

Confession as a Psychotherapeutic Tool to Work with Ego Inflation

(Iryna Semkiv)

Psychology and Psychotherapy department in Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv, Ukraine

Introduction. According to modern Jungian psychoanalysis, the problem of Ego inflation is one of the most common causes of mental health problems. Already K.G. Jung (Jung, 1916) began to describe the issue of inflation; he emphasized that Ego, which in its essence, occupies mostly the area of consciousness and exists as a centre of consciousness, can be mistakenly expanded to a much larger area of its formation – the Self, which is understood as totality of the Psyche. Thus, when, Ego assumes the contents of the Self, then this is manifested in the sense of one's grandiosity, godlikeness, omnipotence. In Jungian psychoanalysis, such a symptom is called "inflation". In his work *Ego and Archetype*, E. Edinger defines inflation as a condition, in which, "something small (Ego) assumes features of something greater (the Self), and as a result increases so much that it goes beyond its size" (E. Edinger, 1992). The result of such inflation may be not only a temporary or lasting changes in the comprehension of the world and oneself, but also behavioural and social changes that can sharply damage the social adaptation of the individual. That is why it is important to know how to work with Ego inflation in psychotherapeutic practice.

The main purposes are: 1. To pay attention to Ego inflation issue; 2. To show how cooperation with the religious experience of the person could help to manage Ego inflation; 3. To point out, how to use social and religious experience and modify it into psychotherapeutic tool.

Design/Methodology/Approach of the article. The main methodological background of the article is: first, theoretical analysis of key analytical approaches to the issue of Ego inflation; second, psychological analysis of psychotherapeutic cases, connected with Ego inflation; third, review of attempts to connect religious experience of the person (community) and professional psychotherapeutic practice.

Results. When Ego is in stage of inflation, person could feel her/himself like grandiose, it could look like someone lost capability of reality testing, social adaptation could suffer too. Besides, there is another great danger, since any inflation is essentially a slip in any one of the modalities of the Self. As it is known, the intrapsychic function of the Self is to establish a balance in the psyche, and to arrange its harmonious functioning, which is manifested in establishing contradictions between the opposite sets of the psyche – conscious / unconscious, internal / external, collective / individual. Thus, any deviations in the balanced functioning of the psyche lead to the fact that the Self attempts to balance mental activity. Such a balance, is a sharp deterioration of mental or even physical health in the form of deep melancholy, depression, suicidal thoughts, psychosomatic disorders, etc.

Big danger for mental (physical) health is next stage, which follows inflation – alienation, this experience does very difficult to endure. Alienation of inflated Ego by the Self occurs with the same amplitude, with which Ego coincided with the Self. Thus, the more "inflated" Ego was, that is, the more archetypal contents it has occupied, the more traumatic the alienation will be.

According to E. Edinger (Edinger, 1992), who believes that in the Christian world, the concept of inflation is identical with the understanding of sin. However, a smaller type of inflation can be seen in the average healthy person. The biggest problem for the person is to experience the further alienation of Ego from the archetype. This condition is accompanied by a feeling of anxiety, depression and, often, accompanied by thoughts (conscious or unconscious) to harm oneself. In a situation of alienation, the level of traumatism, melancholy, lack of goals and needs, even suicidal thoughts, increases. In this case, the balance that the psyche tries to establish has a character of the arbiter of Fate, and in psychotherapeutic practice, this can be accompanied in ordinary people with words about the expectation of "God's punishment". That is why social experience how to work with such a problem could help to manage stages and to preserve person from hard experience.

Limitations and strengths of the study. Limitations of this study is absence of big empirical research. Study presents analyze of the literature and some cases-studies from practice. Strengths of the study is to present attempt to develop psychotherapeutic tool to work with Ego inflation issue.

Practical/Social value. To work with Ego inflation in psychotherapy, psychotherapist had to know not only about the fact of inflation, but about consequences of it as well. Another important issue is to be aware that when psychotherapist start to work with such a problem, he will have to work with depression, sometimes aggression, devaluation in future. According to Jungian psychoanalysis such cases are common even for healthy persons who is in his individuation process. That is why, sometimes modification of some historical, social and religious practice to manage Ego inflation could help to create pretty good tool to work with Ego inflation in psychotherapeutic practice.

Originality/Conclusions. So, the Christian practice of confession can have a great psychotherapeutic value in this case. After all, the confession, with the preservation of all its structural stages, is effective in working with

inflation. Firstly, there is a preliminary self-analysis; secondly, there is confrontation with reality through the introduction of inflationary content in relation to an authoritative person (priest); thirdly, the detection and naming of the inflated Ego; fourthly, the identification of the archetype, with which the merger took place, and fifthly, the imposition of “*penance*”, which is nothing else, but an inter-subjective experience of alienation without any detriment of one’s own health. Thus, completion of penance is the social form of establishing a mental balance in order to avoid the interference of the forces of “Fate”, and in other words “God’s punishment”. **Summarize the contents of the paper.** The article provides readers to the issue of Ego inflation which is understood as identification Ego with the Self or with the part of the Self. Confession as a psychotherapeutic tool of Ego inflation work is analyzed in the article.

Keywords: mental health, Inflation of the Ego, Self, Ego.