

Problem of the fact in modern psychology

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена важной методологической проблеме современной психологии. Особенная актуальность данной работы состоит в том, что многими психологами она вообще не осознается как методологическая проблема. В психологии отсутствуют исследования, посвященные проблеме факта. Факт традиционно трактуется как результат наблюдения или эксперимента, не допускающий неоднозначного толкования. Это противоречит широко известным ситуациям, когда факт оценивается и интерпретируется по-разному. Такой подход не позволяет конструктивно решить проблему. В статье утверждается, что решить проблему факта возможно только рассмотрев его в соотношении с другими методологическими категориями. Формулируется новый подход к анализу факта: рассмотрение факта должно быть включено в интегративную методологическую концепцию. Это когнитивная методология психологии. Утверждается, что для психологии необходим уровневый подход к трактовке факта. В структуре факта могут быть выделены следующие уровни: идеологический, предметный, процедурный. Идеологический уровень связан с трактовкой предмета психологии, предметный и процедурный, соответственно, с базовой категорией и моделирующими представлениями. Уровневый подход, таким образом, может быть реализован, если проблема факта рассматривается в контексте методологической теории научного исследования. Намечается перспектива дальнейших исследований, направленная на поиски синтеза уровневого строения и структурного анализа.

Ключевые слова: Методология, факт, психологическое исследование, когнитивная методология, философия науки, структура, уровень, предтеория

Проблема факта в современной психологии¹

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Abstract. The subject of this article is an important methodological problem of modern psychology. It is especially topical as many psychologists do not consider it as a methodological problem at all. In the frames of psychology there are no studies of the fact problem. Traditionally, the fact is interpreted as a result of observation or of an experiment that does not admit an ambiguous explanation. This contradicts widely known situations when the fact is estimated and interpreted in different ways. Such approach is not a constructive decision of the problem. In this article it is stated that it is possible to solve the problem of the fact only after examining it in correspondence with other methodological categories. A new approach to the analysis of the fact is formulated: the fact examination should be included into the integrative methodological concept. It is a cognitive methodology of psychology. It is claimed that level approach to the fact interpretation is necessary for psychology. In the fact structure one can distinguish the following levels: ideological, subject, procedural. The ideological level is related to the interpretation of the subject of psychology, subject and procedural levels correspondingly are related to the basic category and modelling representations. Thus, the level approach can be realized in case the fact problem is examined in the context of the methodological theory of scientific research. One can outline the prospect of further research that is aimed at the search of the synthesis of the level structure and structural analysis.

Keywords: Methodology, fact, psychological research, cognitive methodology, philosophy of science, structure, level, pre-theory

We have already had to write about the fact that the role of the methodology of psychology is obviously underestimated in the modern psychological science. This conclusion might be considered to be a mistake: we observe an obvious interest to the methodology of psychology, methodological ideas are actively discussed at the scientific conferences, quite a vast number of books and articles on the methodological problems are published. In our opinion, in the modern psychological literature there is a stable underestimation of the role of the methodological aspects of the psychological knowledge on the whole. Let us try to illustrate it on the example of the problem of psychological fact.

The “fact” term is actively used in the modern psychology and that is absolutely natural as the psychology positions itself as an empirical discipline. One cannot doubt that the treatment of facts differed greatly at different stages of development of psychology.

If we use the known periodization suggested by M.S.Rogovin, then it turns out that the facts are significant only at the stage of scientific psychology: one can only conventionally speak of facts in prescientific psychology, philosophical psychology did not pay any essential attention to the facts [14].

Scientific psychology declared itself to be an empirical discipline, a science “of facts”. A certain role was played by the positivism, too, in which “the fact” was one of the key notions. In the scientific psychology “the fact” has been domineering in those versions of psychology which used subjective method. Very soon it became clear that spontaneous introspection is not enough to get a “real” (that is corresponding to the expectations of the researcher) “fact”. Here some special procedures are needed; the procedures that help to fix something that is really needed. In W. Wundt’s school, in Würzburg school, in Cornell at Titchener’s they used special procedures that made it possible to single out those aspects of experience that were thought of as significant in this or that school.

