



Therapist Awareness of Client Reduction of Self: A Daseinanalytic Approach

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Reduction of Self

- Phenomenology has been tackling the problem of reduction since Hegel
- Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* aimed to sublimate or suspend the subject/object divide
- "through sublation, it (self-consciousness) gets back itself, because it becomes one with itself again through the cancelling of its otherness (Hegel, 2001, p. 65)"
- Sublation can be considered important for therapeutic intervention when suspending judgement which can prevent reduction of clients to labels (diagnosis) or objects
- Sublation can be understood through a juxtaposition with superlatives
- Superlatives in grammar are taken with an article (e.g. the best)
- Comparatives can be taken with or without an article (e.g. 'the better option is...')('they are better')
- Sublatives can be considered therefore the more archetypal terms (e.g. good. 'I am good')
- Therapist reduction of clients can prevent authenticity, genuineness, by threatening sublatives (values)
- Client reduction of themselves is a different matter and involves different strategies
- Objectifying others (negating their human status) leads to self-objectification as Hegel's Master/Slave dialectic or model of mutual recognition shows that it can converge with neuroscience as understanding ourselves relies on the same mechanisms we use for understanding others (Marchetti I and Koster EHW (2014))

Reduction of Self

- Dasein's ontology differs from all that is objectively present because its content is not found in any substance's substantiality, nor is it to be considered a subject, rather in the self-constancy of the self that exists, Heidegger sees this as a being that is to be conceived as care. This is why **resoluteness** (projecting itself on the potentiality of being) is being-guilty as a potentiality which belongs to Dasein's being (**in projecting itself on this potentiality of being**), understands itself inside of it. And so **understanding the summoning or calling** of conscience which superliminally passes over the world status and abilities of Dasein, reveals **the lostness in the 'They', as resoluteness brings Dasein back from the 'They'** to its ownmost potentiality of being a self through its individualization (Heidegger, 282-283).
- The **Western mind has the tendency to objectify and reify everything**, including human existence itself, therefore the Western mind can be considered ill-prepared for Daseinanalytic insight into the unobjectifiable nature of man; hence any change to Daseinanalytic ways of thinking and looking at things involves breaking a habit of 2000 years (Boss, 49).
- Daseinanalysis does not conform to neo-Platonic notions between any world of ideas (Forms) and the physical world which we can only access the latter with the notion that we perceive with sense organs; rather for **DA thinking, perceiving, feeling, acting, are taken in DA as different modes within which Dasein's luminating occurs**; hence, DA does not consider different levels, realms, unconsciousnesses, or archetypes (Boss, 52).

Daseinanalysis Prevention of Reduction

- Medard Boss would have highlighted natural science's reductions of the human being (Boss, 30)
- DA thus aims to **refrain from forcing the human being into categories** that are preconceived and prejudicial, which can be considered psyche, soul, person, or even consciousness. What is imperative is how we as **human beings appear in full immediacy** (Boss, 32).
- In contemporary times we now have more categories/labels than in the times of Boss.
- We now have social media which can exacerbate reductions of human beings participating in it.
- We can extrapolate from the notion that from Boss that we as **humans are not to be considered at a location within some sort of world-container** which is independent of the human being or within the human being as a biological organism, that neither is our identity to be reduced or limited to a social profile or from potential ideas others might have on oneself (Boss, 33).
- When we reduce ourselves to objects, such as an ego, psyche, psychic apparatus, social profile, or as a means for comparison, we lose the capacity to understand how any such objects relate themselves in a **meaning-disclosing manner** to an external world that is independent (Boss, 33).
- “primordial being in the world not an abstraction but a concrete occurrence” (Boss, 33)

Daseinanalysis Prevention of Reduction

- "being in the world involves **an openness allowing beings encountered to disclose themselves as beings** they are with all context of meaningful references" (Boss, 33)
- Logic:
- Since Being-ness' awareness is considered the most fundamental feature of a human's existence
- And Being's not a particular being per se, since the 'is' is not considered a property of Being
- Then reducing oneself to an object with properties is not conducive to Being's Being-ness (Boss, 36).
- The primacy awareness of Being-ness constitutes the original dimension and essence of human being in the world (Boss, 37)
- Dasein (there-being) falls prey first to others (Boss, 42)

