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Interdisciplinary Research of Self-Consciousness on the Base of Phenomenology of Karl Jaspers

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Abstract. The objective of analysis is new opportunities in the study of self-awareness, which became possible through the use of an interdisciplinary approach. This approach allows to solve number of conceptual and methodological problems in psychology and psychiatry. The general development of psychiatry in the 20th and early 21st centuries was to improve diagnosis and therapy based on objectively measured indicators. There is a very superficial development of the phenomenology of self-awareness disorders as a result. The interdisciplinary point of view may be the beginning of new theoretical studies of self-awareness in philosophy, as well as provoke pragmatic conclusions for psychological and psychiatric science. Authors claim that the delimitation of the methodological tools of various sciences in the study of self-awareness is unnecessary in principle. interdisciplinary view should be formed by philosophers. The phenomenology of Karl Jaspers and his concept of self-awareness in this sense are heuristically attractive. The authors propose a working model of self-awareness, based on the phenomenological approach of Jaspers, on the ideas of his followers, and also abandoning the disciplinary view of the subject. In this model self-awareness is described through its specific functions. That may be pragmatically useful for mental health professionals: psychiatrists, psychologists and psychotherapists and it may be interesting to philosophers using phenomenological analysis.

Keywords: self-consciousness, personalization, depersonalization, structure of personality, interdisciplinary approach, psychopathology, phenomenology

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The problem of self-consciousness is interdisciplinary, requiring coordination of approaches of various fields of knowledge, including philosophy, sociology, psychology and psychiatry. The study of this subject is uneven and one-sided without coordination between different sciences. The creation of new concepts of self-consciousness in psychopathology requires going beyond basic method of psychiatry and turning to the philosophical and methodological foundations of clinical practice, which is the essence of the interdisciplinary interaction of psychiatry and philosophy. This thesis is by no means trivial for specialists in the field of clinical practice, which is an additional motive for organizing interdisciplinary interaction. As for clinical psychiatry, it completely lacks the generally accepted among psychiatrists, clinical concept of self-consciousness, which would include its working definition, symptomatology, methods of research (diagnosis), etc. This «gap», in our opinion, is a direct consequence of the limited narrowly disciplinary approach. Philosophical and methodological developments have not received a proper application in psychopathology, without which clinical studies of the problem of self-consciousness in a certain sense have come to a standstill.

In foreign science Jaspers' ideas were developed primarily in the plane of psychology (existential analysis). The general development of European and American psychiatry at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries went in other directions. The key tasks were to improve diagnostics and therapy based on objectively measured indicators. There is a very superficial development of the phenomenology of self-consciousness disorders as a result. But in available foreign clinical, psychopathological, neuropsychological studies there is a common understanding that self-consciousness as a fundamental aspect of human life, a violation of which is detected in all mental disorders [1]. Moreover, it is argued that the study of self-consciousness disorders may be essential for diagnosis, therapy and rehabilitation for any mental illness [2]. In recent years, numbers of foreign publications have appeared on the work of Jaspers in the field of phenomenology and psychopathology, they were written by experts in the field of psychiatry, psychotherapy and clinical psychology. In these works, Jaspers' legacy is rethought taking into account modern methodological problems of clinical psychiatry. So, in the “British Psychiatric Journal” published a series of articles that are devoted to the rethinking of the method proposed by Jaspers. The general theoretical mood of the authors of these works is the search for opportunities to build psychiatry that is more focused on the person and the real life of patients [3—6].

The development of an interdisciplinary approach to self-consciousness should be based on philosophical foundations. The phenomenology of Karl Jaspers in this sense is heuristically attractive. We consider this concept as a common worldview and methodological platform for various disciplines: psychology, psychiatry, clinical psychology, neuropsychology, pathopsychology in the studying individual self-consciousness. In this article, we intend to show the possibilities of an interdisciplinary approach using a specific example of Jaspers phenomenology. It can be the beginning of new studies of self-consciousness and can provoke pragmatically useful consequences for psychological and psychiatric science and new prospects for philosophical study.

Jaspers' phenomenology from the very beginning was addressed primarily to psychiatrists. The tasks of phenomenology are the identification of mental conditions experienced by patients, clarification of the relationships between them, a clear differentiation and definition of these relationships. In other words, the essence of Jaspers' phenomenology is the direct discretion of psychic data. Jaspers contrasted the phenomenological approach in psychopathology, on the one hand, with «brain mythology», that is positivistic and reductionist concepts in which psychic phenomena and psychopathological symptoms are identified with biological processes in the brain. On the other hand, he contrasted the phenomenological approach with «psychomythology», theories in which psychic phenomena break away from any material processes and turn into a «thing in itself».

Jasper says, when a person in the entirety becomes the object of research, psychopathology discovers attributes of humanities [7. P. 64]. In «The Philosophical Autobiography», he again points out this circumstance and emphasizes that the study of mental pathologies is interdisciplinary in principle [8. P. 34]. Philosophy and its methodological apparatus serve as reference points for Jaspers in comprehending a specific mental reality — the human soul and its pathology, and the value of scientific theory, in turn, is tested by specific clinical practice.