Let us note the fundamental difference: in schools whose studies were based on the objective approach they traditionally paid less attention to the fact problem.

This is important for understanding why in some schools of psychology the fact problem did not attract close attention of the researchers. For the subject of our article it is important to underline that in the Soviet psychology the fact problem was not popular, as the mediation method regarded as the main method in the psychological research was objective.

In psychology the fact problem “did not succeed” but it played one of the main roles in philosophic schools, and in the first place in those which followed the positivism traditions. As a subject of study the fact problem was adopted in the science philosophy from the logical positivism and it was successfully and efficiently developed by many researchers. In Russian philosophic school the fact problem was “forced out” from the research area to a considerable degree by the categories of “phenomenon” and “essence”, by the correlation of the empirical and theoretical levels of cognition.

So, let us turn to psychology and try to find out the essence of the fact problem. Let us apply to the popular Great Dictionary of Psychology which informs that the fact “in its ordinary meaning is a synonym to the “truth” notion, i.e. it is knowledge which reliability does not cause any doubt, and in a more narrow sense it is a result of an observation (including measurement) and an experiment that cannot be interpreted in different ways” [1, p.587].

And here we face numerous questions. Is the fact in psychology really so unambiguous that it “cannot be interpreted in different ways”?

What shall one do in the cases when one and the same fact can be interpreted by different psychologists in different ways? The cases when somebody considers something to be an obvious fact and somebody has quite a different opinion.

So there are reasons to start the discussion on the fact problem as the methodological problem of modern psychology.

Traditionally, psychology is characterized by multiple approaches to studying this or that phenomenon, by a vast range of different theories, concepts, interpretations. There are dozens of definitions of one and the same notion. To put it short, it is difficult to surprise psychology by problems. In a sense one may state that psychology is one of the most “problem” sciences: it has more undecided questions than found answers. B.F.Lomov in his book “Methodological and Theoretical Problems of Psychology” noted: “A vast range of problems, rich factual material accumulated by psychological science, the tasks that are set by the social practice urgently require further development of its methodological basis” [4, p. 3].

In order to cope with the variety of the problems of psychology let us try and sort them. For that purpose let us try to single out classes of psychological problems. It goes without saying that that sort of singling out is inevitably of conventional character. It seems that is reasonable to implement the singling out of the problem classes in accordance with the types of psychological knowledge. M.S.Rogovin and G.V.Zalevsky single out three types of psychological knowledge. The first type is the knowledge of psychological processes and individual peculiarities, i.e. it is “object knowledge”. The second type is the knowledge of the psychological research process itself, of the ways of generating, fixing and improving the object knowledge of the psychic setup, i.e. “methodological knowledge”. The third type of knowledge, “historical knowledge” reflects the natural succession of the development of the first two types of knowledge and helps us to understand the general state of psychology at every single period of time, at every chronological moment of time [13, p. 8]. Such division seems to be quite convenient. In object knowledge we can single out two conventional levels: a level of phenomenology and a level of theory. Then psychological problems can be referred to one of the following classes: 1) phenomenological problems; 2) theoretical problems; 3) methodological problems; 4) historical psychological problems.

Any science deals with phenomenology, empirical phenomena of some kind. In psychology those are psychic phenomena. Thus, in psychology one can distinguish such phenomena as memory, thinking, perception, and so on. Though at first sight it may seem that that phenomenological level is relatively independent, it is not so. Psychic setup is initially integral, so singling in it out these or those phenomena is determined by theoretical and methodological ideas. The nomenclature of psychic phenomena is determined by the theory, and in reality it is a serious methodological problem. In psychology there were cases when these or those authors affirmed that, for example, attention or imagination do not exist. This, of course, does not make those authors prove that concentration on some objects or creation of new images do not exist. Such phenomena exist, they are observed and described, but explained in a

completely different way. The psychologists - authors of “revolutionary” concepts declared that phenomena are of completely different nature: concentration is not attention but some peculiarities of perception (E.Rubin), creation of new images is a function of thinking and not of imagination (A.V.Brushlinsky). These examples indicate the indissoluble connection of phenomenological and theoretical levels.