Daseinanalysis Prevention of Reduction

- “Opening up of space, Dasein unfolds its existence, consumes its time (**emerges**). If there is no **unfolding** of temporal and spatial then there is no ‘there’, no phenomenon” (Boss, 47).
- **The reduction of self can be considered the prevention of this unfolding.** Worrying about what others think, publishing a profile on social media, and comparing our careers or accomplishments to others rather **folds** our identities into the others, the media, and the thoughts that activate the ideas that surround such comparisons; a **merging** rather than an emerging. The reduction of one’s self to a metaphor counters the World openness that is to describe the human being’s fundamental nature directly and immediately without any such reduced metaphor (Boss, 50).
- Comparison requires reduction and this is what a client might often encounter in their life experiences.
- Daseinanalysis aims to ‘let things be’ and to emerge and unfold and to do this it considers the human being to be **‘in arrears’** which prevents the reduction that can lead to comparison and possible neurosis. The assembly of life-possibilities is imperative for a free authority over one’s own self which is not to be narrowed down to an object in an inauthentic everybody (of falling prey to the ‘they’ (Boss, 48-49)).

Daseinanalysis Prevention of Reduction

- Daseinanalysis can help clients unfold to the world, as human beings are considered existing in a mode of being that expands into a whole realm of luminated horizons which takes **human nature as being ekstastic and standing out into a world of pure openness** (Boss, 51).
- Dasein-analysis thus aims to **reduce the influence of dichotomies on human identity** (Boss, 52), which can limit our unfolding to the world but also apply labels on self that reduce identity to potential metaphor.
- DA is **against reducing the self to subjectivity as a property or characteristic** as such reduction omits the real meaning of being in the world of the unity of human existence through a dichotomy between subject and object (Boss, 53)
- Seeing ourselves as **projecting beings, thus as a luminous realm** (Boss, 54) allows us to see that it is only with this existentially luminated being can we have access to external things or non-objective existential possibility of man in light for human spirit (Boss, 69)
- “DA’s insight that there is a luminated realm into the lucidity of which the meaningfulness of our world’s phenomena can disclose itself, shine forth, and that is nothing else than the **human existence itself which serves as this necessary elucidating world openness**” (Boss, 64)
- “Heidegger with insight into **man’s primary awareness of Being-ness**, the basic dimension of non-objectifiable human Dasein” (Boss, 68).

Daseinanalysis Prevention of Reduction

- For DA, objects come into being by shining forth into the luminosity called Dasein, and so therapists can prevent the need for the concept of an idea that is produced by any assumed psyche that inhabits a subject, in turn allowing the **therapist to overcome psychology (the doctrine of the psyche) in favour of a more respectful understanding of the human being**; a necessary departure from the traditional theory of neurosis which can be seen in DA to be limited by concepts such as 'idea' in terms of psychic object-representation (Boss, 84)
- DA allows us **to increase awareness that objects and fellow humans involve individual encounters that will appear to us as phenomena within meaning-disclosing light of our Dasein-immediacy**, without any subjective processes to be involved as what objects are according to a world openness of our existence. Dasein essentially spatializes itself into the relations it has with what it finds via concern (Boss, 93).

Client Experience of Reduction

- Traumatic experience can be reduced to an object, so the past is reduced (and the self is reduced in the process)
- Clients can tend to **compare themselves** to their partners, and this would entail reducing one's self to an object. Clients can feel that they are not deserving of their content life, as they feel incomplete, which derives from comparing themselves to their partners as they had reduced themselves therefore to a label that did not deserve this.
- Daseinanalysis can help clients move from such a comparison of themselves to their partner or others by encouraging the client to let the client **embrace** their partner for example and allow them to shine forth, but also to allow themselves to shine forth rather than cover themselves over for comparison sake.

