

Three Questionable Assumptions of Philosophical Counseling*

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ABSTRACT: Philosophical practice or counseling has been described as a cluster of methods for treating everyday problems and predicaments through philosophical means. Notwithstanding the variety of methods, philosophical counselors seem to share the following tenets: 1. The counselee is autonomous; 2. Philosophical counseling differs from psychological counseling and 3. Philosophical counseling is effective in solving predicaments. A critical examination shows these to be problematic at both theoretical and practical levels. As I believe that philosophical practice is a valuable contribution both to philosophy and to psychology, though not devoid of potential dangers and misuses, I suggest that philosophical counselors reconsider the theoretical and empirical validity of their tenets. Using my experience as a philosophical counselor, I attempt in this paper to contribute to this task while introducing the reader to what are, in my opinion, the main problems in the field.

Introduction

Philosophical practice or counseling may be described as a cluster of methods for treating everyday problems and predicaments through philosophical means.

Three related tenets, which are considered vital to the very existence of philosophical practice, seem to be widely held by philosophical counselors,

*An earlier draft of the paper has been read at the first international congress of Philosophical Practice and Counseling, in Vancouver, Canada, 1995. Though the contents of this article remain my sole responsibility, I would like to thank Ran Lahav for providing me with valuable material from the first anthology of philosophical counseling (not yet published, at the time) and for commenting on an earlier draft of this paper. I would also like to thank Shlomit Schuster and especially Paola Grassi for their help in updating the bibliography. I apologize for my incapacity in such a limited space to quote or even refer to many valuable and interesting philosophical counselors' ideas on the subject that I have been addressing. Last but not least, I would like to thank Elliot Cohen, whose generous and thorough editorial work saved this paper from oblivion.

though not unanimously. They are: 1. *The counselee is autonomous*; 2. *Philosophical counseling differs from psychological counseling* and 3. *Philosophical counseling is helpful in solving predicaments*. While it is understandable why philosophical counselors hold these views, the critical examination which follows will show that they are problematic at both theoretical and practical levels.

To put it bluntly, the view that the counselee is autonomous serves the purpose of liberating counselors from too heavy a responsibility towards their counsees. The tenet that philosophical counseling is different from psychological counseling serves to establish the legitimacy of the profession. Finally, the tenet that philosophical counseling is effective serves the same purpose as the latter and helps to meet the counsees' expectation of solving a personal predicament.

Most counsees do not come to philosophers to leisurely have their philosophical biographies discovered or to better understand their worldview as a means for a richer life. These may, indeed, be worthy and legitimate goals of philosophical counseling, yet, to this day, I do not know whether they have been investigated. According to my experience, most people come to philosophical counseling in order to solve some predicament, usually after also having undergone psychological counseling, either with regard to this predicament or otherwise.

Philosophical counselors do comply with counsees' needs in the present social context in which they operate, for the obvious yet decisive

reason that they cannot counsel without counsees. At the same time, they try to establish philosophical counseling as a legitimate and honorable profession, taking into consideration the prevailing psychological hegemony over personal predicaments and paying allegiance to their diverse philosophical inheritance. These constraints have created a variety of views which, nonetheless, have the three aforementioned tenets in common. These tenets engender theoretical and practical confusions.

Because I believe that philosophical practice can make a valuable contribution both to philosophy and to psychology, I suggest that philosophical counselors try to be more critical about their tenets. In this paper, I will make a modest attempt to contribute to this task. I will, therefore, address the three tenets mentioned above and probe their reliability on both theoretical and practical levels.

1. *The Counselee's Autonomy*

There is a great emphasis in the philosophical counseling movement on respecting the counselee's autonomy, though we should clarify what is meant by that. Consider the following views: "Philosophical counselors should avoid as much as possible imposing their own views on their counsees. They should put aside any personal or pre-conceived opinion, and empower counsees to make their own free decisions, even if these contradict their own" (1). Or: "Much emphasis is placed on the counselee's autonomy in interpreting and evaluating themselves to themselves. In this sense I suggest

that philosophical counseling can be characterized as “helping the person to autonomously clarify and develop his or her worldview” (2).

Following the same line of thought, another philosophical counselor writes that “someone who wants to make a dogmatic use of philosophy and says: “‘I would like to open a Schopenhauer-practice’ would be an embarrassment to himself” (3). Nevertheless, a small number of counselors feel entitled to advocate certain views in counseling: Barbara Norman, for example, believes in developing with her counselees more holistic and relational, as opposed to cognitivist and alienated ways of understanding (4), while Leks Tjisse Klassen uses Emmanuel Levinas’ conceptual scheme, based on the notion of guilt, as a tool for understanding his counselees’ personal problems (5).

Philosophers are likely to be suspicious of the dogmatic counselor, for she partakes in a paternalistic attitude, which they reject. Such an attitude is expressed in the following assumptions: I know - while you don’t - what is wrong with you (I have a diagnosis), who you should be and how you should feel and act (I hold a view of normality) and the way to get there (I have a therapy). Trust me, and I will cure you. Better: if you trust me, maybe I can cure you; without your trust, I cannot even try.

