

Philosophical Counseling is not a Distinct Field:

Reflections of A Philosophical Practitioner¹

J. Michael Russell

J. Michael Russell is a professor of philosophy and human services at California State University, Fullerton. He is also a research psychoanalyst and training analyst at the Newport Psychoanalytic Institute. He is co-author of the counseling text, Group Techniques with Gerald Corey, Marianne Corey, and Patrick Callanan (Brooks/Cole, 1992).

ABSTRACT: There is currently a movement advocating “philosophical counseling.” My own development as a philosopher, then a human services professional, then a psychoanalyst, charts how I came to believe that philosophical training was underrated, and training in psychology was overrated, as an appropriate intellectual foundation for psychotherapy. However, these fields are not distinct. Laws governing the practice of psychology are arrogant in their scope, and make virtually everything out to be the practice of psychology. The scope and nature of philosophy isn’t any clearer. The kind of thinking encouraged in psychology is liable to be exactly the wrong sort of thing for training therapists. Unfortunately, philosophers are liable to not be good therapists either. The lack of neat distinctions between philosophical counseling and psychotherapy provides an argument against a monopoly on therapy-like activities by psychologists. On the liberal side this is an argument in favor of freedom of speech, of belief, and trade, for the applied philosopher. On the conservative side, it may also be an argument for certification (as opposed to licensure) for both psychologists and philosophers, in the interest of protecting the vulnerable by promoting truthful self-representation.

Since the time of Thales in the 6th century BC philosophers have had the reputation of being useless. This viewpoint is unfair. Indeed, Thales had a practical side to him, and was something of a shrewd businessman. Still, philosophers have, themselves, contributed to the image of being off in the clouds. Seen as useless but also harmless, philosophers have generally been at liberty to talk about whatever they wished. That is an important liberty that I think is worth protecting.

Of late there is a movement of “applied philosophy” gaining momentum, including a subset called “philosophical counseling,” which presumes that philosophers have something useful to offer and seeks to protect their liberty to do so. I am an advocate of this movement. It is not a tidy movement that might speak with one voice, and one will

find advocates of everything from philosophers doing psychotherapy to philosophers seeking to find a market for the most abstract of speculations. Now the prospect arises that they might do harm, if only the harm of doing no good for those who might be vulnerable to false hopes. While wanting to be mindful of the potential for harming the vulnerable, I wish to champion the legitimacy of applied philosophy and of philosophical counseling, down to and including much that might be popularly understood as “psychotherapy.” This is partly because I genuinely believe that the extensive study of philosophy is very practical in many ways. Partly, it is because I think that it might be a very good background, if not a sufficient one, for that therapy-like realm. Partly, it is because I believe very strongly in freedom. This is about freedom of speech. The sort of “psychotherapy” I am interested in is a matter of talking. No one should need a license to talk. This is about freedom from unfair restrictions on trade. No one should be prohibited from trying to make a living though advocating dialogue. It is about freedom of religion. No one should be prohibited from the opportunity to give or receive divergent forms of counsel in matters that address the grounding of beliefs about what to feel and what to value in the conduct of one's life. The opinions I wish to convey will be clearer if put in the context of how I came by them. As a beginning philosophy teacher in the mid 60's I was surprised to find students coming to my office hours with their personal problems. I don't know what they saw in me. Maybe it was that I lectured on areas of philosophy that spoke to my own angst and searching. My doctoral dissertation had been on the topic of self-deception. I was and still am favorably inclined toward the existentialism of Sartre and “ordinary language philosophy” as found in the later Wittgenstein and in Gilbert Ryle. Also, at that time I was rather hostile towards Freud and his followers. I have, however, reversed myself entirely on that score. My way of understanding Sartre and Freud, and subsequent developments in psychoanalysis today, leads me to finding these theories far more complementary than would be widely supposed.

