

Philosophical Counseling and the Practices of Dialogue in a World Built on Communication

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Abstract: The increase visibility of philosophical counseling and therapy is a consequence of the importance of communication in the life of the postmodern individual, and especially of the development of communication technologies, which entail the need for the development of technologies of the self, personal development, and authenticity. One of the most prominent voices in affirming the importance of philosophy applied to personal, professional and organizational life, especially as philosophical counseling and philosophical therapy, is the philosopher Lou Marinoff. He convinces us of the importance of philosophy of communication, philosophical dialogue as a therapeutic method, existential counseling and ethical counseling. The need for philosophical counseling is closely linked to the dialogical nature of the human condition and the individual's need to build a coherent life project based on a philosophy of life assumed as a personal perspective of understanding, interpretation and valorization of the world.

Keywords: *Lou Marinoff; philosophical counselling; philosophical therapy; communication; philosophical dialogue; existential counselling; philosophical practice; authenticity; personal development.*

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Counseling as Philosophical Practice

Philosophical counseling is a consequence of revealing the complexity of the reality generated by a world built on communication. In its development, communication requires as much philosophy as technology. The development of philosophical counseling is a direct consequence of the growing diversity of ways of communication and the need to create structures of general thinking of the ever-expanding network. Thus, the reorientation of the general public towards philosophy is a consequence of the specificity of the human condition in the 21st century. On the one hand, we find that in the postmodern era the individual is delivered to the fragmentary, losing the personal characteristics revealed by the relational structures that they build as part of their personal identity and integration of various existential levels. In this context, it becomes obvious that „people need more help than ever in reassembling the micro-laser-jigsawed fragments of their lives into intelligible wholes” (Marinoff, 2002: 50). At this level, the importance of practicing philosophers becomes evident, for they can provide counseling and assistance in the recovery of a general, integrative perspective that helps the individual to design his own presence and the meaning of his life in the general horizon of his existence. Philosophical counseling helps the individual to get out of the state of existential ambiguity and to see the outlines of an existence that is truly worthwhile and lived with as much intensity as possible. On the other hand, we are witnessing today a redefinition of the human condition from the perspective of the reconstruction of reality in communication (Arnett & Arneson, 2014; Codoban, 2011; Smarandache & Vlăduțescu, 2014: 243-254). The various forms of philosophical practices can be used both in establishing the general framework of communication and in creating the tools necessary for connecting, in particular by providing the rational fundamentals of action, but also intuitive, ethical or axiological ones or of creative reflexivity which implies the affective and imaginative register.

In this context, a specific field of philosophical practice develops. It involves a joint construction of the philosophical counselor and the counseled client viewed as a partnership. Everything is built on the idea that, with the assistance of a philosophical counselor, the client can benefit from encouragement (Marinoff, 2012), support, mentoring, and all kinds of steps that can help solve and manage more sensitive issues appearing in his everyday life experience. Marinoff has repeatedly stated that this type of counseling is customer-oriented who can be described as rational, functional,

fitting in what we normally mean by normality and health, it is a “therapy for the sane” (Marinoff, 2012: 28), and does not take into account those who are labeled as mentally unstable. The latter must seek another type of counseling, and if they seek a philosophical adviser, he should have the ability to advise them to consult a specialist in psychiatry or psychology.

This division between healthy and sick clients has attracted the attention of Marinoff's critics, who question his view which they find as being based on dichotomy and impractical in the field of counseling. Especially when he is discussing the differences between psychological counseling and philosophical counseling, such a distinction is not able to clarify the specifics of the two types of counseling. Psychological counseling has expanded so much in all spheres of human life and activity that they believe it is at least inaccurate to place it only in the area of medical concern. Instead of the dichotomy of the two types of counseling, a common ground of action for the two types of counseling should be found (Cohen, 2014).

When using the phrase “therapy for the sane”, the philosopher does not intend to draw a line of fault between philosophical counseling and other types of counseling. His concern is focused on describing the elements that can account for the type of clients and the type of issues that philosophical counseling takes into account. Counseling is regarded as part of applied philosophy in close relation with philosophical practices such as existential counseling, philosophical therapy, philosophy with groups and fans, philosophical café, philosophy of personal development, philosophical consultancy for organizations, ethics counseling, philosophy for children, philosophy for people with special needs etc.

