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FROM SELF-EXAMINATION TO SELF-TRANSFORMATION: A PHILOSOPHICAL COUNSELLING APPROACH

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Abstract

Human existence is characterized by conflicts and continuous search for their resolutions. Continuous self-reflections and the development of self-understandings enable individuals to examine their unexamined beliefs, assumptions and values. In this context, philosophical counselling offers an approach that satisfy individuals to fulfill their life and understand their life problems in a philosophic manner. The study argues that self-transformation emerges philosophical inquiry, in which individuals become active participants in understanding and reshaping their lives.

Keywords: *Culture, Festival, Meitei, Ritual*

Introduction

Counselling is a learning-oriented process, carried on in a simple, one-to-one social environment, in which a counsellor, professionally competent in relevant psychological skills and knowledge, seeks to assist the client, by methods appropriate to the latter's needs and within the context of the total personal program, to learn more about himself and to accept himself, to learn how to put such understanding into effect, about more clearly perceived, realistically defined goals, to the end that the client may become a happier and more productive member of his society. Philosophical counselling uses philosophical insights and techniques to help you think about your life. Your problems are not seen as illnesses to be cured. Instead, your counsellor will engage with you in a dialogue whose aim is to help you think more clearly and deeply about your issues.

In the latter half of the 20th century, philosophers were interested in philosophical counselling because, among other things, it recalled the notion that philosophy, in its practical sense, might lead to a better life. Furthermore, there are some everyday issues that can be resolved philosophically. As a result, philosophical counselling has gained popularity as a substitute for other counselling modalities (psychological, pastoral, spiritual, etc.). It is crucial to remember that, depending on the issue the client is dealing with, philosophical counselling offers a variety of approaches, tactics, and procedures that might be beneficial in the counselling process. The transdisciplinary nature of this field is also directly responsible for the wide range of approaches, methods, and techniques used in it. As we will demonstrate in this paper, these methods can be general approaches to problem solving that are tailored to the particulars of philosophical counselling, or they can be ideas from various subfields of philosophy or techniques from psychological counselling. Thus, our goal is to provide a novel approach to philosophical counselling that will be helpful in resolving the everyday issues that philosophical counsellors' clients encounter, beginning with a broad approach to problem-solving (of any kind). Therefore, the current approach's hypotheses are as follows: 1) the idea of solving a problem immediately necessitates the need for a specific method; since this has been generalised by some thinkers, i.e., general methodological principles of problem solving have been offered, we can immediately adapt these principles in philosophical practice; and 2) although there are already some methods specific to philosophical counselling, those who have written about them have agreed that each philosophic ideas based on these theories, we contend that the specifics of the method in philosophical counselling can be inferred from the generality of some problem-solving principles (of any kind). Thus, by starting with some principles, we can develop a new method in philosophical counselling that practicing philosophers can use to address, understand, and suggest solutions to particular problems that arise in clients' everyday lives. (Hagiu 2)

Philosophical counselling helps you reflect on your life by using philosophical ideas and methods. Your issues are not viewed as diseases that need to be treated. Rather, your counsellor will have a conversation with you to assist you in thinking more deeply and clearly about your problems. Philosophical therapy is a cutting-edge form of counselling that helps clients reflect on their life by utilising philosophical knowledge and insights. Many of these abilities can be used independently, serving as one's own counsellor. Philosophical counselling can be seen from a Socratic point of view as a dialogue process driven by dialectical reasoning that aims to reflect on the problems and worries that typically come up when living one's life, as well as on the significance of one's life in general. In order to find the truth, knowledge, insight, wisdom, virtue, and happiness, whatever these turn out to be this method entails question-and-answer type reflection in which the individual engages in friendly and encouraging discourse with others. Philosophical investigation can thus assist an individual in leading a more contented, fruitful, significant, and joyful existence. In the end, philosophical inquiry in the Socratic tradition is the regular, everyday practice of considering, elucidating, realising, and making sense of one's values, beliefs, ideas, judgements, desires, emotions, intuitions, feelings, goals, commitments, relationships, and, generally, all the experiences and actions that make up a person's life. (Walsh 498)

