Interpersonal Conflicts in the Relationship of Twins

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Abstract. Taking into consideration two facts: that the structure of social life forces twins to part and that the presented roles in a pair are not equal, (one of the twins plays the role of a leader (L) and the other, the subordinate (P.)), one can ask the question – what meaning does the moment of parting have and what are its consequences?

In order to do that, a survey was conducted, (a sample of 31 pairs of twins above the age of 30), in which every pair was asked the question: " Which one of you made the decision about parting? " The answer had two options: A – I, B – brother/sister. Out of 31 pairs of twins, 16 pairs chose the variant different from his brother or sister – that is A, B, admitting that the interpersonal conflict was the result of the parting. In 7 pairs, both twins chose the B variant – they withdrew from the conflict; and in 8 pairs they chose the A variant – looking for a compromise as the means of agreement.

When analyzing the results of the survey, we can state the following:

– in the relationship of twins, there is an interpersonal conflict;

– the decision about parting is difficult with prevalent feelings of sadness and sorrow;

– after parting, at least one of the twins has problems with preserving his identity and integrity of psychological space.

Since the moment of parting is necessary and difficult, specialists and mainly parents are required to consciously change their position towards the relationship of twins. It has to be the result of applied educational methods which aim at creating subjectivity and equality of each of the twins before the moment of parting.

INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to begin treating twin children separately, since we have a need to emphasize in the environment the idea of symmetry and balance. As we look at twins, we see the harmony and order of the world.

Oliver Sacks, in his article entitled " Twins ", from the book " The man who mistook

his wife for a hat " writes: " Maybe the need to find or experience final harmony or order is something common for the mind, regardless of its abilities or the form it takes ".

I am aware that, on parents and adults taking an active part in the development of twins, we impose an obligation to re-evaluate their psycho-ethical attitude towards their world.

Among parents of twins there is a tendency to strengthen the emotional relationship between twins.

Making decisions about accepting, in daily family situations, educational facts which strengthen the individualism of children in a pair [3] involves anxiety and immense effort. Adults should re-evaluate the way they perceive the reality developed during the period in which relations between twins are created. It is necessary that they modify their position of contemplation of the naturally-created harmony manifested on the outside, which is easy to observe in a twin relation, to the harmony of an individual, individual personality manifested mainly in interpersonal conflicts and ways of solving them. The conditions for this transformation are the creation of separate motivation blocks and connected with it individual ways leading to reaching an intended goal.

In the twin relationship, transmission of information occurs in a specific form, consisting of a different procedure for preparing the message to be transmitted than in the case of individuals. Before the message is sent to the environment, the twins discuss its content and forms.

The individual, while sending the message, independently creates interpersonal relations and systematizes them establishing rules of communication with the co-creators of these relations, whereas in twins, two kinds of relations occur: relations between twins, based on rules established and created within their relationship and relations of this pair – (as a whole) with the environment. Within the relationship the systematization of needs and desires take place, creating a unique structure of an inner world of values transferred into the world of social references. As opposed to individuals, twins always create a message together. The messages sent by the pair are the result of synthesizing transformation of stimuli undergoing analysis by two separate sources (minds) – the one of the twin playing the role of a leader in the relationship and the one of the subordinate twin (symbols (L) and (P)).

We assume that $(L) \neq (P)$ thus the synthesis from the (L) source – marked as $S(L)$ is not the same as the synthesis from the (P) source – marked as $S(P)$.

A sent message can be a result of three basic operations: the first one is sent based on the synthesis of the (L) source, the (P) source does not synthesize individually, but accepts the (L) synthesis; the second one opposing the first one – the (L) source accepts the synthesis of the (P) source, and the third one – based on the joint synthesis for the (L) ^ (P) resulting from two separately developed syntheses. Here it is how the transmitted message is created – we mark it as K:

1 operation: $K_1 = S_1$

2 operation: $K_2 = S_p$

3 operation: $K_3 = S_{(L\cdot P)}$

The first two operations assume subordination in their content, whereas the third one is developed by retaining the assertiveness of each of the twins.

The question which arises, in the case of the third operation, is whether or not the domination of the leader's decision in the pair takes place.

Development of the joint message, without domination of one of the twins, is possible with the assumption that stimuli have the same attractiveness to both of them. However, this is not the case.

In all of the three above mentioned operations, the establishment of a contact is the result of a compromise situation where in the first two cases, the compromise can be the result of an apparent agreement, thus more or less conscious resignation of the conflict situation. We emphasize that the conflict situation will be understood not as the one in which the exchange of ideas takes place, but the one which imparts dynamic exchange of information by imposing the cognitive order (of each twin) one or several other orders, with the twins being the carriers (it has been proved that the cognitive order of the leader – (L) in the pair, is not identical with the cognitive order of the subordinate – (P), thus L≠P) and outside participants of the interpersonal relationships [7].