Philosophical discussions about the nature of humanitarian knowledge and the ways in which one can study the inner reality of man were the theoretical background for the formation of the Jaspers' concept. In the first two decades of the 20th century, in search of an answer to the question «What is a man?», philosophy, psychology and psychiatry drew attention to each other and began to draw closer. Such philosophical and clinical syncretism, the development of descriptive research in the clinic, the emergence of phenomenology and the general humanitarianization of psychiatry led psychiatrists to the logical question of how the mentally ill person can be studied [9. P. 22]. When a phenomenological psychiatry appeared, its representatives Karl Jaspers, Eugene Minkowski, Ludwig Binswanger, Victor Emil von Gebzattel and others postulated the existence of the phenomenal reality of a mentally ill person and opened up a new sphere of philosophical reflection. A new look at mental illness and the norm was developed in unusual conditions — in the space of clinical practice. Philosophy and psychiatry revealed common problems:

the conditions of occurrence and development of a mental illness (clinic) and its ontological status (philosophy), or a methodological approach to the study of mental pathology.

Jaspers' phenomenology was formed in the field of psychiatry and psychopathology, but its theoretical sources were philosophical ideas: the philosophy of life of Dilthey and Simmel, Kantianism and neo-Kantianism, sociology of Weber and phenomenology of Husserl. Jaspers understands phenomenology as a descriptive psychology and an empirical method. In his work «General Psychopathology», he used the term «phenomenology» only to designate a limited area of emotional experiences of the individual not as a «discretion of entities» [7. P. 87]. It is Jaspers who shows the applied possibilities of the phenomenological method and opens for philosophical phenomenology the space of private sciences — psychology and psychiatry. As metaphorically observes O.A. Vlasova, philosophical phenomenology is a kind of «anatomy of the soul», the psychiatric phenomenology of Jaspers is «surgery of the soul» [9], in the sense that it involves interference in the mental life of a sick person and its change.

Jaspers adheres to the general phenomenological principle of contrasting objective consciousness, aimed at the world of things and objects, and the self-consciousness. Just as the types of consciousness of objects are differentiated (sensations, perceptions, thinking, fantasizing, memories, etc.), it is also necessary to differentiate types of self-consciousness, the ways in which the consciousness is given to itself and the ways it is aware of itself. Thus, Jaspers says that, firstly, it is necessary to single out the ways in which consciousness is given to itself, and secondly, to analyze them. Self-consciousness is a heterogeneous process, and it is practically unstudied in contrast to objective consciousness. Jaspers is not interested in the specific content of self-consciousness, he is focused on the «discretion» of their form, its changes and violations.

First, Jaspers considers self-consciousness as an independent mental process that has specific functions that distinguish it from other mental processes, such as perception, thinking, perceptions, emotions and feelings, will, etc. Secondly, self-consciousness is a fundamentally necessary element of the higher integrative mental existence of the individual, in contrast to other private mental processes. Thirdly, Jaspers insists that self-consciousness has both passive-reflective and active-reflective modes, which in different situations perform adaptive and maladaptive functions. In other words, Jaspers suggests special approaches to the study of self-consciousness, different from the examination of objective consciousness.

Jaspers proceeds to specific description of self-consciousness as a mental process, taking and using as a starting point of the analysis a general phenomenological attitude towards the distinction between objective consciousness directed «outward» and «consciousness about consciousness». He introduces into the description formal signs of self-consciousness, the absence of at least one of which is enough to state its violation. Jaspers describes all violations through

manifestation in specific symptoms and syndromes, supplementing this description with subjective reports of patients, and trying to distinguish between psychopathology and the phenomena as of normal mental life. The first sign of self-consciousness is the awareness of itself as an active being. Any manifestation of the mental, such as perception, sensation, memory, representation, thought, etc., have an aspect of belonging to «me», this is the quality of personalization. There is depersonalization if the manifestations of the psychic are accompanied by a consciousness of alienness and automaticity are experienced as existing by themselves.

The second sign of self-consciousness is the awareness of one's own unity (I am one at any moment). In this case, the violation manifests itself in a variety of ways: from experiencing oneself dual and at the same time holistic (a person knows both rows of phenomena) to automatic speech when a person «listens» to himself and so on.

The third necessary sign of self-consciousness is the awareness of one's own identity (I remain the one I have always been). An identity violation occurs, for example, in patients with schizophrenia, when a person claims that he is someone else.

The fourth sign of self-consciousness is awareness of the difference between yourself and the rest of the world. Jaspers illustrates this violation by psychopathological examples of cannabis intoxication or in the context of schizophrenic psychosis, when patients identify themselves with objects of the outside world and suffer from the actions that other people perform with these objects.

Jaspers emphasizes two more types of violations — this is a violation of self-identity and personality splitting. He does not connect them with any specific elements and signs of self-consciousness, he is talking about changing self-consciousness as the “core” of the individual, not disorders of individual mental processes. A split personality can be stated if a person in his inner world feels a clash with “forces” that are “alien” to him, which behave as friendly or hostile individuals, pursuing their own goals. Manifestations of cleavage are embodied in symptoms such as «voices», visual hallucinations, delusions of exposure, bifurcation of the consciousness of one's own body.