When these students-in-distress would approach me, I would send them off to the student health center. My decision was not for lack of interest in their struggles, which very much resonated with my own, but because I thought that as a philosopher I had no business meddling with things better left to “trained therapists.” In time I came to be—

shall I say—less in awe of the training of psychotherapists, and bolder about the possible relevance of training that was primarily in philosophy. During one incident when a student who was threatening suicide refused to accept help from a university counselor, a (therapist) friend said cryptically, “You ain’t much, Mike, but you’re all she’s got.” Something gelled. At about the same time I had another crystallizing experience when my wife (at the time) and I were passengers in the back seat of a GTO being driven by a very inebriated friend who was also a ranking figure at a local psychiatric hospital. At the instant when our speeding car lost all contact with the ground as it cleared the dip of an intersection, I had an insight -- something of an epiphany. I realized that lots of therapists didn’t have their acts together, really, and that maybe I was being too hard on myself for presupposing that, pathetic and angst-ridden philosopher that I was, they were in a position to be helpful and I was not. Students were coming to me with their problems whether I liked it or not, and often as not they just didn’t take my advice to go elsewhere. They resonated with something about me. I decided that I’d better get some more training. Training as what? There wasn’t such a thing as a “licensed philosopher.” I didn’t want to be a psychologist. Nearly everything that I’d written or lectured on was critical of the whole causal perspective of psychology, and as a young Wittgensteinian “Turk” I had nothing short of contempt for the philosophy of mind I found rampant through the social sciences. But, truthfully, I rather liked hearing other people’s struggles, especially when I felt that mine helped me to hear theirs. Obviously, I needed some sort of help myself. For one thing, whether I liked the word “therapy” or not, I realized I could benefit from it, and I sought it out. But I also, obviously, needed training. So I audited or sat in on every course, workshop, or lecture from which I could hope to better my ill-preparedness. I involved myself in every sort of “encounter group” and self-exploration arena I could find. And I sought out and obtained structured supervision and rigorous consultation. Basically, I put together several thousand hours of training for myself, which took up the better part of the 1970’s. This was still training, however, for a non-existent field. As there was no field, there was no way to test it; and I felt I needed to be tested. I was ineligible to sit for any of California’s licenses, as I did not have degrees in the right fields; however, I was able to take and pass an examination to become a Nationally Certified Counselor that had weight in other states.

For some while I was steeped in the “encounter group movement” and an advocate of all manner of forms of group and individual interventions such as the “person centered” approach of Carl Rogers and the “gestalt” work of Fritz Perls. It was becoming more and more plain to me that a great deal that was called “psychotherapy” was an extension of philosophy, being practiced by people who failed to see this. I was convinced that really vital exploration of philosophical issues came alive on the personal plane, when affect was tapped rather than bypassed. So it wasn’t quite that these fads in therapy were doing what philosophers did, but they were doing what philosophers had some claim to the right to be doing. And they didn’t seem to know this. The widespread caricature of the philosopher as a useless person immersed in a useless field has always galled me. My insecurity and defensiveness, mixed with self-righteousness and a willingness to go on the offensive, provided the impetus for a paper I wrote in 1980 entitled “The Philosopher as a Personal Consultant.” It was a provocative piece and provided a cathartic release for me. Having vented, I filed the paper in a drawer undisturbed for nearly twenty years. Recently, I dusted it off to have it published.²

The present paper is a spin-off from that work which was written before my reversal on the worth of psychoanalysis. The argument then was that “psychotherapy” was such a muddled term that maybe no one ought to “do it,” but that whatever “it” was—I liked the term “personal consulting”—philosophy, if any field provided a *better* background than did either the social sciences or medical training (i.e., psychiatry). I believed this then—and still do—but I must admit that my disdain for the social sciences, at that point, was tinged with spite.