The third operation makes possible the training within the pair which is activating negotiations while maintaining assertive and creative solution to a conflict situation when reaching the agreement regarding the sent message. This operation dynamizes the exchange of information in the pair and makes possible the realization of individual " Self " by each twin.

When analyzing the chart in Figure 1 one can see that in case of an individual the conflict situation is disclosed beginning of an interaction with the environment when transmitting a message. However, in case of twins the conflict situation is disclosed during the process of preparing a message to be transmitted outside the pair. Twins would avoid this conflict situation if we could assume that, (as I mentioned, above), the cognitive order and value system are identical for each of them.

If we wanted to examine what an individual has at his disposal when encountering a conflict situation we could list two categories: sense of high self-esteem and ability to preserve the integrity of mental space. The latter characterizes individuals with a high sense of identity and the ability to defend it in difficult situations, (such as a conflict situation), and consists in maintaining the emotional balance during interaction with another individual. Both categories refer to the possibility of creative transformation and conscious control of the course of a conflict situation.

However, in the case of twins we are dealing with the apparent preservation of self-identity and integrity of mental space which are created in a pair and for the pair or for one of the twins, but not separately for each of them.

One can pose the question whether the development of the above categories for each twin is of that importance. If we assumed that the relationship in its harmony lasted for the rest of their lives it would have no major importance, however, if there is a need to separate them, which is regulated by the general rules of social life, it is absolutely necessary.

Twins have always fascinated scientists and society even though not much thought has been given to what is going on within the relationship when the separation takes place. Parting can create a situation of interpersonal conflict – between two persons with the individual " Self " – remaining in a unique dependency.

While analyzing, in the research entitled, " The conflict: psychological and ethical aspect " [4], the behavior of an individual in a conflict situation, I found it legitimate to
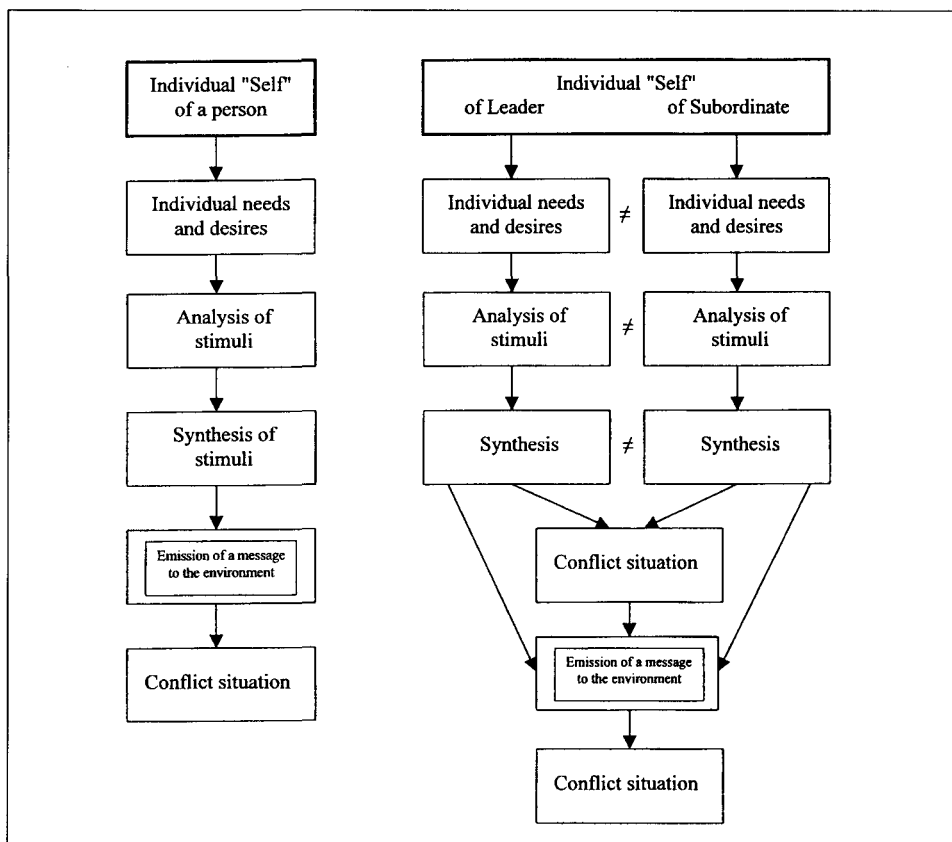
Fig. 1 - Development of the individual " Self " as a result of interpersonal conflict in case of individuals and twins.

examine the ways and possibilities for twins to deal with this kind of situation. As the analyses of many scientists [6] show, the identity of the twin relationship in contacts with the social environment is determined and presented by the leader.

