



# Perspective on the Evolution of Psychoanalysis

## *A Perspective on the Evolution of Psychoanalysis*

### *Transcendence: A window of opportunity*

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#### **Abstract**

Human understanding is more complex than we believe. We continue to filter and transpose information in a manner that fits our needs. Accurate or not, we have had time to improvise and revisit past experiences with our interpretational point of view. Could there be something that we may be missing or misinterpreting when we engage in communication, especially from another's point of reference or even our own? In the field of psychoanalysis, this argument must be also addressed when considering the pathway of the future evolution of human connection.

Merleau-Ponty, a French philosopher, authored a detailed explanation of his understanding of transcendence and its effects on perception. Transcendence describes what lies beyond sense experience, but not beyond knowledge (Webster, 2005). Studying "Phenomenology of perception" (Merleau-Ponty, 2004) was initially quite challenging for this person trained and practicing in the field of psychology and psychoanalysis. The material was unfamiliar and in the beginning did not seem to have a practical use. However, transcendence may offer new insights into rudimentary elements of concepts that are often overlooked or viewed as commonplace material without adequate definition by psychologists. I found the concept of transcendence quite fascinating and definitely connected with my continuing interest in what may be left out of or skimmed over concepts involving a deeper understanding of the human connection. In fact, I believe that we often miss opportunities for a deeper connectedness by forcing our subjectivity onto what we perceive is an accurate perception from our senses of phenomena in life.

Case in point, when an analyst meets a client for the first time, the analyst is apt to force into his or her own subjective thoughts a preconceived notion of the client's operational behavior. This methodology often leads to distortion due to a faulty initial interpretation. Entry into this preconceived notion can take time for the analyst to sort out self-perpetuated beliefs. It also creates the possibility of internalizing a struggle for adequate awareness for a growing body of information for bench marks in future ongoing analytic material. Henceforth, I will introduce several concepts from Merleau-Ponty concerning the concept of Transcendence.

Merleau-Ponty (2004) believed that his life was always being thrown headlong into transcendent things and passed wholly outside of himself. He contended that this process of influence makes its way among objects without him needing to have them expressly in mind (p.429). According to Merleau-Ponty, his writing is not influenced by a certain set of ideas, but by an open situation, for which I could not possibly provide any situation, for which I could not possibly provide any complex formula, and in which I struggle blindly on until miraculously, thoughts and words

become organized by themselves (2004, p.429).

He suggested that environmental variables do not influence him, but that his consciousness “takes flight from itself” and in the environmental variables “is unaware of itself (2004, p.429). Realism tries to explain this by asserting an actual transcendence, and existence in itself of the world and ideas.

According to Merleau-Ponty (2004, p.430), transcendent things cannot be possessed by a person because a person is ignorant of what the transcendent things are, but acknowledges that these things exist. Merleau-Ponty (2004, p.430) proposed that experiencing a transcendent thing is possible only if its project is born and discovered within a person. He wrote that a person is capable of recognizing things around him by his actual contact with them. During contact with an object, a person’s senses pick up information which the person utilizes to create a perception of the object. Then he contemplates how this object applies to himself and creates a personal knowledge or understanding of it. To describe an object situated in a subject’s world, the person apparently must substitute a second variable by which it constructs or constitutes the world itself (Merleau- Ponty, 2004, p.431). This is especially true when the person’s mind has already constructed a significant sign beforehand (2004, p.430). The second substitute is more authentic than the first because the transactions between the subject and the things around it are possible only if the subject causes them to exist for itself, arranges them around itself, and extracts them from its own core (2004, p.431).

Merleau-Ponty (2004) described how a person understands his or her environment. The process begins when the person picks up information through his or her senses. The person perceives something of interest and creates a cognito or thought about it. The person thinks about how this information applies to him and builds a personal knowledge of understanding of the thing of interest. The Cartesian cogito (self-awareness) is always beyond what it brings to mind at the moment (2004, p.431) and only becomes significant through a person’s own cogito. It is the person who assigns thought to the object and constantly verifies thought orientation toward this objective (2004, p.431). Merleau-Ponty suggested that unless thought itself had put into things what it subsequently finds in them, it would have no hold upon them and would be an illusion of thought (2004, p.432).

According to Merleau-Ponty, all of our experiences and reflections are rooted in a being that immediately recognizes itself and knows its own existence by having direct contact with it (2004, p.432). He describes self-consciousness as “the very being of mind in action” (2004, p.432). The act of self-consciousness must be caught at the moment it occurs, before it collapses (2004, p.432).

Merleau-Ponty wrote that “the Cartesian doctrine of the cogito logically leads to the timelessness of mind and to accepting a consciousness of the external” (2004, p.433). Eternity can be understood as the power to embrace and anticipate temporal developments in a single intention which is the definition of subjectivity. Cogito is presented in terms of eternity. It is timeless and includes the perception discovering oneself as the universal constituent of all being accessible to the person and as a transcendental field without hidden corners and no outside (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p.433). It includes the form of all objects of sense. The mind



eludes the outside spectator and can only be recognized from within the person's cogito (2004, p.434). The mind is unique to the person and cannot be shared with anyone else. However, Merleau-Ponty wondered if the mind could be transferable to another (2004, p.434). It is not precisely understood how the world comes to belong to the subject and the subject to himself which is what makes experience, our hold on things, and on our states of consciousness possible (2004, p.435). Merleau-Ponty maintained that consciousness is transcendence through and through. The cogito is "a deep-seated momentum of transcendence which is my very being, the simultaneous contact with my own being and with the world's being" (2004, p.438-439).

To be effective, a therapist or analyst needs to recognize the role the cogito plays in the counseling or psychoanalytic process. Both the therapist's cogito and the client's cogito are involved. Since a cogito is formed from information from the senses and is based on personal experience, it can never be completely accurate. When two people witness the same event, for example an accident, they will not report exactly the same information about it. Each person's cogito contains some element of illusion or distortion. This is also true in a counseling situation. The therapist becomes the subject and the client the object.

The therapist attempts to understand the client's issues and forms a cogito concerning the client which may not be completely accurate. The therapist looks for an adequate understanding of the client, while the client searches for interpretation and understanding about him or herself. People tend to communicate in illusory ways, so the therapist attempts to discern from what the client reveals what is protection, what is false interpretation, and what is reality. The client is not necessarily being deceptive in his or her communication, since protection and false interpretation result from the natural way a person processes information. The therapist is trained to listen for symbolism, distortion, and commonality. The therapist attempts to decode the illusion in what the client says. Transcendence is always present.

### ***Conclusion***

This paper only offers a thought as to a deeper search for meaning of the human mind. It is intended to offer a resurrected perspective to understanding the mind and how it inter-intra relates in human communication. This view may be looked as a new exploration for the analyst's consideration in understanding the client. As we move into a faster paced society, we are integrating the evolutionary development of technology into our human relatedness. Although the philosophical perspective is an older base point of reference to understanding the human connection, it also continues to offer a new perspective on the way we approach human communication, understanding, and knowledge.

### ***References***

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