All philosophical practitioners would agree that philosophical counselling involves philosophizing and that they do indeed philosophize with their counselees. The crucial issue is how, and to what end, the philosophizing is conducted during the counselling session. It is in answering this question that the differences start to appear. One answer that is sometimes given is that the counsellor uses philosophizing primarily to help counselees overcome their personal problems by analyzing their beliefs about, or attitudes towards, their situation (Cohen 95). This approach demotes philosophy to the status of a means to something else; that is, making the counselee happy. Here philosophizing is used only in ways that help the counselee feel better, regardless of how true, intellectually rich, conceptually well-founded, or spiritually deep the counselling is. Whether or not the counsellor's philosophizing with the counselee is deep or shallow, or coherent, or a collection of isolated clichés is irrelevant as long as the personal problem is resolved and the counselee becomes happier. "Such an approach, as beneficial as it may be for other purposes, betrays the distinctive nature of philosophy as a search for wisdom for its own sake. In fact, I would rather not call it philosophical counselling but instead 'Philosophy therapy'(Lahav).

Approaches to Philosophical Counselling

- The Critical Thinking Approach

The more common type in the philosophical practice world is what can be termed the "Critical Thinking Approach." The basic idea here is that philosophy is a critical investigation of fundamental issues, and, therefore, it employs a variety of thinking tools or techniques, such as the formulation of arguments, detection of logical validity and fallacies, analysis of concepts, and exposure of hidden assumptions. These thinking tools, collectively called 'critical thinking', can presumably be used to help counselees analyse their personal problems, their behaviour, beliefs, and emotions. In short, this kind of philosophical counselling is based on the art of reasoning. In principle, self-examination through reasoning, or critical thinking, can be used for a variety of goals: in order to develop self-understanding for its own sake; in order to enrich the counselee's world; to shatter the counselee's hidden assumptions and thus facilitate greater openness to life, etc. But by far the most popular goal in the critical thinking camp is problem resolution: helping counselees to define and resolve their personal problems. Hence, this sub-type of the Critical Thinking Approach can be called the Problem-Solving Approach of philosophical counselling. Counsellors who follow this approach typically focus on specific personal problems the counselee wishes to address and solve, such as marital stress, anxiety, or difficulties at work. They use critical thinking primarily in order to find a solution to these personal problems. The counselling is regarded as successful to the extent to which at the end of the process the counselee can better deal with the personal problem at hand. We might say that the ultimate goal here is counselees 'normalization: to enable them to return to normal life with greater satisfaction.

- Edification method

The process of philosophical counselling is viewed not as a attempt to fix a personal problem, but as a personal journey towards greater wisdom and meaning. The counselling does not end once a personal problem is solved, but rather is an ongoing process that never ends. Its goal is to enrich, rather than simplify, counselees' world, to problematize rather than resolve their personal problems. This approach can be called the Edification Approach to philosophical counselling. It is based on the realization that ideas have an immense power to inspire us and even transform our lives. Consider, for example, how a new social vision about the plight of the unfortunate can inspire someone to leave his secure job and start working for the poor, how a environmental awareness can make a person start behaving in a considerate and frugal way, how a religious realization can inspire a person to forsake his former ways and become humble and meek, or how an existential realization about the inevitability of death, or the futility of fame and money, can motivate an individual to set upon a intense personal journey.

