration on the former relationship passes and only the dregs of fantasies and self-stimulatory bad habits remain. The partners look around their surroundings for other possibilities. The former relationship is not dead. It still, although to a lesser extent, lives on in fantasies. It is bound up with many dreams of a life together, family, and shared old age. Because it is possible to say that it is the former partner who has the greatest chance of getting in with the individual concerned, and then other suitors or admirers. Unfortunately, a lot of damage was done in the previous stages, chances were wasted and both sides have been exhausted and humiliated. Both partners are often hardened in their games of pride, but even this is no longer making sense and is beginning to subside.

## **Group Living with New and Former Partners in Fantasies and Recommendations for New Partners**

A problem of the first liaisons entered into after a long-term relationship falls apart is generally their transient nature. The likelihood of success of these partnerships is not great, for many reasons. When someone begins to come back into herself and get mentally balanced again, she may feel an urgent need to be alone for a while, to enjoy her freedom, to travel somewhere, disappear, change her lifestyle, etc. She partially requires emotional support, but on the other hand, she is not prepared to return this kind of support to another person. Thus, asymmetrical relationships develop where one person is prepared for a new relationship and the other is still locked into their old one. Releasing oneself from the past long-term relationship is not a question of willpower, but unfortunately, mainly of time, and this time is more usually reckoned in years than in months.

From the above-mentioned stages, two recommendations can be distilled for new partners. The person who has been through the breakup does not have most of the processes described under their control, because no one does – not even the psychologist. These parties cannot, unfortunately, speed the processes up. By their activities, they are usually only able to influence them to their disadvantage; i.e.: to prolong them. New partners should try and see to it that the other person feels good with them. They should not punish the person for spontaneously beginning to speak about their former partner. They simply must not think about that other person. When a new partner is speaking about their former one, at least you know what is going on in their minds. Additionally, listening creates a feeling of closeness and a home base that attracts the partner to them the partner to them, even if they may be speaking about someone else. In the same vein, jealous scenes or trying to force guarantees that she will never leave also do more harm than good.

After a breakup, people instinctively seek emotional support, but they are mostly used to getting it from their former partners, without regard to whether they actually received it there. The reason is simple. Expectations do not develop out of reality, but from inner needs that have been channeled towards the former partner after years of living together. New potential partners can relieve them a lot, but at least temporarily they have one great disadvantage: there are not any ideas bound up with them about living a life and growing old together. This process plays out over the long term and is function of

time rather than of a one-off decision. Thus, even when a new partner is present, the former one will still live on for some time as a fantasy. When we take a normal couple around 30 years old and count up their former partners who still sometimes appear in intimate moments in fantasies, then with only a little exaggeration we find that we are describing group sex.

### **Simple Filters for New Partners**

We can observe that many people are not able to learn from their past mistakes. In their backgrounds may be a particular family constellation, for example the daughter of an alcoholic always choosing alcoholics for her partners. Perhaps she has sworn that she will never again begin anything with an alcoholic, but to her horror finds that her partner during the course of several years has begun to drink.

Simply pointing to the family constellation (the alcoholic father, in this example) is, however, a very sweeping psychological explanation. It is as though we explained that a car goes because it was built in the factory and tanked up with gas at the station. The behavior of the car on the road is mostly explained by there being a driver inside who is controlling it with his movements. The past does not explain why the car has its lights on and why after a while it gets into an accident. The past, to wit, does not explain the mechanisms that keep a pathology running in the present. To understand and control these currently active pathological mechanisms is at the forefront of our interest, so let us look at the working of a simple filter that only lets unsatisfactory partners get through.

Imagine a girl from a problematic family who had sworn throughout her childhood that she will at all costs avoid having the same kind of marriage her parents had. For a long time she cannot find a partner who suits her. After a long time, she falls in love with an aggressive psychopath who treats her like an object. He gets her pregnant. When she goes to tell him, he cruelly dumps her, so in shock she miscarries right behind the doors of his apartment. After this traumatic experience the girl again vows that she does not want to even look at a man and she tries even harder to refuse all suitors.

At first glance, this looks like an unhappy fate. However, in closer examination we find that precisely those defensive reactions with which she tries to save herself that are the reason for her repeated pathological choices. Her fear that she will drive away and refuse all reasonable and normal suitors grows out of proportion. Then she begins to suffer from loneliness, and her defenses are overcome only by someone who is sufficiently insensitive, callous, and aggressive so that he is able to ignore her resistance and satisfy himself „with her” on the whole against her will. Even though the power of psychopaths who have had success with this girl is partially given by what she has carried over from her family of birth, the main reason for the repeating trauma is to be found in the defensive reaction – in the attempt not to have anyone or only to have someone who is utterly perfect.

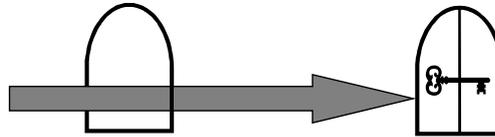
We will also consider as simple filters the kind of behavior that pushes away normal people and lets in psychopathic individuals only on the basis of the intensity of one characteristic. We often see this with women who are trying to get a too-perfect counterpart. They have a tendency to test them beyond what is reasonable. With these tests they get only those men who have abnormal or downright pathological motivations. For example, if a girl pretends for too long that she is not interested, this discourages a normal man, who after the third rejection loses his nerve. With this tactic they only get those who try persistently, obsessively, and unreasonably to win her, as though they did not have any other choice. This defensive tactic, which is supposed to improve the choice of partners in the end leads to a failure of choice. What looked at the beginning like intoxicating love shows itself at the end to be pathology.

### **Temporary Partners, Cobbling a Life Together, and Double Filters**

Another mechanism that prevents finding a partner who is suitable for family life is again a defensive reaction to the breakup – searching for temporary partners. The individual has still not cleaned up the aftermath of the antecedent breakup, but is already suffering from loneliness and has a need for sex. Thus he or she enters into premature, often promiscuous relationships with the thought of „not wanting to be tied down.” The entrance requirement to this kind of relationship is a counterpart with whom a real relationship would not be a „threat.” Emotional relationships are, however, usually a matter of time rather than ideal compatibility of two individuals. Thus, after some time, the individual determines that from the original temporary arrangement, a real relationship has emerged. At least one of this pair will fall deeply in love and want to go farther with the relationship into marriage or founding a

family. Suddenly with horror, the one who did not want to be bound discovers that the counterpart with which he or she has fallen in love is utterly unsuitable for a life together. Thus, retrospection quickly reveals that this was actually the condition laid out at the beginning of the relationship – to find such an unsuitable partner so that a real relationship was not „threatened”. Small wonder that the very same qualities for which the partner was originally accepted are finally viewed as unacceptable. This is a classic illustration of the double filter where during the progression of a relationship the criteria have changed.

**Graph 3**



The principle of the double filter: one and the same characteristic that was at the beginning a necessary requirement for beginning the relationship has in time become an insurmountable barrier ultimately breaks it apart.

There are many similar examples: an individual plays at being tough and unthreatened at the beginning of the relationship, but with time becomes dependent and submissive. The quality for which he was chosen (i.e.: toughness), is then unsustainable in the long term. Finally, he is rejected by his counterpart because she was actually looking for a different type. It is of no matter why this kind of misunderstanding arose in the first place. For example, someone can appear to be insensitive and callous because they are afraid. An unempathetic counterpart interprets this fear wrongly and does not understand the behavior. The one who appeared at the outset to be hard as nails is in reality a scaredy-cat. Suddenly, the two discover that they are a pair of scaredy cats who need to lean upon each other but neither of them has the strength to serve as a support.

Double filters repeatedly and dependably lead to relationships ending. The individuals concerned do not realize the illogicality of their deeds, even after they have broken up again. There are several reasons:

- The changes are too gradual.
- Changes in attitudes and feelings are drowned out by various manipulative games which are generally numerous at the beginning of the relationship.
- These individuals projectively assume that their counterparts is going through the same changes in attitude as they, that they will also want to found a family or get married in a while. They are then unpleasantly surprised when they learn that this was only an illusion of externalization and projection.

Simple and double filters are very difficult to discover because the one who is creating them is going through many changes that he or she is not aware of. He or she additionally is not aware of the causes, but only thinking about why everything worked out so badly when they meant well at the beginning. In this, unfortunately, inheres the treacherousness of self-destructive defensive reactions. At first glance they look like the best solution for a given situation, the individual who manifests them experiences them as an utterly natural solution. It is only afterwards that their results reveal that that, which the relationship was supposed to rescue, has in reality led to ruin.

## **Summary and Outline**

The psychologist can inform both parties about the stages and about what chance they have for success, about what is coming, and what they will be able to influence and what they will not. This insight can lessen the mutual wounding and other ill-considered behavior because it reduces desperate acts and raises hope. The advantage of weathering a breakup calmly is mostly the strength with which the one going through it can look into the eyes of another as well as into his or her own, how they are able to face difficulties that it would have been a wonder if they would not have driven them mad before. A breakup that has been mastered with dignity has then served as a kind of final exam for adulthood. It serves as self-confirmation, affirmation of one's own value, and it offers the possibility to develop self-respect. Those who have gone through a breakup chaotically, flinging dirt and harming one another, making half-baked decisions and half-hearted deeds of which people are usually ashamed later have been cheated.

**Table 1**

	What is Going On	Chances, Dangers and Recommendations
1. Latent Stage	The partner who is more burdened by the problems decides to break up. The mechanism of relative frustration creates a hybrid partner. The real partner is unfairly denigrated.	The possibility of holding onto the relationship and the effectiveness of prevention are at this point highest. However, opportunities for professional intervention generally do not present themselves, because the partners do not go to a psychologist.
2. Trigger Stage	The initiator announces the breakup. Decisions are not yet ripe. Time flows more quickly for both partners. Communication degenerates.	It is best to behave as though nothing had happened and quickly solve the problems that are troubling the partner, to put the brakes on tendencies to extreme reactions, and not to force anyone into unequivocal positions, and so on.
3. Stage of Asymmetrical Decision-Making	The initiator's decision to end the relationship matures - the first gate closes. The defender tries to manipulate, the initiator protects him or herself. Their experiences split. Attention narrows on the other partner. The two partners argue about who should visit a psychologist. They are unable to stop thinking about the other.	It is necessary that the defender not play a manipulative game of pretending that nothing has happened. It is good instead to interact with people who are around the initiator, to work with fantasy figures, and to let the initiator tire of freedom and grant them a free choice, to observe the forces that testify to the viability of the relationship, to calm down and bide his time, not to take things that are said too personally and take offense, and not fall into sheer depression and resignation.
4. Fantasy Stage	Physical separation takes place. Interactions shift from reality to fantasies. Real interactions are rehearsed ahead of time in fantasies. Forces of aversion gradually fade away. The defender loses strength and begins giving up hope. His or her motivation weakens and their reluctance to renew the relationship grows. Manipulative pressure on the initiator lessens.	The defender must overcome depression over losing the relationship and stand on his or her own feet.

5. Paradoxical Stage	The defender has overtaken the initiator in closing the relationship. The initiator is taken unaware by the forces of attraction. The former partner is diagrammed, publicly vilified or unconsciously idealized.	The possibility of a return is greatest here. It is necessary to emphasize the pleasant moments. Do not drag old skeletons out of the closet when getting together, but show the best that is within you. Now it has become possible for the initiator to realize what he or she is losing in the breakup, to take stock of short-term and long-term obstacles to a return, and to get over damage and pain inflicted in the previous stages.
6a. Renewal of the Relationship	The First Gate Opens.	New decisions are made and a mutual resolution is accepted. The breakup is re-labeled as a partner crisis. It is not appropriate to play the game of „as though nothing had happened,“ but to learn from past mistakes and not to long for revenge.
6b. Stagnation in the Breakup	One of the partners is not capable of making definitive decisions. Feelings move in cycles. Partners wound each other, they get closer and draw away from one another in intervals of various length.	The partners are not able to get over their enmity. They long for revenge and succumb to fantasy interactions. This situation arises where there is a greater degree of immaturity of the partners, or possibly in the case of unfavorable external circumstances (a common apartment, company, children). The prospects are not favorable.
6c. The End of the Relationship	The second gate closes and the relationship ends. Both old and new partners live together in fantasies.	An assessment of the former relationship takes place, and a new one is in preparation. Old obstacles should be cleared away. It is necessary to work with new partners and to prevent setting up pathological filters.

## Defensive Reactions and Asymmetry

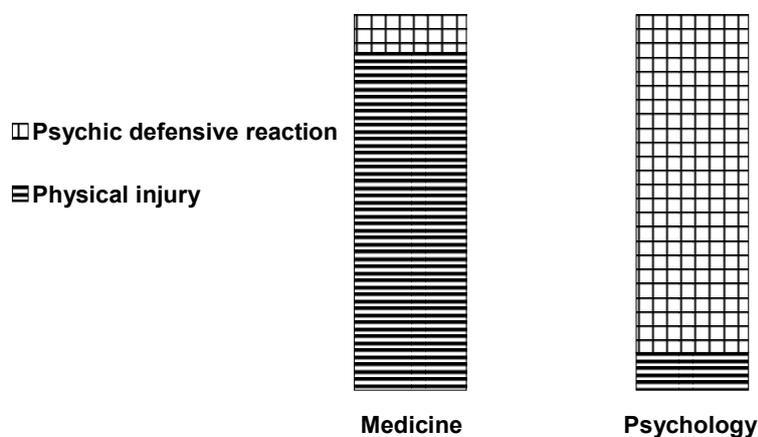
In the preceding parts the most frequent course was sketched out. However, the processes and powers that brought the relationship to the edge of ruin are not evident along a timeline. These analyses have to be performed by a professional in order to comprehend what is being played out in the two partners. On the basis of this constantly refined and amended view, the therapist can then recommend steps for them to take. In this part we will mainly discuss five types of partner asymmetry (of distance, activation, dominance, dependence, and distribution of guilt).

A breakup is a complex process in which at least two people are participants (the partners, children, possibly even the wider family), and therefore it is necessary to know the range of elementary defensive reactions that the building blocks of this complex process. Many of them are generally known and easily accessible in the professional and the popular literature. I am thinking mainly of stress, its stages and physiological reactions, shock reactions (acute and post-traumatic states), stages of acceptance of loss according to E. Kübler-Ross, tendencies to repetition (Wiederholungszwang, repetition compulsion), reactive depression and psychohygienic methods for coping with it and the already-mentioned relative deprivation or frustration. To refresh memory, the reader will find these terms concisely defined in the glossary included at the end of the book. In the following sections we will be looking at less well-documented partner characteristics. However, we must begin with a description of general defensive reactions.

### Self-Destructive Defensive Reactions

In medicine and psychology, a number of defensive reactions have been documented that either have no function at all or are partially harmful. A notorious example of this is stress.

Graph 4



The importance of studying defensive reactions is much greater in psychology than in medicine. If someone breaks his arm, the defensive reactions to this injury are not so important for the physician. His or her paramount task is to treat the physical injury. By contrast, if a husband slaps his wife in front of their friends, we can consider the physical injury to be virtually zero. The pain disappears after five minutes. Everything that is going to follow is a mental defensive reaction when the wife will be returning to this incident for years afterwards. She will experience the humiliation she was subjected to again and again. This defensive reaction that lasts for years is for this woman many times more dangerous than the pain itself. Therefore analyzing and mastering the mechanisms of these defensive reactions is the psychologist's main task in therapy.

The best example of a dysfunctional defensive reaction is the so called instinctive drowning reaction. To stop from drowning, all that is needed is a slight movement of the arms or legs that does not require much effort. However, this movement is not natural or intuitive while swimming. We have two examples of natural defensive patterns – running and the Moro reflex. By contrast with dogs, which swim the way they run, human running does not work in the water. People therefore quickly switch into the much more primitive rescue mode and this is the Moro reflex, where the legs are passive and the drowning person only raises and lowers their arms. But this is not a suitable movement pattern for rescuing someone in the water. A drowning man thus kills himself with the movements he uses trying to

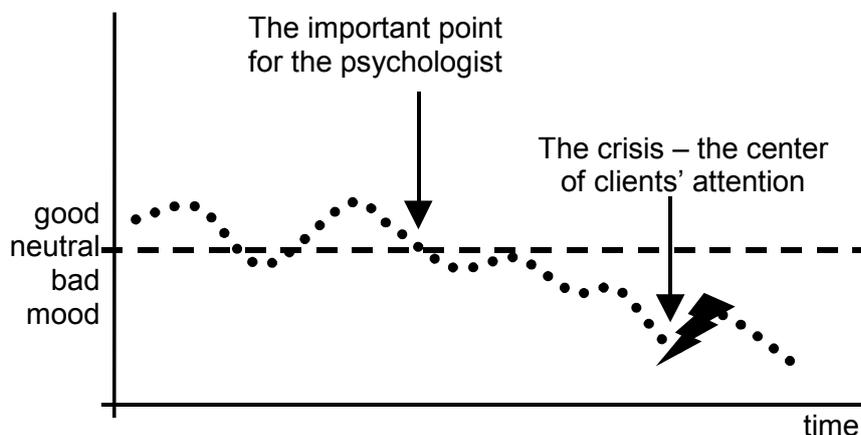
save himself. It is somewhat unjust – even if someone tries as they have never tried in their entire life, they will still die. We find almost exactly the same thing with breakups. Both partners want to save their lives and their relationship, but the steps they take tax all their strength and all their good will and still have the exact opposite effect than the one intended. Their self-defense is self-destructive. Therefore, the goal of therapy is to rescue clients from their own self-destructive defensive reactions that are often completely natural, self-preserving and intuitively perceived as correct.

Similarity with breakups can also be found in the difficulty of helping people out. One drowning person cannot help another, but is more likely to drag them under the water. It is not possible to help a drowning person by giving advice about how to move correctly in the water. Even for a good swimmer, it is difficult to rescue a drowning person. With breakups, there is, fortunately, more time and actual lives are not at stake. The separating partners thus stand a chance of gaining insight into the processes taking place. They also need to gain a rational distance before they can achieve mastery over their natural self-destructive defensive reactions.

Clients go to psychologists with descriptions of their defensive reactions, but they do not describe their trigger causes. This can be illustratively seen in descriptions of automobile accidents. People often describe, and want to hear, what happened with the car when it ceased to be controllable, how it turned around, how it flipped over, and so on. However, most of them overlook the few seconds that came before in which the accident was still possible to prevent. There is generally amnesia about these moments. In the same way, clients describe the wrecking of their partnership and crisis generally from the moment when the situation got out of control, but not from the moment when it had begun to go downhill but it was still possible to do something about it.

Clients with cyclic difficulties that stem from overwork display a similar tendency. They usually come to the psychologist in the period of crisis, when they feel their worse. This is, however, the period of reactive depression when their organism is on a kind of forced period of rest. This is not a particularly dangerous period, but for the client is it extraordinarily unpleasant. His attention needs to be transferred to the stage that preceded this one, when he had feelings of triumphal dauntlessness, and it seemed to him that suddenly everything was coming together and that it would always be that way. Then he overstrained and ignored all the warning signals of the coming crisis. Clients do not spontaneously pay attention to this period.

**Graph 5**



In some easily overlooked moment, the partners' situation began to chronically worsen. The coming crisis was only a matter of time. Clients, however, pay the most attention to describing their own and their partners' behavior in the crisis period, when it is wild and destructive, and also uncontrollable. This is natural, but a dysfunctional tendency all the same. The psychologist has to divert their attention to the days, weeks and months before and chart how events that were taking place below the radar led to the final crash.

## Two Laws of Frustrated Needs

Partners' interactions are driven by basal, evolutionary laws that are so universal that we are usually not even aware of them. They are only sometimes drawn by a cartoonist as a joke or by authors mention them as a curiosity, but their interest in them does not develop further. Many of them are of course known to psychology and they are in the wider professional consciousness. Others so perhaps

described somewhere but they have not yet come into wider awareness of their universality and importance.

Among the described and well known ones are the theories about stress, the phases of acceptance of a deep loss, and relative deprivation. From the less well known group, I am thinking of two laws that could be labeled the law of the strongest conscious need and the law of shared frustration.

### The Law of the Strongest Conscious Need

With regard to the fact that our organism has a great many needs and that the calculating capacity of the brain cortex is limited, most of the processes of satisfying these needs must take place below the level of consciousness, entirely automated. Only that need, or a limited number of them, passes into conscious awareness that is at a given moment the most important and the strongest. Thus, in our brain, there must be an evaluation process constantly running that sorts the needs according to importance. They are then released into consciousness or kept in line waiting. The weaker needs are latent or sleeping, as though they were waiting for their turn. People do not even guess the existence of these needs. Their existence can only be assumed rationally on the basis of knowledge or experience. Something very similar, if not the same, was also described by Maslow (1954) in his theory of the hierarchy of needs or by Lorenz in his a parliament of instincts. I assume that the order in which the needs are sorted is not given only by their own nature or by an absolute hierarchy, but rather by the actual degree to which they have been satisfied or frustrated.

#### Example 7

The following formula describes an actual hierarchy of needs.

$$\text{Order of awareness of a need} = \text{function} \left( \left( \text{Living importance of the need} \right) \times \left( 1 - \frac{\text{Actual satisfaction}}{\text{Maximal satisfaction}} \right) \right)$$

The order (OAN), in which a person becomes aware of needs and works to satisfy them is given by at least two factors: their importance to live and the relative degree to which they have not been satisfied (a second, nested parenthesis). Above all else, needs that are important to life itself, such as air, self-preservation, etc., have the greater priority, so that when they even slightly frustrated, even such important needs as food, sex, and all the higher needs move aside. Nonetheless, so long as the basic elementary needs are satisfied and the right parenthesis approaches zero (i.e.: zero frustration), these needs are push out of consciousness by less important needs that have been more frustrated. The following situation illustrates this process.

**Table 2 Estimation of the Importance to Life of Selected Needs**

Respiration	Self-Preservation, Aversion	Drink	Food	Touch, Appetence	Sex	Knowledge	Aesthetics
1	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.1

The maximal satisfaction of respiration (order of awareness of the need OAN = 1 × 0 = 0) leads to a zero awareness of the need to breathe. Breathing is entirely automated and takes place outside of consciousness, so long as the need is not frustrated. As soon as a person begins to suffocate, the need to breathe immediately pushes all other needs aside. Thus, even a half-frustrated need for aesthetics (OAN = 0,1 × 0,5 = 0,05) can be more strongly present in consciousness than a fully-realized need to breathe. Curiosity that is 80 % satisfied (OAN = 0.3 × 0.8 = 0.24) can be more significantly present in consciousness than hunger if the hunger is entirely satisfied (OAN = 0.7 × 0.2 = 0.14).

The resultant order with the given degrees of satisfaction is: Curiosity – Hunger – Aesthetics – Respiration. During a conversation with a friend who has a serious illness, our feeling of being threatened grows and frustrates the need for security (OAN = 0.9 × 0.9 = 0.81). In this moment we have the feeling that all of our problems, compared with his, are simply trivial. This is true, but the feeling lasts only for a short while until the friend or his fantasy figure passes out of our consciousness. Then our own order returns and we return to what has been troubling us. However, a memory of the temporary disappearance of our own problems and their relief from them during the meeting with a person who is doing worse than we are remains. I then met with clients whose parents had tried to „treat” them in this manner: „Were you ever in a concentration camp? Of course not! Well, then don’t complain. Your problems aren’t any problems at all!” We all know that this „treatment method” does not work, but we are little aware of the law that explains this.

For our topic of breakups, however, this law is of exceptional importance, because in partner interactions people are aware of only one, at that moment greatest force, and that may be appetence, aversion, or else overload. They subjectively have the feeling, however, that they do not have other

forces and other needs. They do not expect that a small change in their life will awaken forces that at the moment they do not have any idea exist, or they do not want to believe that they could exist. Thus it is possible that the initiator may live for several months with the notion that he no longer has any forces of attraction. The defender, then, is not able to comprehend that great rage and aversion towards the initiator are slumbering in her, which will then awaken and surprise her at the moment when the initiator in the paradoxical stage begins to seriously consider a return and takes steps towards rapprochement. In short, this is how hasty, ill-considered decisions arise, decisions which derive only from what the person who makes them is feeling at the moment, and do not take into account the dormant needs. Without knowledge of this law, we would have no explanation for these phenomena.

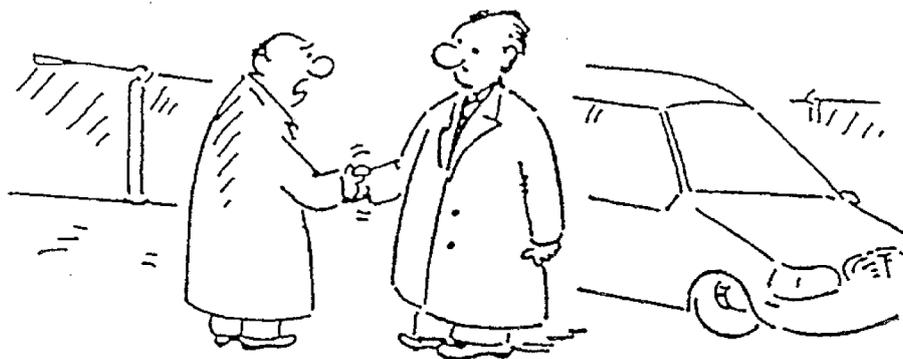
### The Law of Sharing Frustration

The law of sharing frustration is closely bound with the theory of relative frustration or deprivation and clinical psychologists know it in the form of the practical theorem: In a couple or in a system, the one who feels him or herself to be at a disadvantage causes the problems. This law states that as long as two or more people are together, they will have a tendency to even out their moods so that all of them are frustrated or satisfied to roughly the same degree. This will also be an unduly general law that reaches from housework, sharing food and other experiences, barter exchanges all the way to manipulative battles where the manipulator drags the other person down into his own bad mood. (See Ill. 9 in the chapter „Manipulation by Means of „Sticks and Carrots”.) This is how the feeling of entitledness develops in manipulation. So long as the manipulator, for whatever reason, feels badly, he has the irrational feeling that he is entitled to feel just the same as those around him. For example, he can't stand his partner looking happier and having more fun at a party than he is.

Another situation where we can see this is when a mother balances the frustration arising from her duties and cares with child's cries. When the child's crying is soft, she carries on with her other responsibilities, but when the child adds intensity to his cries, she goes to attend to him. The more responsibilities and burdens the mother has, the less she reacts to the child's gentle crying, and thus the less caring for the child burdens her. The fewer cares and responsibilities the mother has, the more she reacts to gentle crying, and thus taking care of the child burdens her more. This would also explain why it is parents in developed countries who complain more of exhaustion and how difficult it is to raise children, by contrast with parents in countries where people struggle with hunger and poverty. The intensity of and style of a newborn's crying are, however, evolutionarily adapted to an environment where hunger and a struggle to survive are the norm. In periods of affluence, it is enough for children to express their frustration with a much less intense cry, and they will still receive care. But we are only the executors of evolutionary mechanisms. Children express frustration with their crying that is excessively intense in an affluent society. Parents can satisfy them only by exerting all their energy, often without the help of grandparents that used to be customary in the past. It is thus no wonder that parents in wealthy countries get the feeling that raising more than two children is beyond human abilities. This could be one of the reasons why in periods of affluence the natural growth of populations declines.

#### III. 4

Be happy, neighbor! But not too happy. It will piss me off!!!



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The law of sharing frustration explains many seemingly incomprehensible human behavior. It is closely related to the theory of relative deprivation, according to which people experience the degree of

their frustration according to the difference in their state with the state of people in their reference group (here the neighbor).

Another area where this law comes to bear is with couples whose needs are so asymmetrical that they exclude each other and they cannot both be satisfied at the same time. They have to satisfy themselves with oscillation – for a while one partner's needs are satisfied, and then the other one's. This oscillation is less satisfactory than continual satisfaction of needs, but despite this, we can still find couple who have achieved long-term stability in this way. The law described here explains moments when the balance tips.

Generally it is narcissists who have partnerships of this oscillating type with masochists or dependent partners. The narcissist wants to have a lot of space and pushes his partner away, but she wants to always be close. There is not optimal distance where both would be satisfied. Thus, the satisfaction is alternating – for a while the narcissist suffers from the intrusive closeness, he loses his strength, and distances himself by force. This makes the dependent partner suffer. When she cannot stand it any more, she picks herself up, contacts the narcissist, and they are back on the merry-go-round. These tippings of the balance always take place when one of the partners thinks that he or she is suffering more than the other one, and thus that they have a right to satisfy their needs. Without this law, we would again have no explanation for what moves the oscillation back and forth.

## Partner Plague

Every psychologist who counsels couples has met with something in his or her practice that could be metaphorically labeled as partner plague. These are chronically engraved negative attitudes where the partners' behavior towards each other is chilly, and they express contempt and scorn. They are not able to provide even minimal emotional support to one another. For example, the husband makes beautiful baskets, but his wife speaks about them with derision, because her husband is not able to repair the electricity and to paint the apartment. At first glance, the problem seems to be self-evident: why not praise the husband's baskets if they are really good? She also knows that they are beautiful and of high quality, but the husband will not hear any praise from her so long as he does not „change entirely”. He will likewise not say that she looks good, so long as they are not having regular sex. This phenomenon is often termed emotional blackmail, but that would be its better face. Blackmail is at least a kind of agreement: „If you give to me, I'll give to you.” In this „partner plague” no such compact is available. The partners do not have an answer to the question: „What would your partner have to do for you to value his baskets, or to praise the way she looks?” This pathology is not explained by laws of social exchange, but rather the law we have explained about sharing frustration. „I will not stroke you, I won't praise you so long as I am feeling unhappy. You cannot be happier than I am.” It is not necessary to emphasize that even though this is a natural and predictable defensive reaction, but such attitudes lead the partners straight to hell.

The partner plague is accompanied by an excessive sense of entitlement that is a by-product of manipulative thinking (see the chapter on the Experience of Manipulators). We can illustrate this situation with the example of a man who has bought a car. He expected that it would go at 200 km/h, but it only goes 50. He is understandably annoyed, and with various adjustments he tried to get it to eke out at least 100. But it doesn't work, the car just won't go faster than 50 km/h. The man therefore stops putting oil into, and does not wash and maintain it. It is completely understandable that he is angry with this car, but a car that is able to go 50 km/h but has not been maintained, will end up going only 20 km/h. The man sits in it entirely furious; even the city transportation system goes faster than he does. But he cannot get out, because he would be exposed to inclement weather, and besides that, he would have to shoulder the entire expense himself. Thus, he just sits there, powerless, hitting the steering wheel and observing cars pass him at a speed of 40 km/h. However, if he wanted his car to go at 50 km/h, it would need the same maintenance as a car that went 100. He would have to forgive the car ahead of time that it will never go even 100, never mind 200 km/h. And he is not able to do this.

This is the situation that all couples who are being destroyed by partner plague find themselves in. They hate their partners because they are a far cry from their ideals, but the more they hate them, the more they hate themselves and their own lives. The man in the example above could double the speed of his car, but he is not able to do it, and would rather drag along slowly. In the same way, many couples would be able to live all in all satisfactorily, if they would respect each others' real possibilities and did not

cling to their demands. The greater the feeling of entitlement to these demands, the less the hope of satisfying them. The more they want to save their lives, the more they lose them (Luke 9:24).

There is no hope of rescuing such relationships so long as at least one of the partners does not abandon this perverse tactic and does not begin to offer emotional support to the other (and to others around them) without looking to whether she will get something back. Although requiring unselfish generosity from partners who are utterly emotionally drained is the goal of the efforts, it is not unattainable. Thus, the first practical step out of this stalemate relies upon harsher methods that have been applied in the Czech Republic by M. Plzák. They require a fairly authoritative approach by the therapist, who introduces a fairly strict regimen founded upon a firmly given, two-sided binding contract. For example, he will look after the children two nights a week, and in return will get sex twice a week without allowance for any circumstances. From this kind of contract, the way towards the unselfish generosity that is the basis of every happy relationship is easier. The theme of contracts within marriage has, fortunately, a rich professional literature, including in the Czech Republic works such as Marital Therapy by S. Kratochvíl.

## **Asymmetry – Introduction**

In the first part of the book we discussed the phases of breakups that derive from an asymmetrical and time-delayed decision to end a relationship. This asymmetry of time is only a result of differences between the partners. Every person is an individual who differs from others by the extent of their needs. One person needs to sleep more, another likes to eat, someone else has a greater need to be touched, and still another prefers open relationships. When two people meet, it is certain that they will not have entirely the same needs, and thus an inequality or asymmetry will have to develop between them. They will have the same number of asymmetries as they have needs. Psychology, during its development, has revealed those needs that have a fundamental influence on the stability and the satisfaction of couples. Often these are umbrella terms that summarize the order of individual needs. Every kind of asymmetry can be a source of imbalance or dissatisfaction for a couple, and therefore a psychologist should monitor what kinds of asymmetries prevail in the relationship and how they develop and change in time.

Sometimes asymmetry is harmful, sometimes symmetry is bad. Usually, a slight asymmetry is natural, harmless, and in its way, can even be beneficial. Extremes tend to be harmful. Assertions like „Opposites attract, I am Mars and she is Venus“ testify to the partners being aware of their different needs, but still finding ways to get along. Extreme asymmetry where the couple ceases to function in certain areas can be seen in stronger rhetoric: „We live next to each other, not together. I have the feeling that I am living with a Martian.”

The basic way to reveal asymmetry is to seek mirror-opposite rhetoric coming from the partners. Both of them create a whole, and in the case of asymmetry, extremism from one of the partners has to be compensated for by the other, whether or not they want to. For example, if one of the partners complains that the other one is always running around on them, then we will hear the mirror opposite in the following: „He is always sticking to me, he follows me like my shadow, he controls me.” It is important to always keep in mind that these two expressions belong together like puzzle pieces. One without the other does not make sense.

In the following text we describe five basic asymmetries: asymmetry of distance, activation, dominance, assigning guilt, and dependency.

## **Asymmetry of Distance and Activation**

*Key questions:*

*Which of the partners wants to be close and who keeps their distance?*

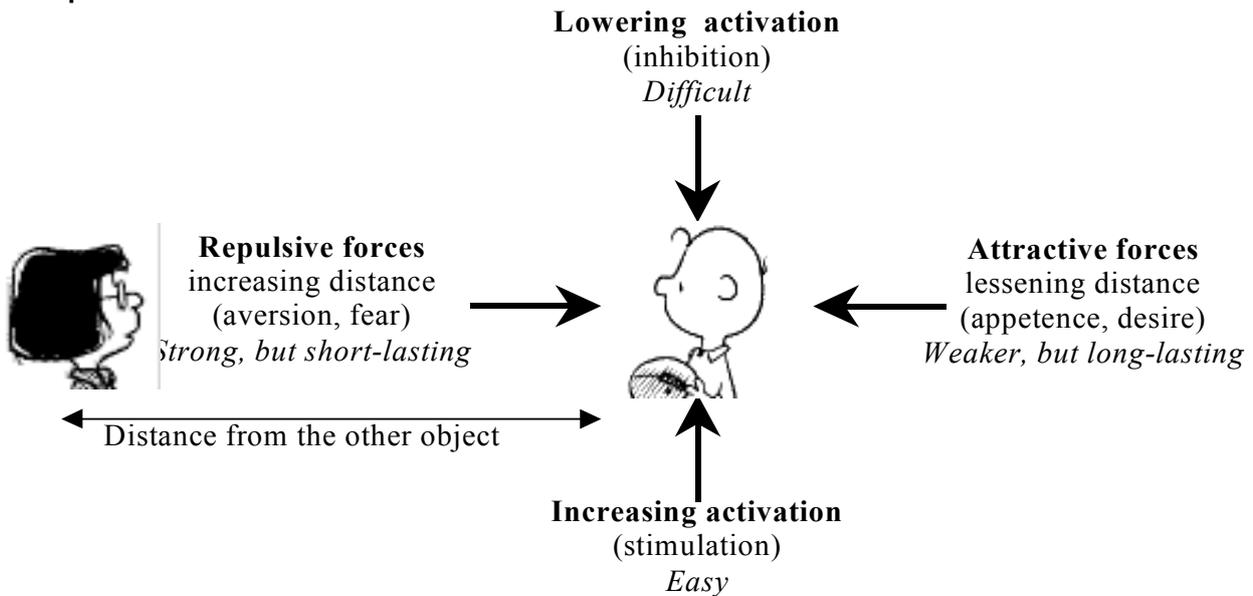
*Which of the partners suffers boredom, and who is overstimulated?*

Two of the most important asymmetries are very general, and therefore they exist to some extent in every relationship. They are mental distance and degree of activation. Every organism keeps up an optimal level of activation which naturally fluctuates according to daily and yearly periods from deep sleep through agitated states of panic. This degree of activation is regulated according to the needs of the momentary situation (for example, the burden according to definition, creates stress), or alternately, what the individual concerned thinks and what he or she imagines. In the same way, every organism maintains what is for it an optimal distance from other objects and organisms.

Thus, we are looking at two homeostatic systems that are each created by two antagonistic forces: two forces enhance and decrease the distance and maintain a homeostasis of mental distance in this way. Two more opposite forces enhance and decrease the activation of an organism, thus maintaining an optimal degree of alertness that allows the organism to survive.

For a person to be mentally at ease, all four forces have to be in balance. We are all different, and it is no wonder that we all have the zone where we feel good in a somewhat different location. As soon as two people want to live together, their zones should overlap. But of course it would be a miracle if they did continually cover each other. One of the pair would like to be closer, and to touch more, the other one would rather be alone. In the same way, one of them wants seeks greater excitement and loves parties and the other prefers the peace and quiet of the family hearth. The situation is optimal when these zones overlap. In cases where they do not do so, the unsatisfactory oscillation we discussed above may appear.

**Graph 6**



Four independent forces keep Charlie at an optimal distance from his friend Marcie and at the same time regulate the degree of his activation (alertness, vigilance, preparedness for action, etc.). Charlie has the same forces aligning towards every other person, and the action of one of the forces does not exclude the action of another. For example, a relationship with a new partner certainly does not mean that the forces of attraction with a former partner automatically disappear. Similarly, although a breakup can cause great damage and with it the forces of aversion may strengthen, the forces of attraction are not erased, and despite all kinds of pain, they still attract the former partners to each other.

For partner interactions, the most important thing is that these forces are mutually independent. Realizing the results of this principle has the value of gold. It is possible to illustrate with a simple example: if a client has used regressive behavior with her partner, then the mere fact that this man has slept with her best friend cannot cancel her need and strong habit to carry on like a small child with him. The forces of attraction are of a different character than those of aversion, even though they mutually interact and overpower each other.

Additionally, clients are often confused by the fact that their former partners sent them various, often contradictory signals. They ask: „Does he want me or not?“ A typical defensive reaction to this confusion is the attempt to force the former partner into an unambiguous stance. („You have to finally clarify what it is you actually want.“) They may also try to reduce the perceived chaos into an extreme by latching onto some kind of often inessential detail: „He just doesn't want me! If he wanted me, she would do things differently.“ The same processes in the period before the breakup lead to the repressing of warning signals. For example, the defender of the relationship generally describes the period before the breakup as „normal, and nothing special was going on.“ Consequentially, she cannot understand how it is possible that he broke up with her when they had slept together two days before and he whispered to her that he loves her. In other words this means that she had mislabeled some of his expressions, especially those of aversion, as insignificant, transient, and unimportant.

Psychologists or other professionals should not allow the same distortion. They should be independent, and consequently monitor both the attractive and the aversive forces, for example with the help of a table:

**Table 3**

The Woman's Forces of Attraction	The Woman's Forces of Aversion
They live together and see each other every day.	They are not able to communicate together peacefully. Every conversation degenerates into a quarrel.
They have a common household and finances.	She complains that he does not understand her.
She sleeps with him.	She returns home late and has an aversion to being in his presence. She is leaning towards infidelity.
Once a week or every two weeks she comes to him, embraces him and says that she loves him so much. She is making sure that he will never leave her.	She spends too much money and then has pangs of conscience.

These two forces are constantly in such a balance that the forces of attraction are stronger up until the breakup. The partners are constantly monitoring whether the subtraction of the two forces is positive or negative. A professional should follow these forces separately and pay attention to their intensity. In our chart we see that expressions of both attractive and aversive forces are very intense. A woman, for example, makes sure that her husband will not abandon her. But this can also be just an expression of a defensive tendency against her own ideas to abandon him, and possibly also a reaction to her own infidelity, as yet undiscovered by her husband. One way or the other, we see that expressions of both forces are very accentuated, which is a sign that bodes much worse for the stability of the relationship than the mere capricious fact that one of the two forces is ascendant at a given moment.

