The Italian Approach to Philosophical Practices: A Socio-cultural Perspective

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Abstract

My thesis analyses how and why several different disciplines such as Philosophical Counselling, Philosophy for Children and for Community, Socratic Dialogue, Café Philo and Philosophy for Management, have spread in Italy in the 1990s, after being imported from the countries where they originated. These disciplines, which create a new controversial specialism, can be deployed in numerous and disparate fields, such as education, workplace, private life, and leisure. They are characterised by different methodological approaches and have multiple purposes which have been defined as educational, therapeutic, conciliatory, pragmatic, or simply critical. Despite their differences, they have been grouped in Italy under the general label of 'pratiche filosofiche' (philosophical practices).

In my thesis, I consider philosophical practices as a socio-cultural phenomenon, and as a product of a specific environment. Focusing on Philosophical counselling and Philosophy for Children, I assess the extent to which the Italian cultural, political and institutional milieu has influenced the development of a specifically Italian take on philosophical practices compared to their initial tenets. My main argument is that the introduction of these practices in Italy has represented a partially unsuccessful response to the crisis of institutional philosophy and humanistic culture that is raging not only in Italy but also across the globe. I show that the Italian institutional and cultural context has favoured the emergence of these disciplines as a product to be marketed to an audience of aspiring practitioners and potential users, which jeopardizes their innovative drive. Lastly, I acknowledge the potential of philosophical practices in the country by articulating them to the currents of 'Italian Theory', thus highlighting the political value of some original applications of these disciplines in the Italian context.

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Introduction

My thesis analyses how and why several different disciplines such as Philosophical Counselling, Philosophy for Children and for Community, Socratic Dialogue, Café Philo and Philosophy for Management, have spread in Italy in the 1990s, after being imported from the countries where they originated. These disciplines are characterised by different methodological approaches, have multiple purposes, and can be deployed in numerous and disparate fields, such as education, workplace, private life, and even leisure. Despite their differences, they have been grouped in Italy under the general label of 'pratiche filosofiche' (philosophical practices). Philosophical practices were born and developed independently in the Western world during the twentieth century, but they began to come into dialogue with each other from the 1990s onwards until they converged in an international movement that is still active today. Since the early 2000s, international associations in collaboration with each other have organized conferences and collective publications with the aim of promoting research and dissemination of these disciplines on a global scale.

The main scholarly works that already analysed the international dawn of these disciplines (e.g. Schuster 1997, Raabe 1999, Marinoff 2001), explained their main characteristics considering them as philosophical currents, and, ultimately, aimed at founding them epistemologically from a supranational perspective. In my thesis, I take a different direction. I consider philosophical practices as products of specific socio-cultural environments, following the line of research traced by Tiziano Possamai (2011), who engaged in a general philosophical critique of Western contemporary culture to explain the rise of Philosophical Counselling. My research goes beyond Possamai's in three ways. Focusing on Philosophical counselling and Philosophy for Children, I first unravel how the specific Italian socio-cultural and historical context shaped and changed these practices compared to their initial tenets. Secondly, I claim that the introduction of these practices in Italy has represented a partially unsuccessful response to the crisis of institutional philosophy and humanistic culture that is raging not only in Italy but also across the globe. I show that the Italian institutional and cultural context has favoured the emergence of these disciplines as a product to be marketed to an audience of aspiring practitioners and potential users, which

jeopardizes their innovative drive. Lastly, I acknowledge the potential of philosophical practices in the country by articulating them to the currents of 'Italian theory', thus highlighting the political value of some original applications of these disciplines in the Italian context.

Having identified the object of my research, my premises, and my main objectives, I am going to explain in greater detail what philosophical practices are, the theoretical perspective I follow to study their development in Italy, the methodology I adopt in this thesis, and the reasons why I limit the scope of my research to only two philosophical practices, namely Philosophical Counselling and Philosophy for Children. Finally, I offer an overview of the overall structure of my work, and I explain the originality of my research, its boundaries, and the potential opening of further lines of inquiry.

1. Philosophical Practices

The term 'pratiche filosofiche' (i.e. philosophical practices) has been used for the first time in 1998 by the Italian philosophical practitioner Alessandro Volpone, during the first seminar of the *Associazione Italiana Counseling Filosofico (AICF),* held in Caselette castle (Turin) in May 1998 (see Volpone 2002, p.17). In 2002, Volpone provided the first meta-level reflection on the concept of 'pratiche filosofiche' in the Italian magazine *Kykéion*. This wording defined for him 'un insieme variegato di prospettive e metodi filosofici con indirizzo pratico che trovano applicazione nelle dimensioni molteplici del mondo contemporaneo (educazione, lavoro, vita privata, tempo libero, ecc.) e più in generale nella vita di ogni giorno' (Volpone 2002, p. 18).[1]

Such attempt to unify this variety of approaches under a single label is crucial, I claim, as it attests to the need of Italian scholars to systematize the vast number of practices that suddenly entered the Italian context in the 1990s. This occurrence caused 'una confusione generale'[2] among those who were interested in the subject, making the introduction of an umbrella definition

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[1] As reported in the footnote of Volpone's article, this name was also found in 2001 on a French website. With this expression they indicated 'attività e argomenti che spaziano dal Café Philo a seminari e dibattiti pubblici sulla filosofia fino alla didattica vera e propria, relativa all'insegnamento filosofico disciplinare' (Volpone 2002, p. 18). For Volpone, philosophical school teaching should not be inserted between the philosophical practices, since it aims to regulate the transmission of the theoretical *corpus* of this subject. Therefore, it should be included in the circle of its communication and production.

[2] As declared by Volpone during an unpublished interview released to the author of this thesis in March 2017. Volpone also asserted he initially intended to copyright the expression 'philosophical practices' - which he also called 'new philosophical practices community'- with his colleague Paola Teresa Grassi. However, this intention was abandoned as the use of the notion was already widespread even beyond national borders, albeit with different meanings. Grassi was a pioneer in the field and founder of the bilingual magazine *Pratiche Filosofiche/Philosophy Practice*, though she is no longer active in this field.

necessary. According to the author, such a unifying expression was also useful to create a collaborative network and constant dialogue between the disciplines and to start a collective reflection on their contents (See Volpone 2013a).

The notion proposed by Volpone is ambiguous, since it aims to bring together in the same group different philosophical disciplines, methods and techniques which are dissimilar and subject to continuous independent development and transformation. This difficulty is made evident by the fact that, currently, there is neither a census, nor a precise and globally accepted classification of these practices. Also, categorising them under the same group, by attempting to provide a single and comprehensive definition of their practical and operational purposes, seems to be highly problematic. According to Italian philosophical practitioner Neri Pollastri, philosophical practices are a complex *corpus* with multiple purposes which are achieved by different methods. Depending on the discipline considered, those purposes can be described as 'pedagogici, terapeutici, conciliatori, pragmatici, produttivi di ben precisi risultati finali' (Pollastri 2007, p.26) or purely 'philosophical'.[3]

A tentative taxonomy of philosophical practices can indeed be based on Pollastri's purposes.

I suggest that we speak of educational and pedagogical purposes when 'philosophical practices' aim at teaching reasoning techniques, at facilitating learning processes, at helping cognitive development, at improving speaking skills in order to better discuss different points of view, or at exposing the logical fallacies in one's own arguments and in other people's arguments. These would be the case, for example, in *Philosophy for Children* and *Socratic Dialogue*. Philosophy for Children (P4C) is an international pedagogical project conceived in the early 1970s by American philosopher and pedagogist Matthew Lipman. Its main goal is to foster critical thinking in school children through the teaching of argumentative and reasoning skills whilst transforming the classroom into a small community capable of independent philosophical inquiry and research. Socratic Dialogue is a method of communal philosophical investigation elaborated by German philosopher Leonard Nelson (1882-1927). Nelson designed it as a method to the teaching of philosophy whose aim was to teach students how to 'philosophize', that is how to investigate various philosophical issues so as to reach ultimate and final 'philosophical truths'.[4]

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[3] Volpone himself acknowledges the operational differences among philosophical practices (see Volpone 2002, p. 18).
[4] Later, his friend and disciple Gustav Hackman took the method outside the educational framework and introduced important amendments. The practice was thus configured as a guided group discussion between adults aiming at exploring and reaching agreement on the most disparate issues.

If a practice intends to produce a concrete, well-defined and globally accepted result, like an agreement following a group discussion about a philosophical issue, or if it encourages discussions on shared objectives, strategies, and values in the workplace, its purposes could be described as *conciliatory* and *pragmatic*. For example, Philosophy for Management (also called Philosophy4Company or Philosophy in the Workplace) belongs to this group, as it mainly aims at resolving disputes in the workplace and at discussing company policies. Philosophical discussions in informal places also belong to this group as they aim to reconcile conflicting ideas and to reach a sufficiently shareable agreement by all on various topics. For instance, this is the case of the 'Cafe Philo', which were born in Paris in the early 1990s on the initiative of philosopher and philosophical counsellor Marc Sautet. They consist of public discussions on various topics concerning philosophy, religion, politics, that are carried out in places such as libraries or cafes. These discussions are free and open to the participation of anyone interested, without any limitation on age or education.

Those disciplines whose principal goal consists in an 'equal' dialogue between a professional philosopher and a client who aims at investigating his life experiences by 'philosophizing' together with the counsellor, have a *critical* purpose. I am referring here mainly to *Philosophische Praxis* - also called Philosophical Practice or Philosophical Counselling - which was ideated by German philosopher Gerd Achenbach in 1981.

When, on the other hand, a philosophical practice helps to resolve inner conflicts or to overcome an emotional distress combining the knowledge of the philosophical tradition with theories and techniques pertaining to psychological disciplines, we could speak of a therapeutic aim. This is the case of what I propose to term *Therapeutic Philosophical Counselling.* I define Therapeutic Philosophical Counselling the kind of philosophical counselling that makes use of psychological theories and techniques in its practice. This discipline does not deny a similarity of intents with psychological counselling and psychotherapy in general.

The attempt to distinguish the various purposes of philosophical practices is undoubtedly valuable. Nonetheless, in my view, such an attempt should not be interpreted too sharply and schematically, as some of these disciplines may have multiple purposes or share some with other similar practices. Also, the methods employed to achieve these purposes can be provisionally described as heterogeneous, since they refer, to different extents and broadly speaking, to the entire body of critical thinking techniques, which can be by and large associated with the entire Western philosophical tradition.

The semantic discussion of the notion of 'philosophical practices' is complicated not only by such heterogeneity of purposes and methods, but also because the various philosophical practices often differ in both *target* and *setting*. They may be addressed to individuals, groups of adults or children, as well as employees or managers. They may also be exercised in public settings, such as coffee shops, squares, festivals, or in private contexts, such as companies or the studio of a philosophical counsellor or even in institutions such as schools, hospitals and prisons. To further complicate the picture, philosophical practices have been conceived mostly independently by theorists trained in different countries (most but not all of them from Europe and North America). Therefore, each practice has a specific history and, sometimes, a specialized literature.

I am aware that these overall provisional definitions may seem particularly vague, but this is due to the heterogeneity of the practices and the methods themselves. The different theoretical framework, purposes, targets, and methodologies of the twos practices I decided to study will be made clear extensively throughout this thesis.

Despite the differences, according to Volpone, the label of 'philosophical practices' could still be functional to their categorization and, consequently, to the identification of this heterogeneous set of elements. All these disciplines, in fact, would share the same 'orizzonte fondativo o epistemologico' (See Volpone 2002, p. 17).

The first, and most obvious, common foundational element would be that all philosophical practices are based on an 'operational' conception of philosophy. Philosophical thought, that is, becomes a means to a specific end - be it educational, therapeutic or critical – so as to assume, as a consequence, a *practical* and *instrumental* value (see Volpone 2002, p. 18).

The operational dimension consists primarily in making users an active part of the process of 'philosophical production'. To this regard, Frega argues that what distinguishes philosophical practices from 'applied philosophy' or 'educational philosophy' is that they try to 'annullare la distinzione tra *produttore* e *fruitore* nella prassi filosofica, ovvero a mettere il fruitore al centro del processo di riflessione e farne il soggetto attivo della filosofia' (Frega 2005, pp. 14-15). In other words, each individual user involved would not be a generic, anonymous recipient of a distant philosophical speculation. On the contrary, the user would become the *centre of interest* of the philosophical inquiry, the *active* and *productive* part of philosophical thought and, at the same time, the *final product* of this process: 'La filosofia come pratica [ha] una peculiarità: il soggetto rientra non solo fra le condizioni di produzione, ma anche tra i materiali che vengono elaborati

dalla filosofia, tra i suoi oggetti e i suoi scopi. La filosofia non produce solo testi, ma anche esperienze, esistenze, soggetti' (Brigati 2005, p. 1).

According to practitioner Neri Pollastri, such an interest on individual's experiences and thoughts would be the way in which philosophical practices are inscribed in the peculiar "practical turn" of twentieth-century philosophy:

> La "svolta pratica" che la filosofia sembra aver effettuato negli ultimi decenni del Novecento e che ha condotto all'origine delle "pratiche filosofiche" consiste proprio in questo: nel tornare a occuparsi filosoficamente delle individualità, pur con tutto il bagaglio di conoscenze universali che la speculazione plurimillenaria ha lasciato in eredità all'uomo di oggi; nel porre a tema dell'esame filosofico non già soggetti universali ma soggetti particolari e concreti' (Pollastri 2007, p. 71). [5]

According to Frega, putting the focus of the philosophical enquiry on the individual user implies a reversal of perspective in relation to the general tendency that seemed to have characterized contemporary 'speculative philosophy'. Precisely, in his opinion, this reversal would call into question 'un postulato fondamentale per tutta la tradizione filosofica degli ultimi due secoli, quello che riconosceva nella ricerca il paradigma di riferimento per l'esercizio della filosofia scientifica, vista come impresa orientata alla produzione di una conoscenza universale' (Frega 2005, p. 15). For Frega, the university is structured as the prominent place dedicated to the production of philosophical knowledge, and it builds the idea of a self-regulated and elitist community on 'scientific research' (i.e. academic philosophical research) and on the interaction amongst researchers and specialised readers. Instead, thanks to the different operating mode of philosophical practices, the 'modi di esercizo del sapere filosofico' (Frega 2015, p. 15) would radically change. Notably, philosophical practices would favour 'la formazione di comunità costruite attorno all'esercizio comune del sapere filosofico' (Frega 2005, p. 20). Such new communities would extend indefinitely 'oltre l'ambito, divenuto familiare negli ultimi due secoli, dell'insegnamento universitario compendiato nel genere della lezione e della scrittura specialistica rivolta agli appartenenti ad una comunità costruita sul modello della comunità di ricerca' (Frega 2005, p.19). The changeable and indefinite set of people who, through their intellectual engagement, 'produce thought' would thus constitute a new open community of research. This would give to the philosophical exercise an 'extended' and 'popular' value (see Volpone 2002, p.18).

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[5] For scrutiny of the "practical turn" in twentieth-century Western philosophy, see Brigati, Frega et al. 2004.

Overall, despite the differences in aims, methodologies, settings, and targets, all philosophical practices share the direct involvement of individuals and their life experiences and a popular interpretation of the concept of philosophical research that extends beyond the specialist academic domain.

2. Methodology: Philosophical Practices in the Socio-cultural Context

Having stressed the problematic nature of the umbrella term 'philosophical practices', I maintain that the introduction of these disciplines in Italy has given rise to something inevitably new compared to the original layout of the various disciplines. As said, each of these disciplines have been conceived independently by theorists trained in different countries and historical periods and was originally based on theoretical assumptions that have been deeply conditioned both by the historical and cultural circumstances and by the particular philosophical background of each author. Therefore, each of them has a specific historical and cultural background.

In my opinion, their initial configurations undergo significant changes when exported to countries other than the country of origin insofar as the initial layouts have to adjust to a different historical and socio-cultural context. I suggest that we consider these practices as the outcome of certain socio-cultural environments which, once exported in Italy, gave life to a new social phenomenon, with its own characteristics, that has to be examined as a brand-new object.

Indeed, as the sociologist Dal Lago has pointed out, by the very fact of being 'practical', philosophical practices emerge immediately as a social phenomenon as they offer 'un sostegno, un tipo di condotta, una forma di vita, una professione, un lavoro, insomma una relazione sociale' (Dal Lago 2007, p. 10). Thus, investigating the original theories underlying the various philosophical practices is not adequate to understand them properly, since their theoretical contents of social disciplines cannot be completely separated from the analysis of their actual practical implementation. A social discipline comes into contact with a specific history, a set of ideas, beliefs, regulations, laws, institutions, and particular, unrepeatable economic contingencies. Hence, such a separation between theory and practice is not sufficient to grasp them, in that they can affect the context in which they are practiced and, at the same time, they can be changed by it in turn. Scholar Tiziano Possamai already highlighted that philosophical practices always emerge 'in un determinato contesto di relazioni sociali [e] la forma e il significato che assumono, in un certo senso, dipende da quel contesto' (Possamai 2011, p. 9). My thesis is configured as an original

response to this line of research, which Possamai leaves undeveloped when he engages in a general philosophical critique of western contemporary culture and philosophy.

Following the perspective I outlined, I believe that such a new phenomenon can be fully understood by focusing the analysis on five main groups of research questions:

1) Considering the practices in their initial configuration (Where and when did these practices originate? Who created them and why?);

2) Investigating the reasons behind the introduction of said practices in Italy (What made them appealing to the Italian context? What disciplinary, educational, or social gap, were they called to fill?);

3) Tracing the ways in which these practices are implemented in Italy (How are these disciplines practiced in Italy? What kind of difficulties did they find in entering Italy? Who are philosophical practitioners in Italy, what do they do, to what profession do they belong?);

4) Highlighting the effects that specific national arrangements are having on the development of these practices (What institutional regulations, laws, and contexts affect them? How do philosophical practices change when practiced in Italy? Which tenets of the original practice are retained and which ones are transformed?);

5) Analysing the most relevant theoretical perspectives of these practices in their intertwining with the Italian philosophical production (e.g. What idea of community do these practices create and how does this relate to Italian biopolitical thought?).

In my opinion, such a methodology of investigation, which is the basis of this research, could significantly contribute to enriching the understanding of philosophical practices in each country in which they are practiced. Such a perspective of analysis - and in particular points 1 to 4 - can be considered as part of cultural studies or all those multidisciplinary studies that analyse the interaction between culture, professions, economic environment, and institutions (see Zembylas 2004, Staffel 2020). Point number 5 build on the perspective of cultural and interdisciplinary studies and adds a conceptual investigation on the philosophical grounds of philosophical practices. In the next section, I will summarize the content of the chapters whilst showing how these research questions guide my work. I have not developed the five points in a schematic or explicit manner within the body of my thesis, as they need to be analysed in context. The reason

behind this choice is that I intended to make my writing as smooth and consequential as possible. Therefore, more than a rigid model, these points should be considered the guiding questions on which I based my work and as an indicative outline of my reasoning.

As I show in my thesis, Italian philosophical practitioners are generally trained in different disciplines and methods and work in different fields and settings. Nonetheless, given the extent of the phenomenon, the considerable number of philosophical practices, and their continuous emergence and mixing, I decided to circumscribe the scope of my research. Namely, I narrow my analysis down to two of the many philosophical practices: Philosophy for Children (P4C) and Philosophical Counselling (PC). These are the two leading disciplines in Italy in terms of number of schools, master's courses, specialised literature, and a specialised path to professionalisation. Therefore, the reason for such a choice lies in the greater definiteness of the two objects of study and in their rather stable rooting in the country.

3. Chapter by Chapter Synopsis

My analysis develops in three chapters.

The first chapter focuses on Philosophical Counselling (PC) and is divided into two parts. In the first part, I consider the practice in its initial configuration (point 1). First, I reconstruct the history of this discipline, arguing that the development of philosophical counselling intersects with that of other disciplines such as Philosophy 4 Children, giving way to the 'Philosophical Practice movement', a composite movement comprising the various practices mentioned above.

Secondly, I explore different interpretations of PC emphasizing the lack of consensus amongst theorists on general definitions, purposes of the sessions, role of the counsellor, and methods to be used within a counselling session. To explain the contents of this discipline I propose my own original taxonomy. Notably, I analyse the works of the most internationally acknowledged authors identifying three main orientations in PC: a *Radical* approach, that conceives PC as a non-aim-oriented, non-theoretically-determined, meta-methodological, non-hierarchical, non-therapeutic, and critical dialogical exchange between an expert in philosophy and a client; a *Therapeutic* approach, that conceives PC as a goal-oriented, multi-methodological, therapeutic dialogue between a client and counsellor trained in philosophy and psychology; an *Intermediate* approach, in which philosophical counselling is aim-oriented and shares some theoretical

assumptions and methodologies both with the radical approach and with some mental health disciplines.

In the second part of the chapter, my principal argument is that a similar heterogeneity can also be found in Italy contributing to its marginal diffusion within the country together with specific socio-cultural factors. First, I reconstruct the history of the entry of PC around the end of the Nineties thanks to some pioneering philosophers and psychologists. The diverging theoretical positions amongst them led to the birth of two different professions: the 'counseling filosofico' (i.e. philosophical counselling), mainly based on the intermediate approach, and the 'consulenza filosofica' (i.e. 'philosophical consultancy'), whose defining principles are still matter of a lively debate amongst practitioners. Secondly, I investigate the reasons that favoured the introduction of this discipline in Italy (point 2). I argue that recent University reforms and rising unemployment rates for graduates in humanistic fields in Italy, has contributed to the establishment of philosophical counselling and consultancy as professions. Namely, I maintain that these professions have been introduced as a response to such a critical context and as a rather unsuccessful attempt to offer a new career opportunity for philosophy graduates and those interested in the field of counselling. Thirdly, I trace the way in which PC is implemented in Italy (point 3). Namely, I reconstruct the process through which these new professional fields were created, highlighting the problematic aspects of such a process. To do so, I examine the training of philosophical counsellors and consultants, studying their pathways to professionalisation. I discuss the availability of MAs in relevant disciplines in Italian universities, as well as entry requirements, module offers, structure of curricula and the functioning of the main consultancy schools in the country. Lastly, I analyse the legislative provisions recognizing philosophical counselling and consultancy as 'unregulated' professions and internet dissemination.

Such an analysis allows me to individuate the effects that the overall national arrangements are having on the development of this discipline (point 4). My main claim is that the extreme variety of approaches in the various schools and in career paths compromise the establishment of the two professions, in that thus far it has led to organisational and theoretical confusion, and to widespread amateurism. Besides, I maintain that the Italian institutional and cultural environment has favoured the emergence of these disciplines as a product to be advertised to a populace of aspiring practitioners and potential users, which hinders their innovative drive.

The second chapter focuses on Philosophy for Children (P4C) and it is divided in two parts. In the first part, I present the original configuration of P4C (point 1), conceived in the early 1970s by the American philosopher and educationalist Matthew Lipman, who designed an original teaching curriculum based on the so-called method of the 'Community of Philosophical Inquiry' (CPI). I give special attention to the philosophical background informing his ideas and the socio-cultural context in which he ideated his project. Finally, I highlight some problematic aspects of the discipline.

In the second part, I first Investigate the reasons behind the introduction of this discipline (point 2) whilst contextually tracing the way in which it is implemented in the country (point 3). Namely, I argue that P4C has been presented in Italy as a response to the crisis of the teaching of philosophy in secondary school and as an alternative approach to the more traditional 'historicist' teaching method which, broadly speaking, is based on the analysis of philosophers' theories throughout the history. The argument of this chapter is that P4C is a problematic answer to such issues for two main reasons. First of all, in my analysis, I show that P4C's initial difficulty in taking root in the Italian school system was due to the well-grounded philosophical tradition on which the Italian historicist method is based, which has been the object of a lively debate in the Italian academic community throughout the whole twentieth century. As I show, this has always made the traditional historicist methods difficult to substitute with other teaching approaches, at least within the high school system. The second problematic aspect is connected to the recent reforms of the Italian educational system. On the one hand, these changes have made the Italian school favourably inclined to experimenting with new teaching methodologies, which could favour a greater spread of P4C at school but, on the other hand, they have aggravated the crisis of the Italian school system. In my analysis, I demonstrate that the ideological framework of the novelties introduced within the school system risk framing P4C into the logic of commodification of knowledge that, since the early 2000s, has started to permeate the Italian school (point 4).

The third chapter differs from the other two in the purpose of the analysis. It is in fact an entirely theoretical chapter, in which I examine the most relevant perspectives of these practices in their intertwining with Italian philosophical production, proposing my own reading (point 5). In my opinion, despite the criticalities highlighted in the previous chapters, there are applications of these disciplines that have a political value, which is given by their high performative potential. In fact, not only philosophical practices are the product of a certain socio-cultural context, but also, they can influence or even reshape such context, in that they establish social relations between

individuals and institutions. This political significance spurred me to investigate the theoretical relationship between the Italian philosophical practices and 'Italian Theory', an umbrella term that indicates those thinkers who have initiated a new reading of notions such as 'biopolitics', 'community', and 'institution' in Italy. Special attention is given to the analysis of Roberto Esposito's philosophy, a central figure within Italian Theory, who especially focuses his research on the notions mentioned, and to a recent theoretical development of P4C, i.e. Philosophy for Community (P4Co), in that it has been conceived in Italy as a communitarian practice and may present significant political applications. I examined whether P4Co can offer novel ideas for the reflection initiated by Italian theory thinkers, and particularly by Roberto Esposito, on the concepts of community and institution.

The chapter is divided in two parts: in the first one, I explain the main traits characterizing P4Co, and analyse the concepts of 'community' and 'philosophical research' that such discipline embodies, comparing some practioners' intuitions with Roberto Esposito's philosophy. In the second part, I focus on the notions of institution and instituting praxis in Esposito's thought, using such a perspective to assess if P4Co represents a vital force, capable of renovating institutions from within. The investigation of the relationship between philosophical practices and the Italian Theory is another original aspect of my thesis.

As shown, my thesis is multidisciplinary and is based on a variety of sources, since I analyse laws, regulations, economic figures, books, articles, and informal channels such as websites and blogs. Therefore, it has the advantage of offering a complex look at the context in which philosophical practices have developed and identifying the factors that most affect their development. The proposal of a new taxonomy of philosophical counselling, and the historical-analytical cut of the first two chapters, which includes the analysis and the commentary on the data collected, represent the first important points of originality of my thesis. Although some sections may appear rather technical and descriptive, they are a fundamental part of my reasoning, as they serve to justify my hypotheses and make my argument solid and consequential. Overall, such a methodology allows me to frame these disciplines not only as supranational philosophical currents but also as a national social phenomenon with its peculiar strengths, weaknesses, contradictions, and potential. A further element of originality consists in the theoretical interpretation that I advance in the third chapter, in which I relate Philosophy for Community, a discipline born in Italy from Philosophy for Children, with the contemporary Italian philosophical production, and particularly with Roberto Esposito's theories.

I have purposefully restricted my research to two philosophical practices, in order to make my study as cohesive, in-depth, and exhaustive as possible. Obviously, by foregrounding Philosophical counselling, Philosophy for Children, and its recent developments, I have left out several other very relevant philosophical practices (such as Socratic Dialogue, Café Philo, Philosophy in The Workplace). By applying my methodology only to Philosophical Counselling and Philosophy for Children, I hope with this thesis to define a multidisciplinary line of enquire that can then be extended to these other practices and potentially to novel disciplines in entirely different fields.

I do not expect my thesis to be exhaustive nor to identify all the essential points for a complete investigation of all philosophical practices in Italy. Rather, I hope that my work could encourage academic research to continue investigating the phenomenon of philosophical practices from a socio-cultural and/or anthropological point of view, as well as from a theoretical/philosophical angle.

For some viable directions for future research, I refer to the conclusions of this thesis, in which I will suggest possible themes and methodologies for continuing such a study.

I. Philosophische Praxis/ Philosophical Counselling

As explained in the introduction, philosophical practices are a heterogeneous set of disciplines, born with different purposes and in dissimilar cultural contexts during the twentieth century. My thesis is that these disciplines undergo significant changes when exported to countries other than the country of origin insofar as the initial configurations have to adapt to different historical and/or socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, I suggested that we consider these practices as socio-cultural products which, once exported to Italy, gave life to a new social phenomenon with its own characteristics.

In this chapter, I focus on *Philosophische Praxis / Philosophical Counselling* (from now on PC), a philosophical practice that arrived in Italy at the end of the Nineties. In the first part of this chapter, my main objective is to explore the main interpretations of PC found in international academic literature. In the second part of the chapter, I demonstrate that a similar multiplicity of approaches is also found in Italy and that, together with other specific socio-cultural factors, it hinders the emergence of these disciplines as well-defined professions with a recognisable and rigorous identity.

Provisionally, we could define PC as a recently born discipline in which a trained counsellor dialogues with a client, to investigate the client's 'existential questions' and concrete life-problems. The purposes and aims of the dialogue, as well as the precise role of the counsellor, his training pathway, and the methods to be used within a counselling session are still matter of lively debate within the international academic community. The lack of consensus among theorists on paradigms and definitions has been ascribed to the insecure identity that every new-born discipline experiences in its early stages (Mace 1999, Shibles 1998, Paden 1998, p. 10). Indeed, PC could be still going through what Paden has called a 'pre-paradigm phase', that is a period in which practitioners focus especially on defining the new field. Notably, in such a phase, the initiators of a new practice generally write manifestos, form new societies, as well as compare and contrast the new discipline with those that seem to be directly related to it, trying to finally reach a general agreement on each argument (see Paden 1998, p. 10). The growing number of publications, the birth of associations and the development of different practical and theoretical approaches to PC, suggest that Paden's definition is appropriate. The debate on the similarities and differences between PC and some forms of psychotherapy corroborate further his hypothesis. However, the

divergent perspectives in defining the field have been explained as well as a sign of 'healthy pluralism' (Heath 1998, p.45).

In this part, I first reconstruct the history of this discipline, so as to explain the dynamics with which this practice was born and developed in the Western world. I argue that the history of PC intersects closely with that of other philosophical practices such as Philosophy 4 Children, which will be analysed in the next chapter. As I will show, when it appeared on the international scene, PC gave way to the 'Philosophical Practice movement', a composite movement comprising the different specialties of philosophical practice.

Secondly, in order to navigate the plethora of different approaches and to illustrate the contents of this discipline, I intend to challenge the bipartition proposed by American psychologists Knapp and Tjeltveit. Namely, they used the term 'narrow-scope philosophical counselling' to refer to the practice addressing problems that are generally associated to the philosophical realm (and related, for instance, to ethics, logic or existential dilemmas), and 'broad-scope philosophical counselling' to refer to the practice investigating problems usually associated to the field of psychotherapy, such as interpersonal relationships, life crisis or even anxiety and depression (Knapp and Tjeltveit 2005, p.559). This subdivision has been proposed to make sure that PC steers away from issues that are considered to be better suited for psychotherapeutic approach. Indeed, in Knapp and Tjeltveit's opinion, such topics would represent a risky area, in that philosophical counsellors could face emotional and mental problems of clients, probably not having adequate skills to deal with them. In fact, generally philosophical counsellors are not trained in psychology, but only have an expertise in philosophy.

Despite the usefulness of this bipartition in identifying some problematic aspects of PC, I believe that its criterion is too clear-cut, risking to oversimplify a complex picture. Indeed, even 'narrow scope' philosophical counsellors addressing, for instance, 'existential dilemmas', usually investigate clients' life-experiences and, therefore, they could still have to deal with clients' emotional response. Besides, Knapp and Tjeltveit's bipartition represents exclusively an *external* perspective on the phenomenon, meaning that it divides the currents of PC according to their problematic relationship with what is *external* to them, that is, with the neighbouring disciplines (i.e. psychotherapies). This perspective fails to grasp the specificity of the two approaches and their different philosophical orientation and implications.

Thus, in this part I propose a different taxonomy. Namely, I suggest that we identify three main orientations in PC:

1) A *Radical* approach, conceiving PC as a non-therapeutic, meta-methodological, non-aim-oriented, non-theoretically-determined, non-hierarchical and critical dialogical exchange between an expert in philosophy and a client (e.g. Achenbach, Schuster, Lahav). This orientation problematizes clients' need for help, trying to empower clients' ability to manage their life independently through philosophical reflection. The radical approach thus openly challenges some psychotherapeutic paradigms and the monopoly of mental health disciplines in dealing with human suffering.

2) A *Therapeutic* one, in which the counsellor is a trained practitioner setting the goals of the counselling sessions in accordance with the clients, identifying a structured methodology to conduct the sessions (i.e. Coehn). This perspective considers PC as a form of psychotherapy and refers to psychiatrist diagnostic tools such as the DSM-5[1] to define its scope and limits, it is based on measurable criteria and requires practitioners to be trained in psychology. *Therapeutic* PC does not question the psychotherapeutic framework, it provides some schematized ideals on concepts such as 'happiness' and 'wisdom' and guide the clients in achieving them through rational dialogue.

3) An *Intermediate* approach (e.g. Raabe's) that has opened a dialogue with mental health disciplines, sharing with them some theoretical assumptions, some methodologies and the aim to expressly ameliorate clients' life. In this group I also insert perspectives that are difficult to classify (e.g. Marinoff's) in light of some ambiguous traits they present. The addition of an intermediate group serves the purpose of showing the complexity and rather contradictory nature of the general landscape of PC.

I believe this tripartition is valuable for three main reasons. First, contrary to Knapp and Tjeltveit, I prefer not to highlight the alleged difference in contents between the main approaches since, as I shall show in detail, the topics dealt with during the philosophical counselling sessions of divergent approaches often overlap. Secondly, I emphasize the difference between the declared intents and methodologies of the branches as well as the role they assign to the philosophical counsellor. This will help individuate the theoretical assumptions informing the various declensions of this practice. For these purposes, I analyse the works of internationally acknowledged authors like Gerd Achenbach (Germany), Ran Lahav (Israel-United States), Shlomit Schuster (Israel), Peter Raabe (Canada), Lou Marinoff (United States) as, in my opinion, they are representative of the three

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[1] The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders has reached his Fifth Edition (DSM-5) in 2013. The DSM-5 is a taxonomic instrument used by American Psychiatrists to diagnose mental illnesses and recommend treatments.

main currents I have identified. In particular, I investigate the way in which each author describes PC, its goals and aims, as well as the role of the counsellor and the methods used throughout the course of the counselling sessions. Besides, I outline their views on the relation (or divergence) between PC and some specific forms of psychotherapy and psychological counselling.

Such a tripartite structure will be helpful to define, in the second part on this chapter, that a similar heterogeneity is also found in the Italian context and that, together with specific socio-cultural factors, it contributes to its marginal and difficult diffusion within the country.

I.1 The History of Philosophical Counselling: A Brief Overview of a Complex Phenomenon

In this section, I reconstruct the history of the birth and spread of PC so as to explain the complex dynamics with which this practice was born and gave way to the 'Philosophical Practice movement', a composite movement comprising the different specialties of philosophical practice.

PC's official birth dates back to 1981, the year in which German philosopher Gerd B. Achenbach opened the first private studio of what he called *Philosophische Praxis* near Cologne, in Germany, and started receiving clients to discuss their personal troubles from a 'philosophical' perspective. Nonetheless, other examples of practices that have been associated to PC can be found even before that date. For instance, Marinoff notes that already in 1979, 'Paul Sharkey was appointed *Philosopher in Residence* at a county hospital, and wrote a paper calling for a renewal of philosophy as a helping profession. In 1980, Seymon Hirsh published a paper entitled *The Counseling Philosopher*' (Marinoff, 2002, p. 68). In Holland, John van Veen opened his practice as philosopher and counsellor for 'existential and psychological problems' in 1967 (see Tillmans, 1998). Broadly speaking, it has also been suggested that PC has actually a millenarian history, in that it would represent a return to the origins of western philosophy. Following this point of view, just as ancient Greek philosophers such as the Cynics, the Stoics or Socrates were mostly concerned with attaining moral virtues, so PC would mark a renewed interest in the ways to lead a meaningful and fulfilling life in everyday practice (See Achenbach 2006). Finally, considering that PC never became a codified discipline, it is difficult to point to a foundation date. However, Achenbach remains the inventor of

Philosophische Praxis as a *specific interpretation* of this discipline and, above all, the initiator of 'Philosophical Practice' as a contemporary international *movement* (see Lahav 2014)[2].

Lahav argues that 1982 is the true watershed, since it is when Achenbach officially initiated a new professional field by founding the *Gesellschaft für Philosophische Praxis* – 'Society for Philosophical Practice', the first official association for those who intended to become philosophical practitioners.[3] Indeed, according to Lahav, this event marks the beginning of the first of the three periods of the *Philosophical Practice's movement*, which he calls respectively: 1) early developments, 2) decentralisation and 3) popularisation (Lahav 2014). During the first period, after its birth in Germany, *Philosophische Praxis* continued to develop in the Netherlands, where a group of students from the University of Amsterdam launched an association of practitioners in 1988[4]. In 1994 though, Lahav himself, who had previously visited the groups in Germany and the Netherlands, organised in Vancouver the first 'International Conference on Philosophical Counseling' (also known as first 'International Conference on Philosophical Practice – ICPP) in collaboration with American philosopher Lou Marinoff.[5] The event, coordinated by the *Center for Applied Ethics* of the University of British Columbia, opened up a dialogue between practitioners coming from different countries and backgrounds (Marinoff 2002, p.70-71). As maintained by Lahav, this episode marked the beginning of the 'second period' of the movement, during which English became the international language of the movement and 'new groups developed their own ideas on how to practice philosophy quite independently of one another' (Lahav 2014).

I believe that Lahav's account on the 'second period' is too simplistic and should be at least integrated with other considerations, instead of adopted acritically, for two reasons.

First, after the first ICPP, disciplines having an autonomous and sometimes long history and their own specific contents, such as Philosophy 4 Children and Socratic Dialogue, began to slowly merge into the movement. Indeed, whilst the content of the first International Conference was particularly focused on problems related to PC, the successive gatherings, held more or less every

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[2] Here I refer to Lahav's article on his website. See Lahav 2014, URL: https://philopractice.org/web/history-ran-lahav Last Access: 09/02/19.

[3] Later, the society has been renamed IGPP (Internationale Gesellschaft für Philosophische Praxis, i.e. 'International Society for Philosophical Practice'). Nowadays the IGGP is a point of reference both for group counselling and for individuals counselling. In 1987, the association started publishing a journal, *Agora*, which is now called *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Praxis*, 'Journal of Philosophical Practice'. In 2005, Gerd B. Achenbach also founded a regional Society for Philosophical Practice in Bergisch-Gladbach (GPP), that has become a member of the IGPP.

[4] 'Its three founders were Ad Hoogendijk, Ida Jongsma, and Dries Boele (the first two have left the field, and only the third still practices philosophical practice)', (Lahav 2014).

[5] Lou Marinoff had opened his own practice in the same period, which confirms the general tendency. In 1998 he founded The American Philosophical Practitioners Association (APPA) in New York City.

two years, gradually widened the scope of the debate.[6] The choice not to make explicit the emergence of this plurality of disciplines within the movement risks to endorse an overlap of terms and concepts that is still prominent within this field. In fact, it is not rare to find ambiguous interchangeable terms in the literature of PC, so that *Philosophische Praxis* - as a specific discipline designed by Achenbach - has often been translated into English with the terms 'Philosophical Practice' and 'Philosophical Counselling'. The wording 'Philosophical Counselling', semantically connected Philosophische Praxis and psychological counselling, favouring the rising of the many ambiguities and difficulties in defining this discipline. The very fact that the first 'International Conference on Philosophical Counselling' is also known as first 'International Conference on Philosophical Practice' confirms this overlap and the problematic nature of that event itself.[7] In addition, as shown, the wording 'Philosophical Practice' has been also used to indicate both the *movement* and the compound of various disciplines forming the *movement*, including P4C and Socratic Dialogue. This is almost a synecdoche, in that a term referring to a part (the specific discipline of *Philosophische Praxis* translated as 'Philosophical Practice') refers often to the whole (the movement and the totality of the practices) and *vice versa*. Finally, since Achenbach is the initiator of the movement, as well as the inventor of *Philosophische Praxis*, his name is inextricably linked to both phenomena, which most likely contributed to the overlapping.

Therefore, I suggest that, at this stage, we at least clarify the terms to be used. To avoid confusion, I use the wording 'Philosophische Praxis' to refer to Achenbach's specific interpretation of PC, the wording 'Philosophical Practice' to refer to the *movement* and the wording 'Philosophical Practic*es*' in the plural, as it is used in Italy, to refer to the set of disciplines belonging to the movement. Therefore, the second period described by Lahav could be regarded as the period in which different 'Philosophical Practices' started to slowly merge into the 'Philosophical Practice movement', which had started thanks to Gerd Achenbach, the creator of *Philosophische Praxis* (also known as Philosophical Practice or, much more improperly, as Philosophical Counselling).

The second reason for which Lahav's account of the 'second period' is problematic, is that it does not take into account the contemporary development of the 'American Society for Philosophy,

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[6] Whereas for instance the first conference focused on PC, the 15th ICPP, held in 2018, addressed 'the most diverse fields of application such as philosophical counseling, philosophy for children and the young, philosophical workshops applied in various areas, philosophical cafes, philosophy for organizations, etc.' (see URL: http://www.cecapfi.com/icpp/CALL%20FOR%20PAPERS%2015%20ICPP%201.pdf , Last Access: 09/02/19).

[7] See for example: URL: http://www.peterraabe.ca/history.html Last Access 9/02/19, or the 'Call for Papers for The First International Conference on Philosophical Counseling' published by the American Philosophical Association (see APA 1994).

Counseling, and Psychotherapy' (ASPCP). Indeed, two years before the first ICPP, philosophers Elliot D. Cohen, Paul Sharkey, and Thomas Magnell founded the ASPCP, which is the oldest association of PC in the Unites States[8]. This event, which has not been emphasized in Lahav's account, is crucial when trying to distinguish the different approaches in PC in that, as we shall see, Cohen's methodology is strictly structured, connects PC with psychotherapy and determines it openly as a helping profession.

That said, following Lahav's account, the third period of *popularisation* started in the early 2000s with the publishing of several books on philosophical practices, including the best-seller[9] 'Plato, Not Prozac' by Marinoff, which focused in particular on PC for individuals and contributed to drawing attention (and criticisms) to the field, at the time still largely unknown to the general public. In that period, the *movement* continued to spread but every new group tended to investigate quite independently on how to empower and conceive the practice of philosophy: 'Interestingly, no central authority figure appeared on the scene—like Freud in psychology—to dictate what philosophical practice is all about. As a result, different groups developed their own specific ways of working and thinking' (Lahav 2014). Today, there are philosophical counsellors, groups and associations all around Europe, as well as in Northern and Latin America and East Asia. Yet, according to Lahav 'more than three decades after our movement began, our numbers are still very small, our clientele is even smaller, and there is not much public awareness of our existence' (Lahav 2014).

Arguably, the scarce public awareness about PC and the Philosophical Practice movement, could be related to the general confusion/'healthy pluralism' characterizing this new-born discipline and to the difficulty in classifying the plurality of disciplines forming the movement.

Having illustrated some questions regarding the birth of PC and its connection with the development of the Philosophical Practice movement, I now proceed with the delineation of the different approaches to PC. This serves to demonstrate the great theoretical heterogeneity of PC, as there is no single commonly shared definition of this discipline.

In the part dedicated to PC in Italy, I will show that such a heterogeneity is also found in the Italian context and that, together with some peculiar socio-cultural factors, it contributes to its marginality within the country. In the following section, I focus on the Radical approach to PC,

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[8] Later the society was renamed 'National Philosophical Counseling Association (NPCA)'.
[9] Marinoff's book is considered a best-seller and has been translated in 25 different languages all over the world, as reported on the philosopher's personal website; see URL: https://www.loumarinoff.com/plato-prozac-translations/, Last access: 13/08/20.

which includes Achenbach's *Philosophische Praxis*, Schuster's philosophical psychoanalysis and Lahav's latest contribution to the field.

I.2 The *Radical* Approach: Achenbach, Lahav, Schuster

In this section, I outline the Radical Approach to PC. Notably, I focus on Achenbach's *Philosophische Praxis*, Schuster's philosophical psychoanalysis and Lahav's latest contribution to the field.

As I will show in this section, the Radical approach defines PC as a non-therapeutic, meta-methodological, non-aim-oriented, non-theoretically-determined, non-hierarchical and critical dialogical exchange between an expert in philosophy and a client. Practitioners embracing this perspective consider PC as a way to rethink the role of the philosopher within contemporary society and as a challenge to the monopoly of mental health disciplines in dealing with human suffering. Notably, they believe that most human problems originate from 'philosophical' issues, such as the meaning of life, the value of love, ethics, engagement etc., and should therefore be addressed and explored from a 'philosophical' perspective. They therefore question the abuse of medical terms in current general narrative concerning human problems and the consequent 'psychopatologization' (Schuster 1999a, p.8) of everyday life.

As I will show in the part on PC in Italy, this approach, and in particular Achenbach's theories, had great success in the country, which is why it is important to understand its theoretical foundations.

The first author I am going to consider is German philosopher Gerd Achenbach, for his indisputable prominence in this field. In his first works, Achenbach referred to the counselling given to individuals,[10] describing it as a 'free' and 'empathetic' dialogue between a professional philosopher and a 'visitor' or 'guest'[11] who aimed at investigating his life by philosophizing together with the counsellor. He named it 'Philosophische Praxis', i.e. 'Philosophical practice' since it

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[10] Philosophische Praxis is currently addressed to individuals, groups or institutions, as stated in the programmatic manifesto of the IGPP: 'Counseling (of individuals and institutions) and education (of the general public) are the two priority areas for practitioners in the understanding of philosophical practice in the IGPP' See URL: https://www.igpp.org/english/ Last Access: 24/06/19.

[11] Achenbach uses the terms 'besucher' and 'gast' which mean exactly 'visitor' or 'guest' and referred to the counselling given both to individuals or organisations.

represented 'Die philosophische Lebensberatung in der Praxis des Philosophen', that is 'The philosophical life-counselling in the practice of the Philosopher' (Achenbach 2009, p. 19)[12]. As highlighted by Italian philosophical counsellor Neri Pollastri, the German term 'praxis' refers, in the spoken language, to the 'professional firm', notably the physician's firm (See Pollastri 2004, p. XIX). Hence, Achenbach's first intention was to identify the philosophical practitioner as a 'true' professional receiving a fee to philosophize with his clients in his studio. Nevertheless, the term *praxis* has given rise to further reflections that may contribute as well to the understanding of the discipline. The term was used in ancient Greek philosophy with the meaning of 'action, act, practice or experience' (Schuster 1999a, p.7). In connection with its Greek philosophical roots, Achenbach's *Philosophische Praxis* (from now on, Ppx) has been interestingly described in particular as a form of Aristotelian *praxis* (Weiss 2018). According to Aristotle, human activities can be categorised into *theoria*, that is thinking structurally to reach the truth, *poiesis*, that is *making*, *producing* something, and *praxis*, that is acting according to reflection and thought (see Aristotle, Met: 1064a). Accordingly, Achenbach's dialogical practice would be a form of Aristotelian 'praxis' in that it is a type of action (or 'inter-action', as defined by Achenbach), which is 'based on thoughtful and reflected doing (i.e. reflected speaking and thoughtful listening)' (Weiss, 2018, p.7). Besides, in Aristotle's description, 'praxis' differs from 'poiesis' in that, 'the latter has an aim beyond the activity (e.g. build a house), the former has its aim in itself (e.g. dwell, go for a walk, philosophize)' (Staude 2015, p.42 f). Achenbach's Ppx does not have a specific and declared aim but its only goal is the very act of philosophising and, therefore, it can legitimately be conceived as form of Aristotelian *praxis*. Indeed, 'praxis' in Ppx is represented by the interchange of ideas between the two partners of the dialogue. More precisely, Ppx aims at establishing an *equal* exchange between the philosopher and his guest. This means that the guest has to consider himself as a philosopher criticising his own 'philosophy' (i.e. beliefs, convictions, interpretations) by investigating – together *with* the counsellor – questions such as: 'What do I know? What do I do? What do I hope? Who am I?' (Achenbach 2009, p. 45). Recalling Popper's idea according to which we all have an implicit 'philosophy' (see Popper 2012, p. 179), Achenbach argues that embracing it, by itself, does not imply any access to an alleged superior truth, for a 'low-quality' philosophy can make mistakes and even cause catastrophic damages. The consequence is that it seems necessary 'to try to improve our philosophy with

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[12] In this section, I will refer to a recent Italian translation (See Achenbach 2009) of some of Achenbach's German writings dating back to the 1980s that are not available in English yet. The English translations of Achenbach's quotations in this chapter are mine.

criticism' (Achenbach 2009, p. 21). Criticizing one's own philosophy would entail untangling the thinking process and enlarging the scope of one's judgments: '[In stranded thought or feeling] we must participate and think together, think further, untangle analytically, unite synthetically, marvel and provoke, shift attention to other judgments and so on' (Achenbach 2009, p. 29). Achenbach calls this process 'second thinking' that means *thinking-together* and *thinking-again*.

A 'didactic intent' may be spotted in this analytic effort. Yet, in Ppx the non-directive role of the counsellor, who has an expertise but at the same time, learns *from* the client and philosophises *with* the client, is emphasised. I would then argue that Achenabach's Ppx has an *implicit bi-directional educational intent* and an *explicit communal research intent*, in that there isn't a vertical teaching attitude but rather a shared, horizontal willing to research and critique. Arguably, it could be defined as a willingness for a *radical* philosophical critique, since Ppx *problematises* its own status, by interrogating the need itself for counselling and help: 'Life-counselling is philosophical to the extent that it does not give advice but problematises the need to seek advice; to the extent that [...] it does not put itself at the service of the desire that is at the origin of the visit but confront itself with it in a transversal way' (Achenbach 2009, p. 96). To this regard, in one of his first papers on Ppx, Achenbach maintained that Ppx 'is an alternative to psychotherapies' (Achenbach 2009, p.19). With this, he recognized the similarity of intents and problems motivating both clients of Ppx and of psychotherapies to seek support. At the same time though, he intended to highlight the divergence in approach between psychotherapies and *Philosophische Praxis*. In a dialogue with A.K.D. Lorenzen, 'The philosopher as a counsellor', Achenbach argues that pastoral service first, and psychology then, tried to replace philosophy in the task of counselling people, incurring in the same impasse: both ended up offering generic answers to particular problems, whilst resting on general theories. Notably, the main purpose of both appeared to be to 'save' or 'heal' the problems of people whilst determining the *quid* of the problem itself through definitions and standardized solutions. Rather provocatively, Achenbach suggests: 'The standards and the therapeutic concepts produce its request; those who help judge the help you need; the exploration of problems constitutes its own preparation' (Achenbach 2009, p.25). For Achenbach, psychotherapists' submission to their theoretical frameworks, makes those who rely on psychotherapies dissatisfied. In this dynamic they would perceive a fragility and at the same time a 'violence' from which to look (Achenbach 2009, p. 25). Besides, for Achenbach, the psychotherapeutic setting establishes a hierarchical relationship of power. In the psychotherapeutic relationship, in fact, there would be a 'healer' and a 'patient', whose 'defective' status is defined *a priori* by his role within the communication. This type of

communication would be unidirectional and 'distorted' (Achenbach 2009, p. 26) and inevitably configure the psychotherapeutic relationship as a medical service, in which there are 'symptoms', and 'disabilities' to 'treat' (see Achenbach 2009, pp. 74-76).

Achenbach seems particularly suspicious of psychotherapies making the investigation of unconscious motives the point on which to focus attention. He refers to 'psychotherapies', and in particular to Freudian psychoanalysis, as practices looking for a 'second discourse' hidden behind the conscious words of the patient. In his opinion though, this process often risks to relegate the client to a state of impotence:

> Often the concluded therapeutic endeavors had the effect of [making the patients] feel "devitalized". This result should not come as a surprise, if we think that the specialty of psychology is to discover a second discourse, behind or under what is exposed, with the help of which one is able to explain the first or […] to weaken it (Achenbach 2009, p. 30)

In order to solve these impasses, Achenbach configured Ppx as a *'critique of auxiliary reason'*, with the consequence that he does not consider it as a helping profession. Within Ppx, the philosophical counsellor does not offer any 'help' to his clients but, on the contrary, openly admits that he does not know what it really means to help someone: 'Only a dull conscience knows what help is, only militant stupidity knows when a man is helped. But philosophy questions what others make obvious. […] Philosophy - *radical not only as a theory, but also as a practice* - should not be afraid to reflect deeply on this question; in the individual case, could 'not helping' be of help?' (Achenbach 2009, p. 98). Similarly, a radical approach to PC implies for Achenbach that there is no general theory to which to cling, nor a univocal method that guarantees the resolution of problems. The philosophical counsellor should in fact remember a single basic notion: 'Philosophy does not work with methods, but on methods' (Achenbach 2009, p. 21). This means that it does not follow standardised procedures, but de-construct them, for 'the obedience to methods is proper to science, not to philosophy' (Ibidem). Similarly, Ppx is not based on any specific theory, that is to say 'it is not metatheoretically controlled, i.e. it is not first conceived and then reflected, but it is a *practicing metatheory*, it is constructed only as a reflective and practical process' (Achenbach 2009, p. 95). For this reason, Achenbach often emphasizes the 'freedom' inherent to this practice: neither the counsellor or the counselee should be directed, informed, or limited by any preconceived theoretical framework regarding any of the issues dealt with during the sessions.

The radicality of Ppx can also be spotted in the effort to drastically reconsider the figure of the philosopher. Indeed, as maintained by Achenbach, the 'counselling philosopher' would have to 'justify his thoughts with his entire existence' (Achenbach 2009, p. 32),[13] meaning that he must have 'lived' the philosophical questions he discusses and admit clearly their persistent problematic nature (see Achenbach 2009, p. 33). Ppx itself becomes a way to investigate the role of the philosopher as the agent of a praxis, for it is a factual response to the question: 'who is the philosopher?', in that, whilst philosophizing with his guest, the philosopher openly ponders and enact his own role. According to Achenbach, this is a primary question that philosophers need to ask themselves, for it is preliminary to the highly debated issue of 'what is philosophy?' (Achenbach 2009, p. 37) and, at the same time, it is configured as an indirect answer to it. As shown in fact, considering a philosopher as a practitioner entails conceiving philosophy itself more as a practice rather than, for instance, as a mere discipline formed by an ensemble of theories conceived by thinkers during the eras, or as an elitist discipline confined within academies and accessible only to intellectuals. For this reason, Achenbach states: 'The concrete image of philosophy is the philosopher, and the philosopher, as philosophy institutionalised in one particular form, is the philosophical practice' (Achenbach 2009, p. 37). The philosopher, as a practitioner, is one with what he does and one of his defining activities, according to Achenbach, is that of counselling.