It is no coincidence that many authors prefer not to differentiate these two levels and speak of object knowledge. Being fully aware of the conditional character and voluntariness of such division, let us talk of phenomenological and theoretical levels and correspondingly of the existence of phenomenological and theoretical problems. The phenomenological level is important because it really determines potential spaces of psychic reality. Let us explain it. In his experiments S.Grof (using LSD and later some other techniques) observed phenomena of the altered states of consciousness, transpersonal phenomena of condensed experience systems (CES) and so on. These phenomena present undisputable psychic reality. According to some psychologists these phenomena are worth studying and theories that explain these phenomena can be worked out. According to other psychologists these phenomena do not exist at all: they represent an artifact or outright cheating so their special study is out of question. Thus, we can state that different researchers see the range of the spaces of psychic reality differently. Some of them include parapsychological phenomena into the problem area of psychology and some do not. It is only natural that this or that decision is determined by theoretical comprehension. Thus, phenomenological problems become apparent in the determination of the spaces of psychic reality, its division into separate phenomena.

Theoretical level is connected with the explanation of psychic phenomena. At theoretical level psychic phenomena turn into psychological ones. In psychology these problems are evident. There are different theories explaining one phenomenon. For example, the selective character of thinking while solving a problem might be explained by the influence of associations that determine tendencies, anticipations and so on. We will not study this here in detail as even a first year psychology student knows (and this is first-hand knowledge) that psychological theories are diverse. Theoretical problems in psychology are most numerous.

Phenomenological and theoretical levels that are inseparably related to each other compose object psychological knowledge. Two first levels are connected with two classes of problems: phenomenological and theoretical.

But these two levels are (also inseparably) related to another level - a methodological one. And the nature of this relation reveals the fact that the methodological level is determinative to a considerable degree both to phenomenological and theoretical levels. It is methodology that reveals and interprets

the subject of psychology (and, as a consequence, really determines the range of the spaces of psychic reality), methodology determines the possibility of studying of this or that phenomenon, as well as the method that will be used to study the psychic, and, finally, confirms the ways of explanation that are acceptable for the modern science. It is known that in psychology there are different interpretations of the subject of science, different method approaches. Methodological problems turn out to be the most essential, the deepest.

And finally, the fourth type of the problems are historical psychological ones that appear in historical knowledge. As it has already been noted, historical psychological knowledge reflects the natural succession of the development of both object knowledge and methodological knowledge. M.S.Rogovin and G.V.Zavevsky noted that “in historical knowledge a far broader principle of scientific cognition of reality is revealed: it is treated as developing in time; being treated from the historical point of view, the succession of its types indirectly reflects the intensification of the object and methodological knowledge [13, p. 10]. These problems are also numerous. Let us note that many of them are of implicit character.

There is special relationship between the singled out types of problems in psychology. Methodology is the “core element” of psychological knowledge in general as in the long run it is methodology that determines the essential characteristics of “object” knowledge (and both phenomenology and theory) and of “history” (as it will be interpreted).

Till now we have managed to do without mentioning the term “fact”. But where is its place in the above-examined scheme? As one can see, the psychological fact comes into sight when phenomenology and theory interact: the phenomenon interpreted as a psychic phenomenon becomes a psychological fact.

