

## **Philosophical Counseling As Conceptual Art**

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I call that man rich who can satisfy the requirements of his imagination —Henry James

### **Abstract**

In this paper I draw a comparison between philosophical counseling and conceptual art. The comparison is with the philosophical counselor as one who helps clients see their problems in new ways, thus enabling them to cope with them in new ways. I provide a brief history of how I developed a skills-based approach to philosophical counseling, emphasizing thinking, feeling, sensing, intuitive, voluntary and interpersonal skills. The main philosophical tool in reconceptualizing presented problems involves the use of stipulative as opposed to reportive definitions. To illustrate, three examples are drawn from the history of philosophy: Epicurus on wealth; Epictetus on loss; and Epicurus on old age. The paper concludes with three examples taken from my own experience as counselor: a young philosopher's obsession with death; a woman doubtful about her diagnosis as a victim of multiple personality; and a woman trying to deal with a change in her consciousness after an operation on her brain. The concluding point: as with art, so in counseling, the ultimate test is not just a new idea but also the manner of execution.

**Keywords:** *philosophical counseling, conceptual art, stipulative definition, basic human skills*

## **The Art of Cabaret as Philosophical Practice**

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### **Abstract**

Cabaret, an intimate art form that utilizes songs, monologue, sketches, poetry, dance and humor to introduce commentary on actions, events, and life's emotional ups and downs, can also be thought of as philosophical practice when the topic under investigation is the virtues and their contribution to character development and the life well lived. The basic elements of cabaret that make it useful as a teaching tool are introduced and the reasons why the shows meet the basic requirements for twenty-first century character education are given, along with a brief description of the accompanying workshops.

**Keywords:** *archetype, cabaret, character, conduct, consciousness, musicophilia, myth, virtues*

## **How Dewey's View on Aesthetics is Relevant to Philosophical Counseling**

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### **Abstract**

The object of this paper is to counter the misguided view on aesthetics as something superficial, residing at the top of a Maslowian pyramid of needs, and to point out that the aesthetic dimension is profound in human life. Here we follow John Dewey, who in *Art as Experience* provides a conceptual framework we find relevant to philosophical counseling. It highlights the aesthetic aspect of human conduct, which also exists outside the realm of artful performances, and it enhances our understanding of what constitutes an experience. This enables counselor and client to make sense of a past experience by jointly reconstructing it in hindsight. A sense of merely drifting might be overcome, and be replaced by a sense of meaning and autonomy. To a counselor, an awareness of life's aesthetic dimension is thus equally important as critical thinking and ethical reasoning. It may even be what is required to make sense of what the client's problem is all about.

**Keywords:** *aesthetic dimension, Maslowian hierarchy of needs, restoring continuity, aesthetic vs. an-aesthetic experiences, environments, interaction with the world, equilibrium vs. tension, wholeness, organic whole, transactional, adaption, felt harmony, suffering, favorable outcome, hierarchical vs. dialectical, intrinsic, intention, meaning, impulsion, emotion, undergoing and doing, authenticity, the Peter Pan impulse, creating or reconstructing experiences, receptivity vs. recognition*

## **Confused Non-virgins: Happiness, Virtue and Sexual Decision-making**

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### **Abstract**

Many single adults are confused non-virgins who are sexually active but have no real understanding of their motives for having sex or of its effects on them. They may seek philosophical counseling for sexual decision-making. Sexual choices can be evaluated by both an obligation standard (which asks ‘do my sexual choices keep or break rules of conduct such as “do no harm”?’) and a virtue standard (which asks ‘do my sexual choices contribute to my own individual fulfillment or are they self-destructive?’). While not ignoring how sexual behavior can hurt others, this paper focuses on the impact it has on personal happiness and moral character. It first outlines a general happiness-and-virtue ethic that applies to counseling many different everyday problems. Then, by integrating virtue ethics and social science research in human sexuality, it suggests ways in which philosophical counselors can advise confused non-virgin clients. While focusing on heterosexual behavior, its lessons apply to homosexual activity as well.

**Keywords:** *eudaimonistic ethics, habituation, happiness, sexual ethics, virtue ethics*