Projecting 'The Good Life' in Philosophical Counseling

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Abstract

This paper examines the conceptual matrix of philosophical counseling, and philosophical practice generally, which distinguishes philosophical practice from mainstream theoretical philosophy. I argue that the essence of philosophical practice is the realization and radicalization of Pierre Hadot's paradigm-shifting view of 'Philosophy as a Way of Life,' through the projection of philosophical concepts and methods to the goal of attainment of the good life by moral education and character-building. The base-line concept of the good life that the paper works with is the relatively uncontroversial concept of a life based on sustained reflected pleasures that are both socially desirable and individually fulfilling. I argue that this type of concept of the good life as qualified pleasure is inherent in any doctrinal account of what it is to lead a good life, including the ones that emphasise asceticism, such as Christian philosophy of life and ethics. Finally the paper concludes that projections of the good life by philosophical counselors are reflective on philosophical counselor themselves: philosophical counseling is a way of 'the good life' that aims to use the resources of philosophy as a whole to help others build the moral qualities and character required to reach their own good lives. By projecting philosophical concepts and methods to the applied conceptual matrix of moral education and the good life, philosophical counseling emancipates philosophy as a whole from its current remoteness and isolation into an active, and reflective, role in the real lives of ordinary people. This heralds a paradigm shift in philosophy, from the pseudo-science that much of mainstream philosophy painstakingly pretends to be to an intellectual powerhouse for the enhancement of the quality, clarity and integrity of life, which was the reason philosophy initially emerged for, both in the Western and in the Eastern philosophical traditions.

Dialectical Ways of Coping with Dilemmas

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Abstract

There are various gaps between general and abstract academic philosophy and particular and concrete life experiences. But, despite them, lessons learned from the history of debates in the former may be relevant to coping with problems in the latter. From the present perspective philosophical debates cannot lead to valid, universally accepted and ultimate solutions. Suggestions to deal with problems of life by adopting "the right" philosophy" or following "the correct" method or rule are therefore as dogmatic and parochial as religious preaching. However, as philosophers from Plato via Hegel to Kuhn have demonstrated, dialectical processes may lead to the overcoming of seemingly irresolvable controversies. The chosen option may eventually raise new oppositions, but at the actual problem situation the involved parties find it satisfactory. Difficulties of coping with the problems of life, practical as well as philosophical, are often involved with (tacit) unresolved philosophical dilemmas. Philosophers can help others as well as themselves by bringing the relevant opposing poles into awareness in a dialectical process that facilitates the discovery of various options to overcome the difficulty, and their exploration. Several philosophical possibilities of dialectical overcoming are demonstrated and discussed in the paper.

Protagoras: Well-Traveled Philosophical Practitioner
Reflections on the Diversity and Internationality of Philosophical Practice

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Abstract

Philosophical Practice in its present form developed in the 20th century in the Western world. It was proclaimed as such by Gerhard Achenbach and it had similarly inspired precursors in Germany, England and the USA. But it also had its predecessors in antiquity, as Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault have shown. The earliest such thinkers were the Sophists, who initiated intense philosophical reflection on the themes of humanity and human existence. The philosophical approaches of the different Sophists were varied, and the ideas broadened by their travels overwhelmed the limited imagination of many other Greeks. They can be a paradigm for Philosophical Practice as it is internationally known today, if we look at their accomplishments instead of demonizing their anthropocentrism and pragmatism.

Philosophy Dancing
Nietzsche's Philosophical Practice as Playful Experimentation

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Abstract

Nietzsche's writings are generally associated with atheism, will to power, nihilism, amorality, and even immorality. The correctness of such characterization aside, Nietzsche's diverse works contain a host of original insights and sage advice—often contradictory, yet always worth considering. Furthermore, the value of Nietzsche's philosophy, for me, is not based on its alleged doctrines but on its openness, fluidity, and its experimental and explorative character. Nietzsche's writings are unreservedly personal. Their stated ultimate goal is to assist readers in fully becoming what they already are in their slumbering core. Music, dance, and play serve as apt models in Nietzsche's attempt to create a style of philosophizing which invites daring adventures of thought and living, risky experiments involving one's self, and failures to learn from. Bold movements of thought do not allow for comfortable and complacent rest, and demand from brave and honest philosophical wanderers to contradict themselves, which in turn may lead to more perceptive self-scrutiny and multifaceted insights. For Nietzsche, the style of thinking and writing is as least as important as the issues examined. In order for philosophy to enhance our lives, Nietzsche demands, it must be conducted in a joyful, graceful, and playful manner—philosophy must be "dancing." The paper concludes with summarizing remarks on implications for philosophical practice, especially philosophical counseling.

Keywords: *Nietzsche, philosophical practice/counseling, perspectivism, experimentation, play, music, dance, art of living.*

Philosophical Counseling with Islamic-Arab Minorities

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Abstract

The present era of globalization is characterized by a continuous movement of migration of populations with different ethnicity, culture and religion. Nowadays, this phenomenon of migration due not only to political but to economical reasons as well reaches a very high peak. Thus, a counselor is likely to be approached by a client with a diverse religious and cultural background. The aim of this presentation is not to delve full force into the subject matter. Rather, the aim is above all to make us aware of difficulties and challenges that may emerge in philosophical counseling with client–immigrants of Islamic-Arab culture and consequently to make us reflect about the limits if any of philosophical counseling.

Keywords: *diverse cultural background, wonder, openness, different world perspective, collective self, eligibility*

Philosophical Practice and Social Welfare
Counselling and Supervision of Ethics

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Abstract

Context: Ethical counselling is a process which facilitates the identification of ethical dilemmas that individuals or organizations are facing and ways out of these dilemmas that are most congruent with the vision shared by the individual or organization, context in which supervision of individuals intervenes as a support process. The paper starts from a set of convergence that we could find between philosophical practice and the counselling process specific to the field of social welfare. We see those convergences through a methodological aspect, but also from axiological, teleological and pragmatic points of view. We will present in what follows a practice model of counselling of ethics derived from counselling in social welfare. We mention that philosophical ethical counselling model that focuses on solving ethical dilemmas represents a transposition of social practice at the level of counselling of ethics.

Philosophical Walks

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"My dear Phaedrus, whence come you, and whither are you going?"
— Socrates in Plato's *Phaedrus*; under a plane tree by the banks of the Ilissus.

Abstract

Since 2007, I use philosophical walks for individual consultations, teaching, or Socratic group exercises. I was inspired by Plato's *Phaedrus*, which documented Socrates taking a walk with Phaedrus along the Ilissus river in search for the right spot to philosophize about love. I took the elements of this dialogue and transformed them into a method for philosophizing. In this paper, I will describe my method and give an example: a philosophical walk at the Holargos park in Athens on the occasion of the 12th International Conference on Philosophical Practice (ICPP).

The Circles Test

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Abstract

At the 12th International Conference on Philosophical Practice we performed a workshop introducing the "circles test" as an easy drawing projective test for philosophical counseling and psychotherapy. This paper points out the aims, method, theory and real examples of this test as a tool for philosophical counselors.

Keywords: *Circles Test, projective test, counseling tools, philosophical counseling, psychotherapy.*