The philosophical practice that raises most controversy is philosophical counseling understood as philosophical therapy. It involves therapeutic dialogue as a form of self-reconstruction in communication as a privileged instrument of personal development as a philosophical way of recovering authenticity. When considering this level of interpersonal relationships, the issues that are suitable for counseling or philosophical therapy can be listed as specific problems related to the dilemmas about personal morality or professional ethics; those relating to the value system and their assumption or reconstruction, or reflections on the relationship between values and purposes in structuring a coherent life project. Counseling sessions can address aspects of personal beliefs and their rationalization in the context of real life action involving both rational choices and irrational choices; issues of personal and professional satisfaction or fulfillment, or those that aim at the authenticity theme. But many other issues that require a philosophical interpretation of the dynamics

of life, changes in personal existence, projected on a general background of the significance of existence as such can be addressed. Philosophical counseling is a special type of communication that fits on the defining relationship structure for what the human being is.

The Golden Triangle of Human Beings as the Fundament of Philosophical Counseling

The need for philosophical counseling, understood as a distinctive type of relating and intervention, is founded by Lou Marinoff in the very way of human's existing in the world. The human condition reveals a special being constituted as a construct of communication that develops throughout three fundamental dimensions: biological, cultural and spiritual. Thus, Marinoff contextualizes and describes philosophical counseling within a triadic relationship, characterized by the presence of the biological, affection and thought. He imagines the whole dynamics of communication with the representation of a triangle in which biology, affection, and thought occupy each one the angles of the triangle. These elements are each in relation to itself and to the other in the form of pairs built on mutual communication.

The biological peak is conferred by the physical nature of the human being conceived as the presence of the organism itself; feelings and habits contribute to the affective component of the actions taken; and the symbolic structure and thought contribute to its noetic component. In the relationships of mutuality implied by the dynamics represented by this triangle, an important role is given to thought. It is placed in a hierarchic order where „thought can hold sway over affect, just as affect can over biology” (Marinoff, 2002: 100).

The premise of such a philosophical perspective is that man is both a biological and cultural being. It can solve its biological problems by resorting to a cultural reformulation and realization of the problems it faces. In this process a whole series of questions of philosophical nature arose, the answers of which depend on the way in which the realization of the human being is conceived on various levels of its existence. In this context, Marinoff assigns philosophical counseling the power to help people resolve or manage their day-to-day problems by changing their focus from the biological dimension that appears at first glance to the cultural issues that demand attention, elaborate, nuanced, and integrated into the natural cycle of life in order to solve them. In this way, philosophical counseling is focused on the process of solving problems and personal development. It can take manifest itself on multiple levels. It can reach the sphere of analysis

and examination of beliefs, opinions, doctrines or ideologies that have served as a basis for the person's action in the past, or it can explore such elements that actually influence the person's present life. As it is possible that everything should focus on constructions that seem desirable from the point of view of formulating answers to the fundamental questions that govern life in general, to existential dilemmas manifested as present concern or to the orientation of the meaning of life in future. Throughout extensive analysis, Marinoff revealed that both the formulation of the fundamental questions and the possible answers to such questions are equally important from the point of view of philosophical counseling, such as the formulation of answers to the existential challenges that intervene in the actual development of life (Marinoff, 2002: 76, 2013).

In a world where efficiency is transformed into intrinsic value, Marinoff finds it more than visible that most of the problems people are upset about is the effect of ineffective thinking. The increasingly important role that philosophical counseling must play in this context is based on the fact that philosophy is based on effective thinking. This stimulation of the efficiency of thought is built by the author as part of the way of being philosophy, it is the foundation of philosophical thinking and philosophy, unlike psychiatry, which is based on issues deriving in general from cerebral chemistry or in contrast to psychology, which starts from a problem that concerns the world of emotions. From this way of establishing philosophy, he comes to derive the specific role that philosophy has in relation to the other two disciplines to support the human being. The special power of philosophical counseling is built on the idea that „philosophy helps people think effectively about their problems, it helps them cultivate effective beliefs and engage in effective behaviors” (Marinoff, 2016: 87).

