

REMEMBERING ZDENEK KLEIN (13.6.1944–4.9.2000)



In September 2000, unexpected and forever, Czech Anthropology and Ethology lost an unique personality, outstanding scientist and exceptional human being. Zdenek Klein was a doctor of Natural Sciences, graduated from the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the Charles University in Prague.

Klein, a long-standing researcher at the Psychiatric Centre in Prague was senior lecturer in the field of Human Ethology at the 3rd Medical Faculty, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Faculty of Humanistic Studies at the Charles University in Prague, as well as at the Institute for the Medical Postgraduate Training in the Czech Republic.

His untimely death at the age of 56 due to a short and lethal malign disease ended tragically his lifelong sufferings and struggles. His life symbolizes, in a bitter way, the epoch he lived: being an outstanding human ethologist, unparalleled in Czechoslovakia (later in the Czech Republic), he was forced to study human behavior, the main topic of his professional work, without any backing or support from any scientific institutions. It belongs to the sad paradoxes of the previous society, which with its “behavioral patterns” and its very marginal, almost agrammatical knowledge about them, forced the most distinguished expert in this field to mediate his enormous scholarship only privately.

For his civil courage, Klein was imprisoned by the previous regime in then Czechoslovakia during the years 1972-1974. This deprived him of his basic human rights and until 1989 from his academic environment, studies and teaching.

Forced to live as an unqualified help-worker for many years, Klein’s highly cultivated intelligence and intellectual integrity could not be broken even in that “non-academic” world. His unique empathy, talent of observation, his mastership of human, both verbal and non-verbal communication and his extraordinary education in human ethology, made him the greatest authority in the field of non-verbal communication in his country.

In 1990, Klein returned to his previous work at the Psychiatric Centre in Prague (originally the Psychiatric Research Institute) and in a short time both his teaching and publication activities started to thrive. In 1993, he published a monograph *Ecce Homo* and the full bibliography of the Czech and Slovak ethological publications in the years 1970-1993. In 1997, together with Prof. Franková, he wrote and published the *Textbook of Ethology* and in 1998 he published his famous *Atlas of Semantic Gestures*.

A talented editor, Klein became a member of numerous editorial boards including our sister publication *The International Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Medicine*, (Heidelberg), *Modern Psychiatry* (Prague) and *Ziva* (Prague). He was a close co-worker with the *Neuroendocrinology Letters* (Stockholm-Prague-Geneva). He initiated the founding of *Folia Ethologica* and was long-standing editor of the News of the Czech and Slovak Ethological Society.

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Zdenek Klein was member of the International Society for Human Ethology, American Dermatoglyphics Association, European Anthropological Association, Czech Anthropological Society, Czech and Slovak Ethological Society and the International Society of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Medicine (ISPPM) as well as the “Club of Friends of Neuroendocrinological Letters”. He also was a member of the Scientific Committee for Anthropology (Prague) and member of the Governance of the Foundation The Child’s Brain.

One of Klein’s professional interests and research fields was dermatoglyphics. He elaborated an original system of markers contributing to the diagnostics of selected serious diseases. Until his last days he worked on this topic, which remains unfinished. He was a most distinguished - and from his students - most appreciated teacher in Ethology and Human Ethology at the 3rd Medical Faculty, the Faculty of Natural Sciences and the Faculty of Humanistic Studies at the Charles University in Prague as well as at the Postgraduate Medical Institute in the Czech Republic.

Zdenek Klein was deeply devoted to the work of the great Czech writer (and the pre-war President of the PEN-Club in Prague) Karel Capek. During his years of imprisonment, Zdenek became very close to Capek’s outstanding humanitarian attributes. Very soon after being freed, he joined the “Society of Brothers Capek” and later became a member of its executive committee. In 1985, he founded the *News* of this Society and continued as its editor for ten years, during which time he also founded the *Documenta Capkiana*.

Zdenek Klein was a humble man. But in spite of his well known modesty, he became a recognized authority in various human societies and gatherings. He was a great narrator, full of life and humor. One could say that you could judge people by their attitude and approach to Zdenek Klein.

He was a man of high personal integrity, decency, dignity and kindness; attributes which are seldom experienced in today’s world. All of us, who knew him closely and intimately, will miss him deeply. We have lost an indispensable friend, the scientific world has lost a noble personality, and the world has lost a great humanist.

Brave until the very last day of his life, Zdenek Klein remains unforgettable and indispensable.

Compiled and translated from the Czech Reflections on Zdenek Klein, mostly from the Obituary by Zbynek Šmahel, by Peter G.Fedor-Freybergh.*

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