
THE ROLE OF BELIEF IN THE ELIMINATION OF COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

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Abstract

The article considers the methods of elimination of cognitive dissonance at the mental level. In order to identify the methods of elimination that have been already developed, the typology of research areas related to cognitive dissonance has been provided. These methods include changes in cognitive elements, addition of cognitive elements and their substitution. Belief plays a major role in resolution of dissonant relations. The structural-functional and introspection methods have been applied to understand this role. Belief is understood as a matrix formation, filtering information for its trueness or falsity. The analogy method has been used to identify the methods of elimination of cognitive dissonance. The expansion of the known methods of elimination of cognitive dissonance with regard to their use at the mental level has become a result of this study. The methods related to the work of mental protective mechanism, which have not been previously considered, have also been identified and described. These methods include displacement, identification, projection, reaction formation, ignoring, denial, regression.

Keywords: subjective reality, belief filter, matrix filtration, information, trueness

1. Introduction

1.1. Subjective reality as object of philosophical reflection

Subjective reality as a set of elements and states of the human psyche [1]; a holistic, multidimensional, dynamic, bipolar structure [2] has always been the centre of attention for philosophers. However, complexity and diversity of this issue, the lack of ambiguity in understanding the essence and content of subjective reality, its determinant, the elements, their functioning and nature, finally, transcendence, in the Kant's terminology, of subjective reality for a person studying this phenomenon [3] resulted in the formation of a plurality of opinions on this phenomenon, in the identification of various aspects and vectors of its study.

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1.2. The structure of subjective reality

Subjective reality is explicated as an integrity provided by the dialectical unity of opposite aspects (conscious and unconscious, rational and non-rational aspects) [4]; in turn, completeness of subjective reality consists of two kinds of experience – phenomenal and transcendental [5]. In this regard, some researchers take a great interest in the area reflected with the concepts of ‘consciousness’, ‘conscious’, ‘deliberate’, ‘reflective’, ‘rational’, ‘verbalized’, ‘phenomenal’, etc.. Other researchers take an interest in the area, understanding of which is implemented through the following concepts: ‘unconscious’, ‘non-rational’, ‘unthought’, ‘non-reflexive,’ ‘intuitive’, ‘transcendent’, ‘non-verbalized’, ‘noumenal’, ‘irrational’, ‘pre-rational’, ‘surrational’, ‘inorational’, etc.

1.3. Place of belief in subjective reality

Belief is a process that operates in both areas affecting both types of experience. The analysis of religious and philosophical texts devoted to the study of belief showed that most of them define the concept of belief, reveal its nature and attributes. At the same time, as a rule, very little interest in the study of the mechanism of belief and its role in human cognition can be observed. This article attempts to reveal the mechanism of belief and its importance for the elimination of cognitive dissonance.

From our point of view, belief is a mental process of subjective assessment of information for its trueness/falsity, that functions both at the level of consciousness and unconsciousness, from a position of personal world view and through the way of comprehending objective reality reasonable for individual consciousness. The functioning of belief at the level of consciousness occurs only when there is some difficulty associated with the assessment of information. Up to this point belief operates at the level in an unconscious and non-reflexive way [6].

2. Methods

The interdisciplinary approach has been used in the scientific work that allows considering the mechanism for elimination of cognitive dissonance by belief from philosophical and psychological points of view. A method of inductive typology has been used to identify the methods to eliminate cognitive dissonance.

In developing the concept of the mechanism of belief a structural-functional method has been used, allowing to identify the structural elements, to describe their properties, interrelation and functioning.

An introspection method that allowed to penetrate deeper into the study process has been used to describe the features of functioning of the mechanism of belief. In order to determine the mechanisms for elimination of cognitive

dissonance by belief an analogy method has been used, where a psychological typology of the protective mechanism of the psyche has been taken as a basis.

3. Results

3.1. Cognitive dissonance

In today's world we can observe two coexisting processes: on one hand, the scope and intensity of the information flow increases due to an increase in availability of media means, their diversity and expansion of interactivity, as well as due to increasing penetration of scientific knowledge in them. Furthermore, this information tends to be fragmentary, plural. It is often characterized by a mutual exclusion, demonstrating various ways of reality knowing. On the other hand, the process of differentiation of separate areas of knowledge occurs. All this leads to the fact that a field of unknown information of an individual increases and the scope of his/her competence narrows.

