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**PHILOSOPHICAL COUNSELLING:
SYNTHESIS OF THE ESSENCE AND MODERN TENDENCIES OF
PHILOSOPHY**

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Abstract: The article is devoted to analyzing philosophical counseling and coaching as contemporary tendencies of philosophy. The authors intend to demonstrate that philosophical counseling arises as a result of transformations of philosophy, its acquisition of a practical dimension related to the “end of metaphysics,” the situation of “end of ‘grand narratives’” (J.-F. Lyotard), “linguistic/communicative / practice turns in philosophy,” “era of interpretation.” Thus, philosophical counseling is closely related to modern philosophical trends - existentialism, philosophy of dialogue, communicative philosophy, hermeneutics. But, at the same time, the dimension of philosophical counseling was embedded in philosophy from the very beginning. The idea of “philosophy as a way of life” defines the essence of philosophical practice. Certain archetypal images include Socrates, who used his maieutic method to lead students to the truth (essentially advising them on how to choose the path to truth), or Plato, who traveled to the tyrants of Syracuse to “consult” how to create an ideal state. That is why the author’s thesis is that to understand the essence of philosophical counseling and define its principles, we should turn to the peculiarities of the development of philosophy in the modern era and certain universal principles of philosophizing, manifested throughout history of philosophical thought.

Key words: philosophical counselling, coaching, philosophy, therapy, dialogue.

1. Introduction

In modern conditions, philosophy is primarily transformed. Even the “end of philosophy” is proclaimed within the postmodern paradigm. Obviously, this is mainly about the “end” of systemic philosophy and philosophy oriented towards the foundation of worldview and knowledge. Philosophy ceases to be a “guardian of truth and rationality” (Bronk 1998, 67). One of the manifestations of this is the anti-metaphysical attitude that we can observe from the times of positivism. The idea that only metaphysics has privileged access to a special essence of things is rejected. Language begins to play an important role, which is expressed in the designation of change in philosophy by the concept of “linguistic turn,” which, as Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines, is “[...] radical reconception of the nature of philosophy and its methods, according to which philosophy is neither an empirical science nor a supraempirical enquiry into the essential features of reality; instead, it is an a priori conceptual discipline which aims to elucidate the complex interrelationships among philosophically relevant concepts, as embodied in established linguistic usage, and by doing so dispel conceptual confusions and solve philosophical problems.” (Glock&Kalhat 2018). To this, the “communicative turn in philosophy” (J. Habermas) is added, which aims to update the tradition of classical transcendental idealism. In particular, Kant’s philosophy is transformed on the principles of intersubjectivity. As a result, there is a paradigm shift, which involves the transition from the philosophy of consciousness to the philosophy of communication. In addition, this transition is aimed at identifying the more fundamental principles of philosophizing.

To these two “turns,” we can add the third one – the “practice turn” in humanities and philosophy. On the one hand, it is defined as focusing on “everyday ways of doing things that are limited in time and space” (Vries & Leezenberg 2019, 269). On the other hand, it is associated with an attempt to give philosophy a more practical dimension. What does it mean to give philosophy a more practical dimension? This question is ambiguous, and the answer is not obvious. One way is to change the teaching of philosophy in universities. Teaching philosophy due to such a change implies that students do not receive a set of philosophical concepts and meanings, but employing philosophy, critical thinking, and the ability to systematize and analyze knowledge is developed. As a result, as Olga Gomilko notes, “philosophy becomes a practical field of knowledge that provides thinking, and, on the one hand, reliable protection against manipulation and lies of the modern world, and on the other - helps to find happiness and harmony in everyone’s life and the world” (Homilko 2011, 338).

Finally, we can mention the “public turn” in philosophy and the humanities. This “turn” is defined as a situation in philosophy and the humanities which involves an increasing demand for socio-humanitarian and philosophical knowledge. As a result, new ways of presenting and translating philosophical ideas, popularizing philosophical concepts, and applying philosophy as a way to solve social and individual problems are developed. Consequently, the understanding of philosophy changes, as well as its functions. One of the consequences of this turn is the transformation of philosophy from esoteric knowledge to more open to a wide range of stakeholders. The methods of philosophical reflection are also changing as philosophy becomes more intersubjective and interactive.