Though psychoanalysis is traditionally associated with paternalism, this is not true of all psychological therapies or therapists. Some are influenced by classical, individualistic ethics. Originally formulated by Kant, such an ethics states that the individual is autonomous, i.e., free and therefore, exclusively responsible for his or her actions. Extensive literature concerning the

individual's autonomy abounds in the medical, psychiatric and psychological disciplines. Indeed, the issue of autonomy has been characterized as one of the most critical problems in the history of psychiatric ethics. (6).

I find, however, most of this discussion irrelevant to the present context, as it concerns the mentally ill, who are not, to the best of my knowledge, considered to be potential philosophical counselees by most counselors. Hence, it is up to us to interpret classical individualistic ethics, i.e., the view that the individual is free and therefore responsible for her actions, in a manner appropriate to our context. As a descriptive statement, it can be trivial in this context. Insofar as the mentally ill are excluded from philosophical counseling, the counselee is *a priori* free and responsible for his or her actions. As a prescriptive statement, it tells people to become aware of their freedom and take full responsibility for their actions. It is none other than the existentialist view of autonomy.

In the philosophical counseling context, however, the issue of autonomy may be linked with various issues of rationality (7). For example, the tenet of the counselee's autonomy can be understood in Socratic terms, that is, everyone can (descriptive) and should (prescriptive) think for himself/herself and strive to be more rational. Whether interpreted in the existentialist or the Socratic prescriptive senses, or in the sense advocated by other traditional philosophical systems, such as Spinoza's or Nietzsche's (8), individual autonomy is a highly praised and rarely attained philosophical goal.

In practice, most counselees are likely to be heteronomous, for fully autonomous people are not likely to come to counseling, philosophical or otherwise. Moreover, most counselees are not likely to state their counseling goal as that of becoming autonomous. Rather, they usually come to solve a specific problem as quickly as possible. There are times, however, when counselees - usually refugees from psychological therapy - insist on their autonomy. In my experience, this explicit emphasis sometimes turns out in subsequent sessions to be something quite different: the counselee is in fact stating his or her unwillingness to change the relevant behavior or view, while insisting on getting the counselor's help in solving the predicament in question (9). At other times, however, heteronomous counselees try to glean the counselor's views or explicitly ask for advice. It seems, then, that autonomy is a philosopher's goal, not shared by most counselees. In practice, the philosophical counselor should therefore distinguish between her own expectations and those of the counselee (10).

2. Philosophical Counseling Differs From Psychological Counseling

In an era in which psychological therapies have dominion over counseling, philosophical counselors are motivated to hold the view that what they offer is at least different from psychological counseling, if not better. Theoretically speaking, this distinction is not easily made. The easiest way is to differentiate philosophical counseling from psychoanalysis, as done by Ran Lahav (11). Psychoanalysis is also the best target for accusations of paternalism, as

mentioned above. Yet, to reduce psychology or psychological therapies to psychoanalysis (though Ran Lahav does not suggest it) is to ignore the evolution that took place in that discipline in the last decades. Ethical or philosophical views were at the root of this evolution, confirming once again the continuous influence of philosophy upon psychology. Elliot Cohen rightly emphasizes the philosophical foundations of the counseling theories that undergird practice (12). I will mention only the most recent ones: the roots of existential therapy in existential philosophy, the Stoic basis of Rational-Emotive Therapy, the humanistic philosophical assumptions underlying Person-Centered Therapy. These therapies are also kindred in practice to what philosophical counseling tries to do. It is obvious, then, that some psychological practices make use of philosophy.

Philosophical counselors rightly emphasize psychologists' incompetence in dealing with philosophical issues that are incorporated in psychological therapies. The need to remedy this incompetence is at the basis of the suggestion that philosophical counseling might be a legitimate alternative to psychological counseling. Formal psychological education and training, however, is not a prerequisite for philosophical counseling. Thus, philosophical counseling must claim complete independence from psychology, echoing a similar claim made by psychologists with regard to philosophy at the beginning of the last century.

Not all philosophical counselors adhere to this claim. A notable exception is Elliot Cohen who developed a hybrid approach, incorporating some Rational-Emotive Therapy techniques and even non-cognitive therapeutic

modalities, such as behavioral ones, within the corpus of philosophical counseling (13). Some philosophical counselors meet the problem of psychological incompetence by excluding emotions as a legitimate subject-matter of philosophical counseling (14).

I am afraid, however, that this solution will not do, for several reasons. From a theoretical point of view, philosophical systems do include psychologies and indeed, it is hard to see how philosophy would be of any relevance to life if it did not deal also with emotions. Philosophy owes most of its practical import to this important fact. Theoretically, then, the demarcation between psychological and philosophical counseling is untenable (15).

Moreover, the sociological context, i.e., the fact that most counselees come to solve a personal predicament and not to broaden their philosophical horizons nor discover their philosophical biography, does not enable the philosophical counselor to exclude systematically any discussion of emotions.

It seems, then, that from a theoretical point of view, there is no need to exclude discussion of emotions from philosophical counseling and, that from a practical point of view, it is vital to the profession to include it. However, the issue of the emotions, though important, is just one aspect of the problem of incorporating psychology into philosophy, and thus, into philosophical practice.

