

# From psychotherapy to emotional well being

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## INTRODUCTION

Psychotherapy has grown vigorously and rapidly over its first century of existence. It has become like a rather overgrown piece of land, where all sorts of vegetation and animal life mingle and where it is quite easy to lose one's way as in a jungle, even as one is looking for clarity and direction. It is not surprising that some zealous spirits have spent the past decades trying to organize and sanitize this complex and confusing environment, by introducing some form of regulation into it. Professional bodies have sprung up in almost every country of Europe in response to a desperate need for clarification and accountability, aiming to discipline the professionals working in the field. The therapeutic field itself however has remained fairly untouched by this process of formalization and standardization of psychotherapy training and practice.

We are still unclear as to who are the rightful owners of the professions of psychotherapy and counselling as the sister professions of psychology and psychiatry vie with psychotherapists for control over the field. As psychotherapy is becoming established it needs to define itself more clearly

in relation to other professions and functions in society. In order to do so it needs to clarify its objectives in overall socio-cultural terms. It needs to become far more lucid. Instead of remaining engrossed in petty battles between different methods we need to set clear priorities and objectives and examine how we can most usefully make a contribution to society.

## DEFINING PSYCHOTHERAPY

This sends us back to our roots: we have to re-examine where we come from and what the therapeutic mission is about in the first place. We have to ask ourselves afresh what it is that psychotherapy is actually supposed to do for people. The answer to this question is not as self evident as we might think.

In spite of the establishment of the European Psychotherapy, by the EAP, a lot of diversity remains across Europe in relation to how the profession of psychotherapy is defined. When professional bodies meet they still have considerable differences of opinion about what psychotherapy consists of and which different modalities can be accepted. This is because psychotherapists do not all hold the same beliefs and do not all have the same objectives. As soon as one tries to reach an agreed definition there is immediately disagreement about whether psychotherapy is to be seen as a form of

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treatment or as a form of personal development. There is still no agreement about whether psychotherapy is primarily a medical, a psychological, an educational or a spiritual activity.

There can be no doubt that psychotherapy is about helping people with personal, emotional and relational problems through the intermediary of the therapeutic relationship. But even then, people will disagree about the definition of helping or whether this should involve mostly emotional, behavioural or cognitive elements, and whether it should be based on an intra- or inter-personal model.

Some think that psychotherapy has a didactic impact others think it should absolutely not have one. There are therefore fundamental philosophical differences in a way rarely found within one profession. Psychotherapy for some is about priesthood, for some about parenting, for some about education, for some about healing, for some about friendship, for some about mental or moral exercise. In some ways psychotherapy can encompass the whole of human activities and, like philosophy once upon a time it makes claims to being able to understand everything and everybody. We should be aware of our own grandiosity and put some limits to it, by defining the overall objectives.

#### THE PHILOSOPHICAL DIMENSION OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

All psychotherapists intervene in people's lives and either explicitly or implicitly affect the way in which they think and feel about themselves, others, the world and human living in general. In the process of psychotherapy moments of reflection and contemplation may occur when the person's life is seen in a new light. The light thrown is the light of the therapist's belief system, as taught by this particular modality of psychotherapy and interpreted through the therapist's personal experience and wisdom accumulated over a life time of personal and professional experience.

Every therapy sooner or later deals with radical philosophical questions. Sometimes this is done explicitly when clients raise direct moral and personal dilemmas, but it is always done indirectly whenever clients struggle with questions of understanding self and other, right and wrong, purpose and meaning.

The roots of psychotherapy are in fact deeply

embedded in philosophy: at least of that branch of philosophy that concerns itself with ethics and in particular with how to live a good human life.

Those who take on this profession end up debating the big issues of life and the universe, often without any systematic training in the field of philosophy. Approaches to psychotherapy represent distinct value systems and belief systems although they remain non-explicit about their own philosophical and spiritual guidance role. The calibre of a lot of the thinking is therefore low. There is a risk that psychotherapists end up making interpretations from a background of unassimilated home-spun, popular philosophy.

#### UNDUE INFLUENCE

There was a time when many psychiatrists practised psychotherapy without specific training, ending up doling out medication together with words of moral advice.