In our opinion, philosophical counselling has become popular within the context of modern tendencies and “turns” named before. As Sandu Frunză writes: “Philosophical counselling is considered more and more as a solution that can be used in our cultural space. The various types of counselling leave room, even if still modest, for this practice of dialogue and wisdom that we find in the form of ethical and deontological advice, interpersonal counselling, group counselling, personal development counselling based on philosophical principles, philosophical cafes, philosophical debates, philosophical mentoring, philosophical counselling online, in the form of philosophical interventions of critical thinking, etc.” (Frunză 2019, 74). Philosophical counseling is often defined as a philosophical movement that becomes popular and pays significant attention to the sapiential power of philosophical thinking and ideas. The other definition states that philosophical practice or counseling may be described as a cluster of methods for treating everyday problems and predicaments through philosophical means. (Amir 2004: 58). We often find that philosophical counseling pays attention to the possibility of self-examination of modern people using philosophical means. To stimulate the self-examination of some person, the philosopher becomes a counsellor who leads the process of thinking about him/herself and helps other people understand their world, worldview, system of values, and solve some existential problems. Ran Lahav describes two main goals of philosophical counseling: “[...] philosophical self-understanding or wisdom (philo-sophia = love of wisdom) as an end in itself, and overcoming personal problems – receive different emphases by different philosophical practitioners” (Lahav 1996, 259).

In our article, we intend to demonstrate that philosophical counseling arises as a result of transformations of philosophy, its acquisition of a practical dimension related to the “end of metaphysics,” the situation of “end of ‘grand narratives’” (J.-F. Lyotard), “linguistic/communicative / practice turns in philosophy,” “era of interpretation.” Thus, philosophical counseling is closely related to modern philosophical trends - existentialism, philosophy of dialogue,

communicative philosophy, hermeneutics. But, at the same time, the dimension of philosophical counseling was embedded in philosophy from the very beginning. The idea of “philosophy as a way of life” defines the essence of philosophical practice. Certain archetypal images include Socrates, who used his maieutic method to lead students to the truth (essentially advising them on how to choose the path to truth), or Plato, who traveled to the tyrants of Syracuse to “consult” how to create an ideal state. That is why our thesis is that to understand the essence of philosophical counseling and define its principles, we should turn to the peculiarities of the development of philosophy in the modern era and certain universal principles of philosophizing, manifested throughout the history of philosophical thought.

2. Communication through dialogue

The modern world demonstrates a focus on communication, which is intensely expressed in various forms and for which new technologies are used. Researchers sometimes talk about the communication revolution as communication technologies create a new reality. As Sandu Frunzã writes, “Unprecedented development of communication and its means triggers fundamental changes to the relational structure of human beings. Transformations are so deep that they affect one’s rapport to oneself, to others, and to reality. This reality also includes the virtual space that has already become a part of the relational reality of daily life” (Frunzã 2019a, 9).

Communication as an essential element of philosophy can be seen as a sign of our time and as a specific cultural universal through which philosophy arose and through which it is expressed. As a universal component of philosophy, communication is associated with a general trend in developing philosophical knowledge (especially in Western philosophy). For example, Aurel Codoban states that communication has been the only accessible reality if we consider the perspective of Western thought’s evolution. From this point of view, the “communicative turn” of the twentieth century does not seem to be something “revolutionary.” A. Codoban states: “[...] The succession of philosophical thematizations, parallel to Gorgias’s trilemma on being, knowledge, communication, brings us to the linguistic turn or the communication thematization. In the Heideggerian variant of this thematization, our very existence is communication because it is based on our authentic communication with Being” (Codoban 2021, 267).