This situation leads to the predominance of conventional ways of knowing that naturally increases the incidence of cognitive dissonance, which is an uncomfortable condition that occurs due to contradictions between existing knowledge and new information.

3.1.1. The theory of cognitive dissonance

The theory of cognitive dissonance that has been put forward by L. Festinger in 1957 and is based on a provision stating that the occurrence of conflicting relations between separate elements in the system of knowledge causes psychological discomfort, which was called 'cognitive dissonance' [7].

The elements of knowledge, including any opinions or beliefs, form an individual picture of reality. But these cognitive elements quite often do not correspond to reality; that is why reality will put some pressure on an individual in order to bring these cognitive elements into line with reality. At the same time, a person is trying to rationalize the contradictions emerged by virtue of pursuit of inner harmony peculiar to the human psyche, consistency of cognitive elements. If these attempts are unsuccessful, then a contradiction emerged in the system of knowledge will cause psychological discomfort, which will motivate a person to reduce the degree of cognitive dissonance or avoid situations and information that cause increased dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance occurs between a pair of elements, characterized by a dissonant relationship, "if the opposite of one element follows from the other" [7, p. 28]. The strength of this relation is directly proportional to the significance of cognitive elements: the higher their significance for an individual, the greater the dissonant relationship between them. The higher the degree of a dissonant relationship, the greater the desire to reduce the dissonance of the two cognitive elements.

Since a dissonant relationship exists between several elements, then changes reducing dissonance should be directed to one of these elements. Therefore, reducing the dissonance has a wide variability of its manifestations. Festinger provides for the following methods of changing a dissonant relationship:

- 1) Changing cognitive behavioural elements – a change in an action or a feeling, representing a cognitive dissonant element, changes a cognitive element itself.
- 2) Changing cognitive elements of the environment – changing behaviour representing a dissonant relationship can change cognitive elements of the environment.
- 3) Addition of new cognitive elements – addition of new cognitive elements in the system of knowledge of an individual, which in some way ‘try on’ the two dissonant elements.

In his work Festinger focused on situations when there is a dissonance between a cognitive element of the environment and a behavioural cognitive element. In particular, this circumstance caused further studies of cognitive dissonance in the sphere of behavioural responses, denying, from our point of view, the theory of universality.

3.1.2. Further studies of cognitive dissonance

Following Festinger, a large number of studies of cognitive dissonance have been conducted. A number of research areas can be distinguished [8-13; B. Drees and B. Eckwert, *Asset Mispricing Due to Cognitive Dissonance*, IMF Working Paper, January 2005].

3.1.2.1. The study of choice of alternatives and the freedom of choice

Free choice. When the choice of alternatives is free, dissonance arises from the fact of having to select, reduction of dissonance thus achieved by the depreciation of the rejected alternative and an increase in the significance of the chosen alternative. If the alternatives are identical, the choice becomes conflict and creates cognitive dissonance, reduced through the refusal of a situation of choice, thereby eliminating the need for cognitive performance. In case of a strong external stimuli, dissonance increases as the stimulus begins to replace the will of a person.

Not free choice. If there is a strong external stimulus, dissonance is reduced due to the transfer of responsibility for the act to an external factor, having some significance. An expected negative result increases dissonance, as if weighing the responsibility to which we agreed. If a negative result is unexpected, dissonance does not arise, since, in view of the result of chance, responsibility for the act cannot be applied to it.

3.1.2.2. The study of attribution

Shifting responsibility for occurrence of dissonance from one's own controversial actions and attitudes to external stimuli reduces dissonance. If we cannot justify the 'blame' of an external source, either the behaviour is impaired or behaviour and cognitive dissonance are considered as not connected.

3.1.2.3. The study of a relationship

When behaviour is uncharacteristic and inconsistent, increased dissonance leads to an increase in changing attitude towards this behaviour. It means a person is forced to justify his/her behaviour, which caused dissonance in order to reduce the degree of tension. Moreover, the greater the dissonance is, the more the attitude changes. If at the same time positive emotions occur, they eliminate the need to change the attitude, as they are likely to reduce excitation at the physiological level, caused by negative emotions, characteristic of dissonant excitation.