Assuming that the psychosocial identity of the pair remains until the moment of parting, I have posed a hypothesis that in the case of twins we deal with a conflict situation disclosing its power at the moment when one of the twins tries to gain individual identity.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In order to confirm this, I conducted a survey of the process of parting of twins [2]. Thus I chose the twins above thirty years of age: in a sample of 31 pairs, the youngest pair was 30 years old and the oldest one was 45 years old. (I consciously disregarded the differences in sex as well as mono-and dizygoticness since it does not directly influence the analysis).

While selecting the age limit I assumed that twins above 30 years of age have certainly parted with their siblings, have their own families, live separately and, what is most important, have a psychological difference from the processes which took place in the period between 18-27 years of age, (the time range in which the majority of young people gain independence and self-sufficiency).

I asked only one question to each of the 31 pairs: Which one of you made the decision about parting? There were only two options, out of which they could only choose one:

Answer: A: I; answer B: brother/sister.

Twins selected one of the two answers – the variant A or B in a written form, simultaneously and without the option of negotiating the answer.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of 31 pairs, in 16 pairs each of the twins chose a variant different from his brother/sister, in 7 pairs both twins chose the B variant, and in 8 pairs the A variant (Table 1). The above results are presented in the graph in the Fig. 2. The OX axis represents the kinds of decision made by pairs and the OY axis the number of pairs who identified themselves with a given decision.

Taking into consideration the fact that out of 31 pairs decisions made by 16 pairs lead to a conflict, one can assume that the moment of parting was the result of a one-sided decision. Therefore, I became interested in reasons for this decision and accompanying emotions.

In order to do that I asked the 16 pairs to answer the two following questions: (they were answering simultaneously and orally).

Question 1: What caused your decision to part?

Question 2: Name the feeling accompanying your parting.

Regarding the 1st question: as the reason for parting the pairs gave the following answers: meeting a partner and a desire to establish a family (10 pairs), selection of different subjects at university (3 pairs), change of job (2 pairs), divorce of parents (1 pair). Regarding the 2nd question: I asked each of the twins to pick one of the below mentioned emotions – the one which in the strongest way determined his/her behavior in the

Table 1 - Survey results (sample of 31 pairs)

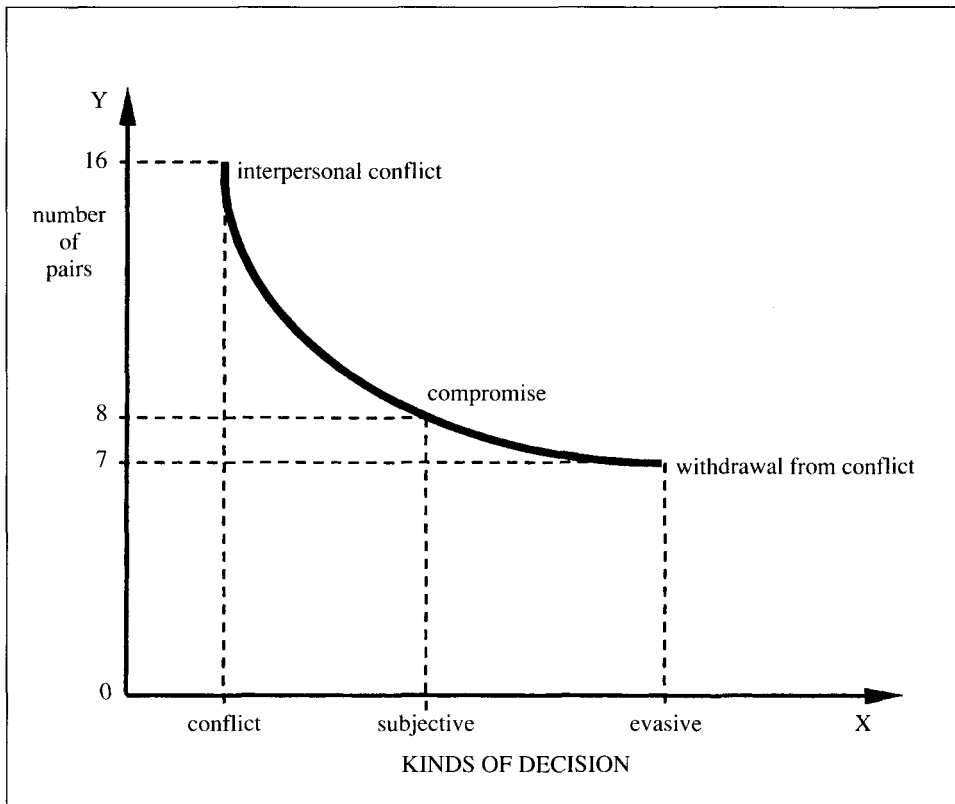| Answers in pairs					
twin 1		twin 2		Kinds of decision	Result of the decision
A	B	A	B		
16	0	0	16	conlifct	interpersonal conflict
0	7	0	7	evasive	withdrawal from a conflict
8	0	8	0	subyective	compromise