Let us turn to an example. Every specialist who trains animals knows that with the course of time animals become responsive to those stimuli that are only associatively correlated with a specific body reaction. As a matter of fact, it is a conditioned reflex. As we know from the history of psychology, the conditioned reflex phenomenon was discovered more than once. It was the genius of I.P.Pavlov (whose attention was drawn by salivation before the feeding time at sight of the employee who usually brings food), E.B.Twitmyer (whose attention was drawn by the fact that those who were experimented on concerning the knee-jerk reflex started to respond to the stimuli that were different from the initial hammer-tapping), V.M.Bekhterev (“Bekhterev found out that reflex movements, for example, the withdrawal of the finger from the objects that can potentially threaten electrical shock, may be activated not only under the impact of unconditioned stimuli (for example, electrical shock) but also under the impact of the stimuli which are

combined with the initial one - thus, the buzzer that sounds simultaneously with the electrical shock soon makes the person who is experimented on withdraw their finger” [15, p.268], that made the phenomenon implement into a scientific fact - a conditioned reflex (Pavlov), a special reflex (Twitmyer), combinative reflex (Bekhterev).

Psychology is one of the disciplines that feature empirical factological basis. As science classic I.P.Pavlov fairly noted, the facts are like air for the scientist. In practice the generally accepted in modern psychology point of view is that the fact is something simple that cannot be “explained in several ways” is an essential barrier for the development of psychological science and practice. With such an approach the main barrier is that the fact makes it harder to form the factological basis of science depriving it of the opportunity of additional analysis of the scientific psychological fact as a complex phenomenon which features a psychological structure of its own, thus making working out the standard for the description of the fact in psychology impossible. At the theoretical level the underestimation of this problem leads to inadequate presentation of the correlation of empirical and theoretical components in psychological cognition. At the methodological level the absence of development of the fact problem prevents creating an integral up-to-date conception of the structure of psychological research as it is the complex phenomenon of the fact playing the role of the core that ensures the integrity of the structure of psychological research.

The solution of the problem of the psychological fact, the revelation of its structure, the understanding of the determination will allow to get definite answers to a range of most important problems: a) to improve the correlation of psychological facts; b) to understand the reasons why one and the same facts are substantially differently treated and estimated by different researchers; c) to foster a better understanding between researchers including the representatives of different schools; d) to promote the development of the models of modern research process in the sphere of psychology; e) to make a considerable contribution to solving the problem of integration of psychological knowledge; f) to clear up numerous episodes from the history of psychology in which the same facts were described and interpreted completely differently by different researchers.

Above we have already analysed the reasons why the fact problem “had no luck” in psychology in general and in Russian psychology in particular. It does not mean though that the problem was not under study at all.

In order to avoid misunderstanding let us underline the fact that one should not get the impression that the psychological fact was not studied in psychology. Many authors, especially those who studied the processes of cognition and scientific

research, touched upon the fact but it was not the subject of special research in psychology. Let us mention the following researchers: G.I. Chelpanov, N.N. Lange, M.Y. Basov, L.S. Vygotsky, V.N. Ivanovsky, S.L. Rubinshteyn, K.N. Kornilov, A.N. Leontyev, B.G. Ananyev, B.F. Lomov, O.K. Tikhomirov, D.N. Uznadze, A.A. Leontyev, B.M. Teplov, Y.V. Shorokhova, K.K. Platonov, M.S. Rogovin and others.

Important aspects of the fact problem in psychology are discovered in the works of A.V. Yurevich, interesting methodological research of V.M. Allakhverdov, T.V. Kornilova, S.D. Smirnov, methodological works of F.Y. Vasilyuk, I.N. Karitsky and others. In the works of K.A. Abulkhanova, A.Y. Agafonov, V.G. Aseev, A.G. Asmolov, V.A. Barabanschikov, F.E. Vasilyuk, I.P. Volkov, I.Y. Garber, A.N. Gusev, M.S. Guseltseva, A.L. Zhuravlev, Y.M. Zabrodin, G.V. Zalevsky, V.P. Zinchenko, Y.P. Zinchenko, V.V. Znakov, I.I. Ivanova, V.I. Kabrin, I.N. Karitsky, A.V. Karpov, V.Y. Klochko, V.A. Koltsova, T.V. Kornilova, D.A. Leontyev, L.Y. Dorfman, S.V. Malanov, B.G. Mescheryakov, I.A. Mironenko, P.Y. Myasoed, V.I. Panov, V.F. Petrenko, V.A. Petrovsky, Y.Y. Sokolova, S.D. Smirnov, Y.B. Starovoytenko, V.A. Tatenko, D.V. Ushakov, N.I. Chuprikova, V.D. Shadrikov, A.V. Yurevich and others many important methodological problems of psychology were solved, and namely, those connected with the fact problem in psychological science. Important questions of the methodology of psychology that are connected with the fact problem are discussed in the works of I.V. Vachkov, A.O. Prokhorov, Y.V. Levchenko, A.A. Piskoppel, V.A. Yanchuk, A.G. Liderev and others.