Clients mainly track the resultant of these two forces, because practical decisions are going to be derived from them: whether to stay or to go. The psychologist, however, wants to even out existing contradictions. He must therefore carefully observe the entire system. The overall resultant is only one of its many details.

Because these four forces are mutually independent, we have to lead our clients to an understanding that their attempts to increase their aversion enough to drown out the appetite are utterly in vain. A client is mistaken if she thinks, for example: „I want to do something that will totally disgust him so that he will lose interest and leave me alone,” or if she has tendencies after the breakup to get into extreme, nasty interactions so that she can break away from the losing situation and burn all the bridges back. Attempts at creating a „definitive end” that will finish off the relationship are doomed a priori to failure. Relationships do not end with a bang, but gradually, in waves that grow smaller and fade away.

While clients are naively trying to make sure that the forces of aversion are stronger, the psychologist should be attempting to reduce the intensity of all the forces. In the long-term perspective the forces of attraction always prevail over the forces of aversion. As time passes, what's important is that the intensity of the forces of attraction towards the former partner will become weak that they will easily be overcome by attraction to other people, for example, towards a new partner.

The clients' acts, however, stem from instinctual and utterly natural defensive tendencies, but they will not bring about the intended goal, because appetite and aversion are different and mutually independent forces. Each one develops differently in time, as we will demonstrate in the following paragraph. Even an extremely repellent act will drown out the forces of attraction only for a brief moment. After a few days or weeks, we still catch ourselves missing our other half and we devise ways to contact him or her, even if it is only to provoke another argument.

The results of a unspecified study circulated around the internet in which it was stated that 95 % when extremely drunk will call up some significant other. What is interesting about this is that 30 % of these people thus contacted are the callers' former partners or spouses. In short, tiredness in the evening enhanced by a loss of inhibitions makes the forces of attraction come floating up to the surface and these people then tap out the old familiar numbers of their former loves on their cell phones.

### **Preferential Curves – Appetence and Aversion**

Ethology is the study of animal behavior, or generally of the behavior of organisms. This science has noted connections between these four forces and has introduced definitions of appetite and aversion. Appetence indicates desire or attraction and aversion indicates repulsion. To understand these definitions, we only need to grasp a simple insight: when we are afraid of something or shrink from it, our fear or general activation grows the more we get close to the given object. With appetite, the opposite is true. A child that longs for its mother finally calms down when she gets close.

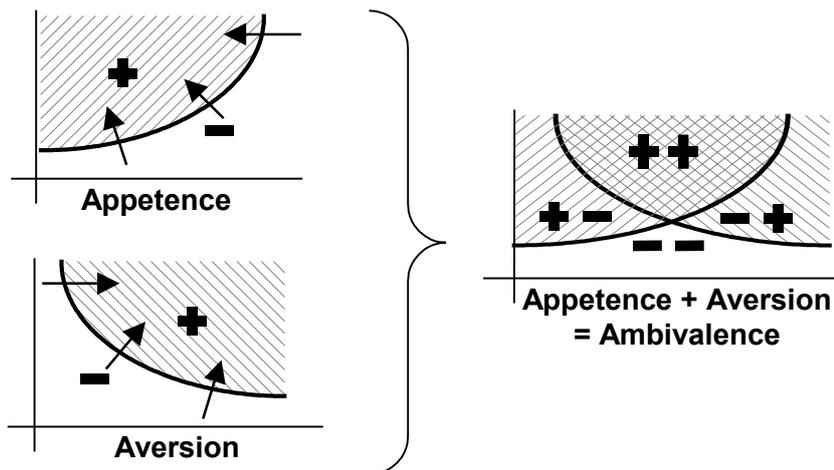
These forces operate by and large independently of our will. When someone forcefully pushes you towards the edge of a cliff, your activation increases whether you want it to or not. That is to say, the cliff activates our aversion. In the same uncontrollable manner, we will be disturbed when a partner unexpectedly announces that he or she is breaking up with us. We will not be able to sleep or in any other way be at peace. The threat of a breakup increases our mental distance as well as our activation and it testifies to the forces of attraction that bind us to the partner.

The definitions of appetence and aversion are important because they delimitate our experience in reference to the partner or generally to any other object. This is clear even through simple proxemics. If two people want to talk together they draw closer to a certain compromise distance. This distance may be too close for one of them – and he or she will keep pulling away. When the distance is too great for the other, he or she will display a tendency to continually get closer to the first one. This phenomenon is named the proxemic dance, and it is typical for encounters between people who come from different cultures: for example, Arabs like to get closer than Europeans.

Appetence and aversion define two important boundaries or curves. These curves are marked out by moments when the concerned party suddenly realizes the excessive closeness or distance of the other and often there can be seen an observable defensive reaction.

It is necessary to keep in mind that both activated aversion and also activated appetence are accompanied by unpleasant sensations. It is unpleasant when someone seems to be sticking to us just like we mind it when someone we care about leaves us. In practice, we determine appetence and aversion with the help of the application of the above-mentioned definitions. If the distance is increased at the same time as the activation of the organism, then we are looking at appetence. If the number of defensive reactions grows with decreasing distance, it is aversion.

**Graph 7**



Our distance from the object is drawn on the horizontal axis. On the vertical axis is our activation. According to ethology, appetence is defined as when the activation of the organism increases when the object is distant or absent. With aversion it is the other way around: activation increases the more the dangerous object draws near. The curves define the boundaries between pleasant and unpleasant experiences. As soon as someone (even if unintentionally) crosses one of these boundaries, he or she usually experiences a change in mood, which generates a defensive or other type of reaction (see the arrows). For example, someone may find himself unable to calm down after the announcement of a breakup. He begins to cry, or to argue, or get drunk in order to reduce his anxiety, or he may just send a text message to his friends.

If, for example, a man moves out of an apartment where his wife committed suicide, he is increasing his distance from the building that makes him feel uneasy. That is, the building itself induces aversion (See Graph 7 – the aversion curve). If the same man is not able to fall asleep after his wife’s death, then her death represents an increase in mental distance that, along with the increased activity (stress) fulfills the definition of appetence (See Graph 7 – the appetence curve). Both aspects of the wife’s death activate the man’s appetence and aversion and both are subjectively unpleasant. The points at which a person becomes aware of a change in mood from neutral or positive to negative and consequent (observable) defensive reaction define the above-defined curve of appetence and aversion.

For a successful consultation, the psychologist must be able to safely determine whether a certain reaction represents one of these three possibilities – aversion, appetence or overload, which we will discuss later. It is not easy to realize that not everything unpleasant is aversion. I asked one female student when she had last gotten angry or upset. She said that it was two days ago when her dad was

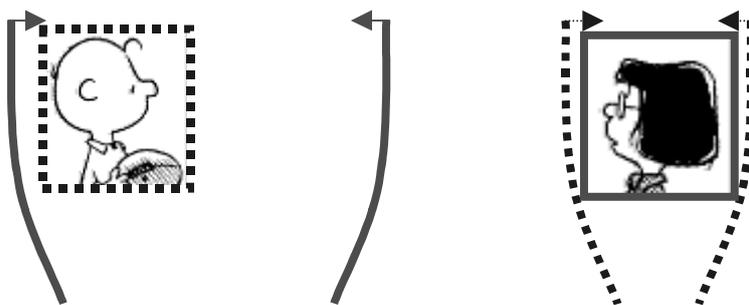
taken to the hospital with the suspicion that he may have cancer. This was very unpleasant, but it was not aversion. The threat of losing her father represented an increase in the mental distance, and thus the accompanying upset was caused by appetite. I asked her next when she had last quarreled with her father. She said that it had been the day before this. „How did it end?”– „I slammed the doors and went into my room.” The increase in activation and also in distance (leaving) correspond with the definition of aversion. Both events were unpleasant, but only one of them was aversion. Both coincidentally detected and opposing tendencies made it possible for the student to see her ambivalent relationship with her father.

A mistaken diagnosis leads to errant recommendations. We have to be careful above all with the described behavior of a third person, where we cannot ask the person concerned how they felt and what the motives for their behavior were. This is generally the case when one person in a couple refuses to go to therapy sessions. The psychologist is then only working from a mediated description – who has pissed whom off, and when, what they did, and so on.

Clients do not always have the correct insight into their former partner’s motives. Defenders have a tendency to interpret all of the initiator’s behavior as aversive, while initiators look for an attempt to renew the relationship in every action of the defender. Therefore, the psychologist has to use logic and, in making an analysis of the behavior, to determine whether what is happening is not, for example, a forthright move masked by degenerated communication. Moreover, clients often have no understanding of their counterparts’ behavior – they just describe the „incomprehensible” deeds: „Imagine, Doctor, what s/he just did again...” „And what does this mean?” „Well, I don’t know...”

In a partnership - and with breakups especially - the partners’ forces of attraction and also of aversion are clearly labeled. Our partners are neither entirely attractive, nor entirely repulsive. This kind of simultaneous presence of opposing forces is called ambivalence. It is indicated by the overlapping curves of appetite and aversion. It is understandable that every person tries to be in the double-plus zone where both needs are satisfied at the same time. Each member of the couple has their own two curves and tries to achieve the balanced state that lies at their point of intersection. If two people are going to have a working relationship, the zone of pleasant experiences has to be covered for both partners. They have to arrive at the right degree of distance and excitement so that both are satisfied. If they cannot get there, the couple either will never get started together or else there will be a significant asymmetry between them that is accompanied by mirror-opposite rhetoric and oscillating satisfaction of needs.

**Graph 8**



Every person has their own boundaries of aversion and appetite. If the boundary of aversion is crossed, he tries to get away. If the farther boundary of appetite is reached, he will try to draw closer. The optimal distance where we want to keep the other partner lies between these two boundaries. Two people try to find a compromise that will satisfy both in their interactions. The couple in the illustration has succeeded. The woman is the more tolerant one here. The space carved out by her boundaries (the solid line) of appetite and aversion is simply larger. A degree of asymmetry is also apparent, but the couple as a whole functions well. Yet it is enough to imagine that if the man (his boundaries are marked by the dotted line) tried to put himself at a much greater distance then a compromise would not be possible. This example is illustrated in the following graph.

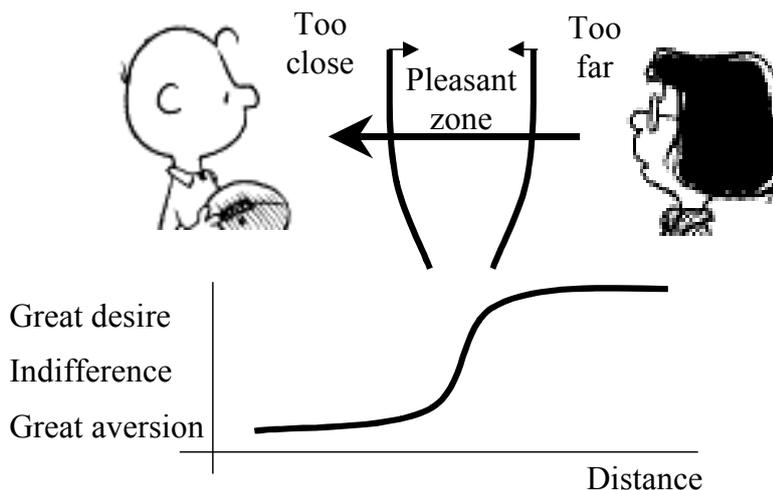
### Drop-down Curve

A good example how to become aware of one’s own ambivalent reactions is the drop-down curve. It describes a rapid change in evaluating one’s partner who becomes suddenly very repulsive even when has been very attractive only a few minutes ago. In order to understand that this is not a coincidence, one

must experience more of these moments and then it is clear that it has to do with a function of psychic distance. This is possible to sketch into the following graph.

It is not only narcissists who suffer from this behavior, but also hysterical women (Topiář, Fládr, 1983). When they get closer, their partner becomes unattractive. When the woman was the man's mistress she had an activated need for getting closer, and therefore feelings of longing dominated and manifested themselves in enhanced sexual needs. After the wedding, her boundary of fear and aversion has been crossed and she immediately begins to show anxiety from her partner's too-great proximity. It kills the possibility of sexual satisfaction, and the impossibility manifests according to circumstances as pain during intercourse, lessened frequency of intercourse, fewer orgasms, etc. The woman may subjectively express indignation that her partner „makes demands on her body, but she doesn't want to belong to anyone,” and so on, and she develops a physical aversion toward her partner.

**Graph 9**



The arrow on the upper graph indicates the relatively rapid approach of a woman to a man across his boundaries of closeness and fear (appetence and aversion). For example, a lover becomes a partner living with him in his apartment, and then a wife with children. Thus, her mental distance to the man can change fairly quickly. With the transition across both boundaries there is a sharp change in his evaluation of the woman. The drop-down curve shows that love, during her approach, changes into aversion. A great desire for getting closer and for sex transforms into repulsion. The woman has become repulsive to this man suddenly. Any possible detail on her disgusts him, even though he didn't mind it before – wavy hair, the way she brushes her bangs off her forehead, her makeup or lack of makeup, etc. The decline described by the curve is almost always connected with a small space between the boundaries marked by appetence and aversion. The necessity of keeping his partner in this narrow zone leads to chronic manipulations.

It is interesting that other than in very exceptional cases, clients are not capable to discover the relationship between extreme desire, repulsion, and changing distances for themselves. Although they do notice the hopelessness of their situation, they characterize their disappointment with various adages („forbidden fruit tastes the sweetest”), or they are subjectively convinced that these declines are the fault of the partners they are with. They often finally grasp the situation when the drop-down curve is shown to them. The unclarity of the connection between distance, desire and repulsion is clearly caused by there being an zone of pleasant experience where the subject feels good that is lying between these two unpleasant extremes. This pleasant period separates the previous and the following extremes from each other, so that the subject does not manage to connect them. (For the connection of the drop-down curve with manipulations see the chapter on The Experience of Manipulators.)

There are many reasons why people do not understand the changes in their counterparts in connection with distance:

1) Normal objects do not change as a subject's distance from them changes. Exceptions are found only in films. (For example, in the film „A Thousand Clarinets“ weapons change into musical instruments when they cross the border. This is, of course, an exaggeration.) In reality we do not expect that an object will have one set of characteristics at a distance of one meter and another at five meters away.

2) Our own feelings that are brought up by changing distances are externalized onto other people. Changes in emotions are ascribed to imprecise knowledge: „I used to think that she was different, but

when I really got to know her...” This statement is not always true. She is not different, and I did not really get to know something truly new, she just got close enough that I felt threatened.

3) During an approach from too great a distance to too-close proximity the zones of pleasant experience are traversed. They create a natural line of division that prevents the connection of the period of retroflexion (too far away) with the period of deflection (too close).

#### **Example 8**

It would be difficult to find a more vivid example of manipulative behavior and its consequences than is shown in the personal testimony of a representative of so-called male chauvinism, J. Hausmann (1999: p. 13). He describes the experience of trying to get an attractive girl, and sacrificing a weekend on the water with his friends in order to be with her:

„I decide to chase after something special. I make a clown of myself, talk nonsense, nod along with her about things with which in the depths of my heart I do not agree, I look around, to see if anyone sees or hears me in this humiliating situation, I laugh at drivel that bores me, I spend time and money, but don't mind, because I'm in the conquerer's trance.

The finally when I made love with her, I told myself that I did well, that I decided on her, I picked her up and like so many times before even now my mind has snapped back to reality. So thanks to this I haven't gone anywhere. How can I quickly split from here?!? How can I stem any further losses? If I ran right now to the main station I could still catch the evening campfire under the cliffs and salvage all of Sunday. What am I going to do with this female until tomorrow? For God's sake, how do I get out of this?”

And in the meantime, the girl whose getting I had not long ago been licking my fingers over and whom I now hate because I lost out on a weekend with friends for her sake, is curled up on my chest and building airy castles out of our future life together, while in the meantime I am earnestly pondering how to disappear as quickly as possible. If there was not so much cynicism in me, I would stroke every part of her body, which now seem stale and ordinary, and I am surprised at myself how I was so willing to sacrifice anything for these caresses just a few hours ago. Well, so I will stay and play the clown until Sunday.”

In this quote we can discern most of the results of manipulative attitudes towards other people. Mainly, they have to do with a permanent frustration and inability to escape from their own isolation. When he has conquered the girl, he does not have her; she is inaccessible. When she has been conquered, she becomes, unfortunately, worthless. He is again alone and his frustration continues. He has found himself in a vicious circle: on the one hand, he needs women in his life, but on the other, he will never have them due to his manipulative attitudes. Yet he does not understand the reasons for this frustration, and therefore he tries to anchor his experiences in one circumscribed extreme: life without women. But this ideal – male chauvinism – is not realizable for him over the long term. He is more or less unsatisfied with his own life and his book has arisen as a reactive creation.

Let's take notice of the fact that the shift in his experience takes place during lovemaking, which diminishes the mental distance. We can clearly observe how his experience moves from attempts at getting closer, through pleasant excitement, and into aversion. His own zone of pleasant excitement is exceptionally narrow and his pleasure is short-lived. The clear ambivalence is also manifest in the fact that he feels aversion towards the girl with whom he is in bed, but the forces of attraction are still powerful enough to prevent his rising up and going to the river Sázava to see his friends, as he had originally planned.

Because of the inauthenticity of his behavior and his constant dissimulation, he has the feeling that he is always playing the clown. In other words, he is playing a comedy in front of the girl because he is convinced that he, the way he really is, with all of his penchants and convictions, would be unacceptable for her. We see here his basal dissatisfaction with himself. In his mind, he has the image of an anticipated rejection from the girl if he were to act authentically. As a result of this manipulative comedy he also is unable to identify with the nascent relationship, which of course, the girl is naturally doing. It is not his relationship, she is not his girl, there is nothing that he would be willing to fight for and defend. This relationship, too, is a stopgap arrangement, a patch over the emptiness that he has been living with all his life.

### **Partnership of the „Tension” Type**

It is possible to sound out asymmetry of distance in a couple quickly, especially with the help of proxemics. For example, their mutual gazes at one another largely show who is trying to keep the greater distance. It is enough to inadvertently overhear one telephone call and it is possible to immediately recognize who has the tendency to prolong the conversation and who tries to keep it short.

For a description of these types of asymmetry we use terminology taken from Gestalt Therapy (Polster, 1974). We call the one in the couple who has the momentary tendency to maintain a greater distance from the other the deflector (from the Latin *de flecto* – I turn to the side); whereas the one who momentarily tries for more closeness is the retroreflector (from the Latin *retro flecto* – I turn back).

When looking at the problem of breakups, it is most important to realize that the rhetoric and behavior of the deflector and the retroreflector are mutually linked and form mirror opposites. Thus, even when we know only the version of the story told by one member of the couple, we can very precisely

guess at the other person's version and describe his feelings. In the following table the characteristic behavior and rhetoric of both types are described.

**Table 4**

<b>Deflector</b>	<b>Retroreflector</b>
Increases distance.	Would like to get closer.
Experiences relief when separating.	Experiences anxiety when separating.
Feels aggression towards partner.	Feels tenderness towards partner.
Is very little jealous, or not at all.	Is jealous about nearly everything around partner.
Feels apathy or disinterest in partner.	Experiences love towards partner.
Feels lack of freedom and bondage in the relationship or emotions of the partner.	Feels a deficit of returned love. It seems that they are living next to one another, not together, etc.
It seems that they are missing out on something because of the relationship, and that if they were single, they would have many other more attractive opportunities.	Does not manifest interest in the world around, or other people and activities. Feels they will be capable of full engagement after they are fully accepted by the partner.
Not interested in sex with the partner, has distaste for foreplay, resistance to kissing, etc.	Experiences attractiveness or appeal of counterpart. Cannot get enough of them.
Concludes and shortens conversations and telephone calls.	Prolongs conversations.
Has a tendency to look away.	Seeks out the partner's gaze. Cannot get enough of looking at them.
Suffers from doubts over whether they really love their counterpart (or is certain that they do not). Ponders whether they want to make a commitment.	Does not suffer from any doubts. Experiences the intoxicating feeling of the love they have always longed for. Worries that their feelings are not sufficiently returned.
The extreme psychopathological versions are <b>antisocial, narcissistic personalities.</b>	The extreme psychopathological versions are <b>masochistic, dependent personalities.</b>

People with certain personality disorders (psychopathies) have a tendency to form couples and create (pathologically) stable pairs of deflectors and retroreflectors. For example, only a very masochistic or dependent personality will remain in a relationship with a narcissist.

In its milder variations, asymmetry of distance is natural and does not have a destructive influence on the functioning of a relationship. The moments fluidly alternate when one or the other in the couple becomes the deflector and the retroreflector. Nonetheless, if the situation becomes critical, one of the partners becomes a permanent deflector who perhaps for an entire year does not feel the need to get closer even once. And the other partner is devoured by love and is worried about being cynically tossed aside, and as the one acting as a retroreflector constantly entreats their partner and tries to coax at least an indication of feeling from them.

These traits, paradoxically, are not of character, but are attributes of the situation and of the relationship. A well-known example of relativity of the deflector and retroreflector are partners' polygons. When A loves B, B loves C, C loves D, and D loves A. In this vicious circle one is always a deflector towards the one he or she loves, and a retroreflector toward the one he or she is rejected by. This situation has been humorously illustrated in an excerpt from the song „Grotesque” (*Groteska*) by Pavel Šrut from the album by Luboš Pospíšil and 5P titled *A nestřílejte na milence*:

*Well, A loves B,  
With the silky eyes,  
But A is married  
And his wife C  
Drives to D's cottage every Friday.*

*Only B is not interested in A,  
She is thinking more about E, a medic,  
When she's walking back through the park with A, and  
Wonders whether E  
Is not having F overnight in the dormitory.*

*But it's just that F met an Italian  
Called G in the cafeteria,  
G, however, is expecting a child with H  
And additionally has gotten to know CH,  
And now he is not feeling brave.*

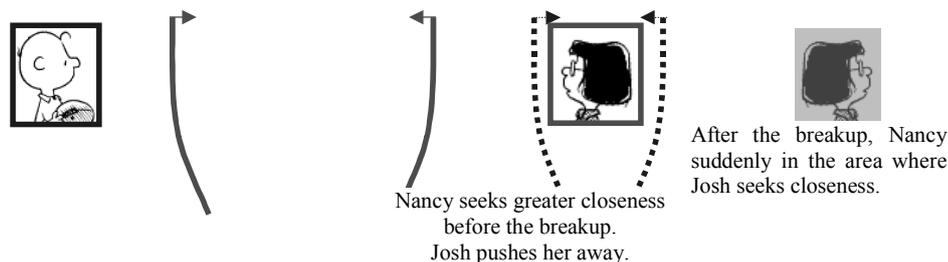
*So A, who loves B,  
Goes out once with I for dinner,  
Where he meets his first love, J,  
Who got divorced from K,  
And it's a sad grotesque.*

**Example 9**

My acquaintances had complained to me about Josh, who had been treating his partner Nancy, our classmate, in a very degrading way. He always pushed her away, put her down, let her wait for him, and, on principle, never informed her about his plans. That is, for many years he had been functioning as a deflector. That, however, quickly came to an end when Nancy lost her patience and after many attempts,

finally walked away from him. That was a shock for Josh. Suddenly, he broke down, and started bringing her flowers, calling her constantly, and wanted to explain everything. He even sought me out so that I could help him return Nancy to him. So one day, or one moment was enough to change a chronic deflector into an extreme retroreflector. This sudden transition from aversion to extreme attraction (or the other way around) is described by the drop-down curve that is typical for manipulators.

**Graph 10**



Josh (a narcissist) has a need to keep Nancy (a masochistic, dependent personality) at a great distance in the narrow territory described between the two borders of aversion and appetite. The distance that would have suited the more tolerant Nancy was, however, too small for Josh. Therefore, he kept running away from her. She suffered from loneliness and had the feeling that they were living next to one another rather than truly together and that they just keep passing one another by. She was displaying the typical rhetoric of a retroreflector.

Josh had the mirror-opposite rhetoric of the deflector: He claimed that Nancy walked behind him like a shadow, and that she always wanted to be with him, but he wanted to have his freedom. In short, both are chronically dissatisfied, but for opposite reasons. For Josh, it is because they are together too much, and for Nancy, that they are together too little. When we look at the borders marking the zones of pleasant experience for both it is clear that even with the best of intentions, it cannot come to be that both of them will be satisfied. The situation in a given moment can work well for, at most, one of them and their satisfaction can only alternate.

After breaking up, their experience is turned on its head. Nancy turns her attention somewhere else (see the picture on the right). She becomes a deflector who refuses Josh and thus gets him into the zone where he feels an intensive need to get closer. After the breakup, thus Josh has unexpectedly become a retroreflector and has gotten into a state of crisis.

Besides the mirror-opposite rhetoric, the relationship of the deflector also displays permanent tension, reproaches, and a tug-of-war over the mental distance. There is a minimum of arguments, the conflicts are either left unresolved, or if they are then it is without conspicuous emotions. Instead of true feelings the couple get by with rituals of showing emotions – the man always kisses the woman when arriving and departing, and she always makes him a snack to take to work, even though their real feelings may be very distant from these ritualized ones. The disappearance of these rituals is one of the last warning signals of an approaching breakup. When the rituals vanish, they have nothing left in common.

This disappearance of the rituals may be accompanied by this kind of rhetoric: „I realized that we keep playing an empty comedy of Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum, but it’s all for nothing. Therefore, I decided that I will be authentic and no longer play this comedy.” The psychologist should, however, warn against this step. The problem is not in the rituals themselves, but in the forces of aversion. The rituals are, paradoxically, the last thing that still keeps the partners together. What is more destructive is the apportioning of guilt. It is not necessary to deal with the rituals, but to find a defense against feelings of guilt, and possibly also against other mechanisms that destroy mutual comfort.

## Evolution of the Forces of Attraction and Aversion

The forces of aversion and of attraction have considerably different natures. The forces of attraction are generally weaker than the forces of aversion. This is because aversion generally has a self-preserving function, so it is stronger than all other emotions. Its effect is, however, short-lived and it does not work at a great distance. By contrast, the forces of attraction are weaker, but they are very long-lived and can work at a great distance. These forces were also created by evolution. In brief, in human development the children that survived were generally those of partners who, despite various difficulties, had a tendency to return to one another even after a long separation.

With men, these long-term forces of attraction are even more powerful than with women. Women who have found a new partner who takes care of them and their children would need to detach themselves from the old, dysfunctional partner as quickly as possible, even if it was only „for the kids’ sake”. On the contrary, a man’s children would have been more likely to survive if their father kept

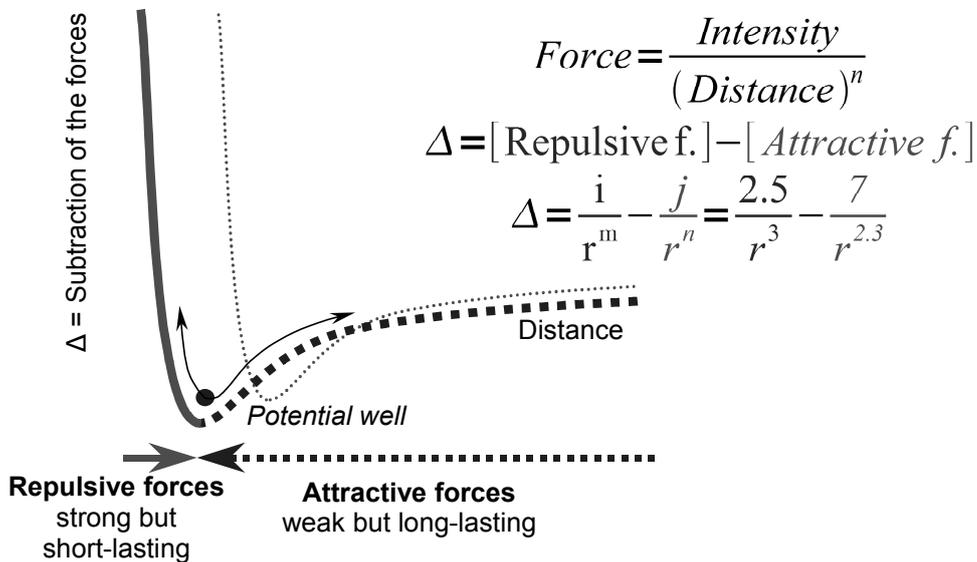
returning to their mother even after long separations. Our evolutionary past has thus determined why men generally tolerate breakups worse than women.

Differences between the forces of attraction and aversion also explain why breakups are so painful and why they often end in inveterate hatred. As we demonstrated in the first part, in the so-called fantasy phase of the breakup, the forces of aversion stop working because the partners have already physically distanced themselves for some time. The forces of attraction that had been up till this time drowned out by the forces of aversion are then able to float up to the surface. The partners again begin to gravitate toward each other, and just at the time when they are already begin to think that the breakup is in the past. Unfortunately, this is not so. This phase of resisting the forces of attraction is the most difficult and longest. One client said to me in this phase: „I don't understand myself. How can I still feel anything for him after everything he did to me?”

If the breakup proceeds in an uncontrolled fashion, the former partners will often continue to hurt one another in order to convince themselves that they really and truly do not want to return. With new injuries the forces of aversion are renewed and the merry-go-round spins around as many times as necessary until a permanent enmity is achieved between the partners.

The forces of attraction and aversion do not only have different intensities at the outset, but their intensities additionally decline at different rates (with a different power) with increasing distance. When we plot their differences in connection with distance on the graph, we find that they create a so-called potential well. This is a place where the forces of attraction and aversion equalize. When a person (the dot on the graph) wants to leave this place, he must either overcome the sharply increasing forces of aversion on the left, or else the long and gradually rising curve on the right. Everyone who has decided for a breakup counts on getting rid of the unpleasant forces of aversion (on the left) in this way. This is accomplished fairly quickly, but clients are usually not prepared that they will have to still for a very long time (after a serious relationship ends for about 5 years) resist the forces of attraction (on the right) without regard to how much their counterpart may have hurt them. In time they will feel sad, they will miss their former partner, they will think about him or her and inadvertently catch themselves thinking up reasons to get back together, to call or at least send a text message.

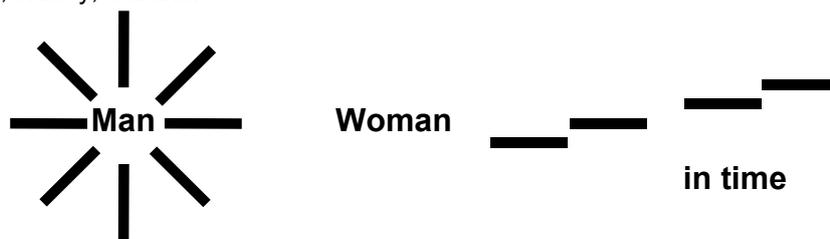
**Graph 11**



The symbolic equation defines the shape of the potential well – subtraction of the forces of attraction from those of aversion. The variable  $r$  indicates distance, the coefficients  $j > i > 0$  absolute intensity of the forces of attraction and aversion, and finally the coefficients  $m > n > 1$  determine how quickly these two forces decline with increasing distance. Specific numbers provide only an example of one of many possibilities.

There is a shifted thin dotted line, which represents a typical male curve - which is at a greater distance than the thick female curve. It is interesting that drawing this curve requires both stronger attractive and aversive forces. So a man is bound to his woman with stronger appetent forces, but he also experiences stronger revulsion. This corresponds with observations as well - men are very eager for rapprochement, but have problems solidifying their relationships and drawing closer to their partners, so they are able to endure half-broken relationships for a long time and they have more trouble surviving breakups. On the other hand, women are different: their desire is for a long-lasting close relationship, but when they are unable to achieve it they usually initiate a breakup and try to find something more satisfying. As a result, a woman's loves are

sequential, serial. She loves John, Charles, Martin... one after the other. A man, however, is star-like. He collects Jane, Nancy, Sarah...



The relationship between the forces of aversion and attraction can be easily documented, for example in the relationship between sexual forces, which are appetent (according to the definition, they are quelled after the object of desire is attained), and admonishments, which are aversive and increase the distance between partners. If the measure of admonishments increases, it can in time destroy the need for sex. Thus arise paradoxical relationships where a man does not have any interest in sex and sleeps on the living room sofa or falls asleep with his child while reading a bedtime story, and despite this is not capable of leaving his wife even if he has sufficient opportunity to do so. This moment is thus important in diagnosing the degree and the danger of so-called distribution of guilt, which we will discuss later.

#### Example 10

From the following abbreviated email communication it is evident how the forces of attraction over time must outweigh those of aversion:

N. N.: „...I'm getting divorced (on my own initiative) and I'm living with another woman, I don't feel (except for the inconsiderable pressure of conscience) any discomfort (even if I live very frugally)... I'd almost be inclined to claim that I am happy :-).”

J. K.: „Divorce is a long-distance race... The compunctions could just be a transformed manifestation of missing her. So you will see for yourself how things develop.”

N. N.: „Yes, I miss her (more my wife than the children), I lived with her for more than twenty years, so it's something that can't just be erased from my mind or my heart ... although we were a fatal mismatch. After separating, the bad in the relationship stopped seeming so pressing and the memories from the good side of living together remained. My wife keeps pressing me to withdraw my petition for the divorce, or else it would be better if I moved somewhere far away so that we would not be living in the same area, so that I could disappear from their life. (Once she even said that it would probably even be better if I died than if I left – which, strange as it sounds, seems to make sense on the whole.)”

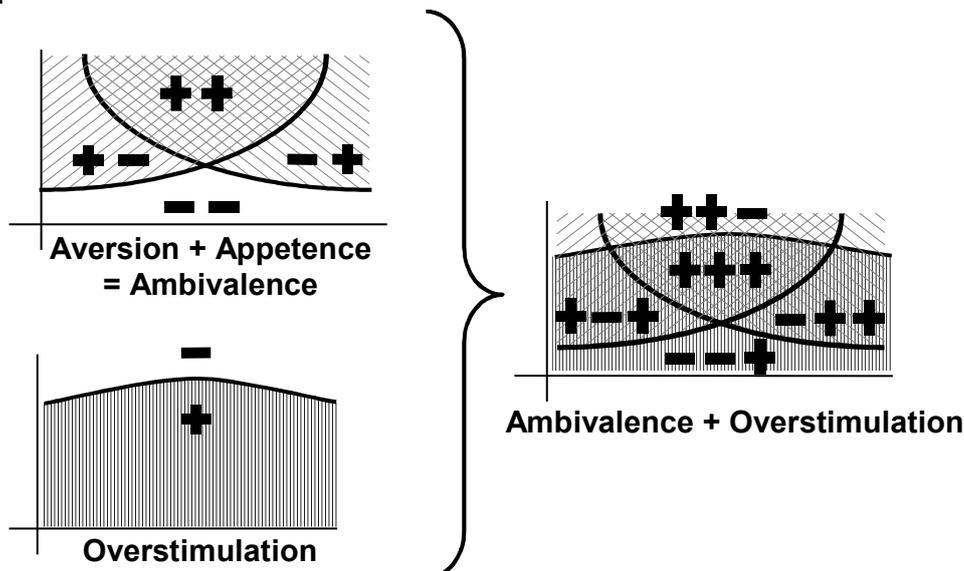
The need to drive a partner away so that he or she is physically as far away as possible is acting out from a psychological point of view. Above all else, both partners want to get rid of the fantasy figures of their counterparts, which keep getting activated in their thoughts. They are the bearers of the forces of attraction with which the physical separation of the partners will struggle for several more years, or possibly for the rest of their lives. Paradoxically, it is more difficult to get rid of fantasy figures than real people.

#### Curve of Overstimulation

Just like the way an organism protects itself against too-great proximity or distance, it also protects itself against excessive excitement. Histrionic (hysterical) personalities generally try to get strong stimulation. It seems to them that no stimulation is intense enough. Despite this, these people also have certain limits where the desired and pleasant excitement turns into unpleasant panic or anxiety and in feelings of being overwhelmed or overstimulated. Each individual has his own personal optimal degree of activation. It can cause trouble in a relationship when partners differ significantly in these degrees.

And so, a third curve is added to the ones showing appetite and aversion: a curve of overstimulation, overload or unbearable disturbance that transforms their experience from pleasant to unpleasant. We can again map the point at which it is crossed over with the help of defensive reactions. When the music gets too strong for one of the partners, he or she gets up and turns it down. The new volume may suit the other partner, or they may protest. In short, even here an optimal degree of activation is being sought (in this case, expressed in sound volume), which should work for both partners. The search for a mutual social optimum manifests in the degree of visits to cultural events, parties, excursions, the number of children, quarrels, etc.

Graph 12



The third curve of overstimulation splits the chart's area into two parts – the unpleasant zone of unbearable excitement is above, and the zone of pleasant arousal is below the curve. A mere expansion of the diagram of ambivalence with the overstimulation curve creates the zone of pleasant excitement – three plus –, which is bordered on all sides by areas with various negative experiences. Every person or, more generally, each organism, seeks the area where all four forces that regulate distance and excitement are satisfied. A partnership has hope of succeeding only when the partners are able to find a situation where their zones of pleasant experience overlap.

We may divide people into two groups according to whether they prefer their partners to be controllable or uncontrollable. It seems that most women tend to look for men who are somewhat uncontrollable, active, who are always coming up with something new, then do it and do not let themselves be easily controlled. Although they may complain that such a man is like an unguided missile, upon closer examination we find that this characteristic is a necessary condition for getting through their entrance filter for all the partners with whom they have ever had a relationship (see the chapter *The End of the Relationship – Establishing New Relationships – Single Filters for New Partners*). All controllable men are, for example, labeled as „nice guys who would make good fathers, but there would be no chemistry in a relationship with them” (that is, they do not provide sufficient activation or stimulation). On the other hand, I have encountered the case of a woman who was physically and sexually abused in childhood. Her husband was meek and tender with her and had long wavy hair like a doll. He was somewhat controllable and predictable and his wife did not feel threatened by him. This choice testifies to her curve of overstimulation having been lowered, which manifested itself in the corresponding choice of partner.

### Partnership of the „Quarreling” Type

Just like the characteristics of deflector and retroreflector are located on the axis of distance, there exists a similar asymmetry along the axis of activation. We will call the member of the couple who seeks fun, excitement, and a colorful life full of thrills *the activator*. The one who tries for more peace, quiet, order, and regularity, who doesn't tolerate chaos and who would rather stay safely at home, etc. will be called *the inhibitor*.

Even looking at couples through this lens we find more or less asymmetrical pairs. We recognize them because they typically take the form of stereotyped explosive „Italian” households – constant quarrels, subsequent reconciliations, outbursts of emotion for no apparent reason and over nothing, jealous scenes. In this way, they differ from couples with deflectors and retroreflectors where there are far fewer quarrels or practically none at all, and where, by contrast, a heavy oppressive atmosphere shot through with unspoken reproaches and only ritual shows of emotion are made. Therefore, we divide partnerships into two extreme types: the stifling atmosphere type and the quarreling type.

Mirror-opposite rhetoric is also to be found between activators and inhibitors. It does not require great ingenuity for us to judge on the basis of hearing one side of it what the other partner would likely

say. The rhetoric of both partners is symmetrical – the more one stresses his position, the more the other insists on the other extreme, and the rethorices is specific for a certain situation and relationship. For example, one and the same man may be an activator with his wife and at the same time an inhibitor with his mistress.