Client Experience of Reduction

- **Regret** can also be a sign of a reduction of self, as it entails that the client is regretting not doing something in life that would perhaps lead to more **acceptance from others**. This can be seen in retrospection in which one might compare their career and accomplishments to others'. This can come out in notions such as 'not doing enough', or 'to be good and worthy, one needs to earn and work.' **Caring what others think, but even worse, caring for what others might think, alludes to the reduction of self in order to compare to others. Guilt** would also arise from this feeling of not being good enough and would affect self-esteem.
- Such regret, guilt, and worry can come from clients who also consider that nothing is done for ends in themselves as everything is done instrumentally as means to ends. Clients can be challenged to consider doing things for themselves and not others. This can be connected to their **worry of how others thought about them**, wanting to be liked and wanting validation and status. It is important here to assist the client in keeping their self-critic in check. DA can assist with this by decreasing the self-objectification of self for analysis and criticism. **Shining forth to oneself is just as important as shining forth to others, which is why congruency is important.**
- Clients can find that comparing themselves to others could be positive in the sense of **increasing motivation** such as when seeing another play music and saying to oneself 'I can do that if not even better' which could conversely lead to activating a **harsh self-critic** which can be said to involve a negative self-interpretation as a reduced object for observation.

Client Experience of Reduction

- One way Daseinanalysis can allow a client to shine forth and counter any reduction of self or experience is to assist the client to **tap into their core values** allowing for them to shine forth authentically to the world. 'Fairness' for example as a core value for a client could be desired to be seen from others but also promoted as well.
- **Clients can reduce themselves to concepts**, such as wanting to be 'The Best' when in social circles or situations which can be for the aim of being complete and admired.
- It can be interesting to note that clients can feel but be aware of the "irrationality of feeling as they might feel like a failure but rationally know they are not a failure". There is a need **for external validation in this sense** to assist them in feeling beyond failure. Daseinanalysis would not aim to include a dichotomy in this sense of promoting the notion that the client is a 'success' as opposed to a 'failure' but rather to promote their core values and authenticity.
- **Sublation** allows clients to connect to their **core values** by bringing clients back to their groundedness through countering **superlatives** like 'being the best success' and **comparatives** like 'she is more successful than me'. Bringing out the sublative language through DA suspensions of reductions can lead clients to say 'I am doing things that make me feel successful or feel like a failure' which can connect to the 'success, the good, failure or the bad'
- Sublation can thus allow the so-called 'Forms' (the good) to be **neither Universal nor Particular** but contextual and contingent. To further any dependence on dichotomies like superlation and sublation, value the process of sublation

Client Experience of Reduction

- Clients can also fall into **the trap of dichotomies** such as the inner and outer child
- Clients can deploy thoughts on self through the concepts of the **inner and outer child** where the inner can relate to a caring parent and the outer child finding everything to be an object to satisfy self. Clients might also experience the world in terms of feeling as a **participant or observer**.
- DA aims to refrain from such dichotomies. (How to overcome dichotomies?)
- To **overcome dichotomies**, we can consider their **A) saturation**. This could be done with the participant or observer dichotomy by adding to each binary element within dichotomies and realizing that these can go on *ad infinitum*. We could thus have an internal participant and an external participant juxtaposed to an internal observer and external observer and so on. Such saturation can assist in decreasing the meaning attached clients apply to dichotomies.
- In the Hegelian sense, **dichotomies could also be B) synthesized**, thus in this case, the dichotomy can become the **participating observer** or **the observing participant** (which are also other dichotomies) but the idea is that we see how such **dichotomies are not fixed** and that the client is not reduced between the concepts of dichotomies.

To label or not to label

- We have seen that we could increase client appreciation or exploration of **core values** by aiming for sublatives. So when a client might aim for the objective of the superlative (the best), or a comparative with (better or worse than) we could aim to bring them back to (the good) and explore what 'the good' could mean for them for a value in turn increasing a sense of grounding
- Practitioners then may **not want to label**, reduce, reify, or compartmentalize clients or any of their characteristics or aspect, however, this could lead to ignoring their autonomy since clients might identify with labels (i.e. their diagnoses) (Carter, p. 38)
- Such otherness could be considered to reflect **a belonging** when such clients can be considered marginalized (being part of a tribe can be fitting) (Carter, p. 38)
- Perhaps a Daseinanalyst would allow the client **to project themselves (shine forth)** in sessions and allow clients to explore the meanings (labels etc) they might apply to themselves
- Such an exploration should not involve interpretation from the therapist or the 'They'
- Clients should be promoted to **interpret but in an authentic manner** which the therapy should cultivate through phenomenological suspensions on judgment, dichotomies, and interpretations.

References

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