Ran Lahav's approach to PC can similarly be considered 'radical', since it tries to focus on constitutional problems concerning the discipline, namely: what are the core aspects characterising this practice? Or, in Lahav's words, 'what is *philosophical* in philosophical counselling?' (See Lahav 1996) and, in reverse, what *is not* fundamental in PC*?*

First of all, for Lahav, in the literature on PC there are recurring issues that are ill-posed or do not help understand what it specifically consists of. For instance, the dilemma of whether or not to adopt specific methods within a PC's session would not be decisive, for the absence - as well as the presence - of methods is not what makes a discussion more or less philosophical. Indeed, he believes that philosophical counsellors could undoubtedly rely on methods that help the conversation flow, as long as they do not impose them on the conversation in a rigid and artificial way. Lahav argues that PC should not limit itself to help the client freely express his thoughts, nor it

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[13] Ppx could be described as an Aristotelian praxis also because the philosopher's thoughts should give birth in his own life to actions, becoming therefore themselves a praxis, that is a customary practice, a 'way of life'. in Aristotle's ethical writings indeed, praxis is described as a morally qualified action, as long as it is strictly connected to the agent's intentions (see Belfiore 1984, p. 111). Thus, the philosophical practitioner, identifying himself with his thoughts and his actions, is the moral agent of a praxis, as described by Aristotle.

should aim at merely improve critical thinking, for these attitudes are a necessary condition to conduct any kind of intellectual research and can be easily fostered even in most psychotherapies. Instead, as Lahav argues in one of his first writings on this subject, PC should investigate into the client's 'worldview', so as to shed light on his 'lived understanding', that is the assumptions and conceptions structuring and shaping the ideas the client has on life's issues and on specific circumstances. As a result, client would then reach a 'deeper form of wisdom' (Lahav, 1996). Yet, in order to differentiate itself from any other practice of self-analysis, Lahav has recently maintained that PC should offer something even more specific. Notably, PC should discuss ideas concerning the general meaning of human existence. Although the sessions need to start from the concrete case, that is from the specific situation of the client, the counsellor should then encourage his guest to analyse his specific problem as an *exemplum* of the 'human condition': 'What happens if I discuss with my counselee only her personal love story, and not what love means in general? Or, only her specific anxiety, but not the place of anxiety in the human condition? Well, my counselling may be wonderful, but it is not "philosophical." And if I insist on calling it "philosophy" then I am misleading people' (Lahav 2015a). Hence, Lahav suggests that counsellors and guests are inspired by the work of the great philosophers who have always reflected on the basic 'existential questions', not being content to live life in a 'superficial way'. This does not mean *applying* the ideas of other philosophers as a response to a specific issue, but use their reflections as a point of depart, as a *stimulus* to push the reasoning further and help to philosophise. Although in the history of philosophy there have been authors such as Kant or Hegel, known for having devised complex philosophical systems on human knowledge, for Lahav, philosophizing does not coincide inevitably with the edification of rigid patterns and theories, but it implies constructing *network of ideas* in an open and creative way: 'Some philosophers – think of Bergson, Buber, or Nietzsche – do not build rigid theoretical structures. Rather, they "weave" or "compose" ways of understanding. And what they compose is not exactly "theories," but more generally "networks of ideas"(Lahav 2015b). Through new connections of ideas, Lahav's PC aims at achieving its final purpose: transforming what is 'superficial, narrow, automatic into something deep, full, free, large' (Lahav 2015b).[14] Therefore, although Lahav shares with Achenbach the idea that PC does not have preconceived theories on what 'help' actually is, in his approach a rather *explicit transformative intent* is clearly visible.

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[14] Recently Lahav has also promoted a new format of philosophical practice, which is not the classic individual counselling and does not resemble to codified group sessions such as Socratic Dialogue or P4C. He named it *Philosophical companionship.*

Shlomit Schuster's[15] philosophical practice can be equally inserted into the 'Radical Approach to PC' section because of her attempt to reconsider the concept of counselling itself by questioning the dominant 'therapeutic culture'. In her opinion, currently there is an abuse of medical terms to describe almost all human afflictions, which cause a 'psychopathologization' (Schuster 1999a, p. 8) of almost every behaviour and feeling. In her opinion, since 'Omen est Nomen', people who are diagnosed with a mental illness tend to identify completely with their illness, with the consequence that, often they 'remain hospitalized or in treatment for the rest of their lives' (Schuster 1999a, p. 8). According to her, the fundamental task of PC would be to counteract this trend by denying a clinical approach and a medical terminology to describe problem common to all people. Like Achenbach, Schuster considers PC as an 'alternative' to psychological counselling and treatment. She defines her approach to PC as 'trans-therapeutic'[16], as it consists of 'activities that are not therapies, yet can nevertheless induce well-being' (Schuster 1999a, p.8). She argues that the noun 'therapy' is often confused with the adjective 'therapeutic'. Indeed, she stresses that a 'therapy' is something specific and delimited, consisting in 'a scientifically discovered or designed method of curing', whilst a therapeutic effect can be obtained thanks to disparate life experiences and 'occur spontaneously to induce well-being' (Schuster 1999a, p. 19). Although she does not deny the possibility of collaboration between physicians, psychologists and philosophical counsellors (Schuster 1999a, p.13), Schuster warns against the attempts of monopolization of the new discipline by mental health specialists (Schuster 1999a, p.6). According to Schuster, these specialists, through legislation, state certifications and their constant supervision, would risk, especially in the United States, to incorporate PC in the system from which this practice tries to take distance (Schuster 1999a, p.6).

Despite the need to keep the two fields apart, Schuster identifies some fundamental features in PC that are also common to most psychotherapies. These elements are: 'personal relationship of warmth and trust, reassurance and support, desensitization by sharing the problem or question,

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[15] Schuster (Suriname 1951 - Israel 2016) was the first philosophical counsellor to open a private study in the Middle East in 1989 and to launch a First-Aid telephone line, called 'Philoso-phone', for people needing an immediate help for 'ethical dilemmas and existential problems. As a philosophical counsellor, she used to receive her clients 'in the office, salon, clinic or café' (Schuster 1999a, p. 122), and other public spaces. She would ask for flexible fees, depending on the financial possibilities of the clients and, sometimes, she would offer free sessions for those who were not able to pay (Schuster 1999a, p.122).

[16] On the concept of 'trans-therapeutic' and the various philosophical currents that, according to Schuster, have had in the course of history 'trans-therapeutic' contents, see chapter 3, Philosophical Care, in Schuster 1999a. In her reconstruction, Schuster analyses the thought of ancient Greeks like the Sophist Antiphon, Plato, as well as the religious philosophies of Augustine, Philo of Alexandria or Maimonides, up to mention contemporary philosophers such as Martin Heidegger.

attainment of understanding and insight, and reinforcement of adaptive responses' (Schuster 1999, p. 16). However, in her view, these similarities are not due to an overlap in the contents and scope of the two fields. Schuster holds that such relational and empathic elements should be applied in all professions (Schuster 1999a, p. 16). Besides, she stresses that such a practice can be described as 'a philosophical way of "helping" or "caring" for people' (Schuster 1999a, p. 10). This implies that PC should not be limited or informed by the concepts of 'development', 'growth', 'recovery' or 'cure' (Schuster 1999a, p. 11) which, in her view, are paradigmatic notions within most psychotherapies. In Schuster's opinion, PC can even help people who generally turn to physicians or therapists for psycho-physical disorders, such as insomnia (Schuster 1999a, p.13), because such disorders would often be caused by identifiable 'ethical conflicts' which could be 'philosophically' addressed. In any case though, PC would not be advisable for people who are unable to sustain dialogue, like those afflicted with 'severe functional cognitive defects' or 'communicative disorders' (Schuster 1999a, p. 15).

For Schuster, the relationship established between counsellors and clients is a fundamental element in PC. Such a relationship should take the form of an 'intellectual love and friendship' (Schuster 1999a, p. 93) which should not to be understood as a sentiment, but as a 'philosophical idea', a *praxis*, or a 'method' (Schuster 1999a, p. 93). Schuster refers to Aristotelian ethics, according to which friendship was the optimal code of conduct within the city-state: 'The hierarchical model of friendship – leading up from friendship with the aim of mutual advantage to friendship for the sake of pleasure and virtue - would eventually bring about an intellectual community of friends, in which people share activities, discussions and thought '(Schuster 1999a, p. 94).

To explain her idea of an optimal relationship between philosophical counsellors and clients, Schuster also refers to some aspects of Martin Buber's thinking. In particular, she believes that this relationship should be configured as the 'I-Thou' encounter theorized by Buber. For Buber, the 'I-Thou' encounter differs from the 'I-it' experience, in which the individual experiences the world as an inanimate thing to be used or controlled by knowledge. Nonetheless, every 'I-It' experience has the potential to become and 'I-Thou' encounter (see Buber 1970). According to Schuster's reading, in Buber, the term 'Thou' indicates a supportive spiritual presence which is comforting for the person (the 'I'). This presence can be represented by God, the universe, nature or even art (see Schuster 2004a, p. 134). When an 'I' enters into relationship with another human being recognizing it as a 'Thou', it feels the spiritual connection with the other and the absence of discrete bounds.

According to Schuster, when transferring this notion in PC, the 'I-Thou' connection can be obtained through the 'genuineness' of the encounter between counsellors and clients (Schuster 1999b).

Schuster indicates seven features, derived from Buber's 'I-Thou' notion, that should characterize the meeting between counsellors and clients:

> '1) The I-Thou involves a person's whole being (i.e. no divided mind); 2) The relationship is exclusive, in that I am grasped by the encounter 3) There is a direct relationship; I do not pretend or try to impress 4) The relationship is effortless not an act of will: "The Thou meets me through grace; it is not found by seeking" 5) The relationship is in the present. A present relationship is not a fictional relationship, as the transference relationship in psychodynamically-oriented therapies 6) the relationship takes place between people, and is an organic process - 'the whole is more than the sum of its parts' 7) the relationship is reciprocal: "As I become I, I say Thou '(Schuster 1999a, pp. 100 -101).

Lastly, Schuster claims to integrate these ideas with the approach of Chad Varah, the founder of the British Samaritans. For Schuster, the helpline created by the Samaritans for suicide prevention had a friendly approach which deterred people from suicide. The friendly approach was even more important than the advice offered (Schuster 1999a, p. 93).

For some, such as Cirri (Cirri 2006, p. VIII), Schuster had an 'Achenbachian' approach to PC, due to a substantial affinity between her conception of this practice and Achenbach's. This proximity is not affected by the original elements of her thought which, on the whole, confirms Schuster's concordance with the original notion of Ppx.

Schuster acknowledges a closeness with Achenbach, distancing herself from other approaches that would misunderstand the real nature of Ppx. Notably, Schuster believes that many interpretations of PC are only 'ghosts' of Achenbach's original idea (Schuster 2006, p. XVII), insofar as they insist on building theories and methods, neglecting the concept of 'free' encounter with the interlocutor, which would be the true linchpin of Ppx. Like Achenbach, she believes that PC is 'ein freies Gesprach', a 'free dialogue' that can embrace all philosophical schools, without adopting the univocal point of view of a school or a method (Schuster 2006, p. XVII). Schuster defines such an attitude as 'pragmatic' and 'eclectic' (Schuster 1999a, p. 17) for it emphasizes that PC should not be limited to embracing certain philosophical theories, but should draw on the entire history of philosophical ideas to stimulate dialogue and deepen the understanding of a question (Schuster 1999a, p. 108). For Schuster, philosophical counsellors should not convince clients of the correctness of their opinions, but must dialogue with clients in an equal relationship, being prepared to accept a critique or a rational assent to their ideas (Schuster 1999a, p. 99). Notably, they should maintain

a 'neutral' and 'open' attitude towards clients' experiences and respect the way in which they see 'reality' and 'truth' (Schuster 1999a, pp. 86-87)[17]. Through their wide philosophical knowledge, counsellors should help clients to investigate the way philosophers and philosophical schools have analysed similar experiences, so as to look for affinities and differences between philosophers' attitude and clients' response to a specific situation. To this end, Schuster often recommends philosophical readings so as to lead clients to deepen and broaden their understanding of a matter. In accordance with Achenbach, Schuster believes that PC is simply an invitation to 'philosophize' (Schuster 1999a, p. 23), meaning that its only goal is in itself and not beyond the very act of reasoning in a dialogical manner. For Schuster, 'philosophizing' would simply respond to the specifically human need for understanding. This need would emerge from the very history of humanity and of the philosophical discipline, which has always been presented, especially in ancient times, as an 'intellectual search for wisdom and knowledge' (Schuster 1999a, p. 29). The ultimate purpose of PC would be to provide a place in which to 'examine the self, life and the world' to restore 'a childlike wonder to our existence' (Schuster 1999a, p.5), so as to 'unite philosophical thought with the activities of life' (Schuster 1999a, p.6).

Schuster defines philosophical practice with one or two clients as 'philosophical counselling', 'philosophical consultation', 'philosophical psychoanalysis', 'philosophical practice' or 'philosophy practice' (Schuster 1999a, p.3). She uses these terms interchangeably because she believes that they do not should be considered as 'proper nouns to be coined, receive a trademark, or obtain title protection' (Schuster 1999a, p.3). Despite this plurality of definitions, her approach, as she herself admits, is configured primarily as a 'philosophical psychoanalysis' due to the issues her PC investigation primary focuses on. Namely, she believes that self-narration and intellectual re-examination of one's life and experiences could be the optimal way to interpret PC. This orientation of psychoanalysis would have in common with the classical Freudian psychoanalysis only the interest in the biographical element of clients' narration: 'People often feel the need to relate their present problems to their past, but not necessarily through to Freudian or other clinical developmental theory' (Schuster 2003, p.57).

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[17] This approach has led Schuster to handle some cases in a way that could be contested by many psychiatrists. For example, Schuster said she had received a client who had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and had dealt with her system of 'reality' and 'truth' without sticking to medical models. In particular, the client claimed to hear voices that disturbed her. Schuster explains that she helped the client deal with these voices in a rational way, that is, accepting her story as real and analyzing the demands of the voices and their applicability from an ethical point of view. Schuster also showed the client studies demonstrating that some individuals were able to manage auditory hallucinations without the need for clinical interventions. See Schuster 1999a, pp. 87 -88.

Schuster suggests that philosophical counsellors encourage clients to construct with them a 'philosophical narrative' of their lives, following the example of philosophers' autobiographical writings. In their autobiographies, philosophers such as Augustine, Rousseau, Montaigne or Jean-Paul Sartre[18] have investigated their relationship with faith, the society they lived in and the ideologies of their time, by narrating their conscious intellectual and philosophical development. In Schuster's view, these philosophers have searched for a sense of unity within their lives with a philosophical self-questioning, understanding the way in which they have come to develop an ethical or aesthetical conception of life through an intellectual reconsideration of their past end their encounters. According to Schuster, even though such a task had clearly no declared 'therapeutic' goals, it led them to a radical transformation:

> Though there were issues in their lives for which they sought healing, change, reconditioning, or transcendence, self-narrative was not considered the elementary tool to these transformations, but their philosophizing. Each of these philosophers remembered his childhood and recognized influences of that childhood on his life, but by philosophizing each radically transformed or even eradicated the influence of the past over the present (Schuster 2003, p. 63).

Schuster invites her clients to read biographies and autobiographies that use these philosophical parameters to articulate the narration, spurns clients to write 'philosophical memories' or texts in which they expose their 'philosophies of life' or dialogically revisits their autobiography, looking for philosophical questions, values and ideals that have guided or negatively influenced them. According to Schuster, in analysing clients' existence 'philosophically', philosophical counsellors should keep an open look at the different explications that can be given of an event, so as not to be rigid with narrow and univocal interpretations. In this regard, she refers to an example given by Achenbach (see Achenbach, Macho 1985), who indicates the ancient Arabic folk tales of *One Thousand and One Nights* as a paradigm for a manifold philosophical inquiry into one's life:

> Shahrazad (possibly, together with King Solomon, one of the first Oriental philosophical practitioners) interprets the king's compulsions in her fairy tales, each night in a different manner. The originality of these pluralistic clarifications of life's

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[18] According to philosopher Lydia Amir, Schuster often 'did not clearly differentiate between philosophy and religion nor between philosophic transformations and spiritual conversions, in her writings'. Notably, in Amir's opinion, Schuster 'may have taken for granted that philosophy can be religious; or she may have adhered herself to an interpretation seeing St. Augustine's conversion to as a philosophical transformation.' (Amir 2016), See URL: http://npcassoc.org/journal/table-of-contents/vol-4-no-2/ Last Access: 19/04/21.

situations helped the king to forget and to overcome his murderous passions (Schuster 1999a, p. 99).

Accepting the multiplicity of possibilities in life would broad the scope of clients' worldview.

The originality of Schuster's theoretical production and, in particular, her proposal for a philosophically-oriented form of psychoanalysis does not significantly distance her interpretation of PC from that of Achenbach, for they are both configured as an 'edifying *praxis'*, i.e. as a means of constructing and founding oneself through a philosophical understanding of one's own life-experience. This layout makes her practice a radical interpretation of PC. Schuster's emphasis on the need to challenge the primacy of the psychotherapeutic paradigms by keeping the two fields clearly apart, allow us further to include her practice in this section. In relation with this, her criticisms on the therapeutic framework conditioning every aspect of contemporary western culture contribute to a reconsideration of the very profession of the counsellor.

I.3 The *Therapeutic* Approach: Elliot D. Cohen

After having analysed the Radical approach to PC, I now investigate what I called 'The Therapeutic Approach'. Such a perspective considers PC as a form of psychotherapy, it is based on measurable criteria, requires practitioners to be trained in psychology, and does not question the psychotherapeutic framework. *Therapeutic* PC is aim-oriented, as the counsellor sets the goals of the counselling sessions in accordance with the clients, and is based on an identifiable methodology to conduct the sessions. In my opinion, Elliot D. Cohen's methodology is the most representative of this framework, hence his particular approach is the object of my analysis.

In 1992, American philosophers E. D. Cohen and Paul Sharkey founded the *National Philosophical Counseling Association* (NPCA)[19], the first association of PC in the United States and the first in the country to certify philosophical counsellors. The association was conceived to bring together philosophers and mental health practitioners in order to 'share ideas and make inroads to more efficacious modes of helping'.[20] For Cohen, philosophical counsellors must cooperate with psychotherapists and constantly collaborate with them. This principle is evident from the training programs that are currently offered by the NPCA. To date, the association recognizes two professional figures of practicing philosophers: the 'philosophical counselor' and the 'philosophical

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[19] NPCA publishes the International Journal of Philosophical Practice (IJPP).
[20] See URL: http://npcassoc.org/, Last Access: 16/07/22.

consultant'. While the first holds a minimum of a Master's degree in a Mental Health area, is licensed by the State, and holds a certificate of philosophical counsellors from NPCA, the latter must hold a minimum of a Master's degree in Philosophy and a certification of philosophical practitioners recognized by the association[21]. Following the definition of the NPCA, philosophical counselors are, in all respects, mental health professionals who use philosophical methods for therapeutic purposes and can treat 'the range of mental disorders ordinarily addressed by licensed mental health practitioners' (Ibidem), as they are presented in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). Instead, philosophical consultants must follow a precise protocol and deal with specific problems such as 'Moral issues, Values disagreements, Political issues, Writer's block, Procrastination, Career issues, Job loss, Disability issues, Financial issues, Aging, End of life issues, Midlife issues, Problems with family, Breakups and divorce, Parenting issues, Falling in and out of love, Loss of a family member, Rejection, Discrimination, Religion and race-related issues, and others'[22]. Once the problems of the clients are defined, philosophical consultants help them examine their reasoning concerning such matters and 'teach critical thinking skills' (Ibidem). Consultation sessions end when the particular problem is solved. Throughout consultations, consultants must stay in contact with a network of psychotherapists and/ or philosophical counsellors to whom to ask for advice in case a client shows neurodevelopmental disorders, psychotic symptoms or other mental disorders described in the latest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM - 5), the reference handbook that the majority of mental health clinicians in the USA use to reach an accurate diagnosis.[23] Although NPCA's guidelines clearly specify that philosophical consultants 'do not treat, diagnose, or offer remedies or cures to mental disorders',[24] it is questionable whether consultants should also be able to sketch a sort of provisional diagnosis, so as to recognize symptoms or identify ambiguous cases that fall into a 'grey area' and redirect clients to psychologists[25]. Above all, this means that both counsellors and consultants adopt the DSM-5 frame of reference and adapt to it. Certificates of specialization for philosophical counsellors and consultants recognized by the NPCA, are obtained via the affiliate 'Logic-Based Therapy & Consultation Institute'[26] and are essentially two: Logic-Based Therapy (LBT)

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[21] See URL: http://npcassoc.org/practice-areas-boundaries/ Last Access: 14/07/21.

[22] A more comprehensive list can be found here: http://npcassoc.org/practice-areas-boundaries/ Last access: 14/07/21

[23] There is a list on the website showing the major symptoms for which referral to a licensed mental health professional is asked, see URL: http://npcassoc.org/practice-areas-boundaries/ , Last Access: 14/07/21.

[24] See URL: https://www.philosophicalpractice.net/about-lbtc Last Access: 16/7/22.

[25] Cohen himself wonders about this issue, see Cohen, Zinaich 2013, p. 6.

[26] The Institute, originally called Institute of Critical Thinking, was founded in 1985 by Elliot D. Cohen with the aim of integrating logic and philosophy into Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT). In 1992, it joined the NPCA. Since then,

and Logic-Based Consultation (LBC). The first is for those who want to become philosophical counsellors, the latter for those who want to become philosophical consultants.[27] LBC is a program that trains consultants to facilitate the client's analysis of the specific problems mentioned above, through logical tools that refer to the principles of LBT. According to Coehn, LBT is in fact the 'leading modality' of his approach to PC [28] and, from the beginning of Cohen's activities, it has been the specific method by which he identifies the specificity of PC. As I will illustrate, LBT contains all the elements that allow it to be included in the therapeutic category I proposed. LBT is not only concerned with specific and contingent problems but addresses behavioral and emotional problems too. Although Cohen considers it a form of therapy, he has stressed that LBT cannot always replace other forms of psychotherapy and psychological counseling, as it makes use of philosophical and logical tools that could be unsuitable for some people (Cohen 2013, pp. 116-117). Cohen defines LBT as an offspring of Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) developed in the 1950s by Albert Ellis (See for instance, Ellis 1957, 1958). REBT holds that traumatic events (called 'activating event') are often interpreted through irrational beliefs and self-deceptive ideas: these occurrences combined would be the major cause of people's behavioural and emotional problems. By changing the patient's irrational beliefs to rational ones, REBT contends that such behavioural and emotional problems can be overcome. Cohen argues that REBT puts an emphasis on finding the external causal explications of a certain emotional distress, i.e. heartbreak, loss of a job etc. (Cohen 2013, p.113), whereas LBT replaces such 'casual approach', which is proper to empirical science, by focusing uniquely on the analysis of the client's arguments (Ibidem). According to LBT, human harmful emotions are generally caused by Eleven Cardinal Fallacies of Behavioural and Emotional Rules and of Reporting.[29] Cohen identifies eight Fallacies of Behavioural and Emotional Rules (Demanding perfection; Awfulizing; Damnation; Jumping on the bandwagon; Can'tstipation; Dutiful Worrying, Manipulation, The world-Revolves-Around-Me Thinking) and three Fallacies of Reporting

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its clinical findings have been presented at the annual meetings of the NPCA. In 2005 the Institute begin a certificate program in Logic-Based Therapy (LBT).

[27]This implies that to obtain an LBT certificate one must hold a 'Master's or doctorate from a recognized institution in a mental health field'. Instead, to obtain an LBC certificate, it is necessary to hold a 'Master's or doctorate from a recognized institution in philosophy' or 'Masters or doctorate from a recognized institution in a mental health field'. See URL: http://npcassoc.org/training/ Last Access: 23/5/2019.

[28]Cohen often refers to PC calling it philosophical practice, which re-propose the ambiguity of the term that I have already highlighted. In publications in collective volumes, Cohen has always referred to the LBT as a paradigm for PC. For this reason, I refer to the LBT to explain his approach.

[29] Coehn identifies eight Fallacies of Behavioural and Emotional Rules (*Demanding perfection; Awfulizing; Damnation; Jumping on the bandwagon; Can'tstipation; Dutiful Worrying, Manipulation, The world-Revolves-Around-Me Thinking*) and three Fallacies of Reporting (Oversimplifying Reality, Distorting Probabilities, Unsupported Explanations), Cohen 2013, p. 115.

(Oversimplifying Reality, Distorting Probabilities, Unsupported Explanations) (Cohen 2013, p. 115). Such fallacies would condition judgments and behaviours regardless of the specific external event, since human beings are assumed to be 'inherently fallible' and their reasoning to be often fallacious (see Cohen 2005, p. 23). As stated by Cohen, human beings would tend to construct emotional reasonings built as fallacious 'practical syllogisms' (Cohen 2013, p. 113).[30] Such syllogisms are constituted by a fallacious Major Premise Rules (based on one of the Eleven Cardinal Fallacies) and a Minor Premise Report (i.e. the occurring of a particular event). The syllogism terminates with a self-defeating Conclusion. Such deductive reasoning has been schematised as follows:

(Major Premise Rule) If I lost my job, then I'm worthless.

(Minor Premise Report) I lost my job

(Conclusion) Therefore, I'm worthless. (Cohen 2013, p.113)

Through a five-step method, LBT helps clients identify the practical syllogism in their reasoning (1), find the fallacious premises (2), refute the syllogism (3), formulate 'antidotal philosophical reasoning' (4), exercise willpower to stick to the new thinking (5) (see Cohen 2013, p. 114). The mechanism of refutation (3) aims at spotting what is wrong in the premises through methods of philosophical analysis such as the *reduction ad absurdum*, that is 'adducing evidence that falsifies a premise; and showing that the inference used to support a premise itself commits and inductive fallacy' (Cohen 2013, p. 116). The 'antidotal philosophical reasoning' is a rational philosophy which can be derived from the 'myriad of philosophical theories' conceived in History (Cohen 2013, p. 116). LBT accepts any philosophical theory to the extent that it promotes 'the respectful treatment of others, self-acceptance, creativity, independent thinking' (Cohen 2013, p.120). Contrary to REBT, LBT also asserts that identifying and correcting emotional and behavioural fallacies is not sufficient since, by itself, this process does not guarantee happiness. In fact, it is necessary to help the client reflect on the Eleven Transcendent Virtues[31] which trump the correspondent Eleven Cardinal Fallacies mentioned above. These virtues are 'transcendent' in that 'they constitute higher-order capabilities or "human excellences"' (Cohen 2013, p. 118). These

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[30] The notion of practical syllogism is derived from Aristotle's ethical philosophy and is discussed in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. A syllogism is a three-proposition deductive argument formed by a major premise affirming a universal truth, a minor premise stating a particular truth, and a conclusion which is derived from the premises. Being a practical syllogism, the conclusion is not a mere abstraction, but an exhortation to take an action.

[31] Metaphysical Security, Courage, Respect, Authenticity, Temperance, Moral Creativity, Empowerment, Empathy, Good judgment, Foresightedness, Scientificity (see Coehn 2005).

virtues can be achieved through virtuous practices and exercises that strengthen the willpower (Cohen 2013, p.122).[32] The ultimate goal of LBT is to achieve these virtues so as to 'do and feel excellent' (Cohen 2013, p. 118).

From what has been said, Cohen's PC is a goal-oriented practice (its final purposes are the resolution of a specific problem, as in the philosophical consultation, or the achievement of virtuous behaviours and excellent feelings, as in philosophical counselling); Cohen's PC directly relates to the domain of psychology, accepts important psychiatric diagnostic criteria such as those contained in the DSM-5, and it is configured as a contiguous and auxiliary discipline to psychological counselling; Cohen's PC proposes a logical-rational method that uses philosophical procedures and theories as *tools* to achieve its purpose; Cohen's PC has a *vertical didactic intent*, for the counsellor teaches the use of these procedures. Furthermore, the philosophical counsellor described by Cohen has a triple function: he is a *facilitator*, for he follows the client in reasoning and helps him unmask the inconsistencies of his arguments; he is a *master*, insofar as he teaches reasoning according to logical and rational methods, he teaches the virtues necessary to live happily and he teaches to build the client's character; he is a *therapist* since 'engages in active listening, reflections and empathetic regard'(Cohen 2013, p. 114) and welcomes the client's emotions. Above all, Cohen's PC has a *starting theory* consisting of a series of assumptions about the functioning of human emotions and behaviours on which it bases its practice. Cohen himself has identified four *metaphysical assumptions* of LBT:

> 1) Humans being logically deduce the cognitive-behavioural components of their emotions from premises;
> 2) Human beings are inherently fallible and the premises of their behavioural and emotional reasoning tend to contain fallacies;
> 3) Behavioural and emotional problems tend to stem from absolutistic, perfectionistic construct of reality;
> 4) Human beings have an inherent power of will that can be used to overcome fallacious behavioural and emotional reasoning (Cohen 2005, p. 23)

To these assumptions, it can be added that LBT declares to know the virtues that guarantee human happiness and, most importantly, what happiness consists of (i.e. the achievement of these virtues).

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[32] To strengthen the will-power, LBT proposes a range of behavioural techniques, including 'behavioural homework assignment, shame attacking exercises, positive reinforcement, and role-playing' (Cohen 2013, p.122)

Having explored what the *Therapeutic* approach to PC consists of, in the next section I will explore other theoretical perspective that do not allow easy classification and that I identified as an *Intermediate* approach to PC.

I.4 **Other Perspectives in PC: Peter Raabe, Lou Marinoff and the *Intermediate* Approach to PC**

As specified in the introduction, there are numerous other theorizations of PC that cannot be attributed to the above-mentioned radical and therapeutic approaches. In fact, they may have characteristics that can be traced back to both frameworks or may present ambiguities that do not allow easy classification. For these reasons, I have defined this approach to PC as *Intermediate*. In this section, I examine for instance Peter Raabe and Lou Marinoff's proposals, showing the reasons why their classification is less clear-cut.

Born in Germany in 1949, Peter Raabe has lived in Canada since 1957. Currently, he is Professor of Philosophy at the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) in British Columbia after being awarded a doctorate for his theoretical and practical work in PC. During his career as a scholar and philosophical counsellor, he has reiterated the importance of philosophy in the treatment of 'mental illness', questioning the abuse of medical and psychiatric terms in the description of psychic suffering[33].

However, at the same time, he has not spared philosophical counselling from criticisms. First, he has always been critical of the way in which many philosophical counsellors have tried to differentiate PC from psychotherapy. For instance, he has argued that most of the distinctions proposed by philosophical counsellors can relate solely to the classical Freudian psychoanalysis and, in particular, to its medical-diagnostic application (Raabe 2001, p. 81-83). Notably, the latter would be based on a specific psycho-sexual developmental theory and on concept such as 'normality', 'syndromes' or 'symptoms' that are absent in PC. Differences can also be found in analyzing in the aspects that are investigated within the psychoanalytic setting, in the role of the therapist, in the methodology used within the psychoanalytic framework and the ultimate aims of the analysis. Notably, the subject of psychoanalysis are the repressed and unconscious aspects of patient's mental life. These unconscious dynamics are 'centrally related to current behavior' (Raabe 2001, p.

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[33] See Raabe's website, URL: https://www.peterraabe.ca/ Last access: 25/2/ 2019.

82), i.e. they are the main cause of social, relational and behavioral difficulties in adult life, generating 'intrapsychic conflicts and psychological symptoms which the therapist must diagnose and treat' (*Ibidem*). Studying patients' symptoms, the psychoanalyst must be able to make a diagnosis and to this end, should rely on diagnostic tools such as DSM-5. In the course of the analysis, the psychoanalyst would assume an 'anonymous' position (Raabe 2001, p. 91) towards the patients, favouring their 'projections' and 'transference' (Ibidem). With regard to psychoanalytic methodology, the psychoanalyst should lead the patients in a long and complex analysis of their own experience using free associations in order to decipher the '"real" (unconscious) meaning, which is hidden from the patient underneath the (conscious) phenomenon of what the patient tells the therapist' (Raabe 2001, p.82). The ultimate aim of psychoanalysis would be 'to make the unconscious conscious and to assist the client in reliving earlier experiences and working through repressed conflicts, in order to achieve intellectual awareness and thereby to reconstruct the basic personality of the client' (Raabe 2001, p. 95). The theoretical assumption of this approach would be the idea that the person is a fragmented being, largely unconscious, characterized by multiplicity and tendency to self-deception (Raabe 2001, p.102).

On the contrary, philosophical counsellors generally address the problems of the patients according to their conscious aspects. This would help stimulate clients' active response to a particular situation and take responsibility for their decisions. Particularly, as advocated by Schuster as well, this would entail highlighting the 'social, political, economic, historical and philosophical roots' (Schuster 1992, p. 595) of clients' worldview. To a large extent, philosophical counsellors do not consider the unconscious as a 'psychic locality' (Raabe 2001, p.96) to be explored through specific techniques, but rather as a set of beliefs, prejudices and assumptions not rationally elaborated by the client. Investigating the rational aspects of the problems, would favor clients' 'empowerment'. Secondly, according to Raabe, in PC there is an equal relationship between counsellor and clients. Such a relationship is based on a continuous dialogue between 'interdependent participant defined by open-minded questioning, with empathy functioning between them' (Raabe 2001, p. 93). Raabe emphasizes that in this way, PC assumes an 'intentional stance'[34] towards the client's problems, as it focuses on the specific problem presented and helps

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[34] Raabe specifies this point with an example: 'If a client comes to a therapist and says […] "I am depressed because I have lost faith in God", […] the therapist who works with the "intentional stance" actually addresses the God question head on, taking it seriously as a cause of depression. [This kind of activity] welcome, and in fact requires the client's conscious involvement' (Raabe 2001, pp. 93- 94). In referring to the clients' 'conscious involvement' Raabe means that clients of PC always have a full understanding of what is happening in the dialogue. This would not happen in psychoanalysis, where patients are often inscribed within a theoretical framework that they are not required to know.

clients 'understand the meaning of [their] utterances within the context of therapy, everyday life, and of rationality'(Raabe 2001, p. 94).

However, Raabe reminds that many psychoanalysts include, among the objectives of psychoanalysis, that of 'understanding of conscious […] motivations from the point of view of the patient' (Raabe 2001, p.83)[35]. With this specification, Raabe seems to suggest a certain caution when it comes to demarcate the subject of PC and psychoanalysis. Furthermore, in one his latest works, he has raised the question amongst philosophical counsellors on whether it would be appropriate to address clients' unconscious patterns even within PC setting (See Raabe 2006). This would represent such a radical theoretical change, that philosophical counsellors would have to completely rethink their relationship with psychoanalysis.

That said, Raabe stresses the enormous heterogeneity of psychotherapeutic disciplines, which goes well beyond the original Freudian psychoanalysis. In accordance with Ruschmann's critique of Philosophical counseling (see Ruschmann 1998), Raabe notes that, to date, there exists countless psychotherapeutic schools and currents, as well as different methods and objectives, therefore a unitary criticism of psychotherapy would be impossible (Raabe 2001, p.81). According to Raabe, whilst it is relatively easy to distinguish PC from Freudian psychoanalysis, the comparison between PC and other forms of psychotherapy is more problematic. Notably, it would be very complex to distinguish PC from therapies such as RET and REBT, as they only deal with patients' conscious thoughts in order to restructure their philosophical and behavioural styles (see Raabe 2001, pp.84-85). From this point of view, Raabe recognizes the subject affinity between PC and cognitive therapies highlighted by Cohen.

Further similarities can be seen, in his opinion, between PC and Carl Rogers' person-centred-therapy, which is based on the assumption that the average person has the means to solve his /her problems through an open rational dialogue with the therapist. This implies that no diagnostic tests, or complex interpretations are needed (Raabe 2001, p. 85) Similarly to PC, the existential therapy of Victor Frankl, called Logotherapy (see Frankl 2006), emphasizes the importance of human self-determination, making the search for the meaning and values of life its fundamental principle.

Lastly, Raabe notes that the relationship between philosophical counsellor and clients theorized by philosophical practitioners is not a prerogative of PC. He points out that many

[35] This and other differences of views between psychoanalysts are caused by the fact that psychoanalysis itself has undergone profound variations over the decades. Raabe himself emphasizes that, in post-Freudian era, there was no 'uniformity viewpoints on what constitutes psychoanalysis' (Raabe 2001, p.81) and that there was a proliferation of interpretations that led to the birth of different psychoanalytic psychotherapies.

psychotherapists, similarly to Achenbach, describe their relationship with patients as non-directive and non-hierarchical (see Raabe 2001, p.80). Once again, this would be particularly true in therapies such as the Person-centered therapy, and Logotherapy. Indeed, in both these therapies, the psychotherapist must establish an equal and authentic relationship with the clients, in order to help them understand their 'uniqueness' (Raabe 2001, p.92).

According to Raabe, all these similarities make it much more difficult to differentiate PC from the rest of psychotherapies than it is often argued by philosophical practitioners. Moreover, in his view, the fact that PC can have therapeutic effects, would allow to consider it in turn as a form of therapy.[36]

In line with Cohen's arguments, Raabe believes that a dialogue between philosophers and psychotherapists would improve the treatment of many problems normally considered the exclusive competence of psychologists. He also suggests that psychotherapists themselves would benefit from PC, for it would 'facilitate an inquiry into both the content and the process of reasoning that may have resulted in either professional or personal difficulties for the psychotherapist.'[37] Contrary to Cohen though, Raabe argues that PC should be practiced exclusively by philosophers, since they would be 'better qualified to deal with specifically philosophical issues such as the meaning of life or questions of right and wrong than the therapist whose education has been predominantly in psychology'. [38]

To define PC as a discipline, Raabe suggests that practitioners propose elements that are clearly identifiable by clients and reproducible by other counsellors in order to guarantee the standards of a legitimate profession (Raabe 2001, p.125). Indeed, Raabe believes that not defining the modalities, techniques and intentions of PC risks turning the profession into a 'postmodern'[39] practice (see Raabe 2001, p.167). In Raabe's reading, postmodernism, in its extreme configuration, 'holds that no external or objective reality exists independent of each individual, and that in such a world of "multiple realities" one interpretation is as good as any other' (Raabe 2001, p.167). As a consequence, he criticizes Achenbach's 'beyond-methods method' which, by not defying paradigms in PC, would allow 'for no criteria with which to evaluate the legitimacy of any model of practice' (Ibidem) and, therefore, would promote precisely the postmodernist "anything goes" position'

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[36] Notably, PC would fall into a line of thought that, from Epicurus to the American pragmatist philosophy, has defined philosophy as 'therapy for the soul', 'practice of wisdom' or as a method to deal with the problems of men. See: http://www.peterraabe.ca/what.html Last Access: 20/7/22.

[37] See URL: http://www.peterraabe.ca/what.html, Last Access: 20/7/22.

[38] See URL: http://www.peterraabe.ca/what.html, Last Access: 20/7/22.

[39] Raabe here refers to the definition of postmodernism offered by Pauline Marie Rosenau (see Rosenau 1992).

(Ibidem). Ultimately, in his opinion, counsellors holding that PC should not set the goal of helping clients to alleviate their distress, are unable to convincingly explain the reasons for which one should look for their service (Raabe 2001, p.124).

To avert such risks, Raabe has identified a model of PC that would clarify the core characteristics of this discipline and, at the same time, it would pinpoint its specificity when compared to the rest of psychotherapies. He has defined his model as being normatively and descriptively comprehensive, (see Raabe 2001, p.129) as it is not only based on his own experience as a philosophical counsellor, but has been developed by considering a wide range of case studies and different approaches in literature. For instance, he believes that Lahav's original model of interpreting the clients 'worldview' was certainly appropriate, but it was not sufficient to explain the entire process of counselling. Similarly, the kind of peer research theorized by Achenbach would be certainly a valuable part of the counselling process, but cannot be addressed at the beginning of treatment, for clients address counsellors precisely because they tend 'to feel under-qualified to deal with what life is demanding of [them]' and with the manifest will of wanting to learn (Raabe 2001, see p.168).

According to Raabe, to properly conceptualize PC, it is necessary to clearly identify its progress and structure. Notably, since patients' needs and expectations change during the sessions, a multi-stage model would adequately describe these changes, as it highlights the shift in the counseling process from an 'analytical' style of reasoning to a 'transcendental' approach (Raabe 2001, p.120).

Raabe proposes a model of PC based on four stages: 1) free floating, 2) immediate problem resolution, 3) teaching as an intentional act, 4) transcendence. Raabe stresses though that this model should not be considered as a rigid sequential scheme: the various stages can be overlapped or repeated if clients wish so (Raabe 2001, p.128).

In the stage of free floating (1), counsellors familiarise themselves with the clients' problems and expectations about the counselling process. Raabe points out that, initially, clients tend to have no clear idea concerning their discomfort, but they often complain about the difficulty of focusing on the reasons for their dissatisfaction (Raabe 2001, p.130). In this phase, counsellors' task would be to engage in 'maieutic listening': 'Maieutic listening is listening in such a way that it helps the one being listened to "give birth" to her thoughts and ideas. Listening at this stage is not judgmental; it is acceptance; it is empathetic; it is helpful; it is offering time; it is relief' (Raabe 2001, p.130). During 'free floating', counselling should not be aimed at a particular goal and counsellors should not

criticise or approve clients' reasoning, nor they should seek unconscious mechanisms underlying the clients' conscious words (see Raabe 2001, p.133). Rather, the counsellors should limit themselves to noting the inconsistencies, contradictions and fallacies of the clients' reasoning, without intervening with evaluative criteria. Raabe suggests that, in doing so, counsellors would avoid discouraging clients from opening up or asking questions that may interfere with clients' line of reasoning (Raabe 2001, p.134). According to Raabe, counsellors' listening must not be 1) *pseudo-listening*: counsellors must not pretend to listen whilst thinking what to answer or how to intervene; 2) *self-centered listening*: counsellors must not pay attention only to what coincides with their point of view; 3) *selective listening*: counsellors should not listen uniquely to what they consider important, but they should pay attention to all the reasoning; 4) *defensive listening*: counsellors should never consider clients' reasoning as possible attacks on their own hypotheses; 5) *insensitive listening*: counsellors must not take what clients say at 'face value' (Raabe 2001, p.134). At this stage clients should be allowed to speak mostly without interruption, so as that their speaking can have a cathartic and therapeutic effect (Raabe 2001, p.134).

In Raabe's experience, after this first stage of understanding and reassurance, the sessions tend to focus on the discussion of a concrete problem, which introduces to stage 2. At this stage, counsellors help the clients to extricate themselves in a specific situation that generally creates anxiety, confusion, distress (see Raabe 2001, p.137). In stage 2, counsellors' listening becomes more active, critical and participatory: they analyse clients' issues through questions and considerations, separating and clarifying the main points highlighted in the clients' narrative and explicitly stressing the inconsistencies and obscurities of their reasoning. Nevertheless, Raabe emphasizes that, during this phase, counsellors should not challenge clients' worldview and values, but they should exclusively help clients understand any inconsistencies between their emotions, thoughts, and reactions to the specific case and their personal worldview (Raabe 2001, p.145). The interaction between counsellors and counselees should be now entirely problem-oriented so as that clients' can benefit from the counsellors' logical-argumentative skills to solve their problems (see Raabe 2001, p.144). Indeed, Raabe specifies that at this stage clients implicitly require the counsellors to assume the role of 'authorities' (Raabe 2001, p.143), i.e. they expect that counsellors use the reasoning and dialogical skills developed through years of study and training, so as to help them untangle the problem they consider insoluble. During the second phase, counsellors should use a 'phenomenological approach', that is, they have to guide clients in a detailed description, free of preconceptions and prejudices (Raabe 2001, p.144). More precisely, Raabe's 'phenomenological

approach' exhorts clients to detach from the emotional experience and describe their problem with an external, objective approach, moving from precise and well-argued premises and arriving at conclusions marked by accurate inferences, validated by the counsellors (Raabe 2001, p.144). In case clients wish to talk about broader issues and discuss more generical values and philosophical ideas, counsellors should first investigate whether their questions do not originate from specific situations; if so, they should persuade clients to start from their own experience and personal problems (Raabe 2001, p.144).

Raabe believes that, although many consultations end at this stage, that is after the resolution of a specific issue, this should not be the main goal of PC. Rather, its ultimate goal should be to guarantee the clients the ability to solve possible future problems on their own. (Raabe 2001, p.146) This capability can be acquired in stage 3 of Raabe's model: 'teaching as an intentional act'. In his opinion, stage 3 is the most significant and peculiar moment within the entire course of PC, for it clearly differentiates this practice from psychological therapies, in which intentional teaching is absent (Raabe 2001, p.148). Raabe highlights that many philosophical counsellors admit the need to teach procedures and methods of philosophical reasoning, but they do not clarify the modalities and the time when this should be done (Raabe 2001, p.148), whilst others argue that the analytical procedures of stage 2 are sufficient to make clients learn how to carry out this kind of enquiry autonomously (Raabe 2001, p.149). Contrary to this, he believes the teaching should be made explicit by counsellors and openly tackled by clients, since 'it cannot simply be assumed that the client will "pick up" the kind of philosophical reasoning skills employed by the counsellor from what transpires during a counselling session' (Raabe 2001, p.149). Teaching philosophical reasoning would mean reconsidering carefully the fallacies of reasoning noted in stage 2 in more depth, in order to broaden clients' argumentative and thinking abilities. This would entail that, under the guidance of the counsellors, clients would learn different strategies such as 'giving reasons, distinguishing good reasons from bad ones, constructing inferences, evaluating arguments, generalizing, using analogies, identifying, questioning and justifying assumptions' (Raabe 2001, p.154) and others. Contextually, clients would learn to expand their thought horizon through, for example, 'being open to different perspectives and viewpoints, exercising empathy and moral imagination, being sensitive to context, being committed to searching for truth, caring for the procedures of the inquiry' (Raabe 2001, p.154) etc. According to Raabe, in this way clients would improve their creativity and sensitiveness, for philosophical discussions are not only a cognitive

exercise, but also a 'meeting of minds' (Raabe 2001, p.155), i.e. a collaboration in a research exercise.

This collaboration becomes particularly stringent and productive in the transition to phase 4, i.e. the 'Transcendence' stage, which has been defined by Raabe as the proper phase for 'dialogic research' (Raabe 2001, p.163). The term 'transcendence' means here that, at this stage, counsellors invite clients to 'transcend' their everyday life, and to look at their own life from a more complex, holistic and, at the same time, objective perspective. Once clients have become able to recognize their problems (stage 1), to face and resolve difficult situations with the guidance of the counsellors (stage 2), and have learned the dialogic, logical and cognitive skills as well as the sensitivity to face an adequate philosophical analysis (stage 3), they would be finally ready to face questions of a 'more abstract and universal' nature (Raabe 2001, p.159). For instance, such questions would be: 'Who am I? […] How should we live?' (Raabe 2001, p.162). At this stage, clients are encouraged to analyse themselves 'within the framework of [their] own family [and] community' (Raabe 2001, p.159), in order to understand their place within these social and ideological structures. The analysis is now enriched by 'intuition and emotional considerations' (Raabe 2001, p.160) and the aim is the search for wisdom and a deeper and more meaningful life (see Ibidem). Only at this point can philosophical dialogue actually be called a 'dialogue between equals' since clients themselves have attained the capability they were not sure to possess at the beginning of the process (Raabe 2006, p.164). PC would now assume a 'playful' dimension, of disinterested research and of collaboration (Raabe 2006, p.165) for clients would feel no longer distressed by the problems they had at the beginning of the sessions. Raabe argues that at stage 4, PC can overcome the conception of 'post-modern autonomy, that is focused on the "cult of individuality" - with its obsessive, and unsatisfying, quest for absolute independence' (Raabe 2001, p.166). Rather, clients would finally understand that 'autonomy' means 'better recognition not only of [their] inherent worth but her interconnection with both the human community of others *with* whom [they reside], and the natural community *in* which [they reside]' (Raabe 2001, p.166).

Raabe's method could therefore be defined as comprehensive or holistic, since in his model there is a moment of cathartic and therapeutic listening, an attempt to solve the immediate problem, a phase of vertical teaching, a stage of communal open-ended research. As shown, Raabe's model is also person-centered, as the client himself has to propose whether and when to proceed to the next stage (Raabe 2001, p.128) and disputes the oppositional definitions of the practice (therapy / non-therapy, problem-oriented / open-ended).

As in Cohen's approach, attention is here paid to the methodology and the teaching given by the philosophical counsellor as an authoritative figure. The prominence given to the maieutic listening, the needs of clients and the cathartic moment of stage 1, also represent a clear attempt to establish contact with the psychological realm and, in particular, with the 'Person-centered therapy' by Carl Rogers.

All this would allow framing Raabe's approach in the therapeutic category I previously outlined, but there are equally important elements connecting the '4-stage method' with the 'radical approach' too. As admitted by Raabe himself, Lahav's 'interpretation of worldview' is part of the PC procedure, as is the peer research of Achenbach's Ppx. His critique of the psychiatric outlook on psychic suffering distances Raabe from Cohen who, as shown, accepts and follows DSM-5 diagnostic criteria. Raabe's model, therefore, can be considered intermediate, since it is not entirely attributable to any of the two antithetical approaches I identified.

Another author who must necessarily be taken into account for his prominence in the field is Lou Marinoff, a Canadian philosopher, philosophical counsellor, Professor of Philosophy at the City College of New York, founding President of the American Philosophical Practitioners Association (APPA) and Editor of *Philosophical Practice: Journal of the APPA.*[40] As previously shown, his presence in the field of philosophical practices has been a constant since PC started to spread in the United States; today, he is one of the most famous promoters of the profession of philosophical counsellor in the country and regularly participates in international meetings, courses and conferences.

Marinoff's fame is partially due to the great success of '*Plato not Prozac! Applying Eternal Wisdom to Everyday Problems*', his bestseller published in the United States in 1999 and translated in various other languages over the years. The book, written in a simple, direct and captivating prose, had the intent to make the new domain of philosophical practices known to the general audience. Special attention was given to the presentation of PC for individuals through the illustration of case studies, and to the way in which ancient, modern and contemporary Eastern or Western philosophical thought[41] can be applied to deal with ordinary life problems, such as the

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[40] The APPA is a non-profit corporation founded by Marinoff in 1998 'for the benefit of the public, to lend support to and further the understanding of philosophical practice in the United States'. According to the Articles of Incorporation of the corporation, APPA's activities include: '(a) education of the lay public and professionals concerning all aspects of philosophical practice throughout the United States, (c) implementation and administration of a certification program for philosophical practitioners, (d) serving as a liaison between practitioners of philosophical practice in the United States and foreign national organizations of similar purposes and interests, and (e) engaging in any other educational and professional activity in furtherance of the advancement of philosophical practice.' See URL: https://appa.edu/documents/ Last Access: 19/4/ 2021.

[41] Marinoff briefly mentions some notions of many distant philosophical currents to give a 'context for the application of these ideas' (Marinoff 2000, p.52) in the illustration of case studies. He offers a summary of rather decontextualized

research, maintenance or acceptance of the end of a relationship, the management of family life, problems at work, or ethical questions. The book aroused internationally the criticisms of philosophical counsellors who emphasized theoretical inaccuracies and trivializations, as well as Marinoff's mystical, provocative and poorly analytical style, and his self-promoting tone.[42] In the following years, Marinoff published other books on philosophical practices maintaining mostly a caustic style and a popular approach (see for instance Marinoff 2002,2003).

In his writings, Marinoff defines PC as a 'Therapy for the sane' (Marinoff 2000, p.11) so as to stress ironically that the great majority of people are 'fundamentally (and mentally) well, not ill' (Marinoff 2002, p.81).

Nonetheless, he argues, 'mentally well' people may need help in case of need: PC would then represent the optimal help, namely a peculiar 'therapy' for non-mentally ill people.[43] As stated by Marinoff, the oxymoron inherent in the expression 'therapy for the sane' would be justified by the etymological meaning of the term 'therapy': 'In Greek, a "theraps" is merely an attendant, of an unspecified kind. The verb "therapuein" means, generically, "to attend to something"' (Marinoff 2002, p.84).[44] Specifically, in Marinoff's view, PC is not only a therapy in all respects, but it should

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ideas of philosophers such as Aristotle, Augustine, Marcus Aurelius, Bacon, Descartes, Dewey, Hegel, Hobbes, Nietzsche etc.; he refers to concepts proper to Confucianism and Buddhism, offers an Appendix of authors that, to his say, are useful for PC, and another short Appendix on the use of the ancient Chinese divinatory text of the I-Ching. His purpose is to give a general brushing to the lay public of what he considers to be the most useful ideas in the history of Western and Eastern philosophy, warning the reader: it is a 'crib sheet for a cocktail party' (Marinoff 2000, p. 53).

[42] For instance, Schuster argues that Marinoff perceives himself as 'a kind of mystic' (Schuster 2004b, p.6), encouraging the application of any school of thought, including 'dubious and esoteric thinkers' or 'gurus and astrologers', with the consequence that 'critical reasoning is absent' (Ibidem). Tudor B. Munteanu considers Marinoff's best-seller a 'trivialization of philosophy' and his attempt to promote the profession of philosophical counsellor as a 'market-driven opportunism' (see URL: http://www.friesian.com/munteanu.htm Last Access: 25/2/2020). Alessandro Volpone defines him as a 'businessman in the marketplace of ideas', stating that 'Plato! Not Prozac' is essentially against PC and its 'relatively young dignity' (see URL: http://win.filosofare.org/Pf/marginalia/RecMarinoff/Plato_not%20_Viagra.htm Last Access: 12/12/2020). Each of these authors also challenges the way in which Marinoff interprets the authors he cites. For instance, Munteanu says that the authors cited by Marinoff are 'thoroughly and repeatedly misrepresented', whereas Volpone deepens Munteanu's criticism by further showing the 'parade of lapses and superficialities' in Marinoff's best-seller.

[43] Cohen has leveled criticisms against the notion of 'Therapy for the sane' for, in his view, it could dangerously feed the stereotype that 'people who need psychological therapy must therefore be "insane"' (See E. D. Cohen, *Philosophy with Teeth: The Be Wedding of Philosophical and Psychological Practices*, International Journal of Philosophical Practice, Vol. 2, No.2, Spring 2004, p.1). More could be said about the notions of 'mentally ill' and 'mentally well' people used by Marinoff, but the ironic, inflammatory and scarcely analytical tone of his arguments makes it difficult to consider such expressions something more than a provocation. However, as its book is a great commercial success, the impact that such simplifications may have on the reception of PC should not be underestimated.