- Casuistical Method

Clients are often concerned with whether or not a certain course of action is morally acceptable. For example, a client may approach counsellor in order to inquire whether or not she should procure an abortion. Given that it is not a counsellor's responsibility to provide "right answers" to such questions, but rather to help the client come to understand what she believes the right thing to do is, the counsellor may decide to address this issue casuistically. She would then outline to the client a set of scenarios in which similar moral dilemmas are faced, and ask her what she believes the right choice to be in those cases and why she believes this. For example, the counsellor may begin by asking the client why she believes killing to be wrong. If the client responds that killing causes pain, then the counsellor may proceed by asking her whether killing someone painlessly in his sleep is wrong. If the client believes that it is, then clearly, she does not believe that the wrongness of killing lies solely in the pain that

it may cause to the victim. Eventually, the counsellor may elucidate from the client that she believes that killing is wrong because it takes away from the killed entity the potential for a certain kind of life. With this in hand, the counsellor may then more directly address the client's own beliefs concerning the morality of abortion. Alternatively, the counsellor may elucidate from the client that she believes that it is wrong only to kill an entity that possesses certain kinds of capacities at the moment of its death. Again, this information may be used by the counsellor to help the client reflect more acutely upon her own views concerning the morality of abortion. The counsellor must be careful not to use either the casuistical method nor the Elenchus in such a way as to "lead" her client into making the decision that the counsellor believes to be correct.

- Contractarian Approach

An alternative way in which a philosophical counselor may help a client come to better understand her own worldview is through utilizing a contractarian approach to counseling again, a technique for counseling drawn from the practice of mainstream philosophy. Kenn Cust's use of the contractarian approach in philosophical counseling is also indicative of how this practice may interact with academic philosophy. In using the contractarian method, Cust's counselor would ask her client to make his decision on the basis of his own values and worldview. In order to enter into such a hypothetical contract, then, one would have to possess a fairly substantive motivational set with which to guide one's decisions. Drawing on the contractarian approach to philosophical counseling's recognition of this, one may develop an objection to the Rawlsian contractarian position that requires persons to make decisions from behind a veil of ignorance, devoid of all knowledge of their personal characteristics. This highlights the second way in which philosophical counseling is of central value to the mainstream of academic philosophy: Through their use of standard philosophical methodology, philosophical counsellors are able not only to help their clients address their personal problems, but they are also able to productively interact with the abstract problems addressed by mainstream philosophy.

Self-understanding is the beginning of philosophical inquiry, which refers to the process of critical examination of individuals themselves; their beliefs, thoughts, actions, and values. It requires a method of self-questioning what is directly going through one's mind, without inhibition. Generally, human beings frequently develop their understanding of reality through social influences, personal influences, and inherited beliefs. Making unquestioned assumptions restricts critical thinking. Developing the ability to understand reality without assumptions based on one's misbeliefs is the first aid to critical thinking.

The significance of self-examination is evident in the philosophy of Socrates, whose famous assertion that "the unexamined life is not worth living" highlights the importance of critical thinking. (Plato 38) Self-examination encourages individuals to investigate the validity and consistency of their assumptions. The Socratic method provides a systematic foundation for philosophical counselling. Questioning a person's claims and identifying contradictions within their reasoning helps develop their ability to answer their own questions.

Ran Lahav argues that philosophical counselling facilitates philosophical self-investigation by examining the fundamental principles underlying an individual's lived understanding. (Lahav) This idea suggests that the counsellor's role is not simply to provide ready-made answers but to facilitate a process through which individuals can critically investigate their own perspectives.

Conclusion

One crucial aspect of philosophical investigation is the path from introspection to self-realization. The process is started by self-examination, which challenges people's presumptions, beliefs, and lifestyles. Through philosophical inquiry and critical thought, it progressively advances into self-understanding and deeper self-knowledge. The contributions of Socrates, Plato, and modern philosophical counselling show how important self-examination is as a prerequisite for leading a contemplative and fulfilling life. By portraying self-knowledge as a transformative investigation into the essence of the Self and human existence, the Bhagavad Gita enhances this conversation even more. By giving people the chance to explore their core ideas, define their values, and reevaluate how they view life, philosophical counselling offers an important modern backdrop for this journey. It promotes a deeper engagement with the philosophical issues that underlie human existence rather than just trying to solve current issues. In the end, self-examination can be interpreted as the start of philosophical awakening, self-understanding as the growth of reflective awareness, and self-realization as the more profound potential to acknowledge one's existence and nature. The shift between these aspects emphasises how philosophy can be a transforming tool for self-awareness and conscious living.

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