The special importance given to thinking must be related to the examination of the way of thinking and the way of living in order to build the necessary instruments to reach an authentic life. The search for an appropriate path is what Aristotle called “practical wisdom” (phronesis). Such wisdom can lead us to an interpretation of everything that happens in a perspective that can be our own philosophy of life (Marinoff, 2013: 27).

If we can visualize Marinoff's triangle, we can say that in its dynamics, philosophical counselors are at the middle of the axis between affection and thought. Located in the noetic angle of the triangle, the philosopher activates the very special power of thinking in the relationships he cultivates with both biology and affection. The growing importance of philosophical counseling is due to the fact that „thought and its powers were sorely neglected in the twentieth century, and marginalized as passive echoes

or shadowy epiphenomena of biological and affective phenomena. The noetic vertex was projected onto the biology-affect axis; the triangle collapsed into a straight line” (Marinoff, 2002: 104). In this way, the three triads were reduced to one. What seems to be important for the philosopher is to emphasize that if we do not understand this architecture of the dimensions of human existence, the therapeutic relationship can be distorted. If we do not have an adequate recognition of the importance of the noetic angle of this triangular model, we end up collapsing and generating the disappearance of the affective-biology axis. The entire edifice collapses and the triangular relationship is reduced to a linear one in which normal affective states become distorted by being labeled as behavioral disorders or erroneously reduced to various states of illness. The positive aspect of philosophical counseling becomes clear in such context, especially when it comes to counseling because it „reconstitutes the triangle, redefines the three dyads, revivifies the mind, restores the balance of powers, and thus refreshes the being” (Marinoff, 2002: 104-105).

Moreover, it is possible to extend this model, which takes into account, in particular, the biological and cultural dimension of the human universe. If we want to take into account a special and distinct dimension of the human being in the form of a spiritual dimension, then the philosopher proposes to extend the triangular model by projecting “a fourth vertex into a third dimension. That vertex would represent the human spiritual, theological, or mythological being, and would transform our triangle into a tetrahedron” (Marinoff, 2002: 105).

Such a representation of the human being can take reveal the complexity of the postmodern human being and the metamorphoses that the human condition undergoes. Even in the most secularized of cultures, man rediscovers himself, beyond his other fundamental needs, with his need for spiritual life. Theorists often point to the fact that in real life, human beings, after accomplishing the material, emotional, and intellectual needs, continue to avidly seek out the meaning of their lives. The need for meaning is only partially satisfied if it is not fueled by a special spiritual energy that we most often associate with religious experiences. Spiritual quests can take multiple forms, “people sooner or later seek spiritual pathways through life, whether via traditional organized religions, nontraditional belief systems, perennial wisdom of the East, New Age approaches, or even secular philosophy” (Marinoff, 2003: 262, 2015, 2017). One cannot overlook Marinoff’s observation, often theorized by postmodern philosophers, which show that behind the desires that seem to be of material nature are hiding spiritual aspirations that have not been satisfied. This substitution often

occurs as a secular way of satisfying spiritual needs by replacing them with objects in the universe of material things (Marinoff, 2013: 405).

Dialogue as Therapy

The analysis of philosophical counseling practices shows that there is no single method to be used as a standard in counseling activities. Each philosopher uses a specific method. Philosophical counseling takes different forms and sometimes has different goals when it is professed by Ida Jongsma, Rav Lahav, Oscar Brenifier, Jules Evans, Donata Romizi, etc. (Eilon, 2015; Evans, 2013; Lahav, 2014a, 2014b; Romizi, 2015). Lou Marinoff has created his own method, known under the acronym PEACE. Among the appraisals that this method has received, we can mention the one of Alexandar Fatic, who considered that “Marinoff’s PEACE method is undoubtedly one of the most effective on the market and one of the most existentially realistic for both managers and employees, because it speaks both the traditional ‘rational choice-type’ expectations in corporate decision-making, and the contemporary expectations that corporations are truly about more than just good business decisions: they are as much about vision and change with a view to creating new realities tomorrow” (Fatic, 2016). This method is considered to be effective for various forms of philosophical practice, but especially for situations of personal counseling and philosophical therapy.