[44] Marinoff's understanding of the term 'therapy' has been harshly criticized by Schuster, insofar as it would risk to turn too many unspecified activities into therapy. Notably, she provocatively observes: 'His "attending" to his clients' problems is therapy, my "attending" to his books as a critical reviewer is without doubt therapy, and the finance minister attending to the financial affairs of his country is practicing therapy and so on.' (Schuster 2004b, p.3) As I showed earlier in this chapter, Schuster conceives 'therapy' as a structured and controlled procedure, therefore her strong rejection of Marinoff's interpretation is probably not surprising. According to Marinoff instead, this kind of criticisms is due to a

be acknowledged as the oldest form of 'psychotherapy', given that, in the 'ancient world', philosophy was considered the most effective 'cure of souls'[45](Marinoff 2002, p.85). In explaining this notion, he relies again on etymology: 'The Greek 'psukhé' means, variously, "breath", or "soul", or "character". The English equivalent, "psyche", can designate any of the following things at least: mind, soul, id, ego, self, nature, spirit, subconscious. Thus "psychotherapy" means attending to any of the foregoing' (Marinoff 2002, p.85). According to Marinoff, PC is the best option to conduct such a 'psychotherapy', for philosophy is the highest way for 'attending to the soul'. The ultimate aim of Marinoff's reinterpretation of the terms 'therapy' and 'psychotherapy' is to undermine the monopoly of psychiatry and psychotherapy in dealing with the *psyche* (Marinoff 2002, p.85).

Marinoff defines PC as a 'process-oriented' practice, as it would not be interested in achieving a specific purpose, but rather in reexamining the philosophical foundations through which clients analyze their problems. As Marinoff himself states: 'the client's problem may be readily configurable against a stable ground, and its resolution or management may thus require a re-examination of the ground itself' (Marinoff 2002, p. 79). In his opinion, philosophical reflection is a form of 'active meditation', that is a way of maintaining 'equilibrium in the face of constant change [...] and of generating a kind of ataraxia' (Marinoff 2002, p.62). This form of active meditation would use the millennial heritage of philosophy's history, which renders it accessible only 'to those who have the capacity to engage in it, which is definitely not everyone' (Marinoff 2002, p.62). The purpose of philosophical counsellors would then be to help clients undertake such a task through their help and knowledge.[46] Specifically, counsellors should explore clients' 'noetic world' in order to help them develop 'a philosophical disposition that enables [clients] to resolve or manage [their] problem' (Marinoff 2002, p.81). Counsellors should thus act as 'guides who awakens or instills in the client the capacity to philosophize for [themselves]' (Marinoff 2002, p.82). With the term 'philosophizing', Marinoff means a structured ability of thinking 'wisely' that transcends the mere critical thinking, for philosophers should be generally:

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misconception of the term 'therapy', which is interpreted 'in the narrowest possible sense, equating it strictly with medical treatment' (Marinoff 2002, p.82).

[45] In *Philosophical Practice*, Marinoff does not provide any particular clarification of the notion of 'cure of souls' in antiquity, nor does he specify to which current he is referring, which renders rather difficult to criticize or approve its usage in this context.

[46] However, Marinoff believes that this type of meditation based on speculation can achieve the best results, provided that counsellors are able to bring their 'mind to a quiescent state' (p.62). This would be possible through practices of 'inactive meditation' (Marinoff 2002, p.63), to which counsellors should undergo to better help their clients: 'Inactive meditation improves active meditation. The two are complements, not opposites. In fact, the two are not necessarily two, but one' (Ibidem). These notions of 'active' and 'inactive meditation' have contributed to give Marinoff the reputation of 'mystic'.

'trained in the rigors of valid argumentation and the exposure faulty inference; in the heuristics of ampliative logic and the grounds for holding beliefs; in the exercise of moral reasoning and formation of aesthetic judgment; in the theory of making decisions and the justification for acting on them; in the method of resolving conflicts through the building of consensus; in the juxtaposition of scientific knowledge with skeptical challenge; in the maintenance of humanity in the face of dehumanizing aspects of technological change; in the acceptance of personal, professional, and social responsibility; in the acquiescence to conditions imposed by birth and death, in seeking to understand the meaning, realize the purpose, and fulfill the potential of sentient being in a universe replete with mystery, uncertainty, and unknowability' (Marinoff 2002, pp. 85-86).

Having been trained to master all these skills, philosophical counsellors could act as teachers or, more precisely, as *educators* guiding clients in the practical applications of 'wisdom'. For this reason, although Marinoff does not dictate a stage of explicit teaching within the counselling process, as proposed by Raabe in his '4-stage method', he believes the intentions and contents of PC are mainly 'educational' (Marinoff 2002, p.81).

Marinoff emphasizes the educational stance of PC to highlight further the difference between the latter and the psychiatric practice, which would be guided mostly by 'diagnostic' intentions and criteria (see Marinoff 2002, pp.81-82). Also, unlike most psychological therapies, which would analyze clients' past in order to understand their present, PC would focus on the clarification of their present situation, it should be oriented towards the future and should be short-term (Marinoff 2002, p. 9)

With regards to the methodology to be applied during PC, Marinoff argues that the dialogue between clients and philosophical counsellors can be conceived mainly in three ways, which he calls type A, B and C dialogue. In type A dialogue, philosophical counsellors lead an inquiry into a problem by freely talking to the clients. What would make this type of dialogue 'philosophical' is that the counsellor 'is also a philosopher' (Marinoff 2002, p.87). Type A dialogue does not provide a predetermined methodology, but bases its effectivity on the personality and skills of the philosophical counsellor, which would make such a dialogue a 'therapeutic example of *déformation professionnelle*' (Marinoff 2002, p.87). In type B dialogue, philosophical counsellors would instead 'bring one or another insight from a particular philosopher to light in a session, from the allegory of Plato's cave to Mill's conception of liberty' (Marinoff 2002, p.91). Although citations may serve as a useful 'noetic catalyst' in the dialogical exchange, Marinoff brings into focus the risk that PC is here reduced to the recitation of an aphorism, legitimized by the sole authority of a philosopher's name:

'"Take two aphorisms and call me in the morning" is not philosophical counselling; it is the casting of philosophical spells' (Marinoff 2002, p.93). Finally, Type C philosophical dialogue would be a sort of 'outgrowth' of the two previous types, whose target would be clients 'who are especially literate and thoughtful' (Ibidem). Namely, it is addressed to those who want to improve their knowledge of the history of a philosophical concept through the reading of books recommended by counsellors themselves.[47] Marinoff claims to use a mixed approach that includes all three types of dialogue listed above, implicitly distancing himself from Achenbach's *modus operandi* which, in his opinion, would fall into Type A category[48] (Marinoff 2002, p.89).

In *Plato, Not Prozac!*, Marinoff has also offered an orientation scheme that would describe the optimal course of a successful PC. As he specifies, such a scheme limits itself to retrospectively describing the trend of the counseling sessions and, therefore, it is not based on a conscious or preconceived adhesion to a specific paradigm.[49] For this reason, he states, his scheme should be considered as a 'contentless form that suggests some contours of philosophical counselling, without prescribing any particular methodology' (Marinoff 2002, p.167). He called it "PEACE PROCESS", where the term PEACE is the condition of internal balance towards which the counselling process tends. Furthermore, PEACE is an acronym indicating the five typical stages of the counselling process that make it possible to achieve the final result. These stages are called *Problem*, *Emotion*, *Analysis*, *Contemplation*, *Equilibrium* (Marinoff 2000, p.38). According to this scheme, in order to analyze a *Problem* (P) effectively, it is necessary to first identify it correctly and explore the *Emotions* (E) connected to it[50]. In Marinoff's view, the first two stages are what is usually dealt with in most psychotherapies, whilst the true benefit of PC, as well as its peculiarity, would be represented by the next three stages. The *Analysis* (A) stage consists in enumerating and evaluating the rational

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[47] Marinoff considers this approach a kind of 'bibliotherapy' (Marinoff 2002, p.93).

[48] This interpretation has been criticized by Schuster for, in her view, it depicts Achenbach's practice as deprived of any methodological contents. On the contrary, she defined Achenbach's Philosophische Praxis as a 'beyond-method method' which would provide some basic points: '1. Sincere communication between the philosophical practitioner (an academically trained philosopher) and the visitor or client, based on a "beyond-method" method. 2. The importance of dialogue, as that which enlivens and flows from being. 3. "Auslegen" – a looking for explanations – in which the practitioner becomes united with the problem, not by imparting his own understanding of it, but by giving the visitor a fresh impulse to explain him or herself. This instead of "ünterlegen" – explanations given by psychotherapists (or others!) to their patients's problems. 4. The innovative component of dialogue, the element of wonder in philosophical practice, which does not allow for fixed viewpoints, standard attitudes or permanent solutions' (Schuster 2004b, pp. 3-4).

[49] In fact, Marinoff has declared to have simply realised, by considering *a posteriori* the sessions with his clients, that those with a positive outcome followed the aforementioned scheme.

[50] In *Therapy for The Sane*, Marinoff has offered another acronym in order to help the readers reconsider their 'philosophy of life' (Marinoff 2003, p. 319). He calls it the MEANS method: "The MEANS I'm suggesting is an acronym. I will walk you through Moments of truth, Expectations, Attachments, Negative emotions, and Sagacious choices" (Marinoff 2003, p. 320).

options to solve the problem (Marinoff 2000, p.39), whilst the next stage envisages *Contemplating* (C) the situation as a whole through a 'philosophical' perspective (Marinoff 2000, p .39). This would involve simultaneously approaching the problem in itself (P), as well as its emotional valences (E), the rational solutions (A) considering 'philosophical insights, systems and methods' (Marinoff 2000, p.39) so as to finally manage the situation as a whole.

In Marinoff's view, this is the stage in which PC carries out its most peculiar function, for it explicitly investigates into 'different philosophies offering contrasting ideas of a specific situation as well as divergent solutions' (Marinoff 2000, p.39). In an attempt to enrich the analysis, at this stage, philosophical counsellors can present alternative philosophical perspectives that respond to the problem under examination or suggest readings (type C dialogue). In the final stage of *Equilibrium*, the problem is understood in its 'essence' (Marinoff 2000, p.39) and clients become 'ready to take appropriate and justifiable action' (Marinoff 2000, p.40). Despite having declared to care for the quality of the overall process rather than to the achievement of a particular result, Marinoff often refers to solving the clients' problem as the actual purpose of PC. Specifically, he said he tries to untangle the problem his clients face, classifying its component and implication as to find the 'best solution' (Marinoff 2000, p.9). Such an optimal solution would be taken by embracing 'a philosophical approach compatible with [clients'] own belief system yet consonant with time-honored principles of wisdom that help leading a more virtuous and effective life' (Marinoff 2000, p.9).

Despite this, Marinoff stresses that PC should be able - at least ideally - to analyze clients' beliefs, help them to question them and, if necessary, to change them by means of questions such as: 'Who do we believe? What grounds do we have for believing as we do? What inferences do we draw from our beliefs? Are they valid? To what act are we committed or impelled by our beliefs and inferences? What are conceivable consequences of these acts, for ourselves and others? Are they likely? Are they desirable?' (Marinoff 2002, p. 89).

On the whole, the contents of Marinoff's PC are distant to Cohen's 'therapeutic approach'. Although he describes PC as a peculiar kind of 'therapy', according to Marinoff, his notion of 'therapy' differs from that carried out by psychiatric instruments like the DSM-5 which, on the contrary, is a diagnostic benchmark in Cohen's practice. Besides, the connotation he seems to give to the term 'psychotherapy' refers to concepts such as 'cure of souls' that he ascribes to the philosophical tradition to specifically differentiate PC from psychotherapies. One could thus be tempted to classify Marinoff's perspective among the above mentioned 'radical' approaches. The

prominence he gives to the necessity of a philosophical attitude to manage everyday problems and his criticism towards the psychiatric and psychotherapeutic monopoly on human 'mental' suffering could bring his viewpoint closer to that of Achenbach, Schuster and Lahav. Nonetheless, his notion of PC as a 'therapy for the sane' remains at least problematic, since it raises doubts that should be further investigated. Besides, Marinoff's popular approach to PC, imbued with a plain language aimed at self-promotion and marketing, and of hasty self-help strategies based on the strategic use of the most disparate philosophies, make his perspective difficult to classify.

Similar difficulties arise by analysing the training offer of the APPA. In addition to certificates for other types of philosophical practices[51], APPA's certification offer include a *Certification Program for Philosophical Counselors (Level I)* and a *Full Certification Program for Philosophical Counselors (Level II).*

Specifically, the first Level program for philosophical counsellors is open to *Adjunct* and *Affiliate Members* of APPA: *Adjunct Memberships* are offered to holders of an earned MA, ABD or Ph.D. in *Philosophy*, whereas *Affiliate Membership* can be recognized to professionals who works in other counseling fields, such as 'law, pastoral counseling, psychiatry, psychology, social work etc.', as long as they 'explicitly or implicitly utilize philosophical elements in their practices'.[52] Although access priority is given to *Adjunct members*, the Level I Certification of Philosophical Counsellor can be *de facto* obtained by professionals who have no specific academic training in Philosophy. The program, which is meant to give 'practitioners the necessary tools to build a counselling practice',[53] has a duration of three days and includes seminars on 'Theories, Resources, Techniques, Useful Methods and Skills' on PC, a 'Demonstration of Counseling Session', as well as advice to interpret 'Philosophical Counseling as a Business' and to 'Build a Practice'.[54] Certification is obtained by solely attending the course, which means participants have no evaluative exam to pass. Arguably, these two clauses make this certification criteria not particularly strict, at least as far as the formative potential of the course is concerned.[55] Nonetheless, after being certified in the first level, philosophical counsellors have to be supervised in their practice for a year by a fully certified

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[51]Currently, APPA provides certification programs for Consulting, Facilitation, Socratic Dialogue, 'Well-Shod Philosophers' and 'Barefoot philosophers', see URL: https://appa.edu/programs/ Last access 20/03/2020.

[52]Constitution of the American Philosophical Practitioners Association', article V. See URL: https://appa.edu/documents/ Last access 20/03/2020.

[53] 'Counseling Level II'. See URL: https://appa.edu/programs/ Last access 20/03/2020.

[54] 'Counseling Level I'. See URL: https://appa.edu/programs/ Last access 20/03/2020.

[55] Years ago, this approach has earned Marinoff some criticisms regarding the lack of rigor in the training of counsellors. As reported by Daniel Duane on The New York Times, the psychologist and philosopher David O' Donaghue would consider 'Marinoff's three-day certification efforts ''ludicrous'' and that ''the psychologists are laughing at us!''', see Duane 2004, URL: https://www.nytimes.com/2004/03/21/magazine/the-socratic-shrink.html, Last Access: 14/3/2021.

counsellor. The Level II Certification program provides 'detailed feedback on case studies, along with full APPA certification'[56], and it is addressed only to counsellors who have at least one year of experience. After having obtained the first level Certification, filled a questionnaire on their experience as counsellors and submitted ten case studies, candidates are evaluated by members of APPA's Faculty and then granted the new Certification. The criteria for obtaining this higher certificate seem certainly more selective and surely both certifications offer the possibility to belong to a structured group and to possess a recognizable qualification in the marketplace. Nevertheless, doubts on the Level I program, which actually introduces to the exercise of the profession, remain. Although Marinoff's outlook has aroused suspicions and strong criticisms in the field of PC,

it is, to date, the one with which the discipline may be easily identified by the lay public, due to the fame of the best-seller *'Plato, not Prozac*!'. In analyzing PC as a socio-cultural phenomenon, it is therefore necessary to take this fact into account. When exploring the Italian context, we will understand to what extent this viewpoint is actually influencing the development of PC in the country.

I.5 Recapitulatory Considerations

As mentioned in the introduction, philosophical practices are a heterogeneous set of disciplines, born with different purposes and in dissimilar cultural contexts during the twentieth century. In this first part of this chapter, I analysed *Philosophische Praxis / Philosophical Counselling*, I presented Philosophical Counselling (PC), a new profession in which a trained counsellor dialogues with a client, so as to investigate the client's 'existential dilemmas' and concrete life-problems.

First, I have reconstructed the history of this discipline, explaining the dynamics with which it intersected closely with the spreading of other philosophical practices, giving the way, at the same time, to the 'Philosophical Practice movement'.

To navigate the multitude of approaches characterizing this new-born disciple I then proposed my taxonomy. My goal was to systematise the complexity and untangle the rather contradictory nature of the actual landscape of PC.

I identified a *Radical* approach, conceiving PC as a non-therapeutic, meta-methodological, non-aim-oriented, non-theoretically-determined, non-hierarchical and critical dialogical exchange

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[56] See URL: https://appa.edu/programs/ see 'Counseling Level II' Last access 20/03/2020.

between an expert in philosophy and a client. This approach is based on the assumption that most human problems originate from 'philosophical' issues, such as the meaning of life, the value of love, ethics, engagement etc., and should therefore be addressed and explored from a 'philosophical' perspective. Radical PC aims at rethinking the role of the philosopher within contemporary society and at challenging the monopoly of mental health disciplines in dealing with human distress. Practitioners embracing this perspective question the abuse of medical terms in describing every human problem and the consequential 'psychopatologization' of everyday life. The radical approach openly challenges some psychotherapeutic paradigms and warns against the attempts of appropriation of the new discipline by mental health specialists through legislation, state certifications and their constant supervision.

This orientation also problematizes clients' need for help, trying to empower clients' ability to manage their life independently through philosophical reflection. In this group, I inserted Gerd Achebach's *Philosophische Praxis,* Lahav's investigation in clients' 'worldview', and Shlomit Schuster's 'trans-therapeutic' philosophical psychoanalysis.

I then identified a *Therapeutic* approach to PC, in which the counsellor is a trained practitioner setting the goals of the counselling sessions in accordance with the clients, following a fixed methodology to conduct the sessions. According to this perspective, PC is a form of psychotherapy and, therefore, must refer to psychiatric diagnostic instruments such as the DSM-5 to define its scope and limits. Therapeutic PC is based on measurable criteria and requires practitioners to be trained in psychology and/or to be constantly supervised by mental health professionals. Therapeutic PC does not question the psychotherapeutic framework, it provides some schematized ideals on concepts such as 'happiness' and 'wisdom' and guide the clients in achieving them through rational dialogue. I inserted in this group Cohen's Logic Based Therapy (LBT).

Lastly, I defined an *Intermediate* approach to PC that has opened a dialogue with mental health disciplines, sharing with them some theoretical assumptions, some methodologies and the aim to expressly ameliorate clients' life. In this group, I included Peter Raabe's perspective on PC for his effort to emphasize the similarities between philosophical counselling and some forms of psychotherapy. In this last group I also inserted Lou Marinoff's reading of PC. His mystical and provocative style has been harshly criticized by philosophical counsellors that accused him to jeopardize the reputation of the new discipline. Nonetheless his approach to PC is, to date, the one with which this practice may be identified by the lay public, due to the fame of his best-seller '*Plato, not Prozac*!'.

Having understood the different approaches to PC, I am now going to assess the extent to which the Italian cultural, political and legal *milieu* has influenced the introduction and development of this discipline in the country. My basic assumption is that studying the theories underlying the various philosophical practices is not enough to understand them comprehensively. Indeed, by the very fact of being 'practical', philosophical practices emerge immediately as a social phenomenon and, therefore, an exhaustive critique of them is possible only by understanding through which laws, modalities and institutions they are and can be implemented.

I.6 'Counseling Filosofico' and 'Consulenza Filosofica' in Italy

After having outlined the history and main coordinates of PC in the world, and having analysed the most significant theories of some internationally recognized authors, in this second part of the chapter, I reconstruct the history of the introduction of PC into Italy.

PC was introduced in Italy around the end of the Nineties by a very small number of philosophers, psychologists, and psychotherapists. After having become aware of the Philosophical practice movement independently, they started to investigate the international debate on such phenomenon and began to discuss with the intention to promote it in Italy (see Volpone 2013b, pp. 56-70, Pollastri 2007, p. 1). Two years later, in the spring of 2000, the group, comprising '11 laureati in filosofia, 3 psicoterapeuti e 1 psicologo' (Volpone 2013b, p. 55),[57] founded the first 'Italian Association of Philosophical Counseling' (Associazione Italiana di Counseling Filosofico - AICF) in Turin. According to one of its founders, the philosopher Neri Pollastri, in AICF's statute one could spot the signs of a 'terminological redundancy' that stemmed from a still evident 'conceptual confusion' on the discipline (Pollastri 2007, p.2). Such confusion resulted in the impossibility of finding an agreement on the Italian denomination of the discipline. In fact, psychologists proposed to call it 'counseling filosofico', on the basis of the American and British denomination 'philosophical counselling',[58] whilst philosophers favoured the neologism 'consulenza filosofica' (i.e. 'philosophical

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[57] Among the founders, there were also Stefano Zampieri and, above all, Umberto Galimberti, a well-known philosopher and psychoanalyst who contributed significantly to public awareness of the phenomenon. See his book on the rising of PC as a response to an alleged crisis of classical psychoanalysis, Galimberti 2005.

[58] As Pollastri recalls, at the time, philosophical counselling was known mostly in the interpretation of the English author Tim Le Bon, (see Pollastri 2018a) URL: https://www.neripollastri.it/2018/04/18/ventanni-di-consulenza-filosofica-e-ancora-impera-la-disinformazione/ Last Access: 24/05/2021.

consultancy') as a translation of the German 'Philosophische Praxis', coined by Achenbach. The debate on such issue was developed over the years in Italian specialised journals and in a series of monographs. While it might sound like a superficial debate on nomenclature, it actually addressed core questions and themes that were already discussed internationally, such as the distinction between philosophical counselling/consultancy and psychotherapies, or the dilemma on whether to define the methods and objectives of philosophical counselling/consultancy's sessions or not. The impossibility of finding an initial agreement led to diverging theoretical positions: 'gli psicologi volevano dar vita a una nuova professione d'aiuto, che portasse con sé tutti gli strumenti psicologici tipici di quelle professioni, mentre i filosofi – coerentemente al dettato del fondatore dell'attività, Achenbach – volevano creare una professione del tutto nuova e basata solo sul filosofare, sulla chiarificazione del pensiero degli ospiti'(Pollastri 2018a).[59] Such an incompatibility of viewpoints led to a group splitting in 2001 and to the creation of two different associations, SiCoF (Società Italiana Counseling Filosofico, i.e. Italian Society of Philosophical Counseling), and Phronesis (Italian Association for Philosophical Consultancy), founded in 2003.

SICoF was founded by psychologists and psychotherapists, under the guidance of psychiatrist Ludovico Berra, to promote a new helping profession. Such profession would aim at assisting clients in finding 'soluzioni o riposte a problemi di carattere esistenziale, aiutando l'individuo a prendere decisioni, risolvere dubbi, gestire crisi, migliorare le relazioni, sviluppare risorse, promuovere e sviluppare la consapevolezza personale'.[60] Instead, Phronesis' philosophical consultants intended to found and promote philosophical consultancy according to the original theories of *Philosophische Praxis*'s founder Achenbach.

In 2004, Umberto Galimberti and Neri Pollastri, in collaboration with the publishing house APOGEO, launched a book series expressly dedicated to philosophical consultancy, which testifies to the growing interest in the phenomenon even at the editorial level.

Philosophical consultancy and other philosophical practices blossomed in the decade 2005-2015, so much so that, in 2006, philosopher Pier Aldo Rovatti founded the *Osservatorio critico sulla consulenza filosofica* at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Trieste, which was renamed the *Osservatorio critico sulle pratiche filosofiche* two years later (see Casarin, Scarazzato

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[59] See URL: https://www.neripollastri.it/2018/04/18/ventanni-di-consulenza-filosofica-e-ancora-impera-la-disinformazione/ Last Access: 24/05/2021.

[60] See URL: https://www.sscf.it/Master%20SSCF/index.html#:~:text=Il%20Counseling%20Filosofico%20%C3%A8%20una,e%20sviluppare%20la%20consapevolezza%20personale. Last Access: 07/08/2021.

2013, p.239). Initially the *Osservatorio's* main purpose was to monitor the development of philosophical consultancy within the country; however, the group's objectives soon expanded, aiming to investigate the various applications of different philosophical practices in Italy.[61] Indeed, in Italy philosophical counselling and consultancy developed more or less in conjunction with other disciplines such as Philosophy 4 Children,[62] Café Philo and Socratic Dialogue, following the contemporary trend of the international 'Philosophical practice movement' of co-opting disciplines and methodologies coming from different historical-cultural contexts. However, in those years, the interest raised by philosophical counselling and consultancy was high and was fostered by the growing number of training courses provided by new private schools, associations, and Universities. In addition, philosophical consultants managed to start local projects in council offices, hospitals, and psychiatric wards where they assisted psychiatrists and psychotherapists by facilitating group discussions with patients.[63]

All this certainly demonstrates the great interest that the composite movement of philosophical practices had in Italy at first. According to claims by practitioners and scholars such as Pollastri or Rovatti, the general attention given to these practices originated from what they call a noticeable 'need for philosophy' in Italian society. Such a need would arise from the widespread feeling that, nowadays, philosophy is 'confined' within academic specialised research, with the consequence that it is no longer interested in 'existential' problems. In line with Achenbach's views, they maintain that philosophical inquiry could give a broader understanding of such problems, which would imply a radical rethinking of the role of philosophy in the life of a non-specialised public (see Rovatti 2006, Pollastri 2004). Most importantly though, the establishment of a new profession would represent a further possibility for Philosophy graduates to carry out an activity linked to their main interests. Rovatti has emphasised the reasons that generally motivate undergraduates to study Philosophy at university. Namely, students' and researchers' main reason for choosing such a path seems to be the genuine passion for philosophy. In his view, Philosophical consultancy has been perceived by most Philosophy students as a coherent completion of a career based mainly on passion (see Rovatti 2006, p.91 f).

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[61] See Osservatorio Critico Sulle Pratiche Filosofiche 2009.
[62] However, in the next chapter, I am going to show that P4C has a history partly independent of the rest of the Italian Philosophical practice movement, as it had already been introduced a few years before as a proposal to renew the teaching of Philosophy within the Italian school system.
[63] See for instance (Galimberti, Perissinotto, Rossi 2011) and (Pollastri 2013).

Currently, more than twenty years after the arrival of philosophical counselling and consultancy in Italy, there are still many schools and associations organising training courses, as well as philosophical retreats, events, conferences, and summer schools concerning the vast ensemble of philosophical practices. However, alongside the hopes and some valuable projects and experiences, as Pollastri recently noted,[64] philosophical counselling and consultancy are both still struggling to emerge as a profession, so much so that in Italy there is hardly any professional who can live on their salary.

Besides, the development of philosophical counselling and consultancy has raised the perplexity of both outside observers and some practitioners, albeit for different reasons. In the first case, for example, the sociologist Alessandro Dal Lago, in a well-known controversial pamphlet, *Il business del pensiero*, maintained that 'turning Philosophy into a profession' is a reason to be wary of this discipline. According to Dal Lago, such an occurrence would represent an attempt to commodify philosophical thinking (See Dal Lago 2007, p.65 ff). According to Dal Lago, the very professionalization of philosophy represents a philosophical problem and a risk of impoverishment for this discipline. In line with Dal Lago's insights, the scholar Tiziano Possamai engaged in a general philosophical critique of western contemporary culture to explain the rise of PC. Amongst the various interesting points in his analysis, he saw a risk that PC could reinforce the so-called 'therapy culture' paradigm outlined by sociologist Frank Furedi (See Furedi 2004), despite the stated purpose of PC to question that very paradigm (See Possamai 2011).

For others, such as the consultant Pollastri, philosophical consultancy in itself was a great opportunity for the renewal of philosophy but he criticised the business created around the discipline. Notably, for Pollastri, universities and private schools often participated in what he calls the 'business della formazione', organising expensive 'master professionalizzanti nei quali insegnano per principio docenti che non hanno mai né praticato, né studiato la professione stessa (Pollastri 2007, p.9). Likewise, he warned that since philosophical consultancy was a new-born practice in Italy, proposing it as a real job opportunity for young graduates was a fraud (Pollastri 2007, p.10). Indeed, some philosophical consultants admitted that the first university courses were created 'non per rispondere a un bisogno del mercato, ma per creare nel mercato un bisogno di filosofi' (Guadalupe Masi, Rossi 2013, p. 213).

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[64]See N. Pollastr 2019i, Confondere la Prassi col Pragmatismo e Uccidere la Consulenza Filofica,16/12/2019, URL: https://www.neripollastri.it/2019/12/16/confondere-la-prassi-col-pragmatismo-e-uccidere-la-consulenza-lesempio-di-un-libro/ Last Access 11/8/22.

In this part, I investigate Italian philosophical consultancy and counselling as a socio-cultural phenomenon, leaving aside the philosophical issues raised by this practice and already investigated by Possamai and others.[65]

Indeed, I believe that an exhaustive critique of philosophical counselling and consultancy is possible only by understanding the laws, modalities and institutions through which it is and can be implemented.

My research develops on two main levels. On the one hand, I analyse the socio-cultural factors and trends of Italian society that favoured the entry of PC and the launch of philosophical counselling and consultancy in the Italian labour market. Through a brief analysis of university reforms and the labour market performance from the early 2000s onwards, I show that Italy was going through a period of intense changes and instability. My aim is to show that such institutional and cultural context may have favoured the emergence of these disciplines as a product to be marketed to an audience of aspiring practitioners and potential users.

On the other hand, I hypothesise the cause of the difficulties in affirming philosophical counselling and consultancy as professions. In my opinion, such a difficulty has the following causes: the initial problematic differentiation between philosophical counselling and consultancy and their partial overlap; a general disagreement on the founding principles of philosophical consultancy as a profession; the chaotic multiplicity of approaches in universities' and private associations' training offer; non-stringent and shared access criteria to training courses; the terminological confusion and the carelessness in the internet dissemination; an insufficient legislation on the regulatory principles of this profession; the presence of an already saturated neighbouring professional field such as that of psychotherapies and other counselling types.

To account for these ideas, I investigate the legal and social aspects that have influenced the process of professionalization of philosophical counselling in Italy; the main points of the theoretical debate on these disciplines' professionalization pathway; the main schools' programmes and training offer.

I believe that, as a whole, not only do these elements hinder the emergence of this discipline but, above all, they risk characterizing it as a product to be sold to a potential public, which jeopardizes its potential innovative drive.

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[65] See for example, Miccione 2007, Pezzano 2008, Osservatorio Critico sulle Pratiche Filosofiche 2009.

In addressing these issues, my primary sources are personal websites, blogs, and social networks, as informal channels and the internet are the key ways in which this discipline is both defined and advertised so as to create a demand.

I.7 University Reforms and the Italian Labour Market in the Early 2000s

As stated, to understand PC as a cultural phenomenon, I first analyse the socio-cultural factors and trends of Italian society that favoured the entry of these disciplines in the country. Namely, in this section, I analyse the changes in the university system and in the Italian labour market which took place from the end of the Nineties onwards, that is, in conjunction with the launch and development of philosophical counselling and consultancy in the country.

The first aim of this survey is to show that PC was introduced in a period of profound transformation in Italian society. On the one hand, this period saw the radical rethinking of the Italian university according to European guidelines, the main purpose of which was to encourage the inclusion of young people in the labour market by creating new possible career paths. On the other hand, it was characterised by a simultaneous and progressive economic instability, by the general difficulty of graduates to find a stable job, and by the difficulty of graduates in the humanities to pursue a career in line with their studies.

The purpose of this survey is to show how these changes in the general framework have encouraged the initial positive reception of PC in Italy and, at the same time, have favoured the emergence of this discipline as a product to be marketed to an audience of aspiring practitioners.

As for the first point, the proliferation of training courses and university master's courses in philosophical consultancy and counselling denounced by Pollastri is partly attributable to the Italian academic system, which in the last twenty years has been gradually structured in order to favour such a phenomenon.

Notably, the second half of the Nineties represents a turning point in the Italian reformist project of higher education. In those years, the centre-left government led by Romano Prodi was faced with a series of crucial questions regarding the status of the Italian university. Specifically, the main problems concerned a general inefficiency of the system due to an overly centralized and elitist organization and the need to adapt to European guidelines (see Vaira 2011, pp. 79-83). In order to address these issues, Italy decided to adapt the overall higher education apparatus to the criteria of what they called 'università di massa'. Namely, this involved trying to increase the number of

graduates, equipping the system with degree courses of various levels of specialization. As a secondary outcome, this measure intended to lower the students' age on graduation. The final aim of such a strategy would have been to accelerate the entry of young people into the labour market, so as to conform the Italian higher education system to European standards (see Potestio 2014, p.546).

Some agreements reached between European countries in the second half of the Nineties turned out to be fundamental for the restructuring of the Italian university. Events such as the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997) and the Sorbonne Declaration (1998) framed all recent Italian reformism in higher education.[66] In Italy, the changes made during the mandate of Ortensio Zecchino, Minister of University and Research from 1998 to 2001, with the crucial collaboration of Luigi Berlinguer, marked an epochal change in accordance with the European project.[67] The primary objective of Zecchino and Berlinguer's project, the so-called 'Riforma del 3+2', was to equate university degrees and levels of study with the European directives, by breaking the university course of study into two (or more) levels (BA/BSc and MA/MSc) with different durations and objectives. Through the 'decreto ministeriale 3 novembre 1999, n.509', 'Regolamento recante norme concernenti l'autonomia didattica degli atenei',[68] the ministry established, in article 3, the

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[66]Specifically, the Lisbon Recognition Convention, officially named 'Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region', led to a legal agreement elaborated by the Council of Europe in collaboration with the UNESCO. Such an agreement stipulated a series of procedures for the recognition of Higher education qualifications among the signatory States. This process would eventually lead to the harmonization of titles within these countries (See URL: https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/165, Last Access: 14/10/19). The Paris meeting was the second step in this process. The Sorbonne Declaration (See URL: http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/1998_Sorbonne/61/2/1998_Sorbonne_Declaration_English_552612.pdf Last Access 14/10/19) was signed by the education ministers of France, Germany, United Kingdom and Italy and intended to create a common framework within the area so as to promote mobility for students, graduates and teaching staff. The Italian minister of Education at the time was Luigi Berlinguer. These two events paved the way to the so-called 'Bologna process' , a program of international reform of higher education systems consisting in a series of official meetings and agreements between EU and non-EU countries. This set of ongoing manoeuvres was intended to assure comparable standards of higher education qualifications in these countries. The process led to the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which aimed at creating more coherent systems of higher education in Europe. The basic higher education system outlined within the 'Bologna process' (See URL: https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/higher-education/bologna-process-and-european-higher-education-area_en, Last access: 13/10/19) over the years consists of three cycles of university qualifications consisting of bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies which are framed within the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).
[67] In its general conception, Zecchino and Berlinguer's reform is currently still partially active. Indeed, the following university reforms did not drastically alter the overall structure of university's degrees courses and cyclces. Notably, Letizia Moratti's 'D.M. 22 ottobre 2004, n. 270' provided that, after the first year of the first level degree, students could choose between a preparatory two-year course for the second level degree and a employability-oriented two-year pathway. This expedient has been called 'modello Y', due to the bifurcation that could be implemented after the first year of the degree course. Such bifurcation intended to facilitate the 'interdisciplinarità dei percorsi di formazione' (Malizia 2011, p. 135) and to further enhance the employability after first level degrees. In addition, the D.M 270/2004 also renames the Laurea Specialistica 'Laurea magistrale'.
[68] See URL: http://www.miur.it/0006Menu_C/0012Docume/0098Normat/2088Regola.htm, Last access: 17/10/19

names and types of the various levels of university courses. Specifically, the article distinguishes between a First Level Degree (Laurea di Primo Livello - L), Master's Degree (Laurea Specialistica - LS), Postgraduate Diploma (Diploma post-laurea - DS) and Doctorate (Dottorato di ricerca - DR).

Through this adaptation to international agreements, Italy intended to counteract two intrinsic problems of the previous university structure, organized in 'single-cycle' degree courses ('Laurea a ciclo unico') lasting 4, 5 or 6 years. Such issues were the 'dispersione universitaria' (high drop-out rates), and the endemic phenomenon of the so-called 'studenti fuoricorso' (students graduating one or more years later than prescribed). Indeed, 'la riforma del 3+2 stimava di incoraggiare i disorientati, parcellizzando gli obiettivi' (Briguglio 2011, p.6).[69] In particular, the first level degree was supposed to have general, vocational and culturally generalist contents, aiming to equip students with the basic skills to access the labour market.

Finally, the reform establishes that each degree could be followed by a one-year vocational course, the so-called 'Master di I livello' (i.e. First Level Master course) and 'Master di II livello' (i.e. Second Level Master course). University Masters have employability aims, and do not constitute a necessary step to progress in higher education. They are promoted and financed by each university independently, in many cases in collaboration with external companies,[70] and are organized at university departments or external institutes, special schools and other centres. University special Master courses are a *unicuum* in the European university system and should not be confused with the international title of 'Master's degree' (MA/MSc), which corresponds to Italian 'Laurea Magistrale'.[71]

Such changes in Italian university are particularly relevant, in that philosophical counselling and consultancy entered Italy in conjunction with the implementation of the '3 + 2 reform' and with the organization of the first university master courses. As I am going to show in detail in the following sections, the Italian educational system seized the opportunity to promote specialist degree

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[69] See also, Malizia 2011, p. 131: 'La percentuale dei laureati rispetto alla media degli immatricolati scendeva dal 62% del 1970 al 45% del 2000; il tasso degli abbandoni si collocava intorno al 60% dopo aver raggiunto il 70% negli anni '70; i fuori corsi assommavano pressoché a uno su due iscritti (il 41% nel 2000 in paragone al 17% del 1970); la durata media effettiva degli studi era di 7/8 anni per la laurea e di 4 per il diploma, per cui il ritardo medio rispetto alla durata regolare era di oltre tre anni, e l'età media in cui si conseguiva la laurea si situava a circa 27 anni; la percentuale degli studenti che nel 2000-01 ottenevano la laurea in corso era minima, il 4%, mentre nel caso del DU saliva al 37%, ma in ogni caso il dato globale era il 7%'.

[70] Sometimes the external training companies participate in the financing of the master and, in collaboration with other partners, they organize internships for the attendees aimed at a subsequent possible recruitment.

[71] Likewise, Italian university Masters are not to be confused with the numerous master's courses existing in the Italian private sector. In the latter case, generally the term 'master' does not define the final qualification awarded but the course itself. Indeed, qualifications having legal value can only be issued by public institutions or authorized institutions.

courses and university masters in philosophical counselling even though the profession had not yet taken off and there was in fact no market demand for this profession. Thus, Higher Education was one of the first channels for promoting this discipline.

The second factor that favoured the entry of PC as a new career possibility for graduates in the humanities was the inconstant performance of the labour market, which did not offer satisfactory career opportunities for this group of graduates. To describe the labour market performance, I mainly refer to ISTAT's (Istituto nazionale di statistica) 'Rapporti Annuali' (i.e. 'Annual Reports', from now on "RA") from the early 2000s onwards, since they offer an accurate summary of the general picture of the Italian labour market in that period.

First, I take into account the 2000 RA, because it was written just before the adoption of the Euro in Italy and rolling out of the '3 + 2' university reform. According to the 2000 RA, Italy was going through a period of general growth which had started in 1996. The general expansionary cycle of the Italian economy was inscribed in the general positive trend of the European Union countries, which started in the second half of the 1990s[72] and continued at until the early 2000s. This occurrence has been explained as an initial positive outcome of the European economic policies following the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and, subsequently, as a positive consequence of the adoption of the single European currency (See RA ISTAT 2005, p.141). Indeed, the overall job offer had increased year by year, mainly thanks to a greater participation of women in the working class and to the 'terziarizzazione' (i.e. expansion of service industries) within the labour market.[73]

Nonetheless, from 1993 onwards, so-called 'atypical contracts' (i.e. part-time or short-term contracts) have always contributed more than the 'standard contracts' (i.e. permanent contracts) to the variation of employment data.[74] On this regard, the so-called 'pacchetto Treu', a delegated

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[72] 'Nell'Unione europea il robusto ciclo occupazionale si è avviato nel terzo trimestre del 1994, ha raggiunto il picco nel quarto trimestre del 1999 (con un tasso di crescita tendenziale del 2,3 per cento) e ha quindi iniziato una fase di rallentamento. Dopo il quarto trimestre del 2002 (quando la crescita è stata dello 0,5 per cento), la dinamica dell'occupazione ha messo a segno una nuova accelerazione, che ha consentito di ritornare, nella media dei primi tre trimestri del 2005, a un tasso di crescita tendenziale dell'1,4 per cento' RA ISTAT 2005, p. 141. The unemployment rate in the period considered (1994-2005) also fell steadily in the EU countries: 'Tra il 1994 e il 2005, l'insieme dei mercati del lavoro dei paesi dell'Ue15 ha progressivamente ridotto il tasso di disoccupazione medio dal 10,5 al 7,9 per cento delle forze di lavoro, RA ISTAT 2005, p. 144.

[73] 'il volume di lavoro dei servizi è cresciuto del 2,3% (347 mila unità di lavoro standard), giungendo a rappresentare circa il 65% dell'input complessivo di lavoro impiegato nel processo produttivo', RA ISTAT 2000, p. 5. The employment rate, which has been increasing since 1996, reached 53.5% in 2000. On the causes of the 'terizarizzazione' of labour, see RA ISTAT 2000, p. 164 ff.

[74] This continued to happen despite the constant increase in standard contracts between 1997 and 2000. In fact, this virtuous three-year period records the increase in employment in all fields and with all types of contracts, See RA ISTAT 2000, p. 53

law sanctioning 'Norme in materia di promozione dell'occupazione',[75] launched by the then Minister of Labour Tiziano Treu during 1996-1998 Prodi's first government, is particularly relevant, since it reshaped Italian labour market by regulating various types of contracts. These contracts are characterized by a greater or lesser stability of the employment relationship (permanent or fixed-term job) and by a greater or lesser duration of working time (full-time or part-time job). The intention of the legislator was to create a more dynamic market and a general increase in employment.

Nevertheless, as I will show, over the years the new model of 'flexible work' has constituted a first determining factor in the development of the phenomenon of the so-called 'precari intellettuali', also known as 'cognitari', i.e. those who work, in an unstable and scarcely guaranteed manner, using their own 'conoscenze teoriche e specialistiche, spesso con contratti di collaborazione, nel mercato intellettuale e delle nuove tecnologie'.[76] Indeed, the types of contracts introduced with Treu's law have actually started

'una segmentazione del mercato del lavoro in termini di condizioni contrattuali e di tutele del lavoratore, cosicché oggi il mercato del lavoro si caratterizza per una chiara bipartizione dei lavoratori tra quelli con contratti di lavoro a tempo indeterminato e quelli con altre forme contrattuali, con una scarsa permeabilità tra i due segmenti e una difficoltà di transitare dall'occupazione temporanea a quella permanente' (RA ISTAT 2012, p. 124)

As I will show, graduates in the humanities, like Philosophy graduates, have been particularly penalized over the years and are fully part of the new 'intellectual precariat'. This is one of the reasons why PC has been marketed as an enticing new career prospect for them.

Between 2001 and 2004, Italian unemployment rate had reached a level similar to that of the majority of EU countries whilst the employment rate had reached better values than most of the other European countries.[77]

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[75] Legge 24 giugno 1997, n. 196, See URL: https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1997/07/04/097G0227/sg, LAST ACCESS: 08/12/2019

[76] See URL: http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/cognitario_%28Neologismi%29/ Last Access: 08/12/2019.

[77] 'Tra il terzo trimestre del 2000 e il primo trimestre del 2004, la crescita occupazionale trimestrale media dell'Italia è stata dell'1,7 per cento (0,7 punti più di quella dell'Ue15), e nel primo trimestre del 2001 ha superato il valore del 3 per cento. La crescita ha subito un pesante ridimensionamento dal secondo trimestre del 2004 in poi: il tasso medio di variazione tendenziale è sceso a più 0,7 punti percentuali e, nella seconda parte del 2005, la crescita si è quasi arrestata', RA ISTAT 2005, p. 142.

However, despite these positive general signals, in 2005 some critical issues concerning the new characteristics of the labour market emerged clearly. Indeed, the new 'flexible job market' was more and more characterized by the widespread diffusion of atypical part-time and short-term contracts, which were often accepted due to the lack of alternatives.[78]

Furthermore, new criticalities emerged for workers that are particularly relevant for my argument. In particular, finding a good match between the qualification obtained through secondary and higher education and the profession practiced was becoming rather difficult: '1,9 milioni di occupati (il 9,0 per cento del totale) svolgono un lavoro relativamente più qualificato in confronto al titolo di studio conseguito. Un numero quasi doppio di occupati (3,7 milioni pari al 16,5 per cento del totale) possiede invece un titolo superiore a quello maggiormente richiesto per svolgere quella professione' (RA ISTAT 2005, p.169). Specifically, such a phenomenon of 'sovra-inquadramento' concerned the over 40s who have been working for many years, whilst the opposite phenomenon of 'sotto-inquadramento' mainly concerned young people who had just entered the marketplace at the end of their studies: in fact, more than half of the 'sotto-inquadrati' were under-34, or workers with atypical contracts. [79]

Among graduates, those suffering the most from 'sotto-inquadramento' were new graduates[80] and the graduates in humanities and social studies.[81] The lack of professional experience of young people and the scarce adaptability of the qualification achieved were considered the main causes of this phenomenon (See RA ISTAT 2005, p.178).

These data are important, since 2005 RA shows the first tangible effects of Berlinguer's reform; indeed, as previously shown, this reform was intended to improve the connection between

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[78] 'Il nostro paese presenta la più alta incidenza di part time involontario tra i principali partner dell'Unione. Tra gli occupati part time tra 15 e 64 anni, il 42,2 per cento non ha infatti trovato un lavoro a tempo pieno, contro il 20,8 per cento della media europea. In Italia le donne tra 30 e 54 anni che vorrebbero lavorare a tempo pieno sono circa un terzo di quelle che lavorano a orario ridotto, contro il 18 per cento della media Ue. Tra i giovani, l'incidenza del part time involontario è intorno al 60 per cento sia per gli uomini sia per le donne, circa il doppio rispetto a quella dei 25 paesi dell'Unione complessivamente considerati' RA ISTAT 2005, p. 183.

[79] 'si registra una maggiore incidenza di occupazione sottoinquadrata nelle forme di lavoro meno tradizionali. Il 43,8 per cento degli occupati a termine, il 34,5 per cento di quelli in part time e il 31,1 per cento dei lavoratori con rapporti di collaborazione è impiegata in lavori poco qualificati. Per i giovani fino a 34 anni l'incidenza dei lavoratori sottoinquadrati nell'occupazione a termine raggiunge il 47,4 per cento' RA ISTAT 2005, p.176.

[80] 'Sussiste una relazione molto netta tra la distanza dall'anno di conseguimento del titolo di studio e la probabilità di trovare un lavoro non adeguato al livello di istruzione: si passa dal 50,8 per cento dei soggetti che hanno conseguito il titolo negli ultimi due anni, al 9,1 per cento di coloro che possiedono l'attuale titolo di studio da almeno dieci anni.' RA ISTAT 2005, p.171.

[81] 'Tra i laureati in studi umanistici e sociali e quelli in scienze economico-statistiche, che pure trovano lavoro più rapidamente dopo la laurea, la quota di coloro che svolgono un lavoro sottoinquadrato è quasi il doppio rispetto ai colleghi laureati in discipline scientifiche o in ingegneria (rispettivamente 44,0 e 48,8 a fronte del 26,1 e del 25,3 per cento).' RA ISTAT 2005, p.173.

universities and the marketplace and, therefore, it is crucial to evaluate it. The picture outlined thus far clearly highlights a condition of fragility for young people, despite the still favourable economic conjuncture. In fact, even among young graduate workers, the widespread use of short-term contracts, aggravated by the lack of social safety nets offered centrally by the state, hindered their independence and economic stability (see RA ISTAT 2005, p.187).

The 2008 RA is equally important, as it offers a perspective of the Italian situation at the outbreak of the profound economic crisis that began in the United States in 2006. Such a crisis marked its first effects in Europe in 2008, exacerbating in 2011 in the eurozone and particularly in Italy.[82] During 2008, the Italian employment rate grew less intensely than the unemployment rate for the first time since 1995.[83] At the same time, the use of short-term contracts was becoming so widespread, that it did no longer concern only the under 30s.[84] Precariousness became structural and it was increasingly common for Italian workers to have unstable jobs.

If we look at the unemployment figures, the general critical picture is complete: indeed, for the first time since 1999, unemployment has started to rise, as are those seeking employment.[85] The use of atypical contracts is one of the factors exposing workers to the risk of unemployment, since switching job seems particularly difficult. As a consequence, short-term unemployment is frequent, which evidently contributes to the phenomenon of precariousness.[86]

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[82] 'Nel corso del 2011 l'Italia si è trovata ad affrontare nuovamente una grave crisi di carattere finanziario, la quale ha prodotto, e sta tuttora producendo, importanti effetti sul sistema economico e sulle condizioni di vita della popolazione. Se la recessione del biennio 2008-2009 era stata originata al di fuori dell'Unione europea, la crisi avviata nel 2011 appare strettamente connessa a problematiche interne alla zona dell'euro e all'Italia. Sostenibilità della situazione del bilancio pubblico, necessità di riforme strutturali, rilancio della competitività del sistema economico, collocazione dell'Italia nel commercio mondiale, aumento dell'efficienza della Pubblica Amministrazione, lotta alla corruzione, perdita di credibilità della classe politica sono alcuni dei temi all'ordine del giorno nel dibattito pubblico, che stanno determinando un potenziale ripetersi del quadro politico, culturale ed economico che l'Italia si trovò ad affrontare nel 1992, primo anno sul quale l'Istat pubblicò il proprio Rapporto annuale.' RA ISTAT 2012, p. 59.

[83] 'la crescita degli occupati (183 mila persone in più rispetto a un anno prima) è, per la prima volta dal 1995, inferiore a quella dei disoccupati (186 mila in più).' RA ISTAT 2008, p. 173

[84] More specifically, 'circa 600 mila lavoratori temporanei hanno iniziato a lavorare da non più di due anni, ma 1 milione e 300 mila sono presenti nel mercato del lavoro da più di dieci; nell'80 per cento dei casi si tratta di occupati con almeno 35 anni di età', RA ISTAT 2008, p.179

[85] 'Il numero di persone in cerca di occupazione aumenta nella media del 2008 di 186 mila unità rispetto all'anno precedente. Nei dati destagionalizzati, inoltre, l'ampliamento dell'area della disoccupazione tra la primavera del 2007 e la fine del 2008 è ancora più esteso, e pari a 241 mila unità. Il numero delle persone in cerca di lavoro (1 milione e 692 mila unità) si è riportato sopra ai livelli del 2006' RA ISTAT 2008, p. 87.

[86]Besides, the suppression of job posts increased the employment turnover, which, in turn, favoured short-term unemployment. These effects were more evident for those who held unguaranteed contracts such as atypical contracts: 'Sia per i dipendenti sia per i collaboratori il motivo principale della perdita è la scadenza di un lavoro a termine: nei primi incide per il 53 per cento dei posti di lavoro persi nel 2008, nei secondi per oltre il 60 per cento. Inoltre, proseguendo la tendenza iniziata nel 2007, il numero di quanti hanno perso il precedente lavoro per il mancato rinnovo di un contratto a termine è aumentato su base annua del 13,8 per cento [...] Il fenomeno riguarda per il 37 per cento i giovani fino a 29 anni, per quasi un terzo gli ultraquarantenni. Il numero dei nuovi ex occupati che hanno perso il lavoro

It is thus clear that, in the preceding years of economic prosperity, the effects of 'the flexibility of labour' had been distorted by a favourable employment and economic conjuncture. As the overall picture started to change with the beginning of a general recessionary phase, the growth of employment stopped.

2008 is equally significant for the reconstruction of young graduates' situation, and particularly for the graduates in the humanities. In fact, 2008 is the first year in which it is possible to trace an occupational comparison between graduates who have completed long courses ('Laurea specialistica'or 'Laurea a ciclo unico' in the pre-Berlinguer system) and those who have obtained only the 'three-year degree' with the new system established though the '3 + 2 reform' (See RA ISTAT 2008, p. 222 in footnote).

ISTAT data show that, amongst the 'three-year graduates', 73.3% are employed, 12.1% are looking for a job and the remaining 14.7% do not work or look for a job, since they are mostly engaged in further training activities. This data seems encouraging, but the picture changes when observed in detail. Less than half of the three-year graduates who worked were engaged in ongoing work and, among those who had a stable job, most had started before obtaining the degree (See RA ISTAT 2008, p. 225). This means that the 'Laurea Triennale' did not immediately guarantee stability and, very often, it was not necessary to obtain a job. Most importantly, ISTAT analysis highlights that 'a trovare lavori nei quali la laurea non è richiesta, sono oltre sei laureati triennali su dieci dei gruppi giuridico e letterario' (RA ISTAT 2008, p. 231). These data attest to the particular difficulty of humanities graduates in finding a job that enhances their studies.

The situation changes slightly for those who have completed a five-year degree from the old system or a 'Laurea Magistrale' and have started to work after having obtained the degree: amongst this group, 56.1% - slightly more than half - are employed on an ongoing basis.

However, by investigating the data that divide the degrees into disciplinary sectors, it is possible to notice again the disadvantaged position of graduates in the humanities compared to others. In fact, in this group, both three-year graduates (35.3%) and Master's graduates (48.6%) are far from having a full and stable employment. The general situation markedly improves three years after graduation, when 91.1% of five-year graduates and 92% of three-year graduates are employed. Nevertheless, even in this case the situation remains delicate, since many of these graduates have short-term contracts, that is 'circa un terzo di chi ha concluso corsi lunghi e il 41,2 per cento dei

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per licenziamento nel corso del 2008 registra una brusca impennata, con una variazione tendenziale del 32 per cento' RA ISTAT 2008, p.192.

laureati triennali' (See RA ISTAT 2008, p. 228). In particular, graduates in the humanities are mainly involved in short-term jobs, both after obtaining a three-year degree (57.5%), and after obtaining the specialist degree (56.1%), (See RA ISTAT 2008, pp. 228-230). Finally, even among graduates in long courses in the humanities, a 'complete correspondence'[87] between educational qualifications and work carried out is declared by only 54.5% of the interviewees.[88] Once again, such a 'mismatch' testifies to a certain difficulty in dialogue between universities and the labour market, despite the reforms implemented precisely to provide university courses with a professional layout.

