

A Counselor's Vicious Cycle of Discontent over Life Pursuits

Practicum Paper for Partial Satisfaction of Requirements
for Primary Certification in Logic-Based Therapy (LBT)

Dusan Galic

Dusan D. Galic is currently an Instructor of Philosophy at The College of DuPage. He has previously taught Philosophy courses at Harper College, Indiana University Northwest, and also at the University of Kansas as a graduate student. He received his masters degree in philosophy at the University of Kansas, and has delivered a number of presentations that pertain to various philosophies, most notably those of Michel Foucault ("The Relation of Ethics and Education within the Philosophy of Michel Foucault") and Martin Heidegger ("Heidegger's Analysis of the Other/Theyness"), and has published an article discussing the conceptions of freedom held by Jean Paul Sarte & Simone de Beauvoir and the relation these conceptions may have to ethical theory ("Jean Paul Sartre & Simone de Beauvoir: Regarding their Conceptions of Freedom and the Relations these Conceptions may have to Ethical Theory," *Auslegung*, Volume 27, Number 2, pp. 17-32, [Winter/Spring 2005]). His main interests include ethics, political philosophy (especially John Rawls), history of philosophy, Existentialism and twentieth century continental philosophy (especially Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Michel Foucault). His current research is aimed at elucidating Foucault's work as unified around the concern for freedom. Email Address: galicd1979@gmail.com

This paper will discuss the following aspects regarding the practicum that occurred on Sunday October 26 2014 between the two following participants of the LBT (Logic Based Training) program where I (Dusan Galic) assumed the role of the counselor and a close, long-time friend of mine who assumed the role of the counselee: 1) A step-by-step analysis of the LBT approach with respect to this particular practicum, which involve the following six steps--a) Identifying the emotional reasoning, b) Checking for the fallacies in the counselee's argument, c) Refuting these aforementioned fallacies, d) Identifying the guiding virtue for each fallacy, e) Finding a philosophy for each guiding virtue, and f) Applying each philosophy to the situation; 2) Things learned from my end as the counselor from engaging in this LBT experience; 3) Things that I would do differently next time; and 4) Things that the counselee learned.

1

The first thing that I asked my counselee was if there was anything in her present life that was troubling her. She immediately replied that the one thing in her present life that she found troubling was her current inability to follow through with a plethora of pleasurable things she had begun, e.g. her short story, her artwork, her violin lessons, in addition to a host of other pleasurable pursuits that were in a current state of incompleteness. She identified this aforementioned inability as a feeling of "flightiness" and a position of being "non-committal." After initially pinpointing the principal subject matter of her primary worry, I followed by inquiring as to why these feelings of flightiness and being non-committal bothered her. She replied that many of the activities and projects she has taken on in her life have bored her in that

once she undertakes a new activity or project, soon thereafter she finds herself decreasingly interested, which then results in the pursuit of another pleasurable activity or project. She continued by saying that she finds herself in a vicious circle of constantly looking for something that she will find better or more pleasurable than the previous activity or project that she undertook with which she became bored and disinterested. I replied by asking her why she felt she became bored and disinterested in several of these activities or projects. After some back-and-forth discussions, we finally pinpointed what I felt to be the central issue of her life's central worry, i.e. the intentional object. She admitted that she felt that many if not all of these activities and projects are those that are not accentuating her best internal talents and skills. That is to say, she felt that the activities and projects she has undertaken are in some sense holding her back from doing something of which she is capable. I then later inquired into the level of her concern regarding the aforementioned intentional object, i.e. the rating of this object. She replied that while this object is not something that completely dominates her life or incapacitates her in any major manner, she did add that this concern/object, which she rated as a seven out of ten in terms of degrees of consternation, is something that she frequently thinks about and would like to be resolved in a logical and timely fashion.

