

Topic 3. Consciousness as a social phenomenon

1. The philosophical concept of consciousness. Consciousness as reflection.
2. The origin problem of consciousness. Kinds and spheres of consciousness.
3. The unconscious problem. Psychoanalysis.

1. As a rule in philosophy consciousness is opposed to material.

Consciousness is the human ability to think.

There are some synonyms of this concept: ideal, spirit, universal idea, divine reason, objective reason, world will, internal world, realised being, etc.

As the base of the ideal world this concept was realised in Plato's philosophy for the first time. Later, in the Middle Ages, consciousness was understood as the ideal primary cause, as God; the man had only a weak reflection of the divine consciousness.

Already in the Renaissance epoch the man's consciousness was considered as the attribute of the human being. New Time revealed even a number of consciousness' characteristics.

German classical philosophy discovered the individual and social consciousness dialectics, showed the difference between the consciousness organisation levels as well as its activity and historicism.

The essential characteristic features of consciousness is ideality

because consciousness consists of the images which do not have characteristics of reflecting things of reality or characteristics of the nervous physiological processes which formed those images. The images do not have the substance what is a characteristic feature of the reality and the brain. They have no weight, no space characteristics and no other physical attributes.

Ideality is a systematic characteristic feature of all the human society in general.

Objective idealists Plato and Hegel were right when considering consciousness to be objective. They understood consciousness to be independent of the individual thinking but they interpreted it metaphysically.

Consciousness forms emerged during the history independently of separate men's will and thinking, that is objectively. Language, religion, moral, art appeared in such a way, too. Moreover language, beliefs, moral norms, ideas can usually change but the process itself has the objective character.

Also, consciousness is social because it is the man who is included into the society system and who thinks with the help of the brain but not the brain itself. So consciousness is not the brain function but the society function generally.

Consciousness is a specifically human way of adaptation to the environment. Moreover the man changes not himself but the environment. This new way of adaptation needed forming of stable

people communities and permanent coordination of its individuals in the existing conditions creation process. Permanent contact among individuals became the condition of developing the language. It's a very important moment because our consciousness exists in the sign and symbol form and language as the sign system is the way of expression and conservation of the consciousness. It is the consequence of the consciousness ideality. Language, on the contrary, is material because it uses material bearers. So language is the material expression of the non-material construction of consciousness.

Sign (symbol) is a material object (thing, phenomenon) which is a substitute of another thing (phenomenon). Therefore consciousness exists as a symbolic activity when the thought is coded into a sign (symbol). This way consciousness is enciphering and deciphering the signs.

Realisation of reality is fixed as knowledge about it. It is the only way of human adaptation to the world. Knowledge secures the possibility of the outstripped reflection of reality. It offers a possibility for purposeful activity which is the qualitative difference between consciousness and other contact forms.

So consciousness is the reflection of the world but it also has creative character, it actively influences the surrounding world and transforms it according to the society needs. Simultaneously the consciousness and self-consciousness bearer creation process takes place.

2. There are several opinions of the consciousness genesis.

Materialists consider consciousness to be the consequence of biological evolution and anthroposociogenesis (it means that consciousness is secondary to material).

Idealists insist that consciousness can be understood only from itself and it has its own laws.

According to the consciousness question idealism is divided into objective and subjective.

Objective idealists mean that the world exists independently of the human consciousness but the basis of the world is the objective consciousness, “the absolute spirit”, “the world reason”, “God”. This position makes the consciousness objectivity absolute.

Subjective idealists consider the world to be dependent of the human consciousness. So the world is the sum total of the thinking subject’s feelings, namely the consequence of our consciousness. This position is justified because our knowledge is the ideal thinking construction which is mostly defined by the subject’s peculiarities. Here the consciousness subjectivity becomes absolute.

The consecutive subjectivism leads to the solipsism where the world and the people exist only in a man’s consciousness.

The question of primary or secondary place of consciousness in the world origin is not decisive in principle. Any answer is not conclusive and is accepted as a basis postulate of different philosophic doctrines.

In consciousness structure philosophy distinguishes individual and social consciousness.

Individual consciousness is the spiritual world of one person.

Social consciousness is the spiritual world of the society in general.

We will study the structure of social consciousness later. But now one of the most actual philosophical problems is the structure of individual consciousness. Usually three spheres are distinguished:

1) **Cognitive sphere** consists of the area of the perceptible processes and the area of the rational thought.

To the area of the perceptible, sensitive processes belong feelings, perceptions and notions (ideas). They appear as a result of influence on a human's external senses organs.