Let us underline the fact that in modern psychology there are no special studies of the fact in psychology. This is worth underlining as it turns out that the structure of psychological fact that reflects the specific character of psychological research has not been revealed and developed till now. And all the same, there are no rules without exceptions. We have already mentioned above that it is not characteristic for psychologists to think over the problem of the fact methodology, to develop it. But we have to state that practically there are no special studies on the subject. It is fair on the whole, though one can always find both exceptions and the reasons that explain those exceptions.

It is the well-known work of A.V. Yurevich [16] that presents the concept analysing in detail the fact problem in psychology. As A.V. Yurevich reasonably noted, “One of the main peculiarities of the up-to-date state of psychological science in Russia is the combination of, on the one hand, high demand for the psychological knowledge and the psychologists who possess it and, on the other hand, a reduction of the number of attempts to instill some order into that knowledge and obvious

neglect of methodological questions” [16, p.15]. In his research Yurevich solves a fundamental problem of revealing the structure of psychological knowledge in which a certain place is filled by facts proper.

A.V.Yurevich regards the following as structural elements of psychological knowledge:

1. Basic “ideologies” and systems of methodological principles that are associated with them;
2. Categories;
3. Theories;
4. Laws;
5. Generalizations;
6. Explanations and interpretations;
7. Forecasts and predictions;
8. Facts and phenomena;
9. Knowledge of the context (ascertainment of facts and manifestation of phenomena);
10. Empirically revealed correlations between phenomena;
11. Descriptions;
12. Methods / Procedure;
13. Technologies;
14. Knowledge assimilated by psychology from allied sciences [16, p.16-17].

A.V.Yurevich gives characteristics of the role of facts in the structure of psychological knowledge: “Psychological facts and phenomena are usually regarded as one of the main “units” of empirical knowledge of psychology. Their steady character makes them different from other types of empirical experience: as facts and phenomena they usually regard those events that feature sufficient reproducibility and are manifested more or less permanently - at least under certain circumstances. Besides, not only any relatively stable psychological phenomena are usually regarded as facts and phenomena, but events that are substantial enough for the science of psychology and that express any psychological regularity” [16, pp.26-27]. “An important quality of psychological facts and phenomena is that they even having analogs in everyday experience, as a rule, are fixed in specially organized conditions of psychological research” [16, p.27]. As it was fairly observed, “Psychological facts and phenomena as a type of psychological knowledge are organically completed by such its variety as the knowledge of the context of construction of such facts and phenomena as well as the conditions of their manifestation” [16, p.28]. A.V.Yurevich notes that some ideas that present the facts as “theoretically loaded” have rooted in post-modernist methodology of scientific cognition, the facts are also thought to gain