The problem of demarcation between psychological and philosophical counseling on the theoretical level is reflected in practice. There, I believe, psychological knowledge and experience is used as a determinant part of

philosophical counseling, enlightening the philosophical counselor's way through the labyrinth of her philosophical knowledge and assisting her in the choices she makes. I would like to demonstrate this point with examples from the literature and from my own experience as a philosophical counselor.

I refused to accept for counseling a woman who gave me enough details about her psychological condition so that I could diagnose her as depressive. She had been in psychological therapy and on medication for fifteen years and claimed it did not help her. Although I thought that philosophical counseling might be helpful in this case, I did not accept her as my counselee because I was afraid that she would commit suicide. My decision was made solely on psychological grounds.

Published reports of case studies bear the mark of psychological skills used during philosophical counseling. The marriage philosophical counselor, Anette Prins-Bakker, "senses" that something is too much for the still unstable marriage. One of the most important insights her counselees can gain through counseling is clearly psychological, namely, that "mutual understanding and acceptance must take place in a dialogue" (16). In a case study labeled "the phenomenology of a child", Ran Lahav chose to interpret his counselee's worldview as that of an adult believing he is still a child. He relied solely on an insight based on Freudian slips of the tongue, namely, his 35 years old counselee's tendency to use expressions such as "when I grow up" and "the adults out there are doing such and such" (17). Tim LeBon's concern for the theoretical assumptions of the field and for "detailed considerations of what actually

takes place in the sessions” (18) led to a recent publication of a special issue of *Practical Philosophy: Journal of the Society for Philosophy in Practice* (Spring 2003, 6 (1)), which is dedicated to case studies. Apart from this condensed source, other recent cases that illustrate the problem I am pointing at can be easily found in the literature about philosophical counseling (19).

3. *The Effectiveness of Philosophical Counseling*

The third tenet common to philosophical counselors is the effectiveness of philosophical counseling in solving predicaments. Although most philosophical counselors maintain that they do not offer a diagnosis or a therapy (20), the tenet of effectiveness must be at least the honest counselor’s implicit assumption when working with counselees who come to resolve a personal predicament. There are, however, other alternatives for the counselor, which will be discussed below when addressing the practical import of the tenet of effectiveness.

At the theoretical level, the question of the effectiveness of philosophical counseling is raised, and answered mostly in the affirmative, though it is not clear on what grounds. Consider, for example, the following explanations:

Once you become more aware of your own basic views
and realize that they can be corrected or changed by

yourself, you will be able to begin making changes in yourself and your life (21).

Or,

Obviously, there is no magical formula to bring about... an extreme change, but I believe that even the mere understanding of patterns in one's attitude involves a powerful insight that is an important step towards real personal progress (22).

It seems that the underlying assumption of most philosophical practitioners is that a better understanding of oneself or of one's predicament is helpful, for understanding enables change. Some philosophical counselors do not explicitly formulate this assumption, some acknowledge that it "need[s] to be made by philosophical individual counseling" (23), while others try to argue for the validity of the assumption, using theoretical considerations (24) or empirical support (25). My own view is that, until further empirical data is supplied or more convincing theoretical arguments are proposed, *understanding is not a sufficient condition for changing nor a necessary one* (as was made clear by successful therapies which are not based on understanding, such as behavior therapy).

A more moderate view concerning the effectiveness of philosophical practice might then be formulated, namely, that a better understanding of one's predicament is valuable in itself. Although this might be the case, I doubt that psychological relief of one's suffering can be attained in this way. Getting a better understanding of one's predicament without a means to resolve it may be very frustrating. Nor do I know whether there is more consolation in the interpretation of the hindrance in terms of irrational beliefs which one cannot annul or in terms of a worldview one cannot alter, than in terms of hidden forces one cannot control: the apparent accessibility of the former and the alleged responsibility one has for his beliefs - when coupled by impotence as regarding change - might be a humiliating experience (26).

These considerations lead us to the possible harmful consequences of philosophical practice in particular and of philosophy in general. Evidence of harmful effects of philosophical practice has already been recorded in the literature. Consider, for example, Shlomit Schuster's description of Hoogendijk's practice: "In thematising, thinking becomes clearer, but situations can become more problematic, which could upset the visitor" (27). To take another example, the marital philosophical counselor mentioned above, writes about "new and more profound doubts" that come out about the counselees' marriage through the use of philosophy (28). There is, of course, ample evidence of allegedly necessary, though temporary, harmful effects of psychological therapies in the literature (29), but this could hardly count as an argument in favor of necessary evils in philosophical counseling. Karl Pfeifer

succinctly summarizes this point by writing, “the desiderata of philosophy can diverge from the desiderata of counseling” (30).

The potentially harmful effects of philosophy, though a detailed discussion of them lies beyond the scope of this paper, should be taken into consideration: we know from personal experience that philosophy can confuse, bewilder, frighten, discourage. Perhaps the main advantage of philosophical counseling over unmediated and unguided access to philosophy, lies in the possibility to supervise and thus minimize those harmful effects. This latter consideration bears consequence on the questions of the counselee’s autonomy and of the counselor’s paternalism discussed above.