Philosophical discourse can be represented as the search for a particular type of communication. This aspect of philosophy was especially evident in the twentieth century. For example, within phenomenology, Edmund Husserl seeks to understand the meaning of human intersubjectivity. His reflections aim to find ways to talk about

another self meaningfully. Other philosophers continue these thoughts, seeing in interpersonal communication ways to understand the Other. For example, Carl Jaspers argues about authentic existential human communication. Martin Buber focuses on a careful analysis of the starting point of any communication, which is the “I-Thou-relationship”; Otto Friedrich Bollnow develops the theory of existential encounter (Sytnychenko 1996, 6). Modern philosophers are working to restore the authenticity of human interaction, which is based on a system of values. Such attitude has personal consequences for the individual, which result from establishing a dialogue with the Other and gives the opportunity to understand themselves better and form their own authentic identity. The resumption of interaction also has social consequences associated with the resumption of experiences to realize the common good.

However, the sources of modern reflections on the proper dimension of interpersonal interaction should be sought in the fundamental principles of communication. John Durham Peters distinguishes two types of communication: dialogue and dissemination. He writes that “dialogue is only one communicative script among many. [...] Dialogue is a bad model for the variety of shrugs, grunts, and moans that people emit (among other signs and gestures) in face-to-face settings. It is an even worse normative model for the extended, even distended, kinds of talk and discourse necessary in large-scale democracy. Much of culture consists of signs in general dispersion, and felicitous communication – in the sense of creating just community between two or more creatures – depends more basically on imagination, liberty, and solidarity among the participants than on equal time in the conversation. Dialogue, to be sure, is one precious part of our tool-kit as talking animals, but it ought not to be elevated to sole or supreme status.” (Peters 2000, 34). Nevertheless, it is the dialogue in the form proposed by Socrates that demonstrates to us the type of communication that provides direct communication “from soul to soul.” This type of communication makes philosophy itself possible because, as we know, Socrates argued that philosophy needs two persons. However, there are critics of the Socrates method. For example, Jacques Rancière in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (Rancière 1991) critically evaluates the method of Socratic dialogue. Socrates is presented by the French philosopher in the role of a trainer: he skillfully directs the flow of thought of his student in the right direction; the student marvels at the results he\she has achieved and is convinced that if he\she had been left to himself and his\her mind, he\she would hardly have been able to follow this path. Such criticism of Socrates is not entirely justified. Obviously, in dialogue with his students, Socrates acts as an authority. However, his authority does not put pressure on the interlocutor. Socrates’ authority is used only so that, if necessary, the philosopher can be heard by the interlocutor, which would allow to correct the student’s thinking, motivate him to reflect and direct it according to the experience

of philosophizing the teacher. As Blanka Šulavíková notes, “From a Socratic perspective, philosophical counseling can be viewed as a conversational process guided by dialectical reasoning aimed at reflecting upon the concerns and issues that normally arise through living one’s life—as well as upon the meaningfulness of one’s life as a whole. This method involves question-and-answer style reflection, where the individual enters into dialogue with others, in a friendly and supportive way, in search of the truth, knowledge, insight, wisdom, virtue, and happiness—whatever these turn out to be” (Šulavíková 2014, 576).

According to the Socratic method, the interlocutors work together to clarify the problem. The one who knows helps to interlocutor on this dialogical path of knowledge. In psychotherapy, dialogue is used as a “Socratic dialogue” method, which involves attracting the client to cooperate and expand the scope of his\her consciousness. The Socratic Dialogue assumes that the counselor correlates inconsistent, contradictory, and unproven client judgments during therapy.

As a special type of communication expressed in dialogue, philosophy lays the preconditions for transforming experience. Dialogue not only spreads certain information between participants, but it also becomes an experience. This aspect of dialogue with the Other is clearly demonstrated by Martin Buber (Buber 1958). In his famous book *I and Thou*, he writes that human relationships are fundamental to human existence. Only when a person realizes the Other as his\her own otherness and when based on this he\she tries to comprehend the Other - only then human beings can break the vicious circle of loneliness. The essential thing in human existence is to turn to the Other and respond to the call of the Other. The meaning of human existence is revealed only when a person turns to the Other and the Other responds.