sense only in the frames of a certain interpretative structure that is set by theories, paradigms, research programmes, research traditions and so on. According to Yurevich “The feeling of ephemerality of facts is mostly characteristic to the social humanities such as psychology where it turned out to be most acute due to post-modernist methodology [16, p.88]. It is very important that Yurevich suggests a typology of psychologists based on their treatment of facts: “One can divide psychologists into three categories in respect to their treatment of facts. Some of them, and they are an overwhelming majority, are indifferent to the gnosiological status of facts. They have been doing something that they are used to despite the tumultuous events in the philosophical methodology of science, and in particular the spread of post-modernist methodology. Others eagerly and with certain pleasure adopted the post-modernist ideas, and this was a natural reaction to long years of the prevalence of positivism and simplified ideas of science accentuating the relativity of facts, their dependence on the theories and so on. One more group, on the contrary, aggressively reacted to the spread of such ideas and demonstrated concern that could be compared to that caused by the formula “the matter is disappearing and strive to restore the inviolability of the facts both as the facts proper and as the end-point criterion of the truth [16, p.88]. The first position does not need to be commented on. What concerns the other two, being completely opposite, they are united by the undifferentiated treatment of facts as stereotyped and homogeneous type of experience. As A.L.Nikiforov wrote: “the majority of modern epistemologists implicitly act on the premise that they understand facts “one-dimensionally”, i.e. they interpret facts as something simple, as the real state of things, a sensory image, a suggestion. Being interpreted like this the fact always belongs to a certain sphere - linguistic, perceptive or physical”... The facts are not homogeneous though, and in the diversity of empirical experience that the researchers in general and psychologists in particular are used to see as facts one can single out substantially different components [16, c.88]. It is important that in paper A.V. Yurevich suggests a method of fact regulation: “A variety can be regulated by arranging the facts that are established by the psychological science in the frames of a system of at least five scales that present degrees: 1) the “inflexibility” of the facts; 2) their reproductibility; 3) contextual dependence; 4) theoretical load; 5) socialization [16, c.89]. It seems to be a challenging idea.

This can be applied to foreign psychological research, too. Naturally, the problem of fact is under study in many works on the methodology of psychological research (J.Piaget, F.McGuigan, R.Kirk, R.Gottsdanker, R.Plutchik, D.Chassagne, A.Kazdin, D.Goodwin and others) that cover the problems of explanation (Fodor, 1968; Swart, 1985; Cammins, 1983; Brown, 1963 and many others) and the

philosophy of psychology (M.Bunge, R.Argila, 1987, J.Bermudez, 2008 and others). We underline that we did not manage to find special research studies on the analysis of the structure of psychological fact in the literature we had access to.

It is but natural that the specific character is not revealed in the philosophical studies of the fact problem either. The special philosophical studies that analyze the fact are of great interest for psychology (in the first place concerning the general architectonics of the fact). Here one can refer to the studies of such researchers as V.A.Shtoff, L.S.Merzon, V.S.Shvyrev, V.M.Kapustyan, S.F.Martynovich, V.S.Stepin, G.F.Khrustov, E.M.Chudinov, A.I.Rakitov, A.L.Nikiforov, S.V.Illarionov and others.

Of course, we cannot but mention the works of foreign philosophers L.Wittgenstein, B.Russell, R.Carnap, L.Fleck, T.Kuhn, P.Feyerabend, N.R.Henson, B.Latour, E.Pickering and others).

And here a question arises: what prevents a new understanding of the fact? To our mind, the main obstacle is that the psychological fact is considered per se, while it has to be considered, treated and interpreted in the context of the methodology of psychology, i.e. in the frames of the methodological concept of psychological research. Being introduced into the methodological psychological context the fact will reveal the real complexity of its structure and will allow applying to the revelation of its determination.

In our works of the late 1990s we demonstrated that the methodology has concrete historical character and theoretically it has to answer the questions and react to the problems that appear within the object field of science. In some cases the methodological research passes ahead of the demands of science, and in some cases they lag behind them. At present the development of general methodology of psychology is brought to the forefront. We underline that it is not an attempt to create a general theory. We share the belief of Jung according to which the time is not ripe for general theories in psychology.

The matter is that the reserve of developing separate isolated methodological problems (though, beyond all doubt, most important for psychology) has been nearly as yet exhausted. Now most actual is the development of problems in complex and that means the development of general methodology of psychology in which separate methodological categories would be coordinated in integrated semantic area. It is their concept coordination that bears the new potential of methodological research and development.

