

PHILOSOPHY OF PHILOSOPHICAL COUNSELLING

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation critiques both the existing theoretical conceptions of philosophical counselling and accounts of its practice. It also compares philosophical counselling with psychotherapy in order to point out the fallacy of the argument that philosophical counselling is radically removed from all forms of psychotherapy.

It then presents and defends a four-stage model of philosophical counselling that captures the best conceptions and reports of practice, one that is more comprehensive, more positive (as opposed to the more common characterization of what it is *not*) more explicit, and more definitive in its conceptualization than any that have been offered in the philosophical counselling literature thus far. Furthermore, this model addresses more of the actual needs of potential clients as they are highlighted in descriptive accounts and case studies, and conforms more closely to justifiable normative criteria of what ought to constitute practice in philosophical counselling than any of the currently existing models.

The final chapter highlights those areas in which philosophical counselling is superior to the approaches found in psychotherapy, and explores the benefits of philosophical counselling over other forms of counselling.

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## INTRODUCTION

Philosophical counselling is almost two decades old but still seems to be suffering from a lack of identity. Although a number of essays have appeared in an array of journals, and a book of collected essays has been published, there is little agreement as to what constitutes the methodology of philosophical counselling – or if, indeed, there even is one – what its goals and intentions are, what sort of skills are required as a philosophical counsellor, and how it compares with other forms of counselling. The term “philosophical counselling” is often used as a generic term to encompass an eclectic array of approaches, procedures, models, theories, and methods. As recently as 1996 one philosopher wrote the following words:

I maintain that the greatest theoretical challenge to us who call ourselves philosophical counselors is to articulate what distinguishes us from psychological counselors, not only in terms of method but also with respect to the nature of the counselor-client relationship.<sup>1</sup>

Since before these words were written, practitioners have been attempting to define philosophical counselling in a number of ways. One of the most prevalent has been negatively – that is, by explaining what it is *not*. This is because of the difficulties inherent in the task of coming to a positive definition of philosophical counselling in light of the disagreements found in the literature. This difficulty has led some to maintain an almost “anything goes” attitude which risks the diluting of philosophical counselling by a variety of pseudo-philosophical practices perhaps more accurately termed psychological counselling, pastoral care, or simply New Age services.

Philosophical counsellors have also endeavored to define their profession by attempting to differentiate themselves from psychotherapy. They have done this by highlighting what are perceived to be their differences, and largely ignoring their

similarities, at the expense of an accurate account of both psychotherapy and philosophical counselling. The attempt to define philosophical counselling has also led to the publication of a number of normative essays stressing the significance to philosophical counselling of certain so-called universal practices which, to date, remain in the form of theories within the philosophical counselling literature which, strangely, receive little if any practical application anywhere in the field.

At the moment the philosophy of philosophical counselling is in a state of dynamic disarray. For example, while some philosophers argue that there is *no* method in philosophical counselling, others argue that there *ought to be* a method, and that, once established, it should be clearly articulated, while still others argue that there already *is* an implicit method in philosophical counselling which only needs to be made explicit if it is to benefit the community of philosophical counselling professionals. Still others argue that there are clearly extant a number of overlapping or complementary methods as described in numerous recent essays, while still others argue that there are so many disparate, ostensibly incommensurable, and even mutually exclusive methods reported in the literature that it renders them collectively unintelligible.

Currently philosophical counselling lacks a clear and unambiguous articulation of both the normative theory on which it rests and its forms of practice. Put another way, philosophical counselling suffers from a confusion of identities. This confusion is seen by some as preventing philosophical counselling from gaining any sort of credibility among potential clients. The lack of a coherent model of philosophical counselling also hinders the establishment of a comprehensive training program for those philosophers who may decide to become practicing counsellors.

Philosopher Ida Jongsma points out that when it is unclear what philosophical counselling involves – where its boundaries are, what the philosophical counsellor has to offer his client, and what the client can expect – it is not possible for the practitioner to even talk about philosophical counselling, let alone to seek clients.<sup>2</sup> The practitioner who cannot articulate a philosophical counselling method in positive terms (as opposed to

stating negatively what it is *not*) will simply be unable to offer his\* services to the public by means of any sort of advertisement. Like Jongsma, Dries Boele and others wonder how it is possible to promote philosophical counselling to potential clients if it does not have clearly defined features, or if it is defined only vaguely – as, for example, that it is an “understanding” of the client’s problem, or that it is “beyond method” – or with reference to abstract notions unfamiliar to the general public – such as that it is concerned with “worldview interpretation.”<sup>3</sup> These vague notions may function adequately in a professional journal addressed to a readership of knowing practitioners, in that they allow readers to interpret philosophical counselling according to their own experiences and to suit their own practices. But they fail to provide unambiguous and concrete accounts of philosophical counselling, to those who are unfamiliar with it, that make clear in what sense or senses philosophical counselling is in fact philosophy that gives counsel and counselling that is philosophical.

The founder of the modern philosophical counselling movement, Gerd Achenbach, argues that philosophical counselling does not and should not have what may be characterized as a definite method. He maintains that the profession stands to gain by leaving the theory undefined and the practice open to all interpretations. But Jongsma argues, from the perspective of professionalism, that if Achenbach’s characterization is not challenged, and an “anything goes” attitude is allowed to permeate the field, then “this new profession will appear vague.”<sup>4</sup> Such vagueness can lead to “the dangerous consequence of giving license to philosophical counsellors to do whatever they please.”<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, as I will argue in chapter four, Achenbach’s extreme postmodern position in regards to method calls into question both the nature and the existence of the philosophical counsellor’s expertise. If there are no acknowledged aims or purposes, and no principles of action, or at least guidelines, to follow in the practice of philosophical

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\* The issue of gender in published texts is an important one, and I am aware that historically the masculine gender has at times been used intentionally, at other times unreflectively, and at still other times simply by convention to denote figures of power and authority. In an attempt to break with this controversial tradition I began by using he/she and s/he, and alternating the gender of the counsellor and the client. But this became very confusing. I concluded that the best approach was to consistently refer to the counsellor in one gender and to the client in the other. Since I am male I chose the masculine for the counsellor and the feminine for the client throughout most of this dissertation.. Unfortunately this fails to reflect the gender diversity found in the roles of both philosophical counsellors and their clients.

counselling, then it seems to follow logically that the philosophical counsellor cannot claim an expertise in anything. This argument has actually been made by some critics of philosophical counselling. If this is the case then the philosophical counsellor's client is simply wasting her time and money, or worse, she is the victim of malpractice.<sup>6</sup>

Having a clearly articulated approach to philosophical counselling can also bolster the client's confidence in what is currently still a relatively unfamiliar form of therapy.

Professor of psychiatry Jerome Frank observes that in psychotherapy

the therapist's adherence to a particular technique provides both therapist and patient with a feeling of security and demonstrates the therapist's competence. This in turn enhances the patient's faith in the therapist, strengthening willingness to cooperate and making it easier for the therapist to stick to the procedure.<sup>7</sup>

It seems reasonable to assume that a similar situation exists in the practice of philosophical counselling.

Dries Boele also cautions that, due to its lack of a clearly articulated method, philosophical counselling may ultimately be defined according to its practitioners – that is, in reference to the personalities of individual philosophical counsellors – clearly an inferior, and therefore undesirable, way of defining any new practice.<sup>8</sup>

The ambiguities and vagueness in the theoretical literature, the inconsistencies, and the often outright contradictions in the descriptive reports of practice are liable to leave those who wish to work in the field both confused and frustrated. It seems that in order for philosophical counselling to be taken seriously, not only by prospective clients but potential practitioners and by professionals in psychology, it is imperative that its theoretical framework and its fundamental practices first be clarified, and then that an operative working model of philosophical counselling be articulated.

In this dissertation I will critique both existing theoretical conceptions of philosophical counselling and accounts of its practice. I will then present and defend a model of philosophical counselling that captures the best conceptions and reports of practice, one that is more comprehensive, more positive (as opposed to the negative

characterization of what it is *not*), more explicit, and perhaps more definitive in its conception than any that have been offered in the philosophical counselling literature thus far. It is an attempt at what may be called an over-arching model that eliminates those conceptions which reflect actual practice only incidentally, vaguely or ambiguously, and then coherently synthesizes or integrates the remaining, viable theories and practices.

More importantly I consider this model to be both feasible and more morally and intellectually responsible than existing models. By this I mean that it addresses more of the various actual needs of potential clients highlighted in descriptive accounts and case studies, and conforms more closely to justifiable normative criteria of what ought to constitute practice in philosophical counselling than any of the currently existing models found in the literature.

This model will bring to light that which is already evident in much that has been written on philosophical counselling but is often unrecognized by those who practice in the field: that there are a number of important overlapping commonalties among the various theories and practices which suggest an ultimate holism may be possible. Put another way, this model does not claim that there exists an essential core that can be called philosophical counselling, but rather that there are a number of elements all of which contribute to it. To borrow an analogy from Wittgenstein, philosophical counselling doesn't have an essential core any more than a thread has a single fiber as its core. Instead,

...in spinning thread we twist fiber on fiber. The strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fiber runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibers.<sup>9</sup>

Likewise, although there are a number of important elements that need to be present in philosophical counselling (which will be discussed later), none of these many theoretical and practical "fibers" are individually able to adequately define philosophical counselling as a whole. And yet when these fibers are woven together, as I shall attempt to do in the fourth chapter, they do indeed constitute a strong thread in that they produce both a coherent model and a substantive method for philosophical counselling.

Chapter one is an inquiry into the theoretical elements of philosophical counselling in order to familiarize the reader with the many normative accounts that have been presented by various philosophers. In the course of this inquiry it should become clear that there is widespread disagreement as to what constitutes an accurate and complete conception of philosophical counselling. For example, while some philosophers see elements such as phenomenology and hermeneutics as the *essence* of philosophical counselling others see them as merely necessary components of the practice, but unable to adequately define the totality of philosophical counselling. Furthermore, some claim that teaching ought to be a part of the counselling process, while others argue that teaching should have nothing at all to do with it. There is also widespread disagreement as to whether philosophical counselling ought to be characterized as therapy or not. It should become clear that these differing conceptions must be reconciled before a coherent theory of philosophical counselling is possible.

Chapter two examines the numerous descriptive accounts of the actual practice of philosophical counselling. In this chapter I will argue that what writers in the field have individually presented as philosophical counselling is, to a large extent, so narrow in focus that they do not adequately represent everything that should legitimately be included as part of its practice. And, despite the fact that many of their accounts contain overlapping elements, it is not possible to adequately define the profession of philosophical counselling inductively by means of an aggregate of commonalities in those overlapping elements because there are simply too few commonalities among them and too many outright contradictions.

The second chapter begins with a discussion of what is meant when the words “procedure,” “technique,” “approach,” and “method” are used, and then examines what has been presented in the literature as the current practice of philosophical counselling. It should become evident that, just as in the area of theoretical normative conceptions, the claims as to what constitutes actual practice are often severely at odds with each other. These differences expressed by writers in the field begin with the issue of whether any technique – or collection of techniques or procedures – deserves the designation of “method” in the first place, and ends with the problem of what appears to



be central and/or fundamental to the practice. This chapter brings to light the fact that in philosophical counselling there are almost as many techniques and procedures as there are practitioners, but that none of them alone adequately addresses the many and varied problems, puzzles, and questions that prompt the client to seek philosophical counselling, and that therefore no one technique or procedure can accurately be termed an adequate model of philosophical counselling. It should become clear that, if philosophical counselling is to have the coherence, consistency, and scope essential to an adequate model, it is important to somehow integrate many of the various practices discussed.

In their effort to attain credibility for this new field, many writers have taken the approach of attempting to differentiate philosophical counselling from psychotherapy. Chapter three shows that, contrary to the claims of some philosophical counsellors, philosophical counselling is in fact very similar to certain forms of psychotherapy, but that there are a number of differences which have to date not received adequate attention in the philosophical counselling literature – such as intentionally teaching the client the philosophical reasoning skills employed by the philosophical counsellor, the importance and centrality of informal logic or critical/creative thinking in the philosophical counselling process, and its preventive or pro-active effect. But this attempt to differentiate philosophical counselling from psychotherapy seems to have little if any importance in the legitimization of philosophy as a form of counselling. Many psychotherapists are already engaging in philosophical inquiry but calling it psychological counselling. What is important is the answer to the question of whether philosophical inquiry is an effective – or the most effective – and morally responsible way of addressing certain kinds of human problems, puzzles, and questions that distress some individuals, and who is best qualified to carry out such an inquiry.

Once the problems inherent in current normative conceptions of philosophical counselling and reports of its practice have been critiqued, the fourth chapter attempts to form a synthesis, or to reconstruct, the various separate, legitimate, and necessary elements of philosophical counselling – not only as they have been presented in the literature, but as they have become evident in my own practice – into a coherent and adequate model. Several writers have maintained that philosophical counselling has

within it a number of stages. In this chapter the weaknesses of their models are pointed out, and a new model is presented which argues that philosophical counselling may be seen as consisting of four stages:

- (1) “free floating”,
- (2) immediate problem resolution,
- (3) intentional teaching,
- (4) transcendence.

This model accounts for most of the theoretical conceptions of philosophical counselling as well as the majority of reports of actual practice. I will argue that this model addresses all of the diverse needs of various clients, it is goal-oriented without infringing on the autonomy of the client, it allows for the autonomy of the client to be enhanced rather than simply respected, it clearly differentiates philosophical counselling from psychotherapy (if that is indeed important), and it avoids the detrimental ambiguity and vagueness of the extreme postmodern “beyond-method” model posited by Achenbach and others.

If philosophical counselling is to be a beneficial practice we need a vigorous examination of, and dialogue concerning, the purposes and practices of philosophical counselling. This thesis is intended as a useful contribution to this dialogue, not the last word. Furthermore, it is not intended to provide the criteria by which the certification of practitioners is to be undertaken.

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## NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup> Marinoff, Louis. "Philosophy Meets Pirandello: Six Professions in Search of a Schema." *Perspectives in Philosophical Practice. Collected Lecture of the Second International Congress on Philosophical Practice*. Wim van der Vlist ed. Leusden: 1996. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Jongsma, Ida. "Philosophical Counseling in Holland: History and Open Issues." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 30-31

<sup>3</sup> Boele, Dries. "The 'Benefits' of a Socratic Dialogue." Paper presented at the Third International Conference of philosophical Practice. New York, July, 1997. Appendix 21.

<sup>4</sup> Jongsma. Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> An implicit warning of this nature can be found in the July, 1998 essay entitled "Philosophical Counselling: The Case Against" at *The Philosopher's Web Magazine* located on the Internet at <http://philosophers.co.uk.critcounselnf.htm>

<sup>7</sup> In *Persuasion and Healing*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1991 ed. 164-65.

<sup>8</sup> Boele, Appendix 18-21.

<sup>9</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1958 ed. sec. 67.

## CHAPTER 1

### A SURVEY OF CONCEPTIONS

#### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter is an overview of the limited textual sources available on the contemporary philosophical counselling movement in an attempt to arrive at a sense of the current theoretical conceptions of philosophical counselling. The accounts presented in this chapter will be primarily normative and will examine how various theorists have construed philosophical counselling by examining what they propose ought to be its central constituents and aspects. In the course of this chapter it should become clear that there are many problems with current theoretical normative conceptions of philosophical counselling, and that there are conflicting elements which continue to add to the confusion in the field. The purpose of this chapter is to become familiar with what philosophers say *ought to be* found in philosophical counselling. This will then act as part of the foundation of the model I will propose in chapter four.

First an inquiry will be made into where and how philosophical counselling began.

#### 1.2 A Brief History of Philosophical Counselling

Philosophical counselling, rather than simply being something innovative and completely new, is often described as a return to the ancient roots of the practice of philosophy, or as “a new version of an old tradition.”<sup>1</sup> The American Society for Philosophy, Counseling, and Psychotherapy (ASPCP) states in the preamble to its “Standards of Ethical Practice” that the practice of providing philosophical assistance to others “is at least as ancient as Socrates who, in the Fifth Century B.C., made such a practice of philosophy.”

In his recent book entitled *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, the French historian Pierre Hadot examines how philosophy appeared in the first place “as a therapeutic passion” meant to bring about “a profound transformation of the individual’s mode of seeing and being, a transformation of our vision of the world...and a metamorphosis of our personality.”<sup>2</sup> Many of the philosophic schools of antiquity did not see philosophy as merely teaching abstract theory, or the exegesis of texts, but rather “the art of living.” “The philosophical act,” says Hadot, was seen by Hellenistic and Roman schools of philosophy as “a progress which causes us to *be* more fully, and makes us better.”<sup>3</sup>

It is a conversion which turns our entire life upside down, changing the life of the person who goes through it. It raises the individual from an inauthentic condition of life, darkened by unconsciousness and harassed by worry, to an authentic state of life, in which he attains self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace, and freedom.<sup>4</sup>

Hadot’s historical research has shown that there was a decidedly practical, self-developmental orientation to philosophy in antiquity.

In her book *The Therapy of Desire* Martha C. Nussbaum argues that Hellenistic philosophical schools in Greece and Rome, such as Epicureans, Skeptics, and Stoics, did not practice philosophy as a “detached intellectual technique dedicated to the display of cleverness but “as an immersed and worldly art of grappling with human misery,” and “as a way of addressing the most painful problems of human life.” The philosophers of those schools made themselves “the doctors of human lives.”<sup>5</sup>

Richard Shusterman points out that Hellenistic philosophers such as Epicurus and Seneca questioned the quest for knowledge for its own sake, and regarded knowledge as having mainly instrumental value for something higher, such as virtue or happiness in ordinary life.<sup>6</sup> The philosophical counselling movement is an attempt to return philosophy to this role as a substantial element in the living of everyday life. It is a practical perspective in what has been largely an academic pursuit, a contemporary pragmatism whose goal is to reestablish theory as “a useful instrument to a higher

philosophical practice: the art of living wisely and well.”<sup>7</sup> Philosophical counsellors often quote both ancient Greek primary philosophical sources as well as Hadot’s and Nussbaum’s exegeses of these ancient texts when attempting to define their profession.<sup>8</sup> They also quote more recent philosophers such as Nietzsche who says he is “still waiting for a philosopher physician” who will “muster the courage... to risk the proposition: That what was at stake in all philosophizing up to this point was not at all ‘truth’ but something else – let us say, health, future, growth, power, life.”<sup>9</sup>

Jon Borowicz uses a quote from the writings of Seneca to begin his paper on the practicality of philosophical practice. In his letters to Lucilius, Seneca, the Stoic tutor to Nero, stated unequivocally what he considered to be important about philosophy. He wrote, “Shall I tell you what philosophy holds out to humanity? Counsel.” Seneca then demands to know what philosophers are doing to help those facing death, those vexed by poverty, or tormented by wealth.<sup>10</sup> Borowicz points out that Seneca’s challenge can no longer be ignored as irrelevant to contemporary philosophy because “philosophical practice has changed all that.”<sup>11</sup> The point Borowicz is making is that Seneca saw the practice of philosophy as not merely an scholarly exercise but as a means by which to inform, advise, guide, and instruct – in other words counsel – both oneself and others.

In discussing the efforts of some modern-day philosophers to return the practice of applying philosophical knowledge to real life situations by means of philosophical counselling, Susan Robbins quotes one of the twentieth century’s most influential philosophers, Ludwig Wittgenstein, as asking rhetorically, “What is the use of studying philosophy if all it does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse questions in logic, etc., and if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life?”<sup>12</sup> She also points out that John Dewey, the highly regarded American philosopher of education, wrote earlier this century that philosophy would show its true value “only when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men.”<sup>13</sup> The writings of contemporary philosophical counsellors agree that the practice of philosophical counselling is precisely what is once again showing the true value of philosophy.

The modern philosophical counselling movement is relatively young. In 1980 an article appeared in the journal *The Humanist* entitled “The Counseling Philosopher” in which Seymon Hersh compared the counselling philosopher to a coach and a field engineer. He saw his clients viewing themselves not as individuals afflicted with some sort of illness, or as looking for a cure for neurosis, but as “intelligent ‘investors’ who want to get increasingly greater returns on their investment in living.”<sup>14</sup> Psychological counsellors and psychotherapists have been writing about philosophy for decades, and many approaches, such as, for example, Carl Rogers’ client centered approach, Albert Ellis’s Rational Emotive Therapy, Transactional Analysis, Existential Analysis and Humanistic Therapies claim a strong philosophical element in their psychologically based procedures. But none of their practitioners abandoned the psychological, therapeutic paradigm, nor did they call themselves philosophical counselors.<sup>15</sup> The issue of whether philosophical counselling is in fact therapy or not will be addressed in a later section of this chapter. An in-depth inquiry into the differences and similarities between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy will also be conducted in a subsequent chapter.

Although there were philosophers who practiced some kind of philosophical counselling as early as 1967, it is generally held that the official birth date of philosophical counselling is 1981, when the German philosopher Gerd Achenbach opened the first philosophical counselling center and started philosophical counselling as a movement.<sup>16</sup>

### 1.3 Antinomous Definitions

Most attempts to define exactly what philosophical counselling *is* generally begin with an explanation of what it *is not*. In her paper published as part of the Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Philosophical Practice held in Leusden, the Netherlands in 1996, Shlomit Schuster attempts to explain what she means when she says “philosophical counseling” by writing in part,

Philosophical counseling did not originate in psychological counseling; it was not practiced previously by psychologists or therapists, nor was it an offshoot of a hybrid psychology-philosophy approach.<sup>17</sup>

While differentiating philosophical counselling from psychotherapy and psychological counselling is one approach to an attempt to find a definition for philosophical counselling, another approach is to differentiate it from applied philosophy. Schuster writes that although philosophical counselling is somewhat similar to “advisory applied philosophy” the two are not identical.<sup>18</sup> She holds that those working in applied philosophy may be considered philosophical “practitioners” but not philosophical “counsellors” in the way in which the term is used by philosophical counsellors themselves.

Furthermore, many practitioners define philosophical counselling as also *not* academic philosophy. What differentiates philosophical counselling from its academic counterpart is that the philosophical discussion between counsellor and client is not stripped of its personal context, as it is in the abstract forms of philosophizing as, for example, between teacher and student. Philosophical counselling, it is said, “uses abstract and universal considerations, but always in reference to the concrete and personal problem at hand.”<sup>19</sup> Philosophical counselling is said to respect the individual’s genuinely philosophical concerns about life and resists the temptation to formulate the client’s concern by means of “academic jargon.”<sup>20</sup> The intention is to try to gain a philosophical understanding of the client, and to work with the client to help her come to a better philosophical understanding of herself. It would therefore be counter-productive to use an academic approach with clients who, for the most parts, are untrained in academic philosophy and would not understand the technical language or jargon.

Philosophical counsellors therefore seem to be “fighting on three fronts” so to speak when they define themselves in antinomous terms: first against psychotherapists “who force upon their clients a rigid diagnostic and therapeutic system;” second against academic philosophers “who overlook the problems of daily life (and thus at the same time the special needs of the philosophical practitioner);” and third against those who



apply philosophy in an advisory capacity by hiring themselves out as ethics consultants to work with, for example, biomedical ethics boards, or with the business community, and so on.<sup>21</sup>

#### 1.4 Some of Its Uses

Before examining some of the attempts to formulate a substantive definition of the term “philosophical counselling,” it may be useful to approach the task in a pseudo-Wittgensteinian way by inquiring into what various writers have said about its uses. Richard Bernstein points out that American philosopher John Dewey stated at the beginning of this century that it is time for philosophers to turn themselves to the problems of everyone, rather than merely the problems of philosophers. Bernstein and Dewey both submit that philosophy should be less academic and more about the problems that confront a person in their daily lives.<sup>22</sup> Philosophical counselling is said to concern itself, at least in part, with exactly that.

Philosophical counselling has been said, among other things, to help the client to identify and clarify hidden assumptions and emotions; to recognize leaps of abstraction and assumption; to deal with questions about meaning and value in life, ethical problems, questions regarding the ‘right’ thing to do in given situations, good decisions and best choices to make; to learn ‘the art of living’ by helping clients to find, for themselves, the answer to the question, ‘how should I live my life?’; to clarify roles and responsibilities; to develop intellectual tools to aid in examining problems from various perspectives; to recognize options; to anticipate consequences; to develop the intellectual tools necessary in the constructive examination of the client’s own thinking (“reflexive analysis”); to deal with the impact of systems such as the media, technology, industry, the modern work ethic, societal demands, etc.; to construct a life narrative in line with the client’s own values and goals; and to critically examine the relationship between beliefs held by the client and the life they live.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, philosophical counselling is argued to be appropriate in areas such as marriage counselling,<sup>24</sup> bereavement, pastoral work,<sup>25</sup> academic advising and problem alleviation, career advising and management consulting,<sup>26</sup> self-esteem development,<sup>27</sup> self-identity issues and problems, religious or spiritual problems,<sup>28</sup> meaning of life/existential questions,<sup>29</sup> acculturation problems, phase of life and/or mid-life problems, social/political issues, interpersonal problems,<sup>30</sup> family problems,<sup>31</sup> intergenerational problems, in both group<sup>32</sup> and one-on-one situations, as well as in dealing with the feelings of guilt, depression,<sup>33</sup> shame, anger, and so on, associated with or stemming from any of the above.

In addition to acknowledging that people consult philosophical counsellors in order to receive help in dealing with specific problems that confront them in their everyday lives, some writers argue that people go to philosophical counsellors for the same reasons that they seek out psychoanalysis, yoga, and meditation classes, New Age and spiritual workshops, and a broad range of religious practices: in order to “improve themselves, to live a deeper, richer, better, and more significant life.”<sup>34</sup> In this sense the “problem” which they present the philosophical counsellor amounts to a feeling that something of higher significance is missing in their lives.<sup>35</sup> This aspect of philosophical counselling may be seen as its function in the personal development of the client. This topic will be examined in more detail later, after some attempts at a substantive definition are considered.

### 1.5 Attempts at a Substantive Definition

In positive terms it has been argued that philosophical counselling is “the philosophical care of the self.”<sup>36</sup> It is also conceived of as “an autonomous philosophical discussion about whatever a client wishes to discuss with a philosopher.”<sup>37</sup> It is seen as referring to “a face to face discussion in which a philosopher thinks along with a client about problems in decision-making and about existential questions.”<sup>38</sup> In a session with a client the counsellor is said to attempt to understand the nature of the client’s problem, and to clarify what is at stake, rather than to offer practical solutions.<sup>39</sup>

His “principle commitment” is to “stimulate the development of enhanced perspective while facilitating the progressive clarification of life-ordering values and conceptual orientations.”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the counsellor is said to help his client better understand “the conceptual and logical network” that touches upon her life, and more specifically touches upon the issues with which she is currently struggling.<sup>41</sup> The counsellor’s intention is to conduct a thorough hermeneutic of the client’s “text” as orally presented, before helping the client attempt her own critique.<sup>42</sup> In this sense then, philosophical counselling is client-centered in that the client is necessarily involved in a participatory dialogue with the counsellor that requires the client’s self-scrutiny within the context of the client’s so-called “world view.” But at other times philosophical counselling is said to deal just with the actual “worldview interpretation” held by the client in order to determine whether the confusion or unrest the client is feeling may be due to an inconsistency or contradiction in this world view.

Like other forms of counselling and therapy, philosophical counselling seems to be multi-faceted. It is at times described as concerned with personal development as it is defined and desired by the client herself. At other times philosophical counselling is said to restore equilibrium, and to help individuals develop their capacities for first order and second order (or meta) thinking. It is considered by some practitioners to be a useful therapy, while others hold that it is nothing like therapy at all. In some cases it is said to teach clients who have had major difficulties in life how to live life so that the possibility of life-disturbing problems, which would require the intervention of a counsellor, can not only be self-mitigated but avoided. It seems therefore that philosophical counselling could be characterized in a way that it rarely is by writers in the field: as both a “corrective” and a “preventative” measure.

Ran Lahav approaches the question of a definition of philosophical counselling by asking the question, What exactly is a philosophical investigation? In his examination of the contemporary approaches to philosophical counselling in 1996,<sup>43</sup> Lahav finds three main answers, the first two of which he considers unsatisfactory. The first consists of seeing philosophical counselling as concerned with examining the client’s conscious opinions and thoughts. Lahav argues that, in its attempt to differentiate itself from the

psychologist's business of examining the unconscious, this first approach makes philosophy only marginally relevant to life since life consists of much more than mere rational thought: namely emotions, hopes, desires, fantasies, patterns of behaviour etc. The second approach, which considers philosophical counselling as being about using rational thinking tools in order to investigate a person's network of beliefs within both the conscious and unconscious processes of the client's mind, is so similar to cognitive approaches in psychotherapy as to be virtually indistinguishable. He argues that the examination of how a client's beliefs interact with her emotions and influence her behaviour is an empirical question which requires the aid of a substantial psychological theory, and cannot be addressed through pure philosophical contemplation.

Lahav argues that the previous two approaches are followed by few philosophical counsellors. He believes that most practice what he terms an investigation of "lived understanding," in other words, the world as "understood" by the client's emotions, behaviour, thoughts, hopes, desires, and entire way of being. This so-called lived understanding may not be entirely conscious, but neither is it unconscious because it is not a psychological structure in the client's mind. "It is, rather, the meaning, implications, or 'logic' of the person's attitude toward life."<sup>44</sup> The ultimate goal of the client's philosophical investigation into her "lived understanding," says Lahav, is wisdom, thus making philosophical understanding a goal in itself rather than only as a means to overcoming some personal problem.<sup>45</sup> This approach at a definition for philosophical counselling is a variation on what Lahav earlier called "worldview interpretation" which will be explained in greater detail below.

Shlomit Schuster claims that philosophical counselling "has its own identity" in that it can be defined as "a reciprocal relation in which philosophical thought and freedom of thought are developed."<sup>46</sup> While this may be a constitutive element of a substantive definition, and therefore necessary, it is not sufficient in that it does not serve to exclude other, non-counselling, practices which can also be said to consist of reciprocal relations in which "philosophical thought and freedom of thought are developed" such as in the classroom, Socratic discussion group, "philosophy café," or even a discussion among friends. But to reach a substantive definition, more needs to be said.

## 1.6 Client-Centered Dialogue

Two of the most important aspects of philosophical counselling are said to be its “client-centered” focus, and the dialogical nature of the process. The term “client centered” was coined by psychologist Carl Rogers in the 1950s. Rogers started what he called “nondirective counselling” in the 1940s as a reaction against the classical Freudian and directive psychoanalytic approaches to individual therapy in use at that time. This approach directly challenged the long-standing paternalistic presumption that the therapist knows what “normal” is, that he knows how the client’s state differs from normal, and that he therefore knows what is best for the client in order to bring her to the state of normalcy. In the next decade Rogers developed what he called client-centered therapy which is based on the assumptions that people are essentially trustworthy – that is, that what they say to the therapist can be believed, and is not merely an unconscious cover-up of the truth – that they have a vast potential for understanding themselves and resolving their own problems without direct intervention from the therapist, and that they are capable of self-directed growth within a therapeutic relationship.<sup>47</sup> Today, philosophical counsellors share Rogers’ view that the best vantage point for understanding how people behave is from their own internal frame of reference, or from within their own contextual milieu.<sup>48</sup>

In the seminal anthology entitled *Essays on Philosophical Counseling*, psychotherapist Ben Mijuskovic maintains that

philosophical counseling must be “client-centered.” It must orient itself from the ultimate assumptions (consistent or not) and the projected systems of the counselee. The focus must always be on what the counselee believes and thinks and never on what he or she, “should know” or whether she or he has “repressed feelings.”<sup>49</sup>

Mijuskovic’s position is indicative of the sentiments expressed in all the written works on philosophical counselling currently available in English regarding the

client/counsellor relationship. The client is seen by the philosophical counsellor not as the host of an isolated illness needing treatment, but rather as whole person, a self-directing moral agent whose dignity and autonomy deserves the respect of the counsellor.<sup>50</sup> While the counsellor may certainly be empathetic to the difficult choices and complicated dilemmas experienced by the client – so as to be better able to assist the client in finding a satisfactory resolution – it is maintained that the counsellor should resist making decisions on behalf of the client – so as to not only avoid infringing on the client’s autonomy, but to avert the possibility of the client’s developing a dependency on what may be perceived as the counsellor’s superiority in reasoning ability and decision-making expertise.

Being a counselee or client does not amount to giving up one’s autonomy. The philosophical counsellor is not seen as an expert who is taking away the responsibility of the client to think and speak for herself. The counsellor is seen as helping the client to develop her own capacity for finding a resolution to the problem or concern which the client herself finds satisfactory. The “point of reference” of any philosophical counselling session is always said to be the client and her understanding.<sup>51</sup>

The primary tool of the philosophical counsellor is reportedly the dialogical exchange. And the initial tasks of the philosophical counsellor within this dialogue is listening to,<sup>52</sup> and then comprehending what the client “wishes to pursue.”<sup>53</sup> Then, through critical questions and comments, the counsellor motivates the client to consider different opinions, to examine her attitudes from others’ points of view, to reconsider or revise her original viewpoint, and to integrate different approaches.<sup>54</sup> It is said that the philosophical counsellor tries to create an “open dialogue” in which his questions, rather than being based on any standard list of questions, are inspired by the client’s ideas or the counsellor’s thoughts at that moment.<sup>55</sup>

The following is a sample of the sort of philosophical dialogue one might find in a counselling situation.

On his first visit to my office Clarence said he felt abandoned by God and wanted to know what he could do about re-connecting with Him.

Clarence was a First Nations, single, young man of about twenty-five. He had been adopted as a baby by a Caucasian couple but had left his adoptive parents at the age of twelve to live in detention centers, jail, and on the street. He had relied on welfare and crime to support his drug and alcohol habits. But in his late teens he had come to the realization that his life was doomed to be, in the words of the philosopher Thomas Hobbes, "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."<sup>56</sup> So he decided to find his way back to his native people, get in touch with their ancestral Spirit, and, with Spirit's help, change his ways for the better. He sobered up, got a part-time job, went back to college, sought out and found a transcendent "Spirit" in the stories of his people, discovered an imminent and complementary God in "New Age" writings, and became confident that his recovery from substance abuse had put him back in step with his predestined role in the grand, Cosmic scheme of things. He had not only come to accept his God's grace, he had also come to recognize, and accept as legitimate, the authority to forgive himself for his past behavior based on a contextual and situational understanding of that behavior.

For Clarence faith in God was clearly life-enhancing. It was a means whereby he was able to preserve his personal integrity and a sense of meaning in the face of profound physical, social, and psychological changes.<sup>57</sup> He had even decided to reconnect with his adoptive parents and was seriously considering trying to locate his birth mother.

But one evening it all came crashing down. He and his 12 year old friend, Josh, were walking home from a movie when they chose to take a shortcut through a dark alleyway. Suddenly, they found themselves confronted by two knife-wielding men who said they were going to rob them. Terrified, Josh began to cry. Clarence, in his fear of being killed and in his rage at being victimized, found himself driven to his old ways, using the street fighting tactics he had learned in his bad days to try to fend

off the attackers. But they overpowered him, and stole his money, his jacket and his shoes. They also stole Josh's shoes and most of his clothes.

When he returned home that evening, Clarence was bleeding both physically and spiritually. When he tried to make sense of what had happened he only found himself becoming more confused. He finally arrived at the conclusion that their being beaten up, robbed, and nearly killed must surely have been divine retributive justice, or God's means of exacting payment for the sinful life of crime and drugs he had lived earlier. And it was his own fault since it was clearly a case of "what goes around comes around," a kind of "New Age karma." But what didn't make sense to Clarence was why God saw fit to punish him at this time, just when he was succeeding in changing his life for the better. And if his giving up drinking and drugs did not count to reduce the debt he seemed to owe God, then his effort to stay sober and clean was also pointless. In fact, Clarence argued, there seemed to be no point in life at all since there was no comfort to be found in having a belief in God.

Clarence was caught in a classic crisis situation in that his perception of the robbery and his subsequent doubts about his faith proved an intolerable difficulty that exceeded his resources and coping mechanisms.<sup>58</sup> Clarence, unable to resolve the crisis, turned back to his former addictions to drown out the confusion. He eventually found his way to an addiction recovery center which, ironically, employed the Alcoholic's Anonymous model of personal reliance on a transcendent power often referred to as God.

Clarence had told me all these things in the first stage one session. In the second session our discussion moved naturally into stage two problem resolution. I started the session slowly and gently, carefully asking him how he felt about what had happened. He said he blamed himself and felt very bad about what had happened, especially to his 12 year old friend. I reviewed what we had discussed during the previous



sessions by means of open-ended questions: "What do you think Spirit or God is like?" I asked.

He answered, "Like a loving father who is everywhere; someone who watches over you and has your welfare at heart."

I asked, "Why do you think a loving father would want to get even with his son for something he had done in the past, especially when the son was trying to make amends?"

He said that it did not make sense for a loving father to act that way, and that he could see that God probably wouldn't act like that either. I asked him why Josh should also have been involved in his mugging if it was indeed some sort of punishment from God? Again he said this didn't make sense since Josh was in no way responsible for any of the things he had done in his teenage years.

"And," I asked him, "When you were still mugging people, how did God let you know who to mug?"

Clarence said the he had always decided for himself who to mug. God had nothing to do with it.

So I asked, "If God never influenced your own choice of victims when you yourself were still mugging people, why should it be the case that God directed these particular muggers to victimize you and your young friend?"

He consented that God probably had nothing to do with it. So I suggested that his thinking about God's involvement in the mugging was not consistent with either his beliefs about God or his knowledge about the dynamics of a mugging, that perhaps he was jumping to a hasty conclusion about the mugging as part of God's plan. Clarence agreed and said he could see that this was not making sense.

But I had that uncomfortable suspicion that Clarence was mouthing words empty of conviction. He seemed distracted to me, as though there was still some important, but yet unspoken, issue that

concerned him. The 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher and psychologist William James said that in the metaphysical and religious sphere, articulate reasons are cogent for us only when our inarticulate feelings of reality have already been impressed in favor of the same conclusion.<sup>59</sup> I wasn't convinced that our philosophical reasoning had succeed in getting Clarence past the reality of his feelings that God was punishing him for something he had done.

It occurred to me that perhaps Clarence and I were viewing the mugging from different epistemic foundations.<sup>60</sup> One of the primary tools available to a philosophical counsellor is the ability to assist the client in locating and examining the ground or reason for their beliefs. I decided to turn our attention to the very basic question of responsibility. I asked him, "So if God isn't responsible for setting the muggers on you, who do you think is to blame for what happened? Who is responsible for the mugging?"

He replied, "Well, God is, sort of."

I said, "But I thought you just said you didn't think God was the kind of Being who needed to get even with people."

"No, I mean, life is responsible. Um, I guess I am. You see, I don't know. Things just happen. I should have known better, you know, so it's my fault, isn't it?"

I tried asking the same question differently, "What I mean is, who is responsible for actually mugging you?"

He replied, "Well, I read that things just happen as they're supposed to. They call it a sort of karma. I don't know. It's my own fault for being out there, you know?"

I asked him a third time, "But who's actually responsible for beating you up and robbing you that night when you were coming home from the movie?"

Finally he said, "Oh, I see what you mean. You mean when it happened? They are! Those guys who mugged us are responsible."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "Because they did it. It was their decision. They decided to do it, just like I used to decide to do it." Then he burst out laughing. He thought it was hilarious that he hadn't seen this before. He couldn't believe he had missed something so blatantly obvious.

"They're responsible for beating us up, not me." He laughed again and said he had wasted a whole week trying to figure out, since God was punishing him, how exactly he was to blame, and how his having gone back to drugs and alcohol was a justified response to the situation. He hadn't seen that he might not have been responsible at all. He thought this was incredibly funny.

I continued by asking him questions regarding his own autonomy. I asked him to repeat to me the details of how he had pick his own victims when he was still robbing people on the street; what criteria he had used. Then I asked him if this might have been how those men who had mugged him and Josh had chosen them as their victims. He agreed it was very likely. He told me he had been wearing a costly leather jacket and expensive shoes. Josh was dressed from head to toe in designer clothes. They had been seen coming out of a movie theater which would lead the muggers to assume they were carrying money. And Josh, being a small twelve year old would offer little resistance. All things considered, they were the ideal potential victims. Any mugger would be thrilled to encounter them in a dark alleyway.

I asked him again what role God had played in his own decision-making when he was still robbing people. After thinking carefully for a while, he said he could honestly say God had played no part in it whatsoever. So I summarized what he had told me: a loving father would not keep score of the past wrongs his son had committed and then get

even; a loving father would not direct strangers to inflict violence against his son; if God was like a loving father it would not make sense to assume he had kept score of Clarence's past wrongs and then directed the men to attack him. And even if it was the case that God was punishing Clarence, why would he have involved an innocent person like Josh? It didn't make sense. Clarence agreed, and said that the conclusion seemed to be that God was probably not involved in muggings.

I continued to summarize: we agreed that the men themselves were responsible for the actual assault and robbery; it was reasonable to assume they chose their victims the same way Clarence had chosen his own victims in the past – Clarence and Josh had been, after all, irresistible, and well-dressed, sitting ducks; Clarence had assured me that there was no Cosmic plan according to which he had chosen his own victims, so it seemed very unlikely that these men were acting in accordance with anything but their own criminal agenda. Clarence agreed to the logic.

My question to him then was, "So is it possible for you to avoid being a victim in future? Can you control your own welfare to some extent, or do you still think, because of what happened, life is hopelessly fated?"

The client is said to benefit from such a dialogue in that, rather than having to struggle with just her own limited understanding and conflicting opinions, she and the counsellor together explore different, alternative viewpoints, conceptions, and convictions,<sup>61</sup> which can then lead them to developing a many-sided, and integrated, image.<sup>62</sup> Notice that dialogue is seen to offer not only "the critical and distinguishing effects of somebody else's thinking,"<sup>63</sup> it is also seen to have a "supplementary effect"<sup>64</sup> in that the thinking of the counsellor, and the combined thinking of the counsellor and client, is said to add to the thinking which the client has already done previously either on her own or with friends and family.

The model of the philosophical counselling dialogue is seen by many counsellors as being Socratic, that is, a dialogue in which the subject matter is less important than the

method employed, and the actual course of thought taken, or process within the counselling sessions, is more important than any conclusion that may be reached.<sup>65</sup> Dialogue is seen as especially well suited as a method in philosophical counselling because it has “elements sufficient for the resolution of problems amenable to philosophical practice” because, in part, it “limits thought to the tempo of speech, thereby focusing one’s attention to the present moment.”<sup>66</sup> The philosophical counselling dialogue is said to remain “devoid of fixed boundaries and taboos.”<sup>67</sup> It is seen to provide “a neutral arena for the development of open thinking” in which the philosophical counsellor helps to “create a reflective and clarifying” exchange.<sup>68</sup>

But it is argued that both the client-centered and dialogical nature of the philosophical counselling encounter require of the client a perspective that some may find difficult if not impossible to achieve. Anette Prins-Bakker encounters in her practice what she calls “the problem of identification.”<sup>69</sup> By this she means that some clients identify themselves with the problem – they are so absorbed in their problem that it is no longer simply one aspect of their lives but “has grown and expanded to occupy their entire being.”<sup>70</sup> They no longer simply “have a problem” it has taken them over completely. In order to be able to undertake a philosophical investigation into her problem, Prins-Bakker feels the client must first be able to characterize the problem precisely, alleviate the emotional burden, and “detach” herself from it. If the client cannot do so, even after utilizing a number of methods designed to help her do so, it may be the case that philosophical counselling is not appropriate in this instance.<sup>71</sup>

While some writers maintain that seeking philosophical counseling should be seen not as the client giving up her independent thought, but rather as a means of dealing with problems or concerns via a discussion with “a partner,”<sup>72</sup> they point out that there is, of course, a crucial difference between the client and the counsellor, and between the kind of discussion one might have with a friend and the kind of discussion which occurs between client and counsellor, namely both the focus of the discussion (which is always on the client and her concerns),<sup>73</sup> and the philosophical expertise of the counsellor. But some writers warn that this difference in specialized knowledge can easily lead the counsellor into a trap: that of allowing his relationship with his client to take on the less

desirable (for counselling) asymmetry found in a teacher-student relationship.<sup>74</sup> This can lead him to forget about the conceptual framework of the client in favour of what he may feel is a more comprehensive or correct one, namely his own. But this raises the question of whether the client/counsellor relationship ought never to resemble that of the student/teacher relationship.

In an essay which examines the kind of abilities and training that might be required of a philosophical counsellor, Dries Boele cautions that the skills needed by a philosophical counsellor during a philosophical dialogue should not be confused with excellence that can be attained in academic studies. He sees academic achievement as calling exclusively for the ability to use one's mind, while in philosophical counselling "it is also crucial to be sensitive, to have natural intelligence, be able to read between the lines, express understanding towards the other person, grasp the unsaid, and be tolerant of other approaches to life."<sup>75</sup>

While several writers have pointed out that a philosophical dialogue does not demand that the conversants be intellectual equals, they argue that it does require that they be equal, and perceive each other as equals, in terms of the weight of their opinions.<sup>76</sup> Counselling, it is argued, cannot be truly client-centered when the "default" opinion, or the final word on any issue, always belongs to the counsellor. In the early stages of the counselling relationship such equality of opinion is rarely the case, since most clients assign a high degree of non-solicited authority to their counsellors. But the philosophical counsellor tries to abolish this authority. He does this in a number of ways as, for example, by demonstrating that, although he may be more knowledgeable in the history of philosophy, he too has areas in which his knowledge is limited, and, though he may be more adept at critical inquiry, he too experiences problems and concerns.<sup>77</sup> Prins-Bakker, writes that by presenting her own viewpoint as only a personal viewpoint, she stimulates her clients to discover their own personal point of view and to explore other possibilities. This leads to their distancing themselves from the traditional client/practitioner dichotomy and becoming instead partners in a client-centered dialogue who see themselves as involved in a caring relationship.<sup>78</sup>

## 1.7 Care and Relationship

In a traditional professional therapeutic relationship the practitioner's "care" for the client can be construed as only incidental or indirect since his main concern is the treatment of the illness or disease. This is not to say that those who practice in one of the many fields of psychotherapy do not care for their patients, but rather to clarify where the focus of the therapeutic approach is located – in the case of psychoanalysis the focus is on the disease; in the case of philosophical (and other psychotherapeutic forms of) counselling the focus is said to be on the client. Conversely, this does not mean that the philosophical counsellor is not concerned with the client's problem, but rather to note that the practitioner helps the client examine her difficult situation by sharing it empathetically. In philosophical counselling, empathetic understanding is said to replace the medical method – often employed in psychoanalysis and some forms of psychotherapy – in which the expert diagnoses the patient's problems, and then prescribes or administers a cure.<sup>79</sup>

In his comparison of the therapeutic relationships within a number of different psychological approaches, Corey explains that in psychoanalytic therapy the analyst remains anonymous to the client.<sup>80</sup> Yet earlier in the same volume Corey points out that the client is only able to "loosen their defenses and rigid perceptions" when the counsellor adopts an attitude of respect, acceptance, understanding, and genuine caring.<sup>81</sup> It is this compassionate attitude, which can also be found in many other forms of psychotherapy, that is said to be found in philosophical counselling. More will be said about the similarities and differences between philosophical counselling, psychotherapy, and psychoanalysis in the third chapter.

Ran Lahav sees philosophical counselling as caring for the soul of those who come for counselling. According to him, to care for a client's soul is to examine philosophically the basic concepts and principles which underlie their way of living.<sup>82</sup> This concept of caring for the soul is traced back to its roots in antiquity by Pierre Hadot. He writes that both the Stoics and Epicureans advised their adherents to follow certain "spiritual" exercises, that is exercises "which correspond to transformation of our vision of the world, and to a metamorphosis of our personality," for the healing of

the soul.<sup>83</sup> But this “healing of the soul” can become an intellectual pursuit, or even a quasi-medical exercise where the illness and its therapeutic eradication are once again the main focus of attention. This kind of pragmatic “care” is not that which is required in a philosophical counselling relationship as called for by those who practice it. The word “relationship” is said to be the key here.

Barbara Norman uses the term “ecological philosophical counselling” to express what she feels is the central aim of philosophical counselling: the development of the arts of relationship and interpretation. She sees in the dynamics of a philosophical counselling session a way of thinking which

acknowledges the importance, firstly, of the continual interpretation and reinterpretation of the cultural and personal beliefs, values, and attitudes through which we relate to the world; secondly, of interpersonal relationships which are caring rather than confrontational; and thirdly, of the interdependency between the participants, specifically, the counselor and the counselee (or counselees).<sup>84</sup>

Norman holds that these three elements – *interpreting* oneself and one’s world while assuming *caring relationships* and *interdependent relationships* with others – form a necessary union, in the context of a philosophical counselling session, that helps the client examine and reform her way of being in the world. For Norman, philosophical counselling that is ecological “facilitates the development of caring relationships, a move away from rational objectivity.”<sup>85</sup> Drawing on the writings of Nel Noddings<sup>86</sup> and Martin Buber,<sup>87</sup> Norman describes caring as becoming a way of life for the philosophical counsellor in which he provides space for those in the counselling relationship to be themselves. At the same time, the empathetic nature of caring commits the counsellor to a real concern for the client in that relationship, feeling with the client in a reciprocal commitment to the counselling process. So an “ecological point of view” assumes that the arts of interpretation and relationship are possible only when the client is allowed, and invited, to be involved in all aspects of the counselling



session through open-minded questioning and caring empathy on the part of the counsellor.

“Care” in the practice of philosophical counselling may be summarized then as an empathetic attitude between the counsellor and client which leads the counsellor to offer a “protective harbor” when the client finds herself “in the grip of mental conflicts or tensions that impede the natural flow” of her life.<sup>88</sup> And in this safe place, the client is encouraged to explore the significance and limitations of her “life-narrative constructions” or what some have called her “worldview.”

### 1.8 “Worldview Interpretation”

The term “worldview,” for which the German term “Weltanschauung” is often used in the philosophical literature, refers to an individual’s general view of the universe and humanity’s place in it “which affects one’s conduct.”<sup>89</sup> It has also been termed “lived understanding,” or “network of meaning.”<sup>90</sup> Any worldview is said to be one of several ways of “organizing, analyzing, categorizing, noting patterns, drawing implications, making sense of, and more generally assigning meanings to, one’s life-events.”<sup>91</sup> It seems, therefore, possible to express one way of life in a number of different worldview interpretations. In fact, Ruschmann proposes that the history of philosophy may be regarded and used as a sequence of different world views.<sup>92</sup>

One of the main proponents of the conception that philosophical counselling is centrally concerned with worldview interpretation is Ran Lahav. Lahav intends that his proposal of locating worldview interpretation at the heart of philosophical counselling be seen as having both a descriptive and a normative aspect in that it expresses what he feels is a “broad common denominator”<sup>93</sup> in many philosophical counselling approaches, and at the same time it is a claim that worldview interpretation belongs at the centre of any philosophical counselling session.

Lahav suggests that worldview interpretation may be considered  
an abstract framework that interprets the structure and  
philosophical implication of one’s conception of oneself

and reality; a system of coordinates, so to speak, that organizes, makes distinctions, draws implications, compares, confers meanings, and thus makes sense of one's various attitudes towards oneself and one's world.<sup>94</sup>

He explains that "to live is to embody a specific understanding of oneself and one's world."<sup>95</sup> He claims that everyone constantly interprets their world, not just through beliefs and thoughts but through their "entire way of being," through their expressing "a certain understanding about the nature of the self, about what is important, moral, beautiful, about what is love, friendship, courage, and so on."<sup>96</sup> A worldview can alternately be understood as a person's way of being, or their "lived philosophical understanding."<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, Lahav suggests that philosophical counselling can be characterized not only as an approach aimed at helping clients interpret the worldview expressed by their way of life, but that it is aimed at "exploring the philosophical implications of their various everyday attitudes for their conception of themselves and reality, thus unfolding the worldview expressed by their behaviors emotions, preferences, hopes, etc."<sup>98</sup> Metaphorically, Lahav says he helps the client to

organize the color-patches of which their life is composed (i.e., aspects of their actions, emotions, thoughts, etc.) into complex paintings. This involves breaking down the relevant aspects of their lives into isolated components... ; joining the pieces together into an overall worldview (not always consistent); examining their everyday life from the perspective of this worldview; and critically investigating it.<sup>99</sup>

The process is meant to open the door for new ways of thinking about and relating to one's world, "with the double aim of alleviating the predicament and contributing to personal enrichment."<sup>100</sup> The result of such a worldview interpretation is that the client is often helped to make sense of both her problems and her previous attempts to manage them, as a preliminary to the search for a more satisfactory resolution.<sup>101</sup> Lahav's position can be clarified if it is simplified into a syllogism: life consists of a continuous

interpretation of ourselves and the world (worldview interpretation); philosophical counselling offers a controlled and directed environment in which to engage in an interpretation of ourselves and the world; therefore philosophical counselling offers assistance in life.<sup>102</sup>

The subject matter of philosophical counseling, as Lahav sees it, is not the processes which presumably occur inside the client. He sees this sort of analysis as more akin to the approach in psychotherapy or psychoanalysis. He holds philosophical counselling to be more focused on the way the client's world is constructed through philosophical (logical, conceptual, existential, ethical, aesthetic, etc.) considerations. It is the client's conception of reality – as expressed in her way of life and developed through reflection – which is at the centre of the counselling conversation.<sup>103</sup> In taking worldview interpretation as the primary issue in the client's everyday problems and concerns, Lahav says the counsellor can approach such predicaments as meaning crises, feelings of boredom and emptiness, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, anxiety, contradictions or tensions between two conceptions about how life should be lived, hidden presuppositions that have not been examined, views that fail to take into account various considerations, over-generalizations, expectations that cannot realistically be satisfied, fallacious implications, and so on, as expressing problematic aspects of one's worldview.<sup>104</sup>

As an expert in worldview interpretation, it is said that the philosophical counsellor points out inconsistencies in the client's world view such as when the implications of a particular belief conflict with previously articulated goals.<sup>105</sup> He helps the client interpret her worldview by helping her “in checking and changing certain unfavorable conceptions which eventually are causal or co-responsible for the ‘predicaments’ or ‘problems’” she is experiencing.<sup>106</sup> The philosophical counselor is also said to help the client uncover various meanings that are expressed in her way of life, and to critically examine, and enable her to articulate, those problematic aspects that are found to be at the root of her predicament. Not only does this help the client enrich and develop her worldview, it may also facilitate the process of change,<sup>107</sup> or a “re-construction” of her worldview.<sup>108</sup>

In an elaboration of the concept of philosophical counselling as worldview interpretation, Hoogendijk argues that it is of special importance in worldview interpretation that the relationship between the client's different concepts is noted. By this he means it is important for the philosophical counsellor to examine with the client how various concepts join together into the conceptual network, or what Quine has called the "web of belief,"<sup>109</sup> which constitutes the client's constructed worldview. He calls this process of examination and inquiry in worldviews a kind of "vision development" which requires both analytic and synthetic forms of thinking to uncover the presuppositions, structure, concepts, and their interrelationships, inherent in any worldview.<sup>110</sup> Perhaps this process of worldview examination can be further reduced into what some philosophers claim are two more fundamental stages in the philosophical counselling process, namely phenomenology and hermeneutics.