Dialogue, which becomes the basis of philosophical counseling, is a process focused on understanding and acceptance. During the philosophical counseling session, a kind of hermeneutic circle is realized (H.-G. Gadamer’s version): each participant comes from understanding to self-understanding and vice versa - from self-understanding to understanding. The dialogue is conducted in order to understand the differences in the views and perceptions of the participants in the process. By listening to each other, participants understand how everyone’s experience affects his/her beliefs. Participants can share their understanding of the situation. Dialogue provides an opportunity to form a common understanding of the situation shared by all. At the same time, intense emotions, such as anger and sadness, are acceptable when they contribute to understanding the depth of experience and beliefs. The result of the dialogue is the participants’ acceptance of each other’s experiences.

3. Self-examination as a therapy

As a particular type of communication, philosophy is expressed in dialogue and follows the psychotherapeutic aspect of philosophical counseling. However, this is one of the aspects of modern philosophy. When philosophy is losing its status as a fundamental discipline, it is becoming one of the ways of thinking about the meaning of life, which has a psychotherapeutic aspect. In other words, philosophy is becoming psychotherapy, which modern humans can use to reflect on the meaning of life or values or the meaning of events around (Hațegan 2018; Nneji 2013; Lahav&Tillmanns 1995).

Although this is another aspect of modern philosophy, the roots of this aspect can be traced back to antiquity. For example, the psychotherapeutic dimension of philosophy was very well demonstrated by Boethius in *The Consolation of Philosophy*. The philosophy here is a beautiful woman who saves Boethius from the torments of prisoners and disease. The philosopher describes this moment of therapy very figuratively: «[...] I gradually became aware looming over my head, the figure of a woman whose look filled me with awe. Her burning gaze was indescribably penetrating, unlike that of anyone I have ever met, and while her complexion was as fresh and glowing as that of a girl, I realized that she was ancient and that nobody would mistake her for a creature of our time [...]. “But this is the time for treatment,” she said, “and not mere complaining.” She looked at me with a steady gaze and asked, “Are you the same person who was nourished with my rich milk and fed on my diet as you were growing up? Did I not prepare you with such weapons as you could now use in your difficulties if you had not chosen to discard them? Do you even recognize me? Answer me! Are you silent because you are ashamed? Or are you just dumbstruck? I’d rather that it was shame, but I am afraid that you are merely and deplorably stupefied.” [...] I recovered myself enough to recognize now the face of my healer. As I gazed, her features came into clear focus and I beheld the nurse who had reared me and whose house I had visited from my earliest youth, none other than the lady Philosophy.» (Boethius 2008, 2-7).

It is not accidental to pay attention to ancient authors. Modern philosophical counseling creates synergies with ancient wisdom. Ancient wisdom is actualized and becomes an element of contemporary philosophizing. Therapeutic counseling, which aims to solve human life problems (experiencing a crisis of middle age, loss of a loved one, a disease that is especially relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic), finds in ancient philosophy ideological and ethical support. At the same time, the tendencies of modern philosophy are not ignored, and the direction of philosophy as therapy develops based on a synthesis of current philosophical and psychological concepts (Fischer 2011; Frunză 2018).

We suggest that in the days of postmodern philosophy, which is anti-metaphysical and anti-fundamentalist, philosophical counseling finds its foundation in ancient philosophy. Based on this foundation and considering the achievements of modern philosophy, which aims at tolerance, pluralism, understanding of the Other, philosophical counseling allows achieving a better understanding of people and yourself.

Philosophical counseling as a method cannot solve mental problems. Moreover, philosophy cannot replace classical psychotherapy in the case of complex psychological issues. Therefore, the axiom of the philosopher-consultant should be the rule that philosophical methods can not cure mental illness. However, certain existential situations (experiencing “borderline situations,” according to Karl Jaspers), feelings of loss of meaning in life or awareness of the absurdity of life that happen to a person in certain periods of life due to aging, the burden of responsibility for moral decisions, stress due to change of residence or works are entirely amenable to decision in the process of philosophical counseling. To solve these problems, we can use philosophical techniques to change the way of thinking, redefine concepts, design strategies, logical justification of certain actions or theses. The business environment can use philosophical counseling to design its development or rethink its position in the market.