It seems that cognitive methodology that fulfils the tasks of the modern world has to be of level structure. Such level structure must not only reflect the

heterogeneity of the psychological content itself but also the ways and methods of work at different levels that differ in their in essence.

Let us formulate the main point of our approach to the development of cognitive methodology. There are different approaches to the investigation of any phenomenon in the sphere of psychology. Traditionally they are considered as incomparable so at the best one can speak of the coexistence of approaches. We consider that while using a special methodological apparatus one can find additional “points of contact” and “incomparable” concepts will turn out comparable to a much more degree than it usually seems.

From our point of view this goal is achievable if a general scheme of psychological research will be taken as a basis of comparison. The scheme comprises the following structural components: the problem, the subject of psychology, the object-related problem, the pre-theory, the method (which includes three levels: ideological, subject and procedural), the empirical material, the explanation (which also includes the explanatory category, the explanation proper which supposes the presence of a level structure), the theory as a result of research [5], [7]. Let us underline that such scheme of research is “closed”, i.e. the theory serves as a basis for the new problem statement. So general cognitive methodology acts as a means of comparison and correlation of different psychological concepts. We take the following position: 1) the development of the general methodology is possible as it is possible to develop a universal model using which one can combine, integrate the most important methodological categories in “general research area”; 2) using such kind of integrative model allows to take into consideration the groundwork of the leading Russian and foreign methodologists through the correlative model (communicative methodology) we have worked out earlier [8],[9].

General methodology of psychology is a consistent concept that treats the problems of the subject, the method, the explanation, the theory, the fact and so on in their interrelationship. To our mind, not taking into consideration this kind of interrelationship, one cannot advance essentially further in the development of these (and many others) most important methodological issues of modern psychology. Such methodology might be called an integrative cognitive methodology of psychological science.

Now let us turn to the problem of the psychological fact in the context of the concept of general (integrative) methodology of psychology.

It might seem that here everything is quite simple: the research gives some empirical data that need to be interpreted. Let us turn to the philosophy of science that dislike the methodology of psychology gives much consideration to such issues. And as Kant warned “the mind sees only something that it creates following its own

scheme” [3, с.85]. So the received empirical data are usually considered by the researcher “in the light of” the pre-theory (see below). In fact, they have already been “pre-interpreted” though the researcher is not usually aware of the fact. Special attention must be paid to this moment.

Not being able to give a general characteristics to the concept (because of the limited size of this article) let us study in more detail the development of the methodological concept of the fact (in the first place due to the fact that in modern psychology practically no attention is paid to this methodological problem). While psychology neglects this problem (one can suppose that this is due to the seeming simplicity of the issue), the philosophy of science quite reasonably considers this problem to be one of the most serious ones.

“Fact - from Latin factum - done, completed) - 1) the synonym of such notions as the truth, the event, the result; something real as opposed to something imaginary; concrete, unique as opposed to something abstract and general; 2) in the philosophy of science - sentences of special type that fix empirical knowledge. As a form of empirical knowledge the fact is opposed to the theory and hypothesis” [10, с.157].

In understanding of the fact nature in modern philosophy of science one can distinguish two main tendencies: factualism and theoretism. These tendencies act as one of the forms of manifestation of the old empiricism - rationalism dilemma. While the first tendency underlines the independence and autonomy of facts in relation to different theories, the second one states that the facts are fully dependent on the theory, and when the theories are changed, the whole factual basis of the science is changed [10, pp.157-158]. One cannot but agree with A.L.Nikiforov who notes: “Nowadays more and more scientists believe that both absolute contraposition of facts and theory and their total dissolution in theory are not correct. The fact is the result of active cooperation of the subject and the object of cognition and it has a complicated structure some elements of which are determined by the theory and, and therefore, are dependent on it, and some elements are determined by the peculiarities of the cognizable object. The dependence of facts from theory is expressed through the fact that the theory forms the conceptual basis of facts: it singles out the aspect of reality under study, it determines the language used for the description of facts, the means and methods of the experimental research. Besides, the data obtained as a result of the experiment or observation are determined by the qualities of the objects under study. They give the content to the conceptual scheme. So, the scientific fact being theoretically loaded simultaneously preserves its autonomy from the theory as its content does not depend on the theory. It is due to that relative independence that the facts demonstrate the ability to contradict the theory and stimulate the development of scientific cognition” [10, p.158]. In his other study A.L.Nikiforov