### 1.9 Phenomenology

Phenomenology has been described variously as an objective inquiry into the logic of essences and meanings, a theory of abstraction, a deep psychological description or analysis of consciousness, speculation on "the transcendental Ego," a method for approaching concretely lived existence, and as an element of existentialism.<sup>111</sup> The pre-eminent French phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, admits that phenomenology appears to say everything and seems therefore to be incapable of defining a stable and consistent domain. But he notes that it "can be practiced and identified as a manner or style of thinking which is attainable solely via a phenomenological method."<sup>112</sup> By a phenomenological style of thinking he means that the individual must suspend her common sense certainties and natural attitude, in order to allow reflection to enable her to become aware of the beliefs "behind" her presuppositions and assumptions.<sup>113</sup> Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, is said to have regarded the phenomenological method as "the only way of elevating philosophy to the status of a rigorous science," by asserting that the phenomenological method attunes the philosopher to see phenomena such as the idea of justice or punishment, or of friendship and love, as "bearing their

meaning within themselves” and that they are not to be comprehended in terms of external considerations such as utility or pleasure.<sup>114</sup> Martin Heidegger characterizes phenomenology as “the science of the being of beings – ontology...” behind which nothing else appears because there is nothing else.<sup>115</sup> Max van Manen holds that phenomenology is “the study of the lifeworld – the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize, or reflect on it,”<sup>116</sup> He explains that, on the practical level of the human sciences,

phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences. Phenomenology asks, “What is this or that kind of experience like?” It differs from almost every other science in that it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it... Phenomenological research is the study of lived experience... the explication of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness... the description of the experiential meanings we live as we live them... the attentive practice of thoughtfulness... and a search for what it means to be human.<sup>117</sup>

In employing phenomenology in philosophical counselling the counsellor is said to encourage the client to reflect on her perceptions and on her thoughts about those perceptions without immediately judging them or herself. Some philosophical counsellors consider their practice to involve “clarification,” that is, as aiming at clarifying the client’s “present way of being” by uncovering, examining and possibly modifying presuppositions hidden in the client’s attitude, various potentialities and implications in her situation, concepts that are interwoven in her life, ideas which she follows, ethical implications of her actions, alternative courses of action, and so on.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, in a phenomenological investigation the philosopher is said to encourage the client to reflect on her mental states and describe them. He inquires whether her

mental processes are “intentional,” that is, whether they are intended by her or more automatic and uncontrolled, and whether they reflect the thoughts she desires to have. Are they temporal, motivational, or emotional? How are they different today from yesterday? Do they pertain to the past (retention) or the future (protention), and so on?<sup>119</sup> The key to a phenomenological investigation in its function as a prelude to what some practitioners claim is the next stage of the philosophical counselling inquiry, termed “hermeneutics,” is said to be for the client to experience her view of both the world and the objects and events in it from something like an objective point of view, in order to see them as the client presents them to herself, not as neutral, but as “meant and intended.”<sup>120</sup>

Phenomenology in philosophical counselling is said to serve a number of crucial functions. First, a phenomenological investigation allows the client to attain new perspectives and insights which can then “colour” her worldview and attitude to her predicament, problems, or concerns.<sup>121</sup> Second, a philosophical counsellor trained in phenomenology can describe aspects of subjective experience that are commonly overlooked by the average person or client, thereby adding to the client’s understanding of herself and her way of being in the world.<sup>122</sup> Third, phenomenology in philosophical counselling can help to isolate the relevant components of both the client’s life and the problems or concerns she is experiencing.<sup>123</sup> In this way complex and complicated events and issues are said to be untangled and rendered less daunting. And finally, phenomenology is said to help the client think about, and talk through, the crucial events of her life that have remained unexamined and largely “undigested,” by enabling her to remove them from their close proximity to her to a place from which an objective examination is possible.<sup>124</sup>

But phenomenology is not only a method which the counsellor encourages the client to use as a means of self-examination. In order for the therapist or counsellor to even begin to understand the client’s problems and concerns, it is argued that he must also take a phenomenological journey into the world as experienced by the client. That is, the therapist or counsellor must himself try to enter the client’s subjective world in order to better understand the client’s internal frame of reference or “locus of evaluation,” by means of which she perceives the world.<sup>125</sup>

By encouraging the practice of self-reflective phenomenology in the client, and by using a phenomenological approach in his sessions with a client, the philosophical counsellor is said to offer, at least potentially, what philosophy itself was to offer: freedom from the preconceived, the ill-conceived, the prejudiced, and the unconscious.<sup>126</sup> Philosophical counselling is described by some as a philosophical discussion with one's emotions, cravings, behavior, expectations, or more generally, way of life.<sup>127</sup> If this is the case then it seems to be that a phenomenological inquiry into these areas of discussion is certainly an essential element. Phenomenology is said to allow the counsellor to stimulate the client into a discovery of what foundational elements constitute her life-questions. But while some practitioners see this as being the focus of philosophical counselling, others maintain that it is only after this task is accomplished that the philosophical counsellor can attempt the next, and more important, steps of reformulating, elaborating, and finally coming to an understanding of the meaning of both the problem and the subsequent requirements for a satisfactory solution.<sup>128</sup>

### 1.10 Hermeneutics

Heidegger says that the methodological meaning of phenomenological descriptions lies in *interpretation* (his emphasis).<sup>129</sup> Interpretation is also termed "hermeneutics," and, according to Heidegger, phenomenology is hermeneutic in that it interprets. But this seemingly paradoxical amalgamation of the two terms is by no means accepted by all philosophers. For the most part the philosophical counselling literature sees hermeneutics as a separately identifiable, although overlapping, process by which one individual attempts to comprehend the intentions of another by putting himself into the place of the other, and then to try to develop what has been called "participatory understanding on the part of the interpreter."<sup>130</sup> In philosophical counselling hermeneutics is the attempt to interpret or understand the client's "text" as she has lived, and is living, it. In other words it is the philosophical counsellor's attempt to understand the client by helping her to both comprehend and articulate her problems, concerns, and issues in a spiraling dialectic, and to do so within the milieu of the political, social, relational, and personal

parameters of her own life within life in general – that is, in both her particular and a universal “con-text.” The use of the word “text” to denote what the client may reveal to the counsellor in a dialogical counselling session follows Ricoeur’s “widening” of the conception of this term to include any human action or situation. Ricoeur writes that “to interpret a social situation is to treat the situation as text and then to look for the metaphor that may be seen to govern the text.”<sup>131</sup> So then hermeneutics in philosophical counselling might be characterized as the interpretation of the client’s text within a context.

While phenomenology is compared to the scientific method, William Franke suggests that a useful strategy in the attempt to conceptualize hermeneutics is to differentiate it from the scientific method.

Whereas science endeavours to neutralize or eliminate the activity of the knower in order that the object may be known “objectively,” hermeneutic understanding or insight knows and acknowledges itself to be the result of a mutually transforming involvement of the knower with the object known. The scientist strives to know the object as it is in itself (though this may, admittedly, be only phenomenal, that is, appearance to the senses), free from perspectival or personal bias. The hermeneut, by contrast, is interested above all in knowing the meaning the object takes on for someone within a particular context of experience.<sup>132</sup>

So, while the scientific approach to knowledge demands the detachment of the knower with respect to the known, the hermeneutic form of understanding is based on involvement. The hermeneutic function of the philosophical counsellor is said to be his involving himself with his client in order to “develop an understanding of the assumptions, hunches, and intuitions that are aroused in moments such as senselessness and meaningfulness.”<sup>133</sup> The philosophical counsellor is said to attempt to comprehend



and reconstruct the “meant sense” that inheres in the client’s underlying mental processes.<sup>134</sup>

Gerd Achenbach, the initiator of the modern philosophical counselling movement in Germany, likens philosophical counselling to a Socratic “hermeneutics of burdensome life.”<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, he characterizes philosophical counselling as an “interaction” with the client for the purpose of gaining a “philosophical-hermeneutic affinity to disturbances and suffering” – and, conversely, as a negation of any pretension of “treating” them.<sup>136</sup>

The philosophical counsellor’s challenge is characterized as having to facilitate the client’s progressive understanding of her situation as a reflection of the “guiding interests and questions” that underlie the problematized elements of her life-narrative.<sup>137</sup>

According to Ran Lahav, life consists of a continuous interpretation of ourselves and the world, and philosophical counselling offers a controlled and directed environment in which life – understood as a process of interpretation, or hermeneutics – is intensified.<sup>138</sup>

Barbara Norman suggests that hermeneutic inquiry within the philosophical counselling partnership requires that the philosophical counsellor concentrate on listening both to the client and to himself within a reciprocal connection between counsellor and client, or what she calls “an ecological relationship.” She characterizes an ecological relationship as

open-minded questioning and a constant reinterpretation of the (social and other) environment. This is the environment in which the human agent is acting and reacting, and is acutely aware of other participants. Listening becomes an important art in order for an ecological relationship to proceed. It is a listening that is “tuned in” to others, where one hears more than what is said explicitly: one also “hears” what is assumed. Listening consists of a two-way procedure: One listens to others, but in that listening one is also listening to oneself. The resulting process is, hopefully, redescription.<sup>139</sup>

For Achenbach hermeneutics or interpretation is not the discovery of underlying truths (an *Unterlegen* literally that which lies underneath) behind the communication resulting from such an “ecological relationship” between philosophical counsellor and client. He sees in philosophical practice a dialectical process (an *Auslegen* literally to spread out before) in which the practitioner gives the client a “fresh self-explanatory impulse” rather than conferring his own understanding on what was said.<sup>140</sup>

Eckart Ruschmann sees the hermeneutic aspect of philosophical counselling as a two-stage process that follows Schleiermacher’s construal of “hermeneutics and critique.”

Ruschmann points out that

since the philosophical counselor, as ‘hermeneutic practitioner,’ is faced with the ‘author’ of the ‘text,’ this critical consideration of an individual’s ‘philosophy of life’ will of course be molded into a specific form, where a critical reconstruction of an improved ‘text’ (in the sense of more adequate conceptions, theories etc.) will be formulated together with the client. Thus understanding and counseling form a necessary unit, as ‘hermeneutics and critique.’<sup>141</sup>

Ran Lahav also points out that interpretation and understanding in philosophical counselling can have both a pragmatic and a non-pragmatic value. Aside from the potential effects of the counselling dialogue on helping the client to overcome her predicament, hermeneutics can help her bring to the fore previously hidden features of her attitude, and thereby “contribute to the enrichment of her outlook, by conferring meaning upon everyday events and elevating them from the level of brute facts to meaningful occurrences.”<sup>142</sup>

Michael Schefczyk sees philosophical counselling as a “critical examination of life-directing conceptions” which are often merely conditioned in the individual by the “suggestive products of mass culture.” He holds that coming to an understanding of one’s “conceptual vicissitudes” by means of a critical examination, or hermeneutics, can ultimately lead the client to greater freedom and happiness.<sup>143</sup>

But, while hermeneutics is described as a crucial part of the philosophical counsellor's method, a note of caution is offered regarding the "reflective" element of hermeneutic inquiry. According to H.G. Gadamer, the central task of hermeneutic analysis is "to clarify what lies at the base of our interests," because we cannot "understand the statements with which we are concerned" until we can "recognize our own questions in them."<sup>144</sup> But it is this necessary presence of the counsellor within the hermeneutic process that requires caution. Gadamer's analysis of the complexities of a hermeneutic "reading of texts," reflects this challenge facing the philosophical counselor. Gadamer writes that during a hermeneutic endeavour "it becomes more important to trace the interests guiding us with respect to a given subject matter than simply to interpret the evident content of a statement."<sup>145</sup> He explains that the genuine reality of the hermeneutical process seems to him "to encompass the self-understanding of the interpreter as well as what is interpreted."<sup>146</sup> This suggests that the philosophical counsellor must recognize that his every explanation, assessment, or construal of a client's textual reality reflects back on the motivations of the one who construes the meaning – namely himself. In other words, when the philosophical counsellor is "reading the client's text" in order to interpret and understand her, he is at once "reading himself into the text" and reading the text through his own experience. The philosophical counsellor must therefore be aware of the fact that his "reading the text" always taints, to a certain extent, the "text" the client is attempting to present with the counsellor's own biases, assumptions, and prejudices.

Along the same lines, Habermas has argued that hermeneutics has taught us that we are always a participant in the interpretive process as long as we "move within the natural language."<sup>147</sup> There is therefore no general criterion available to the philosophical counsellor which would allow him to determine when he is subject to the false consensus of a pseudo-normal understanding, and when he is considering something to be a difficulty that can be resolved by hermeneutic means when it may, in fact, require a systematic explanation.

Similarly, any self-critique, self-justification, and even self-transformation that the client attempts on her own by means of an internal hermeneutic conversation are likely to

result in the same distortions inherent in the original self-understanding. This is because a “monologue” with herself cannot surmount the “deformations within the language of understanding and interpretation itself” available to the client at this time.<sup>148</sup> Habermas suggests that it is necessary to supplement such distorted hermeneutic insight into meaning with a theoretically informed account of the conditions and genesis of that meaning.<sup>149</sup> This may require the counsellor to cross the threshold from being an equal partner within a dialogic encounter with his client, to assuming the role of instructor or teacher for the client. Of course, this raises the question, does philosophical counselling in fact involve any teaching? Furthermore, should it?

### 1.11 Teaching and Learning

There is considerable debate over whether the philosophical counsellor does, or ought to ever, function in the capacity of a teacher. This debate may stem in part from the negative experiences some philosophical counsellors themselves have had as students at the hands of good philosophers who were bad instructors. It may also have to do with the desire of philosophical counsellors to respect the autonomy of their clients, and to foster the “client-centered” approach discussed above which is far removed from the perceived paternalistic approach in traditional pedagogy and some forms of psychotherapy. Whatever the reason, this debate, like so many others in the field of philosophical counselling, rather than being far from over, has scarcely just begun. At this point it is only possible to present the ongoing arguments of both sides as they are found in the literature.

On the one hand, Ben Mijuskovic asserts that the philosophical counsellor is neither a teacher nor a therapist, and that the client cannot be considered either a student or patient.<sup>150</sup> While on the other hand, Jesse Fleming calls philosophical counselling “an educational service.”<sup>151</sup> Eckart Ruschmann describes education, counselling, and therapy as comprising three special or basic forms of learning with and from people.<sup>152</sup> Shlomit Schuster also claims that “the unifying and possibly enduring characteristic” of the various philosophical practices is “their didactic intent.”<sup>153</sup> According to Schuster, a

client learns various philosophical ways to “question, think about, and comprehend the self and its problems” from meetings with the philosophical practitioner.<sup>154</sup> She does not elaborate how the client learns these skills from the counsellor.

Dries Boele contends that in philosophical counseling book-learning can at times be used “when it is helpful to the client, in order to clarify the problem, but it is not of central concern.”<sup>155</sup> Ran Lahav argues that in its modern form “philosophical counselling does not provide philosophical theories, but rather philosophical thinking tools” which allow philosophical understanding to grow from the client.<sup>156</sup> It seems reasonable to assume that the philosophical counsellor providing his client with “thinking tools” amounts to the philosophical counsellor teaching them to his client. However, the question that needs to be answered is, how much of a counselling session is actually concerned with providing the client these “thinking tools” once the client’s problems and concerns have been alleviated?

Jon Borowicz considers directly the question, “How is philosophical practice distinct from teaching philosophy?”<sup>157</sup> He answers in part by noting that they are not fundamentally incompatible. But while he allows that there are similarities, such as that neither teaching philosophy nor philosophical practice or counselling can occur in the absence of “an other,” Borowicz cites a number of fundamental differences: the teacher-student relationship “entails an essential asymmetry of roles;” it is typically the instructor’s role “both to determine the program of activity and to evaluate its success;” and what is taught can be “discrete, without bearing on other aspects of the student’s life.”<sup>158</sup> Because he understands philosophical counselling as holding that the counsellor/client relationship is in fact symmetrical, that, unlike an instructor, the counsellor does *not* “determine” the program of activity nor evaluate its success, and that what is “learned” in the philosophical counselling session is in fact *meant* to bear on other aspects of the client’s life, Borowicz therefore sees it as a mistake to cast the philosophical counsellor in the traditional role of the non-democratic, authoritarian teacher.

In general, the debate over the question of whether philosophical counselling can also be construed as teaching seems to be leading to the conclusion that the philosophical

counselling relationship may be substantively didactic but that it is not procedurally pedagogic. Simply put, many theorists compromise by allowing that the client in a philosophical counselling relationship may be learning indirectly, and that through the counselling process there is a subtle teaching force at work, but that it is not, nor should it be, the intention of the philosophical counsellor to teach the client directly. Of course, this begs the question; and there are a few dissenting voices.

Karl Pfeifer argues that, if philosophies are to be adopted by a client and allowed to “act as healing agents,” the philosophical counsellor “must play a didactic role in the client’s adoption of philosophy,” unless the client has had some academic training in philosophy or at least is reasonably well informed in that area. In general terms, Pfeifer argues that the counsellor must, in effect, become a tutor in philosophy to his differently, or less well, educated clients.<sup>159</sup> Again, he does not specify where or when in the counselling process such tutoring ought to take place.

A much more concrete model of teaching in philosophical counselling is offered by Vaughana Feary. She has taught thinking skills within philosophical counselling sessions with incarcerated populations in the United States. Feary argues that there should be a revival of the “much maligned” concept of rehabilitation. She proposes that philosophical counselling should be “at the core of a constellation of rehabilitative programs,” and that the philosophical counsellor ought to “not merely enrich the worldviews of offenders” but rehabilitate them.<sup>160</sup> By “rehabilitation” she means “an attempt to promote those competencies necessary for moral responsibility” which includes their having “the requisite competencies to make rational moral choices.”<sup>161</sup>

This means they must be able to

1. recognize and to manage any problems or disease which impairs rational thought and action...;
2. develop critical thinking skills which include competencies to recognize and articulate problems, to gather and assess relevant facts, to distinguish fact from opinion, to acquire, remember and process information, to recognize alternatives and consequences, and to detect

- fallacies in their own thinking and the thinking of others...
3. master at least minimal social and communication skills...
  4. learn to manage, modulate and express emotions appropriately...
  5. develop the ability to reason morally...
  6. develop a personal identity, a secure and realistic sense of self, and the ability to maintain at least minimal self esteem and self respect in the face of criticism and peer pressure.<sup>162</sup>

To accomplish these goals, Feary clearly seems to be advocating, among other things, an educational approach in the process of philosophical counselling with incarcerated populations.

Another specialized area in which, it has been argued, the philosophical counsellor can, and indeed must, serve as a teacher is in addiction recovery counselling. Individuals often become addicted because they do not have the cognitive skills and decision-making abilities necessary to overcome problems encountered in life.<sup>163</sup> Philosophical counselling has been used in addiction recovery counselling not only to alleviate immediate problems in life, but to teach clients critical and constructive thinking skills to prepare the recovering addict to be better able to cope with life once she leaves the counselling setting.<sup>164</sup>

In the less overtly rehabilitative area of marriage counselling, Annette Prins-Bakker sees the philosophical counsellor as having an important role in his client's learning "the thinking tools and process of a philosophical inquiry."<sup>165</sup> Since the philosophical counsellor is being consulted by a couple, the counsellor's aim is to develop in both her clients the ability to "formulate their own questions, to analyze their problems, and to know how to deal with their marriage."<sup>166</sup> While Prins-Bakker acknowledges that the clients' simply understanding is important, in order for it to be philosophical,

[the client or counselee] needs to be aware of the process through which it comes into existence. For this reason I see

the goal... of philosophical counseling in general, as teaching counselees enough philosophizing that they can continue the process of gaining self-knowledge on their own. My presupposition is that happiness does not require freedom from problems, but rather the knowledge that you can deal with them.<sup>167</sup>

It seems then, whether the philosophical counsellor is dealing with special populations – such as the incarcerated or those recovering from addictions – or with a non-rehabilitative clientele – such as in a marriage counselling situation – the process of overtly teaching certain useful skills directly to the client is seen by some philosophers to be an important constituent in the field of philosophical counselling after all. Chung-Ying Cheng argues that the philosophical counsellor “cannot simply function as a teacher or an enlightener,” because he must “integrate a measure of psychological and psychoanalytic knowledge and technique in his program of counseling.” But on the other hand, says Cheng, the philosophical counsellor has to guide the client “out of conceptual muddles and emotional entanglements by philosophical analysis like a logical teacher... In this endeavor he has to function like an open-minded teacher and patient conversationalist.”<sup>168</sup> Unfortunately the case studies which have been published to date give no indication that any form of teaching is employed by most philosophical counsellors.<sup>169</sup> Instead the impression is given that once clients are helped to overcome their philosophical problems or issues the counselling relationship is, in most cases, considered completed and therefore terminated.

Gerd Achenbach brings the issue of teaching around full circle when he says that “the practitioner has to start as a teacher,” but that he must be a particular kind of teacher. Referring to Kierkegaard’s “Der Gesichtspunkt für meine Wirksamkeit als Schriftsteller” (The Point Of View For My Work As A Writer), Achenbach says the philosophical counsellor does not teach “by telling it is so and so, nor by giving a lecture,” but by making the client “capable and willing to learn.”<sup>170</sup> This kind of teaching requires that the philosophical counsellor “learn from the pupil” by putting himself in the place of the client, and by coming to an understanding of the client according to how she has come to



that understanding herself.<sup>171</sup> So then, according to Achenbach, the philosophical counsellor, when he is construed as being this kind of teacher, must also be a student.

The issue of the importance of teaching in philosophical counselling will be revisited in a later chapter. But the question of whether there is room, or a need, for teaching in philosophical counselling is not the only contentious issue. What is depicted by some philosophical counsellors as being the therapeutic component of philosophical counselling is seen by others as being no such component at all.

### 1.12 Therapy

Not surprisingly, the question of whether philosophical counselling is therapy or not overlaps considerably onto the broader debate over the comparisons and contrasts between philosophy and psychology. In psychology a non-problematic division seems to exist between counselling – which deals with “problems which are not considered classifiable ailments and diseases”<sup>172</sup> – and therapy – in which an expert’s knowledge is placed at the disposal of a patient in treating them for those “classifiable ailments and diseases” which constitute their psychological disturbances.<sup>173</sup> The answer to the question of whether philosophical counselling is therapy or not hinges very much on how individual writers define, or at least use, the word “therapy” in the literature. There seem to be just as many compelling arguments that philosophical counselling is *not* therapy as there are arguments that it *is*.

Gerd Achenbach argues that philosophical dialogue as a means in philosophical praxis is not necessarily therapeutic,<sup>174</sup> and that philosophical counselling should not be considered therapy because it does not accept two of the fundamental components of therapy, namely the “*logic* of all therapies” which says that a symptom turns a person into a case to be treated, and the *goal* of all therapies which is to bring about change in the client.<sup>175</sup> He maintains that the third of four “fundamental rules” which lead him in his own practice says, “Do not want to change the visitor who is coming for your advice!”<sup>176</sup> Of course this raises the question of whether it is in fact “the logic of all therapies” to see the person merely as a case to be treated. It raises the further question,

“Why exactly does the client seek out the philosophical counsellor if not for assistance in changing herself through a change in her thinking?”

Ben Mijuskovic holds that philosophical counselling is not therapy because the philosophical counsellor’s “treatment” focuses not on any sort of symptoms the client might have but rather her “worldview,” “principles,” and “system.”<sup>177</sup> Chung-Ying Cheng cautions that “we must recognize that the content of philosophical counseling is basically philosophy and as such the philosophical counselor’s actual function would have to be to enlighten and to cultivate rather than to cure and to perform therapy.”<sup>178</sup> Shlomit Schuster writes that “there is no therapeutic aim to these sessions, since there are no implicit a priori therapeutic ideals or particular values taught in philosophical counseling.”<sup>179</sup> This raises the question of whether “treating” a client’s worldview, principles and system to careful scrutiny is not in fact at least one of the “therapeutic aims” of the philosophical counsellor. Furthermore it raises the question of whether helping the client to reevaluate her concepts doesn’t in fact require that the philosophical counsellor hold an a priori ideal present in many forms of therapy, namely the development of greater depth and clarity in the client’s thinking, an improved proficiency in her ability to think autonomously, and thereby a heightening of the client’s ability to independently reevaluate her concepts. It seems that these questions also point to an implicit value taught in philosophical counselling, namely that proficiency at rational/critical/constructive thought is both of pragmatic and intrinsic value.

But Michael Russell argues that therapy is “something you undergo, something done to you, something that is supposed to bring about a change, a fix, a cure,” and consists of a search for, and alleviation of, the causes that determine behaviour, none of which are the aim of philosophical counselling.<sup>180</sup> Furthermore he argues that the formal definition of therapy includes seven “key conditions” which must all be present if a discussion between two individuals is to be considered therapy proper: (1) Representation. The counsellor identifies himself as a therapist; (2) Suffering. The client identifies herself as suffering from some sort of psychological or emotional problem or disorder, or a physical disorder presumed to be psychologically or emotionally related, or what may be termed a sickness, that she wishes to have cured or removed; (3) Expectation. The client believes

that the therapist has an expertise, and the therapist will draw from this knowledge to bring about a cure; (4) Diagnosis and Prognosis. The therapist believes the client's problem can be diagnosed and treated according to theories and skills familiar to him; (5) Explicit Agreement. The therapeutic relationship is entered into by both parties under an agreement that the assumptions and conditions of therapy as treatment are shared by both; (6) Professionalism. The therapist has the relevant abilities and that he will charge a fee for services rendered; (7) Passivity. The client is regarded as undergoing, or being the recipient of, something called therapy under the guidance of the therapist who is presumed to be an expert and a healer.<sup>181</sup>

Michael Russell sees philosophical counselling – or “personal consulting” as he prefers to call it – as not being accurately captured in the term “therapy” because it does not meet three of the formal conditions of therapy listed above. Philosophical counselling does not deal with curing sickness or suffering, there is no diagnosis, and the philosophical counsellor's client is not expected to passively receive treatment, in the sense of being cured of her sickness by the therapist. Russell points out that, rather than seeing the philosophical counsellor as producing improvement, a change, or a cure in his client, he prefers to see him as inviting something like self-expression, self-understanding, and an exploration of self-deception. “The effective consultant (or counsellor),” he says, is not a therapist, but “is someone with a talent for making invitations.”<sup>182</sup>

David Jopling, citing Lahav and Achenbach, characterizes philosophical counselling as being distinguished from therapy in “its refusal to be governed by ready-made normative ideals about normalcy, self-realization, mental health, or psychic well-being.”<sup>183</sup> He sees one of the goals of counselling as being to call these very ideals of therapy into question. But Lahav himself acknowledges that there may be therapeutic effects found in the philosophical counselling process. He explains that philosophical counselling “seeks to develop and refine philosophical sensitivities through a dialogue on the various meanings found in everyday life,” and that such an enrichment “is likely to have various therapeutic effects” since a feeling of meaningfulness is likely to bring about a general feeling of well-being.<sup>184</sup> But he adds that this is not the “primary aim”

of philosophical counselling. Yet despite his reluctance to label philosophical counselling a therapy, Lahav admits that philosophical counselling should have a significant therapeutic effect. He bases this conjecture on the fact that a number of studies have shown that cognitive approaches “which seem close in spirit” to philosophical counselling “are particularly effective in therapy, often more than other psychotherapeutic approaches.”<sup>185</sup> He goes on to say that especially relevant is the finding that “therapeutic effects are positively correlated with the extent to which patients manage to construct a coherent story of their predicament and to cast it in terms of an understandable scheme.”<sup>186</sup> It seems then that while philosophical counselling cannot be formally defined as a therapy it can be said to have a therapeutic effect.

While Shlomit Schuster denies that there is any therapeutic *aim* to philosophical counselling sessions, she does not hesitate to acknowledge that philosophical counselling can have therapeutic effects.<sup>187</sup> She writes that “the aim of philosophical practice is not the healing of visitors, but for them to come to a satisfactory self-explanation and clarification.”<sup>188</sup> The philosophical practitioner does not attempt to “heal” but rather allows the client to find her own health.<sup>189</sup> But despite this “hands-off” approach, Schuster nevertheless acknowledges that, within philosophical counselling, “authentic dialogue and self-narration can have therapeutic effects.”<sup>190</sup> She points out that formal therapy is frequently not necessary to produce the results obtained from therapy. She warns that describing philosophical counselling as therapy is to run the risk of needlessly limiting “the open and neutral position of philosophical practitioners.” Therefore she describes philosophical counselling as “the antipode of therapy”<sup>191</sup> and her own approach as “trans-therapeutic,” and consisting “of activities which are not therapy yet can nevertheless induce health and well-being.”<sup>192</sup>

Dries Boele is more forthright in his appraisal. He admits philosophical counselling is “partly therapeutic” in that it is an abolition of “something negative,” and it clarifies “hindrances and disturbances with the help of philosophical skills.”<sup>193</sup> Although Lahav and Schuster differentiate between the aim of philosophical counselling and its effects, and Boele grants that philosophical counselling may be partly therapeutic, other

philosophical counsellors state categorically that philosophical counselling is indeed a form of therapy.

Many philosophical counsellors claim that there is a synchronicity between modern day philosophical counselling and the classical conception of philosophy as therapeutic. They refer to such authors as Pierre Hadot and Martha Nussbaum who presents evidence in her book, *Therapy of Desire*, that the Hellenistic ideal of the philosopher was that of “a compassionate physician whose arts could heal many pervasive types of human suffering.”<sup>194</sup>

Historian Pierre Hadot writes that Epicurus expresses a sentiment common to all of the schools in Greco-Latin antiquity when he claims that philosophy is a “therapeutics of the passions.”<sup>195</sup> What Epicurus meant was that the main cause of human “suffering, disorder, and unconsciousness” were the “unregulated desires and exaggerated fears.”<sup>196</sup> Philosophy was therapeutic in that it led to a “profound transformation of the individual’s mode of seeing and being” which alleviated the worries that had prevented them from truly living.<sup>197</sup> A well-known passage from the writings of Epicurus compares the work of the philosopher to the work of a medical doctor.

Empty is the argument of the philosopher by which no human disease is healed (variously: which does not relieve any human suffering); for just as there is no benefit in medicine if it does not drive out bodily diseases, so there is no benefit in philosophy if it does not drive out the disease of the soul.<sup>198</sup>

Epicurus held that, more than merely having an incidental or indirect therapeutic effect, philosophy had the potential to be actively useful as an applied therapy.

Karl Pfeifer points out that when Wittgenstein said that “philosophy unties the knots in our thinking” he regarded these knots as pathological symptoms of “intellectual disease,” and the philosophical methods required for untying them as “therapies.” Thus, Pfeifer holds, “*chez* Wittgenstein, to properly philosophize is already, metaphorically, to provide counsel or therapy to oneself or others.”<sup>199</sup> In considering the role of philosophy in various kinds of psychotherapy, Edith Weiskopf-Joelson writes that in speaking about

the “therapeutic effect of philosophies, or perceptual houses” she is not referring to the philosophies behind various psychotherapeutic approaches. She is focusing on what she perceives to be “the therapeutic effect of the patient adopting a perceptual house, whereby specific features of this perceptual house become healing agents for the patient.”<sup>200</sup> In other words Weiskopf-Joelson means to make her reader aware that a philosophy’s specific features can become healing agents for the client.

In an essay entitled “Philosophy as a Therapeutic Activity” Steven Segal argues that philosophy is in fact a *reflexive* therapeutic activity in that it allows the individual to change the way he or she experiences the world by reflexively deconstructing the texts or stories that shape the way he or she relates to the world.<sup>201</sup>

Going one step further than merely suggesting that philosophy *can* become a healing agent, Vaughana Feary argues that in some specialized counselling contexts philosophical counselling *ought to be* therapeutic.

Philosophical counseling in correctional settings should be therapeutic not merely in the weak sense that a philosophical examination of one’s life and problems is always therapeutic, but in the stronger sense that it must have the specific goal of changing the critical and moral thinking as well as the belief structures, offenders use to excuse or justify actions which harm others.<sup>202</sup>

She contends that as an employee of a state correctional institution, the philosophical counsellor’s duty is not simply to enrich the worldviews of offenders, but to rehabilitate them. As mentioned above, by using the term “rehabilitation” Feary infers that philosophical counselling in this setting is used “in the process of promoting and restoring competencies necessary for leading a minimally successful life outside an institution.”<sup>203</sup> She argues that philosophical counselling can play a major role in helping incarcerated populations acquire at least five competencies necessary to become rational moral agents: the knowledge and ability to recognize and to manage any problem or disease which impairs rational thought and action; critical thinking skills; at least minimal social and communication skills; the ability to manage, modulate and express

emotions appropriately; the ability to reason morally; and the ability to form a coherent personal identity.<sup>204</sup> Rather than arguing for a typically non-intrusive approach to doing philosophy, there is no doubt that Feary intends philosophical counselling to have a major impact on the life of her incarcerated clients, and impact that might be called therapeutic.

In the case of incarcerated populations, as in the case of addiction recovery counselling and other “interventive” applications, the philosophical counsellor seems to have the explicit intention of helping those clients to change who desire such change, and he accepts the self-evident normative conception of “normal” which includes freedom from substance abuse and self-destructive criminality. In this sense it seems non-controversial to say that philosophical counselling is therapeutic and, furthermore, that the philosophical counsellor assists the client on the road to self-improvement or personal development.

### 1.13 Personal Development

Ran Lahav states categorically that one of the reasons an individual becomes a client of a philosophical counsellor is in order to “improve themselves, to live a deeper, richer, better, and more significant life.”<sup>205</sup>

Dries Boele writes that in his practice he often meets people who “shed their skin morally,” as he calls it. By this he means that the pattern of values that fit them earlier does not meet their needs any more, and “a reorientation is necessary.”<sup>206</sup> In a situation such as this, the supportive and risk-free atmosphere created within the counselling relationship allows the philosophical counsellor to call into question a client’s “habit-ridden, over-simplified or normalized self-conceptions.”<sup>207</sup> The counsellor might stimulate the client to explore questions like “Who am I?” in a progressively deeper sense, by “calling into question the encumbrances of fixed social norms, conventional truths, and self-concepts.”<sup>208</sup> The counsellor can challenge the wisdom of popular conceptions of the good life, and help the client examine pre-conceived notions and traditional conceptions of the roles of individuals within society. Philosophical counselling is said to afford the client a break with the other habitual forms of ordinary

life.<sup>209</sup> It is said to call into question the indiscriminate generalization of norms, circular reasoning, appeals to authority and other common modes of thought which often lead to seemingly irresolvable problems and dilemmas.

It is argued that, rather than being an attempt to transmit ready-made views about philosophical issues, philosophical counselling acts as a critical reflection, or a process, whereby the client is helped to examine the assumptions underlying her life in order to investigate the formal structure of her life such as consistency and coherence, as well as the reasons on which they are based. Philosophical counselling is thereby a “reflection on the validity of one’s concrete biographical material.”<sup>210</sup> It is seen as helping the client to “come to an understanding of their predicament or life and unfold the broader horizons toward which they can grow.”<sup>211</sup>

Philosophical counselling is said to allow individuals in general, but especially women and minorities, to recognize the ways in which gender, class, race, and ethnicity have conditioned their experiences. Feminist philosophies are said to have tremendous relevance for the philosophical counseling process in this area.<sup>212</sup> For example, a person encountering sexist or racist discrimination can come to question what discrimination is, what causes it, what it means, what it aims for, whether to justify or condemn it. Such an intellectual search will guide the client into philosophic domains, where she may find or create a “wisdom of life,” and thereby be better able to deal with the sexism and racism as it emerges in her life, both in terms of dealing with the attitudes of others as she experiences them, and by way of inquiring into the authenticity of her own thoughts and feelings.<sup>213</sup> A sexist or racist encounter can thus become an opportunity to obtain understanding and wisdom. Philosophical counselling is also said to be able to facilitate inter-generational and inter-cultural values clarification, and in this way bring family members to a better understanding of the underlying assumptions and often unexpressed expectations of all concerned.

Ethical Standard #1 of the “Standards of Ethics” of the American Society for Philosophy, Counseling, and Psychotherapy (ASPCP) states, “In providing professional services, the philosophical practitioner should maintain utmost respect for client welfare, integrity, dignity, and autonomy.” But it appears to be a universally held



view among philosophical counsellors that more than simply maintaining a respect for a client's autonomy, one of the fundamental objectives of the philosophical counsellor seems to be the promoting of an increase in the autonomy of his client. It is argued that a crucial and substantial intention in the work of a philosophical counselor is to strengthen the client's trust in the value of his or her own experience and reason.<sup>214</sup>

This element of philosophical counselling, that is, the development of the self-confidence and autonomy of the client, is said to be diametrically opposite to any professional counsellor/client relationship in which the client comes to rely on the expertise and authority of the counsellor to do the work for her. As James Tuedio puts it,

When we entrust our problems<sub>i</sub> to a psychotherapist, we become dependent on specialized interventions and may lose considerable autonomy with respect to the reconstruction of our life-narrative... Effective philosophical facilitation empowers clients to engage in a critical examination and reconstruction of dysfunctional conceptual elements underlying their narrative construction of problematized relations and events in their life, using insights that arise from their active participation in philosophical dialogue.<sup>215</sup>

It is argued that one virtue of an approach which encourages the client's personal development is that it may "empower the client to recognize the healthy dimension of a transitional condition of life that might otherwise be construed as a dysfunctional mode of existence and subjected to reactive intervention."<sup>216</sup> In this way the client is seen to be encouraged to make the kind of decisions that will allow her to take responsibility for her own thinking and her own direction in life.<sup>217</sup>

It is said that the counsellor develops the client's autonomy by helping her to learn to read and respond more effectively to the play of everyday pressures which surround her.<sup>218</sup> Again, the philosophical counsellor does not provide philosophical theories, but rather he encourages the client to develop and utilize her own philosophical "thinking

tools.” He does not offer ready-made truths about how life should be lived, nor does he merely instruct the client in the historical precedents to metaphysical perspectives of the world. Rather he is said to allow philosophical understanding to grow from the client herself so that the client may not only benefit from having come to an understanding, but that she will benefit from the development of the reasoning capacity which has led her to this understanding.<sup>219</sup>

The philosophical counselor is described as a skilled partner in a dialogue through which counselees develop what some philosophical counsellors have called “their individual worldview.”<sup>220</sup> Philosophical counselling as a dialogical encounter can be either short-term or ongoing, and has been described as helping to expand the “Spielraum” (literally “the room to play,” but in this context “the range of movement”) within which the client confronts and interprets the events of her unfolding life. This dialogical encounter between the client and the philosophical counsellor is said to help remove obstacles to the natural flow of life as it unfolds.<sup>221</sup> In the very specialized demands of counselling within a penal institution, philosophical counseling has been said to promote critical and moral reasoning, and thereby to promote “the development of a realistic self concept and secure self esteem which results from the assurance that one has the competency to make rational moral decisions about one’s own life.”<sup>222</sup> These same results are seen when philosophical counselling is practiced within the non-incarcerated population. Becoming more self-knowledgeable through philosophical counselling is seen as allowing the client to develop a greater awareness of her thinking processes. As a consequence, the client is said to be able to employ a more conscious intentionality in her decision-making procedure, thereby affording her more practical control over her beliefs and the actions which result from them.<sup>223</sup>

But a problem arises when the philosophical counsellor is seen as merely a neutral, value-free professional-for-hire. Some philosophers argue that, just as fundamental moral principles support the assertion that a teacher should not facilitate the teaching of hatred, a philosophical counsellor should not act in the role of a value-neutral technician who helps the client to obtain whatever goal she desires.<sup>224</sup> If an individual’s worldview

involves, for example, the random hatred of others, and she approaches a philosophical counsellor in order to seek a comprehensive justification for such hatred, most counsellors see it as not only more appropriate but as a moral responsibility to both their client and their community to address the client's rationale for such hatred than to simply assist her in formulating the justification she desires. In this sense, philosophical counselling is said to encourage the client to "transcend" her present way of being and evolve into a different one, with a new way of seeing, experiencing, relating, and thinking.<sup>225</sup>

This suggests that philosophical counselling, construed as personal development, can thus not only be characterized as therapeutic and rehabilitative, but as something still more: as proactive, and as preventive. To date these conceptions of philosophical counselling have received very little attention in the philosophical counselling literature.

#### 1.14 Conclusion

Since its modern inception in 1981, philosophical counselling has often been negatively defined, that is by means of a recounting of what it is *not*. Positive definitions have been conflicting, contradictory, and often mutually exclusive. To date the theoretical accounts of what constitutes philosophical counselling have left many issues unresolved. For example, while philosophical counselling is characterized as a clearly client-centered dialogue in which an empathetic counsellor assists his client in an interpretation of her worldview, it is unclear how much of the counsellor ought to be "present," or how much the counsellor ought to influence his client, when involved in such an inquiry.

It is also argued that philosophical inquiry in counselling is accomplished, first, by means of phenomenology or description, and, second, by hermeneutics or interpretation. But since philosophical counselling is universally held to be a means whereby the client gains in autonomy, phenomenology and hermeneutics are seen by some as being inadequate at facilitating this change or progress in the client. Therefore, some philosophers argue that it is essential to include the element of pedagogy in any

conception of philosophical counselling. On the one hand, practitioners such as Pfeifer and Feary argue that the notion of healing or rehabilitation is intrinsic to counselling, and that therefore it requires the counsellor to act as teacher at certain times. On the other hand, Mijuskovic and others argue that philosophical counselling has nothing to do with teaching and therefore pedagogy should not be part of its conception. This leaves the problem unresolved as to whether an accurate conception of philosophical counselling requires that the counsellor/client relationship be modeled along the lines of the student/teacher relationship or not.

While philosophical counselling is portrayed as different from therapy – in that philosophical counselling holds no normative ideals about normalcy, and the client is an active participant in the process rather than a passive recipient of treatment – some philosophers argue that philosophical counselling is indeed a form of therapy. Others argue that while it may not currently be offered as a therapy, it ought to be construed as such. The currently available literature therefore leaves the question of whether philosophical counselling ought to be construed as a form of therapy or not still unresolved. We will return to this issue shortly.

Also unresolved at this point is what seems to be a vital aspect of philosophical counselling that has received very little attention to date: the question of how much of philosophical counselling ought to be not merely concerned with problem resolution but with creating in the client the ability to anticipate, and subsequently avoid, possible future problems. And furthermore, if the answer is in the affirmative, how is this to be done?

While much confusion as to what constitutes philosophical counselling has been created by the variety of normative theories and conceptions presented in the literature, the problem has been further exacerbated by conflicting reports and descriptions of current practices out of which many of the theoretical conceptions have been abstracted. The next chapter will examine the problems raised by what various practitioners argue are the methodologies central to, and definitive of, philosophical counselling.

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## NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

- <sup>1</sup> Lahav, Ran. "Introduction." *Essays on Philosophical Counselling*. Lahav, Ran and Maria da Venza Tillmanns eds. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1995. ix.
- <sup>2</sup> Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995 ed. 82.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid, 83.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid, 83.
- <sup>5</sup> Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994. 3,485
- <sup>6</sup> Shusterman, Richard. *Practicing Philosophy. Pragmatism and the philosophical life*. New York: Routledge, 1997. 5.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> See for example Jon Borowicz's paper, "How Is Philosophical Practice Practical" in *Perspectives in Philosophical Practice*. Wim van der Vlist ed. Leusden: Vereniging voor Filosofische Praktijk, 1997. 97; also Ran Lahav's "Introduction" in *Essays on Philosophical Counselling*, especially the section entitled "Historical Precursors." x-xii.
- <sup>9</sup> From the second preface to *The Gay Science* as quoted by James A. Tuedio in "Postmodern Perspectives in Philosophical Practice..." In van der Vlist. 184.
- <sup>10</sup> *Letters to Lucilius*. §48.
- <sup>11</sup> Borowicz, 91.
- <sup>12</sup> In her essay entitled "Letter on Certification" in the American Society for Philosophy, Counseling and Psychotherapy's Newsletter Vol. 2, Issue 3, November, 1997. Quoting from Mary Midgeley. *Wisdom, Information, Wonder: What is Knowledge For?* New York: Routledge, 1991. 239.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid. Quoting from Richard Shusterman. *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life*. New York: Routledge, 1997. 19-20.
- <sup>14</sup> Hersh, Seymon. "The Counseling Philosopher." *The Humanist*. May/June, 1980. Vol. 40 No. 3. pp. 32-34. As quoted by Shlomit Schuster in "Sartre's Words a Paradigm for Self-Description in Philosophical Counseling." In van der Vlist. 20-21.
- <sup>15</sup> Schuster, Shlomit. "Sartre's Words a Paradigm for Self-Description in Philosophical Counseling." In van der Vlist 20-21.
- <sup>16</sup> Lahav "Introduction" In Lahav and Tillmanns. xii.
- <sup>17</sup> Schuster, Shlomit. In van der Vlist. 21.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup> Boele, 45.
- <sup>20</sup> Lahav "Introduction" In Lahav and Tillmanns. 16.
- <sup>21</sup> Eckart Ruschmann mentions two of these "fronts" in his paper entitled, "Foundations Of Philosophical Counseling" in *Inquiry* Vol. XVII, No. 3 Spring 1998. 21-35.
- <sup>22</sup> Bernstein, Richard J. "Does Philosophy Matter?" *Thinking*. Vol. 9 No. 4, 1991. 2-4.
- <sup>23</sup> This list is condensed from various sources examined later in this chapter and subsequent chapters.
- <sup>24</sup> Prins-Bakker, In Lahav and Tillmanns. 135-152.
- <sup>25</sup> Hoogendijk, Ad. "Philosophical Practice, Pastoral Work, and Suicide Survivors." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 153-159.
- <sup>26</sup> Gluck, Andrew. "Philosophical Counseling in Career Counseling and Management Consulting." In *Perspectives in Philosophical Counseling*. 195-213.
- <sup>27</sup> Feary, Vaughana Macy. "A Right to (Re)Habilitation, including Philosophical Counselling, for Incarcerated Populations. In *Perspectives in Philosophical Counseling*. 259-278.
- <sup>28</sup> Hoogendijk, Ad. "Philosophical Practice, Pastoral Work, and Suicide Survivors." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 153-159.
- <sup>29</sup> Zijlstra, Bauke. "The Philosophical Counselor as Equilibrist." In *Perspectives in Philosophical Counseling*. 35-44.

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- <sup>30</sup> Broin, Valerie. "Talking Oneself into Being: Domestic Violence, Autobiography and Self Construction." In *Perspectives in Philosophical Counseling*. 244-258.
- <sup>31</sup> Marinoff, Louis. "On the Emergence of Ethical Counseling: Considerations and Two case Studies." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 171-192.
- <sup>32</sup> Norman, 49-58.
- <sup>33</sup> Hick, Christian. "The Structures of lived Time and their Implications for Philosophical Counseling." In van der Vlist. 135-154..
- <sup>34</sup> Lahav, Ran. "What is philosophical in Philosophical Counselling?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 13, No. 3, 1996. 276.
- <sup>35</sup> Lahav, Ran. Ibid, 276.
- <sup>36</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "Philosophy as if it Matters: The Practice of Philosophical Counseling." *Critical Review*. Vol. 6. No. 4, 1993. 587.
- <sup>37</sup> Schuster, Shlomit. In van der Vlist. 21.
- <sup>38</sup> Boele, Dries. "Experimental Wisdom And The Art Of Living." In van der Vlist. 157.
- <sup>39</sup> Boele, Dries. From his paper entitled, "The 'Benefits' of a Socratic Dialogue." Presented at The Third International Conference on Philosophical Practice. New York, July 22-25, 1997. 19.
- <sup>40</sup> Tuedio, 183.
- <sup>41</sup> Blass, Rachel. On The Possibility Of Self-Transcendence: Philosophical Counseling, Zen, And The Psychological Perspective." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. Vol. 23, No. 3. Sept. 1996, 280.
- <sup>42</sup> Eckart Ruschmann refers to Schleiermacher's conception of hermeneutics as a conceptualization of philosophical counselling in that it is described as a two-step process consisting of understanding and critique. See his paper entitled, "Foundations Of Philosophical Counseling" in *Inquiry* Vol. XVII, No. 3 Spring 1998. 28.
- <sup>43</sup> Lahav, Ran. "What is Philosophical in Philosophical Counselling?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 13, No. 3, 1996.262-265.
- <sup>44</sup> Lahav, Ran. Ibid, 262-265.
- <sup>45</sup> Lahav, Ran. Ibid, 262-265.
- <sup>46</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. In van der Vlist. 23.
- <sup>47</sup> Corey, Gerald. *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. New York: Brooks/Cole, 1996 ed. 198-202.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid, 198-202.
- <sup>49</sup> Mijuskovic, Ben. "Some Reflections on Philosophical Counseling and Psychotherapy." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 96
- <sup>50</sup> Marinoff, Louis. "On the Emergence of Ethical Counseling: Considerations and Two Case Studies." *Essays on Philosophical Counseling*. In Lahav and Tillmanns. 180.
- <sup>51</sup> Boele, Dries. "Experimental Wisdom And The Art Of Living." In van der Vlist. 157.
- <sup>52</sup> Hoogendijk, Ad. "The Philosopher in the Business World as Vision Developer." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 162.
- <sup>53</sup> Ruschmann, Eckart. "Foundations Of Philosophical Counseling" in *Inquiry* Vol. XVII, No. 3 Spring 1998. 27.
- <sup>54</sup> Hoogendijk, 162.
- <sup>55</sup> Prins-Bakker, 137.
- <sup>56</sup> *Leviathan*. Chapter 13.
- <sup>57</sup> Streng, Frederick J. *Understanding Religious Life*. California: Dickenson, 1976. 41.
- <sup>58</sup> Gilliland, Burl E. and Richard K. James. *Crisis Intervention Strategies*. Scarborough, Ont.: Brooks/Cole, 1997. 3.
- <sup>59</sup> James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Penguin, 1958 ed. 73.
- <sup>60</sup> McPeck, John E. *Critical Thinking and Education*. Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981. 157.
- <sup>61</sup> Ruschmann, Eckart. Ibid, 25.
- <sup>62</sup> Boele, Dries. "Experimental Wisdom And The Art Of Living" In van der Vlist. 162.
- <sup>63</sup> Boele, Dries. Ibid.
- <sup>64</sup> Boele, Dries. Ibid.
- <sup>65</sup> Borowicz, 102.