If, as I imagined they surely would say, the psychologists were going to say I had no business doing the sorts of things I was doing, I would rejoin that this applied philosophy was something the psychologists had no business doing! The same for the field of medicine. For one thing, the “turf” to be fought over was patently philosophy in taking up, at every juncture, the sorts of things philosophers have always been addressing and looking at it with a lot of help from philosophical theory and rather little help from empirical methodology. Secondly, it actively encouraged affect and subjectivity by both (or all) participants. Psychology and psychiatry, I maintained, promoted exactly the wrong sort of thinking for a form of inquiry which demanded that one be able to join with

clients to see and to feel things from their experiential vantage point. It seemed to me that objective neutrality was just what was *not* wanted, whether this be medical distance or the objectivity of replicable observable experiment so valued in the social sciences. What was wanted, I surmised, was the ability of the practitioner to think enough within the perspective of the client to be able to see just how to make that person's world comprehensible, and at the same time, be able to see where it might fail. This, I thought, is really what philosophers do, minus the receptivity to affect.

This last "minus," however, looms all too large. I did not and do not think it likely that the vast majority of philosophers I have known would be at all promising as personal consultants. I believe that as a group they are far too hampered by idiosyncrasies and far too removed from their own or anyone else's affect. They are, in other words, pretty out of touch. Besides, I don't think many philosophers chose their field of study expressly because they wanted to make a profession of listening to the personal struggles of others. Those who did have that sort of career aspiration would most likely study psychology or medicine, regardless of the shortcomings of these fields. Nonetheless, *in theory*, and depending greatly on the specifics of their studies, the philosophers had the best sort of preparation.

Shortly after writing that paper I had the opportunity to embark on training in psychoanalysis. California law allows certain psychoanalytic training institutes to train persons with doctorates from disciplines not traditional to mental health, and these persons may practice as "research psychoanalysts" provided that this is as an "adjunct" to research or teaching that they do. I completed the required five years of psychoanalytic training in 1988, and have maintained a small private practice in addition to my teaching duties since that time. Having "become legitimate" cooled my anti-therapy passion considerably. Now in the "club" I have become more conservative about who I would like to have join! Still, I think my basic arguments are sound.

I still think philosophy is a highly underrated academic background for a broad spectrum of applied concerns, including things therapy-like, and I continue to believe psychology is a vastly overrated academic discipline. I choke on the arrogance of a field—psychology -- that is prepared to legislate a near monopoly on an immense range of human activities which they would claim to be their sole province, while

simultaneously seeking, in effect, a copyright on the bulk of vocabulary with which a competing discipline might seek to promote a competing trade. Here is how it is put in California law:

CALIFORNIA BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS CODE SECTION 2900-2918³

2900. The Legislature finds and declares that practice of psychology in California affects the public health, safety, and welfare and is to be subject to regulation and control in the public interest to protect the public from the unauthorized and unqualified practice of psychology and from unprofessional conduct by persons licensed to practice psychology. 2901. This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Psychology Licensing Law." 2902. As used in this chapter, unless the context clearly requires otherwise and except as in this chapter expressly otherwise provided:

- (a) "Licensed psychologist" means an individual to whom a license has been issued pursuant to the provisions of this chapter, which license is in force and has not been suspended or revoked.
- (b) "Board" means the Board of Psychology.
- (c) A person represents himself or herself to be a psychologist when the person holds himself or herself out to the public by any title or description of services incorporating the words "psychology," "psychological," "psychologist," "psychology consultation," "psychology consultant," "psychometry," "psychometrics" or "psychometrist," "psychotherapy," "psychotherapist," "psychoanalysis," or "psychoanalyst," or when the person holds himself or herself out to be trained, experienced, or an expert in the field of psychology.

2903. No person may engage in the practice of psychology, or represent himself to be a psychologist, without a license granted under this chapter, except as otherwise provided in this chapter.

The practice of psychology is defined as rendering or offering to render for a fee to individuals, groups, organizations or the public any psychological service involving the application of psychological principles, methods, and procedures of understanding, predicting, and influencing behavior, such as the principles pertaining to learning, perception, motivation, emotions, and interpersonal relationships; and the methods and procedures of interviewing, counseling, psychotherapy, behavior modification, and hypnosis; and of constructing, administering, and interpreting tests of mental abilities, aptitudes, interests, attitudes, personality characteristics, emotions, and motivations. The application of such principles and methods includes, but is not restricted to: diagnosis,

prevention, treatment, and amelioration of psychological problems and emotional and mental disorders of individuals and groups.