At the theoretical level, then, both potentially beneficial and harmful effects of philosophical counseling should be made explicit. Emphasis should be laid, in my opinion, on the theoretical grounds of philosophical effectiveness no less than on the description of empirical effects: as philosophers, we want to know whether - and if yes, how - our beliefs relate to our emotions and behavior (31). Philosophical counselors’ views upon the relationship of beliefs, emotions and behavior should be exposed to public debate, in order to be critically examined, if not empirically refuted, by philosophers, psychologists and fellow-counselors.

At the practical level, I believe that the counselor should not ignore the counselee’s expectation of solving his or her predicament. One way of dealing with this expectation is to make the problematic tenet of philosophical effectiveness explicit, as well as the potential harmful effects of philosophical

counseling. At least two other alternative ways, however, are open for the counselor confronted with counselees' expectations to resolve a personal predicament, namely:

1. To say right away that the counselor cannot solve it;
2. To undermine, à la Achenbach, the counselee's need for solving his or her predicament. In his words:

Rather than readily serving the needs that are directed to it, philosophical practice should be their most thorough critic, in the sense that it should put these needs in question. Instead of accepting the need as it is, it is its goal to examine it in order to develop it further. Philosophical practice is the cultivation of needs, not just their satisfaction. (32)

If, however, the counselor does believe that philosophy is effective to some extent in solving personal predicaments, she should share both her convictions and doubts with the counselee. This is a concrete way to combat the paternalistic attitude which seems to bother the philosophical counselor, as we saw above.

Conclusion

I think that it is clear by now that the three kindred tenets, which form the allegedly necessary basis of philosophical practice, are problematic (33). Using philosophy autonomously as an effective tool towards change is a very noble

ideal attained by few philosophers and strove for by many. Helping others achieve positive change can be very rewarding, yet philosophical counseling brings novelty which is not without risks. I suggest that philosophical counselors submit themselves to strict discipline: public debate and criticism of beliefs, on the theoretical level, and complete sincerity vis-a-vis the counselee, on the practical level.

Notes

- (1) R. Lahav (1995) "A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counseling: Worldview Interpretation", in R. Lahav and M. Tillmanns (eds.) *Essays on Philosophical Counseling* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America), pp. 3-24, p. 5.
- (2) R. Lahav (1992) "Applied Phenomenology in Philosophical Counseling", *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 7, pp. 45-52, p. 47. For a similar view, see J. A. Tuedio (1996) "Postmodern Perspectives in Philosophical Practice." In *Perspectives in Philosophical Practice: The Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Philosophical Practice*, Win van der Vlist (ed.) (Doorwerth, The Netherlands: The Dutch Society for Philosophical Practice), pp. 184-194.
- (3) M. Schefczyk (1994) "Philosophical and Psychological Individual Counseling", in *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Praxis*, 5, pp. 6-11, p. 7.
- (4) B. Normann (1995) "The Art of Ecological Relationship and Interpretation", in *Essays on Philosophical Counseling*, op. cit., pp. 49-58.
- (5) L. T. Klassen (1996) "The Concept of Guilt in Philosophical Counseling, in *Perspectives in Philosophical Practice: The Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Philosophical Practice*, op. cit., pp. 24-36.
- (6) N. Laor (1981) "Common Sense Ethics and Psychiatry", in *Psychiatry*, vol. 47, pp. 137-149.

(7) See J. Agassi and I. C. Jarvie (eds.) (1987) *Rationality: The Critical View* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff). The philosophical practitioner Elliot D. Cohen links autonomy and rationality quite efficiently in most of his work; to the best of my knowledge, he did the most extensive work among his peers on the problem of autonomy. See, for example, “The Philosopher as Counselor”, (2000) in E. Cohen (ed.) *Philosophers at Work: Issues and Practice of Philosophy*, 2nd edition, Wadsworth, pp. 457-466; “Logic, Rationality and Counseling”, *International Journal of Applied Philosophy* (1990) 5 (1), pp. 43-49; *Caution: Faulty Thinking can be Harmful to your Happiness* (1992), (Fort Pierce, FL: Trace-WilCo, Inc.); “Philosophical Counseling: A Computer-Assisted, Logic-Based Approach”, *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines* (1995) 15 (2), pp. 83-90; “Philosophical Principles of Logic-Based Therapy” (2003) in *Practical Philosophy: Journal of the Society for Philosophy in Practice*, 6 (2), pp. 27-35; and *What would Aristotle Do? Self-Control through the Power of Reason* (2003) (New York: Prometheus Books).

(8) For Spinoza’s and Nietzsche’s ideals of autonomy, see for example, Lydia B. Amir, *Spinoza and Nietzsche as Alternative Redeemers*, unpublished manuscript, currently under review by Martinus Nijhoff Press. For a critique of the feasibility of their respective ideals for non-philosophers, see L. B. Amir, “Happiness, Virtue and Management: A Spinozistic Approach”, and “Autonomy, Sovereignty and Generosity: Nietzsche’s Ethics in Management”, in *Reason in Practice: The Journal of Philosophy in Management* (both forthcoming). For an ideal of autonomy based on the Hellenistics’ teachings, see Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (1994), and for a critique of its feasibility within the philosophical counseling framework see Fiona Jenkins, “Therapies of Desire and Aesthetics of Existence: On Foucault’s Relevance for Philosophical Counselling” (2001), in *Practical Philosophy: The Journal of the Society for Philosophy in Practice*, 4 (3), pp. 15-24, and the almost identical paper “Philosophical Counseling as Care of the Self: Notes on Foucault’s Genealogy of Ethics” (2002) in H. Herrestad, A. Holt and H. Svare (eds.), *Philosophy in Society*, (Oslo: Unipub Forlag), pp. 287-296. For the existentialist ideal of autonomy and its criticism in post-modernism, see the

first three chapters of Lydia Amir, *Homo Risibile: Philosophy, Humor and the Human Condition* (Albany: SUNY Press), forthcoming.