Although he does not believe in a single interpretation, in a single scheme of personal dialogue, assessment, and personal transcendence, Lou Marinoff believes that in some situations it is easier to be successful in the therapeutic relationship by resorting to a five-step method in solving problems with which the customer is confronted. The five steps assumed by the PEACE method are: the problem, the emotion, the analysis, the contemplation and equilibrium. The first step is to identify the problem. It’s a very difficult task. Although naturally every person has the ability to separate their real problems from the false ones, it is often difficult to identify the complexity of the problem and the challenges it brings to ones personal lives. Through dialogue, the counselor can support the client in this pursuit of clarification. The second step is represented by a sort of mapping of emotions produced by this problem. It is about drawing an interior map, and the counselor can support the client to organize his / her experiences in a constructive manner. The third step is that of the analysis, which puts together both the external factors (the problem) and the internal ones (the emotions) in order to find the best way to solve the problem. The counselor

can be a catalyst here by using philosophy as a tool for analyzing and shaping decisions. The fourth step is contemplation. It involves an effort to integrate all the steps so that they become a life philosophy, with values, ethics, responsibility, commitment to personal development, with the assumption of methods of controlling one's own situation. At this stage, the philosophical counselor can help his client not lose himself in the diversity of recipes offered by various philosophers and try to shape a life philosophy, meaningful from the perspective of his way of being and existing in the world, a philosophy which is effective in solving the problems that may arise in one's life. The fifth step is that of equilibrium. It is a stage of inner peace characterized by the fact that "You understand the essence of your problem and are ready to take appropriate and justifiable action. You feel on an even keel but are ready for the inevitable changes ahead" (Marinoff, 2010: 78). Philosophy can have such a therapeutic role in achieving inner balance, communicating with others, harmonizing with the outside world, transfiguring relationships with existence as such. The counselor can accompany his client in this process in one session or for several weeks or several months, until the client is certain that the situation is under control (Marinoff, 2010: 91-95).

It is common knowledge that "the socratic spirit, the various models of philosophical counseling do not seek to impose upon the client any conception of the world, but use methods to bring to light its own philosophy and facilitate its reflection on it" (Lobont, 2010: 13). Each counselor adopts a method that is best suited to the situation his client is. We are therefore witnessing a wide variety of approaches. However, there is a common denominator of philosophical counseling or philosophical therapy practices: the particular importance of dialogue as a therapeutic method and as a method of revealing and resolving existential problems.

The approach is one that leads to an emphasis on dialogue as a development of alterity. The client addresses an existential counselor for philosophical reasons, to understand, to accommodate and even to solve certain existential problems. Although it presumes an understanding of philosophical ideas and doctrines, „philosophical practice does not aim to transform the interlocutor into a philosopher, but rather to put him in a reflexive situation of opening up to self-knowledge and facilitating personal autonomy. Philosophical practice is a meeting between the philosopher and the interlocutor, who is willing to understand her attitude towards life and towards herself, and as well as the meanings of her own decisions and own orientation towards the world and life. Therefore, philosophical counselling mainly consists of an interrogative reflection—continuing the Socratic

tradition—through which the counselling philosopher questions himself and questions others about what gives meaning to life, and the way in which each participant interprets his or her meaning and transforms it into current action” (Sandu, 2015: 1619).