Nowadays, even in psychiatry, much attention is paid to psychotherapy training. However such training very rarely directly addresses the moral and metaphysical questions that our clients struggle with. How often do we debate on our training courses whether there is life after death or what the parameters of a good relationship are? How accustomed are we with the investigation of the consequences of people's actions or in-action? Where do we place ourselves as therapists when clients wonder whether to kill themselves or whether they are entitled to take somebody else's life? How do we know whether to support, admonish or contradict? How clear are we on fundamental questions of freedom and necessity, of good and bad and right and wrong?

Much of the time psychotherapists deny the need to intervene in the philosophical dilemmas of their clients and they stick to the resolution of clients' conflicts or internal turmoil. In spite of this almost all our interventions are value laden and suggestive of a particular point of view and so we do give philosophical, political and social guidance whether we like and admit it or not. Charles Rycroft once reported to me that one of his patients at the end of his therapy with him had remarked how easy it had been to work out what his therapist's political beliefs were. Rycroft had believed himself to be neutral and he had

consistently abstained from bringing any of his own values and beliefs into the therapy. His patient however had noted that Rycroft used to make an interpretation whenever his patient spoke about the conservatives whilst he would listen silently when he spoke about the labour party. He had drawn his conclusions accordingly.

This raises the important question about what clients and patients are actually picking up from their therapists, silently and non explicitly but probably very effectively. What do clients learn from their therapy that remains unsaid? What new tricks and values do they pick up with the interventions their therapists make or abstain from making? The issue of influence and indoctrination has to be seriously considered. As long as psychotherapists deny that they are actually influencing the essential ways in which their clients see and experience the world, it remains difficult to systematically investigate how such influence is exerted, let alone to ask how we might do so in a constructive way. It also raises the question of how we can carefully and fairly research the effect of our work on our clients.

Such research is difficult enough as it is, because we do not have clarity on what kind of influence is beneficial and desirable. Erwin in his book *Philosophy and Psychotherapy* (Erwin, 1997) points out that it is not for instance clear whether we should evaluate psychotherapy by the therapist's or the client's standards. Should we consider psychotherapy a success if an unemployed person ends up establishing him or herself as an independent copy-editor using the ability to work as the criterion of success, when perhaps the tendency towards self-isolation which was the problem in the first place, has thus been compounded?

#### ETHICAL QUESTIONS

Woven in with the personal and psychological problems that our clients bring are other deeper layers of difficulty which are to do with the perennial questions about the meaning of life and the moral issues about how a good human life should be lived. There are some fundamental philosophical issues that are regularly dealt with in psychotherapy. They include basic questions such as what is the correct way to raise children or run a society? They include existential questions such as why is

there something rather than nothing, why am I me and not someone else, what is the meaning of life, is there such a thing as a self and is there such a thing as altruism? There are ethical questions about how my actions make a difference in the world. More profoundly there are metaphysical issues such as what happens after my death, is a foetus a human being and is there such a thing as extra-sensory perception or the presence of ghosts? Perhaps most importantly there is the problem of good and evil. Children are intensely preoccupied with the existence of goodies and baddies from an early age as they try to figure out what kind of person they should be themselves. People wonder whether goodness will always win, is always the best option or whether sometimes the strong have to be mean and goodness equals weakness. People really want to know whether they must fight evil, or whether they are evil themselves for thinking and doing certain reprehensible things. They are often perturbed because they have or have not done something specific in their lives. Guilt is a source of much human suffering. Should we treat these conditions medically or psychologically or should we go beyond psychotherapy and tackle them at the root? Is psychotherapy enough to help people return to their essential grasp of human nature, the human condition and the life they want to try and live, or do we need a much more practical form of philosophical enquiry and praxis? Have we gone beyond psychotherapy back into the field of applied philosophy?

It is quite noteworthy that psychotherapists should increasingly be treated by society as the wise people who can show the direction in which culture should move. It is psychotherapists and counsellors who speak on radio and television about a myriad of issues on which they form opinions based on their clinical experience. It would seem important that they reflect upon such issues from a rather more solid foundation in philosophical thinking and argument. Recently I was asked to comment for a BBC programme on 'what women want' and I was somewhat relieved to find that I had a previous commitment as I would have been hard put to do justice to such a thorny issue in ten minutes. If I speak from my own, complex and sometimes confusing experience how do I know that what I say is said because I am a woman rather than a human being or middle aged? How can I know that what is true for me,

for my clients, for my students, is true for other women too? How can I be sure that the things we want superficially are also the things that we want deep down. Or indeed how can I know whether what I desire is worthwhile or just an illusion. As Oscar Wilde once pointed out: there are two tragedies in life, one is to not get what you want and the other is to get it.