Psychotherapy within the meaning of this chapter means the use of psychological methods in a professional relationship to assist a person or persons to acquire greater human effectiveness or to modify feelings, conditions, attitudes and behavior which are emotionally, intellectually, or socially ineffectual or maladjustive.

Let me call attention to three features that emerge here. California law tries to identify *representation*, or what you may or may not call yourself. It seeks to identify *practice*; in a move that probably involves a circular reference to what you call yourself, it says what you may and may not do. (The circle comes from defining psychology as the use of “psychological principles.”) And it tries to identify *purpose*, highlighting “diagnosis, prevention, treatment, and amelioration of psychological problems and emotional and mental disorders...”

I note in passing that the law has lumped together “psychologist” and “psychoanalyst.” This is utterly wrong-headed, but shall not be central to my interests here. More central for me is the fact that the law has basically reserved the word “psychotherapy” for the psychologist, and my objection to this is that it makes too broad a claim on too much language. I do support reserving some language for groups that are subjected to governance and review; this affords the public some assurance, certainly no guarantee, that some standards of training and competency have been met. “Licensed psychologist” is an example of a term where restrictions on use make sense to me. At least this much of a concession to the concern for harming the vulnerable is reasonable, in my opinion. More problematic, in my view, is the *de facto* copy writing of the word “psychotherapy.” For my immediate purposes it suffices to note the extraordinary breadth of domain of human *activity* this law would govern.

Here is my problem. I want to build a case for the legitimacy of applied philosophy. This would include various forms of “philosophical counseling,” some of which admittedly look like what would popularly be regarded as psychotherapy, but which are candidly offered as an alternative. I think there are several ways one might try to do this. (1) One would be to establish that philosophical counseling is (or can come to be) something distinct from psychotherapy -- hence, not part of the domain claimed for

psychology. This is the strategy—or maybe simply the belief—of some philosophical counselors. (2) The second would be to allow that psychotherapy and philosophical counseling might overlap and then attempt to overturn the psychologists' monopoly on the grounds that the laws are miscast. Given my own history of advocating the “philosopher as a personal consultant” I prefer this stance to the first. This approach subdivides into three options: (2-a) Argue that the laws are miscast because the *practices*—the activities—that might constitute psychotherapy are so hopelessly broad and amorphous that it becomes patently unreasonable to suppose them the sole domain of those trained in any one academic discipline; or (2-b) argue that the activities are roughly identifiable and do, indeed, overlap, but that there are compelling reasons why philosophers ought to be at liberty to do those things; or (2-c) argue that a decisive factor is whether what is done, regardless of who does it, is for purposes of diagnosis and treatment of a disorder. (3) A third route, and the one toward which I am presently most inclined, is something of a mix of all of the above. I do think “psychotherapy” is a generally muddled term, and that the sorts of *activities* that fall under its heading are too broad to be the sole province of any group. Further, the broadest account of the *purpose* of psychotherapy—“to acquire greater human effectiveness”—is certainly sweeping; for psychology to declare this as its own domain is simply hubris. The more narrow vision where purpose is linked with diagnosis and treatment fares somewhat better. But it, too, falters on vagueness. One practitioner's view of pathology will be another's view of sloppy thinking. One practitioner's view of treatment will be another's idea of a good heart-to-heart talk. And even if this vagueness weren't fatal, this alone would not settle when or whether philosophers might be in a position to diagnose and treat disorders. My view is that what could come closest to making out a “distinct field” of philosophical counseling would not turn so much on what is done nor why it is done, but on the identity of who does it. Specifically, “who” with respect to such things as what they call themselves, the professional identity through which they represent themselves, what field might be most fundamental to how they were trained, and in terms of generalizations about those fields, how they think about things. In that case the “practice of psychotherapy” will be partly a matter of what is done, somewhat more a matter of why it is done, but mainly a matter of whether it is done by someone who may legitimately be