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- <sup>66</sup> Ibid, 102.
- <sup>67</sup> Gerbers, Will A.J.F. "Philosophical Practice, Pastoral Work, and Suicide Survivors." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 158.
- <sup>68</sup> Gerbers, Will A.J.F. Ibid, 158.
- <sup>69</sup> Prins-Bakker, 140-1.
- <sup>70</sup> Prins-Bakker, Ibid.
- <sup>71</sup> Prins-Bakker, Ibid.
- <sup>72</sup> Boele, Dries. "The Training of a Philosophical Counselor." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 47.
- <sup>73</sup> Boele, Dries. Ibid, 38.
- <sup>74</sup> Borowicz, 92.
- <sup>75</sup> Boele, Dries. Ibid, 38
- <sup>76</sup> See, for example, Prins-Bakker, op.cit.136.
- <sup>77</sup> Prins-Bakker, Ibid, 136-7.
- <sup>78</sup> Prins-Bakker, Ibid.
- <sup>79</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "Philosophical Narratives And Philosophical Counselling." *Journal of the Society for Existential Analysis*. July, 1997. 115.
- <sup>80</sup> Corey, Gerald. 467.
- <sup>81</sup> Ibid, 203.
- <sup>82</sup> Lahav, Ran. "Introduction." In Lahav and Tillmanns. xii.
- <sup>83</sup> Hadot, 82, 87.
- <sup>84</sup> Norman, 50.
- <sup>85</sup> Norman, Ibid, 53.
- <sup>86</sup> Noddings, Nel. *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. Berkeley: University of California P., 1984. 112.
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- <sup>99</sup> Lahav, Ran. Ibid, 17.
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- <sup>142</sup> Lahav. *Ibid*, 19.
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- <sup>145</sup> Tuedio. Ibid.
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- <sup>152</sup> Ruschmann, Eckart. "Foundations Of Philosophical Counseling" in *Inquiry* Vol. XVII, No. 3 Spring 1998. 21.
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- <sup>155</sup> Boele, Dries. "Experimental Wisdom And The Art Of Living." In van der Vlist. 156.
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- <sup>167</sup> Prins-Bakker. Ibid.
- <sup>168</sup> Cheng, Chung-Ying. "From Self-Cultivation to Philosophical Counselling: An Introduction." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. Vol. 23, No. 3. Sept. 1996, 254.
- <sup>169</sup> See for example any of the case studies presented in the published papers on philosophical counselling listed here, as well as in the only two volumes published on the topic to date: *Essays on philosophical Counseling*, and *Perspectives in Philosophical Counseling*.
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## CHAPTER 2

### DECONSTRUCTING METHODOLOGIES

#### 2.1 Introduction

Theorists and practitioners writing in the field of philosophical counselling have been attempting to define philosophical counselling by means of appeals to various methodologies – or what a dictionary might call systems of principles, practices, and procedures – in order to confer on it the credibility they feel it deserves. But their attempts have led to a variety of disparate claims as to what constitutes the actual, everyday practice of philosophical counselling. These varied procedural descriptions suggest that there are – or at least there are perceived to be – a plurality of distinct methodologies. Most philosophical counsellors seem to be maintaining that their own approaches are unlike all the others, and yet they still see theirs as belonging under the general classification of philosophical counselling. In reviewing the philosophical counselling literature this pluralism is clearly evident. But what is unclear is whether practitioners are arguing from what may be termed a realist (or objective) position or from an anti-realist (or subjective) position – that is, whether they hold that their particular approach or method is in fact “objectively” the best, or most effective one, or whether they hold that their particular approach or method is simply the one they personally prefer. What is also unclear, due to disagreements in the literature, is whether talk about method is even an acceptable topic of discussion within the field of philosophical counselling. All this serves to make the new practice less credible rather than more.

For example, on the one hand, Shlomit Schuster argues in several different papers that philosophical counselling, as it is conceived by its modern-day organizer, Gerd

Achenbach, is "an open, 'beyond-method' expertise, since the philosopher accompanies the counselee in thinking through, from different perspectives, those issues or questions he or she wishes to discuss."<sup>1</sup> In other words, for Achenbach, any talk of method in philosophical counselling is simply inappropriate.

On the other hand, Ida Jongsma maintains that philosophical counselling is in fact commonly characterized in terms of methods, such as analyzing the client's views, searching for inconsistencies in her reasoning, encouraging clarity in her thinking, uncovering their hidden assumptions, opening new creative alternative ways of thinking, and stimulating self-reflection.<sup>2</sup> Jongsma seems to be suggesting that there is a homogeneity in philosophical counselling in which the term "methods" is simply a means of describing techniques or procedures employed by practitioners, while Schuster seems to be claiming that philosophical counselling is actually heterogeneous and can therefore not be characterized as having any particular methods. It almost seems that no two counsellors give the same response to the question: What is the method practiced in philosophical counselling?

This chapter will examine a number of different techniques, procedures, approaches and methods all said to constitute the practice of philosophical counselling. It should become evident that the reports of actual practice presented in this chapter leave us with a number of problems, such as the paradox of mutually exclusive practices, and the dichotomy between the need for counsellor input on the one hand and the autonomy of the client on the other. These problems among others will be resolved by means of a four-stage model in chapter four.

But before various practices can be examined it is necessary to first clarify what the terms "technique," "procedure," "approach" and "method" are meant to refer to when applied to philosophical counselling.

Catherine McCall argues that while there may be methods in academic philosophy, much as there are in the field of medicine, "there is an art to practical philosophy, which cannot be captured in any method."<sup>3</sup> McCall compares the "art" of practical philosophy to that of the "bedside manner" or "communication skills" of the medical doctor. Neither "art" can be taught or learned directly, but both are essential if the practitioner

wants to be known as a “good” practitioner. In McCall’s view, practical philosophy – which includes philosophical counselling – is entirely dependent on “the art” exercised by the individual philosopher in practice. She argues that in order to assume that there could be a method to heal human suffering, such as in the medical model, one would also need to assume that one can predict the outcome of the application of that method. This assumption requires the medical practitioner to “hold as constant the ‘object’ which is being manipulated or changed by the method.”<sup>4</sup> It requires the psychotherapist to assume a “standard” human nature which, McCall says, does not exist<sup>5</sup> And since one cannot hold people as constants, the philosophical practitioner cannot follow a method in dealing with a client, as one would follow a recipe for a cake, and expect the person to come out happy in the end. The practical philosopher working with people “is always and in every instance improvising.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, she maintains that while it may seem plausible that a philosopher can be neutral with respect to the application of a method, “a philosopher who is improvising with every client is attuned to each individual in a manner which cannot be neutral,”<sup>7</sup> and therefore the philosopher cannot simply apply a method.

It may be true that it is the inferior medical doctor who merely applies a standardized medical method and a prescribed form of civility as his bedside manner in his indifference to the uniqueness of each person/patient. But to answer the questions of whether philosophical counselling is *only* an art distinct from any method, and whether a method, or several methods, can, or do, exist in philosophical practice, it is necessary to inquire into both the term “art” and “method.” Barbara Held points out that psychotherapists who have attempted to define therapy as art have run into several unresolvable problems. First, because the therapy-as-art proponents appeal to the absolute uniqueness of each and every client and each and every situation, it necessarily prevents any replication of procedure, and any generalizations that may be derived from the observation of client sessions.<sup>8</sup> In other words, nothing can be repeated, learned, or shared because, according to the therapy-as-art model, nothing that occurs in one situation may be generalized to either future sessions with the same client or to other clients. This would in fact make the publishing of case studies for the purpose of educating new practitioners a misguided and futile endeavour. Second, Held quotes D.P. Spence as

pointing out that if “art” means the absence of guidelines, and if the art of psychotherapy is practiced without guidelines, “then the risks of going wrong are sizably increased.”<sup>9</sup> In philosophical counselling this might mean that without guidelines for philosophical counselling it is impossible for the practitioner to determine whether he is in fact practicing philosophical counselling or whether he has strayed into something else entirely – such as, for example, psychoanalysis or pastoral work. Third, Held argues, “if art of any sort is a discipline, and therapy is a particular type of artistic discipline, then by definition there must be some order, regularity, organization – that is, something systematic – in its realization.”<sup>10</sup> Applied to philosophical counselling this means that even if philosophical counselling is an art it does not rule out the fact that there is some order, regularity, and organization to what is done by its practitioners.

As for the question of whether there is or can be a “method,” it is important to note that McCall bases her argument – that there cannot be a method in philosophical practice – on an implicit definition of “method” which may not inhere in the common understanding of the term. McCall seems to be suggesting that “method” is necessarily a dogmatic, *unalterable* “process which will yield predictable and therefore controllable outcomes,” or what may be termed a comprehensive and clearly articulated “system.”<sup>11</sup> This may be true in some instances, especially in those practices which hold themselves to be “scientifically” oriented, as in the case of psychotherapy narrowly defined as psychoanalysis, in which the practitioner is expected to follow codified texts in both symptomatological diagnoses of disorders and in their subsequent interventions. But in many other fields, such as in psychotherapy more broadly construed, method is taught and learned with the understanding that the new practitioner has the right to develop his own particular “style,” to adapt his approach within that method to both his own personality, the counselling context, and the specific requests or requirements of his clients.

In philosophical counselling there is clearly a place for “meta-discussions, in which both the practitioner and the client may think about, and discuss, the nature of their communications,” or to “think about their thinking.”<sup>12</sup> In this sense philosophical counselling offers the greatest possible freedom to the client from any methodological constraints because “the client can always raise objections about the philosophical

starting points or methods a practitioner may use.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, in philosophical counselling, as well as in many other fields of practice, it is understood that a method that is taught to the new practitioner is not necessarily fixed, that it does not demand absolute compliance, and that there are acceptable – and indeed at times necessary – variations determined by the context in which that method is utilized.<sup>14</sup> Anette Prins-Bakker points out that her method “allows for a wide spectrum of variations, something which keeps the discussion not only open and lively, but also uncertain, sometimes even risky.”<sup>15</sup> With this understanding of the term “method” it may after all be possible to articulate teachable approaches or methods in philosophical counselling. This chapter will examine the attempts of various philosophers to do just that.

The words “procedure,” “approach,” and “method” are used interchangeably by many writers in the field of philosophical counselling, with the result that an “approach” or “procedure” in one source may appear as a “method” in another, or even as both in the same source. This has led to a certain amount of confusion. To illustrate the point, recall that Ida Jongsma states that “philosophical counseling is commonly characterized in terms of methods, such as analyzing the counselee’s views, detecting inconsistencies, encouraging clarity in thinking, uncovering assumptions, opening new creative alternative ways of thinking, and stimulating self-reflection.”<sup>16</sup> But what Jongsma terms “methods” have in turn been used *within* other “methods.” It seems more appropriate therefore to call them “techniques” or “procedures” within methods rather than “methods” per se. Therefore, for the sake of clarity, in this chapter an “approach” is a practitioner’s personal style or manner of applying a method; a “procedure” or “technique” is an element within a method; and a “method” is understood to be a cluster or system of practices, procedures or techniques that is often given an appellation by their practitioners. For example, dialogue between the counsellor and the client is a technique or procedure that is common to a number of philosophical counselling methods, while “Socratic Dialogue” is the name applied to a method followed by some philosophical counsellors that utilizes, among other things, a dialogical procedure. But it is important to note that the so-called “Socratic Dialogue” method is more than simply a dialogical procedure since its practitioners follow a *number* of prescribed procedures or techniques



in the facilitation of their dialogues – such as directing the dialogue toward group consensus – which can be taught and learned as a system of practices, or a method.

The approaches, techniques and procedures to be examined below are dialogue, worldview interpretation, problem-oriented, person-oriented, open-ended, end-point-oriented, client autonomy, counsellor input, critical investigation, descriptive interpretation, normative claims, and the quest for equilibrium. The methods discussed are Achenbach's "beyond-method method," philosophy a way of living, the combination of philosophy and psychology, the use of individual philosophers, two-stage decision-making, six-stage relationship, groups, Socratic Dialogue, and logic-based.

## APPROACHES, TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES

### 2.2 Dialogue

Of all the various techniques or procedures in philosophical counselling the most ubiquitous is that of the use of dialogue between the client and the practitioner. But while the psychoanalyst conducts a dialogue with his patient in order to inform himself of her symptoms, so that he may be led to an accurate diagnosis and "structured intervention" in his patient's illness,<sup>17</sup> a dialogue in philosophical counselling is said to serve a different purpose. One of the primary goals of dialogue in philosophical counselling is for the client to be self-reflective.<sup>18</sup> In dialogue the philosophical counsellor invites his client to turn her inner thinking to an inter-subjective exchange that has the potential to result in better self-understanding.

Ideally, dialogue in philosophical counselling is meant to be "authentic, open, and non-confrontational."<sup>19</sup> It is meant to open the circle of the client's fixed ways of thinking about an issue or problem by not only allowing the counsellor to present a variety of different perspectives, but by allowing the counsellor to assist the client in discovering perspectives she has not noticed before. The act itself of the client's presentation of her personal problems to the counsellor can be a first step towards clarifying the client's problems to herself, since she is required to try to express them in

some understandable framework.<sup>20</sup> In this way the dialogical exchange helps the client to, paradoxically, learn what she believes by hearing herself say it.<sup>21</sup>

A dialogue on the various meanings found in everyday life is said to help “develop and refine the philosophical sensitivities” of the client.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, dialogue is said to allow for the expansion of the “Spielraum,” or the space in which the client engages the circumstances of her life, and thereby removes the obstacles that are hindering the natural flow of her unfolding life.<sup>23</sup> Schuster sees the dialogical exchange in philosophical counselling “proper,” as it is envisaged by Achenbach, as a “pluralistic, eclectic, skeptical, humanistic, and ethical dialogue, which creates a free place for investigation” for both the counsellor and the client.<sup>24</sup>

At least four variants of the simple dialogical technique, as it is presented above, are possible. First, there is the Socratic approach (not to be confused with the Socratic Dialogue method discussed below) in which the counsellor asks questions of the client but does not lead her to any conclusions, nor does he suggest any points of view. This approach is said to help the client to develop a “reflective attitude” which empowers her to become the originator of insights and solutions to her own problem. There is no direct input from the counsellor of any knowledge, values, beliefs, or understanding. This is the procedure claimed by the originators of the method called “Philosophical Midwifery.” It is also referred to as “colloquy” and claimed to be practiced by the founders of a philosophical method called “Therien.” More will be said about both below.

Second, there is the dialogical procedure in which the practitioner assumes the client wishes to be informed of alternative points of view or philosophical theories. In this approach, the philosophical counsellor is said to hold the client to be his intellectual equal who welcomes not only his assistance in clarifying her own thinking, but who wishes to know the counsellor’s own thoughts and beliefs. It is this kind of dialogue which Annette Prins-Bakker is referring to when she maintains that “a real philosophical dialogue requires the conversants to be equal, and to see each other as equals, in terms of the weight of their opinions.”<sup>25</sup> This concept of equality in the “weight of their opinions” between the counsellor and client is a contentious issue, because it seems to imply that both counsellor and client are equally able to defend their intellectual commitments,

whereas this seems not to be the case in many instances. As Dennis Polis points out, the client is typically at a severe disadvantage in the explanations and defense of her beliefs since the philosophical counsellor "is an experienced philosopher who has spent years perfecting, articulating and perhaps rationalizing his or her beliefs."<sup>26</sup> But what Prins-Bakker seems to mean is that the counsellor does not assume that his opinion is the correct one towards which the client must be guided. She points out that by presenting her viewpoint as a *personal* point of view, she stimulates her clients to discover their own personal points of view and to explore other possible ones. This exchange fosters an atmosphere in which the counsellor and client become "partners-in-dialogue."<sup>27</sup> In this kind of dialogue the possibility exists as strongly for the counsellor as for the client that they will each come to new understanding and insights.

The third approach to dialogue is also a controversial one, and represents a marked increase in the amount, and kind, of participation of the counsellor in the dialogical exchange. In this procedure the philosophical counsellor in effect becomes a teacher while the client takes on the role of the student. The counsellor may take this approach when the client requests information from the counsellor, or when the counsellor feels that offering information is essential in helping the client through the process of resolving her own problem. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the component of teaching has received very little attention in the philosophical counselling literature although it clearly seems to be an element that is vital to some situations if counselling is to be effective.

A fourth approach to dialogue is discussion in groups as in, for example, groups of students,<sup>28</sup> incarcerated individuals,<sup>29</sup> or recovering addicts.<sup>30</sup> The procedure within such a group discussion can be either of the Socratic variety in which the counsellor is a non-participatory facilitator, one in which the counsellor is a more self-revealing participant, or one in which the counsellor takes a more pedagogical stance. Dialogue in this setting is said to act not only to illuminate the perspectives of those who participate, but it serves to familiarize participants with the social milieu and dynamics of a free group discussion.

What the various dialogical techniques or procedures have in common is the assumption that the client is able to rationally investigate the framework of her own mind,

gain some self-understanding about her own behavior, decisions, and experiences, and then be able to influence that framework when this is deemed necessary.<sup>31</sup>

### 2.3 The Holism of “Worldview Interpretation”

Recall that Eckart Ruschmann contends that the entire history of philosophy “can be regarded and used as a sequence of different world views.”<sup>32</sup> Recall also that the main proponent of the centrality of so-called “worldview interpretation” in philosophical counselling, Ran Lahav, explains that a worldview is “one out of several ways of organizing, analyzing, categorizing, noting patterns, drawing implications, making sense of, and more generally assigning meanings to, one’s life-events.”<sup>33</sup> He maintains that the philosophical counsellor, as an expert in worldview interpretation, offers the client a “system of coordinates” by helping her to “uncover various meanings that are expressed in their way of life, and critically examine those problematic aspects that express their predicament.”<sup>34</sup> What the philosophical counsellor is said to do with this procedure is

interpret everyday problems and predicaments – such as meaning crises, feelings of boredom and emptiness, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, anxiety, etc. – as expressing problematic aspects of one’s worldview: contradictions or tensions between two conceptions about how life should be lived, hidden presuppositions that have not been examined, views that fail to take into account various considerations, over-generalizations expectations that cannot realistically be satisfied, fallacious implications, and so on.<sup>35</sup>

Hoogendijk agrees that worldview interpretation is an important technique in the “vision development” within practical philosophy. He contends that worldview interpretation involves both analytic and synthetic thinking in that it requires a critical examination of the foundations, or basic structure, of the client’s worldview, that is, its

logic, presuppositions, structure, concepts, as well as the interrelationships between the client's different concepts and how they join together into a conceptual network.<sup>36</sup>

In practical terms Mijuskovic sees worldview interpretation as in part consisting of the counsellor presenting and elucidating to the client two or more opposing worldviews, several conflicting paradigms of value, that she has presented as informing the way she lives her life.<sup>37</sup> Boele indicates that the philosophical counsellor must be critical in the sense of helping the client to make analyses and distinctions of beliefs and values, pointing out what she has taken for granted, as well as drawing her attention to any contradictions, presuppositions, and biases she may use in the fundamental decision-making process within her worldview.<sup>38</sup> What seems to make worldview interpretation distinct from other procedures is that it is said to be a holistic approach rather than problem-specific in that its focus is on the client's entire life and philosophy of life and not simply a single element within it.

## 2.4 Problem-oriented<sup>39</sup>

The problem-oriented approach is a procedure which is said to focus on helping the client to solve or overcome specific problems such as indecision, family conflicts, meaning crises, crises of faith, personal relationship difficulties, self-esteem and self-identity issues, ethical decision-making dilemmas, and so on. Success in this procedure is gauged by the level of satisfaction the client feels in their ability to first articulate, and then deal with, the problem or issue. Other issues or problems in the client's life are only discussed in so far as this is relevant to the illumination and resolution of the problem at hand.<sup>40</sup> A problem-oriented counselling relationship may consist of only a single one-half hour to a one hour session, if this is all that it takes in order for the client to feel the problem has been sufficiently discussed.<sup>41</sup>

## 2.5 Person-oriented

Lahav points out that several German counsellors take a holistic approach to philosophical counselling in that they do not focus on the problem as such but the person as a whole.<sup>42</sup> In this procedure the philosophical counsellor helps the client to examine and develop her “entire stance in the world.”<sup>43</sup> Barbara Norman describes it as an “ecological” approach to philosophical counselling in which the client is brought to question different ways of relating to, or being in, the world. The counsellor is said to aim at leading the client to a “redescription” or an uncovering of hidden assumptions and incoherence in her reasoning, and thereby to develop the art of relationship and interpretation.<sup>44</sup> Here the focus of the philosophical inquiry is the client’s entire attitude toward life – as reflected in both her actions and thoughts – rather than merely a single pressing problem or issue. Philosophical counselling is said to be based on the Socratic idea of the counsellor as “midwife” of the client’s wisdom, that is, of helping the client “give birth” to ideas from her own thinking. The counsellor’s role is to encourage clients to “work out their own thinking, use independent judgment, and take responsibility for their ideas.”<sup>45</sup> The resemblance of this procedure to the client-centered approach in psychotherapy will become obvious in the next chapter.

## 2.6 Open-ended

Gerd Achenbach, the founder of the modern philosophical counselling movement, advocates an open-ended procedure consisting of a continuous re-interpretation of oneself and the world. Quoting Jaspers, Achenbach sees a goal-oriented procedure as “the first mistake” in the practice of philosophy since “the invention of a finite goal is technical – and not philosophical practice.”<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, he sees the philosophical counsellor as having no right to establish a goal in whose direction he can lead the client. Instead, says Achenbach, “it is the privilege of your guest to give your conversation a goal and to find

a sense in it.”<sup>47</sup> If there is a goal at all in philosophical counselling Achenbach would say it is the same as the only goal in all “philosophical experience,” namely,

to maintain philosophical skepticism concerning everything which considers itself right, settled, conclusive, indubitable, or in short, everything which considers itself “true” and which therefore wants to abolish all further questioning. For it is this skepticism that would yield a renewed interest in everything which has been refuted, taken care of finished, or explained as “untrue.”<sup>48</sup>

Ran Lahav also sees philosophical counselling as unlike its academic counterpart exactly because it is more interested in the process than in the end-point. He alleges that instead of aiming at a finished product, such as a philosophical theory, philosophical counselling “values the process of searching; and rather than constructing general and abstract theories, it encourages the unique expression of the individual’s concrete way of being in the world.”<sup>49</sup> He maintains that the philosophical counsellor is “a partner to an open-ended philosophical dialogue,” in that he “helps to raise questions, uncover hidden assumptions, suggest possible implications, but imposes no specific philosophical view about what is right or wrong, what is important, normal, healthy, or what life is all about.”<sup>50</sup> Of course, this open-ended procedure in philosophical counselling is necessarily based on the assumption that the client’s immediate and specific problems will eventually be resolved if a more general inquiry is undertaken.

## 2.7 End-point-oriented

A problem-oriented approach can also be considered an example of an end-point-oriented approach to counselling. The counsellor’s goal is said to be at least to start the client on the road to the alleviation of her problem or concern, and at best to assist her in finding a definite solution. The goal is often clearly expressed by the client, and the counsellor disregards other issues he thinks may need attention but which do not affect the arrival at the client’s expressed end-point. A clear goal may be as varied as keeping

the client from becoming a re-offender,<sup>51</sup> resolving a conflict in a marriage relationship,<sup>52</sup> making a decision,<sup>53</sup> or overcoming insomnia.<sup>54</sup>

## 2.8 Client Autonomy

Some philosophical counsellors argue that the counsellor should avoid imposing his own views on his client, and allow his client to have as much freedom in decision-making as possible. While some practitioners maintain that philosophical counselling is based on the assumption that the client is already able to think autonomously and critically,<sup>55</sup> and that she is capable of exercising a degree of freedom in decision-making,<sup>56</sup> Michael Schefczyk holds that philosophical counselling can in fact lead the client to become more reflective and thereby autonomous.<sup>57</sup> He also maintains that philosophical counselling ought not attempt to “transmit ready-made views” about any issue, but that it should be a process of self-reflection and self-examination.<sup>58</sup> Louis Marinoff argues that the philosophical counsellor ought to take a “hands off approach” to his client in the sense that he should resist making decisions on behalf of his client. In this way the client will retain moral responsibility – a crucial element of autonomy – for all moral decisions she makes in the counselling situation.<sup>59</sup> The respect for the autonomy of the client is based in part on the proposition held by many philosophers that there is no one “correct” point of view or way of life.<sup>60</sup> The counsellor’s role in this approach is limited to raising appropriate questions and pointing out open alternatives in order to help the client to undertake a self-analysis.<sup>61</sup>

## 2.9 Counsellor Input

An argument against allowing the client to have unrestricted autonomy is that it is in fact forcing the client to be what she may not be prepared to be. Allowing the client to be autonomous, or even insisting that she make her own decisions, has been characterized by some writers as an abdication by the counsellor of his responsibilities toward her.<sup>62</sup> It seems reasonable to say that, if the client requests a point of view or suggestions from the



counsellor, a refusal to do so could be detrimental to the counsellor/client relationship. Furthermore, it seems that it is reasonable for the skilled counsellor to share his knowledge and offer to present his views in direct assistance to his client when it seems effective or even necessary to do so. Barbara Norman argues that, in what she describes as “ecological” counselling, the philosophical counsellor needs to take the client or group from “a comparatively naïve understanding of the current predicament under discussion, through a form of empathetic listening, questioning, and critical self and group appraisal” and to help the client or group to construct a “new vocabulary.”<sup>63</sup> Norman gives clear direction to her group of students, just as Vaughana Feary gives guidance and instruction to the incarcerated populations in her practice.<sup>64</sup> This approach maintains that the counsellor must at times act like a teacher or tutor to his client.<sup>65</sup>

## 2.10 Critical Investigation

According to Gerd Achenbach, philosophical counselling is a critical investigation in which the client’s most basic assumptions are questioned. He sees the purpose of philosophical practice not as that of providing desired solutions or the satisfaction of expressed needs, but rather of the questioning of those needs with which it is presented.<sup>66</sup> Michael Schefczyk sees philosophical counselling as “the critical examination of the individual’s conceptual history.”<sup>67</sup> Rather than imposing on the client the counsellor’s own existential, ethical, or other philosophical assumptions about life, Schefczyk argues that philosophical counselling “should critically examine such assumptions.”<sup>68</sup> According to James Tuedio, a postmodern approach to philosophical counselling is critical and demands that “every assertive essentialist claim implying a revelation about truth, objectivity, meaning, or identity must be seen as an orienting hypothesis that is contestable from other frames of reference.”<sup>69</sup> Postmodernism opens up a critical perspective on values, interpretations, expectations, and beliefs that the client may take for granted as the basis for her life. And these critical perspectives “can become the basis for productive human growth” when they are used to orient the client to the organizing assumptions of her life.<sup>70</sup>

## 2.11 Descriptive Interpretation

Some philosophical counsellors see their role not so much as having to critically undermine their client's misguided assumptions or contradictory values, but as making them explicit so that the client may then be better able to proceed with a critical evaluation. In this procedure the counsellor's job is seen as involving only the first of the two hermeneutic stages in what is described by Schleiermacher as the necessary unit of "hermeneutics and critique."<sup>71</sup> The task of formulating a critique, while it may be guided by the philosophical counsellor, is left primarily to the client. Seymon Hersch sees descriptive interpretation as the first in a series of four steps in philosophical counselling. Ruschmann explains that many essential aspects of the client's philosophy of life may not be available in propositional form and must therefore first be "explicated from the implicit state."<sup>72</sup> The first step in Hersch's approach – that of descriptive interpretation – is meant to awaken the client to the nature of their currently held philosophy before any sort of productive critique can begin. Bauke Zijlstra compares this task with the untangling of a knot "which, if we try to untie it, results in new knots at other places."<sup>73</sup> According to Zijlstra, such a knot can only be untangled by means of a rational unraveling of "the whole set of clues" to the client's worldview. Only then will the client and counsellor be able to progress from this discovery process to the establishment of coherence throughout her conceptual world.<sup>74</sup> Interestingly, Dries Boele also uses the metaphor of "inner knots being disentangled" to describe his gaining of insights into the complexities of his own thoughts and feelings while in the process of training to become a philosophical counsellor.<sup>75</sup>

Descriptive interpretation is also said to be a non-clinical sort of diagnosis. Schuster argues that just as one can verify "the cause of noise in a motor, of failure to pass an examination, or of sadness" with non-clinical approaches, the philosophical counsellor can diagnose a client's problem, by means of a philosophical examination of its cause or its nature.<sup>76</sup> She maintains that what distinguishes a philosophical diagnosis from a medical one is that the philosopher does not base his diagnosis on an a priori

understanding of the source or nature of philosophical problems. In other words, the philosopher does not have a paradigm to which he must match his client. He must instead work in collaboration with his client in the search for clarification.

## 2.12 Normative Claims

In this approach, the philosophical counsellor assumes that there are in fact normative philosophical standards according to which the client's "beliefs, assumptions, moral outlooks, styles of practical reasoning, and even their worldviews and implicit metaphysics can be explored and evaluated."<sup>77</sup> David Jopling sees the philosophical counsellor as shouldering a significant burden of responsibility in helping his client to reach the kind of accurate, defensible, action-guiding and truth-oriented self-understanding that is not achievable by the client alone.<sup>78</sup>

He points out that there is an inherent risk in the philosophical counsellor's desire to be perceived as absolutely neutral in his role, and in his attempt to respect his client's autonomy at all cost, namely, the flourishing of the client's self-deception and self-illusion.<sup>79</sup> Jopling maintains that the grounds for discriminating between better and worse ways of self-interpretation is the pursuit of the truth, and that the philosophical counsellor can assist the client in this task by helping her to weed out uncritical subjective preferences, to test arbitrary epistemic biases, to strengthen evidentiary standards, to enrich the evidentiary base, to eradicate sloppy practical reasoning, and so forth.<sup>80</sup> He sees philosophical counselling as a "shared, frank, truth-seeking face to face discussion with another" in which both participants are motivated by a common question: what is really good, better or best for the client, given her options, and objective constraints.<sup>81</sup> Andrew Gluck also sees philosophical counselling as possessing a degree of normative or moral authority, and as being able to function in a normative role in society. But he maintains that it can only do so if it can be aimed at a "radical transformation of human life and value."<sup>82</sup> He leaves the question open as to whether philosophical counselling is ready to assume such a momentous responsibility at this time.

Jopling attempts to use this normative procedure in philosophical counselling as a means of differentiating it from psychotherapy. He argues that the pursuit of truth is one of the characteristics of philosophical counselling that distinguishes it from psychological counselling, "because it is a departure from the ethics of non-directive and non-judgmental counselling."<sup>83</sup> But Jopling's effort seems problematic in that, while it may be the case that philosophical counselling pursues the truth, it is not the case that all forms of psychotherapy are in fact non-directive and non-judgmental. To begin with, it seems that the initial process of diagnostic evaluation of the patient or client is intrinsically judgmental. Furthermore, recommended treatments are always already directive in that they aim the patient or client toward a pre-conceived norm of mental well-being. More will be said about this in the next chapter.

### 2.13 The Quest for "Equilibrium"

Bauke Zijlstra's "untangling the knot" in philosophical counselling, as mentioned above, is part of her attempt to help her clients restore their equilibrium. Zijlstra explains that during work as a philosophical counsellor "it gradually became obvious to me that the main task consists in restoring the client's disturbed equilibrium – both his disturbed equilibrium of life and his disturbed equilibrium of thinking about life."<sup>84</sup> She sees the client's consulting the philosophical counsellor as a call for assistance in restoring this equilibrium. Using John Rawls' model of "reflective equilibrium"<sup>85</sup> in decision making, Zijlstra maintains that the philosopher is the person who, in a dialogue with the client, "is ready to help, either to clarify and restore the equilibrium or to build a wider equilibrium."<sup>86</sup> She explains that Rawls maintains that equilibrium is achieved by a rational process of deliberation which leads to a balance of one's moral judgments with their most related moral principles. But, she points out, one cannot simply align moral judgements with principles as they exist in one's society or tradition. They must be balanced against as wide a description of principles, and as many philosophical principles as it is possible to find, both as they have been laid down in history and as they are

designed for present or future use.<sup>87</sup> She holds that this procedure is a means for avoiding the moral traps of cultural relativism and subjectivism.

Zijlstra's conception of equilibrium is in contrast to the motivational theories in psychotherapy based on the principle of homeostasis. These theories hold that the individual is a being who "is just out to satisfy drives and instincts, to gratify needs, and all this just in order to maintain or restore an inner equilibrium, a state without tensions."<sup>88</sup> Equilibrium as homeostasis in this sense is based on the interpretation of the individual as a psychological being abreacting, or acting out instinctual tensions, and/or a biological entity reacting to stimuli. In this model the others loved by the individual, and the causes that individual seems to devote herself to, are simply tools used to alleviate the tensions aroused by the various human drives, instincts, needs, and the stress of everyday life. A restoration of equilibrium in this model is clearly self-centered and self-serving, while Zijlstra's Rawlsian model is based on a more reciprocal relationship with society at large – that is, one in which the individual attempts to "adjust" her own thinking in order to re-establish the equilibrium of the relationship between herself and the society of which she is a part.

Within Zijlstra's model the problem for which the client consults a philosopher is a disturbance in the equilibrium between life as the client is living it and the principles which are perceived to be informing that life. This kind of disturbance occurs when, for instance, the personal religious, social or cultural experiences or ideas are challenged or affected by ideas or events from outside the equilibrium. For example, the client may have a strong religious or moral belief that it is important to be charitable and help one's neighbour. Yet, at the same time, the client wonders whether it is appropriate, or in fact required of the moral person, to give aid to a needy neighbour whose behaviour has been a constant threat to the tranquillity and cohesion of her community. This issue is not only a disturbance to the "internal" equilibrium of the individual who finds herself in this situation, it has a negative impact on the equilibrium of the community in which the issue has arisen. Zijlstra explains that the client does not have the knowledge or capacity to cope with this disturbance and consults the philosophical counsellor for assistance in doing so.<sup>89</sup>

James Tuedio sees the issue of equilibrium in philosophical counselling somewhat differently. He characterizes the philosophical counsellor's role as helping the client to "negotiate a healthy balance [or equilibrium] between the different roles and games of life that demand their attention" from one phase of life to another.<sup>90</sup> The counsellor does this by helping the client to break free of "the narrower range of expectations shaped by their uncritical relations to a socially dominated life history," and to become more critical of the "consumptive patterns of life" inherent in modern society.<sup>91</sup> In other words, Tuedio sees the philosophical counsellor as helping the client to balance what society expects of her with what she sees as being the right, "life affirming" thing to do. It is the counsellor's ability to view the client's internal struggles from the outside which lends success to this approach.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, "approach" is defined as a style or manner, and a "procedure" or "technique" is an element within a method. The question which remains is, what are the methods in which these different approaches, techniques, and procedures can be found?

## METHODS

### 2.14 The "Beyond-Method Method"

Achenbach's conception of a philosophical counselling method is not based on the use of one specific philosophy as the foundation of all counselling endeavours, but rather on "everything philosophy is and everything it can do for a person."<sup>92</sup> Achenbach illustrates the impossibility of defining the philosophical counsellor by means of a reference to his method with the question of what might be done to correct the behaviour of "a nasty child."<sup>93</sup> Achenbach says the father could try to bring the child to reason "with a smack;" or he could talk to his son and ask him kindly to show some sensitivity for his nerves. The pedagogue might play with the child and lead him to more cooperative behaviour by hinting at a possible reward. The therapist would ask the child for the causes of the discomfort that has "brought this little person out of balance."<sup>94</sup>

Achenbach points out that, while one can recognize the pedagogue and the therapist by the approach they take in dealing with the child, the “method” used by the father does not define him as the father. In other words, the father “has all options at hand,” even those methods normally employed by the pedagogue and therapist, and he is still the father regardless of which method he chooses to use. The philosopher, according to Achenbach, “reflects himself as the father,” acknowledges the experts and specialists, but considers himself to have all options available to him.<sup>95</sup>

Schuster quotes Achenbach as characterizing philosophical practice as “opposing the positivist notion that it is necessary to have a method: ‘Philosophy does not *use* methods, it *develops* methods; it does not *use* theories, it *develops* theories.’”<sup>96</sup> Elsewhere she describes Achenbach’s method as a method “beyond method,”<sup>97</sup> and as an “open, ‘beyond-method’ expertise.”<sup>98</sup> If there is any “method” at all in Achenbach’s conception of philosophical counselling it may perhaps be found in what he offers as four fundamental rules which the philosophical counsellor ought to follow: first that the philosophical counsellor should never treat all clients in the same way, but should adapt himself to their different needs; second, he ought to try to understand his client and help them to want to understand; third, he should never attempt to change his client but avoid all pre-conceived goals and intentions; and fourth, in two parts: he should try to help the client “amplify” or enlarge her perspective or “the frame of her story,” and he ought to “nurture” his client with whatever seems appropriate to the circumstance.<sup>99</sup> While Achenbach is thus putting forth a set of claims about how philosophical counselling ought to be practiced, he denies the existence of, or need for, a complete or comprehensive theoretical system.

If these four fundamental rules don’t constitute a theoretical system, and are not meant to suggest a method, the question remains, what would a “beyond-method method” look like in an actual counselling situation with a client? By way of explanation, Achenbach offers the metaphor of the pilot of a boat. He explains that the philosophical counsellor is not the pilot whose job it is to take the place of the true captain of a boat long enough to steer the boat past dangers which only he knows lie hidden beneath the surface of a particularly dangerous body of water. The philosophical

counsellor is more a trained pilot who steps aboard the ship which “has lost its speed or its direction or both,” and “sits together” with its captain, exploring old and new maps, inspecting the compass, sextant, and telescope, chatting with the captain about prevailing winds, sea currents, and the stars, over hot cups of coffee. Only later in the evening do they discuss questions such as whether he is in fact captain of this ship, and what it means to be the captain. The “pilot” may tell the captain what “men” in the past have said about being captain, and what those in other parts of the world have said about it. Conversation drifts from seriousness to laughter and back again until the captain once again takes up the controls of his ship, increases his speed, and goes his way “over the unreliable sea.” If there is a method here, Achenbach asks rhetorically where it is to be located: in the “intelligent talks about navigation, or was it the view of the stars? Or the laughter and the coffee at the end?”<sup>100</sup> Achenbach admits that this is where method may lie, but he cautions that it is not clear exactly where it may be found.

## 2.15 Concerns About Method

Achenbach’s characterization of a philosophical counselling session as an open-ended, non-focused conversation seems to disregard practical considerations affecting actual counsellor/client interchanges, such as the limited time available to each client, the client’s expressed desires and expectations of the counselling process, and the client’s financial constraints. While it could be granted that Achenbach’s metaphor may serve as the ideal, it does not satisfy demands for a realistic account of philosophical counselling that might serve as a useful guide to practitioners entering the field.

In an essay entitled “Philosophical Counselling: The Case Against,”<sup>101</sup> Margaret Goord cautions her readers that philosophical counselling holds potential pitfalls for the naive client. She characterizes Achenbach’s conception of philosophical counselling as having a somewhat troubling post-modern, “anything-goes” sense that leaves the institution of philosophical counselling “ambivalent about method and content,” and as failing to specify either the kinds of issues that can be addressed by philosophical counselling or “the sorts of concepts and methods that should be employed in the



endeavour.” This, she warns, fosters a kind of relativism that may lead to philosophical counsellors “who are willing to deal with disorders... which would be better handled by the medical profession,” and with drugs.

Ida Jongsma cautions that if it is held that there is no definite method in philosophical counselling, and an “anything goes” attitude is allowed to permeate the field, then “this new profession will appear vague.”<sup>102</sup> She wonders how it is even possible to talk about philosophical counselling, or to seek clients, when it is unclear what it involves, where its boundaries are, what the philosophical counsellor has to offer his client, and what she can expect. Like Goord, she worries that the claim made by some philosophical counsellors, that the point of philosophical counselling is precisely that it does not have a particular method, “seems to have the dangerous consequence of giving license to philosophical counsellors to do whatever they please.”<sup>103</sup>

Jongsma argues that philosophical counselling must clarify its basic assumptions and theoretical framework if it is to attain a professional status and be taken seriously by the philosophical world. To accomplish this, Jongsma recommends that philosophical counselling ought to develop “a common methodological framework based on explicit assumptions and conceptions about human life”<sup>104</sup> This would not mean that there would be a precise set of rules which the philosophical counsellor would be required to follow each time he conducts a counselling session, but rather that there would simply be “boundaries of basic principles” to guide him. This would not only allow, but make it necessary to establish training programs for philosophical counsellors, and require counsellors to provide protocols of their sessions for peer review in order to ensure that they meet some minimum professional standards of competency.<sup>105</sup>

Dries Boele practices the precisely codified Socratic Dialogue method, which he says has much in common with philosophical counselling. According to Boele, resisting the search for “methodic features” in philosophical counselling, “paralyses the search for features of a counseling session that are at work implicitly.”<sup>106</sup> But why is it necessary to make these features explicit and to discover or define a method in philosophical counselling? Like Jongsma, Boele asks rhetorically how it is possible to promote philosophical counselling to the community at large and to potential clients if it does not

have clearly defined features, or if it is defined only vaguely with reference to abstract notions such as “world view interpretation” and “understanding the problem.” Boele also wonders whether, by lacking a clearly articulated method, philosophical counselling may ultimately be defined by the personality of the philosophers, inferring that this is far from ideal in the development of a new practice. He also maintains that having a clearly defined method allows for an articulation of standards, which can lead to a better process in the evaluation of those training to become philosophical counsellors. Boele points out that, despite the claims of some philosophical counsellors, there may be more method to philosophical counselling than is currently acknowledged in its literature.<sup>107</sup>

So then, while Goord and Jongsma are saying – in contrast to Achenbach’s position – that there *ought to be* a method, and that, once established, it should be clearly articulated, Boele argues that there already *is* an implicit method in philosophical counselling that simply needs to be made explicit if it is to benefit the community of philosophical counselling professionals. A number of philosophical counsellors have attempted to do just that.

## 2.16 As a Way of Living

Historian Pierre Hadot notes that, in the view of the Stoics, Epicureans, and other ancient philosophers,

philosophy did not consist in teaching an abstract theory – much less in the exegesis of texts – but rather in the art of living. It is a concrete attitude and determinate lifestyle, which engages the whole of existence. The philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level, but on that of the self and of being. It is a progress which causes us to *be* more fully, and makes us better. It is a conversion which turns our entire life upside down, changing the life of the person who goes through it. It raises the individual from an inauthentic condition of life, darkened by

unconsciousness and harassed by worry, to an authentic state of life, in which he attains self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace, and freedom.<sup>108</sup>

Similarly, Jon Borowicz promotes his method of philosophical counselling as supporting individuals “in their efforts at a considered and deliberate approach to living.”<sup>109</sup> He explains that his method, which he calls “Therien,” assumes the ancient point of view that philosophy is a way of life as opposed to an academic discipline, and that the philosopher practices an art of living rather than merely a form of discourse. He maintains that the aim of the Therien method is in line with the vision of Gerd Achenbach, the founder of contemporary philosophical practice, in that it “seeks to create a space for serious thought in the lives of its visitors.”<sup>110</sup> But it goes beyond Achenbach’s gentle, philosophical discourse between two individuals that is meant to assist the client in coming to terms with some issue or problem. Borowicz sees each of his clients as philosophers, and he sees the main aim of philosophy, and therefore the Therien method, as promoting a “rational direction of life.” He attempts to accomplish this by means of “meditation (understood as dialogue with oneself),<sup>111</sup> memorization, reading, writing (both one’s own thoughts and those of others), observation and description, and Socratic discourse.”<sup>112</sup>

Borowicz’s method then seems to be a structured, modern-day attempt “to transform mankind”<sup>113</sup> by training them to “look at the world in a new way”<sup>114</sup> and return to the philosophical way of life. But he makes it clear that, “despite the outward appearance of similarity,” the approach at Therien is not psychotherapy, in that no therapy or treatment is offered, and the client’s remarks are taken at face value and there is no assumption of underlying causes.<sup>115</sup> But other practitioners in the field clearly see a place for a psychotherapeutic approach in their method of philosophical counselling.

## 2.17 Philosophy and Psychology

The methods of both James and Kathy Elliott and Pierre Grimes are self-admittedly a combination of psychology and philosophy, and yet are still considered by them to be part

of the larger field of philosophical practice, and perhaps even specifically philosophical counselling.

The Elliotts have titled their method “Clinical Philosophy” which they explain is a combination of a psychotherapeutic approach they call “Anthetic Therapy” and non-academic philosophy, that is, philosophy applied to everyday issues in living. While Anthetic Therapy was found to be effective in helping their clients “overcome cognitive and emotional obstacles to living a happier and more effective life” the Elliotts found that it could not give them the guidance in “deploying their newly-emerging energies and exercising their new freedom.”<sup>116</sup> Clinical Philosophy is said to be a responsible “psychophilosophical practice” which acknowledges that the practitioner is not value-free. Its goals are described by the Elliotts as

first, to teach the skills of critical thinking, so that every belief may be placed in question and evaluated; second, to help people get free from ideological attachments; and third to help each person create a satisfying philosophy of life that is informed by positive values.<sup>117</sup>

Clinical Philosophy is said, in the words of its founders, to not only provide counselling services for individuals and couples, and to conduct training programs for mental health professionals, but also to encourage the integration of insights drawn from the fields of philosophy, psychotherapy, and religion; and to undertake studies in three areas: the philosophical foundations necessary for an optimal psychotherapy; ways that psychotherapy can contribute to progress in philosophy; and ways that both philosophy and psychotherapy can inform and revitalize religion and spirituality.<sup>118</sup>

Pierre Grimes also claims to combine psychotherapy with philosophy and calls it “philosophical midwifery” after Socrates’ reference to his own approach to philosophical discussion as midwifery in Plato’s *Theaetetus*. There Socrates explains that he sees himself as assisting in the delivery for men who are pregnant with either true ideas or false beliefs.<sup>119</sup> Grimes points out that he first used the dialectic approach in the psychotherapeutic treatment of alcoholics. His approach, as it is outlined in a published and copyrighted handout, is very problem-oriented. He offers seven “signs of a

problem” – such as the failure to achieve one’s goal with excellence, and being unable to maintain the goal – which, if any one of them is recognized by the client, will indicate that she suffers from some “pathologos” or “sick idea.” He then offers a step-by-step analysis of the problem which includes stating the nature of the problem, describing the scenes in the present and recent past in which the problem was most obvious, recalling early incidents, reflecting on various scenes, and “puzzling out the meaning.”<sup>120</sup>

According to Grimes, when the client comes to terms with her “pathologos” she removes the block that has kept her from fulfilling her destiny. Philosophical midwifery is studied at the “Open Mind Academy,” part of the “Virtue Mountain Temple” in California, where clients can also explore and study their dreams and review problems they are experiencing with meditation.<sup>121</sup> Grimes explains that the need to study dreams and to “prepare for dreams” is a means to “purify the psyche of one’s ignorance of oneself,” and to come to know “the dream master” which he says is “an intelligible consciousness that lies at the core of our being and is our very nature.”<sup>122</sup> Grimes’ method seems to utilize the traditional psychotherapeutic approach of diagnosis and treatment to overcome what is perceived by him to be pathology.

Elliott Cohen also combines philosophy with psychology in his method of philosophical counselling. He describes his method as a modified form of Rational-Emotive Therapy (R.E.T.) and Transactional Analysis.<sup>123</sup> The Rational-Emotive-Behavioral Therapy (R.E.B.T.) method, as it is called today, has already been dubbed *philosophical* therapy by psychologists. It is said to be a “philosophical restructuring” to change a client’s “dysfunctional personality.” It does this by helping the client to arrive at “a new and effective rational philosophy” by helping the client take three necessary steps: detecting irrational beliefs, strenuously debating and questioning those beliefs and arguing them away, and discriminating the irrational from the rational beliefs so that only the rational ones are used in everyday life.<sup>124</sup> Cohen seems to be the first to have written on the topic of the roles of logic and critical thinking in philosophical counselling.<sup>125</sup> More will be said on this topic below.

More will also be said about Schuster’s so-called “philosophical psychoanalysis” in which she combines Sartre’s Existential psychoanalysis with self-analysis.

One further example of philosophical counselling as a method which combined both psychotherapy and philosophy is in the practice of Jesse Fleming and his students in Taiwan who employ the I Ching as both a diagnostic and a therapeutic tool. Fleming sees the I Ching acting like a key, or catalyst, "to expose one's unconscious fears, desires, intentions, etc."<sup>126</sup> He uses the I Ching much like a Rorschach ink-blot test, or a word-association test, to call forth "the unconscious needs, and anxieties which shape our futures unbeknownst to us."<sup>127</sup> He explains that using the I Ching as a diagnostic tool

avoids some of the pitfalls of classical psychoanalytic diagnosis and therapy, where the client/patient's response (to his dreams, symptoms, parapraxes in free association) is contaminated by unconscious communication with and quasi-hypnotic suggestion by the therapist, or counter-transference where the unconscious of the therapist is displacing pathological emotions like amorous attraction or hostility onto the client/patient; this is of course, because the I Ching is a texttool, rather than a living counselor.<sup>128</sup>

These examples of psychotherapeutic approaches in combination with philosophy as a method in philosophical counselling are clearly goal-and/or treatment-oriented and aimed at changing the client from a non-desirable state to one more in line with might be considered psychologically "normal." As such they are a far cry from the non-methodological approach suggested by Achenbach, but are none-the-less considered to be part of the philosophical counselling movement as it appears today.

## 2.18 Calling on Philosophers

Philosophers such as Plato, Kant, Mill, and others have written so much that a collection of one such author's work can be a source of insight into almost any human issue. Some philosophical practitioners, such as Pierre Grimes mentioned above, find that it is more expedient to focus on the works of just one philosopher, and use this to inform their practice, than to counsel their clients with a "piece-meal" approach in

which reference is made to an eclectic assortment of excerpts from the writings of a diversity of philosophers.

Steven Segal illustrates the use of this method when he does a “Heideggerian interpretation” of Tolstoy’s personal existential crisis, which he wrote about in an essay entitled “A Confession.”<sup>129</sup> Tolstoy found himself overcome by what Segal describes as “intense feelings of anxiety and depression in which he lost all sense of himself and purpose to his existence... [and unable to] find meaning or purpose in writing, farming, education, or family life.”<sup>130</sup> Segal points out that Heidegger’s philosophy does not perceive this kind of a crisis of meaning in the same way that it might be seen by a psychotherapist – as pathology. For Heidegger the crisis of meaninglessness “is itself a meaningful crisis,” because it is not simply a means to an end but “the process of education about being-in-the-world.”<sup>131</sup> If Tolstoy were in fact a contemporary client of a philosophical counsellor who used this approach, he would be told what Heidegger has said about the meaning of meaninglessness in Heideggerian terms as an alternative way of perceiving what seems at first to be a very negative experience. This is not to say that Segal confines himself to this method in his own practice, but only that in using Heidegger to analyze Tolstoy’s problem he illustrates how the method of applying one particular philosopher’s perspective to one issue or one client might function in a given philosophical counselling situation.

In a paper published in 1995 Shlomit Schuster explains how she has combined existential psychoanalysis with Jean-Paul Sartre’s existential philosophy to generate, what she calls, “philosophical psychoanalysis.”<sup>132</sup> Schuster explains that she finds the twentieth century French philosopher’s ideas particularly useful in her practice. She sees them as helpful when clients are “bewitched” by the past and the impact of what seems like its “causality,” in other words, when they see the past as an inescapable blueprint that determines who they presently are. She points out that, although Robert C. Solomon, Albert Ellis, and other psychotherapists have argued like Sartre for the freedom to “create” oneself, she considers Sartre’s particular call for reflection in the following areas as a major influence on her philosophical psychoanalysis: “reflection on the possibility of making something of the person one has become through life, others, oneself, or all of

these; reflection on the possibility of choosing oneself, one's emotions and thoughts, and one's future."<sup>133</sup> Schuster explains that she attempts to make Sartre's ideas relevant to her clients, but that her use of the Sartrean perspective is only with the approval of her clients. If Sartre's ideas are not welcomed she feels free to refer her clients to the ideas of other philosophers.<sup>134</sup>

Not only might a philosophical practitioner call on the specific words of a particular *philosopher* when counselling his client, but his method may have its foundation on a particular *philosophy*. Jesse Fleming points out that both he and his students have been successfully integrating several systems of Chinese thought (Taoism, Confucianism, Zen, and the I Ching) into their philosophical practice.<sup>135</sup> They find that the profound philosophies of time, change and action found in these Asian ways of thinking are very useful not only in dealing with Asian clients and in counselling multicultural groups but in dealing with western clients who might benefit from a different perspective from the traditional western, analytic methods.<sup>136</sup> Fleming claims that Asian models of philosophical counseling advocate a more active and interventional role for the counsellor, since philosophy is not conceived of as an inquiry into language about reality, as it is in Western/analytic philosophy, but rather as an inquiry into reality itself. He explains that when he says that the philosophies of China, Japan, and India should be incorporated into philosophical practice, this does not mean that the counsellor ought to tell the client what to think or do, but that he ought to "inform the client of various options promulgated by philosophers that he may not be familiar with (e.g. stoic asceticism, Zen immediacy, Buddhistic non-attachment, etc.) and invite the client to choose for himself."<sup>137</sup>

So while some philosophical counsellors clearly *prefer* to work with a particular philosopher or within a certain school of philosophy, it seems that many of these practitioners are not bound to follow a single philosopher or philosophy exclusively.