Recently, the Italian labour market is more competitive and in recovery, thanks to the substantial increase in the number of graduates between 2008 and 2018[89] and to the increase in the demand for qualified jobs between 2013 and 2015. In particular, employment rate returned to the levels prior to the 2008 crisis. Nevertheless, this positive figure was due exclusively to the 'lavoro dipendente',[90] which was mainly based on short-term contracts.[91] Furthermore, even if the share of permanent employees had remained more or less the same from 2008 to 2018, workers with a permanent full-time contract have decreased, whilst those with an unwanted part-time contract have doubled. [92] The result is that, on the whole, 'la ripresa dell'occupazione si accompagn[a] a un aumento della precarietà lavorativa e della vulnerabilità dei lavori più stabili' (RA ISTAT 2019, p.182).

But what is significantly striking is the difficulty of young people under 35 to fit satisfactorily into the difficult Italian labour market. In fact, youngsters have increasingly greater difficulties in accessing the working life on a stable basis, as shown by the decrease of almost 9% in permanent

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[87] The 'completa corrispondenza' entails the 'richiesta della laurea come requisito di accesso ed effettiva necessità delle competenze acquisite per lo svolgimento dell'attività lavorativa' RA ISTAT 2008, p.231.

[88] 'Anche in questo caso, i laureati che dichiarano una esatta corrispondenza tra titolo di studio e lavoro svolto sono poco più della metà tra quelli laureati in ambito letterario (54,5%). In questo caso però, la situazione è nettamente peggiore per i laureati in ambito politico sociale, i quali dichiarano esatta corrispondenza solo nel 33,7% dei casi' RA ISTAT 2008, Figura 4.25, p.230.

[89] 'nel decennio 2008-2018, la percentuale di laureati sulla popolazione di 15 anni e più passa dal 10,7 al 14,7 e, su quella tra i 20 ed i 34 anni, dal 16,3 al 22,0 per cento' RA ISTAT 2019, p.181.

[90] 'In dieci anni è aumentato di 682 mila unità (+4,0 per cento), a fronte di un calo di oltre mezzo milione di lavoratori autonomi, la cui quota sul totale occupati è scesa progressivamente (da 25,5 per cento nel 2008 a 22,9 per cento nel 2018)' RA ISTAT 2019, p.170.

[91] Except for the years 2014-2017, during which 'l'occupazione dipendente a tempo indeterminato ha progressivamente recuperato le perdite subite durante la crisi, grazie soprattutto al picco di crescita del 2016, a sua volta stimolato dagli incentivi allora in vigore', RA ISTAT 2019, p.170.

[92] In presenza di una quota di dipendenti a tempo indeterminato sostanzialmente invariata (dal 64,7 per cento del 2008 al 64,0 per cento del 2018), sono diminuiti gli occupati che possono contare su un lavoro stabile e a tempo pieno (da 55,9 per cento a 52,6 per cento). Di contro sono raddoppiati i dipendenti permanenti a tempo parziale involontario, la cui quota sul totale occupati è passata dal 3,2 al 6,8 per cento.' RA ISTAT 2019, p.171.

contracts[93] in this age group, as well as the scarcity of young people in the most qualified professions. In particular, young people under 35 are only the 10% of those employed in primary and secondary education, which is one of the most typical job outlooks for humanities graduates.

Besides, the greater presence of graduates in the marketplace has also favoured the aforementioned phenomenon of 'mismatch' between educational qualifications and professional choices. In 2018, 'i laureati "sovra-istruiti" sono circa 1,8 milioni […] in aumento nel quinquennio 2013-2018 dal 32,2 al 34,1 per cento anche per effetto dell'ingresso nel mercato del lavoro di generazioni più istruite'(RA ISTAT 2019, p.182), which is a sign that the Italian system still does not guarantee a full valorisation of higher education qualifications.

In particular, by investigating the training pathway and the experience in the labour market of graduates in 'Scienze Filosofiche', i.e. Philosophy, we can see that in 2018 their situation is particularly delicate. Data shared by *Almalaurea* show that, one year after graduation, 76.1% of three-year graduates are enrolled in a second-level degree, 20.1% are participating or have participated in a 'tirocinio post-laurea', 29.2% have a paid job, 19.7% are unemployed, 52.8% continue their pre-graduation job, and only 22% consider their degree as a necessary qualification for their current job.[94] These data show that three-year graduates generally prefer to continue to study, especially because, among those who work, only a rather small percentage considers their degree to be effective for their work. Evidently, the mechanism put in place by the '3 + 2 reform' is still rather penalizing for graduates in Philosophy.

The data available concerning second level graduates (i.e. those with a 'Laurea Magistrale') in 'Scienze Filosofiche', show a critical situation in the medium term. In fact, 3 years after graduation, 61.7% of interviewees are participating or have participated in a post-graduate training activity (internship, apprenticeship, doctorate, specialization, etc.), 62.3% work, 15.4% are unemployed, 20.8% continue their pre-graduation work, 41.9% consider their degree effective for their job.

These data highlight that few years after the master's degree, most Philosophy graduates considered it necessary and/or preferred to continue training. Furthermore, among those who work, less than half consider their degree as an effective qualification for their job. This means that in many cases, graduates in Philosophy find or choose jobs that are not in line with their studies.

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[93] 'la quota di dipendenti a tempo indeterminato tra i giovani è scesa dal 61,4 per cento del 2008 al 52,7 per cento del 2018, mentre quella degli over 35 è aumentata di 1,1 punti attestandosi al 67,1 per cento. Inoltre circa un terzo dei 15-34enni occupati nel 2018 ha un lavoro a tempo determinato.' RA ISTAT 2019, p.181.
[94] See URL: https://www2.almalaurea.it/cgi-php/lau/sondaggi/intro.php?config=occupazione Last access: 27/08/19.

Finally, long-term data show that, 5 years after the second level graduation, 66.5% of Philosophy graduates are participating or have participated in a post-graduate training activity, 66% work; 12.8% are unemployed; 16,4% continue the job they did before graduation, 46.7% consider their degree as an effective qualification for their job. [95]

This means that, for graduates in Philosophy, prospects for full-time employment (whether temporary or stable) are still distant even 5 years after the Laurea Magistrale. Most importantly, a remarkable part (more than half) of the graduates who effectively work, choose or accept jobs that are not related to their cultural education. Considering that the phenomenon of 'mismatch' often causes negative psychological effects on workers due to a scarce satisfaction at the workplace,[96] the situation of Philosophy graduates seems particularly critical.

Moreover, when studying the situation of humanities graduates who choose a career pathway that is most in line with their studies, such as university research, the situation remains worrying.

In 2018, ISTAT conducted a survey concerning doctors of philosophy who had obtained their title in 2012,so as to verify their employment status 6 years after PhD graduation. Data show that about seven PhDs out of 10 had started a new job after the title. Amongst those working, less than 30% of PhDscontinued to work in academia.[97] However, the most interesting factor concerns the perceived usefulness of the title achieved. Almost 50% of the interviewees stated that the doctorate 'non appare necessario allo svolgimento dell'attività lavorativa, indipendentemente dall'essere o meno richiesto per ottenere il posto' (RA ISTAT 2018, p. 207). This could mean that the skills acquired during PhD are not matched with the tasks performed in the workplace, even when the doctorate is one of the entry requirements for the job position.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of 'mismatch' can be recorded for the doctoral graduates as well. In 2018, 'il 17,1 per cento degli intervistati risulta interessato da mismatch' (RA ISTAT 2018, p. 207). This phenomenon has been more or less constant during the last fifteen years: in 2010, 4 and 6 years after the title, 17.4 % of PhDs stated that they were doing a job for which their title was

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[95] See URL: https://www2.almalaurea.it/cgi-php/lau/sondaggi/intro.php?config=occupazione Last access: 27/08/19.

[96] RA ISTAT 2019, p. 205. ''Nel 2018, i laureati di 20-34 anni che si dichiarano molto soddisfatti del lavoro svolto (punteggi da 8 a 10, in una scala 0-10) è pari al 62,4 per cento, tra coloro che non sono interessati da mismatch, mentre scende di ben 10 punti, al 52,7 per cento, tra coloro che ne sono interessati. Tra i vari aspetti della soddisfazione, la differenza - a seconda che ci si trovi o meno in una condizione di mismatch – è massima sull'interesse per il lavoro (pari a circa 20 punti)' (Ibidem).

[97] 'Il settore dell'istruzione universitaria occupa il 28,6 per cento dei dottori che lavorano; quello dell'istruzione non universitaria il 16,1 per cento; il 15,8 per cento dei dottori occupati lavora nell'ambito di istituti di ricerca pubblici o privati, mentre un occupato su dieci lavora nel settore dell'agricoltura e dell'industria', RA ISTAT 2018, p. 206.

neither requested or necessary. Similarly, in 2014, 18.8 % of the PhDs entering the labour market in 2008 and 2010, declared that they were in a 'mismatch' condition. As regards the disciplinary sectors that are most affected by 'mismatches', once again, the data on holders of doctorates in the humanities are not comforting: 'I dottori delle Scienze politiche e sociali e, in misura più contenuta, i dottori delle Scienze storico-filosofiche e psico-pedagogiche presentano una probabilità di mismatch significativamente superiore (odds ratio, rispettivamente, pari a 1,74 e 1,39)' (RA ISTAT 2018, p. 209).

According to ISTAT, such a difficult communication between academia and the marketplace may be due to doctors of philosophy's extremely theoretical and abstract background. Namely, their preparation would not be particularly attractive to employers (See RA ISTAT 2018, p. 207). In this regard, ADI, the 'Associazione Italiana Dottorandi e Dottori di Ricerca' ('Italian Association of PhD students and PhDs') is currently fighting for the enhancement of this title outside academia. In fact, according to ADI,

> vi è una bassa presenza dei dottori di ricerca in posizione gestionali; l'impresa non ha consapevolezza delle caratteristiche distintive dei dottori di ricerca rispetto alla Laurea specialistica o magistrale; la stragrande maggioranza delle imprese italiane (quasi tutte piccole e medie imprese) hanno ridotta capacità/propensione ad innovare tramite investimenti a medio-lungo termine sul capitale umano e nelle infrastutture.[98]

This means that, in ADI's view, the difficulties of transitions between academia and the labour market would not be due to a scarce applicability of doctors of philosophy's skills, but to the inability of the Italian system to understand the specificities of the research work and its transferability in other sectors. As stated during the recent 'Giornata Nazionale sul Dottorato di ricerca' a collaboration between academia and the world of business would be advantageous for both fields: 'se il mondo accademico e il mondo delle imprese e della pubblica amministrazione uniscono le forze, in particolare potenziando le occasioni di collaborazione e di riconoscimento del ruolo che possono avere i dottori di ricerca nei processi innovativi, il Paese troverà lo slancio giusto per una crescita economica, sociale e culturale.'[99]

ADI's attempt to promote the skills of PhDs is also due to precariousness of researchers' employment perspective within Italian academia. On 8 May 2019, ADI presented its '8th Survey on

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[98]See URL: https://dottorato.it/content/giornata-nazionale-dottorato-di-ricerca-2019?fbclid=IwAR3D0nXi06iuUNLSpM1ILng3lzsRNrpz2Al2IB8eV2CKL59dwwTWWgloMyA Last access: 27/08/19.

[99]See URL: https://dottorato.it/content/giornata-nazionale-dottorato-di-ricerca-2019?fbclid=IwAR3D0nXi06iuUNLSpM1ILng3lzsRNrpz2Al2IB8eV2CKL59dwwTWWgloMyA Last access: 27/08/19.

PhDs and Postdocs to the Senate of Italian Republic, showing working condition of Early-Career Researchers (ECRs) in Italy. The principal aim of this presentation was to discuss the various policies adopted by governments regarding university staff and researchers. According to the survey,[100] PhD posts have been reduced by 3.5% in 2018 (from 9,288 to 8,960). This equates to a 43.4% fall from 2007, the year before Berlusconi's government significantly reduced research funding in the Italian budget. As argued by Eurodoc, 'one piece of good news for PhD candidates in Italy is that only 16.9% of PhD positions lack any kind of scholarship, down from 39% of positions in 2010. However, the data presented by ADI shows that instead of these positions being financed during these years, they were simply cut altogether.'[101]

Lastly, according to ADI's dramatic survey, 56,2% of PhDs will abandon academia after one or two short-term contracts. If Italian governments will not significantly change their policies, by encouraging and financing the research system, on the long run 'ben il 90,5% degli assegnisti verrà espulso dall'università.'[102]

From the above picture, the Italian labour market seems generally quite unstable, due to the profound economic crisis that began in 2008, whose effects are still currently visible. But the economic crisis is not the only reason of such an instability. Indeed, Italy presents a structural difficulty to fully exploit the high skilled graduates. Particularly, Italian labour market seems to struggle in adequately absorbing graduates in the humanities. Indeed, the increasingly widespread use of atypical contracts, the persistence of job instability even after several years from graduation, and the low effectiveness of these degrees particularly penalizes this group of graduates. The poor employability of many graduates, especially those in the humanities and the widespread phenomenon of 'mismatch' also testify to the inadequacy of the university system reforms of the last twenty years, which have not yet proved effective in enslaving the task that they were asked, that is to guarantee a preparation more in consonance with the requests coming from the labour market. Finally, even a career traditionally considered more in line with the humanities, such as university research presents a widespread precariousness of working conditions.

This situation draws a picture of change and uncertainty that have certainly favoured the introduction of alternative job opportunities for young people and in particular for graduates in the humanities. University reforms and in particular the creation of vocational master's courses have

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[100] See URL: https://dottorato.it/sites/default/files/survey/indagine-adi-2019.pdf Last access: 27/08/19.
[101] See URL: http://eurodoc.net/news/2019/conditions-and-prospects-of-higher-education-in-italy-the-adi-survey-on-early-career?fbclid=IwAR2-1Wc9K600GVS7V-MUU6Il1ncrtfWf1lT0fJz4f2aXXfmAnHuNtMPwAgI Last Access: 27/08/19.
[102] See URL: https://dottorato.it/content/indagine-adi-2019, Last Access: 20/11/19.

encouraged this trend. Philosophical counselling and consultancy therefore fall within this framework, having been presented as new professional opportunities for those who wanted to pursue a career in line with their passions.

I.8 Philosophical Counselling and Philosophical Consultancy in Italy: Towards a Definition of their Professional Identity

After showing the two main causes that favoured the entry of the PC as a new job opportunity for graduates in philosophy, in this section, I begin the analysis of the factors that have compromised its development and diffusion as a profession. The first cause was the difficulty on the part of aspiring philosophical counsellors and consultants to define their specialty theoretically and as a profession. Such a difficulty partly reflects the heterogeneity of interpretations observed within the international literature. However, I will show that some cruxes concerning the process of professionalization of PC can only be explained by analysing the laws, regulations, and ways in which a profession is generally conceived in Italy. On this regard, I will show that some reflections by philosophical practitioner Giacometti are crucial to frame PC in Italy as a complex social phenomenon.

As regard philosophical counselling, in 2012, SICoF founder Ludovico Berra stressed that such a specialty in Italy is fully part of the wider professional field of counselling. Counselling has been defined as a helping profession 'basata su abilità comunicative e interpersonali, finalizzate a facilitare il cliente nella risoluzione di uno specifico problema o nella presa di decisione.'[103] Its principal goal is to favour 'a riorganizzazione di capacità, risorse e competenze già possedute dal cliente, facilitandogli un percorso di vita verso obiettivi possibili e realizzabili.' [104] The profession of counselling has its own theoretical tradition, having its own literature and reference authors, including the American psychologist Carl Rogers, but it can have various orientations originating from different theoretical-practical reference models (See Nanetti 2003).

For Berra, philosophical counselling differs from other types of counselling, which often rest on psychological theoretical models: 'Spesso infatti la metodologia e la teoria in uso da parte dei più comuni counseling diffusi in Italia e nel mondo, hanno come base schemi e teorie di evidente e

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[103]   This   definition   was   proposed   by   the   Società   Italiana   di   Counseling,   SICo.   See   URL: http://www.sicoitalia.it/online/utenti/definizione-di-counseling/ Last Access: 1/10/2021.
[104] See URL: http://www.sicoitalia.it/online/utenti/definizione-di-counseling/ Last Access: 1/10/2021.

chiara derivazione psicologica divenendo a ragione modalità occulte, a volte inconsapevoli, di esercizio abusivo della professione di psicologo e psicoterapeuta' (Berra 2012, p. 39).[105] Instead, Berra believes that philosophical counselling is clearly distinct from psychotherapies, as it does not use psychological tests and it does not diagnose nor deals with intrapsychic problems. Indeed, it addresses philosophical problems (i.e. crisis of values, the meaning of life and death, etc.) and makes use of philosophical methodologies and processes of language analysis sourcing from philosophy's millennial tradition. However, in Berra's view, philosophical counselling is also distinguished from philosophical consultancy since it is explicitly configured as a 'helping relationship'. Besides, it requires a 'psychological awareness', that is, a knowledge of the main psychological and psychopathological theories, in that it is based on a relationship between two individuals in which 'intervengono dinamiche di cui è necessario avere consapevolezza' (Berra 2012, p. 36). Indeed, philosophical counsellors sometimes refer to concepts that are clearly unrelated to consultancy, such as that of 'therapeutic alliance': 'Nell'ambito del Counseling Filosofico grande importanza è data allo spazio interpersonale, che si crea attraverso l'alleanza terapeutica, come fondamentale spazio per filoso-fare'.[106] Furthermore, such 'psychological awareness' would allow counselors to 'identificare situazioni a rischio e, eventualmente, nel rispetto del codice deontologico, richiedere l'intervento di altri professionisti della salute' (Berra 2012, p. 38). Finally, philosophical counselling, unlike philosophical consultancy, especially the Achenbachian one, expressly proposes to solve the problem afflicting the clients. Thus, the practice proposed by Berra can be included in what I have defined as the 'intermediate approach to PC' since it is configured as an aim-oriented helping profession, and opens up for collaboration with psychologists.

Whilst philosophical counselling has been theoretically framed within the field of counselling, the attempts to define philosophical consultancy have been more controversial since it aims to become a completely new profession, distinguishing itself from the neighbouring ones.

The professionalisation of philosophical consultancy has been debated in Italy particularly by practitioners belonging to the school Phronesis, which counts amongst its main objective the investigation and promotion of philosophical consultancy as a new profession. Some contributions that appeared in the journal with the same name throughout the years actually show the evolution of the theorisation around this subject.

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[105]See also Berra's most recent editorial in which similar concepts are reiterated, Berra 2018, URL: https://www.sscf.it/images/Rivista%20Italiana%20di%20CF/Rivista-Counseling-14-2018/Editoriale,%20La%20professione%20del%20counselor%20filosofico.pdf Last Access, 27/06/2021.
[106]See URL: https://www.counselingitalia.it/articoli/112-cosa-l-counseling-filosofico, Last Access: 17/08/2020.

Notably, in 2002, the philosopher and consultant Andrea Poma wrote that philosophical consultancy is a 'consultative activity' with no therapeutic purposes, in which the professional offers 'il supporto di consigli, suggerimenti e orientamenti che aiutino il consultante a trovare strade per lui soddisfacenti per affrontare ed elaborare in modo positivo i problemi che egli stesso pone' (Poma 2002, p. 37). Besides, he made the first attempt to define philosophical consultancy as a profession by identifying a series of characteristics that should have informed it. In the first place, consultants must maintain a professional relationship with clients, not trespassing on matters outside their competence nor forging a friendly relationship with clients. In listening to clients' requests, it is the consultants' duty to evaluate whether to direct them to other professionals, such as psychotherapists, pedagogues, or labour consultants (See Poma 2002, p. 39). Secondly, to be defined as professionals, consultants must offer some specific expertise. Namely, they must have completed an entire cycle of studies in Philosophy and must have specific post-graduate training in Philosophical Consultancy, which allows them to 'aggiungere alle [proprie] conoscenze filosofiche la consapevolezza degli obiettivi, delle condizioni e dei metodi per l'esercizio specifico della professione. Il consulente filosofico dovrà inoltre applicarsi ad un'attività di studio e di formazione continua durante l'esercizio della sua professione e sottoporsi ad un periodico esame critico di controllo di esso con l'aiuto di persone legittimate a questa funzione' (Poma 2002, p. 38). In this way, they become 'experts in philosophy', putting their 'philosophical competencies' at the service of clients. Poma distinguishes such competencies between 'nozioni di dottrine filosofiche riguardanti contenuti (*nozioni materiali*) e nozioni di principi metodologici e di regole metodiche (*nozioni formali*)' (Poma 2002, p. 41). The 'nozioni materiali' are the philosophical contents acquired during university courses. Such notions are mainly related to the Western tradition, which is the object of most Italian university programmes (see Poma 2002, p. 40). However, the core competencies defining this profession are the formal notions, that is 'conoscenze formali riguardanti i principi del pensare, dell'agire e del produrre (principi logici, morali, giuridici, estetici, ecc.), così come essi sono stati formulati in differenti modi nel corso della storia del pensiero filosofico; di conoscenze riguardanti principi metodologici riferiti agli ambiti suddetti (principi del metodo deduttivo, induttivo, dialettico, trascendentale, fenomenologico, empirico, euristico, ermeneutico, analogico, simbolico, ecc.); di conoscenze riguardanti dottrine normative della conoscenza, del discorso, della comunicazione, o della morale o di canoni artistici e così via' (Poma 2002, p. 41). The formal notions allow the consultants to help clients in understanding and exploring a specific problem from various angles, having as main purpose a disinterested and playful investigation.

Consequently, according to Poma, one of the consultants' most important goals is to awaken clients' interest in free theoretical speculation. [107] Finally, philosophical consultants must demonstrate a critical and hermeneutic ability by referring to appropriate philosophical texts or by recommending some readings, whilst bearing in mind the risks that such suggestions entail, such as the trivialization or misunderstanding of complex theories by the clients (See Poma 2002, p. 43).

Many definitions proposed by Poma were later abandoned, in particular the definition of philosophical consultancy as a consultative activity offering advice and suggestions. In fact, such a notion seemed to inscribe philosophical consultancy in the paradigm of the so-called 'technical rationality' criticised by philosopher Donald Alan Schön, who is a recurring reference author in practitioners' writings. According to Schön, 'the model of Technical Rationality [....] fully shaped both our thinking about the professions and the institutional relation of research, education, and practice – professional activity consisting in instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique' (Schön 1984, p. 23). Besides, such a perspective seemed to betray the main hope of the recognised founder of this discipline, Gerd Achenbach, whose prominence as a leading theorist on philosophical consultancy has long been undisputed in Italy. As previously shown, according to Achenbach philosophical consultancy should question the very need of clients to rely on an expert to solve their problems, as well as the temptation of consultants to take the position of authority dispensing advice and suggestions. Furthermore, the reading of philosophical classics is not recommended by some theorists of the Radical approach, as philosophizing must be as free from indoctrination as possible. For these reasons, Poma's interpretation must also be included in what I have defined as the 'Intermediate approach to PC'. In fact, while not considering the PC as a helping profession with therapeutic intentions, it substantially differs from Achenbach's or Schuster's radical approach. Beyond this, Poma's essay had the merit of emphasizing the role of free theoretical activity as the main content of the consulting process.

However, probably Giacometti was the first to seize the core aspects of philosophical consultancy's professionalization process, in that he deconstructed the terms of the question starting from their definition and their applicability within the Italian context. From this point of view, Giacometti anticipates a central point in my analysis. Indeed, an exhaustive critique of

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[107] 'Può avvenire, ed è verosimile che avvenga spesso, che il consultante affronti le questioni senza alcun interesse teoretico, ma piuttosto preoccupato da interessi pratici o pragmatici: sarà senz'altro uno dei compiti del consulente, oltre ad altri, il guidarlo a scoprire l'interesse teoretico dei problemi, cioè la dimensione per cui i problemi non sono solo delle difficoltà importune o dolorose da superare il più rapidamente possibile, ma anche delle potenzialità concettuali interessanti da scoprire e da sviluppare in modo fecondo' Poma 2002, p. 46.

philosophical consultancy is possible only by understanding through which laws, modalities and institutions it is and can be implemented. In other words, it is necessary to frame philosophical consultancy as a complex social phenomenon.

First, Giacometti clarified what a profession is according to sociology's classical paradigms; secondly, he explained how the concept of 'profession' is described in the Italian Civil Code; thirdly he defined what a consultancy is; finally, he wondered in what terms philosophical consultancy can be practiced as a professional activity within the country. Following Max Weber's classic definition of *beruf* (i.e. occupation, profession),[108] Giacometti maintained that a profession is an ongoing for-profit intellectual activity (Giacometti 2006, p. 40). However, to understand the real conditions of possibility of this professional activity within our system, Giacometti referred to the Italian Civil Code:

> Il riferimento alla legge dello Stato ha, dunque, un valore più costitutivo del riferimento alla definizione di professione offerta dal dizionario o da un maestro della sociologia (come Weber), almeno se ammettiamo che l'esistenza stessa di una professione presupponga il *riconoscimento pubblico*: ciò che lo Stato *statuisce* che una professione sia, tanto in generale, quanto in riferimento a uno specifico settore di attività, incide sulla definizione stessa della determinata professione, almeno entro i confini dello Stato in cui essa viene esercitata. In altre parole un professionista viene *riconosciuto* come tale sempre da almeno due interlocutori: il *cliente* e lo *Stato* (Giacometti 2006, p.42).

According to the Italian Civil Code, a profession is a contract between two subjects whose object is an activity that focuses on something '"possibile, lecito, determinato o determinabile" e deve avere una *funzione* economico sociale o pratica che giustifichi la stipulazione del contratto con il cliente'(Giacometti 2006, p.41).[109] Since this is the definition accepted by the Italian state, in order to become a profession, philosophical consultancy must respond to these characteristics, thus choosing to compromise with the paradigms of 'technical rationality'. For Giacometti, the slowness in philosophical consultancy's professionalisation process lies precisely in the difficulty of defining it as such, in that it does not respond to these technical parameters. This makes it difficult not only to define it as a profession but also as a consultancy activity. The term 'consulenza', adopted in the

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[108] 'The term "occupation" (beruf) will be applied to the mode of specialization, specification and combination of the functions an individual so far as it constitutes for him the basis of a continuous opportunity for income or earnings' (Weber 1978, p. 140).

[109] See also Codice Civile italiano, ar. 1346. Furthermore, the conclusion of the contract must be free and consensual, and professionals must receive a remuneration regardless of their results, provided that they do 'semplicemente il [loro] dovere con la dovuta diligenza' (Giacometti 2006, p.41).

Italian context, is problematic precisely because a consultant, by definition, uses his expertise to advise clients on a specific issue. Besides, as a reflective practice based on free philosophizing and a 'practicing metatheory', according to Achenbach's definition, philosophical consultancy would be based on the continuous questioning of clients' needs as well as of its own founding principles. In fact, a certain intrinsic aporetic nature of this practice is probably testified by the large number of works that over the years have repeatedly tried to define and circumscribe this discipline, without however reaching shared conclusions. [110]

Despite these difficulties, arguably in order to safeguard PC as a profession, Giacometti recently emphasized the importance of the free theoretical pluralism on this matter. Notably, he considers it philosophically counterproductive to strive for a univocal definition of this discipline shared by the entire community of consultants. In his view, such an agreement would imply the risk of impoverishing the semantic richness of what is to be defined: 'tale ricerca (di un'impossibile autodefinizione) denota una profonda *insicurezza* di ciascuno e di tutti, la paura quasi davanti a quella *libertà* con la quale la filosofia ci chiede (anzi ci impone) di venire esercitata.'(Giacometti 2018, p.1).[111] For Giacometti, this insecurity is one of the main reasons for the failure of philosophical consultancy in Italy: 'Il "cliente" si accorge di questa nostra insicurezza e scappa (rivolgendosi a un professionista *diversamente competente*). Oppure il cliente non riesce neppure ad accorgersene, perché non osiamo aprire uno studio, metterci in gioco, *senza prima* aver perimetrato, definito, esserci riconosciuti ed esserci fatti riconoscere... in un evidente regresso all'infinito (per la natura meta-teorica della filosofia) che rinvia *sine die* l'agire professionale' (Giacometti 2018, p.1).

According to Giacometti, although there are no prescriptive criteria to promote philosophical consultancy's professionalisation, some 'conditions' could at least favour such a process. Such conditions would be the consultants' strong motivation; the use of an accessible and attractive language; a definition of the 'product' offered within a philosophical consultancy. He described this product as the clarification of counselees' worldview, in line with Lahav's early theories. Besides, he believes it necessary to set a criterion of success (and quality) of a consultancy. This criterion would be the clients' satisfaction: 'Una professione che non consideri la soddisfazione del cliente come misura (anche se, certamente, non l'unica) del suo valore, in quanto professione (non in quanto

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[110] See for instance the recent article Mancini 2020.
[111] See URL: https://www.platon.it/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Come-pu%C3%B2-la-consulenza-filosofica-divenire-sempre-pi%C3%B9-una-professione.pdf Last Access: 22/06/21.

pratica, in generale) si nega come professione, venendo meno quel carattere *economico* […] che dovrebbe contraddistinguerla' (Giacometti 2018, p. 10). Finally, Giacometti suggests that philosophical consultancy should have a clear ultimate goal, in order to safeguard its professional status. Such decidedly ambitious goal would be to lead customers towards a sort of philosophical conversion: 'La pratica deve riuscire ad (almeno) *cambiare significativamente* (se non "rivoluzionare", realizzando una vera e propria *metànoia* o *conversione* e […] il proprio rapporto con sé stessi, con gli altri, con il mondo' (Giacometti 2018, pag. 11).[112]

Pollastri champions opposite ideas. Over the years, he has remained faithful to Achenbach's radical 'method beyond the method', emphasizing that philosophical consultancy's only aim is philosophical speculation: 'la consulenza [non ha] finalità estranee alla filosofia tradizionalmente intesa, [ma ha] di mira solo la comprensione di un universo concettuale: non vuole "insegnare" alcunché, non intende "curare" né "trasformare" nessuno, non ha di mira il "trattamento" di alcun disagio, non "prende in carico" né si "prende cura" del proprio ospite' (Pollastri 2017).[113] Pollastri has repeatedly expressed himself on the importance of theoretical production during consultancy. In his view, the philosophical consultant is not only an expert in philosophy but a philosopher *tout court*. According to Pollastri, philosophical consultancy as a profession is the one theorised by Achenbach, however problematic or paradoxical it may seem. Other approaches conceived for different purposes or built upon well-known philosophers' specific theories and methodologies, can be valuable practices but they should not be referred to as philosophical consultancy, which has a historically-determined precise identity. [114]

In fact, renouncing some shared cornerstones seems harmful to the affirmation of philosophical consultancy in Italy, as in this way the conditions are created for a marked self-referentiality of professionals. In a recent post on his personal blog, Pollastri himself noticed that, in discussing with other consultants, often

> 'è possibile trarre l'impressione che nelle cosiddette "pratiche filosofiche" tutto
> vada bene, ognuno abbia il diritto e la libertà di far finta che prima di lui non sia
> successo alcunché e che la riflessione epistemologica sulle pratiche, la ricerca dei

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[112] See also Giacometti 2016.

[113] See URL: https://www.neripollastri.it/2017/02/22/ma-la-consulenza-filosofica-non-e-una-pratica-filosofica/ Last Access: 7/10/21. Due to consultancy's peculiar features, in this article, Pollastri came to the conclusion that this profession should not even be counted amongst the philosophical practices. .

[114] In this regard, see Pollastri's critique of a book that takes Pierre Hadot's theories as a reference point for philosophical consultancy (Pollastri 2019), URL: https://www.neripollastri.it/2019/12/16/confondere-la-prassi-col-pragmatismo-e-uccidere-la-consulenza-lesempio-di-un-libro/ Last Access: 7/10/21. In his view, such an approach has in itself an already determined worldview, which is certainly legitimate, but it differs from the concept of consultancy conceived by Achenbach.

loro fondamenti, il vaglio critico sulle loro qualità e portata filosofica siano del tutto inutili, arcaico portato della filosofia "accademica", sostituiti in toto dai meri "fare" e "aver fatto", già da oltre venticinque anni criteri di verità della politica nazionale e adesso tracimati anche nel mondo del filosofare' (Pollastri 2020).[115]

From the picture presented so far, it is possible to deduce a general theoretical disagreement on the definition of philosophical consultancy as a profession for what concerns both the purposes, the methods, the definition, and the role of the philosophical consultant. Although such a disagreement can be interpreted once again as a sign of 'healthy pluralism' as found internationally, it is beyond doubt that it represents a serious obstacle to the development of philosophical consultancy as a profession in Italy. Without a definition as clear and shared as possible, it is difficult for an aspiring client not only to distinguish it from other helping professions but even to perceive it as a specific and well-determined professional activity. Furthermore, philosophical consultants' theoretical efforts, such as Giacometti's, to promote the profession and make it appealing to a potential audience, risk distorting the discipline to meet the market trends and the changeable consumer attitudes.

Closely related to the theoretical disagreement of philosophical consultants is the question of the dishomogeneity of the Italian training offer. In an article published in the newspaper *La Repubblica* in 2017, Donata Romizi, a practitioner who trained with Achenbach, remarked that, in Italy, 'non esiste a tutt'oggi un profilo professionale definito e condiviso, non c'è un percorso formativo anche solo tendenzialmente omogeneo, non c'è consenso sugli standard di qualità, non c'è nemmeno consenso su cosa sia — in definitiva — la Pratica filosofica! L'agire nel mondo richiede un certo grado di dogmatismo, e l'esistenza di una professione presuppone una certa omogeneità di pensiero tra chi la pratica: cose che riescono tipicamente difficili ai filosofi' (Romizi 2017).[116] Here, the term 'dogmatism' is used in a certainly emphatic and probably provocative manner, as it refers to something indubitable and indisputable. Nonetheless, such emphasis in highlighting the need for some solid and universally shared criteria is perhaps the most evident symptom of the difficulty of creating a stable agreement between professionals, which is one of the main conditions for the birth and consolidation of a new professional field.

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[115]See URL: https://www.neripollastri.it/2020/02/27/pratica-filosofica-necessita-un-salto-di-qualita/ Last Access: 25/09/2021.
[116] See URL: https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2017/09/24/prenderla-con-filosofia48.html Last Access: 20/06/21.

Hence, the analysis of the Italian training offer will be the subject of the next section. As I will show, the various courses appear to be quite divergent both in terms of programme contents and access criteria.

I.9 Training Courses and Internet Dissemination

Amongst the major problems for the affirmation of PC in Italy as a profession with a precisely distinguishable identity, there is the plurality of training approaches, the hybridization with other practices, and the non-homogeneity of access criteria. In this section, I highlight the inconsistencies of the Italian system in the training of philosophical counsellors and consultants. Such inconsistencies are a consequence of the theoretical disagreement between the various practitioners of the discipline. Nonetheless, whilst theoretical pluralism can be philosophically relevant and fruitful, an incoherent training offer undermines the potential of these professions, as it contributes to configuring them *a priori* into an ambiguous hybrid form.

As for *Phronesis*, the school has been configured as a composite training environment, even though it branched out across various peripheral offices, all situated in central and northern Italian regions. Over the years the association has changed its formative itinerary. Currently, to access Phronesis' training course and become a philosophical consultant, it is necessary to have a 'Laurea Magistrale' (or 'Laurea Specialistica' or old system 'Laurea') in Philosophy or, at the discretion of the association, a qualification deemed equivalent by the members. Candidates must also pass a 'colloquio motivazionale', i.e. an interview attesting their motivation to become consultants. Between the first and second course years, candidates must pass another interview in which, starting from autobiographical issues, they have to 'enucleare gli aspetti filosofici rilevanti ai fini della consulenza'.[117] The training ends with a final interview in which candidates discuss their own thesis on philosophical consultancy. The title of 'Philosophical Consultant' gives access to the Association's Directory and to the 'Sistema di Formazione Continua'.[118] In addition to training, the association promotes research activities, as proved by the numerous essays published in the homonymous journal and the collective volumes published by Liguori Editing house, as well as the

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[117] See URL: https://www.phronesis-cf.com/sintesi-dell-itinerario-formativo/ Last Access: 29/05/2021.

[118] The 'Sistema di Formazione Continua, risultato dell'esperienza e del confronto con i più significativi modelli di formazione professionale a livello europeo, è stato approvato nell'Assemblea del 29 marzo 2009. Durante il suo secondo ciclo, tale modello formativo ha manifestato l'esigenza di un rinnovamento che ha portato alla proposta dell'Ordinamento della Formazione attualmente vigente, approvato dall'Assemblea dei Soci il 26 maggio 2013'. URL: https://www.phronesis-cf.com/formazione-continua/ Last Access 29/05/2021.

development, definition, and regulation of the profession of the Philosophical Consultant. Phronesis describes philosophical consultancy as a 'forma di dialogo – paritetico, franco e collaborativo – [che] opera con la finalità di chiarire, rendere più articolata e profonda la visione del mondo del consultante, ovvero quell'insieme di concetti, emozioni, principi, valori e significati con i quali ogni persona, pur non sempre in piena consapevolezza, pensa il mondo e agisce concretamente nella realtà', and clarifies that it does not have 'finalità terapeutiche né pedagogiche e non richiede la conoscenza della filosofia. È rivolta a tutte le persone interessate ad un approccio critico e responsabile per affrontare le difficoltà della vita per renderla in ogni circostanza degna di essere vissuta'.[119] Recently, Pollastri, who was amongst Phronesis' founders, left the association and founded his own training institute, in which he intends to train consultants in the 'original philosophical consultancy', that is, Achenbach's *Philosophische Praxis*.[120] Both Phronesis and Pollastri's new school emphasize the role of philosophical knowledge for aspiring practitioners and offer a specialized training course exclusively in philosophical consultancy.

Alongside private school courses, over the years, numerous university courses have been organized in Italy, which have made the educational offer in philosophical consultancy significantly more inconsistent.

In particular, the University of Venice 'Ca' Foscari' was the first to offer a Master's degree course in *Filosofia pratica e relazioni umane* and subsequently expanded the training offer with a Second Level Master in 'Philosophical Consultancy', which is still active. Over the years, some universities all over the country have organized other professionalizing Masters, including the Second level joint Master in *Consulenza filosofica* at the Universities of Naples, Pisa, and Cagliari; the First Level Masters in *Consulenza bioetica e filosofica* at the University of Bari and in *Consulenza filosofica e Antropologia esistenziale* at the Pontifical University Regina Apostolorum; the Second Level Master in *Pratiche filosofiche e Consulenza filosofica* at the University of Roma Tre; the Second level Master in *Consulenza filosofica di trasformazione* at the University of Verona. Some of these master's courses are still active today.

Access criteria differ both from each other and from those of private schools: for instance, whilst the current Venice's master course is specifically addressed to four-year or master's degree graduates in Philosophy; the one organized years ago by the University of Bari was addressed to three-year graduates in Philosophy, whilst the current Regina Apostolorum master course is

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[119] See URL: https://www.phronesis-cf.com/che-cose-la-consulenza-filosofica/ Last access: 30/05/2021.
[120] See URL: https://www.istitutodiconsulenzafilosofica.it/ Last Access: 30/05/2021.

addressed much more generically to 'a tutti i laureati in discipline umanistiche e filosofiche, in psicologia, in medicina, in scienze infermieristiche, economiche-aziendali e giuridiche, così come ad altri professionisti e dirigenti del mondo del lavoro e della comunicazione'.[121]

Arguably, recruiting from such a varied group of graduates and professionals does not value philosophical consultancy as a profession expressly conceived for graduates in Philosophy. The training offer is also quite varied and heterogeneous, as it focuses on topics such as Ethics, Bioethics, argumentative techniques, and elements of psychopathology, or includes modules concerning other philosophical practices such as Philosophy 4 Children.

But what further complicates the Italian scenario are the training courses in philosophical counselling as they often offer similar programs to those conceived for philosophical consultants, but they have even vaguer access criteria.

The main school, created by SICoF's founders, is the SSCF (Scuola Superiore di Counseling Filosofico) [122] based in Turin, which has already organised 25 masters in philosophical counselling throughout the years. Currently, it proposes a three-year training course in accordance with 'l'orientamento europeo nella formazione dei counselor, che prevede un ciclo almeno triennale.' [123] Even though the course follows the European guidelines related to counselling's professional field, it is aimed at 'approfondire l'insieme delle pratiche filosofiche e le metodologie d'intervento d'aiuto al fine di sostenere ed aiutare la crescita del singolo individuo e dei gruppi'. Indeed, it provides a very varied training, as it includes modules on Philosophy 4 Children, Socratic Dialogue, Elements of Psychiatry, Techniques of Dialogue, Neuroscience, Philosophical Meditation, etc.

The access criteria are very broad. In fact, to access the Master, any degree (including a three-year degree) amongst Philosophy, Political Sciences, Educational Sciences, Law, Sociology, Economics, Psychology, Medicine, Nursing is accepted. Furthermore, the school reserves the possibility to admit graduates from other disciplines.

It is clear that such a path not only perpetuates the risk of overlap between philosophical counselling and consultancy but it broadens the educational offer and the access criteria so much

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[121] See URL: https://www.upra.org/offerta-formativa/facolta/filosofia/master-consulenza-filosofica-2021/ Last Access: 2/08/ 22.

[122]This school is part of the 'Dipartimento di Pratiche Filosofiche e Filosofia Applicata dell' Istituto Superiore di Filosofia, Psicologia, Psichiatria' (ISFiPP). See URL: https://www.sscf.it/Master%20SSCF/index.html Last Access: 30/05/2021. The school is also recognised by the 'Società Italiana di counseling'. See URL: https://www.federazioneitalianacounseling.com/scuole-counseling-riconosciute/ Last Access: 30/05/2021.

[123] See URL: https://www.sscf.it/l%E2%80%99identit%C3%A0-del-counseling-filosofico.html Last Access: 30/05/2021.

that the course is more an overview of the various philosophical practices than a specialization path in philosophical counselling.

Alongside SICoF, there are numerous other schools and associations organizing training in philosophical counselling, which are often in a relationship of mutual collaboration. Notably, PRAGMA, which is based in Milan, is worth mentioning because of its peculiar training offer. In fact, it offers a 'Master di Alta Specializzazione in Consulenza Filosofica, Counseling e Pratiche Filosofiche', and boasts '12 metodi innovativi e versatili per la facilitazione dei gruppi, di cui deteniamo il copyright esclusivo.'[124] Finally, the school Metis has to be mentioned since it is the only one in the centre-south accredited by the association SICO (Società Italiana di Cousenling). Metis was founded by Giovanna Borrello in 2007 and has offices in Rome, Naples, and Catania. The peculiarity of these philosophical counselling courses is that they are addressed to a rather large audience of aspiring counsellors: undergraduates, graduates in science and humanities, doctors, teachers, social-health workers, managers, public administration employees.

An overall look at both realities (philosophical counselling and consultancy), the multiplicity of approaches, the inhomogeneity in the access criteria, and the strong mix with other practices are evident. All this may confuse aspiring practitioners and, above all, it contributes both to the difficulty in theoretically delimiting the discipline, and to an excessive broadening of the professional field. Professionals trained according to these directives very often learn notions concerning practices designed for very different purposes, such as Philosophy 4 Children, as well as disciplines that are not even part of the Philosophical Practice movement, such as Bioethics and applied ethics. The risk is to use them as methodologies to be modelled according to their usability in a certain application context. This can widen job opportunities, but it risks flattening the dissimilar theoretical assumptions of the disciplines. Above all, when access to these courses is granted to graduates from the most diverse fields, the philosophical foundations of the profession are sacrificed and, at the same time, practitioners with a course of study in Philosophy are not valued enough. Thus, rather than contributing to the creation of new professions through well-defined and solid criteria, these courses risk devaluing the disciplines, as they sell a rather varied and vague training package to the largest possible number of candidates.

This risk of theoretical flattening is also particularly evident in the information material available on the internet. In particular, Internet dissemination seems to greatly penalise the distinction between philosophical counselling and consultancy developed in specialist journals over

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[124]See URL: https://pragmasociety.org/master-counseling-filosofico/# Last Access: 20/05/2022.

the years. The two terms are often used interchangeably[125] or inappropriately.[126] Since the internet is the principal channel for the spreading of philosophical practices, such inaccuracies contribute to perpetuating the confusion and partial overlap between the two practices. In fact, Italian philosophical counselling and consultancy owe a lot to the internet, both for having put pioneering practitioners in contact and, subsequently, for facilitating the creation of a network of aspiring professionals. As previously stated, the internet and social networks remain the main means to find information on the discipline and, for this reason, the analysis of the languages used on the various platforms, on some prominent authors' personal blogs, and on associations' websites has been central to understanding the phenomenon.

I.10 Legal Aspects and Relationship with Neighbouring Professional Fields

In this section, I take into account the last important aspects to contextualize the two practices in Italy: the recent legislative provisions recognizing philosophical counselling and consultancy as 'unregulated' professions, and their competitive relationship with the helping professions. My intent is to show that the new legal measures marked an important step for the public recognition of the two disciplines, nonetheless, they did not contribute to delimiting their professional field nor to effectively regulating the two professions. On the contrary, I will show that the inadequacy of Italian laws contributes to the trivialization of the disciplines and to the phenomenon of training inhomogeneity. This element, together with the competitive relationship with helping professions, represents the last specific socio-cultural factors that contribute to the scarce diffusion of philosophical counselling and consultancy in Italy.

In 2013, philosophical counselling and consultancy have been recognised by the Italian State as 'unregulated' professions, according the Law of 14 January 2013, number 4, 'Disposizioni in

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[125]See for instance: ''La Scuola Umbra di Consulenza Filosofica è un'associazione di promozione sociale che organizza corsi di formazione triennali per l'esercizio della professione di counselor filosofico nelle relazioni d'aiuto', See URL: http://www.sucf.it/chi-siamo/ Last Access: 18/08/2022, or 'Il Counseling Filosofico ha una precisa identità, ed appartiene alle varie forme delle pratiche filosofiche e del counseling ad indirizzo umanistico – esistenziale.Esso nasce in Germania nel 1981 per iniziativa del filosofo Gerard Achenbach, il quale ha richiamato il ruolo d'importanza pratica che ha avuto la filosofia nella Grecia Classica.' URL: https://www.counselingitalia.it/articoli/112-cosa-l-counseling-filosofico Last Access: 18/08/2022.
[126]See the diatribe between Pollastri and Luca Nave on Pollastri's blog: (Pollastri 2018a), URL: https://www.neripollastri.it/2018/04/18/ventanni-di-consulenza-filosofica-e-ancora-impera-la-disinformazione/ Last Access: 24/05/2021.

materia di professioni non organizzate'[127]. The law is composed of 11 articles and entered into force on 10 February 2013. Article 1.2 clarifies that 'per "professione non organizzata in ordini o collegi", di seguito denominata "professione", si intende l'attività economica, anche organizzata, volta alla prestazione di servizi o di opere a favore di terzi, esercitata abitualmente e prevalentemente mediante lavoro intellettuale, o comunque con il concorso di questo, con esclusione delle attività riservate per legge a soggetti iscritti in albi o elenchi ai sensi dell'art. 2229 del codice civile, delle professioni sanitarie e delle attività e dei mestieri artigianali, commerciali e di pubblico esercizio disciplinati da specifiche normative."[128]

This implies that philosophical consultants and counsellors carrying out activities attributable to other regulated professions would be sanctioned for 'abuso di professione', as established by article 348 of Italian 'Codice Penale'. Over the years, there have been numerous interventions by philosophical consultants and counsellors aimed at differentiating these disciplines from psychotherapies.[129] Philosophical consultancy, in particular, defining itself as an alternative to psychotherapy, opens *de facto* a comparison with this field and, consequently, must fully demonstrate its originality. Primarily, such articles and essays were intended to epistemologically define the new practices, secondly, they intended to avert the risk that such activities could trespass into psychologists' professional field, which in Italy is a regulated profession.

The law that regulates the profession of psychologist is the Law 18 February 1989, n. 56, 'Ordinamento della professione di psicologo'. Article 2.1 establishes that 'per esercitare la

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[127]From now on, Law 4/2013. See URL: https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2013/01/26/13G00021/sg, Last Access: 31/08/19.

[128] As specified in the 'XXII Rapporto sul Mercato del lavoro e la contrattazione collettiva', 'Questa definizione ha tratti simili a quella ricavabile dalle norme del codice civile, ma non del tutto coincidenti: a) esercizio abituale (ma non esclusivo); b) natura intellettuale della prestazione, ma in forma attenuata (in quanto prevalente e solo concorrente); c) molteplici modalità di esercizio (forma individuale, in forma associata, societaria, cooperativa o nella forma del lavoro dipendente); d) possibilità (non obbligo) di costituire associazioni professionali; e) esercizio non subordinato al superamento di esami di stato' (CNEL 2020, p. 173), See URL: https://www.cnel.it/Documenti/Rapporti Last Access: 19/07/2021. The other main articles establish the methods for forming professional associations (art.2), for meeting in aggregative forms (art.3), for advertising such associations (art.4), as well as the information that the associations must offer to customers (art.5). As regard to regulated professions, the article 2229 Codice Civile ratifies that 'La legge determina le professioni intellettuali [2068, 2956, n. 5] per l'esercizio delle quali è necessaria l'iscrizione in appositi albi o elenchi [art. 2061]. L'accertamento dei requisiti per l'iscrizione negli albi o negli elenchi, la tenuta dei medesimi e il potere disciplinare sugli iscritti sono demandati [alle associazioni professionali], sotto la vigilanza dello Stato, salvo che la legge disponga diversamente [art.2642]. Contro il rifiuto dell'iscrizione o la cancellazione dagli albi o elenchi, e contro i provvedimenti disciplinari che importano la perdita o la sospensione del diritto all'esercizio della professione è ammesso ricorso in via giurisdizionale nei modi e nei termini stabiliti dalle leggi speciali'. See URL: https://www.laleggepertutti.it/codice-civile/art-2229-codice-civile-esercizio-delle-professioni-intellettuali Last Access: 15/07/21

[129] See for example Giacometti (ed.by) 2010, Fiore 2015, Cervari 2016, URL: https://www.huffingtonpost.it/paolo-cervari/consulenza-filosofica-o-psiconalisi_b_7682028.html Last Access: 17/08/2022; Lahav 2015c.

professione di psicologo è necessario aver conseguito l'abilitazione in psicologia mediante l'esame di Stato ed essere iscritto nell'apposito albo professionale.' Since then, graduates in other subjects are no longer allowed to carry out activities attributable to that profession. Before this law, it was possible graduates in subjects other than psychology, including philosophy, to carry out a training process that allowed them to practice as psychologists.[130]

According to psychiatrist Paolo Migone, it is plausible that, over time, this law may have gradually favoured the entry of new approaches characterized by less stringent access criteria, such as philosophical counselling and consultancy.[131] Arguably, such a barrier is also one of the reasons pushing todays' Philosophy graduates to build a professional career in these unregulated fields. Indeed, switching careers after graduation to become a psychologist may be a very long and onerous pathway.

In Italy, some philosophical consultants have pushed for the creation of professional orders, considering it a guarantee for the development and dignity of the practice, whilst others emphasized the inherent freedom of unregulated practices.[132] Such debate seems to retrace the one which took place between academics from the Universities of Padua and Rome starting from the 1970s and up to the approval of the 1989 law. At the time, psychologists practiced within a legislative void that exposed them to accusations for 'esercizio abusivo della professione medica', i.e. improper practice of the medical profession.[133] To avoid such a risk and facilitate the affirmation of the profession, the

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[130] For a limited period of time, law 56 itself granted the possibility to access the Register to non-graduates in psychology and to take the State Exam to qualify in the profession of psychologist, thanks to the so-called 'transitory rules' (articles 31-36). In particular, article 32 established the rules for the "Iscrizione all'albo in sede di prima applicazione della legge […] su domanda da presentarsi entro sessanta giorni dalla nomina del commissario». This was granted not only to graduates in psychology or medicine but also to graduates for at least seven years who had carried out "in maniera continuativa attività di collaborazione o di consulenza attinenti alla psicologia con enti o istituzioni pubbliche o private" or that had worked "per almeno tre anni nelle discipline psicologiche ottenendo riconoscimenti nel campo a livello nazionale o internazionale" (letters C and D., Instead, Article 33 provided for participation in a special session for the state examination to 'i laureati in discipline diverse dalla psicologia, che abbiano svolto dopo la laurea almeno due anni di attività che forma oggetto della professione di psicologo contrattualmente riconosciuta dall'università, nonché i laureati che documentino di aver esercitato con continuità tale attività, presso enti o istituti soggetti a controllo o vigilanza da parte della pubblica amministrazione, per almeno due anni dopo la laurea' (letter C) See URL : https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1989/02/24/089G0090/sg Last Access: 15/07/21. This allowed graduates in the humanities, such as philosophy, who had previously chosen training courses in psychology, to enter the professional Order. Today this path is no longer possible, in fact, only those who hold a Master's Degree in Psychology can become psychologists. See URL: https://miur.gov.it/web/guest/fonti-normative Last Access: 21/08/19.
[131] 'In Italia la Legge 56/1989, che limita l'esercizio della psicoterapia a medici o psicologi che abbiano fatto una scuola riconosciuta post-laurea di quattro anni, può aver favorito l'importazione di questi approcci',(Migone 2012), URL: http://www.psychomedia.it/pm/modther/probpsiter/ruoloter/rt121-12.htm, Last Access 02/08/2021 .
[132] See Pollastri 2018b, URL: https://www.neripollastri.it/2018/08/31/la-leggenda-degli-albi-e-degli-elenchi-professionali/ Last access: 19/08/22.
[133] See Codice Penale, ar. 348, URL: https://www.brocardi.it/codice-penale/libro-secondo/titolo-ii/capo-ii/art348.html Last Access: 12/4/2020.

'Ordine degli Psicologi' was established. Some were opposed to it for political reasons: in their opinion, the orders represented corporate instruments to be abolished. [134]

However, the current situation of philosophical counsellors and consultants differs in one fundamental point. At the time the professional market tended towards regulation, which guaranteed norms and quality standards for a long time but created a rather rigid labour market. In recent years, there has been a trend towards the deregulation of professions, aiming both at expanding the exercise of many professions within the European community and at promoting higher competitiveness in the labour market.[135] Hence, nowadays' trend towards liberalisation and European Union's current guidelines on professions[136] suggests that philosophical counselling and consultancy will unlikely become regulated professions.[137]

Law 4/2013 plays a part in this project through the recognition and legitimization of non-regulated activities. However, the law allows voluntary self-regulation and promotes 'la qualificazione dell'attività dei soggetti che esercitano le professioni di cui all'art. 1, anche indipendentemente dall'adesione degli stessi ad una delle associazioni di cui all'art. 2' (art.6).[138] Thus, although associations between philosophical consultants and rigorous training are encouraged to promote the dignity and public recognition of the profession, they are clearly not mandatory. This implies that, to date, anyone, even if self-taught, can call themselves a philosophical counsellor or consultant, without incurring penalties. Besides, there are no mandatory criteria for the training of new professionals, as it emerges from my analysis of philosophical counsellors' and consultants training pathway.