(9) I analyze a case in which this kind of behavior is exemplified in “Philosophical Practice: A Method and Three Cases” (2003) *Practical Philosophy: The Journal of Consultant Philosophers*, 6 (1), pp. 36-41.

(10) In “Philosophical Practice: A Method and Three Cases” (op. cit.), I assess the success of the philosophical counseling sessions in terms of the client’s expectations as well as mine, underlining my failures in promoting my goals, which include the furthering of the client’s autonomy.

Within the literature on philosophical counseling, the issue of autonomy is usually addressed from a different, less radical, angle than the one I propose. Anders Holt, for example, addresses the issue by warning against “all forms of manipulation and persuasion” and by contrasting “the principle of autonomy” with “a paternalistic helper” (“Between Ideality and Reality – Some Principles” (2002), in H. Herrestad, A. Holt and H. Svare (eds.), *Philosophy in Society* (Oslo: Unipub Forlag), p. 268). Eckart Ruschmann simply states that the philosophical counselor sees his client as “an equally philosophizing person” (“Foundations of Philosophical Counseling” (1998), in *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines*, 17 (3), p. 25). Tim LeBon articulates the theoretical assumption that “most people are capable of fruitful philosophical dialogue” and adds that “this assumption denies the elitist claim that only few, possessing a philosophical aptitude and skills, can benefit from philosophy” (“Philosophical Counselling: An Introduction”, (2001) *Thinking Through Dialogue*, Trevor Curnow (ed.), (Oxford: Practical Philosophy Press), p. 6. On the immense difficulties of dialogue, philosophical or otherwise, see Lydia Amir (2001) “Don’t Interrupt My Dialogue”, in *Thinking Through Dialogue*, Trevor Curnow (ed.), (Oxford: Practical Philosophy Press), pp. 239-243.) Views of autonomy which are similar to those of Holt, Ruschmann and LeBon can be found, *inter alia*, in Margaret Buchman’s “On Avoiding Domination in Philosophical Counseling” (1996), *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 23 (3), pp. 341-335, and in James Tuedio’s “Death of a Virtue Salesman:

The Philosophical Counselor as Personal Redeemer”, in *Praktische Philosophie/Philosophy Practice*, (forthcoming).

One of the consequences of the prevalent view of autonomy within the philosophical counseling movement is that the issue of autonomy is seldom addressed as an independent issue. Most contributions to the issue of autonomy are found in the literature that seeks to differentiate between philosophy and psychoanalysis, or alternatively, to find analogies between philosophical counseling and other forms of psychotherapy (see note 15 below for an extensive literature on the subject). Another consequence of the prevalent view of autonomy is that it is rarely viewed as problematic within the philosophical counseling movement. If there is some concern, it is directed towards the counselor’s capacity to respect autonomy rather than towards the counselee’s capacity to achieve it. In other words, the counselee’s autonomy is mostly assumed, as is assumed both her capacity and will to enhance it. A valuable guide to the issue to autonomy within the literature of the movement can be found in Peter B. Raabe (2001) *Philosophical Counseling: Theory and Practice*, (Westport, CT: Praeger), chapters 2 and 5.

(11) R. Lahav (1995) “A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counseling: Worldview Interpretation”, op. cit. See also R. Lahav (1993) “Using Analytic Philosophy in Philosophical Counseling”, in *The Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 10 (2), pp. 243-252, for a valuable discussion of the difference between philosophy and psychology. It seems that his thought has undergone an evolution regarding this issue, for in a more recent paper he suggests “that the attempt to make a clear-cut distinction between philosophical practice and existing psychotherapies is questionable if not hopeless.” (“Is Philosophical Practice That Different From Psychotherapy?” (1994) in *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Praxis*, 1, pp. 32-36, p. 33).

(12) E. D. Cohen (1995) “Philosophical Counseling: Some Roles of Critical Thinking”, in *Essays in Philosophical Counseling*, op. cit., pp. 121-131.

(13) E. D. Cohen (1992) *Caution: Faulty Thinking Can Be Harmful to Your Happiness* (Fort Pierce, FL: Trace-WilCo, Inc.). For references to Cohen’s more recent work see note 7 above and note 15 below.

(14) Some philosophical counselors, however, think that the main goal of philosophical practice is to educate the emotions (i.e. Warren Shibles (1998; 2001)). Others, following Bertrand Russell's view that "one could stretch the comprehensiveness that constitutes wisdom to include not only intellect but also feeling" (1956, p. 174), think that developing better feelings is a worthy philosophical goal (i.e., Lydia B. Amir (2002a; 2002b; 2003)).