## 2.19 Two-stage Decision-making

Louis Marinoff proposes a method in ethical counselling – which can be either prescriptive or non-prescriptive – that will help the client overcome what he calls “decision paralysis.”<sup>138</sup> This method consists of two stages: the first is a clarification of options available to the client, and the second is an analysis of the outcomes of following any of those options. In the first stage, the philosophical counsellor is said to help his client clarify what options exist for her, and to help her prioritize them by suggesting frameworks according to which she can “disentangle and assess the relative merits and demerits of available options.”<sup>139</sup> So far this counselling method is non-prescriptive, in that the counselor does not recommend any modification of the counselee’s declared set of possible choices, but simply allows the client to offer every option she can think of. It becomes prescriptive – and allowably so – when the counselor points out viable options the client did not consider viable, or options that have simply not come to mind. This is what Jopling has called a “weak directive stance,” in that the philosophical counsellor does not take a paternalistic attitude – in which he states outright what the client ought to do – but rather one that is helpfully critical or evaluative.<sup>140</sup>

The second step is said to consist of analyzing ways in which inconsistencies in the client’s system of values, arising from the choices she deems possible can, or cannot, be eliminated. Marinoff holds that this can be accomplished by means of a collaborative critical analysis of the outcomes which may result from hypothetical choices the client has chosen to make. In other words, the counsellor is said to assist the client in making a decision by helping her in an examination and consideration of which of the possible consequences of her choices she favours most.<sup>141</sup> With this method the counselor may express an empathetic attitude all along, regarding the difficulty of the decision faced by the client while he is assisting her in making her own decision, but at no time does he make any part of the decision on her behalf. This method, says Marinoff, ideally helps the client to feel empowered to, at least, make a constructive deliberation regarding what choice to make, and, at best, to actually make a choice “without further ado.”<sup>142</sup>

## 2.20 Six-stage Relationship

The philosophical practitioner is seen to be a “partner-in-dialogue” in the marriage counselling method for couples followed by Annette Prins-Bakker. She calls it a method only tentatively because she allows a wide range of variations and uncertainty in its application. It consists of six stages: “Tell Me...;” “Who Are you?;” “What About Your Life?;” “In Which Phase of Your Life Are You Now?;” “Questioning Your Relationship;” and “Should the Marriage be Continued?”<sup>143</sup>

She usually begins her sessions by working with each of the married partners separately until the final stages. In the first stage the philosophical counsellor “listens, asks questions to gain a clearer view, and gives comfort through his or her presence, attention, and understanding,” and encourages the client to tell the story of her relationship from an objective viewpoint.<sup>144</sup> This objectivity allows a philosophical attitude, according to Prins-Bakker in which the client can begin to systematize her thoughts, feelings, emotions, fears, intuitions, and so on, and to become aware of various patterns that may come to light. This process of inquiry is not unique to the first stage but is often on-going.

During the second stage attention is shifted away from the relationship between two individuals and is focused instead on the individual present to the counsellor in order to allow her to understand herself not as she is defined by the relationship but objectively and “as a unique person.”<sup>145</sup> It is during this stage that changes in the individual are examined to establish what effect they may have on the couple’s relationship. According to Prins-Bakker, it is at this stage also that it is most essential for her clients to have the thinking tools necessary for such an inquiry, and she finds herself often having to teach thinking skills to her clients so that the process may be continued. In stage three she helps her clients “develop an understanding of how they conceive of themselves and their lives.”<sup>146</sup> It leads to what Prins-Bakker considers the most fundamental goal of philosophical counselling: the relationship – and possible gaps – between how her clients actually live their lives and how they conceive of their lives as viewed through their

“personal glasses.”<sup>147</sup> In this stage she attempts to expose, articulate, examine, and develop her clients’ philosophy of life and dispose of those which seem detrimental.

Prins-Bakker encourages her clients to articulate and examine what they consider to be the phases of their lives for themselves in the fourth stage. She points out to her clients that, while partners in a marriage relationship need not be in the same phase of life, it is essential to the harmony of the relationship to recognize which phase each partner is in and how these phases affect each other.<sup>148</sup> Stage five returns to the problem of the relationship. She discusses the concept and nature of relationships in general with both clients, in order to have them articulate to the other what ideas they see as inherent in a successful marriage partnership. The reference point of the final stage is no longer that of the individuals in the relationship, but rather the combined perspective of the couple. Discussion now becomes, what Prins-Bakker describes as, a Hegelian synthesis, and focuses on their combined thoughts about tensions and problems in their relationship.<sup>149</sup>

The role of the counsellor changes during these six stages, according to Prins-Bakker, from that of “partner in dialogue” to “critical interpreter,” in which she encourages both clients to listen and interpret each other’s statements more effectively. It is in this final stage that “dialogue becomes their most important tool.”<sup>150</sup> Even if these six steps are not followed exactly with each client, Prins-Bakker sees the philosophizing inherent in the process as an opportunity for self-reflection and self-development. Such benefits have been noted by philosophical counsellors whose practice involves not just pairs of clients but an entire group.

## 2.21 Groups

The method of philosophical counselling in group is said to offer a number of advantages over individual counselling. For instance, participants can explore their styles of relating with others and learn more effective social skills. Members can also discuss their perceptions of one another and receive valuable feedback on how they are being perceived in the group. As a microcosm of society the group provides a safe and limited-

risk sample of reality, since the struggles and conflicts members can experience in the group are similar to those they experience outside of it, with the notable difference that the consequences of interaction are not as costly as they may be in society at large. The group offers understanding and support, and a sense of belonging and purpose, which can foster the members' willingness to explore the problems they have brought with them to the group.<sup>151</sup> In a group setting clients are sometimes able to achieve that which, as Prins-Bakker has pointed out, is often very difficult for a client to achieve in an individual session: philosophical objectivity.

Eckart Ruschmann has been experimenting for some time with what he calls "philosophizing in and with a group," which he says has been "underrepresented in the philosophical discourse and yet is of importance to philosophical practitioners."<sup>152</sup> His is a conception of philosophical groups where the personal worldview is the starting point – where the group's theme is the presenting as well as the reviewing of personal philosophies of life. He finds that a discussion of concepts is useful, but it is the reactions of the members of the group to each other that he feels may be especially helpful to them in the process of identifying less desirable aspects of their own respective worldviews, and in modifying and/or "giving up" certain concepts, and replacing them with more appropriate ones. Ruschmann differentiates this approach from the Socratic Dialogue (discussed below) in that it is not geared toward reaching a consensus. Instead, important goals might be a focus on the philosophies of life, and the "basic assumptions of anthropology" and "Weltanschauung" held by each participant.<sup>153</sup> Added to this each participant is encouraged to examine the adequacy of her conceptualizations in order to avoid unfavorable influences on the practical conduct of their life.<sup>154</sup>

Barbara Norman argues that group counselling can be particularly effective in promoting "the art of ecological relationship and interpretation." By this she means "open-minded questioning and a constant reinterpretation of the (social and other) environment."<sup>155</sup> She explains that in her experience, in countries such as her own South Africa, in which there are considerable social upheavals, she has found that a fruitful way to encourage "redescription" is through group activity that provides an opportunity for participants to "voice out" their thoughts and feelings about their own lives. She finds it

allows people, and especially the young, to avoid confrontation and to develop the art of listening.

In her unique method the medium for group philosophical counselling is the preparation and presentation of a play. The play, such as, for example *Romeo and Juliet*, provides the participants with an opportunity to express their own reactions to social pressure, not only verbally but actively. It also affords the counsellor the opportunity for counseling by encouraging a therapeutic “voicing out” of individual participants’ interpretations. She sees the philosophical counsellor’s role as that of taking the participants “from a comparatively naïve understanding of the current predicament under discussion, through a form of empathic listening, questioning, and critical self and group appraisal, to the constitution of a new vocabulary.”<sup>156</sup> The interaction, both between characters within the context of the play and between actors and their (philosopher) director, provides the opportunity for talking about “feelings, beliefs, attitudes and desires in a way that is both reflective and constructive.”<sup>157</sup> Norman maintains that this group approach is redescriptive in that it provides a different, and more comprehensive, way for participants to articulate the situation in their community; and it is ecological in that it encourages participants to empathize with their environment and to work towards its betterment.<sup>158</sup>

My own method of group philosophical counselling with recovering drug and alcohol addicted men utilizes an approach first developed for use primarily with children in an educational setting. In the early 1980s Matthew Lipman popularized a method called “community of inquiry” as a way to bring philosophical discourse into the classroom. It encourages multiple points of view and looks at issues from many different perspectives. It is where participants (both group members and the facilitator) can develop their own ideas, help each other to build on one another’s ideas, search for reasons for their views, explore presuppositions, think independently, and discover, invent, interpret, and criticize.<sup>159</sup> Lipman describes the dynamics of the community of inquiry within the classroom as “bringing forth from each individual a rich interplay of personal feelings and individual ideas.”<sup>160</sup> My method consists not only of using the community of inquiry approach as a forum for discourse concerning problems and issues confronting the men in

my group, I also devoted one half of each two hour session to actually teaching the men critical thinking skills. With this method, philosophical counselling not only allows the men to deal with their own individual and collective problems, but to gain the abilities and dispositions necessary for them to change their own addictive thinking habits to the kind of reasoning that would allow them to successfully integrate back into their various families and society, and, hopefully, to avoid the kind of thinking traps that would result in relapse into addiction.<sup>161</sup>

A somewhat different form of group philosophical counselling is practiced by Vaughana Feary. She argues that philosophical counselling is a moral and legal right of incarcerated populations in the United States, and that it ought to be a therapeutic core of rehabilitative programs. Feary points out that the method of counselling prisoners with philosophy requires the philosophical counsellor to have inter-disciplinary skills which include the knowledge of criminal justice, criminology, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS counselling, inmate and officer culture, the dynamics of group process, and so on.<sup>162</sup> She sees philosophical counselling in the correctional setting as different from the usual approach in that the philosophical counsellor “needs to be conversant with other therapeutic techniques. Rational Emotive and Reality therapies, behavior modification, imaging, stress reduction and assertiveness training techniques, art therapy, etc.”<sup>163</sup>

A further difference is that philosophical counselling ought to be therapeutic for an incarcerated population,

not in the weak sense that a philosophical examination of one’s life is always therapeutic, but in the strong sense that it must have the specific goal of changing the critical and moral thinking, as well as belief structures, offenders use to excuse or justify actions which harm others.<sup>164</sup>

According to Feary, it is not enough for this method of group counselling to merely enrich the worldviews of prisoners. It must have the clear goal of promoting or restoring in the inmate the competencies necessary for leading a minimally successful life outside the institution. Feary argues that group philosophical counselling is especially appropriate for incarcerated populations because psychological approaches are “simply

not able to resolve some of the conceptual and philosophical confusions” which offenders have about life in the world outside institutions.<sup>165</sup> She points out that her method reaffirms the Socratic ideal of returning to the cave to unshackle its prisoners and assist them in making the journey from darkness to light.

The Socratic approach to philosophical discourse is followed even more precisely in a method in group philosophical counselling that has its origins in Holland, and has been given the formal title “Socratic Dialogue.”

## 2.22 Socratic Dialogue

While dialogue has been an aspect of all the various methods of philosophical counselling discussed thus far, the practitioners of “Socratic Dialogue” consider it a distinct method in itself. The Socratic Dialogue method was developed in Germany by Leonard Nelson early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In its standard form, Nelson’s Socratic Dialogue method follows strict rules of procedure. The facilitator puts a general question to the group, after which he asks participants to give concrete examples of a situation in which the problem in the question has appeared in their lives. He then chooses one of the examples as an “exemplary event” as a concrete focus for the ensuing discussion.<sup>166</sup> The attempt is to find an answer to the question by means of consensus.

The Philosophical Political Academy of Bonn lists seven rules for participants – including that each participant may only make contributions based on what has been experienced and not what has been read or heard, and questions and doubts expressed must be genuine and not simply for the sake of argument – two rules for facilitators – which include that the facilitator is to aim the process at both clarification and consensus – and five criteria for choosing suitable examples – such as that examples must be simple, they must be such that each participant can imagine themselves “in the shoes of the person giving the example,” they must have been resolved and not be on-going, and they must be from personal experience, that is, not hypothetical or “generalized.”<sup>167</sup> These guiding rules are meant to bring about “a certain process that is typical for a Socratic Dialogue.”<sup>168</sup> This process can be described as the collective inquiry of each participant’s

personal experience of a given issue, exemplified in a personal story. These personal experiences are then narrowed down, and with group consensus, expressed as a core statement. From there, regressive abstraction is used to justify why the core statement was collectively chosen, resulting in an inter-subjective essence of the given issue. This process follows what has been called an hourglass model, with personal experiences at the top, the core statement in the middle, and an abstract principle at the bottom of the hourglass.<sup>169</sup>

Dries Boele emphasizes that it is not the “answer” to the question which is the most important aspect of this method, but the process of attempting to reach a final answer. He maintains that one of the most important of the rules is the one which says that participants are encouraged to express doubt. This “touches at the heart of the Socratic method,” he says, because it puts into practice independent reasoning. Consensus is only reached when no one has any more doubts.<sup>170</sup> Boele characterizes Nelson’s Socratic Dialogue method as “a game with a clear intention and aim,” namely, learning to avoid any appeal to authority, and making explicit the presupposed values and principles that underlie each participant’s point of view.<sup>171</sup> Participants are said to learn from their own experiences, and to develop the wisdom universally sought by philosophers. Besides learning from their experiences, some participants use Nelson’s Socratic Dialogue as a method to improve their ability “to analyze experiences carefully, to formulate arguments and to weigh them critically,” in other words, as an exercise in critical thinking.<sup>172</sup>

Nelson’s Socratic Dialogue method is a far cry from Achenbach’s characterization of one individual’s “free-floating” discussion with another over some troublesome problem or concern. But the adherence to explicit regulations during the Socratic Dialogue method does not preclude it as a useful method of philosophical counselling. In fact, the pace and demands of today’s world often don’t afford the client or the philosophical counsellor either the luxury of unlimited time, or the pleasure of indulging in a non-structured, non-goal-oriented discussion. Most philosophical counsellors therefore find it necessary to help expedite their clients’ search for the heart of their problems with guiding rules such as those found in the Socratic Dialogue method, as well as in other Logic-Based methods.



## 2.23 Logic-Based

Elliott Cohen suggests that the application of certain fundamental concepts of logic and critical thinking “can contribute to a philosophical approach to counseling.”<sup>173</sup> He explains that the method he practices is related to “Rational-Emotive Therapy” (R.E.T.) by virtue of its emphasis on “formal,” deductive logic, and by virtue of its inclusion of a broader range of “informal” fallacies, and that it may therefore be called “Logic-Based.” He argues that although this method is a Logic-Based variant of the psychotherapeutic method of R.E.T., it is none-the-less philosophical because it emphasizes the importance of belief justification, which is clearly at the core of philosophical reasoning.<sup>174</sup>

Cohen maintains that one of the counsellor’s roles in a Logic-Based method of philosophical counselling is to explore with his client the inferential leaps the client might have made in the process of arriving at an irrational evaluation. It is also possible for the counsellor to attack his client’s irrational evaluations directly rather than simply attacking the faulty premises with which the client attempts to defend them. Cohen gives the example of the client who damns her entire self because she has failed at something; or of the one who exaggerates by claiming she can no longer stand something. In these instances the philosophical counsellor points out the fallacies involved in this kind of thinking.<sup>175</sup>

Cohen points out that syllogistic logic can also be employed in philosophical counselling “to provide the framework for belief system analysis in terms of the standards of logic.”<sup>176</sup> In other words, syllogisms can be constructed from the reasoning offered by the client to simplify the logic she is employing, and to highlight the fallacies inherent in her thinking which are preventing her from coming to a satisfactory (to her) resolution of her problem or concern. It might be argued, says Cohen, that Logic-Based philosophical counselling suffers from the same shortcomings as R.E.T., in that it fails to address the client’s emotions. But Cohen argues that, since emotions are based on beliefs, and beliefs can be altered by means of critical thinking, it seems reasonable to

hold that emotions can also be altered by means of critical thinking.<sup>177</sup> Note that this is an explicitly logical defense of his Logic-Based approach.

Cohen's characterization of his Logic-Based approach to philosophical counselling seems to indicate that he sees it as an appropriate method in dealing with particular sorts of issues, and not of universal utility in every instance. But while it may be true that this Logic-Based counselling may not be able to address all issues presented to the philosophical counsellor by his various clients, it also seems to be the case that the critical thinking and the logic upon which the Logic-Based method is grounded is clearly more than merely one of a number of factors contributing to philosophical counselling. Cohen himself maintains that the logic found in critical thinking is a basic, essential area of philosophy, and that, because it sets standards for distinguishing correct from incorrect reasoning "it, *ipso facto*, sets the parameters of philosophical thinking."<sup>178</sup> In applying the syllogistic reasoning Cohen himself uses to defend his Logic-Based approach above, the following seems to hold: if the logic found in critical thinking sets the standards of philosophical thinking, and philosophical thinking is at the heart of all approaches and methods of philosophical counselling, then it seems to be logical to conclude that the logic found in critical thinking is at the heart of, and sets the standards for, all forms of philosophical counselling. But this conclusion needs more by way of support than a simple non-apodeictic syllogism.

## 2.24 Conclusion

The first and most obvious problem faced when attempting to define philosophical counselling, and to develop a viable model in part by means of reference to the way it is actually practiced is that there is general disagreement as to whether there is in fact a method at all, or whether there is only one particular method, or whether there are a number of equally important but distinctly different methods.

The examination of the methodology of philosophical counselling involves two aspects: 1) various techniques, procedures and approaches, and 2) distinct methods. While McCall argues that philosophical counselling is more art (in medical terms,

“bedside manner”) than method, it seems that the term “philosophical counselling” is in fact used to refer to some necessarily present procedures and techniques. In this chapter the word “approach” was used to mean a procedure or technique within a method; while “method” referred to a cluster of procedures or techniques with some sort of appellation.

The approaches in philosophical counselling have been discussed under the headings of dialogue, worldview interpretation, problem-oriented, person-oriented, open-ended, and end-point-oriented. These raise the question, Since some of these approaches seem mutually exclusive what are we to make of them?

While the practice of philosophical counselling is said to require a respect for the client’s autonomy, the theory of philosophical counselling, as presented in the first chapter, holds that the philosophical counsellor ought to develop or increase the client’s autonomy. This raises the question of whether the client’s autonomy ought to be merely respected, or whether it is the role of the philosophical counsellor, and the purpose of philosophical counselling, to enhance the autonomy of the client. And if the latter, then how is it to be done? Another question raised by the descriptive accounts in this chapter is, Is the role of the philosophical counsellor to help his client to describe her assumptions and values, or to compare them against some normative ideal, and critique them? Or is it the counsellor’s job simply to help his client to reach some sort of stasis or equilibrium?

Regarding methods in philosophical counselling, Achenbach argues that there is no method. His “beyond-method method” is a post-modern enigma guided by only four general rules of conduct, the most puzzling one being that the philosophical counsellor should never attempt to change his client. In contrast, Jongmsa and Boele argue that without the clarification of some sort of method in philosophical counselling it fosters an “anything goes” attitude that is unhealthy for this incipient profession.

When philosophy is seen as a way of life, it defies the constraints of adherence to an articulated method. But when this approach to life is offered by the philosophical counsellor to his client, there seems to be some sort of “method” in the combined practices, procedures and techniques – one that results in helping the client to enhance her way of life through philosophy. This method seems to contain what some have argued is the central and most fundamental element of philosophical counselling, namely

worldview interpretation. This raises the question, Is worldview interpretation in fact the approach that underlies all the methods described in the literature? Both my own practice and the philosophical counselling literature seem to suggest that something else, namely philosophical inquiry – such as is found in Cohen’s logic-based method – is perhaps more fundamental to philosophical counselling than worldview interpretation. It is clearly necessary that both the client and the counsellor are able to conduct a reasonably competent philosophical inquiry if they hope to achieve any sort of worldview interpretation.

The attempt to come to a coherent and comprehensive definition of philosophical counselling is complicated all the more by the fact that some methods in philosophical counselling are eclectic, drawing on the works and ideas of any philosopher(s) deemed appropriate, while others rely primarily on one philosopher or a single “system” of philosophy. Furthermore, Marinoff practices a two-stage decision-making method, while Prins-Bakker engages in a six-stage relationship method. Prins-Bakker’s method is especially suited to couples counselling, while Norman and Feary have developed instructional methods they use in dealing with larger, more specialized groups. Again, the question arises, How can such a diversity of methods within one field of practice be reconciled?

Several methods in philosophical counselling, such as the Elliott’s “clinical Philosophy,” Grimes’s “philosophical midwifery,” and Schuster’s “philosophical psychoanalysis,” also contain strong elements of psychology. The next chapter will examine the similarities and differences between philosophical counselling and a number of approaches in psychotherapy that have sometimes been labeled “philosophical.” This will bring to light the problems that emerge and the questions that still need to be answered when attempts are made to define philosophical counselling by characterizing it as completely different from psychotherapy.

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## NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

- <sup>1</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "The practice of Sartre's philosophy in philosophical counseling and existential psychotherapy." *The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly*. Vol. 44 Jan.1995. 113. See also her essay "Philosophical Counseling and Humanistic Psychotherapy." *Journal of Psychology and Judaism*. Vol. 20, No. 3. Fall, 1996. 251; and see "Philosophy as if it Matters: The Practice Of Philosophical Counseling." *Critical Review* Vol. 6, No.4 1993. 589.
- <sup>2</sup> Jongsma, Ida. "Philosophical Counseling in Holland: History and Open Issues." *Essays on Philosophical Counseling*. Ran Lahav and Maria da Venza Tillmanns eds. Lanham: University Press of America, 1995. 33.
- <sup>3</sup> McCall, Catherine. "Jobs for Philosophers: Philosophical Inquiry – Origin and Development." *Perspectives in Philosophical Practice: Collected Lecture of the Second International Congress on Philosophical Practice*. Wim van der Vlist ed. Leusden: 1996. 70.
- <sup>4</sup> McCall. Ibid, 70, 71.
- <sup>5</sup> McCall. Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> McCall, 71.
- <sup>7</sup> McCall. Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Held, Barbara S. *Back to Reality*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995. 248.
- <sup>9</sup> Quoting from D. P. Spence *Narrative truth and historical truth: Meaning and interpretation in psychoanalysis*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1982.294. Ibid, 249.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid, 248.
- <sup>11</sup> McCall. Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Schuster, Shlomit. C. "The practice of Sartre's philosophy in philosophical counseling and existential psychotherapy." *The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly*. Vol. 44 Jan.1995. 100.
- <sup>13</sup> Prins-Bakker, Anette. "Practisch Mijmeren," *Filosofie*, Vol. 6, No. 2. 35 Quoted in Schuster, Shlomit C. "Sartre's Words A Paradigm For Self-Description In Philosophical Counseling." In van der Vlist. 23.
- <sup>14</sup> See "Developing Your Own Counseling Style," in Corey, Gerald. *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. New York: Brooks/Cole, 1996 ed. 44. See also the three chapters on training according to method in *Psychodynamic Treatment Research*. Miller et al eds. New York: Harper Collins, 1993. 191-247.
- <sup>15</sup> Prins-Bakker, Anette. "Philosophy in Marriage Counseling." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 137.
- <sup>16</sup> Jongsma, Ida. "Philosophical Counselling in Holland: History and Open Issues." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 33.
- <sup>17</sup> Tuedio, James A. "Postmodern Perspectives in Philosophical Practice." In van der Vlist. 183.
- <sup>18</sup> Boele, Dries. "The Training of a Philosophical Counsellor" In Lahav and Tillmanns. 43.
- <sup>19</sup> Norman, Barbara. "Philosophical Counseling: The Arts of Ecological Relationship and Interpretation." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 53.
- <sup>20</sup> Boele. Ibid, 43.
- <sup>21</sup> Miller, W.R. "Motivational Interviewing With Problem Thinkers." *Journal of Behavioural Psychotherapy*. 1983 11. 147-72.
- <sup>22</sup> Lahav, Ran. "A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counseling Worldview Interpretation." In Lahav and Tillmanns, 16.
- <sup>23</sup> Tuedio. Ibid, 188.
- <sup>24</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. Personal e-mail message Sept. 1997.
- <sup>25</sup> Prins-Bakker, Anette. In Lahav and Tillmanns. 136-7.
- <sup>26</sup> Polis, Dennis. e-mail communication to philosophy-counsel@freelance.com. 14 Dec., 1997.
- <sup>27</sup> Prins-Bakker, Anette. Ibid, 7.
- <sup>28</sup> See Norman, 49-59.
- <sup>29</sup> See Feary, Vaughana Macy. "A Right to (Re)Habilitation, including Philosophical Counseling, for Incarcerated Populations." In van der Vlist. 259-279.

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- <sup>30</sup> Raabe, Peter "From Addiction to Community: Philosophical Counselling within a community of Inquiry." In *Inquiry*. Vol. XVII, No. 1, Autumn, 1997. 81-93.
- <sup>31</sup> Boele, Dries. "The Training of a Philosophical Counselor." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 46.
- <sup>32</sup> Ruschmann, Eckart. "Foundations of Philosophical Counselling." Paper presented at the Third International Conference on Philosophical Practice. New York, 1997. 15.
- <sup>33</sup> Lahav, Ran. "A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counseling : Worldview Interpretation." In Lahav and Tillmanns, 9.
- <sup>34</sup> Lahav. Ibid, 15, 10.
- <sup>35</sup> Lahav. Ibid, 9.
- <sup>36</sup> Hoogendijk, Ad. "The Philosopher in the Business World as a Vision Developer." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 161, 163.
- <sup>37</sup> See the case study of "Anna" by Ben Mijuskovic. "Some Reflections on Philosophical Counseling and Psychotherapy." In Lahav and Tillmanns 97.
- <sup>38</sup> See the description of his own training in worldview interpretation by Boele, Dries. "The Training of a Philosophical Counselor." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 39.
- <sup>39</sup> The following eight approaches are presented as pairs of dichotomous approaches in philosophical counselling by Ran Lahav in Lahav and Tillmanns, 20-23.
- <sup>40</sup> Lahav, Ran. "A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counseling : Worldview Interpretation." In Lahav and Tillmanns, 20.
- <sup>41</sup> Marinoff, Louis. "On the Emergence of Ethical Counseling: Considerations and Two Case Studies." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 181.
- <sup>42</sup> Lahav. Ibid.
- <sup>43</sup> Lahav. Ibid.
- <sup>44</sup> Norman, 50-51.
- <sup>45</sup> Boele, Dries. "The Training of a Philosophical Counsellor." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 37.
- <sup>46</sup> Achenbach, Gerd. "About the Center of Philosophical Practice." In van der Vlist. 13.
- <sup>47</sup> Achenbach. Ibid.
- <sup>48</sup> Achenbach, Gerd. "Philosophy, Philosophical Practice, and Psychotherapy." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 73.
- <sup>49</sup> Lahav, Ran. "What is Philosophical In Philosophical Counselling?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 13, No. 3, 1996. 260.
- <sup>50</sup> Lahav, Ran. "Philosophical Counseling and Taoism: Wisdom and Lived Philosophical Understanding." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. Vol. 23, No. 3. Sept. 1996, 262.
- <sup>51</sup> Feary, 259-279.
- <sup>52</sup> Prins-Bakker, Anette. In Lahav and Tillmanns. 135-153.
- <sup>53</sup> See Marinoff, Louis. "On the Emergence of Ethical Counseling: Considerations and Two Case Studies." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 171-193.
- <sup>54</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "Philosophical Counseling and Humanistic Psychotherapy." *Journal of Psychology and Judaism*. Vol. 20, No. 3, Fall 1996. 247-259.
- <sup>55</sup> Boele, Dries. "The Training of a Philosophical Counsellor." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 45.
- <sup>56</sup> Marinoff. Ibid, 180.
- <sup>57</sup> Schefzcyk, Michael. "Philosophical Counseling as a Critical Examination of Life-Directing Conceptions." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 79.
- <sup>58</sup> Schefzcyk, 77.
- <sup>59</sup> Marinoff. Ibid, 179-80.
- <sup>60</sup> Lahav, Ran. "A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counseling: Worldview Interpretation." In Lahav and Tillmanns, 22.
- <sup>61</sup> Schuster, Shlomit. "Philosophy as if it Matters." *Critical Review* Vol. 6 No. 4, 1993. 590.
- <sup>62</sup> Marinoff. Ibid.
- <sup>63</sup> Norman, 56.
- <sup>64</sup> See Feary, 259-279.

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- <sup>65</sup> Pfeifer, Karl. "Philosophy outside the academy: The role of philosophy in people-oriented professions and the prospects for philosophical counseling." *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines*. Autumn, 1994, Vol. 14, No. 2. 66.
- <sup>66</sup> Achenbach, Gerd B. as quoted in Lahav and Tillmanns 22-23.
- <sup>67</sup> Schefzcyk, Michael. "Philosophical Counseling as a Critical Examination of Life-Directing Conceptions." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 76.
- <sup>68</sup> Schefzcyk. Ibid, 76.
- <sup>69</sup> Tuedio, James A. "Postmodern Perspectives in Philosophical Practice." In van der Vlist. 186.
- <sup>70</sup> Tuedio, 187.
- <sup>71</sup> Ruschmann, Eckart. "Foundations Of Philosophical Counseling." Presentation paper for the Third International Conference on Philosophical Practice. New York: July, 1997. 9.
- <sup>72</sup> Ruschmann. Ibid, 6.
- <sup>73</sup> The most famous metaphor of philosophy as the process of untangling conceptual knots was made by Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967.
- <sup>74</sup> Zijlstra, Bauke. "The Philosophical Counsellor As An Equilibrist." In van der Vlist. 41.
- <sup>75</sup> Boele, Dries. "The Training of a Philosophical Counsellor." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 40.
- <sup>76</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "Sartre's Words: A Paradigm for Self-Description in Philosophical Counselling." In van der Vlist. 24.
- <sup>77</sup> Jopling, David A. "Philosophical Counselling, Truth and Self-Interpretation." *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 13, No. 3, 1996. 298.
- <sup>78</sup> Jopling, 308.
- <sup>79</sup> Jopling, 304.
- <sup>80</sup> Jopling. Ibid.
- <sup>81</sup> Jopling, 306.
- <sup>82</sup> Gluck, Andrew. "Philosophical Practice and Religious Faith" Unpublished paper presented at the Third International Conference on Philosophical Practice. New York, 1997. 18-21.
- <sup>83</sup> Jopling, David. "Philosophical Counseling, Truth and Self-Interpretation." *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 13, No. 3, 1996. 307.
- <sup>84</sup> Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge: Harvard UP., 1971 ed.
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>86</sup> Zijlstra, Bauke. "The Philosophical Counsellor As An Equilibrist." In van der Vlist. 35, 41.
- <sup>87</sup> Ibid, 36.
- <sup>88</sup> Frankl, Viktor E. *The Will To Meaning*. New York: Meridian, 1988 ed. 162.
- <sup>89</sup> Zijlstra. Ibid, 41.
- <sup>90</sup> Tuedio, James A. "Postmodern Perspectives in Philosophical Practice." In van der Vlist. 187.
- <sup>91</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>92</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "Sartre's Words: A Paradigm for Self-Description in Philosophical Counselling." In van der Vlist. 20.
- <sup>93</sup> Achenbach, Gerd B. "What Does it Mean to Say: 'Philosophical Practice is No Psychotherapy'?" In van der Vlist. 16-19.
- <sup>94</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>95</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>96</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "Philosophical Counseling and Humanistic Psychotherapy." *Journal of Psychology and Judaism*. Vol. 20, No. 3, Fall 1996. 251.
- <sup>97</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "Philosophy as if it Matters: The Practice Of Philosophical Counseling." *Critical Review* Vol. 6, No.4 1993. 589.
- <sup>98</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "The practice of Sartre's philosophy in philosophical counseling and existential psychotherapy." *The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly*. Vol. 44 Jan.1995. 113.
- <sup>99</sup> Achenbach, Gerd B. "About the Center of Philosophical Practice." In van der Vlist. 9-15.
- <sup>100</sup> Achenbach. Ibid.
- <sup>101</sup> This essay can be found on the Internet at *The Philosopher's Web Magazine* located at [philosophers.co.uk.critcounselinf.htm](http://philosophers.co.uk.critcounselinf.htm)

- <sup>102</sup> Jongsma, Ida. "Philosophical Counselling in Holland: History and Open Issues." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 30-31.
- <sup>103</sup> Jongsma. Ibid.
- <sup>104</sup> Jongsma. Ibid.
- <sup>105</sup> Jongsma. Ibid.
- <sup>106</sup> Boele, Dries. "The 'Benefits' of a Socratic Dialogue." Paper presented at the Third International Conference of philosophical Practice. New York, July, 1997. Appendix 21.
- <sup>107</sup> Boele. Ibid, Appendix 18-21.
- <sup>108</sup> Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995 ed. 83.
- <sup>109</sup> Borowicz, Jon K. *Therien*. Pamphlet published at Cedarburg, WI, received July 1997.
- <sup>110</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>111</sup> Also part of the "spiritual exercises" practiced by ancient philosophers. See Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995 ed. 87.
- <sup>112</sup> Borowicz Ibid.
- <sup>113</sup> Hadot, Pierre *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995 ed. 107.
- <sup>114</sup> Hadot, Ibid.
- <sup>115</sup> Borowicz Ibid.
- <sup>116</sup> Elliott, James, and Kathy J. Elliott. *Clinical Philosophy*. Pamphlet published by the Anthetics Institute, Lafayette, LA. Received July, 1997.
- <sup>117</sup> Elliott. Ibid.
- <sup>118</sup> Elliott. Ibid.
- <sup>119</sup> Grimes, Pierre. *Philosophical Midwifery*. Pamphlet published by the Academy for Philosophical Midwifery. 1994.
- <sup>120</sup> Grimes. Ibid.
- <sup>121</sup> Grimes. Ibid.
- <sup>122</sup> From an Internet document at <http://www.philosophicalmidwifery.com>, Jan.1998.
- <sup>123</sup> Cohen Elliott D. "The Philosopher as Counselor." *Philosophers at Work*. New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1988. 344-353.
- <sup>124</sup> Corey, Gerald. *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. New York: Brooks/Cole, 1996 ed. 323-4.
- <sup>125</sup> Cohen, Elliot D. "Philosophical Counselling: Some Roles of Critical Thinking." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 121-132.
- <sup>126</sup> Fleming, Jesse Charles. "Philosophical Counseling and the *I Ching*." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. Vol. 23, No. 3. Sept. 1996, 301.
- <sup>127</sup> Fleming. Ibid, 301, 302.
- <sup>128</sup> Fleming. Ibid, 317.
- <sup>129</sup> See Leo Tolstoy's "A Confession and Other Religious Writings." New York: Viking Penguin, 1987 ed. 17-80.
- <sup>130</sup> Segal, Steven. "Meaning Crisis: Philosophical Counselling and Psychotherapy." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 102.
- <sup>131</sup> Segal. Ibid, 117.
- <sup>132</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "The Practice of Sartre's Philosophy in Philosophical Counseling and Existential Psychotherapy" *The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly*. Vol. 44, Jan. 1995. 104.
- <sup>133</sup> Schuster. Ibid, 108.
- <sup>134</sup> Schuster. Ibid, 99-114.
- <sup>135</sup> Fleming, Jesse Charles. "Philosophical Counselling and Asian Philosophy." In van der Vlist. 279.
- <sup>136</sup> Fleming. Ibid.
- <sup>137</sup> Fleming. Ibid, 285.
- <sup>138</sup> Marinoff, Louis. "On the Emergence of Ethical Counseling: Considerations and Two Case Studies." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 178.
- <sup>139</sup> Marinoff. Ibid.
- <sup>140</sup> Jopling D. A. "Philosophical Counselling, Truth and Self-Interpretation." *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol.13, No. 3, 1996. 307-8.



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- <sup>141</sup> Marinoff. Ibid, 178-179.  
<sup>142</sup> Marinoff. Ibid, 179.  
<sup>143</sup> Prins-Bakker, Anette. In Lahav and Tillmanns. 137-148.  
<sup>144</sup> Prins-Bakker, 138.  
<sup>145</sup> Prins-Bakker, 137-148.  
<sup>146</sup> Prins-Bakker, 143.  
<sup>147</sup> Prins-Bakker, 143-144.  
<sup>148</sup> Prins-Bakker, 145.  
<sup>149</sup> Prins-Bakker, 146-147.  
<sup>150</sup> Prins-Bakker, 148.  
<sup>151</sup> Corey, Gerald. *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling*. Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole, 1990 ed. 6-8.  
<sup>152</sup> Ruschmann, Eckart. "Foundations of Philosophical Counselling." Paper presented at the Third International Conference on Philosophical Practice. New York, 1997. 13.  
<sup>153</sup> Ruschmann, 14.  
<sup>154</sup> Ruschmann, 13.  
<sup>155</sup> Norman, 55.  
<sup>156</sup> Norman, 56.  
<sup>157</sup> Norman. Ibid.  
<sup>158</sup> Norman, 58.  
<sup>159</sup> Lipman, Matthew. *Philosophy Goes to School*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1988. 45.  
<sup>160</sup> Lipman. Ibid, 129.  
<sup>161</sup> See "The Unintentional Researcher: From the Field Notes of a Philosopher." *Philosophical Writings*. No. 4, Jan, 1997. 39-54. Also "From Addiction to Community. Philosophical Counselling Within a Community of Inquiry." *Inquiry*. Vol. XVII, No. 1. Autumn, 1997. 81-93.  
<sup>162</sup> Feary, 262.  
<sup>163</sup> Feary. Ibid.  
<sup>164</sup> Feary. Ibid.  
<sup>165</sup> Feary, 270.  
<sup>166</sup> Boele, Driese. "The 'Benefits' of a Socratic Dialogue." Presentation paper at the Third International Conference on Philosophical Practice. New York, July, 1997. 2-3.  
<sup>167</sup> Document labeled "F" included in appendix of van der Vlist. 2-3.  
<sup>168</sup> Boele, 5.  
<sup>169</sup> See Leonard Nelson's *Socratic Method and Critical Philosophy*. New York: Dover, 1949.  
<sup>170</sup> Boele, 7-8.  
<sup>171</sup> Boele, 10, 12, 14.  
<sup>172</sup> Boele, 9.  
<sup>173</sup> Cohen, Elliot D. "Philosophical Counselling" Some Roles of Critical Thinking." In Lahav and Tillmanns, 121.  
<sup>174</sup> Cohen, 122.  
<sup>175</sup> Cohen, 125-127.  
<sup>176</sup> Cohen, 128.  
<sup>177</sup> Cohen, 122-125.  
<sup>178</sup> Cohen, 131.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE

### PHILOSOPHICAL COUNSELLING /PSYCHOTHERAPY

### DIALECTIC

#### 3.1 Introduction<sup>†</sup>

The legitimacy of a new practice is often perceived to be directly proportional to the degree of separation and differentiation between this new practice and other practices in its field. The new practice of philosophical counselling is no different in this respect. Practitioners in philosophical counselling have made a rigorous attempt to establish its legitimacy by arguing for its uniqueness. Gerd Achenbach, who is credited with starting the modern-day philosophical counselling movement, attempts to differentiate philosophical counselling from psychotherapy by describing philosophical counselling in terms of a single, central element: “interaction.” By this he says he means

interaction between people – as opposed to the therapeutic  
assignment of roles (patients and therapists); philosophical  
education – as a critique of “standardized training;”  
philosophical enlightenment – as an understanding which  
is not subject to any pre-determined “purpose;”

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<sup>†</sup> It may be argued that the discussion in this chapter, and in fact the topic of this entire dissertation, is meaningless since research has shown all types of cognitive therapy – whether they originate in psychology or philosophy – to be no more effective in treating a number of conditions, such as, for example, depression than anti-depressant medication (See Jerome D. and Julia B. Frank’s *Persuasion & Healing*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1991 ed. 219). The response to this is that cognitive types of therapy are offered to, and often preferred by, patients and clients precisely because they are non-pharmaceutical alternatives to drug therapy. A positive interpretation of the research is that cognitive types of psychotherapy – and therefore also philosophical counselling – are *no less* effective than medication, and do not threaten the client with any of the contingent side-effects common to pharmaceutical intervention.

philosophical-hermeneutic affinity to disturbances and suffering – as a negation of any pretension of “treating” them; philosophical dialogue as a discourse which includes insights about “psychological means” – but demotes them to mere limited moments; exchange of philosophical thoughts – as a negation of “teachable techniques;” development and progress of philosophical insight – as a definite negation and removal of any “goal”-setting, so that the goal determines the process and the process determines the goal, reformulating and further developing it.<sup>1</sup>

While some philosophical counselling theorists and practitioners agree with Achenbach’s depiction, others strongly disagree. They see philosophical counselling as in fact having a specific subject matter and approach which is without doubt describable, which is clearly a teachable method, which is goal-oriented, which requires certain abilities and dispositions (or skills and tools), whose practitioners ascribe to it certain assumptions about not only the human mind but about the person who is the client and about that client’s relationship with her counsellor. This does not mean that those who disagree with Achenbach’s depiction of philosophical counselling are guilty of attempting to codify conceptions of something else entirely, and illegitimately label it philosophical counselling – an accusation often exchanged among theorists and practitioners – but rather that theirs is a legitimate and sincere attempt to clarify this new practice which is still in need of such attention despite the early efforts of its modern founder.

Furthermore, while Achenbach attempts to use the element of “interaction” to distance philosophical counselling from psychotherapy, others argue that many psychotherapists and counselling psychologists are in fact equally as concerned about interaction with their clients as philosophical counselling practitioners claim to be. To them the question of what differentiates philosophical counselling from psychotherapy is not resolved simply by means of an exclusive claim to counsellor/client “interaction,” but must be based on something more, such as the subject matter, the

abilities and dispositions required, the assumptions inherent in each discipline, and so on.

Psychotherapy is said to be “a discipline that resists any broad consensus.”<sup>2</sup> It encompasses a broad range of approaches that includes narrative therapy, existential therapy, psychodynamic psychotherapy, reality therapy, rational-emotive therapy, Adlerian therapy, gestalt therapy, client-centered therapy, and traditional psychoanalytic therapy. Professor of psychology, Barbara Held, points out that her research has shown that “one-third to one-half of present-day clinicians disavow any affiliation with a particular therapeutic school, preferring instead the label of ‘eclectic’.”<sup>3</sup> Achenbach points out that while one cannot *yet* speak of the concept of philosophical practice – because it is not yet sufficiently developed and still lacks a clear definition – one can *no longer* speak of a clear, singular concept of psychotherapy. The domain of psychotherapy has been expanded into an “operative multiplicity of heterogeneous shapes and endeavors.”<sup>4</sup> In fact, one count of separate and distinct schools of psychotherapy conducted in 1986 found that there were more than 400 different “schools” of psychotherapy.<sup>5</sup> Achenbach warns that the boundaries of the concept of psychotherapy has nowadays become blurred to the point of “unrecognizability” because “any describable content has been dissolved by contradictory and competing assumptions which exist in the field.”<sup>6</sup> Held concurs. She points out that there are “a vast number of formulations about problem causation and problem resolution that permeate many distinct schools,” and that “despite almost 50 years of the scientific study of psychotherapy, there is still surprisingly little consensus about what causes problems and what causes solutions.”<sup>7</sup>

Eckart Ruschmann maintains that the specific field of “psychoanalysis” is often employed as an unfavorable example against which philosophical counsellors demarcate their domain. But Ruschmann calls attention to the fact that often when the term “psychotherapy” is used, it is in fact “psychoanalysis” that is meant and criticized. He cautions writers in the field of philosophical counselling that they must clarify their nomenclature, and write with the understanding that psychoanalysis is more akin to the medical/diagnosis-and-treatment model than psychotherapy is. He argues that, since

many psychologically founded methods of counselling in fact exist today as alternatives to psychoanalytic therapy, a critique of “*the psychotherapy*” – with the aim of demarcating philosophical counseling from it – is no longer possible.<sup>8</sup>

With this caveat in mind, the present chapter will undertake an overview of the efforts to date, by theorists and practitioners in the field, to legitimize philosophical counselling by attempting to demarcate their practice from psychological therapy by an appeal to the universal elements which seem to constitute the substratum of both. This will illustrate that philosophical counselling is in fact very similar to certain forms of psychotherapy, but that there are some differences which have not received adequate attention in the philosophical counselling literature to date – such as the intentional teaching, to the client, of the philosophical reasoning skills employed by the philosophical counsellor, and the importance and centrality of informal logic or critical thinking in the philosophical counselling process.

### 3.2 Subject Matter<sup>9</sup>

In his book *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*,<sup>10</sup> Gerald Corey has selected nine therapeutic approaches for which he gives an overview. He offers a number of general summaries and tables in which he gives clear and succinct synopsis of the theories and approaches found in those nine different psychological therapies. He divides them into four general categories: analytic approaches, which include psychoanalytic or Freudian methods; experiential and relationship-oriented therapies, which includes the existential, person-centered, and Gestalt approaches; action therapies, which includes reality therapy, behavior therapy, rational-emotive behavior therapy, and cognitive therapy; and the systems perspective, which includes family therapy.<sup>11</sup>

In Corey's characterization of the various therapies, the analytic and action therapies seem to be located somewhat at extreme ends of the spectrum when compared to philosophical counselling, with the analytic methods being most unlike, and the action oriented being most similar to philosophical counselling. Therefore, in this chapter,

philosophical counselling will be compared and contrasted primarily with the analytic and some of the action therapies, thereby leaving out a detailed consideration of experiential and relationship-oriented therapies and the systems perspective which overlap considerably with the polar extremes and whose inclusion would result in a great deal of unnecessary repetition. The characterization of psychotherapies in this chapter will be based mainly on this source, and compared with what has been written about both psychotherapy and philosophical counselling by a variety of different counsellors and theoreticians in the field of philosophical counselling.

Corey describes the subject matter of psychoanalytic therapy as being the unconscious factors, most of which were developed during the first six years of the client's life, that have shaped the development of personality and motivate behaviour. The focus is on addressing deviation from normal personality development that is based on successful resolution and integration of psychosexual stages of development.<sup>12</sup> When faulty personality development occurs it is the result of inadequate resolution of some specific stage. Id, ego, and superego constitute the basis of personality structure, all of which are said to have a "normal" state in the healthy individual. Anxiety results from the repression of basic conflicts, and ego defenses are developed to control that anxiety. Unconscious processes are centrally related to current behavior, and it is by addressing those unconscious processes that behaviour can be modified to suit relevant norms.<sup>13</sup> It is this approach to psychotherapy that is most often used as the "unfavorable example,"<sup>14</sup> as Ruschmann puts it, against which philosophical counselling is favorably compared.

Perhaps the clearest articulation of the subject matter of psychoanalytic therapy is the need for the therapist to address his "patient's" conflicting unconscious forces which can cause psychiatric or psychological symptoms which the therapist must diagnose. These symptoms can cause a person occupational and/or social distress, such as alcoholism, anxiety, depression, and so on. In effect then, in psychoanalytic therapy the "patient" is understood to be under the control, and at the mercy of, various causes, which are manifest as her symptoms.

The psychoanalytic approach is seen by some philosophical counsellors as drastically depriving problems of their “social, political, economic, historical, and philosophical contexts and roots.”<sup>15</sup> When problems stem not from the unconscious but from objective situations or cultural contexts, psychoanalysis is seen as precluding the possibility of facing actual causes of distress and discontent.<sup>16</sup> While the psychoanalytic perspective is seen to produce “explanations” centered on the unconscious and the unintentional that can serve to divorce the client from responsibility, philosophy is understood to help the client undertake a self-examination of the reasons for feelings, and the intention of thoughts and actions, thereby grounding the client in responsibility. Philosophical concerns are said to generally not impair a person’s occupational or social functioning, and the client’s issues, concerns, or beliefs as expressed in a philosophical counselling relationship do not need to be regarded as symptoms at all, but can be addressed directly.<sup>17</sup> In fact the client in philosophical counselling is regarded as an active agent who is more powerful than any particular belief she may happen to hold.<sup>18</sup> The central thesis of the new philosophical counselling movement is said to be that “life has significant philosophical aspects which cannot be reduced to psychological mechanisms and processes.”<sup>19</sup>

But this “extreme opposition,”<sup>20</sup> and “obviously very different” interests<sup>21</sup> of psychoanalytic therapy when compared with philosophical counselling seems neither so extreme nor so obvious when philosophical counselling is compared to other *descriptions* of psychoanalytic therapy, and to other *forms* of psychotherapy. For example, the authors of a handbook for clinical practitioners, present the central defining characteristic of both psychoanalysis and dynamic psychotherapy as that of fostering the understanding of conscious and unconscious motivation from the point of view of the patient.<sup>22</sup> They state that both in psychoanalysis and in dynamic psychotherapy the therapist aims to set up conditions that will increase the patient’s self-understanding and resolve the patient’s main conflicts by means of working on transference and resistance.<sup>23</sup> While transference and resistance are outside the scope of philosophical counselling, the subject matter of “understanding of conscious... motivation from the point of view of the patient,” and increasing the client’s self-

understanding” are certainly within its domain. Philosophical counsellors also speak of a “critical examination of the individual’s conceptual history” and “life-directing conceptions,”<sup>24</sup> and of helping the client to “explore the philosophical implications of their various everyday attitudes for their conceptions of themselves and reality” in order to unfold “the worldview expressed by their behaviors, emotions, preferences, hopes, etc.”<sup>25</sup> While these similarities in description of the subject matter of psychoanalytic therapy and philosophical counselling certainly can’t be understood to prove either a procedural or substantive identity between these two approaches, they do point to a substantial theoretical and methodological overlap between the two domains.

Despite the fact that there is some disagreement as to what is the legitimate scope of philosophical counselling,<sup>26</sup> a close resemblance of subject matter can be found between philosophical counselling and cognitive-behavioural therapies. The general area known as cognitive-behaviour therapy holds that, although psychological problems may be rooted in childhood, they are perpetuated through reindoctrination in the present. A person’s belief system is seen to be the primary cause of her disorders. Internal dialogue is said to play a central role in one’s behavior. The counsellor’s subject matter is the client’s faulty assumptions and misconceptions which has led to her distress.<sup>27</sup> Rational Emotive Therapy (R.E.T.) is one form of cognitive-behaviour therapy developed by Albert Ellis in the early 1950s. Ellis took philosophy as his main pursuit and hobby from age 16, and held that if people acquired a sane philosophy of life they would rarely end up “emotionally disturbed.”<sup>28</sup> He decided to incorporate philosophy into his counselling approach after coming to the conclusion that Freudian psychoanalysis was “a relatively superficial and unscientific form of treatment.”<sup>29</sup> Ellis readily admits that similar principles to the ones on which he has based his approach were stated originally several thousand years ago by the Greek and Roman Stoic philosophers, by some of the ancient Taoist and Buddhist thinkers, and congruently by many contemporary philosophers,<sup>30</sup> but since there were no philosophers prepared to practice philosophy in the domain of real-world application in the 1950s, Ellis felt no hesitation in making philosophy part of his method of psychotherapy.



Psychotherapies such as Ellis' R.E.T. – or Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (R.E.B.T.) as it is called today – are often criticized as being too exclusively “cognitive therapeutic modalities” ineffective in dealing with emotional problems. But Ellis points out that in R.E.B.T. the therapist teaches his clients the “A-B-C” model of changing their emotions. “A” is the existence of a fact, an event, or the behavior or attitude of an individual. “C” is the emotional and behavioral consequence or reaction of the individual; the reaction can be either appropriate or inappropriate. Ellis sees A (the activating event) as not being the cause of C (the emotional consequence). Instead, he maintains that B, which is the person's belief about A, largely causes C, the emotional reaction.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, if the emotional reaction at C is, for example, depression, an R.E.B.T. therapist will work with the client to examine and, if necessary, alter the beliefs at B which caused that emotional reaction.