Furthermore, the poorly restrictive criteria of law 4/2013 do not help define philosophical counsellors' and consultants' professional fields in relation to the vast variety of counselling

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[134] For further information, see Lo Iacono 2016.

[135] 'A prescindere dal quadro regolamentare prescelto, la regolamentazione crea ostacoli per il funzionamento del mercato unico e frena il potenziale per la crescita e la creazione di posti di lavoro nelle economie dell'UE. Il fatto di rimuovere gli ostacoli esistenti offre opportunità e ha un impatto positivo sulla produttività e sulla competitività dell'economia dell'UE. Qualunque sia il modello applicabile in ciascun paese o in ciascuna regione, qualora determinate restrizioni possano essere eliminate o essere rese più proporzionate, questo compito dovrebbe essere intrapreso a beneficio dei cittadini, dei consumatori e dei professionisti. A tal fine, saranno utili le esperienze di altri Stati membri sul modo migliore di procedere.' See URL: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0820&from=PL Last Access: 22/08/2022.

[136] See URL https://www.tuttocamere.it/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=324 Last Access 22/08/2022.

[137] See graph 2 on p. 13, which shows an increase in regulated professions in Italy from the second post-war period up to the 1990s. This trend has stopped since the 2000s.: Mocetti, Roma 2021, URL: https://www.bancaditalia.it/pubblicazioni/qef/2021-0600/QEF_600_21.pdf Last Access 25/08/2021.

[138] See URL: https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2013/01/26/13G00021/sg, Last Access: 31/08/2019. The law also indicates the ways in which associations can leave certificates concerning the registration of both simple and professional members (Article 7), clarifying the terms of the validity of such certificates (Article 8).

schools,[139] which certainly represent philosophical counsellors 'and consultants' major competitors. As previously shown, counselling is part of the helping professions, but it is an unregulated profession, recognized by law 4/2013, just like philosophical counselling and consultancy. The law 4/2013 was criticized by some counselling associations for not having contributed to the effective regulation of the various counselling types:

> La legge n° 4 del 2013, nata per regolamentare l'attività di categorie professionali come gli amministratori di condominio, esperti e tecnici in ecologia ambientale, ecc., è stata abilmente sfruttata da naturopati, guaritori e counselor per fornire al pubblico una illusoria forma di legittimazione. Essa lascia libere le associazioni di definire i criteri di appartenenza ad esse, ai fini dell'attività professionale, e quindi rende il panorama del Counseling ancora più confuso di quello precedente, nel quale decine di associazioni di categoria, ognuna in maniera autonoma e in contrasto con le altre, proponevano, e propongono, il loro indirizzo e le loro regole ai fini dell'esercizio dell'attività di Counseling. Se questa fosse davvero legislativamente regolamentata, non esisterebbero così tante associazioni di categoria e il Counseling avrebbe una sua definizione fondamentalmente univoca.[140]

As I explained, philosophical counselling and consultancy face an identical training inhomogeneity that adds up to the theoretical disagreement on the founding principles of the two disciplines. Therefore, the Law 4/2013, despite having officially recognised the professions of philosophical counsellor and consultant, did not establish minimum training criteria to be respected for the dignity of the profession, nor did it help to differentiate them from other types of counselling. Added to this, the simultaneous presence of a rather high number of psychologists in the regulated field risks making the sector market unbalanced due to an excessive offer. As a recent report on regulated professions says, 'in Italia gli Psicologi iscritti all'albo sono oggi oltre 101 mila, un numero impressionante, specialmente se si considera che erano appena 43 mila nel 2003. La numerosità e la continua crescita degli iscritti rappresentano una delle criticità più stringenti per la Categoria, per la quale, oggi più che mai, è fondamentale la programmazione degli accessi, a partire dai corsi universitari. Basti dire che secondo una ricerca commissionata dall'EPAP (l'ente previdenziale della Categoria), già dal 2004 il mercato aveva raggiunto il livello di saturazione. Non

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[139] See URL : https://www.assocounseling.it/counseling/ambiti.asp Last Access: 1/10/2021; See also URL: https://www.counselingitalia.it/counseling-counselor/5-tipi-di-counseling, Last Access: 07/09/2021.
[140] See URL: https://www.uni-psi.it/articolo/diventare-counselor-ci%C3%B2-che-non-vi-dicono-facciamo-chiarezza--unipsi Last Access: 07/09/2021.

a caso, il tasso di disoccupazione a tre anni dalla laurea specialistica in psicologia, secondo le indagini Almalaurea, sfiora il 22%, valore tra i più alti nel confronto tra le diverse categorie'.[141]

Psychologists are competitors of philosophical counsellors and consultants despite an apparently contradictory element. Namely, a recent law has officially established that the profession of psychologist is to all intents and purposes a healthcare profession,[142] effectively placing it in the same professional field as the medical doctors. Professionals intending to address individual distress and existential problems from a non-medical point of view, such as philosophical counsellors and consultants, would then have their market share. Nonetheless, recent research promoted by the Instituto Piepoli in collaboration with the national order of psychologists shows that, in recent years, psychologists are increasingly perceived as a valid help in daily life, whose expertise is not confined to the treatment of mental and psychological disorders.[143] For example, about 53% of respondents find the presence of a psychologist in hospitals very useful, 56% in social services, and 46% in school, whilst 49% of respondents believe that an important area of competence of psychologists are work-related issues.[144] These data seem to confirm that there is an increasing demand for psychologists in new areas, which would again restrict philosophical consultants' exclusive areas of expertise. Thus, in Italy, philosophical counselling and consultancy must deal with a fairly saturated market due to the presence of a high number of specialists both in the regulated and in the unregulated neighbouring sectors.

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[141] Comitato Unitario Permanente degli Ordini e Collegi Professionali, Secondo Rapporto sulle Professioni Regolamentate in Italia, Numeri, dimensioni, tendenze, cambiamento, CRESME Ricerche Spa, Roma 2018, p. 36. URL: http://www.cuprofessioni.it/2%C2%B0_Rapporto_Professioni_2018.pdf Last access: 19/07/2021 See also L'ultimo rapporto disponibile sui laureati in Psicolgia del Consiglio Nazionale Ordine degli Psicologi https://www.psy.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/La-psicologia-in-cifre.pdf

[142] 'Legge 3/2018' see URL: https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2018/1/31/18G00019/sg Last Access: 15/08/2022.

[143] See Istituto Piepoli 2019, URL http://www.quotidianosanita.it/allegati/allegato9192281.pdf Last Access: 20/06/2020.

[144] See Istituto Piepoli 2019, pp. 6-11, URL: http://www.quotidianosanita.it/allegati/allegato9192281.pdf Last Access: 20/06/2020.

I.11 Conclusions

PC was introduced in Italy around the end of the Nineties by a very small number of philosophers, psychologists, and psychotherapists. Since they did not find an agreement to denominate and conceptualize the disciplines, very soon two different practices arose: the 'counselling filosofico' (philosophical counselling), conceived by psychologists, and the 'consulenza filosofica' (philosophical consultancy), ideated by philosophers.

In this part of the chapter, I investigated the development of these two disciplines in Italy and I have structured my research on two main levels. First, I analysed the socio-cultural factors and trends of Italian society that favoured the entry of these disciplines and their launch in the Italian labour market. Secondly, I highlighted the main causes of the scarce purchase that philosophical counselling and consultancy had as professions.

As for the first point, I analysed the changes in the Italian labour market and in the university system which took place in conjunction with the launch and development of philosophical counselling and consultancy in the country. I showed that the Italian labour market has been quite unstable and struggled to absorb graduates in the humanities efficaciously. Notably, the massive use of atypical contracts, the structural job instability, the precariousness of university researchers' conditions particularly penalises graduates in Philosophy. Besides, the widespread phenomenon of 'mismatch' testifies to the inadequacy of the recent university reforms to train this group of graduates so as to meet the requests of the labour market. Such an uncertain picture, I claim, has favoured the introduction of alternative career routes for graduates in the humanities, such as philosophical counselling and consultancy. University reforms and in particular the creation of vocational master's courses (not to be confused with the international understanding of MA/MSc) have encouraged this trend.

As to the second point, I identified the factors that have compromised the development and spreading of philosophical counselling and consultancy as specific professions. The first cause was the difficulty on the part of early practitioners to define their specialty theoretically. Namely, I emphasised the general theoretical disagreement on both the purposes, the methods, the definition of the two disciplines, and the role of philosophical counsellor and consultants. In my opinion, the absence of clear and shared definitions and aims may impede the distinction between the two disciplines and between them and other helping professions. Moreover, practitioners' efforts to make the professions appealing to a potential audience risk adapting the practices in accordance

with market trends, which could jeopardize philosophical counselling and consultancy's innovative potential. Secondly, I highlighted the inhomogeneity of the Italian training offer. The lack of rigour of access criteria compromises the philosophical foundations of the profession and does not value practitioners with a course of study in Philosophy. Besides, within the training courses, the two disciplines are often combined with other philosophical practices. Such hybridization risks ignoring the different theoretical assumptions of each specialty, especially if they are modelled and adjusted according to their usability in different application contexts. A similar theoretical flattening is also evident in the information material available on the internet, as the distinction between philosophical counselling and consultancy developed in specialist journals over the years is often neglected. All this certainly does not help philosophical counselling and consultancy to emerge as professions with a precise and rigorous identity.

Thirdly, I showed that the recent legislative provisions recognizing philosophical counselling and consultancy as 'unregulated' professions marked an important step for the public recognition of the two disciplines but did not contribute to delimiting their professional field nor effectively regulate them. Specifically, Law 4/2013 did not establish minimum training criteria to be respected for the dignity of the two professions, nor did it help to differentiate them from other types of counselling.

Lastly, I highlighted that the simultaneous presence of a rather high number of psychologists in the regulated field risks making the sector market unbalanced due to an excessive offer.

My aim was to show that these elements hinder the emergence of these disciplines as well-defined professions and, above all, they risk trivializing them by characterizing them as products to be sold to a very broad and inhomogeneous public of aspiring practitioners.

In conclusion, the second part of this chapter highlights that to evaluate the evolution of the two disciplines in Italy, it is necessary to consider them not only as theoretical constructs but also as a socio-cultural phenomenon. Such a perspective implies that the philosophical weaknesses or theoretical contradictions of the disciplines themselves are not the only factors that contributed to their partial failure as new professions. The modalities through which they have been concretely inserted and developed in the Italian context are equally significant.

II. Philosophy for Children (P4C)

During the 1990s, philosophical practices started to draw the attention of a wide audience of scholars and aspiring practitioners in Italy, slowly spreading across the country through local projects and training courses in private schools and universities. PC and Philosophy for Children (generally abbreviated as P4C) are the two practices that best rooted in the country and, therefore, they are the object of my thesis. In the first chapter, I studied the spreading of PC from a socio-cultural angle. I reconstructed the history of its birth and international development, the multiple theoretical interpretations in international literature, and investigated the reasons for its difficult development in Italy.

In this chapter, I intend to focus on Philosophy for Children (from now on P4C), an international pedagogical project, currently officially implemented in approximately 40 countries worldwide[1], whose primary aim is to foster critical thinking in children aged 3 to 18 through the teaching of argumentative and reasoning skills.

My leading thesis is that the introduction of P4C in Italy has given rise to something inevitably new compared to the original layout of this discipline. As I am going to demonstrate, P4C was originally based on theoretical assumptions that have been deeply conditioned both by the particular philosophical background of the author and by the historical and cultural circumstances.

The original configuration of P4C and the CPI method were conceived in the early 1970s by the American philosopher and educationalist Matthew Lipman who promoted a peculiar approach to learning based on the so-called method of the 'Community of Philosophical Inquiry' (CPI). In a CPI, children learn to think together by engaging in group discussions on philosophical issues with the teacher serving as a facilitator. Such a methodology was rooted in the ideas of Charles Sanders Peirce and, above all, in the work of pragmatist philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer John Dewey. Peirce identified the 'community of inquiry' as a model for scientific research, positing that scientific knowledge can be acquired and developed only with the participation of individuals sharing the same goals and perspectives. Within a 'community of inquiry', every new discovery requires all those involved in the process of investigation to agree, so as to be considered the discovery legitimate (Peirce 1955, pp. 5-22). According to Lipman, Dewey applied Pierce's concepts to the educational setting, proposing that the 'educational process in the classroom should take as

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[1] See the 'Research' area on the 'Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children' (IAPC) official website, URL:https://www.montclair.edu/cehs/academics/centers-and-institutes/iapc/ Last Access: 14/02/2019.

its model the process of scientific inquiry' (Lipman 2003, p.20, Dewey 1902). Being himself an educationalist, Lipman inherited and personally re-elaborated Dewey's views, trying to convert the classroom into a miniature community of enquiry. As I will show, Lipman believed that the American public school system was incapable of training students in critical thinking. Although his first goal was to help US school children become more active in asking questions, to critically discuss their own ideas and engage in debates[2], his final hope was to contribute to the education of 'reasonable' citizens. Lipman was convinced that the collaborative approach of his CPI method could encourage children to develop a sense of community based on cooperation and mutual respect. The climate of protest and political progressivism of the seventies were the favourable socio-cultural factors that led him to strive for a reform of the school system.

My claim is that, when P4C entered Italy, it had to adapt to a different historical-cultural context which not only does not favour its development within the country but also risks compromising the most promising educational and philosophical aspects of this discipline. Namely, as I am going to show in this chapter, in Italy P4C has been suggested as a possible response to an alleged crisis of the teaching of philosophy at school, and as a propaedeutic teaching approach to the traditional 'historicist' method which, broadly speaking, interprets the teaching of philosophy as a survey of philosophers' theories throughout the history. My argument is that P4C represents a problematic answer to such issues for two main reasons.

First of all, I argue that, at first, P4C had difficulty in taking root in the Italian school system due to the solid philosophical tradition on which the Italian historicist method is based, which has been the subject of debate in the Italian academic community since the beginning of the twentieth century. As I am going to show, this has always made the traditional historicist methods difficult to replace with other teaching methodologies, at least in the high school system. Besides, the Italian school has always considered philosophy a subject suitable only for students of certain types of high school. The model proposed by P4C represents a reversal of perspective on both fronts that is not easy to adopt.

Secondly, P4C risks being a part of the crisis of the teaching of philosophy at school, rather than a solution to it. Such a problematic aspect is linked to the recent reforms of the Italian

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[2] To some British scholars, Lipman's implicit goal to establish 'philosophy as a full-fledged "content area" in US public schools […] has, with time, become an increasingly distant one'. According to the authors the same goal has been reached in Europe: 'This is not so much the case in the UK, Europe and Latin America, however, where the theory and practice of doing philosophy for or with school children appears to be of growing both interest and concern in the field of education and, by implication, in society as a whole' (Vansieleghem, Kennedy 2011, p.171).

educational system. On the one hand, I am going to demonstrate that these changes have made the Italian school more open to experimenting with new teaching methodologies, which is favouring a greater diffusion of P4C but, on the other hand, they have exacerbated the crisis of the Italian school system. Namely, I suggest that the ideological assumptions of the changes made within the school system risk inserting P4C into the logic of commodification of knowledge that seems to permeate the Italian school since the early 2000s.

Thus, the chapter will be divided into two parts. In the first part, I briefly retrace the history of P4C, highlighting the main contents of this discipline and the philosophical and historical background in which it was conceived. In the second part, I focus on the teaching of philosophy in Italy. Namely, I explain how the Italian institutional framework has slowly contributed to redesigning the role of philosophy within Italian school, highlighting positive aspects and critical points. To do so, I analyse the main educational reforms that have taken place over the last century, showing their ideological content and examining the way in which they have been criticized by Italian philosophers and academics. Contextually, I analyse the recent spread of P4C and the way in which it has been absorbed within such evolving and controversial framework.

II.1 Matthew Lipman's 'Community of Philosophical Inquiry' (CPI)

In this section, I reconstruct the birth of P4C, analysing the intellectual pathway that led Matthew Lipman to start this innovative pedagogical project. In particular, I highlight the philosophical background informing his ideas and the socio-cultural context that inspired his project. Finally, I briefly explain the theoretical cornerstones and the methodology of the 'Community of Philosophical Inquiry' (CPI), highlighting some problematic aspects of the discipline.

Lipman (1923-2010) studied Philosophy for two academic terms at Stanford University as part of his induction into the army during the Second World War (see Cam 2011, p.116). In this period, he began reading the works of John Dewey, whose theories, unbeknownst to him at the time, would have a long-lasting influence on his thought. When the war ended, he pursued his postgraduate studies in Europe and, afterwards, returned to the Unites States to teach Philosophy at Columbia University in New York. He first specialised in Aesthetics but his interest in Dewey's studies remained unaltered and, at the end of the 1960s, he eventually turned his attention to education. In his autobiography, *A Life Teaching Thinking* (2008), Lipman mentions many different factors that contributed in this shift in specialisation, including a personal concern for the education of his own children and a growing dissatisfaction with the educational program of undergraduate students which, in his opinion, did not develop sufficiently in their reasoning skills (see Cam 2011, p.116, Lipman 2008).[3] More in general, he also noticed that many Americans were showing problems in presenting their views about the wisdom and morality of the Vietnam War. He attributed this incapacity to an irreparable lack in critical thinking, which should have been the educational system's first responsibility (see Pritchard 2022).[4]

For Lipman, 'critical thinking' involves judgments based on 'mega-criteria' such as *reliability*, *relevance*, *strength*, *coherence*, and *consistency* (Lipman 2003, p.119) which are essential to determine the reliability of ideas, concepts and theories. Thus, he began to wonder if teaching

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[3] Lipman displays frequently his worries on education: 'We do not sufficiently encourage [the child] to think himself, to form independent judgements, to be proud personal insights, to be proud of having a point of view call his own, to be pleased with his prowess' (Lipman 1976a, p.22).

[4] See URL: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/children/ Last Access: 07/09/2022. With Lipman's words: 'If we deplore our leaders and electorates as being self-centred and unenlightened, we must remember that they are the products of our educational system. If we protest, as an extenuating factor, that they are also the products of homes and families, we must remember that the unreasonable parents and grandparents in these families are likewise products of the same process of education. As educators, we have a heavy responsibility for the unreasonableness of the world's population' (Lipman 1985, pp.25-26).

critical thinking skills from an early age and throughout the duration of high school could improve people's argumentative abilities as adults (see Martin 2011).[5] He believed that in a democratic society, citizens should cultivate the virtue of *reasonableness*, which 'is not pure rationality; it is rationality tempered by judgment' (Lipman 2003, p.11). If adults lacked reasonableness, it was once again because of the inefficiency of the schooling system: 'This is not to say that all who are reasonable must have been educated, but rather that whoever is educated ought to be reasonable' (Lipman 1985, p.27).[6] According to Lipman, any deficiency in an educational system generally affects the portion of population which is already socially and economically disadvantaged and, as far as the American educational system was concerned, no countervailing educational intervention could be considered as a sufficient remedy:

> The only way to make compensatory education work is not to approach it as a merely compensatory device at all, but to design it so as to promise educational excellence for all young people. Just as there is no field called "compensatory medicine", there should be no such field as compensatory education (Lipman 1978, p.253).

Although Lipman clearly doubted that any tardive compensatory education would be sufficient to compensate for the lack in critical thinking, here he was referring in particular to the American public school system of the late 1970s which, in his opinion, was able to provide neither a good standard of schooling nor an efficient compensatory education, since 'the methods employed in compensatory education generally [turned out to be] much the same as those in the existing system itself' (Lipman 1978, p.253).[7] Indeed, he maintained that the standard American educational system, based on the acquisition of a great amount of information verified by means of rigid tests, 'rather than being one which encourages children to think for themselves, is a failure even on its own terms, for we are constantly appalled at how little our children seem to know about the history of the world, or about its political and economic organization' (Lipman 1985, p.28). Although he was aware that a more functional educational system could not guarantee drastic social

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[5] See URL: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/15/education/15lipman.html?_r=1 Last Access: 26/08/22.

[6] 'The greatest disappointment of traditional education has been its failure to produce people approximating the ideal of reasonableness' (Lipman 1985, p.27).

[7] In 1970s' American education, the teaching of disciplinary philosophy was included neither in elementary schooling nor in high school education. Even now in the USA, logic and philosophy are thought mostly from college years. See Pritchard 2022, URL: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/children/ Last Access: 07/09/2022.

changes, he was convinced that it could produce measurable educational improvements with long-lasting effects to society as a whole (see Lipman 1978, p.254). As a consequence, he believed that a resolute change in methods would represent not only the best attempt to ameliorate the whole educational system, but above all a matter of social justice towards those who succumbed to miseducation more easily. For all these reasons we can argue that Lipman had a clear *democratic intent*, which made his works politically relevant.[8]

As a starting point for the process of renewal, he believed that the primary concern of the educational system should be to understand the real 'causes of miseducation'. In his opinion, these causes were to be traced in the functioning of children's schooling programmes. Namely, he had observed that the lack of *relevance*, *interest* and *meaning* of standard children's courses were the principal causes of dissatisfaction amongst young students, and that the knowledge transmitted in textbooks was often perceived as bad-tasting medicine rather than as an interesting experience. On the contrary, for him, 'the textbook should be an adventure filled with discoveries; indeed, it should be a paradigm of discovery in practice' (Lipman 1998, p.256). He also argued that the school environment was probably demotivating since, normally, when children begin their formal education in kindergarten, they 'are lively, curious, imaginative, and inquisitive', but gradually 'a decline sets in, and they become passive' (Lipman 2003, p.12). According to Lipman, this drop-off in student interest was due to the rigidly structured teaching settings of elementary schools, which seek uniformity and regularities, seemingly indifferent to diversities and particularities: 'Before long, children become aware that schooling is enervating and dispiriting rather than animating or intellectually provocative. In short, schooling provides few natural incentives to thinking […]. A drop-off in student interest is the natural consequence' (Ibidem).

With regard specifically to the tuition of standards disciplines, he stressed that the teaching of certain ordinary subjects such as mathematics or science had been overrated by American educationists, at least as far as the improvement of children's abilities in logical inferences was concerned (see Lipman 1976a, p.19). He believed that the kind of reasoning learnt with mathematics was too abstract to be easily transferred to conceptual deduction, whereas the teaching of science could help children to approach only certain types of inferences, notably the 'inductive inference'.

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[8] For instance, he states: 'A higher-quality democracy is not achieved merely by attracting it to a plurality of individuals capable of higher-order thinking. It must itself engage in the cultivation of such thinking. (One would not have to look for long to find communities--often suburban--in which the intellectual level of the residents considerably outstrips the intellectual level of the schools.) Nor is education for higher-order thinking merely the education of a privileged elite, whether the basis of that elitism be wealth, power, or intelligence. Education for higher-order thinking is quality education for all' (Lipman, 1998, p.277).

According to Lipman, the learning of mathematical and scientific reasoning was far from being sufficient for the formulation of complex hypothesis and deductive inferences (Ibidem). Similarly, he argued that the thinking and linguistic skills learnt by children whilst reading works of literature should not be confused with the logical skills on which deductive inference and verbal judgements depend: 'Verbal meanings depend upon connotation and suggestion, upon all sorts of nuances other than what can logically be deduced from a given set of statements in a given context' (Lipman 1976a, p.20). Thus, in Lipman's opinion, it was crucial to teach children *proper logical skills* while stimulating their creativity, enthusiasm and independence of thought. Of course, this implied that even very young children could be capable of acquiring those types of skills. Lipman's assumptions on children's rational abilities were in contrast with those of the clinical psychologist Jean Piaget, according to whom children under 11-12 rarely produce abstract thought. Following Piaget's theories of cognitive development, prior to that time, children's thinking focuses concretely on sensations, imaginations or perceptions and, therefore, the kind of instructions that they should receive, should be equally oriented towards the concrete (see Babakr, Mohamedamin, and Kakamad 2019). In particular, children would not be capable of 'thinking about thinking', the meta-level reasoning that generally marks philosophical speculation.[9] In Lipman's opinion, this was a misconception based on some important bias which had led to considerable pedagogical mistakes: 'Children are treated as if they were incapable of philosophical deliberation, therefore they behave as if they were incapable of philosophical deliberation. And this is said of children who, with a constant inclination to ask "Why?", behave far more philosophically than most adults!' (Lipman 1976a, p.25). Evidently, for Lipman, the major limits of traditional pedagogical approaches lie in the methodology used. A children-oriented methodology needs to look for new stimulating ways of teaching, by taking into account that children learn more easily when they experience the joy of *enchantment* and *discovery*:

> I didn't want to teach children logic in the way we taught (or pretended to teach) college students logic. The children would certainly object to having one more nauseating subject crammed down their throats—and they'd have been right. Someone suggested to me that I somehow present logic in the form of a children's story. The possibility intrigued me: a story telling, almost as a child would relate to it, of the discovery by a group of children of how their own thought processes work, and how more effective thought processes could be distinguished from less effective ones (Lipman 1976a, p.17).

[9] The main figure who challenged Piaget's theory was the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, who highlighted how a child's cultural background can modify the stages of cognitive development which, therefore, doesn't have to develop inevitably in succession (See for instance Vygotsky 1962,1978).

Arguably, the political ferment of the late 1960s, which culminated with the University riots of 1968, 'provided a social and educational atmosphere in which a man who was a meliorist by temperament should have concocted a plan for radical educational change' (Cam 2011, pp.116 - 117). Hence, in 1969, Lipman applied to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a pilot project grant. He proposed to write a children's book, which he entitled 'Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery' (1969), and to teach it to fifth grade children in a true field experiment, so as to test the method he was elaborating. The grant was approved and the project was carried out in 1970-71 at a school in Montclair, New Jersey. Thanks to the encouraging results of the pilot project (See Lipman 1976a, pp.34-38), Lipman decided to establish the *Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children* (IAPC) as part of Montclair State College and, in 1979**,** they published the first volume of *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children* (1979).[10]

Today, the IAPC continues to develop and publish new P4C curricula, working internationally to advance and improve P4C.[11] During the 1970s**,** Lipman also developed a teacher's manual in collaboration with his colleague Ann Sharp (1942-2010) and arranged for the preparation of a children's workbook, in order to help teachers of fifth to eighth grades work with the material. From that moment on, Lipman and Sharp wrote several other philosophical novels for children and high school students, each of them accompanied with a teacher's manual.

In the first novel he wrote, the protagonist Harry comes across the basic concepts and rules of Aristotelean logic little by little, in collaboration with his schoolmates. They all speculate on the nature of thought, causality, reality, knowledge and belief and on the differences between right and wrong, helping and stimulating each other.[12] These stories do not entail the specialist vocabulary of philosophy, yet their subjects pertain to logic, and other branches of philosophical investigation.

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[10] The journal published articles about the hermeneutics of childhood and proposed the works of theorists and practitioner of P4C in the form of philosophical arguments, classroom transcripts, curricula, empirical research and reports. It ended in 2014. See URL: https://www.pdcnet.org/thinking , Last Access 14/04/2019.

[11] Currently, numerous organisations around the world are formally affiliated with the IAPC. Though in many cases autonomous from the IAPC approach, they all collaborate to spread P4C and they have formed national and regional associations all over the world. See URL: https://www.montclair.edu/cehs/academics/centers-and-institutes/iapc/philosophy/affiliates-contact/ Last Access: 14/04/2019.

[12] Here is an example of logical discovery in Harry Stottlemeier's adventure: 'All planets revolve about the sun," Mr. Bradley had said, very distinctly. And this thing with the tail also revolved about the sun, but it wasn't a planet. "So there are things that revolve around the sun that aren't planets," Harry said to himself. "All planets revolve about the sun, but not everything that revolves about the sun is a planet." And then Harry had an idea. "A sentence can't be reversed. If you put the last part of a sentence first, it'll no longer be true. All right, it's true that 'all planets revolve about the sun'. But if you turn the sentence around and say that 'all things that revolve about the sun are planets', then it's no longer true—it's false!' (Lipman 1976b, pp. 40-41).

This was the result of Lipman's choice, as he believed that philosophy was the best way to produce high-order thinking among young students, precisely because 'children find the concepts […] to be *important*, they are delighted to *discover* the power of *logic* as a discipline for their inquiries, and it helps them, as no other discipline can, with the intricacies of reasoning and judgment' (Lipman 1998, p.279). Furthermore, he maintained that philosophy should be the first learning stage because it prepares children to think in terms of the other disciplines and reduces the sense of fragmentation that they often experience within standard educational programmes (see Lipman 1985, p. 33).[13] This intention was made more evident by the contents of the other novels he wrote over the following decades, since each of them is specifically devoted to a philosophical subject, such as aesthetics, ethics, social relations and language.[14]

Even though the contents of the novels are relevant from a philosophical point of view, the philosophical interest of the P4C method does not lie uniquely in them. The discussions that follow the reading of the book can be considered, indeed, as the most philosophically fruitful part of the P4C program. *Discussions* and *cooperation* are the basis for the building of an efficacious 'Community of Philosophical Inquiry' (CPI). As Lipman explains in other writings, the CPI is the classroom itself,[15] whose task is to analyse and to comment on the contents of the philosophical novels written for the P4C curriculum. The depth and accuracy of the analysis depends on the student's level of familiarity and experience with the methods of the program.

As far as the actual method of investigation is concerned, Lipman described the inquiry as a five-steps process: 1. The offering of the text; 2. The construction of the agenda; 3. Solidifying the community; 4. Using exercises and discussion plans; 5. Encouraging further responses (See Lipman 2003, pp.101-103). At the beginning of a typical CPI's dialogue, some time is spent identifying the key-concepts contained in the written text. At a second stage, participants formulate their own philosophical questions related to the reading and vote for the one they wish to explore. The discussion usually takes place in a circle, with the teacher intervening as facilitator in order to encourage students to deepen their arguments, whilst still giving them freedom to follow their interests:

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[13] 'Philosophy is, so to speak, at right angles to the other disciplines so that together, like warp and woof, they interpenetrate and interweave until they produce a seamless texture' (Lipman 1985, p.33).

[14] Lipman wrote several philosophical novels during his career, such as Lisa (1976), Suki (1978), Mark (1980), Pixie (1981), Kio and Gus (1982), Helfie (1987), Harry Prime (1987), Nous (1996).

[15] 'I have suggested that the model of each and every classroom - that which it seeks to approximate and, at times, becomes - is the community of inquiry. By inquiry, of course, I mean perseverance in self-corrective exploration of issues which are felt to be both important and problematic' (Lipman 1985, p. 28).

> The dialogue moves in the direction of two kinds of *wholeness*. On the one hand, the mental acts form logical connections with one another. On the other hand, those who perform such acts form social relationships with one another. The first kind of wholeness is a *completeness of meaning*. The second kind, the interpersonal kind, moves toward a communal *solidarity*. Participants find this dual form of fulfilment highly gratifying and much to be preferred to the benefits of traditional pedagogies (Lipman 1998, p.279).

In the excerpt above, Lipman sketches the concept of interpersonal interaction as a form of communal solidarity. Following Dewey's theories on the nature of enquiry (see Dewey 1910,1916, 1938), Lipman believed that every enquiry is intrinsically social or communal because it is based on an agreed set of rules, such as a shared language or symbolic system. Nonetheless, he points out that 'while all inquiry may be predicated upon community, it does not follow that all community is predicated upon inquiry' (Lipman 2003, p. 83). This seems to be the most interesting proposal of P4C: building the sense of community upon the ideal of an *intersubjective research*. Instead of relying on traditions and fixed norms, a CPI bases its own existence and meaning on a self-critical practice (Ibidem), which lends it a dynamic and evolution-oriented character.[16] Furthermore, the notions of 'community' and 'communal practice' emphasise the idea that a successful learning process needs the experience of others as a condition for its own existence. Exchange is not only preferred but strongly encouraged by the structure itself of the dialogue between participants, which is based on key-ideas such as 'inclusiveness', 'participation', 'shared cognition', and 'face-to-face relationships' (Lipman 2003, p.95).

Nonetheless, Lipman envisaged the risk of conformism amongst students during group discussion, therefore he emphasised the need to preserve independent thinking:

> The opinions of others need to be respected, but they do not have to be mimicked. In a healthy community of inquiry, students learn to build on each other's ideas, although not necessarily with identical architecture. They also learn that, in a community that urges the discovery of the other side of the question, there are many occasions on which one may well be proud to be on that other side (Lipman 2003, p.97).

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[16] 'The making of an inference compels the participants to explore what was being assumed or taken for granted that led to the selection of that particular inference. A contention that several things are different demands that the question is raised of how they are to be distinguished. Each move sets up a train of countering or supporting moves. As subsidiary issues are settled, the community's sense of direction is confirmed and clarified, and the inquiry proceeds with renewed vigor' (Lipman 2003, pp. 92-93).

Therefore, in P4C, the concept of inter-subjectivity emerges as a form of *relation* and mutual respect between distinct individuals, rather than a practice with fusional and conforming intents. To this extent, Ann Sharp affirmed that 'the success of the community is compatible with, and dependent on, the unique expression of individuality' (Sharp 1991, p.33). On this regard, P4C has been efficaciously defined as a 'transindividual system', meaning that the processes of psychic individuation of individuals is synchronic with the determination of the collective. Notably, they are both constituted by their relation: 'the transindividual understood as relation is not what occurs between individuated terms, but is a dimension of individuation itself' (Merçon, Armstrong 2011, p. 252).

The communitarian aspects of P4C are the most philosophically promising ones. As I will show in the next chapter, they represent the basis on which 'Philosophy for Community' is founded, that is, an original Italian theoretical proposal that arises from the innovation and transformation of this discipline into a practice for adults.

Despite the merits of the discipline, some criticisms that are connected to P4C's rather rigid structure and theoretical framework are worth mentioning.

According to Kohan, the political justification for the existence of P4C, notably the training of individuals who would eventually 'lead to a better world', are ideologically driven. In his opinion, prefiguring a final political goal entails a misunderstanding of the unpredictable effects of free thinking:

> Thinking is unpredictable; it is an event, it is the free operation of difference and complex repetition in the realm of the heterogeneous—an uncertain, accidental, unexpected encounter. This means that where there are predetermined forms, ideas or models, philosophical thought will not find its place (Kohan 2014, p. 38)

More precisely, in Kohan's opinion, when philosophy has any moral, politic or religious intent, it automatically loses its own subversive sense. Therefore, thinking of the purposes of educational philosophy always implies answering somehow to the problematic question: 'what is philosophy?' (see Kohan 2002, pp. 8-11).

Nonetheless, this argument can be reversed. If we consider the communal practice of CPI as a way to form *reasonable* citizens, as Lipman suggested, we could imagine them being capable of criticising politics and philosophy's aims themselves. Besides, Lipman's political intents can hardly be considered strictly normative. They are rather a suggestion or a declared hope, since P4C, for the very fact of being a *practice* that produces its results from time to time, works beyond and, perhaps,

at the expense of his initiator. The consequences of it, in fact, cannot be either predicted, nor controlled in advance.

In line with Kohan's remarks, it has been hypothesised that, in Lipman's P4C, the strive for unity and consistency, embodied by the subordination of critical thinking to the universal rules of logic, entails having a fixed idea of what is or should be truth, philosophy, and human nature itself (see Vansieleghem, Kennedy 2001, p. 179 ff, and Reed, R.F., Johnson, T.W. 1999).

Overall, I claim that if P4C is implemented in unfavourable institutional and historical-cultural contexts, it actually runs the risks highlighted by these authors. As I will show in the next sections, this is what happened when this discipline was applied in the current Italian schooling system.

Having explained Lipman's historical, philosophical and pedagogical background, the methodology of the CPI, and some general risks concerning P4C, in the next sections I will devote myself to analysing the development of the discipline in Italy, starting from the nineties onwards.

My aim is to demonstrate both the philosophical reasons that initially hindered the development of P4C in the country and the ideological factors informing the current Italian school that risk amplifying the critical aspects of this discipline.

II.2 The Spreading of P4C in Italy: A Socio-cultural Perspective

Having investigated the main contents of Lipman's original configuration of P4C, I am going to briefly summarize its entry into Italy. Notably, I will highlight the expectations that the first practitioners placed in this discipline, so as to outline the main issues that will be addressed in the rest of the chapter.

P4C was introduced in Italy in 1990 by Antonio Cosentino, a philosophy teacher in secondary school, and Marina Santi, who is currently a professor in Pedagogy at the University of Padua, following a workshop on P4C methodology held in Yugoslavia and organized by Matthew Lipmann and Ann Sharp (Cosentino 2002, p.1).

In 1992, Cosentino founded the CRIF (Centro di Ricerca sull'Indagine Filosofica)[17] and, shortly thereafter, Marina Santi founded the CIREP (Centro Interdisciplinare di Ricerca Educativa sul Pensiero).[18] A few years later, Santi also launched the first 'Corso di perfezionamento' at the University of Padua. The two centres served two main interconnected purposes. On the one hand, they organised experimental projects on P4C throughout the national territory and started to train teachers for the role of 'facilitators' within the 'Comunità di Ricerca Filosofica' (CdRF), according to Lipman's method; on the other hand, they dealt with the translation of texts from the original syllabus, [19] whilst carrying out research and academic consultancy. Over the years, the CRIF has continued its experimentation and training activities. To date, it has a fair number of affiliates, local offices, and 'collabora con l'Università di Napoli 'Federico II' e con l'Università di Firenze a corsi di perfezionamento e aggiornamento-formazione in Philosophy for Children; e ha stabilito negli anni rapporti con altri atenei italiani, come Padova, nonché vari Enti e Istituzioni'.[20] Besides, CRIF has been recently recognised by the MIUR as an official institution for the training of facilitators.[21]

Thus, P4C entered Italy several years before PC and well before the international 'Philosophical practice movement' co-opted disciplines with dissimilar histories, purposes, methodologies, and theoretical apparatuses.

As for P4C, it was originally introduced for pedagogical purposes. In particular, what interested Cosentino the most about Lipmann's curriculum was the possibility of an overturning of the hierarchical teacher-learner relationship, and the opportunity for an encounter between philosophy and pedagogy, where 'dimensione teorica e dimensione pratica dei processi di formazione si intrecciano e si fondono senza residui' (Cosentino 2002, p.2). Besides, in Cosentino's view, P4C seemed to answer the most common questions of those years' Italian debate concerning the possibility of innovating the teaching of philosophy, which had been taught as a school subject

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[17] See URL: https://www.filosofare.org/crif-p4c/organigramma/ Last Access: 05/03/2021. Today, CRIF is officially recognised by the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC, Montclair State University, New Jersey, USA), and it is a member of the International Council for Philosophical Inquiry with Children (ICPIC), the international network that brings together the centres for philosophy with children and adolescents across 70 countries worldwide.

[18] See URL: http://www.cirep.it/ Last Access: 05/03/2021.

[19]The translations of the original texts are published in the series 'Impariamo a pensare', published by Liguori. In recent years, in addition to the translation of the original texts of the curriculum, some readjustments of the original philosophical stories have been proposed in order to make them more suitable for the Italian public.

[20] See URL: https://www.filosofare.org/crif-p4c/lassociazione/ Last Access: 07/03/2021. One of the main bodies in close relation with the CRIF is the ACUTO Summer School, which has collaborated in the training of P4C teachers since 1999 on the initiative of its Director, Antonio Cosentino. See URL: http://www.scuolacutop4c.it/acuto/ Last Access: 07/03/2021.

[21]CRIF is accredited by Italian MIUR for the training of school staff pursuant to Directive 170/2016.

in upper secondary schools - mainly in the 'licei', i.e. high schools - since the end of the Nineteenth century. Namely, he argued that P4C could be an effective propaedeutic teaching approach (see Cosentino 2002) to the traditional 'historicist' method which, broadly speaking, interprets the teaching of philosophy as a survey of philosophers' theories throughout the history.

However, despite the internships, master courses, and research activity of CRIF, so far, P4C has been able to secure a place exclusively within experimental projects in primary schools, first-grade secondary schools, and in a limited number of second-grade secondary schools in the country. As noted by Giustina in 2015, 'nello stesso ambiente accademico la pratica è pressoché sconosciuta, i laboratori, qualora attivati, troppo poco numerosi e nel dibattito contemporaneo lo spazio che le si riserva non è ampio quanto invece meriterebbe' (Giustina 2015, p.1).

In the following sections, instead of dwelling further on the purely theoretical contents of the discipline, I intend to study P4C as a socio-cultural product, thus answering the following questions: what kind of resistance did P4C meet when it was introduced in the Italian socio-cultural context? Secondly, how does the normative and ideological framework defining the current Italian school affect the philosophical and pedagogical potential of P4C? Indeed, as I argued in the introduction to this thesis, the theoretical contents of a social discipline cannot be separated from the analysis of its actual practical implementation.

Regarding the first question, in my analysis, I argue that P4C's difficulty in taking root in the Italian school system was initially due to the difficulty of challenging the solid philosophical tradition on which the Italian teaching method is based, which has been the subject of debate in the Italian academic community since the beginning of the twentieth century. Namely, the institutional and academic debate on the teaching of philosophy has revolved around two main axes: the contents and the teaching methods. As for the contents, despite differences and interpretative nuances, for the greatest part of the Twentieth century the main question was whether a 'theoretical-systematic' model or a 'historicist' model was preferable. The theoretical-systematic model focuses on the study of philosophy by thematic areas (e.g., Logic, Ethics, Aesthetics, etc.), whilst the 'historicist' model proposes the study of philosophical thought through a diachronic reconstruction, thus following philosophers' theories over the course of history. As I am going to show, the second model has almost always been successful. Indeed, in 2007, a UNESCO report defined the Italian approach as the 'archetype' of a history-focused kind of teaching (Goucha, Moufida 2007, p. 68).[22] As for the methods, the main question raised was whether it was necessary for students to work from

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[22] See URL: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000153601 Last Access: 31/01/2021.

textbooks, or whether it was preferable that they engaged in the close analysis of selected philosophical texts. In this case, the 'textbook model (i.e. 'modello manualistico') was successful.

As I am going to show, the philosophical relevance of the teaching models proposed in Italy throughout the last century has always made the traditional historicist methods difficult to replace with other methodologies coming from other philosophical traditions, such as P4C, which is rooted mainly in American pragmatism.

As to the second question, I argue that a broad political project that started during the Nineties, which aimed at restructuring the entire Italian school system, has gradually changed the ideological structure of the Italian school affecting the approach to teaching school subjects, including philosophy. Initially, institutional reforms have made the Italian school more open to experimenting with new teaching methodologies, which could favour a greater diffusion of P4C at school but, ultimately, they have exacerbated the crisis of the Italian school system. Indeed, the gradual shift towards a logic of exploitation of skills and an efficiency-driven paradigm of education has had significant consequences on two main levels. In the first place, this new paradigm has contributed to the gradual technicalisation of the Italian school, which appears increasingly market-oriented; secondly, it affected the contents and the teaching methodologies of school subjects - including philosophy and experimental projects such as P4C - since the learning objectives are defined within the new theoretical outlook. Namely, the ideological assumptions of the changes made within the school system risk inserting P4C into the logic of commodification of knowledge that seems to permeate the Italian school since the early 2000s. As a consequence, such a framework risks favouring P4C's most critical aspects whilst jeopardising its most promising pedagogical and philosophical contents.

II.3 The Teaching of Philosophy in Italian School: from 'Legge Casati' (1859) to the 1940s

In the previous section, I explained that P4C was initially introduced in Italy as an innovative proposal for the teaching of philosophy, which had traditionally been taught exclusively in high schools. In my opinion, in Italy, the reception of such a proposal has been partly difficult due to the significant philosophical background on which both the State educational system and the teaching of philosophy have long been based.

In this section, I analyse the late 19th and early 20th-century educational reforms and their philosophical background. This historical excursus is crucial for my argument. As I will demonstrate, in addition to structuring the school as a whole, these reforms have outlined a concept of didactics of philosophy at school that is still partly in use today. In particular, I focus on the so-called 'Riforma Gentile', implemented in 1923 by the Minister of Education Giovanni Gentile. Although such reform was substantially corrected by Minister De Vecchi in 1936 and then revised over the following decades, it has set up the teaching of philosophy in a way that has never been completely overcome. Then as now, philosophy is taught mainly in high schools according to a historicist framework. All the proposals for a renewal of the teaching of philosophy at school - including P4C - had to confront this dominant model.

The first phase in the history of the teaching of philosophy in Italian schools begins in the kingdom of Sardinia with the 'Legge Casati'[23] of 1859, which was extended to the new-born Kingdom of Italy in 1861. Casati law, commissioned by the Minister of Education Gabrio Casati, was revised and corrected by his successor Michele Coppino in 1867. The former measure constitutes the first regulatory intervention aiming at founding the Italian school in its entirety. The 'Legge Casati' delineated a distinctly classist system. Students completing elementary school, could choose between a 'Istituto tecnico' (i.e. technical school), which was meant to train the working-class, and a paid gymnasium for the future ruling class. The gymnasium gave access to the *Liceo* - for students aged 15 to 18[24] which in turn allowed admission to University. The *Liceo* had a strong humanistic connotation, due to the importance attributed to the humanities by the widespread Jesuit culture (see Gaiani 2014, p. 23). Philosophy was taught during the three years of the *Liceo*, following a

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[23] See the original text of the 'Legge Casati', URL: https://riami.altervista.org/mirkoriazzoli/legge-casati/storia/documenti-storici/ Last Access: 12/11/2020.
[24] Gymnasium lasted five years, whereas high school lasted three. Both were fee-paying schools.

generically-defined 'natural and Socratic' teaching model (see Telmon 1970, p.11). However, the law did not clarify methods and contents of the teaching, therefore it lacked a 'indirizzo definito' (Gaiani 2014, p. 22). In 1860, Casati's successor, Mamiani, suggested that the philosophical contents had to be presented by following their chronological order, but he did not provide a coursework and his proposal was withdrawn (Gaiani 2014, p. 22). The first philosophy syllabus was introduced in 1863 by Minister Amari and ratified that philosophy had to be taught according to a 'systematic' model, which included Logic, Metaphysics and Ethics. The first textbooks for students were thus published, which gave rise to 'una forma di trasmissione della filosofia condensata nel dettato autorevole e precostituito di un libro di testo' (See Polizzi 1998 in Gaiani 2014, p. 24). [25]

The 'Coppino' law of 1867 marked the first fundamental turning point in the history of the teaching of Philosophy in Italy since it offered relevant guidelines to teachers. Notably, Coppino's *Istruzioni per l'insegnamento della filosofia nei licei* provided that contents and methods had to commensurate with the interests and abilities of young people. This implied accustoming students to rigorous 'scientific' reasoning by focusing on Philosophy's practical usefulness in everyday life, avoiding hyper-specialised discussions.[26] The strong emphasis on the usefulness of philosophy and the urge for scientific rigor mirrored the affirmation of the positivist culture of the time (Gaiani 2014, p. 26).[27] In 1884, Coppino introduced new amendments that marked an important step towards a history-oriented teaching method. In fact, whereas in the first two-year period Philosophy had to be taught according to the classic 'thematic-systematic' criterion (i.e. 'Formal Logic' and 'Psychology' in year one, 'Ethics', 'Induction', 'Sociology' and 'Law' in year two), in the third year a 'historicist' module on the theme 'Disegno storico della filosofia antica, medievale e moderna' was introduced (Gaiani 2014, p. 27).

However, this novelty was promptly withdrawn in 1888 by Minister Boselli, who returned to Amari's tripartite system. The last small change to the original programme of the 'legge Casati' occured in 1892, when ministers Villari and Martini reduced Philosophy's curriculum to 'Elements of Psychology', 'Elements and exercises of Logic' and 'Elements of Ethics'. The three modules were

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[25] According to Cavallera, the adoption of the textbook was expedient used to standardise the teaching of philosophy in the peninsula and cement national unity (see Cavallera 2014, p.3).

[26] The goal was to eliminate 'la pseudofilosofia sermocinante' (Garin 1966, p.13).

[27] The genarail aim of the 'Istruzioni' was to produce 'un abito di ragionamento severo e la ricerca del vero procedendo dal noto all'ignoto, compiti precipui attribuiti all'insegnamento di tale disciplina che debbono essere finalizzati, secondo l'autore dei programmi a chiarire "ogni esercizio di scienza e di lettere o d'arti non manuali", ricercando "i più facili e i più generali precetti di verità, di bellezza e di bene"; esplicita, tuttavia, appare l'avvertenza che segue tali indicazioni: evitare di addentrarsi in questioni "dubbie e recondite" (Scalera 1990, p. 22). On this regard, see also Spirito 1956, and Cambi 2010.

taught respectively during the first, the second and third year of the *Liceo*. Such adjustments were the last ones characterised by distinctly positivist leanings since they confirmed a 'systematic' teaching method, according to which high school Philosophy was an 'elementary' subject, that is, it had to be taught in its easy-to-group basic contents.

Consistent changes to the teaching of Philosophy came several years later, with the 'Riforma Gentile' of 1923. Understanding the philosophical contents of this reform is crucial, in that it set up the teaching of philosophy in a way that has never been completely overcome.

The reform was drafted in the midst of the Fascist era, during Mussolini's first government, and named after the Italian philosopher Giovanni Gentile. Gentile was Minister of Education from 1922 to 1924 and was in charge of restyling the whole school system.[28] The upper secondary school ideated by Gentile was characterised by the centrality of humanistic knowledge, which played a central role in the education of the future Fascist leading class.[29] Consequently, he assigned particular importance to the 'Liceo Classico' (i.e. classical high school) and to the teaching of Philosophy. Specifically, the two key-notions informing Gentile's high school were the preponderant role of Philosophy over Science, and the concept that Philosophy and History were two intrinsically linked disciplines. Philosophy had to assume a preponderant role compared to Science in that, according to Gentile, 'la storia di ogni scienza ci insegna che le sue origini sono nella filosofia, dalla quale non s'è staccata, e non s'è tenuta e non si tiene distinta, se non per una critica filosofica' (Gentile 1900, p. 141). This approach mirrored Gentilian actualism, a form of neo-idealism[30] for which humanistic education is linked to the 'essenza spirituale dell'uomo (l'"uomo morale") e richiama alla necessità di una formazione "integrale", cioè non settoriale, non tecnica' (Gaiani 2014, p.34). According to the philosopher, science does not enjoy any cognitive autonomy: it is a product of rational activity and philosophy, by making conscious use of rationality, includes scientific knowledge within itself (see Cosentino 1989, pp.14-15). For Gentile's actualism, philosophy 'non è una o più conoscenze, ma è pensiero, non è contenuto, ma forma del sapere' (Gentile 1924a, p. 9).

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[28] For a broader examination of Gentile's school reform, see Giraldi 1968. Here I focus mainly on his approach to the teaching of Philosophy in high schools.

[29] Benito Mussolini defined the Riforma Gentile as 'la più fascista delle riforme', See Mussolini 1923, in E., D. Susmel 1956, p. 366.

[30] Gentile's philosophy, which he called 'attualismo' or 'idealismo attuale' claims the unity of Nature and Spirit, affirming that the essence of man and world is spiritual. Indeed, according to Gentile, the only existing reality is the pure act of the 'pensiero che pensa', that is, the 'autocoscienza' in which the Spirit that encompasses everything existing is manifested. In other words, for Gentile only what is realised through thinking is real. Reality is one, and there is no difference between the thinking subject and the thought object. On Gentile's philosophy, see Negri 1975.

This is a pivotal notion because it connects with the second principle of the Gentilian school, that is the close connection between philosophy and history. By affirming that philosophy is 'thought' and 'form of knowledge', Gentile means that 'questa forma del sapere, questa coscienza, è essa stessa formazione, e quindi vita storica, nella quale ogni grado riassume in sé tutti i precedenti'(Gentile 1969, p. 698). This means that not only does philosophy coincide with thought, but also with history - and *vice versa* - since history testifies to the evolution of thought over the course of time. This is why in Gentile's view, 'tra filosofia e storia vige un nesso inscindibile: la filosofia nasce dalla storia e la storia è costruita dalla filosofia' (Gaiani 2014, p. 36). Consequently, both the relationship between philosophy and science and the relationship between philosophy and history within Gentile's conception of high school are determined by the very premises of his neo-idealist philosophy.

The first direct consequence of this theoretical framework was that philosophy could not be taught in high school in an 'elementary' form, as the previous reforms had established. That is, it could not be divided into its basic elements, [31] terms and concepts but had to be 'colta nel suo farsi e nel suo darsi, e ciò accade soltanto nelle opere dei filosofi' (Gaiani 2014, p.44). Consequently, Gentile's Reform does not promote the use of school textbooks, which would synthesise and crystallise philosopher s' thought, but encourages teachers and students to engage in the close reading of philosophers' writings.

Gentile's methodology is 'historicist' insofar as it conceives that each philosophical work represents the progress of thought and must be carefully analysed as a testimony of such progress. Secondly, starting with his Reform, high school courses in History and Philosophy were grouped under the same 'cattedra', that is, they were entrusted to the same teacher (see Polizzi 1999, pp. 32-35),[32] which testifies to their close correlation.

Finally, the historicist outlook of Gentile's Reform is particularly evident from the programmes of *Liceo Classico*'s end-of-year Philosophy examinations. According to the

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[31] At most, it could be understood as an 'initial' phase of learning: 'Chi dice filosofia dice sistema e pensiero unitario; e con frammenti o elementi non si ottiene unità e non si ricostruisce mai né un pensiero, né altro che abbia vita e significato' (Gentile 1921, p.7).

[32] However, Gentile proposed the combination of the teaching of History and Philosophy with Political Economy in the classical and scientific high schools and the coupling of Philosophy with Pedagogy in the 'Istituto Magistrale'. See Riforma Gentile "Regio Decreto 6 maggio 1923, n. 1054 (in G.U. 2 giugno 1923, n.129) Capo III, art.42, Capo V, art.55 e Capo VI, art. 66, URL: https://www.registrostoricocicli.com/listing/mirror/raggidistoria/p/RG1923_06_02_129_PNC.pdf Last Access 28/01/2021.

programmes, students had to comment on a series of works chosen from a list indicated by the legislator, part of which had to be historically framed by the candidates.[33]

Nonetheless, Gentile's historicism never coincided with a mere prescriptive account of philosophical theories' history. Indeed, by limiting the use of manuals, he tried to avoid any risk of doxography, highlighting instead the importance of a close analysis of philosophical texts.[34] Besides, Gentile did not prescribe a codified syllabus since he believed that philosophy could not be taught according to a pre-established programme, as 'non il programma fa il maestro ma il maestro fa il programma' (Gentile 1932, p. 223);[35] in fact, the freedom of teaching was one of the cornerstones of the Gentilian school.[36] Therefore, Gentile's approach is a theory-oriented 'historicism', since it had the purpose of 'offrire gli strumenti per uscire dal dogmatismo che egli attribuiva ai procedimenti meccanici dell'apprendimento di dottrine già fatte, inerti esposizioni di risultati e non già attiva ricostruzione delle tappe evolutive dello spirito nel suo farsi' (Cosentino 1988, pp. 20-21).