Asking such questions about desire and longing sends us back to ancient times, three thousand years ago, when people were also doing philosophy, i.e. searching for wisdom and when they were acutely aware that doing philosophy was about seeking better ways to live. What we now call psychotherapy was originally called philosophy and we would be very wrong to believe that the history of psychotherapy starts merely a century ago.

#### AN ANCIENT ENQUIRY

I would like to refer you, in the context of this questioning of the function and role of psychotherapy to a book by Martha Nussbaum, called *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Nussbaum, 1994). It is a book that reminds us of our origins and in doing so it also implies and sketches out a different future.

This is a very significant book for psychotherapists. It provides the long awaited scholarly overview of the origins of western psychotherapy as it was first conceived in its Hellenistic antecedents.

Here is a complete account of the initial psychotherapeutic function of philosophy, showing us how much our cultural progress has jeopardised and lost track of over the centuries. Applied philosophy was always meant to have the very practical function that psychotherapy and counselling are attempting to hold in the twentieth century. As Nussbaum puts it:

‘Aristotle and others knew that where the body had a need for medicine, the soul also had a need for an art that would heal diseases of thought, judgement and desire’ (*ibid.*, p. 40).

Philosophy was meant to have a practical application in the form of an art of moral education and good living. Those who are familiar with Socrates’ teachings and Plato’s philosophy will already be

well aware of this (Vlastos, 1992). We are usually less aware of what became of philosophy during the subsequent centuries, both in Greece and Rome. It is fascinating to consider the contributions of Aristotle and his followers, Epicurus and the Epicureans, the Skeptics and the Stoics. When we pay attention to our forebears we find that there is much of therapeutic value in each of these philosophies. Each rethinks essential and existential principles in its own way. Hellenistic philosophy was quite blunt about its objectives, which were definitely to achieve eudaimonia, the good or flourishing life. The definition of what such a life consists of and how it is achieved varies from one philosophical school to another. Paying attention to these matters predictably means that one has to ask a number of searching political questions. Think for instance about the Aristotelian emphasis on the good life as something that can only be taught to the privileged intellectual, although it should be attainable by the many, in contrast with the Epicurean ideals, which are a much less sophisticated product that can be more easily absorbed by the crowd, but that has the drawback of being dogmatic as a consequence. Equally in many of the Hellenistic philosophies, but particularly in the Aristotelian the condition of an individual’s pursuit of the flourishing life, is that it should benefit the community at large rather than only the individual.

Guidelines for Aristotelian practice are remarkably compatible with existential psychotherapy (van Deurzen, 1988, 1997). Note for example the prescription that the philosophy teacher’s (psychotherapist’s) discourse with the pupil (client) should be a co-operative, critical one that insists on the virtues of orderliness, deliberateness and clarity. Teacher and pupil are both active and independent, though the teacher is able to offer experienced guidance. The ethical inquiry that they engage in together is seen as a ‘winnowing and sifting of people’s opinions’ (Nussbaum, 1994, p. 76). Pupils are taught to separate true beliefs from false beliefs and to modify and transform their passions accordingly. The idea that emotion can be educated, rather than ignored, or merely expressed or suppressed, is still revolutionary today, two and a half thousand years later. Aristotle’s descriptions of the various emotions and what can be done with them is not unlike that of Spinoza, who also showed them to be like a field of opposing forces (Spinoza, 1677).

## FINDING MORAL PRINCIPLES

The philosophies of Socrates and Plato are the best known for giving moral guidance. The ideal world described in these philosophies is promised as being obtainable to anyone who is able to rise above the trouble and strife of everyday life by following reason and acquiring knowledge of the good. While Socrates lived his philosophy to the bitter end of his own death sentence, his example is not easy to follow for lesser mortals. Aristotle's critique of Socrates' teaching that virtue is all and can overcome anything is powerful. It is a much more realistic acknowledgement of the realities of everyday life and the recognition that practical wisdom consists not of being sufficient onto oneself, but to be connected to the world and experience all the emotions it evokes. Aristotle's idea of moral education is however an elitist one.