Philosopher Elliott Cohen uses a similar explanation of the interaction between cognition and emotion to defend philosophical counselling from the same criticism. Cohen argues that a client's emotions are often based on evaluative statements that themselves depend on further statements, which are often factual or non-evaluative.<sup>†</sup> A factual statement may then serve as the basis of an “inferential leap” that leads to the sort of evaluation that can cause emotional disturbance.<sup>32</sup> The philosophical counsellor can help the client examine those “inferential leaps” from the factual to the evaluative in order to determine whether the inference is in fact justified, and in this manner readily address, and perhaps even alleviate, the emotional disturbance.<sup>33</sup>

The similarity between R.E.B.T. and philosophical counselling is fairly apparent, and it is therefore neither evident where to draw the line of separation between philosophical counselling and this form of psychotherapy, nor is it clear how distinct such a line might be once it is drawn. Other approaches such as the client-centered (or person-centered) therapy, existential therapy, and Logotherapy, and the psychodynamic theory or insight theory guiding other forms of psychotherapy all resemble philosophical

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<sup>†</sup> Martha Nussbaum makes a similar point in discussing “medical” philosophy in Hellenistic times. She writes, “To use philosophical argument to modify the passions, the philosopher does not have to turn away from her commitment to reasoning and careful argument: for the passions are made up out of our beliefs and respond to arguments. Argument, in fact, is exactly the way to approach them; no less intelligent way will address the root of the problem” (In *Therapy of Desire*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994. 39).

counselling when they are examined closely. For example, Corey depicts client-centered therapy as providing a “safe climate conducive to the clients’ self exploration, so that they can recognize blocks to growth and can experience aspects of the self that were formerly denied and distorted.”<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, it is based on the assumption that the client has the potential to become aware of problems, and the means to resolve them, and faith is placed in the client’s capacity to resolve the discrepancy between what she wants to be and what she is. The psychotherapist employing the client-centered method practices active listening and hearing, reflection of feelings, clarification, and “being there” for the client. Corey stresses that this model “does not include diagnostic testing, interpretation, taking a case history, and questioning or probing for information.”<sup>35</sup>

There is a striking similarity between philosophical counselling and the general psychotherapeutic model known as existential therapy. In an article in the March 1998 issue of the journal of the Society for Existential Analysis, Ran Lahav suggests that only in philosophical counselling is the dialogue of a philosophical nature. In response, Tim Lebon, an existentialist therapist trained at Regent College in London, points out that in existential counselling the dialogue can certainly be philosophical in nature if the client wants it to be, but this will not be imposed on the client.<sup>36</sup> In fact, on his web page, Lebon maintains that existential psychotherapy “is perhaps the most advanced and well-worked out form of philosophical counselling.”<sup>37</sup>

Corey says existential therapy “can be especially suited to people facing a developmental crisis or a transition in life. It can help clients “in making choices, dealing with freedom and responsibility, coping with guilt and anxiety, making sense of life, and finding values.”<sup>38</sup> Victor Frankl’s version of existential therapy, called Logotherapy (which he translates into “therapy through meaning”), has at its foundation such basic concepts as freedom, responsibility, meaning, and the search for values<sup>39</sup> – all of which figure prominently in philosophical counselling. Existential therapy, according to Corey, stresses understanding first and technique second. Corey points out that the existential therapist “can borrow techniques from other approaches and incorporate them into an existential framework.”<sup>40</sup> This characteristic of this

particular psychotherapeutic method is remarkably similar to Achenbach's own characterization of the philosophical counsellor as having "all options at hand," whether pedagogic or therapeutic, when in the counselling relationship.<sup>41</sup>

It is interesting to note that Achenbach's normative characterization of the philosophical counsellor practicing with the freedom of having all options available to him parallels the fairly recent development in psychotherapy known as the integrative/eclectic therapy movement.<sup>42</sup> This movement is said to have been engendered by the feeling that no single psychotherapeutic method is adequate in treating the variety of clients seeking psychotherapy, and that no one theory is capable of predicting or explaining all of their behaviours.<sup>43</sup> At least six inter-acting factors are believed to have fostered the movement during the 1970s:

1. a proliferation of therapies;
2. the inadequacy of any one specific therapy;
3. the absences of differential effectiveness among therapies;
4. a growing recognition that patient characteristics and the helping relationship are the most efficacious components of successful treatment;
5. the search for common components of effective treatment; and
6. external sociopolitical contingencies.<sup>44</sup>

Parallel to this, Achenbach's call for an eclectic approach in philosophical counselling seems appropriate given the variety of approaches and methods currently found in the field, the inadequacy of any one approach or method in dealing with every problem or concern, the absence of any clearly defined "superior" approach or method, the recognition that the client's needs and wants ought to come ahead of any method the counsellor might favour, the desire to offer the most helpful (to the client) philosophies, and the sociopolitical climate of the philosophical counselling movement in which there seems to be a competition for recognition by the primogenitors of the various approaches and methods.

Louis Marinoff, past president of the American Society for Philosophy, Counseling and Psychotherapy (ASPCP), suggests that, rather than simply seeing philosophical counselling as in "extreme opposition" to other forms of therapy, philosophical

counselling is analogous to a genus, and that particular therapeutic approaches are species belonging to that genus. "Thus existential counselling, stoic counselling, Buddhist counselling, virtue counselling, ethics counselling, decision-theoretic counselling, and philosophical midwifery – to name just a few styles – are all species of that genus."<sup>45</sup>

Clearly the similarities between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy do not justify the assertion that philosophical counselling is *just like* psychotherapy, but they do dispute the claim that philosophical counselling is categorically different – both substantively and procedurally – from psychotherapy. Philosophical counselling not only resembles some models of psychotherapy in its subject matter, it is also similar in respect to the abilities and dispositions, or what some have called the skills and tools, required of individuals who practice in those fields.

### 3.3 Abilities and Dispositions

One of the primary skills of the psychoanalyst is his ability to make a diagnosis based on symptomatology found in the latest diagnostic tool available – currently the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV) published by the American Psychiatric Association in 1994. For example, the psychoanalyst must be able to diagnose major depression from such symptoms as suicidal ideation, feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, etc. Some philosophers argue that because of the nature of philosophical counselling, the philosophical counsellor does not need to possess such diagnostic skills.<sup>46</sup> Nor does the philosophical counsellor need the sort of expertise that enables the psychoanalyst to conduct the kind of client testing required in order to determine a "patient's" pathological and/or cognitive/affective deviation from the "norm."<sup>47</sup> The philosophical counsellor holds no firm conception of "normal," and therefore does not need the ability to follow along recommended lines of intervention or treatment meant to "cure" the "patient." This, then, seems to be a fairly clear distinction between the skills required of practitioners in

philosophical counselling and the narrow subsection of psychotherapy known as psychoanalysis.

But Chung-Ying Cheng argues that philosophical counseling could be construed as a composition of psychoanalysis and self-cultivation in so far as psychoanalysis provides the technique of recognizing the relevant issues and problems in concrete in a person whereas a self-cultivational program provides a holistic project of transformation so that the particular issue could be resolved or dissolved in the process of transformation. In this sense we can see how a philosophical counselor must function as a diagnostician at the first stage and then would have to move to a position of a teacher so that the counselee may be helped or inspired to effect a transformation of his life view and end values, in light of which he would find his solution to his specific problem or the problem would simply disappear.<sup>48</sup>

What Cheng is suggesting is that this conception of philosophical counselling – as both diagnostic and concerned with the dissolution of an “issue,” as well as the “transformation” of the individual – in fact requires the philosophical counsellor to have abilities and dispositions very similar to those needed by the practitioner of psychoanalysis.

It must also be remembered that the field of psychotherapy involves more than the specialized area of psychoanalysis. Not all psychotherapeutic approaches are exclusively based on the psychoanalytic approach. The ability to diagnose is not central to all psychotherapies when psychotherapy is construed as more broadly than psychoanalysis. Some therapists allow their clients the opportunity to supply their own definitions or descriptions of their problem; “they therefore attempt to refrain from imposing on their clients any predetermined notions of what the problem may be.”<sup>49</sup> In fact some psychiatrists see the American Psychiatric Association’s diagnostic manual as being of very limited helpfulness to psychotherapy because it only “classifies disorders

phenomenologically – that is, according to what can be observed and measured.”<sup>50</sup> They see it as failing to address that with which psychotherapy is most concerned, namely epiphenomena such as the meanings patients attach to their symptoms, the attitudes behind their symptomatic behaviour, and the social and historical antecedents of a patient’s suffering.

Furthermore, some forms of psychotherapy, such as Logotherapy, Ellis’s Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy mentioned above, and others, do not require diagnosis in the strict sense of identifying underlying, unconscious causes. The therapist employing these approaches must instead have the ability to deal with a client’s issues and concerns which clearly exist at the conscious level, and can be said to be more philosophical and cognitive in nature than unconscious and causal. This raises an important question: How much skill and competence in the area of philosophy and cognition does such a psychotherapist possess who has been trained primarily in the area of psychology?

Ran Lahav points out that in the past several decades psychology has had a monopoly over personal predicaments. They have therefore felt no hesitation in helping themselves to all available methods, including philosophical ones. As mentioned above, up until the rise of the philosophical counseling movement in the 1980s, there was nobody to protest that psychotherapists were trespassing beyond the boundary of their skills and training into the foreign domain of philosophical expertise. Lahav argues that although psychologists may be excellent therapists in their own domain, it is hard to believe that they can conduct serious philosophical counselling with little or no philosophical training.<sup>51</sup> Lahav’s argument therefore highlights an obvious difference between the skills of the philosophical counsellor and those of the psychotherapist: the specialized philosophical knowledge and the unique ability to philosophize at the “expert” level held by the philosophical counsellor which the counselling psychologist generally does not possess.

As Karl Pfeifer explains,

After years of philosophical training, one develops certain philosophical sensitivities that needn’t always involve self-conscious philosophical deliberation in their exercise.

Philosophically trained individuals have increased sensitivity to fallacies, evidential weakness, or bad faith; they become better detectors of hypocrisy, cynicism, and rationalization; they are more discerning as to what's possible or plausible.<sup>52</sup>

It seems that this "increased sensitivity" is essential to the modern day counsellor who must practice in a society steeped in the language of psychology and "pop psychology."

Some practitioners point out that it is not unusual for the philosophical counsellor to see a client who has already received treatment from a psychotherapist, and has therefore been "labeled" with a psychological diagnosis, prior to her visit to the philosophical counsellor. It then becomes necessary for the philosophical counsellor to first "undo" the diagnoses with which client has been labeled in her previous treatment, and/or the resultant pre-conceived psychological notions she has about herself before any philosophical approach can be attempted.

Shlomit Schuster maintains that she often finds it necessary to "de-analyze" or "de-diagnose" clients who come to her with presuppositions of a psychological nature before she can embark on a "free philosophical interpretation of any problems or questions."<sup>53</sup> In this sense then, it seems the philosophical counsellor must have the skill to re-interpret the client's issues or concerns from the language and perception of psychotherapy to that of philosophy. The philosopher must therefore have "basic philosophical skills," as well as a good knowledge of the philosophical history and literature so as to be familiar with various theories, "alternative lines of thought," argument fallacies, and so on.<sup>54</sup>

Nonetheless, if one looks beyond the narrow confines of psychoanalysis, there is a substantial overlap in the abilities and dispositions required by all forms of counselling and therapy. On the one hand Corey suggests a number of skills that any psychotherapist must possess, none of which seem to be unique or exclusive to psychotherapy, and can also be said to be required of the philosophical counsellor, such as the ability to ask "*open* questions, which encourage further client talk and

exploration,” being able to “intensify” what the client is feeling rather than “closing them up,” the ability to listen, being able to empathize with the client, and so on,<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, philosophical counselling is said to require that the counsellor “exemplifies a certain interdisciplinary expertise,” which allow him to address the client’s needs as they lead into the area of literature, religion, art, politics, sociology, mythology, and even psychology.<sup>56</sup> Jesse Fleming suggests that among the tools a philosophical counsellor might want to have is a familiarity with several systems of Chinese thought, such as Taoism, Confucianism, Zen, and the I Ching. Furthermore a counsellor knowledgeable in the philosophies of China, Japan, and India can incorporate them into a counselling session in order to “inform the client of various options promulgated by philosophers that he may not be familiar with (e.g. stoic asceticism, Zen immediacy, Buddhistic non-attachment, etc.).”<sup>57</sup> If it is in fact necessary to distinguish philosophical counselling from psychotherapy in order to legitimize philosophical counselling then the fact that the philosophical counsellor has this sort of multicultural “tool” at his disposal may serve such a purpose.

Then again, some approaches to psychotherapy are in fact overtly philosophical, and their practitioners share the ability to philosophize, and may very well be able to draw on Eastern and Asian philosophies to inform the “treatment” of their clients. Conversely, most practicing philosophical counsellors are well aware of the possibility of deep-seated psychological influences on their clients, and on the client/counsellor relationship, which may not be accessible by means of a purely philosophical inquiry. Louis Marinoff points out that the more philosophical counselling he does, particularly with clients who have had prior psychotherapy or psychoanalysis, the more keenly he becomes aware of the “psychological manifestations in the counselor-client interaction.”<sup>58</sup>

It seems, therefore, that if one deems it necessary to establish a clear differentiation between philosophical counselling and the broad field of psychotherapy it may not be possible to do so with a direct comparison of either the subject matter or the abilities and dispositions required by each. Such a differentiation may only be possible by an explication of the specialized grounding and level of expertise – which in turn informs



procedural method and sessional content – of the various practitioners within their respective fields. But while it may be true to argue that “*philosophy* is uniquely qualified to deal with questions of values, worldviews and meaningful connections,”<sup>59</sup> it does not necessarily follow that the *philosophical counsellor* is also uniquely qualified to address a client’s issues in those areas. It is perhaps more accurate to say that the philosophical counsellor may be better qualified to deal with philosophical issues than the counsellor trained exclusively in psychology. This would make theirs more of a difference in degree of knowledge than a difference in kind. This brings up an important point of difference.

It may be only trivially true to conclude that the most salient difference between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy is that, unlike psychotherapy, what the philosophical counsellor and his clients do is “primarily philosophize,”<sup>60</sup> and therefore, on the theoretical level, the difference between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy is that one requires a greater expertise in philosophy than the other. However, the role of philosophy, and the relevance of philosophical training in the sort of intervention or treatment that psychology has termed cognitive therapy, has been “pathetically underrated.”<sup>61</sup> This leads to the conclusion – and this is not at all trivial – that since most psychotherapists are “devoid of significant philosophical education,”<sup>62</sup> and not nearly as well trained as philosophers in the skills required to undertake a philosophical approach in counselling, a client can expect to find a higher quality of philosophical insights in a counselling session conducted by a philosopher than can be found in most cognitive therapy sessions conducted by a psychotherapist.

Michael Russell makes this point very strongly by offering a number of examples of areas in which an academic background in philosophy makes the philosopher far better suited than the student of psychology to conducting a cognitive kind of therapy or counselling. He points out, for example, that philosophers have an extraordinarily rich repertoire of theoretical perspectives at their disposal, and are therefore “especially adept at picking up new ones (such as may be offered by psychotherapists, or by clients or students) and seeing their implications and assumptions.”<sup>63</sup> Philosophically trained counsellors are also “familiar in depth with a large spectrum of the most fundamental

schemas through which anyone has ever looked at anything” and are therefore able to “follow, restate, anticipate, and ‘dance’” with their clients.<sup>64</sup> Russell asks a number of rhetorical questions which argue that a solid background in ethics seems appropriate for the sort of “values clarification” which has come into vogue, that training in formal logic and critical thinking seems appropriate for challenging the client’s illogical thinking and irrational beliefs – as it is practiced in Rational-Emotive Therapy –, that a knowledge of the American pragmatist vision of epistemology and metaphysics seems essential to the what Glasser calls Reality Therapy, that a knowledge of Kant is necessary in order to understand Jung, that a Wittgensteinian scholar would “quickly get the hang of Transactional Analysis,” and so on.<sup>65</sup> Russell’s point is that if therapy is the business of challenging a person’s muddled thinking, and this is what philosophers do, then clients who wish to undergo a cognitive kind of therapy would be far better off seeing a philosophical counsellor than a psychotherapist.<sup>66</sup>

Perhaps the final word on the topic of abilities and dispositions ought to go to Catherine McCall who argues that practical philosophy (which includes philosophical counselling) is not a skill at all, but “an art.” She maintains that the desire to capture the “art” of practical philosophy under the concept of “skill” “results from a pragmatic functionalist philosophy which attempts to treat human beings as though they were objects which can be put through processes which will yield predictable and therefore controllable outcomes.”<sup>67</sup> This raises the intriguing question of whether there is in fact a difference between “the art” of philosophical counselling, and the techniques and procedures in philosophical counselling in conjunction with the abilities and personality of the philosophical counsellor. This discussion has so far not been addressed in the philosophical counselling literature.

Some philosophers have also argued that another difference between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy is evident in both the theoretical and the actual relationship between the client and the counsellor.

### 3.4 The Client/Counsellor Relationship

In psychoanalytic therapy the analyst remains anonymous, and the client develops various “projections” toward him, that is, she ascribes feelings and thoughts she is having – especially those she considers undesirable – onto the analyst. The psychoanalyst focuses on reducing the client’s resistance in working with her “transference” – i.e., her feeling of dependence on her analyst as though he were someone of significance from her early childhood – and on establishing more rational control. Clients undergo long-term analysis, engage in free association to uncover conflicts, and gain insight by talking. The analyst makes interpretations to teach his client the meaning of current behavior as it relates to their past.<sup>68</sup> As Habermas explains it,

At least some of the patient’s claims are not taken as validity claims and examined for their truth or rightness but are rather regarded as symptoms of an underlying pathology. Patient and therapist are thus not meant to be free and equal dialogue partners; rather, the patient is partially objectified: his or her validity claims are not to be understood as claims tested discursively; they are rather explained as the causal results or symptoms of early childhood events.<sup>69</sup>

The client/therapist relationship in psychoanalysis, in which the patient is seen to be “under the control, and at the mercy of, his or her symptoms,” is antithetical to the client/counsellor relationship in philosophical counselling in which the client is regarded as an active agent, “an equally philosophizing person,”<sup>70</sup> who is “more powerful than any particular belief he or she may happen to hold.”<sup>71</sup>

But, again, among the many psychotherapeutic approaches, the psychoanalytic perspective is the one that is the most easily distinguishable from philosophical counselling. For example, when comparing the client/counsellor relationship in philosophical counselling to that of either existential therapy or Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy the many obvious similarities among them seriously challenges the notion that they are in fact radically different.

In existential therapy the therapist's main tasks are to accurately grasp the client's "being in the world" and to establish a personal and authentic encounter with them. The client is led to discover her own uniqueness in the relationship with the therapist. This relationship is seen as critically important, and a heavy emphasis is put on the human-to-human client/therapist relationship in which the therapist is not seen as the expert, or the paternalistic authority so often encountered in psychoanalysis. This dynamic relationship means that both the client and the therapist can be changed by the therapeutic encounter.<sup>72</sup>

In Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (R.E.B.T.) the therapist is said to function as a teacher, and the client as a student. Therapy is seen as an educational process.<sup>73</sup> The therapist is highly directive and teaches clients the "A-B-C" model of changing their cognitions mentioned above. The therapist aims at "providing the client with the tools to restructure their philosophic and behavioral styles" to enable them to deal more effectively with not only the present problem or situation but many other current problems in life, and those in the future.<sup>74</sup>

Cognitive therapy, similar to R.E.B.T., focuses on a collaborative relationship between the client and the therapist. The therapist uses Socratic dialogue – in which the client is guided by means of questions in discussion – to assist her in identifying dysfunctional beliefs and discovering alternative rules for living. After the client gains insight into her problems, she is expected to actively practice changing her self-defeating thinking and acting.<sup>75</sup>

Existential therapy, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, and cognitive therapy are all easily distinguishable from psychoanalysis in that they promote a far more active role for the client than found in psychoanalysis. This active participation of the client in the counselling process is one of the features of philosophical counselling that is most often emphasized when a comparison is being made. Psychotherapy is portrayed in the philosophical counselling literature as leading to a dependency on the specialized interventions of the therapist in which the client can "lose considerable autonomy with respect to the reconstruction of [her] life narrative."<sup>76</sup> The philosophical interaction in a counselling session, on the other hand, is described as being guided by the client rather

than the counsellor.<sup>77</sup> While the psychiatrist must “seek to reach understanding with the patient even when the patient withdraws from such understanding,”<sup>78</sup> the philosophical counsellor sees his client as “an equally philosophizing person.”<sup>79</sup> The counsellor is therefore regarded as “a partner to a dialogue” who does not “seek to discover hidden truths about the client’s problem” but helps her to clarify issues, critically examine her basic assumptions, and interpret herself and the world.<sup>80</sup>

The philosophical counsellor is said to be “less concerned with ‘the problem’ and more concerned with the client” while participating in a continual dialogical process in which requests for further clarification can come from both the client and the counsellor.<sup>81</sup> The philosophical counselling relationship is described as “receptive and open” because the client is given “a significant degree of free rein” to work out her problems on her own terms, and at her own pace.<sup>82</sup> And, perhaps most importantly, in contrast to the therapist’s view of what is termed the client’s “resistance” or rejection of suggestions offered in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, in philosophical counselling the client’s rejection of suggestions made by the philosophical counsellor is not interpreted a priori as resistance or hostility, but is accepted as a positive response leading to further discussion.<sup>83</sup> The philosophical counsellor is construed as having no preconceived ideas about how the client should understand herself. Therefore, he is said to never dispense advice or offer to “treat patients” in light of some criteria geared toward a normative ideal.<sup>84</sup> The counsellor is said to attempt to “display a neutral attitude” towards the client’s perceptions of herself and the events in her life.<sup>85</sup> Finally, but certainly not exhaustively, philosophical counselling is described as “ecological,” meaning that the relationship between the client and the counsellor is caring rather than confrontational, and consisting of persons who are interdependent participants defined by open-minded questioning, with empathy functioning between them.<sup>86</sup> But none of these characterizations make philosophical counselling wholly unique from *all* of the various forms of psychotherapy.

In fact, philosophical counselling and psychotherapy can both be differentiated from psychoanalysis in that neither see the client from the psychoanalytic/paternalistic perspective in which she is termed the “patient.” Philosophical counselling and

psychotherapy are similar in respect to what Daniel C. Dennett calls their “stance.” He defines one’s “stance” as the way in which one interacts with complex systems, or, in this case, other persons. The “physical stance” considers only the actual physical construction of the system. It does not come into play in the therapeutic relationship unless a pathological condition is being treated. To use the “design stance” is to consider only the “programming” of the system, its functional organization; while taking the “intentional stance” is to attribute beliefs, desires, etc. to the other person or system.<sup>87</sup> For example, if a client comes to a therapist and says, “I am depressed,” and goes on to explain what she is depressed about, some therapists would mostly disregard the client’s own descriptions of the reason for the depression, preferring to uncover the unconscious causes or dynamics instead. This is seeing the client from the “design stance,” in that it looks for the “programming” which is causing the client’s symptoms and distress. If the client had gone on to say, “I am depressed because I have lost my faith in God,” the therapist using the “design stance” would steer clear of the God issue and would instead attempt to uncover the unconscious dynamics behind this depression. The design stance does not inquire into the reasons the client might offer for feeling how she does. In taking this approach the psychoanalyst is somewhat analogous to the surgeon whose expertise is concentrated on the removal of a tumor without the requirement of the conscious involvement of the patient. The psychoanalyst questions the patient and notes her responses, but does not expect or require the patient to know what her own answers mean.<sup>88</sup> The psychoanalyst has no intention of helping the client to understand her utterances within the context of psychoanalytic theory.

On the other hand, the therapist who works in the “intentional stance” actually addresses the God question head on, taking it seriously as a cause of the depression. He works with his client to alleviate her distress by helping her to examine her own thinking – in this case about her relationship to her God. It is precisely the intention of the therapist in this stance to help his client understand the meaning of her utterances within the context of therapy, everyday life, and rationality. In this stance the therapist is analogous to the physiotherapist who helps the client to exercise so as to increase her range of motion (the breadth and depth of her thinking skills), her flexibility (her ability

to look at issues from a variety of perspectives), and her strength (her ability to accept the opinions of others). In order to be effective, these therapeutic activities welcome, and in fact require, the client's conscious involvement.

It clearly seems that philosophical counselling – as well as many of the forms of psychotherapy – maintains the intentional stance in that it sees the client as an autonomous person who is certainly influenced by her beliefs, desires, and so on, but is not merely determined by her unconscious.<sup>89</sup> But because this “intentional stance” inheres in the client/therapist relationship of both the philosophical counsellor and the psychotherapist, this attempt to delineate them from each other, serves only to, once again, trivially delineate philosophical counselling from psychotherapy narrowly defined as psychoanalysis.

It could be argued that in both psychoanalytic therapy and in psychotherapy – especially in R.E.B.T. – the counsellor intentionally takes on the role of the expert, authority, or teacher, and that this is not the intention in philosophical counselling. While it may be true that this is not the expressed intention in philosophical counselling, two important considerations are worth noting: first, it is evident from case studies in the field of philosophical counselling that despite the published claims that the client is “an equally philosophizing person,” and that the client and counsellor are equal “partners in dialogue,” in reality the philosophical counsellor is in fact assumed by the client to be the undisputed “expert” in the counselling relationship. He is usually seen as far better philosophically educated; and he is believed to be trained to possess a superior ability in clear reasoning in a philosophical manner. It is understood by both the counsellor and his client that the client has approached him for counselling precisely because she perceives him to have an expertise which she herself does not possess. Rather than the counsellor *claiming* authority over the client, it is often the case that the client, in effect, *grants* this authority to the counsellor, and in fact often *demand*s of the counsellor that he act with the authority befitting of an expert in the techniques required for a cooperative philosophical inquiry. And rather than the issue of authority having a detrimental effect on the counselling relationship, David Jopling points out that research has shown that the

client's perception of the counsellor as an expert and authority often functions as a positive factor in the counselling process and in the client's "recovery."<sup>90</sup>

Second, in order to avoid the possibility of the client developing a long-term dependency on the philosophical counsellor, it seems to follow logically that the counsellor must indeed make an effort to teach – in some manner – the client those skills which will contribute to her autonomy. This, of course, necessarily requires the prior assumption that the counsellor is not on an equal footing with the client, but rather that he has expert knowledge of facts and/or techniques which the client does not possess, and which he can pass on to her by means of some form of pedagogy. Similar presuppositions exist in psychotherapy. This topic of expertise, authority and teaching will be taken up again in the final chapter.

It seems that the client/counsellor relationship does not present a clear distinction between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy. It may be that such a distinct difference will be found when the processes and the goals of the various therapeutic and counselling approaches are examined.

### 3.5 Goals and Process

The goals of the psychoanalytic therapist, according to Corey, are to make the unconscious conscious, and to assist the client in reliving earlier experiences and working through repressed conflicts, in order to achieve intellectual awareness, and thereby to reconstruct the basic personality of the client. Psychoanalyst Rollo May observes that people go to the therapist

because they have become inwardly enslaved and they yearn to be set free... I believe that the therapist's function should be to help people become free to be aware of and to experience their possibilities.<sup>91</sup>

The key techniques in the psychoanalytic process are interpretation, dream analysis, free association, analysis of resistance, and analysis of transference. All are designed to help the client gain access to her unconscious conflicts, which leads to insight and



eventual assimilation of new material by the client's ego.<sup>92</sup> The psychoanalyst will often use tests to help him make a diagnosis, and he will use answers to his questions to develop the client's case history.<sup>93</sup> Sometimes the psychiatrist or psychoanalyst must deal with a case in which all possibility of reaching understanding seems to have been removed, and where any hope of "forging of a human partnership, no matter how fleeting, between doctor and patient" seems to be excluded.<sup>94</sup> Philosophical counselling, on the other hand, is said not to treat "symptoms as caused by dysfunctional experiences in the past."<sup>95</sup> Instead it is seen as "conceptual and atemporal in intent."<sup>96</sup>

But Elliot Cohen argues that while a client may have emotions about an issue which seem to be driven by the unconscious, it must be remembered that emotions are often based on beliefs. Yet an examination of such emotions may reveal that they are in fact based on certain beliefs about this issue of which the client is not consciously aware. Cohen maintains that the philosophical counsellor can aid the client to come to a conscious realization and articulation of such "unconscious" beliefs in order that they may be scrutinized and evaluated. In this way the philosophical counsellor is in fact dealing with the unconscious but in a manner more indirect, and with more client involvement, than the approach followed in psychoanalysis.<sup>97</sup> This ultimately seems to lead to a rejection of the classical Freudian theory of the unconscious as the controller of human motivation and emotion upon which psychoanalysis and several models of psychotherapy are based. According to Rachel Blass, this means that, by starting with the assumption that the client is not under unalterable control of her unconscious but is able to choose and will, the philosophical counsellor can enable his client to "transcend whatever psychological preconceptions, tendencies, needs, desires, or other processes and mechanisms may motivate the individual."<sup>98</sup>

But even if we allow that psychoanalysis deals primarily with the exploration and "uncovering" of the unconscious while philosophical counselling does so only indirectly, and that the psychoanalyst may be called upon to work with a patient who is not a willing partner in discussion while a philosophical counsellor works only with those willing and able to be "partners to a dialogue,"<sup>99</sup> these considerations do not

constitute a clear separation of the two fields. For one thing, as psychologist Drew Westen points out, modern psychoanalytic therapies attempt to help the client to bring to consciousness previously unconscious cognitive-affective motivational structures influencing behavior, “so that the person can exercise more flexible conscious control over thoughts, feelings, and behavior,”<sup>100</sup> or as May expressed it above, “to help people become free to be aware of and to experience their possibilities.” This clearly indicates that psychoanalysis is not simply concerned with “treating the disease” but that it also attempts to empower the client to address the problem herself – a goal that is universally declared to be central to all forms of philosophical counselling.

Furthermore, philosophical counselling is not unique in *not* dealing directly with the unconscious or in dealing only with those who are able to form a client/counsellor collaboration. Many other forms of psychotherapy focus on exactly that which philosophical counsellors have claimed as their domain, although their procedural methods may vary.

For example, Michael Schefczyk sees philosophical counselling as a “critical examination of life-directing conceptions” which are often merely conditioned in the individual by the “suggestive products of mass culture.” He maintains that coming to an understanding of one’s “conceptual vicissitudes” by means of a critical examination, or hermeneutics, can ultimately lead the client to freedom and happiness.<sup>101</sup> So the goal of philosophical counselling, as Schefczyk describes it, is the client’s freedom and happiness. Compare this to Corey’s characterization of the goals of cognitive psychotherapy, which he says are to challenge the clients to “confront faulty beliefs with contradictory evidence that they gather and evaluate,” to help clients “seek out their dogmatic beliefs and vigorously minimize them,” and to help them to “become aware of automatic thoughts and to change them.”<sup>102</sup>

Rachel Blass argues that the philosophical counsellor facilitates a process within the client in which the client “steps beyond the course set out for him by his psychological makeup... to go beyond the psychological self to attain a true state of being.”<sup>103</sup> But again, this goal of philosophical counselling does not seem very different from the

“self-transcendence” that is the goal of Victor E. Frankl’s Logotherapy<sup>104</sup>, and the various goals of existential therapy, R.E.B.T., and other forms of psychotherapy.

Shlomit Schuster sees the philosophical counsellor’s function as helping the client to gain “freedom from the preconceived, the ill-conceived, the prejudiced, and the unconscious.”<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, she says that the client learns from the counsellor to “question, think about, and comprehend in various – philosophical – ways the self and its problems.”<sup>106</sup> Corey points out that in psychotherapy, generally,

therapists use a variety of cognitive, emotive, and behavioral techniques, tailored to suit individual clients. Some techniques include debating irrational beliefs, carrying out homework assignments, gathering data on assumptions one has made, keeping a record of activities, forming alternative interpretations, learning new coping skills, changing one’s language and thinking patterns, role playing, imagery, confronting faulty beliefs, and engaging in Socratic dialogue.<sup>107</sup>

While dialogue serves as a diagnostic and treatment tool in psychoanalysis, in psychotherapy broadly construed it serves a similar function to that which it serves in philosophical counselling. The psychotherapeutic process in Logotherapy, R.E.B.T, and others use a type of Socratic dialog when appropriate.<sup>108</sup> These psychotherapies also use dialogical approaches in which the counsellor or therapist takes a more active participatory or pedagogic role.<sup>109</sup> Any one form of dialogical process can be found separately or in combination with others in the various methods of psychotherapy, and therefore the use of Socratic dialogue in philosophical counselling cannot in itself serve to differentiate philosophical counselling from all forms of psychotherapy to any substantial degree.

The overlap in methodology between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy seems to be rather obvious. Albert Ellis’s R.E.B.T. is described as a highly didactic, cognitive, action-oriented model of psychotherapy that stresses the role of thinking and belief systems as the root of personal problems.<sup>110</sup> Ellis explains that in the course of an

R.E.B.T. counselling session, thoughts and feelings that at first appear to be deeply unconscious are quickly revealed by the counsellor to the “patient” as being her “arbitrary moralizing,” her blaming and punishing herself or others. These thoughts and feelings are then “brought to light and vigorously challenged,” and “ruthlessly analyzed and counterattacked” so that they can be “replaced with saner, more rewarding philosophies of living.”<sup>111</sup> Although Ellis’ technique may be far more aggressive and “ruthless” than the approach of most philosophical counsellors, his approach is none-the-less philosophically oriented, and therefore similar in many respects to philosophical counselling.

Ran Lahav points out that the philosophical investigation undertaken in a philosophical counselling session “focuses on the ‘logic,’ so to speak, of the ideas in question, rather than on contingent states of affair.”<sup>112</sup> He maintains that a philosophical investigation of some given personal material “may examine the logical connections between the person’s different presuppositions and ask whether or not they contradict one another.”<sup>113</sup> Lahav also contends that philosophical counselling is an attempt to help the client care for her soul by means of a philosophical examination of the basic concepts and principles which underlie her way of living.<sup>114</sup> The philosophical counsellor’s goal is seen to be that of helping the client explore her “predicaments” using “philosophical thinking tools such as conceptual analysis and phenomenological investigations.”<sup>115</sup> Through these explorations the client attains new insights which “color” her *worldview* and attitude to her predicaments.<sup>116</sup>

But worldview interpretation is not unique to philosophical counselling. In psychotherapy this approach is sometimes termed an examination of the patient’s or client’s “Weltanschauung.” Psychiatrists Julia and Jerome Frank call this an examination of an individual’s “assumptive world.” They define a patient’s assumptive world as each person’s evaluations of

internal and external stimuli in the light of assumptions about what is dangerous, safe, important, unimportant, good, bad, and so on. These assumptions become organized into sets of highly structured, complex,

interacting values, expectations, and images of self and others that are closely related to emotional states and feelings.<sup>117</sup>

What the Franks call a person's assumptive world Lahav calls an individual's worldview, and others call a person's philosophy of life. In his book, *The Will to Meaning*, under the section heading of "Foundations of Logotherapy" Viktor E. Frankl discusses the importance to psychoanalysis of an examination of the patient's assumptive world or Weltanschauung, and its centrality in Logotherapy, by explaining that "there is no psychotherapy without a theory of man and philosophy of life."<sup>118</sup> Jungian analysis is also noted for the important place occupied by the client's assumptive world or Weltanschauung in the psychotherapeutic process.

Ludwig Binswanger was one of the first existential psychotherapists to approach what is called worldview interpretation in philosophical counselling by way of Heidegger's modes of "Being-in-the-world" (Dasein). Binswanger speaks of the client's "world-design" by which he means "the all-encompassing pattern of an individual's mode of being-in-the-world," or the way the client's life is either "open or closed, disclosed or concealed, light or dark, expanded or constricted."<sup>119</sup> It can be described as the client's attitude based on her beliefs which in turn influences the "world-relationships" the client has, and affects how she will act and perceive the world around her.<sup>120</sup> Binswanger's analyses of his clients' being-in-the-world within his existential approach to psychotherapy seem very similar to Lahav's interpretation of his clients' worldviews.

Compare this also to what Albert Ellis writes regarding his brand of psychotherapy. He says one of its goals is to help people to achieve profound *philosophical* changes. The psychotherapist helps clients to

perceive, interpret, evaluate, and interact with their environments differently in order to increase their long-term happiness and to assist their clients to develop more realistic and functional *views of their worlds*,<sup>121</sup> thereby reducing their inflexible, rigid, dogmatic, and maladaptive patterns. . . and to rid the client of her pervasive self-

defeating, irrational, and unrealistic ways of  
*conceptualizing their worlds.*<sup>122</sup>

In contrast to Ellis, Gerd Achenbach argues that, while therapy is a means to a goal – namely bringing about a change in the client – the philosophical counsellor should resist any temptation to set such a goal for the counselling process.<sup>123</sup> But many philosophical counsellors clearly see philosophical counselling as being geared toward the alleviation of what the client herself perceives to be a problem or concern in her life. Thus the counselling process is perceived as being the vehicle for client-desired change in her own life toward the goal of “a better life.” Philosophical counsellors write that they see their function as “making specific influences on the counselee’s life,”<sup>124</sup> and as helping their clients to “enrich and develop their worldviews,” in order to “facilitate the process of change.”<sup>125</sup> They attempt to restore their client’s “disturbed equilibrium” – both her disturbed equilibrium of life and her disturbed equilibrium of thinking about life.<sup>126</sup> The philosopher is seen as “the person who, in a dialogue with the client, is ready to help, either to clarify and restore the equilibrium or to build a wider equilibrium.”<sup>127</sup> Besides restoring the client’s equilibrium, the philosophical counsellor is also said to attempt to help his client overcome her “decision paralysis” and thereby empower her to “make a choice following constructive deliberation.”<sup>128</sup> Contrary to Achenbach’s assertion, then, it seems obvious that a change in the client is both a necessary and inevitable constituent of the philosophical counselling process – regardless of what the philosophical counsellor may claim he is *not* doing – because it is precisely because the client wants to change either something in her life, or her entire life per se, that she seeks out a philosophical counsellor in the first place.

Ellis also argues that all effective psychotherapists, whether or not they realize what they are doing, “teach or induce their patients to re-perceive or rethink their life events and philosophies and thereby to change their unrealistic and illogical thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.”<sup>129</sup> This change which both the psychotherapist and the philosophical counsellor help to bring about (whether intentionally or unintentionally) meet many of the common objectives which Ellis claims are shared by the cognitive therapist, the psychodynamic psychotherapist, the systems-oriented psychotherapist, and

the transactional analyst: to achieve a humanistic outlook; to advance scientific thinking; to achieve profound philosophical change; to aid self-acceptance; to increase tolerance of others; to accept probability and uncertainty; to increase will and personal choice; to develop awareness and insight; to accept human fallibility; to develop greater self-interest; and to achieve greater human freedom.<sup>130</sup>

The weight of evidence clearly indicates that, contrary to the claims of some writers in the field of philosophical counselling, mental-health workers do not generally abort the exploration of issues such as the meaning of life, suffering, death, or evil by explaining them away as being merely “symptoms or the rationalizations of the emotional mess the patient is in.”<sup>131</sup> Psychotherapists do in fact attempt to deal with these issues in a manner similar in many respects to the approaches found in philosophical counselling. The goal of the psychotherapist – that of alleviating the patient’s distress, helping her to resolve her problems or concerns, and assisting her to become more autonomous in solving future problems – is also similar, if not identical with, the goal found in philosophical counselling. As pointed out above, the ability of a counsellor trained in psychology to conduct a philosophical inquiry or discussion may not be as well developed as that of the counsellor with a degree in philosophy, but it seems apparent that the goals of the psychotherapeutic process, and the process itself, cannot be said to be radically different from that of philosophical counselling.

David Jopling argues that one obvious characteristic which can in fact be used to distinguish philosophical counselling from psychological counselling is the commitment of philosophical counselling “to the pursuit of truth.”<sup>132</sup> By this he means that the philosophical counsellor takes either a “weak non-directive stance” toward the client in which he is neutral “with respect to the specific content of the client’s personal beliefs, choices and values,” but he takes “a philosophically critical stance with respect to the relevant evidentiary and criteriological choices, patterns of reasoning, and other formal properties of the client’s views (e.g. coherence, consistency, explanatory adequacy plausibility); or he takes a “weak directive stance” which is

a philosophically critical and evaluative stance with respect  
to (at least) the factual content and implications of the

client's beliefs, choices, and values, as well as to all evidentiary, criteriological, logical and other formal characteristics of client's views.<sup>133</sup>

Jopling claims this "pursuit of truth" in philosophical counselling is a "departure from the ethics of non-directive and non-judgmental counselling" because philosophical counsellors take one of the above directive stances, while "normally, therapists and counsellors refrain from either advising or evaluating the client's personal decisions and values."<sup>134</sup> But in their book *Persuasion and Healing* Jerome and Julia Frank argue that

Truth was Freud's god. [Freud saw] psychoanalysis as the scientific search for truth... The partial or total aim of all psychotherapeutic methods, many of which resemble dialectics, is to arrive at psychological truths.<sup>135</sup>

Elsewhere the Franks point out that "the therapeutic power of any form of psychotherapy depends primarily on its persuasiveness."<sup>136</sup> If the pursuit of psychological truth and the use of persuasion are elements of psychotherapy then psychotherapists do indeed make normative judgements of their clients' statements, and they do indeed venture beyond simply giving advice to using therapy to persuade the client to discover and/or consider a more truthful perspective on matters. In light of Frank's observation and Ellis' characterization of the R.E.B.T. approach – as consisting of ruthlessly analyzing, vigorously challenging, and counterattacking his client's beliefs, and then teaching or inducing them to rethink and change their unrealistic and illogical thoughts and personal philosophies – and in light of the resemblance between the goals and processes of philosophical counselling and those of psychotherapy mentioned above, Jopling's distinction between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy seems to be somewhat less than obviously universal. It seems that psychotherapists can claim to be as much in pursuit of truth by means of their cognitive approaches as are philosophical counsellors. Furthermore, philosophical counsellors are individually undoubtedly as reluctant, or as prone, to give direct advice or to openly criticize or attempt to coercively persuade their clients regarding their personal decisions and values as are their counterparts in psychotherapy.



Finally, it may be argued that there is indeed a difference between the goals and processes of psychotherapy and philosophical counselling when one considers that philosophical counselling employs the clearly philosophical tool of hermeneutics in its pursuit of truth. Recall that Gerd Achenbach likens philosophical counselling to a Socratic “hermeneutics of burdensome life”<sup>137</sup> in which there is an “interaction” between the counsellor and the client for the purpose of gaining a “philosophical-hermeneutic affinity to disturbances and suffering.”<sup>138</sup> Other philosophers such as Lahav, Norman, Schefczyk, and Ruschmann cite the importance of hermeneutics or interpretation of the client’s personal narrative or “text” as central to the philosophical counselling process. But philosophical counsellors are not unique in seeing their practice as a hermeneutic search for truth. In their book *Persuasion and Healing*, under the sub-heading “Psychotherapy and Hermeneutics: The Patient as Text,” psychiatrist authors Jerome and Julia Frank write,

Insofar as the psychotherapist seeks to understand and interpret the meaning of the patient’s communications, psychotherapy bears interesting resemblances to hermeneutics... In medicine as well as psychiatry, diagnosis and treatment have been described as forms of mutual interpretation between healer and patient... The construction of a mutually satisfactory story involves what has been termed the hermeneutic circle.<sup>139</sup>

The Franks see hermeneutics in psychotherapy as not only making sense out of the material the patient has offered, but leading to a pragmatic truth in interpretation: one that is fruitful, has “beneficial consequences for the patient’s ability to function and for the patient’s sense of well-being.”<sup>140</sup>

It seems that the only noteworthy difference between philosophical counsellors and psychotherapists in terms of goals and process is the fact that psychotherapists openly admit to having the intention of helping their clients achieve a change for the better in their lives by means of the pursuit of truth, whereas philosophical counsellors, especially

those who follow Achenbach's conception, are reluctant to publicly acknowledge any such goal.

So while there may be procedural differences between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy, it is evident that these differences are not as significant as they may appear at first glance. It also seems evident from the philosophical counselling literature, that procedure within philosophical counselling itself often differs from one practitioner to the next, and it is therefore impossible to distinguish all of philosophical counselling from psychotherapy by means of generalizations. And while goals are said to be different for philosophical counselling than they are for psychotherapy it is far from obvious where a substantive difference may be found. The overlap between the various approaches and methods is simply too great to allow a clear differentiation.

One final component of philosophical counselling remains to be examined. Some philosophers are convinced that the most fundamental difference between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy can be found by examining the combined assumptions and values of those respective fields.

### 3.6 Assumptions and Values

In classical psychoanalytic or Freudian therapy the assumption is that human beings are basically determined by psychic energy and by early experiences. Unconscious motives and conflicts originating in past experiences are central in present behavior. Irrational, and largely uncontrollable, forces are said to be strong; and the person is understood to be driven by sexual and aggressive impulses.<sup>§</sup> Naturally, early development is considered to be of critical importance, because later personality problems are believed to have their roots in repressed childhood conflicts.<sup>141</sup> It is maintained that Freud's assumptions about the "person" was that she was not a "knowing" person but rather a psychoanalytic person better characterized by

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<sup>§</sup> Viktor E. Frankl, citing Ludwig Binswanger's *Erinnerungen an Sigmund Freud*, points out in his book *The Will To Meaning* (New York: Meridian, 1988 ed. p. 84) that "philosophy has been disdained by Sigmund Freud and dismissed by him as nothing but one of the most decent forms of the sublimation of repressed sexuality."

multiplicity, disunity, and self-deception, and as being “decentered,” fragmented, heterogeneous, irrational, and incapable of objective reasoned arguments.<sup>142</sup> This seems like a rather extreme depiction of Freud’s theory which may no longer be held by contemporary psychoanalysts. In fact, it is interesting to note that one philosopher set out to research “how individual psychologists actually conceived of ‘persons’ and to compare this to the philosophical assumptions which underlay their espoused psychological positions.” She found that none of the psychologists in her study actually themselves conceived of people in the way their theories modeled them.<sup>143</sup> This might serve as a word of caution that contemporary practice does not necessarily always follow original theory.

According to Ran Lahav, Freud saw everyday predicaments as being “expressions of unconscious beliefs, conflicts, desires, fears, and other mental events.”<sup>144</sup> He sees Freudian psychoanalysis, like philosophical counseling, as offering interpretations of everyday life events, but points out that there are two important features of Freudian “interpretations” which distinguish them from worldview interpretation as done in philosophical counseling.

First, unconscious mental events, with which Freudian psychoanalysis commonly interprets predicaments, are supposedly mental (psychological) events inside one’s mind. Statements about hidden fears or unconscious desires are intended as descriptions of real psychological processes, Second, Freudian unconscious events are viewed as exerting influences on each other; that is, they are understood in *causal* terms. Mental events, such as unconscious or conscious desires or anxieties, suppress, enhance, produce, modify each other, or, in short, interact with one another in accordance with psychological causal laws.... Their relation to observable behavior is causal; they are the hidden causes that *bring about* or *influence* manifested behavior.<sup>145</sup>

In effect, what psychoanalysis seems to suggest is that some “events” that the client believes to be happening are not external events at all, but can only be discovered by searching within the psyche. In other words, a client’s everyday lived experience, according to this model, may simply be events caused by, and experienced within, her unconscious. On the other hand, philosophical counselling makes no such assumption about the causal relationship between the contents of the unconscious and the client’s everyday lived experience.

Colin Clayton and Nick Dianuzzo explain that the philosophical approach does not conceive of the individual as being determined by psychological, biological, or sociological forces. Instead, she is understood as a free and self-creating human being. Individuals are never understood as being “failures, or successes, or slaves or sinners.” Nor are they understood as having “missed the mark,” or as having a “diseased,” or a “disordered personality.” Individuals are held to be generally healthy and responsible. The philosophical counsellor, however, at the same time is also said to recognize that many individuals have an “inadequate relationship to the social world” and a distorted self image that is a consequence of a “loss of centre.” Clayton and Dianuzzo describe this “loss of centre” as “a lack of empowerment experienced by individuals as anxiety or dread, a desire to be.”<sup>146</sup>

Rachel Blass sees this difference in the conception of “the person” as being the crucial difference between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy. She says that in referring to the person and how she should be treated, philosophical counsellors and psychotherapists “are not talking of the same entity.”<sup>147</sup> She argues that the philosophical counselling conception of the person “rests on the notion that the person is an embodiment of [her] ideas,” while the psychotherapeutic conception of the person “is one which recognizes the philosophical worldview but identifies the person in terms of the psychological substratum underlying it, as the substantive viewer who has that worldview.”<sup>148</sup> She claims that, from the psychotherapeutic perspective, like that of philosophical counselling, “the person is [her] meaning, but from the psychotherapeutic perspective meanings are psychic events, not abstract ideas.”<sup>149</sup> These different conceptions of what constitutes the person reflect different assumptions and different

values.<sup>150</sup> But, again, when Blass speaks of the “psychotherapeutic perspective” it is evident that she is referring to psychotherapy construed in the narrow sense of psychoanalysis. Psychotherapy construed in the wider sense in which it includes the numerous cognitive and behavioural approaches mentioned above allows no such clear distinction.

In cognitive-behavior therapy the assumption that a person’s emotional and behavioral disturbances are caused by unconscious motives and conflicts originating in past experiences is exchanged for the assumption that the person tends to incorporate faulty thinking, which then leads to such disturbances. It is held that cognitions are the major determinants of how a person feels and acts. Therapy is primarily oriented toward cognition and behavior, and it stresses the role of thinking, deciding, questioning, doing, and “redeciding.” In contradistinction to psychoanalysis, cognitive-behavioral therapy is a “psychoeducational” model, which emphasizes therapy as a learning process, rather than as an expurgation of the negative elements within the unconscious. Psychotherapy thus construed includes acquiring and practicing new skills, learning new ways of thinking, and acquiring more effective ways of coping with problems.<sup>151</sup> The assumptions of psychotherapy are far less grounded on pre-conceived notions of “normal” and “abnormal” causal events in the unconscious than they are in psychoanalysis.

Similarly, the “basis” of philosophical counselling is a healthy doubt concerning what is considered by psychoanalysts to be “normal” and “abnormal” unconscious forces. This means the philosophical counsellor abstains from making counselling decisions by means of entrusting the client to any specialized “theory,” especially ones based on the primacy of the unconscious.<sup>152</sup> In this way, philosophical counselling takes the decidedly “unpaternalistic attitude that most people are basically sane, free of psychological pathologies, and capable of engaging in and benefiting from reasoning.”<sup>153</sup> There is the further assumption that a person is able to think autonomously and critically, meaning that she is able to rationally investigate the framework of her own mind, gain some self-understanding about her behavior, decisions, and experiences, and then influence that framework when she deems this

necessary.<sup>154</sup> There is little to distinguish these assumptions from those held by many psychotherapists.

The concept of “person” held by practitioners in existentialist therapies, such as Logotherapy, is even more closely aligned with the concept of person as construed by philosophical counsellors. The originator of Logotherapy, Victor E. Frankl, argues that the person is not merely “the battleground of the clashing claims of personality aspects such as id, ego, and superego.”<sup>155</sup> He quotes Freud as having said, “The moment one inquires about the sense or value of life, one is sick.”<sup>156</sup> Frankl does not see the “existential vacuum,” or the struggle for meaning *in* life, or the search for the meaning *of* life, as a pathological phenomenon, but rather as a “manifestation of intellectual sincerity and honesty.”<sup>157</sup> Likewise philosopher Steven Segal points out that it is not always reasonable to assume that the questions and issues with which a client is grappling are best handled according to a medical model, as symptoms that need to be diagnosed and treated. Rather, questions often need to be addressed directly and philosophically. This requires the philosophical counsellor to be the kind of person who knows how to identify the question which is being asked, who is able to elaborate on it, and who can then help his client to develop a way of dealing with it.<sup>158</sup>

As mentioned earlier, one criticism often leveled against philosophical counselling comes in the form of the assumption that a philosophical approach is inappropriate in the affective domain, that is, it fails to address the client’s feelings or emotions. It is argued that by concentrating on the analysis of cognitions, it necessarily misses the emotions. But Cohen points out that, while beliefs don’t themselves constitute emotions, beliefs are still included in emotions. If it can be assumed that beliefs or cognitions (especially evaluative ones) can influence changes in our behavior as well as in our physiological states, then it is easy to see how philosophical counselling; which works on cognitions, can also, thereby, work on emotions.<sup>159</sup> So the assumption that philosophical counselling cannot deal with the client’s emotions is unfounded, according to Cohen, and the philosophical counsellor assumes that the feelings of the client are not beyond the scope of philosophical inquiry.

Furthermore, Mijuskovic argues that it would be a mistake to infer that the sadness, anxiety, and confusion engendered by philosophical conflicts are in fact psychiatric disorders rather than philosophical concerns that can be properly addressed by means of philosophical counselling.<sup>160</sup> In psychotherapy, the theoretical foundation of Ellis's rational-emotive-behavior therapy is similarly based on the assumption that human thinking and emotions are not two disparate and antipodal processes, but that they significantly overlap and are in some respects, for all practical purposes, essentially the same.<sup>161</sup> Ellis also contends that a client's emotional or psychological disturbances are largely a result of her thinking illogically or irrationally, and that she can rid herself of her emotional or mental unhappiness, ineffectuality, and disturbances if she learns to maximize her rational and minimize her irrational thinking.<sup>162</sup> The assumption, then, in both philosophical counselling and psychotherapy broadly construed is that the person is a rational autonomous agent capable of addressing emotional disturbances on a conscious, cognitive level. This indicates that both the philosophical counsellor and psychotherapist recognize an inherent value in the active and collaborative participation of the client in the counselling process.

Catherine McCall succinctly describes some of the assumptions she feels are necessary in practical philosophy. She maintains that her practice of Philosophical Inquiry (PI) – a form of philosophy that is in many respects analogous to philosophical counselling in a group setting – is based on four assumptions: first, that many everyday problems are at root philosophical rather than psychological. Second, that the first assumption rests on a metaphysical assumption of External Realism.<sup>163</sup> By this she means that once the philosophical nature of a problem has been determined, its solution depends upon certain ontological facts, such as, for example, the existence of human rights. Third, she says that PI rests on the epistemological assumption that an individual can be wrong about what is “out there.” And fourth, she holds that PI rests on the assumption that there can be “a kind of epistemological evolution,” meaning that a person's knowledge and assumptions about the world can change.<sup>164</sup> In light of what has been discussed above regarding the assumptions in psychotherapy, it seems unlikely

that these four assumptions on which McCall bases her approach to philosophical practice are very different from those that might be ascribed to psychotherapy.