Gentile's reform was soon undermined by the evolution of the political framework, characterised by the progressive 'fascistisation' of the Italian society and of the educational institution. As early as 1925, Gentile's successor, Minister Fedele, introduced a philosophical 'Summary', that is, a textbook tracing the history of philosophy, whose content students had to refer to when questioned in the end-of-year examination. The 'positivist' textbook was then reintroduced in a renewed 'historicist' version, which actually overturned Gentile's educational objectives: the freedom of teaching was limited by the strict prescriptions for the examinations. Besides, Gentile's

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[33] For a detailed analysis of the exam structure in classical and scientific High School, and in the 'Istituto Magistrale', see Gaiani 2014, p.37 e Scalera 1990, pp. 187-188.

[34] 'Facciamo per la filosofia come si fa per la poesia: per la quale non si chiede all'insegnante che faccia lui la sua poesia, ma che legga, commenti e faccia intendere quella di Omero, di Dante, di Leopardi. In questa sua opera di commentatore egli è libero e può esplicare tutta la sua personalità; ma Dante, in tutte le scuole, è sempre Dante. Ebbene: si legga Platone, si legga Aristotele. Ognuno nell'interpretazione metterà le sue idee: ma da tutti i punti di partenza si dovrà sempre giungere allo stesso Platone' Gentile 1924b, in Caputo 2019, pos. 1002/14001.

[35] Thus, the course programmes, which came into force in 1863, were abolished in 1923 by Gentile, who outlined instead the programmes for the end-of-year exams.

[36] Gentile's adhesion to Fascism certainly makes this statement problematic. It would be necessary to thoroughly investigate the relationship between Gentile and the regime in order to understand its theoretical implications. However, the fact remains that the philosopher conceived the school as a secular institution and teaching as an exercise entrusted to the methodological freedom of the teacher, in which the relationship between teacher and student played a central role. Such a relationship of total trust and intimacy goes back to his neo-idealist conception of the unity of the Spirit: 'Se tutto è spirito, tutto è spirito in quanto si fa spirito. Educatore ed educando sono spiriti, ma in quanto si fanno, nel loro farsi. Rispetto a un momento ulteriore ogni farsi è qualche cosa di fatto, non è unità ancora, ma dualità; e ingenerale, molteplicità. Maestro e scolaro, nel loro primo incontrarsi, possono, di certo, dissentire e sentire ciascuno l'altro fuori di sé, repellente, chiuso, impenetrabile: non quale spirito, che, come sappiamo, è assoluta permeabilità e trasparenza intima, ma quale materia: una cosa e magari un coso. Ma ancora non sono veri maestro e scolaro, devono farsi; e il loro essere, nella loro correlazione educativa, è farsi' Gentile 1959, pp.135-136. See also, Borriello 1916, pp. 433-454.

theory-oriented historicism was compromised by the compulsory use of schoolbooks, which inevitably proposed a codified knowledge, in open antithesis to the ideas of the philosopher. Consequently, his original educational goals underwent a change: 'dove Gentile cercava la profondità di pensiero per spingersi a riflettere sui fondamenti primi, qui si cerca l'ampiezza, l'estensione, la conoscenza di più argomenti possibili' (Gaiani 2014, p. 50).

The subsequent substantial modifications to Gentile's Reform were approved in 1929, 1930 and in 1936. The Lateran Pacts of 1929, which Gentile never adhered to, also had important repercussions on the school, since the importance of teaching Religion at school was reiterated to the detriment of Philosophy and the general secular layout of the 'Riforma Gentile'. In 1930, Minister Giuliano introduced the study of Mussolini's and Gentile's 'Dottrina del Fascismo' to be read and commented on during Philosophy teaching hours. At the same time, the use of textbooks was encouraged to the detriment of the close analysis of philosophical writings. Such adjustments aimed at a common goal: 'Il regime preferì sempre più la storia della filosofia svincolata da una seria lettura diretta, sia perché questo permetteva sviluppi retorici cari al fascismo, sia per l'offensiva cattolica contro una grande parte degli autori moderni' (Ostenc 1980 in Gaiani 2014, p.56). Finally, in 1936, the new minister De Vecchi extended a strict state's control over all the contents of upper secondary schools' textbooks and abolished university autonomy; in this way, 'l'istruzione italiana [venne] del tutto assoggettata al controllo statale' (Gaiani 2014, p. 57).

As for the teaching of philosophy, De Vecchi abolished exam programmes, reintroducing course programmes, as in pre-Gentilian times. Program contents were strictly arranged and deployed over the three years of teaching, whilst Philosophy was to be taught according to a quantitative 'historicist' method. This meant that 'l'insegnamento della filosofia [faceva] perno sulla storia della filosofia, che [andava] studiata nella sua interezza; la lettura e la discussione dei classici [erano]diventate accessorie' (Gaiani 2014, p. 58). Gentilian neo-idealist approach, which was based on the equation between the historical succession of doctrines and the development of thought, is thus definitely exasperated and distorted due to the cumbersome presence of the schoolbook, which establishes the codified periodisation of the various phases of the history of thought. Instead, much of the interest in the development of students' critical skills is lost through the suppression of the analytical reading of texts. [37]

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[37] 'Gentile come riforma era morto e sepolto: le trasformazioni posteriori avevano stravolto l'impostazione dottrinale, indirizzandola in senso storico-politico e dossografico, grazie all'introduzione di un orripilante fardello enciclopedico' (Girotti 2005, p.61).

New changes to this approach were made only in 1944, during World War II, when the 'Sottocommissione Alleata dell'Educazione', chaired by the American pedagogue Carleton W. Washburne, was established. The 'Subcommittee' purged Philosophy programmes of fascist contents, such as the 'Dottrina del Fascismo', but entrusted responsibility for drafting new School curricula to the Italian government. This redrafting was never completed, not even after the end of the war and the establishment of the Republic in 1946. The new Ministers' philosophical background did not prompt them to reject 1936 programmes, which evoked 'alla lontana l'attualismo gentiliano, cioè una prospettiva filosofica non così difforme dall'orizzonte mentale di chi si [era] formato alla scuola di Croce' (Gaiani 2014, p. 64). Indeed, as Telmon pointed out, 'i primi ministri [repubblicani] della Pubblica istruzione si chiamarono Omodeo, De Ruggiero, Arangio-Ruiz, tutti di formazione crociana, storicista e meridionale' (Telmon 1970, p.111, n.142).

Thus, despite the political differences between Fascist and Republican Italy, the general framework for the teaching of Philosophy at school did not change. In fact, it did not change until 2010, when the 'Indicazioni Nazionali' issued by Minister Gelmini brought relevant and actual innovations to the high school teaching of Philosophy. This means that for 'quasi settant'anni i programmi che regolano l'insegnamento della filosofia nella scuola italiana sono, rivisti e ripuliti, quelli imposti da De Vecchi nel 1936' (Gaiani 2014, p. 65).

In this section, I have shown that the philosophical framework on which the teaching of philosophy in the Italian school is still partly based has its roots in Gentile philosophy and in its reinterpretation by Minister De Vecchi. Gentile and De Vecchi outlined the foundations of the teaching of philosophy at school for almost the entire twentieth century. According to this approach, philosophy must be strictly connected to the study of history, it is aimed at high school students, it cannot be simplified into its constituent elements and cannot be separated from the study of philosophers' thought through the textbook.

In the next section, I will show that this system has been hardly retouched, even though the lively debate pertaining to the teaching of philosophy has never stopped looking for new theoretical references, methods, and alternative didactics models. It was only from the 1980s onwards that a radically different conception of philosophy didactics and of the very conception of education began to emerge, thus favouring the entry of new approaches to teaching, including P4C.

II.4 Thinking Philosophy in the Italian School: The Debate from the 1950s to the 1990s

In the previous section, I explained that the philosophical framework on which the teaching of philosophy in Italy is still partly based has been strongly influenced by Gentile's philosophy and by the school reforms of the early twentieth century.

Although the provisions regulating the teaching of philosophy have not actually changed since 1944, the academic debate around this discipline never stopped. On the contrary, during the 1940s, the discussion on Philosophy teaching methods and contents has been quite heated. According to Girotti and Caputo, after the 1940s, the decades of philosophical and pedagogical discussions on this issue can be summarised as follows: '- fase di discussione ideologico-contrappositiva (anni '50); - fase di concentrazione sulle problematiche tecniche e pedagogiche (anni '60); - fase dell'emergere dei problemi 'metodologici' dell'insegnamento (anni '70); - fase di 'strutturazione' del dibattito sulla didattica della filosofia (anni '80); - fase delle sperimentazioni in classe, fino ai Programmi Brocca (anni '90); - fase dell'emergere della logica delle competenze, fino alle Istruzioni nazionali (2010)'(Caputo 2019, poss. 1018-1023/ 14001).

In this section, I will follow this perspective and analyse the first four phases, which mark the slow transition from the properly Gentilian school to a new model of school and philosophy teaching, within which P4C has been gradually inserted from the '90s.

The 'phase of ideological-oppositional discussion' emerged after the birth of the Italian Republic in 1946. Such a phase saw the emergence of two main needs: to overcome Gentilian neo-idealism, which was considered the main matrix of Fascist ideology, and re-found the Italian political framework after the Fascist 'Ventennio'. In fact, Italy needed new philosophical models that could better represent the new democratic and republican ideals. Between the 1940s and the following decade, the hegemonic line of thought in the lively philosophical debate,[38] was the Marxist-Gramscian one, represented at a political level by Togliatti's party.[39] From a theoretical point of view,

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[38] Those years' philosophical debate was characterised mainly by the emergence of a current of thought, conventionally called 'neo-Enlightenment', which settled on generally 'anti-idealistic' stances, and by the concomitant clash between Catholics and Communists, both at the philosophical and political level. For an accurate reconstruction of the publications, the main authors and conferences of the period, see in particular Gaiani 2014, pp.69-130.

[39] Palmiro Togliatti was the Secretary and principal leader of the 'Partito Comunista Italiano' (PCI) from 1926 to 1934 and from 1938 to 1964, the year of his death, as well as a member of the 'Assemblea costituente' between 1946 and 1948. After the political elections of 1948, Togliatti led the opposition party to the various governments that succeeded

the adoption of a Marxist perspective, aiming at overcoming the early twentieth century neo-idealism, did not entail abandoning the historicist approach to philosophy. Indeed, Italian Marxist theorists intended to re-found historicism according to new paradigms (See Gaiani 2014, Bedeschi 1985, Pera 1985). According to this line, which refers to Gramsci's thought, philosophy had to be conceived as a historical knowledge. This meant that, in order to grasp the specificity of a given era, philosophy had to take into account the concrete social dynamics, by investigating them in a scientific, pragmatic way, with a philological method. The ultimate purpose of this way of interpreting philosophy's duty was to modify society by acting on it by means of political action. Following this line, philosophy, which combines theory and practice, aimed to overcome the more purely speculative perspective of Croce and Gentile.[40]

However, the turning point that indirectly sanctioned the definitive marriage between philosophy and history was perhaps the publication of the 1959 book by Eugenio Garin, 'La filosofia come sapere storico'. In this text, which could represent the *summa* of those years' debate on historicism and historiography (See Ferrari 2016, pp.101-113), Garin reaffirmed the idea that philosophy is a knowledge rooted in its time and the fruit of a specific historical contingency. As had already been highlighted by Gramsci, not only must philosophy interpret the world through a rigorous and scientific research method, but philosophy itself, its history, must be understood through the means of a historiographical survey. Therefore, in order to fully understand a philosophical dissertation, rigorous philological work on the text and on the context in which the text was conceived is necessary. Thus, both the historian of philosophy who reconstructs events and the philosopher who interprets reality by means of critical thought, are guided by the same need for reconstructing and interpreting data. However, the most characterising element of Garin's perspective is the notion that the approach of the historian of philosophy is itself a way to

one another under the leadership of the Democrazia Cristiana (DC). The PCI was not a governing force, nonetheless, Togliatti assumed a culturally determining role. Indeed, after years of Stalinist orthodoxy, in the 1950s he proposed the so-called 'via italiana al socialismo', that is the realisation of the communist project through democracy, which entailed applying the Italian Constitution in its entirety. Between 1948 and 1951, Togliatti cured the first edition of Gramsci's 'Quaderni dal Carcere', which were published by the editor Giulio Einaudi.

[40] Here I refer to the concept of 'filosofia della prassi' developed by Gramsci. See for example this famous passage: 'La filosofia della prassi è la concezione storicistica della realtà, che si è liberata da ogni residuo di trascendenza e di teologia anche nella loro ultima incarnazione speculativa; lo storicismo idealistico crociano rimane ancora nella fase teologico-speculativa' (Gramsci 1948, p. 191). Gramsci did not abolish any reference to idealism, since 'Hegel viene considerato come una sorgente della quale non si può fare a meno', nonetheless ' a partire da Hegel [...] Croce e Gentile sviluppano teorie che secondo Gramsci prendono una deriva 'teologico-speculativa'. Il pensiero di Marx, che è stato a lungo studiato sia da Croce che da Gentile, è il terreno su cui si deve giocare il rovesciamento di quella prospettiva ancora intrisa di presupposti metafisci' (Gaiani 2014, p. 91). On the link between Gramsci's thought and idealism, see for example Bergami 1997, pp. 517–534. On Gramsci's 'filosofia della prassi' as a completely original reworking of Marx's thought see instead Vacca 2016.

'philosophise'. In the words of Musté: 'la storia della filosofia, "proprio perché vuol essere integrale storicizzazione", non [si riduceva] a semplice erudizione, ma – spiegò [Garin] – "si propone come 'filosofia'": e tale appariva non solo per la capacità di costruire connessioni, di "stabilire rapporti fra idee, teorie, visioni d'insieme, e situazioni reali", ma anche perché quella pratica storiografica presuppone "una sua concezione", "una veduta 'filosofica'", "una coscienza critica della storicità dell'opera umana"'(Musté 2017, p.19).[41] Therefore, in Garin's oeuvre philosophy is neither exhausted nor flattened in historiographical research.

Although these philosophical developments were part of an academic debate that did not directly concern the teaching of philosophy in high schools, they still had repercussions in this area. Indeed, through the predominant figure of Garin, such new conceptions confirmed 'un modello di studio e di insegnamento della filosofia: la filosofia è un sapere storico e va insegnato come tale' (Gaiani 2014, p.126).

The following phase (i.e. the 1960s: 'fase di concentrazione sulle problematiche tecniche e pedagogiche') saw a gradual shift of the focus of the discussion on philosophy teaching towards pedagogical and methodological issues, relegating content issues to a secondary level (see Caputo 2019, Gaiani 2014, Stelli and Lanari 2001, Telmon 1970). Once it was ascertained that the historicist method was unquestionable, [42] scholars began to ask themselves what the role of philosophy as a school subject was, what its objectives and purposes were, and how could it be taught to adolescents in accordance with their interests, skills, and needs (Telmon 1970, pp. 214-217). They also questioned the role of the philosophy teacher, who began to be described not only as an 'expert' in a specific knowledge, i.e. his teaching subject, but also as a 'trainer' teaching students how to learn and apply their knowledge, and as an 'assessor' who was supposed to have the competence to evaluate students (Caputo 2019, pos. 1211/14001).

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[41] Garin ironically defends the historians of philosophy, considering them philosophers in all respects, against those who interpreted philosophy solely as 'pure' activity, uprooted from the context: 'Per chi intende la filosofia come un certo lavoro teorico puro, tutto esaurito nell'ambito di puri sistemi logici, derivanti l'uno dall'altro, tutto quello che è campo dello storico, tutto quello che è storico, o storicizzabile, non può non cadere fuori dalla filosofia. Con lo storico che cerca di svelare le radici terrestri delle idee il filosofo di questo tipo non può non sentirsi in radicale contrasto[...] Né si comprende perché tanti filosofi amino violentare la storia (la seria, modesta storia, che ha a che fare con l'umano, col mondano, col mutevole) impegnandosi in quella strana cosa che è la sollecitazione dei testi per attribuire ai grandi morti le loro piccole - o grandi - idee. A costoro e a quanti come costoro infastidiscono con accuse di filologismo, culturalismo, erudizione e così via chi affronta umilmente in archivi e biblioteche la responsabilità dell'indagine faticosa, vien fatto di ripetere con l'immagine cara al vecchio filosofo: visto che tra l'ottuso profeta e l'onesto somaro abbiamo scelto la compagnia del secondo, lasciateci almeno lavorare in pace!' (Garin 1990, pp.85-86).

[42] In the sixties, the opposition of the Catholic front, which had always proposed a systemic approach to the study of philosophy, faded. Hence, the Catholic area seemed to be satisfied with the consolidated political hegemony. (see Gaiani 2014 and Bobbio 1986).

It would be wrong to assume that, in previous decades, there had been no reflections on pedagogy, on the role of the teacher, and on the methods by which philosophy was to be taught. As shown, Gentile himself addressed each of these themes in his reflection. Nonetheless, the 1960s seem to be another watershed when a sort of reversal of focus began to occur. Until a short time before, the methodological questions were a reflection and a consequence of a broader debate that focused on the very concept and status of philosophy. The primary goal of this debate seemed to seek an answer to the question: 'What is philosophy?'. From the 1960s, methodological and pedagogical concerns began to take on a leading role. To some extent, such issues seemed to respond to a more technical need, which could be embodied by the question: 'What is the usefulness of philosophy?'. The simultaneous opening of the Italian debate on education to the international context had two main consequences. First, since the international debate focused mainly on methodological issues, such an opening constituted 'un'occasione per cominciare a riflettere con cognizione di causa su impostazioni alternative' (Gaiani 2014, p.134). Secondly, the excessive technicality of the debate led to a theoretical 'flattening'. Notably, some theses by pedagogists of various backgrounds and origins, such as Piaget or Bruner, were quite often adopted uncritically, becoming easy slogans (see Stelli and Lanari 2001, pp. 65-67). The paradoxical result was that just when the 'historicist' approach ceased to be questioned, it entered a crisis, emptying itself of theoretical content (See Gaiani 2014, p.136, Stelli and Lanari 2001).

But how to explain this general inversion of focus in the school-related academic debate? In the words of Caputo, 'tutto questo è sintomo, forse, più che origine della crisi di autofondazione e autolegittimazione che stava vivendo la filosofia (indebolimento dei modelli filosofici classici, dichiarazione da più parti di 'morte della filosofia', mancanza di un paradigma vincente, in grado di spiegare il mondo), crisi che si riflette anche sulla didattica della filosofia. Soprattutto in confronto alla crescita (in legittimità e forza) del canone scientifico' (Caputo 2019, pos. Pos.1134/ 1139). Such a crisis of philosophy's self-legitimacy 'aveva il suo puntuale riflesso nella crisi del suo insegnamento (e della identità professionale dei docenti di filosofia) e nella apparente tecnicità e neutralità delle discussioni sulla didattica della disciplina' (Scalera 1990, p. 100). Besides, the ideological ferment of the decade, which resulted in the claims of the 1968 social movements, contributed to shifting the attention to other problems. For instance, it encouraged the demand for the so-called 'inclusive school' that is, an egalitarian, democratic, public, and guaranteed education for all. The push towards the enlargement of the school audience also came from the productive fabric, that is, from entrepreneurs and economists, who intended to increase the performance of the workforce, in

accordance with the new production processes: 'La scuola così venne ad essere sottoposta a una doppia istanza: di diffondere la cultura disinteressata, che forma e che nutre l'intelligenza e la persona, da un lato; di creare profili professionali, dall'altro' (Cambi 2003, p. 439).

Such an atmosphere began to affect the teaching of philosophy. The first proposals to extend the teaching of philosophy to all categories of school date back to those years. From that moment on, and especially in the Nineties, this proposal became a *leitmotif* in the disputes on philosophy at school (Gaiani 2014, p. 135, De Pasquale 1998).

The 1970s and the 1980s,[43] initially saw the outbreak of the 'crisis of philosophy' as a school subject. In fact, Philosophy started to be questioned as an autonomous discipline and risked being completely absorbed within the rising domain of social sciences. The first proposal to abolish the teaching of philosophy dates back to 1970 with the change of the 'classe di concorso'[44]. Until that moment this 'classe di concorso' included only History and Philosophy, while at this time a denomination that explicitly referred to the social sciences was proposed. The national curriculum, however, remained unchanged (Gaiani 2014, p.149).

On the one hand, the growing interest in social sciences can be linked to those years' climate of contestation. Philosophy was considered an elitist subject, whereas Social Sciences seemed to be within everyone's reach, providing students with useful skills and promoting scientific knowledge at the same time (See Gaiani 2014, p. 155). On the other hand, such a crisis had its roots in the previous decades' debate on the status of philosophy. As shown, philosophy had increasingly established itself as a knowledge inextricably linked to the historical circumstances, whilst, rather similarly, social sciences aimed at the scientific analysis of socio-cultural contexts. The necessary consequence of this reasoning was to consider philosophy as a mere expression of such context. For this reason, the autonomous teaching of this discipline began to seem superfluous.[45] Nonetheless, the numerous conferences of the period, which for the first time were also attended by upper secondary school teachers, moved in the opposite direction. The intent was to revamp the high school teaching of Philosophy reaffirming its importance as a discipline in its own right. Thus, the long-standing

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[43] 'fase dell'emergere dei problemi 'metodologici' dell'insegnamento (anni '70); - fase di 'strutturazione' del dibattito sulla didattica della filosofia (anni '80)', see above.
[44] In Italy, a 'classe di concorso' refers to an alphanumeric code that indicates the subjects a teacher can qualify in and can teach on a permanent basis after passing a State competitive exam. Currently, 'A019' is the 'classe di concorso' in Philosophy and History. Once the qualification is obtained, the teacher can be assigned a permanent role ('cattedra').
[45] 'Se la filosofia è un "sapere storico", se ogni dottrina rientra nel panorama culturale di un'epoca, quale senso può avere il farne oggetto di una disciplina distinta?' (Rossi 1978, p.254).

diatribe between the 'systematic-theoretical' approach and the 'historicist approach' – which saw attempts at a definitive overcoming of the dichotomy – was relaunched. [46]

At a more general level, during the Seventies, there was wide interest in practical philosophy, that is, a philosophy applicable to tangible human problems (see Frega, Brigati 2004). As shown, questioning the practical purposes of philosophy was nothing new, neither within the academic philosophical debate nor in the discussion concerning the teaching of this subject at school. However, whereas in the previous decades the lens through which to interpret philosophy as 'praxis' had been mostly ideologically oriented, in the 1970s and 1980s, 'il declino del marxismo [mise] in palio ampi spazi per riformulare le questioni legate alla prassi, all'agire individuale e politico, alla vita morale' (Gaiani 2014, p. 181).

Thus, a space for a new 'filosofia della prassi', with various nuances and theoretical possibilities, began to open. P4C, which was born in the seventies in the United States, fits exactly into this climate of renewed interest in practical philosophy. Such a renewed attention for practical philosophy equally had an impact on the Italian school debate[47], so much so that, since the end of the 1970s and especially in the 1980s, scholars investigated the 'transversal skills' – i.e. skills that can be used in a wide variety of situations and settings - that students might improve studying philosophy. Notably, the idea that philosophy especially fosters the critical, theoretical, and argumentative skills of young people was reaffirmed. For this reason, teaching methodologies became a topic of intense debate.

In this section, I highlighted that after a period of a lively debate on historicism and the very meaning of philosophical knowledge, the focus of the debate on the didactics of philosophy gradually shifted to methodological issues. From this paradigm shift, it can be seen that the debate was gradually moving towards the contents and solutions proposed by Lipman's P4C in the United States. Issues such as the enhancement of logical and argumentative skills, the role of the teacher, and the practical utility of philosophy are in fact central to Lipman's proposal.

It is precisely in such context of radical change in philosophical and pedagogical orientation that the first serious attempts at reforming the teaching of philosophy were proposed in Italy.

In the next section, I analyse the proposals of the so-called ' Commissione Brocca' (1988) and 'Commissione dei Saggi' (1997), which are part of the aforementioned 'experimental phase'.

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[46] See for instance, (Antiseri 1977) suggesting that there is no necessary opposition between the theoretical method and the historicist method to the extent that the analysis of the 'problems' is combined with the analysis of the various authors' works.

[47] See for example the conference held in Calabria in 1983 (Alcaro et al. 1985), with various contributions.

Those proposals were the first real institutional attempts to reform the teaching of philosophy. It was precisely in those years that P4C entered Italy, and was proposed as a methodological novelty and as a prerequisite for the study of philosophy in secondary schools.

I.5 Italian 'Experimental' Phase for the Teaching of Philosophy: The Entry of P4C

In the previous section, I presented the lively scholarly debate on historicism that continued through the 50s and 60s, showing how it gradually started to focus on methodological issues. The enhancement of logical and argumentative skills, the role of the teacher, and the practical utility of philosophy gradually became central to redefining the teaching of philosophy at school.

In this section, I analyse the aforementioned 'fase delle sperimentazioni in classe', which includes the innovative proposals of the Commissione Brocca (1988) and Commissione dei Saggi (1997). Both projects represent a good synthesis of the 1970s and 1980s discussions, as well as the first institutional attempts to radically modify traditional contents, methodologies, and educational purposes of philosophy at school. I will also highlight the shared principles connecting these projects with P4C, which was introduced in Italy in that decade.

The so-called 'Commissione Brocca'[48] was formed in 1988, at the behest of the Minister of Education, Giovanni Galloni.[49] The Commission had the purpose of redesigning the entirety of upper secondary schools by rethinking the educational objectives of each school type and of each curricular discipline, including Philosophy. A text was drafted which was to serve as a reference for such reform. According to the Commission's programmes, Philosophy would have been taught in all three-year courses of all second-grade secondary schools' types (for students aged 15 to 18), thus affirming the value always attributed to this subject in the 'formazione di una più fondata coscienza valoriale, etico-civico-politica' (Commissione Brocca 1992, p. XI). The document settles the general purposes of Philosophy as a curricular subject, its specific learning outcomes, and a series of methodological guidance for teachers. As regards the general aims, the document establishes that

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[48] The Commission was named after its President, the Undersecretary Beniamino Brocca.

[49] Initially, the 'Commissione Brocca' was appointed by Minister Giovanni Galloni to review the programs of the first two years of upper secondary school, in view of the extension of compulsory education to the sixteenth year of age. The following year, the commission proposed a document that outlined a common two-year period for all upper secondary schools. The commission was reconstituted in 1990 by minister Gerardo Bianco and, in 1991, the mandate was extended to the non-compulsory three-year period of upper secondary education. The work was finished publishing during the ministry of Riccardo Misasi, Minister of Education in 1992.

the teaching of Philosophy had to help students become 'soggetti autonomi consapevoli della loro autonomia e del loro situarsi in una pluralità di rapporti naturali ed umani, implicante una nuova responsabilità verso sé stessi, la natura e la società, un'apertura interpersonale ed una disponibilità alla feconda e tollerante conversazione umana' (Commissione Brocca 1992, p.212-213). The emphasis on concepts such as 'tolerance' and 'responsibility' implies that Philosophy should have an ethical duty, aiming at the moral development of young people. In addition, it should help students improve their argumentative skills and their critical and flexible thinking, i.e. it has to teach them 'a pensare per modelli diversi e [a] individuare alternative possibili, anche in rapporto alla richiesta di flessibilità nel pensare, che nasce dalla rapidità delle attuali trasformazioni scientifiche e tecnologiche' (Commissione Brocca 1992, p.213). This objective suggests that philosophy should also help interpret the changes in society; to do so, the dialogue with other curricular disciplines is favoured, so is the investigation of the realities that are 'external' to the school context. Most interestingly though, philosophy should help students improve their ability to question ideas, beliefs and knowledges 'mediante il riconoscimento della loro storicità' (Ibidem). This seems to confirm the notion of philosophy as a 'historical knowledge' in the sense indicated by Gramsci and Garin. That is, philosophy is acknowledged as being able to provide students with the necessary skills to interpret the world and to read the philosophical theories themselves as the fruit of a given era's *zeitgeist*.

However, the Commission's main innovation consisted in the introduction of an innovative teaching methodology, which can be inferred by analysing the sections relating to the 'learning outcomes' ('obiettivi di apprendimento') and disciplinary contents ('Contenuti'). Amongst the 'learning objectives', in addition to learning the lexicon and categories of the philosophical tradition, the Commission added the analysis of 'testi di autori filosoficamente rilevanti' (Commissione Brocca 1992, p.213). Thus, Brocca proposal aimed at resuming a founding element of 'the Riforma Gentile' which, during the century, had often been reproposed by scholars but never formally implemented. But the Gentilian model itself would in turn be renewed starting with the innovations proposed during the Seventies and Eighties, which played an important role in Brocca's disciplinary contents. Notably, Brocca programmes indicated a series of authors and/or essential themes from which the teacher could freely choose by working directly on the original texts (this is the so-called 'approccio per problemi', also known as 'approccio per temi').[50] This novelty marked the distance from the

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[50] All this 'consiste nella individuazione di alcuni grandi nodi, intorno ai quali si è storicamente sviluppata la filosofia, e nella ricostruzione, a partire da essi, di alcune possibili reti con cui catturare i più importanti temi e problemi filosofici'

manual-based historicist model, which still aimed at a historically ordered and exhaustive teaching of the entire history of philosophy. At the same time, though, the work on textbooks would not be completely abandoned, which again testifies to the fact that historical contextualisation was considered an essential purpose of this teaching subject.[51] In short, Brocca's methodology could be defined as 'historical-critical-problematic', in that it is 'una mediazione, in buona sostanza, tra metodo storico (la carrellata sull'intera storia della filosofia) e metodo per problemi (la trattazione di temi spesso avulsi dal contesto nel quale sono sorti)'(Grigoletto 2011, p.51). All this also involved, as argued by Grigoletto, a sort of 'revolution' or 'conversion' of the teachers, as they were called to 'mettere da parte il programma tradizionale e a costruirne uno nuovo di anno in anno, curando una rigorosa conoscenza dei testi. I Programmi Brocca, infatti, non prescrivono niente di predeterminato, domandando soltanto all'insegnante creatività, aggiornamento personale e soprattutto ricerca di nuove competenze' (Grigoletto 2011, p. 52).

Probably, though, the most innovative aspect was the use of dialogue as a teaching and research modality. In this regard, the innovative reference models were the 'philosophical laboratory' and the 'educating community' to be used interchangeably: 'là dove per laboratorio filosofico si intende quell'"ambiente formativo (spazio, fisico e relazionale), in cui si forma alla filosofia, attraverso una pluralità di pratiche che permettono la ricerca filosofica. Nel laboratorio l'allievo può far pratica del filosofare, acquisendo gradatamente le abilità indispensabili per l'esercizio autonomo del filosofare", a partire da "una pluralità di modelli didattici"' (Caputo 2019, Pos. 1407 p. 79).[52] Within an 'educating community' instead, the philosophical dialogue takes place on two levels: on the one hand, the students converse with each other on relevant philosophical issues with the mediation of the teacher, on the other hand, the class analyses philosophical texts as a group, pretending to discuss and question the authors of the texts as if they were physically present in the classroom (see De Pasquale 1996).

The concepts of 'philosophical laboratory' and 'educating community' are certainly what connects the commission's proposals with P4C. Although the Commission's general framework still provided for the close analysis of the most relevant texts in the history of philosophy, some

(Berti 1995, p. 9). For instance: 'Il docente, nell'ambito della programmazione didattica, dovrà trattare i seguenti temi: A .1) Due autori a scelta tra: Galilei, Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz, Vico, Hume, Rousseau. A.2) 1. Kant 2. Hegel B) Almeno *due nuclei tematici* tra quelli sottoindicati, a titolo di esempio, ferma restando la possibilità di costruire altri percorsi: 1. Umanesimo e Rinascimento. 2. La Rivoluzione Scientifica. 3. Il pensiero politico tra realismo e utopia […], (Commissione Brocca 1992, p. 215).

[51] 'Non si potrà, ovviamente, prescindere da un inquadramento storico degli argomenti e dalla ricostruzione dei nessi che li collegano' (Commissione Brocca 1992, p. 216).

[52] On the notion of 'laboratorio filosofico', see also Santi 2007.

methodologies are strictly comparable to Lipman's. In particular, the importance accorded to the development of students' ability to 'philosophize', and the use of group dialogue for the analysis of philosophical texts are among the cornerstones of P4C.

Despite the wide range of suggestions, the text of the 'Commissione Brocca' never formally entered into force, but was implemented in several school as an experimental project. Nevertheless, the work of the Brocca Commission marked a decisive moment towards a definitive transition to an experimental phase for the didactics of philosophy, within which the entry of P4C as a new methodological approach was possible.

A few years later, the so-called 'Commissione dei Saggi'[53] suggested other interesting novelties. This Commission was formed in 1997 with the broader aim of gathering reflections on the contents of the school programmes and on the teaching methodologies[54] that should have informed the project for a structural reform of the entire education system.

The quite revolutionary proposal of the 'Commissione dei Saggi' was to extend the study of philosophy to all branches of upper secondary school starting from the first two-year compulsory period, when students are generally 13 years old. To this end, the commission suggested not to limit the study of this subject to the history of philosophy. In fact, according to the 'Saggi' it was first necessary to equip students with the 'competenze minime necessarie alla comprensione dell'ambiente di vita e all'interpretazione dei messaggi che vi circolano' (Materiali dei Saggi 1997, p. 36). This objective would be achieved through two channels. In the first place, students had to deal with relevant 'questioni etiche' so as to understand 'la struttura e le forme di validazione delle argomentazioni di valore, di giustizia e simili, a partire da questioni elementari/fondamentali (diritti/doveri, cittadinanza, bioetica)' (Materiali dei Saggi 1997, p. 36). This involved developing discursive and argumentative skills through dialogue with peers starting from concrete issues. Secondly, the students should have investigated 'questioni di verità' with their teachers, meaning that they had to work on the 'struttura dell'argomentazione (logica, retorica, propaganda) e le sue condizioni di verità/plausibilità' (Materiali dei Saggi 1997, p. 36-37). The following three-year non-

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[53] The commission was made up of 44 'experts', who were mostly university professors. It was established through DD.MM. n. 50 (21/01/1997) and DD.MM. n. 84 (5/02/1997). See: Bianchi 1998, URL: https://www.sfi.it/archiviosfi/cf/cf4/articoli/bianchi.htm Last Access: 31/01/2021.

[54] The Commission's materials available are varied. Here I refer to the Summary of the reunions of the Technical-Scientific Commission appointed by the Minister of Education Luigi Berlinguer to identify the fundamental knowledge on which the learning of young people in Italian schools in the following decades would be based (from now on 'Materiali dei Saggi'1997).

compulsory period would instead adapt to the historicist model, 'secondo gli assi già indicati dalla commissione Brocca' (Materiali dei Saggi 1997, p.37).

The Commissione dei Saggi's proposal seems to suggest that students approaching the study of philosophy for the first time should acquire the technical skills of philosophical reasoning and investigate some general issues before tackling the study of philosophical doctrines from a historical perspective. This model was questioned. For instance, in Bianchi's view, such a choice implied, as a 'renunciation' of the historicist method in the years of compulsory schooling (see Bianchi 1998),[55] which risked to undervalue the specificity of the Italian approach to philosophy, not sufficiently taking into account that 'non c'è riflessione filosofica senza concettualizzazione e, nello studio della filosofia, una piena comprensione dei concetti da parte del soggetto in apprendimento può essere favorita da una ricostruzione dei significati anche in prospettiva storica' (Bianchi 1998).

As is evident, the resistance toward didactic methodologies that omitted the historical contents of the discipline was still strong. However, it is precisely in the problematic transition between Brocca's experimental proposal and the Commissione dei Saggi's project that P4C began to penetrate the Italian school system. According to Cosentino, Lipman's curriculum fitted both with the proposal of the 'Commissione Brocca' to extend philosophy to all secondary schools and with 'Commissione dei Saggi's proposal to introduce the study of philosophy in the first two years of high school by means of new teaching approaches.

Specifically, P4C seemed particularly appropriate as a preparatory stage to the history-based teaching of the discipline in secondary school. As Cosentino argued in 2002, 'il modello di insegnamento della filosofia soprattutto nel biennio (se mai sarà istituito) non potrà essere molto diverso da quello che della 'Philosophy 4 Children', specialmente se questo curricolo viene considerato non tanto dal punto di vista dei suoi strumenti specifici (racconti, manuali, ecc.) quanto, piuttosto nei suoi fondamenti teorici, metodologici e, ancor più, nelle finalità formative alle quali tende' (Cosentino 2002, p.7). Cosentino's mention of P4C's 'finalità formative' mainly referred to the enhancement of argumentation techniques and the development of thinking skills that are the basis of Lipman's pedagogical theories.[56] Thus, such a 'training' would not be done in replacement of the historicist approach to the teaching of philosophy but in view of it. This clarification must be

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[55] See URL: https://www.sfi.it/archiviosfi/cf/cf4/articoli/bianchi.htm Last Access: 25/02/2021.
[56] 'L'insegnamento della filosofia, d'altra parte, nel momento in cui mette provvisoriamente tra parentesi la sua identità disciplinare-accademica, si candida ad operare nel modo più diretto sul terreno delle abilità del pensiero, organizzandosi come setting di facilitazione e di sostegno del dei processi di ricostruzione e costruzione di orizzonti di senso, di tavole di valori e di "ecologie mentali"' (Cosentino 2002, p.7)

made because, as shown, Lipman had thought of the curriculum in a context in which philosophy was completely absent, in any form, from school programmes. Therefore, Cosentino's initial interpretation could be configured as an attempt to mediate between P4C's original outlook and the transposition of the discipline in a very different cultural context, where philosophy has always been a teaching subject, at least in secondary school.

However, as shown, neither the proposals of the 'Commissione Brocca' nor those of the 'Commissione dei Saggi' were fully implemented, which implies that, at present, philosophy is still taught exclusively in the non-compulsory three-year period in high schools according to the 'historicist' and 'historical-problematic' model. Therefore, other methodological proposals, such as P4C, are adopted only as experimental projects in elementary, first-grade and second-grade secondary schools.

In this section, I pointed out that the cultural climate of the 1990s, which favoured experimentation and methodological innovations for the teaching of philosophy at school, facilitated the reception of new approaches such as P4C.

Instead, in the following sections, I show that, from the end of the nineties onwards, a slow but remarkable revolution of the Italian school has led to a redefinition of the school and of the education itself. My final aim is to demonstrate that the regulatory and cultural framework of the current Italian school undermines the philosophical potential of P4C.

II.6 From the Nineties to the Present: Rethinking Education Within a New School System

In the previous section, I showed that the works of the 'Commissione Brocca' and 'Commissione dei Saggi' were another watershed moment in the history of philosophy at School because they marked the moment in which Italian governments tried to amend the general framework and the contents of the discipline, which had remained unchanged since the 1940s. It was at that particular moment that P4C found fertile ground to be presented as an innovative methodological proposal for a different approach to teaching philosophy.

In this section, I briefly analyze the many reforms and counter-reforms that the Italian educational system has undergone during the period of the spread of P4C. My aim is to demonstrate

that a broad political project, which started at the end of the nineties and aimed at restructuring the entire Italian school system, has gradually changed the ideological framework of the Italian school.

Although this investigation may seem overly technical, I believe it is crucial to highlight the reasons informing such a reformist phase, as well as analyse the structural changes initiated by these reforms within the Italian School system, and clarify their cultural and pedagogical objectives. Indeed, such changes are the result of a political project of modernisation of the school system and internationalisation of the syllabus, which has affected the teaching of philosophy by re-orienting the theoretical-cultural reference framework as well as by re-defining the learning objectives and teaching methodologies. My final goal is to clarify that, if such a new ideological framework is embraced uncritically, it risks focusing excessively the learning process on the acquisition of skills, which may become empty labels with no content. P4C, which was born precisely as a methodology aimed at developing such skills, is particularly likely to become an instrument at the service of this model.

In addition to the need to containing public spending, the main reason that pushed Italian governments towards a restructuring of the school was to provide the education system with new legislation responding to the most recent guidelines of the European Union. In fact, from the second half of the 1990s and in particular from the early 2000s, the European Union's guidelines on Education and professional Training went through a reform phase, which was aimed at leveling out the policies of EU states. Namely, through the acts of the European Council, held in Lisbon between 23 and 24 March 2000, the member states agreed 'a new strategic goal for the Union in order to strengthen employment, economic reform and social cohesion as part of a knowledge-based economy'.[57] Such a long-term goal was set to reach full employment within all member States, by favouring social cohesion, combating illiteracy and reforming education. In this regard, the European Council suggested that EU countries modernise their educational institutions by favouring the use of new technologies, by encouraging the study of European languages and by promoting the idea of a life-long learning experience for all citizens. This entailed offering 'learning and training opportunities tailored to target groups at different stages of their lives'.[58] The ultimate aim of the agreement was to make the EU 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in

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[57] See Lisbon European Council 2000, URL: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm Last Access: 26/02/2021. On the concept of knowledge society, see Commissione Europea 1995, Cerroni 2006.
[58] See Lisbon European Council 2000, URL: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm Last Access: 26/02/2021.

the world'[59], that is a model of innovation and cooperation based on the exchange of information and research, respecting the cultural peculiarities of each State. At the basis of this model was the notion of a learning process which, starting from the years of school education, was not only focused on disciplinary contents but aimed principally at the development of certain competencies and skills that would allow students and workers to take an active part in the 'knowledge society'.

Despite the undoubted value of the project, from that moment on a paradox arose that should be emphasized, as it had significant repercussions on subsequent education reforms.

As argued by Caputo, 'qui […] è proprio in gioco il passaggio dalla logica della conoscenza a quella della competenza (spesso a svantaggio della conoscenza stessa). Il fine è infatti trasformare le informazioni/conoscenze in un sapere operativo, condivisibile e spendibile.' (Caputo 2019, pos. 2852). This shift towards a logic of exploitation of skills and towards an efficiency-driven paradigm of education has had significant consequences on two main levels. In the first place, this new paradigm has contributed to the gradual technicalisation of the Italian school, which appears increasingly market-oriented; secondly, it affected the contents and the teaching methodologies of school subjects - including philosophy and experimental projects such as P4C - since the learning objectives are defined within the new theoretical outlook. All recent school reforms must be understood within this common general framework, interpreted by the various Italian governments in ways that were only partially divergent.

The first major attempt at reform of the Italian school was the so-called 'Riforma Berlinguer',[60] which has been one of the most enterprising, controversial, and innovative reform proposals in recent Italian history, in that it aimed at completely reorganising the general outline of Italian primary, secondary and higher education.

Although the measures concerning primary and secondary schools never came into force,[61] the initiatives of Berlinguer's project are crucial in Italian education history, in that they aimed at a

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[59] See Lisbon European Council 2000, URL: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm Last Access: 26/02/2021.

[60] The innovative program, issued during the XIII legislature, between Romano Prodi's first Government (Governo Prodi I 1999-1998) and Giuliano Amato second mandate (Governo Amato II 2000-2001), was defined and conceived by the Ministers of Public Education Luigi Berlinguer and Tullio de Mauro.

[61] As for primary and secondary school, the reform was based mainly on the contents of the 'legge 10 February 2000, n. 30', the so-called 'Riforma dei cicli' on the reorganization of school levels. The 'Riforma dei cicli' provided for the establishment of a nursery school ('scuola dell'infanzia') lasting three years (children aged 3 to 6), an intermediate school ('ciclo primario') lasting six years (children aged 6 to 13) with a final State exam, and a secondary school ('ciclo secondario') lasting six years (students aged 13 to 18). The four traditional levels of the Italian School system ('scuola materna', 'scuola elementare', scuola media' and 'scuola superiore') were thus to be eliminated. The 'ciclo secondario' was to be composed of an introductory year which was common to all secondary school's different subject areas. The 'Riforma dei cicli' was replaced in 2003 by Minister Letizia Moratti's school reform before being formally actuated. See

radical rethinking of the very function of the school. Indeed, in accordance with EU guidelines, the reform aimed at responding to the needs of the ever-changing society of the new millennium, where knowledge quickly becomes obsolete and needs frequent revisions. To do so, it intended to integrate the classical model - which, according to its promoters, was based on the 'trasmissione di un insieme consolidato di conoscenze' (Dal Passo, Laurenti 2017, p. 65) - with a model in which the acquisition of various skills and methods was at the centre of the learning process. This new layout was meant to help students 'a sviluppare la capacità di analizzare, problematizzare e sintetizzare la realtà' (Dal Passo, Laurenti 2017, p. 65).

The 'Riforma Berlinguer' intended to implement the concept of 'autonomia scolastica' (i.e. 'school autonomy'),[62] according to which the functions of the central and peripheral administration of public education had to be attributed to the schools. Notably, the school was supposed to manage all the services, resources, structures, technologies and teaching staff. This approach *de facto* overturned the traditional school model, which was based on the top-down management of the central administration. The Ministry would have kept the duty of controlling and manage the system externally. At the same time, the reform promoted the concept of 'autonomia didattica' (i.e. 'didactic autonomy'), consisting in the 'scelta libera e programmata di metodologie, strumenti, organizzazione e tempi di insegnamento',[63] which partially recalls the Gentilian notion of 'libertà di insegnamento'. This project, though, intended to integrate final-year teaching of all secondary schools with internships, training and work experiences in collaboration with local authorities. These should have provided training opportunities responding to the different needs of each Region. Such plan, called 'alternanza scuola-lavoro' (i.e. 'school-work alternation') would have allowed students of all subject areas to develop professional skills whilst completing their standard education. The Riforma Berlinguer also sanctioned that compulsory schooling ('scuola dell'obbligo') ended at age 15, but article 68 of 'Legge 17 maggio 1999, n. 144'[64] established that students had the obligation to 'train' up to age 18 ('obbligo formativo'), by acquiring professional skills. Therefore, 15-to-18-year-old students who did not intend to conclude their curricular studies had the chance to complete their education by enrolling in regional organizations dedicated to vocational training.

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the 'legge 10 febbraio 2000, n. 30 - Legge quadro in materia di riordino dei cicli dell'istruzione', URL: https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2000/02/23/000G0063/sg, Last Access: 25/02/21.

[62] The general principles of the 'autonomia didattica' were established by the article 21 of 'Legge 15 marzo 1997, n. 59', promoted by the Minister of Public Administration Franco Bassanini, See URL: http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/97059l.htm, Last Access: 19/09/19.

[63] Law 15 march 1997, n.59, IV, article 21.9.

[64] See URL: https://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/99144l.htm, Last Access: 18/09/19.

Thus, the aim of vocational education was to provide students with a first orientation in the labour market. These measures started to promote the idea of a close interconnection between the school system and professional training.

On the whole, Berlinguer's and De Mauro's general new structure of education had the purpose of redesigning the role of the school around the needs of the students (person-centered model), in order to train them from multiple points of view: 'l'introduzione dell'obbligo formativo a diciotto anni e le nuove norme sulla formazione professionale e l'apprendistato hanno delineato un vero e proprio sistema formativo integrato. Gli studenti delle scuole superiori possono così spaziare tra istruzione, formazione professionale e mondo del lavoro' (Dal Passo, Laurenti 2017, p. 75).

The introduction of the so-called 'crediti scolastici' (i.e. 'school credits') and 'crediti formativi') (i.e. 'training credits') is also particularly significant. These 'credits' consisted of a portfolio of points that teachers had to appoint to the students during their final three years of secondary school. Points were to be accredited in accordance with students' academic commitment and results achieved through internships and extra-curricular courses.

The last novelty introduced by the 'Riforma Berlinguer' would have been the rethinking of the role of the headteacher, who would have become a high-paid manager with wider powers, duties and responsibilities. Namely, the new principals would have had 'il compito di assicurare la gestione unitaria della scuola, averne la rappresentanza legale ed essere responsabili della gestione delle risorse finanziarie e strumentali' (Dal Passo, Laurenti 2017, p. 87). Therefore, with the Berlinguer reform, the idea of a headteacher with broad powers and a 'school-company' training students not only culturally but also professionally through internships, was introduced.

However, as anticipated, the significant changes concerning secondary school outlined by Berlinguer's reform were not implemented. With the end of the XIII legislature, the measures were repealed by the entry into force of the subsequent structural reform of education, the so-called 'Riforma Moratti' (2003-2005).[65]

The 'Riforma Moratti' presented substantial differences with Berlinguer's proposal, especially as regards the educational offer and the reorganisation of school levels. However, there were also numerous points in common between the two reforms, particularly with regard to some basic pedagogical principles and students' vocational training. In fact, both were based on a 'modello pedagogico personalista' (i.e. 'person-centred pedagogical model') placing educational

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[65] Conceived between the second and third Berlusconi government, the first of the XIV legislature, this reform was proposed by the Minister of Education, University and Research Letizia Moratti.

institutions at the service of the person's need, and on the so-called 'modello domandista' (i.e. 'demand-based model'), meaning that training programmes had to respond to the expectations of the labour market. As far as the management of economic resources was concerned, the new center-right project immediately showed the intention of limiting further the role of the State in education, by favouring competition between public and private schools and by decreasing the financial resources allocated to the public school system.

Another fundamental novelty of the reform was the establishment of a 'Servizio nazionale di valutazione del sistema educativo di istruzione e di formazione' (i.e. 'National Evaluation Service Of The Education And Training System') which was meant to reorganize the 'Servizio nazionale per la qualità dell'istruzione' (i.e. 'National Service For The Quality Of Education') conceived under Berlinguer's Ministry[66]. The new service aimed at providing for the evaluation of pupils, teachers and educational institutions through tests and surveys supplied by a new body, called the 'Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema di Istruzione' (i.e. the 'National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System'- INVALSI).[67] Still in force today,[68] INVALSI is an evaluation system placed within the European reference framework.

The reform[69] established the reorganization of school levels.[70] According to the law, the 'scuola secondaria di secondo grado' (i.e. 'second grade secondary school') is the last stage of school education. Compared to the 'secondo ciclo' proposed by Berlinguer, which was exclusively focused

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[66] 'L'ambizione principale del Servizio nazionale per la qualità dell'istruzione era quella di incidere sul funzionamento della scuola per migliorare gli esiti dell'istruzione mediante un'autovalutazione (o valutazione interna). Il servizio di Vertecchi, almeno agli inizi, non aveva come compito prioritario quello di svolgere valutazioni esterne di massa della scuola italiana. Solo in seguito, nel 1999, il servizio si è orientato in questa direzione con una rilevazione campionaria impostata per analizzare l'evoluzione del sistema scolastico (il progetto SERIS, ossia Servizio Rilevazioni di Sistema). All'inizio, il progetto faro del servizio era l'archivio docimologico per l'autovalutazione delle scuole, nel quale le singole scuole od i docenti avrebbero potuto attingere item di test o prove tarate utilizzabili per le proprie autovalutazioni', URL: http://adiscuola.it/Pubblicazioni/Invalsi/invalsi_09nascita.htm Last Access: 12/09/19.

[67] See the D.L. 19/11/2004, n. 286, "Istituzione del Servizio nazionale di valutazione del sistema educativo di istruzione e di formazione, nonché riordino dell'omonimo istituto, a norma degli articoli 1 e 3 della legge 28 marzo 2003, n. 53", URL: https://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/deleghe/04286dl.htm , Last Access: 09/09/19.

[68] For an overall idea of all the services currently managed by INVALSI, see URL: https://www.invalsi.it/invalsi/istituto.php?page=chisiamo, Last Access: 09/09/19.

[69] Law 28/3/2003, n.53 – 'Delega al Governo per la definizione delle norme generali sull'istruzione e dei livelli essenziali delle prestazioni in materia di istruzione e formazione professionale' See URL:https://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/normativa/2004/legge53.shtml, Last Access: 15/09/19.

[70] According to the new directives, compulsory education starts with the 'scuola primaria' (i.e. 'primary school'). It includes the teaching of English and the use of computers from year one, as well as a biannual evaluation by INVALSI. The 5th grade exam is abolished. Primary school is followed by the 'scuola secondaria di primo grado' (i.e. 'first grade secondary school') lasting three years, in which a second European language was introduced for all classes. The first two years constituted a 'two-year period', at the end of which the evaluation followed by INVALSI was included. At the end of the three years, a state exam was scheduled. The reform also introduced the so-called 'portfolio', a dossier documenting the different educational experiences through which the students acquired the various skills inside or outside school.

on high school education (the so-called 'Sistema dei licei'), Moratti's proposal makes a clear distinction between two different educational pathways (the so called 'Sistema a doppio canale', i.e. 'double channels system') creating a rather rigid framework. In fact, secondary school was to be divided into two distinct types or 'channels': the 'Sistema dei licei' (i.e. 'high schools system') and the 'Sistema di formazione professionale' (i.e. 'vocational education system').[71] The first channel was based on a 'cultural' and theoretical outlook, whereas the second provided a clearly 'professionalising' training pathway to be undertaken at the very young age of 13.[72] The teaching of philosophy was included in the three-year non-compulsory period of the 'Sistema dei licei'.

However, Moratti reintroduced Berlinguer's 'school-work alternation' project even in the licei,[73] confirming the idea that school should provide, at all levels and within all the systems, a form of apprenticeship to enter the labour market.

With the establishment of Romano Prodi's second government in May 2006, Giuseppe Fioroni took over as Head of the 'Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione' (MPI, i.e. 'Ministry of Public Education'). Although he did not present a structural reform of education, he modified Moratti's layout in some important points, blocking the implementation of the provisions concerning the 'second grade secondary school' before they came into force. His measures were called 'Riordino Fioroni'. The 'Riordino Fioroni' modified the disputed 'dualistic' conception of Moratti's project which, as shown, established two distinct paths for school education and vocational training. In particular, with the 'legge 27 dicembre 2006, n. 296'[74] and with the 'Decreto ministeriale 22 agosto 2007, n. 139'[75], students' age to enter the workforce is raised to 16, starting from academic year 2007/2008. In this way, Italy was in line with most of the other EU countries. Furthermore, the

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[71] The duration of high school was five years: the first two years constituted the 'first biannual period', the third and fourth years were the 'second biannual period'. A fifth year followed, at the end of which a State Exam was required. High school's State exam was necessary to be admitted to a University. Instead, the system of vocational education provided a path based on the choices of each student. This implied that the duration of the course was not established a priori, but it was planned by the students over the years. Specifically, vocational training had to last at least four years, at the end of which a 'qualifying diploma' could be obtained. Such a diploma though, did not allow students to enroll at University. Indeed, if students had wanted to access University, they would have had to take the high school State exam as external candidates or after attending a fifth additional year of preparation. See Law 28/3/2003, n.53, art 2.f:, URL: https://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/normativa/2004/legge53.shtml, Last Access: 09/09/18

[72] Nonetheless, the reform allowed for the possibility of students' transfer from one channel to another. See Law 28/3/2003,n.53,art.2., URL: https://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/normativa/2004/legge53.shtml, Last Access: 09/09/18.