Such a socratic premise of the need to live an examined life, that is to say a life lived with the consciousness of its profound meanings, is used by Marinoff as a starting point for understanding the specificity of philosophical communication and therapy. By placing dialogue in the center of philosophical practices, and especially those aimed at philosophical counseling and therapy, Marinoff draws attention to two formal characteristics of philosophical counseling: 1) philosophical counseling, even when taking the form of therapy, should not be associated with therapy healing practices belonging to the medical field, involving a special type of communication in which a non-medical relationship is established to solve specific human problems; 2) In the personal counseling relationship, the philosophical practice emphasizes that the whole process of counseling follows the dialectical model that we find in various phases of philosophy development and especially in the ancient phase when, among other things, dialogue was perceived as having therapeutic valences. It is no accident that some of the best-known writings and philosophical teachings from ancient times were conceived in the form of dialogues (Marinoff, 2002, 2016), be it an inner dialogue or a dialogue that engages the multiple intersubjective relationship. The dialogical form is functional in this case because it highlights the interpersonal interactions that can be used as elements of the real life of the person that manifests itself in the personal space or in the public space of everyday life. Dialogue is used as a form of the therapeutic relationship because in the practice of counseling, the approach to formalizing language is not significant, but the emphasis is on its use as the main element of human communication. We can now see the importance of dialogue in communication and in the existential situation in relation to alterity as seen by Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas (Grad, 2013; Mureşan, 2005; Sandu, 2016: 28-47). Following the tradition of socratic maieutics, philosophers today use dialogue as a practical tool as a way of accessing therapeutic effectiveness.

This is how the philosopher explains that philosophical dialogue is an approach in itself that has an existential motivation. It is based on the individual’s everyday problems, with the inherent problems that arise in the actual living of life. The purpose of a philosophical dialogue is not based on a diagnosis, and does not aim at establishing a diagnosis. Philosophical counseling, being an existential therapy that focuses on healthy individuals,

initiates a dialogue between a counselor and his client who is concerned about the problems he is facing and which he wants to solve in an efficient manner (Marinoff, 2010: 44-45). Philosophical dialogue is used by the therapist as “a vehicle for exploring the client's noetic world, with a view to developing a philosophical disposition that enables the client to resolve or manage his problem” (Marinoff, 2002: 81). Dialogue involves a relationship between equal partners, meaning that intersubjective relationships are not hierarchized by a diagnosis and do not involve any kind of adversity in ideological disputes that may arise. Counselors support their clients in a therapeutic relationship in which, beyond any diagnosis, what is central is a life lived under the objective conditions of the daily life. Even if sometimes the problems faced by clients involve intense existential tension, they are considered to be natural manifestations of their personal life, “for everyday human problems are not considered as illnesses by philosophical counsellors” (Marinoff, 2002: 82). Of course, the philosophical counselor must know its limits and have the ability to grasp the imbalances that go beyond its sphere of competence and advise the client to turn to other types of therapy, whether psychiatric, psychological, or belonging to the sphere of pastoral therapy (Fulford, Thornton, & Graham, 2006; Lynch, 1999; Slife, O’Grady, & Kosits, 2017).

Assuming the problems he faces daily, the individual engaged in a philosophical counseling relationship ends up discovering himself as being able to decipher the meaning of the world by referencing himself as the main source of the self revelation of the meaning and construction in personal representations. Thus, philosophical counseling is described by Marinoff as an existential experience in which dialogue is used as an exploratory vehicle. Dialogue is described as a mutual relationship in which each participant brings his / her specific experience, depending on the role he/she plays in the dialogue. In the case of such a communication device, the client is the one who offers his mental landscape and ideas that shed a light onto his world, and the counselor is the one who fulfills an important role in the guidance required for the most effective philosophical mapping of all landscapes. Even though, through the assumed role play, this communication dynamics is led by the counselor, the actual exploration is done together by the counselor and the one who is counseled in an approach with many customized nuances, at the end of which Marinoff considers that the counseled ends up discovering his own philosophical being (Marinoff, 2016: 99).

Given that philosophers do not accept the existence of a single method of schematizing dialogue, Marinoff accepts the existence of at least

three types of dialogue. He does not give them a name, does not label them according to the content or method they use, but prefers to generically refer to them as type A, B and C dialogues:

1) The Type A dialogue is either one of basic philosophical level or one that addresses a particular philosophical theme. It takes place between a philosopher and his client and involves a philosophical exploration, from various perspectives, of a problem and its existential relevance from the point of view of the problems the client is facing. It is a way for the client to access philosophy in order to get advice to support his actions or to help him achieve certain goals. Counseling in this case takes place against the backdrop of a reflexive spontaneity set in motion by the counselor. It brings a certain freshness of thought and a dynamism of decisions and action based on a philosophical attitude fueled by the surprising nature of the questions, answers and solutions that can intervene as a result of the practice of philosophical dialogue.