Philosophical concepts can become the basis for psychotherapeutic approaches. For example, we can mention the *dasein*-analysis, which was based on the fundamental ontology of Martin Heidegger. Ludwig Binswanger and Medard Boss developed this direction. Both tried to adapt *Dasein*'s existential analytics to solve patients' psychological problems. The question, however, is whether the philosophical significance of ideas is lost during their application. Martin Heidegger is known to have been less sympathetic to this “transformation” of his fundamental ontology. For example, Medard Boss, in his own way, interprets the basic concept of Heidegger's philosophy – *Dasein*. According to Medard Boss, *Dasein* is how a person understands him/herself; openness to the world, understanding of being, self-knowledge; “World-coexistence-with-other-people.” However, his approach can be practical in terms of philosophical and psychological counseling. The purpose of *Dasein*-analysis is defined as ensuring and restoring the actual implementation of human freedom, which means the implementation of a set of possibilities of behavior. According to this approach, *Dasein* exists as a whole ensemble of possibilities, and only one of the possibilities can be realized. Therefore, the consultant must constantly pay attention to the ensemble of human capabilities. Thus, the person who needs the support of a counselor is faced with the question “Why not?” instead of the causal question of psychoanalysis “Why?”. The question “Why not?” determines the client during the therapeutic session to take into account the full range of opportunities and take responsibility for choosing these options. Through

thinking about the range of possibilities, choosing one of them, and taking responsibility for this choice, a person knows him/herself and establishes his/her position in the world. In addition, through self-examination, persons find meaning in their actions because responsibility gives them a moral dimension.

The task of philosophical counseling is to enable a person to rise above the limitations of everyday life. This task reaches the very essence of philosophy, the logos of which overcomes the limits of the mythological worldview. The philosopher plays an essential role of a person who is able to show a person the possibility of realization in both practical and cognitive terms. Ran Lahav writes about this aspect of philosophical counseling: "The role of philosophy in philosophical counselling is to open up the counsellee to the all encompassing horizons of meanings that constitute our reality, which is to say, to wisdom. To put it dramatically, in terms of Plato's famous cave metaphor about us people who live in a dark cave and can see only shadows, the point of philosophy in counselling should not be to help those cave-dwellers explore the shadows among which they live, but rather to help them leave the cave and climb up to the greater light of the world outside" (Lahav 2001, 10).

For the effective implementation of philosophical counseling, the philosopher must know basic philosophical concepts (both ancient and modern) be able to relate them, revealing their potential for consulting. In addition, he/she must be able to build arguments for theses and positions to have the principles of rational problem-solving. It is important to emphasize that a philosopher who consults for a certain person can not take responsibility for the client's decisions and, therefore, should not give him/her ready-made solutions. Counseling is a process of developing a follow-up scenario rather than a set of ready-made scenarios. The philosopher must motivate the creativity of thinking of the person who turned to him/her and not imposes ready-made decisions, including those related to his/her own experience. But most importantly, the philosopher him/herself must be open to new experiences and opportunities to motivate his/her clients to self-examination, which should result in solving existential, moral, and epistemological problems, as well as the development of a worldview full of meaning.

4. Philosophical counselling and coaching

Philosophical counselling is connected to coaching. Sometimes, counseling and coaching are used as synonyms to define an alternative route to conventional psychotherapy. But in other cases we can find that coaching is defined as aspect of counselling, який спрямований на збільшення можливостей людини. One of the definitions of "coaching" states: coaching is unlocking people's potential to maximize their performance (Whitmore 2009, 10).

Coaching is based on anthropological principles, according to which a person has an inner potential that can be released (if it is limited by something) or developed (if it is poorly manifested). Agnieszka Woszczyk notices that this principle is strongly connected to Plato's conception of *anamnesis* (recollection) or Aristotle's comprehension of human nature as the realization of inner potential according to perfection (the teleology development). We can also add their successors to the concept of ancient philosophers. For example, among modern philosophers, we can name Erich Fromm, whose ideas resemble the concept of Aristotle, or some psychoanalytic approaches that presuppose the idea of inner human potential and deny the pessimistic view of human nature (Woszczyk 2013, 128).