[73] See Law 28/3/ 2003, n.53, art.2.f: 'dal compimento del quindicesimo anno di età i diplomi e le qualifiche si possono conseguire in alternanza scuola-lavoro o attraverso l'apprendistato', URL: https://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/normativa/2004/legge53.shtml, Last Access: 09/09/18.

[74] Si tratta della legge finanziaria 2007. See in particular : 'Legge n° 296 art. 1, parte 3, comma 622 e 624, del 27 dicembre 2006' URL: https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2007/01/11/07A00183/sg, Last Access: 13/09/19.

[75] DD.MM. 22/8/2007, n. 139 - 'Regolamento recante norme in materia di adempimento dell'obbligo di istruzione'. See URL: https://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/normativa/2007/dm139_07.shtml Last Access: 13/09/19.

possibility of choosing between high school and vocational training[76] right after the 'first grade secondary school' was eliminated. The first two years of 'second grade secondary school' thus became mandatory and equal for all.

The 'Decreto ministeriale 22 agosto 2007, n. 139' also presented a series of 'annexes' which defined the educational objectives (the so-called 'competenze chiave di cittadinanza', i.e. 'citizenship key-competences') that students of all courses must have acquired by the end of their training. The document showed that, in addition to knowledge-related skills, students had to develop 'competenze orientate al saper essere' (i.e. 'skills aimed at knowing how to be'), such as 'imparare ad imparare' and 'realizzare progetti riguardanti lo sviluppo delle proprie attività di studio e di lavoro' (i.e. 'learning how to learn' and 'carrying out projects regarding the development of one's own study and work activities')[77]. Such new, broader criteria defined the so-called 'didattica per competenze', i.e. a new teaching framework based mainly on the development and evaluation of students' skills, in agreement with the European Qualifications Framework, which was effective from 2008.[78]

In 2008, center-right coalition returned to govern under the leadership of Silvio Berlusconi, whose government, through the so called 'Riforma Gelmini' (2008-2011),[79] started a heavy rationalisation of the entire public school system, which was carried out over the next three years by cutting expenses on school staff, reducing the number of teaching posts and decreasing the teaching hours within the various school levels.[80] At the same time, Berlusconi's government increased funding for private schools, causing outrage and controversy in the part of public opinion

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[76] Fioroni ratified that the State is the only responsible for issuing all types of diplomas, whilst Regions must guarantee the three-year qualifications of vocational training.

[77] See URL: https://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/normativa/2007/allegati/all2_dm139new.pdf, Last Access: 13/09/19

[78] European Qualification Framework (EQF) See URL: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/european-qualifications-framework-eqf Last Access: 13/09/19.

[79] Between May 2008 and November 2011, Mariastella Gelmini was head of the 'Ministry of Education, University and Research' (MIUR). In this period, she promulgated measures - better known as the 'Riforma Gelimini' - which were meant to innovate both School and University. As for the school, the main innovations introduced by Gelmini's reform were implemented through the 'legge 6 agosto 2008, n. 133' , through the 'legge 30 ottobre 2008, n.169' and through the 'd.p.R. n.87 / 2010, n.88 / 2010 and n.89 / 2010'. The law 133/2008, signed by the Minister of Finance, Giulio Tremonti, concerned public finance, but included some crucial measures for the educational system.

[80] For further details, see URL: https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2011-04-17/istruzione-anni-tagli-miliardi-081609.shtml?uuid=AaEl9gPD&refresh_ce=1 Last Access 10/10/19, URL: https://www.repubblica.it/scuola/2011/03/06/news/l_uragano_di_tagli_del_governo_sull_istruzione_il_prossimo_anno_saltano_altre_20_mila_cattedre-13247197/?ref=HRER2-1, Last Access: 10/10/19.

which was in favour of a public and anti-elitist school.[81] Law 169/2008 and the subsequent d.P.R.,[82] established students' evaluation criteria and reorganized school levels,[83] retouching and integrating the structure envisaged by Moratti's reform and the subsequent 'Riordino Fioroni'.

Gelimini's most relevant changes refer to secondary school. Unlike Berlinguer's proposal, which conceived the school as a system entirely based on high schools, and unlike Moratti's reform, which established a rather rigid 'double channel' distinguishing high school from professional education, Gelmini promoted a tripartite system. Namely, such system was based on high schools (Licei), technical institutes (Istituti tecnici) and vocational schools (Scuole professionali) [84]. The reform provided for a substantial reduction in the training offer and for a general simplification of all three specialties.[85] The reform essentially aimed at strengthening the role of the technical institutes and the professional schools in the educational system by better defining their employability aims. Indeed, high school's layout remains essentially 'cultural', aiming at providing students with a mainly theoretical preparation, whereas the vocational institute is mainly based on

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[81] See, Intravaia 2010, URL: https://www.repubblica.it/scuola/2010/11/12/news/fondi_scuole_paritarie-9034340/ Last Access 11/10/19, and Gramaglia 2009, URL: https://rivistapaginauno.it/dis-parita-scolastica/ Last Access: 10/10/19.

[82] This reorganization of school cycles was regulated by a series of other measures. See URL: https://www.orizzontescuola.it/riordino-degli-istituti-istruzione-secondaria-superiore-varate-linee-guida/ Last Access 10/10/2019.

[83] The set of measures affected primary school with interventions reintroducing a traditional school model by restoring the so-called 'maestro unico', i.e. a single teacher for all subjects (Previously there were three teachers for every two classes). The reintroduction of the 'maestro unico', which de facto was optional, was contested from two points of view. In the first place, this decision was questionable, as it was believed that 'in un contesto di molteplicità di saperi, di specializzazioni crescenti, la pluralità di maestre e il lavoro d'équipe possono garantire maggiormente la soddisfazione delle esigenze di apprendimento dei bambini' (See URL: https://www.tuttoscuola.com/il-maestro-unico-e-le-critiche-che-non-ti-aspetti/ Last Access: 10/10/19. See also the URL: https://www.lavoce.info/archives/25101/elementare-gelmini/, Last Access: 10/10/19). Secondly, the number of primary school teachers was further reduced, thus reducing the job opportunities for primary educators. Following public protests, the introduction of the 'maestro unico' was poorly implemented. See URL: https://www.fondazionescuola.it/sites/default/files/allegati_iniziative/report_finale_maestro_unico.pdf Last Access 10/10/19. As regards the 'scuola secondaria di primo grado', minister Gelmini's program of rationalisation was realised through the reduction of ordinary school hours, which went from 33 to 30 per week, and the implementation of the teaching of English (the so-called 'inglese potenziato'), that replaced other European languages. The role of the INVALSI assessment tests was further enhanced. Indeed, it was made mandatory to take Italian and Mathematics tests established by INVALSI during the last year of the cycle, in order to be admitted to the final State Examination. The outcome of these national tests contributed to students' grade obtained though the final State exam.

[84] il DpR 15 marzo 2010, nn. 87, 88 e 89, contiene i regolamenti e le linee guida per il riordino dei licei, degli istituti tecnici e degli istituti professionali. Per un resoconto più dettagliato di tutti i regolamenti inerenti il riordino della scuola secondaria, see URL: https://www.orizzontescuola.it/riordino-degli-istituti-istruzione-secondaria-superiore-varate-linee-guida/ Last Access 10/10/2019.

[85] In high schools, the majority of the optional experimentations were abolished, whereas technical institutes were divided into only two sectors: the economic sector and the technological one. See Piras 2010, Appunti per un dibattito sulla politica scolastica, pp. 10-14, URL: https://www.bibliotecafilosofica.it/resources/documenti/Documento-SFI-Torino-Vercelli-Apopunti-per-un-dibattito-sulla-politica-scolastica.pdf, Last Access: 11/10/19. In technical institutes, teaching hours and weekly workshop hours are also reduced, whilst students still have the opportunity to participate in workshops and internships during their final year. Even the vocational institutes, previously divided into five sectors with 27 specialisations, are now divided into two macro-sectors with 6 specialisations.

the teaching of practical skills, serving to train the students for a specific profession in the fields of commerce, health, agriculture, and catering.[86] Lastly, the technical institute was intended to provide skills and knowledge so as to prepare students for technologically advanced professional fields.

The teaching of philosophy is provided throughout the high school system, with an hourly differentiation between the various addresses.

The cultural, didactic, and structural orientations analysed so far have their latest coherent and consequential development in the most recent reform of the so-called 'Buona Scuola', implemented in 2015 during Matteo Renzi's Government and slightly retouched over the years. The 'Buona Scuola'[87] reform does not envisage a new upheaval of the overall structure of school levels, but mainly reforms the functioning, administration and management of personnel within schools.

The philosophy behind the reform is once again based on the notion of 'school autonomy', which is now interpreted as a reconfiguration of the educational system through a process of 'corporatisation' of schools. The main innovation introduced by the reform concerns a considerable increase in the power of the principal. Notably, the principal designed by Renzi's government not only has to manage and coordinate the institute's activities, but also has to dictate the guidelines of schools' educational offer,[88] and to evaluate and reward the work of teachers.[89] The 'Buona Scuola' also introduced the compulsory 'alternanza scuola-lavoro', for all students in the final three-year of upper secondary school. The project of alternation expressly aims to create 'un'alleanza profonda e stabile con aziende ed enti pubblici e privati, connessi alla realtà del territorio, una

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[86] With Gelmini's reform, all the diplomas awarded by secondary schools allow students to enroll in university, but vocational institutes still have the 'possibilità di rilasciare qualifiche e diplomi di competenza regionale in regime di sussidiarietà sulla base di accordi stipulati dal MIUR e le singole regioni' (Dal Passo, Laurenti 2017, p 179).

[87] 'Buona Scuola' consists of a single and complex law, the 'legge 13 luglio 2015, n. 107', launched by the Minister of Education, University and Research, Stefania Giannini. The reform was completed, through a series of implementation decrees , by Senator Valeria Fedeli, head of MIUR during the subsequent centre-left government, led by Paolo Gentiloni between 2016 and 2018.

[88] Buona Scuola' gives the principal the tasks of outlining the general principles of the 'Three-year Educational Offer Plan' ('Piano Triennale dell'Offerta Formativa - PTOF), i.e. the document establishing the fundamental cultural principles and planning outline of each school. Before the reform, the entire school council (the 'Consiglio di Istituto') defined the general guidelines for the school's activities and general management. With the 'Buona Scuola' instead, the principal outlines the guidelines for school activities and managerial and administrative decisions before the teaching staff draws up the Plan. The guidelines set by the principal thus constitute the starting point and the boundaries within which the staff drafting the PTOF can operate. On the contents of the PTOF, see also the URL: https://www.orizzontescuola.it/guida/addio-pof-arriva-ptof-cosa-cambia-quali-innovazioni-chi-fa-che-cosa-e-come/ Last Access 11/10/19.

[89] 'Buona Scuola' establishes a fund for the enhancement of teachers' 'merit'. Once again, the principals are in charge of assigning a sum of the aforementioned fund to the most 'deserving' teachers, basing their judgments on the criteria identified by a 'comitato per la valutazione dei docenti' (see law 107/2015,art.1.129), according to a 'motivata valutazione' (see see law 107/2015,art.1.127). See also Sabella 2015, URL: https://www.orizzontescuola.it/ruolo-e-funzioni-dei-presidi-prima-e-dopo-legge-buona-scuola/ Last Access: 12/10/19.

sintonia nella condivisione di una responsabilità educativa che non spetta unicamente alla scuola, ma che coinvolge professionisti, imprenditori, lavoratori e operatori dell'associazionismo.'[90] According to this viewpoint, school is not sufficient to educate adolescents, whereas early experiences within the job market are essential to complete their education.

In conclusion, even though many of the recent reforms of Italian school were not implemented or were only partially applied, some shared inspiring principles are evident. Such principles are the increase in the power of principals and the prominent place given to notions such as 'autonomia scolastica', 'alternanza scuola-lavoro', and 'didattica per competenze'. These reforms introduced a technical language to the school context, based on terms coming from the world of economics (such as 'credits', 'debts', 'human capital' etc.), as well as a logic of standardised evaluation methods such as INVALSI tests, and configure the new school system according to corporate standards.

As shown, on the one hand, these inspiring principles arise from specific developments in domestic politics, such as the process of decentralisation of powers and competences from the State to the Regions. On the other hand, though, the new educational criteria are configured as a response to the European guidelines, to which Italy has tried to adapt with some contradictions and resistance.

Although this section may seem overly technical, it was necessary to investigate this change of direction. In fact, P4C developed in Italy in conjunction with this profound paradigm shift, which, in my opinion, may compromise the quality of its educational project.

In the next section, I will demonstrate how this change is reflected in the most recent adjustments to school programs, methodologies, and educational goals concerning philosophy and school teaching in general.

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[90] See URL: https://www.istruzione.it/alternanza/strutture_alleanza.html, Last Access: 12/10/19.

II.7 P4C within a New Ideological Framework: Towards the Commodification of Knowledge

In the previous section, I delineated the broad political project, started at the end of the Nineties, which aimed at restructuring the entire Italian school system. As I will show, this model has led to an impoverishment of teaching, emptying school subjects of contents - including philosophy - and directing them towards utilitarian purposes, such as their usability in the labour market.

All this certainly interest the Italian academic debate because it could be a sign of a low incidence of philosophical research on the direction to be given to the teaching of philosophy or even a symptom of a general 'mancanza di indirizzo della filosofia italiana' (Gaiani 2014, p.18). More importantly, this new general outlook represents the ideological substratum into which P4C has entered.

In this section, I will first outline the latest developments in the teaching of philosophy, highlighting the risks and contradictions they entail in this new ideological framework.

Secondly, I will show that some characteristics of P4C, such as the emphasis on the acquisition of logical and reasoning skills, the rigid structure of the CPI, and facilitators' non-specialistic training pathway, risk transforming this discipline into an instrument at the service of this ideological framework.

The guidelines concerning the teaching of philosophy were included in the 'Indicazioni Nazionali Degli Obiettivi Specifici di Apprendimento per i Licei' of 2010. Further suggestions were included in the following 'Orientamenti del Miur per l'apprendimento della filosofia' (2017).

Still valid today, the 'Indicazioni Nazionali' aim at describing the 'Profilo educativo, culturale e professionale dello studente a conclusione dei percorsi liceali', and consist of a 'nota introduttiva' (allegato A) and of the learning objectives of each high school.[91]

As far as philosophy is concerned, the novelty that the 'Indicazioni' introduces is that the historicist model of 1944 is re-dimensioned through the juxtaposition of the 'approccio per problemi'. This means that, in addition to promoting the study of certain authors' theories and

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[91] 'liceo artistico e relativi indirizzi allegato B); liceo classico allegato C); liceo linguistico allegato D); liceo musicale e coreutico allegato E) liceo scientifico e sua opzione delle "scienze applicate" allegato F); liceo delle scienze umane e sua opzione "economico-sociale" allegato G)' (Indicazioni Nazionali 2010, p.3), see URL: http://www.indire.it/lucabas/lkmw_file/licei2010/indicazioni_nuovo_impaginato/_decreto_indicazioni_nazionali.pdf, Last Access: 08/05/2020.

philosophical texts, the 'Indicazioni' encourage an approach 'tradizionalmente minoritario in Italia, quello teorico-problematico' (Gaiani 2014, p.232).

However, the 'Indicazioni' have some theoretical limitations and ambiguities. In fact, they propose an excessive juxtaposition of concepts 'senza gerarchia, senza connessioni fondate e argomentate, senza giustificazioni esplicitate' (Gaiani 2014, p.16).

Besides, they claim not to dictate strict didactic-pedagogical models, since they intend to 'favorire la sperimentazione e lo scambio di esperienze metodologiche, valorizzare il ruolo dei docenti e delle autonomie scolastiche nella loro libera progettazione e negare diritto di cittadinanza, in questo delicatissimo ambito, a qualunque tentativo di prescrittivismo'.[92] To some extent, this is undoubtedly true, since the 'Indicazioni' do not prescribe anything, except for the study of some 'essential' philosophers. They are not 'ministerial programs' but 'Indications', i.e. suggestions, which do not replace the planning of each school. Thus, from this point of view, they seem to renew some principles of the Gentilian approach, such as the freedom of teaching, and the absence of prescriptive programs. However, as Caputo notes, the pedagogical model to which these 'Indicazioni' tend is clearly identifiable:

> il modello c'è, ed è quello della Didattica delle competenze. Certo, poi, all'interno di questo resta la libertà/sperimentabilità, resta la pluralità dei metodi proponibili, però gli insegnanti sanno bene che, dallo schema di progettazione ai criteri di valutazione, dall'organizzazione dell'offerta formativa, alla costruzione/proposta degli obiettivi d'apprendimento, la griglia non è libera, ma veicolata. E il suo scenario pedagogico-didattico difficilmente aggirabile' (Caputo 2019, pos. 2545).

The juxtaposition between the historicist approach and the problem-based approach, to be interpreted through the lens of the 'modello della didattica per competenze', conceived at a European level and introduced in Italy with the 'Riordino Fioroni', represent the real novelty of the 'National Indications'.

The 'Orientamenti del Miur per l'apprendimento della filosofia' (2017) were expressly placed in continuity with the National Indications of 2010.[93] The document aims to design a model of

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[92] See the 'Schema di regolamento recante "Indicazioni nazionali riguardanti gli obiettivi specifici di apprendimento concernenti le attività e gli insegnamenti compresi nei piani degli studi previsti per i percorsi liceali di cui all'art. 10,comma 3, del d.P.R. 15 marzo 2010, n. ...... in relazione all'articolo 2, commi 1 e 3, del medesimo d.P.R.". pp. 11 ff. See URL: http://www.flcgil.it/files/pdf/20100526/schema-di-regolamento-indicazioni-nazionali-dei-licei-del-26-maggio-2010-4803531.pdf Last Access: 08/05/2020.

[93] 'Il *Documento* nasce dall'esigenza di riflettere sulle potenzialità formative dello studio della filosofia nella scuola italiana e come campo dell'istruzione degli adulti, nell'ottica del *life-long learning* e del *life-wide learning,* alla luce sia dei provvedimenti previsti dalla legislazione scolastica italiana degli ultimi anni - a partire dal Regolamento e dalle *Indicazioni nazionali* per i Licei, dai Regolamenti e dalle *Linee Guida* per i percorsi degli Istituti tecnici e Professionali,

'Filosofia per tutti', i.e. 'Philosophy for all', within the so-called 'knowledge society' and shows openness to the idea of extending the teaching of philosophy to all types of secondary school. However, they present a series of criticalities in the theoretical and methodological proposals.

In the first place, the document acknowledges the possibility of giving various answers to the question of what philosophy is and how it should be taught but, actually, it seems to value mainly the Anglo-Saxon tradition, revealing 'una preferenza alquanto accentuata verso la filosofia analitico-pragmatica e verso una didattica ispirata ai suoi principi' (De Pasquale 2018, p. 12). The document seems to acknowledge a single 'modello di razionalità filosofica identificata tout-court con le procedure concettuali, logiche e argomentative del pensare' (De Pasquale 2018, p. 26), and proposes the use of teaching methodologies specifically 'provenienti dal mondo anglosassone: la capacità di ragionare, il *critical thinking* e l'utilizzo come metodologia, per raggiungere le competenze filosofiche, del *Debate'* (Bernardi 2018, p.30).

Most importantly though, the usefulness of transversal skills obtainable through the study of philosophy and the value of such skills for purposes that are not connected to philosophy are emphasized so much so that the risk is to 'minare la specificità contenutistica della disciplina: i saperi diventerebbero così strumenti per altro' (Boracchi 2018, p. 39). In addition, the 'Orientamenti' focuses on the 'competenze fondamentali' that students should acquire, so much so that the 'conoscenze sono a servizio delle competenze; e vengono paradossalmente solo secondariamente collegate alle competenze attese' (Caputo 2018, p. 51). According to Caputo, the opposite perspective should be taken into account: 'dalle conoscenze filosofiche dedurre le competenze filosofiche che esse sono in grado di attivare grazie ad una "trasformazione" didattica' (Caputo 2018, p. 51).

Finally, the document theorises the urgent need to rethink the 'traditional method' of teaching philosophy - which is not precisely identified - but it does not specify 'le ragioni del fallimento e dell'inattualità dell'impostazione consueta relativa all'insegnamento della filosofia' (Carosotti 2018, p. 69). This seems to imply that the 'traditional method' can be identified *tout-court* as mere mnemonic learning of notions, whereas, as De Pasquale argues, even within the historicist tradition 'sono stati elaborati tanti modelli curricolari e didattici, che valorizzano la

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fino alla Legge 107/2015, ai relativi decreti legislativi del 2017 e documenti di accompagnamento - sia della documentazione internazionale come la Risoluzione adottata dall' Assemblea Generale dell'ONU *Trasformare il nostro mondo: l'Agenda 2030 per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile.'* in *'*Trasmissione del Documento MIUR "Orientamenti per l'apprendimento della Filosofia nella società della conoscenza" diffuso con nota prot. n. 16947 del 19 dicembre 2017' URL: http://www.philolympia.org/pdf/2018/aoodgosv.pdf Last Access: 27/02/2021.

dimensione diacronica, opportunamente selezionata secondo rappresentatività storico-critica, epistemologica e metodologica, al fine di consentire la promozione di abilità, capacità, competenze, utili a costruire conoscenza filosofica' (De Pasquale 2018, p. 14).

On the whole, both documents, which are based on the ' didattica delle competenze' model, are theoretically weak and more prescriptive than expected. Above all, I believe that the points highlighted by Boracchi and Caputo are the most important ones. In fact, currently, the logic of the acquisition of skills and competencies runs the risk of putting education at the service of secondary purposes. As argued by historian Mauro Boarelli, potentially fruitful ideas, such as the 'didattica per competenze', actually respond to a utilitarian conception of knowledge. For instance, one of the 'transversal skills' that students are encouraged to develop, namely 'learning how to learn', could theoretically represent an important educational goal. Nonetheless, when such a concept is included in nowadays excessively technocratic narrative, it risks limiting the functions of education to making students adaptable, from a very early age, to the dominant ideology (see Boarelli 2019). In Boarelli's view, within the current Italian education system, notions such as 'learning how to learn' are a sort of 'ideological blanket', serving the purpose of teaching a specific form of behaviour. Such behaviour would consist in adapting to the forms of 'flexibility' and exploitation of the current precarious labour market. Concepts such as 'the measurability of results' that can be assessed in 'credits', 'debts' and 'scores', are equally part of such an ideological apparatus that borrow notions and language from the world of economics and industry, implementing them in the school jargon. He argues that the acquisition of 'skills' plays a decisive role in the general process of subordination to the language of economics. Indeed, nowadays the collection of certifications attesting students' large amount of different 'skills' is often interpreted as a form of 'meritocracy'. Nonetheless, in Boarelli's view, such a reading of the concept of 'meritocracy' risks to encourage schools and universities to abandon the construction of critical knowledge in favour of an instrumental knowledge.

As a consequence, instead of contributing to a critical analysis of the existing economic, social and cultural models, school risks to become an instrument of supine adaptation to such a model. Arguably, Italy is promoting such an ideological framework, without sufficiently taking into account the effects that this layout is having on education. As shown, the school reforms of the last twenty years, combined with recent 'Indicazioni' and 'Orientamenti' for the teaching of philosophy, fully fit into this model.

I believe that, in such a context, some peculiarities of P4C expose it to the risk of being exploited as a normalizing discipline, at the service of this ideological framework that interprets learning as the ability to adapt to a context rather than modify it. As Biesta argues, 'the question here is where in the paradigm of learning as intelligent adaptation there is a place for the question whether the environment we find ourselves in is an environment worth adapting to. […] the paradigm of learning as intelligent adaptation cannot account for this' (Biesta 2017, p. 433-434). One of the greatest risks that P4C could run is that of reducing philosophical inquiry with children to the fostering of thinking skills, thus transforming philosophical practice with children in school into a human capital device (see Biesta, 2017). In line with Boarelli general remarks, Biesta argues that the current international tendency to implement critical thinking programmes in schools such as P4C is based on the reductionism of education to learning outcomes. Such goals are a dominant aspect of educational policies since they are at the service of the current trend for the capitalisation of knowledge: 'the cult(ure) of measurement and of measurable learning outcomes appears to have succeeded in re-defining what education is supposed to be for, with teachers becoming servants of the system rather than being key agents in the educational endeavour' (Biesta 2017, p. 422, see also Biesta 2015a, Biesta2015b). As shown in the previous sections, this is particularly true when considering the Italian institutional and cultural framework. Recent agreements between MIUR and CRIF[94] promote the inclusion of P4C within school planning by presenting it as a practice for the development of the so-called transversal skills, which confirms the concreteness of such risk.

Even the rather rigid structure of the CPI is problematic for two mains reasons. First, as previously shown, Lipman's CPI has American pragmatism (mainly Dewey and Pierce's theories on education) as its theoretical background. Adopting such a structure implies a preference for the tradition of analytical philosophy to the detriment of other philosophical approaches. As shown, such a tendency has been already highlighted in the debate on the recent 'Indicazioni' and 'Orientamenti'. Biesta himself, in his experience working philosophically with children, had 'the impression that only a particular 'slice' of the philosophical tradition was being represented, more on the analytical-logical side of the philosophical spectrum, and less on the phenomenological and more speculative end' (Biesta 2017, p. 421). Secondly, the rigid sequential structure of the CPI could encourage the teachers-facilitators to focus excessively on the formal aspects of the discipline.

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[94]See URL: https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/MIUR.AOODPIT.REGISTRO_UFFICIALE%28U%29.0001649.30-08-2017%5B1%5D.pdf/5bd1ba52-b9c5-401b-82f1-34c21e68ee0b?version=1.0&t=1504102687293 Last Access 22/08/2022.

Namely, it may happen that ''la ripetizione delle fasi previste [...] divor[i] la possibilità di cogliere, al margine della metodologia, il piacere della creazione concettuale, lo spazio per un pensare ulteriore' (Casarin 2016, p.38).

The figure of the teacher-facilitator is also problematic. Cosentino imagines the facilitator as a teacher 'deprived' of his authoritarian, normative and judgmental characteristics: 'un docente senza una disciplina/materia da trasmettere, senza il potere della valutazione sommativa, senza un'autorità formalmente riconosciuta, senza ingaggio per il disciplinamento dei corpi e dei comportamenti; infine, senza risposte e certezze e, pertanto, completamente azzerato rispetto alle aspettative che l'immagine comune di scuola legittima e sostiene' (Cosentino 2011, p. 101). However, it is difficult to imagine that such freedom can actually be implemented in the Italian school, where student evaluation is mandatory and experimental projects must be justified through the constant measurability of learning outcomes.

In addition, the not necessarily philosophical training of facilitator teachers risks making P4C a project with a poor philosophical content. Indeed, CRIF's training courses are addressed to teachers of any discipline from the national school syllabus, coming from all school types and levels. This means that, currently, teachers who adopt P4C's methodology did not necessarily graduate in philosophy or pedagogy. Such broad access criteria contradict the ambition that these teachers are effectively able to perform with students - especially with mature students of secondary schools - 'un processo di indagine che sia filosofica e non di altro tipo' (Oliverio, Miraglia 2016, p.75).

Finally, the very structure of the school days does not facilitate the execution of P4C sessions. As pointed out by Marina Santi, 'i programmi disciplinari sempre più vasti ed approfonditi, i tempi stretti da ripartire nel modulo, le classi numerose ai limiti della gestibilità, sono una realtà difficile da ignorare [...] non c'è tempo nel monte-ore, non c'è spazio nella programmazione [...]' (Santi 1995, p.81). This means that, within Italian schools, there are procedural and organizational difficulties that add up to the difficulty of emancipating this discipline from the ideological framework of contemporary education.

Therefore, a full correspondence between theory and practice should not be taken for granted. In fact, the actual implementation of the discipline in the class setting and - more importantly - the socio-cultural and ideological framework of the educational institution are not secondary issues. On the contrary, both aspects have an impact on the practice and possibly, modify its outcomes.

II.8 From Philosophy *for* Children (P4C) to Philosophy *with* Children (*PwC*) and Philosophy for Community (P4Co)

In the previous section, I demonstrated that, despite the merits of P4C, within the current Italian school, this discipline risks becoming a tool at the service of an extremely technocratic conception of education.

However, the risks associated with the overly technical implementation of the procedure and an excessive focus on logical-argumentative skills may be in part compensated by some fundamental elements of the practice itself. For instance, the 'social' and 'democratic' skills that this practice can promote, such as mutual respect, the tolerance of different opinions, and the collaborative and creative resolution of a problem, lend this discipline a broader pedagogical goal in that it educates to ethical values. Therefore, it is true that a certain regulatory, institutional and cultural framework, such as that of contemporary Italian school, can jeopardize its potential, but it is also true that alternative ways of interpreting this discipline can lead to unexpected and philosophically relevant results.

In this section, I argue that recent theoretical proposals introduced methodological novelties that may favour P4C's creative elements as well as its ethical contents, thus compensating for some critical aspects of the practice.

In recent years, a new generation of P4C's theorists, both in Italy and internationally, has called into question some well-rooted principles of the traditional curriculum. Although most of them do not consider their suggestions as a form of rupture with Lipman's project but rather as its necessary evolution, it is important to highlight the novelties that they have introduced. First of all, they use the preposition "with" instead of "for" to name the discipline (Philosophy *for* Children thus becomes Philosophy *with* children, P*w*C), which emphasises the participative and democratic components of P4C dialogue. These components would lie in the collaboration between participants and the non-authoritarian and encouraging role of the teacher/facilitator. At the same time, this change aims at clarifying some doubts with regard to the role of Philosophy within this practice. It seemed in fact that the notion 'Philosophy *for* Children' could recall the idea of a *simplified philosophy* expressly conceived for the fruition of children. On the contrary, the expression "*with* Children" would stress that, in this context, philosophy is not a discipline to be taught, but rather the result of a communitarian practice (see Vansieleghem, Kennedy 2011).

Although the original denomination could cause some misunderstandings, this linguistic revision seems to be no more than a clarification of Lipman's declared intents. But, as soon as the theoretical implication of certain methodological modifications are investigated, the innovations appear to be undoubtedly relevant. In PwC the initial *stimulus* for the ensuing debate is not necessarily a novel taken from the P4C curriculum, but rather it can be any other material, such as an article, image, picture or video clip. The discursive procedure becomes less rigid, with the students deciding each time what rules to adopt. The flexible character of *PwC* would be the result of a change in western philosophical paradigms, broadly speaking:

> Given the rise of post modernity, one simply does not do philosophy the way one did forty years ago. The assumptions about truth, perspective, nature and so on have, at least, been challenged, thereby forcing attempts at justification and explanations that were considered unnecessary in previous days (Reed, Johnson 1999, p.64).

However, some theoretical innovations go even further than this in that they widen the wholescope of the discipline.

In particular, current Italian P4C seems to tend towards a sort of 'nomadismo, contaminazione, rottura dei confini del filosofare' (Casarin 2016, p.37). Namely, a new declination of the original practice has sprung from the Italian P4C aiming at expanding the target of the discipline to adults, which has transported the concept of the 'Community of Philosophical Inquiry' beyond school boundaries.

This is the case of the Philosophy for Community (P4Co), an original Italian proposal. Such a new discipline is currently proposing the application of Lipman's method in 'progetti destinati ad operatori sociali, Università della terza età, gruppi informali di cittadini, organizzazioni lavorative, carcere e comunità per tossicodipendenti, contesti socio-sanitari'.[95] From *Philosophy for Community* derive *Philosophy for Company*, which introduces P4C's methodology in workplaces, and *Philosophy for Citizenship* which, further expanding the general framework, is open to the 'intera comunità umana, ovunque vi siano persone che scelgono di riunirsi per affrontare in maniera condivisa e riflessiva, alla maniera dell'antica frequentazione agoretica dell'esercizio filosofico, basato sul confronto dialogico, temi di attualità e spesso urgenti riguardanti lo sviluppo economico, sociale e

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[95] See URL: https://www.filosofare.org/crif-p4c/p4community/ Last Access: 08/03/2021.

culturale della nostra civiltà, la convivenza civile nell'ambito della società globale, la salvaguardia del pianeta'.[96]

Aspects such as the flexible layout of *PwC* and the recent opening towards different areas of society seem to support a recently proposed thesis, namely that P4C is in fact moving towards a 'post Philosophy 4 children' (Casarin 2016). This opens up a broader interpretation of Cosentino's notion of P4C as 'propaedeutic' discipline, in that P4C itself could be interpreted as the preparation for a sort of programmatic 'trespassing', which 'ridefinirà gli stessi confini della pratica e forse li confonderà persino. Un movimento che potrebbe, persino dicevamo, permetterci di intravedere la nascita di nuove esperienze filosofiche' (Casarin 2016, 36, p.37).

In the next chapter, the theoretical contents of P4Co will be analysed from a philosophical perspective, since I believe they have interesting implications that intersects with contemporary Italian political philosophy.

II.8 Conclusions

In this chapter, I analysed P4C, an international pedagogical project that aims at fostering critical thinking in children aged 3 to 18 through the teaching of argumentative and reasoning skills.

My leading argument was that, being P4C a practical and social discipline, it has to be investigated from a socio-cultural angle, as theoretical contents cannot be separated from the analysis of their actual implementation. My final intention was to demonstrate that the implementation of the discipline in the class setting and the socio-cultural and ideological framework of the educational institution where it is practiced are not secondary issues. On the contrary, both aspects have an impact on the practice itself, possibly modifying its outcomes.

In the first part of the chapter, I reconstructed the birth of P4C, analysing Mattew Lipman's intellectual pathway. I highlighted the philosophical background informing his ideas and the socio-cultural context that inspired his project, explaining the methodology of the 'Community of Philosophical Inquiry' (CPI) and P4C's critical aspects.

In the second part of the chapter, I focused on the introduction of P4C in Italy which, in my opinion, gave rise to something inevitably new compared to the original layout of this discipline.

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[96] See URL: https://www.filosofare.org/crif-p4c/philosophy-for-citizenship/ Last Access: 08/03/2021.

First, I argued that P4C's difficulty in entering the Italian school system was initially due to the philosophical relevance of the Italian traditional historicist teaching method, which have been difficult to replace with other methodologies coming from other philosophical traditions throughout the whole twentieth century. According to the still dominant model, philosophy is connected to the study of history, it is aimed at high school students, and it is rarely separated from the study of philosophers' thought through the textbook.

In my critical-historical reconstruction, I showed that this system has been hardly retouched, even though the lively debate pertaining to the teaching of philosophy has never stopped looking for various theoretical references, methods, and alternative didactics models.

Subsequently, I illustrated that, from the 1980s onwards, a new conception of philosophy didactics and of the very conception of education began to emerge, which favoured the emergence of new approaches to teaching. Issues such as the enhancement of logical and argumentative skills, the role of the teacher, and the practical utility of philosophy became central within the Italian debate and 1990s' institutional reforms of philosophy teaching. P4C seemed to fit perfectly within this new experimental phase.

Nonetheless, in my opinion, the most recent Italian educational reforms, implemented from the end of the nineties onwards, have overturned the cultural orientation of the Italian school, distorting its educational objectives. The general shift towards a logic of exploitation of skills and an efficiency-driven paradigm of education contributed to the gradual technicalisation of the Italian school, which appears increasingly market-oriented. I argued that such a new framework affects the contents and the teaching methodologies of school subjects - including philosophy and experimental projects such as P4C - since the learning objectives are defined within the new theoretical outlook. I believe that, in such a context, some peculiarities of P4C - such as the emphasis on the acquisition of logical and reasoning skills, the rigid structure of the CPI, and facilitators' non-specialistic training pathway - risk transforming this discipline into an instrument at the service of this ideological framework that interprets learning as the ability to adapt to a context rather than modify it.

Despite these criticalities, I finally mentioned recent theoretical novelties that, in my opinion, may favour P4C's creative elements as well as its ethical contents, thus compensating for some problematic aspects of the practice. In particular, Philosophy for Community (P4Co), an original Italian declination of Lipman's discipline, aims at expanding the target of the P4C to adults, outside the school contexts. In my opinion, this new practice has interesting implications that intersects

with contemporary Italian political philosophy. Therefore, P4Co will be the object of the next chapter.

III. Philosophical Practices, Philosophy for Community (P4Co), and Italian Theory

In the previous chapters, I analysed philosophical practices such as Philosophical Counselling, Philosophical Consultancy, and Philosophy 4 Children in their articulation within Italian society. I highlighted that a historical-cultural turn that took place between the late nineties and early 2000s favoured the introduction of philosophical practices in the country. Specifically, one aspect that emerged is that both P4C and Philosophical Counselling and Consultancy were introduced in a period of change and crisis within both the labour market and Italian institutions such as School and University, which seem to be increasingly influenced by an economistic and technocratic worldview. Philosophical practices rose within this context of crisis, proposing themselves as a possible solution to it. In fact, they were introduced in Italy as an attempt to restore and renew institutional philosophy as they proposed the use of new approaches to philosophizing and opened up new professions for philosophy graduates.

However, my analysis showed that the crisis affecting Italian institutions and professions has in fact strongly influenced these practices, so much so that, currently, they risk being absorbed by such technocratic and commodifying paradigm. In particular, I pointed out that, in order to be more usable in the workplace, philosophical practices have hybridized and mixed amongst each other so much as to risk a flattening of their initial theoretical assumptions. This seems to intersect with the current socio-economic and institutional framework which, over the last thirty years, has favoured a sort of hypertrophy of training courses for marketing purposes both in the public and in the private sector. To survive on the side-lines of the ultra-competitive and saturated field of the helping professions, philosophical counselling and consultancy currently risk conforming to market trends, which risks jeopardizing their innovative charge. Similarly, within nowadays school context, P4C risks becoming an instrument to a content-less technical and economistic drift. These aspects demonstrate that philosophical practices, as a social phenomenon, can only be understood in relation to the historical, social, and cultural context in which they develop.

Despite these criticalities, the dialogue and hybridization between the various philosophical practices have had at least two further consequences that must be taken into consideration. Firstly, such dialogue has opened up a fruitful theoretical confrontation between the practitioners of the various disciplines and, secondly, it is giving rise to new philosophical practices such as Philosophy for Community, which blossomed from Philosophy for Children. As to the first point, in the

Introduction to this thesis I showed that Italian philosophical practices were introduced into the country from abroad more or less simultaneously in the nineties. This occurrence has undoubtedly favoured the development of a first collective reflection around the very concept of philosophical practices. As argued by Volpone, 'si è sviluppata [in Italia] una riflessione di meta-livello che consente senza dubbio confronti, accostamenti, se non commistioni e sconfinamenti, sulla base dell'idea che, al di sotto delle singole specificità storiche e operative, vi sia un quid fondativo comune' (Volpone 2013a, p.68). Such communal aspect has given Italian philosophical practices a particularity which translates into an attempt not only to make the practices dialogue with each other but also to conceive philosophical practices as an *ensemble* in constant evolution and change. According to Volpone, amongst the practitioners of the various disciplines, the pioneers of P4C were the very ones who first attempted such dialogue and mingling: 'La comunità italiana della philosophy for children è stata tra le prime ad aprirsi a questo confronto' (Volpone 2013a, p.68).

As to the second point, in Volpone's view, the general predisposition to confrontation has also favoured the birth in Italy of the Philosophy for Community (P4Co). But, once again, it was P4C's practitioners that made the birth of this practice possible. Specifically, there would be methodological and ideological reasons that cause the birth of P4Co from P4C. From a methodological point of view, as it is conceived, P4C not only trains children but also aims to train adults according to the same principles: 'La formazione dei facilitatori P4Co è improntata al principio del 'learning by doing' [...] Gli adulti, pertanto, svolgono il loro apprendistato operativo facendo la medesima cosa che fanno bambini e adolescenti in classe: le attività sono completamente isomorfe' (Volpone 2013a, p.61). From an ideological point of view, instead, P4C has at its base 'un'utopia sociale e civile, che passa attraverso un'ideale educativo' (Volpone 2013a, p.62). Thus, for Volpone, as well as being a pedagogical project designed specifically for children and teenagers, P4C has within itself a 'potential' that is exploitable in other areas by adults and beyond the school context.

I believe that the communitarian aspect of philosophical practices, and their attempt to renew institutional philosophy and the institutions themselves have a theoretical and philosophical relevance. In this chapter, I claim that these facets constitute a phenomenon that may be of interest to a particular strand of current Italian 'institutional' philosophy – i.e. the recent development of so-called 'Italian Theory'. Specifically, I intend to demonstrate that the Italian declination of P4Co, and practitioners' collective reflection on the concept of community and communal philosophical research have interesting political implications that intersect with the study path of one of the main

exponents of Italian Theory, i.e. Roberto Esposito. The relationship between P4Co and Roberto Esposito's philosophy will be the main object of this chapter.

Before explaining how the rest of the chapter will be articulated, I will introduce the notion of Italian Theory and Esposito's reading of it. My first aim is to stress the reasons why philosophical practices are an object of study that is of interest to this strand of institutional Italian political philosophy. Secondly, I will focus on Roberto Esposito's research path, explaining the core nodes of his thought and the reasons why, in my opinion, his philosophy represents the ideal point to start a theoretical confrontation between philosophical practices, and in particular P4Co, and Italian Theory.

III. 1 Italian Theory and Esposito's Philosophy: A Brief Introduction

Having introduced the main issues that will be analysed in this chapter, in this section I first introduce the concept of Italian Theory according to Esposito's reading, in order to show the reasons why philosophical practices are an interesting object of study for this strand of contemporary Italian political philosophy. Second, I will summarize the main points of Esposito's philosophical research to show their connection with the main concepts thematized in P4Co. In the following sections, such a connection will be investigated in depth.

Between the second half of the Nineties and the beginning of the new millennium, roughly coinciding with the entry of philosophical practices in Italy, a new interpretative paradigm of political philosophy has gained space and resonance in the international academic community, namely the so-called Italian theory. 'Italian Theory' is an umbrella term grouping a series of Italian authors who examine some key issues that are relevant to philosophical practices, such as praxis, community, biopolitics, and institution.

The notion of 'Italian Theory' generally refers to philosophers such as Mario Tronti, Antonio Negri, Massimo Cacciari, who emerged during the political struggles of the Sixties by engaging in an intellectual militancy within leftist workerist movement,[1] as well as to authors such as Giorgio

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[1] Italian workerism (*operaismo*) is a current of Marxist thought and research that developed in Italy from the early 1960s. According to workerism, the working class is the real agent of economic development, which is why it should lead a revolutionary process in order to destabilize classical institutions such as parties and trade unions. Workerists theorized that, to overthrow capital, a sort of self-destruction of the working class was necessary through the renunciation of work. In 1961, together with other intellectuals who detached from some left-wing parties, Mario Tronti, Toni Negri, and Raniero Panzieri, the main theorists of workerism, founded the magazine Quaderni rossi, in which they developed

Agamben and Roberto Esposito who developed their research in politics from the nineties onwards, moving from a rethinking of the category of biopolitics as theorised by Michel Foucault during the seventies. Given the international success of these authors, over the years many have tried to pinpoint a supposed 'Italian difference', that is, a peculiarity of Italian thought and a shared theoretical framework amongst such thinkers.[2] In particular, an attempt was made to identify aspects of Italian thought that were capable of responding to the political issues of the contemporary world. German and French philosophy, whose interpretive paradigms had dominated in the international debate until a few years earlier, had entered a crisis.[3]

So far, various authors have proposed a personal reading of the notion of Italian theory, trying to outline a possible 'Italian difference'.[4] However, it was Roberto Esposito who gave the most debated and successful reading of such notion.

In his 2010 book 'Pensiero vivente. Origine e attualità della filosofia italiana', Esposito defined some specific traits of Italian speculation by enquiring into the history of Italian literature, philosophy, and arts starting from the pre-unitary and Renaissance tradition.[5] Instead of using the lemma 'Italian theory', he opted for the wording 'Italian thought' in order to give such notion a performative sense. The concept of 'thought' would be performative in a double acceptation: on the one hand, it is performative because it highlights the relationship existing in Italian thought

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workerist thought. In 1963, Mario Tronti, Alberto Asor Rosa, Toni Negri, Massimo Cacciari, and others left the group to found 'Classe operaia', another historical magazine of leftist workerism.

[2] Here I cannot analyse the debated issue on whether Italian Theory's authors share the same theoretical framework since such question averts from the topic of this chapter. (On this issue, see for instance Gentili, Stimilli 2015 and Maltese, Maniscalco 2016).

[3] According to Esposito such a crisis is due to the predominant role of the analysis of language in both philosophical traditions, which would be the main cause of a post-philosophical turn in contemporary western thought: 'Una volta che questo [i.e. ' il linguaggio] … dichiara la propria parzialità, e cioè una inabilità strutturale a formulare modelli di razionalità universali o universalizzabili, alla filosofia non sembra restare altro spazio che quello della propria autonegazione o prosecuzione estenuata'(Esposito 2010a, p.8).

[4] The first anthology in chronological order was that of Semiotext (e) in 1980 which featured, among others, writings by Negri, Tronti, Virno and others (see Lotringer, Marazzi, 1980). The curators intended to present to American leftist readers an overview of the theoretical production and struggle experience of the first wave of Italian workerist movement. The second anthology is edited by Paolo Virno and Michel Hardt in 1996 (see Virno, Hardt 1996). Workerist and post-workerist theories are here re-proposed to make a critique of the contemporary neo-liberal political structures in materialistic terms. The authors included in the anthology are Agamben, Negri, Revelli, Piperno and others. In the introduction, Hardt identifies a 'laboratory Italy' that questions the relationship between theory and practice and argues that Italian radical thought can be used internationally for anti-capitalist political purposes: 'Laboratory Italy refers no longer to a geographic location, but to a virtual space of hope and potential that may be actualized anywhere; better, it refers to a specific modality now available to all of us, of experimenting in revolution' (Hardt 1996, p. 9). The anthology edited by Chiesa and Toscano (see Chiesa, Toscano 2009) collects texts by Negri, Esposito, Rovatti, Vattimo, Murari, Tronti and Virno. Finally, the book by Gentili (see Gentili 2012) is a personal reading of such category. For a critical reconstruction of the publications on the Italian difference, see (Maltese, Maniscalco, 2016).

[5] Esposito investigates connections and resonances in philosophers' and artists' production such as Machiavelli, Bruno, Vico, Leopardi, Cuoco, Da Sanctis, Croce, Gramsci, Pasolini.

between theory and practice: 'un pensiero della prassi e, insieme, una pratica di pensiero' (Esposito 2015, p. 12). Secondly, it is performative because it does not arise solely from theoretical presuppositions but is strictly bonded with its own practice. Besides, according to Esposito, Italian thought is propelled by an 'outside' that precedes theoretical speculation.

First of all, such an 'outside' is political praxis in its conflictual relationship with the established power. This is particularly evident within workerist political theory, which stemmed within and together with the political struggles of the sixties. In Esposito's view though, there is a reason for such occurrence, connecting the peculiarity of Italian thought to Italian history, territory, and culture. From medieval times to the Nineteenth century, Italy has been characterised by the absence of a centralised state, often causing intellectuals to interact with local political and ecclesiastical power, which in turn would result in their often conflicting, and difficult position toward power.[6] Secondly, Italian thought is touched from the 'outside' as it tends to hybridize with other paradigms and incorporate philosophical glossary from other countries.[7] Thirdly, Italian thought is a philosophy of immanence, which means that, at the hearth of Italians' speculations, there is often an extra-historical, 'original' element. Namely, Italian thinkers tend to investigate the concepts of life, body, instincts, and their intertwining with politics and history.

If Italian thought has always been characterized by the close correlation between practice, theory, politics, and by the hybridization with theoretical paradigms coming from abroad, then philosophical practices are undoubtedly of interest to the 'Italian theory' laboratory. As shown so far, they are practical and social disciplines, open to theoretical dialogue and hybridization and, due to their performative potential, they can have political effects on society. In fact, not only are philosophical practices the product of a certain socio-cultural context, but also, they can

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[6] He argues: 'Quella italiana è stata sicuramente più una filosofia della resistenza che una filosofia del potere' Esposito 2015, p. 13). Esposito borrows from Deleuze the concept of geophilosophy,: 'Mi pare innegabile una qualche connessione tra filosofia e territorio […] un insieme di caratteristiche ambientali, linguistiche, tonali, che rimandano a una modalità specifica e inconfondibile rispetto ad altri stili di pensiero', Esposito 2010a, p. 14. See Deleuze and Guattari: 'Subject and object give a poor approximation of thought. Thinking is neither a line drawn between subject and object nor a revolving of one around the other. Rather, thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth' (Deleuze, Guattari, 1994, p.85). Nonetheless, Esposito has emphasised that such a perspective is far from being nationalistic: 'il carattere più intensamente geofilosofico della cultura italiana sta in una terra che non coincide con la nazione e che anzi si costituisce, per una lunghissima fase, nella sua assenza' (Esposito 2010a, p. 20). According to Esposito, the fragmented nature of Italy has profoundly influenced Italian thought, making it for long less interesting within the international debate than that of other European thought traditions, such as the English, French or German ones, in which the concept of nation-state played a much bigger role. However, 'nel momento in cui il tempo della nazione sembra, se non esaurito, quantomeno posto in discussione nei suoi presupposti e fini, esso può affacciarsi al futuro con una maggiore carica innovativa' (Esposito 2010a, p. 23).

[7] Once again hi traces back this tendency form Renaissance, when deterritorialisation and hibrydation was a tipical feature of European societies.

influence or even reshape such context, in that they establish social relations between individuals and institutions.

But there are further elements that spur me to focus specifically on Roberto Esposito's thought. In addition to having offered an original interpretation of the concept of 'Italian Theory', Esposito has initiated an innovative research path that emphasizes the potentialities of Italian philosophy within the international philosophical debate whilst proposing, at the same time, a new reading of notions such as community, and institution.

According to Esposito, Italian thought is an 'affirmative philosophy', that is, it does not elaborate a reactive thought but a productive thought. More specifically, what contemporary Italian thought seems to produce is a critique of political theology (see Esposito 2015, p. 15).

Broadly speaking, political theology analyses the relationships between theology and politics, investigating for instance the ways in which power is legitimised through religion and theology is used as a political tool, or highlighting how political categories and terms often originate from theological notions, and *vice versa*. In Esposito's works, and particularly in the book 'Due. La macchina della teologia politica e il posto del pensiero' (2013), political theology is conceptualised as a very ancient thinking *dispositif* whose purpose has been to unify two opposing instances, as the lemma 'political theology' already suggests, for the purpose of incorporating and neutralizing one in favour of the other: 'teologia politica va intesa come la forma ricorrente attraverso la quale un Due tende a farsi Uno escludendo, o emarginando, l'altra sua parte' (Esposito 2015, p.16) Esposito gives the example of the struggle between the Church, first with the empire and then with the national states: in each of these cases the common element is that each element tends to capture the other with the aim of weakening it. According to Esposito though, such a *dispositif* is still active today. The current prevalence of economic interests within the political narrative is nothing more than an extension of political theology discourse as it nurtures precisely the theological-political paradigm of 'inclusione escludente': 'anziché segnare la fine della teologia politica, essa [la teologia economica] la porta al suo culmine, alimentando sempre più la macchina dell'inclusione escludente' (Esposito 2015, p. 16). Indeed, today, economy seems to be incorporating and neutralizing the political within it.

The attempt to get out of political theology is for Esposito the most important contribution of contemporary Italian thought. Precisely because it is a thought of the 'outside' and of immanence, Italian thought is trying to conceive a language that is not affected by theological and metaphysical concepts and by the notion of transcendence.

In Esposito's philosophy, this path has been attempted through a rethinking of the concept of community, which he investigated in an etymological and political sense by comparing and contrasting it to the concept of immunity. *Communitas* derives from the Latin '*cum – munus'*. The term *munus* means 'gift', and has to be interpreted as a duty, as an obligation towards of the other: 'Il munus che la communitas condivide non è una proprietà o una appartenenza. Non è un avere, ma, al contrario, un debito, un pegno, un dono-da-dare. E dunque ciò che determinerà, che sta per divenire, che virtualmente già è, una mancanza' (Esposito 2006, p.XIII). Within a community, individuals are exposed to a lack or, rather, to the renunciation of their full individuality for the sake of safeguarding a condition of openness to the other-than-self (*altro-da-sé*) – this is the 'gift', the *munus* in *communitas*, according to Esposito. Hence, what binds the subjects in the community is the exit from the boundaries of the self, which implies in turn the danger of disintegration of individuality within the indefinite space of the community.

Immunitas is 'la forma negativa, o privativa, della *communitas'* (Esposito 2004, p.47). Such concept was analysed by Esposito both in legal terms, which provide that those who are given immunity are not subject to common justice, and in biological-medical terms, where an immunized organism is capable of effectively counteracting an external infection protecting the integrity of the body. On a political level, the notion defines a condition of particularity and privilege with respect to the destiny of the community. If community entails mutual care and obligation and a loss of self-boundaries, immunity defines a condition of derogation from such rule: as a consequence, those who are immune are protected from the most extreme risks of communality. According to Esposito, the immunising paradigm is present in all societies through the norms and rules that organise and divide the social body and it is essential to the stability of society. However, in modernity, it is central in all our symbolic experience, so much so that it risks annihilating any form of communitarian space: 'When immunity, which is necessary to the preservation of individual and collective life – since no one would be alive without an immune system [*sistema immunitario*] inside our body – assumes an exclusive and excluding shape with respect to any environmental and human otherness, it ends up contradicting the development of life itself' (Esposito 2012).[8] Hence, for Esposito, the answer to such a deadly outcome due to an excess of protection would consist in identifying the systems of immunization whilst activating new communitarian spaces so as to find a balance between the two instances.

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[8] See URL: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/pc/12322227.0003.001?view=text;rgn=main Last Access: 27/01/22.