called a psychotherapist because they studied it, trained in it, and because they think like psychotherapists. This may or may not be persons who identify themselves as psychologists, have trained in psychology, think “like psychologists.” It may or may not be persons who identify themselves as psychiatrists, who have trained in medicine, who “think like a doctor.” And if I could have it my way, so too with the practice of philosophy. Granting that some philosophers might make good psychotherapists, what they might offer which would make them more or less distinct would be that they trained in philosophy, identified themselves as philosophers, and thought “like philosophers.”

Putting aside this potential means of distinguishing a philosophical counselor from a psychologist/psychotherapist by means of how they identify themselves professionally, is it possible to distinguish them either by their activities or by their purposes? Even if we could make a tidy picture of what was to count as philosophical counseling, what can count as “psychotherapy” is so amorphous that nothing could (or would) prevent whatever one comes to call philosophical counseling from being construed by psychology as one form of psychotherapy—hence, their domain! Incredibly, that’s the law.

Suppose one could stipulate an unambiguous definition of philosophical counseling. But why suppose such an edict would have any force with people who used the term? I don’t think this a credible forecast of how people would use—continue to use—this term. Every bit of media coverage I have seen has discussed philosophical counseling in the same breath with psychotherapy. So the psychotherapists can’t be counted on to keep the thing distinct, and the general public very likely will not keep it distinct either. Could the philosophical counselors keep it distinct? Well, for one thing, do we need a consensus of any and all who would call themselves philosophical counselors? Can we or should we (and who is “we” at this point, anyway?) reserve the term for those who agree to some stipulative and limiting definition? Suppose that there are some (self-proclaimed) philosophical counselors who believe they have an especially good understanding of, say, Spinoza’s, or Sartre’s philosophy which will allow them to be of particular assistance to persons who are unhappy in a relationship, or anxious about career decisions, or worried about any of a number of things that engage them in a personal and potentially emotional way. Or suppose (as is in fact the case) that there are

philosophical counselors who think they have an especially good understanding of Socrates' method of dialogue, and want to make this available to persons faced with personal dilemmas. These scenarios do not provide us with a distinct field because (1) nothing stops any psychologist / psychotherapist from saying they do this too. (2) The newspapers and general public are still going to think about this in a sloppy way, and talk about this as an alternative breed of psychotherapy. (3) There may still be those who maintain that they are philosophical counselors, but deny that what they do has any connection with Spinoza's or Sartre's theories or Socrates' dialectic.

Might philosophical counseling be distinguished from psychotherapy by the presence of a peer relationship in the one case, and the absence of a peer relationship in the other? This does not hold up. There is nothing to keep philosophical counselors from being arrogantly removed and unequal, and there are plenty of modes of psychotherapy that can claim to be fairly egalitarian. On this matter of peer relationships, let me say that this is all well and good for those that wish it, but that I have not wanted nor had a peer relationship with those persons who have been really helpful for me in my own "self-exploration"—I'm thinking here, certainly, of my own analyst ("training analyst")—as well as some of the philosophy professors who had the greatest impact on me. Neither do I want a peer relationship with those who seek me out for "therapy" ("self-exploration," call it what you will). On the contrary, I hope to provide an environment which will facilitate a constructive sort of regression, I welcome the "transference," (I hesitate to say this because it is so likely that it will be badly misunderstood) a certain sort of "dependency" that my clients routinely feel toward me.

The immediate point is this. While I think it would be possible to give a *rough* general account of kinds of conversational activities characteristic of what would be widely understood as psychotherapy, and given the sorts of things that are liable to be put under an umbrella of "philosophical counseling," I do not believe that any list of activities, alone, could be precise enough to support the legislated monopoly of one group to the exclusion of the other. On this score—about activities—I conclude that philosophical counseling is not and could not be a distinct discipline from psychotherapy.