(15) This view of the inseparability of philosophy and psychology is similar to the view advocated by Michael Schefczyk, who writes: "One would therefore.....make a mistake if one were to try to draw a clear line between philosophy and psychology. All attempts in this regard, in my opinion, are in vain. Philosophical practitioners use therapeutical techniques; Psychotherapists use philosophical thoughts in their counseling... psychologists and philosophers should learn to put up with the situation in which they are mutually dependent upon one another and should help each other in turn." ("A Few Remarks on Philosophical Practice", unpublished manuscript given to me by the writer). In this respect, see also E. Cohen's view, quoted at the end of this note.

Apart from Ran Lahav (see note 11 above), various counselors dealt with the subject of differentiating Philosophical counseling or practice from Psychological therapy. Many of the papers of the first English book on philosophical counseling, edited by Lahav and Tillmanns (1995), were dedicated to this problem. See, for example, Steven Segal, "Meaning Crisis: Philosophical Counseling and Psychotherapy", pp. 118-123; Ben Mujuskovic, "Some Reflections on Philosophical Counseling and Psychotherapy", pp. 90-100, and Lahav himself "A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counseling: Worldview Interpretation", pp. 1-10. Another philosophical counselor, who addressed the issue is Shlomit C. Schuster, who argues for a "sincere communication in philosophical practice, based on a free, spontaneous developing conversation for which no method can exist" (Schuster, 1999, p. 96, and the whole of chapter 3), a point she repeats by referring to philosophical practice as "beyond-method method" in "Philosophical Counseling and Rationality" (2001) in *Thinking Through Dialogue*, Trevor Curnow (ed.), (Oxford: Practical

Philosophy Press), pp. 58-61; see also the bibliography at the beginning of Schuster's book for further references to her work. Alex Howard, in "Taking an Ethical Stand", argues that "the primary attention of philosophers is not personal and psychological. They seek to help clients examine the roots of perception, thought and opinion and engage with important moral questions. ... People have always been faced with important ethical, existential and spiritual questions. These questions are not primarily psychological, therefore there is no reason to believe that a psychologist or psychological counsellor is best placed to assist." (Alex Howard, "Taking an Ethical Stand", *Practical Philosophy: The Journal of the Society for Philosophy in Practice*, 6 (1), pp. 63-65, p. 63). Other contributions to this issue by practical philosophers include David A. Jopling, "Philosophical Counseling, Truth and Self-Interpretation", *Journal of Applied Philosophy* (1996), 13 (3), pp. 290-299; Dries Boele, "The Art of Living: Philosophical Contributions to Psychotherapy", *The British Psychological Society Psychotherapy Section Newsletter* (1999) June 25, pp. 25-33; Dona D. Warren, "Healing Trasyrachus: the Psychotherapeutic Use of Dialogue" (2001), in *Thinking Through Dialogue*, Trevor Curnow (ed.), (Oxford: Practical Philosophy Press), pp. 42-9; Lou Marinoff, *Plato, Not Prozac: Applying Philosophy to Everyday Problems* (1999) (New York: Harper Collins) chapter 2; Lou Marinoff, (2002) *Philosophical Practice*, (San Diego, CA: Academic Press), chapter 15; Lydia Amir, "The Unconscious: Freud versus Sartre", in *Philosophical Counseling and the Unconscious*, P. Raabe (ed.), forthcoming . Finally, see Peter C. Raabe, "The Relationship between Philosophical Counseling and Psychotherapy" (2003), in *Pratische Filosofiche/Philosophy Practice*, 2; in the third chapter and the second appendix of his first book (2001) he offers an excellent summary of the literature on the subject and of the main issues involved.

The Psychoanalyst Rachel Blass contributed to the issue of differentiating philosophical counseling and psychological counseling, *inter alia*, the following publications: "On the Possibility of Self-Transcendence: Philosophical Counseling, Zen and the Psychological Perspective", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* (1996) 23 (3), pp. 277-298; Rachel Blass, "The *Person* in Philosophical Counseling vs.

Psychotherapy and the Possibility of Interchange between the Fields”, *Journal of Applied Philosophy* (1996) 13 (3), pp. 279-296. The Psychotherapist Chris Mace contributed to the same problem an introduction, entitled “philosophy and psychotherapy”, and the final chapter: “Philosophy as Psychotherapy” to the book he edited (1999).