Once we then identified the aforementioned intentional object and her rating of this object, we were thus able to formulate the counselee's emotional reasoning and search for the fallacies that would apply to her principal worry/intentional object as well as the accompanying forms of refutation. The two primary fallacies that we thought best applied were the following fallacies of: a) demanding perfection and b) can'tstipation. With respect to the aforementioned fallacy of demanding perfection, the conclusion or form of refutation that was reached was that she was demanding an unreasonable expectation of perfection for her projects and activities. That is to say, she had placed these projects and activities on a very high and unattainable pedestal in which she expects them to deliver some ultimate and newfound/never-felt-before state of supreme intellectual and creative pleasure/euphoria. This refutation alludes to the counselee's reduction to the absurdity of her overreaching demand for an unattainable level of perfection and overwhelming empirical evidence that contradicts this unreasonable demand given our finite existence as mortal beings and our inability to fully complete in some unattainable flawless fashion a plethora of various activities and projects. With respect to the aforementioned fallacy of can'tstipation, the conclusion or form of refutation that was reached was that she felt that she was obstructing her creative, latent ability/potential not by holding in and refusing to excrete some volitional can't but by holding on to some never-ending desire to realize/actualize her "true/ natural" internal abilities. This refutation alludes to the counselee's reduction to the absurdity of her unrealistic vision of who she is qua human being. That is to say, we as human beings are not born with any natural or pure condition/state that can be satisfied or realized by completing what we deem to be some set of associable activities and projects that we associate with this mythical natural/pure state. Rather, it is the case that we imperfect beings are born into this imperfect world as "empty shells" and then over time via social influence are constructed into various subjects as a result of the plethora of activities and projects we take on.

With respect to the first aforementioned fallacy of demanding perfection, the guiding virtue that seemed to be most helpful here is the virtue of temperance that would assist her effort to pursue a lesser number of activities and projects so that she did not feel overwhelmed to complete so many. That is to say, it was deemed wise that she show a greater degree of moderation and

restraint when it comes to pursuing so many activities and projects. There were a host of philosophical theories we as a class thought could apply here but some of the most well-known were those of the following thinkers: Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle in his views on virtue ethics suggests the pursuit of the “mean” and the avoidance of any excess or deficiency; Confucius in the *Analecets* who encourages the virtuous practices of self-control and modesty when it comes to the pursuits of one’s life; and the Eightfold Path that is promoted within the realm of *Buddhism* that teaches the acts of self-restraint and forbearance. Thus it was our joint recommendation that she prioritize the lower number of activities and projects in which she attempts to adjudicate to the best of her abilities which activities and projects she deems as most important and to simply focus on those important activities and projects before she moves on to the next set of important activities and projects. In addition, it was also deemed wise that she view her activities and projects in a more balanced light where they are not consistently being viewed in such an extreme and unrealistic sense of delivering such a supreme level of euphoria but in a more moderate and realistic fashion where they are to be viewed as delivering measured levels of euphoria and personal degrees of intellectual and creative pleasure.

With respect to the second aforementioned fallacy, the guiding virtue that seemed to be most helpful here is the virtue of metaphysical security that would assist her effort to alter her mode of self-comportment or self-attitude that she has with regard to her activities and projects. That is to say, it was deemed wise that she accept herself as an imperfect and constructed, social being living in an imperfect world with other imperfect and constructed, social beings where the attainment of some level of supreme euphoria to match or coincide with some mythical internal/natural state of who one truly is qua human subject, as noted above, is simply an unrealistic vision that often results in a host of futile attempts to satiate this natural state. As was the case with the refutation of the first fallacy mentioned above, there were also a host of helpful philosophical theories we as a class thought could apply here but some of the most well-known were those of the following thinkers: Friedrich Nietzsche where in his novel *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* he discourages people viewing themselves as *Übermenschen* in which people attempt to completely transcend the real ambiguity of the world within which we live and encourages people to embrace the ambiguity and imperfection of our current world; Jean Paul Sartre where in *Existentialism is a Humanism* he argues that we human beings are thrown into this world and our condemned to be free such that we shape who we are by the decisions we make; Simone de Beauvoir in her *Ethics of Ambiguity* where she argues that we embrace the aforementioned sense of ambiguity of the world in which we live while acknowledging a variety of real-life constraints that we must willfully overcome; and Michel Foucault who suggests that we subjects come to terms with and historically investigate our current life-positions of subjectivity, several of which are intolerably constraining. On this last approach, we first seek to uncover the root causes of this intolerable constraint upon our significant process of self-determination/self-fashioning, such that we subjects genuinely participate in the determination/fashioning of who we are and what we do qua subjects; instead of being intolerably constrained dependent subjects, who are currently shut out from and dependent upon others in determining/shaping who we are and what we do in our life situations. Second, we actively engage in a practice of critique as *tolerably* constrained agentive subjects where we first seek to “desubjectify” who we currently are as intolerably constrained subjects, and then take care of ourselves by genuinely participating in the determination/fashioning of who we are and what we do as subjects.