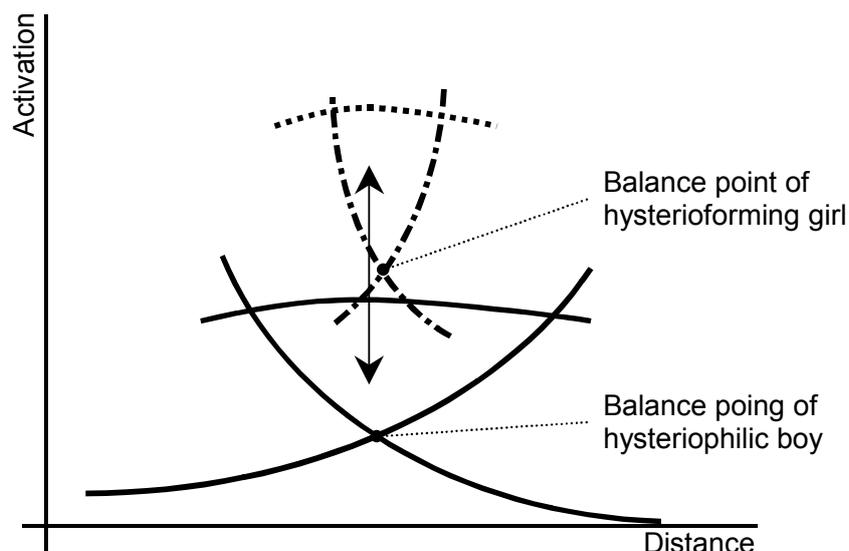
**Table 5**

<b>Activator</b>	<b>Inhibitor</b>
Tries to achieve excitement and activation.	Tries to achieve peace and order.
Has the feeling that nothing is going on. („Sunday is the worst.“)	Feeling of permanently residing in a madhouse. Looks forward to quiet, relaxed weekends.
Suffers from feelings of boredom, emptiness, feels lost.	Has the feeling of being overstimulated and of needing to rest, and also feels that others constantly want something from them.
Constantly suggests sexual novelties, variations and experiments.	Perceives partner’s sexual suggestions as „perversions”.
Is annoyed that his or her partner prevents them from organizing parties at home, and does not want to travel.	After a party at home, the house stinks of cigarettes, somebody destroyed the shelf, and they can’t find their things.
Likes changing their work. In a new job gets bored after two weeks.	Gets goosebumps imagining a change in employment.
Loves various drugs, extreme sports and situations. The thought of criminal behavior fills him (or her) with a covetous excitement.	Can’t stand drugs, would rather work on their garden, or on one stable hobby.
Has the feeling that the other partner does not express their love enough. Seeks pretexts for eliciting jealous scenes. Does not try to hide their infidelity.	Does not especially desire infidelity. Sees unnecessary complications in it. When they are unfaithful, they carefully cover it up so as not to hurt their partner.
The extreme psychopathological version is the <b>histrionic (hysterical) personality</b> .	The extreme psychopathological version is the <b>anancastic, pedantic personality</b> .

We make note of the fact that conflicts between activator and inhibitor do not revolve around who is drawing away from whom and who loves whom more. Rather, they are concerned with questions of how the relationship functions, for example, in the synchronization of activities. Love and sex are abused only for the sake of creating proper dramatic scenes or excitement.

Again, we can find pathologically stable couples where one of the partners is an extreme activator – a histrionic (hysterical) personality. This individual can, of course, be either a man or a woman. In the case of men, however, we rarely meet with a diagnosis of hysteria. When these men fill the required criteria for the definition, they are generally labeled with the folk terminology of „choleric” or „hotheaded.” Histrionic personalities sometimes try out partnership with narcissists, but these usually end in fiasco. Ultimately, only pedantic or anancastic personalities are able to remain with them.

**Graph 13**



A tension between the activator (hysterioforming personality) and the inhibitor (hysteriophilic personality) develops in the direction of a vertical arrow. The activator is bored with the inhibitor, and the inhibitor suffers from chaos and overstimulation with the activator. Arguments set off by the activator are ended by the inhibitor, perhaps with phrases such as „OK, so you’re right, I hope you’re happy now.” This kind of rhetoric is a defensive reaction that shows that the inhibitor has crossed his or her

boundaries of overstimulation (illustrated with the arrow). Here, rituals of showing emotion are also missing. Feelings are authentically expressed – sometimes to the point of churlishness.

In the professional literature there is sometimes discussion of the hysteriophilic personality, which is a person who seeks a hysterical partner, and the hysterioforming personality, who induce hysteria for the couple. The difference between these characteristics and the terms activator and inhibitor lies principally in that the hysteriophilic and hysterioform traits are permanently anchored in the person's temperament, while the terms activator and inhibitor are primarily relational and situation-specific characteristics of interactions between two partners.

## **Time Synchronization of Activation**

Many of a couple's problems may stem from different needs for activation. It is necessary to keep in mind that activation naturally decreases during the day, the week, and with the changing seasons. These declines are natural and healthy. Once it disappears, for example, due to stress, we have to do all that we can in order to renew it. A state where a person is constantly on edge is very exhausting and as a result, also subjectively unpleasant. Sometimes it is accompanied by depersonalization-derealization syndrome, the disappearance of daydreams, enhanced vigilance (hypervigilance) and, along with it, feelings of depression. These clients often complain of unusual feelings, as though the things and people around them were at the same time different, and yet still the same. This cluster of problems is treacherous, because clients do not have a natural vocabulary with which to describe their difficulties. They use universal words that don't mean anything: „weird, dumb, unusual”.

The physiological need for activation is a permanent part of a human being's makeup, and it is necessary to lead clients to accepting it. One acquaintance told me a story from his youth when a good-looking female colleague was trying to woo him. She was able to arrange that they would take a work-related journey together by train. The woman was clearly looking forward to talking with him for the whole trip. It was at the beginning of courtship where the game is to play at being strong and beguiling, so such that the two suitors do not necessarily reveal their singular eccentricities. In this case, the eccentricity would be the fact that the man, as soon as he sat down in any means of transportation, always immediately fell asleep. And so it happened this time, and the woman could not wake him even at the last station. From that point on, the openness she had shown him from the beginning of their acquaintanceship changed into a permanently chilly reserve. She obviously interpreted his sleep as ostensible disinterest. Nonetheless, the differences that arise from differing synchronization of activation are not always so funny.

### **Example 11**

After some years, a client came to see me again about the problems he was having with his partner. There was a whole range of little things, of which some had a common factor precisely in the synchronization of activation. Even though these seemed to be petty troubles, since there were so many of them, and along with the lower flexibility of this man, the couple had even been considering whether they should live in separate apartments, or even to break up.

One of the petty discrepancies was that the man was returning from work around eight o'clock very tired, and wanted to have absolute peace. However, his partner had already been waiting for him for two hours with dinner ready, she was bored, and had either the radio or the television on and wanted to talk. These moments were the origin of chronic arguments. The man considered whether he should go to the pub after dinner in order to unwind, or whether it wouldn't perhaps be better to live alone. I asked him how long it would take for him to miss his partner in an empty flat. About a half hour, he said. The following advice was simple enough to give: „Try to make an agreement with your partner that when you come home for work, she will keep quiet and not speak to you or contact you in any other way for a half hour. Physical presence does not mean the same thing as mental presence. After a half hour, when you will be readjusted then you will be able to talk naturally again.” Surprisingly, this measure solved their evening problems within a week. In my opinion, the reason why they could not arrive at the same solution themselves was that they were trying to resolve the whole problem in the moments when it arose, at eight o'clock in the evening, so it slipped into the old losing battles.

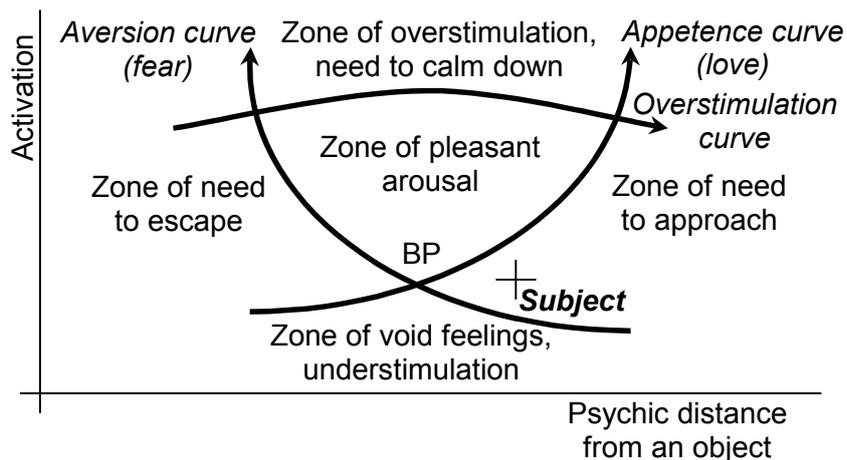
Their second problem area was of a similar type. The man woke up on weekends around seven, managed to wait until ten, and then began trying to work out with his half-sleeping partner where they were going that day for a trip. She was not capable of deciding anything at that hour and the whole discussion would end in a quarrel. At this moment the situation was exactly opposite the one described above. Now it was the man and not the woman who was „ready to receive”. The procedure here was similar to the one used in the previous case: „If you lived separately and arranged a meeting at 10:00 at the train station, both of you

would arrive in time. Therefore, don't try to work out when and how you are going on Saturday morning, but on Thursday evening. Just agree on what time you will be leaving your apartment on Saturday morning." In these cases it is not difficult to give recommendations, but to reveal the source of the problems. Clients do not come in with clear questions of how to synchronize their circadian activation, but rather: „We probably don't belong together. Wouldn't it be better to live separately or to find different partners?"

## Zones and their Typical Symptoms

The following graph illustrates particular zones. While the deflector and the retroreflector span over the zones that describe the needs for escape and for closeness, the activator and the inhibitor are having a tug-of-war between the zones of needing greater excitement and more peace and quiet. However, all of them have one thing in common: they would all prefer to be in their own zones of pleasant excitement. In order to attain this, they utilize a whole range of techniques. On the vertical axis of activation are autostimulation and autoinhibition. On the horizontal axis is manipulation of mental distance.

**Graph 14**



The cross indicates the subject - say a woman - and her state, which is given by a certain activation and distance from an ambivalent object (who lies somewhere at the activation axis). With regard to her position, she is aware only of her need for getting closer, for love, and for more contact. Her mind will be intensively occupied with the given object, man. Other needs in corresponding zones are not available at this time for introspection (see the sub-chapter on the Law of the Strongest Conscious Need). The woman would really like to get into the zone of pleasant excitement. In order for it to happen, she has to either decrease her mental distance or increase her activation, for example, with a help of autostimulation. The balance point (BP) is a situation where the person feels good with a minimum of activation; that is, it is a point of intersection between the curves of appetence and aversion.

Each zone has its own characteristic defense and rhetoric. All of them can be easily enough understood through introspection except for the zone of emptiness, which people generally are not aware of. This is a state where the person is not missing anything, but despite that, still feels bad. The more they fall into inactivity, boredom and emptiness, the less they are able to do anything about it. Therefore, these states are very dissatisfactory, and people usually try to polarize their experience – either by extreme escape (deflection; narcissism), or by extreme clinging (retroreflection; the dependent, masochistic personality), or by extreme excitement (activator; experience-seeking, workaholics). Psychologists do not hear complaints in the empty zone – they will have to be intuited. Clients generally complain about secondary and unwanted results of their extreme defensive reactions:

Activators get into self-killing activities. Retroreflectors remain in an abusive relationship and suffer domestic violence, because they fear the emptiness that follows a breakup. Their fear of emptiness manifests in that they would rather have a psychopathic partner than a normal one with whom they would suffer boredom. The deflector experiences a loss of sexual desire and love towards those she or he is close to and has the feeling that they would suffocate if they were to accommodate their partner's desires.

## Autostimulation and Autoinhibition

We consider as autostimulation or autoinhibition all techniques with which a person activates or calms down (inhibits) him or herself. For example, children in orphanages rock themselves from side to

side for hours whereby they stimulate their stato-kinetic mechanism. Similarly, there are those people who need to put on the news every evening and get all worked up over what they see. Autoinhibition techniques are also very common – collecting activities, seeking a monotonous environment, and, surprisingly, also often playing computer games.

For example, a husband is nervous before leaving for an important business lunch. He keeps thinking up more and more activities. He turns on the computer and making backups of files, then goes to sew on a button, then straightens books on the bookshelf. His wife starts getting frustrated by all of this. She does not understand what he's doing. The bookshelf can wait! She presses on him to get moving. Most of her husband's „incomprehensible” activities have the aim of calming him down to reduce his tension, so they are all forms of autoinhibition. Maybe we do not have any miraculous advice for his wife, but it would be good if she could at least understand the function of his activities. This would at least prevent her pouring oil into the fire.

#### **Example 12**

One client described his relationship with a hysterical woman whom he had showered with almost unimaginable wealth. This woman was constantly arguing with him, obscenely insulting him, and generally treating him like a doormat. He did not understand why he put up with it, why he loved this woman and not the pretty and even somewhat famous young ladies with whom he only slept. After several hours of therapy he told me: „Do you remember the first hour when you described that feeling of falling? I never knew what was behind it. Once you told me that it's autostimulation, it was like a window opened up.” During therapy it is a great service to clients when we can put a name to their needs. This man was hysteriophilic because he had had an emotionally cold and manipulative mother. His wife was very similar to her and unconsciously exploited this transfer. Constant breakups and reconciliations were a source of extreme excitement. In short, he was able to love only the one who, symbolically speaking, „slaps him in the face and throws him out the door,” just like his mother. This feeling of rejection along with the triad of autostimulation, masochism and a tendency to repeat traumas created an altogether simple, but for that, all the stronger mechanism that maintained a pathologically stable relationship for a period of six years, after which their relationship has become time-worn. (A similar relationship was portrayed by Luis Buñuel in his film *That Obscure Object of Desire*.)

People react in two ways to any kind of stress. One way is to increase activation, and the other way is to decrease it. For example, we see how people react to becoming unemployed. Passive types fall into lethargy, and the fact of being unemployed eats at them and makes them unable to go look for work. The active type, on the other hand, is stimulated by unemployment to vigorously and constructively seek work. People react in the same way to problems with their partners. While one reacts with a hangdog, passive resignation, another protects himself from frustration and waves of anxiety with a level of activity that can be panic and chaotic.

Physicians stabilize a patient's physiological condition (breath, blood circulation) before beginning to treat details (say a broken hand). In a similar way, psychological consultation must also begin with stabilizing the client's condition. Hundreds of relaxation and activation methods can serve this purpose, and it is only necessary to choose which one is the most suitable for a given client. Another similarity with physicians' practice lies in informed consent: we first have to explain to the person concerned the purpose of this relaxation. Even though these seem to be trivialities, the psychologist should be monitoring how much the client eats, sleeps, drinks, and how she is breathing. It is a professional disappointment when we try in vain for a year to get at the source of a client's chronic depression and then find out that she has only been sleeping two or three hours a night and eats only a cup of yoghurt and a roll. For laypeople, this apparently self-destructive and self-hating motivation is incomprehensible, but depression and negative experiences can be more bearable to some people than feelings of emptiness and loss of the meaning of life. Thus, even bringing on depressive states in these ways can take on the character of autostimulation.

#### **Example 13**

One acquaintance used to come to me with problems relating to his partnership, parents, schools, etc. I was unsure where to begin, because this person was in very poor condition. He spoke in a half-voice and it was difficult to understand him; he was unable to finish expressing his thoughts, so before finishing a sentence he had already begun on one topic, he jumped to another, and his speech was full of half-starts and hesitation. During the conversation he even spilled his coffee on himself, because he was under so much stress. This state of tension brought up misgiving over whether to begin with taking a case history and analyzing the historical roots of the problems, or just get started on his current state. Ultimately, we ended up devoting the whole first meeting just to explaining the importance of relaxing and calming down, several methods of stabilization, and reactions to waves of anxiety. Attempts at calming down were accompanied by a tendency to cry, as though his chronic tension and agitation kept him in line. Altogether it is possible to say

that the choice to begin with relaxation techniques was the right one, because during the first two weeks he experienced a significant degree relief. This effect was a wave of anxiety had passed: „It's a fact. It is important to unwind.” Therapy does not not always work so well from the outset, but that is why such a success is all the more pleasing.

## **Asymmetry of Dominance and Submission**

Key Question:

*In a couple, the dominant one is the one who decides, and ultimately has the last word in most important decisions. Who is this?*

The concept of dominance is taken from the Latin word *dominus* or *domina* – lord, lady. Submission indicates its opposite; that is, servitude. These terms describe which person in the couple has a greater share in decision-making, both in important and long-term questions, and also in everyday matters. If it is the man who has the last word in the family, we are describing patriarchy, and when it is the woman, it is called matriarchy (in the psychological sense).

Patriarchy and matriarchy are given not only by cultural traditions, but also by other factors, such as divorce and questions associated with it, for example, with whom a child will stay after the separation. With families where the mother has alternated several partners, her children will take her for a greater authority because she is the most stable parental figure. Children are then used to living in a matriarchal environment where the mother has the final word and not the „uncle” who has just happened to be temporarily living with them.

To a great extent, the increasing rates of divorce and the great economic emancipation of women has meant a decline in the importance of traditional patriarchy where the man in the family was the main decision-maker who was responsible for the safety, order and daily operation of households, and his responsibilities also included ensuring the supply of foodstuffs and passing on religious traditions.

Another influence that determines who in the couple will be dominant and who will be submissive is the sibling constellation from which the partners are coming from. That is, which of the partners was a firstborn, or a second-born child, and how many brothers and sisters did they have? Firstborns are generally fated to become dominant.

Asymmetry of dominance and submission is relatively the least problematic area. We can find satisfied couple whose relationships work well with a fairly high measure of asymmetry. And of course, there have been many relationships broken apart by struggles over power, careers, or conflict over who earns more.

The rule of thumb is that a more dominant person has his overstimulation curve set higher than a submissive one. This means that a dominant person can get more emotionally aroused during quarrels, and will win them according to the rules of manipulation.

## **Asymmetry of Dependence and Independence**

Key Question:

*In the couple's life together, the more dependent person is the one who would tolerate a breakup or eventual separation worse than the other one. Who is this?*

The question of dependence is much more important than the question of dominance, because a great degree of dependence carries many pathological symptoms such as self-hatred, anxiety, pathological jealousy, breakdown of the self, etc. Dependence on the relationship does not have any influence on the question of dominance. Even a very dominant person can be dependent on a relationship and use their dominance in order to ensure the constant proximity of their partner. These cases are generally narcissistic men who are often dependent on their not-very-attractive girlfriends (see the chapter on Dichotomous Thinking – „Either-Or” Reactions – Catch Figures).

People with symbiotic tendencies have an urgent need to have their partner by their side, and are unable to separate themselves from their other half. When they are submissive and masochistic, they follow their partner like a shadow. When, on the other hand, they are dominant and aggressive, they authoritatively demand the presence of their partner. This type of dependence, however, only partly relates to how these people will tolerate a potential breakup. In any case, many couple therapists (in this country, such as M. Plzák) consider asymmetry in dependence to be a serious complication in a relationship.

Two concepts are tightly bound to the question of dependence: the symbiotic personality and separation anxiety. We consider those cases where partners have a tendency to share every moment of their lives together as symbiotic behavior. They go everywhere like Siamese twins, they do everything together, and have the same opinions on everything. These partners work well in a quiet environment, but in periods of trial and strain they are not able to provide sufficient support for one another. This need is generally felt by one of the two in the couple, and if that one is dominant, they will also insist on that way of life. If that partner is not dominant, then a significant asymmetry in distance will develop. He will become the retroreflector and the other partner, behaving as the deflector, will be chronically running away from him.

### **The Stage of Separation Reaction**

Separation anxiety has been described in the behavior of small children whose mothers have had to leave them in a hospital. This does not mean, however, that there is not a version of this in adult relationships. Separation anxiety has several phases. So that the professional can anticipate the following stages when he or she has observed the stage that came before, he should know them by memory. Separation anxiety is not pathological in and of itself. It is a normal, healthy reaction in children to an unhealthy separation from their mother. It is in adulthood that we can declare the dependency as unhealthy, when a person cannot cope with temporary separation from their partner.

#### **Example 14**

A mother and a child enter a hospital. The doctors say that the child must remain in the hospital. The child will have to be separated from the mother. The following stages follow:

1. The child is taken away from the mother more or less by force.
2. The child reacts emotionally, experiences anxiety, cries. The high level of activation precisely fits the definition of appetite – the organism is activated by the non-presence of an object.
3. The tired, exhausted child falls into apathy, resignation or depression. She or he does not react to other people, and does not want to play with other children. This phase is actually a state of reactive depression to the subjective loss of the mother.
4. In time the child begins to accept other adults and begins to establish new relationships with the nurses and other adults, as though they were substitute parental figures. In other words, the child's needs begin to be satisfied by other adults to whom the child transfers the preference that had originally belonged to the parents.
5. If the child's mother reappears at this time the child of course recognizes her, but ignores her for a certain amount of time.
6. Then the child expresses aggression or rage towards her.
7. Finally, the child accepts her and clings to her, and thus the fear of abandonment is renewed.

It is not necessarily the case that every child goes through each of these stages. Sometimes we seem to observe them only briefly. In any case, the memory of this kind of experience, and ultimately similar reactions generate similar reactions in adult clients towards their partners and thus they form extreme emotional dependence.

A separation reaction is closely related to changing psychic distance, and it has two typical tempestuous scenes. The first one takes place when the distance between partners is increasing, and then there is a relatively calm period. The second scene occurs when the original close proximity is decreased or restored. See also example 19.

Even here, the intuitive defensive reactions are often not beneficial. One mother wanted to protect her little girl from the trauma of separation by not telling her until the last moment that she would have to stay in the hospital alone for several days despite that she (the mother) had known it for more than a week. She brought her girl in to the hospital and told her there: „OK, now you are going to stay here, but I will come back.” What followed was a textbook example of a separation reaction and a trauma for the girl that lasted for many years, and for which she still blames her mother even now. And we can say that she is altogether justified in doing so. But let us pose the question of what prevented the mother from preparing her daughter for the hospital stay in the week before it took place? Clearly fear from the girls' emotional reaction. The mother was protecting herself from extraordinary excitement and her not informing her daughter of what was coming was therefore a kind of autoinhibition.

#### **Example 15**

One female client recalled a horrible experience from her childhood when she got an infectious childhood disease like measles. Doctors came and stripped the perhaps six-year-old girl, put her naked up on the table, and in view of the whole family - where they had strong sexual taboos – carefully examined her entire body including her intimate parts. Then they wrapped her up in a blanket and sprayed down the entire

apartment, as was the habit at that time, with a disinfectant. They took her away to the hospital. Partly owing to uncertain emotional ties to her mother, the girl tolerated the hospital environment very poorly. Additionally, a nurse there told her that her mother will never come back for her because she had been naughty. Her mother, of course, did come back, but still years later recalled and reproached the client for not having wanted to go back home with her and for behaving towards her as towards a stranger. So much, then, for the testimony of this client, who later ended up having huge problems in her relationships with partners not only because of this experience, but also as a result of the generally poor emotional environment in her family.

## Asymmetry in Guilt Distribution

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.

### Example 16

The distribution of guilt is well illustrated in the Czech film *Samotáři (Loners)*. Peter and Hannah are partners. Their friend Robert arranges a meeting where he offers them, separately, the chance to meet with someone interesting because they weren't getting on well together in their relationship. However, he brings these two themselves to the meeting and understandably a conflict arises between them. The asymmetry in distributing blame is clear there. Even though each of them has done the same thing, the guilt lies with Peter. He tries to atone for his action – for example, he tries to placate Hannah by placing his arm on her shoulder. She refuses him. He is thus the bearer and Hannah the distributor of guilt:

- You were curious if that girl wouldn't just happen to be Miss Right. Which means, that I'm not Miss Right.
- So let's try to do something about that.
- What do you want to do about it?
- At best, we could toss a coin.

Neither of them have any idea about this distribution of guilt in their relationship, or they do not regard it as the source of their problems because they tend towards hopeless solutions like tossing a coin. Even from the next episodes in the story it is clear that Peter, the bearer of guilt, was more dependent on this relationship. This dependency is certainly given because he, as the bearer of guilt, has broken his character down into the bad „I” with whom he identifies and the good „I” who was connected with Hannah. He cannot, therefore, walk away from Hannah, because then his good „I” would also leave him.

Notice also the most natural psychic punishment - Hannah's increasing of the distance. Really natural reaction that we can see already with horses (Roberts 1996) is very often the final drop which starts irreversible breakup phases in such settings.

In marital therapy we often meet with the variant that the man is the bearer of guilt without regard to whether or not he is dominant and the woman is the distributor of guilt. If this asymmetry is clear-cut, generally we find that the man keeps silent during the first session, he often looks to the side and the woman reels off all of his sins or elaborates upon her dissatisfaction with their life together. In other

words, she wants the therapist to fix her damaged partner. When we give him a chance to speak, he just shrugs his shoulders and says something to the effect of it's not worth fixing. When during the session we begin to support the man a little, suddenly he opens up, and so the picture begins to look different. Suddenly we see a man who talks a mile a minute and a silent woman. Usually it is useful to point to this reversal and its causes and to demonstrate how the one plays a manipulative game of one against the other, which is just another version of dichotomous thinking of the „either-or” type.

The wife will clearly be generally dissatisfied with her husband's behavior. She will complain that she does not even get the minimum of what she needs from her husband. When we hear out her arguments, we generally agree that this is true. The man in these cases really does withdraw from the family and either reacts to his wife's questions and requests inhibitionally (with silence and passivity) or else belligerently (explosively, aggressively).

Despite that the wife is generally in the right about many things, there is one thing that she is usually not aware of, and that is that her husband has been driven into a corner by her demands and he feels drained by them. This opinion seems absurd to her when she evaluates the „nothing” that, according to her, the man is doing for his family. The man, however, is not worn out by his actions, but by the feelings of guilt and by her demands. What is further paradoxical about this situation is that the more the woman increases her insistence that the man do something, the less hope there is that he actually will. She needs to realize how his indirect dependency works before it will be too late. Often it only comes out after a divorce that the husband is with new (less reproachful) partner actually quite hard working, and on his own initiative fixes up their apartment and it does not seem to be just a passing whim. The fact of the man's overburdening with feelings of guilt in his home is demonstrated in his extreme high performance in other areas, such as in hobbies. How is it possible that in his hobbies he is about to perform superhuman feats and be so passive and ineffective in his own household at the same time? The problem is not primarily his laziness, but lies in the interactions between him and his partner.

It is somewhat dangerous to give the bearer of guilt the means to protect him or herself against the distributor. For once the bearer of guilt begins to systematically refuse the guilt, he or she begins to expand within the relationship and the entire attempt at rescuing it may only result in a divorce. When taken to its extreme, the distribution of guilt is only a kind of cover under which a whole slew of unresolved problems is hiding, that are necessary to systematically tease out and resolve. If we cannot guide the couple in therapy, it is generally better if it is to be rather the distributor of guilt who gradually lets up the pressure on the bearer of guilt. Thus their dynamic may begin to shift more naturally and without explosive crises.

Here, however, we are dealing with the influence of the distribution of guilt on the couple's mental distance. A significantly asymmetrical distribution of guilt generally belongs among the reasons for those divorces where onlookers can't understand why the couple is splitting up. A divorce does not have to be accompanied by huge arguments, but an all-encompassing stifling atmosphere is typical along with certain attempts of the couple to rearrange their life together, including its intimate side. Among these attempts often belong separate sleeping arrangements, refusal to take part in common activities, and the like.

**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 17**

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!

The distributor of guilt generally has the intense feeling that she is not getting enough from the relationship, or at least not as much as she „deserves.” Here, the typical background is a tendency to manipulate others and insufficient gratitude. We have to lead distributors to understand how their counterparts operate and why reproaches are ineffective, or rather counterproductive. Then we can begin to take further steps. One of these might be accepting the necessity of satisfying oneself with 20 % of what they expect from their partner or their life. The distributor has to become aware that she has a hidden helper, a fantasy figure of herself in the mind of the bearer of guilt. It is enough to say a criticism once. The fantasy figure, for example a wife in her husband’s mind will be repeating the comment for the next three days. If the real wife minds that her husband stubbornly keeps silent she must do everything in her powers in order to get him to open up and talk to her.

A very frequent question from distributors of guilt is: „OK, so you say not to criticize, but how can I tell him when something is bothering me?” This is a good question to which it is difficult to provide a good answer. Criticisms are above all else a function of a person’s internal state. They are most often delivered when someone is feeling badly for some reason. They are rhetoric without real content that is an indirect manifestation of a bad mood or fatigue. Therefore, the first part of an answer sounds like: „Control the number of criticisms per day. One or two are bearable and can provide information about what bothers you. As soon as you find that you have said more put a lock on your lips.” The second part of the answer is in practicing a communication exercise. Even little words, intonations, and phrasing can insert the thorn of criticism into a sentence and block open communication.

For example, one client’s father had multiple sclerosis and required help with his personal hygiene. This was certainly embarrassing for him. Even though he had no idea what was necessary to do, he shouted at his wife and son who were caring for him: „Why do you keep polishing there? The hell with it!” The son paid him back by moralizing: „Why can’t you just keep quiet for a while so we can finish?” This is a reproach. A real question would sound like: „See, Dad, you always comment on what we do even though you don’t know what it is we have to do. Is it really so unpleasant for you?” A transition from reproaches to open communication and real questions assumes a change in established habits of expression. This is only possible when we prepare for the change in advance. In a given situation, communication tends to develop according to a habitual script and because of this it is practically impossible to control.

#### **Example 18**

Even more importantly, criticisms of a partner are actually self-pity over one’s own life. We often are able to find partners who have a significant tendency to criticize and also to pity themselves. These people are not only angry with their partner who is not giving them what they want but also at themselves and their own unsuccessful lives. They are then incapable to accepting their partner’s weakness because they would also have to forgive themselves – and they are not capable of doing so. In one couple, the woman had an unexpressed problem in accepting her husband, who had after several years of their acquaintanceship and marriage, ceased drinking heavily. The partner who was always on the bottom, beneath her so to say, and whom she had to take care of gradually became self-sufficient, attractive, and generally successful. Her unending stream of reproaches towards him was actually her resistance towards the changes in him, in their life together as a couple and the fact that she should be an equal partner and not a superior caregiver. For it was in this role that she was able to get rid of her anxious depressive feelings. She couldn’t stop with the reproaches because she was not able to accept herself in the changed role. However, this example is already getting into the deeper psychopathology of alcoholics and their partners.

The systematic but uncontrolled use of reproaches is either a relieving maneuver or a method of manipulation that has the character of a pathological cycle. The criticisms are generally used for short-term rapprochement – keeping the partner or the children in the family (keeping them away from friends, hobbies, etc.). The manipulator however remembers that the advantages gained through their reproaches will have to be paid for by the loss of their positive feelings. So it is a kind of loan under usurious interest. The manipulator becomes unpleasant to their counterpart, who formally seems to comply, but whose experience shifts away as they escape and become a deflector. The use of manipulative reproaches brings temporary gains, but in the long-term perspective it contributes to effects that are opposite from those intended. Criticisms thus represent taking one forward one step and two steps back. Let us recapitulate: a reproach a day keeps the partner away.

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 19**

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. (Calling out for help in this case takes the form of insults and verbal rejection.) Neither the client nor his wife was able to realize the regular cycle because they were drowning in the problem of distribution of guilt – in questions of who was the bad one. The husband had to commit the stages of separation anxiety to memory and when his wife picked an argument he had to name the stage she was in and anticipate the stage that was to follow. Another of his tasks was to separate the pith of what she was saying from the degenerated form the message took, and distance himself from his own need for self-accusation that was preventing him from understanding the whole dynamic of how his marriage was functioning.

### **Distribution of Guilt and Expert Testimony for Courts**

More than by anything else during the course of a divorce, children are harmed by being forced choose between their parents: „Either you will be on Daddy's side or Mommy's, but you can't love them both.” Often courts want a psychologist to express an opinion on how a child will tolerate a divorce. Here it would be well to answer that they will tolerate it worse the more the parents urge an either-or choice. (Which is, by the way, also part of the Oedipus complex: when Oedipus loved his mother he hurt his father, and also when he wanted to atone for his guilt over what he did to his father he had to reject his mother and automutilate himself.)

A child is capable of accepting that his father will go live somewhere else. He is not, however able to understand why he can't express happiness over presents he got from his father in front of his mother. And also why his father looks gleeful when he complains that his mother is mean because she has forbidden something.

When working on the question of who is going to be the most suitable guardian for a child the court should, besides looking into practical matters, also observe other circumstances surrounding the case, such as which one of the parents is putting more pressure on the child to make a dichotomous choice: „Choose: you can have either me or the other one” and which one has the greater tendency to denigrate the other one.

Here we have a plain enough insight into what is happening. Distributors of guilt put much more pressure on children in this way than do bearers of guilt. They (the bearers), on the contrary have a tendency to constantly make excuses for the distributor. Thus from the psychological point of view it is better if the court puts the child into the care of the bearer of guilt, whether this individual happens to be the mother or the father. With bearers of guilt, the alienated parent syndrome does not appear to such a degree.

Making this kind of a decision takes a certain courage on the part of a judge, because distributors of guilt also have a tendency to blame judges and to attack expert witnesses. They do this everywhere they

have the impression that they are the one who has a right to everything and that they do everything right. But, if we are looking for the best solution for the child and not for a manipulator it is necessary to prefer the bearer of guilt in this matter.

### **Relative Deprivation and the Enforcement of Court Orders**

Children are used as a weapon when balancing manipulative payoffs: who is a winner and who is a loser, and ultimately who is good and who is bad. Children who are affected by these manipulations are usually living with the distributor of guilt who cultivates a dichotomous choice between the parents. However, courts can greatly reduce the dichotomousness of the situation when they make it absolutely clear that the child will have regular contact with both parents as was determined in the initial judgment.

The number of cases where a child is truly threatened by being with one of the parents is absolutely minimal and we will not discuss these cases here. Mostly what we find is a manipulative battle waged from the side of the parents who take the children. State agencies that deal with the social and legal protection of children tolerate prevention of a child's contact with the other parent because of their own fear, lack of resolve, overwork, or just out of laziness. Court enforcement should start to become much more rigorous than it has been, and judges should interpret prevention of a child's contact with the other parent as a serious flaw in that child's care. Or more precisely stated, it should be regarded as psychological abuse of the child in a (post-) divorce battle on which basis the child's transfer to the other parent's care should be enacted. (When both parents actively promote the parental alienation syndrome, it is preferable to put a child into temporary professional foster care with guardians who will ensure regular contact with both biological parents.)

Since parents often successfully ignore both courts and social agencies for many years, it would be appropriate to consider even more severe sanctions for parents who cause the alienated parent syndrome with the other – estranged - parent. The consequences of this kind of parental battle are comparable for the child with milder degrees of sexual abuse, and for this reason where there is a case of psychological abuse of a child it is not beside the point for courts to utilize short-term unconditional prison sentences if there is no other way to convince the parent to change their behavior.

The laxer a court is in enforcing and executing its judgments the more the mechanism that was described in connection with the latent stage – of relative frustration of deprivation is brought to bear with the parents. The intensity of the manipulative battle for the child is, according to this theory, stronger the more hope the parents have for getting him. This means cutting the other partner off from contact with the child. If parents feel the slightest wavering or inconsistency in the resolve of state agencies to enforce the court's judgment it gives them an unbelievable strength to keep fighting which can result only in permanent damage being done to the child.

Psychologists will have less work treating the consequences of divorces on children if courts will promptly and adamantly insist on parents abiding by their decisions on the child's contact with both of them.

## Manipulation

*Manipulation means deliberately treating other people as though they were things. Here we are describing manipulation of people, which may be direct, where the manipulator goes against the will of another person, or indirect, where he slips past the other's awareness of his attempt to manipulate. We are going to take a look at a world which is not occupied by people, but only by things that is ruled by the manipulative rules of ferocious warfare. We will demonstrate the function of catch persons and of dichotomous thinking of the „either – or“ type.*

The word manipulation betrays its remote descent from the Latin word *manus* – hand, and indicates that this person degrades those around him or her into objects that are possible to move around and place where they want just like nonliving things. Just this fact testifies to a pathological phenomenon and to the destructiveness of manipulative tendencies. We can also look at manipulation as filling a need to control one's environment that got stuck in its childhood form and was retained that way into adulthood (emotional retardation). (For comparison, see Matthew 11: 16–17: „But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.” We also find the same attitude in the conception of hysterical manipulation in the MMPI test MMPI (Graham, 1977), where it also indicates immature relationships with other people: „They are interested in other people primarily because they can gain something from them rather than from sincere interest in them.”

## III. 5



Terrible, right? I would have gotten rid of him a long time ago, but he produces oxygen for me.

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The utilitarian approach to people leads to chronic loneliness. Manipulators are surrounded by things and they project the same feeling onto others.

For serious analysis, however, it is necessary to more strictly separate manipulation from other means of satisfying needs. We label goal-oriented behavior as manipulative when the subject deliberately ignores or gets around the typical human characteristics of their companions – their will or consciousness – that is, what these others need to base their own behavior on freely-made choices. According to this definition we can divide manipulation into two types:

- 1. Direct or pressure manipulation** (acting against the will of another person). This is when a person tries to make another do their bidding through by force or pressure. This type of manipulation tends to appear with extrapunitive individuals or with those who are able to act from a position of power (bosses, teachers, policemen etc.).
- 2. Indirect or tactical manipulation** (getting around the awareness of the other person). This type of manipulator comes up with various strategems and subterfuges to get their way. They are especially to be found among intropunitive individuals or among those who cannot gain direct satisfaction of their needs (for example, subordinates vs. bosses.)

Manipulation is mainly an internal attitude held by a person who treats others, whether consciously or unconsciously, as nonliving objects. If this internal attitude is not present, we are not discussing

manipulation. We can also consider the systematic use of suggestive sentences or assertive methods and the like as manipulative. In the professional literature, in connection with personality disorders, we also often find mention of the *utilitarian or instrumental attitude towards people* that marks the same phenomenon (Netík, Netíková, Hájek, 1997, p. 63). In the popular consciousness it is assumed that manipulation is an entirely deliberately and planned intention to control someone. This is unfortunately only the tip of the iceberg of all the different kinds of manipulation. The great majority of manipulation is unconscious and instinctive – a person simply tries to get around foreseen refusals. Manipulation therefore often represents a style of living one's life – a manner of treating other people as though they were things.

The source of manipulative behavior is mainly rigidity – that is, a low level of personal flexibility, self-hatred or self-destructive tendencies. We may look at manipulation as an unhealthily exaggerated attempt to control one's surroundings, and we can divide it into two general categories:

**1. Manipulation of other people;**

**2. Manipulation of one's own feelings** (with the use of fantasy figures).

With the manipulation of one's own experience, we are looking de facto only at the extension of this relationship with other people to oneself. Its essence is refusal of certain feelings or experiences and an attempt, by the force of will, to induce other experiences. For example, people try to get rid of reactive depression by refusing their bad feelings, or trying to manipulate themselves into the emotions they ought to be feeling if someone close to them died, or how they should feel with their brand new husband or wife, how they should feel after taking their first Holy Communion, and so on.

According to the gains that are expected, we can divide manipulations into the **altruistic type** – done for the sake of the one who is being manipulated – and the **egocentric type**, where the manipulator is mainly seeking their own advantage. Among altruistic manipulations belong *parental manipulations* above – various childrearing tricks for getting children to do things that should benefit them. *Commercial manipulations* are usually egocentric. In psychological research it is necessary to let go of the negative connotations of the word „manipulation” and keep in mind that evaluation of whether a given manipulation is morally good or evil belongs to other normative fields such as morality, ethics, theology or law.

## **Cycle of manipulations**

Manipulations have a distinct temporal pattern where there always has to be some triggering frustration at the beginning and we always have to analyse in which phase we currently find ourselves:

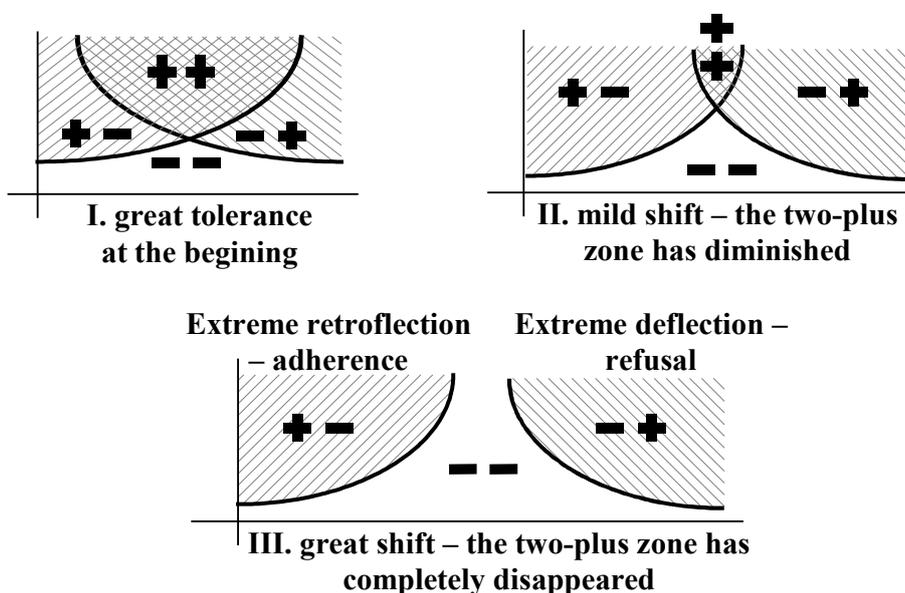
- 1) **Strong and urgent need** (very often a conflict between two values). Frustration is often invisible, which is why we must assume it and search for it when we suspect manipulation. The triggering frustration provides a reason for all consequent behavior, as manipulation stops when the frustration is satisfied.
- 2) **Anticipated refusal.** The manipulator usually guesses that the answer will be „No“, when asking a frank and open question. However, this anticipation may be in error.
- 3) **Fantasy preparation** - Long and intense thinking about how to satisfy the need. Looking for a new and clever way to pull it off.
- 4) **Feeling of entitlement to be satisfied.** This feeling is the product of intense endeavour. Hard mental work seems to guarantee the right to be satisfied. Another source of the feelings of entitlement is the principle of shared frustration. The manipulator always believes that he experiences greater perpetual misery than the manipulated person.
- 5) **Attempt to manipulate**
  - a) in the case of success (seldom) the manipulator enjoys a **short peak of exhilarating triumph**, but satisfaction of needs is followed by a loss of interest in the manipulated object, disrespect - the drop-down curve. Change of the object of interest.
  - b) in the case of failure (usually) - there is a **slide into depression (aggression)**. Occasionally there is also a change of the object of interest. Chronic lack of success by the manipulator results in self-hatred.
- 6) If the object finds out that she was abused, she creates an **antimanipulative defense**. The manipulator must find a new trick.

