

THE ROLE OF MALE AND FEMALE UNCONSCIOUS IMAGES IN HUMAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ADAPTATION

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Abstract: *the paper is concerned with the conflict between masculine and feminine introjects as a basic determinant of psychological adaptivity. The author puts forward a hypothesis about the intrapersonal conflict between masculine and feminine introjects, not least the parents' introjects, being the possible reason for adaptivity disturbance expressed in the polarity of emotional reactions. An original psychotherapeutic method is presented, as well as the results of its use.*

Keywords: *bipolarity, adaptivity, introject, aggression, parent–child relationships, constellations.*

РОЛЬ БЕССОЗНАТЕЛЬНЫХ ОБРАЗОВ МУЖСКОГО И ЖЕНСКОГО В ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКОЙ АДАПТАЦИИ ЧЕЛОВЕКА

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Аннотация: *статья посвящена проблеме конфликта интроектов мужского и женского как базовой детерминанты психологической адаптивности человека. Согласно гипотезе автора, нарушение адаптивности, выраженное в полюсности эмоциональных реакций, может быть обусловлено внутрилличностным конфликтом интроектов мужского и женского, в частности интроектами родителей. Автор представляет оригинальную методику психотерапевтической работы, а также результаты ее применения.*

Ключевые слова: *биполярность, адаптивность, интроект, агрессия, детско-родительские отношения, расстановки.*

The dynamics of social processes, as well as value-based orientations of the modern world is becoming one of the basic determinants of individual practice for a growing number of people, belonging to different age and ethnic groups. At the same time, the problem of developing new adaptive mechanisms of the psyche that allow an individual to process changing experiences relying on the basic worldview categories (the self-concept components) is getting ever more actual. On the one hand, a person seems to be able to realize his physical, intellectual and emotional potential in new ways that are relevant to the current conditions. On the other hand, in practice there is often a contradiction of stable patterns of individual reactions and adequate ways of interacting with reality. In this case, one may talk of a personal psychic adaptivity disturbance, problems of adaptation and efficient action in actual conditions [6].

Implementing of adaptation mechanisms of the highest order, first of all behavior, is included in the context of satisfaction of the basic personal needs; therefore situational adaptation disturbances can cause a wide range of emotional reactions.

In psychiatry, as well as in psychotherapy, strong, out-of-control mood swings, as well as thinking patterns that arise when such states are reflected [5] tend to appear as a consequences of this or that phase of bipolar personality disorder. Symptoms of the disorder can take various forms, leading to a variety of possible diagnoses. When both the depression and mania phases are pronounced, the disease is classified as bipolar I disorder ... If a person is severely depressed and the mood swings are less intense (or mania is observed), the condition may be diagnosed as bipolar II disorder [5, p. 2].

The typology and diagnosis of individual phases of bipolar disorder are complicated by the fact that the symptoms of the disease are quite individual and may change over time. In the overwhelming majority of cases, it is very difficult to determine unambiguously the causes of such disturbances caused by the combined impact of biological, psychological, and social factors [5].

In this regard, we consider it necessary to emphasize the social aspect of the determinacy of the personality's polar states, as many years of experience in therapeutic practice allow us to affirm the dependence of the polarity of reactions and manifestations of personality in certain areas of life on the internal inconsistency of the different personality elements, in particular the introjects of parents.

In many cases the emotional and volitional domain of a person without pathology is characterized by separate elements of bipolarity manifestation. It is believed that pharmacotherapy in such cases is an

indispensable tool for stabilization. Thus, scientists call the use of mood stabilizing agents one of the main factors that help to cope with the symptoms of bipolarity (See Table 1) [5, p. 14].

Table 1. Protective and risk factors in bipolar disorder

Protective factors	Risk factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of mood stabilizing medications ▪ Abstinence from alcohol ▪ Abstinence from recreational drug use ▪ Structured schedule ○ Regular awake and sleep times ○ Schedule of recurring social activity ▪ Support system ○ Professionals ○ Family ○ Friends ▪ Psychotherapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alcohol ▪ Recreational drugs ▪ Abrupt discontinuation of medications ○ Mood stabilizers ○ Antidepressants ○ Anxiolytics ▪ Sleep disruption ▪ Loss of supports ▪ Cognitive distortions ▪ Interpersonal conflict ▪ Role transition ▪ Negative emotional communications ▪ East-west travel ▪ Anxiety disorders and stress

The remarkable fact is that among the preventive measures psychotherapy is considered only as an auxiliary method of correction of a person’s psycho-emotional state.