Therefore, it was established that, in her outlook of the pursuit of her various activities and projects, she had a constraining humanistic/naturalistic view of her “true” internal nature, which she felt was not being fed, developed, or accentuated. It was then suggested that she alter her view of herself and mode of self-comportment with respect to her pursuit of her activities and projects. From this altered perspective, she would view herself as a being who is not born with any mythical innate nature that must be fed and developed through the pursuit and completion of a particular set of supreme activities and projects but as an imperfect individual who is simply “thrown into this world”; who is then constructed as various subjects over time; who is shaped by a range of experiences and circumstances within which she finds herself, and those in which she willfully chooses throughout her life. We established that this alteration of one’s personal outlook/mode of self-comportment is not meant in any way to diminish how one views oneself. Instead, it is more an act of empowerment in which one truly seeks to grasp the metaphysical ambiguity of life, where this alteration brings to light that one is a subject with pure inwardness who can make meaningful and significant decisions in one’s life but, at the same time, an object who exists within a world of other objects, and who is constantly being constrained, sometimes intolerably, within this world, and by the other subjects with whom we live.

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There were a host of positive things I learned from engaging in this enlightening and extraordinary experience of Logic Based Therapy. The first and foremost piece of learning that I acquired was the execution of the aforementioned six steps of LBT. I learned how to accurately pinpoint both the intentional object and rating of this object with regard to my counselee’s current troubling situation. I also learned how to properly identify the refutations that accompanied each of these intentional objects and locate a helpful guiding virtue and associative philosophy that can be used by the counselee so as to alleviate her troubling situation in a logical and timely fashion. The other piece of learning that I took away from this exceptional experience was the art/skill of silence, i.e. a skill that could use some improvement on my end. That is to say, I have a tendency to dominate conversations in which I do not allow the other individual or individuals to fully express their feelings and thoughts before I interject my own thoughts. My intentions are always good-hearted in that they are always directed towards the other individual or individuals in my conversations with her or them in that I do not interrupt her or them in an effort to show off some level of superiority through my knowledge but fully committed to helping her or them as best I can; rather, I believe my problem lies in my lack of patience. In other words, I sometimes interrupt others in their speech because I want to arrive at the solution of their concerns in a quick or what I deem to be a quick manner. In listening to my counselee’s concerns and drawing out her issues to the fullest extent possible without any serious interruptions within our given time constraints, which I did not think were intolerable, I managed to positively develop the art of silence and my skills of fully listening to the concerns of others despite the time I thought I could have saved had I interrupted her in the sharing of her concerns.

3

The one thing I would have done differently next time is to refrain from sharing my concerns with my counselee when it was her turn to share her concerns with me. That is to say, I caught

myself a few times on day two of the practicum where I played the role of the counselor and she played the role of the counselee where I tried to relate my issues and problems I shared with her on day one to her concerns she shared with me on day two. As it was disclosed above, my counselee and I are friends who have known each other for some time so there was a degree of comfort between us and we have shared many of these same concerns with each other in the past, although not specifically in the fascinating LBT format we learned in the workshop. Thus, I was more at ease to attempt to relate my concerns to her concerns in an effort to display a degree of empathy with her, something I have often done with her in our past conversations. However, I now realize after the fact that while this degree of empathy on my part might have emanated from the best of intentions that a better approach for this particular LBT practicum would have been to strictly focus on the concerns and worries that currently trouble her and then maybe after implementation of the LBT approach in our personal and colloquial conversations relate her concerns to those in my life.

4

My counselee had divulged to me that she found the experience enlightening and eye-opening. That is to say, she disclosed that she had these aforementioned feelings of flightiness and of being non-committal; yet, what troubled her was her inability to pinpoint the root cause or root feeling of what made these feelings grow to the disturbing levels that they have currently reached in her life. She also disclosed to me that she too had learned to develop the art of silence. We both divulged to each other in our practicum and in our past conversations that as instructors we have tendencies to interject our opinions sometimes too soon before the other people with whom we are engaging, e.g. our students, can fully express their opinions on a topic. Thus in the application of this particular LBT practicum we both learned to genuinely listen to each other and better internalize the words and messages of our interlocutor.

In closing I found this exercise to be extremely productive and beneficial for both the counselee as well as the counselor. The LBT approach most definitely helped me organize my thoughts better in a more logical manner and allowed me to develop a whole set of positive skills that I can utilize in the future to better my own life as well as the lives of others.