Some special issues arise from attempting to differentiate philosophical counseling from forms of therapy which are closer to philosophical counseling, such as existential therapy and R.E.T. and R.E.B.T. Emmy Van Deurzen, who is trained equally as a psychotherapist and a philosopher, contributed especially to the elucidation of the relationship of philosophy with existential psychology; see, for example, “Predictable Difficulties in Daily Living: Existential Psychotherapy as a Road to Human Understanding” (2002), in H. Herrestad, A. Holt, H. Svare (eds.), *Philosophy in Society*, (Oslo: Unipub Forlag), pp. 143-164; “Speech is Silver, Silence is Golden: Psychotherapy and Philosophical Consultancy” (2001) in *Thinking Through Dialogue*, Trevor Curnow (ed.), (Oxford: Practical Philosophy Press), pp. 35-41; and “Existentialism and Existential Psychotherapy” (1999), in *Heart and Soul: The Therapeutic Face of Philosophy*, Chris Mace (ed.), (London: Routledge), pp. 215-236 . Other contributions to the difference between philosophy and existential psychotherapy include Ran Lahav, “Philosophical Counseling and Existential Therapy: On the Possibility of a Dialogue between the Fields”(1997), *Journal of the Society for Existential Analysis*, 9, pp. 129-145; Simon du Plock, “Today We Have Naming of Parts: On Dialogue between Philosophical Counselling and Existential Psychotherapy” (1999), *Journal of the Society for Existential Analysis* 10 (1), pp. 7-28. The work of the existential therapist Tim LeBon with David Arnaud is also especially relevant here (see their papers in *Practical Philosophy: The Journal of the Society for Philosophy in Practice*, “Towards Wise Decision-Making 1: Decision Analysis” (2000), *Practical Philosophy*, 3 (1), “Towards Wise Decision-Making 2: The Emotions” (2000), *Practical Philosophy*, 3 (3), and “Towards Wise Decision-Making 3: Critical and Creative Thinking” (2001) *Practical Philosophy* 4 (3); see also Tim Le Bon’s book, *Wise Therapy: Philosophy for Counsellors* (2001)).

The main task of differentiating between Rational Emotive Therapy and philosophical counseling fell into E. Cohen's domain, for his own view of philosophical counseling is close to these therapies. See, for example, Elliot D. Cohen, "The Philosopher as Counselor" (2000), in E. Cohen (ed.) *Philosophers at Work: Issues and Practice of Philosophy*, 2nd edition, Wadsworth, pp. 457-466; "Logic, Rationality and Counseling", (1990) *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 5(1), pp.43-49; *Caution: Faulty Thinking can be Harmful to your Happiness*, (1992) (Fort Pierce, FL: Trace-WilCo, Inc.); "Syllogizing RET: Applying Formal Logic in Rational-Emotive Therapy" (1992), in *Journal of Rational-Emotive and Cognitive-Behavior Therapy*, 10 (4), pp. 239-245; "Philosophical Counseling: A Computer-Assisted, Logic-Based Approach" (1995), *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines* 15 (2), pp. 83-90; "Philosophical Principles of Logic-Based Therapy" (2003), in *Practical Philosophy: Journal of the Society for Philosophy in Practice*, 6 (2), pp. 27-35, in which he writes: "I regard LBT (Logic-Based Therapy) as a development of REBT (Rational-Emotive Behavioral Therapy). In saying this, I do not view philosophical counseling as entirely distinct from psychological counseling. Psychological counseling can get philosophical, and conversely. The difference may be one of degree." (p. 31) See especially his most recent book, *What would Aristotle Do? Self-Control through the Power of Reason*, (2003) (New York: Prometheus Books). See also D. Robertson, "REBT, Philosophy, and Philosophical Counselling" (2000), in *Practical Philosophy*, 3 (3), for a criticism of an earlier version of LBT.

(16) A. Prins-Bakker (1995) "Philosophy in Marriage Counseling", in *Essays in Philosophical Counseling*, op. cit., pp. 135-151, p. 137.

(17) R. Lahav (1992) "Applied Phenomenology in Philosophical Counseling", in *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 7, pp. 45-52, p. 47.

(18) Tim LeBon (2001) "Philosophical Counselling: An Introduction", in *Thinking Through Dialogue*, Trevor Curnow (ed.), (Oxford: Practical Philosophy Press) pp. 5- 9, p. 8.

(19) A careful reading of the spring issue of *Practical Philosophy: Journal of the Society for Philosophy in Practice*, (2003), 6 (1), which is dedicated to case studies,

illustrate my claim, to wit, that in practice, philosophers use also psychology in their counseling. For more cases through which this claim can be substantiated, see P. B. Raabe (2001) *Philosophical Counseling: Theory and Practice*, (Wesport, CT.: Praeger), part III: Practice; S. C. Schuster (1999) chapters 6-12; and L. Marinoff's two more recent books [(2002) *Philosophical Practice* (San Diego, CA: Academic Press) and (2003) *The Big Questions: How Philosophy Can Change Your Life?* (New York: Bloomsbury)]. Robert Paden's view is worth mentioning in this context: he suggests that non-philosophical methods are a necessary prerequisite of the effectiveness of philosophical methods (Paden, 1998).

(20) S.C. Schuster (1991) "Philosophical Counseling", in *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 8 (2), pp. 219-223.

(21) A. Prins-Bakker (1995) "Philosophy in Marriage Counseling", op. cit.

(22) R. Lahav (1992) "Applied Phenomenology in Philosophical Counseling", op. cit.

(23) M. Schefczyk (1994) "Philosophical and Psychological Individual Counseling", op. cit.

(24) E. D. Cohen (1995) "Philosophical Counseling: Some Roles of Critical Thinking", op. cit., and more recent publications.

(25) R. Lahav (1995) "A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counseling: Worldview Interpretation", op. cit.

(26) See L. B. Amir, (2002b) "Pride, Humiliation and Humility: Humor as a Virtue", *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 1 (3), for one possible way of dealing with the kind of humiliation which might arise from impotence to change some important aspects of the human condition.