Biological theories emphasizing the efficacy of drug treatment in cases of depression and psychotic conditions have also become widespread today, offering more and more verified patterns of the effects that certain drugs have on chemical processes in the central nervous system [2]. Meanwhile, some estimates suggest that only 60–65% of depressed patients shown marked improvement as a result of tricyclic drug use [1, p. 2]. Therefore, in other cases, different methods of treatment and care are required. It is also important not to use medication if there are any side effects in patients.

Thus, psychotherapy is, in our opinion, no less effective, and in some cases much more effective method of working with states of maladaptation, as well as with the depressive states developed on their basis. According to A. Beck, “effective course of psychotherapy might be more beneficial than chemotherapy in the long run because the patient can learn from his or her psychotherapeutic experience. Thus, such patients might be expected to cope with subsequent depressions more effectively, to abort incipient depressions, and conceivably might even be able to prevent subsequent depressions” [ibid., p. 3].

The World Health Organization estimated for 2015 that mental, neurological and psychoactive substance use disorders constitute a significant share of the burden of disease and disability worldwide [8]. Moreover, the latest data (see Table 2) show that during the 2007–2017 period, the proportion of people with mental disorders worldwide increased on average by 13.5% (with bipolar disorder by 15%); the proportion of people with neurological disorders increased by 17.8%; and the proportion of people with psychoactive substance use disorders increased by 16.7% [3, p. 1816–1818].

Table 2. WHO Mental Disorder Prevalence Dynamics up to 2017

	Percentage change in counts, 2007-2017
Mental disorders	13,5%
Schizophrenia	17,2%
Depressive disorders	14,3%
Bipolar disorder	15,2%

The given dynamics cannot but be recognized as a significant indicator of the need for greater differentiation in the choice of therapeutic strategies for working with patients, as well as an indicator of the relevance of developing and implementing more efficient practices and tools, in particular psychotherapeutic ones.

Many years of experience in individual and group work with patients with more or less pronounced adaptation disturbances allowed us to integrate a number of both traditional and innovative methods.

Our work is based on Bert Hellinger’s Systemic Constellations method [4]. Yet we have developed the principle of systemic interpretation in terms of recognizing the significance of any conscious and unconscious representations of certain fragments of reality. In addition, this method integrates the techniques of Sexual Grounding Therapy, the Lifespan Integration method, the R. Bartlett’s method, Reference Point Therapy, and others. Thus, analysis of patient maladaptation often requires taking into account not only the causes of the system level, but also the ones of level of personality, the level of collective unconsciousness, body and other levels. In our opinion, the focus of destabilization of any of the levels of psychic representation is the dynamics of confrontation between masculine and feminine introjects, which arise in different semantic embodiments.

As a rule, at the level of the most general worldview categories, the concepts of “male” and “female” are entwined in a client’s unconscious with categories of good and bad in different ways of matching. At the same time, the semantic spheres of masculine and feminine are exercised in all spheres of life without exception, going far beyond the family systemic determinacy itself.

We assume that the conflict of psychic masculine and feminine introjects generates an excessive duality of categorical evaluations of good/bad, which in turn determines the lack of psychological adaptation of the personality to the circumstances of life [9]. Female and male aggression, mutual nonacceptance of men and women and related situations can cause mood swings, polar responses, and bipolarity symptoms in patient. The conflict between mother and father becomes internalized and exists further inside the person, causing internal bifurcation. The most typical scenario of male–female aggression – the “tyrant–victim” relationship – is being introjected into the psyche and is further realized as an intra–personal conflict structure, which finds expression in the polar states of euphoria and depression. At the same time, a person becomes maladaptive in certain areas of life. In extreme cases, such conflict leads to bipolar disorder.