3.1.2.4. The study of the influence of efforts

In anticipation of the punishment or major threat, as well as when expected results have not been achieved at high expenditure of efforts, dissonance from the act is reduced by increasing the significance of the act. The more efforts are spent in such situation, the more valuable the act will be perceived. Low threat reduces dissonance by reducing the attractiveness of the forbidden object.

3.1.2.5. The study of knowledge change

When cognitive dissonance is reduced, conflicting information should be either ignored, devalued or supplemented with new knowledge, enhancing or modifying the significance of cognitive elements, or it is necessary to change an opinion. It is preferable to change the information that is difficult to refute, the consonant and dissonant information that is easily refuted.

3.1.2.6. The study of self-justification

Unjustified expectations towards oneself lead to increased dissonance, unjustified expectations towards another person does not have such an effect. Dissonance is often reduced by improving self-esteem in an activity that is more successful for us. If dissonance threatens a self-concept or our identity, social recognition can help. If our self-esteem changes negatively as a result of another person's actions, we can reduce the significance of the person or the action that caused dissonance, or begin to improve ourselves in this activity.

Against a great interest in the problem of cognitive dissonance after Festinger, a common systemic assessment of the phenomenon has not been developed. The studies undertaken, for the most part, created external and intrapersonal conditions for the occurrence of cognitive dissonance and specific methods of its elimination by changing behaviour or attitude. Meanwhile the mental process was almost not affected. This was most likely due to the impossibility of applying psychological methods of experiment and observation toward the area that is analysed by a reflective analysis.

The following methods of elimination of cognitive dissonance can be identified:

- changing the information available by increasing its significance through trustworthiness, experienced stress or social justification;
- changing the received information by reducing its significance or ignoring;
- addition of new cognitive elements;
- redirecting the attention to the other, more easily resolvable dissonance to an external stimulus;
- inclusion of positive emotions in a dissonant relationship.

3.2. *Belief*

3.2.1. The idea of the belief filter

From our point of view, belief is the closest to mental operations of probability, consent, confidence, which evaluate something from the perspective of reality. Such position, according to which belief is understood as confidence, assurance in the trueness of anything, is reflected in the works of F.W.J. Schelling [14], L. Feuerbach [15], S.L. Frank [16], E. Fromm [17].

For an explanation of belief, we used the idea of a filter which is often used to explain the method of selection of the information. The belief filter is a mechanism that establishes the conditions of processing, evaluation and follow-up revision of the incoming information. Filter capacity is set by certain conditions. The received information is filtered through a particular matrix, which is a certain rigid form. On one hand, it dictates the conditions for filtering information, and on the other hand, it forms a logical entanglement of this information with personal knowledge. The use of a matrix filter is justified by the fact that the matrix is perceived as a template with a specific pattern. Thereby it is assumed that filter efficiency will be set by the matrix configuration.

This reality or a simulated one is perceived by a person in the form of images, representations, i.e. the human psyche is not faced with the reality as it is, but with its interpretation, and disjunction between objective reality and those representations and images with which it works is not perceived. This allows affirming that belief interacts exclusively with the ideal world which is generated by all sorts of information. Moreover, the information in this case is considered in the broadest sense: starting from the human genome and signals of

the sensor system up to the logical operations and semantic-symbolic representations.

Belief is a mental process, which filters the incoming information and gives it the status of trueness or falsity, thereby establishing for the human the realness of existence of something. All information gets through the human brain and passes filtration of belief to a greater or lesser degree.

The act of belief can occur both in the conscious and unconscious state. At the unconscious level filtration occurs, provided that the information received passes ideally through filter matrices. It means that this process is a kind of automatism, which does not allow to check previously verified information, thus preserving the energy of the psyche. The information which has previously been filtered or received in early childhood passes in such a mode.

Inclusion of consciousness into this process occurs when there are apparent inconsistencies of information received and the filter matrix, which causes cognitive dissonance. In this case, consciousness gets involved in order to eliminate the contradictions that occur when the information passes through the filter. Thus, the thinking process reprocesses information that has not passed the belief filter yet.

3.2.2. The structure of the belief filter

The belief filter has a rather complicated structure, which consists of several zones: a pre-processing zone, a conditionally true information zone, a conditionally false information zone, a true information filter, a false information filter, a filter matrix pattern. The structural distribution of the zones is schematically shown on the Figure 1.