Schuster argues that a substantive difference between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy can be found in the fact that “there is a place for meta-discussions” in philosophical counselling, a “thinking about thinking” in which the practitioner and client may think about and discuss the nature of the philosophical counselling session itself.<sup>165</sup> But it is not clear that philosophical counselling is unique in allowing and even valuing such a discussion to take place, nor can it be assumed that a meta-discussion between the philosophical counsellor and his client will necessarily change either the substance or the general procedure of subsequent sessions to any greater degree in philosophical counselling than a similar discussion would affect the process in psychotherapy.

At this point it is no longer obvious where any major differences exist between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy broadly construed in terms of their assumptions and values, or if indeed any such clear distinctions exist at all. In fact, it seems that, just as was discovered in the examination of other elements in philosophical counselling and psychotherapy, there appear to be far more similarities than differences.

### 3.7 Conclusion

It is a simple matter to draw a distinction between philosophical counselling and the procedure in psychotherapy narrowly defined as psychoanalysis. But when psychotherapy is defined more broadly to encompass the various existential, cognitive and behavioural therapies, procedural differences seem to be overshadowed by the many substantive similarities.

The subject matter found in Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, client-centered therapy, existential therapy, and Logotherapy very much resembles that which is found in philosophical counselling, such as, for example, the client’s faulty assumptions, misconceptions, and confused and conflicting values. While there is no doubt that the



practitioner trained in philosophy is better equipped (though not necessarily better able) to take a philosophical approach in counselling, and perhaps teach his client the abilities and dispositions necessary for critical thinking, many approaches in psychotherapy also deal directly with philosophical problems and concerns of the client. It is therefore only the level of expertise in philosophy which may ultimately distinguish the philosophical counsellor from the psychotherapist. Furthermore, to say that the philosophical counsellor is uniquely concerned with worldview interpretations, ethical questions and questions surrounding the discovery of a meaning *in* life or the meaning *of* life is to be misinformed about the extensive domain of psychotherapy. There are also many abilities and dispositions required of the philosophical counsellor that overlap with those required of the psychotherapist.

While it has been argued that an appeal to the “intentional stance” which inheres in the client/therapist relationship in philosophical counselling differentiates it from psychotherapy, this argument is only valid if psychotherapy is again defined in the narrow sense of referring to psychoanalysis. Even then the argument is not entirely convincing, except when it is applied exclusively to the classical conception of Freudian psychoanalysis. It is evident that most psychotherapists also approach their clients from the “intentional stance.”

The goals of philosophical counselling also seem similar to those of psychotherapy in many respects, although, while psychotherapists openly admit to having the intention of helping their clients to change their lives for the better, Gerd Achenbach’s original characterization of philosophical counselling – as devoid of any goals – has made many philosophical counsellors reluctant to openly acknowledge any such goals to their practice. It was also found that while there may be procedural differences in methods and techniques – with some psychotherapeutic approaches being much more forthright and aggressive in their attempt to influence the thinking of their clients than the approach of most philosophical counsellors – there are an abundance of substantive similarities.

And while it is easy to contrast the concept of person in philosophical counselling – and the assumptions inherent in such a conception – with that found in psychoanalysis, it is far more difficult to find such obvious differences when comparing the concept of

person in philosophical counselling with that found in many psychological therapies construed in the broader sense of psychotherapies. Judd Marmor suggests that in the course of psychiatric training and practice the professional identities of practitioners can become so intimately linked to what they have learned and their individual style of practice that "we are prone to extol uncritically the virtues of our own techniques and to depreciate defensively those techniques that are different."<sup>166</sup> Philosophical counsellors must be careful of falling into the same trap of simply making the categorical and unfounded declaration that all other forms of counselling are completely different from philosophical counselling.

So far in this comparison between the two fields there has still not emerged a clear distinction between philosophical counselling and those forms of counselling which use philosophical approaches but are based in psychology. What at one time seemed like the distinctive outlines of philosophical counselling as opposed to psychotherapy are rendered all the more blurred by the fact that, not only have many psychotherapists effectively employed philosophy in their practice, some philosophers have deliberately utilized psychology in theirs. For example, psychologist James Elliott combines applied philosophy, which he has termed "Anthetic Therapy," with psychotherapy and religion to offer what he calls "Clinical Philosophy."<sup>167</sup> Philosopher Pierre Grimes, has worked since 1978 with a method he calls "Philosophical Midwifery," in which he uses Socratic philosophy to help persons to deliver themselves of what are considered false beliefs. In a recent publication about his work Grimes calls Philosophical Midwifery the combination of a mode of psychotherapy and a mode of philosophical counselling.<sup>168</sup> These procedural methods in the field of philosophical counselling are manifestly unlike philosophical counselling as it was originally conceived by Gerd Achenbach and his followers. In fact, Achenbach has himself recently maintained that the relationship of philosophical practice to psychotherapy "no longer has the structure of a division of labor, but rather is a relationship of cooperation and competition, that is, a dialectic relationship."<sup>169</sup>

The questions that remains to be answered then is, If philosophical counselling and psychotherapy are indeed so close in their theory and practice, what remains to serve as a

definition of philosophical counselling that will adequately differentiate it from psychotherapy? And, furthermore, if in fact it is not necessary to differentiate philosophical counselling from psychotherapy in order for philosophical counselling to be a legitimate practice in its own right, what is a morally and intellectually responsible, as well as feasible, model of philosophical counselling that is not merely its differentiation from psychotherapy but will address the problems inherent in current normative theories and descriptions of practice discussed in the preceding chapters?

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## NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

- <sup>1</sup> Achenbach, Gerd. "Philosophy, Philosophical Practice, and Psychotherapy." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 63.
- <sup>2</sup> Held, Barbara E. *Back to Reality: A Critique of Postmodern Theory in Psychotherapy*. New York: Norton, 1995. 13.
- <sup>3</sup> Held, 30.
- <sup>4</sup> Achenbach. Ibid, 62.
- <sup>5</sup> Held, 30.
- <sup>6</sup> Achenbach. Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Held, Ibid, 13, 15.
- <sup>8</sup> Ruschmann, Eckart. Foundations Of Philosophical Counseling. Paper presented at the Third International Conference on Philosophical Practice. New York, July 1996. 4.
- <sup>9</sup> The subheading titles in this chapter were inspired by Rachel B. Blass's examination of other attempts to delineate the domain of philosophical counselling in her article entitled "The 'Person' in Philosophical Counselling vs. Psychotherapy and the Possibility of Interchange between the Fields" in the *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1996. 277-296.
- <sup>10</sup> New York: Brooks/Cole, 1996 ed.
- <sup>11</sup> Corey, 9.
- <sup>12</sup> Corey. Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Corey, 464.
- <sup>14</sup> Ruschmann, 4.
- <sup>15</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "Philosophy as if it matters: The Practice Of Philosophical Counseling." *Critical Review* Vol. 6, No.4 1993. 595.
- <sup>16</sup> Schuster Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Segal, Steven. "Meaning Crisis: Philosophical Counseling and Psychotherapy." in Lahav and Tillmanns, 119.
- <sup>18</sup> Mijuskovic, Ben. "Some Reflections on Philosophical Counseling and Psychotherapy." In Lahav and Tillmanns 92.
- <sup>19</sup> Lahav, Ran. "Introduction." In Lahav and Tillmanns. xv.
- <sup>20</sup> Lahav, Ran. "A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counselling: Worldview Interpretation." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 6.
- <sup>21</sup> Gluck, Andrew. "Philosophical Practice in career Counseling and Management Consulting." In *Perspectives in Philosophical Practice*. Wim van der Vlist ed. Groningen, Holland: Vereniging voor Filosofische Praktijk, 1997. 202.
- <sup>22</sup> Miller, Nancy E. et al. *Psychodynamic Treatment Research*. New York: Basic, 1993. xx.
- <sup>23</sup> Miller. Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> Schefczyk, Michael. "Philosophical Counseling as a Critical examination of Life-Directing Conceptions." in Lahav and Tillmanns. 76.
- <sup>25</sup> Lahav, Ran. "A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counselling: Worldview Interpretation." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 7.
- <sup>26</sup> Lahav. Ibid, 21.
- <sup>27</sup> Corey, 465.
- <sup>28</sup> Ellis, Albert. "The basic clinical theory of Rational-Emotive Therapy." *Handbook of Rational-emotive Therapy*. Albert Ellis and R. Grier eds. New York: Springer, 1977. 3-34.
- <sup>29</sup> Corey, 317.
- <sup>30</sup> Ellis, Albert. *Reason And Emotion In Psychotherapy*. New York: Lyle Stuart, 1970 ed. 35.
- <sup>31</sup> Corey, 322-324.
- <sup>32</sup> For a detailed philosophical discussion of the relationship of the emotions to reason see *Explaining Emotions* edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: U of California P., 1980). See also *Perspective on*

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*Self-Deception* Edited by Brian P. McLaughlin and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: U of California P., 1988).

<sup>33</sup> Cohen. Elliot. "Philosophical Counselling: Some Roles of Critical Thinking." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 124-125.

<sup>34</sup> Corey, 465.

<sup>35</sup> Corey, 466, 469.

<sup>36</sup> From an e-mail message from Tim Lebon, March 15, 1998 in which he cites his interview with Marinoff in the UK journal *Philosophy Now*. March 1998.

<sup>37</sup> Web page located at <http://members.aol.com/timlebon/extherapy.htm>

<sup>38</sup> Corey, 471.

<sup>39</sup> Corey, 171.

<sup>40</sup> Corey, 469.

<sup>41</sup> Cohen. Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, chapter 2 of Barbara S. Held's book, *Back to Reality: A Critique of Postmodern Theory in Psychotherapy*. New York: Norton, 1995.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>45</sup> From a web-site reproduction of an interview with Lou Marinoff by Tim Lebon published in *Philosophy Now – A Magazine of Ideas*. Edited by Richard Lewis. <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/kis/schools/hums/philosophy/PhilNowHome.html>

<sup>46</sup> Mijuskovic, 92.

<sup>47</sup> See Miller, Nancy E. et al. *Psychodynamic Treatment Research*. New York: Basic. 1993.

<sup>48</sup> Cheng, Chung-Ying. "From Self-Cultivation to Philosophical Counselling: An Introduction." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. Vol. 23, No. 3. Sept. 1996, 254.

<sup>49</sup> Held, 58.

<sup>50</sup> Frank, Jerome D. and Julia B. Frank. *Persuasion & Healing*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1991 ed. 10, 11.

<sup>51</sup> Lahav, Ran. "A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counseling : Worldview Interpretation." In Lahav and Tillmanns, 14.

<sup>52</sup> Pfeifer, Karl. "Philosophy outside the academy: The role of philosophy in people-oriented professions and the prospects for philosophical counseling." *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines*. Autumn, 1994. Vol. 14, No. 2. 60.

<sup>53</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "Sartre's Words: A Paradigm for Self-Description in Philosophical Counselling." In van der Vlist 24.

<sup>54</sup> Boele, Dries. "The Training of a Philosophical Counsellor." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 38-9.

<sup>55</sup> Corey, See esp. chapter two.

<sup>56</sup> Mijuskovic, 96-7.

<sup>57</sup> Fleming, Jesse Charles. "Philosophical Counselling and Asian Philosophy." In van der Vlist. 285.

<sup>58</sup> Marinoff, Louis. "Philosophy Meets Pirandello: Six Professions in Search of a Scheme." In van der Vlist. 111.

<sup>59</sup> Gruengard, Ora. "Mindanalysis: Ideas from Brentano and Locke" In van der Vlist. 212.

<sup>60</sup> Lahav, Ran. "Philosophical Counseling and Taoism: Wisdom and Lived Philosophical Understanding." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. Vol. 23, No. 3. Sept. 1996, 260.

<sup>61</sup> A thought provoking polemic on this issue has been published on the web by Michael Russell entitled "The Philosopher as Personal Consultant." *The Philosopher's Magazine*. London: <http://www.philosophers.co.uk/current/russell.htm>.

<sup>62</sup> Lahav. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. 263.

<sup>63</sup> Russell, Michael. "The Philosopher as Personal Consultant." *The Philosopher's Magazine*. London: <http://www.philosophers.co.uk/current/russell.htm>.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid..

<sup>65</sup> Ibid..

<sup>66</sup> Ibid..

- <sup>67</sup> McCall, Catherine. "Jobs for Philosophers: Philosophical Inquiry – Origin and Development." *Perspectives in Philosophical Practice: Collected Lecture of the Second International Congress on Philosophical Practice*. Wim van der Vlist ed. Leusden: 1996. 71.
- <sup>68</sup> Corey, 467-8. See also Fischer et al. *Psychology Today*. New York: Random House, 1975. 681, 684.
- <sup>69</sup> From Jürgen Habermas's *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Jeremy Shapiro trans. Boston: Beacon, 1971. As discussed in Georgia Warnke's *Justice and Interpretation*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT press, 1993 ed. 101-102.
- <sup>70</sup> Ruschmann, Eckart. "Foundations Of Philosophical Counseling." Unpublished presentation paper for the Third International Conference on Philosophical Practice. New York, July22-25, 1997. 6.
- <sup>71</sup> Mijuskovic, 92.
- <sup>72</sup> Corey, 467-8.
- <sup>73</sup> Corey, 320.
- <sup>74</sup> Corey, 319, 320.
- <sup>75</sup> Corey, 467-8.
- <sup>76</sup> Tuedio, James A. "Postmodern Perspectives in Philosophical Practice" In van der Vlist. 183.
- <sup>77</sup> Mijuskovic, 92.
- <sup>78</sup> Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *The Enigma of Health*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996. 169.
- <sup>79</sup> Ruschmann, Eckart. "Foundations Of Philosophical Counseling." Unpublished presentation paper for the Third International Conference on Philosophical Practice. New York, July22-25, 1997. 6.
- <sup>80</sup> Lahav, Ran. "Introduction." In Lahav and Tillmanns. xv.
- <sup>81</sup> Ruschmann. Ibid, 6.
- <sup>82</sup> Jopling, David A. "Philosophical Counselling, Truth and Self- Interpretation." *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 13, No. 3, 1996. 298.
- <sup>83</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "The practice of Sartre's philosophy in philosophical counseling and existential psychotherapy." *The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly*. Vol. 44 Jan.1995. 111.
- <sup>84</sup> Jopling. Ibid, 298.
- <sup>85</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "Sartre' 5 Words A Paradigm For Self- Description In Philosophical Counseling." In van der Vlist. 32.
- <sup>86</sup> Norman, Barbara. "Philosophical Counselling: The Arts of Ecological Relationship and Interpretation." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 52-3.
- <sup>87</sup> See Daniel C. Dennett's, *Brainstorms*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1993 ed.
- <sup>88</sup> This characterization of the patient/psychotherapist relationship is based on Gadamer's example of a similar non-awareness of the meaning of one's own responses when they are testimony in a court of law in response to questions posed by lawyers who alone are aware of the context of their questions. See his essay "The Philosophical Foundations of the Twentieth Century" in his book *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. David E. Linge trans. and ed. Berkeley: U of California P., 1977. 121.
- <sup>89</sup> Inspired by a communication from Todd Moody to the "phil-counsel" e-mail discussion group at phil-counsel@freelance.com. Sept. 1997.
- <sup>90</sup> See David A. Jopling's paper entitled "First Do No Harm": Over-Philosophizing and Pseudo-Philosophizing in Philosophical Counselling." Forthcoming in the proceedings of the Third International Conference on Philosophical Practice in New York. 1997.
- <sup>91</sup> May, Rollo. *Freedom and Destiny*. New York: Dell, 1981. 20, 19.
- <sup>92</sup> Corey, 466.
- <sup>93</sup> Corey, 469.
- <sup>94</sup> Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *The Enigma of Health*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996. 168.
- <sup>95</sup> Mijuskovic, 92.
- <sup>96</sup> Mijuskovic. Ibid.
- <sup>97</sup> Cohen, 121-131.
- <sup>98</sup> Blass, Rachel B. "The 'Person' in Philosophical Counselling vs. Psychotherapy and the Possibility of Interchange between the Fields." *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 13, No. 3, 1996. 291.
- <sup>99</sup> Lahav, Ran. "Introduction." In Lahav and Tillmanns. xv.

- <sup>100</sup> Westen, Drew. "Cultural, Emotional, and Unconscious Aspects of Self." *The Relational Self: Theoretical Convergences in Psychoanalysis & Social Psychology*. Rebecca C. Curtis ed. New York: Guilford Press, 1991. 203.
- <sup>101</sup> Michael, Schefczyk. "Philosophical Counselling as a Critical Examination of Life-Directing Conceptions." In Lahav and Tillmanns, 80-81.
- <sup>102</sup> Corey, 467.
- <sup>103</sup> Blass, Rachel. "On the Possibility of Self-Transcendence: Philosophical Counselling, Zen, and The Psychological Perspective." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. Vol. 23, No. 3. Sept. 1996, 278.
- <sup>104</sup> Frankl, Viktor E. *The Will to Meaning*. New York: Meridian, 1988 ed. 162.
- <sup>105</sup> Schuster. *Critical Review*. 598.
- <sup>106</sup> Schuster. *Ibid*.
- <sup>107</sup> Corey, 470.
- <sup>108</sup> See, for example, Ellis, Albert. *Reason And Emotion In Psychotherapy*. New York: Lyle Stuart, 1970 ed. 35.
- <sup>109</sup> See Corey, Gerald. *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. New York: Brooks/Cole, 1996 ed.
- <sup>110</sup> Corey, 9.
- <sup>111</sup> Ellis, Albert. *Reason And Emotion In Psychotherapy*. New York: Lyle Stuart, 1970 ed. 183, 187.
- <sup>112</sup> Lahav, Ran. "What is Philosophical in Philosophical Counselling?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 13, No. 3, 1996. 263.
- <sup>113</sup> Lahav. *Ibid*.
- <sup>114</sup> Lahav, Ran. "Introduction." In Lahav and Tillmanns. xii.
- <sup>115</sup> Lahav *Ibid*, x.
- <sup>116</sup> Lahav. *Ibid*.
- <sup>117</sup> See the section under the subheading "The Assumptive World" in their book *Persuasion and Healing*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993 ed. 24-34.
- <sup>118</sup> Frankl. 15.
- <sup>119</sup> Hall, Calvin S. and Gardner Lindzey. *Theories of Personality*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1970 ed. 559-564.
- <sup>120</sup> Hall. *Ibid*, 559-564.
- <sup>121</sup> Italics added for emphasis.
- <sup>122</sup> Ellis, Albert and Raymond J. Yeager. *Why Some Therapies Don't Work*. Buffalo: Prometheus, 1989.
- <sup>123</sup> Achenbach, Gerd B. "About the center of philosophical practice." In van der Vlist. 12.
- <sup>124</sup> Schefczyk, Michael. "Philosophical Counseling as a Critical Examination of Life-Directing Conceptions." in Lahav and Tillmanns. 76.
- <sup>125</sup> Lahav, Ran. "A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counseling : Worldview Interpretation." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 10.
- <sup>126</sup> Zijlstra, Bauke. "The Philosophical Counsellor As An Equilibrist." In van der Vlist. 35, 41.
- <sup>127</sup> Zijlstra. *Ibid*.
- <sup>128</sup> Marinoff, Louis. "On the Emergence of Ethical of Ethical Counseling: Considerations and Two Cases Studies." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 179.
- <sup>129</sup> Ellis, Albert. *Reason And Emotion In Psychotherapy*. New York: Lyle Stuart, 1970 ed. 36-37.
- <sup>130</sup> Ellis and Yeager. *Why Some Therapies Don't Work*. 23-24.
- <sup>131</sup> Schuster. *Critical Review*. 588.
- <sup>132</sup> Jopling D. A. "Philosophical Counselling, Truth and Self-Interpretation." *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol.13, No. 3, 1996. 307-8.
- <sup>133</sup> Jopling. *Ibid*.
- <sup>134</sup> Jopling. *Ibid*.
- <sup>135</sup> Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1991 ed. 43, 66.
- <sup>136</sup> Frank, J.D. "Psychotherapy, rhetoric, and hermeneutics: Implications for practice and research. *Psychotherapy*. 24, 300.
- <sup>137</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. *Ibid*, 589.

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- <sup>138</sup> Achenbach, Gerd B. "Philosophy, Philosophical Practice, and Psychotherapy." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 63.
- <sup>139</sup> Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993 ed. 70-73.
- <sup>140</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>141</sup> Corey, 463.
- <sup>142</sup> Rosenau, Pauline Marie. *Post-Modernism and the Social Science*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992. 45.
- <sup>143</sup> McCall, Catherine. "Jobs for Philosophers: Philosophical Inquiry – Origin and Development." In van der Vlist ed. Leusden: 1996. 86.
- <sup>144</sup> Lahav, Ran. "A Conceptual Framework for philosophical Counselling: Worldview Interpretation." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 6.
- <sup>145</sup> Lahav. Ibid, 6.
- <sup>146</sup> Clayton, Colin and Nick Dianuzzo. "The Community Of Enquiry Vs. Psychotherapy. The Process of Thinking in the Struggle to Free Ideas and Imagination and the Process of Rehabilitation and Prevention of Drug Abuse." (paper presented at "Das Philosophische Denken von Kindern - Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference Academia Verlag, 1992) 10.
- <sup>147</sup> Blass, Rachel B. "The 'Person' in Philosophical Counselling vs. Psychotherapy and the Possibility of Interchange between the Fields." *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol.13, No.3, 1996. 280.
- <sup>148</sup> Blass. Ibid, 282.
- <sup>149</sup> Blass Ibid.
- <sup>150</sup> Blass. Ibid, 284.
- <sup>151</sup> Corey, 464.
- <sup>152</sup> Achenbach, Gerd. "Philosophy, Philosophical Practice, and Psychotherapy." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 63.
- <sup>153</sup> Pfeifer, Karl. "Philosophy outside the academy: The role of philosophy in people-oriented professions and the prospects for philosophical counseling." *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines*. Autumn, 1994. Vol. 14, No.267. 67.
- <sup>154</sup> Boele, Dries. "The Training of a Philosophical Counselor." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 46.
- <sup>155</sup> Frankl, Victor E. *The Will to Meaning*. New York: Penguin, 1988 ed. 87.
- <sup>156</sup> Freud, Sigmund. *Briefe 1873-1939*. S. Fisher-Verlag: Frankfurt am Main, 1960. Quoted in Frankl, Victor E. *The Will to Meaning*. New York: Penguin, 1988 ed. 87.
- <sup>157</sup> Frankl. Ibid, 91.
- <sup>158</sup> Segal, 119.
- <sup>159</sup> Cohen, 124.
- <sup>160</sup> Mijuskovic, 92.
- <sup>161</sup> Ellis, Albert. *Reason And Emotion In Psychotherapy*. New York: Lyle Stuart, 1970 ed. 38.
- <sup>162</sup> Ellis. Ibid, 36.
- <sup>163</sup> Also sometimes referred to as direct or naïve realism.
- <sup>164</sup> McCall, Catherine. "Jobs for Philosophers: Philosophical Inquiry – Origin and Development." *Perspectives in Philosophical Practice: Collected Lecture of the Second International Congress on Philosophical Practice*. Wim van der Vlist ed. Leusden: 1996. 81-85.
- <sup>165</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "The Practice of Sartre's Philosophy in Philosophical Counseling." *The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly*. 100.
- <sup>166</sup> "Dynamic Psychotherapy and Behavior Therapy: Are They Irreconcilable?" In *Converging Themes In Psychotherapy*. Marvin Goldfried Ed. New York: Springer, 1982. 193.
- <sup>167</sup> Anethics Institute pamphlet received July, 1997.
- <sup>168</sup> Grimes, Pierre. *Philosophical Midwifery*. Huntington Beach: The Mind Opening Academy, 1996. 2.
- <sup>169</sup> Achenbach, Gerd B. "Philosophy, Philosophical Practice, and Psychotherapy." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 72.



## CHAPTER 4

### A SYNTHESIS OF FUNDAMENTALS

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will attempt to synthesize the necessary components or fundamental elements of philosophical counselling into a new model that is free of many of the problems inherent in the models that have been offered in the literature to date, such as their inability to address all of the various needs of the counselling client, and their failure to conceptualize teaching as a means to greater client autonomy. This model is meant to be more comprehensive, more positive (as opposed to the negative characterization of what it is *not*), and more definitive than any currently available in the philosophical counselling literature. It is a more adequate and defensible model – one that is better able to meet normative criteria of what ought to be present in the practice of philosophical counselling than can be found elsewhere.

In this chapter I will critique both the empirical and theoretical problems inherent in Achenbach's postmodern conception of philosophical counselling. A number of inadequacies in contemporary descriptive and normative accounts of philosophical counselling methodologies will then be discussed in preparation for their resolution within the new model presented in subsequent sections.

That philosophical counselling involves a number of stages is not new, but writers have not been in agreement as to what these stages are, how they come about, and where they are located along the continuum of counselling sessions. This chapter will present four stages in philosophical counselling in terms of which philosophical counselling can be usefully conceptualized. During the course of counselling, the purposes of the

participants and hence the modes of activity in which they engage undergo changes. The stage model provides a useful way of characterizing these changes. These stages bring to light a shift in the counselling process from a more analytical style of reasoning early on to what may be referred to as a transcendental approach, as well as the need not only for open-ended dialogue but also for a consciously didactic discourse.

The mostly-overlooked preventative or proactive element in philosophical counselling will also be examined in order to establish how it may serve as a distinguishing feature in the attempt to differentiate philosophical counselling from psychotherapy. But before a model of philosophical counselling can be offered it is necessary to critique the most powerful argument that has been offered in the philosophical counselling literature against the a priori acceptability of such a model.

#### 4.2 Problems in Contemporary Accounts of Philosophical Counselling

It is generally held that the three basic purposes or objectives of philosophical counselling are the resolution of problems, the enhancement of the client's autonomy and empowering the client to avoid or solve for herself future problems of a certain sort. In order to accomplish this the client must be helped to develop both practical and theoretical knowledge as well as a particular kind of disposition. Philosophical counselling should therefore help the client to develop the kind of awareness that deepens self-knowledge and a vigilant moral consciousness. It should help the client to develop the ability to act more autonomously by assisting her in gaining knowledge of how to choose to act more appropriately, sensibly, and well. More than this, philosophical counselling should encourage the client to reflect more critically – in the philosophical sense – about her actions and circumstances. This kind of reflection will help her in resolving immediate problems, and to gain more theoretical knowledge, that is, knowledge which can broaden her understanding of why some events occurred, why some actions are better than others, and whether or not her life's circumstances must remain as they are. Improvement of these two types of knowledge – Aristotle called them “practical” and “theoretical” knowledge<sup>1</sup> – are a means to enhancing the client's

autonomy in that they enable her to make wise choices and avoid merely being caused to react from habit to life's events as they confront her. Furthermore, philosophical counselling should empower the client by engaging her in a critical examination and reconstruction of the events in her life, using insights that arise from her active participation in philosophical dialogue to address her own concerns and, ultimately, to avoid future problems. This multifaceted goal of philosophical counselling has not been adequately met by any of the models found in the contemporary literature.

The most noteworthy problem in contemporary accounts is the assumption of many writers that their selective experiential account or conceptual viewpoint is an adequate expression of the process as a whole. The problems inherent in this limited perception in much of the literature is best illustrated in the ancient Jain parable of the seven blind men who are asked to describe an elephant. The one who is holding its tail says the elephant is like a rope, the one touching its ear says it's like a large sheet of leather, the one whose arms are wrapped around one of its legs says it is like a tree trunk, the one holding its trunk says it is definitely like a snake, and so on.<sup>2</sup> The point of this parable is to illustrate how one point of view, although it may accurately describe some aspect of what is being examined, may not represent the entire picture, and that a single point of view of a complex issue leaves out a number of essential other ones. Many contemporary accounts of philosophical counselling are based on particular points of view as developed from particular modes of practice. Theories are then abstracted from these perspectives and models are extrapolated and mistakenly advanced as exemplifying the entire multi-limbed "animal." Put into normative terms, this parable asks us to consider the question, "What must be present in order for there to be a complete elephant?" The model I propose is both normatively and descriptively comprehensive since it is based not only on my own practice but on an exhaustive review of the literature.

Descriptive representations of philosophical counselling tend to be based on accounts of actual cases, and often focus on those elements the author has found to be most noteworthy in his or her own practice. A review of the literature reveals that many journal articles are either based on case studies that are short-term counselling relationships – three or four sessions at most – or they contain only excerpted highlights

of longer relationships.<sup>3</sup> The particular case studies or excerpts of cases chosen by practitioners for publication are selected precisely because the authors feel these are the best evidential illustrations of what they believe constitutes philosophical counselling. But both a short-term case study and a segment of a longer case only reveal a fragment of what is in fact the cumulative and developmental process of a long-term counselling relationship. In other words, while the author of an article may come to the conclusion that, for example, what clients desire from philosophical counselling, and what they receive most benefit from, is to have their immediate problems resolved, this conclusion may be based on the fact that what is noted by the author are only those counselling sessions in which the client's problem was addressed and finally resolved. Or it may have been based on the most active, dynamic, and therefore "interesting" segments of a long series of counselling sessions, those segments in which, again, the problem was considered and solved. The author then argues from these excerpted segments that all philosophical counselling is concerned with the resolution of immediate problems.

Alternately, a writer may conclude that clients want assistance in analyzing and adjusting their worldviews – that this is, and ought to be, of central concern in all of philosophical counselling. Ran Lahav's goal in much of his writing is to "delineate a broad common denominator to as many philosophical approaches as possible" with his claim that philosophical counselling can be construed as "worldview interpretation."<sup>4</sup> But this conception of worldview interpretation as "a broad common denominator" in all of philosophical counselling is supported by only a few samples of select, short-term cases, or on excerpts from long-term cases in which either the client has expressed the desire that world view interpretation take precedence, or in which the counsellor has construed the needs of the client as being worldview interpretation.<sup>5</sup> All other events in these cases are then interpreted by both writer and reader as merely peripheral and supportive of the central goal of worldview interpretation. But is this a fair or adequate reflection of the inherent dynamic and evolutionary nature of philosophical counselling sessions as they are experienced by other counsellors? Lahav's project raises the question: while worldview interpretation may be an important element of philosophical counselling (a part of the description of the elephant), should worldview interpretation in

fact be seen as foundational to *all* of philosophical counselling (an adequate account of the entire animal); that is, should it be said that worldview interpretation is the underlying common factor during the entire hour-long session, and the underlying theme over the course of a number of sessions? The literature clearly shows that many philosophical counsellors do not think so, but fails to resolve the question of what such a “common denominator,” or perhaps a “common thread,” of philosophical counselling might be – if indeed there is one.

Furthermore, the issue of worldview interpretation raises a number of associated issues, such as what significance the practitioner ought to attribute to worldview interpretation, whether it ought to be undertaken by every practitioner, whether it ought to be done with each of his or her clients, and where in the counselling process it ought to take place.

A second problem in contemporary accounts of what constitutes philosophical counselling is what seems like an obvious contradiction between the *theory* that philosophical counselling “provides” the client with philosophical “tools” – meaning that philosophical counselling teaches the client philosophical thinking – and the lack of evidence in currently available case studies that philosophical counsellors are in fact intentionally teaching their clients anything at all, let alone philosophical reasoning skills. There exists among writers an implicit assumption that the act of counselling itself constitutes a kind of concomitant incidental teaching, and therefore philosophical counselling can simply be held to be substantively didactic although lacking in pedagogic intent. What has been inadequately addressed are three questions surrounding this issue: first, normatively, whether the philosophical counsellor *ought to be* teaching his clients anything – in light of the fact that many practitioners hold that philosophical counselling *is* nothing of the sort;<sup>6</sup> second, whether teaching *is* actually part of philosophical counselling given the fact that a number of writers argue and infer that it is;<sup>7</sup> and third, why there is so little evidence of direct teaching if this is indeed a crucial element of philosophical counselling.

Further on this same issue, Ran Lahav writes of “self-investigations”<sup>8</sup> while Shlomit Schuster writes of “self-diagnosis” conducted by clients of philosophical counsellors.

Schuster offers the writings of Augustine, Rousseau, and Sartre as examples of individuals who diagnosed themselves with philosophical problems and then set about to resolve them.<sup>9</sup> Steven Segal presents a similar case in his account of Tolstoy's existential crisis and its ultimate resolution by Tolstoy himself.<sup>10</sup> But, obviously, those historical figures who practiced philosophical self-diagnosis and self-counselling were not merely average citizens of their day. They were in fact educated men, well versed in the skills of philosophical inquiry. In contrast, the typical client who seeks out a philosophical counsellor is rarely familiar with even the most basic precepts of philosophical inquiry, let alone self-counselling. While the client may recognize *that* something is wrong, she is rarely able to articulate *what* is wrong in the form of a diagnosis, and even less likely to be able to do anything to affect a change in her habitual and problematic thinking patterns. In order to self-diagnose her philosophical problem, it would require of the client the ability to understand a philosophical perspective on whatever cognitive "discomfort" she is feeling. This takes the kind of training rarely seen in clients, and raises the question: "If the counsellor truly wishes to help the client to develop the kind of autonomy that would enable her to self-diagnose and alleviate a philosophical problem in future, should the counsellor not offer her such training as a proactive or preventative measure?"

This raises a third contentious issue in philosophical counselling, that of the relationship between the counsellor and the client. Many philosophers hold that there is and ought to be no difference between the counsellor and the client. Others have stated very emphatically that the counsellor ought never to present himself as some sort of expert, or to be the authority in the client/counsellor relationship. For example, Jon Borowicz writes that in his view

it is not esoteric knowledge possessed by the philosopher, nor greater dialectical skill that distinguishes the philosopher from the interlocutor [client]. Rather it is the philosopher's more thoroughgoing assumption of the philosophical attitude toward living that allows the

philosopher to lay claim to the title. The philosopher  
*professes* philosophy in the strict sense.<sup>11</sup>

But this raises the question, is it only a difference in attitude that differentiates the counsellor from the client? If the counsellor is to teach the client the various abilities and dispositions, or skills and tools, necessary to engage in philosophical inquiry, then it seems the counsellor clearly knows something the client does not, and he is functioning in the position of a knowledgeable authority in simply being available as a counsellor to the client. To date the literature has made little sense of the contradictory claim that the counsellor ought to function as the client's equal while at the same time he must necessarily possess an expertise in the kind of philosophical reasoning the client knows she does not have.

The fourth problem in contemporary accounts of philosophical counselling involves the failure in much of the literature to, first of all, acknowledge the evident similarities between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy, and second, to articulate those crucial differences between the two fields which do in fact seem to exist. The previous chapter attempted to bring to light the many similarities between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy when it is not narrowly construed as psychoanalysis. The differences between the two will become more apparent later on in this chapter.

Fifth, while there is strong disagreement in the literature as to whether philosophical counselling is in fact therapy or not, the question that has not been adequately addressed thus far is whether philosophical counselling *ought to be* therapy in order to meet the client's needs and expectations. It seems logical to assume that if the client wishes the counselling encounter to result in some sort of change and/or improvement for her, then it must be therapeutic in the sense that it must address and attempt to alleviate the client's problems. The question that remains is, if counselling is to be therapeutic where is this change or improvement to take place in the counselling process?

The therapy question is connected to a sixth problematic issue: the question of whether philosophical counselling ought ever to be goal-oriented. The argument that there ought *not* to be a goal in philosophical counselling raises the question of why the client arrives at the counsellor's doorstep in the first place. To argue that the client is

merely seeking conversation – as Achenbach's perspective implies – raises the question of whether what is done in philosophical counselling is nothing more than the kind of informed discussion available from a concerned friend, and for which the friend does not need a degree in philosophy. But, clearly, philosophical counselling ought to (and does) go beyond friendly discourse. Its intention is to serve the client's expressed and discovered needs for various sorts of understanding and change. Since this is its goal it is important to articulate what philosophical counselling ought to include, and why.

The literature is also divided on a seventh issue, the question of who sets the agenda to be followed in any one particular counselling session, and over the course of the totality of sessions. Unlike a friendly discussion among friends which can traverse a number of topics in a matter of moments, to be effective philosophical counselling, like any form of counselling, must remain focused on the task at hand. Philosophers at one extreme claim that the topic of discussion ought to always be set by the client, while those near the other extreme argue that in most cases the client has come to the counsellor in such a state of confusion that it is always necessary for the counsellor to construct an agenda based on what he has gleaned from the tangled narrative first offered by the client. The question this raises is: should the agenda of every session in the entire philosophical counselling relationship always be geared to immediate problem-resolution since this is what the client's introductory narrative is typically focused on?

In summary, the fact that some philosophers argue that the element of worldview interpretation expresses what is fundamental to all of philosophical counselling is analogous to saying the tail expresses what is fundamental to the entire elephant. Likewise, those who argue that therapy ought not to be considered part of philosophical counselling – because they don't see what they are doing as therapy – seem to be arguing that the trunk ought not to be considered part of the elephant while they are holding on to its tail. When writers define philosophical counselling in either-or terms – as though it is either problem-oriented or person-oriented, either open-ended or end-point oriented, either therapy or not therapy, and so on – they are making the same mistake as those who define an elephant in either-or terms – as though an elephant is either a tail or a trunk, either rope-like or round.



Going beyond the merely descriptive, it seems reasonable to say that there are a number of important but dissimilar parts that need to be present in order for the elephant not only to be *described* as an elephant but to actually *be* an elephant. Similarly there are a number of important elements that are not merely descriptive of, but must be present in any model of philosophical counselling if it is to meet the criteria of a workable method, one that is able to meet not only all of the client's various needs but the standards of a legitimate professional activity. The question then is, how can these diverse elements be amalgamated into a coherent, viable, and adequate model of philosophical counselling? How can one best answer the question, "What is philosophical counselling?" The answer lies in the recognition of the shifting dynamic and focus of the counselling encounter, which one might term "phases," "steps," or "periods" but for which I have chosen the term "stages."

#### 4.3 The Apperception of Stages

Somewhat like the mistake of assuming that the characteristics of one part of the elephant are constant throughout the entire animal, much of the philosophical counselling literature seems to contain in it the mistake of assuming that the philosophical counselling process is a constant-state process. For example, some writers argue that philosophical counselling should be concerned with the resolution of the client's immediate problems, and that this task ought to involve nothing more than a discussion. The inference these writers make by omission is that the dynamics of a discussion remains constant throughout. By "omission" I mean that most writers make no mention of the vicissitude of the day-to-day counselling process. They infer a stability in the needs and desires of the client, and a constancy in the form as well as the content of discussion, that is clearly counter-factual. Their models simply cannot account for the many changes that occur in the dynamics and focus of client/counsellor discussions. Nor do they adequately address either the needs of a variety of different clients or the various needs of a single client over time.

Notable exceptions to this assumption are Marinoff's reference to a two-stage ethical decision-making process,<sup>12</sup> Dries Boele's division of Socratic Dialogue into three stages,<sup>13</sup> and Annette Prins-Bakker's account of her relationship counselling method in six stages.<sup>14</sup> But these models all suffer from a number of inherent shortcomings that will be discussed below. For the most part, published case studies can easily lead the reader to the misperception that counselling consists of a uniform technique applied to homogeneous sessions spread out over a series of weeks or perhaps even months, that, when appropriately carried out, leads to the satisfactory resolution of a client's problem or issue. A case study may reveal a dominant theme, such as the client's desire to clarify her values, or her need to have her worldview interpreted, but, generally, the process of the counselling as presented in much of the literature can be summed up in a few words: the client arrives with a problem or issue; this is discussed during a number of similar sessions; then the client disengages from the counsellor.

But the insightful writings of some practitioners, as well as my own first-hand experience, suggest that philosophical counselling does not run a steady course, but that the practitioner is often faced with dynamic oscillations in the "climate," focus, "mood," and level of discourse within each session, and over the totality of sessions. The client's mood change substantially over the course of the sessions, going perhaps from worry to relief, and then to wonder. The client's expectations can also change from desiring relief from their immediate problem – such as, for example, "decision paralysis" – to wishing to learn how to avoid such disconcerting indecision in future. A review of long-term case studies – especially in those cases which span more than ten sessions – reveals that the counselling process does indeed consist of a series of fluid, overlapping, and inter-connected transitions, or what may be termed phases or stages, which typically tend to, but don't necessarily, follow a sequential or linear path from "problem presentation" to "problem resolution," and beyond. The existence and importance of these transitory stages in actual counselling practice has received relatively little noticed in the philosophical counselling literature.

Recall that in Marinoff's method – in which he alleviates in his clients what he calls their "decision paralysis" – the first stage consists of a clarification of options available

to the client, and the second an analysis of the outcomes of following any of those options.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, this model focuses exclusively on the element of problem resolution and does not account for the client who expresses other needs, such as the desire to learn philosophical reasoning skills in order to improve her ability to address personal problems in future and independently, or to discuss philosophical themes of interest that may be used to address personal problems indirectly.

Dries Boele describes what he perceives to be three stages within a Socratic Dialogue that might be appropriately applied to a case in philosophical counselling as follows:

First, to dissolve the obscurity of the problem by organizing it in some overall picture. Second, to analyze this picture: critically expose its structure, the attitude towards life which it reflects, and its underlying values and presuppositions. Through this process the problem reaches a clearer and more manageable form. The third objective is to encourage an attitude of readiness to examine an issue for the sake of understanding. A detached and unbiased perspective is needed for true philosophical reflection and understanding.<sup>16</sup>

Boele's first step, that of making sense out of a confusion of material, and his second step of critically examining underlying values and presuppositions seem to me to be necessary elements in philosophical counselling. But while Boele's focus is again primarily on the client's immediate problem and what can be done about it, problem resolution neither is – nor should it be – the single focus of philosophical counselling. Again, what Boele's model fails to address is the client's often expressed desire to improve her own philosophical reasoning abilities so that she may in future conduct an independent inquiry into personal problems, and the wishes of some clients to discuss topics from a perspective somewhere outside of the context of immediate problem resolution. Furthermore, Boele argues that "true philosophical reflection and understanding" requires a detached and unbiased perspective. The question this raises is whether it is in fact within any person's power to achieve the sort of detachment and the

kind of unbiased perspective that is needed in Boele's model. This model seems to suffer not only from the fatal flaw of calling for that which may in reality not be possible to achieve – a detached and unbiased perspective – but from the omission of a number of elements that are necessary if the client's varied needs and wishes are to be met.

Annette Prins-Bakker describes six stages in her relationship counselling method. These are, first, listening, asking questions to gain a clearer view of the issue or problem, and “giving comfort through his or her presence, attention, and understanding,” and encouraging the client to tell the story of her relationship from a “detached” point of view.<sup>17</sup> The second stage focus is on the individual present to the counsellor in order to allow her to understand herself not as she is defined by the relationship but in a more general and abstract manner as well as individually, “as a unique person.”<sup>18</sup> It is at this stage that she also attempts to teach her clients the tools necessary for this inquiry. In stage three she helps her clients “develop an understanding of how they conceive of themselves and their lives.”<sup>19</sup> In this stage she attempts to expose, articulate, examine, and develop her clients' philosophy of life, or what others might call their worldview. In the fourth stage Prins-Bakker encourages her clients to articulate and examine what they consider to be the phases of their lives for themselves. Stage five is a discussion of relationships in general, while in the final stage, she discusses the tensions and problems within their particular relationship with the couple.<sup>20</sup>

Although based on the specialized area of marriage counselling, Prins-Bakker's description of the six stages she experiences in her practice is to date perhaps the best recognition that the needs of clients are many and varied, and the clearest recognition that there is an underlying pattern of change and progress in many cases when the philosophical counselling process is observed in its entirety. I believe this type of practice – that is, working within a number of stages as they emerge in counselling – constitutes the most effective and most rewarding approach to philosophical counselling in that it addresses the client's needs and desires as they change over time. Note that Prins-Bakker does not focus exclusively on problem resolution. She goes one step further to include a stage at which the counsellor teaches philosophical reasoning skills to the client. But her model fails to account for one other important area of concern to many

clients that has been discussed in the literature, and that I have noted in many of my own clients who feel that their immediate personal problems have been adequately attended to. This other concern may be counted as a separate stage, and is often expressed by theorists as the ultimate end of not only philosophical counselling but philosophy in general, namely philosophical discussion that transcends the client's immediate problems when those problems no longer demand the client's undivided attention.

While Prins-Bakker's model seems to serve her well in her specialized field, some of her stages are redundant to the conception of a model that can be more generally applied. The descriptions of philosophical counselling in the literature available in English, and my own first-hand experience as a practitioner of philosophical counselling in Vancouver, Canada, have led me to the conclusion that an adequate model of philosophical counselling consists of four clearly identifiable stages: 1) "free floating," 2) immediate problem resolution, 3) teaching and learning, and 4) transcendence. As suggested by the labels I have given them, and briefly put, each stage represents a step in the process of enhancing client autonomy, and a focus on a different set of client needs as they are either expressed by the client or noted by the counsellor in discussion with the client.

Naturally these four stages are not always as clearly differentiated in practice as they may appear in this depiction. They are not independent entities which are visited individually and then left entirely behind; nor are they necessarily recursive or followed in a linear sequence, although they may be both. They overlap extensively with each other, and it is sometimes necessary to revisit a previous stage depending on the events that have occurred in the course of client's life during the week between visits to her counsellor. The stages can not be recognized merely by considering how many visits the client has made to the counsellor, nor by calculating the overall time span of the client's relationship with the counsellor. For example, stage two may be revisited after some time spent in stage three or four, while stage three may be entered immediately after stage one, and so on.

If philosophical counselling is primarily concerned with meeting the needs of the client, and if the client is to be allowed to develop her autonomy in the counselling

relationship, then it is the client's concerns, not the counselor's agenda, which should dictate at which stage the session will transpire. In other words, the counsellor should not pre-determine at which stage counselling in an upcoming session must take place, and the question of in which stage the counselling actually transpired can often only be answered in retrospect. For example, while it may seem in some case studies that the counsellor is attempting a general worldview interpretation while addressing the client's immediate problems, it is the client's focus on the examination and attempted resolution of her immediate problems which dictate that this is more accurately construed as counselling at stage two. As suggested above, what will largely determine which stage follows which, or which stage predominates the counselling process, is the nature of the issues, concerns or problems which the client brings to the counselling encounter, the client's philosophical reasoning abilities, and the client's own expressed or implied needs.

Many of the various and dissimilar conceptions of philosophical counselling and the seemingly conflicting reports of practice discussed in earlier chapters can be reconciled with this four-stage model. But more importantly, this model is best able to meet the various needs of the client. For example, this model allows for what is clearly change in the client's conception of her predicament, and progress achieved in the task of problem resolution; it is goal-oriented in that it allows for an intentional attempt to alleviate the expressed and/or discovered problems and concerns the client brings to the counselling relationship – thereby avoiding the vagueness and ambiguity of the postmodern “beyond-method” approach; it allows for the client's autonomy to be enhancement rather than merely respected; it accounts for the normative requirement of directly teaching the client philosophical reasoning skills as a means of enhancing client autonomy; and it reduces the client's dependency on the counsellor by creating in the client the ability to anticipate, and subsequently avoid, possible future problems.

Furthermore, this model meets the criteria of a legitimate approach to professional counselling, as well as the practical goals of the profession in that it allows philosophy to be a therapeutic as well as an intellectual pursuit and a way of life; it accounts for the activities of the client and the practitioner who continue their philosophical discussion beyond resolution of the client's immediate problems; it is the articulation of a teachable

method and the substantiation of an expertise which gives both the profession and the practitioner the credibility they deserve; it plainly differentiates the practice of philosophical counselling from psychotherapy; and it allows for a clear articulation of the process to any prospective client.

Philosophical counselling, according to this model, begins typically with what I shall call "Stage 1."

### Stage 1) "Free floating"

It is this initial stage that enables the client to first learn about philosophical counselling. It is also the stage at which the counsellor ought to make himself as familiar as possible with the needs and wishes of his client so that they may be adequately addressed in later stages. It is the time in which both client and counsellor reach their individual decisions as to whether they will be able to feel comfortable with each other in their anticipated counselling relationship.

In this stage the client may express desires as varied as the wish to learn how to become a philosopher, or the need to be rid of some terrible sense of failure, doom, or meaninglessness. A philosophical counsellor may give his client a form or questionnaire to fill out in which she is asked to describe in her own words the problem for which she is requesting the philosophical counsellor's help.<sup>21</sup> But often the client does not know, or simply cannot articulate to the counsellor what she thinks or feels the problem is, or what she wants or needs. Many people feel there is something missing in their lives, "some failure to find what they are seeking or perhaps even to *know* what they are seeking."<sup>22</sup> In such a situation the counsellor must carefully encourage the client to speak freely so that he may discover – in what is at first the client's long, complex, and often confused monologue – what is perhaps troubling her. Without this information future sessions cannot have the focus necessary to achieve the kind of problem-resolution for which many clients seek counselling. Often it is simply a matter of the counsellor listening "with the maieutic silence of the person who listens in order to allow something apparently inexpressible to emerge."<sup>23</sup>

This first stage of counselling should be the most non-directive and open-ended, or, conversely, the least end-point or goal-oriented. The philosophical counsellor's aim at this stage should not be to conduct a "dialectical dismantling"<sup>24</sup> of his client's communicative efforts. Rather he should concern himself with trying to come to as complete an understanding of his client and her predicament as possible, using both a phenomenological approach and hermeneutics – but with what Fiumara calls, "a hermeneutic experience rooted in listening."<sup>25</sup> He should note any inconsistencies, any contradictions, any strong appeals to the "authorities" in the client's life, and so on. In other words, the philosophical counsellor should approach his client with the desire to both understand and to interpret the "text" of his client's life, while resisting the temptation to either critique, approve, or recriminate since these evaluative stances can easily discourage the client from making further disclosures.

The discussion at this stage ought to be "free-floating," in that the counsellor should ask few, if any, probing or challenging questions. Again, the counsellor should be more inclined to simply be present for the client, and listen without asking any questions at all, since the client is more likely to "open up" if he first listens "care-fully," taking things in sympathetically, empathetically, and patiently, than if he attempts to "invade the territory" of the client with intrusive questions. Fiumara points out that asking any question "pre-determines the reply."<sup>26</sup> The way in which a question is posed "limits and conditions the quality, and level, of any answer that can possibly be worked out," and hinders the revelation of information from beyond the intended conceptual scope of the question that might have been forth-coming.<sup>27</sup> Asking a question may inadvertently determine the direction of the subsequent dialogue with the client since "the answer collaborates with the question and produces everything that is demanded of it, and *nothing else*."<sup>28</sup> Therefore the counsellor needs to understand that at this stage it is not as important for him to ask questions as it is for him to open himself up to the so-called "risks" inherent in "the transforming experience of proper hearing."<sup>29</sup>

To accomplish this the counsellor should allow his client to "get things off her chest," or to "unload her burden," while he listens without reserve and with as few assumptions and preconceptions in mind as possible. His listening should not be pseudo



listening (in which he only pretends to listen while thinking of what he will say as soon as the client has finished speaking); it should not be self-centered listening (in which he listens closely to only those points which agree with his own point of view); it should not be selective listening (in which he hears only some of what is said but ignores the rest as not worth hearing); it should not be defensive listening (in which he hears what the client says as an attack on his own position); and it should not be insensitive listening (in which he takes what is said literally or only at face value).<sup>30</sup> Not making these errors in listening will help the counsellor to apprehend most clearly what his client means to say.

The counsellor should offer few if any observations or explanations at this stage, knowing that a hasty and premature "diagnosis" may lead off in the wrong direction. Not only that, but he needs to be aware of the fact that any insights he offers may frustrate a more basic need felt by the client: the need to speak freely. By tacitly permitting the client this freedom, the unhindered act of talking may itself prove to be cathartic for her, and thereby therapeutic.

For example, the client may have presented the counsellor with a simple, but enormously all-encompassing, statement of feeling hopeless or depressed about life. By means of both silent listening and tactfully encouraging her to speak uninhibitedly the counsellor may come to recognize that his client's underlying "problem" is in fact worry about her grown son's resistance to finding a job, which in turn has led her to feel that she has been a failure as his mother, and so on. The counsellor's maieutic listening and questioning for the sake of understanding allows the client's concerns to become expressed in ever more specific and concrete terms, and thereby become more visible to both the counsellor and his client. But any discoveries made by the counsellor at this point tend to be only the tip of the iceberg.

In my own practice I have found that at this stage listening is my most important function. But I have also discovered that, when I do feel compelled to speak, the words that have had the most beneficial effect on my clients were words of reassurance. Expressing reassurance substantially enhances the maieutic function of listening. Many individuals will seek counselling because they have come to believe, or they have been

convinced by someone, that they are somehow abnormal and/or inferior to others. They feel themselves either incapable of making rational decisions, or don't trust that the decisions they have made are good ones. A person may also have sought advice from friends or relatives and gained little insight from them, or experienced non-satisfying or ineffectual counselling prior to visiting the philosophical counsellor. This may have led her to fear that her situation is totally hopeless, and/or that she is completely incompetent, stupid, crazy, or bad.\*\* For example, after telling me about herself for half an hour, one client hesitantly asked of me, "Are you sure you can tolerate someone as awful as I am?" Because of the pervasiveness of such negative self-images and low self-esteem among clients it is important that the counsellor truthfully reassure his client early in this stage that her situation is not hopeless, that perhaps not all of her decisions have been poor ones, and that she is indeed worthy of the assistance he is offering her. This offers hope, and hope is a strong catalyst for development in human beings.