Although philosophical counseling and coaching should not be completely equated. Some studies distinguish between these two methods of philosophical practice (Woszczyk 2013). In particular, the difference is that coaching focuses on a clearly defined goal, which is the subject of individual sessions with the client. In turn, counseling can be a field of free discussion that does not have a clearly defined goal (ultimately, goal setting and understanding can be the result of counseling). It is also assumed that coaching has a clear structure, which provides specificity of the coach's actions to ensure change related to improvement. Philosophical counseling may also have a well-defined structure, but this is not a prerequisite. Counseling can take the form of thinking about specific issues related to experience or moral evaluation. Agnieszka Woszczyk also notes that philosophical coaching is characterized by the expression of reflection and deepening of self-understanding in accordance with instrumental and adaptive goals and the use of certain specific tools and techniques that help achieve these goals. Instead, philosophical counseling focuses on a person's spiritual needs, expressed in metaphysical issues (Woszczyk 2013).

Philosophical coaching demonstrates the synthesis of universal principles of philosophy, such as dialogue, education, critical thinking, ideological mentoring. But at the same time, it is based on modern trends in philosophy, particularly existentialism. For example, there is a kind of existential coaching, which is defined by Yannick Jacob as "[...] an approach that is rooted in and informed by existential philosophy, a branch of philosophy concerned with questions of existence – that is, what it means to exist, to be human and to be alive in a world with other people (Jacob 2019, 16). He states that existential coaching is a philosophical practice that is oriented to thinking, pondering, reflecting, and exploring the human condition in the context of a specific goal. Coaching helps clients identify areas of self-deception (blind spots), create more opportunities and choices, and live a more authentic life despite inevitable existential anxiety. Such coaching orientation is essential for modern people who have problems with identification (Shevchuk&Matuskevych

2017) and satisfaction with spiritual needs (Frunză 2018) in times of liquid modernity and the digital era. Existential coaching was developed in the early 2000s by such scholars as Emmy van Deurzen, Monica Hanaway, Ernesto Spinelli, Bruce Peltier, Caroline Horner, Alfried Längle, Mike van Oudtshoorn, Jamie Reed. And it uses the ideas and principles of modern philosophical conceptions such as existentialism and phenomenology and makes them the instruments for coaching practice.

5. Conclusion

A sign of modernity is also the blurring of boundaries between disciplines and creating new approaches, which are often interdisciplinary. These transformations include the emergence of more philosophical disciplines and ways to solve philosophical problems related to (self) understanding, worldview, and moral dimensions of activity. Moreover, new philosophical approaches are often combined with related disciplines – linguistics, psychology, and anthropology.

The development of philosophical counseling involves the formation of educational programs that will provide the necessary competencies. In particular, it is advisable to create interdisciplinary programs that combine philosophy with psychology. In Ukraine, such a program is implemented, for example, at the National University of Ostroh Academy. The purpose of this educational program is to prepare specialists in the field of practical philosophy who have a systematic knowledge of the theory and practice of socio-political, axiological, moral and ethical, educational, legal, economic, religious, national, geopolitical processes; able to quickly and creatively adapt to changing conditions in modern society, types, and forms of realization of the individual in the humanitarian sphere in the context of rapid development of the world community and value globalization of the world. This program provides interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary training of specialists in practical philosophy, with scientific tools for theoretical and experimental research and practical activities in the field of philosophical coaching, consulting, social field, teaching.

The profile of this program provides a synthesis of modern trends in the development of philosophical knowledge with the essence of philosophy, which lays down its universal dimensions. In particular, the educational program includes the development of ideas about the structure of philosophical knowledge, diversity, and features of philosophical disciplines; the ability to determine their role in the justification and development of thinking and knowledge of the world; basic knowledge of the main philosophical fields in terms of practical significance for the individual who lives in the modern world and overcomes its challenges; development of orientation in the main

directions and tendencies of contemporary philosophical discourse, their connections with previous intellectual history to apply this knowledge in the teaching of practical philosophy, counseling and coaching. In addition, training in the educational program of philosophical coaching and counseling involves the study of major philosophical and psychological methods and research approaches to develop students' understanding of the ethical and practical significance of philosophical knowledge. Finally, all this provides a basis for the development of philosophical counseling itself, which can not only be a tool for dialogue or psychotherapy but can also be widely used in business or politics to form better concepts and practices.

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