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Abstract (inglese)

Epoché in art and art of epoché

In my work as a psychotherapist, epoché means seeing, hearing and feeling the client in a special way, leaving aside my own ideas and projections. This helps to see and hear a person in a more realistic light, to feel the uniqueness of everyone.

The art of epoché opened up to me thanks to painting. I had a bouquet of white roses at the window, and I decided to paint a sketch. I began to look at the rose as if I was seeing it for the first time and knew nothing about it, pushing aside my concepts and ideas about it. Then amazing things opened up to me...

Abstract (italiano)

L'epoché nell'arte e l'arte dell'epoché

Nel mio lavoro di psicoterapeuta, l'epoché significa vedere, ascoltare e sentire il cliente in un modo speciale, mettendo da parte le proprie idee e proiezioni. Questo aiuta a vedere e ascoltare una persona in una luce più realistica, a percepirne l'unicità.

L'arte dell'epoché mi si è rivelata grazie alla pittura. Avevo un mazzo di rose bianche sulla finestra e decisi di farne uno schizzo. Iniziai a osservare la rosa come se la vedessi per la prima volta e non sapessi nulla di lei, mettendo da parte i miei concetti e le mie rappresentazioni mentali. Ed è lì che mi si spalancò un mondo di scoperte sorprendenti...

Abstract (russo)

Эпохе в искусстве и искусство эпохе

В моей работе психотерапевта эпохе означает видеть, слышать и чувствовать клиента особым образом, оставляя в стороне собственные идеи и проекции. Это помогает увидеть и услышать человека в более реалистичном свете, почувствовать уникальность каждого.

Искусство эпохе открылось мне благодаря живописи. У меня на окне стоял букет белых роз, и я решила написать этюд. Я стала смотреть на розу так, как будто вижу ее впервые и ничего о ней не знаю, отодвигая свои понятия и представления о ней. И тут мне открылись удивительные вещи...

When I thought about the topic to speak at the conference, I realized that for me Rome is, first of all, history and art. Here you can see the paintings of the greatest masters of all time - geniuses. And where, if not in Rome, at this conference, to talk about art. My first education is a teacher of painting and drawing.

For me it is easier to think in images and comprehend something through art. And it was easier to understand epoché through images, not words.

When I studied phenomenology at MIEK and became acquainted with Husserl's ideas about reduction and epoché, it was obvious to me how useful they can be in the process of existential therapy. Bracketing your own thoughts, ideas, perceptions, abandoning preliminary judgments and preconceptions.

But the question arises, how to implement it in practice, while working with the client?

Merleau-Ponty believed that it is not possible fully implement reduction, and therefore epoché in practice. My experience says the same. After all, even when I refuse to use typologies or psychological theories, I still unwittingly rely on my personal experience and on language, which is inseparable from the culture in which I grew up.

Here painting came to my aid. Just when I was thinking about epoché, I decided to draw a sketch of white roses against the background of a window.

What do I know about the rose? That it is white, prickly with green leaves. What am I really seeing right now? It stands on the window, in a counter-light, and the light pours from behind it, but does not illuminate the rose itself. Then I look at the rose as if I know nothing about it, and I see that it looks dark, almost black against the background of the window. It plays with many colors and shades. And I don't take white crayon, but green, blue, purple, and other colors, and white is left aside.

And then I realized that the principle of epoché is well known to me from painting, and that I have been practicing epoché in painting for a long time, without realizing it.

I remember when I was learning to paint, I took lessons from an old master. At that time painting for me was like mathematics. I believed that colors should be calculated, and I always doubted where to put warm and where to put cold colors. And then he said a surprising and unexpected thing to me. "Don't invent anything, just paint the colors you see." How close it is to epoché!

I look at the rose, the rose looks at me. We are in the same space. Only later I read in Merlot Ponty: "I feel that things are looking at me."

Husserl believed that the essence of things can appear only in relations with the world. If a relationship arises between me and something or someone, only then there is an opportunity to discover the essence of things. When I paint, I enter into a relationship with the world. And the world resonates within.