Clearly it is in this stage that Achenbach's characterization of philosophical practice is most appropriate. In this stage, "Philosophy does not *use* methods, it *develops* methods; it does not *use* theories, it *develops* theories."<sup>31</sup> It is also in this first stage that Achenbach's four fundamental rules for philosophical practitioners seem most relevant. First, the philosophical counsellor should never treat all clients in the same way, but should adapt himself to their different needs – it is in this first stage that the counsellor comes to understand the needs of his clients. Second, he ought to try to understand his client and help her to want to understand – again, this is in line with the dynamics of this first stage. Third, he should never attempt to change his client but avoid all pre-conceived goals and intentions – clearly it is rarely possible to articulate any sort of goal so early in the counselling relationship, when the problem still appears so vague and disjointed, except, of course, for the very general goal of the eventual alleviation of the client's concerns or problems. And fourth, in two parts: he should try to help the client "amplify" or enlarge her perspective or "the frame of her story;" and he ought to "nurture" his client with whatever seems appropriate to the circumstance.<sup>32</sup> Again, these

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\*\* Psychiatrists Jerome and Julia Frank point out that research has shown "people seek [psychotherapeutic] help not in response to the symptoms themselves but because their efforts to cope with the symptoms have failed." (in *Persuasion and Healing*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993 ed. 38).

“rules” seem justified in this first “free-floating” stage in that they achieve the purpose of the first stage, namely the counsellor’s desire to come to as accurate an understanding of his client’s concerns and problems as possible. Furthermore, these rules are instrumental in achieving the purpose of the counselling session in general, namely progress toward the alleviation of those problems and concerns as understood by both the counsellor and his client.

A number of different eventualities can result from this first stage. The first three are far less common than the fourth. First, the client will often have gone through a “catharsis” simply by being able to speak freely for the duration of an hour without being challenged or criticized. This may lead the client to terminate the counselling relationship at this point.

Second, the client may simply ask to be taught how to “think about things in life like a philosopher.” This should lead counselling into the teaching stage.

Third, the client may express the desire to “discover the meaning of life,” or to be able to see her life more holistically. In this case it is appropriate for counselling to move into the transcendent stage.

By far the most common occurrence is the fourth possibility. After having given the philosophical counsellor an overview of what she considers to be the sum total of her “problems,” the client will ask him to discuss with her a particularly unsettling aspect of her life, or a particular issue that she feels is most urgent. This will lead naturally into problem resolution.

## Stage 2) Immediate Problem Resolution

This stage is the most likely to follow the first simply because the psychotherapeutic model of problem resolution – “diagnoses of the problem is followed by treatment” – predominates in the thinking in most Western nations. Despite the fact that well-known philosopher Jürgen Habermas argues that “the *moral* intuitions of everyday life are not in need of clarification by the philosopher,”<sup>33</sup> the majority of individuals who seek out the

philosophical counsellor do so primarily in order to have him assist in the alleviation of one or more seemingly irresolvable personal moral problems.

Clearly, individuals are quite capable of dealing with most of their own problems on a day-to-day basis. It is when problems become too complex, as, for example, when values seem to conflict, when facts appear contradictory, or when the individual's reasoning about a problem becomes trapped within a circle, that she will tend to seek counsel. This stage addresses this need and clears the way for possible future development in the client's philosophical reasoning abilities.

Here the philosophical counsellor is called upon to metaphorically help untangle the client's "knot" of problems, and sort out the strands of the unmanageable mass into more comprehensible separate particulars which can then be more readily dealt with. Or, conversely, the counsellor can be said to help the client to examine the pieces of the "puzzle" of problems in her life, to recognize their inter-connectedness, and to fit them together into a more easily understood pattern. It is at this stage that the philosophical counsellor must assist his client in what Zijlstra has termed the client's quest to restore her disturbed equilibrium of life.<sup>34</sup>

This is the stage in which the primary question or concern expressed by the client is in the form of, "I don't know what to do about..." If it concerns an ethical or moral issue the question may be asked, "What is the right thing to do?" The counsellor is often faced with a mystery which he must help the client solve by means of listening for clues in what the client says. In this stage the client will often implicitly demand of the counsellor that he assume the role of "authority." This does not mean that either the client or the counsellor see the counsellor as an authority in the overarching political or epistemic sense of his having or knowing the one, final, and correct, perspective on every issue, but rather in the sense that he possesses a professional aptitude – in the form of practical experience and years of academic study – which have produced in him the reasoning abilities necessary to reach the level of philosophical insights and dialogical competence necessary for "solving the mystery" not yet possessed by the client. While the counsellor must be respectful of the client's opinions he should keep in mind that the

client's own reasoning ability has so far not served to alleviate the predicament which motivated her to enter into the counselling relationship with him in the first place.

A part of the counsellor's "authority" comes from his ability to take a more universal perspective, or a more "objective" perspective, that is, a view from outside the client's life and problems – perspectives which the client herself may not be capable of at this time – that allows him to recognize those possibilities for untangling the client's "knot" of problems that have not been visible to her, or to see the potential pattern of the puzzle pieces she has not yet noticed. Epistemologically speaking it may therefore be said that at this point in the counselling process there is a one-sided expertise located in the counsellor. But the knowledge of how to resolve a particular client's problem is not located within the counsellor nor can it be found within the counselling literature. This knowledge evolves within the discourse between the counsellor and client, and may be said to be situated between them.<sup>35</sup>

Ideally the counsellor should approach the exploration of the client's problem not as the removed, academic professional "outsider" looking in on an alien life, but as a fellow human being, an "insider" who is himself familiar with the problems that may be experienced in everyday life.<sup>36</sup> For the client this avoids a cold, clinical atmosphere in the counselling relationship that can arise when she feels that the counsellor is merely attempting to analyze her. For the counsellor it is an empathetic approach, one in which the client's concerns may resonate with the counsellor's own life experiences, thereby affording a better understanding of the client's concerns. Sometimes the needs of the client are satisfied just in the process of cooperatively identifying and simplifying the knot of problems, or coming to a joint understanding of the various pieces of the puzzle. This may give the client the confidence to decide independently what she ought to do about it, and she may therefore terminate the counselling relationship.

For those clients who choose to continue working with the counsellor, the process in this stage should be primarily analytic, similar to the approach found in North American and British academic philosophy, meaning that the whole is reduced and sorted into its parts for easier analyses, and that it proceeds from these particulars to the construction of a more holistic conception of how the client's problem is situated within the context of

her life and the greater community, and how she might best carry on with life. But discussion, even when it concerns the client's most basic beliefs, generally must remain within the client's paradigm or belief system, rather than – as will occur in stage four – questioning or challenging that paradigm itself. For example, if the client's expressed concern is her relationship to God, discussion must focus on the problem of the relationship rather than dealing with the more fundamental or paradigmatic metaphysical concern regarding the possibility of God's existence in the first place.

It is a logic-based, problem-oriented approach in which the client benefits from free access to the philosophical reasoning abilities possessed by the philosophical counsellor. It is here that the counsellor must shift the hermeneutic process from simply trying to understand the client's problems to critique in the form of inductive and deductive inquiry. The philosophical counsellor must now ask more clarifying, and sometimes challenging, questions, to not only unfold the client's thinking patterns for his (the counsellor's) scrutiny, but to bring them to the client's own attention. He may do this by helping the client to become aware of where her thinking runs contrary to her intentions. And he must try to have their dialogic interaction become maieutic, that is, to help her give birth, and re-birth, to her own thoughts.<sup>37</sup>

The counsellor's listening should undergo a transition from the "care-full," sympathetic and empathetic listening found in the first stage – for the purpose of strengthening the counselling relationship, and for understanding – to active listening – for the purpose of critiquing.<sup>38</sup> The counsellor must help the client to lay out the elements of her reasoning not principally to see whether she has made a "mistake," but to see "critical moves she might make to determine the strengths and weaknesses of her reasoning in relation to alternatives."<sup>39</sup>

An important characteristic of this dialogical exchange between client and counsellor is that it ought to be cumulative. The line of reasoning should move forward from well-established premises or reasons to conclusions reached by means of very careful (ideally deductively valid) inferences, so that any conclusions or courses of action that are reached rest on solid foundations.<sup>40</sup>

A number of practitioners write that, in their experience, philosophical counselling exhibits many of the elements typical of an analytic philosophical investigation.<sup>41</sup> Lahav has found that philosophical counselling can be used to analyze the structure in the client's conception of morality, honour, family relations, relationships at work, motives, meaning of life, and even emotions.<sup>42</sup> In dealing with a client's emotions, the philosophical counsellor, rather than taking the medical or psychological view which often see emotions as being *caused* by unconscious and uncontrollable forces, ought to follow Aristotle in seeing emotions as being feelings associated with thoughts and beliefs *about* something, and therefore as being intertwined with reason (and reasons).<sup>††</sup> This will allow the philosophical counsellor to understand that it may be fitting and reasonable to feel angry at times, such as, for example, when one has been cheated. Anger may help an individual to respond on her own behalf or on behalf of others. But when the client is unable to see the reason for her anger, or sees her feelings as inappropriate or puzzling in some situations, the philosophical counsellor must assist her in locating, not the *unconscious* causes of her feelings, but the *unexamined* reasons connected with them.

Philosopher Robert C. Solomon argues convincingly that emotions are not simply uncontrollable feelings to which the individual is a helpless subject, but rather that they are a complex of judgements, desires, and values. He holds that emotions are based on a person's thinking rather than her feelings in that

every emotion presupposes, if it is not composed of, a set of specifiable concepts (e.g., anger as offense, sadness as loss, jealousy as the threat of loss) and more or less specific desires and values...<sup>43</sup>

According to Solomon emotions are always intentional and purposive – although often short-sighted – normative judgements *about* something. And because they are not simply irrational and causal, they can therefore be changed by influence, argument and evidence. This is the view many philosophical counsellors take regarding the emotions,

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<sup>††</sup> The philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre also writes that an emotion is “set in motion by a perception,” it is “a certain way of apprehending the world,” it has a “functional structure,” and it is “accompanied by belief.” He also argues that freedom from an emotion like fear has to come either from “purifying reflection or a total disappearance of the affecting situation.” See his essays on a phenomenological theory of the emotions in *Essays in Existentialism*. Wade Baskin ed. Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1997 ed. 187-252.

and as such the counsellor can help his client to open herself to argument, persuasion, and evidence, to help her to be self-reflective, to see how she has in a very real sense chosen to have the emotion by accepting a particular interpretation of a situation. The awareness of the possibility of such critical examination can release the client from the misperception that she is simply a slave of irrational emotions that need to be forced into submission, and can give her the very real power of rational consideration of the normative judgements embedded in every emotional response.<sup>44</sup>

Counselling at this stage can uncover hidden assumptions about, for example, human motives in the case of inter-personal relationship problems, the nature and function of the family in the case of family difficulties, sex-differences and sex roles in the case of spouse problems or problems with personal identity, about the client's own duties, self-worth, and so on, or what Lahav has called the client's "theories" or "worldviews."<sup>45</sup> Cohen observes that it can also bring to light "inferential leaps" which the client has made in her thinking which may have led her into the present predicament.<sup>46</sup>

The analytic approach in philosophical counselling may also be used to examine the coherence between the client's conceptions of her personal "theories" or "worldviews" and the way in which she has reacted to her present predicament. Counselling can facilitate a conceptual analysis of matters such as responsibility in the context of decisions with moral implications, or of friendship and commitment in the context of clarifying her relationships with others, or of value, motivation, God, creativity and so on.<sup>47</sup> It can also highlight the mistakes in reasoning (technically called fallacies) that lead to problems caused by an acceptance of irrational justifications or conclusions.<sup>48</sup>

Barbara Norman finds that, in her counselling of students, it is at this primarily analytic, inductive stage, going from particular instances to general perspectives, that

the philosopher aims to take the participants from a comparatively naïve understanding of the current predicament under discussion, through a form of empathic listening, questioning, and critical self and group appraisal, to the constitution of a new vocabulary. The interaction provides the opportunity for talking about feelings, beliefs,



attitudes and desires in a way that is both reflective and constructive.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, it is this stage which is evident in James Tuedio's essay in which he maintains that effective facilitation by the philosophical counsellor empowers his client to engage in a critical examination and reconstruction of dysfunctional conceptual elements underlying her narrative construction of "problematized" relations and events in her life.<sup>50</sup> It is in this stage that the counsellor must be most active in directly assisting his client in terms of helping her to alleviate the ethical "decision paralysis" of which Marinoff writes. In this sense the second stage is often specifically concerned with the employment of practical reasoning to induce the articulation of a prudential and pragmatic course of action. Often the successful resolution of the client's immediate problems leads her to terminate the counselling relationship at this stage.

The danger inherent in philosophical counselling conducted only as far as, or exclusively at, this stage is that the counsellor may be led to employ merely rhetorical procedures. By "rhetorical procedures" I mean the use of forceful arguments with strong appeal to the emotions that are designed to persuade the client to accept the counsellor's point of view. The counsellor may be tempted to employ rhetorical procedures when he is faced with a client who expects quick results. This approach can be effective in a number of ways, such as arousing hope in clients who feel overwhelmed, combating alienation in those who lack a sense of connection, and stirring up the emotions of despondent clients. The problem is that rhetorical encounters rarely, if ever, result in new learning for the client, nor do they provide the client with the opportunity to practice philosophical self-inquiry.<sup>51</sup> While the client's immediate problems may be resolved *for* her by the counsellor using this approach, the ultimate goal of philosophical counselling – that of enhancing the client's autonomous ability to deal with her own problems – is clearly not met in such a case.

It is hoped that the satisfactory resolution of immediate problems, or simply reaching a saturation threshold in problem-oriented discussions, will motivate the client to use this accomplishment as only a preliminary step in a deeper exploration of her thinking and her life in terms of the underlying values, beliefs, and guiding principles that inform her

conceptions beyond those concerned exclusively with immediate problems. But in order to participate more fully in this sort of inquiry she will need to develop her own philosophical thinking abilities, or what may be termed philosophical reasoning skills and tools. This is where the philosophical counselling process crosses over into what is perhaps the most significant third stage.

### Stage 3) Teaching – as an intentional act

The intellectual tasks most of us are engaged in on a day-to-day basis are quite trivial. Our thinking is, for the most part, dictated by our institutions, our peers, those we consider to be authorities, and by our habits as conditioned by an assortment of aphorisms learned in childhood. Approximately eighty percent of Americans have no education past the basics of public schooling required by law. This means only twenty percent make it through college or university.<sup>52</sup> But it is unknown how many of these individuals have taken even a single philosophy course. These statistics become relevant to philosophical counselling when one asks, “How can a person who has never taken a course in philosophy be expected to resolve her own problems by means of philosophical introspection and self-inquiry?” As Rachel Blass puts it, if philosophical counselling is to be more than the counsellor simply applying philosophical methods to the material brought by the client, then a question arises regarding the client’s *capacities* to be involved in a philosophical self-exploration.<sup>53</sup>

The question of the client’s capacities to think philosophically becomes even more significant when one accepts the argument of those theorists who maintain that philosophical counselling is a return to the historical origins of philosophy in which the philosopher not only discusses philosophical issues with the client but helps his client to embrace philosophy “as a way of life.”<sup>54</sup> Clearly, philosophy cannot be lived if it is not even understood.

Karl Popper, a British philosopher of science, has emphasized that while an individual must make errors if she is going to extend the knowledge she has, it is necessary for her to recognize the errors for what they are.<sup>55</sup> Implicit in Popper’s

assertion is that “extending one’s knowledge,” or learning as it is usually referred to, is only possible if the person has the requisite abilities and dispositions to first perceive *that* something went wrong, then to locate *what* went wrong, and then to examine *why* it went wrong. Without this aggregate of abilities and dispositions a person functions as merely a victim of circumstances, doomed not only to suffer from her mistakes, but to repeatedly and unintentionally make the same mistakes, and suffer continuously the attendant consequences. No rational being desires this kind of life for herself, and many individuals who find themselves in this sort of situation seek help from therapists and counsellors in their attempt to improve their self-agency or autonomy.

But in his book *The View From Nowhere* Thomas Nagel points out that the aspiration of rational beings to greater autonomy in both their beliefs and actions is not satisfied by their simply having an expert solve their problems, or dictate to them what to think and how to act.

They wish to form their beliefs on the basis of principles and methods of reasoning and confirmation that they themselves can judge to be correct, rather than on the basis of influences that they do not understand, of which they are unaware, or which they cannot assess.<sup>56</sup>

If it is in fact the goal of the philosophical counsellor to help his client to achieve greater freedom and autonomy by improving her reasoning abilities, or even to help her adopt philosophical reasoning as an intrinsic element of human existence – that is, as a way of life – then it seems to follow logically that the client must be taught the necessary skills and dispositions required to do so.

James Tuedio expresses succinctly the sentiments of many other writers in this field when he claims that philosophical counselling is different from psychotherapy in that when the client entrusts her problems to a psychotherapist, she becomes dependent on his expertise and may thereby lose considerable autonomy with respect to the reconstruction of her life-narrative.<sup>57</sup> She becomes dependent on the psychotherapist because he does not teach her how to carry out a psychotherapeutic analysis. There is no intentional transference of expertise from therapist to client. The psychotherapist is not attempting to

make a psychotherapist out of her client; but the philosophical practitioner *is* attempting to make a philosopher out of his.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, Tuedio says, effective philosophical counselling empowers the client by engaging her in a critical examination and reconstruction of the events in her life, using insights that arise from her active participation in philosophical dialogue.<sup>59</sup> But, again, empowerment implies helping to foster emancipatory self-agency in the client, that is, assisting the client to become capable of conducting such a critical examination and reconstruction in the absence of the counsellor's expertise. This in turn requires that the client be offered the tools the counsellor possesses, and taught the skills necessary to use them. There is little evidence in the literature that, in fact, there is any of this sort of teaching being done.

But the *theory* that the client is, or must be, taught or "provided with" thinking tools pervades the philosophical counselling literature.<sup>††</sup> Again, if philosophical counselling is indeed meant to help the client become better able to deal with her own problems and concerns, as I think it is, then some form of teaching her how to do so must be present in all philosophical counselling relationships.

As mentioned previously, Prins-Bakker is to date the only practitioner who makes any direct reference to reaching a "stage" in her work with married couples in which she finds it essential to intentionally "acquaint them with," or "teach them" the thinking tools necessary for their substantive participation in this philosophical endeavour.<sup>60</sup> She writes that in her opinion learning is an important aim of philosophical counselling.

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<sup>††</sup> To offer just a few examples, Ran Lahav writes that "the role of the philosophical counsellor is not to cure people, but rather to offer them tools for dealing with their predicament." ("Using Analytic Philosophy in Philosophical Counselling." *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 10, No. 2, 1993. 248). James Tuedio maintains that the counsellor develops the client's autonomy by helping her to learn to read and respond more effectively to the play of everyday pressures which surround her. (In van der Vlist. 187,188). Jesse Fleming calls philosophical counselling "an educational service." ("Philosophical Counselling and Asian Philosophy." In van der Vlist. 279). Shlomit Schuster claims that "the unifying and possibly enduring characteristic" of the various philosophical practices is "their didactic intent." ("Philosophy as if it matters: The Practice Of Philosophical Counseling." *Critical Review* Vol. 6, No. 598).

And Annette Prins-Bakker writes,

I see the goal... of philosophical counseling in general, as teaching counselees enough philosophizing so that they can continue the process of gaining self-knowledge on their own. My presupposition is that happiness does not require freedom from problems, but rather the knowledge that you can deal with them. ("Philosophy in Marriage Counseling." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 140).

Its goal is not primarily to satisfy the counselee's desires – an answer for their question, a solution for their problem, saving their marriage – but rather to develop their ability to formulate their own questions, to analyze their problems,

and to know how to deal with their marriage. Understanding is important, but in order for it to be philosophical one needs to be aware of the process through which it comes into existence. For this reason I see the goal of this stage, or even of philosophical counseling in general, as teaching counselees enough philosophizing so that they can continue the process of gaining self-knowledge on their own. My presupposition is that happiness does not require freedom from problems, but rather the knowledge that you can deal with them.<sup>61</sup>

The problem is that, while most practitioners claim that it is either descriptively valid to say “philosophical counselling involves teaching,” or that teaching is a normative requirement of philosophical counselling, none of them (except Prins-Bakker) explain exactly when, where, or how the teaching does, or ought to, occur. For example, according to Schuster, a client learns various philosophical ways to “question, think about, and comprehend the self and its problems” from “meetings with the philosophical practitioner.”<sup>62</sup> The question this raises is, *how* and *when* does the client learn these ways to “question, think about, and comprehend the self and its problems” simply from “meetings with” the philosophical practitioner? The implication is that somehow, during the course of such meetings in the counselling process, the client will incidentally, and unreflectively, develop and improve her philosophical reasoning abilities.

Again, there seems to be an assumption held by many philosophical counsellors that the act of counselling itself constitutes teaching, and that therefore philosophical

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See also Jopling, D.A. “Philosophical Counselling, Truth and Self-Interpretation.” *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 13, No. 3. 1996 298. See also Ran Lahav’s “Introduction.” In Lahav and Tillmanns. xi.

counselling can simply be held to be didactic although the counsellor makes no effort at direct pedagogy. This assumption seems an obvious fallacy when it is applied to any other field of professional practice. For example, it is never assumed that when an individual visits the family doctor to have a physical problem attended to the doctor is teaching this individual/patient her medical skills. Nor is it held that when a person consults a lawyer about a particular legal problem the lawyer is teaching this person/client her legal skills. Yet the assumption held by many philosophical practitioners and theorists is that when an individual consults a philosophical counsellor about a particular philosophical problem the philosophical counsellor is in fact teaching this person/client his philosophical skills. Granted, while participating in an activity, such as discussing a problem with a doctor, lawyer, or philosopher may lead the participant to learn something about the practice of medicine, law, or philosophy simply by keen observation or fortuitous discovery, the act of participation is not necessarily equivalent to learning, or being taught, the skills inherent in that practice. Why is this not the case?

It seems obvious to say that teaching the client the practice of philosophical inquiry clearly requires more than that individual's attending counselling sessions as a client. It cannot simply be assumed that the client will "pick up" the kind of philosophical reasoning skills employed by the counsellor from what transpires during a counselling session. It seems to call for a disposition, a particular mind-set, or an intention on the part of the client in which she is self-consciously aware and deliberately attending to what the philosophical counsellor is doing. But can this be done during a session in which, say, the client is discussing a problem she is having with her daughter? It seems fair to say that it would be difficult in such a case for the client to simultaneously be a client as well as an "apprentice," discussing her worries and fears on the one hand, while on the other objectively observing, and trying to learn, the techniques used by the counsellor in dealing with her problem. In a counselling session the client is engrossed in exploring her own thoughts; her attention will be focused on the job of carefully explaining her predicament, her thoughts and her feelings to the counsellor; and she will be concentrating on coming to an understanding of her problem by offering authentic responses to the counsellor's questions. It is only after the client is able to shift her

mind's eye away from her particular problem that she can begin to re-focus her attention onto the task of learning the techniques that were used by the counsellor on her behalf. For this reason, it can be said that very little teaching and learning will occur without the intention of both the counsellor and the client, and that the counsellor's effort to directly teach the client philosophical reasoning at this stage will at worst be completely futile and at least only minimally effective if the client feels that her remaining problems or concerns continue to require the energy of her immediate attention.

With these counsellor/client dynamics in mind there clearly seem to be three criteria for teaching in philosophical counselling: first, intentionality (the counsellor must approach the client with a clear intention to teach – be it critical thinking skills, ethical decision-making strategies, philosophical analyses, etc. – and the client must have the intention to learn these); second, subject-matter display (the counsellor must actively do something with the philosophical reasoning skills he has been employing – such as illustrate them, demonstrate them, talk about them – beyond his merely applying them to the client's problems); and third, the client must be both cognitively and emotionally ready to move beyond discussion of her immediate problems (at least temporarily) and be able to focus her attention on learning what the counsellor is attempting to teach.<sup>63</sup> The activities typically found within the first and second stages of philosophical counselling do not meet any of these teaching criteria; nor should they.

It is not until this third stage, when the counsellor and client agree that direct teaching is appropriate and desirable, that the client should be thought of as a cognitive apprentice in which she stands to gain both intellectual acumen and cognitive skills. It is in this stage that the counsellor should move from gently correcting unidentified fallacies in the client's reasoning to pointing out those fallacies, labeling them, and suggesting ways of dealing with them or avoiding them in future. In my own experience, labeling fallacies has not only enabled many of my clients to become more readily aware of mistakes in both their own reasoning and in the arguments of others, it has led clients to see themselves as gaining some of the expertise they perceived in me, thereby enhancing both their self-esteem and their ability to act autonomously. It is also in this stage that the client can be taught the numerous approaches to ethical decision-making, such as

utilitarianism, deontology, pragmatism, and contextualism, that have been advanced by various philosophers over the course of history.

The relationship between the counsellor and client is now more directive, but it should also be more collaborative than ever before, and more reciprocal in that the counsellor should consciously use what is discussed, and what was discovered during the previous two stages, to help the client become aware of, and gain a greater understanding of, her own reasoning habits. In this way she will be better able to improve upon them, and to realize her own potential for both independent and cooperative problem-solving.<sup>§§</sup>

Time spent in this stage will help the client to develop the ability to “self-diagnose” because she can be helped to discover, and be taught, the numerous processes, techniques, and strategies of philosophical inquiry such as giving reasons, distinguishing good reasons from bad ones, constructing inferences, evaluating arguments, generalizing, using analogies, identifying, questioning and justifying assumptions, recognizing contradictions, detecting fallacious reasoning, striving for consistency, making distinctions and connections (part/whole, means/end, cause/effect), asking questions, listening effectively, making predictions, formulating and testing hypotheses, offering examples and counter examples, correcting her own thinking, formulating and using criteria, detecting vagueness and ambiguity, asking for evidence, taking all relevant considerations into account, being open to different perspectives and viewpoints, exercising empathy and moral imagination, being sensitive to context, being committed to searching for truth, caring for the procedures of inquiry, and respecting other persons and their points of view.<sup>64</sup> Teaching these abilities to the client, and nurturing these

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<sup>§§</sup> Particularly at this stage – but in the others as well – the counsellor must take into consideration the difference between the way men and women communicate and learn. In my own practice I have found that male clients often have very different expectations of the counsellor in the role of teacher than do female clients. In general, and for whatever reasons, men anticipate and expect more direct transference of information from the counsellor to themselves, information which they then perceive as open to questioning and critique. On the other hand, women clients more often prefer the counsellor to simply assist them in a collaborative discovery of the same information. This is an obvious generalization, of course, but it is a noteworthy difference that deserves consideration and further study (For discussions on gender differences in communication styles see, for example Anne Wilson Schaef’s book *Women’s Reality* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985]; or Deborah Tannen’s book *You Just Don’t Understand* [New York: Ballantine, 1990]; or Barbara Westbrook Eakins and R. Gene Eakins bppk *Sex Differences in Human Communication* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978]; or *Language and Gender* edited by Jennifer Coats [Oxford: Blackwell, 1998]).



dispositions, will deepen in her the facility for “reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do,”<sup>65</sup> which may variously be called instruction in critical thinking skills, informal logic, creative, productive, or constructive<sup>66</sup> thinking skills, or imaginative reasoning.

This is not to say that philosophical inquiry in philosophical counselling consists exclusively of critical thinking, but rather that I conceive of critical thinking as lying at the heart of any philosophical inquiry, including that of worldview interpretation. Philosophical inquiry involves, among other things, a curiosity about the assumptions and values one lives with on a day-to-day basis. It is a search for the underlying meaning inherent in one’s own – as well as others’ – actions in the world, and reactions to what is experienced and to what is said or done by others. This is in effect what is meant by worldview interpretation. It is the attempt to bring to a conscious awareness hidden beliefs, assumptions and pre-conceived notions that guide the client’s decision-making process on a day-to-day basis so that she will be better able to base her beliefs and actions on considered choices rather than mere convention, unexamined tradition, or habit. It also consists of attempting to recognize and understand the emotive side of a discussion – that is to say, the attitudes and feelings of both the speaker and the listener – that may serve to determine both the path their discussion follows and its eventual destination, thereby taking into account not only the purely rational but the emotional facets of the client’s life decisions. Philosophical inquiry in philosophical counselling is not a solitary cognitive endeavour but rather the kind of “a meeting of minds” in which the inter-dependence of the client and counsellor as co-inquirers constitutes a more significant locus of cognition than is possible by any single thinker on his or her own.

The counsellor’s assisting the client to become a more competent and autonomous thinker means not only instructing her in the technical elements of critical and constructive thinking, but helping her to become aware of the various kinds of questions that can be asked, the various strategies one can employ in decision-making, the different stances that can be assumed in the act of attentive listening, and the sorts of thinking that can be engaged in when thinking is more than merely thoughts that are the conditioned

response to external stimuli. Furthermore, it requires encouraging her to develop particular values and traits of mind which include the following:

intellectual courage – having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which [the client may have] strong negative emotions, and to which [she] may have not previously given serious attention; having intellectual perseverance – a willingness and consciousness of the need to pursue intellectual insights and truths in spite of difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; and faith in reason – confidence that, in the long run, [the client's] own higher interest and those of humankind at large will be best served by giving the freest play to reason.<sup>67</sup>

It is at this stage, after the urgency of immediate personal problems has been significantly diminished, that the client may be introduced to, and may come to recognize, and then approach, philosophical reasoning as “a way of life” as described by Hadot.<sup>68</sup> It is here that the client should be encouraged to strive to develop an understanding which, as Gadamer puts it, is not merely “a simple activity of the consciousness that understands, but is itself a mode of the event of being.”<sup>69</sup> In other words, the client should be encouraged to adapt her way of thinking about an issue – such as, for example, her belief in the right of animals not to be killed – to her way of living in the world – say, by becoming a vegetarian, or at least reducing her meat consumption.

At this stage the client should also be introduced to the difference between the inductive, analytical approach used in stage two, in which inquiry is focused primarily on resolving complex problems by separating large and general issues into smaller, more manageable particulars within a given framework or context, and the more synthetic approach used in stage four in which she is encouraged to “transcend” the particulars of everyday life, and to view her own life and the events in it more broadly, within the context of her community and her world, at the same time from a more holistic and yet objective perspective. But “objective” here does not mean the modernist objectivity of

the scientist who sees the world as a wholly separate “other.” Rather the counsellor should help her to first learn how to take the phenomenological stance in relation to her life experiences, her world, and the others who share both with her – that is, to help her gain as unbiased an image as possible of what she is observing – and then help her to inquire into her thoughts and beliefs about them by means of a collaborative hermeneutic investigation – that is, to come to a better understanding of what her own beliefs, values, and thoughts about the world mean in terms of the life she is presently living, and in relation to the life she imagines herself living in future.<sup>70</sup>

The counsellor’s teaching the client in this stage must not be simply a didactic act. It should not follow what Scheffler calls the “impression model” of learning in which the teacher “fills” the student’s head with various bits of knowledge that may ultimately have no effect on the student’s pre-conceived values or beliefs. Rather it should follow the “insight model” in which the teacher assists the student in coming to an understanding.<sup>71</sup> It should be a creative, generative, productive, imaginative, and constructive dialogical process that helps the client in her attempt to break out of the framework of unexamined assumptions, or at least to transcend as many of these assumptions and biases as possible,<sup>72</sup> thus leading the counselling process naturally into the fourth stage. The client should be encouraged to think about matters for herself, and to begin to both “raise” her thinking to the meta-level, and to delve inward in self-scrutiny in order to come to an understanding of the “second-order” cognitive frameworks which inform her thinking.

Entering this stage of the counselling procedure does not mean that the discussion of problems or concerns must be left behind permanently. Many clients find that when they begin to learn thinking skills they are better able to re-conceptualize their past problems, or address new issues, by themselves. This may prompt them to return to a consideration of immediate personal concerns or problems, but as more active participants, or – inspired by their greater proficiency at problem identification, articulation, and resolution – in the role of primary inquirer and so-called “self-diagnosis.”

For example a client may learn that it is important to clearly define the meaning of crucial terms in a discussion, and not to simply assume that the meaning is self-evident.

This may lead her to recall an argument she has had, and how this argument ended regrettably in the breakup of a significant relationship. She may then come to recognize that the argument was based on a difference between herself and the other in their understanding of a term whose meaning both had taken for granted.<sup>73</sup> This is an instance of “self-diagnosis.” The client is able to carry out a legitimately autonomous reflection on this life experience because her counsellor has taught her the abilities she needed to examine this issue on her own. The client has not merely been led to an understanding of the contents of the issue, she has been brought to an awareness of the process through which it came into existence in her life.<sup>74</sup> This example also suggests that if a client engages in this kind of activity “with sufficient rigour and passion” over time she will not only acquire a number of abilities and dispositions, she will change as a person, that is, she will change from one who is dependent on another for assistance in philosophical inquiry to one who can do so on her own.<sup>75</sup> But, again, in order for this to happen, the philosophical counsellor must teach his client the philosophical thinking skills necessary not only to undertake a philosophical inquiry but to understand the process and how significant her contribution is to its successful functioning.

So when practitioners argue that philosophical counselling *is not* teaching<sup>76</sup> they are in fact correct, given that most contemporary philosophical counsellors do not practice intentional pedagogy. The point is, they should. If the practices of all philosophical counsellors were to have incorporated in them the conscious act of teaching philosophical reasoning abilities to those clients who stay with the process past the second stage, it would constitute what could be considered a major differentiating element that clearly distinguishes philosophical counselling from psychotherapy. Recall that of all the psychotherapeutic methods discussed in chapter three above it is Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (R.E.B.T.) that is characterized as most overtly holding the role of the therapist to be that of a teacher and the client that of a student.<sup>77</sup> In fact Albert Ellis, the founder of the method, argues that *all* effective psychotherapists, whether or not they realize what they are doing, “teach or induce their patients to re-perceive or rethink their life events....”<sup>78</sup> Ellis assumes, as do many other writers in the field of psychotherapy,

that the psychotherapist's helping the client to see things differently automatically constitutes the act of teaching.<sup>\*\*\*</sup> This is so, according to Ellis, even when the psychotherapist does not realize what he is doing!

There seem to be two main problems with his assumption. First, it certainly seems uncontroversial to say that the individual who does not realize what he or she is doing can only be said to "be teaching" in a very peculiar sense of the term. And second, it does not seem at all self-evident that simply helping a client to see things differently – without sharing with her the techniques that were used to help her do so, without helping her to become aware of the changes in her own thinking processes, and without helping her to develop the ability to utilize the techniques she has learned and to be able to repeat the process on her own in future – is in fact teaching her anything that will help her become more autonomous in her reasoning.

In my own practice I have found that there is an enormous gap between merely helping a client to see things differently, and bringing the client to the sort of understanding of the philosophical reasoning process that will enhance her autonomy – understanding *how* she has come to see things differently, and what it is in her that now *makes it possible* for her to see things in a way in which she was previously unable. This gap requires that I teach the client to become aware of, and familiar with, and accept into her own reasoning repertoire, those thinking "tools" I have encouraged her to employ. Reports of actual practice in both philosophical counselling and psychotherapy seem to suggest that most counselling does not concern itself with this kind of teaching.

As long as philosophical counsellors assume, like their psychotherapeutic counterparts, that the client's simply attending a counselling session in order to resolve a problem counts as "learning" the techniques of philosophical reasoning or inquiry then

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<sup>\*\*\*</sup> See for example *Persuasion and Healing* by Jerome D. Frank and Julia Frank (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993 ed. 45-6) in which they state that "in all forms of psychotherapy, the therapist is a teacher who provides new information in an interpersonal context that enables the patient to profit from it... Some types of psychotherapy are virtually indistinguishable from corrective education." Also in the "Foreword" to the book *Converging Themes in Psychotherapy* (Marvin R. Goldfried ed. New York: Springer, 1982, p. ix) Hans H. Strupp writes, "Whenever a therapeutic interaction produces measurable therapeutic change, the patient (client) has undergone a learning experience." He claims this highlights the fact that in psychotherapy "there is a 'teacher,' a 'student,' and a learning process having a particular outcome." But this still begs the question whether the therapist has in fact taught the patient anything or if

philosophical counselling will remain identical in this respect to what transpires in much of contemporary psychotherapy. It is the act of intentionally teaching the abilities of the counsellor to his client that has perhaps the best potential for clearly differentiating philosophical counselling from psychotherapy.

For many clients the resolution of their immediate problems, and their having learned many of the techniques used in philosophical inquiry, will have satisfied their expectations of the philosophical counselling relationship. They will feel adequately equipped to deal with most of what life has to offer on a day-to-day basis. But there is a fourth stage which may be entered by some.

#### Stage 4) Transcendence

The four stages offered in this model are somewhat analogous to various aspects of Plato's cave metaphor: free-floating as establishing relationships with the prisoner(s); immediate problem resolution as helping them free themselves from their chains; teaching and learning as leading them toward the light; and finally transcendence as allowing them to see the Forms.<sup>79</sup> Having addressed the client's immediate problems, and the client's having reached a certain satisfying level of philosophical competence, the client and counsellor may now find that their dialogue is reaching beyond the concrete particulars of the client's daily life, and approaching questions of a more abstract or universal nature, or what some philosophers call "second order questions." Here the philosophical discourse no longer focuses exclusively on the issue of personal problem resolution; rather it now takes on the quality Rorty calls "edifying."<sup>80</sup> Barbara Norman describes the state of edification as seeing the world not from a "disengaged perspective" as a kind of objective observer, but from the standpoint of a conscious awareness of one's environment while at the same time feeling an involvement with, and a commitment to, it.<sup>81</sup>

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the patient was simply observant enough to have learned something. The difference is crucial. Similarly important is the question of *what* the patient has learned.

The client finds herself emerging from what Simone de Beauvoir calls the state of “immanence,” – or what Govier describes as human life “where we are caught in the flow and do not reflect or make free choices to undertake projects” – and now living her life more in the state in which she employs the human capacity to reflect, choose, and direct herself.<sup>82</sup> In transcending she comprehends more clearly the particularities of her individual life situation and sees them in their larger social, historical, and universal life context. This transcendence is a surpassing of that “compressed” state of being in which the client is so absorbed in the world that, according to Heidegger, it renders the world so obvious as to be unnoticed in the course of one’s everyday activities.<sup>83</sup> It is often a shift *away* from abstract thinking – an exercise Wittgenstein recommended to philosophers – to a discovery of the aspects of those things which are most important and fundamental to everyday life that used to be hidden from perception because of their simplicity and familiarity.<sup>84</sup> While the problems experienced at stage two have been described by some clients as not being able to see the forest for the trees, a transcendent perspective is not only coming to see each tree more clearly but seeing the forest for what it is, and coming to a better understanding of the interrelationship between the forest and the trees.

Dries Boele characterizes transcendence as “primordially a mental affair: it is memory and imagination which enable us to go beyond the immediate reality of our experience.”<sup>85</sup> It is, what Hadot calls, a liberation of the self from “the state of alienation into which it has been plunged by worries, passions, and desires... open to universality and objectivity.”<sup>86</sup> It is of course impossible for either the counsellor or client to completely emancipate or liberate him or herself from the inevitable influence of traditions. But philosophical discussion at this stage enables the client to better see herself and her beliefs within the larger framework of her own family, community, and the world in the sense of her place within familial, social, and political ideologies and structures. It is the approach to wisdom, a “liberation from the passions, utter lucidity, knowledge of ourselves and of the world”<sup>87</sup> that frees the client from simply reacting to life from non-reflective emotion or habit, and promotes an enhancement of her “ability and knowledge to distinguish the life that is good from that which is bad,”<sup>88</sup> and to

choose for herself the belief or course of action that will best suit her own conception of "the good life."

It goes beyond the "singular primacy of rationality and logical thinking"<sup>89</sup> preferred by so many western and academic philosophers to include reasoning tempered by intuition and emotional considerations in the decision-making process. It is a way of both seeing the world for the first time, so to speak, and seeing beyond the horizons of the material world to come to a more discerning understanding of oneself in order to improve oneself, and to live "a deeper, richer, better, and more significant life."<sup>90</sup> By way of illustration, it is a shift from attempts to find practical answers to the ethical question "What is the right thing to do?" to considering the meta-ethical foundation on which such an answer is based. In other words, it is a search for the answer to "How does one go about resolving questions of right and wrong?"

Rachel Blass cautions that the transcendent conception of philosophical counselling is not to be confused with Sartre's view in which he holds existence as prior to essence. Sartrean transcendence refers to the process whereby "man creates himself." She explains that Gabriel Marcel criticizes this as a misuse of the term transcendence. "Transcendence," he argues, "cannot merely mean 'going beyond,' but rather must stand in opposition to immanence."<sup>91</sup> Blass goes on to say that Sartre's transcendence does not take man beyond the immanent, does not lead man beyond himself, and thus in many ways remains diametrically opposed to the position of Jaspers,<sup>92</sup> Marcel, and her own conception of transcendence in philosophical counseling.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore Blass sees the kind of transcendence which philosophical counselling may help the client to achieve as having a rather lonely and foreboding side to it. She maintains that philosophical counselling does not offer the client a definite place into which to transcend; nor does it point in a specific direction of transcendence, or clear a specific path along which the client can "stride on his way to going beyond himself."<sup>94</sup> She warns that "the search is a lone one and there is no knowing where it will lead."<sup>95</sup>

But, contrary to Blass, case studies in the philosophical counselling literature seem to reveal a different image of this road to transcendence. The search for understanding need not be the "lone one" found in Blass's warning because the client is not left to work in



isolation. And rather than simply “clearing a specific path,” the “path” along which the client and her counsellor stride must be constructed by both in tandem. In my own practice I have witnessed the transformation of individuals who have reached this stage. It is as though they “blossom” into a different state of consciousness that allows them to not only see themselves and their world with a far greater acuity than they have been accustomed to, but to see in colour where previously they were seeing everything only in black and white.<sup>†††</sup> By this I mean that, among other things, they come to recognize previously unnoticed biases, assumptions, and both pre-conceived and ill-conceived notions in their own thinking patterns, and to understand not only how these are affecting their own lives but, in the context of an expanded worldview, how they are affecting the lives of others around them.

A common expression I often hear from my clients is, “I can see so many more options now where I thought I only had two choices before.” There is a joy of anticipation from not knowing where the path will lead, and it is not unusual for the client at this stage to actually take pleasure in the process of discovery, and in the power of the experience of a greater autonomous agency.<sup>96</sup> As Epicurus puts it,

In other activities, the rewards come only when people have become, with great difficulty, complete [masters of the activity]; but in philosophy the pleasure accompanies the knowledge. For the enjoyment does not come after the learning but the learning and the enjoyment are simultaneous.<sup>97</sup>

When philosophical counselling reaches stage four transcendence the counsellor should offer gentle guidance that enables the client to learn “to recognize in a live way a new conceptual space that opens up through the philosophical encounter,” and to go beyond the narrow network of beliefs by which she is currently living her life.<sup>98</sup> Segal

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<sup>†††</sup> Their transformation is very much in line with Plato’s metaphor of the cave in which he likens the life of most individuals to that of a person chained in a dark cave surrounded only by shadows, and education being like a person emerging from the shadowy cave into the sunlight. See his *Republic*, Book VII, 514. See also my case studies “Veronica’s Pride” (in *Elenchus, A Journal of Philosophical Inquiry*. Vol. II, Issue II, Spring 1998) and “From Addiction to Community” (in *Inquiry*. Vol. XVII, No. 1, Autumn,

uses a Heideggerian framework to characterize transcendence in philosophical counselling as the process in which the counsellor helps his client to uncover her fundamental presuppositions, examine them, and then transcend them toward a more authentic way of "being-in-the-world,"<sup>99</sup> a way of being that is not simply followed but consciously chosen.

It is in this stage that the counsellor and client arrive together at the most intimate questions, such as, "Who am I?" It is also here that the most universal questions are encountered – questions such as "How should we live?" While discussion in stage two remains primarily at the practical level of *what* to do, discussion in this stage develops the articulation of answers to the question, "Why?" or "For what reasons?" In stage two, by necessity and for the sake of expediency, solutions are often short-term in focus and take into consideration only a very narrow array of contingencies, while in stage four the focus of attention shifts to the long term and the larger picture. Here counselling should become what may be termed "dialogic research" in which the client and counsellor are actively involved in the construction of theory about life and validation of meaning of the events in it.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, while discussion at earlier stages remains within the client's paradigm or worldview, in this stage the client's paradigm or worldview must come to the fore as a legitimate and consequential topic of examination.

This stage may be reached as the result of one of two possible factors. The first is that the client expresses to her counsellor the desire to approach the alleviation of her problems in a more holistic manner, one which doesn't hold problems to be unrelated or atomistic incidents, allowing separate analyzes. The client may have come to recognize that there is a "thread" which runs through each incident, or a commonality among them which is somehow intimately connected with who she is and how she perceives her place in this world. It is this "thread" or commonality she now wishes to explore with her counsellor.

The second possibility is that the client may express the wish to delve further into the abstraction or meaning of things in general, to move beyond the pragmatic element of philosophical inquiry and confront those issues which circumscribe humankind's, and her

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1997), and also "Why Has God Forsaken Me? Philosophically Counseling a Crisis of Faith" forthcoming

own, existence. In other words, the client may want to gain a broader and deeper philosophical understanding of herself, and the relationship between herself and the world in which she lives. It is the desire for a broader perspective and/or a deeper knowledge which is at the heart of transcendence.

It is at this stage that existential questions must be allowed to rise to the surface. Not that such questions don't arise at any of the earlier stages, but it is generally not until this stage that the client is both self-confident enough, and adequately prepared philosophically, to approach them with any measure of aplomb. It is at this stage that the client is most capable of being an "authentic presence" not only to the counsellor but to herself. She is therefore able to have a more genuine encounter and dialogue with herself in which she attempts to – perhaps for the first time – reveal herself to herself.<sup>101</sup> Not only is this dialogue one in which she speaks to herself, but it is, paradoxically, where she can listen to herself with less reserve and fewer preconceptions. It is where she is able to listen to herself in the absence of questions, in silence – the kind of comfortable silence in which she is able to be with herself despite her known faults and shortcomings. By being able to properly hear herself she is then also able to learn what it is she truly believes.<sup>102</sup>

While the second analytic, primarily inductive, problem-resolving stage moved the client from an examination of particulars to recognizing some of their underlying, more general or universal factors, this fourth stage should move the client in exactly the opposite direction. It is at this stage that the client should be encouraged to intentionally take the phenomenological stance, to move from a discovery of the "larger picture" – the underlying or overarching principles and values that guide her thinking, and the deep-seated, uncritical, egocentric, and sociocentric habits of thought, and so on, which comprise her "network" or "web" of beliefs or worldview – to allow an examination of any particular future problems in light of these discoveries. By helping the client come to a conscious awareness of her own worldview, she is helped to see more clearly

the relationship between worldviews, forms of life, human engagements and interests, what is at stake (versus what is at issue), how the question of what is at issue is often itself

an issue, how the unexpressed as well as the expressed may be significant, the difficulties of judging credibility, and the ethical dimension in most important and complex human problems.<sup>103</sup>

When the client is unaware of her worldview or, what Schefczyk calls, her “conceptual vicissitudes,” it can open a gap between her actual way of life and any potential ways of life that could have given her self-realization – in terms of meeting her own criteria for a good life – and happiness.<sup>104</sup> In other words, it creates room for possible “self-alienation,” or disappointment and rejection of who/what she perceives herself as having become. Understanding her own worldview can lead the client to a better comprehension of her own behaviors, emotions, preferences, hopes, and decisions.<sup>105</sup> It allows her to become aware of her way of organizing, analyzing, categorizing, noting patterns, drawing implications, making sense of, and more generally assigning meanings to, her life-events<sup>106</sup> thereby enabling her to live the life of reason rather than simply following what is forced upon her.

Once she is conscious of the assumptions and beliefs which constitute the worldview or belief system within which she is living, the client is then able to follow a strongly transcendent approach to reasoning, one which starts from the knowledge of her own beliefs and values and leads her to a consideration of her relationship to particular day-to-day issues or problems in light of her paradigm. When a client’s decisions about particular issues or problems are informed by an awareness of her own worldview, her decisions are more likely to “feel” like the right decisions to her, since internal conflicts – which can arise when the client’s decisions are inconsistent or contradictory with her worldview – are less likely to ensue.

The client at this stage has been in the process of developing her reasoning and dialogic skills over the course of many months, and has no doubt mitigated, to some extent by means of her own reasoning, the number, severity, and/or pressure of her immediate problems and concerns. She has thereby probably also been gaining significantly in self-confidence. It is because of these changes in the client, and not until this stage of philosophical inquiry has been reached, that it can be said the client nears the

condition of being "an equally philosophizing person,"<sup>107</sup> and that the relationship between the client and counsellor approaches their being equal "partners in dialogue."<sup>108</sup> This is because it is at this stage that the client has come to abandon her earlier demand that the counsellor "play the role" of the authority in the dialogical exchange, the one who, to use Gadamer's terminology, is "always seeing through" his dialogical partner.<sup>109</sup> She has instead come to rely more and more on her own thinking ability as the source of answers to her questions and the wellspring of insights. The maieutic function of dialogue between the two at this stage requires the client to express her previously unarticulated, but deeply felt, commitments in a much more explicit and carefully qualified way. The counsellor should now test more rigorously what the client offers as her reasons and conclusions, and he should ask her more directly to try to defend them against the kind of non-charitable interpretation and skepticism to which she may be subject in her community.<sup>110</sup>

It is at this stage that hermeneutic process ought to be most active and evident in yielding for the client self-knowledge through interaction with an other, interaction consisting of open-ended, and potentially infinite, communication that is not merely the perpetuation of the client's problematic internal dialogue, but is instead grounded on theoretically informed viewpoints. This communication aids in the discovery, re-discovery, construction, de-construction, assigning, re-evaluating, criticizing, and interpretation of meaning. It is by means of this hermeneutic interpretation, consisting of the combined efforts of the counsellor and his client to meet and always accept the other, that the client comes to mediate and resolve many of the remaining conflicts in her life through what has been (perhaps somewhat exaggeratedly) termed an "unlimited" broadening of her understanding.<sup>111</sup>

It is also at this stage that the client often questions the process of philosophical counselling itself, as she has experienced it thus far. She may ask of herself or the counsellor the questions behind the question of "the meaning of life," namely, what is the best way to pose this question in the first place, or how does it relate to the "I" who is asking the question? This may lead to a discussion of the very method employed by the philosophical counsellor, and to her wondering whether a change in method might not be

of greater benefit to her. Because the client no longer feels the urgency of immediate life problems that demand her attention, she now has the time to engage in much more “playful” inquiry, that is in questioning for the sake of exploration and discovery, rather than for relief from the stressful burden of problem resolution.

Rachel Blass suggests that it is unlikely that this conception of philosophical counselling will ever assume a central position among the helping professions because of the popular appeal of short-term forms of help for overcoming problems, and even the appeal of long-term forms of help which only “delve deeply into the self.”<sup>112</sup> But it seems to me that the main obstacle to a client’s entering this stage and benefiting from it is the lack of understanding on the part of many a counsellor as to what may transpire here. It is in fact at this stage that the client’s autonomy stands to become the most highly developed, because it is here that she can not only test the coherence of her moral beliefs, but she can become conscious of having made them her own because she has explored the point of them. Published essays<sup>113</sup>, and my own practical experience, suggest that it is at this stage also that the client works to resolve conflicts and ambiguities, thereby developing a strong sense of the kind of person she is and of the kind of life to which she is committed by her view of the world. It is the autonomy she nurtures here that helps her to avoid the danger of falling into anomie, or an existential crisis, under conditions of stress and change.<sup>114</sup> By being unaware that this stage is part of philosophical counselling, many practitioners miss the opportunity to work with those clients who are prepared to move past the second and third stages.

But it is not only a sense of autonomy that may be gained by the client at this stage. Lorraine Code points out that the worthy ideal of autonomy reduces to crude individualism when relations of (inter)dependence are ignored.<sup>115</sup> The philosophical counsellor should assist his client in transcending the postmodern conception of autonomy which has been termed the “cult of individuality” – with its obsessive, and unsatisfying, quest for absolute autonomy, self-development, and celebrity<sup>116</sup> that often leads to destructive competition and inter-personal conflicts – and help her instead to come to the kind of autonomy that leads to a better recognition not only of her inherent worth but her inter-connection with both the human community of others with whom she

resides, and the natural community in which she resides. Again, it is only when the counsellor himself comes to realize that it is at this stage that his client stands to benefit the most in terms of understanding the inter-connection of her particularity with the universal that he will be more inclined to lead his client this far, and less likely to consider the resolution of day-to-day problems as the ultimate end of philosophical counselling.

Because, by this stage, the client has become capable of examining her own problems by herself, within the context of her transcendent perspective, and with minimal input from the counsellor, she is now not only able to resolve present concerns by herself, and to restore harmony to her life, but she is better able to anticipate which factors external to her own paradigm or worldview, that is which points of view and beliefs different from her own, are likely to eventually precipitate conflicts. She is therefore better able to avoid contingent future problems in the course of her own life.