The Epicureans by contrast seek to treat human suffering by removing corrupting desires and by eliminating pain and disturbance in the process. Epicurean pupils are taught to adjust their values in order to retain only those that are attainable and may bring them pleasure. It is a method very much like rational emotive therapy, which seems to promise a life free of stress. Following this method one relinquishes the unobtainable and adjusts one's expectations to what is realistic, so that with a slight of hand we can obtain what we think we want. This involves a detachment from one's own desires. The teaching of detachment is similar to that in some forms of Buddhism, though for the Epicureans detachment happens in relation to externals, rather than in relation to self. The Epicurean idea of the good life is unfortunately rather dogmatic. Dialectical investigation and critical thinking are replaced with formulae and communal living enforces the creed. Some schools of psychotherapy similarly stray into prescriptive territory. However Epicures also understood something that neither Plato nor Aristotle had fully grasped, i.e., that false beliefs are often settled deep in the soul and that they may not be available for argument. This is something not all therapists are cognisant of, although the psychoanalytic tradition promotes the idea forcefully.

Nussbaum indeed credits Epicures with the discovery of the unconscious and shows how he learnt to use the technique of narrative to contact suppressed and hidden motivations and beliefs.

She makes this clear by drawing on Lucretius' work with dreams and emotions and I found many of his insights topical and useful. An example is for instance his statement that

'to attend to the everyday and to make it an object of delight or voluptas, intentional and mutual, is to make a good marriage possible' (*ibid.*, p. 185).

The aim of Lucretian therapy? It is 'to make the reader equal to the gods and at the same time, to make him heed nature's voice.' In order to do this we are taught how to deal with love, death and anger, but most other topics get also discussed in the process.

The Epicurean view is that pleasure is the only good and we are taught to adjust our needs so as to guarantee the procurement of pleasure from small natural resources. However according to the Sceptics this in itself creates anxieties and the only way to stop pain and suffering is to simply not believe in or desire anything. So whilst Epicureans try to get rid of false beliefs, the Sceptics want to get rid of all belief. It is a strategy that is increasingly popular in western society and that many people today adopt in order to not get hurt. Nussbaum herself notes that Scepticism is a knack that anyone can learn and which sets out to protect one against intensity. 'But an intense attachment to the absence of intensity is a funny sort of desire, a desire born of troubles' (*ibid.*, p. 311), she comments incisively.

Whilst Epicureans and Sceptics, unlike Plato and Aristotle, reject reason as a way out of difficulties, the Stoics accept it, but use it in a rather forceful and controlling manner. Again the parallels with contemporary psychotherapy are fascinating. Who today could disagree with the statement that 'the job of living actively in accordance with one's own reason, rather than passively, in the grip of habits and conventions, requires vigilance and probing' (*ibid.*, p. 328). On the other hand is our culture ready for the kind of ordering of the self and soul that Stoics propose to bring about? Perhaps it is more than ready for the kind of exercise of the mind that Stoics advocate, seeing the problems in living that people contend with not as problems of evil but rather as the result of a lack of moral fibre and emotional weakness. Stoic therapy can begin anywhere, because everything is connected, but Stoics consider that different temperaments need

different approaches and that there is a critical moment (*kairos*) for intervention, a view shared by the Epicureans. The Stoics make a point of finding ways of penetrating deep into the soul and use story telling to do so.

The educational aspect of this therapy as of all the other Hellenistic therapies is very strong, but this particular one also emphasizes the aspect of self-scrutiny, which includes an understanding of one's relationships. For the Stoics the pupil's goal is to become his own teacher and pupil: a goal well beyond that of most forms of contemporary psychotherapy, which leaves one to wonder whether we have wandered rather far from the philosophical path of intervention in to the jungle of medical cure.

Stoics teach us that in order to improve a person's life the soul must be exercised everyday, for instance by the use of logic and poetry. The objective is wisdom, which is the only ultimate value and virtue and leads to *eudaimonia*, the flourishing life. We do not have to agree with the Stoical conclusion that such wisdom is primarily achieved through detachment and self-control. Nor need we agree that it is necessary to extirpate our passions as Stoics would like us to do. But we certainly can learn a lot from some clear thinking about how passions can best be tamed and benefited from. Few psychotherapists have clear views on these matters. If passions of which we lose control are counterproductive then it is vital to be able to be in charge of our own emotions. How can we enable a person to expand their capacity for passion at the same time as their ability to control it? We need not get rid of passion altogether (as do the Skeptics), or minimize it (as do the Epicureans) or increase control over it (as do the Stoics). But we do have to take these philosophical questions seriously as our clients constantly struggle with them. There are rich and fruitful interactions to be had between philosophy and psychotherapy. If we are to develop psychotherapy beyond its narrow scope we need to reconnect with our philosophical roots.

#### PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

It is somewhat surprising that philosophy and psychotherapy do not have a more distinguished history of co-operation. Both disciplines are concerned

with human well being and human living, the one in a theoretical manner, the other in a much more pragmatic way. One would expect psychotherapists to have noted the central importance of philosophy to the practice of their own profession and draw on philosophy as a source for understanding their clients' predicaments. Unfortunately this has not been the case. Psychotherapists have on the whole neglected the study of philosophy, which they have frequently dismissed as irrelevant and they have turned to medicine and psychology as the disciplines of theoretical reference for their domain.

Philosophy itself has to a large extent lost track of its own mission to understand, clarify and sustain the concrete realities of ordinary people and as it spawned the sciences became increasingly abstract and detached from its former objectives. This is particularly evident in logical positivism. Nevertheless there has always been a strand of philosophy that concerned itself with human issues and there are a number of philosophers, like Kant, Rousseau, Spinoza, Hume and Hegel who have made important contributions to the understanding of human nature. They should be essential reading for trainee psychotherapists.

It is however with the new impulse of the philosophies of existence, particularly those of Kierkegaard (1844, 1846, 1855) and Nietzsche (1881, 1882, 1886, 1887, 1888) that philosophers themselves became directly interested again in the concrete questions of human existence. The philosophies of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche draw attention to the subjective life of the individual and in this way provide an excellent basis for the kind of philosophy that can inform the practice of psychotherapy. With the advent of Husserl's phenomenology (Husserl, 1900, 1913, 1925, 1929) a more concrete methodology of investigation of human issues was proposed enabling existentialism to come into its own with the work of philosophers such as Heidegger (1927, 1954, 1957), Sartre (1939, 1943, 1948) and Merleau Ponty (1945, 1964, 1968).

Existentialism became a popular movement as people reclaimed philosophy as being of personal relevance. Here at last was an approach that would give them a handle on the moral choices, existential crises and constant challenges of daily reality. Philosophy was shown to be capable of providing a forum for debate where light could be thrown on the far-reaching changes that humanity had to

negotiate in the modern and post-modern era. It was therefore predictable that existentialism should also generate a new form of psychotherapy in which medical considerations were replaced with wider human ones and where a person's particular problems were set off against the background of a general existential perspective.

#### EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

Existential psychotherapy is the only established form of psychotherapy that is directly based in philosophy rather than in psychology. It was founded at the beginning of the century, on the one hand by the original work of Karl Jaspers in Germany, (1951, 1963, 1964) which itself influenced Heidegger's thinking and on the other hand by the work of two Swiss psychiatrists, Ludwig Binswanger (1946, 1963) and Medard Boss (1957, 1962, 1979, 1988), who were in turn inspired by the work of Heidegger to create an alternative method of dealing with emotional and mental distress. All three turned from psychiatry to philosophy, in an attempt to understand the human predicament, paradoxes and conflicts of their patients. These early applications of existentialist philosophy to psychotherapy have been followed by a number of other and varied attempts, as for instance in the work of Frankl (1946, 1955, 1967), May (1958, 1969, 1983), Laing (1960, 1961, 1964, 1967), Szasz (1961, 1965, 1992) Yalom (1980, 1989) and van Deurzen (1984, 1988, 1992, 1997, 1998, 2002).

There has however continued to be great diversity between these and other authors as no official or formal rendering of existential psychotherapy has ever been agreed. To confuse matters further existential principles have also been applied more indirectly to psychotherapy as part of the humanistic psychology movement, for instance in Person-centred and Gestalt approaches to psychotherapy, which often pride themselves in their existential origins. Personal-construct therapies also have a basis in the phenomenological approach and there are a number of psychoanalytic writers who take existential ideas into account as well. All of these approaches however tend to focus on the intra-personal dimensions of human existence and they have formulated psychological theories that do not allow the philosophical dimension to come to the fore or to be central. Radical existential psychotherapy focuses on the

inter-personal and supra-personal dimensions, as it tries to capture and question people's world-views. Such existential work aims at clarifying and understanding personal values and beliefs, making explicit what was previously implicit and unsaid. Its practice is primarily philosophical and seeks to enable a person to live more deliberately, more authentically and more purposefully, whilst accepting the limitations and contradictions of human existence. It has much in common with the newly developed practice of philosophical consultancy, which is just finding its feet in Germany, the Netherlands, Israel and the United States (Lahav, 1995; Achenbach, 1984; Hoogendijk, 1991; Curnow, 2001; Herrestad, 2002).

