

**Not If But When:
First Philosophical Reflections
on Perpetrators, Victims, and Survivors
of Mass Shootings**

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Abstract

If the word 'random' is used to imply 'meaningless' then there is no such thing as random violence. Violence against innocents, such as in wars and mass public shootings in peacetimes, always have a meaning or purpose for their perpetrators. But this may not always be obvious to their victims. The media tends to focus on the spectacle of violence, often saying little about its victims or survivors. Counselling survivors with philosophy can be a difficult task. It is often appropriate to have at least a cursory discussion about the meaning of life. One often unusual but very useful strategy is to place the blame squarely on the shooter.

Keywords: *'random,' victim/survivor, justification, suicide, meaning, counselling, philosophy*

Complex Moral Narratives in Philosophical Counseling: Insights from Henry James

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Abstract

As philosophers with many theoretical books at our fingertips, we can find additional illustrations of human life as lived on a deeper, moral level. Henry James, a master at describing the internal states of mind and social dynamics of his characters, along with their moral dilemmas, is one very good place to start. Throughout his short stories and novels, he illustrates how, even though we might wish to make it otherwise, life is not an illusion. We wake up to it every day. We can forget or deny it, or we can welcome our experiences as they come and give them what they demand. His works are passionate pleas for the fullest possible human development, one unimpered by reckless and barbarous stupidity and informed by enlightened morality, enable us to envision better what life fully lived might look like, and to see the sense of striving for it ourselves.

After introducing the audience to the life, works, and philosophy of Henry James, I will present instances in which my work with clients was informed and enhanced by them. Three cases will be interwoven with stories of the ways in which his works and thoughts enriched my thinking and improved my ability to reflect upon some of the moral dilemmas involved.

Keywords: *Henry James, fiction, literature, moral dilemmas, philosophical counseling, philosophy*

Camus' Absurd and its Application to Existential Psychotherapy

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Abstract

This essay will explore and critically evaluate Camus' theory of the absurd and then discuss its relevance to the practice of existential psychotherapy. It is proposed that the concept of the absurd, whilst initially intimidating, can be beneficial to include in psychotherapeutic work. Helping others to move away from global concepts of meaning, to finding their own way through life, can initiate a process of experiential development, and ultimately liberation.

Keywords: *Albert Camus, the absurd, existential psychotherapy, acceptance processes, behavioural change*

Towards a Basic Model for Philosophical Counseling

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Abstract

This paper argues for the use-value to the growing field of philosophical counseling of a basic, teachable model for the practice of philosophical counseling. The paper proposes three basic assumptions as best undergirding such a model: first, that philosophical counseling helps people to deepen their understanding of issues through the development of their autonomous reasoning processes; second, that these reasoning processes stand to gain from the right inputs and challenges from the counselor; and, third, that beyond its practical use, philosophical counseling aids in the attainment of ‘philosophical health’, which has value in itself and over time demonstrates its priority over the attainment of external goods. The paper finally presents a basic model of philosophical counseling that reflects the author’s own developed practice, and consists in a sequence of seven steps: 1) the use of pointed clarifying questions, 2) the performance of values reflection, 3) the posing of fear-facing questions, 4) the sharing of relevant experiences, 5) the registering and sharing of impressions, 6) the discernment of the crucial issue, and 7) the use of breakthrough questions.

Keywords: *philosophical counseling, philosophical health, eudaimonia, Socratic midwifery*