2) In the B-type dialogue, the philosopher recurs to the vision of a particular thinker to lead his client in formulating answers or guiding him to realize the meaning of his own life. The convictions formulated by a certain philosopher are offered as a kind of pill of wisdom that acts therapeutically in treating the existential disorders that are presented by the client who comes before the counselor with a well-defined range of problems he is facing in his everyday life. The counselor assumes the role of helping him connect with concrete data offered by the world of philosophical ideas, which may be beneficial for the formulation of the solutions he seeks. He is imagined by Marinoff as a sort of guide for those that are lost through the labyrinth of the great library of philosophical thought, and the counselor helps his client reach exactly the right page that speaks in such a way as to seem to him that it is talking about him, about the problems he is facing and about the ways he has to follow to find his way. This dialogue between the counselor and the client is the latter's dialogue with the meanings of the text revealed by some significant elements from the thought of a certain philosopher.

3) The Type C dialogue is presented by Marinoff as a kind of „bibliotherapy”. Clients who are familiar with ideas within a culture or with a philosopher's way of thinking, use dialogue to explore the context and depth of concepts or ideas for themselves. The philosophical counselor guides them on their journey through their readings and their personal philosophical reflections. The dialogue is based on the client's personal effort to read and explore in order to obtain existential advantages for personal gain as a result of this reflexive and critical thinking process. It is

very important to note that this is a very relevant common ground where the encounter between the theoretical and the practical philosophy can take place. This form of dialogue is based on the importance given to a solid theoretical training, conducted in an academic environment and later used by a counselor in his philosophical practice. This convergence between theoretical philosophy and philosophical practice is one of the most powerful reasons for which Marinoff always emphasizes the importance of the philosopher's professionalization. Thus, and in depth study of philosophy seems to be the first step for the later realization of the decisive step of practicing philosophy in relation to different types of clients, whether individuals, groups or organizations (Marinoff, 2016: 100-108).

The dialogue is here, on the one hand, as a way of reaching the deeper levels of philosophical thinking to the level at which it becomes relevant from the point of view of the person engaging in a communication and reflection effort with direct consequences in solving the problems they are facing; and on the other hand, as a way of reaching through philosophers and philosophical books the formulation of a personal perspective from the angle of which the individual can look and understand his world and formulate his own philosophy of life. The statement that „The book *Plato, not Prozac*, is an unexpected manifesto for a strong philosophy” (Popescu, 2010), is to highlight the way in which philosophy is proposed as a central preoccupation capable of improving the personal life of contemporary man. In this context, one can find the answer to the question: when should we turn to a philosophical counselor? One of the answers can be found in Marinoff: when you need „a guide, or a mirror, to help you draw your own philosophy into the open where you can see it and work with it. A disposition is something you find genuinely within. It is more like an unearthing and gem than manufacturing a tool” (Marinoff, 2010: 84-85). On the basis of the assumption of such a vision, formulated with the support of an existential counselor, Marinoff proposes each person to create his own philosophical practice. More than anyone, this should be done by counselors and practitioners belonging to the field of philosophy. The solution for a proper philosophical practice is to avoid the implementation of a unique method of practice. Each counselor must aim to have a personal approach that suites his beliefs and his client's needs. An additional reason in this plea is that „buying a thriving practice is normally far more costly than establishing one yourself ... we needn't worry about buying anyone else's practice, and should concentrate on building our own practices” (Marinoff, 2002: 278). Such a perspective is based on his conviction that each person has a personal life philosophy. It is often a diffuse one. Working with a

counselor, the individual can consciously formulate and assume a life philosophy on which to base their personal development and the participation in his welfare, as well as that of the community in which he is living. For this, people need a dialogue through which they become equipped with tools that allow them to control the problems they face. The dialogue should aim not to establish a diagnosis and therapeutic steps to follow, but to lead to the discovery of the importance of finding the respite necessary to examine one's life in order to seek solutions for peace of mind, for emotional stability and decisional coherence. Dialogue should be based on the openness of the mind towards philosophy, which man naturally possesses (Marinoff, 2010: 39).