There continues to be a lack of systematic theorizing about existential psychotherapy and a lack of research to demonstrate the effectiveness of this kind of work. This is mostly because the existential approach resists formalisation and opposes the fabrication of a method that can be taught as a technique and followed automatically. Existential psychotherapy has to be reinvented and recreated by every therapist and with every new client. It is essentially about investigating human existence and the particular preoccupations of one individual and this has to be done without preconceptions or set ways of proceeding. There has to be complete openness to the individual situation and an attitude of wonder that will allow the specific circumstances and experiences to unfold in their own right.

Unfortunately existential therapists like most other therapists have their own dogmas and worldviews, which constrict free philosophical exploration. I do not believe that existential psychotherapy is any better than any other form of therapy unless it can detach itself from the desire to know and prescribe. In order to truly make oneself available to other human beings we need to learn to be in doubt and wonder and dispense with wise words other than those that come from one's own experience. In this way it may become possible to investigate with those who come to us for help what meanings they want to attach to their own lives and how they want to live these lives, given their particular predicaments and their particular personal and cultural assets. We have to accept that there is no wisdom without doubt.

As Paul Tillich once said:

The courage of confidence takes the anxiety

of fate as well as the anxiety of guilt into itself (Tillich, 1952, p. 163).

#### CONCLUSION

To go beyond psychotherapy is to see that a dialectical process underlies the tensions of human existence. Conflicts are constantly generated and then overcome, only to be reasserted in a new form. Life flows from a number of contradictory forces working against and with each other. In order to move successfully beyond psychotherapy we have to recognize together with our clients what specific tensions are at work in the client's life. This requires a process of careful scrutiny and description of the client's experience and a gradually growing familiarity with the client's particular situation and stance in the world. To understand the worldview and the states of mind that this generates is to grapple with the way the client makes meaning, which involves a coming to know of clients' values and beliefs. The particular circumstances of the client's life have to be recognized, but so has the wider context within which this life is lived. The philosophical helping process is to elicit, clarify and put into perspective all the current issues and contradictions that are problematic. Part of the work consists in enabling the client to come to terms with the inherent contradictions of human living. Another part of it is to help clients find a satisfactory direction for their future life with a full recognition of the paradoxes that have to be faced in the process. Ultimately the therapeutic search is about allowing the client to reclaim their own ability to be open to the world in all its complexity. We need to research into what it means to live a satisfactory, worthwhile and fulfilling human life. A true philosophical exploration will take account of what is true for the client and set this against insights and understanding gained from three thousand years of philosophy and a century of psychotherapy. We are, with the movement of therapeutic culture, at the beginning of a new philosophical era. We are better equipped than ever before to tackle life's inevitable darkness and adversity. Psychotherapists can learn to think more clearly about the human issues they are dealing with by drawing more directly on the strengths of philosophy. The time has come to let the side track of psychotherapy flow back into

the main stream of philosophy. The time has come to join forces with philosophers and look beyond this one century of psychotherapy towards a rich past of human explorations. The time has come to get out of the dark ages of an isolated psychotherapy profession, back into the light of a search for wisdom.

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#### ABSTRACT

This paper considers the relevance of philosophy to psychotherapy. It traces the progression of early western philosophy in its approach to human emotions and considers how this is mirrored in current psychotherapeutic practice. It argues that psychotherapists have much to learn from philosophy and that a clear understanding of life events and issues is essential for doing good psychotherapy.

*Key words:* Philosophy, psychotherapy, ethics, existential, moral principles, emotions detachment, wisdom, dialectics, well-being.

## RESUMO

Este artigo considera a relevância da filosofia para a psicoterapia. Esboça o progresso da filosofia ocidental antepassada na sua abordagem às emoções humanas e considera como esta é espelhada na prática psicoterapêutica

actual. Argumenta que os psicoterapeutas têm muito que aprender da filosofia e que uma clara compreensão dos acontecimentos e assuntos da vida é essencial para praticar uma boa psicoterapia.

*Palavras-chave:* Filosofia, psicoterapia, ética, existencial, princípios morais, emoções, liberdade de espírito, sabedoria, dialéctica, bem-estar.