Notice that the philosophical understanding reached by the client in this and the previous stage can be of a decidedly pro-active or preventive nature. In fact, philosophical counselling must be pro-active and preventive if it is to offer the greatest benefit to the client. This very important objective of philosophical counselling is largely overlooked by both practitioners and theorists. The model presented above addresses this omission as well as a number of other detrimental shortcomings found in contemporary theories such as the avoidance of a clearly articulated method.

#### 4.4 Problems With a "Beyond-Method Method"

Achenbach's "beyond-method method" in philosophical counselling can be described as a typically postmodern stance. Postmodernism is characterized as being oriented toward methods that apply to a broad range of phenomena, focus on the margins, highlight uniqueness, concentrate on the enigmatic, and appreciate the unrepeatable... As substitutes for the "scientific method," the affirmatives look to feelings, personal experience,

empathy, emotion, intuition, subjective judgment, imagination, as well as diverse forms of creativity and play. But the actual content of these terms and their methodological significance are relatively vague and difficult to communicate to others.<sup>117</sup>

When represented in the language, and with the intrinsic assumptions of, the postmodern stance, philosophical counselling suffers from all the inherent difficulties associated with the postmodern avoidance of methodological clarification found in other fields of practice. Postmodernism is strongly anti-realist. In its extreme form it holds that there exists no external or objective reality independent of each individual, and that in such a world of “multiple realities” one interpretation is as good as any other. Achenbach’s articulation of philosophical counselling is both postmodern and anti-realist. It allows for no criteria with which to evaluate the legitimacy of any model of practice. What Achenbach has done – because this is what his articulation suggests – is allow philosophical counsellors around the world to define philosophical counselling in any manner they feel is appropriate. The problem with this all-inclusive approach is that some of what is said about philosophical counselling will be interesting and fascinating, and some will be ridiculous and absurd, but Achenbach’s stance on the issue provides no means to distinguish between the two.<sup>118</sup> It is an “anything goes” position that permits of no standard of judgement.

This extreme postmodern position also allows for no evaluation of “progress” or “efficacy,” in the philosophical counselling process. In other words, the philosophical counsellor, according to the extreme postmodern conception, has no “objective perspective” from which to view the events occurring within a philosophical counselling session – or over the series of sessions – and therefore no means by which to judge pragmatic consequences in terms of whether what is transpiring within the philosophical counselling dialogue is actually of benefit or harm to the client. This leads logically to the conclusion that any intentional choices made by the philosophical counsellor and his client as to what topic to discuss, or what direction to take in order to advance the philosophical counselling dialogue, are completely unnecessary, and in fact meaningless,



since, without the concepts of progress or efficacy, any choice will be as good, or as bad, as any other.

The view that the philosophical counsellor has no objective perspective from which to evaluate his relationship with his client is unjustified. The basic criterion for such objectivity and evaluation is the measure of change, progress, and/or benefit reported by his client. Not only is it evident from the literature that the philosophical counsellor *does* in fact often take such an objective look at his practice, the philosophical counsellor *must* do so for a number of reasons: It allows the client and counsellor to be able to choose a topic that is both in tune with the client's wishes and relevant to her needs; it allows the counsellor to help the client clearly identify and adequately articulate her problem(s) so that an attempt may be made at alleviating it (them); and it gives both the counsellor and the client the opportunity to take an evaluative look at how the counselling process is evolving in order to determine what changes ought to be made, or even whether a continuation of the counselling relationship is of any value to the client in the first place.

Besides this empirical and practical indictment against Achenbach's theory of philosophical counselling, his "non-method," as he himself has articulated it, is even more problematic when critiqued purely on the basis of its theoretical justification. Recall that Achenbach used the metaphor of the philosophical counsellor as the pilot of a ship, but not one whose job it is to simply take the place of the true captain of a ship long enough to steer it past the hidden dangers in a particularly dangerous body of water. He sees the philosophical counsellor as more like a trained pilot who steps aboard the ship which "has lost its speed or its direction or both," and "sits together" with its captain, exploring old and new maps, inspecting the compass, sextant, and telescope, chatting with the captain about prevailing winds, sea currents, and the stars, and having "intelligent talks about navigation" over hot cups of coffee.<sup>119</sup> In this metaphor the captain of the ship is clearly meant to represent the client, the ship portrays this particular individual client's life, while the water it floats on is meant to portray the currents of life in a more general sense.

The problem with this metaphor lies in the fact that it analogizes the client with the *captain* of a ship. While Achenbach's metaphor represents a relationship between two

*equally competent* mariners, one of whom has perhaps had a loss of self-confidence or suffers from a bit of temporary confusion, no such equality inheres in the vast majority of accounts of actual client-counsellor relationships. The captain of a ship tends to be an experienced seafarer, one who has both theoretical and practical training, and years of first-hand maritime command. In contrast, the philosophical counsellor's client often tends to feel under-qualified to deal with what life is demanding of him, and often sees himself as a mere passenger in the ship of his life rather than its captain.

The client comes to the philosophical counsellor not because he simply needs an "intelligent talk about navigation" but because he does not even possess, in the first place, those instruments crucial to navigation, such as compass, sextant and telescope. Because of this lack, the client feels unable to make sense of the prevailing winds, old maps, and sea currents, which he had – for the most part – taught himself to "read" according to intuition, habit, or tradition. But when intuition, habit, and tradition seem no longer adequate, he feels buffeted and blown about by cultural winds beyond his control, misled by old psychological maps which give faulty directions, and adrift on sea currents of personal life changes which fail to flow according to his own needs, wishes, and values. He seeks out the philosophical counsellor to receive from him those tools – the compass, sextant, and telescope – which will allow him to *become* a more competent navigator than he has previously been, and to *become* the "captain of his own ship," able to make conscious decisions about the direction and speed of his "ship" on the sea of life.

In less metaphorical language, Achenbach argues that philosophical counselling ought to be a simple sitting together, and an intelligent talk between two equally competent interlocutors which allows the client the time to resolve his own problems. In fact the client always comes to the philosophical counsellor because the client has been unable to solve his own problems. He comes seeking something that he perceives as lacking in himself, namely the ability, or tools and skills, necessary to carry out a competent philosophical inquiry and self-inquiry that will facilitate the resolution of his problems. Contrary to Achenbach's assertion that philosophical counselling ought to have no goal, every client always approaches the counsellor with a very clear goal, and therefore the

counsellor ought to always already have this same goal in mind when the client approaches him: namely meeting the client's expressed and yet to be discovered needs, in whatever form they may eventually be manifest.

Achenbach's hesitancy to acknowledge any sort of goal to philosophical counselling, any general method, and any kind of expert knowledge in the counsellor – based on his desire to maintain a focus on the individual uniqueness of each client/situation – is analogous to the kind of stance found in the postmodern narrative therapy movement within psychotherapy. Psychologist Barbara Held points out that the postmodern approach to therapy fails to achieve theoretical consistency because it oscillates between realism and anti-realism and between individuality and a systematic approach.<sup>120</sup> In Achenbach's conception of philosophical counselling this means the postmodern practitioner is caught in a number of paradoxical situations: that of attempting to “do something with” his client that will in fact (hopefully) lead to benefit for and changes in the client, but that he refuses to call an approach or method; that of attempting to resolve a problem (in the realist sense of the client's existential problem as, for example, interpersonal difficulties with a spouse) which he will not acknowledge as being a problem (from the anti-realist perspective of it being *merely* the client's subjective perception of a problem and therefore only “within” the client and not within the actual relationship between the client and her spouse); that of counselling the client to help her improve her situation while at the same time claiming that there is no “better” or “worse” in any given situation – it simply “is” as defined by each individual; that of having to account for the fact that the client has sought out his services as a practitioner with a perceived expertise in an approach or method which he claims does not exist but refers to as philosophical counselling; that of practicing something which he claims cannot be generalized from one client to the next but which he practices with multiple clients; and finally that of practicing what he has learned but claims cannot be taught to newcomers because almost nothing may be said to constitute it. Held argues, and I agree, that in order for any “healing” practice – such as philosophical counselling – to succeed it cannot be built on a foundation of postmodernism.

One further – perhaps minor but none-the-less troubling – difficulty with a “beyond-method method” portrayal of philosophical counselling is that it invites the construction of a negative ontology. In other words, it perpetuates the current trend to represent philosophical counselling in terms of what it is *not* without encouraging practitioners to either search for or construct a positive conception of what philosophical counselling actually *is*.

#### 4.5 The Preventive/Proactive Element

As mentioned above, one of the basic purposes of philosophical counselling is empowering persons to solve or avoid future problems. The only source to date which mentions explicitly the preventive nature of philosophical counselling is a paper by Shlomit Schuster. She sums up her argument that “philosophical practice is not an alternative therapy, but an alternative to therapy, or a supplement to psychotherapy, which in turn supplements it,” with what seems like a minor after thought: “As well, it can prevent psychological problems.”<sup>121</sup> Unfortunately, (to the best of my knowledge) Schuster does not elaborate on this theme in any of her other papers.

The issue of philosophical counselling as proactive or preventive is easily confused with philosophical counselling’s serving to develop in the client the ability to tackle future problems as they arise. For example, Lahav states that the role of the counsellor is to help clients to develop their philosophical understanding of themselves and their world, and thereby empower them to address their problems and lives in their own way.<sup>122</sup> James Tuedio also points to philosophical counselling as empowering clients to deal with problems by helping them to “engage in a critical examination and reconstruction of dysfunctional conceptual elements underlying their narrative construction of problematized relations and events in their life.”<sup>123</sup> The implication is that the ability of the client to handle present problems – by freeing her from dogmatic thinking,<sup>124</sup> and by enhancing her cognitive abilities<sup>125</sup> by teaching her the abilities and encouraging in her the dispositions necessary for competent philosophical reasoning –

can be so refined as to create in her the competency to *deal* with future contingencies on her own. But this is not the sense in which philosophical counselling is in fact proactive or preventive.

Although empirical data is lacking, and the concept of philosophical counselling as a preventative measure has yet to emerge as a topic of discussion in the literature, the argument made by Vaughana Feary, concerning the rehabilitation of incarcerated populations by means of philosophical counselling, clearly implies that if certain cognitive skills and rational/moral competencies are taught to the client for future use during the philosophical counselling process, philosophical counselling can provide the means by which the client may in fact not merely deal with future problems as they arise, but *foresee*, *anticipate* and thereby *avoid* problems, or *prevent* problems from occurring in the first place.<sup>126</sup> It is by going beyond the second stage of immediate problem resolution to the third and fourth stages of teaching and transcendence as presented in the model above that philosophical counselling is rendered truly proactive or preventive.

Every philosophical counsellor ought to work toward the creation of an awareness in his client that will allow her to anticipate – and thereby avoid or prevent – future problems. Not only will this make it far less likely that the client will find herself unwillingly confronted by unexpected and unwelcome problems but the practice of philosophical counselling will thereby be more autonomy-enhancing than psychotherapy, and therefore more clearly differentiated in that it will have inherent in it a strong proactive or preventative element not found in many types of psychotherapy.

#### 4.6 Limits

As in any helping professions, there are limits to what may be expected of philosophical counselling. These limitations arise from either or both the nature of the practice and from the physical and/or mental health of the individual seeking counsel.

- Philosophical counselling, like philosophy itself, cannot offer ready-made definitive answers to, life's questions. Philosophy has only ever claimed to provide the means by which such answers might be arrived at.

- The philosophical discussion engaged in during a counselling session and the conclusions reached cannot produce behaviour that is in line with those conclusions. As in any form of teaching or counselling, discussion can only point the way to a change in behaviour it cannot force it.

- Philosophical counselling does not claim to address what psychotherapists have called intrapsychic or unconscious conflicts. Philosophical counselling is limited to those problems which can be addressed on a conscious level.

- While philosophical counselling has been proven to be effective in alleviating depression without medication, philosophical counsellors are not trained to deal with psychopathologies, nor are they qualified to prescribe the medication required in the treatment of severe conditions such as schizophrenia or psychosis.

- The quality of the counselling relationship and of the content of the counselling discourse is always limited by the abilities and the personality of the counsellor. A graduate degree in philosophy may guarantee a certain level of philosophical reasoning expertise but it does not guarantee that the holder of such a degree will be empathetic or caring toward his clients.

- Philosophical counselling is limited in its effectiveness when the client is intentionally deceptive or untruthful. In other words, philosophical counselling, like any other helping profession cannot help those who refuse to be helped.

- A philosophical counsellor cannot deal with a client who is so emotionally entangled in her problems that she is unable to mentally step back from those problems in order to examine them critically. Not that philosophical counselling cannot deal with the emotions or emotional issues, but in order to have a rational discussion it must be possible for the client to emerge from emotional self-absorption so as to inquire into the reasons for the emotional distress.

- A philosophical counsellor will not discuss issues in the absence of moral considerations. By this I mean that the philosophical counsellor will assist his client in

achieving her goal so long as that goal does not require immoral behaviour that has the potential to harm either the client or others in her community.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

Achenbach's original theory of philosophical counselling has it that there is no method in its practice, nor should there be. But this conception raises all the problems inherent in the postmodern stance, namely a seemingly non-committal vagueness and ambiguity which cannot alleviate contradictions, cannot form a comprehensive conception, does not meet all of the client's manifold needs, and does not account for actual practice.

Contemporary accounts of philosophical counselling harbour a number of problems. They tend to focus on specific procedures or events within philosophical counselling and construe these as representative of all that happens in the counselling process. Many accounts claim that teaching is a vital part of philosophical counselling – since it develops in the client the ability to conduct autonomous self-analysis – but case studies reveal that very little teaching in fact occurs. They leave ambiguous or unexamined the importance of the counsellor's expertise and authority as it relates to two-thirds of the counselling process. And none of the literature accounts for the potential of philosophical counselling to be proactive or preventive in its effect, an important element in differentiating it from psychotherapy. This left the problem of what sort of construal of philosophical counselling would be adequate in addressing all of these inadequacies.

I argued that the majority of theories, and most of the approaches and methods in philosophical counselling as it is currently being practiced, may be reconciled by means of a four-stage model. This model not only adequately accounts for what is currently presented in the philosophical counselling literature as both normative theory and descriptions of its practice, more importantly it better represents what is required to fulfill the acknowledged, desirable purposes and aims of philosophical counselling. Furthermore, it allows for philosophical counselling to be clearly differentiated from psychotherapy in four main ways: (1) intentional teaching, (2) transcendence beyond

immediate problem solving, (3) enhancement of client autonomy, and (4) the preventive or proactive element. None of these elements seem to be present in psychotherapy to the extent to which they can, do, and ought to occur in philosophical counselling. And finally, contrary to Achenbach's original conception, this model clearly allows philosophical counselling to concern itself with being of assistance to the client in her own attempt to improve both her thinking and her life.



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#### NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

- <sup>1</sup> For a discussion of Aristotle's concepts of different types of knowledge see Trudy Govier's book *Socrates' Children*. Peterborough: Broadview, 1997. esp. pp. 55-60.
- <sup>2</sup> For the Buddhist version of this parable see the Udana vi. 4 in *Some Sayings of the Buddha*. F. L. Woodward trans. Oxford: Great Books 395, 1973. 190-192.
- <sup>3</sup> See, for example, "Philosophical Counselling: Some Roles of Critical Thinking." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 121-132.
- <sup>4</sup> Lahav, Ran. "A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counselling: Worldview Interpretation." In *Essays on Philosophical Counseling*. Ran Lahav and Maria da Venza Tillmanns eds. Lanham: University Press of America, 1995. 7-9.
- <sup>5</sup> See, for example, Ran Lahav's essay "Using Analytic Philosophy in Philosophical Counselling." In the *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 10, No. 2, 1993. 243-251.
- <sup>6</sup> Mijuskovic, Ben. "Some Reflections on Philosophical Counseling and Psychotherapy." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 96
- <sup>7</sup> See for example Rachel B. Blass' essay "The 'Person' in Philosophical Counselling vs. Psychotherapy and the Possibility of Interchange between the Fields." *Journal for Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 13, No. 3, 1996.
- <sup>8</sup> Lahav, Ran. "What is Philosophical in Philosophical Counselling?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 13, No. 3, 1996. 262-266.
- <sup>9</sup> Schuster, Shlomit. "On Philosophical Self-Diagnosis and Self-Help; Clarification of the Non-clinical Practice of Philosophical Counseling." Excerpted from chapters III and V of her dissertation "Philosophical Autobiography: A Commentary on the Practice of Philosophy." 1997.
- <sup>10</sup> Segal, Steven. "Meaning Crisis: Philosophical Counselling and Psychotherapy." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 101-119.
- <sup>11</sup> "How is Philosophical Practice Practical?" In Van der Vlist, 92.
- <sup>12</sup> Marinoff, Louis. "On the Emergence of Ethical Counseling: Considerations and Two Case Studies." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 178.
- <sup>13</sup> Boele Dries. "The Training of a Philosophical Counselor." In *Essays on Philosophical Counseling*. In Lahav and Tillmanns. 45-46.
- <sup>14</sup> Prins-Bakker, Anette. "Philosophy in Marriage Counseling." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 137-148.
- <sup>15</sup> Marinoff. Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Boele. Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Prins-Bakker, Anette. "Philosophy in Marriage Counseling." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 138.
- <sup>18</sup> Prins-Bakker, 137-148.
- <sup>19</sup> Prins-Bakker, 143.
- <sup>20</sup> Prins-Bakker, 137-148.
- <sup>21</sup> According to Laura Wexler this is the approach used by Ken Cust. See her article "Thinking Not Shrinking" in *The Utne Reader*. January-February, 1997. 50-51.
- <sup>22</sup> May, Rollo. *Freedom and Destiny*. New York: Dell, 1981. 22.
- <sup>23</sup> Fiumara, Gemma Corradi. *The Other Side of Language: A Philosophy of Listening*. New York: Routledge, 1995 ed. 98.
- <sup>24</sup> Fiumara, 13.
- <sup>25</sup> Fiumara, 40.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup> Fiumara, 33-40.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup> Adapted from the chapter entitled "Effective Interpersonal Communication," in Lewis Shipper's *Introduction to Philosophy and Applied Psychology*. (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995. 75).
- <sup>31</sup> Quoted in Schuster, Shlomit C. "Philosophical Counseling and Humanistic Psychotherapy." *Journal of Psychology and Judaism*. Vol. 20, No. 3, Fall 1996. 251.
- <sup>32</sup> Achenbach, Gerd B. "About the Center of Philosophical Practice." In van der Vlist. 9-15.

- <sup>33</sup> Habermas, Jürgen. *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Translated by Christine Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996. 98.
- <sup>34</sup> Zijlstra, Bauke. "The Philosophical Counsellor As An Equilibrist." In van der Vlist. 35-44.
- <sup>35</sup> For a discussion of the locus of cognition as located between persons see Dennis Sumara and Terrance Carson's essay "Reconceptualizing Action Research as a Living Practice" in *Action Research as a Living Practice*. Terrance R. Carson and Dennis J. Sumara eds. New York: Peter Lang, 1997. iv.
- <sup>36</sup> The concept of outsider and insider comes from J.B. Christman's essay entitled "Working in the field as a female friend." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*. Vol. 19, No. 2. 1988. 70-85.
- <sup>37</sup> Fiumara, 165.
- <sup>38</sup> For a discussion of various types of listening see *Successful Listening* by Carol A. Roach and Nancy J. Wyatt. New York: Harper and Row, 1988.
- <sup>39</sup> Paul, Richard W. "Teaching Critical Reasoning in the Strong Sense: Getting Behind Worldviews." In *Critical Reasoning in Contemporary Culture*. Richard A. Talaska ed. New York: State University of New York Press, 1992. 144.
- <sup>40</sup> Walton, Douglas. *A Pragmatic Theory of Fallacy*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P., 1995. 106.
- <sup>41</sup> See for example the essays by Dries Boele, Elliot Cohen, Ran Lahav, Shlomit Schuster, Louis Marinoff discussed in earlier chapters.
- <sup>42</sup> Lahav, Ran. "Using Analytic Philosophy in Philosophical Counselling." *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 10, No. 2, 1993. 248.
- <sup>43</sup> See his essay "The Virtue of (Erotic) Love" in *Philosophical Perspectives on Sex and Love*. Robert M. Stewart ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1995. 251.
- <sup>44</sup> Solomon, Robert C. "Emotions and Choice" *The Review of Metaphysics*. XVII, 1 Sept. 1973. 251-281.
- <sup>45</sup> Lahav, Ibid.
- <sup>46</sup> Cohen, Elliott D. "Philosophical Counselling: Some Roles of Critical Thinking." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 125.
- <sup>47</sup> Lahav. Ibid, 249.
- <sup>48</sup> Cohen, 126.
- <sup>49</sup> Norman, Barbara. "Philosophical Counseling: The Arts of Ecological Relationship and Interpretation." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 56.
- <sup>50</sup> Tuedio, James A "Postmodern Perspectives in Philosophical Practice." van der Vlist. 183.
- <sup>51</sup> For a discussion of the similarities between rhetoric and psychotherapy and the uses of rhetoric in psychotherapy, see Jerome D. Frank and Julia B. Frank's *Persuasion & Healing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1991 ed. 65-70).
- <sup>52</sup> Statistic offered by Noam Chomsky in the video documentary *Manufacturing Consent* as seen on public television, March 23, 1998.
- <sup>53</sup> Blass, Rachel B. "The 'Person' in Philosophical Counselling vs. Psychotherapy and the Possibility of Interchange between the Fields." *Journal for Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 13, No. 3, 1996. 293, 294.
- <sup>54</sup> Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.
- <sup>55</sup> In Bernard William's *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1985. 58.
- <sup>56</sup> New York; Oxford UP, 1989 ed. 118.
- <sup>57</sup> Tuedio, 183.
- <sup>58</sup> See Jon Borowicz's essay entitled "Philosophy as Conversion" in *Inquiry*. Vol. XVII, No. 3 Spring 1998. 71-84.
- <sup>59</sup> Tuedio. Ibid.
- <sup>60</sup> Prins-Bakker, 137-148.
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid 140.
- <sup>62</sup> Schuster. Ibid, 598.
- <sup>63</sup> For a further discussion of the criteria for teaching see P.H. Hirst and R.S. Peters *The Logic of Education*. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970. 79.
- <sup>64</sup> Splitter, Laurance J. "Some Reflections on Inquiry, Community and Philosophy." *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines*. Vol. XVII, No. 1. Autumn, 1997. 34.

- <sup>65</sup> Ennis, Robert H. "The Degree to Which Critical Thinking is Subject Specific: Clarification and Needed Research." *The Generalizability of Critical Thinking*. Stephen P. Norris ed. New York: Teachers College, 1992. 21-37.
- <sup>66</sup> See Barbara Thayer-Bacon's argument for using the term "constructive thinking" for what is generally called "critical thinking" in "Is Modern Critical Thinking Theory Sexist?" *Philosophy of Education*. William Hare and John P. Portelli eds. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1996 ed. 98.
- <sup>67</sup> Paul, Richard W. "Teaching Critical Reasoning in the Strong Sense: Getting Behind Worldviews." In *Critical Reasoning in Contemporary Culture*. Richard A. Talaska ed. New York: State University of New York Press, 1992. 153-154.
- <sup>68</sup> Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.
- <sup>69</sup> Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. David E. Linge trans. and ed. Berkeley: U of California P. 1977. 50.
- <sup>70</sup> This distinction is discussed in detail by Mary Field Belenky et al in *Women's Ways of Knowing*. New York: Basic, 1986.
- <sup>71</sup> Scheffler, Israel. *Reason and Teaching*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973. 75-80.
- <sup>72</sup> Bailin, Sharon. "Critical and Creative Thinking." *Philosophy of Education*. William Hare and John P. Portelli eds. Calgary: Temeron Books, 1996. 73.
- <sup>73</sup> This example is based on an actual case of mine published under the title "Veronica's Pride. A Case Study in the Importance of Words." *Elenchus: A Journal of Philosophical Inquiry*. Vol. 2, Issue 2. Millbrae, CA: April, 1998. 6-8.
- <sup>74</sup> Prins-Bakker, 140.
- <sup>75</sup> Murris, Karin. "The Baby and the Bath Water." In van der Vlist. 129.
- <sup>76</sup> Mijuskovic, Ben. "Some Reflections on Philosophical Counseling and Psychotherapy." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 96
- <sup>77</sup> See Corey, 468 and elsewhere.
- <sup>78</sup> Ellis, Albert. *Reason And Emotion In Psychotherapy*. New York: Lyle Stuart, 1970 ed. 36-37.
- <sup>79</sup> See Plato's *Republic* Book 7, sec. 514.
- <sup>80</sup> Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979. 372.
- <sup>81</sup> Norman, 51-52, 58. For a further discussion of "edification" inspired by Norman's paper see Jon Borowicz's "How Is Philosophical Practice Practical?" in van der Vlist, 91-105.
- <sup>82</sup> Govier, Trudy. *Socrates' Children*. Peterborough: Broadview, 1997. 230.
- <sup>83</sup> Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. New York: State University of New York P., 1996 ed. This is the subject of Division 1.
- <sup>84</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. G.E.M. Anscomb trans. New York: Macmillan, 1953. I, 129.
- <sup>85</sup> Boele, Dries. "Experimental Wisdom and the Art of Living." In van der Vlist. 165.
- <sup>86</sup> Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. 103.
- <sup>87</sup> Ibid
- <sup>88</sup> Plato. *Republic*. Book X, 618 c - e.
- <sup>89</sup> Kerr, Donna H., and Margaret Buchmann. "On Avoiding Domination in Philosophical Counselling." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. Vol. 23, No. 3 September 1996. 341.
- <sup>90</sup> Lahav, Ran. "What is philosophical in Philosophical Counselling?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 13, No. 3, 1996. 276.
- <sup>91</sup> Marcel, Gabriel. *The Mystery of Being*. Chicago: Gateway, 1969. 48.
- <sup>92</sup> See Karl Jaspers. *The Way to Wisdom*. New Haven: Yale UP., 1954.
- <sup>93</sup> Blass, Rachel. "On the Possibility of Self-Transcendence: Philosophical Counselling, Zen, and the Psychological Perspective." *Journal Of Chinese Philosophy*. Vol. 23, No. 3 September, 1996. Footnote 2. 294-5.
- <sup>94</sup> Ibid, 290.
- <sup>95</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>96</sup> See Nietzsche's comment on the pleasure in power in his *Will to Power*. Book Two, 428.
- <sup>97</sup> "The Vatican Collection of Epicurean Sayings." In *The Epicurus Reader*. Translated by Brad Inwood, L. P. Gerson, and D. S. Hutchinson. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994. Text 6: 27.

- <sup>98</sup> Blass, 282.
- <sup>99</sup> Segal, Steven. "Meaning Crisis: Philosophical Counselling and Psychotherapy." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 101-119.
- <sup>100</sup> The concept of dialogic research comes from the book *Getting Smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern* by P. Lather. New York: Routledge. 1991.
- <sup>101</sup> For a discussion of the significance and importance of philosophical dialogue with oneself see Pierre Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. 91.
- <sup>102</sup> W.R. Miller puts it this way, "I learn what I believe as I hear myself talk." in "Motivational Interviewing with Problem Thinkers." *Behavioral Psychotherapy*. 1983. Vol. 11, 147-72.
- <sup>103</sup> Paul, Richard W. "Teaching Critical Reasoning in the Strong Sense: Getting Behind Worldviews." In *Critical Reasoning in Contemporary Culture*. Richard A. Talaska ed. New York: State University of New York Press, 1992. 142.
- <sup>104</sup> Schefczyk, Michael. "Philosophical Counseling as a Critical Examination of Life-Directing Conceptions." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 79, 80.
- <sup>105</sup> Lahav, Ran. "A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counseling: Worldview Interpretation." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 7.
- <sup>106</sup> Lahav. Ibid, 9.
- <sup>107</sup> Ruschmann, Eckart. "Foundations Of Philosophical Counseling." Unpublished presentation paper for the Third International Conference on Philosophical Practice. New York, July22-25, 1997. 6.
- <sup>108</sup> See Boele, Dries. "The Training of a Philosophical Counselor." In Lahav and Tillmanns. 47. See also Prins-Bakker, Anette. "Philosophy in Marriage Counseling." In Lahav and Tillmanns 136-7.
- <sup>109</sup> Gadamer. *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Trans. and ed. by David E. Linge. Berkeley: U of California P. 1977 ed.41.
- <sup>110</sup> For a discussion of the dynamics of critical discussions see Douglas Walton's book *A Pragmatic Theory of Fallacy*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P., 1995. 103.
- <sup>111</sup> Franke, William. "Psychoanalysis as a Hermeneutic of the Subject: Freud, Ricoeur, Lacan." *Dialogue*. Vol. 37, No. 1, 1998. 76, 71.
- <sup>112</sup> Blass. Ibid, 287.
- <sup>113</sup> See the collected papers in Lahav and Tillmanns and van der Vlist.
- <sup>114</sup> Benn, Stanley I. *A Theory of Freedom*. New York: Cambridge UP., 1990 ed. 206.
- <sup>115</sup> Code, Lorraine. *What can she Know: Feminist Theory and Construction of Knowledge*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1991. See esp. Chapter 3.
- <sup>116</sup> Heller, A. and F. Feher. "On Being Satisfied in a Dissatisfied Society." *The Postmodern Political Condition*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988. 23-27.
- <sup>117</sup> Rosenau, Pauline Marie. *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992. 117.
- <sup>118</sup> Rosenau, 37.
- <sup>119</sup> Achenbach, Gerd B. "About the Center of Philosophical Practice." In van der Vlist. 9-15.
- <sup>120</sup> Held, Barbara S. *Back to Reality*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1995. passim.
- <sup>121</sup> Schuster, Shlomit C. "Philosophy as if it Matters: The Practice of Philosophical Counselling." *Critical Review*. Vol. 6, No. 4. 595.
- <sup>122</sup> Lahav, Ran. "What's Philosophical in Philosophical Counselling?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 13, No. 3, 1996. 259-260.
- <sup>123</sup> Tuedio, James A. "Postmodern Perspectives in Philosophical Practice." In van der Vlist. 183.
- <sup>124</sup> Norman, 53.
- <sup>125</sup> Feary, Vaughana Macy. "A Right to (Re)Habilitation, including Philosophical Counselling, for Incarcerated Populations." In van der Vlist. 261.
- <sup>126</sup> See Feary, 259-278.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

In the endeavour to define philosophical counselling, three approaches are commonly used: constructing normative theory, reporting actual practice, and differentiating it from other counselling methods. I have argued that in order to formulate an adequate and defensible model of philosophical counselling – one that fulfills the acknowledged, desirable purposes and aims of philosophical counselling – it is essential to first make sense of the numerous, and seemingly incommensurate normative theories, and the disparate practices presented in the literature available in English.

I have done this in the opening chapter by first investigating various theoretical conceptions of philosophical counselling in order to identify and then critique some of the problems inherent in them. This led to the conclusion that many issues are still unresolved in the literature, such as what role is served in philosophical counselling by the practice of phenomenology and hermeneutics, and whether teaching is or ought to be part of philosophical counselling or not.

Second, in Chapter two I examined philosophical counselling from the perspective of reported practice. This highlighted the incredible diversity in what practitioners believe to be the central approaches or methods within their field. It was determined that there are indeed methods in philosophical counselling, despite arguments to the contrary from some practitioners, and that many methods are in fact complementary rather than mutually exclusive. This led to the suggestion that perhaps what has been called “worldview interpretation” may not be foundational to all of what transpires in philosophical counselling. An answer to the question of what may in fact be fundamental to philosophical counselling will be considered below.

Third, in Chapter three I critiqued attempts to differentiate philosophical counselling from psychotherapy. While there seems to be a major distinction between philosophical counselling and classical Freudian psychoanalysis, it is far more difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at anything approaching a clear distinction between philosophical

counselling and all of the numerous methods in psychotherapy. Many of the methods in psychotherapy are in fact substantively philosophical, and several of the methods in philosophical counselling are admittedly modeled after cognitive psychotherapy. I argued that, like the training of the baker differentiates her from the bus driver, the training of the philosophical counsellor differentiates him from the psychotherapist, and the training in philosophy better prepares him to conduct philosophical inquiries with his clients than the training in psychology prepares the psychotherapist to do a similar philosophical investigation. The problem with this argument is that it seems self-evident and is therefore neither very significant nor satisfying.

I argued that perhaps a far more effective way to distinguish philosophical counselling from psychotherapy (if this is even necessary) is to accept the procedure of intentional pedagogy as a stage in philosophical counselling. Not only will putting direct teaching into practice (thereby promoting it from the status of a mere theory) serve to differentiate this aspect of philosophical counselling from psychotherapy, more importantly it will substantiate the claim that the intention of philosophical counselling is, first and foremost, to enhance the autonomy of the client by means of improving her reasoning abilities. While many therapies and counselling methods claim to provide the client with the tools needed to live a better life, thus inferring that they teach their clients some sort of skills, it is unclear how this is accomplished since most employ no direct teaching methods. The common assumption seems to be that the process of problem resolution is equivalent to the act of teaching. Philosophical counsellors ought to abandon this erroneous belief – that counselling already is teaching – and begin to see teaching as an undertaking that requires intention on the part of both the counsellor and of the client, and as an undertaking that deserves a place in the philosophical counselling process. But teaching is only a stage in philosophical counselling that is not experienced by all clients, and therefore cannot serve to distinguish philosophical counselling absolutely from psychotherapy. Perhaps the most salient distinguishing characteristic of philosophical counselling is that it engages the client, at the client's discretion, in some or all of the four stages of philosophical inquiry discussed in the preceding chapter.

I also discussed the question most often asked of the philosophical counsellor, “Is philosophical counselling therapy?” The answer, I argued, is, “Yes, but...” Philosophical counselling is not therapy in the classic sense of diagnosing a patient’s illness according to a social construction, or institutional definition, of “normal,” and the subsequent treatment of the patient’s so-called pathology according to some codified formula. Philosophical counselling does not deal in such cause and effect relations but rather in reason/action relations. But there is no doubt that therapy – in the sense of facilitating an improvement in the client’s condition (whether state of mind, emotional state, or functioning in the world) – is present in those instances of philosophical counselling which are considered by the client to be successful. The “healing” component of the therapy may be anything from a simple discussion about the client’s feeling of unhappiness, to the unraveling of a complex moral problem, to a multi-layered inquiry into the meaning of human existence. All of these can be considered to have served a therapeutic function, to have “healed” or benefited the client, if their undertaking satisfies the explicit wants or the implicit needs of the client. In this sense the answer to the question of philosophical counselling as therapy is also normatively affirmative: philosophical counselling *ought* to be therapeutic if it is to have any point at all.

In the course of this work it has become obvious that a number of elements found in different normative conceptions and accounts of actual practice are – and ought to be – present in all forms of practice in philosophical counselling. These fundamentals are reasoned inquiry, a minimal competency on the part of the client to be able to conduct a rational inquiry, a co-operative client/counsellor relationship, the ability of the counsellor to adapt to the philosophical reasoning skill level of the client, the necessity of direct teaching, an unrestricted agenda which allows for change and progress in the client, and a clear methodology.

(a) Philosophical inquiry

Lahav (1995)<sup>1</sup> holds that it is in fact worldview interpretation which is the fundamental element, or, as he puts it, the underlying “broad common denominator” of

all philosophical counselling. But it seems to be the case that worldview interpretation is the consequence, or the end product of a philosophical inquiry into one's way of living, rather than the other way around. This seems to make philosophical inquiry fundamental to worldview interpretation. And if it is indeed fundamental to worldview interpretation, and worldview interpretation has until now been considered fundamental to all of philosophical counselling, then, not surprisingly, this would make philosophical inquiry rather than worldview interpretation fundamental to all of philosophical counselling.

There is no doubt that it is the ability of the counsellor to conduct a philosophical inquiry that is an a priori necessity in both the analytic and synthetic examination of the client's immediate problems and the transcendent inquiry into her personal "theory," paradigm, or worldview. As Lahav himself has explained elsewhere (1993), the examination of the client's worldview – the process generally undertaken in the fourth stage – requires the uncovering of hidden assumptions, and the examination of the coherence within the client's worldview, which in turn requires the utilization of at least four elements typical of an analytical philosophical investigation:

first, the analyses of the type of phenomenon in question (knowledge, causation, consciousness, etc.) by trying to find a common structure in its various instances; second, the uncovering of hidden assumptions in 'theories' (worldviews): assumptions about the nature of choice and about the nature of the self and the 'true' self; third, the critical examination of the coherence of a 'theory' (worldview): the coherence of the view that objective criteria can tell what one ought to do, and of the view that the self resides in the domain of spontaneous unconscious mental processes; and fourth, conceptual analyses: of choice and justification, of mistakes, and of the self.<sup>2</sup>

So while it does not seem unlikely that an investigation of the client's problems or conceptions could be undertaken without any inquiry into her worldview as such, it does not seem possible that a philosophical counsellor can help his client to interpret her



worldview without utilizing at least some of the elements found specifically in critical thinking and in philosophical inquiry generally. To put it another way, it seems crucial that the client experiences stage three – learning philosophical reasoning skills, and developing the ability to carry out competent philosophical inquiry – in order to have the foundation upon which a cooperative worldview interpretation, between the client and counsellor, such as is done in stage four, may be undertaken.

(b) Minimal competency requirement for clients

Several writers have argued that, in order for a client to undertake any rational inquiry, what is primarily required by all approaches and methods in philosophical counselling is that she must be able to think autonomously and critically. This means that the client must have the abilities and disposition necessary to rationally investigate the framework of her own mind, gain some self-understanding about her behavior, decisions, and experiences, and then be able to influence that framework when necessary by means of both critical and creative self-intervention.<sup>3</sup>

But to insist that the client exhibit a high level of these abilities and dispositions as a fundamental prerequisite before being accepted into a counselling relationship would, of course, be to demand that the client already possess what she has come to the counsellor to develop or attain. A client's cognitive abilities may keep her from entering into discussion at the stage four level, but this is not necessarily a restriction since many clients express no desire to engage in such discussion in the first place.

(c) The cooperative client/counsellor relationship

The pedagogy called for in philosophical counselling at stage three is not based on the traditional teacher/student relationship in which information is given, or instilled, or passed on from one authoritative knower to the other to be stored in memory unaltered from one generation to the next. In philosophical counselling at stage three the operative terms in the counsellor/client relationship are, among others, collaborative learning, reciprocity of information and insight, creative as well as critical inquiry, maieutic rather

than mimetic learning, rigorous listening prior to clarifying questioning, partnership rather than persuasion, and dialogue and discourse rather than “dialectical dismantling.”<sup>4</sup> An appropriate metaphor for the philosophical counselling relationship may be that of dancing. Michael Russell suggests that, like in a dance, as a philosophical counsellor “sometimes you lead, and sometimes you follow, and sometimes the hardest part is to learn how to stay out of your partner’s way.”<sup>5</sup> As a philosophical counsellor, he says, “you must understand your partner’s way of moving very well indeed if you are to follow it, move with it, and know what will embellish and accentuate and what will interrupt.”<sup>6</sup>

The counsellor must also be aware of his own assumptions, biases, and prejudices make every effort to avoid allowing these to influence the way he hears his client and helps her to interpret her “text.”

Furthermore, it is crucial that the philosophical counsellor avoid the temptation to see the purpose of the dialogue within the counsellor/client relationship as a means of furthering his own understanding of the client. Instead he ought to see it as – and indeed it ought to be – a heuristic device, that is, a means of enhancing the client’s understanding of herself. It is not unacceptable (and certainly not unheard of) that, with the counsellor’s assistance, the client sometimes comes to a new understanding, or experiences an original insight into some aspect of her life which will remain beyond her counsellor’s understanding. But this need not be construed as some sort of failure in the counselling relationship or in the counsellor’s cognitive abilities. On the contrary, this is a positive sign of growth in the client’s competence and autonomy.

(d) The ability of the counsellor to adapt

Spinoza maintains that the vast majority of people – “the multitude” – do not have the resources necessary for the sustained reflective attitudes and rationality required for a genuinely philosophical life.<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche observes that “in the great majority, the intellect is a clumsy, gloomy, creaking machine that is difficult to start.”<sup>8</sup> While these positions may be somewhat extreme, it seems reasonable to assume that most individuals have little training, and therefore little proficiency, in philosophical reasoning. This suggests that a fundamental element in philosophical counselling, besides teaching at stage three, must

be the ability of the philosophical counsellor to adapt, that is, to simplify complex philosophical constructs when necessary, to articulate them according to the client's own cognitive ability, and to help the client interpret her expressed feelings and concerns – when appropriate – into a philosophical framework she may not be familiar with. As Jopling puts it,

Given that the average person cannot be expected to fully understand the discourse of the philosopher, the philosopher must use the language of the average person, and adopt their level of thinking, in order to educate and counsel them.<sup>9</sup>

But simple language should not be confused with simplistic thought. The counsellor need not assume that the philosophical issues which arise in philosophical counselling are necessarily shallow or naïve, or that he must abandon meta-issues in such areas as epistemology, metaphysics, or ethics. What Jopling is saying is that, especially in the earlier stages of philosophical counselling, the client may not have the vocabulary nor the intellectual stamina of a trained philosopher. The philosophical counsellor must not forget that, like the professional athlete, he has spent many years developing a rich set of concepts for differentiating kinds of statements, arguments, theories, reasons, explanations, definitions, judgements, and so on, that allow him to critically appraise his own thinking as well as the thinking of others, and that he ought not to, unfairly, expect the same of his untrained client. It is up to the counsellor to not only help his client resolve her problems at the level of her understanding, but to help her develop her level of understanding over the course of the counselling process so that their collaborative discourse can become progressively more rich in a philosophical sense.

(e) Direct teaching

If philosophy ought to be more than the academic pursuit of a few specialized scholars and instead (at least in part) be “a personal life-practice devoted to self-improvement through self-understanding,”<sup>10</sup> and if philosophical counselling is meant to assist the client in becoming capable of conducting an autonomous philosophical self-

inquiry that will lead to greater self-understanding than one of the fundamentals of the counselling process must be to enhance in the client the abilities and dispositions necessary to undertake such a project. This means that the philosophical counsellor cannot simply rely on the incidental learning which may occur during the course of a problem-oriented counselling session. It means instead that the counsellor must accept the role of teacher and vigorously pursue a course of intentional pedagogy at the appropriate time. It requires that the counsellor, like the traditional teacher, accept the “educational task” of finding out how to enable his client to choose intelligently and authentically for herself in both the moral domain and others, and of learning how to equip her with the conceptual tools, the self-respect, and the opportunities to make decisions in the safety of the counselling environment.<sup>11</sup> This necessarily requires that the counsellor shift his approach at some point in time from the “free-floating” conversations at stage one to include all those procedural requirements of a didactic relationship, such as offering information, lesson planning, a review of materials covered, and process and progress evaluation. This does not mean that the counsellor must approach the teaching of his client according to some academic model that requires an algorithmic approach in which a fixed procedure is followed in order to achieve a prescribed outcome. Rather it means that there must be a cumulative intent to the instruction, which necessarily requires elements such as lesson planning and progress evaluation.

(f) Unrestricted agenda

The autonomy of the client in philosophical counselling rests not only on her ability to reason, it is also founded on her freedom to set the agenda within the philosophical counselling process. When the philosophical counsellor restricts himself to the concepts of one philosopher, or to the structures of one philosophical system, or to working at only one stage in the four-stage model, he is forced to manipulate the philosophical dialogue with his client in such a way that it suits his agenda, and not hers. This approach to philosophical counselling is in fact a deliberate inhibition of the autonomy of the client. If her autonomy is truly of paramount importance in the philosophy of philosophical

counselling then any such restrictions by the counsellor is clearly antithetical to this philosophy.

It seems therefore that a fundamental element of philosophical counselling must be the philosophical counsellor's familiarity with, and willingness to draw on or discuss in an open-minded way, a variety of philosophical perspectives and approaches, and that his "agenda" contain nothing more substantial than his desire to help his client.

(g) Change and progress

Achenbach seems firm in his conviction that the philosophical counsellor should not want to change the visitor who is coming to him for advice. If this intention exists, he warns, the philosophical counselling process will become what it should not become: goal-oriented.<sup>12</sup> A charitable interpretation of this warning is that the philosophical counsellor should not intend to change the client according to his (the counsellor's) conception of what ought to constitute such a change, but rather that his intention be to allow and assist the client to change on her own accord. But a more critical reading makes it seem like Achenbach forbids the philosophical counsellor from having any intention whatsoever, including the intention of helping the client to satisfy her own desire for change.

As Jopling has pointed out, philosophy is a powerful tool that does not leave people unchanged.<sup>13</sup> Murriss likewise maintains that the client in a philosophical counselling relationship is bound to change as a person.<sup>14</sup> I would add to this that each client in turn produces some change in the counsellor.

A review of the philosophical counselling literature shows that there is always already obvious intention to all philosophical counselling sessions at every stage along the way, from the alleviation of whatever problem, concern, or issue the client has presented to the counsellor, to improving the client's reasoning skills, to helping the client gain greater insight into complex philosophical themes. And this intention is in response to, and reflects, the expressed wishes of the client, namely obtaining his assistance in affecting those changes she finds herself unable to achieve. It seems evident from case studies that a fundamental element in all philosophical counselling sessions is the striving for change,

improvement, and benefit to the client in whatever form it may take. The normative question, of course, is whether change, improvement, and benefit to the client *ought* to be the goal of philosophical counselling. The answer to this question seems to present itself in another question: If change, improvement, and benefit to the client ought *not* to be a fundamental goal in philosophical counselling, then what is the point?

(h) A clear method

The question, "What is *the* method in philosophical counselling?" is different in kind from the question of whether there ought to be any sort of method at all. It seems evident that without the articulation of some sort of acknowledged aims or purposes, and some principles of action or guidelines to follow in the practice, philosophical counselling will suffer on a number of fronts, such as the inability of its practitioners to speak coherently about what it is they do.

The methodology of philosophical counselling involves two aspects: various approaches, and distinct methods. These are often confused, and those elements which are merely structural components of methods are often seen as competing methods. A fundamental requirement in philosophical counselling seems to be the need for a clarification of method(s). This is not to say that a single method ought to be promoted, only that if philosophers are to become the counsellors of the future it will be necessary for them to be able to articulate what it is that a counsellor does. The four-stage model I have proposed above seems to me to eliminate much of the confusion and to offer a concrete and feasible guide to practice.

There are many approaches and methods presently operating in philosophical counselling, but I believe that my four-stage model does a better job at tying together the diversity of "fibers" which constitute the practice of philosophical counselling as described in the literature, and, more importantly, is better able to meet the various needs of a diverse clientele than any of the other existing models. The first, "free-floating" stage is the listening stage in which the counsellor must focus on becoming acquainted with the client and her concerns, and in which the client comes to know the counsellor and is familiarized with his approach to the philosophical counselling process. In the

second stage the counsellor attempts to help his client resolve her immediate problems, concerns, and issues. In this stage the client usually sees the philosophical counsellor as the expert or authority in philosophical reasoning, and utilizes the counsellor's philosophical reasoning abilities that he has made available to her. In the third stage the counsellor must become more explicitly a teacher, developing in the client her own reasoning skills and the philosophical dispositions necessary to carry out an effective philosophical self-inquiry as a more independent thinker. It is in stage four that the client is helped to transcend the "mundane" chore of immediate problem resolution, to question the assumptions and values inherent in her own paradigm or worldview, and to attain the wisdom to see farther and wider into the world and herself than she has perhaps ever gazed before. It is with this philosophical vision that she will be able to live life less like a mere unreflective machine simply reacting to life's stimuli, and become better able to make the kind of informed choices that will satisfy her own conception of the good life. Only then will she be able to practice philosophy in a way most beneficial to herself: as a way of life.

Admittedly, this description of four stages in philosophical counselling is controversial. It may be argued that there is already enough conflict among philosophical counsellors regarding the taxonomy of their various approaches and methods that we don't need any more classifications to add to the fuel of disagreement. But clearly many of the disagreements between philosophical counsellors, that seem to be based on differences in general philosophical counselling methods, are merely differences in the methods employed *at different stages*. In other words, while a writer may argue that in fact philosophical counselling involves "this particular method but not that one," that writer may be correct only in so far as this method is appropriate for the client at the stage she is occupying at the moment, but not for all clients and their various needs. For example, a practitioner may argue that the problem-oriented approach ought to be considered the most appropriate method for philosophical counselling. It will therefore be seen to conflict with the person-oriented approach. Or it may be construed as opposed to worldview interpretation. But none of these approaches or methods are mutually exclusive when viewed according to the model of philosophical counselling I have

presented. Each simply represents an approach or method that may be the most appropriate for a specific client at a particular stage of counselling.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a general failure on the part of both theorists and practitioners to notice that different clients arrive at the same philosophical counsellor's doorstep with different problems, puzzles, and questions, and a range of philosophical reasoning abilities. While one client may start at the first stage, another may start directly at stage three, and so on. For example, on the first visit a client may request a discussion of a transcendent issue such as the meaning of life, which can be classified as stage four. This client may have read and thought philosophically most of her life, and may well be a capable discussion partner, able to participate actively in the multifarious aspects of this issue. On the other hand, she may never have read or thought about philosophical topics before in her life, and may simply have the desire to do so at the present time. It may not be appropriate to then simply drag this client along in the sort of discussion typically engaged in at stage four. In fact, it is highly likely that, if this were done, the client would soon become discouraged and leave the counselling relationship of her own accord.

It seems reasonable to suppose that the counsellor who is cognizant of the various stages in the philosophical counselling process is better able to look for clues in what the client says and does, and will thereby be in the best position to advise the confused client what stage may be most suitable. By being aware that stage four discussion requires a certain level of philosophical reasoning ability, the counsellor will be able to make a decision – by trial and error or by simply discussing with the client – whether a discussion at the stage four level is appropriate, or whether it may lead the client to frustration and, ultimately, to a sense of failure. If the latter, the counsellor will know that he must first gently guide the client to an earlier stage, such as the stage three learning process, to first prepare her for stage four discussions.

This answers the question of whether or not there is a method in philosophical counselling, and if so of what it ought to consist. There is in fact a substantive method in philosophical counselling: that of addressing the client's needs at the appropriate stage. Clearly, if philosophical counsellors were to understand that the philosophical counselling *process* involves a number of overlapping stages, and that the philosophical



counselling *method* consists of dealing with a client in ways appropriate to where the client's needs are located within that model of stages, it is likely that much of the disagreement over the so-called best method for *all* philosophical counselling sessions and *all* clients would be resolved.

But philosophical counselling is not about stages, or clients, or approaches, or methods. It is about the interconnectedness of people and philosophy, life and wonder. Philosophy offered as philosophical counselling, to people attempting to cope with life in the day-to-day world, appears in its original aspect: not as a theoretical construct, or an academic exercise, but as a method for helping people to live and to look at the world in a more thoughtful way. It is therefore not simply "an attempt to transform mankind,"<sup>15</sup> but rather an attempt to help individuals transform themselves.

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NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

<sup>1</sup> Lahav, Ran. "A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counselling: Worldview Interpretation." In *Essays on Philosophical Counseling*. Ran Lahav and Maria da Venza Tillmanns eds. Lanham: University Press of America, 1995. 7-9.

<sup>2</sup> Lahav, Ran. "Using Analytic Philosophy in Philosophical Counselling." *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 10, No. 2, 1993. 243-251.

<sup>3</sup> Boele Dries. "The Training of a Philosophical Counsellor." In *Essays on Philosophical Counseling*. Ran Lahav and Maria da Venza Tillmanns eds. Lanham: University Press of America, 1995. 45-46.

<sup>4</sup> Fiumara. op. cit. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Russell, Michael. "The Philosopher as Personal Consultant." *The Philosopher's Magazine*. London: <http://www.philosophers.co.uk/current/russell.htm>. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Russell. Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Jopling notes that this is the theme of Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise*. See his "Philosophical Counselling, Truth and Self-Interpretation." *Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 13, No. 3. 1996

<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*. In *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. Walter Kaufmann ed. New York: Modern Library, 1968 ed. p. 176, sec. 327.

<sup>9</sup> See Y. Yovel's *Spinoza and Other Heretics: The Marrano of Reason*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 19891 Vol. 1, Ch.5. Cited in Jopling.

<sup>10</sup> Shusterman, Richard. *Practicing Philosophy. Pragmatism and the philosophical life*. New York: Routledge, 1997. 182.

<sup>11</sup> Greene, Maxine. "Teacher as Stranger." In *Philosophy of Education*. William Hare and John P. Portelli eds. Calgary: Temeron Books Inc., 1996 ed. 198.

<sup>12</sup> Achenbach, Gerd B. "About the Center of Philosophical Practice." In van der Vlist. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Jopling, David A. "'First Do No Harm': Over-Philosophizing and Pseudo-Philosophizing in Philosophical Counselling." Paper presented at the Third International Conference on Philosophical Practice. New York, 1997. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Murris, Karin. "The Baby and the Bath Water." In van der Vlist. 129.

<sup>15</sup> Hadot, 107.

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