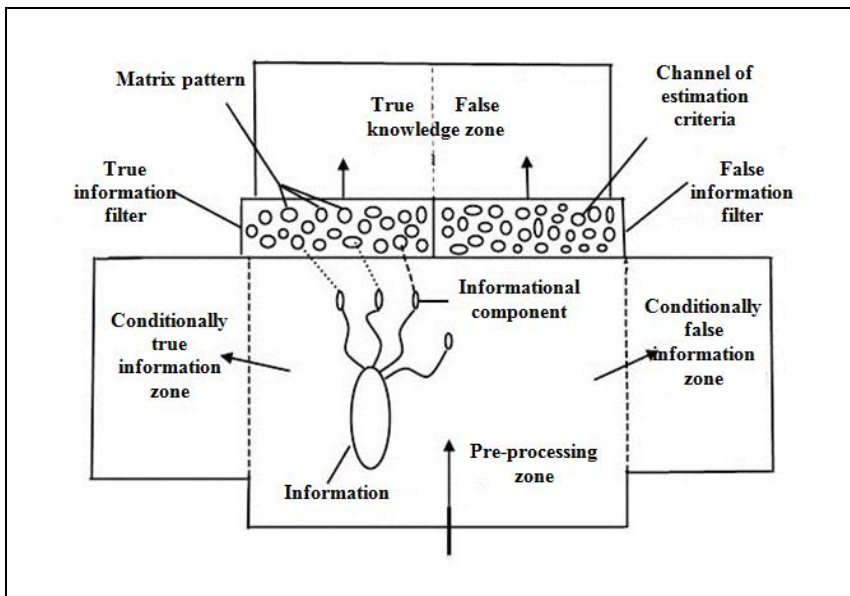


Figure 1. Belief filter.

A pre-processing zone is a buffer which contains the information which enters the psyche, where it must ultimately be directed to the belief filter. In this zone the information is subject to adjustment and follow-up revision needed to pass the filter.

Conditionally true/false information zones are also buffers where the information that has not passed the belief filter for whatever reason is stored. In these zones, the information is stored in the mode of expecting the receipt of additional facts, which are necessary for consciousness for its full assessment. The prevailing assessment of trueness or falsity of the majority of components of the information received determines the distribution to a particular area of conditionality.

For filters of true and false information there is a matrix pattern, which determines their throughout capacity. This pattern is some kind of a structural model containing different assessment parameters. This pattern is strictly individual, since it is formed on the basis of persogenesis, while not being genetically determined. This matrix pattern is not completely constant, it can be modified, while in childhood changes occur quite rapidly, in contrast to adulthood, characterized by a high degree of rigidity of the filter matrix. The matrix pattern is a set of channels, each of which corresponds to its separate criteria of trueness/falsity. These criteria are different, but it is possible to separate some common groups which are present in most cases. These groups of criteria can be as follows: assessment of analysers (obligatory for all matrices), assessment of related external conditions for information uptake, assessment of a source generating information, assessment of an internal psychophysical state, assessment of analogousness, assessment of obligatoriness, assessment of consistency. These criteria can be used both main and secondary ones. The information should be in compliance with the main criteria, while compliance with the secondary criteria is only desirable. The status of these criteria may also change over time. The criteria for assessment are formed only on the basis of accumulated knowledge, not depending on the way it was obtained, as it is impossible to assess the information based on the information unknown to the psyche. It should be noted that knowledge that lies at the base of the matrix pattern must be identified by consciousness of an individual both as true (for filtering true information) or false (for filtering false information) knowledge. Each channel of the matrix has something like an individual pattern, a certain individual connector (this comparison is convenient to describe the filter operation). Subsequently, for the convenience of description of a mechanism of belief we will denote a single channel of the assessment criteria on the filter matrix as a 'connector'.

3.2.3. How the mechanism of belief works

Let us consider the mechanism of the belief filter on the example of conflict-free passage of information through it.

For easy review of the mechanism of belief the information may be represented as a capsule with numerous branches with plugs at the ends, which have their individual patterns corresponding to various components of this information. Then a separate component of any information will be denoted as a 'plug'. In order to connect plugs to the connectors there should be conformity between them.