(27) S. C. Schuster (1991) "Philosophical Counseling", op. cit., p. 222.

(28) A. Prins-Bakker (1995) "Philosophy in Marriage Counseling", op. cit., p. 137.

(29) See, for example, A. Ellis (ed.) (1971) *Growth Through Reason* (Palo Alto, CA: The Institute for Rational Living). In the introduction, he writes: "When I practiced psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy.... I warned my clients that before they improved as a result of seeing me, they might well get worse. And I was frequently right! Many of them ultimately got better - but only after they had

undergone considerable suffering concomitantly with, and quite probably as a direct result of, treatment. For revealing to an individual some of his hidden traits and motivations may finally do him some good, but in the short run it aggravates his suffering. This can happen in rational-emotive therapy, too” (p. 1).

(30) K. Pfeifer (1994) “Philosophy Outside the Academy: The Role of Philosophy in People-Oriented Professions and the Prospects for Philosophical Counseling”, *Inquiry: Critical Thinking across the Disciplines*, 14 (2), pp. 60-68, p. 67. In order to avoid any misinterpretation of Pfeifer’s intention or potential confusion of his views with mine, the paragraph from which this quote is taken is worth being reprinted here: “‘The unexamined life is not worth living,’ said Socrates. Maybe so. But ignorance may still be a bliss, and alienation may still be the plight of the aware. The desiderata of philosophy can diverge from the desiderata of counseling. The examined life may not be worth living either.”

(31) Philosophers have done some important recent work on the emotions. See, for example, M.C. Nussbaum (2001) *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press); R.C. Solomon (1993) *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life* (Indianapolis/ Cambridge: Hackett); and A. Ben Ze’ev (2000) *The Subtlety of Emotions* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press). See also some practical philosophers’ work on the emotions, such as L. Amir (2002a, 2002b, 2004), E. D. Cohen (1988, 1990, 1998, 2003), P. B. Raabe (2000) and W. Shibles (1978).

(32) G. B. Achenbach (1987) *Philosophical Practice (Philosophische Praxis)*, (Köln: Jurgen Dinter), pp. 51-56. More recent work by Gerd B. Achenbach in which he expresses similar opinions are, *inter alia*, “Philosophical Practice Opens up the Trace to *Lebenskönnerschaft*” (2002), in H. Herrestad, A. Holt, and H. Svare (eds.), *Philosophy in Society* (Oslo: Unipub Forlag), pp. 7-16; Gerd B. Achenbach, (2001) *Lebenskönnerschaft*, (Freiburg: Herder); Gerd B. Achenbach, (2003) *Vom Richtigen im Falschen. Wege philosophischer Lebenskönnerschaft*, (Freiburg: Herder).

(33) Peter B. Raabe made recently a much more comprehensive attempt to clarify and criticize the various methods of philosophical counseling, and to offer a model of his

own. Though most of his remarks are very valuable and the scope of his work impressive, my goal has been different: to uncover the basic tenets of philosophical counseling and to show both their (at least *prima facie*) necessity and the problems they create theoretically and practically. Still, the reader will be rewarded by complementing my paper with P. B. Raabe's critical synthesis of various views of the client's autonomy (chapter 2 and 5), on the relationship of philosophical counseling and psychology (chapter 3) and on the effectiveness of philosophical counseling (scattered remarks, note 1, p. 108, for example). See P. B. Raabe (2001) *Philosophical Counseling: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger) and its sequel (2002) *Issues in Philosophical Counselling* (Westport, CT: Praeger), in which he states that though philosophical counseling is not therapy, dialoguing with a philosopher may be therapeutic. Lou Marinoff's last book (2003) can be helpful too, as well as Tim LeBon's *Wise Therapy: Philosophy for Counsellors* (London: Continuum, 2001), and Elliot Cohen's last book, *What would Aristotle Do? Self-Control through the Power of Reason* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2003).

Especially relevant to the issues raised in this paper is Tim LeBon's article "Philosophical Counselling: An Introduction", (2001) *Thinking Through Dialogue*, Trevor Curnow (ed.), (Oxford: Practical Philosophy Press) pp. 5- 9, which shows similar concerns with both theoretical and practical aspects of philosophical counseling. Though he proposes a list of theoretical assumptions which somewhat differs from mine, he begins by wondering about the fact that they are seldom discussed in the literature "Surprisingly, the theoretical assumptions of philosophical counselling have seldom been made explicit," he writes (p. 6). In affinity with my thoughts, he ends his article with the following remarks: "philosophical counselling would benefit from more attention being paid to both to the theoretical assumptions of philosophical counselling ...and detailed considerations of what actually takes place in the sessions, possibly through the publication of in-depth case studies. In this way both the benefits and the limitations of philosophical counseling could be better understood so that the discipline can progress even further." (p. 8)

Finally, the psychotherapist Chris Mace expresses similar concerns. In the concluding paragraphs of the book he edited, he writes: “attempts to realize philosophy as practice, in the shape of philosophical counseling, are barely in their infancy... The experience of other practical disciplines is that its survival and growth will require more distinct values and vision than are currently evident.” (Chris Mace (ed.) (1999), *Heart and Soul: The Therapeutic Face of Philosophy*, (London: Routledge), p. 277).

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