Most of all, I like to go to sketches and paint the sea, mountains, forest, flowers. And at first, I sit down and just look at the landscape. I do not think, but peer. At sunset, the colors change rapidly, almost every second. The sea is also in constant motion. Epoché helps me to resonate with the landscape. I draw an etude at the level of feelings, what I see at the moment. And I don't notice that I almost don't look at what I'm drawing. The sheet of paper is almost black, completely in the shade, behind it is the sun setting on the sea. I realize that I can't see anything anymore, but I continue to draw on a hunch. I come home and see that this is exactly what I saw and drew almost blindly.

At the age of 14, I liked to read about Tibet and stories about travels of Nicholas Roerich to the Himalayas. Once an exhibition of his works was brought to my city, and I went there in anticipation. I wanted to see the places he had visited - the Himalayas, India, Tibet.

But how disappointed I was when I saw them! Roerich's landscapes seemed to me too bright, too unnatural, even childish. Why exaggerate the colors so much?

Almost thirty years later, I was lucky to visit the Himalayas, and I came to the village of Naggar, where Roerich lived. My husband and I rented a room with a terrace right above the Roerich estate. When early in the morning I went out on the terrace to look at the valley and mountains, I was amazed by what I saw. The mountains were bright blue and purple, all the colors were bright, like an illustration in a fairy tale book. And then I remembered my first impression of Roerich's paintings. It turns out that he did not exaggerate, or if he did, then just a little. The landscape in the early morning dazzled the eyes with its magnificence, brightness of colors and shades. And if I had painted it, I probably needed to paint so vividly and richly to convey my impression! Today, at the age of 14 I saw it at Roerich's exhibition. What prevented me from perceiving his painting then? Perhaps my ideas of what the landscapes in the Himalayas should be like, where I have never been...

In this regard, I recall another episode. At that time, I taught at an art school in the Far North, in Novy Urengoy. One boy was drawing a forest, and I noticed that several of his trees were very crooked. The tops were bent down. I was surprised and asked why he drew such trees, but he just shrugged. But how I was surprised when on the way home, I saw exactly such strongly curved trees. What prevented me from seeing them before and not asking the boy such a stupid question? In my mind, there could not be such trees, because I had never seen such a tree.

My friend, an artist, told me that she never understood Kandinsky and was indifferent to his paintings, so she thought. But one day, in the museum, she stopped before a picture and something amazing and unforgettable began to happen to her. Lines, spots, on the picture began to come to life and move, penetrated it at the level of body sensations.

When she approached the painting, she did not think that it was Kandinsky and that she did not like him, that he was an impressionist, and what was depicted in the picture, in what technique, and what the artist wanted to say. At that moment, she was looking at and perceiving the picture without thinking or analyzing. This was epoché. She had an encounter with the painting and with the artist. She told me about it so emotionally, figuratively, gesticulating, that she had goosebumps, and I myself had goosebumps. This encounter with the work of Kandinsky greatly impressed her and was remembered forever.

Our presets, a priori judgments, hinder us both in the perception of art and in psychology.

Painting allows you to convey the unique, the singular. Every word is a generalization, and every brush stroke is unique. When I use the language of painting, I don't have to choose my words. I just depict what I see.

In epoché we look at a person and how do we see him. What do we see, and what do we draw ourselves? How can the art of painting help us in existential counseling, and how can the art of epoché help in painting, in the perception of painting?

When working with a client. I feel like an artist who is drawing a portrait. I am trying to see the inner world, the light in a person and reflect it to the client. And here the direct vision of the client helps me.

When I work with a client with epoché, I do not analyze, do not adjust what I have heard into my theories, ideas and precepts, the client has more space for self-knowledge and inner silence. To meet oneself. When I minimally contribute my own, the client comes to his insights.

Once in my youth, a street artist drew my portrait. Now I think that he was also close to epoché. He didn't know anything about me. He didn't ask me anything. He only looked and drew what he saw. And when I saw myself in this portrait, I had this important encounter with myself. He managed to depict my character, my inner world.

Summarizing, epoché helps me and my client to be, figuratively speaking, an artist.

I suggest you, my colleagues, also experiment during your excursions to museums. Look at paintings and sculptures without analysis, directly, comprehending the art of epoché.