The area of the rational thought includes conceptual thinking (with the help of the language), figurative thinking (imagination), attention and memory.

2) **Emotional sphere** includes all the emotional experiences, man's internal feelings.

There are transitory experiences namely emotions (joy, fear, sorrow, admiration, suffering, etc.) and stable, long-lasting experiences namely senses (love, hate, grief, happiness, compassion, etc.).

3) **Valuable and strong-willed sphere** consists of internal aims of the man and his spiritual efforts for achievement of these aims.

Norms, life objectives, values and ideals are formed in our consciousness. They serve as the aims we strive for. The ability to fulfil wishes, the aspiration to the achievements of the aims are called will.

Besides, traditionally subconscious sphere (instincts, reflexes, visions, complexes, etc.) and super-conscious sphere (intuition, illumination, and conscience) are revealed.

Also there exists a consciousness sources problem. There are the factors which create, change, direct the consciousness processes. The most important source of consciousness is the external material world, and then there are social and cultural surroundings and the spiritual experience of the man, his emotions, understandings, internal efforts.

3. After Freud the unconscious concept became common for us.

The unconscious is the concept used by the psychological conceptions for designation of those personal motives which don't pass through his or her consciousness, which transform and disfigure the conscious motives and which impose on the person a certain automatism of behaviour.

Freud paid attention to the latent, irrational forces of human actions and experiences.

Later Jung suggested considering of the unconscious motivations schemes (archetypes) which are inhere to the social groups and the whole peoples.

Freud's creative work consists of two periods: before 1920 and after 1920.

I. Within the first period he created the unconscious conception. On the basis of his observations Freud made conclusions about constitutions with a well-defined structure in the human psyche: consciousness, pre-consciousness and the unconscious. The last one played the decisive role.

The unconscious is a part of psyche where all unrealised wishes of the man are placed.

Pre-consciousness makes censorship of human wishes which express the unconscious strivings. Pre-consciousness is the source of conflict between the man and himself. The unconscious is subordinated to the pleasure principle but pre-consciousness – to reality; so the last one must bridle the unconscious human wishes.

The rejected impulses are replaced into the unconscious and their reverse activation causes neurotic situations. Censorship is aimed at sexual wishes. Freud called them libido. Later this fundamental energy becomes not only a sexual manifestation but also Eros, erotic love.

Libido realises three functions:

- 1) pure realisation, relaxation;
- 2) suppression and replacing;
- 3) sublimation (rising), changing-over the living energy into the other, or high aims. This function is considered to be the precondition

of culture. So culture is the libido sublimation result.

II. In 1920 a new psyche topic appeared in Freud's conception: It (Id), I (Ego) and Super-I (Super-Ego).

It is the sum total of psychical beginnings of the man namely instincts.

I is the visible part because I selects, realises or forbids the wishes.

Super-I is the judge over all human psyche, it coordinates the man's behaviour with the social norms and standards.

Freud's conclusion was: European culture is the culture of tabooing the unconscious.

After Freud, freudism, psychoanalysis and neofreudism appeared.

Adler was the first who departed from Freud's system. He replaced the pleasure principle with the will to power. It became the compensation of inferiority complex.

Jung introduced "the collective unconscious" concept. If the individual unconscious includes the complexes then "the collective unconscious" consists of the archetypes. So an individual inherits them in spite of his or her wishes as the super-personal phenomenon by means of mythology, tradition, etc.

The archetype is the image which is always repeated during the history development where the creative imagination is entirely manifested. In other words it is the mythological image.

Archetypes are the psychical rests of the ancestors' experience. They are general standards of behaviour and thinking, universal

standards of the collective unconscious which did not undergo any conscious treatment so it is the immediate psychical datum.

Following Jung, the unconscious includes not only instincts but also archetypes. Though instincts are physical impulses they prove themselves in fantasies and symbolic images. Jung called these manifestations archetypes.

Archetypes make sense only in the personal human experience. In reality archetypes are revealed in the myths, fairy-tails, beliefs, secret doctrines, but they can be realised only in personal experience (visions, dreams, ecstasies, etc.).

Permanently archetypes help culture to reproduce its past, to carry out the connection with the sources. When loosing its archetypes the culture is doomed to death.

Later the neofreudism appeared and at the beginning of 1920^s was formed the Frankfurt school attached to the Social Investigations Institute of Frankfurt. After 1933 all the representatives of the School immigrated to the USA. Among them were Adorno, Horkhimer, Markuser, Fromm, Habermass – the famous philosophers of the 20th century.

As you see consciousness is one of the most complete and ambiguous problem in philosophy though it has a long history.