## Dichotomous Thinking – „Either-Or” Reactions

Dichotomous (disjunctive) thinking arising from the opposite terms „either-or” generally appears whenever a person has two very strong needs that are mutually exclusive. When both needs cannot be satisfied at the same time, a temporary solution could be alternating which one is satisfied. The leaps from one extreme to the other take place at moments when one need has already been satisfied, or if the frustration of the other unsatisfied need grows beyond tolerable limits. We often see a person who seems to be operating in two different modes, similar to the Jekyll and Hyde from R. L. Stevenson’s well-known novel. Often, this person is not even aware of the two irreconcilable states of being; he or she just lives with them. These kinds of states do not afford the person experiencing them much of a degree of tolerance or flexibility. It is difficult for very frustrated people to be tolerant, so they try to satisfy their deprived needs at any cost and without regard for what other people think, want, or desire. Thus, these people fulfill the definition of manipulators.

Most manipulation is triggered by an obstinate, frustrated need for something that the manipulator assumes he or she has a right to, but that the person being manipulated will not freely give to them. We will show the origin of these kinds of obstinate needs in four forces that keep a person at an optimal distance or activation and which are mutually independent. If the opposing forces are unusually strong, the curves of appetite and aversion will be mutually shifted in such a way that the zone of pleasant excitement disappears. This situation is illustrated in the following graph.

**Graph 15**



The shift of the curves away from one another results in the narrowing of the zone of pleasant excitement (two-plus), until it ultimately disappears entirely. The first diagram shows a healthy person with a large zone of two-plus that illustrates great tolerance and flexibility.

The second diagram illustrates a slight shift. The living space of this person has been narrowed to one or two situations where they feel good. The result is a workaholic or a gambler who, in all the wide world of things that he might do, only enjoys compulsive activities, and everything else feels hollow and worthless. Such an inflexible person will not have an easy time of it if he will want his partner to also share such a limited zone of pleasant excitement. He will have to exert great efforts, and despite his manipulations will still not succeed in most cases.

The third case is nothing short of catastrophic, although it is frequent enough. The shift of the curves is so extreme that the two-plus zone has entirely disappeared. Two-minus appears in the center. This person experiences extreme emptiness and futility. His temporary or makeshift substitute for happiness and the path he seeks to take out of his misery are the two zones on the sides – extreme clinginess or extreme rejection. This individual thus flip-flops from one extreme to the other. Here there exists only dichotomous thinking, only „either-or” decisions, or black-and-white thinking. We also find an exacerbated tendency for catch figures to come into play.

### Example 20

A girl has two entirely different ways of being with guys. The first one is short-term affairs of one night, which are sexual, but she paradoxically is not capable of enjoying the sex. She uses this mode when she is feeling

extremely uncomfortable. In „depression,” she goes to take a walk in the park. Clearly, through involuntary long glances she invites men passing by to come speak to her. Then they go together to a restaurant and then to bed, and in the morning she throws them out of her apartment. The second way of being with guys goes into effect when she is with someone she cares about. In these cases she insists on an extraordinary slow process of getting to know one another – glances, fleeting touches, innocent meetings in cafes, deliberately not exchanging telephone numbers, and so on. Short-term acquaintances border on promiscuousness. But she establishes long-term acquaintanceship only with married men who are not interested in a genuine relationship. In no case is she able to establish a relationship fairly quickly – let’s say within the course of a month or two. Her quick manner of getting intimate with someone copies the curve of appetite in the third diagram above, the depiction of extreme retroflexion. The slow manner then corresponds to the slowly flickering out aversion and fear of unknown men that is illustrated in the curve of diagram III. Both manners of relating are pathological because only useless or, in a worse scenario, psychopathic partners can get through her filters. And in both cases, the girl remains unsatisfied. Nevertheless, establishing a relationship in a more normal manner (the center of Diagram III) is unachievable for her, because it does not satisfy either her need for aversion or for appetite.

## **Dichotomous Thinking, Common Space and Decisions**

Dichotomous thinking has a generally destructive influence on couples’ lives together because the partners are unable to create a collective identity of „we” and their whole mutual life is governed by a law of „either you or me”. This leads, for example, to an inability to share their common space. Every object and place in their home either belongs to one or the other, and they do not share anything. Expressed in mathematical symbolism: if their apartment has a floor space of 50 m<sup>2</sup>, then each partner gets 25 m<sup>2</sup>. But when they share their space, each of them can use 50 m<sup>2</sup>, and so together they have a kind of virtual 100 m<sup>2</sup>. The same thing applies to mutual decisions. Not „we are going on a holiday” but „I am going on a holiday because my husband wanted to.” The house was not bought for „us” for because the wife insisted. From the outside this may appear like an expression of love, but it is much more likely to stem from an inability to create a collective identity of „we”.

Furthermore, dichotomous thinking leads not only to an inability to create a fully-functioning relationship, but paradoxically also to an inability to end the dysfunctional living together. Even a decision to break up cannot be understood as a mutual decision: „Either I will kick you out or you will kick me out. I can’t bear the humiliation that you have rejected me so I will therefore do everything possible to win you back and then I will break up with you. This is going to be my decision, and I will stick with it until I see you suffer. So long as I have not yet seen you unhappy I cannot identify with the statement that even I do not want to continue in this relationship.”

The role of the ego and its pride has obviously swelled out of proportion, which indicates a defensive reaction or a reactive product. The source of the problem may lie in the weakness of a person’s own identity or self-hatred. The boundaries between you and me, but also one’s own decisions have to be set by a fight, clash or argument with the partner. It is no wonder that dichotomous thinking is often the result of parents’ divorces during which a child has been forced to choose „Either Daddy or Mommy”. This experience is carried over into adulthood in the form of the role „either me or my partner”, or into attitudes of sexual chauvinism „Either men or women” that testify to an emotional stagnation that has left this individual at the level of the lower elementary school years which are characterized by a kind of natural segregation by sex (boys and girls do not play together).

## **Catch Figures**

When a child has a problem, she immediately cries: „Mommy” or „Daddy”. This means that the problem activated a mental representation of a parent in the mind of the child. Every one of us has such mental representations, and we call them catch figures. This is because we reach out for them to catch us when we are about to „fall down“. With adults, the catch figure is usually a partner, but it might be God, a psychologist or anyone else from whom help is expected.

For an infant until the age of 6 months, permanent objects do not exist. A baby considers her toy as lost, as non-existent when we are hiding it from her. For adult manipulators of course permanent objects do exist, but only in a kind of intellectual way. At the level of emotions, it is as though other people cease to exist in the moment when they leave one’s sight. In its way, it is psychologically understandable. If the manipulator is treating other people like things that only exist in order to benefit him or her, then it is no wonder that in the moment when they are no longer seen it is as though they do not exist.

A world like this, composed only of temporary figures and patches manifests itself in the constant shifting of preferences for one person and then another. These shifts can take place over the short term (with narcissists, or generally with chronic deflectors it is typical to have a crush for two weeks or an even shorter period) or a longer period (with dependent persons or generally with chronic retroflectors). However, both extremes have one thing in common. A person is tossed aside like a worthless toy as soon as they cease to satisfy the manipulator's needs, and the manipulator behaves as though they had never existed.

I think that for these figures to which manipulators make fickle and temporary attachments it is not entirely appropriate to use the term „significant other”. I recommend using an expression suggested to me by a client, „catch figures” for these bonds. This woman always had some catch figure for every environment where she found herself. In therapy I was it, at work it was her boss, at home her mother, and at various other places it was the person who was running the show there. Other people, including former catch figures, did not interest her. They were just air for her. A relationship with a significant other endures even when that person is not physically present. Catch figures become worthless when they leave one's sight. Even here we see an extremely utilitarian approach to others.

The existence of catch figures is explained in the diverging curves of preference (see Graph 15 and Diagram III.). Towards any other person a manipulative individual may be extremely clingy or, on the other hand, extremely rejecting. As soon as there is a chance, the former catch person will be abruptly rejected. Beware: this may also happen to their therapist. It is necessary to keep this phenomenon in mind while developing a treatment coalition with such a client.

## **The Rules of Manipulation**

A person who is manipulating others is, whether justified or not, convinced that nobody would voluntarily give him what he wants. Therefore, he comes up with various ways to surreptitiously wangle his wishes out of other people. There exist certain unwritten and unspoken rules for this battle that stand in contradiction to all therapeutic and ethical recommendations. They exist, however, because from an evolutionary point of view, they pay off. A certain percent of the population (approximately 4 % of the population) is able to gain advantages over their entire lifetimes by applying unfair or tricky stratagems. However, they will pay for this with dissatisfaction with their lives, by not being grounded in anything and by the necessity of constantly seeking a new environment where nobody yet knows their tricks. The following rules are good to learn well in order to be able to protect yourself, but do not use them in your own life.

The rules of manipulation are very interesting from the point of view of developmental psychology. Children discover them spontaneously in their early school years. They represent the latest level of development attained and they serve as a kind of toy that seems to draw them in and swallow them whole. That said, there exist several developmental conditions that children must fulfill in order to be capable of adopting the rules of manipulation as their own:

They must be capable of playing cooperative games with rules and roles. Toddlers are not capable of playing such games: as soon as one of them has a toy, any other child who sees it wants to play with the same toy and a struggle to get or maintain possession of the toy breaks out. Older children are able to alternate roles. The one with the gun plays the police officer, the other ones are the bandits, and they chase each other. This alternation of roles that makes cooperative games possible can be generally observed after children reach three years of age.

They must also be able to distinguish the intention of another person from the results of that person's behavior. For example, someone wanted to catch a ball, but did not manage to catch it. Having reached this stage of development is shown when the child laughs in situations that require this kind of analysis. For example, the child begins laughing when someone's hot dog falls into the campfire because she knows that their intention was to keep the hot dog on the stick and roast it. Younger children do not laugh when a hot dog falls into the fire. The ability to achieve a set goal is perceived as power, skillfulness, intelligence, etc. and it defines the natural framework for making evaluations of others.

They have to know the rules of social exchange, as well as of barter and sharing. For this, children need to acquire the ability to evaluate whether they have come out well when sharing or exchanging something, and whether the transaction was fair.

The child also must comprehend the theory of mind or mentalization; i.e.: to understand that someone else can have something different in their mind than I have. This newly-acquired ability opens doors for children to a heretofore unsuspected world of possibilities for how to gain previously inaccessible advantages for themselves. It enables them to make use of deliberate lies, tricks and deceptions.

**Example 21**

The theory of mind or of mentalization can be illustrated in the following example (false belief test; Dunbar, 2004): Sally and Ann are two dolls. Sally has a ball. She puts the ball under the cushion on the chair. Then, she leaves the room. While she is out of the room, Ann takes the ball out from under the cushion and hides it in the toy box on the other side of the room. Later, Sally comes back into the room. Where does Sally think her ball is?

Children up to the age of four and a half years will answer that she will look for it in the toy box, but older children correctly answer that she will look „under the cushion”. That is because older children are able to model the minds of two people at the same time. This enables them to deliberately lie and deceive others. This is the same age from which we can speak of manipulation according to the above-given definition. Children begin to play with this gradually-acquired ability as with a new toy that they indulge in playing with sometimes with an obsessive intensity.

Who doesn't know the childish trick: „Someone called you a owl!“ „Who?!“ „:-)))“ or another „Step on a crack” - „Break your mother's back”? Even with these primitive tricks children are practicing how it is possible for them to have something different in their heads than their counterparts have. And so for several years the game will be played to determine who is stronger, who is capable of predicting what the other is thinking, and who will be the weaker „dummy” who gets caught and symbolically „breaks his mother's back” or „is an owl“, which was certainly not his intention. From these developmental steps you may have the feeling that you have known these rules of the game since Day 1, but that is not true: you have known them since approximately the age of five years.

**III. 6**



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The rules of manipulation are unwritten and each individual has to discover them by means of trial and error, and therefore it is necessary to be constantly on one's guard.

From a logical point of view all of the following rules should be possible to reduce to a few basic premises. Among them would certainly belong these three axioms, though they certainly do not represent an exhaustive list:

Axiom 1: the name of the game is „Stronger & Weaker”; the stronger one wins.

Axiom 2: the rules of the game are unwritten and unspoken. Each one has to discover them by means of trial and error.

Axiom 3: the stronger one reaches his goal but the weaker one does not.

III. 7



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There is an implicit conviction that reaching of one's goal is good. This sort of evaluation might be primitive, but it is inevitable. Thus emerges a primitive morality. For example, one of a man's natural goals is to have a happy wife and family. It also makes him angry when somebody makes his wife unhappy. When his wife is unhappy because he has cheated on her, he naturally feels guilty and may even be angry with himself, as he has not achieved his goal - to have a happy wife - because of himself. So we can see plenty of defensive reactions arising as a result of this cognitive dissonance, e.g. making light of her suffering, shifting his aggression on her...

Through practical application of these three axioms it is also possible to infer the following rules of manipulation:

- Everyone plays. Nobody asks anyone else if they want to play or not.
- There is no right to take a break, the game is played without stopping. Not being on one's guard is punishable.
- The weaker one is the one who doesn't know something. For example, she doesn't know that the other person wants to double-cross them. Not knowing is punishable.
- The stronger one does not need anything, is not missing anything, and does not mind anything. The weaker one is the one who needs something.
- The stronger one is the one who first verbalizes a rejecting attitude; for example: „I don't care about you but you care about me.” The weaker one is the one who expresses interest in rapprochement.
- The weaker one is the one who lets himself be „taken”, who is confused, who loses control over the surroundings (see the above example with the hot dog).
- The weaker one is the one who displays feelings (especially positive feelings), who apologizes, who is obliging towards others, who makes a request, expresses interest in the other person, or gives off an impression of weakness or vulnerability or of having been injured, etc.
- The reply to any request or plea from the other person is „no”. The loser is the one who complies without delay and for free what the other one wants from him, or who reacts to an invitation, wish, etc. (The conflict between your wishes and mine define the boundaries between us and they accentuate my own identity.)
- The fool and the weaker one is the one who lets himself get burned, who trusts the word of the other one. For example, the one is considered to be a weaker fool who waits at an appointed place, not the one who deliberately does not show up. A partner who is being cheated on is a fool and a cuckold, and the one who is cheating is the stronger partner. The one who was faithful and believed in their partner's love will feel like a fool. (This evaluation is entirely inverse to the officially set rules.)
- Weakness, vulnerability and illness are punishable. For example, in one family when someone was sick everyone acted as if they did not exist. Here, the usual practices such as the mother carrying her child tea with honey or stuffing him with pills were impermissible. We find the same phenomenon in Milgram's experiments (1974), where participants had a tendency to reduce victims' suffering and say such things about them as: „He was so stupid he deserved the electric shocks.”
- The triumphal feeling of victory is not reduced even if the manipulated person does not guess that they have been defeated in a silent, vicious battle. In other words, unawareness is also punishable, as it prevents us from reaching a goal (axiom 3).
- Only a weakling voluntarily gives in or offers a compromise.

– Nothing is free, generosity is pure folly behind which is always hidden some kind of intention or stratagem. For example, the generosity of foreigners is said to only be a display of their condescension and calculation.

– Above all it is necessary to be careful not to give more than the other person gives. For example, in extreme cases, some people count sighs when they are making love.

– The stronger one does not show pain. This rule, similar to all the others, is related to the over-compensated ego (pride). For example, one woman was descending on an escalator when she tripped, and went down the stairs several meters to the bottom in a kneeling position on her shins, which had to hurt a lot because she scraped her whole shins raw. The woman then stood up at the bottom of the stairs and walked away without one curse or any other utterance. In a similar way strength is demonstrated by prisoners condemned to death who laugh at their executioners (See Daniel 3:16).

The rules of manipulation become a permanent part of a developing person's social skills. They are called for in various situations and are often applied completely automatically without any deliberation. Then they often become a systematic source of degenerated communication. For example, a man likes a certain woman but the rules of manipulation state: „The stronger one never expresses positive feelings.” How can this contradiction be practically resolved? The man expresses his positive feelings with a negative gesture and hopes that the woman is able to decipher the positive feeling that lies behind it. The man thus painfully spansks the woman on the behind. Will the woman react to the painful gesture or to the man's positive hidden feeling? This is the lottery of the rules of manipulation and degenerated communication (see the chapter on Types of Degenerated Communication – Degenerated Expression of the Need for Rapprochement).

Manipulative behavior mainly appears during a breakup during the stage of asymmetrical decision-making. There the partners try to show who has lost more, and who is to be considered the unwritten winner of the struggle. We also find it to a greater extent during courtship, but as the relationship develops it is less evident, especially when the couple becomes parents. Well-developed manipulative behavior within the space of a relationship is a sign of a psychopathological personality, but it is a natural – though not always healthy – phenomenon during courtship.

### III. 8



CALVIN AND HOBBS © (1987) Watterson. Dist. By UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE. Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved.

Between what is spoken (locution) and what is thought (illocution) there can be a shift that is systematically produced by the rules of manipulation. Calvin likes Susie, but he is already six years old so he knows the principle that the stronger one does not express positive emotions. He expresses his fancy for her and his affection with insults, but he wants her to take it as a game. Sometimes she does take it that way, but this time it wasn't funny.

Generally those who do not manipulate others have a greater chance at successfully getting acquainted with and maintaining a relationship. Manipulators either do not enter into a relationship because they are afraid to show an investment of feelings or after beginning the relationship they lose interest in their new partner because they have gained only a worthless thing, they were only interested in the chase, in the „pickup”, or because establishing the relationship has unbearably reduced their mental distance.

#### Example 22

Revealing hidden intentions is a deeply-rooted part of manipulation starting in the preschool years. In this case, Hannah has played the game of who is stronger with the doctor and we can read her triumphal feeling in having pulled off a masterful victory:

A certain Prague doctor requested that the professor of pediatrics Jiří Brdlík visit his sick eight-year-old daughter Hannah. The girl had an elevated temperature and Professor Brdlík checked everything out very carefully, looking into her throat, feeling her ears, asking her where it hurt, tapping the girl's body here and there, listening to her heart, lungs, and pressing on her belly, but after all that he still hadn't discovered anything unusual. He told the girls' parents that at this time it was difficult to make a pronouncement on her state, since hadn't found anything, but that they should let him know in any case how her case developed. The next day Hannah's father called and reported that something was coming out of his daughter's ear. Brdlík was surprised, and as soon as he had a moment of free time drove to his colleague's house to pay a visit. And truly, there was a massive discharge coming out of her ear – a typical middle ear infection. „That's odd,” he said and turned to his young patient: „And it didn't hurt at all yesterday, Hannah, when I touched your ear? It had to have actually been very sensitive by then.” „Yeah, it hurt,” explained Hanička with a mild expression of triumph, „but Daddy told me that you are a terribly clever doctor and I was curious as to whether you would figure it out for yourself...” (Káš, 1988)

### Manipulation by Means of „Carrot and Sticks”

A whole range of techniques have developed evolutionarily for getting a pair or a group tuned into the same emotional state. This may be the cry of a child who transfers her dissatisfaction to her parents, or a child's smile that has the opposite function. With groups it is song, dance, and music, battle cries, and so on. The ability to align one's psychomotor tempo with others contributes to a significant extent to the feeling of belonging. People who are not experiencing the same thing as the others increase their activation and then transfer their frustration onto others. This phenomenon describes the law of sharing frustration (see the chapter on Two Laws of Frustrated Needs).

This law indicates the different reactions of manipulators and the normal population. If a healthy person is in a bad mood and meets someone who is glowing with happiness, they are infected by the good mood and suddenly also experience a relatively better mood. Those who manipulate, however, often have very limited flexibility both in their mental distance and their activation. Additionally, they have an urgent need to control their surroundings, and therefore, they cannot adjust themselves to the moods of others, but require that the others must adjust to them.

Just like children have the feeling that each one has a right to an equal share – whether of cake, work, or pleasant experiences, or of injury or harm –, so with adults the feeling persists that everyone should share in a „crappy mood” to the same extent. Therefore, manipulators ignore the manifestations of sadness and pain in other people – which are often enough the cause not feel any empathy up until the point where they begin to get the feeling that the other party is suffering more than they are; for example, if they break down in hopeless crying and obviously surrender. At this moment they shift modes and these same people who had been acting as the aggressors suddenly become helpers and perpetrators who take care of the other person with a tender care. These jumps between suddenly dishing out punishments and rewards are the subconscious basis of indirect manipulations of the „carrot and stick” type.

#### III. 9



No pills, doctor, she calms down whenever she infuriates me.

© Vladimír Jiránek

Achieving unison in mood and emotions has an appetent function – when it has been induced, comfort and pacification are induced. Therefore, manipulators utilize their tactics in order to get to this

state, even though in practice it means that they have to destroy feelings of satisfaction or peace in their counterparts. This is a special kind of manipulation of another person's emotional state which is incomprehensible to laypeople because it seems to be without any motivation or reasonable grounds.

These manipulators distinguish themselves with their systematically reversed cycle vis-à-vis their counterparts. When the other person is in a bad mood, they seem to be sparkling with satisfaction and well-being and it is quite possible that they wonder why the other person is constantly sad, but woe unto him if he straightens up and begins to be more satisfied than the manipulator. Then he will have to be humiliated, taken down a few pegs in order that he not begin to think that he can be sure of how things stand. In short, he does not have any right to be happier than the manipulator.

If clients want to break up with manipulators, it is advisable for them not to show off their satisfaction with the breakup; on contrary, in the presence of manipulators, they should always keep their emotions just a bit more toned down than those of the other partner. This greatly reduces the aggression of manipulators: „Now you are sad. You deserve it. You should think twice before breaking up with *me*.“

When in contact with such a manipulator, we find ourselves in a constantly worsening mood. We feel at every moment that we must have angered him, but we don't know why. We never know when he is going to agree with us and when he is going to dress us down with a poisonous comment with which we are made to feel like complete idiots. When we then fall into a bad mood, then he will give the message that everything is okay, and when we straighten up and become again inspired by something, then he strikes again. In a group of people we discover that the maximum of attention and vigilance is directed towards him. The other people seem to be less important. Discovering these manipulations is difficult because they are covered over by the distribution of guilt which prevents people from observing the regular connections between moods and reactions. These intermittent rewards represents the strongest known type of conditioning - intermittent conditioning. That's way the life with a manipulator is quite addictive, the emotional bonds are hard to break.

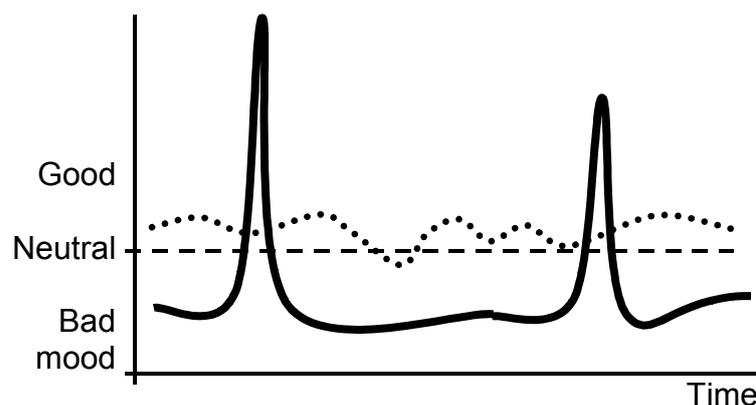
The mind of a manipulated person keeps revolving around the question: „What have I done wrong?“ She forgets that the humiliating remarks addressed to her are not meaningful in terms of their content, but are a measure of the current difference between her mental state and that of her manipulator. The content of the remarks is therefore entirely irrelevant, they always appear when a specific situation arises, and thus they fulfill the definition of rhetoric (see the chapter on The Concept of Rhetoric).

The constricted zone of the pleasant experience of excitement or its disappearance as described above lead to the manipulator's experience being fundamentally different than the experiences of normal, healthy people. It is necessary to understand the way they experience things – a client or his or her partner may be a manipulator. Additionally, during the period of a breakup clients are temporarily more likely to have these types of experiences which they do not understand themselves, nor do those around them and sometimes even their therapist does not understand.

Normal people spend most of their time living in a slightly positive mood that may sometimes flag a bit. When they drop into negative feelings, we can observe a defensive reaction - usually calling for the help of a catch figure, or their going through a relieving maneuver. It is a stereotypical action that is not well thought out and which is used to pull them out of the negative feeling into one that is neutral or even positive. Manipulators, however, permanently live in a negative mood as though they were under water. It is not possible to live one's whole life under water so the manipulators sometimes need to come up for a breath and enjoy a good mood for a while. This however does not happen continuously as with normal people, but only in flashes, in short-lived peaks.

Even the peaks of triumphant victory are very narrow and quickly fade away, a manipulator still lives for them. This is his „gambling“ area, the one true purpose of his life. The psychologist cannot take these peaks away from him so long as he does not also offer a way to get himself permanently into the zone of a mood that is at least neutral. It is necessary to be aware that these peaks represent only way that the manipulator knows to get himself out of his bad mood. They again represent very addictive intermittent conditioning.

Graph 16

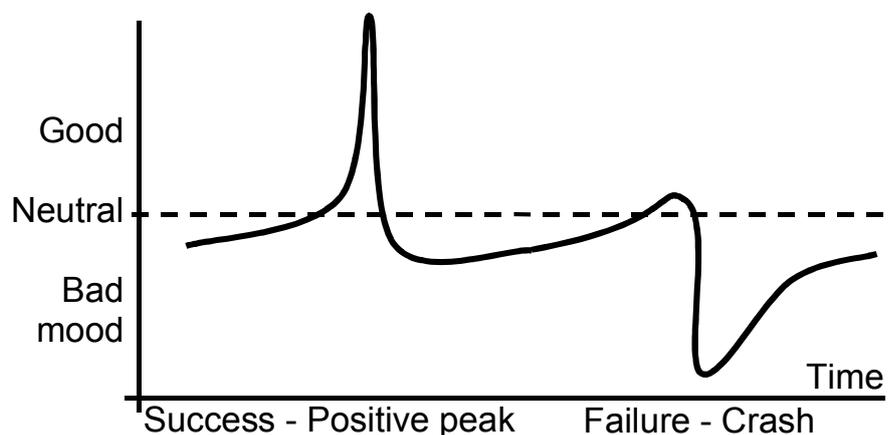


Comparison of the progression of a manipulator's mood (the solid line) with a normal person (dotted line). The healthy individual spends most of his time in the slightly plus zone; that is, in the zone of pleasant excitement. By contrast, the manipulator spends most of his time in one of the minus zones and therefore is permanently in a bad mood. He only gets into a good mood in brief flashes when one of his manipulations has paid off. He is not often able to speak about these successes with anyone because the rules of manipulation are unwritten and unspoken. If he were to advertise his extremely positive experience, he would betray the rule of the game of who is stronger.

This is truly a losing situation if the peaks are, for example, sexual murders or other extremely antisocial behavior. The individuals who commit these acts then report that they do not know any greater high than killing someone. During the act itself they get such a strong rush that is so intoxicating and pleasurable like nothing else in their lives has been. Unfortunately, immediately after the act they again fall into their glum, gray mood and those around them and often they themselves are not able to explain the motivation for their behavior. So long as we are in the area of partnerships, this peak of triumphal victory through manipulation could be achieved by winning a new sexual partner. It is then understandable that a chronic Don Juan cannot anchor himself in a stable relationship because in the presence of one woman his mood would always remain below the freezing point.

However, we get an even worse situation when an attempted manipulation does not work out as planned. Instead of the intoxicating triumphal victory, a protracted depression ensues which the manipulator does not see a way out of.

Graph 17



### Tendencies Toward Mental Dependency

These peak experiences and protracted spells of being in a bad mood function as so-called intermittent conditioning that creates an extreme mental dependency on peak experiences. For example, for Hitler or Goebbels speeches worked in this way. When delivering them they got into these positive states but otherwise suffered from protracted states of depression. Mental dependency can also be extremely strong without drug-related, biological or social components.

When considering the question of the harmfulness of drugs, there is usually discussion of their biological addictiveness even though biological addiction is a fairly marginal part of the work of breaking the habit. For example, with alcoholics, their metabolic addiction to the ethanol is broken within fourteen days, and then their body is capable of functioning without alcohol. Thus, everything that follows is

psychological addiction. These addicts solve their problems or cope with difficult mental states or dissatisfaction with their lives as a whole, including with interactions with their partners with the help of alcohol. This psychological addiction is the reason why they have to remain abstinent for the rest of their lives, if they are to be victorious over the drug.

As we said above, a manipulator may enjoy a good mood only in peaks or flashes. Therefore, these peaks generate an extreme psychological addiction and the bad habits they engender are insurmountable by willpower alone. Any relieving maneuver that has ever led a person from a bad mood into a good one can become psychologically addictive. Unfortunately, this can be just about anything. According to the level of activation we can divide relieving maneuvers into the following groups:

**Autostimulation** – the already-mentioned murders, violence, sport, gambling, tasting of forbidden fruit, etc.

**Autoinhibition** – Computer games, housework, losing weight, shopping, counting one’s money, the first sip of alcohol, etc.

**Activation-relaxation** – a wave of activation after which follows its diminishment – sex.

For partner interactions the most important thing is the so-called **drunkard’s remorse**, which is a feeling of guilt that lasts from the time of a need having been satisfied to the first signs of withdrawal symptoms, when it is overcome by the awakening need. Drunkard’s remorse is deceptive because it has no influence at all in changing a person’s behavior and in stopping the addiction. Nonetheless, the partners of these addicted persons hang onto the moments of drunkard’s remorse because to them they represent the only glimmers of hope in their otherwise utterly dim prospects for the future. They themselves become dependent on their sick partners. In every case of addiction, the entire system, the entire family is always sick.

As a result of these flashes the feeling arises among partners of addicted persons that they seem to be living with two different people in one partnership. With one wonderful, nice person, and another who is mean and cruel. As long as the forces of attraction remain stronger, they tell themselves: „S/he is at heart a good person, it’s only the exterior that looks so bad.” This rhetoric, of course lasts only until they break up and it is an expression of fruitless searching for the resultant of the forces of attraction and aversion (see the chapter on Asymmetry of Distance and Activation). Or more accurately, we may state that both the forces of attraction and aversion are extremely hypertrophied and they create a permanently unhealthy tension.

III. 10



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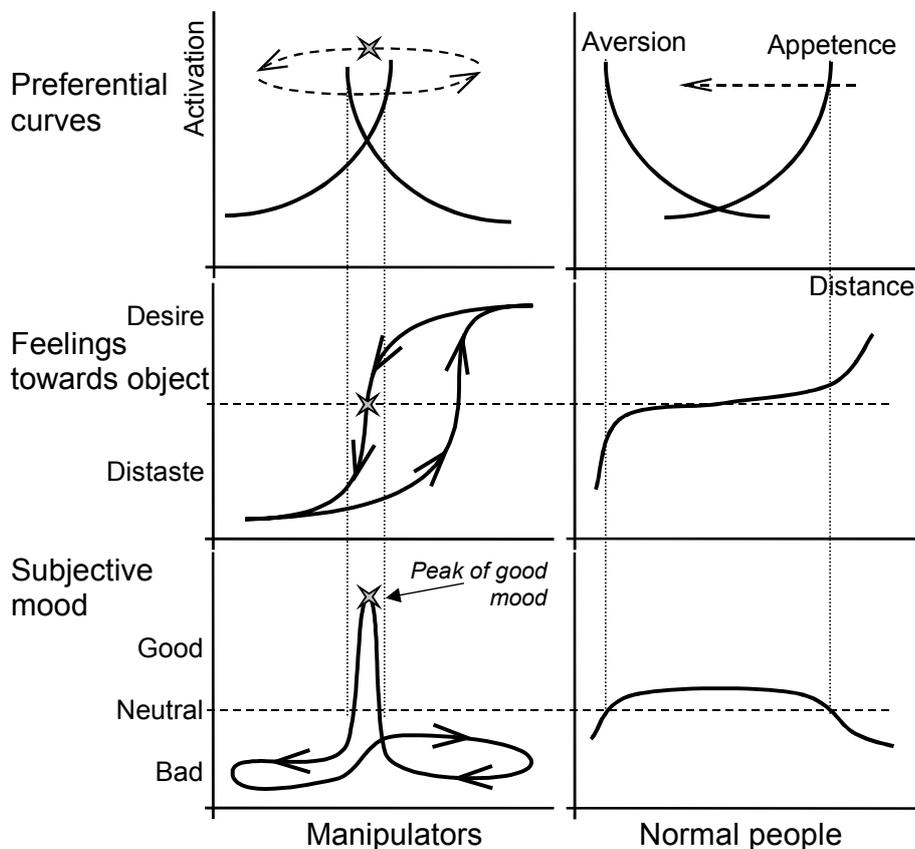
Manipulators do not know how normal people operate. They don’t have any point of comparison. They are not able to see the relationship between their own illogical dependency and the protracted periods of ill humor. In the cartoon, Garfield searches in vain for the reasons why he has a compulsive and incomprehensible tendency to hang from trees. In the end, all the same he falls into the empty „diagnosis” of stupidity and self-hatred.

**The Relationship of Peaks to a Drop-down Curve**

There is a relationship between the triumphal peak of a good mood and the drop-down curve (see the chapter on Asymmetry of Activation – Drop-down Curve). The feeling of triumph appears when the manipulator has moved from an experience of great longing into great aversion, but it is lacking when the movement is in the opposite direction. The manipulator thus cannot be satisfied in a peaceful state, and their partners various attempts at finding some kind of environment or state where both of them will be

satisfied are foreordained to failure. Satisfaction can only be momentary for the manipulator and he or she gets it in oscillations: an attempt to get there across a great distance, crossing through the narrow area of satisfaction – a peak of triumphal and intoxicating good mood, then a state of revulsion and disgust and a need to distance him or herself. When getting putting this distance between themselves and their partners there is no peaking in their experience at all. There is only a feeling of relief. At a great distance, the longing to come back awakens and the cycle may begin all over again.

**Graph 18**



The graph illustrates the relationship between the curves of preference, mood, and desire for one's chosen partner. While normal people experience a good mood when they find themselves at an optimal distance from their chosen object, manipulators get into a good mood only during a rapid approach from a great distance, and then the spike representing their good mood appears, see the center hysteric curve. When the manipulator is putting him or herself at a distance there is no peak present, and only relief is experienced, which is apparent in the lower loop. Additionally, when distancing themselves, manipulators change the object of desire, simply, they fall in love for a while with someone else. However, when they find out that someone else may be interested in their original partner, then they quickly transfer their interest back and the cycle repeats.

### Emotions as a Secondary Reward

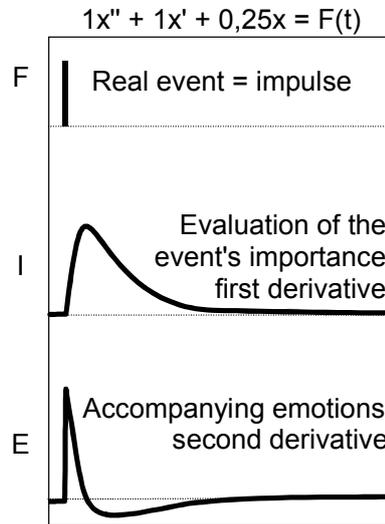
One psychological theory of emotions or well-being explains the peak of triumphal feelings (Warren, Sprott; Sprott, 2001). It indicates that emotions behave like a second derivative of a change (acceleration or deceleration). In somewhat simplified form, an event (the Dirac impulse;  $F(t)$  in the following illustration) leads to a twofold response in the organism - an evaluation of the event's importance for the subject, from which follows the first derivative ( $I; x'$ ) and emotions, which behave as the second derivative; ( $E; x''$ ). For example, if someone graduates from a school (impulse  $F$ ) he feels high and at that time he evaluates this event as foremost in his life. Then the intensity fades away and as years go by, it is not so important ( $I$ ). However, emotions ( $E$ ) pass away much faster. They arise promptly with the impulse and afterwards disappear almost at the same speed. This man even might find himself in a bad mood the day after his graduation celebration.

The evaluation, which is to be the first derivative (in mathematics, the slope of the curve  $x'$ ), indicates where the action was headed, and whether it was positive or negative. The accompanying emotions (the second derivative;  $H, x''$ ) react to the flexion of the curve, to acceleration. Actual acceleration means that the person has done something good right now and it ought to be rewarded and

reinforced. So feelings also have the function of a supplementary, secondary mental reward (or punishment). This teaching signal was sent by the nucleus accumbens that gives the organism a dose of dopamine.

For example, the primary reward when eating is banishing hypoglycemia, hunger. The secondary reward is emotional – the immediate experience of joy after a successful hunt (evolutionarily speaking) or some other means of acquiring one’s food. The secondary reward does not banish hunger, but strengthens the feeling of success, reinforcing the memory of the successful strategy. This all happens before commencing the actual act of consumption; i.e. the primary reward.

**Graph 19**



Sprott (2001), modified

These theories of emotions appear to be evolutionarily adequate. A constant feeling of intoxicating happiness can be achieved, for example, by means of direct stimulation of the nucleus accumbens or indirectly with drugs but this leads to maladaptation to the environment. An extremely happy person ignores the warning signals around him or her. Therefore, nature is frugal with feelings of happiness. For manipulators, however, strong emotional peaks are the one way they are able to get out of their permanent and ubiquitous „crappy” mood. In order for a sufficiently large emotional peak to be produced with the help of this derivational theory, the movement and the change must be very quick and intensive. Manipulators therefore escalate situations to the point of unbearable extremes – perhaps like some children need to make their swings go all the way up to the ceiling in order to enjoy them. For example, with hunger, we can realize that the pleasure we get from someone letting us bite their sandwich depends on how great our hunger is. Thus, in partner interactions manipulators push the situation to extremes in order to for their peaks to appear. It is clear that this way of life leads to self-destructive excesses, but it’s just a given with this kind of experiencing.

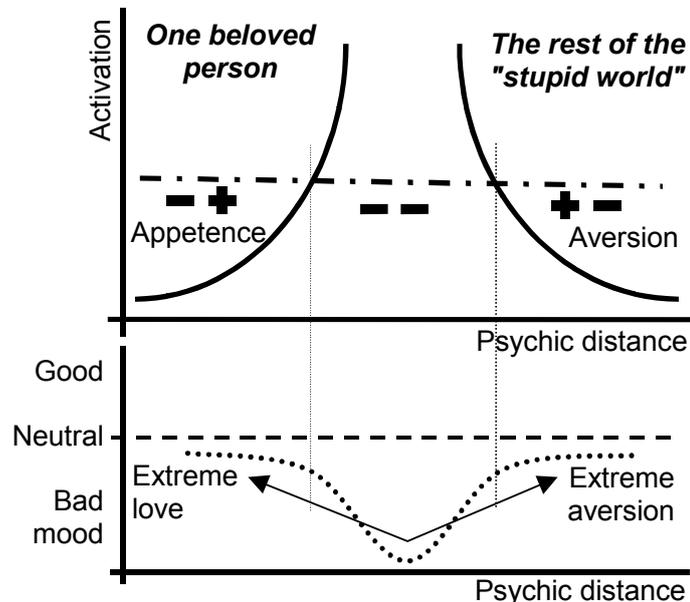
**Manipulators and Love**

The dichotomous structure „either – or” divides the world into two unequal parts: to one beloved being and the rest of the world which the manipulator despises from the bottom of her heart. She is utterly dependent on her beloved being, and allows herself to be used, and is as defenseless against this as a slave. However, compared with the rest of the world, she behaves with contempt and uses anything and everything for her own advantage.