The assessment of the information will occur provided that all plugs of information are connected to the connectors of matrix channels. The focus of assessment depends on the dominance of connectors. Considering the information as true or false is marked by conditional lightening of a bulb and the opening of one of the matrices. After that, the assessed information enters a zone of knowledge having a status of trueness or falsity, and is embedded in the world view system of a person.

If the information was assessed as true, it is directed to the zone of true knowledge. If the information was assessed as false, it is directed to the zone of false knowledge, which is a kind of a personal 'anti-worldview'.

If one of the plugs has a configuration similar to configuration of its potential connector, but it does not entirely fit, then in the filter matrix a variative connector may be formed. This procedure often takes place at the unconscious level. Thus, we often perceive the information as true if its criteria are similar to true criteria, from our point of view, and vice versa. If when connecting the information to the filter, one, that is more often, or more, that is quite rare, plugs, for which there are no similar connectors (i.e. in the matrix pattern of the filter one more criterion of information assessment is not provided), a new connector is formed in the matrix directly for the assessment criterion that will fit the connected plug by its pattern. This occurs only if all the other plugs of information fit, which allows assessing the information and, consequently, choosing the matrix, where one connector will be plugged in.

If when connecting the information to the filter the majority of plugs fit the connectors of the matrix of trueness, and a small portion of plugs are connected to connectors of the matrix of falsity, such information will appear in the conditionally true information zone. If the distribution of plugs is directly contrary, the information gets into conditionally false information zone. The ratio of such divergent connections to the filter matrix determines the degree of reliability/unreliability of information. The entry of information in this or that zone of conditionality runs search thinking that will recheck the information, look for more information, adjust it, thereby modifying the information to the state in which it can pass through one of the belief filters.

When rechecking information, consciousness needs to rationalize the cause of its falsity or inaccuracy. If this is not done, i.e. consciousness will not know the cause of the error, next time the same incident will occur. This error may not necessarily be explained by the fact of its existence, it is sufficient for consciousness to validate an explanation and, of course, validate it at the level with which consciousness will agree.

After such revision the information may pass the belief filter and appear in the knowledge zone, and be re-submitted to rechecking, provided that it can enter the opposite zone of conditionality for rechecking. Displacement of information between the zones occurs quite freely, since there are no filters between the zones of conditionality. Displacement of the same information from the true knowledge zone to the false knowledge zone and vice versa takes place with a certain degree of difficulty, since firstly the information returns to the pre-processing zone and then is re-filtered through the matrix, obtaining a new status of trueness/falsity.

3.3. Methods of the elimination of cognitive dissonance

3.3.1. The occurrence of cognitive dissonance

If the information received even after its rechecking and correction cannot pass through the belief filter and cannot be placed in the zone of conditionality by virtue of its relevance, i.e. it actively tends to obtain a status; thereby it initiates the occurrence of cognitive dissonance.

If the information received causes cognitive dissonance, which can threaten the integrity of the personal view of the world or interfere with the desired, but conflicting information to pass through the filter matrix, then the contradiction forces the psyche to eliminate it, preferably with a satisfactory result.

Cognitive dissonance may occur between the new information and the belief filter, and knowledge in the base of the filter, assessment criteria and a matrix pattern can be opposite in the filter. On the other hand, the information does not always confront as a single system, its individual components may also contradict one another.

Dissonance is manifested in understanding the fact that new information logically belongs to a certain category of trueness/falsity, but the belief filter contradicts it, i.e. a situation occurs where one of the pieces of information or the filter should be deleted as incompatible with others. At its core, this situation is similar to the process of selection of alternatives, with only one difference: one of the alternatives estimated as true is more desirable for the psyche than the other one presented in the form of new contradictory information. The more desirable personal knowledge is (i.e. it is systematized and reflected on or socially significant), the harder it is for the psyche to deny it and give preference to a certain alternative.

Depending on which components of dissonant elements contradict with each other and what significance they have for the world view, consciousness will choose one or another strategy of protection from discomfort. The strength of the link of knowledge with the personal world view and a degree of reliability of contradicting information will also have an impact on the choice of the strategy. Moreover, several strategies are often used. The number of strategies used and the intensity of their use will depend on the degree of dissonance, i.e.

on the degree of threat of changing the outlook. Selection of strategies occurs until complete victory of one of the arguments and elimination of cognitive dissonance. To eliminate cognitive dissonance different protection strategies may be used based on the change in one of the elements of dissonant relationships.