One of the other means (suggested above) for trying to distinguish psychotherapy and philosophical counseling was in terms of differing *aims* or objectives; viz., the

relevance of diagnosis and treatment in the one field and the absence of this in the other. I don't think this works either. It has been suggested to me that almost all psychotherapy attempts to solve some kind of psychological problem, either real or perceived. In other words it is as its name implies, therapy, which has the goal (of) improving one's condition on the model of moving from sickness to health. I disagree.

The seeming implications of the word "psychotherapy" notwithstanding, it just is not so that psychotherapy is ubiquitously problem focused. Or more precisely, it is problem focused, but in a way importantly contrary to what might be supposed -- it is not that self-understanding is promoted as a means to solving problems; what is promoted is focusing on areas of conflict—problems—as a means to the end of self-understanding. Admittedly, the term “psychotherapy” propels us into vocabularies of fixing and healing. That's part of the muddle. In fact, we all live on a continuum from where the language of emotional pathology has very plain applicability to paradigms of spiritual achievement. When to call it “treatment,” when “growth,” and when “self-exploration for its own sake” is something of a judgment call. But the whole enterprise takes on a profoundly different cast if we reverse the usual presupposition -- we emphasize problems in order to promote understanding, rather than seeking understanding to cure problems. There are plenty of psychotherapists—very different breeds of them—who say some really interesting things that run contrary to the idea that what they do is about being out to fix things. The most obvious examples come from those who present what they offer as “self-exploration” or opportunities for “personal growth.” There are, for instance, assorted “humanistic” therapists—Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow—who use the language of “growth” and reject the language of “sickness.” In the “Gestalt Therapy” of Fritz Perls there is more a promoting a “here-and-now experience” than any direct effort to “fix a problem.” William Glasser's “Reality Therapy” is not about therapists fixing clients, although it does involve asking clients to evaluate their own behavior. One could go on. But notice—just with these approaches to therapy— that the portrait of psychotherapy as inherently about either a problem focus or medical language does not hold up.

Shifting to the psychoanalytic realm, it is relevant that psychoanalysts routinely debate differences between “psychoanalysis” and “psychotherapy” or “psychoanalytic psychotherapy,” and arguably the central point is precisely that psychoanalysis is a

method of investigation promoting understanding for its own sake and not with some objective. Again, there is no disputing that psychoanalysis is steeped in sickness-diagnosis-cure language, but there's a really significant dimension to it in which psychoanalysis is distinguished from psychoanalytic psychotherapy. Bion's famous edict about the analyst's entering the session "without memory or desire" underscores the idea (ideal) of the analyst not having an "agenda," not being focused on any particular "problem." Freud's objection to Ferenczi's efforts to bring about a "corrective emotional experience" suggests that even when the analyst and patient are seeking to bring about some change in the patient (even this way of putting it is appropriately more vague than would be the idea of "fixing" some specific "problem") it is "unanalytic" to be self-consciously aiming for that. Freud objects to Ferenczi's *trying* to provide a corrective emotional experience. The idea, I think, is that the best sort of therapy even when it's therapy that is wanted, paradoxically, does not seek to be therapy, but seeks only to understand, to "analyze." Consider too that a good many training analyses as well as required periods of "therapy" for therapists in training, are not presumed to be undertaken for the sake of fixing problems or curing pathology.

My clients are typically high-functioning professionals, many of them practicing or aspiring therapists. This sort of clientele is not at all unusual for psychoanalysts. I also have taught a range of courses and led a variety of groups that I think of as promoting "self-exploration." In these various activities it is quite true that my focus, and, more importantly, the focus of the people I am working with, is on "problems." That being so, surely they want solutions to their problems, and I want this for them too. I believe that what they do with me within the environment I try to create often will lead to some modifications and solutions to these problems. What they talk about and what (little) I do with this would generally, popularly, be called "psychotherapy." However, I do *not* see myself, basically, as trying to solve—or even help them to solve—their problems. I do find that I particularly listen for conflict and for feelings which, in my view, are being avoided. Around me, these people are likely to find themselves addressing—and feeling—hurt. Of course I partly wish, and they wish, that they were not in conflict and that they weren't hurting. We both wish they weren't hurting over their problems. Even so, I don't think what I am trying to do *is* about solving what hurts.