In Steven Spielberg’s film Schindler’s List, which is otherwise entirely black-and-white, there is one interesting scene. A girl who is not black-and-white, but surprisingly rendered in full color suddenly appears against a gray background. She comes forward in her red dress and everything around her remains dull gray. Similarly, in a manipulator’s world generally there is one being who stands out, who is completely idealized against the background of a disgusting, gray world. This being, so long as he or she remains unavailable over the long term, can remain a relatively stable presence for the manipulator. Nevertheless, various people may alternate in the position of angelic being over the course of a fourteen-day cycle. Love for manipulators is extremely strong and also capricious. It is necessary to warn our clients that if they require any extreme displays of love from their admirers, they are unknowingly weaving a web, a simple filter in which they can only hope to catch pathological manipulators.

It is important, however, to emphasize that although a real beloved being will activate the appetite of a manipulator, but he or she must at the same time remain unavailable – at a great mental distance. The reason is simple. As soon as the unavailable being comes close and begins to reciprocate the manipulator's love, his forces of attraction have been satisfied and the forces of aversion start to come up to the surface. There is then a decline and the one who was beloved unto the grave just a few minutes ago now appears vile and revolting. The manipulator has registered a quick shift in mood, but does not comprehend the underlying mechanism. She has the feeling that everyone suffers from these kinds of sudden losses of interest. She does not understand why she can only love those who do not want her.

**Graph 20**



If aversion and appetite decline, the curves shift so that the zone of pleasant excitement disappears. Instead of it there appears just a two-minus zone. Thus, the distance at which normal people feel the best is where manipulators feel worst (the well in the graph 20 above). They have a tendency to flee from this unsatisfactory situation into one of two extremes. Either an extreme love develops for one idealized being who is in reality inaccessible. Towards the rest of the world they experience a marked aversion and outwardly concealed aggression. (The dot-and-dash line represents average daily activation.)

This is the way not only the minds of mentally disturbed personalities (psychopaths) operate, but the same mental structures can be found temporarily in partners at the stage of asymmetrical decision-making. We also see the same mechanisms in the battle for short-term victory. These two are competing over who is coming out better and who is „ripe for the psychologist”. From the third person's point of view they are actually both drowning people who are engaged in a hopeless battle for breath where each one thinks that they will get to inhale when they pull the other one under the water.

### **Chronic Self-Hatred**

Self-hatred along with fantasy figures and self-talks represent a modern-day taboo. When we indicate to a client that his problem may be self-hatred, he generally reacts by saying that of course not, he likes himself just fine. Generally it takes several sessions before he comes to understand what kind of structure of self-destructive thinking the psychologist has in mind. People generally have an intuitive notion that egoism and egocentrism exclude self-hatred. However, the truth is opposite to what they imagine. Egoists generally suffer more from self-hatred than do other people.



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In order for a manipulator to be able to circumvent the will and also the awareness of another person, they must often exercise an extreme degree of ingenuity. In the great majority of cases, these attempts are unsuccessful so chronic feelings of futility, envy and rejection and, in their wake, self-hatred are fostered.

It is appropriate to look for chronic self-hatred with those kinds of breakup where one side cannot, for a very long time, reconcile with the disintegration of the relationship and they fall into chronic depression. In a closer examination we see that with the breakup it is as though their better self – the other person - were going away and they feel as though they are left with only the worst of what they are. An accompanying phenomenon can be self-blame stemming from egoism and from errors, and also the feeling that the better off the other partner is, the worse they will be able to bear the loss that comes with the breakup.

#### Example 23

In the background of self-hatred it is useful to seek auto-stimulatory techniques and vices. For example, one client with the above-described structure of thinking recalled his parents' breakup. The first sentence with which he reacted to their decision was: „I don't blame myself for my parents breaking up. But I do reproach myself that I didn't do enough to keep Father with us.” In other words, denial. His childish reaction to the loss of his father was the following. Whenever he began to miss his father, instead of soothing himself or coping with his loss in some other, healthier, manner he told himself that he had given up too easily and not fought hard enough to make his father stay with him. Thus, his entire way of looking at the situation was simplified into a black-and-white intropunitive picture: „Don't cry, this is your own fault. You were lazy.” Now, twenty years later he reacts wholly analogously to a breakup with a girl that had happened a year ago and due to which he has been suffering from a protracted state of depression with occasional suicidal thoughts. His former partner has even indicated that the breakup was not entirely his fault, but he is not able to see anything at all in it that could have been hers. She was always the better one of the pair. Her loss cannot be compensated by anything.

Another boy when becoming sick after his absent father uttered this sentence to „sooth“ himself: „My father does not like me. He even didn't come to see me, when I was in the birth hospital.“ This is the event which he knew only from a narration of the mother. This sentence was not true. It was the battle between parents that caused all that. But we see clearly the mechanism of self-hatred. When he is sad, he activates a catch figure - the father. But fantasy figure does not satisfy his loneliness. So he tries to get rid of it - to send it away, to adulterate the fantasy figure of the father with moral inferiority: „I you do not care of me, so I do not care of you!“ But the only thing he can acquire by this construction is deep sense of inferiority: „I am unwanted child, that wasn't even worth for the father to see me when had been born.“

But how is it possible to distinguish between remorse for true guilt from unhealthy self-hatred? Above all else, self-hatred is a function of mental states. It appears in moments of exhaustion, loneliness, and the need for physical touch, and it serves to fill in the feeling of emptiness. Furthermore, pathological self-hatred does not help people improve themselves, to get rid of their undesirable characteristics and bring benefit to other people. To the contrary, it closes a person up in their shell, keeps them from doing their jobs, blocks contacts with other people and prevents any change for the better. (After all, they don't deserve to have anything good...)

### Self-hatred and Relationships with Other People

If a person is of no value to himself, his value can only be expressed through the assessment and appreciation of other people. This could be, for example, fame, and that is why so many cling to it. Those who are near at hand, however, cannot become close to them. Those who are close become a part of the wider ego, so their appreciation and their feelings lose value.

### Example 24

Laing (1994) illustrates a clinical picture of the vicious cycle of self-hatred:

„I don't think much of myself.

I can't respect anyone who values me. I can only value some who doesn't respect me.

I value Jack because he doesn't value me.

I despise Tom because he doesn't despise me.

Only a despicable person could like such a despicable being as I am.

I can't love anyone whom I despise.

Since the time that I have valued Jack, I can't believe that he likes me. How can he prove it to me?"

Self-hatred also deeply contaminates the behavior of fantasy figures. More precisely stated, fantasy figures are a place where self-hatred is stored. In a persons' mind these little figures inadvertently and seemingly as part of the background tell him off, insult him or reject him. In the battle with self-hatred it is precisely these fantasy figures that have to be the focus of our attention. It is possible to focus on them, for example, through introspection using the method of brief retrospection. When working at his computer, a client realizes that he is in a bad mood. Thus, he takes a break and goes over what, besides the programming, has been going through his mind in the past three minutes and he has an instruction from a psychologist to put this on the paper. Whom he was thinking about and what these people were telling him inside his head. These fantasy figures often express various ugly things and they can be the immediate source of a bad mood. Influencing these fantasy figures by appropriate techniques makes it possible to not only get rid of the bad mood, but also eventually the self-hatred as well.

Cruel and self-hating fantasy figures in our heads can be awakened by the following influences:

- Rejection by important people or authorities;
- Failure;
- Fear or threats;
- Guilt or wrong-doing.

With regard to self-hatred manipulators assume that all of their needs and requests will automatically be met with a negative answer. This is one of the rules of manipulation they learned in childhood: the answer of the stronger one to any kind of request by another is „no". Besides this, self-hatred is also projected onto fantasy figures of other people. These figures likewise express hatred towards the subject. If we do not like someone, then we are not going to voluntarily give her anything. Therefore, it is logical to expect that other people are likewise not going to give us anything voluntarily and deliberately. We have to get around their awareness, to outsmart them – and this is already manipulation. With these kinds of mental gymnastics a person who does not hate himself arrives at manipulative attitudes which continue to spiral downwards in a vicious cycle that causes his relationships with other people to deteriorate.

### III. 12



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It is not easy to detect self-hatred. Here there is a contradiction between the behavior of fantasy figures in Garfield's head and the events taking place on the screen. The fantasy figures may say: „Come here kitty, And now I've got you, you brat, you have just eaten up everything in the cupboard again. Now I'm going to tan your hide." This is Garfield's own prediction of how events are going to unfold. From the screen, however, he hears an unexpected: „Good kitty!" Praise rather than condemnation. The fact that he expected condemnation is a sign of self-hatred, which was stored in the fantasy figure of the imagined human. If you would ask Garfield whether he likes himself he would say yes. He would be convinced that actually he likes himself way too much and that he is egotistical. The behavior of the fantasy figures that are being directed

by his mind, however, testify to the opposite being true. They express hatred and criticism. Garfield therefore serves us as an example of a manipulator with reactive egocentrism who actually regards himself with self-hatred.

Chronic self-hatred also leads to an inability to kindly and supportively address oneself when leading an internal self-talks, which will be discussed later. A person I hate, even if it is myself does not deserve any kindness and support. The useful criterion for self-hatred is: „If you would not do something to another person, do not do it to yourself.“ If you would not call any real girl „a bitch“, you should apologize to yourself, when calling yourself names. So an apology to myself is a technique which often leads to fresh progress.

### III. 13



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Rule of manipulation: „The answer to every request is no“ makes the manipulator internally unfree, even though he himself longs for absolute freedom.

## Fantasy Figures

*Now we will discuss in what way the above-described processes are stored in our minds in the form of mental representations or fantasy figures. We will demonstrate how the process of externalization conceals these fantasy figures so that we do not even know about them. We will describe the differences in behavior of fantasy figures and real people who produce an infinite variety of misunderstandings among partners. Fantasy figures clearly come to life during breakups and they are the bearers of our own wishes, even though we may have the feeling that these are the emotions of our partners.*

Although mental representations of other people are physically stored in our brains, they are projected, or more precisely, externalized onto other people. In a relationship of You-and-I there is a systematic shift of the boundaries between the subjective and objective I. This shift has the result that the mental representations seem to belong to no one – no one claims them (neither you nor I). For this reason they are the source of endless misunderstandings and from the point of view of mental defense they serve as an ideal dumping ground for undesirable thoughts and desires.

Fantasy figures are considered taboo these days, even more than sex or self-hatred. The reason is obviously that in folk psychology, talking to oneself or having fantasy interactions fulfills the definition of craziness. I remember that one nice lady lived on our street who had two mentally backward sons (one moderately and the other severely retarded) with her husband, who was her first cousin. Once, as a seven-year-old boy I was walking down our street past her window and I don't know if I was just singing or actually talking to myself. In any case, the lady stopped me about two days later and lectured me that I should not talk to myself, that only crazy people do that. I felt very embarrassed, but the lady meant well. She obviously wanted to save me from the fate of her retarded sons. Hopefully, she succeeded.

Self-talks are only one of the various possible ways to interact with fantasy figures. Many people have not experienced monologues for themselves and the thought of doing it strikes them as absurd. They have a tendency to identify monologues with hallucinations, with a delusional system or with other manifestations of psychosis. On the other hand, there are many others who consider this experience to be a given, but about which they do not speak with almost anyone else.

It is part of the general layperson's consciousness that monologues are a symptom of mental illness, and therefore they have an irrational fear of them. Clearly for the reason that those individuals are not in control of their monologues, and that they are uncontrollable by willpower.

However, even pathological monologues are de facto arguments with a fantasy figure. This figure does not have to another person, but could also be God, another being, or a nonliving thing, such as, for example, a tram.

### Example 25

Once I saw a limping homeless man who had been distributing the newspaper *Večerní Praha* in restaurants, when he had just finished his work and gone out to wait at a tram stop. After a while he began to noisily remonstrate with the tram that had not yet arrived at his stop. The argument, which began with his mumbling under his beard gradually escalated into loud threats of the type: „If you don't come before I count to thirty I'm leaving.” Whereupon he began to count. The tram, however, did not arrive and he began to holler: „I'm going away, I'm really going, it's all the same to me, I'll just go...I'm going?!” and really, after a moment he did leave, but kept looking around him to see if the tram hadn't perchance changed its mind. After five minutes he returned crestfallen over the hopelessly truculent, non-arriving tram that he perseveringly kept maligning – this time, for a change with weepy admonishments. This social basket case was projecting the rejection that he regularly got from the whole world onto the tram. His discussion with the tram was one great big fruitless defense of himself. No one took him seriously, not even the tram.

This tragicomic anecdote just illustrates an exaggerated form of what everyone usually does unconsciously. It is a discussion or some other form of interaction with a fantasy figure. The goal of psychotherapy is not to suppress this kind of interactions with fantasy figures but to take hold of them and heal them so that they can bring benefits to the client and help his or her social adaptation rather than lead to maladaptation as we saw in the case of the homeless man.

## Mental Representations as Models of Real People

In the moment when we meet a new person we begin to form a mental representation of him or her, not only from what we are actually observing, but also, and mainly from our expectations and from what

we have known of other people in the past. Mental representations are thus a certain kind of model that substitutes for real people and things in the movements when they are not physically present. We practice and prepare for our future interactions with these models. Nevertheless, old traumas and neuroses are kept alive and they satisfy momentary needs. Fantasy figures are often conjured up, for example, in order to ease loneliness.

There is a slight difference between the terms mental representation and fantasy figure. A fantasy figure is a mental representation where its bearer has the feeling that he has been in an interaction with someone who „has a mind of their own”, that is, will and consciousness. Fantasy figures are thus a subset of mental representations. However, this difference is not critical for clinical practice, so it is possible to use both expressions as approximate synonyms.

The term mental representation started to be used because our knowledge of other people is not composed only of concepts and memories but there are also many expectations, scenarios, habitual manners of behavior and reaction to a given person. In other words, the image of another person is usually a fairly faithful and functional model of her personality rather than some kind of unsorted album of memories as the earlier unspoken assumption would have presumed.

Mental representations are of course active even in the physical presence of other people, but they are much less obvious. They get lost because they are covered over by current perceptions. But in these moments they sometimes emerge and appear in the form of mistaken expectations (see Ill. 12).

#### **Example 26**

A woman is anxious and perhaps is troubled by feelings of guilt from her undisclosed unfaithfulness to her husband. Suddenly she begins to have the feeling that he wants to beat her. This expectation could have developed from her memories of older domestic violence, but in a given moment it is entirely at odds with the mental state currently inhabited by her husband. He doesn't have to be thinking about beating women at all at that moment. The discrepancy between the woman's momentary expectation and the man's current state of mind serves as an example of how mental representations operate, their imprecision and how people use older memories in building expectations and predictions for how events will further unfold. It is understandable that by themselves, such expectations can in fact influence future developments as self-fulfilling prophecies. For example, the woman begins to provoke her partner and thereby transfers her state of mind to him, and he then beats her which then seems to confirm the „truth” of her expectations („I knew it all along”). But at the beginning of the whole episode there was only an inaccurate mental representation of her husband.

When interacting with fantasy figures, healthy people maintain a detached perspective and realize that the fantasy figure is not a real being. To put a finer point on it, it is not a hallucination or an illusion, but only an overgrown projective tendency. Of course we also find psychotic patients with fantasy figures, but there they are a part of their delusional systems.

According to Caughey (1984), the average inhabitant of North America occasionally interacts with some 200 – 300 people. This is not at all an exaggerated figure when we realize how many different milieux we move through in our lives. This count also includes classmates from elementary school whom we occasionally remember, and all of our friends, relatives and acquaintances, including emotionally engaged anonymous people who sometimes emerge from our memories. Similarly to Caughey (1984), we can divide fantasy figures into the following groups:

**Fantasy figures of known real people.** Fantasy replicas of close or catch persons (including deceased persons and household pets), where fantasy conversations take place beside real-life interactions, or media figures with whom the subject interacts in their fantasies. For example, one older lady described her fantasy relationship with Frank Sinatra that had lasted during the entire forty years of her marriage (see The Hybrid Partner in the chapter on the Latent Stage).

**Fantasy figures of never seen real people.** Never seen biological parents of adopted children are all fabricated from child's experiences with other real people.

**Mental companions** (Movie „Fight club“, Hobbes of Calvin, „Tracy's Tiger“, etc.) - pure fantasy figures created in dreams and fantasies.

**Big and small fantasy figures.** In a stressful situation, the ego splits into two instances which we can observe in self-talks. The big one scolds the other, small, executive ego.

**Impersonal voices and visions** (see example 27 below) They are fantasy figures despite the fact might not have visual component, appearance. They have other traits of fantasy figures - they seem to have their own will and consciousness and might have spacial coordinates, a subject feels them in some direction and distance from himself.

**Anthropomorphically personified objects** (animism) – conversations with the wind, the tram, with a machine or with another nonliving thing.

**Fantasy figures of religious or immaterial beings** who, although they could be divided into the previous groups have many features that are specific to them alone - the figures of God, angels, saints, the Devil, Buddha, etc.

**Example 27**

Frank Zappa (Barry 2004) witnesses his experience of a fuzzy fantasy figure - a voice behind him: „Brain Police' was a phenomenon because I was just sitting in the kitchen at the Bellevue Avenue house and I was working on „Oh No, I Don't Believe It“, which didn't have lyrics at the time... and I heard, it was just like there was somebody standing over my shoulder telling me those lyrics and it was really weird. I looked around... I mean, it wasn't like „Hey, Frank, listen to this...“, but it was there. So I just wrote it down and figured the proper setting for it.“

There is a neologism „imaginal” for fantasy figures coined by Henri Corbis (1972, according to Nixon, 1992). The word is a composite of „imaginary” and „real”; thus something halfway between a fantasy and reality. There is discussion of „imaginal dialogues” (monologues, self-talks) or „imaginal others” (fantasy figures). The breakthrough work by Mary Watkins (1986) *Imaginal Dialogues* is kindred with Jung's teachings and stake out a polemic with psychoanalysis. Part of the literature also examines mental companions. In Ill. 14 we see Calvin's mental companion, the tiger Hobbes.

**Ill. 14**



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The tiger Hobbes is a stuffed animal. Nonetheless, when he is out of the view of adults he animates and becomes a mental companion for the little boy. This does not change the fact, however, that he is still a fantasy figure and must submit to the laws of fantasy. For example, here we see that he cannot do math any better than Calvin himself.

**Externalization**

Externalization is an automatic subconscious process which does not occur to us to think about. It is a marvelous phenomenon of our minds. We cannot do couples counseling without understanding how it works. The concept of externalization comes from the psychology of perception which describes the special characteristics of the distance senses such as sight and hearing. We can best explain this when we ask a child: „Where do you see the dog?” and the child points with her finger at a distant dog. But when you ask her „Where do you feel this?” the child will show a spot on her body. And this is the paradox. How can it be that one time she is pointing at something on her own body and another time at a distant dog? Well, it is widely known that visual perceptions are created by the impact of photons on the retina. The child should therefore „rightly” point to her eye and say that she sees the dog in her retinas and not point somewhere off in the distance.

Clearly it would be absurd to answer the question of where we see something to point with our fingers to our retinas. This problem has been solved for us by evolution, which provided us with externalization. Nonetheless, such a seemingly harmless and useful function of our minds can wreak damage to our interpersonal interactions. The same phenomenon is at work not only in simple perception but also in mental representations where it is much more difficult to clearly demonstrate its functioning.

## Externalization Shifts the Subjective Boundaries Between You - Me

In the relationship You – Me, externalization manifests one very interesting characteristic that is most apparent in monologues: the outside observer sees that a woman is talking to herself. But this does not correspond to how the monologue is experienced internally. The woman who is doing the talking has the feeling that she is arguing with another person. She is perhaps disputing a hurtful comment made by her former partner. She certainly does not have the feeling that she is actually her own former husband. But her former husband is not physically present at this moment and from this follows that it is only a mental representation of him that has been activated in the woman’s mind and she is having a conversation with it.

Externalization is manifested in a systematic shift of the subjective boundaries between You – I, which can be the source of thousands of misunderstandings. Let us imagine the scene captured in the following joke, which in real life is usually not very funny:

III. 15



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In this scene there is a conversation among four people, two of which are fantasy figures and two of which are real people. It is only when the two missing people are sketched in that the whole picture begins to make sense.

Graph 21

Real Woman (objective boundaries)	Real Man
According to her it is only she herself	According to Marcia it's all Charlie
According Charlie it's all Marcia	According to him it's all only he himself
Mutual Agreement	Systematic Misunderstanding „No-Man’s Land”
	Mutual Agreement

It is necessary to carefully distinguish between the objective and subjective boundaries of selfhood. The subjective boundaries may lie inside the mind between a mental representation of one’s own self and of other people. The objective boundaries are given by the physical boundaries of the body and the

threshold for psychological pain. Smacking a book into the table does not hurt, because we are not the table, but it does hurt if our fingers get hit, because we consider them to be a part of ourselves.

The fantasy figures here do not belong to either of the people because both of them think that they belong to the other one. They influence their mutual interaction and lead to chronic misunderstanding, which is the basis of the joke in Ill. 15. Among these systematic misunderstandings given by the relative shift of boundaries in the You – I relationship belong the endless debates: „You said... You think... You want...”, which the other side denies: „No, I didn't say, I don't think, I don't want...”, which without awareness of this systematic shift and of the fantasy counterparts ends in a losing situation – one claim against another. With clients we can sometimes observe ill-functioning attempts at overcoming such misunderstandings.

#### **Example 28**

An older couple came to me to seek help in resolving similar conflicts that were stemming from the woman's chronic loneliness in retirement. The wife kept reproaching her husband that he liked his own sister better than he liked her. In other words, she described what the fantasy figure of her husband was doing in her own head. He didn't know what to do with his wife, and because he was an engineer, used to precise science, he tried writing notes into his calendar about what he said and when he said it and what their arguments took place over. It is clear that his notes did not do much to convince his wife and she kept living with the erroneous notion that his sister had miscarried a child that she conceived with him in an incestuous relationship.

We see a clear lever effect here. The husband is the catch figure, which should relieve the wife from her loneliness. „Why is he unable to help me?” she asks. „Because he is in love with his sister!” The sister is therefore the explaining fantasy figure. The lever effect takes place mostly in fantasy, so the real man sees only the results of its working and is unable to engage with it in any other way than being physically present with his wife. Because of her advanced age, it was very difficult to explain this lever-effect mechanism to the wife. With younger clients we can recommend that the wife apologize to the fantasy figures of the husband and sister whenever she finds that she is accusing them of adultery and incest: „I'm sorry, Charles, that I have imagined you whoring and debasing yourself. I'm sorry, you don't deserve it.” Then she should soothe herself in her own loneliness as if she were a small, say, two-year-old girl: „I know Jane, you are lonely and sad, endlessly waiting for Charles to come home from work. How can I help you? Come on, let's visit Nancy on her farm!”

### **Mental No-Man's Land**

As a result of the systematic shift of boundaries between the subjective I, fantasy figures are and ideal warehouse for undesirable mental contents. One boy from a children's home reacted to my question: „How is your relationship with your mother?” with the words: „Do you mean, whether I'm mad at her for sticking me in the children's home? No, I'm not mad at her.” The fantasy figure of the psychologist is clearly visible in his pre-formulated question. The real psychologist had asked about his relationship with his mother. However, the fantasy figure of the psychologist in the boy's head was saying „You are mad at your mother for sticking you in the children's home.” There is only love for the mother in his ego. His anger at his mother is stored away in the fantasy figure of psychologist. The boy is, however, convinced that he does not harbor any anger.

We do not incorporate mental representations of other people into our egos, even though we carry them around in our own heads. So in a way they do and do not belong to us, but in any case they permanently influence us because we cannot escape from them. They behave like the kerosene cook stove from the novel by Jerome Klapka Jerome „Three Men in a Boat“:

„We had taken up an oil-stove once, but „never again“. It had been like living in an oil-shop that week. It oozed. I never saw such a thing as paraffine oil is to ooze. We kept it in the nose of the boat, and, from there, it oozed down to the rudder, impregnating the whole boat and everything in it on its way, and it oozed over the river, and saturated the scenery and spoil the atmosphere. Sometimes a westerly oily wind blew, and at other times an easterly oily wind, and sometimes it blew a northerly oily wind, and maybe a southerly oily wind; but whether it came from the Arctic snows, or was raised in the waste of the desert sands, it came ahke to us laden with the fragrance of paraffine oil.”

It's the same way with mental representations of other people. It doesn't matter whether we realize that they are part of us or not. The way we feel about life develops from how we relate to other people because this relationship is projected and preserved through the mental representations we have of them. The fragment from the book was meant to be funny, but love or hate can work just like the paraffine oil, with the only difference being that the winds coming from the Earth's four corners are saturated either with the scent of love or of hate.

### **Example 29**

Irreconcilable motives are displaced into fantasy figures. For example, we must hurry to make it to an appointment on time, but before we go we have to send an email. We have two options – we stop by our acquaintances and get caught up there in conversation, or else proceed to the café. If we walk past the offices of people we know we get the feeling that they are reproaching us for not stopping in when we pass by. This is an erroneous impression: the real people do not even know that we are nearby. The fantasy figures of them in our heads express our feeling that we would like to see them and stop to chat for a while. The first and strongest motive (hurrying) is stored in our ego, the second one (to have a chat) is incompatible with the first, and that is why it is placed into the fantasy figures rather than being considered to be our own desire. If clients display a tendency to do this it is necessary to teach them to read their own needs from between the lines of the fantasy figures they create of other people.

In some works of science fiction beings are described that feed upon people's mental energy. These beings are then constrained to behave symmetrically with those upon whom they „parasite”. It works exactly the same way with fantasy figures. Their activation and the strength with which they manifest in a person's mind are directly proportional to his or her momentary mental state. Fatigue, fear or self-hatred generate aggressive, or else passive and silent figures that express the momentary needs of their bearer in a degenerated form.

For example, one client's need to call his father – because he misses him – could appear as belligerent rebukes by the fantasy father who told him off because the day has passed and his son did not call. The client could easily have picked up the telephone and called his real father, who was probably in an entirely different mood than the one displayed by the fantasy figure in his son's head. Thus he would have satisfied his need to speak with his father and the fantasy figure would have relented. In practice, however, the client protects himself from this aggressive figure, he is afraid of it in the same way he was always afraid of his real father, and because of this he was even more frustrated by his loneliness. The more he missed his father, the wilder the fantasy figure of the reproachful father, the more he became unable to satisfy his real need. In other words, the defensive reaction did not protect him, but rather caused him further harm.

Shifting the boundaries between I and You also has the result of the feeling of selfhood, that which we consider to be ourselves, our very existence is only one of many fragmentary functions of our minds. In no case should we identify selfhood or consciousness with the entire personality or – in the older terminology – the soul of a person as we sometimes find in literature.

## **We Do Not Attack Externalized Counterparts**

Mental representations are as stable as is our memory. It is not possible to push them out of our heads, just like it is not possible to forget something by force of will. Even if a client earnestly desires for a therapist to drive them out, the one and only thing that we can influence is his or her relationship with them. If the mental representations are bound with the ego, then it is clear that there is no point in attacking them. Sometimes I remind clients of the paraphrased dictum of Jára Cimrman: „You don't spit at someone who is close to you! If you do spit, you won't spit that far, and if you do, you won't hit your mark, and if you do hit something, only hit yourself.” This is, of course, an exaggeration, but in clinical practice it has absolutely practical implications.

### **Example 30**

A female client had been abandoned by her partner not long before their planned wedding. Problems that she had suppressed or denied came rushing in like floodwater. She couldn't sleep, couldn't work, hardly ate at all and held endless monologues inside her head with her absent partner. The first phase in the morning was an attempt to pull his fantasy figure closer, by apologizing for „her former sins”: „I know I behaved rudely, but I can change. I promise. Please come back!” This phase lasted few hours until she became exhausted by this self-talk. Then she switched into the opposite position and tried to kick him away: „If you do not love me, go to the hell! I do not want to see you anymore!!!” It is clear for an outside observer that fantasy figure cannot do anything, but the girl was totally down, unable to complete a single invoice in her job for a month. She came to me with request to get rid of this fantasy figure. I showed her that this internalized partner is not real, that he was de facto her alter ego, and I recommended the following trick to her: as soon as her former partner makes his next appearance in her head and she tries to drive him out, she should stop and do the exact opposite of what she usually did (paradoxical intentions). She should give him a friendly welcome, not chase him away, but say to him:” Hello Charles, I'm glad that you are here again. But now I have to get some work done so please take a seat next to me and stay here until it's done.” The next week she reported how it had surprised her that such „nonsense” really works. The imaginary Charles sat down quiet as a mouse, and when he began to fidget, she told him: „Charles, please just wait a

minute, I have to finish up here.” And truly, thanks to this „nonsense” she was finally able to work again, which had been such a problem before as to seem nearly unsolvable.

This simple method, however, breaks one taboo – on discussing externalization. This is how the illusion develops that mental representations of other people are not in our heads, and thus that we cannot do anything about them. The opposite is true; these fantasy counterparts are fed by our moods and mental states. Notice how the imaginary Charles ceased to be aggressive when the client herself ceased to be so, and he was polite when she dealt with him frankly. In this sense, the other people in our heads act as a mirror of our own states. We can read two simple recommendations: „Firstly do not manipulate the distance in which you feel any fantasy figure. Do not either pull them closer, or expell them. Secondly you cannot forget any fantasy figure, you can only become indifferent towards her.“

## **Externalization with Narcissists and Masochistic Personalities**

The problem of narcissism was outlined in Graph 10 and in Example 9. People of either sex may be narcissists or masochistically dependent personalities, but for the sake of simplicity we will assume in the following text that the narcissist is a man and a woman has the dependent personality. These couples are typical in that one person is trying to have a much lesser distance between them than the other would like. A permanent pressure arises between them but it does not manifest in explosive arguments so much as in a chronically stifling atmosphere and mutual dissatisfaction. With regards to this configuration, both of the partners are unable to realize the other polarity of their experience. The narcissist, as chronic deflector never knows whether or not he loves his partner. He does not understand how it is possible that so many beautiful and desirable women can be walking around the streets but he has to live with this one, who seems to bother him in every detail: freckles, wrinkles, acne, long hair, large breasts, how she sways when she is walks, how she laughs, her terrible wardrobe and other adornments, how she is unable to relax in company, etc. His girlfriend, a chronic retroreflector, is not able to perceive her forces of aversion because her partner was never close enough to her. He was always the one who was expressing the aversion.

Each one has the feeling that they have only one need – the woman needs to get closer, and the man needs to put more distance between them. The other, opposite need is kept in the externalized fantasy figure of the partner and so is not considered to be one’s own. This happens because of the shift in the boundaries of subjective selfhood, which is responsible for externalization. For this reason a narcissist longs for subjective certainty that he loves his partner. However, he cannot find it, because the one thing that he is able to appreciate is the sentence: „She loves me.” Paradoxically, he gains the longed-for subjective certainty only after they break up. Just like she has the feeling that if she did not always follow her partner he would not come to her, would not call, would not take her by the hand, would not tell her he loves her, etc. She has the feeling that she has to do all of this for him. She will also find out only after the breakup, when, however, this certainty will be of no use to her.

With these mechanisms a so-called pathologically stable partnership develops, where both are unsatisfied but they are not able to leave other. And both of them for similar reasons. As soon as the masochistically dependent partner begins to give up, the other one feels relief from her continual pressure. His forces of attraction come back to life and the man expresses some kind of interest in her. Thus, he wins her back and convinces her to return to the relationship. She is not aware of her forces of aversion, but they are projected against all other men. What is paradoxical about this is that she also longs for a relatively great distance from her partner but she is not able to realize this need otherwise than by seeing other normal men as though they were unattractive, unintelligent, and by falling in love again and again at first glance only with those will chronically reject her. And her rhetoric will always sound like: „I just have bad luck with these kinds of guys.” Narcissists have the mirror-opposite feeling: „I have always loved women who didn’t want me. And, on the other hand, women that I don’t care about have always fallen in love with me.”

Both of these types are trying to get a subjective feeling of pure love without doubts. The masochistic personality has it, but it is a forlorn longing. Narcissists do not have it, but they long for it. Neither of them, however, get why their lives seem to spin in vicious circles, why they are fated for each other, why they have to live with someone who either they do not want, or who does not want them. Wrath towards one another, mutual ill-treatment and humiliation, paying back an eye for an eye, which is actually a kind of habit for these couples, is all just rage against themselves, at their own messed-up

lives, at the futility of all attempts at it being otherwise and their inability to admit this fact to themselves or to their partner who sits beside them. So long as this kind of behavior becomes chronic and any kinds of spark of mutual attraction is missing, then even a psychologist has very little hope of success, because with these couples the motivation to change their ways of thinking and behaving is negligible. Both partner are too beaten down and wearied from their mutual battle (see the chapter on Two Laws of Frustrated Needs – Partner Plague).

Say it is 5 p.m. and a normal man is about to go home. There appear fantasy figures of his wife and children in his head. He suddenly feels attraction to them, a „flush of love“, so he switches off the PC and rushes home. However, another man who displays narcissistic traits, with elevated aversion or with guilt distribution in a couple also activates the fantasy figure of his wife at about the same time (the same need, the same catch figures), but this fantasy figure expresses reproach: „You promised to come at 5 and now it is already 5:15 and you are still gone. Don't you have a phone to call me when you are going to come late? It is not decent!“ So he now realizes: „She wants me to be home, but I do not feel like it. I would prefer to stay at work and finish some things I have to do, or go see my friends at the pub...“ So this man does the very opposite of what his true need is calling for. Instead of satisfying the needs of his family, he goes and frustrates himself in a pub, where in the back of his mind he continues to run a discussion with the fantasy figure of his wife about how he needs to go home. So he is actually like a widower who suffers from loneliness, despite the fact of having a wife and two children. His need to go home is stored in the fantasy figure of the wife, so therefore he is unable to admit himself: „ I feel homesick. I want to go home...“ and his feelings are expressed as: „She wants me to sit at home all time long, but I want my freedom!“

#### **Example 31**

I once visited a man two years after his breakup with his wife. He has been sitting at home, lonely in front of the TV the whole time, only rarely going out. I chatted for a while with him, and he said: „Strange things happen here...“ „What, for example?“ „Well, it was Valentine's Day yesterday and there were flowers strewn all over the road.“ „And what?“ „The neighbor threw them there.“ „Why?“ „He wants to tell me that I should get in my car and go downtown to buy some flowers for my wife and try to persuade her to come back to me.“ „And did you go?“ „No, it's not worth it. She won't return anyway...“

We see clearly in this example how his wish to attempt to restore the relationship with his wife is stored in his fantasy figure of the neighbor, out of his ego. The more realistic resignation was stored in the man's ego.

## **Characteristics of Fantasy Figures**

### **Fantasy Figures in Dreams**

Figures in dreams, in screenplays and in other products of the imagination are also vivified mental representations that act as though through of their own minds and wills; that is, they are fantasy figures. It is not necessary to add that even the perfect illusion of personal autonomy of fantasy figures is a product of externalization.

The concept of the fantasy figure is related to the psychoanalytic term introjection, with which we label „internal presence of a person, or a physical part of a person, or a thing similar to a person with whom the subject has, in their imagination, an enduring, intermittent, and dynamic relationship. The subject feels the person's existence inside their body, their mind, or both at once. At the same time, the internal presence may be conscious, pre-conscious, or unconscious and it may change in this aspect.“ (Boleloucký et al., 1993)

Our brain is able to function like a multitasking computer and it able to independently simulate several selves at the same time (see the theory of mind in the chapter The Rules of Manipulation), so that a person has the feeling that he is speaking with an almost real person, or that several people are living inside of him. Normally, this ability is hidden, but in dreams, in crises, with writers, and with people who suffer from their internal monologues these fantasy figures come to life, enter their consciousness and present the subject with their various attitudes without his or her being aware that they are actually conversing with their own alter egos, who express opinions that are temporarily being ventriloquized by these figures.

However, the simulation of our brains has it limits, which are manifested in the schematic traits of the fantasy population. These characters have certain traits that real people do not share, and vice versa. As soon as we are able to reveal these traits, we can be sure that we are not dealing with a real being, but struggling with our own interior.

In dreams the symmetry between the behavior of fantasy figures and the mental state of the client is made apparent, and it is necessary to interpret them according to the client's own ability to think in symbols. So whatever kind of symbols the client is used to will be the ones that the characters in her dreams express themselves in. If she is superstitious or has been in contact with superstitious people, then a black cat in her dreams may mean that danger is coming. If the dream sign is confirmed in the future, it is just proof that she anticipated the danger ahead of time, but did not realize that she did because of externalization, and she projected it onto others and into her dreams.

Another universal dream structure is dreams about being chased. Some kind of monster is chasing us but does not catch us because both the chaser and the chased are being simulated by the same brain. Extreme chase scenes in dreams are proof of an objective threat or of chronic self-hatred. A psychologist may use dreams of being chased and their brutality as an orientation criterion for determining the measure of a client's self-hatred. As soon as the dreams of being chased begin to disappear, it is usually a sign that the client is overcoming tendencies to self-hatred.

The same in an unmitigated measure is also true of mental representations of God, whom „No one has ever seen” (1Jo 4, 12). Or rather in the behavior of the God represented in the minds of our religious clients, which we must understand without regard to the question of God's actual existence or nonexistence. He reflects an image of their mental states, so it is also possible to work with these images in clinical practice: a silent God mirrors their repressed rage against themselves. A reproaching God shows their dissatisfaction with themselves, etc. In his uglier attributes, this fantasy God (cynical, heartless, uncaring, etc.) we can read as though from a book all of the negative features of the client's character. This is because his or her mind is creating this mental representation of a figure that actually should not have any bad qualities.

### **Different Qualities of Fantasy Figures and Real People**

Fantasy figures have many features that distinguish them from real people. These qualities are important to understand when tracking experience. Their presence indicates a repressed need about which we have the illusory feeling that it is not our own. However, it is and thanks to this kind of monitoring we can increase our contact with our own experience and with so called „subconscious“.

We can find an interesting analogy with this in astronomy. The founder of Greek astronomy Philolaus (5<sup>th</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) assumed that there must exist some hidden or undiscovered tenth planet besides the Earth and the seven visible heavenly bodies (the Moon, Sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn) and the spheres of the stars. It is said that in the Renaissance these speculations were elaborated upon by a new theory, or rather a fantasy in connection with the newly-revived heliocentric model of the universe. This tenth planet should have revolved around the same orbit as the Earth, but it should have always remained hidden behind the Sun, so we would never have been able to observe it due to our being blinded by the Sun. It was said that everything had been worked out perfectly on this planet that had not yet been achieved on Earth. The reader here may pause for a moment and think about how the existence of such a planet could be proven or disproven. The world of fantasy figures is similar to a phantom kingdom that is concealed by the glare – not of the Sun, but of really-existing people and things.

The basic idea is clear enough. If such an alternative Earth existed, it would have to make itself known in some way. For example, its gravitational effect would be detectable in the movements of other planets. In the same way, fantasy figures present in the human mind must in some way distinguish itself from those real beings and things that also exist there. We will look for the distinguishing traits of fantasy figures and describe them in the following pages.

#### **Example 32**

When seeking the qualities that distinguish fantasy figures from real people, it is useful to begin with the following example. A ghost that appears to a man is de facto a fantasy figure of his deceased wife and has many of those qualities that we discuss in detail one after the other:

On her deathbed the young woman makes her husband promise that he would never marry again after she was gone. „If you break your promise I will come back to haunt you and not let you sleep.” – Her husband kept his promise for a while, but after a few months gets to know another woman and falls in love with her.

Soon afterward, however, the ghost begins to appear to him every night and to reproach him for not upholding his promise. The man does not doubt even once that this is truly the ghost of his wife, because the ghost not only knows everything that has gone on during the day, but even knows the man's secret desires, his feelings, and knows exactly what he is thinking about. Because he cannot bear this anymore he seeks out a Zen master and asks his advice.

„Your first wife became a ghost and knows everything that you are doing,” the master told him. „Whatever you do or say, whatever you give to your beloved, nothing escapes it. It has to be a very wise ghost. It actually deserves your admiration. The next time it appears to you, make a deal with it. Tell it that it knows so much that you can hide nothing from it and that if it can guess the answer to a question that you ask it you will call off your engagement and not get married.”

„What should I ask it?” queried the man.

The master replied: „Pick up a handful of beans and ask it how many you have in your hand. If it can't tell you it is a creation of your own imagination and it will not disturb you anymore.”