3.3.2. Methods based on changes in cognitive elements

Let us consider possible ways to protect against cognitive dissonance. Below are strategies for elimination of cognitive dissonance.

3.3.2.1. Elimination of a counterargument

Consciousness begins to randomly search for any refuting arguments, though these refuting arguments may be 'far-fetched'. The weaker the counterargument is, the easier it is to be refuted by consciousness.

3.3.2.2. Modification of information

Consciousness begins to actively look for new facts to modify this information in the part that can be changed. At the same time, consciousness will actively avoid the information that enhances dissonance emerged. The facts found must be logically connected to the information received. But consciousness must provide 'reliable' reasons why it is incorrect to perceive the information as conflict. Such manipulation with the facts may be conducted in consciousness which, on the one hand, has a wealth of personal experience, and, on the other hand, has an insufficient degree of reflection. After all, if consciousness may reflect on its actions, then it begins to realize what altered the information and then already on this basis it will not believe in it.

3.3.2.3. Reconciliation

There occurs a search for new information to add a new element, which links two elements in a dissonant relationship to each other. This new element should logically link a counterargument and contradicting knowledge.

3.3.2.4. Division into components

It occurs when all the information components perfectly fit the matrix channels, while one component may in no way be adjusted. This component is cut off from the main information in the zone of conditionality; it can be integrated as a new element into the other relevant information and try to be re-assessed by the belief filter. Truncated information passes freely through the belief filter and gets incorporated into the personal world view.

3.3.2.5. Revision of the filter matrix

The belief filter matrix is comprehended, providing consciousness with the information of its main criteria and their validity which are sorted, re-interpreted and re-checked by consciousness on its trueness, trying to explain a contradiction by any facts. If a criterion that has less certainty than a counterargument is found in the matrix, it will be replaced into another criterion which may accept new information. Modification of the filter takes place by the method that is the most painless for the system to maintain its integrity. The information enters the zone of true knowledge, thus initiating the replacement of old logical links related to the criterion removed from the matrix to new ones.

3.3.2.6. Creation of a new channel in the matrix

In the matrix a new passageway is created, the criteria of which are adjusted for the counterargument. Thereafter, this channel starts to operate along with the others. This is possible when the matrix is not even formed or sufficiently adaptive.

3.3.2.7. Removal of knowledge

This strategy is used when consciousness decides to deny some conviction. Knowledge that has been previously assessed as true is removed from the zone of true knowledge to the zone of false knowledge. Corresponding channels and assessment criteria are also removed from the filter matrix. This strategy is often applied to knowledge, which is not fundamental, not verified by personal experience. In all other cases, this strategy is rarely used or used only when all other means have been exhausted, and a counterargument cannot be removed or modified. Consciousness perceives such a radical step oversensitively, since it entails the removal of all logical links and convictions which logically appear in this knowledge. If this is not done, this knowledge will implicitly conflict with new knowledge. In most cases, a counterargument becomes remote knowledge both in the personal world view and adjusting itself under the matrix pattern of the belief filter. When replacing the fundamental knowledge, a large part of the personal world view is subject to alteration.

3.3.3. *Methods based on protective mechanisms of the psyche*

The following strategies are used when, for one reason or another, in the matrix of belief there is information of the strict prohibition on changing the belief filter or its criteria. These strategies are associated with a change in the way consciousness considers the information received, and they can be correlated with psychological protection means [18]. Below are strategies of changing cognitive dissonance when it is prohibited to change the belief filter.

3.3.3.1. Displacement

A counterargument is re-thought in such a way that it is changed beyond recognition. In most cases sophisticated techniques are used. Thus, a counterargument begins to lose its reliability, and then it is easily refuted by logical arguments and enters the zone of false knowledge.

3.3.3.2. Identification

The illusion appears in the consciousness that the dissonant information is fully consistent with true knowledge. When this information enters the zone of true knowledge, knowledge that has been previously contradictory will be altered in accordance with the new information and all the associated elements.

3.3.3.3. Projection

Contradictory information is ‘covered’ by some unquestioned authority, the significance of which is indisputable for consciousness and which cannot be changed. At the same time, the filter matrix accepts both authoritative and dissonant information that is closely linked to the first type of information. This authority may not be logically linked with the information, but after its use this link will appear.

