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**PHILOSOPHICAL COUNSELLING AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IN
THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD**

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Abstract: Review of Sandu Frunză, *Comunicare și consiliere filosofică [Communication and philosophical counselling]*, (București: Editura Eikon, 2019).

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In a world where interactions and changes have such a strong influence, and in some cases, disruptive, philosophical counselling has for sure a very important role, helping the human being to redefine his priorities and to achieve his or her purpose for life (Frunză 2019, 8-9). Unfortunately, when one hears today about counselling he thinks almost automatically to the psychological area. If it is close to religion and spirituality, he may also take into consideration the religious sphere. But for sure, there will be only a few people who will think about philosophy as a space where this kind of activity is possible. This is the reason why, the proposal of the latest book of Sandu Frunză, *Comunicare și consiliere filosofică [Communication and philosophical counselling]*, is a new and challenging one. Bringing into attention a fundamental dimension of human existence, namely the religious one, that is very important in the counselling process, he speaks there about a complementary form of counselling, namely the philosophical one, which together with the pastoral and psychological one, is for sure very important for the postmodern – secular society, being, sometimes, complementary to the other ones.

In fact, it can be said that this book is part of the normal and, for some readers, expected evolution of the author who started his interdisciplinary investigation by investigating Dumitru Stăniloae's theological work from a philosophical and ethical point of view (Frunză 2016; Frunză 2016a) and then investigated different areas of communication, management and leadership linking them with philosophical space (see: Frunză 2013; Frunză 2015) or anti-Semitism (Frunză 2010) and, in 2018 came with an interesting approach on leadership, self-development, philosophy and communication (Frunză 2018). Using information from authors like Lou Marinof, Emmy van Deurzen or Aurel Codoban, he speaks there about the way how philosophy can be useful to nowadays people. He underlines from the very beginning the fact that “philosophical counselling is one of the counselling forms that have known an important grew in the latest years” (Frunză 2019, 22) and that it acts by “taking care from different categories of problems using dialogue” (Frunză 2019, 22).

Designed as an anthology of articles already published in recognised journals (see for example: Frunză 2018a; Frunză 2018b), investigation is segmented in eight parts and investigates both the theoretical and practical sides of the role of philosophy as counselling. As he marks from the beginning of his book, an important tool in understanding the therapeutically role of philosophy is love, that, according to his teaching brings together erotic wish with the one for transcendence: “Bringing together the erotic wish with the wish for transcendence, love proofs to be a transfigurative force of the world of postmodern man, even though some

of the forms we associated before with love have been dimmed or metamorphosed” (Frunză 2019, 14-15).

Love is therefore, as it can be seen, the central element of the therapy, fact that makes Sandu Frunză's approach relevant also for the psychological and theological area, where forms of love like “eros” or “agape” represent keywords of the entire system of thinking. Linking it with transcendence, the author creates also a great “synapsis” that has for sure its correspondence in the second one, that is theological area.

While other authors before him have spoken about the 20th century as about a religious one, Sandu Frunză notes that for the 21st one, philosophy will be for sure the landmark. In the same time he insists on the fact that its use for the man of this time consists in the fact that philosophy facilitates communication and counselling: “21st century will be the one of philosophy. Philosophy will help us to become free in front of diverse forms of Barbary that could install in the absence of the return of philosophy in public life, in the life of ordinary people: from the technological Barbary up to the one of all kind of extremisms, including the one of religious inspiration. Assuming a life philosophy, and to a great extent practicing it, will establish itself as one of the ways of restoring the human being, of self-seeking and of personal development. But the role of philosophy is especially to give substance to the world, to the communication and to the counselling” (Frunză 2019, 19).

One of the defining characteristics of the aforementioned thinker is the practical value of his assumptions and the richness of examples. Speaking about the way how philosophical counselling can contribute in our times to the personal development throughout love, he refers to Aurel Codoban and his work *Amurgul iubirii (The twilight of love)* (Codoban 2004). Showing that he can be considered “a hermeneutist of love” (Frunză 2019, 112), the author investigates his thought through the lengths of personal-development and practical use of philosophy inside the 5th chapter dedicated to this topic (Frunză 2019, 111-134). In fact, what Sandu Frunză is doing inside this chapter is a synthesis of the entire teaching of his former master. But this type of synthesis and comparative approaches define his entire work. And it can be said for sure that, if there is an aspect that can define his entire work, this is his capacity to systematise in a few words a book or even a phenomenon that has been explained in several works, without neglecting any of its essential points. Such an example can be considered the following paragraph, where, inside the introductory part, the Romanian thinker presents not only the structure of one of the chapters of his book, but also the landmarks of the Codoban’s thinking: “In “Philosophy as existential style. From wish to love as a communicational tool”, I stopped on the fact that today the philosophical counselling proves to be one of the most complex forms of intervention in shaping the everyday life of the postmodern individual. And one of the most subtle ways of interpreting and acting in the existential field is proposed by

Aurel Codoban as an existential stylist. He starts from the premise that philosophy must propose a lifestyle. He assumes in his philosophical practice the task to build an anthology of detail in which the fundamental element of defining the human condition is no longer rationality, but desire. As an existential stylist, the philosopher reveals, through his analysis, the benefits that philosophical counselling can bring inside the relationship between desire and love in the context of transformations that take place in the lives of individuals in all five dimensions that appear to us as an existential aspect of the human being: physical, social, personal, spiritual, religious” (Frunză 2019, 14).

While the pastoral counselling aims to listen and help the man to understand himself, to find the causes of his troubles in order to bring him closer to the spirituality and to God Who is the purpose of human’s life according to the Christian doctrine, the philosophical one has different sources, namely the philosophers. They offer their wisdom as a source of reconsidering life, transforming it in a continuous seek for the sense and truth, fact that is clearly emphasized by the aforementioned author and which does not exclude a possible link with the religious area.

Of course, it should not be considered that the investigated author insists only on the Romanian contribution of the problem and isolates this space by the other areas where it has been also investigated. Not at all! In fact, as he mentions inside the introductory part (Frunză 2019, 10), he uses the works and ideas of Lou Marinoff and Emmy van Deurzen, that are representative in global space for the use of this method. Therefore, he presents the way how according to the first one, philosophy and psychology differentiate one to the other (Frunză 2019, 41). He speaks about the results that he obtained (Frunză 2019, 46), or about the fact that he pleads for the idea of having a professional association of the one who realizes philosophical counselling (Frunză 2019, 47), using the model of other sciences.

The use of foreign recent literature, the courage to bring into attention of the reader aspects of trans-disciplinarity that in Romanian space has not been until now presented, the accent on the fact that the spiritual counselling accomplishes its role through an effort of restoration of human being in the contemporary technological context presenting the authenticity as an integrative spiritual value, but also the way how he knows to emphasize the content of his thought in a text easy to read makes Sandu Frunză, as we have also mentioned before (Morariu 2017, 156; Morariu 2017a, 756) one of the most quoted and read authors from Romanian space and transforms his ideas in topics often investigated and discussed. The book that we have tried to present there, but also the other ones written by him, can be for sure considered examples in this sense.

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