When the ghost appeared that night, the man began to flatter it, saying that it certainly knew everything.

„Of course,” answered the ghost, „I even know that today you went to see the Zen master.”

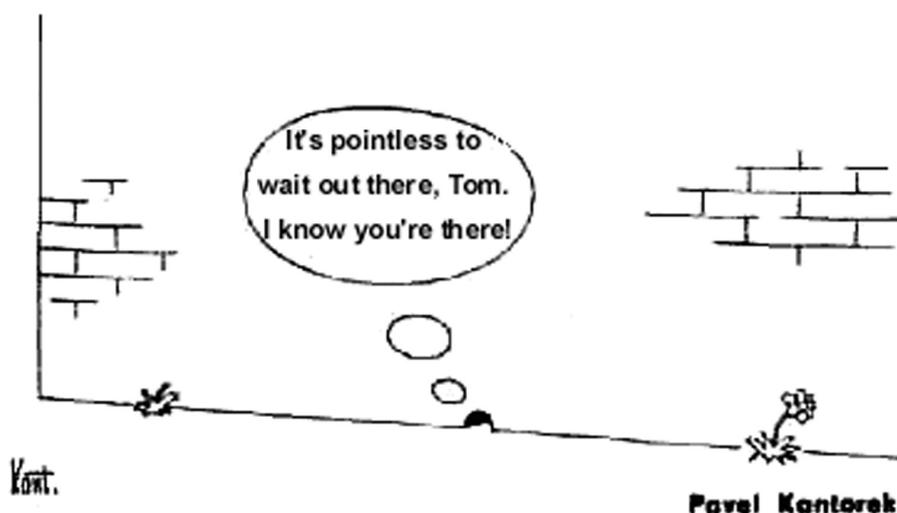
„If you know everything,” he blurted out, „tell me how many beans I'm holding in my hand.”

And the ghost disappeared, without even answering the question. (Ross, 1994)

### Fantasy Figures are Activated According to the Needs of their Bearers

The activation of fantasy figures stems from the ability of our minds to constantly calculate another person's position when we are moving around a room, even without visual and aural feedback. Thus, a warrior, even when he has fallen to the ground can guess in which direction his opponent is located and will aim his attention and efforts in that direction. Or a mother, even when she is occupied with other activities constantly knows in which relative coordinates her child will be. In the case of danger she is able to hop up and run in the right direction to go help even without looking where she has to go. The activation of fantasy figures is thus a case where these calculations are carried out without a real bearer.

#### III. 16



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A mouse, Jerry, has an activated fantasy figure of a cat. It is localized in front of the mouse's hole and the mouse's mind constantly calculates the cat's relative coordinates, since it is a dangerous object. In this case, however, an error has been made because the real cat is somewhere else entirely. Nonetheless, the subjective certainty is the same as in the case of physical presence. It is the same mechanism at work as when we have the feeling that someone is standing behind us.

#### Example 33

Jan Werich: You often have surroundings that are suggestive to such an extent that it may seem to you that someone is standing behind you

Miroslav Horníček: Behind whom. Behind me?

J. W.: Yeah, for example.

M. H.: What does he look like? Big?

J. W.: Who?

M. H.: Well... you said: „someone is standing behind you.”

J. W.: Behind me?

M. H.: Some guy is also standing behind you?

J. W.: Then there are two of them standing here?!

M. H.: If it's that mailman with the altar boy! (Both turn around quickly)

J. W.: What kind of nonsense is that, you see that nobody was standing behind me.

M. H.: Well, you're the one who said it.

J. W.: I was giving an example...

M. H.: Example. That is an example of that! ... Look here. It's cold, dark. Don't you feel like forgiving that guy?

J. W.: I forgave him long ago.

M. H.: OK. So let's go home.

(Voskovec, J., Werich, J., Horníček, M. (2004). CD: Caesar – forestage, Lotos.)

The activation of a fantasy figure is a moment when the fantasy figure seems to appear in a person's mind. By contrast with real people who come on their own initiative, fantasy figures are a function of our minds. They appear when we need them. People however consider the activation of fantasy figures to be a coincidence. They take them to be just as natural as when a co-worker comes into their office. Therefore, they do not ascribe any meaning to it, even though through the mere temporal coincidence of the appearance could help them uncover some interesting rules of these figures' behavior.

For example, a client activates the vision of her argumentative husband and she is having a discussion with him on Thursday afternoon in her empty office. She submits to him a long list of his „sins” and defends the reasons for their divorce. The first question here is not, however: what are they debating? But: why is it that on Thursday afternoon this fantasy figure has been activated when her real husband was miles away? This question has to be asked at the right moment by her therapist, because it will not occur to the client herself. Here, the answer lies in afternoon fatigue and a feeling of loneliness. Her fantasy husband thus had a symbolic function – he expressed the client's need not to be alone. Just like she used to call him, her catch figure up at this time of day and ask how he was doing, today at the same time she has to curse him. It's the same need, but the manner of satisfying it has degenerated.

We all know of examples of breakups after which one of the members of the former couple never marries again. Seventeen years later, every evening they still curse their former partner and we get the feeling as though the relationship was still alive for them, despite all the wounds, the breakup, the permanent separation and mutual silence. Here it would be germane to pose a question. It is well known that unconditioned reflexes die out. So why is it that these are still so active? They have to be constantly renewed and conditioned, but how, when the partners are so far away from one another, and have been for so long? The answer is clear, so long as we are aware that two partners mean four figures – two real ones and two fantasy ones.

Fantasy figures of former partners are regularly summoned up when some kind of need arises – fatigue, loneliness, hunger, fear, sexual longing, the need to be touched, etc. They become the symbol of these frustrated needs. But people do not react to these apparitions of former partners as though they were manifestations of their own needs, but as though they were someone who has hurt them. They begin to tell off their fantasy partner, to blame him or her, beg for forgiveness, get riled up, and then the need that had evoked the fantasy figure subsides. The person feels a mild relief, but in this way conditions and even more strongly binds their former partner to their own needs. Thus they are taking one step forward and two back.

A therapist must prevent this vicious circle from developing by disrupting the dominant fantasy taboo: that is, by recommending that his or client do something that they have never done before, even if they could or even should have done it. For example, the taboo on apologizing.

#### **Example 34**

While drawing up a time axis of a woman's previous partnerships, we arrived at the first one. It was with a man who was 18 years older, and it lasted four years. She said it is still vivid in her fantasies and dreams, and she curses herself for „being so stupid that I lost four years with this man“. I told her, that such an old story must be a symbol for some other, more recent loss: „Are you facing any big losses these days?“ The woman broke into tears - yes, her father was dying. And she has a recurrent dream that her former lover is coming back to her home where she lives with her children and current husband and says that he want her back with him. She sends him away. She does not want to cheat on her husband.

The woman misinterpreted this fantasy figure of the former lover. He was already a symbol of the loss of her father. She manipulates the fantasy figure and consequently feels badly, because she does not send away her former lover, but „kills“ her father. The recommendation was: Stop calling the fantasy lover by his name, and instead call him Father and welcome him in your fantasy: „Hi Father, I am happy that you came to me in my dream. I also think of you all the time. I will visit you today in the hospital.“

#### **Example 35**

Three Ways to Break the Taboo on Apologizing

If a client berates her fantasy partner and is aware that she is actually berating herself, she will cease and will apologize to her fantasy figure. She will not apologize to her real partner; she is apologizing to herself for making herself more frustrated through these fantasy arguments. If a client is not capable of apologizing even to a fantasy figure of a former partner we recommend that he address the figure with his own name.

If Jenny catches herself saying to Bill, her former partner, in her fantasies: „You asshole, you fucked up my life,” it would be best if she could change that to: „Sorry, Bill, I know that right now you are only my own need, so I won't be mean even though you have hurt me.” If she is not able to do this, it is possible for her to

say: „Jenny, why did you come masked up as Bill?” or say instead of „Bill, why did you ruin my life?” rather „Jenny, why did you ruin my life?” or or „Why, Jenny, do you keep attacking Bill? What are you missing? How can I help you?”

Sometimes fantasy figures are activated that are not active not passive – they are aggressive, accusing, repeating insults, laughing, and so on. Even here, it is the client, and the client alone who is harming himself in this fantasy. Unfortunately, he does know another way to stop these figures than go get angry at them again and again. But thus he only deepens his own self-hatred and preserves the fantasy figure in his mind. When this is the case, he is breaking the fantasy taboo in apologizing to the figure. For example, Jenny appears to Bill and she repeats this sentence to him: „I had to have all those lovers because you are impotent!” Even though Bill knows that the real Jenny would never apologize to him, the fantasy Jenny can: „Bill, why do you replay the CD 'Worst of Jenny' over and over? And Jenny, but you know that I have problems with that only when you yell at me. So please do not blame me for what you yourself could influence. I think that you could apologize.” And now he makes the fantasy Jenny apologize for having been crude. For the fantasy Jenny is only a kind of puppet that he can manipulate to a certain extent by means of active imagination.

Sometimes, however, it appears that the fantasy person is not able to apologize. Clients describe that suddenly the figure falls silent and says nothing, or if they say something it sounds unnatural. Here, Bill could express the need that had invoked the whole fantasy interaction: „Why, Jenny, do you suddenly just stand there saying nothing? I know that you feel sad. You are in the mood for sex, and is that why you keep repeating that sentence about the lovers? So come here, and let's think about what we can do about this.” Despite the strange feelings that may arise he has managed to stop the harmful fantasy discussion, which was the goal.

Since the childhood years **mental companions** generally fulfill that which is lacking in real relationships. Very often this is due to emotional coldness in the parents. Therefore it is not possible to look at them as though they were something unambiguously harmful. Sometimes it happens that these people run into a problem of not distinguishing between a real person and their own fantasy, and then there can be a painful confrontation with reality. However, so long as the fantasy interactions are directed and the person having them is aware of the boundaries between fantasy and reality, it is even possible that to look at these methods as a certain kind of relaxation technique.

#### **Example 36**

One client described a catch figure combined with a mental companion in a letter from which I have extracted the following passage.

„My dear doctor, I don't know whether I will be able to describe this intelligibly, but I think that since my childhood when I have not had anyone who has been nice to me I had to make someone up. I was able to bring on the feeling that someone was with me who was close, a nice person. This made me feel much better and so I was fine.

Later this fantasy person started to take on the concrete appearance of somebody who was likeable and close to me, whose presence I was able to invoke according to my needs. It had certain advantages. This kind of fantasy person was always „at hand”, was always in a good mood, never got angry at me, doesn't argue with me, is always nice and kind, is into the same things as me, etc. Yes, I know, it's all deviant – but in some situations it really helps – or rather I think that it helps. In reality it probably does more harm, especially when it somehow gets out of control, as happened to me. But I don't want it to ever get like that again!”

### **Proxemic Attributes of Fantasy Figures**

Real people are always at a certain distance from us and are positioned towards us in some way. The laws that govern interactions within space are called proxemics (from the Latin *proximis* – closest). Fantasy figures, as models of real people also model these relations. They even have a set of proxemic characteristics that real people do not have (for example, they are able to fade out, to be out of focus), but we will not deal with these here.



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The manifestation and expressions of fantasy figures are best observed when their prototypes are not present in periods when their bearer is going through a crisis. In these moments those characteristics of fantasy figures are most apparent which distinguish them from real objects. Nonetheless, we sometimes see their manifestations even in the presence of their real prototypes. These manifestations then resemble an „faulty action“ (Freud's *parapraxis*). Here it was a fantasy figure of Garfield that had some inappropriate remark, as contrasted with the real Garfield, who was silent the whole time. Jon, however, does not distinguish between the fantasy figure and reality, or on other words, he externalizes.

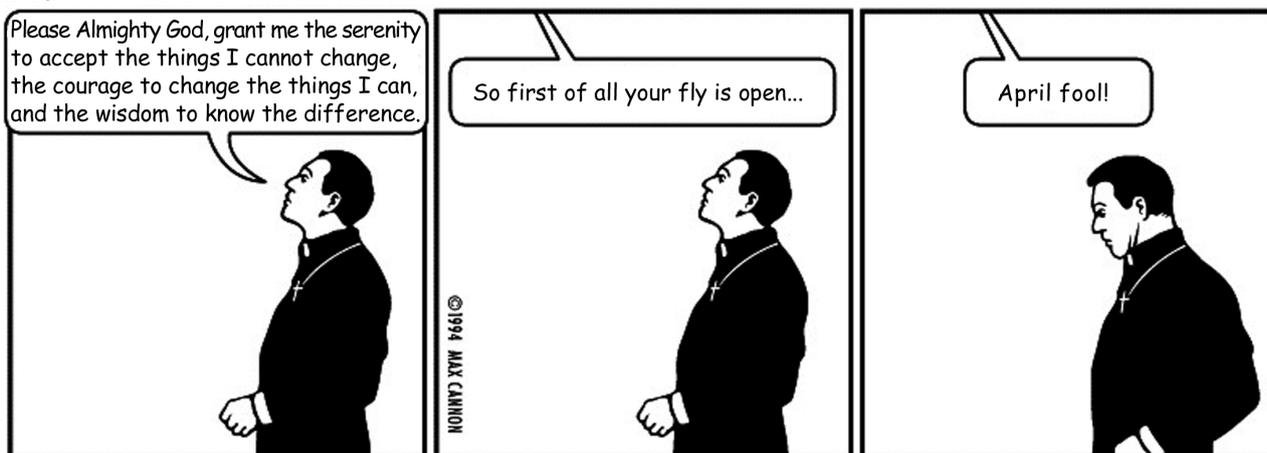
Made-up parents can even be dead, nevertheless in the imagination they are localized to a certain proxemic distance from the subject. But patients generally are not aware of this distance and do not pay attention to it. But they still have a tendency to influence it – they draw the other one towards themselves or else try to drive him or her away. These attempts to manipulate distance of a fantasy figure lead to exhaustion and mood worsening. Sometimes clients come in and ask their therapists: „Get rid of him for me please, I don't want him in my head bothering me, make him just go away.“ And we immediately see that the client has a tendency to try and expel their former partner from their mind.

However, it is not possible to either bring in or to drive out fantasy figures. It is only possible to modify and transform them. The goal is to reduce the intensity of the fantasy experience. As soon as this happens, the fantasy figures disappear on their own. They are drowned out by stronger stimuli or internal impulses.

### **Fantasy Figures Share the Memory, Abilities and Tendencies of their Bearers**

It is possible to hide some information from real people or else to make use of their lack of knowledge. In a dialogue with a fantasy figure this is futile – it knows everything the subject knows. There is no point in trying to hide anything, it would be like playing chess with oneself. Similarly, there also isn't any point in asking a fantasy figure to give us some new information. We may come upon new thoughts during an interaction with the figure, but they will not arise just from putting pressure on it. For example, a man might want to know the reasons for a breakup, and because his real partner is not present he puts pressure on her fantasy figure, but she doesn't know any more than he does.

Similarly, we may press a fantasy figure of God to explain something that isn't clear or to help us. God is often understood, especially in the stage of asymmetrical decision-making, as the highest protector and they expect various manipulations from him, for example by trying to make deals with him: „If you return my wife I will pay you back by building a hospice.“ Of course, he does not take account of the woman's own opinion when making this kind of „deal“ because he anticipates her refusal. This kind of pressure on a fantasy figure of God is, however, only a source of frustration and the fantasy figure may begin to take on the resemblance of the so-called silent God. This bad feeling is consequently compensated by „multitude of words“ in prayers (Mt 6, 7).



Mental representations of God have their own specific features, but otherwise they work under the same basic mechanisms as mental representations of other people. Pastoral theology, however, in practice distinguishes very little between mental representations of God that behave according to the rules for fantasy figures and the real God who does not obey the rules for these fantasies. Here, for example, the fantasy God probably behaves in the same way as the subject (Max Cannon?) does towards other people who petition him. He drives them crazy. This is of course because of the projection of his own behavior onto his image of God. Similar rules for fantasies create the image of the silent God and the phenomenon of religious aridity.

**Example 37**

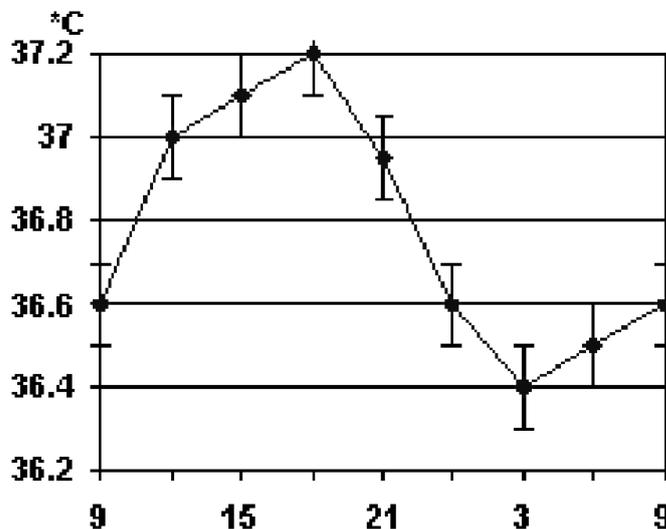
All three years (sic!) a girl sent her boyfriend anonymous emails in which she informed him that she is unfaithful and about what she does during the time when she isn't with him. Clearly, she did this in order to provoke jealousy in him, which would take her into a state of pleasant emotional excitement. Her partner was the active type, but by nature a nice guy. He did not realize that it was his girlfriend who was sending the messages, and found out only some time after their breakup. However, she continued to have the feeling that he was bearing a grudge towards her, blaming her for something, etc., even when she was enjoying otherwise quiet moments.

The mechanism of this projection is given by the mental representation or the fantasy figure of her partner in her mind knowing, by contrast with her real partner, the same things that she knows. Thus even that she was the author of the dirty, anonymous emails. This fantasy figure of her partner reminds her of her weakness, but she has the feeling that she is being accused by her real partner. This feeling of projection is all the stronger the more open and caring her real partner is, because the contrast between them highlights her wickedness.

**Fantasy Figures and Daily Rhythms**

Because fantasy figures share all the mental sources of their bearers, they have to also follow the same daily (circadian) cycle of activation and inhibition. It is possible to recommend that clients who are relatively at ease notice how fantasy figures variously appear and comport themselves during the entering and tailing edge of activation.

**Graph 22**



(Internet, Unknown Source)

Core body temperature roughly corresponds to activation of an organism. The entering edge (3:00–18:00) is the part of the day when activation increases - in the morning after waking up or similar way after waking up in the middle of the night when a person suddenly feels entirely alert even though she may have been sleeping like a log just before. The tailing edge (18:00 – 3:00) is marked by inhibition.

In the entering edge fantasy figures may serve for autostimulation, for example, in suppressing drowsiness. Therefore, attempts at stopping the fantasy interactions with the help of relaxation techniques at these times are ineffective. It works better to make use of the activation, say warm-up exercise, or to turn attention towards other objects: work, cleaning, artistic creation, contact with other people, writing in a journal, etc. If the fantasy figure of a partner seems to keep drawing attention to itself, or on the contrary persistently intruding, then the person should avoid chasing away or trying to draw in this fantasy figure. Manipulation with the distance of a fantasy figure worsens one's mood. It is better to invite the fantasy figure closer, and to react to its activation in a friendly way. However, request that it stay around but remain to the side so that it will not be in the way (see Example 30 in the chapter Mental Representations as Models of Real People).

The tailing edge of activation indicates the approach of the period of inhibition, sleep, rest. Here, fantasy figures behave somewhat differently. Above all else, **when activation decreases, people have a tendency to reduce their mental distance and wish for more closeness and support.** If real or fantasy figures do not satisfy this need then the typical early-evening degenerated arguments with a fantasy figure may take place. These arguments, however, put a brake on the natural decrease in activation and the circadian decline, which is not healthy.

**The transition from lower activation to higher is generally more pleasant than the transition from activation into inhibition.** Therefore, during inhibition a whole constellation of defensive reactions appears, whose goal is to maintain wakefulness and alertness. This is clearly visible with children who are impossible to put to bed in the evening, even though their eyes are already closing. With adults this takes the form of staying up late, escalating the fun to extremes by the end of the party, or dozing off in front of the television, etc. Notice how some people have a need to look at, for example, horror and action films in the evening, but not in the morning because they have a clear autostimulatory function.

In a breakup, a person's certainties are threatened so these defense mechanisms against the oncoming phase of inhibition are even stronger. Sometimes they altogether prevent a person from sleeping, and other times they only lead to a series of mad all-night pub crawls. Clients complain of fear of going to bed because there, as sleep approaches, their fantasy figures and their defenses against them are activated in the form of endless discussions about the sense of the breakup, and in time they come to hate „those four empty walls in the bedroom”.

The tailing edge of activation and inhibition has the advantage, however, that many relaxation techniques can help. The psychologist should select the most appropriate one according to the client's current state: autosuggestion, self-soothing monologues, active imagination, mentally going over what happened that day, a merry-go-round of wishes, Buddhist meditation, yogic breath, etc. The nature of a breakup is interpersonal, therefore we must look mostly for „interpersonal“ relaxation techniques. Say Schultz's autogenic training is quite well known but unfortunately it is impersonal, so it is not much efficient. On contrary inner-child techniques combined with active imagination are more efficient with breakups anxieties, as they are as if „interpersonal“ - the big adult is rocking and soothing the small child within us. However, if we expect a client to overcome his natural tendencies, he must himself understand the reasons for it and accept them as his own.

### **The Influence of Fantasy Figures on the Development of Paranoid Thinking**

Fantasy figures are egocentric, or, more precisely stated, subject-centric. They do everything either for his advantage, or else for his detriment, but always with regard to the subject. In fantasies it is though coincidences do not exist. The source of this fact is always the same – fantasy figures are just puppets that represent real people. The subject pulls their strings and puts words into their mouths which then either give him pleasure or wound him.

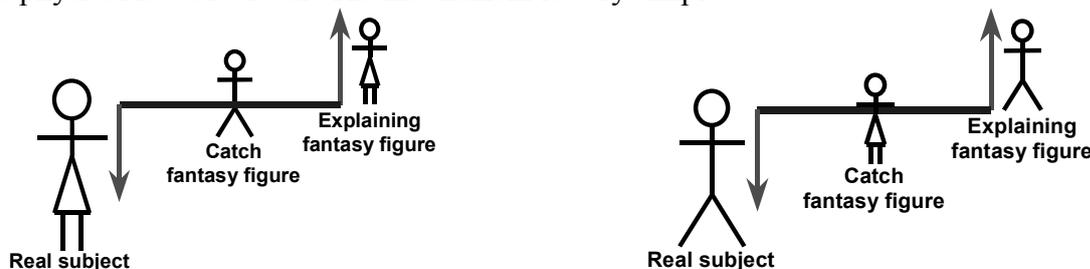
When the hurtful behavior of a fantasy figure is externalized it leads to paranoid ideas. When people who are unacquainted with psychology are harmed by someone, sometimes they spontaneously assume that „he had to know”, and therefore, he did it on purpose.

For example a husband (deflector) forgets his wedding anniversary, about which his wife (retroreflector) has already been thinking about for a month. The wife sees this act of forgetfulness as deliberate on the part of her husband – „he blew it off”. The reason is simple. The fantasy figure of the husband in the wife’s mind shares her mental space, and therefore also has been thinking about their anniversary for a month. Because the wife does not distinguish an introjection of her husband from the real person (the illusion of externalization), the only possible explanation is that he blew off their anniversary: „How else could he have planned a business trip on that day when he knows (understand here to read between the lines: he is supposed to have been thinking about the anniversary all month) that we were married on the twelfth.” But the real partner was really not thinking about it at all.

Attribution theory also deals with this phenomenon (Hayes, 1998, p. 36) and describes the rules that determine when, for example, the above-described situation where the husband forgot his anniversary will be ascribed to the situation (he’s busy at work) and when it will be blamed on his personal qualities (egoism). Our example fulfills two conditions – something pleasant was at stake and it only concerned the wife. It is understandable that people with a narrowed zone of pleasant experience, i.e.: with enhanced tendencies towards manipulation will, according to attribution theory, have greater tendencies toward paranoid thinking because other people’s behavior threatens their mental comfort much more than it does other people’s.

### The Lever Effect and Infidelity

Fantasy figures have a very specific role in shaping the mind of a deceived person. When she finds out that her partner has cheated on her, her fantasy figures start to be activated in a given order which recalls the physical law of a lever. The mechanism is very simple.



When the cheated person faces any discomfort, which is usually not related to the cheating, she naturally calls out to a catch figure for help. Let's say that Jane has a broken light switch. It is usually Charles who fixes it, so the first event is a frustration, and the second one is the activation of a catch figure, Charles. Then follow a question and an answer: „Why doesn't he help me? Because he is with his lover!“ This is the second fantasy figure that is activated, and it is not a catch figure but an explaining fantasy figure. She explains why Charles does not fix the switch. There comes a deep sense of injustice: „Now somebody else is enjoying all the support and energy from Charles which rightfully belongs to me! Her happiness is my unhappiness...”

With men it is just a little bit different. They furnish a sexual partner for their ex-partners by approximately three weeks after their breakup. A man is lonely, so he thinks about satisfaction, and therefore activates the fantasy figure of his wife, who is a catch figure: „She is absent, why?“ His mind produces an explanation: „She must be romping with her lover (activation of an explaining fantasy figure)! That lucky bastard now has everything that I can only dream about. What an injustice!“

The lever effect is a reflection of the one-dimensional symmetry between a subject's unhappiness and the imagined happiness of the explaining fantasy figure. The more he is down, the happier his former partner's lover seems to be. This is just a one-way symmetry, because it does not work vice versa. We do not find: „The happier he is, the unhappier his ex-partner's lover seems to be,“ simply because when the man is happy he has no need to activate and look for help from either the catch or explaining fantasy figures.

The problem of the lever effect is that it is only a sort of unpleasant daydreaming, and has usually no positive impact on reality. Dreaming about Jane's partner's lover cannot fix the light switch, but it can totally exhaust Jane. So it is advisable to cut these harmful daydreams short and shift the client's attention to effective satisfaction of the starting frustration: „OK, so how do I repair the switch without Charles?“

### Example 38 of the lever effect

A student's story: „Since Ian and I broke up he has acquired a fantasy figure of me, without flaws, the perfect girlfriend: caring, nurturing, sweet, and nice. While he maintained this fantasy figure he would call and email, telling me how much he missed me and wanted me back. This was several weeks ago, and he has since adopted a new fantasy figure of me, one who is dating new boys and going crazy with my new singlehood. I would respond to his angry and accusatory emails with sweet, reassuring messages that, however, tried to offer him little hope of us getting back together, but that promised I wasn't seeing anyone else. My lack of reciprocal heated emotions seemed to anger him even more. He seemed to be hearing his fantasy figure of me rather than my actual words. I would say „I am not seeing anyone else,“ but he would hear „I never loved you, my new boyfriend is much better than you ever were.“ Ian seems incapable of hearing me, and this makes it impossible to have any kind of civil conversation with him, instead we continue to fight constantly.“

The explaining fantasy figures of „new boys“ are made of and therefore equal to Ian's sexual frustration and loneliness. He cannot get rid of this frustration, and that is why he is unable to believe that she „is not seeing anyone else“. The feeling of injustice gives him the „right“ to be rude to her. This is the law of shared frustration: „Why should I suffer more than her?!“ The sentence „my lack of reciprocal heated emotion seemed to anger him more“ suggests the same law. So the lever effect is a simple mechanism that produces mutual hatred.

## Extreme Jealousy, Manipulation and Evolution

Jealousy is a defensive reaction to a threatened relationship that has been shaped by the forces of evolution. Therefore, the manifestations and the objects of jealousy are somewhat different for men and for women. Women react more to the emotional investments of their partners, because this represents the loss of potential support for their family. Men are more jealous of the sexual investments of their partners because an unwanted child means that they will be investing in the genes of another man. These evolutionary aspects have been reliably documented.

Besides the evolutionary factors, however, there is also a situational component to jealousy. This is more pronounced with retroflection because a retroflector is trying to get closer to her partner. The deflector's motivation is driven by aversion and is partially grounded in self-preservation instincts. Tendencies towards self-preservation suppress jealousy just like they do any other mating activities. The word jealousy can be empty for a narcissist or any other chronic deflectors. It has no meaning (see degenerated communication): „Are you occasionally jealous of your partner?“ „Jealous? Doctor, please, define jealousy for me and then I will tell you whether I ever have been jealous...“

Jealousy is driven by an urgent need to decrease the mental distance between partners, and therefore it tends to be manipulative – it ignores the wishes and the consciousness of the other person. A jealous person does not assume the consent of his partner, but attacks his rivals, and ultimately prevents his partner from being in contact with them. This manipulative tendency will be greater the more the relationship is – in their minds – threatened. That's why we see a separation reaction with jealousy very often. Endlessly repeated attempts to pull the fantasy figure closer in imagination creates a symmetry: „The more I try to pull the partner closer in my mind, the more I feel his (i.e. his fantasy figure's) tendency to abandon me.“

Mild jealousy is natural, but extreme jealousy can be brought under control by means of the following techniques. However, if real infidelity is taking place at the same time, then these techniques alone are not sufficient. There must be made a balancing decision what to do in reality. It is wise to postpone any decision some time after revealing the deception, perhaps after a month has passed. It is more stable and reflects true values of the person, not only momentary aggression and rage.

The techniques may sound crazy to many people, but we must realize that they are mostly techniques for how to cope with a fantasy figure of the partner, and not with the real one:

**1. Voluntarily offer the other partner the right to hurt you.** Tell the partner in the fantasy: „When I love you I know I'm giving you a club with which you may hit me. I have decided to risk this, and I voluntarily give up the right of the 'first blow' and give it to you. I hope I am strong enough to take what you give me. I will be grateful if you would not use this weapon against me, but I am fully aware that my heart is in your hands. I know you may strike first if you want to and I am helpless against that.“

**2. Apologize to the fantasy figure when you find that you are being to be rude in your mind:** „I'm sorry, Suzanne, I made a whore of you again thinking that you have been running around on me all this time. I know that it is my own weakness that falsely accuses you. Please forgive me.“ In a similar

way you can apologize to (a fantasy figure of) God, for trying to abuse him as an enforcer who will make the other partner love us.

**3. Calm down your freaked out inner child:** „John, why do you keep attacking the fantasy figure of Suzanne? What's wrong with you? Can I help you somehow?“

**4. Express positive wishes toward the fantasy figures of Suzanne and yourself:** „I wish for you, Suzanne, to be happy even if I cannot be. Your happiness is my happiness. I do not want to force you into anything you don't want, and I wish for you to be happy with me, or you may go away if you really want to. But you know I will be grateful to you if you stay...“ These wishes prevent a slide into bad feelings that stem from endless attempts to manipulate fantasy figures in the mind of the jealous person.

**5. Become aware of the self-destructiveness of my own behavior:** „Although I want to bind the other person to me, my behavior is actually driving them away. My defensive reactions have the exact opposite effect to what I would wish for. In the same way, our communication has degenerated: the sentences with which I express love are perceived as injury. I might not have the power to improve the situation, but I wish to be 100 % sure I am not the one who makes it worse.“

With people who have the preferential curves displaced, the zone of pleasant excitement disappears (see Graph 15 and Diagram III.). These people find themselves hopping back and forth between periods of extreme deflection and indifference to periods of extreme retroflection which are characterized by jealousy over perhaps nearly anything that is to be found near their partner; even over animals or inanimate objects.

## How to Work With Fantasy Figures

### Fantasy Figures Cannot Cause Physical Harm

By contrast with real people, a fantasy figure cannot ever physically harm us. Interactions with them may be unpleasant, a person may feel threatened, fantasy figures may threaten us with revenge or punishment, but it is always still just a fantasy and never real danger. Being aware of this fact enhances patients' basal certainty in experiments that test out this area, especially when using paradoxical intentions. They may, for example, challenge the fantasy figure to hit them if it is so angry with them.

#### Example 39

Once when I was in the mountains the bindings on my skis were poorly adjusted and when I fell I sprained both ankles. After being taken to the cottage I was unable to fall asleep that evening because of the pain. I was also kept in a state of tension by a very vivid repeating vision of how I'm going down the hill, fall, and get wounded again. It was actually fear of new pain that led to the awakening of this stream of spontaneous visions that I tried to interrupt by the force of will. However, the visions continued to intrude on me and it was impossible to repress them. Only later did a saving thought come to me: let these fantasies run all the way to the end. My legs wouldn't hurt more than they already did. It wasn't possible to injure myself again. And so, with great trepidation I went down the fateful slope again in my imagination all the way to the moment when I fell, when I discovered, to my great relief that nothing had happened – imaginary falls don't hurt. I repeated this process several times and the visions disappeared forever.

Even here we see a dysfunctional defensive reaction that was supposed to prevent pain from another fall in the world of fantasies. Fear of pain, however, kept me stressed and prevented me from falling asleep. Although it was a natural reaction that was intended to protect my body it was causing harm in this context.

### A Fantasy Figure Cannot Escape the Subject's Imagination

Real people can get closer to a person, or they can also escape from his grasp or view. In this they differ from fantasy figures, who cannot escape from the imagination of their bearers. This fact has two practical consequences.

#### 1. Fantasy figures cannot leave a person's mind against their will.

In some cases a fantasy figure expresses aggression towards a subject by threatening to leave, and possibly in that person's imagination it even displays a tendency to walk out. People's first spontaneous reactions in these cases are attempts to prevent the fantasy figure from getting away. The first spontaneous reaction is supposed to help prevent feelings of emptiness that would otherwise be connected to its „leaving“.

This manipulation of experience creates unnecessary tension. The activated fantasy figure cannot disappear from a person's imagination. Its existence stands or falls with its activation in fantasies. Real people can permanently disappear from the subject's field of view, but activated fantasy figures can at most variously metamorphose themselves. A person subjectively feels their presence even in the case

that they become invisible or are standing „behind the corner”– the mind still calculates their spatial coordinates.

## **2. The subject cannot, by force of will, drive fantasy figures out of his or her head.**

Usually, however, people are bothered by this second aspect. They cannot get rid of their fantasy figures. They figures are obsessive, persistent, aggressive, and they cannot be destroyed or suppressed. In these cases, they sometimes come to the psychologist with the requesting that the therapist help them stop their uncontrollable or overbubbling fountain of thoughts. It is true that an activated fantasy figure cannot just be kicked out of one’s fantasies at leisure. However, it is possible to change its behavior so that it no longer threatens the subject, but so that, on the contrary, its presence in that person’s head becomes pleasant. Then it is possible for spontaneous distraction and deactivation of the fantasy by means of any stronger stimulus from the surroundings or through a stronger association in the subject’s memory.

### **Example 40**

Julian the Apostate (331–363) was the Roman Emperor from the year 361 until his death. His steadfast goal was to renew the old Greek cult, particularly of Dionysus. His attempt at having himself „unbaptized” by having bull’s blood poured over himself in a pit is well known. According to legend, when he was dying near Maranga on the Tigris in a battle against the Sassanids, he said: „Galiláie, enikésas”, which means: „Galilean, you have won”. Even here we are looking at the fruitless lifelong attempts of this emperor to drive the fantasy figure of Jesus out of his head. This fantasy figure gained strength the more he attempted to push it out, and the more he undertook repressive measures against Christians. He did not suspect that he was fighting against himself and trying to suppress the symbol of something that he himself was longing for. He was not aware that it is not possible to repress something that has already taken root in one’s mind with aggression. He could have reconciled himself with it in a way that was acceptable to him and embraced it so that it did not threaten his mental stability. The basis of his ambivalent relationship with Christianity can be found in his childhood when he was raised „on the lonely estate of Macellum in Cappadocia in the rigid monastic discipline while he was being watched by spies; here Julian’s antipathy towards Christianity originated and continued to grow.” (Otto’s Encyclopedia 1888–1908, Volume 13., p. 658)

Even in these cases the most effective therapeutic method is paradoxical intention with an appropriate explanation of how its mechanism functions. There are clients who are aware that the visions of a former partner threaten them with leaving, or, on the other hand, with their constant presence. They can experience a great subjective relief when we give them the instructions: „Let your partner do what they want in your fantasies. Just watch them. They can’t hurt you, they are only a fantasy.” Of course we know what is the basis of this recommendation: a fantasy figure only reflects the client’s own state. If the client manipulates the figure, it defends itself and this is a source of unpleasant conditions, it is this very mental effort that actually fills the figure up with energy. As soon as the client begins to merely observe the figure, it ceases and also begins just to observe. Unfortunately, the client has to find him or herself in fairly bad shape and go through some rather extreme states in order for the fantasy figures to become visible in their thoughts and for these symmetrical qualities to be clearly visible.

Similar examples of the behavior of fantasy figures can also be found in literature. For example, the altogether unsavory plot of the novel *The Sufferings of Prince Sternenhoch* by Ladislav Klíma (1990) is based on the same mechanism. Prince Sternenhoch murders his wife, but is then unable to „murder” his own alcohol-delirious hallucinations in which his wife appears and threatens him with vengeance. Even here the correlation between the behavior of the hallucinated wife and the prince’s present mental state is evident (see p. 171). If the prince is exhausted the fantasy wife is also not aggressive. As soon as he musters his strength, the fantasy figure of his wife attacks him, because she she is only a projection of his own self-hatred.

## **Fantasy Figures as Multipliers of Experience**

Fantasy figures also differ from real people with their schematic, pre-programmed behavior. Real people are truly independent of us. They develop in their own ways, they go through setbacks and reversals that often have no connection with our own behavior and experiences. Fantasy figures are, however, subconsciously controlled by our own minds.

The schematic behavior of fantasy figures is given foremost by their being human constructs – models of reality and so they are of necessity very simplified and schematic in comparison with actual models. Thus, given that a fantasy figure symbolizes animosity, this animosity is hammed up in a stereotyped and illogically – like a bad actress when she gets the instruction: „Be constantly unfriendly and do not make up at any cost!”

This schematism has two very grave consequences. **Above all else it works as a multiplier of experiences.** One experience in real life can repeat itself in fantasies a thousand times. And further individual experiences with constant repetition change into symbols of the same or similar situations. This symbolic function is accompanied by rhetoric that demonstrates that its bearer does not know what to do about the fantasy figures: „I will never forgive him for this. I cannot forgive her for that.”

It is especially the ends of relationships that are full of degenerated communication and rhetoric which cannot be taken literally. For example, the sentence: „You never provided me with emotional support” was in reality spoken only in one ephemeral moment of high passion, and cannot be taken as enduringly valid testimony on the relationship. However, fantasy figures multiply and repeat this sentence in their bearer’s mind ad infinitum for many years to come. Clients are practically powerless against these kinds of repeating memories. The one thing that they try to do is to simply repress them, or perhaps fantasy arguments or quarrels.

#### **Example 41 - Elvis Presley parable**

If there is a noisy party in Prague and Elvis Presley is heard all around nobody calls up the police in the USA to exhume and arrest Elvis Presley for disturbing the neighbours. Everybody understands that someone once recorded his music and someone else is now replaying it. This logic is lost with fantasy figures due to externalization. A person after a breakup seems to have a CD called: „The very worst utterances of my ex-partner with special emphasis on the time of our breakup.” This bestseller CD is replayed and rewound a thousand times a day: „I never loved you. My new love is an angel. You cannot compare to her...” Surprisingly, it is the real partner who is accused of replaying the material on the old CD. It is true, he once said these sentences, but they are replayed by the subject, and therefore only she is able to stop them.

It is sad when even though a client himself is not aggressive and does not suffer from communication vices such as sarcasm or criticism, she is still powerless against these communication vices in others, which fantasy figures keep on replaying in her head. In this way, against her own will, she actually learns these manners of communication.

The reason why training in assertive communication does not have an influence on the behavior of fantasy figures lies in fact that the fantasy behavior feeds other needs than communication; for example, loneliness, fatigue, the need for rapprochement, or feelings of failure. The former partner is activated in situations when the real partner was usually contacted. The fantasy figure, however, is not able to take on a complementary role but only a symmetrical one. Degenerated communication therefore mirrors a dissatisfied state back to its bearer.

We must therefore train clients in techniques for working with fantasy figures. These mainly consist in calling the fantasy figure by its own name, and, in the client’s active imagination, making it apologize for its rude behavior and offer its help. These techniques avoid autostimulatory fantasy quarrels that are harmful, do not work, and which fix the former partner in the client’s mind.

### **Apologies as Prevention of Fantasy Multiplication and Translation Dictionary**

It is necessary to clearly demonstrate to clients how fantasy figures cause many troubles. The client has to deliberately, repeatedly and consistently prevent their negative actions to start feeling herself well. The best way to stop the multiplication of experiences through a fantasy figure is an apology.