However, we believe that if in the process of psychotherapy we combine the masculine and feminine introjects, and, above all, those of father and mother inside a person, then such a restoration of the family bond and the flow of energy between parents and, in general, between male and female, will reduce the polarity of individual manifestations. Thus, a person would begin to perceive reality adequately, to live in it, also becoming adaptive.

In the work like this the method of constellations proves to be one of the most efficient ways to dissociate the personality from masculine and feminine introjects, which act as determinants of the inner tension: “This new type of family constellations allowed us to discover ... internal movement, which they [client and substitute] could not resist. This movement ... interrupts the repetition of the unsolved and opens the way for solutions” [10, p. 141–142]. Such unresolved conflict states, which form the true cause of non-adaptivity, are in most cases not recognized by a person, no matter how developed his ability to reflection is. Therefore, psychotherapist creates for him/her a special field of figures as symbols of internal representations, as the actual representations cannot be separated and understood by the client independently.

It is important to emphasize that we take the conflict between the masculine and the feminine in a broad sense: the aggression between men and women of the family is complemented by numerous and varied variants of separatedness that arose due to some external reason, such as the murder of one of the spouses and, as a consequence, the fixation of the unconscious “love – death” connection. Besides, parents’ neglecting the child is also aggressive naturally forming the child’s aggression towards his/her parents.

Let’s consider a number of typical situations taken from client requests; the work proceeded backed by the above described hypothesis on non-adaptivity as a consequence of the conflict of introjects.

1. The generalized scheme of “tyrant – victim” interaction may vary in the features of the victim's role. Thus, an aggressive manipulative victim as a structural component of a feminine introject is actualized to the extreme extent. At the same time, both a man and a woman aggressively attack each other; therefore, this fact already emphasizes the principle equality and interchangeability of the tyrant’s and victim's positions, which are similar to the polarity in respect to nonmanipulative models of interaction. This resemblance suggests that the “tyrant – victim” duality can be collapsed by changing the interpretative context of the situation, which most often characterizes all male and female relationships in the client's genus. The non-adaptivity of the client's child part, which introduces duality, is manifested in the refusal to enter into a relationship, in negative somatic reactions (fever, shivering) in everyday contact with the members of the opposite sex.

In such cases, the work begins with the analysis of the client’s relationship with his father or mother. In the process of arrangement, as a rule, it becomes clear that the relationship of all men and women in the family was realized in a similar way: women held extreme victim roles, while men were tyrants and necessarily abandoned women. In this case, it is necessary to combine the masculine and feminine introjects of the past, resolving the conflict between the latter, redirect the released energy to the client’s present.

2. Often, the implementation of the conflict between masculine and feminine within the “tyrant – victim” pattern is complicated by the triangulation mechanism of the third figure as a guarantee of survival of the two others in their present roles. The child seems to be forced to play the role of an obstacle to the transition of force into aggression, adopting a model of thinking of any force as a potential danger and death threat. The conceptual field of death as an attribute of one of the parties to the conflict is extremely difficult to process mentally, therefore, a natural manifestation of the conflict caused by the “force – death” association will be somatic responses of asphyxiation, panic attacks, etc. Client’s non-adaptivity will most likely arise in any case of the actualization of force in the field of human perception. At the same time, duality and polarity of perception are manifested in the fact that, on the one hand, a certain area of practical experience (in particular, professional fulfillment) is filled with energy (desires, expectations, opportunities, etc.), while, on the other hand, the client falls into a traumatic “force – death” pattern, which causes a feeling of danger and impending death. In this case, the client is unable to withstand the flow of energy exchange in this area.

In this case overcoming duality proceeds firstly through the separation of the meaning of “force: and “danger,” and the formation of the context of safe force as a psychic resource, and secondly, the new context allows the client to comprehend masculine force as safe, protecting and supporting one, and thus to combine the introjects of masculine and feminine as nonconflict and not aggressive towards each other.