It would be more accurate to say we attend to what hurts as a means to broadening one's capacity for forms of awareness. This might or might not be conceptualized in terms of cure.

Having said that, and on pain of *seeming* contradictory, I now want to propose that personal consulting, therapy, analysis, philosophical counseling—what-have-you—would not be a powerful nor even a very interesting experience if there weren't ways in which the focus *was* on the client's (patient's, subject's, call-them-what-you-like) problems, conflicts, sore spots. It is exactly in the areas of discomfort, places where feelings are running too high or not high enough, where one is blinded by what one doesn't want to see that there is motivation and passion about exploring. Why would anyone want to consult a philosophical counselor when they didn't have a hang-up?

Here I wish to insert brief reference to cautions that could readily be discussed at length. In encouraging philosophers to seek ways to train in and then practice forms of psychotherapy I must emphasize that there is such a thing as supervised clinical training, and, regardless of my liberty-minded views of what the law should allow us to do, I do not think anyone morally ought to wade into these waters without a very great deal of supervised clinical training. If this is new territory for the philosopher, the training should come from persons with professional identities for whom this is not new. The idea that a philosopher might have a short course in how to spot pathology so as to limit his or her practice to the reasonably "healthy" is massively naïve! The prospect that someone will be seduced away from obtaining a more urgent kind of professional help is all too real. Even when one starts with a "reasonably healthy" client, it is terribly easy to underestimate pathology that might develop during the counseling process. There is, for instance, such a thing as a debilitating regressive transference, and the posture of a "philosopher counselor" is exactly the sort of thing liable to promote it. Indeed, one might suspect that the sorts of persons who would seek out the services of a philosophical counselor are exactly the sorts of persons who will miss the opportunity to examine deeper emotional issues because of their selection of professionals liable to collude in that flight from feeling.

The conclusion I would draw in these last paragraphs is that psychotherapy is not to be neatly distinguished from philosophical counseling by the presence of a problem focus, and philosophical counseling is not to be neatly distinguished from psychotherapy by a purported absence of a problem focus. The broader conclusion I have wished to promote throughout this paper is that the lack of neat and firm distinctions between philosophical counseling and psychotherapy with respect to what they do and why they do it provides an argument against a monopoly on therapy-like activities by psychologists, to the exclusion of philosophers. I have also proposed that a more feasible means of distinguishing psychotherapy that is part of psychology from philosophical counseling that is part of philosophy is not on the grounds of what is done, nor very much on the grounds of why it is done, but is mainly a matter of the professional identity proclaimed by those that do it.

On the liberal side this is, I think, an argument in favor of freedom of speech, of belief, and trade, for the applied philosopher. On the conservative side, it may also be an argument for certification (as opposed to licensure) for both psychologists and philosophers, in the interest of protecting the vulnerable by promoting truthful self-representation.

I have also addressed issues of informed consent in Gerald Corey, Marianne Corey, Patrick Callanan, and J. Michael Russell, *Group Techniques*, (Brooks/Cole, 1992).

¹ This paper was presented to the Southern California Philosophy Conference at UCI, October 24, 1998. A revised version was also presented to the American Society for Philosophy, Counseling and Psychotherapy, Group Meetings on Philosophical Counseling, American Philosophical Association, Central Division, May 7, 1999, New Orleans.

² J. Michael Russell, "The Philosopher as a Personal Consultant," *The Philosopher's Web Magazine*, April 1998 (Internet Journal), then published as "What Are Philosophers Good For?" *The Philosophers' Magazine*, Summer, 1998, and also published as "The Philosopher as a Personal Consultant," *Impuls* (Psykologisk institutt, Boks 1094 Blindern, 0317 Oslo, Norway), 3, 1998, 57-64.

³ <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/calaw.html>