An apology is a magnificent tool how to stop or prevent fantasy figures from replaying past event over and over. As soon as we say something that we don’t really mean – an insult, needless sarcasm, or criticism which could set off the fantasy multiplication then we have to apologize as soon as possible. The memory of an apology stops the fantasy figure in the head of our partner. We all have our pride and tendency to explain away our bad behavior: „I just said that when I was mad, as a joke, when I was tired. It’s clear that I didn’t really mean it, etc.” (This defensive reaction represents a refractory phase of guilt - a period of time after a bad act, in which the person is unable to reflect detrimental impact of his behavior on his life.) It is necessary to be aware that perhaps outwardly nothing will happen, but fantasy figure of us will be acting to our detriment for a long time to come in the head of the partner. The sooner comes our apology, the less power the fantasy figures will have.

The real partner, besides making an apology, cannot help any longer. If the apology of the real partner does not work then the fantasy multiplication indicates some kind of need or frustration, for example, fatigue. So when fantasy figures, despite apologies from the real partner, continue to repeat their nasty behavior over and over then it is their bearer who needs to work on them, as she is the only one who can switch off the „player” of fantasy figures. The first question is what is the starting frustration that precedes and switches these scenes on. Then the bearer might ask herself: „Why, Jenny,

do you replay this nasty scene with Franck again? There is no need why to do it right now. Are you sad or what?“ or „I am sorry, Jenny, I torment you with this nasty scene again. I should do something else.“ As a smoke is a sign of fire - the cause, which is not much similar to the smoke, also the nasty scenes of fantasy figures usually do not resemble the starting frustration that caused them to revolve. There is spacial or temporal coincidence between them that must be analyzed logically.

A kind of translation dictionary can also be useful. Any time a fantasy figure says in a client's head: „You are the same kind of bitch as your mother.“ She knows from past analysis in psychotherapy that this activation means that she is tired, she has a tendency to overexert herself and it would be good for her to go lie down as soon as possible. So she may instantly translate the sentence „bitch as your mother“ into „high time to go to bed“. She should say to herself perhaps: „Don't be so beastly to yourself, don't keep rewinding this over and over.“ Similarly, she can make the fantasy figure apologize.

#### **Example 42**

One girl described an incident that happened maybe five years ago, for which she said she had never forgiven her partner. Right at the beginning of the relationship this fellow decided that he was going to some kind of performance. The party that was to follow was held by another girl, with whom he had previously been in love. His new partner wanted, clearly out of jealousy, to go with him at all costs. He refused, saying that she could not go with him because she was not invited. Clearly an acrimonious exchange of opinions broke out, which was forcefully ended by the boyfriend and he left to attend the event.

It is interesting, however, that even after five years of living together the girl still reproached her partner that then, at the very beginning of their relationship, he had behaved this way. She felt that she could never forgive him for this. In other words, the girl for the entire period of five years had, in various frustrating situations, been replaying this scene where again and again she experienced the feeling of utter helplessness. Now only the fantasy figure of her partner again and again refused and humiliated her by saying that he is going out to see his former girlfriend. Compared with this other, she felt unimportant, as though she didn't even reach up to her ankles. Her boyfriend was convinced that her not having been invited was nothing that tragic, and additionally, nothing happened at the party. On the other hand, he admitted that he had unnecessarily flown off the handle at her.

Although this anecdote is quite banal, we may notice its symbolic destructive influence throughout the entire duration of the relationship. Let us answer two questions:

1) *Who is it?* The coexistence of the real and the fantasy partner – a combination of the real partner's previous behavior and the abiding character traits of the girl, for example her intransigence. Thus was created an inhuman and schematized fantasy partner who is paradoxically much worse than the real partner and also the girl herself. This is an important quality – fantasy figures can be worse than their real models, and so they have a negative influence on them.

2) *Who takes responsibility for fantasy figures?* We know that no one does. The girl is convinced that her partner really behaved that way. She does not consider repeatedly replaying this scene for herself in her fantasy to be a manifestation of her own self-hatred but she repeatedly blames it on her real partner, even though since some time he could not have been responsible for it. This is the already well-known phenomenon of externalization. The real partner does not have any inkling of these repetitions in her fantasies. Essentially, it does not even occur to him because his fantasy figure of the girl shares his conviction that she was not invited to the party. If they knew the rules governing fantasy figures and were able to better communicate about their fantasy works, they could, with their combined forces, stop these frustrating fantasies.

Let's notice that the girl's feelings of inferiority were preserved with this symbolic fantasy („he preferred the one whose ankles I don't reach up to“). To wit, feelings of inferiority are generally not preserved in our minds in the form of simple statements: „I'm dumb and ugly,“ but very often as memories of real humiliating events that are replayed by fantasy figures. And these memories gain a symbolic character. With the given girl, it was feeling of helplessness that was symbolized with this rewinding scene. Thanks to their regular replaying they do not fade away, even years later. (For example, by contrast with things learned in school, which we often forget all too soon.) Therefore, therapeutic intervention must follow this logic of their origin – revealing the connection with unpleasant states (fatigue, loneliness, helplessness etc.), removing their symbolic meanings and making the repetitions cease.

### **Correlation Between the Behavior of Fantasy Figures and a Person's State**

Fantasy figures share abilities, memories, and other sources in our minds. They behave commensurately to our conditions. This direct correlation appears in our dreams, in which somebody or something is chasing us. Pretty much all horror movies are also similarly crafted.

In the film Terminator, there are scenes that always have the same, cyclically repeated structure: the amount of power of the Terminator and the main characters is balanced during the entire film. The good guys are always saved at the last minute. At the beginning the main good characters have enough energy, and so does the homicidal robot. We also find the same proportion at the end of the film. When

the heroine is already exhausted, the torso of the robot also crawls on with its last strength in order to destroy her. This correlation reveals that we are actually seeing a fantasy construct rather than a parallel of the real story. Although this fantasy or dream structure is primitive, it lends the film the necessary tension.

Clients after a breakup often describe their awful dreams after which an unpleasant mood lingers into the day like a dark cloud. A quite effective method is again directed monologues, or possibly the carousel of wishes. For example, saying to oneself: „Charles, that was a really terrible dream. I wouldn't like it if people (my ex and I) behaved that way to each other. Nor am I (are we) going to treat other people in that way. Rather, I wish that... (Here follows a free association of positively phrased wishes that systematically cover three areas: myself, my body, my surroundings.” The combination of these two techniques creates a positive attunement and disrupts the impact of the dream on the rest of the day. The same method, directed by an adult, is also possible to use with children when they wake up crying from a night terror (pavor nocturnus).

The above-mentioned dark cloud that is projected from a dream into the following day is possible to reveal and also to remove by introspection via brief retrospections. Whenever clients discover that they suddenly flopped into a bad mood (for example, they catch themselves from out of nowhere sadly saying „Oh well”), stop the stream of thought, say „stop” to themselves, and go into their short-term memory. This is a handy way how to disclose the content of their mental rumination: What were they thinking about during the past three minutes, what fantasy figures were activated and how did they behave? Thus they may discover petty but unpleasant flashes that are not retained in the long-term memory, but run as though in the background or parallel to main activities.

#### **Example 43**

Once I was having a chat in the bus with my now-deceased friend, an organist, about what she thought about when she spent long hours practicing the piano. She retorted: „About nothing! I just think about playing and about musical expression.” I was quite amazed, because when I practice scenes from films play in my head, and emotionally charged interactions with other people, and the like come back to me. With this, however, our conversation ended. Approximately fourteen days later I spoke with her again and she, with great astonishment she confided that when she was playing that she also thought about „all kinds of nonsense”. Evidently, when she was playing the piano she recalled our conversation and it brought her to the surprising discovery of a new experience, that while she practiced she was still able to think about thousands of other things. When a person retroactively recalls something (long-term memory) it is only the main activity – playing the piano, but not the content that is continuously processed in the short-term memory. These can be very unpleasant and with introspection using the method of short-term retrospection they can easily be revealed.

Our head works in very similar way to an herbivorous stomach. We go through many situations during a day, so we push them into our temporal memory, as we do not have enough mental capacity to process them instantly. Then in our leisure time - say when driving a car, washing dishes or practicing the piano - we pull them out and half-consciously ruminate on them as a background for our concurrent main activity. These processes of mental rumination are also hidden as if by externalization - we do not remember the time of processing, we only keep the memory of the time when these events really happened.

The world of parallel thoughts that are running along as though in the background of the main activity is a happy haunting ground for fantasy figures and thus also originate so-called social tuning, which is the sum of the evaluative attitudes towards people around oneself. When we hear clients' attitudes, we see that how critical they are vis-à-vis their surroundings grows with their personal dissatisfaction. This is reflected to them by fantasy figures in their minds that are then in return critical towards them. We can easily put this to the test. We read someone a story and let him evaluate or give marks for the positiveness and negativeness of all of the characters in the story. With people who have a negative social tuning a negative evaluation of the characters will predominate, such that the sum total of the marks they give is low in comparison with the average.

### **Spontaneous self-talks As Preparation for Real Interactions**

We practice new behaviors on fantasy figures. This can sometimes have positive and sometimes clearly negative consequences. For example, an undirected spontaneous monologue can wreak unexpected harm in interpersonal relationships. It can come to be that feelings of powerlessness induced by a conflict with a real person are shifted into fantasy, where the traumatizing process endlessly keeps

unfolding – in their imagination the subject very passionately again and again enters into the same conflict with the object, every time with the same humiliating failure.

The subject does not realize that in these interactions with fantasy figures he is de facto preparing a repertoire of behavior for his next interactions with the given object. Then it easily happens that during the next real interaction with the given object the behavior that was prepared and rehearsed in fantasies that is, of course, very aggressive is set into motion and in the moment when it is unleashed, uncontrollable. This often causes damage that cannot be undone. The subject generally retrospectively says that he does not understand where so much anger and hatred suddenly welled up from within him. This surprise is, however, itself proof that he is not aware of the relationship between fantasy preparation and the subsequent aggressive reaction, or that he does not recall the moments of monologue at all.

#### **Example 44**

At the age of about three years a son witnessed his parents fighting. He tried to help his mother but he was kicked aside by his father. This wretched scene was repeated innumerable times throughout his childhood in his fantasy but always with the same result – when, in his imagination, he ran to help his mother, he was kicked aside by his father. The greater his rage against his father and the more he wanted to protect his mother, the stronger and more brutal his father was in his fantasy. In these chronically repeating fantasy interactions in his powerless rage he was searching for what he could do to his father if it ever happened again.

Additionally, this experience established an Oedipal complex and this individual could not love both his mother and father at the same time. In practice this manifested in sudden shifts between identifying with his mother and with his father. In the phases in which he identified with his mother he hated his father and his inflexible and authoritarian traits. Yet, despite this, most of the time he identified with his father. In these moments he was disgusted by his mother, and felt a physical revulsion toward her, did not understand her and shrank away from touching her. This feeling additionally expanded so that he also began to abhor, for example, the wives of family friends.

Once, when he was about 17 years old his father again physically attacked his mother. The enraged father went to the garage for a cog belt that he wanted to use to flog her with. At that moment, the son's interaction that he had rehearsed in monologue was let loose and he went to help his mother. He ran into the garage after his father and shouted that he was going to kill him if he touched his mother. They began a scrap in which he beat up his father. When he then shut himself into the bathroom, his father came with a club and wanted to break open the door. The son again defended himself with an attack and in the fracas he broke his father's hand. The father threatened to call the neighbors and throw the son out of his home.

The son ran away himself. He slept that fall in a stack of straw because he was ashamed to go to relatives or friends and bring shame to the family. He consulted on the family situation with only one family friend. The situation in his family eventually stabilized, at the cost of the son's utter subjugation. In the given time limit he had to crawl to his father on his knees and repeat a dictated sentence probably like this: „Daddy, I humbly entreat your forgiveness...” which the son had, on the urging of his mother, formally done even though he subjectively felt himself to be completely blameless in the matter. It is difficult to describe wounded psyche of the father. Even though he had somehow internally processed this situation, outwardly he reacted according to the rules of manipulation: „As though nothing had happened.” He did not apologize to anyone for anything, because his son had broken his hand when he had unreasonably meddled in things that were none of his business. The matter was put behind them and it became a family taboo that was not discussed: „Don't pull old skeletons out of the closet”. This expression of the father's indicates that he had admitted for himself a certain share of the guilt that he did not otherwise outwardly admit.

Even in this complex case we see how subconscious, constantly recurring self-hating interactions with fantasy figures can lead to tragic ends in a conflict with real people. In this case additionally, the relationship towards women was significantly affected. At the same time, it is not surprising that this individual suffered with a chronic and unconscious self-hatred that he was only able to rid himself of very slowly. Nonetheless, as a result of this intropunitivity he was able to formally subjugate himself in a humiliating act and go on to finish his studies. Despite the extreme aspects of this story we see how the father and mother become ambivalent objects that at the same time give and take away and they form extreme attitudes in their children either directly as real people or indirectly as fantasy figures.

## **Introduction to Work with Fantasy Figures**

Since it is not always possible for us to indulge in the luxury of professional help, it would be well to bring in a small illustration of how it is possible to privately analyze the behavior of fantasy figures. By contrast with degenerated communication, fantasy figures are relatively easily accessible by means of the above-mentioned introspection method of brief retrospections (from the Latin: looking back).

Any time during the day when we become aware of ourselves, we stop and go through who and what we have been thinking about over the past three minutes. Then we try to describe what was going on in our minds among these figures. For example, we discover: „I'm thinking about my girlfriend, and

she's criticizing me for being selfish. I answer back in my mind that she can go to hell." Then we become aware of the characteristics of fantasy figures and we can begin to pose the following questions:

1) Why am I thinking just now about my girlfriend and not about Charles, with whom I went out for beer last night? (Activation of fantasy figures)

2) What reminded me of her? How many times a day do I go through this interaction? Why can't I stop this debate in my head? Don't I have a bad habit of running through this scene at regular intervals? (The habit-forming nature of fantasy interactions)

3) What need or frustration is behind these thoughts? A reaction to emptiness, loneliness, fatigue, a need for sex or boredom? (Fantasy as autostimulation)

4) What purpose does this debate serve? Preparation for the next argument? Working through the last argument? How do I actually want to react wisely in the future? (Preparation for future interactions)

5) The fantasy girlfriend is now just a product of my head. That the real girlfriend once behaved this way does not mean that she will again react the same way today. Aren't I preparing behavior that will be entirely out of line with reality? (Schematism and rigidity of fantasy figures)

6) In fantasy arguments it is the distribution of guilt that is at stake. To what extent does the fantasy girlfriend represent my internalized convictions? What portion of my own guilt am I willing to accept? In an argument a symmetry appears between the anger of the girlfriend and my own anger. To what extent is this actually my own anger with myself? Over what? Because my partner is not satisfied with me? That my life is not working out? That nothing makes any sense? (Symmetry between fantasy figures and sharing the abilities of a person)

7) How can I change the unseemly behavior of my fantasy girlfriend? Can I make her apologize for her rudeness in my fantasy? Can I apologize to her for my rudeness and offer reconciliation? In this way I calm myself down because fantasy figures are linked to my experience. (Fantasy figures cannot be banished from one's mind; it is only possible to modify their behavior.)

8) Could the intransigence of my fantasy girlfriend be my own intransigence? Because, after all, she shares my traits. Wouldn't it be better if I called her by my own name and said to her „Bill, stop being silly..." (Various methods for mitigating the splitting of my self)

## Directed self-talks

**The basic rule is: the real partner occupies a complementary role, the fantasy figure, however, only plays a symmetrical role.** In this way it is similar to toddlers, who are not able to play games with complementary alternating roles. When one toddler is playing with a ball a second toddler will also want to play with it and they begin push and scuffle for it. Older children are able to play complementary games with a ball – one throws, the other catches, and then they alternate. Thus, when one toddler is crying, a second one will join in (symmetry), but an adult goes over to soothe a crying child (complementarity). Infants are happy to play for a long time a game of „Give me what's in your hand. I will transfer it from one hand to the other." This game is not possible to play symmetrically with two people. Likewise, it is not possible to play symmetrically as a pair this game: „I'm sad. Comfort me." Thus the source of the problem is the fact that people expect complementary behavior from fantasy figures but they are only able to offer them merely symmetrical behavior. This is the reason why fantasy interactions so quickly sour even in cases where between the partners there was no conflict, but a wonderful relationship that was cut short.

We can somewhat mitigate this fact by having the subject himself take on the complementary role vis-à-vis a fantasy figure who is calling out for help. The fantasy figure then expresses his own real needs and brings him tranquility and relief in taking on a complementary role. Directed monologue is based on this mechanism. During spontaneous monologue a person plays out a natural symmetry with a fantasy figure. When the monologue is directed with volitional effort it is possible to free oneself from this tendency and to begin soothing the unhappy fantasy figure.

We can look at directed self-talks as a kind of relaxation technique. We recommend it in those cases where the source of discomfort is self-hatred or interpersonal conflict, such as, for example, a petition for a divorce. In my experience, it has a more pronounced effect in these cases than impersonal techniques such as Schultz' Autogenic Training, progressive muscle relaxation, etc. The reason lies in clients experiencing anxiety from being abandoned by someone, and thus they cannot just impersonally

mellow out. Directed monologue works on relaxing a person indirectly by giving them a feeling of basal interpersonal closeness.

Thus if a client cannot sleep or keep food down and is on pills for at least a week then there are two main methods to utilize for relaxation: meditation with the breath, which quickly stabilizes the basal functions, and directed monologue, which provides self-confidence. For example, a client finds that he again feels like picking up the telephone and having it out with his former partner over her comment that he „Never showed her how much he cares about her”. This, in his view, is not true. So he calls her, but her cell phone is switched off. At this moment the client has a great tendency to interpret the turned-off cell phone as something that was done on purpose, without regard for whether this may be true or not. His urgent need for communication manifests itself in his furiously dialing her number and having an argument with a fantasy partner who, of course, symmetrically shares his agitated mood. It is necessary to stop this spontaneous tendency and begin to speak with his fantasy partner with an awareness that she is actually a personification of his need for rapprochement and of loneliness. „You see, Clara, I’m feeling sad just now and I’m alone and whenever I’m in this mood you appear in my head and tell me that I never showed you how much I care about you. I know that you saw me this way and that your feelings of loneliness and sadness were the same as the ones I’m having now. I’m not going to manipulate you now or try to draw you closer or push you away. I’m just glad that you’re here in my head. So please stay here. I would like it if when we speak again I didn’t manipulate you then either.” This calming of one’s self and complementary behavior calms down the fantasy figure of Klára too. The other way around it does not work – the fantasy Klára cannot calm down the real Bill.

**Example 45**

A client wakes up at night and feels like lighting up a cigarette. She knows, however, that her husband who is lying next to her is an avowed nonsmoker. An endless, anticipated discussion begins to develop between her and her partner who would wake up if she went to have a smoke. On the one side there is her imagined unrelenting husband and on the other the helpless rage of the client. She is unable to rise from the bed so long as she does not get the anticipated conflict in her fantasy under control. Thus begins a fantasy discussion where the husband is increasingly adamant and she is increasingly helpless and furious. This discussion unfolds, perhaps, over the course of several hours. After becoming exhausted the patient either falls asleep or else has to get up to go to work. The real husband generally does not find out about this fantasy interaction because the patient would clearly hear what she was afraid of her in her fantasy and what she could not cope with. Here it is interesting to realize that the adamancy of the fantasy husband does not reflect any characteristic trait of either the husband or the wife. It is only the wife’s personified inability to get over her fear of the husband’s reaction. This is the way that fantasy figures that have worse qualities than their real bearers or models develop.

## Degenerated Communication

*The last chapter of this book covers impact of the above described processes on quality of partners' communication. Without communication degenerated not only during a breakup. The degeneration is not chaotic random proces, but it is closely related to rules of manipulation and the border between ego and fantasy figures of a person. We will get acquainted with a term rhetorics which describes phenomena at a half way between verbal and nonverbal communication*

Degenerated communication is amplified in breakups because the partners cannot openly share their conflicting feelings. The messages that are eventually passed from one to the other are variously coded, distorted, and masked and it is no wonder that their recipients often construe them in the opposite sense as they were originally meant. This shift is not coincidental but a matter of course.

**We will label as „degenerated communication” those cases where the recipient understands a message in a significantly shifted or even utterly opposite sense than it was intended.** What was meant as a gracious welcome is perceived as an insult. Attempts at drawing closer are taken as heartless spurning. Expressions of love paradoxically hurt and wound, etc. Even from the perspective of communication theory or psychological self-defense this is not any new discovery, this – for clients – somewhat unaccustomed point of view helps them understand the ambivalent behavior of their close ones during the period of breakup.

The result of degenerated communication is a practical blindness to the problems of the other, bad interpretation of his or her intentions and an inability to react appropriately. By contrast with asymmetry, manipulation and fantasy figures, degenerated communication is much more difficult to reveal with self-observation and introspection. The persons involved generally do not sense where to look for the problem. Therefore, I consider the main goal of a psychologist to help clients to orient themselves in their own world. Sometimes it is truly painful to look the truth in the eyes, but it is necessary to be realize that for every cruel and painful truth there exist three more less truthful statements that alleviate the cruelty of the first truth. All considered, it is not in vain that the Czech national banner reminds us: „Truth conquers” (Pravda vítězí) (John 8, 32).

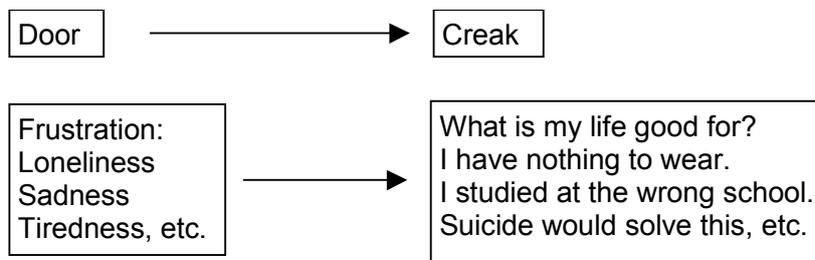
We regard as communication all processes during which individual mental representations of some thing or event develop into collective representations or shared understanding. This definition also captures nonfunctional or degenerated communication because even collective representations can be mistaken and untrue. For example, when a lie is told an untrue collective representation arises that is shared by the lied-to party and his fantasy figure in the head of the liar. So both real people and fantasy figures participate in the communication.

### The Concept of Rhetoric

We have often met with the term rhetoric. We use it in cases where we assume that a certain verbal expression is more often than not only an outwardly observable reaction to certain internal states rather than the bearer of a meaningful message. From the literal meaning of rhetoric it is not possible to deduce logical conclusions. The borders between meaningful communication and rhetoric cannot be precisely determined by an external observer. But even so, certain assertions repeat themselves in certain situations with an atrocious predictability, to the point where people make jokes about it. Often they are gender-specific.

For example, at the beginning of courtship girls say to boys who they are not interested in: „You know I like you, but only as a friend.” Boys in the same situation, however, say: „You deserve someone better than me. I would only hurt you.” They never say this sentence when they have a real interest in the girl. It is clearly absurd to infer from the literal meaning of this sentence any kind of logical implications, for example, that boys wish for better partners for girls they do not love and worse partners for girls who are their chosen lovers. Likewise, girls from this sentence utterly erroneously deduce that the boy in question has little self-confidence, and she needs to encourage him and indicate more clearly to him that he has a chance. These statements are simply typical for certain situations and their literal meaning is irrelevant, and this is why we label them as rhetoric.

Graph 23



Attempts at a literal interpretation of communication vices are sometimes so foolish that it is like a schizophrenic trying to understand what the creaking of a door is saying. Simply, when one is lonely, tired, or in another state of discomfort certain forms of rhetoric appear which then naturally disappear as soon as the negative state passes. In these cases it is necessary to find out which mood unleashes the rhetoric and not allow oneself to be drawn into a literal debate on the topic of „the meaning of life”, „does s/he like me if s/he says that”, „I’m afraid that my parents are going to die someday”, „I’m stupid”, „I’m wicked”, etc.

## Main Principles of the Analysis of Rhetoric

In the period of a breakup many of the above-described forms of rhetoric appear. We will now specify the main principles to use in analyzing them:

**1. We do not take the message at its literal meaning** but we will look at words and speech as observable behavior. We assume that words are mainly a function of internal or external stimuli or of mental states, and their literal meaning is secondary. With this, we are, of course not saying that truthfulness of the message is not very important. The question is, however, foremost of why a person actually begins to talk, why he or she says these things and not something else? Why aren’t they silent instead? The same goes for internal communication: why is someone pondering this and not something completely different?

Often the literal meaning of words does not make any sense. The given rhetoric simply appears whenever a person gets into a certain state. Attempts at analyzing the content of such messages has about as much logic as an effort to understand what a creaking door is „saying”. Just like the door creaks when it opens, a deflector in moments of exhaustion will make his wife suffer by saying things such as he should have never gotten married, that other women are prettier, that her breasts are too large, or too small, and so on. It is simply erroneous to seek in these hurtful words any other kind of meaning than a confirmation of the man’s tiredness, of too-great proximity, overburdening, etc. If we can observe this rule we warn the client not to take anything literally. The similar way we must recommend clients to be mildly tolerant to rhetorics which rises from the hybrid partner and the third stage of a breakup - asymmetrical decision making. Rather, we recommend that she seek the psychological truth that only appears when we unload the burden of literal interpretation.

**2. The words „No” or „not”, i.e.: negation, are not as important as the remaining content of the sentence.** For example, the client in the chapter on chronic self-hatred began to describe his parents with the words: „I don’t blame myself for my parents getting divorced. But I do reproach myself that I didn’t do enough to keep Father with us.” The denial in the first sentence is less important than the rest of the sentence. It is important that the description begins with a sentence about his own guilt. Just like the sentence: ‘I never loved you!’, which we often hear in the period of breaking up is not to be taken literally because these statements are not truthful. They only express the predominance of the forces of aversion in a given stage of the breakup. In a few months the initiator in question will not so unequivocally stand behind this assertion. The negative is not so important. What is more important is that the discussion is about love. The non-degenerated version of the message would be: „I am seeking and would like to have a feeling of subjective certainty, that I really love you and that it is worthwhile to stay with you.” People generally do not suspect that this feeling is for the most part only a function of mental distance and automatically disappears as soon as they get a little more distance between them.

**3. The polarity of I versus You or They is also not very important**, because a lot of important symbolic content may be stored in fantasy figures of others, so the boundaries between you/me/they are fuzzy.

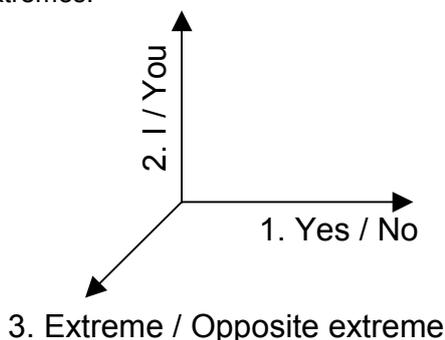
**4. Extremes are closer to each other than an extreme is to a mild center.** „I hate you!!!“ is closer to „I love you!!!“ than to „I feel nothing for you.“

**5. More important than the type of rhetoric used is the transformation of this rhetoric into another.** The change of rhetoric is an expression of change in internal states. These gradual changes indicate the trend of development. behro

**Graph 24**

**Three axes of transformation of degenerated rhetoric**

We can transform degenerated sentences along three axes. The transformations are probable in this order: Yes/No, I/You, and switching extremes.



Let's take the highly emotional sentence: „I don't love you any more!!!“

	<b>I/You axis</b>	
<b>Yes/No</b>	<i>I don't love you any more!!!</i>	You don't love me any more!!! (2)
	I still love you!!! (1)	You still love me!!! (3)

Of all possible transformed sentences, the most probable end result is the sentence „I still love you!!!“ and then „You don't love me any more!!!“ etc.

If none of these transformed sentences correlates with observable behavior in the partner, we may also try switching extremes. Use the word „hate“ instead of „love“:

I don't hate you any more!!!	You don't hate me any more!!!
I still hate you!!!	You still hate me!!!

Perhaps one of these sentences will reveal the speaker's true feelings and deconstruct his projections. These sentences are much more likely to be true than any other sentence the person has not said, such as „I'm thinking of switching cell phone operators“, or any other with neutral content.

**Example 46**

A woman discussed with me her rage against her partner who had said: „I am indecisive, for you know that everything takes a long time for me. Although I don't want the child I'll go along with what you want. Even a wedding.“ The woman minded that this is not the answer of a man who knows what he wants. That she should have to organize the whole wedding herself? Here it would be necessary, however, to realize that this rhetoric was preceded by another that was much crueler, due to which the woman had run away from him for a while: „I don't want a child! You knew that I don't want a child! Please, go get an abortion! I'll pay for it.“ This was not the rhetoric of an undecided man. At that time he was entirely resolute. When we observe the shift in the man's rhetoric we see a great rapprochement. His words are more or less an unconditional surrender.

However, in this story there is one more rhetoric, the rhetoric of the woman. Why isn't she capable of suddenly seeing the man's huge shift? What, is she so blind she cannot see his unconditional surrender? Is it then realistic that the man in the space of one month has changed his conviction on the question of child from „no way“ to „absolutely“? But her rhetoric is also only a function of their states.

At one time she had under great strain moved away from this man. After an argument she miscarried the child but had not yet told the man. She was furious with him, and although it partially subsided, such things are not forgotten. She is shaken with doubts over whether he is the right one. What does his angry rhetoric mean, anyway? That she is squeezed between the described forces of aversion and attraction because in a moment of weakness she slept with him again and he said this sentence to her. She is angry with herself for her own failure and for their getting back together. She doesn't know what to do about the doubts. Her angry rhetoric and inability to react to the man's shift is only a reaction to her own momentary state. So we can try to flop her rhetoric around the I/You axis. From the sentence: „This is not the answer of a man who knows what he wants.“ we get a sentence: „I do not know what I want...“ This sentence reflects her true state more accurately.

She had an inclination to give the man requirements incontinently: „If you want to be with me, you must marry me.“ On the other side, she was afraid, that he could take it literally and offered to marry her. Then she might be sorry for it three days later. She is not interested in any further rapprochement in this situation, even though in principle she would be glad to marry this man.

I recommended to the woman that she make a decision when the acute state has passed. Although her momentary authentic reaction would accurately reflect her mood at that moment, the question remains

whether she would still stand by what she said three days later. Among other things, who knows what kind of damage would be wreaked by her fantasy figure in the man's head which would be continuously repeating only this ephemeral, long-invalid utterance. She herself is internally moving on, but fantasy figures only repeat things that have been said before.

## Communication Acts and Manipulation

It is necessary to attribute many cases of degenerated communication to the rules of manipulation (see the chapter The Rules of Manipulation). Manipulation, as has been said, is enabled by the ability of mentalization, i.e.: independent modeling of the mind of another person, which is acquired by children at about five years of age. With it also develops the ability to differentiate so-called speech acts – distinguishing what is said from what is intended and predicting what their partner will think.

According to John Langshaw Austin (1975) there are three types of speech acts:

**Table 6**

Speech Act	Normal Communication	Shifted Communication (here altruistic manipulation)
<b>Locution</b> – that which is said	Can I put on the Daniel Landa CD?	Do you like Daniel Landa?
<b>Illocution</b> – that which wants to be said (an intention that is not expressed)	If his music would bother you I won't put it on.	Can I put on a CD with his music? If his music would bother you I won't put it on.
<b>Perlocution</b> – that which what is said that creates or causes something to happen (for example, any reactions of an interviewer, an interviewee, or someone around them)	Which of his CDs do you have? Dead Good Fairies? OK, so put it on.	I don't get how that Nazi can sing Karel Kryl's music.

In the case of normal communication the intent of the communicator and what he or she says overlaps fairly well. Even an answer is by and large a good fit with the question. In the case of shifted communication illocution begins to diverge from both locution and perlocution. An interviewer wants to put on a CD, but instead of asking directly, he asked whether the other person likes the artist, meaning the music. The respondent didn't understand the question correctly, and took it as: "What do you think about the singer?" and then expressed his opinion on the singer's personality, which actually does not interest the interviewer. He only wanted to put on a CD that he likes. Why then does he literally ask the other person about something that actually does not interest him?

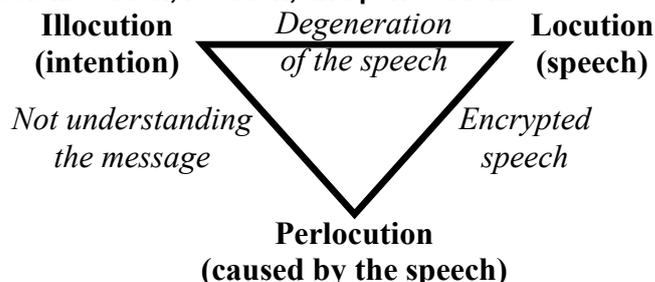
Here we are dealing with politic communication where the interviewer from the other's reaction understands that he should not put on this CD. This conclusion, however, could be mistaken – judging by the first column. This polite communication is a type of altruistic manipulation that goes around the awareness of the respondent so that he is not required to refuse the request, which is sometimes unpleasant. But the motivation for degenerated communication is not always altruistic.

The existing rules of manipulation: the stronger one is the one who first expresses rejection, and the weaker one is the one who first expresses positive feelings. If the manipulator determines that he is experiencing positive feelings and forces of attraction, he cannot express this out loud because then he would be heading for rejection according to the above-mentioned rules. Therefore, he has to deform the things he says. For example, in Ill. 19, Calvin draws Susie a Valentine in school but he is not able to write „I love you” on it, and instead writes: „I hate you, drop dead”, which he sends to her like an exaggeration or a joke. Thanks to the rules of manipulation thus develops a systematic contradiction between illocution (real feelings) and locution (the literal meaning of words). According to these rules, then, the literal meaning of words expresses the exact opposite of what was intended (see above the extreme axis). However, there is the question of whether the other party will be able to decode the original meaning of the deformed message. According to that then perlocution reacts either to locution (misunderstanding), or to illocution (understanding). It is important to know that this shift in communication is not a random mistake, but a systematic degeneration of speech into statements that perhaps even despite good internal intentions express very painful communications.

With degenerated communication it is additionally true that the listener primarily reacts to what it said (locution), but the speaker somewhat illogically a priori assumes that the listener will react primarily to the what is intended (illocution). In other words, the speaker does not hear what he himself is literally saying. He remembers only what he wanted to say (illocution). If the listener does not understand this illocution, he is blamed.

**Graph 25**

**Contradictions between illocution, locution, and perlocution.**

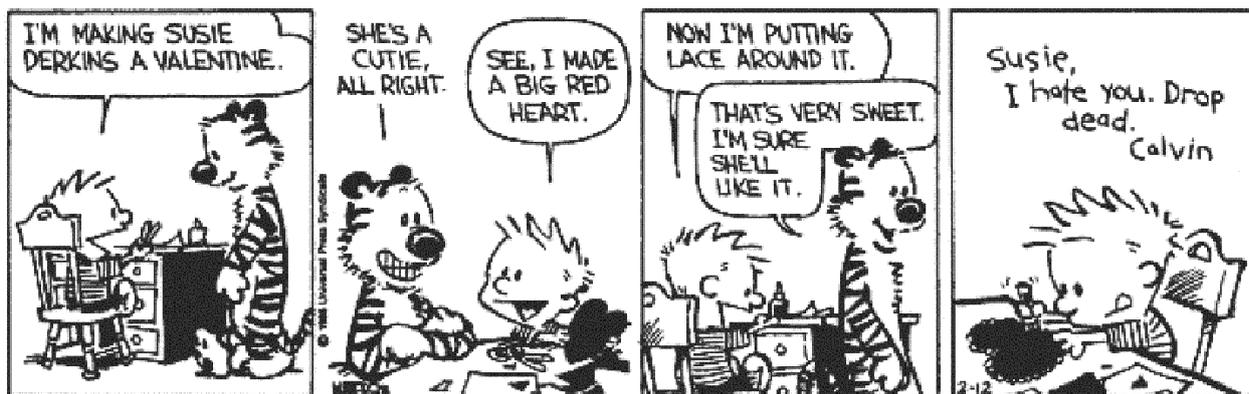


If locution expresses something different or even opposite of illocution, this is a sign of degenerated speech. The listener may correctly decode the ciphered message, that is, react to the intention – the illocution of the speaker, or react to the literal meaning of what has been said; that is, not comprehending the message. Nonetheless, the speaker implicitly assumes that the other party is able to lip-read the illocution. Any misunderstanding that arises is blamed on the listener.

**Example 47**

A father is unable to give his daughter a friendly caress upon welcoming her and instead of a gentle touch he swats her on the head, sometimes painfully, with a rolled-up newspaper. If the daughter understands and takes her father's behavior as an expression of fatherly love, then a coded communication is working between them which those around then may think very strange. But if the daughter says: „Ow! Do you always have to beat me?!” then the father takes offence and returns it to her: „Too bad about the blows that missed...and don't talk back, brat!” and thus developed a whole chain of misunderstandings. For the father assumes that the daughter will be able to decode his degenerated message. He does not take her rejecting reaction only towards his gesture (locution), but he takes it as a rejection of himself at the very moment when he has the strongest need to be close to his daughter (illocution). When we describe this mechanism to him, he makes light of all of his behavior: „But that couldn't hurt. She doesn't get the joke” and perhaps will defend his right to behave this way.

**III. 19**



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Example of degenerated coded communication. Both partners express affection to one another (illocution) by means of insults (locution). Couples do not like to give up this style of communication because they have the feeling that it gives the relationship „spice” and they take it as a game. The problem is that playful sarcasm can be by and large funny and pleasant only in times of mutual well-being, but in a crisis it quickly goes sour. It begins to sting and be hurtful. Unfortunately, the given couple is not able to give up this kind of

communication in hard times, because it is a deeply-rooted vice for them. A psychologist should therefore warn them against this type of communication and put a stop to as much of it as possible.

## Types of Degenerated Communication

As was said before, chronic misunderstandings develop within degenerated communication. A message is understood in the opposite sense in which it was intended. In practice we find a whole range of typical situations that repeat themselves. Let us only go through some of the most typical ones.

### Degenerated Expression of the Need for Closeness

We may very often find the case where people express their need for closeness by insulting or sending the other away. One client complained that her husband pesters her with questions about work even though they had already just talked about it. After further analysis it came out that the husband would have like to get closer but he wasn't able to say so directly so he thought up pseudoproblems. He anticipates rejection, but it does not in any way diminish his need for getting closer because the forces of attraction and aversion are mutually independent. Therefore he tries to use indirect manipulation - to bypass the woman's rejection with question about work.

#### Example 48

On the safety hotline center we can get experience from children from children's homes who sometimes call there. Their conversations usually begin with a torrent of curses, vulgarities and obscenities (clearly, according to the rules of manipulation the stronger one is the one who first expresses a rejecting attitude). If a person lets go of the negative emotional accompaniment that these insults arouse and manages this introductory stage of communication without sarcastic rankouts, as the interview progresses signs of the need for verbal contact begin to appear in the form of questions for the counselor: „How old are you?” – „And do you have a girlfriend?”

These little islands of normal communication are then again alternated with a flood of curses which diminish over time and questions from time to time begin to transform into statements or expressions about the child him or herself and about the problems they have. Their need for verbal contact and contact with an adult is thus coated in a thick armor of negative behavior that they do not like to take off. All positive expressions are said as though in jest, or exaggeration so that at any time they can take them back and say: „That was just kidding, just kind of a game.” The same phenomenon is deliberately utilized in group therapy in prison populations. Nevertheless, not every counselor is able to communicate with these people across this barrier, however well they may know all the relevant facts.

### Degenerated Expression of One's Own Needs

Degenerated expression of needs manifests in a person having a need to actively do something (to „report oneself“, or go and tell someone else off), but this activity, even when it arises from one's own impetus, is experienced as unpleasant. For example, as extreme dissatisfaction and anger with one's partner. Paradoxically, the person experiencing this may be intensely aware that they do not need to see their counterpart but for some internal reason they have to see them. Here is the kind of scene that belongs in this category of partner interactions: a husband was glad to see his wife again, but he did not know how to show his joy so he beat her. In this case we are looking at an externalization or projection of his own need onto a fantasy figure of the other. It often suffices to change the manner of expressing the needs or reframing the meaning so that the negative feeling is changed into one that is neutral or positive.