Instead of a Conclusion: Counseling or Philosophical Therapy?

Marinoff believes that many of the anxieties and problems faced by the postmodern man could be resolved by exploring philosophical ideas and philosophical thinking if they were known to those who needed them. One of the ways in which we are persuaded to appeal to philosophy is formulated as follows: „philosophy can change your life by transforming your dis-ease into ease” (Marinoff, 2003: 4). On such a background, we can see the role that a philosophical counselor can have and the therapeutic relevance of philosophy.

Given that philosophy deals with noetic problems, philosophical counseling cannot be associated with medical procedures in psychiatry or psychology because there is no need for medical treatment to solve the noetic problems. When it uses the term therapy, it gives it a broader meaning than the one established through the very narrow sense of medical treatment. Marinoff opts for philosophy as therapy. He points out that no semantic constraint of the term therapy is to be accepted. It can be associated with a philosophical situation in relation to the problems of life and the need for personal development of each individual. In this regard, each person should be aware that „The only way to have a true, lasting solution to a current personal problem is to work at it, resolve it, learn from it, and apply what you learn to the future. That’s the focus of philosophical counseling, distinct among the countless types of therapy available” (Marinoff, 2010: 65).

In order to reveal the extended meaning of the term, it starts from the meaning that the term has in Greek. The therapist was the caregiver and was identified as a carer who cares for something, without specifying the type of care he practices, and without any sort of constraint on medical care.

We can invoke here a sense of therapy that we find in classical philosophy. Analyzing the context of the Alexandrian culture, with special reference to Philon's philosophy, Ioan Chirilă reveals that the therapists have philosophical and religious concerns, the term therapist is related to a distinct way of life, one which implies a contemplative life. In this context, therapy opposes medical methods that take into consideration the health of the body. Therapists take care of the soul, take care of the health of the fallen soul into the pleasures, desires, sadness and other passions. They are the ones who have received an education according to the nature and holy laws and are oriented towards the cult of Being. In their work, therapists use philosophy as the main tool in modeling contemplative life (Chirilă, 2000: 56-62).

In fact, Michel Foucault speaks of „philosophy as a guide or therapy of the soul” when talking about the development of a technology of self he references Epicurus in order to signal that in the context of epicureism the duty of man to care for his own soul refers both to the medical care for the body and to the therapy of the soul, as well as to the service a caretaker is addressing to his own master or in a cult oriented towards a divine power (Foucault, 2004: 20). In an open hermeneutics of the subject, Foucault combines self-care with the care of the other, combining the physical dimension, the dimension of the soul, but also the one that can be associated with the religious dimension. Through interpretation, he thus creates a connection between the archaic sense of therapy and the postmodern meanings of therapeutic practices.

In line with this broadening of the definition of therapy, a very convincing plea in favor of the assimilation of therapy in specific philosophical methods, is done by the philosopher Károly Veress. He presents to us a very complex form of communication that he calls „hermeneutical conversation.” In the context of such a special type of communication we find a profound meaning of therapy. Thus, when we “talk about hermeneutical therapy, we consider that therapy is not only treating and healing, it also means care. And care is given to the sick, but also to the healthy one” (Veress, 2017: 102). This thematization of care is widespread among those who theorize or practice various kinds of counseling, including philosophical counseling. In an era that is marked by the need for an ethics of care, the formulation of solutions to various forms of existential anxiety, a world that presents itself as a world full of crises and anxieties, metaphysical philosophy has a duty to give answers to the kinds of complex relationships which the postmodern individual creates. Transforming hermeneutics into the most adequate philosophic discipline

used in philosophical therapy, the author gives sufficient reasons not only „in favor of creating a philosophical hermeneutics as a possible philosophical therapy, but also in favor of understanding therapy itself as a hermeneutical experience. This may be possible if therapy is used as restraint, listening, care and participation, so as to implement and valorize the hermeneutical conversation” (Veress, 2017: 110).