3. The regular character of interchange of figures within the “tyrant – victim” pattern is also confirmed by a deeper analysis of unconscious motives as the basis of this relationship. External manifestation of aggression by the figures is often motivated by a feeling of insecurity, valuelessness, the fear of using the aggressor by the victim, and active devaluation of another (in this case the victim). For a child forming psychic introjects of parents, the conflict is aggravated by sudden disappearance of one parent.

The client as a subject of introjects motivates his actions with the feelings of the aggressor as well as the feelings of the victim without being aware. This manifests duality as a state of personality disintegration, as the fear of repeating the experience of both parents acquires a psychotic nature seriously disrupting the vital functions of the person. Somatic symptoms may manifest suddenly, even radically transforming the character of comprehension of familiar and favorite actions. For example, a passion for travel may be replaced by a panic fear of travel. In this case, a sudden, unexplained fear of getting lost turns out to be the result of the fear of sudden loss of a parent.

The duality of introjects of father and mother, violating the integrity of the personality, forms a psychotic feeling of valuelessness, which the client unsuccessfully tries to overcome through compensatory actions, but continues to follow the introjects dual models of interaction and thus only deepens this feeling.

Our methodology involves the idea that it is necessary to connect the poles, which can be achieved, firstly, by dissociating the client from the emotions of his parents, and secondly, by returning value in the relationship between feminine and masculine introjects. Often, careful work involves restoring a balance in the relationships of introjects in each of the life situations in which the client has actualized conflict-based behavioral scenarios. Detailed elaboration of specific situations allows paying attention to more specific, but no less important for a person's associative and apperceptive activity aspects of the conflict, as well as more intensively asserts a new, nondual context of a person's comprehension of his/her practice. Such work helps the client regain a sense of value and security, as he/she stops judging himself/herself, and therefore begins to withstand the opinion of others.

These are the general trends of the conflict development between feminine and masculine introjects: (1) the behavioral “tyrant – victim” pattern actualizes; (2) the third participant forced to adapt to survival in the scenario system, is being involved; (3) an internal interchange of the polar figures of the tyrant and the victim. All these trends cause the main problems in work with clients. The specific psychotherapeutic framework is to be determined by the individual situation, but the basic methods of work with the conflict of introjects are as follows:

- **dissociation** of the client from the feelings of his parents; **disconnection** of unconscious semantic transitions in the actual interpretive base; **formation** of a new apperceptive context for the senses that acted as regulators of non-adaptive behavior;
- **affirmation** of the substantial value of feminine and masculine introjects as the client's intrapsychic structures; **formation** of the connection of introjects not mediated by contradictory semantic transitions; **joining** the introjects into the system “parents as a man and a woman”; **directing** the client's attention to the possibility of acting in the surrounding reality on the basis of the formed system of nonconflict introjects.

The efficiency of our method of work with masculine and feminine introjects is confirmed by the following facts. Positive dynamics in the development of adaptivity is observed in more than 90% of cases. Increased adaptivity is expressed primarily in the fact that clients become calmer and more confident in practical life activities, feel much better, no longer feel resentment, pain and anger. They are actively engaged in their professional career, projecting their own value to the work, which allows them to start new projects, increase the level of income. In more than 98% of cases, polar responses are counterbalanced and become less acute.

Clients begin to envision the possibilities of close relationships with the members of the opposite sex and show a willingness to engage in them, generally demonstrating greater adaptivity in the field of relationships. It is noteworthy, finally, not only that the client's subjective assessment of the surrounding circumstances has changed, but also an objectively growing number of social contacts with men or women, which often causes a person to sincerely surprise why he or she has not “noticed” these people before.

Summarizing the above, let us highlight the main theoretical and methodological aspects of the paper, confirmed by numerous cases from psychotherapeutic practice:

1. The formation of psychological adaptivity of an individual is based on the duality of “masculine – feminine.”
2. The conflict between masculine and feminine in the family forms an internal conflict, a duality of the individual, which manifests itself in non-adaptivity and psychotic behavior in certain areas of his/her practice.
3. The bifurcation of the internal structure of the personality is projected by a person into such contact with reality, in which there is no way to find a common language with the world.

4. The combination of masculine and feminine introjects makes it possible to restore the adaptivity of the individual in those areas of life onto which the internal disagreement was projected.

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