3.3.3.4. Reaction formation

Consciousness apparently agrees with dissonant information. A separate channel is created for this information in the filter matrix. After successful application of this strategy this channel is dismantled. At the same time, knowledge contradicting this information does not disappear. This creates a threat to the internal outlook conflict that will happen sooner or later. But up to this point extremely contradictory facts coexist and the information penetrated is not accentuated, it remains without attention.

3.3.3.5. Ignoring

This is a situation when consciousness ignores the existence of a counterargument, and if it appears again, consciousness avoids it, thereby displacing it into unconsciousness. This information may emerge in consciousness intuitively, but in most cases it is not realized.

3.3.3.6. Denial

It means ‘building a complex protection ‘facility’ – a phantom program. It moves a person from the actual threat into the ‘virtual’ world, making his/her psyche inaccessible’ [19] for a counterargument. This illusion protects only from

one piece of information, all other pieces do not fall under its influence. The information is displaced into unconsciousness and does not enter consciousness.

3.3.3.7. Regression

An access to personal knowledge is blocked for consciousness, after that it cannot understand the meaning of new information.

If consciousness receives a large number of counterarguments, and its protective mechanisms fail to filter them, then the filter matrix can be destroyed, thus skipping all the information that appears in the psyche as true. This creates a real threat to the personal world view, which may also be destroyed. All this often leads to mental problems, and frequently to a suicide.

The information that is contradictory and rationally irrefutable in nature, passing through the belief filter, triggers a number of protective mechanisms, leading to:

- a change in the information received by eliminating a counterargument, modification of information, division of information into components, reconciliation and displacement;
- displacement of the information to unconsciousness by ignoring, denying and regression;
- a change in the belief buffer by reviewing the matrix, creation of a new channel;
- a change in the knowledge system through removal, identification, projection, reaction formation.

4. Conclusions

4.1. Information is an object of belief

Belief operates both in consciousness and unconsciousness. The information in the broadest sense of the word is an object at which the activity of belief is aimed, since the basis of belief is the confirmation of reality of something, while an understanding of this reality comes to a person only on the information channel. The confirmation of reality takes place on the basis of assessment of information as true or false. This assessment process should be conducted by some mechanism.

4.2. Definition of belief through the concept of matrix filtration

In order to describe this process we have chosen an image of a filter due to its operation in the 'selecting-out' mode. We suggested considering the idea of the matrix as a condition for filtering because of its fixed pattern. Thereby, the process of belief is represented as matrix filtration. Based on the above findings, the following definition of belief has been given. Belief is a mental process of matrix filtration of information for considering it true or false.

The mechanism of belief is triggered in case of information entry. All available information is subject to filtration for falsity/trueness. This is due to genetic human desire to control one's space of life.

The matrix, which determines the filtration conditions, is formed on the basis of accumulated knowledge and the outlook.

4.3. Importance of emotions in the mechanism of belief

The act of belief is often accompanied by an emotional reaction which has a negative impact on the psyche. The occurrence of emotions is necessary for protection of the most vulnerable and valuable knowledge in the psyche of a person. Negatively perceived emotions are aggressive in nature, in connection with which the psyche may successfully eliminate counterarguments emerged. After the elimination, the emotional background is painted in more positive tones, thus marking the end of a period of instability.

Strengthening or weakening of belief may be considered through the prism of knowledge protection through emotions. The most protected knowledge includes knowledge that is fundamental to the personal world view, knowledge that have been tested on personal experience, and socio-cultural postulates that are coherent with the worldview. Less protected knowledge includes skills that do not have deep penetration in the worldview, and less associated with the other elements of this system, as well as knowledge gained from non-authoritative sources and not tested on personal experience. The disappearance of belief is regarded as a change of assessment of any knowledge from true to false and vice versa. Replacement of such assessment, especially from true to false, in important individual knowledge, may lead to serious mental disorders.

4.4. Prospects for future research

The study of neurophysiological bases of the mechanism of belief in general and the belief filter in particular is a promising research area. We consider it interesting to identify and describe the formation and functioning of the mechanism of belief and the belief filter in the conditions of unique socio-cultural, historical and cultural contexts.

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