Fig. 2 - Kinds of decisions made in a pair.

moment of parting. Here is the list of emotions: (read to everyone in the same order) anger, joy, sadness, aggression, satisfaction, hatred, sorrow (these feelings were selected as the most often mentioned by individuals remaining in an interpersonal conflict) [1].

Here is the new hierarchy established by the twin pairs: sadness – (9 persons), sorrow – (6), anger – (5), hatred – (4), aggression – (4), satisfaction- (3), and joy – (1).

The graph in the Fig 3 presents the hierarchy of emotions formed when entering a conflict situation by a pair of twins or an individual.

In the comparative analysis (look graph 2) one could expect, if not identical, at least similar accompanying feelings. As we can see in a conflict situation, twin relationships are characterized by a feeling of sorrow, and an individual with hatred. This difference would not have to be emphasized as legitimate if it was not for later effect of the domination of one and the other emotions observable in behavior.

Thus the feeling of sadness implies depression, while sorrow indicates the feeling of guilt [5], which as a result can lead to the situation of entering the role of a victim and thus delay the undertaking of attempts to preserve one's identity and integrity of mental space. As far as the feeling of hatred is concerned, although it can be treated
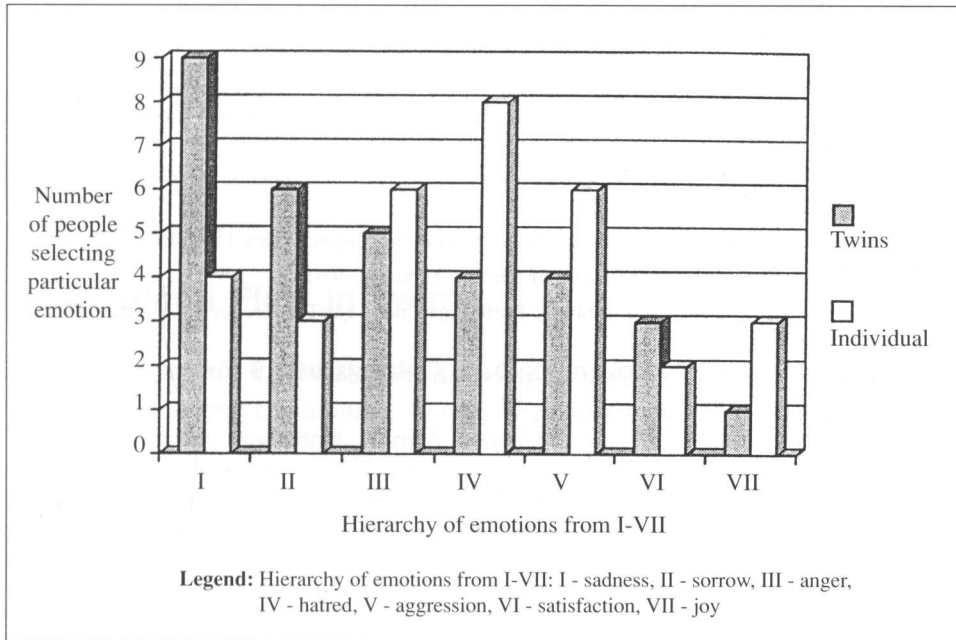
Fig. 3 - Prevailing emotions in the moment of entering an interpersonal conflitc in twins and individuals.

as negative since it more often implies retaliatory and aggressive behaviors, it may be also regarded as positive as it forces upon an individual the need to preserve the two above mentioned categories.

CONCLUSIONS

By analyzing comprehensively the results of the survey we can affirm that: firstly – in a twin relationship there is an interpersonal conflict; secondly – the decision about parting is difficult and the feelings of sadness and sorrow dominate; thirdly – after parting at least one of the twins has problems preserving the sense of " Self " and the integrity of mental space.

   Since the structure of social life does not ensure that the twins will be able to function together for the rest of their lives, and the moment of parting is necessary, let's try to look at this natural harmony and symmetry from a different perspective. This perspective requires from us psychologists, pedagogues and mainly parents, to consciously change our position regarding the relationship of twins. It has to be the result of applied educational methods, which aim at creating subjectivity and balance in each of the twins before the moment of parting.

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