#### Example 49

One client noted that when she is home over the weekend she has a need to leave her room where she was alone every two hours and go „report herself” to her mother so that her mother had an overview of what the client was doing. She expressed this with the words „hangdog fawning with feelings of guilt”. She perceived her natural need for social contact negatively – I'm going to „report myself”. Similarly, her mother has the same need for social contact, but mirror opposite: at intervals of about four hours she went into the client's room and scolded her for something. The mother's also thoughts turned towards the daughter, although they were still expressed negatively – the need to see her daughter is expressed through the need to „chew her out” every four hours. The mother's need to go into her room and dig around in her personal effects when she was not at home fulfilled a similar function.

### Degenerated Expression of Praise

Degenerated praise is perceived by the other side as a put-down. Their speakers, however, subjectively consider it to be praise, for example, „You see, you can do it when you want to.” This sentence implicitly says: „So, basically you are lazy because normally you don't want to do it.” Similarly, when the mother was able to get her child to out on a nice trip she „praises” him: „You're

always just skulking around at home, you don't go anywhere and here you see how nice it is outside." Or a husband, after eating a lunch that tasted good says: „Such a nice dish of sirloin with sour cream and you would always rather cook some godawful slop.”

### **Degenerated Realization of One's Own Feelings (fearlessness, guilt, etc.)**

Various forms of denial and projection have an ego-defending nature and are supposed to guarantee a feeling of fearlessness or exceptionality. For example, a client proclaims: „I could continue with therapy sessions but the therapist is already fed up.” Similar to in the first stages of a breakup this kind of thinking is typical for an initiator who transfers his feelings onto a fantasy figure of the defender: „I'm fine, but poor Hanka. She loves me; she's thinking of me and suffering.”

At other times a client complains in the interview room that he feels no need at all to see his parents, that he never misses them and that he never remembered them. Yet in the following discussion he becomes aware that he actually thinks about his parents several times daily, but only in the form of criticisms: „You never come home at all! You never pay any attention to us! What a great son you've turned out to be!” These criticisms are, however, repressed. He regularly recollects only the fact that he „doesn't remember his parents”. In other words, he needs to see his parents and remembers them by recollecting that he doesn't need to see them, that he doesn't miss them, etc. A positive emotion or a need is expressed and perceived in a negative package. Already the mere fact that in the counseling room he complained that he does not remember his parents bears witness to his thinking about them regularly, even though only in the form of recollection of their hurtful reproaches.

This is the way husbands remember their critical wives when they have been separated for some length of time. For example, truck drivers have a need for a more distant relationship but for the long periods during which they are driving alone are filled up with fantasies. Fantasy wives come to them as they are driving and nag: „You're always traveling. Look, your kids don't even really know you.” This is degenerated communication for both the husband and the wife. The wife in real life is expressing these criticisms because she misses him. The argument about their children is used as emotional blackmail. Even if they want to say something that would draw the husband closer, the resulting message is more likely to drive him away. These criticisms of course hurt the husband. Criticisms have a short-term attractive nature but in the long-term perspective they serve to drive the other partner away. The man plays them over and over in his head when he is missing his wife, but he recalls her in this inverted fashion. He has the feeling that he does not miss her but that she misses him. His need to come back home is not stored in his ego, but in the fantasy figure of his wife, so he often says: „I do not want to go home, but my wife would like to buck me...” He imagines that she will only criticize him again and he prepares arguments to justify to her why he is away for so long. He is completely unaware that he actually misses his wife and therefore when he is driving these fantasy conversations take shape even though he could just as well be thinking about a hockey match. (One driver humorously described this state as chatting with the windshield wipers.)

This disorder with its clearly social origin also manifests itself in other, purely cognitive qualities: for example, a person realizes that „it's interesting that I haven't been hungry all day.” Nevertheless, it is exactly in this way— through denial — that the first signs of hunger make themselves known, and they will make themselves more obvious later. This again confirms the well-known psychological fact that it is not so important what kind of evaluative mark a given object in a person's mind has, but rather how strong the emotion that is attached to it is, how numerous the interactions with it are, or how much representation it has in the subject's experience.

Bearers of guilt, i.e.: often dependent personalities, have a tendency to ascribe all the hurtful aspects of their partner to themselves — as their own fault, personal inferiority and inadequacy. Without regard to whether this is really their own fault or the fault of the other, whether it is a simple failure or setback or any other kind of negative experience. Therefore it is quite common that despite paying very close attention they are unable to figure out the way their partner's way of thinking.

### **Solving the Problems of „Burning Bridges”**

Degenerated tendencies in problem solving either have the character of impulsivity or fantasies of extreme solution: „I'm not doing well in therapy? Suicide would solve the problem!” I'm not doing well at work? Suicide would solve the problem!” and so on, *ad absurdum*. We see that so long as there is not a serious problem in the given area, this can be merely a cognitive vice or an unhealthy intellectual pose

that may serve, for example, for self-stimulation or self-pity. Unfortunately, even a pose can lead to following through with committing suicide, just like a degenerated reaction can lead to an unnecessary breakup. It is therefore necessary to warn clients against self-pitying fantasies about how their partner will mourn when they lie in their grave.

I had a client who spent perhaps a year and a half of therapy with these deliberations: „You see, doctor, you aren't going to agree with me, but I really think that all of my problems would be solved by suicide. You would get a break, my parents wouldn't have to get mad at me, I wouldn't make any more mistakes at work...” Then there was another client who in any moment of discomfort occupied himself with these musings: „I just took a wrong turn. I shouldn't have studied law, but art history: my ex-girlfriend wouldn't have left me, I would be doing work that I'd enjoy, I could write poetry and reviews of poetry...” It took a half year until he realized that the appearance of these deliberations in his head only meant that he was tired or overburdened with monotonous work. It is only with great difficulty that a client will detect degenerated communication without the help of a professional.

These bad habits take the same destructive form in the latent stage of a breakup: „Hmm, the dishes aren't washed – a divorce would solve that.” Not only that it's difficult to rid a client of this kind of bad habit, it is also difficult to lead her to understand that she herself suffers from it. It is good to become acquainted with this phenomenon in theory before we become its slaves in practice.

### **Degenerated Expression of Feelings**

Degenerated expression of feelings can take various forms and is not exclusively associated with ambivalent interactions. The cause can be not only fixed cultural patterns but also lower intelligence. Generally this is in distinctive or peculiar ways in which certain individuals show feelings that they are not able to express in other ways.

Expressions of feelings are channeled into deep-rooted cultural patterns that gradually transform. One example that easily comes to mind is the rural habit of a hostess expressing „goodwill” toward guests by forcing food upon them. The guests may not be hungry or perhaps they do not like the food that is offered. However, by refusing the food they also refuse the hostess, who of course is not interested in the guests' real needs but only in whether this typified expression of feeling was accepted.

Children often have a problem figuring out the inability of their parents to express their feelings in other ways than through clumsily inflicted solicitude: „Pack up lots of vegetables and eggs to take to Brno; you know that you don't eat well there anyway.” So that instead of positive emotions the child hears a command with a criticism. Or the father is not able to caress the child, and instead he gives her a jovial swat on the head with a newspaper. A man painfully slaps his girlfriend anytime she walks by. The message received here is also the opposite of what was intended.

Manipulators have a similar problem when they are unable to express their positive emotions another way than through a service that no one asked them to perform. They are unable to express feelings with a smile, a tender touch, or kind word, but only by rearranging the child's or partner's room when they are away and then they are offended when they then show displeasure upon their return. After all, they had gone to all the trouble of preparing this surprise! The result is a feeling of desolation and rejection, a feeling that the others are ungrateful, treacherous, etc., when they had displayed such good faith and obligingness in offering their help!

It is not always possible to eliminate or change these patterns. Sometimes, if they are not hurtful it may be inevitable to accept them as peculiarities of this person and adapt to them in your own way. Rigidly adhering to them, just like insisting on their elimination, is an expression of attempts at manipulation. After a longer time has passed, often following the loss of a partner, we ultimately discover that suddenly we miss these quirks of her, even if they once drove us crazy. The tendencies of oldest siblings to rule the world and, by the same token, the infantile „cuteness” of younger siblings also belong here.

### **Degenerated Calls for Help**

Around the trigger stage, the future defender is sometimes the first one who says: „Let's break up! It's not worth living this way!” Then she is bitterly surprised when her partner takes this locution literally. She did not mean it that way. She just wanted to threaten him with increased distance in order to make him to work a little harder on their relationship. Increasing distance has been a typical parental punishment for helpless offspring probably at least since the Mesozoic era (248 million years ago), but it

this case this trifling manipulation triggers a breakup. So it is good to know that the terms defender and initiator reflect who is keeping their distance and who wants to restore the partnership during the asymmetrical phase, and not just the plain fact of who first uttered the word „breakup“.

Degenerated calls for help are often combined with manipulation and it is necessary to distinguish them from ordinary and healthy sharing of worries and problems. It is natural that the one who is worried shares this feeling with their family or another group. In this way, they transfer some of the anxiety to others who can together help them overcome the vexatious feeling. The anxiety is thus symbolically transferred to the whole group and is reduced by, for example, the mechanism of diffusion of responsibility or of shared frustration.

An artificially provoked conflict often serves as a means to calm oneself down. The one who is manipulating it creates problems and scenes until they get the feeling that everyone around them is suffering from a „bad mood“ to the same extent that they are. Therefore it is useless to stoically hang in there by force of will and „not let yourself get riled up“, because the manipulator will not give up until he has rattled the nerves of those around him. On the other hand, it is effective to announce the mounting tension and agitation in advance with warnings. First, this notification satisfies the manipulator's need to even out the „bad mood“, it further raises the level of agitation and also prevents outbreaks of domestic violence. The manipulator gets their feedback and can regulate their provocation so that it does not reach a level that they do not want (See Ill. 8).

Sometimes it is difficult to understand that a person in distress may call for help by de facto offering it. However, in order for the people around them to accept this help, they have to feel the same as he does, and therefore, with a characteristic manipulation he has to stress them out and then ceremoniously offer his help. This kind of person is often labeled by those around them as a so-called alarmist. At other times he may truly frighten the people around him and induce an unpleasant mood.

Degenerated calls for help thus do not begin with a subject expressing his or her own anxiety („He isn't afraid of anything“), but with their frightening those around them. The pathology of this behavior lies in those around reacting to the subject, who feels relief after offering help, but who has the unpleasant feeling that they caused harm to those around them. It is more often the case that those around the subject know him or her and ignore these attempts at causing confusion. The subject's manipulation thus fails, feelings of hopelessness arise and the feeling of desolation further deepens. The original anxiety is now joined by a feeling of desolation and the rejection of those around him. It is to know that it is locus of control what is manipulated here according to the manipulative rule: „The weaker one loses control over the surroundings.“ The pay off in this game is „I gain the control, but you have lost.“

Degenerated calls for help are one of the cases when a subject who is unable to manage some need of theirs displays an overcompensated tendency to manage this need in other people. There are cases in the literature of priests with so-called sexual addition who then exhibit tendencies to managing the sexuality of other people, for example, writing moralistic manuals for adolescents (Klimeš 1996).

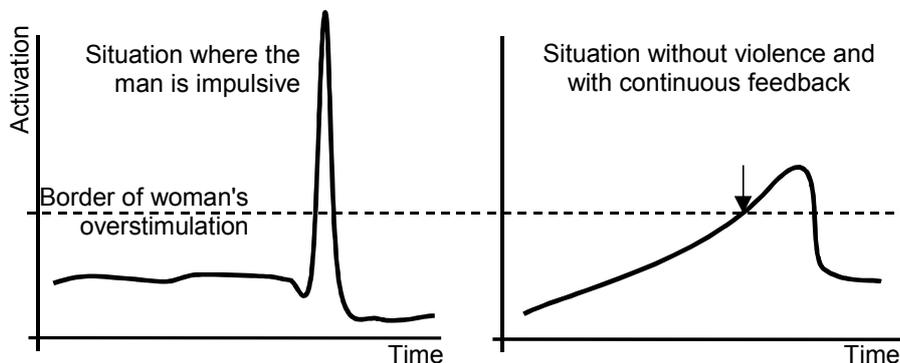
#### **Example 50**

In the chapter on Asymmetry in Assigning Guilt there was a discussion about acts impulsive physical violence committed upon a partner. A husband complains about having a weak will – he is unable to resist the provocations of his wife. She insults and humiliates him up to the very limits of his tolerance. He from time to time beats her with his fists. Then he is sorry for it and brings her a bouquet of roses. He admits that his wife provokes him, but at the same time he thinks that he should be strong enough and not lose his head. Thus he tries as hard as he can to be quiet and pretend that he cannot hear her. This tactic, however, does not work and he is afraid that he will kill her some day because one time he held her throat in his hands and had a good mind to squeeze it. This temptation terrified him and therefore he went to see a psychologist.

Even in this case it was his defensive reaction (trying as hard as he could not to let anything be visible on him), that was part of the source of the problem. Because of this, his wife had the feeling that she was not being heard and therefore she mercilessly amplified her provocations up to the point where the husband's nerves were shattered. It is necessary to recommend this tactic to the husband: continually inform his wife about how his adrenaline is rising and that he is beginning to get angry. Speech itself should not be without emotions. On the contrary, it should reflect the momentary degree of the husband's dissatisfaction: „Why do you keep going after me? What's wrong with you? Where do you want this to go? The last time I walloped you. I don't want to do it again, so don't keep it up! What do you actually want?“ In some moment according to the law of sharing frustration he will reach his wife's threshold of overstimulation and she will know that she is heard, that her husband is not ignoring her, and that he is momentarily more frustrated than she is and perhaps she will begin to more clearly notice what it is that is actually bothering her. Even here we see that a crisis does not arise from either the husband or the wife not trying hard enough. On the contrary, they

are trying very hard, but their efforts, just as with drowning people, are going in the wrong direction. The same tactic can be recommended to parents who use the nonfunctional defense of not reacting to their children's mischief and then they react with exaggerated physical punishments up to the point of abuse. The intuitive stoic ideal – above all else, don't let yourself be provoked, don't show emotions, and to stay in control of yourself at all costs – is often harmful and partially derives from the rules of manipulation: the stronger one (wiser one) is not overcome by emotions, does not get riled up.

**Graph 26**



The husband tried as hard as he could not to react to his wife's provocations and pretend nothing is going on (solid line) up to the point where his nerves shatter and he brutally beats his wife. At this moment his reaction is uncontrollable. The recommendation goes against his tendencies – to continually inform his wife of the mounting tension. After evening out the frustration his wife will back off (this moment is marked with an arrow) and he can calm down.

### Inability to Distinguish Negative Feelings

A consequence of the inability to distinguish among negative feelings is a tendency to conventional and stereotyped solutions - relieving maneuvers. This also results in an inability to learn from negative stimuli. This phenomenon is well documented with mental anorexia and bulimia.

#### Example 51

„Gloria Leon conducted a study with more than nine hundred girls in the seventh to ninth grade. Among the key factors determined to lead to eating disorders was a deficit of emotional abilities. Especially conspicuous were the inability to distinguish among the types of their own negative stressful emotion and also an inability to master these emotions... These girls had only very foggy perceptions of their own feelings and their bodies' signals. The presence of this deficiency was one of the most precise indicators of whether bulimia or anorexia would appear with a given girl over the next two years. Most children learn to distinguish among their feelings: they know whether they are bored, whether they are angry, if they are sad or hungry ... However, these girls have difficulty in distinguishing among even the most basic emotions. They may have an argument with a boyfriend, however they not certain whether they are angry whether they feel anxiety or sadness, or whether perhaps they are hungry; they simply experience unpleasant emotional excitement that they don't know how to handle. Therefore they learn to soothe their feelings with food” (according to Goleman 1997, p. 236).

One client, for example, admitted that she used to be unable to acknowledge tiredness. She thought: „Tiredness, hunger, feelings of anxiety, etc. afflict other people. Not me.” That would have been OK if her tiredness had not manifested itself as jealousy. In the evening, especially when she was alone a catastrophic scenario where her partner abandons her, she is fired from her job, etc. It was interesting that she asked herself these questions in the evening and not in the morning. They were a function of the time of day; and therefore also of fatigue (see the chapter on Characteristics of Fantasy Figures – Fantasy Figures and Daily Rhythm).

For example, narcissists do not know what jealousy is. One such type reacting to my question on whether he was ever jealous of his partner said „Doctor, I don't know what it is. Tell me what jealousy is and I'll tell you whether I'm jealous.” Girls with a tendency to bulimia perceive everything as hunger or a feeling that they are fat. Other patients ascribe everything to feelings of desolation, self-destruction or the death of someone close to them. Others do not know feelings of fatigue, loneliness, being „overwrought” etc., but ascribe everything to a feeling of their own inferiority or interpret them as feelings of guilt.

#### Example 52

An inability to detect and put a name on chaos in emotions manifested itself in the following case.

In a partner crisis the wife got drunk and partially due to her imprudent behavior she was raped. Her husband was aware of his share of the blame in this. He did not want to reproach her for it, even though it hurt him, so he stuck with a compromise sentence (locution): „I have nothing to forgive you for.” He wanted

to express (illocution): „I'm not angry at you. I don't blame you for anything. I also have my share in it." She heard (perlocution): „I won't forgive you. Suck it up." The task of the psychologist is then to help unpack the husband's sentence „I have nothing to forgive you" into the words individual meanings and thus to show the wife that it actually means what she wishes it to.

## **Couples' Degenerated Communication and Breakthroughs**

In some periods of a couple's life together communication degenerates more, in other periods, less. Unfortunately, breakups are fertile ground for it. The initiator, for all kinds of reasons, cannot express her forces of attraction and is often not even aware of them. All of their expressions of affection toward the defender are expressed in various guises or disguises. For example, not moving their things out from their partner's home, seeking pretexts for getting together (work, children). In the same way defenders in the fantasy and paradoxical stages also camouflage their feelings to prevent any further problems.

The most difficult thing is becoming aware of degenerated communication; i.e., gaining a detached perspective. Generally, one person in the couple is a little bit ahead. If this one manages to break down the wall of degenerated communication then the relationship gets to a completely different plane.

### **Example 53**

A wife (defender) brought two students into her apartment as subletters so that she wouldn't be sad. Notwithstanding, she does not have a sexual relationship with them. Tendencies to manipulation prompt her to play a comedy for her former partner and pluck the string of his jealousy which is after their breakup very highly strung. If she gets over these tendencies and is able to tell her former partner that she has those boys there because she felt sad at home then she is able to do something that her former partner does not understand and that he himself would never have been capable of. In this she becomes herself and begins to live an authentic life and she may be surprised by her strength in coping with other difficulties in her life. She is less often flustered, things do not rile her up easily, and her tolerance for her own and for others' weaknesses grows. She enters into a wiser part of her life. She never asked anyone for this transformation, but she welcomes it when it has already come to pass. For it brings as yet undreamt-of horizons.

## **Conclusion**

The period in which I completed this book overlapped with my undergoing chemotherapy for malignant lymphoma. The complications of this condition were sometimes painful, but one interesting circumstance. After the pain faded, it took only one week to get the feeling that this extreme pain was in the distant past, as though it had nothing to do with me. It disappeared entirely without leaving any pronounced traces. On the other hand, breakups constitute another kind of pain. It is a pain that may linger for years. Even breakups that happened many years ago may prick at one's heart when looking at a gift from a former partner, when overhearing the ex-partner's favorite saying, or when a photograph in a magazine recalls a place where something funny happened to the two of you.

As we have already said, this kind of pain is a product of the forces of attraction that keep partners together despite all adversity. In our evolutionary history they have rescued millions of children's lives. We are in this regard only the performers of a mechanism that was perfected by evolution, and therefore it is good to respect these mechanisms and take into consideration when making important decisions in life. We cannot escape from them, just like we cannot escape from gravity.

As a result of the distinctive characters of the forces of attraction and aversion, breakups evolve in stages which are tricky for the partners because a person who is experiencing one stage cannot anticipate what is coming in the stages yet to come. In the same way, they do not connect events from the previous stages with those that are currently taking place – they take these events separately, as though they were not connected. This naïveté, as it is experienced by masses of people, leads to a high rate of divorce in our country, which has been a source of suffering not only for the partners themselves, but also their children, parents, and others around them.

At the same time, the duration of a breakup is generally very long. The most difficult period, when a person going through the process is unable to live a normal life, can last from a half year to a year. In this time he or she is very vulnerable and emotionally unstable. Even here, intuitive attempts at solutions are usually of little use. Thus, if a psychologist is to help this person, it requires recommendations tuned with a watchmaker's precision. It is not possible to give universal counsel and advice or describe how everything will be. In the most difficult moment it is necessary to determine exactly which behavior in a given moment is the source of a concrete negative feeling. The appropriateness of the advice will then be made evident with a relatively quick improvement in their condition.

Additionally, it is necessary to know the basic mechanisms that are the source of bad states. These are described in the second part of the book. We are mainly talking about couples' asymmetry, from which I would especially highlight a very malicious distribution of guilt. Then manipulation, i.e.: treating other people like things. This is not only manipulation of live people but also of fantasy figures that represent them in one's mind. The importance of fantasy figures is greater the later the longer the stage of a breakup goes on with the partner's physical separation. Then most of the partners' interactions are in fantasies. Unfortunately, people have a spontaneous tendency to behave toward the fantasy figure of their former partners as though they were the real partner. This is likewise a source of much trouble and pain. If a psychologist is to help the partners who are breaking up, he or she has to train them in distinguishing between real people and fantasy figures and demonstrate that even minor mistakes can bring on very unpleasant mental states.

The concluding part of the book is dedicated to degenerated communication; i.e.: to communication that conveys something different than what one thinks. It is a nut that is impossible to crack for those who do not grasp what is going on, and take their counterpart's expressions literally and come to nonsensical conclusions from them. The basic methodology for coping with vicious partner circles arises from the idea of the self-destructive defensive reaction. First, we carefully decrypt which stimulus triggers the pathological behavior. Then we regard it as a defensive reaction with which someone wants in good faith to rescue their situation, but which unfortunately has the exact opposite result than what he would have wished for. Instead of rescuing it, they damage it. When we can see the working of the machinery of pathological patterns so clearly, we can devise precise, specifically targeted measures that will release energy which is wasted by being invested into the vicious circles. Instead, we will redirect the client onto a new, healthier path, which will eventually help them be at ease.

Breakups thus are, despite their frequency, a very complicated process which cannot be fathomed with „common sense”. Most of all because there are many natural and intuitive defensive maneuvers that often have the opposite effect. First and foremost because many natural and intuitive defensive maneuvers tend to have the opposite effect than expected by the partners who are breaking up.

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## Concluding Inspiration

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Rescuing relationships is an important compensation for us professionals, and it gives meaning to our work and to this book. All of us are happy when we see that a couple was able to navigate through the shoals of a crisis. Maybe I'm just indulging in self-praise but I would like to show that relationships can be saved. It is necessary to start in time, to have motivation and to work on personal maturity. Maybe you will also feel the joy that was experienced by one couple who sent me this text message:

„Dear Mr. Klimeš, thank you for rescuing us. We wish you many more such successful therapies and also lots of success at work and at home. Gratefully, N. N.. p. s. So far, so good with us.”

I hope that you too, dear readers, will also get on this well.

**Acting out** – a type of defensive reaction where instead of resolving the internal sources of mental discomfort and nonfunctioning change (action) in reality. For example, in the fantasy stage of the breakup the partners tend to suffer by constantly thinking about one another, and the thought-about one in the form of a fantasy figure constantly walking around in their mind. The partners want to get rid of these fantasy figures, so paradoxically they request that the real partner moves far away from them. This external action – moving away – will scarcely have a perceptible influence on the behavior of fantasy figures.

**Activation of fantasy figures** – the moment when in a person's mind a mental representation of another person appears and a mental interaction begins. The main problem is that people take the activation of fantasy figures as the arrival of a real person; i.e.: as an event independent of their mind and will. In reality this activation is controlled by their needs and their mind. Activation of a former partner may mean that the individual misses him or her.

**Activation and mental distance** – two axes defining basic homeostatic systems: homeostasis of optimal distance from the other object and homeostasis of optimal activation in a given situation.

**Activator** – the member of a couple who at a given moment has a tendency to increase the activation. Activators in a certain moment are suffering from boredom, inactivity and feelings of emptiness. This definition is, however, situational, and is not a character typology, but autostimulation is typical for histrionic (hysterical) reactivity.

**Ambivalent object** – a person or other object that at the same time or in quick succession activates to opposite tendencies; for example, the need to get closer and also to distance oneself.

**Antimanipulation** – defensive manipulation that is a reaction to an attempt at manipulation from the side of another person.

**Appetence (attraction, craving)** – a phenomenon where the activation of an organism grows with the increase of mental distance from a given object. A very old psychological term that has been thus defined anew by ethology. The activation of appetence is subjectively unpleasant and beyond control; for example, after announcing the breakup a person is not able to fall asleep. The forces of attraction are weaker than the forces of aversion, but on the other hand they work over a very long term.

**Asymmetry, couples'** – differences in the needs of both partners that are either natural or else created in mutual interactions. Among the basic types of couples' asymmetry belong: asymmetry in distance, activation, guilt, dominance, dependence, phase shift in circadian activation and asymmetry in the decision to end a relationship.

**Autostimulation, autoinhibition** – defensive reactions with which the subject brings himself into greater activation or greater inhibition. People with autostimulatory tendencies (adventurers, sensation-seekers, etc.) tend to suffer from feelings of emptiness and boredom but they generally go to a psychologist because their autostimulatory behavior threatens their life or health.

**Aversion** – a phenomenon where an organism's activation grows with the reduction of mental distance from a given object. A very old psychological term that has been newly defined by ethology in this way. The activation of aversion is subjectively unpleasant and beyond control; for example, when getting closer to a noisy machine whether we like it or not our agitation grows. The forces of aversion are stronger than those of attraction, but they fade away quickly in time.

**Catch figure** – a mental representation or even a fantasy figure of a person that is activated for the first time after the carrier enters some frustrating situation. When a child has a problem, she immediately cries: „Mommy” or „Daddy”, because the problem activated a mental representation of one of her parents in her head. With adults, a catch figure is usually a partner, but it might be God, a psychologist or anybody else from whom help is expected in the given situation. Catch figures created by manipulators have strange traits.

**Circadian cycle** – periodic decrease of activation and inhibition during the day. Important for the choice in relaxation or activation techniques. It is unproductive to recommend during the entering edge relaxing activation (inhibition) techniques. A couple can have problems synchronizing their cycles, which, however are generally described by the phrase: „I guess we don't belong together.”

**Compulsive sociability** – generally after the loss of someone who was close, an urgent need to be constantly in contact with people, not to be alone, and an inability to fall asleep alone. It is not susceptible to classic relaxation techniques, but a soothing directed monologue can help (see fantasy figures).

**Curve of overload, of unbearable excitement** – in the wider sense of the word it is possible to indicate as the third and final of the preferential curves. It defines the boundary where a person begins to feel badly because he is overloaded by stimuli or events. Crossing over this curve is accompanied by a defensive reaction whose goal is to calm the person down and reduce his activation. For example, in an argument this point is accompanied by the typical rhetoric: „Well, then! Great! So you're right, if it makes you feel better...” However, it is only the speaker who wishes to calm down in this moment, and they use this rhetoric only in situations when the argument begins to get, for them, too much out of hand.

**Defensive reaction** – a reaction to an internal or external change. The problem is mainly that spontaneous and natural defensive reactions are often self-destructive. We will divide defensive reactions into specific and nonspecific. For example, a fever is a common nonspecific reaction to illness. The increase in activation is a nonspecific reaction to various problems. A specific defensive reaction would be, for example, the manipulative game of „like nothing is going on”, which is appropriate, but generally missing in the trigger stage of the relationship. By contrast, it is natural, but no longer functional in the stage of asymmetrical decision making.

**Deflector** – the one in a couple who has at a given moment a tendency to increase mental distance. He or she does not call, but rather ends conversations, avoids looking into the other's eyes, wants to be (in the workshop, in the kitchen) alone, is less jealous, may have an aversion to sex, etc. This definition is, however, situational and not a character typology, but deflection is typical for narcissistic reactivity. (The name is derived from the Latin *de flecto* – I turn aside.)

- Degenerated communication** – communication where the message is generally systematically understood in the opposite sense than that in which it was meant, or in significantly distorted form. This is often a result of the principles or rules of manipulation. For example, the sentence „You see, when you want to, you can do it” can be meant from the speaker’s point of the view as praise, but from the other side it is perceived as a criticism – „You’re lazy, because you usually don’t want to do it.”
- Dichotomous or disjunctive thinking** – thinking by means of elimination, in a black and white system of „either-or”. The basis of the Oedipal complex: I can either love my mother or my father, but not both of them at the same time. This forced choice is the most destructive result of a parents’ divorce on their children. It may also have a destructive impact on the manner of courtship, an inability to share common things, living space or decisions.
- Distribution of guilt** – a very harmful asymmetry in couples and a form of manipulation with feelings of guilt, where a certain negative event is blamed on one of the partners. That one is the bearer and the other one the distributor of guilt. The bearer of guilt is generally more dependent on the relationship, but at the same time is usually a deflector. In this kind of couple the feeling that they live next to one another and not together is common.
- Drop-down curve** – graphic illustration of the sudden and necessary change in evaluation of another person from the pole of very attractive to the pole of very repulsive which is effected merely by decreasing the mental distance. The primary phenomenon of narrowing of the preferential curves is a tendency to manipulation; therefore they are often accompanied by a peak of triumphal mood.
- Externalization** – a quality of the distance senses (sight and hearing) and mental representations. In the case of touch (a contact sense) a person considers the source of the perception to be a part of him or herself. With sight, smell, hearing and mental representation, however, the source is taken to be objects in the surrounding area even though the representations in fact arise in the retinae, the cochleae or the brain. As a result of this systematic illusion, people have the feeling that the above-mentioned mental processes are not a part of their selves, but localize them into their surroundings. Therefore they also have the impression that they cannot control them by their own minds.
- Fantasy figure** – a kind of mental representation where the subject has the feeling that it behaves autonomously, as though it had its own will and mind. This quality enables them to have a dialogue with the fantasy figure, which is perceived by those around as a monologue. This concept is close to the psychoanalytic one of introjections. Fantasy figures only have symmetrical behavior and moods to those of their bearers, in this they behave like toddlers. Real people, however, can take on a complementary role. Only the bearer of the fantasy figure him or herself can, in monologue, take on this complementary posture. Expecting complementary behavior from a fantasy figure is mistaken and leads to mental discomfort. A person can comfort themselves, for example, by soothing their fear or rage. This possibility is the basis of directed monologue.
- Filter, double** – cases of pathological choice where the entrance condition necessary for beginning a relationship are qualities that after some time become a barrier to continuation or to further growth of the relationship. For example, fear of a serious relationship after a breakup leads to establishing provisional and temporary relationships with partners with whom „there’s no risk of a serious relationship.” If this provisional relationship grows into a long-term one, it is often the case that the chosen partner is truly useless for starting a family. This was, of course, the condition for establishing the relationship in the first place.
- Initiator and defender** – gender neutral terms that indicate the asymmetry in a decision at the beginning of a breakup and the role of the partners during it.
- Inhibitor** – the one in a couple who has the tendency to decrease activation. Inhibitors at a given moment feel overburdened or even panicked and thus they have a tendency to end arguments. This definition is situational and not a character typology, but autoinhibition is typical for anancastic or evasive reactivity.
- Intropunitivity, extrapunitivity, and impunitivity** – defensive reactions to the distribution of guilt. Intropunitivity lies in the acceptance of guilt, extrapunitivity in its rejection and returning the blame back to the speaker or other objects. Impunitivity means no tendency to apply the concept of guilt.
- Filter, single** – cases of pathological choice of partners that are caused by excessive insistence on a certain quality. For example, a longing for someone for whom we would be their everything leads to extreme testing of potential partners that would filter out normal individuals. Despite the original intention, only pathological individuals get through the filter.
- Halo effect and first impression** – two sometimes erroneously identified concepts. The first impression is a mental representation of another person which is created during the first three minutes of contact with them. The halo effect is a phenomenon where one trait of another person often prevents an objective evaluation of their whole personality, often for a long period of time. For example, a girl can refuse an optimal partner just because he makes it too obvious that he wants her. The unpleasant insistence would clearly disappear after they established a relationship, but at this moment it prevents her from objectively judge his qualities as a partner. (Halo indicates the astronomical phenomenon of a light ring around the moon or the halo of a saint.)
- Hybrid partner** – a phenomenon where the bearer of aversion or of appetite are two physically different people or generally objects; for example, a husband represents everything bad and a lover everything good. With healthy couples the partner is the bearer of both aversion and appetite, so the partner is a true ambivalent object (see also relative frustration).
- Manipulation** – behavior in which a person deliberately ignores or goes around the typical human qualities of their counterpart – their awareness or will. They treat others like nonliving things on purpose. Manipulations are enabled by the so-called theory of mind or mentalization, which is the ability to model the intentions and awareness of another person separately from one’s own will and consciousness. (Children gain this ability at about five years of age.) The origin of the word is in the Latin *manipuli*, which were operative and emergency military units. The distant etymology is from the word *manus* – hand. In the literature therefore it is also described as an instrumental or utilitarian approach to people.

**Mental representation** – everything that we know about a given object. The model which represents the object in a period of its absence and from which we can predict its behavior. It includes not only memories but also experiences with similar objects and the related motor abilities or learned scenarios (scripts). We do not consider mental representations as part of the self, even though they are stored in our heads. They are externalized into the given object and we have the false feeling that they are not controllable. In every interview of two real people thus there are also acting two mental representations or fantasy figures and they are responsible for many misunderstandings.

**Partnership of the „quarreling” type** – Couples with asymmetry on the axis of activation (activator and inhibitor). Quarrels have a strongly autostimulatory function but with their intensity they suit one member of the couple, but not the other. Virtually no conflicts appear on the theme of mental distance, or if so they are not serious. Problems arise from extremes and their accompanying excesses. In slang this kind of cohabitation is described as an „Italian household.” The advantages of open communication are hindered by insults and excesses.

**Partnership of the „stifling atmosphere” type** – couples with an asymmetry on the axis of mental distance (deflector and retroreflector). Arguments are practically absent, but an ever-present stifling atmosphere and tension that is engendered from criticisms and silent pressure. Those around them may think they look like perfect couples because they have elaborately developed rituals of demonstrating positive emotions, behind which real feelings are often missing. Their breakups are unexpected for those around them and they are a result of the absence of open communication.

**Peak of triumphal mood** – a very brief flash of ecstatically good mood that accompanies a successful manipulation. Before it and after it are sprawled long periods of chronically bad moods. This is a typical experience of manipulators.

**Preference curve and point of equilibrium** – in sociology, those interpersonal relationships that are possible to describe with the help of the concepts of attraction, repulsion and indifference (Petrušek, 1969, p. 87). There are two preference curves: the curve of appetite and of aversion. With the curve of appetite (resp. aversion), activation grows with increasing (resp. decreasing) mental distance. Each curve divides the space for activation and mental distance into two parts – one where the person feels good, and one where they feel bad. In practice, we thus discover that someone has crossed over the boundary marked by a certain curve with the help of a defensive reaction. With it they are trying to change either their distance or their activation in order to remain on the side of the curve where they feel good. The point of intersection for preference curves is defined by the point of equilibrium. This is the point with the least activation where the person still feels good. If the activation would further decrease they would begin to suffer from feelings of emptiness or boredom.

**Principle of complementarity** – a principle, according to which when there are processes found only with one partner we find a symmetrical complement to them with the other partner.

**Principle of parallelism** – an axiom according to which both partners are connected to one another as a result of years of living together and thus that during a breakup they experience a deep loss. Thus, what happens in one of them has to, even if only analogously, appear also with the other in the same or complementary form. For example, after announcing the breakup both partners simultaneously and seemingly independently on one another think about the other one more than usual.

**Proxemics, proximity** – psychological laws connected with physical closeness. From the Latin *proximus* – the closest.

**Reactivity** – generally the manner of reacting to stimuli (experiences, behavior) that is specific for a certain personality or disorder. Reactivity may appear transitionally, in periods of crisis with healthy people, but it is otherwise typical with personality disorders (psychopathy). For the person involved it is unusual, they do not know what to do with it, and it is accompanied by typical rhetoric.

**Reactivity, anancastic** – the behavior of a person who is very easily overburdened by stimuli and situations. They therefore try to arrange their surroundings so that everything is as predictable as possible and there can be no source of hurtful experiences. This is graphically illustrated by sinking of the overstimulation curve.

**Reactivity, histrionic (hysterical)** – typical autostimulatory behavior of people who chronically suffer from feelings of emptiness or boredom. The distance from other people is not important, but rather the degree of excitement that they can provide. This is graphically illustrated by a symmetrical, mutual approach of both preferential curves.

**Reactivity, masochistic** – the need for extreme closeness even at the cost of pain and criticism from others, typical for the behavior of a retroreflector. This is graphically illustrated by a shift of the curve of appetite to the left, in the direction of lesser distance from the object.

**Reactivity, narcissistic** – seeking people who do not exude any aversion and criticism (masochistic personalities), typical for the behavior of a deflector. This is graphically illustrated by a shift of the curve of aversion to the right, in the direction to greater distance from the object. The drop-down curve describes their typical experience: loss of interest in the object, which arises by its mere approach.

**Reactive depression** – Reactive depression develops as a reaction to an external stimulus. It differs in this regard from endogenous depression, which develops from internal causes, for example, a metabolic disorder. From a practical point of view it is most important to remember that reactive depression is by its nature temporary and generally disappears on its own within six months. The golden rule: reactive depression cannot be made shorter by willpower. Attempts at forcibly influencing it lead to exhaustion and thus to its prolongation and intensification. It is helpful to patiently tolerate unpleasant states, to switch into a maintenance regime, to avoid autostimulation (excesses) and overburdening. Even though it goes against one's natural tendencies in this period, try to eat, drink, sleep and breathe adequately.

**Relative frustration or deprivation** – sociological theory describes the fact that a person is aware of the difference between his own situation and another possible situation, possibly the situation much more than the situation of their reference group than of the absolute measure of their own frustration. The greater the hope of improving the situation (the probability of success), the more energy a person puts into a change in the current situation. In the latent stage of the breakup this has a destructive influence on the initiator who thus idealizes a prospective new partner or state after the breakup. Just like with parents' struggles over contact with a child where the slightest inconsistency in the court's

execution of its judgment provides hope for success in this manipulative battle which then runs rampant and harms the children most of all.

**Relieving maneuver** – a non-specific defensive reaction, which is typical for a given person (i.e. situation non-specific, but person-specific). It is usually the first stereotypical and not well thought out action a person takes after his mood slides into negative feelings. He is used to this maneuver, as it has lifted him up from bad moods into neutral or positive ones many times in the past. When the person gets into a big crisis, at first he does not think about how to react differently, in a way that might be more suitable for the new and untypical situation, but he automatically exploits this relieving maneuver with elevated intensity. It course is sometimes self-destructive, e.g. when a women is used to reproaching her husband when she is unhappy. Now she will also reproach her husband in extreme way when he is considering a breakup. In this particular situation, it often becomes the last straw and it may greatly accelerate the process of the breakup. Typical relieving maneuvers we see with people are aggression, self-blaming, distance and activation management (say autostimulation), regressive behavior, reproaching, etc.

**Retroflector** – the one in a couple who, at a given moment, has a tendency to decrease mental distance – seeking contact, conversations, is more jealous, wants sex, etc. This definition is situational and not a character typology, but retroflection is typical for masochistic reactivity. (The name is derived from the Latin *retro flecto* – I turn back.)

**Rhetoric** – expressions that are typical and found as a rule for certain situations and mental states, but from their literal meaning it is not possible to infer meaningful conclusions. For example, the sentence said during a breakup: „I never loved you” or inquiring after the meaning of life, which appears in times of frustration.

**Speech acts** – describe relationships between what is said (locution), what is thought or intended (illocution) and what the speech causes to happen (perlocution). Degenerated communication represents shifts between speech acts. For example, the rules of manipulations produce a systematic shift between locution and illocution.

**Stages of accepting loss according to E. Kübler-Ross** – these stages were described in people with terminal illnesses and their close family members. However, their validity is general and extends to all situations where people have to reconcile themselves with a great loss, which is not necessarily the loss of life or health. There are five of these stages: *acute shock* reaction with a range of typical defenses (for example, denial), *nonspecific defensive reactions* (for example, nondirected aggression), *specific and directed attempts* at managing the problem (for example, bargaining, manipulation), *reactive depression* stemming from realization of the futility of their efforts, and then incorporating the loss into their self-conception and *new identity*; i.e.: reconciling themselves with reality and returning to their basal level of satisfaction (well-being).

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