develops a new notion of the scientific fact as a certain complex whole which consists of several elements that are interrelated in a certain sense: one can state that the scientific fact includes three components: a linguistic, a perceptive and a material practical one every of which is equally necessary for the existence of the fact” [11, pp.75-76]. “The three components are in the closest contact, and their division leads to the destruction of the fact” [11, p.76]. A.L.Nikiforov gives a very detailed characteristic of the components of the fact. “First of all, every fact is connected to a certain sentence... Let us call such sentence a linguistic component of the fact. Obviously, the linguistic component is necessary as we would not be able to speak of anything being a fact without it” [11, p.73]. “The perceptive component is the second component of the scientific fact. Speaking of it I mean a certain sensory image or a set of sensory images taking part in the process of the fact establishment. The perceptive component is also necessary. It is due to the fact that every fact of natural sciences is established by appealing to real things and practical actions with such things. The contact with the external world is performed only through the sense organs. So the establishment of any scientific fact is inevitably connected with the sense perception, and the perceptive part is necessary for every fact to a different extend [11, p.73]. “The existence of the third material practical component of the fact that is also very important is not that obvious. As a material practical component of the fact we understand a set of tools and instruments and a set of actions performed by them, skills and abilities used while establishing the fact” [11, p.74].

We consider the singling out and description of the structure of the scientific fact performed by A.L.Nikiforov very important. Perhaps, for psychology it is more important that the fact (at least, the psychological fact but, as we see, this characteristic is quite universal) has not only “horizontal” but also a “vertical” structure. In other words, the psychological fact demonstrates a level structure, too.

Not being able to present a detailed analysis in the frames of this article, we will give only the characteristics of the pre-theory as it is extremely important for understanding the psychological structure of the fact. The pre-theory is a complex of initial ideas of the scientist that serve as a basis for the empirical (and even theoretical) psychological study. So, the pre-theory precedes not only the theory as a result of the study but the empirical study itself. The pre-theory has a complex determination (the education of the researcher, scientific traditions, the ideals of the scientific nature and so on). One can describe the structure of the pre-theory: the problem, the “object-related” problem, the basic category, the modeling notion, the idea of the method, the explaining category, the method (type) of explanation [6].

Let us turn to the problem of the fact again. One can single out the following levels in the structure of the fact: ideological, object and procedural. The ideological

level is connected with the interpretation of the object of psychology, the object and procedural ones with the basic category and the modeling notions correspondingly. Not having the opportunity to analyse in detail the levels of the scientific fact let us make one remark that is important for the history of psychology. Say, let us turn to a classical research of the “phi”-phenomenon by M. Wertheimer. Some people note that the stroboscopic effect had been known earlier, that was not a new fact. This is correct but only in relation to the procedural level. The importance of this scientific fact is in the ideological and object levels. At the object level the integrity of gestalt (“apparent motion”) was proved, at the ideological level Wertheimer demonstrated the existence of the phenomenal field. So to our mind the level treatment of the fact opens new prospects in the indicated direction.

The integration of the structural and level approaches to the fact analyses is possible. It is a separate research goal (we will not dwell on this aspect in this article). Let us note that such interpretation of the fact allows a new way of solving a set of traditional psychological problems and gives an explanation to known facts: why different facts were perceived and interpreted by different researchers in an essentially different way. From our point of view the answer is obvious: in these cases the facts were perceived in this way because they were differently theoretically loaded as they had been estimated from the positions of different pre-theories.

So, the pre-analysis of the fact problem indicates the need for the special methodological study of the “fact” psychological construct.

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