Marinoff points out that an ongoing expansion of the use of the term *therapy* is still evident today. As evidence that we have no problem accepting it when we talk about aromatherapy, or „art therapy, music therapy, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy can also be effective treatments for certain problems, though not administered by physicians” (Marinoff, 2002: 84). All the more, he believes there should be no resistance in the use of the term in the expression of philosophical therapy. It comes to remind us of a cultural tradition in which in ancient times, philosophy was considered useful for the healing of the soul, and philosophers were perceived as psychotherapists. If in the first stages of its development philosophy could play this therapeutic role, Marinoff believes that after twenty-five centuries of development and sedimentation of philosophical ideas and practices, philosophy cannot be denied its therapeutic role. Even though, in the meantime, more specialized forms of therapy and psychotherapy have emerged, philosophy is still therapeutic, even if it shares common ground with other disciplines and other therapeutic practices (Marinoff, 2016: 98).

There is a certain stubbornness in Marinoff's desire to extend the meaning of the word „therapy” and to defend „philosophical therapy” for at least two reasons: on the one hand, his struggle to impose philosophical counseling and therapy as a distinct field of professional practice, and on the other hand, his constant effort to oppose the accusations that were brought to him while practicing philosophical therapy in the USA where these kind of practices were seen as illegal methods to practice medicine without a license. Similar types of motivation are also the basis of his efforts to eliminate any monopoly in counseling practices and to integrate philosophical counseling and therapy into the provision of professional counseling services, including the provision of health services. Such a struggle for recognition is based on the idea that philosophical therapy and counseling are traditional forms of care and support based on dialogue. Therefore, philosophy has to find its place in the range of services the market has to offer customer that may benefit support through dialogue and reflection on the existential problems they are facing. In this regard, Marinoff is advocating „the interruption of the psychological monopoly of

dialogue as a health service.” He tries to convince decision makers and the public that „psychologists aren't physicians either, yet they have enjoyed a virtual non-medical monopoly over the talk-therapy referral system. If your physician can refer you to a non-physician (i.e., a psychologist) for talk-therapy of a psychological kind, and have your health-care insurance foot the bill, then your physician should also be able to refer you to a non-physician (i.e., a philosopher) for talk-therapy of a philosophical kind, and have your healthcare insurance foot the bill” (Marinoff, 2002: 84).

The desire to integrate philosophical counseling in the group of therapies recognized by public health care has attracted countless criticisms. Those that defend the idea of philosophical therapy try to change the minds of the skeptics. They say that Marinoff was entitled to seek such recognition for philosophy because „critics who object the ability of philosophical counseling to improve emotional suffering, Marinoff shows them many cases of depression, anxiety reduction, and anger control. Even if it does not guarantee the diminishing of emotional suffering, its method and those of other practitioners do not only provide constructive ways of assisting in decision-making, but also ways to reduce anxiety that blocks decision-making or avoids destructive decisions” (Lobont, 2010: 32). But perhaps the greatest value of philosophy as therapy can be seen in resolving existential „pathologies” related to various alienation phenomena that the human being lives in relation to the traditional way of conceiving the human condition.

Philosophical therapy is all the more necessary, be it philosophical practice, or philosophy as therapy (Peterman, 1992). It appears as a distinct form of intervention in the practical philosophy and in the field of counseling. Philosophical counseling will gain ground with the foreseeable impact that technological development, especially that related to artificial intelligence, will have on human communication and development. From a philosophical perspective, we can already see that there are plenty of people who become „people who behave like accessories to their equipment, not like pensive beings or social animals at all” (Marinoff, 2003: 234). It is possible to start feeling like „we are becoming human cogs in ever more complex machinery, and that can do strange things to our humanity” (Marinoff, 2003: 235). In these extreme contexts, philosophical therapy will be a very welcome solution. Even when it comes to counseling in the therapist's office, I prefer to speak more about a philosophical counseling, without having any reservations regarding the idea of philosophical therapy. This positioning, on the one hand, allows me to ignore the therapies war, as well as the therapists; critique towards philosophical therapy and, and on the other hand, reinforces my belief that the idea of counseling better reflects

the method of dialogue and the philosophy of communication at the basis of philosophical practice. Most often, philosophical counseling, in this intersubjective dialogue, takes the form of existential counseling and aims to find a way to achieve authenticity (Frunză, 2016: 162-178, 2017: 23-37).

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