Jaspers emphasizes the idea of a qualitative uniqueness of self-consciousness as opposed to a «purely formal» consciousness of the self. This is theoretically important, since, along with the analysis of private mental processes and self-consciousness as mental process, Jaspers focuses on the need for a separate study of how a person is aware of the social and personal aspect of his existence [7. P. 165—166].

So, Jaspers shows: a) self-consciousness requires a comprehensive study as the “core” of the individual; b) it is necessary to specifically distinguish between psychopathological phenomena and normal psychological phenomena in order to understand self-consciousness; c) it is necessary to specifically describe and study

such states, the center of which is a self-consciousness disorder. Such tasks should lead to the fundamental role of the study of self-consciousness as a sphere underlying any, including pathological mental activity. But this channel of research remains «empty», there are no specific developments.

Further, we propose a working model of self-consciousness, based on the phenomenological approach of Jaspers, on the ideas of his followers, and also abandoning the disciplinary view of the subject. This model may be interesting to clinical specialists, who conduct treatment, including psychotherapeutic, and comprehensive rehabilitation of patients with mental disorders. In this model self-consciousness is described through its specific functions.

Self-consciousness allows a person:

1) to state the fact of his own existence, «I am» (ontological aspect);

2) to draw a boundary between personal, mental and biological components of the personality and the outside world, including the border of «subjective internal» and «objective external»; to be aware of the permeability of this border (aspect of the subject's border);

3) to realize and be aware of the existence of specific states and components of the internal subjective world and self-consciousness itself as part of it, this can be analyzed through consideration of integrity, dynamism (historicity), constancy (identity), stability, vitality (content aspect);

4) to control internal states, that is, direct their outward, to material, cultural, social activity and to intrapsychic activity (reflective-volitional aspect) [10].

This model of self-consciousness could serve as a starting point for further research on the specifics of self-consciousness disorders in mental disorders of various levels. It is possible to outline directions for further research, based on the proposed concept of self-consciousness and the unity of its understanding by psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and psychotherapists. The study based on the phenomenological approach could include identification and classification of the corresponding symptoms along the «axis» of self-consciousness, the characterization of which would allow to recognize them in a particular patient, and then include in known, and possibly new, clinical and psychopathological syndromes. To qualify the pathology of mental processes, their evaluation by a specialist precisely at the patient's level of self-consciousness is often important. This is true for individual symptoms, and for syndromes, and for levels of mental pathology.

The study of self-consciousness, subject to the rejection of a disciplinary view of the subject and relying on clear philosophical and methodological grounds, acquires fundamental importance in determining both the mental norm and disorders. An urgent task is to describe all aspects of mental pathology on the basis of an integrative model of self-consciousness. It has not been resolved in many respects due to the lack of a general philosophical and methodological foundation for scattered studies. Jaspers' phenomenological concept of self-consciousness is the most appropriate basis for such research. Further development of the research

methodology and phenomenology of self-consciousness based on the conclusions drawn from this concept seems to be useful both theoretically and practically. In our opinion, the delimitation of the methodological tools of various sciences in the study of self-consciousness is not only insignificant, but in principle unnecessary [11].

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Междисциплинарные исследования самосознания на основе феноменологии Карла Ясперса

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В данной статье рассматриваются новые возможности в изучении самосознания, которые открываются благодаря междисциплинарному подходу. Этот подход позволяет решить ряд актуальных концептуальных и методологических проблем в частных науках — психологии и психиатрии, и подтолкнуть теоретические исследования самосознания в философии. Общее развитие психиатрии и в России, и за рубежом в 20-м и начале 21-го века шло по другим направлениям и заключалось в основном в совершенствовании диагностики и терапии на основе объективно измеренных показателей. Как следствие, изучение феноменологии расстройств самосознания оказалось весьма поверхностным. Междисциплинарная точка зрения может стать началом новых теоретических исследований самосознания в философии и, кроме того, спровоцировать прагматические полезные выводы для психологической и психиатрической науки. Авторы статьи утверждают, что разграничение методологических инструментов различных наук при изучении самосознания в принципе излишне и не нужно. Мировоззренческая основа для междисциплинарных исследований может и должна формироваться именно философами. Феноменология Карла Ясперса и его концепция самосознания в этом смысле эвристически весьма привлекательны. Используя феноменологический подход Карла Ясперса, идеи его сторонников и последователей, а также отказываясь от узкодисциплинарного взгляда на предмет, авторы статьи предлагают рабочую модель самосознания, в которой оно описывается через свои конкретные функции. Эта модель может быть прагматически полезна для специалистов в области психического здоровья: психиатров, психологов и психотерапевтов. Она также может быть интересна философам, использующим феноменологический анализ.

Ключевые слова: самосознание, персонализация, деперсонализация, структура личности, междисциплинарный подход, психопатология, феноменология

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