The second category that seems to connect Italian theory's thinkers and that is central in Esposito's analyses is that of 'potentiality'. Namely, Italian thinkers try to unhinge the antithesis conceived by Aristotle between the notion of 'potentiality' (*dunamis* in Greek) and that of 'actuality' (*energheia* in Greek) in book IX of his Metaphysics. For Aristotle, *dunamis* is the ability to perform a certain activity. When referred to human beings, we say that individuals have some capacities that can be actualised when necessary. For Aristotle, though, potentiality entirely depends on its actualisation, with the consequence that 'to all such potentiality [...] actuality is prior both in formula and in substance' (Aristotle, Met., IX, pp. 1049b4-1049b12; See Treiber, Christiaens 2021). Italian Theory accepts Aristotle's notions but challenges the primacy of actuality by arguing that not every potentiality must necessarily be translated into action, in that there exists a sort of 'unrealized potentiality' defining the field of what is simply 'possible'. Indeed, what is possible can be otherwise, which implies that it is not necessary.

For Esposito, such field of the 'possible' is opposed to the paradigm of current political theology, that is, economic theology, and its metaphysical presuppositions. In fact, as the capitalist narrative often upholds indisputable and non-negotiable paradigms, it assumes a religious-dogmatic value excluding the field of the 'possible'. On the contrary, the concept of 'potentiality' is for Esposito 'ciò che forza dall'interno il potere dell'esistente' (Esposito 2015, p.19), that is, a creative force that can be placed in relation to the concept of 'life', and more specifically with that of 'vital energy'. Such vital energy is the potential from which to draw to create or renew organized life and institutions. Namely, to rethink the current political paradigm, an idea of institutions that aims to 'enlarge life' through a creative force should be relaunched.

According to Esposito, institutions have long been conceived as authoritarian immunising organisms maintaining the order of the social body through limitations, norms, and repressive mechanisms. The primacy of today's economic theology and the populist anti-institutional drift that seems to characterize many Western states should instead be stemmed through a new conception of institutions through the adoption of a new 'pensiero istituente', i.e. 'instituting thought'. In his recent works, he argues that such a 'pensiero istituente' conceives institutions as 'creatio ex aliquo' (Esposito 2020, p. XIX): i.e. creation from something that already exists, as human beings are always 'situated', that is, immersed in an established society. But such a notion of institution also implies a shift from stasis to movement, from noun to verb. In Esposito's view, rather than focusing on the static notion of 'institution', we should value the verb 'to institute', as institutions are not just 'immunising' systems of legal and contractual limitations, but also perennial movement and

invention, continuous praxis. Besides, institutions are not only the State apparatuses but are all those community organisms that are born, evolve, and die inside and outside the state, contributing to renovating society. Thus, adopting an 'instituting thought' means seeking theoretical solutions that help rethink institutions as articulated networks within civil society that safeguard community life and democratic freedoms.

Such a dynamic and productive conception of institutions necessarily incorporates the notion of conflict. Without conflict, order is destined to wither away: 'Nel paradigma istituente, i soggetti politici non precedono in maniera sostanziale il conflitto, ma vengono plasmati e trasformati da esso. Alla categoria di soggetto subentra quella di soggettivazione, coincidente con il movimento, sempre collettivo, dell'istituire' (Esposito 2020, p. XIX). In such a perspective, within a healthy democracy, order and conflict are not antithetic but imply each other and are held together dynamically.

Notions such as practice, community, potentiality, conflict, subjectivation, institution, are thus theoretically intertwined and connect contemporary Italian political philosophy with philosophical practices, and particularly with P4Co. As I will show, P4Co seems to represent, more than any other philosophical practice, the place where these concepts are thematized. For this reason, not only it seems to be the most original Italian contribution to the movement of philosophical practices, but also, it is the point from which it is possible to open a comparison with Italian Theory.

In the rest of the chapter, I examine how the reflections of the authors of Italian philosophical practices on P4Co enter into relation with the study path of Roberto Esposito and whether P4Co can represent a contribution in the reflection initiated by the Italian theory laboratory on the concepts of community and institution.

Therefore, this chapter is divided into two parts: in the first one, I introduce P4Co explaining its birth, the reasons that led me to analyse its contents, and its defining characteristics, then I make a comparison between the concept of community developed by Roberto Esposito and by Italian philosophical practitioners, focusing particularly on Cosentino's theories, who promoted P4C and launched P4Co.

In the second one, I analyse the concept of institution and instituting praxis in Esposito's thought, using such a perspective to assess if P4Co represent a vital force, capable of renovating institutions from within.

III.2 Towards a Philosophy for Community

Having introduced the main contents of the chapter and Esposito's philosophy, in this section, I briefly explain how P4Co was born, focusing on the reasons that spur me to analyse this new discipline from a philosophical (rather than socio-cultural, as I have done for PC and P4C) and political point of view.

Since their arrival in Italy, philosophical practices entered the Italian context more or less at the same time towards the end of the nineties. Since then, P4C and Philosophical Counselling have tried to establish themselves independently in order to create new professional profiles. However, from the outset, philosophical practices established a dialogue, so much so that practitioners belonging to each of these disciplines formed a network of collaborations and joint publications, offering reflections both on individual disciplines and on the movement of philosophical practices in its together.

As seen in the Introduction to this thesis, the very concept of philosophical practices, declined in the plural, was coined in Italy with a dual purpose: on the one hand, the practitioners wanted to emphasize the coexistence of different practices, as well as their similarities and equal dignity at an epistemological level, on the other hand, they aimed at creating a collaborative network and constant dialogue between the disciplines. Thus, entering Italy, philosophical practices, originally conceived separately according to different modalities and purposes, have gradually lost their original characteristics and their philosophical presuppositions to create a new subject, based on the mixture of methodologies and approaches, whose theoretical horizon is changeable and still being defined. Since their inception, therefore, Italian philosophical practices have embodied a sort of paradigm of mixing and trespassing.

As seen in the first chapter, such mixture was one of the factors that jeopardized the development of disciplines in search of their own precise location and identity such as philosophical counselling and consultancy. However, amongst the various disciplines, the practice that most embodies such a paradigm of trespassing has been P4C, as it has made trespassing its programmatic manifesto. In fact, P4C's theorists have given life to a new practice, called 'Philosophy 4 Community' (P4Co), starting from the main structure of P4C.

Thus, P4Co brings the principles of Lipman's 'Community of Philosophical Inquiry'(CPI) and education for shared reflection, outside a normal learning context, transforming new places and institutions in new learning spaces. More specifically, the CRIF (Centro di Ricerca sull'Indagine

Filosofica) from 2000 onwards, participating in the project 'Pierino e il lupo', organized by the Municipality of Rome, 'ha avviato sperimentazioni e ricerche in ambiti extrascolastici con progetti destinati ad operatori sociali, Università della terza età, gruppi informali di cittadini, organizzazioni lavorative, carceri e comunità per tossicodipendenti, sviluppando la pratica filosofica come Philosophy for Community'.[9]

Nonetheless, as stated by Cosentino, one of the leading theorists of P4Co,

> il gioco non è quello di raddoppiare la "Philosophy for Children", costruendone una copia anche per gli adulti. A me è sembrato di vedere la "Philosophy for Community", se intesa come "pratica filosofica di comunità", nei termini di una matrice generale, alla quale la "Philosophy for Children" risale e dalla quale altri progetti, ancora da pensare e realizzare, possono essere ricavati' (Cosentino 2014, p.2).[10]

Indeed, the methodologies of other philosophical practices such as Socratic Dialogue or philosophical counselling and consultancy are often applied in group contexts too. It is not uncommon that techniques and methodologies of philosophical consultancy, Socratic dialogue, and P4Co are even used contextually in group sessions, which confirms the tendency towards hybridization of these disciplines. Thus, these disciplines, taken as a whole, have certainly given prominence to philosophical practice for groups and organizations.

However, the distinctive value of P4Co is twofold: on the one hand, it represents an original Italian formulation, on the other hand, it specifically aims to emphasize the community value of group practices, as its very name suggests. In this regard, the practitioners who refer to this discipline have started a reflection on the theoretical cornerstones through which to interpret this discipline. Notably, they have launched an investigation into the concept of community which has two points of interest: firstly, such an investigation on the concept of community gives the discipline a significant political potential and, in fact, puts it in communication with contemporary Italian political philosophy, particularly with the research of Italian Theory's main proponent, i.e. Roberto Esposito. Secondly, it is a candidate to serve as a theoretical paradigm for all philosophical group practices in order to conceive them as an 'instituting practice' with possible political value.

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[9]See URL: https://www.filosofare.org/crif-p4c/p4community/ Last Access: 12/09/2022.
[10]See URL: https://filosofodistrada.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/livorno_intervento_seminario_10_2014.pdf Last Access: 10/09/2022

In this first part of the chapter, I deal with the first point in question. My aim is to analyse P4Co taking into consideration the theoretical elements related to the concept of community in order to open a comparison with Roberto Esposito's theories.

III.3 P4Co as a Philosophical Practice

In the previous section, I illustrated the main reasons that spur me to investigate P4Co from a philosophical and political angle. In this section, I identify the main aspects that distinguish this discipline. I claim that the characteristics I am going to identify define a notion of community that embodies Esposito's theories.

P4Co can be defined as a practice for groups who wish to explore their experiences within a specific institution (prison, hospital, recovery community, company, etc.) through the philosophical analysis of problems or concepts and a theoretical elaboration carried out in common. From a procedural point of view, it is very similar to the P4C proposed by Lipman: it is structured as a 'comunità di ricerca filosofica' (Community of Philosophical Inquiry - CPI) within which the chosen group starts from the reading of a text, which is called *'testo-stimolo',* i.e. stimulus text, then defines a discussion agenda, and finally move on to the group discussion dividing it into various sessions. The whole process is supervised by a facilitator who is an expert in philosophical practice. The *testo-stimolo* is configured as a starting point in view of the group discussion and as an encouragement for further research that goes beyond the explicit content of the text.

However, P4Co has some significant variations compared to P4C. In the first place, Lipman's original texts are not necessary in P4Co. Indeed, they were conceived with the specific educational intent of developing school children's thinking skills, and, in fact, they are divided by age groups and accompanied by exercises and discussion plans suitable for children. Since P4Co is addressed to adults, it does not have purely pedagogical objectives but the goals are outlined according to the requests of the group participants. Any type of text or image can therefore be used by extrapolating it from literature, cinema, art. Secondly, it preferably takes place where there is already a sort of community, that is, where a group of people share an experience and question themselves starting from it. This means that the situation, context, and institution (e.g. prison, hospital, recovery community, etc.) in which the discussion takes place are often themselves the subject of discussion or condition the choice of topics to investigate. Thirdly, being P4Co a practice with adults, it implies that the structuring of the space, which consists of a circular setting, is discussed and explicitly

theorised as a symbolic and ethical positioning: 'tutti [sono] equidistanti dal centro (*leadership distribuita*) e con legami che vanno da ognuno a tutti' (Cosentino 2008,p, 56). This means that the participants learn to interpret the internal space, which is left empty, as a collective dimension of the 'con-essere' (i.e. co-being) (Cosentino 2011, p.97).

In P4Co the moments of discussion and dialogue are fundamental and are not to be understood as synonyms. The initial discussion produces opposite positions that must be supported by 'good reasons' (Cosentino 2008, p.61); it represents the *'pars destruens'* (Franzini, Tibaldeo 2010, p. 140) of group work, as it aims to defuse prejudices, stereotyped judgments, and ossified thinking habits. The philosophical dialogue, during which the interlocutors try to converge on shareable research results, is the *pars construens*. Even when participants speak about their own experience, they aim to broaden their thought as well as the group perspective: during the dialogue, rather than *about* themselves, participants speak *from* themselves, which 'dà vita a un movimento che apre il campo del conessere' (Cosentino 2011, p.91). Active listening is encouraged as it represents a temporary distancing from oneself, whilst encountering the different perspectives of others. The balance between the individual and the research community is conceived as mobile and unstable, where mobility and instability have a positive and creative connotation. In fact, when any opposing theses reach artificial and infertile stability by blocking the thought process, the facilitator will have to intervene to restart collective thinking. Precisely, the main tasks of the facilitator are to raise doubts, ask destabilizing questions, offer further examples, or propose contrary arguments. As argued by Casarin, the success of a session is obtained when the facilitator 'disappears', that is, when the group internalises the logic of the research and corrects itself autonomously (see Casarin 2010).

Collective research assumes innovatory implications: through examples and counter-examples a negotiation of values and concepts occurs, which is typical of a democratic context. The philosophical research community create a circular relationship between individual and community, since the individual transforms the community and the community transforms the individual through shared thought. However, for there to be significant transformative effects, it is necessary that the work be carried out with a certain continuity in order to strengthen community bonds. Successful work depends on the willingness to 'accettare la propria dipendenza dagli altri […] La "comunità di ricerca" coinvolge, oltre alle attività cognitive, […] la crescita personale nella relazione con gli altri, la collocazione in prospettiva del proprio Io, il controllo crescente dell'egocentrismo,

l'interiorizzazione mediante la pratica effettiva dei valori e delle regole della democraticità' (Cosentino 2008, p.55).

In this section, I have highlighted the peculiar traits that characterize P4Co distinguishing it from P4C. Such elements are the variability of the stimulus-text, the interiorised circular setting, the role of the facilitator, the moments of discussion and philosophical dialogue, and the transformative circular relationship between the group and the individual.

In the next section, I demonstrate how this particular form of practice with adults has the potential to design a concept of community in line with Esposito's philosophy.

III.4 The *Communitas* and the Impersonal within P4Co

Having highlighted the main features of the P4Co setting, I am going to investigate the pivotal concept around which this discipline is built, that is, the notion of community. Opening a comparison with Esposito's theories on community, I argue that the structure and methodology of P4Co configure the community not as a being endowed with a substantial identity but rather as a being-in-common, as an openness and a 'duty' towards the other. Besides, I argue that in P4Co, philosophical research embodies Esposito's notion of 'impersonal'.

Traditionally, the concept of community has been interpreted from a metaphysical angle. Indeed, community was conceived as a substantial entity binding a certain number of subjects to each other through the sharing of a common identity and a relationship of affection (See for instance Tönnies 1957, Weber 1968). For Esposito, in such a way, community was conceptually linked to the notion of 'proprio' or 'property': 'che si trattasse di appropriarsi di quanto è comune o di comunicare quanto è proprio, la comunità restava definita da una appartenenza reciproca. I suoi membri risultavano avere in comune il loro proprio, essere proprietari del loro comune' (Esposito 2010b).[11] Paradoxically, this interpretation overturned the communal into what is logically opposite to it, that is to say into the proper. For Esposito, conceiving community as a 'proper', i.e. as a subject endowed with a substantial identity, a belonging, or a shared property, was at the basis of all the mystical interpretations of closed national communities which characterized the totalitarian nationalism of the early twentieth century. Indeed, reducing community to a property, risks distinguishing members from non-members, which activates the exclusionary mechanisms of strongly identitarian

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[11] See URL: http://www.benicomuni.unina.it/roberto-esposito-comunita-immunita-biopolitica.html Last Access 12/09/2022.

communities. Instead, Esposito's interpretation is part of a trend that, in France and Italy, since the 1980s, has radically deconstructed the category of community, overturning the traditional interpretative horizon. A series of texts such as Jean-Luc Nancy's *La Communauté Désoeuvrée*, Maurice Blanchot's *La Communauté inavouable*, Giorgio Agamben's *La Comunità che viene* shared the idea that community, rather than to a sense of property or belonging of its members, refers to a constitutive otherness and emptiness that subtracted it from any reification and identitarian stance. These authors agreed that the subjects of a community are not connected by a substance, by a fullness, by a *res*, but rather, they are united by a void, a *cut* crossing them, contaminating them mutually (see Esposito 2010b).

In particular, Nancy described the community not as a *quid* linking certain subjects, but as the very being of the relationship. In other words, for Nancy, the community is not a common 'being', but the 'being-in-common' that binds the subjects, opening them to otherness. This implies in reverse that 'being is not a thing that we could possess in common. Being is in no way different from existence, which is singular each time. We shall say then that being is not common in the sense of a common property, but that it is in common. Being is in common' (Nancy 1991, p.1). Nonetheless, Esposito partly distances himself from such notion of community by deconstructing it further, as he believes that Nancy's interpretation could not be applied on a political level:

> Sottraendo la comunità all'orizzonte della soggettività, Nancy ne rendeva estremamente problematica l'articolazione con la politica – non fosse altro per l'evidente difficoltà di immaginare una politica del tutto esterna ad una dimensione soggettiva –, trattenendola così in una dimensione necessariamente impolitica' (Esposito 2010b)

To give it a possible political value he goes back to the Latin etymology of the term community, which is *communitas*. As previously said, *Communitas* derives from the Latin '*cum – munus*'. The term *munus* means 'gift', which Esposito interprets as a duty, as an obligation towards of the other. Within a community, individuals renounce their full individuality so as to safeguard a condition of openness to the other-than-self (*altro-da-sé*).

Such notion of openness and 'duty' is in line with the conception of community made explicit by P4Co. When the participants of the philosophical research community arrange themselves in a circle, recognizing the empty space in the middle as the space of 'co-being', they literally *stage* the 'lack' theorised by Esposito. The community they are performing is based precisely on the awareness of the loss of their subjective, closed, and singular gaze, which encourages openness to

the other. This openness is a gift, and at the same time a duty, that is, a necessary condition to activate a communitarian practice.

But, Esposito argues, the '*munus* di sé' (Esposito 2006, p.XV), the exposure to the other is not perceived as effortless by the subject who experiences it. And in fact, in P4Co this difficulty corresponds to that of abandoning one's prejudices and mental habits. In particular, the moment of discussion makes the subjects aware of the insufficiency of their point of view. The subjects, forced to come out of themselves, come into contact with the 'dono-dovere' of the community which expropriates them of their subjectivity, because, as Esposito maintains, 'il comune non è caratterizzato dal proprio, ma dall'improprio, o più drasticamente, dall'altro' (Esposito,2006, p. XIV). But, although Esposito saw the risk of identity closure in the classic paradigm of the community, that is, in the substantialisation of the concept of community, he does not exclude that the expropriatory paradigm of the *munus* is risk-free. Indeed, community implies in turn the danger of disintegration of self-boundaries which ensures the very existence of the subject: 'communitas: essa è contemporaneamente la più adeguata, anzi l'unica dimensione dell'animale 'uomo', ma anche la sua deriva potenzialmente dissolutiva (Esposito 2006, p. Xv). And it is for this reason - he argues - that modernity has responded to the dissolutive risks of the *Communitas* with what he calls the 'immune paradigm'.

Again, Esposito analyses the Latin etymology of the concept, namely *immunitas*. *Immunitas* is the 'negative' of *communitas,* a derogation from its logic. As previously shown, on a political level, the notion of *Immunitas* defines a condition of privilege with respect to the destiny of the community. If community entails a dangerous loss of self-boundaries, immunity defines an exception to such a rule: as a consequence, those who are immune are exempted from the most extreme risks of communality. According to Esposito, the immunising paradigm is present in all societies through the norms and rules that organise and divide the social body. Ideally, within a healthy society the two opposite drives - *immunitas* and *communitas* - are well balanced but, in modernity, *immunitas* seems to prevail so much so that it risks annihilating any form of communitarian space. When the immune paradigm seems to incorporate the existing in its entirety, it develops an 'autoimmune' mechanism that, instead of protecting life, ends up annihilating it. This is why, according to Esposito, politics has the duty of deactivating the immune mechanisms as much as possible, recovering the principles of the *communitas*, i.e. the contact/contagion with the other. In fact, despite the dissolutive danger it brings with it, such communitarian contact/contagion triggers a vital disruption that produces novelty within an order crystallized in the conservation of

itself. Such an affirmative strategy should not be limited to defusing the immune paradigm but should open towards a new paradigm, towards a 'form of life' that sees in the mutual interdependence of living beings a vital mechanism that predisposes to the acceptance of what is novel.

Esposito's biopolitical lexicon, which is made up of concepts such as life, contagion, immunity - which are to be interpreted both in a material and metaphorical sense - can once again be related to the community practice of P4Co. The Philosophical practitioner Bevilacqua used Esposito's interpretative paradigms by arguing that a 'form of life in common' can free individuals from their 'immune syndrome'. According to Bevilacqua 'ciò che dovrebbe crearsi nella comunità è una prospettiva attiva pro-biotica e non anti-biotica intendendo con *bios* le moltitudini forme di esistenza, vita, del singolo, del gruppo' (Bevilacqua 2009, p. 171). Such an active 'pro-biotic' perspective would consist in opening a new political horizon that attempts a 'contaminazione di relazioni, di soggetti, in uno spazio comune ripensabile' (Bevilacqua 2009, p. 172). In this way, the concept of communitas can also be translated in the affirmative. While on the one hand, the community is a 'nothing in common', on the other hand, it refers to the 'apertura di un senso ancora impensato' (Esposito 2008, p. 101). According to Bevilacqua this is what happens within a philosophical research community. Namely, the 'impensato' is

ciò a cui tende la comunità di ricerca. La ricerca è la direzione che fa tendere all'impensato. Il soggetto in comune è la possibilità dell'esperienza della ricerca dell'impensato. Il comune ci rimanda la possibilità dell'alterazione, che non si dà senza l'altro' (Bevilacqua 2009, p. 172).

However, Bevilacqua's intuitions have to be expanded further. What is the role of research and, in particular, the search for the 'subject in common', a central element of P4Co's philosophical research community? What is the relationship between philosophical research and the idea of community outlined so far?

Cosentino offers a suggestive description of the concept of research, not intending it in strictly academic terms, as P4Co is aimed at a non-specialised public. In his opinion, the term 'research' evokes 'la tensione a infrangere gli accerchiamenti [della comunità]', as it tends 'verso i cieli, un po' più freddi, della decontestualizzazione, verso linguaggi impersonali, definizioni tanto disincarnate quanto valide per tutti ovunque', and 'alla spersonalizzazione, all'astratto, all'aperto, all'universale' (Cosentino 2011, pp. 3-5). To describe what characterizes research within a CPI, he

uses the terms 'depersonalisation' and 'impersonal'. In fact, something 'impersonal' may be associated with objectivity, with something that goes beyond the point of view of a single individual, aiming at impartiality, as research generally does.

The concept of 'impersonal' marks a further point of contact between P4Co and Esposito's thought. Namely, it is the key notion used by Esposito to try to defuse the contemporary immunising paradigm, and to reinterpret the relationship between individual subjectivity and *communitas*. Analysing the development of twentieth-century thought, Esposito showed that any reflection on subjectivity must go through a philosophy of the 'impersonal', 'which privileges multiplicity and contamination over identity and discrimination' (Esposito 2007, pp. 176-177) whilst grasping the being not as a substance but rather as a field of relationships and forces. For Esposito, placing oneself in an impersonal perspective means crossing the boundary of the singular person[12] and assuming a 'third-person' position. The appeal for a third-person position is primarily a reference to the analysis on personal pronouns by the linguist Émile Benveniste. For Benveniste, the third person pronouns and verbs differ from the first two persons in that they are 'never [...] reflective of the instance of discourse', but they 'predicate [...] someone or something outside the instance' (Benveniste 1971, pp. 221-222). For Benveniste, the third person 'represents the unmarked member of the correlation of person' and 'is indeed literally a "non-person"' (Benveniste 1971, p. 221). And this is mainly because, within interlocution, the first two persons are logically and grammatically

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[12] Esposito's entire reasoning starts from a critical deconstruction of the concept of 'person' in the history of Western legal and philosophical thought. Namely, his research on the concept of impersonal originates from the attempt to overcome the 'dispositivo della persona' (see Esposito 2007). On the one hand, such a dispositif led to conceiving the subject as an ultimate, atomic, and individual *datum*, on the other, in its extreme consequences, it led to the establishment of a sort of hierarchy within the human race between those who can rightfully be considered 'persons' and those who can be excluded from this category. This separation originated in the Roman and Christian juridical-political culture, which has established a fracture between being a human being, i.e. a natural being, and being a person, i.e a rational creature and a subject of law. Commenting on the condition of slaves in Roman law, Esposito argues: '[tale condizione] non è che la punta più visibile di un [...]meccanismo di disciplinamento sociale funzionante [...] attraverso lo spostamento continuo delle soglie categoriali che definiscono [...] lo status di tutti gli esseri viventi. Da qui quel movimento perpetuo di oscillazione tra gli estremi della persona e della cosa che fa dell'una insieme l'opposto e lo sfondo dell'altra – non solo nel senso generale che la definizione dell'uomo-persona emerge in negativo da quella dell'uomo-cosa, ma in quello, più pregante, che essere pienamente persona vuol dire mantenere, o spingere, altri [...] viventi ai confini della cosa.' (Esposito 2007, pp. 13-14), In his research, Esposito maintained that, throughout history, various philosophical currents have re-proposed the coexistence within the man of a rational and spiritual human dimension, and of a prehuman component similar to the animal or thing, on which the former can and must exercise a right of life and death. For Esposito, at the basis of the ideologies that deny the dignity of specific categories of men, such as Nazism, there is precisely the dispositif of the person. Indeed, such a dispositif is based on an oppositional dynamic that inevitably leads to distinguishing between persons and 'non-persons', to the point that it triggers a hierarchical and racist logic. This interpretation has been partly contested with regard to the historical and legal (see for instance Sacchi 2012, pp. 125-150) and philosophical reconstruction of the concept of person (see for instance Possenti 2014). Here I cannot go into the specifics of the question, however, it is possible to keep Esposito's considerations on the impersonal as a tension, still in the making, of twentieth-century philosophy towards the codification of a trans-individual, collective, and non-subjectivistic thought.

united whilst the third person remains distant, extraneous to the dialectic of the I and you, thus preserving its impersonal strength. According to Esposito, being 'impersonal' means showing an imperturbability that distances the subject from any private interest; it means raising individuals to a position in which they are no longer a party to a conflict of interest.

Having established the strength and peculiarity of the impersonal, Esposito initially analysed some interpretations of the concept in thinkers such as Simone Weil, Alexandre Kojève, Maurice Blanchot, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and others. For Esposito, each of these authors worked on the notions of impersonal and neutral. Whilst Benveniste analysed the function of the third person in language, Kojève focused on the impersonal impartiality of law, as 'si dà diritto ogni qual volta abbia luogo l'intervento di un terzo disinteressato e imparziale nella interazione tra due esseri umani con la conseguenza di annullare la reazione del secondo all'azione del primo' (Esposito 2007, p. 133). On a similar ground, Weil investigated the universal meaning of justice, placing it on a different and more abstract level than that of law. For Weil, the law is still personalistic, particularistic, and exclusive. In order to function, it actually protects one category of people to the detriment of others (see Weil 1957). The concept of justice instead 'concerne l'impersonale, l'anonimo - ciò che, essendo privo di nome, sta prima o dopo il soggetto personale, senza mai coincidere con esso, con i suoi pretesi attributi metafisici, etici, giuridici' (Esposito 2007, p.124). For Weil, assuming an impersonal position entails a responsibility towards all human beings: 'to safeguard, not their persons, but whatever frail potentialities are hidden within them for passing over to the impersonal' (Weil 1957, pp. 77-78). Thus, Weil's aim is to overturn the constitutive particularism of law in the figure of 'diritto comune', that is, a form of universal justice that is not focused on the rights of individuals but, rather, on the obligations they have towards one another: 'l'obbligo di ciascuno, sommato a quello di ogni altro, corrisponde, in un computo globale, al diritto dell'intera comunità umana' (Esposito 2007, p.126). Blanchot instead questioned the concept of neutral, interpreting it as 'that which cannot be assigned to any genre whatsoever: the non-general, the non-generic, as well as the non particular' (Blanchot 1993, p.299); such 'neutral' is the *Autrui*, the *other*, that is, it 'refuses to belong to the category of subject as much as it does to that of object' (Ibidem) as it is unidentifiable and always situated in an unattainable elsewhere. Blanchot considers the neutral as the point of intersection between being and nothing as it does not fully coincide with either of the two, even though it is 'ciò da cui non è possibile evadere per la semplice ragione che sta già da sempre fuori e anzi è il fuori stesso nella sua dimensione più intensa' (Esposito 2007, p. 159). Since the neutral is something not evadable, the human being can only guard it and try to

explore it, for instance, Blanchot argues, through writing. Indeed, writing contains 'exteriority' (Blanchot 1993, p. 422 ff), i.e. it is a form of expression within which the author's self disappears to let the characters express themselves and, in the most daring forms of contemporary literature, it is a place where characters often manage to decentralize and distance themselves from their own actions. But, in Esposito's opinion, the echo of Blanchot's conception of the neutral can also be found in his political commitment. Blanchot fought for the obliteration of any personalisms from political action, in order to favour an anonymous, impersonal, collective engagement in the name of those who cannot have an active voice within the public debate. For his part, Foucault dealt with the theme of the 'outside' identifying it - especially at a later stage of his research - with the very notion of 'life'. Life would represent that which is unsurpassable more than anything else, that cannot be mastered and is nevertheless within us, as an impersonal force.[13] With Deleuze, the category of impersonal corresponds to the notion of 'event', which is the immanent process of reality itself: everything is 'event', to the extent that everything happens, which is why it cannot be 'personal'. In other words, Deleuzian events are connected but do not form a unity, because each instant is different, and part of an ever-changing, ongoing process. Pivotal events such as life and death are impersonal as they are not controllable, they concern anyone and yet they are unique and immanent, as they are never replicable and can only be experienced individually (see Esposito 2007, p. 175 ff).

This very brief review of some of the main points of Esposito's research on the impersonal brings us to a central point. Esposito acknowledges that the results of each of these authors' research have been different and in part deficient or inconclusive, however - and here is the point that interests us most - all these authors revolve around a fundamental question, which remained unresolved: 'Come fare dell'impersonale [...] il contenuto, di una pratica che modifichi l'esistenza? Come immettere quell'ulteriorità, o quell'esteriorità, all'interno della nostra esperienza singolare e collettiva?' (Esposito 2007, p. 22).

Such a question is at the cornerstone of P4Co. Cosentino goes so far as to suggest that in a CPI the subject is relevant only in so far as it acts within a specific community. That is, it is a subject whose main function is to distance himself from himself and to express himself within the 'spazio agoretico' of the community, uttering a speech that is 'per tutti e di nessuno' (Cosentino 2011, p.92).

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[13] 'Can I say that I am this life I sense deep within me, but which envelops me both in the irresistible time that grows side by side with it and poses me for a moment on its crest, and in the imminent time that prescribes my death?' (Foucault 2005, pp.353-354)

The 'spazio agoretico' is the *vacuum* around which the community is formed, the nothing-in-common that brings the members of the community together, staged through the setting of the empty circle of chairs. In other words: it is the place where the impersonal can be experienced.

What is the result of such an operation? First of all, the result is to produce not a set of speeches by the individual participants but a 'logos comune' (Cosentino 2011, p. 92). How can such a 'logos comune' be defined and why is it not comparable to the simple sum of individuals' speeches? Cosentino provides a definition that connects us again to Esposito's thesis: '[il logos comune] non è comune perché appartiene a tutti, ma all'opposto, perché nessuno può reclamarlo come suo: essa è *da* tutti ma non è *di* nessuno' (Cosentino 2011, p. 92).

Such non-belonging of the communal discourse must not be understood as an unbridgeable distance, possibly generating indifference, between the subjects and their discourses, but rather as the constitutive non-appropriability of the issues under discussion and of the reflections arising from them. Group philosophical practices conceive philosophy as a common movement where what really matters is not so much the author who thinks a theory, nor the individuals who express their point of view, but the very act of theorising together. As a consequence, within such an experience, at some point the persons metaphorically disappear, not because their experience and point of view no longer matter, but because what ultimately matters are the impersonal moments of shared thought. Does this not coincide with the very task of philosophy? As Esposito himself wrote, in thematizing the impersonal, ''il compito della filosofia [è] quello, se non di pensare il neutro - in quanto tale non oggettivabile -, di pensare *al* neutro' (Esposito 2007, p. 161)'. 'Pensare *al* neutro' means thinking beyond the usual dichotomies on which the mind commonly settles, such as the opposition between subject and object, singular and plural, opening up to the 'impensato' mentioned by Bevilacqua.

Philosophical group research is not only comparable to a figure of the impersonal due to its universality but it is also closely connected with the most poignant problems of human life. Life is the real object of philosophical practices and, for Esposito, one of the fundamental themes of contemporary political philosophy. But life should never be understood only as 'bare life', *zoè*, i.e. mere biological life, but always as *bios*, i.e. life inscribed in a horizon of meaning, life organized within a certain time of history and society (see Esposito 2004).

In the most recent phase of his research, Esposito questioned what may guarantee, within our current democratic regimes, an impartial and impersonal gaze, capable of mediating between opposing instances, whilst guaranteeing the stability of a society characterized by pluralism and

opposing needs. What rises to this function are the institutions, which can be defined as the last direction, in chronological order, that Esposito's investigation on the impersonal has taken. As I will show, such a direction links political philosophy to the notion of organized life, i.e. bios, in that Esposito believes that institutions should be interpreted as living beings, capable of transforming themselves and society whilst protecting and enhancing the life of the social body.

Having investigated the concepts of community and impersonal philosophical research, in the next sections, I will focus on the notion of institution as it represents another interesting point of contact between the Italian Theory and P4Co. Indeed, P4Co enters the institutions and presents itself as an innovative instance of both the institutions themselves and the way in which institutions and philosophy are generally experienced and conceived.

What happens inside an organization, an institution, that is built around the impersonal gaze of philosophical research? It becomes precisely a 'Community of Philosophical Inquiry' (CPI), that is, a community determined through thinking. Such a thinking practice is both deconstructive, since it consists in a criticism of the community towards itself, and instituting, because a community that reflects on itself is determined as reflective and regenerates itself through reflection. Similarly, Esposito's latest research path, - which is part of a recently renewed interest in Italian philosophy for institutionalism - investigates the ability of institutions to persist over time by means of a continuous dialectical process of self-preservation and innovation. Esposito calls such a process 'prassi istituente', i.e. 'instituting praxis'.

III. 5 Institution and Instituting Praxis

Since their arrival in Italy, philosophical practices were introduced in the country's institutional system through training courses, school projects, university masters, collaborations with local authorities and administrations. As shown in the previous chapters, the aim of philosophical practitioners was to bring significant innovation to Italian society through new ways of doing philosophy. Such an attempt was partially unsuccessful and with some ambiguities both on a practical and theoretical level, especially as regards Philosophical counselling and consultancy, and P4C. For its part, P4Co, a philosophical practice born and conceived in Italy on the model of Matthew Lipman's P4C, seems to represent an interesting novelty, at least from a theoretical point of view, due to its political potential. In fact, P4Co is based on philosophical research for groups of adults

and can be implemented in institutional and community contexts such as prisons, hospitals, recovery communities, etc.

As shown, P4Co's structure and setting seem to outline a concept of community in line with Italian Theory research path and particularly with Roberto Esposito's thought, which thus connects philosophical practices to academic political philosophy.

However, a further similarity between P4Co project and Esposito's most recent research can be highlighted. In fact, the peculiar structure and processes that are activated within a CPI correspond to Esposito's notion of 'instituting praxis', and can help redesign the very concept of institution compatibly with Esposito's latest works.

In Esposito's theory, the two concepts of institution and instituting praxis are intrinsically linked since institutions themselves are a practice, i.e. they consist of a continuously moving and evolving process. In recent years, Esposito's research has focused on such a theme and particularly on the connection between institution and human life. For Esposito, these notions should not be considered two divergent polarities but rather two sides of the same coin. On one side, such a specular figure would be constituted by the vital character of institutions, and on the other, by the instituting power of life. Both institutions and life are brought into the world, they grow, produce something, are transformed, and eventually die, leaving room for something else, new and different. Similarly, human life is never mere zoè, i.e., 'pura materia vivente' (Esposito 2021, p. 149) but it is always 'bios', that is, it is established, endowed with meaning, and immersed in a fabric of social, political, economic, and symbolic relations: 'ogni vita è sospesa tra due nascite, congiunte ma non sovrapponibili, la prima di tipo biologico e la seconda di carattere simbolico, coincidente con l'uso del linguaggio' (Ibidem). Language is the first example of an 'institution' that directly links the biological life of the human body to the symbolic dimension, thus becoming a paradigmatic example of the connection and co-belonging of human life and institution.

According to Esposito, the task of politics and philosophy that investigates institutions should be to rediscover the link between institutions and life at all levels of society. Such work would aim to think of a type of politics based on the bios that emancipates and strengthens human life in all its acceptations by means of institutions, that is, a form of 'affirmative bio-politics' (See Esposito 2022). For Esposito, if human life symbolically detaches itself from its bond with institutions, it becomes absolutized in an 'excess of immanence', ending up destroying everything that opposes its uncontrolled unfolding. Affirmative biopolitics risks transforming into its opposite, that is, into thanatopolitics (Esposito 2021, p. 151), a type of politics founded on oppression, violence, racism,

and, in the most extreme cases, on genocide. Such a catastrophic outcome would be 'il risultato della rottura tra vita e istituzione, cioè tra vita come forza e vita come forma' (Ibidem). Esposito's instituting thought contrasts with this idea of an 'ab-solute' life since it reaffirms the symbolic, established, and historical character of human existence and the vital task of institutions.

Once the link between human life and institutions has been reaffirmed, Esposito stresses the main objective that institutions can pursue in the organization of our contemporary democratic society from a perspective of affirmative biopolitics. Namely, he maintains that, within democratic regimes, institutions can be a major instrument of freedom since, by mediating between the opposing needs of the various social partners, they are the place where crucial political choices can be made in order to create a healthy and more just society. Such an awareness must lead to 'assumere, dentro e fuori le istituzioni, una posizione politica' (Esposito 2021, p. 145).

Assuming a political position means taking sides openly for 'l'ampliamento di uno spazio giuridico o, viceversa, la riduzione dell'esclusione' (Esposito 2021, p.144) by means of institutional instruments such as law, rules, and regulations. This involves thinking of 'un nuovo diritto, né pubblico né privato' (Esposito 2021, p.147), namely a 'communal', impersonal one.

Such new law should design a governmental practice centred on various needs, such as environmental safety and social care, whilst safeguarding as many people as possible. It should relaunch public institutions such as healthcare, school, research, and welfare. Above all though, a 'diritto impersonale' should extend beyond official state institutions, which are no longer sufficient to describe today's global society, and involve all parastate or transnational organizations that collaborate for the broadening of social inclusion. Thus, Esposito takes sides for 'institutional pluralism' and for a 'prassi istituente flessibile e decentrata, consapevole dei conflitti che tagliano la società' (Esposito 2021, p.145).

What is the link connecting the impersonal of institutions and law with the instituting praxis? The instituting praxis is a type of action that frees itself from any personalism to favour 'una forma di soggettività transindividuale' (Esposito 2021, pp 147-148). According to Esposito, applying such an idea of the impersonal within the institutions is not a simple task but it is essential to reach a universal and common justice.

Having delineated the general aims of Esposito's recent research path, in the following section, I will briefly clarify the concept of institution in Esposito, highlighting the process which, in his opinion, led to the conceptual separation between the notions of life and institution. This will serve me to introduce the following sections, in which I will investigate the connection between

Esposito's innovative theories on the institution and the theories on the CPI. My ultimate goal is to frame P4Co as an example of instituting practice.

III.6 Reframing the Institution: Esposito's Critique

In the previous section, I clarified that, according to Esposito's philosophy, the task of today's political philosophy is to rethink the very notion of institution in order to reconnect the symbolic link between institution and life. Before investigating his new reading of the concept of institution and the way in which this conception is connected with P4Co, I intend to briefly clarify what is the theoretical path that, in his opinion, has led to the caesura between the two notions of life and institution. Finally, I indicate the reason why the task of instituting praxis is to recompose such a connection, arguing that P4Co shares the same objective.

In recent years, Esposito has traced the history of the concept of institution in order to reconstruct the process that led to the theoretical separation of the two terms. For Roman jurists the two notions were strictly connected: the lemma 'vitam instituere' coined by the jurist Marciano captured such a connection. More specifically, the notion of institution had a verbal connotation and referred to subjects who were 'appointed' or 'ordained', such as administrators or priests. Preferring the verbal voice *'instituere'* over the noun *'institutio'* meant giving a vital meaning to the term by projecting it beyond a static dimension: in such way, '"istituire" voleva dire non solo stabilire determinate situazioni, ma anche *produrle* artificialmente in base alle esigenze che di volta in volta si presentavano' (Esposito 2021, p. 27). The Romans could even regulate and institute what was pro or against nature, which gave the concept of institution both a normative and a performative value.

The conceptual framework changed radically with the Christian authors who brought nature back to the centre of the political discourse, restoring its intangibility: nature became the insuperable constraint of the institution as the law had to conform to nature. Nature was no longer established but 'given' by God, who consequently became the only instituting principle of life. Thus, with Christian authors, the figure of God took over to weld the link between institution and nature, becoming the instituting principle of them both. The divine will established life before any other human institution and, consequently, 'ogni istituzione è inserita in un orizzonte metafisico che fa della stessa natura una creazione divina' (Esposito 2021, p. 30). Therefore, if in Roman times the institution had a functional dimension, within Christianity, it assumed a metaphysical and transcendent authoritarian one. The institution embodied an immovable and hierarchical power:

'l'istituito, il suo esito prefissato e irrevocabile, predomina sull'istituente' (Esposito 2021, p. 33). Most importantly, the institution had to lose its historical dimension to acquire strength and authority. Indeed, what disappeared was the instituting moment: for the power of the institution to be indisputable, the process that produced it had to be erased from the collective memory.

According to Esposito, the hierarchical structure accentuated over time during the *Ancien Régime* with the figure of the absolute monarch, whose sovereignty was directly guaranteed by divine right: at that point, all institutions were subordinate to sovereign power and none remained impersonal.

Such a framework of political theology began to change during the French Revolution when little by little the institution established itself as a complex of public bodies in which social life was articulated: 'il contrasto tra i nuovi regimi costituzionali e quello prerivoluzionario segnala di per sé il carattere mobile e differenziato delle istituzioni politiche' (Esposito 2021, p. 36). Despite this turning point, the authoritarian and static elements of the concept of institution persisted for a long time.

According to Esposito, thanks to modern sociology,[14] the concept of institution took distance from the traditional static, personalist, and hierarchical interpretation. Institutions were no longer conceived as the product of particular wills but as the product of impersonal forces preceding individuals. According to modern sociology, subjects themselves are formed by institutions through education: therefore, individuals do not build institutions but, rather, they are inscribed in them. Furthermore, institutions are not something static but alive, that is, they change continuously. They are a practice, which creates and produces social bonds.

Thus, the meaning of the roman lemma 'vitam instituere' is renewed. Institutions become the means of spreading social dynamics within society due to their ability to create other institutions through a potentially infinite process, in which each new institution originates from the previous one. The institution acquires meaning thanks to its persistence through time: 'come la vita degli uomini rivela il suo intero significato solo nel corso delle generazioni, così quella delle istituzioni va situata in un processo genetico che dal passato si allunga nel futuro' (Esposito 2021, p. 44).

Despite the change in the interpretative paradigm operated by modern sociology and the democratic organization of contemporary society, Esposito identifies a certain line of thought that, still in the twentieth century, sees in the institution a mainly authoritarian and normalizing element, which mortifies and compresses life and, therefore, has to be fought or dismantled.

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[14] Esposito refers mainly to Durkheim and Mauss.

For the sake of argumentative coherence, I cannot explore Esposito's rich examination, as he analyses the thought of a vast number of authors to justify each of his theses. For the purpose of this thesis, it will suffice to mention Michel Foucault, as he represents one of the main theoretical references of Esposito's entire research path.

Foucault's research has long focused on the role of institutions and the regimes of truth that are produced within institutions but attributes to them an essentially coercive and normalizing role. As a whole, Foucault's analysis highlights the mechanisms through which institutions govern bodies and human behaviours, and condition the entire collective imaginary (see for instance, Foucault 1995, 2003, 2007, 2014). For Esposito, the limit of Foucault's work lies in a solely negative interpretation of institutions, which are associated with sovereignty as opposed to life: 'esse la controllano, la sorvegliano, la selezionano, ma non la potenziano' (Esposito 2021, p.132, see also Esposito 2004). For Esposito, the problem of Foucault's interpretation lies precisely in his interpretation of the term 'biopolitics': 'la mia impressione è che Foucault non abbia pensato le due polarità della 'biopolitica' – il bios e la politica – in un unico blocco semantico, ma separatamente' (Esposito 2021, p. 133); in the twentieth century, such a semantic fracture between life and institutions led to a twofold theoretical impasse: either institutions are interpreted as a force inhibiting life, or life is interpreted as an absolute energy that rejects any determined, institutionalised form, thus risking transforming politics into thanatopolitics (see Esposito 2004).

For Esposito, the task of contemporary political philosophy is to rethink institutions by re-establishing this original bond. To do this, he proposes to overcome the dichotomy between biopolitics understood as absolute power over life or as an 'ab-solute' life directing politics: 'il pensiero istituete intende ricomporre questa frattura, filosofica prima che politica' (Esposito 2021, p. 155).

Institutions should thus become the place where human life - in its double meaning of bios and zoè, biological life and established life - is not only protected and regulated but, above all, developed and strengthened. In short, they can be the place where a new interpretation of the biopolitical paradigm is exercised, in an affirmative direction. In conclusion, for Esposito, the task of contemporary philosophy is to relate the biopolitical paradigm to the instituting one by integrating them.

These concepts are central to my argument, given that Cosentino has expressly defined P4Co as a discipline that 'spinge al suo estremo limite la relazione tra vita e pensiero e fa saltare lo schema

dualistico che tradizionalmente ha separato le due sfere' (Cosentino 2011, p1). Therefore, also P4Co aims to hold together life - understood as *bios* - and the instituting praxis of thought.

In this section, I have briefly reconstructed Esposito's research on the intertwined relationship between human life and institution in Western history. I have also highlighted some key points of Esposito's critique of the interpretation of institutions as static and authoritarian organisms, and of Foucault's biopolitics. This has allowed me to introduce the philosophical reasons that led him to reinterpret the institution in dynamic and non-repressive terms, but as a multiform and decentralized practice, through which, within contemporary democratic societies, human life can be empowered by multiplying spaces of freedom.

In the next sections, I will investigate the 'pars construens' of Esposito's thought, that is, his alternative reading of institution as an 'instituting praxis' capable of enhancing life and ensuring the proper functioning of democratic regimes. At the same time, I will compare these theories and those of Cosentino and other practitioners around the concept of CPI. My aim is to show that what happens within P4Co is a metaphorical transposition of Esposito's conception of 'instituting praxis' and that, as such, it can favour the regeneration of institutions and social inclusion.

III.7 The Instituting Praxis: A Reading of P4Co Through Esposito's Theories

In the previous section, I briefly summarized the main points of Esposito's recent investigation on institutions. I have shown the ways in which he reconstructed the history of this notion by focusing on the evolution of the symbolic relationship between life and institutions. Finally, I highlighted the main reasons why such relationship has long configured a mainly authoritarian and repressive image of the institutions.

In the next sections, I focus on the concept of instituting practice, opening the comparison between Esposito's work and the theories on P4Co. Namely, I clarify Esposito's' philosophy framing instituting praxis through the notions of creation, transformation, conflict and negative. Opening the comparison with P4Co, I will ask myself in parallel: how is a CPI created? What does the transformative capacity of the CPI consist of? What is the relationship between the CPI and the notions of conflict and negative?

The sections will be developed according to a thematic and sequential structure. That is, they will focus on the parallel analysis of the concepts of creation, transformation, conflict, and negation in Esposito's research and in the theorization of P4Co.

In the comparison, I will show that Cosentino's theories on P4Co are a possible tool to activate regenerative processes within organizations and institutions of various kinds and, at the same time, an interesting point of connection between philosophical practices and Italian Theory.

III.7.1 The Notion of Creation

As explained above, Esposito's recent research on the concept of institution starts from the historical-philosophical reconstruction of the theoretical caesura between the notion of life and that of institution, which has often led to an interpretation of the institution as a static block of necessarily oppressive power. Esposito theorized an 'instituting thought', i.e. a philosophical and political approach to the concept of institution that interprets it as an intersubjective praxis, a dynamic whole, capable of lasting and simultaneously changing over time, productively holding together the conflicts inherent to the different social partners, in order to protect and develop the possibilities of human life.

In this section, I open the comparison with P4Co focusing on the concept of creation in the instituting praxis.

On the philosophical level, phenomenology, and particularly Merleau-Ponty's analysis, engaged in the confrontation with the institution, leading to a fundamental turning point for the instituting paradigm. In *L'Institution dans l'histoire personelle et publique*, Merleau-Ponty highlighted the difference between the concepts of instituting praxis and constituent power: while the second corresponds to the category of *creatio ex nihilo*, i.e. creation from nothing, the first traces back to the category of *creatio ex aliquo*, that is, creation from something already existing (see Merleau-Ponty 2010). *Creatio ex nihilo* refers to the theological-political idea of a sovereign, closed, operating subject that autonomously founds reality, whereas the second refers to the dynamic conception of institution. Instituting is configured as a necessarily inter-subjective practice since, recognizing the debt to the past and to past institutions, acknowledges the presence of others who have previously lived and acted and keeps a connection with them. For Esposito, such an intuition constitutes a considerable caesura with previous interpretative paradigms, as it

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emphasizes that the creation of something is never *ab-soluta*, that is, autonomous, unrelated to the rest, but it is always somehow bound by a series of occurrences that condition its birth.

Nevertheless, even if the new is partly conditioned by what was there before, this does not imply that it is entirely conditioned by it. To explain the conjunction between what has already been established and the new instituting moment, Esposito uses the category of 'emergenza', i.e. 'emergence': 'qualcosa emerge da qualcos'altro, senza esserne determinato e anzi trasformandolo, come ad esempio è accaduto alla psicoanalisi freudiana rispetto alla scienza del tempo' (Esposito 2020, pp. 168). I note that the word *emergenza* in Italian also translates as 'emergency', that is 'urgency', 'danger' and 'criticality'. Thus, an *emergenza* is also a signal of a state of crisis, of something that needs a prompt action of change. As Merleau-Ponty himself argued 'Human institution always resumes a prior institution, which has posed a question […] a past which creates a question, puts it in reserve […] which was its anticipation – and which has failed' (Merleau-Ponty 2010, p. 22). In other words, what emerges cannot and must not be ignored.

What happens when such a paradigm is applied to P4Co's Community of Philosophical Inquiry? Notably, when can it be said that a CPI is created?

For Cosentino, a CPI is a social practice and, as such, it has to originate from something. When analysing a common social practice, it is difficult to trace its origin, at most, it is possible to go back to other structured practices preceding it. Nonetheless, for Cosentino, no community is spontaneously characterized as reflective nor automatically tends towards philosophical research. Therefore, a CPI, like Esposito's institutions, is a form-of-life that needs an intentional act to be instituted: 'Una "comunità di ricerca" è una forma di vita. Ma una forma di vita caratterizzata dall'interruzione della spontaneità e della inconsapevolezza. Mentre la formazione di una comunità e una vita comunitaria può essere spontanea, la ricerca non lo è' (Cosentino 2011, pp. 6-7). Hence, it is not 'absolute' life, but life put into shape, in other words, it is instituted life. For this reason, a CPI is consciously built in a certain 'place' and in a certain 'time'. At the same time though, CPI is not created from a void, on the contrary, it must be understood as a process starting elsewhere: 'ogni cdrf [Comunità Di Ricerca Filosofica, i.e. Community of Philosophical Inquiry, CPI] ha una sua storia ed è la sua storia. L'inizio della storia non poggia sul nulla, ma possiamo intenderlo come coincidente con un punto di svolta di una storia precedente' (Cosentino 2011, p. 3). Although the creation of a CPI requires an intentional act, that is, an instituting act, it will arise from something already existing. Using Esposito's lexicon: a CPI is 'creatio ex aliquo' and will 'emerge' from something already

established. What has such a function in the creation of a CPI? The writing, the initial *stimulus*, that is, the written text from which the group discussion arises:

> nella metodologia lipmaniana l'inizio della pratica di una comunità di ricerca è costituito da una pratica già strutturata che, però, è solo raccontata nella fiction letteraria. Si presenta, perciò, come un'esperienza remota, già conclusa, ma, nello stesso tempo, come memoria pronta a essere rivivificata (Cosentino 2011, p. 95).

Hence, the written text metaphorically takes the place of the 'already instituted' of the instituting paradigm, namely, it is the 'aliquo' from which something new and not definable *a priori* emerges through the imagination of participants. The practice that allows the regeneration of what had previously been instituted is the oral dialogue: 'è così che oralità e scrittura possono intrecciarsi nella vita della comunità' (Cosentino 2011, p. 95).

Thus, the praxis of philosophical research within P4Co always arises from shared and consolidated knowledge, from the awareness of being inscribed in a web of relationships and traditions. Philosophical research, which is always *creatio ex aliquo* since it includes heritage and renewal in itself, is represented by the orality of the group discussion, thus configuring P4Co as a transposition of Esposito's instituting praxis.

III.7.2 Transformation as Subjectivation

Having identified the concept of *creatio ex aliquo* as the first point of connection between Esposito's theories and P4Co, I now focus on the notion of transformation.

How can the transformative process characterizing a CPI be described? According to Cosentino, philosophical research communities can be compared to the learning organizations theorized by Chris Argyris and Donald Schön. In such an organization, learning consists in modifying mind habits and behavioural models overcoming the resistance to change due to the fossilization of an acquired model, that is 'ridurre la routine difensiva e […] promuovere movimenti di pensiero comune in grado di attivare modelli di apprendimento flessibili e riflessivi' (Cosentino 2011, p.64). Namely, Argyris and Schön conceived a so-called 'theory of action', according to which there is a discrepancy between what people think is motivating their actions (they called it 'espoused theory') and what is actually motivating their actions (i.e. 'theory-in- use'): 'The "espoused theory of action" [...] is the theory of action to which he [or she] gives allegiance, and which upon request, he [or she] communicates to others. However, the theory that actually governs his [or her] action is his [or her]

theory-in-use, which may or may not be compatible with his [or her] espoused [publicly stated] theory; furthermore, the individual may or may not be aware of the incompatibility of the two theories' (Argyris and Schön 1974, p.7). The theory-in-use is not declared because subjects are often not aware of it, or because they want to protect it from criticism and do not want to question it. Thus the stagnation of a group, organization or even institution may be often caused by an uncritical perpetuation of the 'theories-in-use'. Such stasis can block a profitable transformative movement and lead to failure. As in institutions, even groups and organizations that fail to regenerate are doomed to extinction. Instead, learning occurs when an organisation 'riesce a modificare le proprie 'teorie-in-uso' e ad operare, di conseguenza, un riassetto della sua struttura e una ridefinizione della sua immagine' (Cosentino 2011, p. 66).

Cosentino suggests that, in order for organizational learning to take place, initiatives are necessary that link the learning of individuals and those of the organisation. This occurs when the members of an organisation face a problematic situation and, in the interest of the organization, investigate it by reacting with new thought processes and new action plans. According to Argyris and Schön, there are two main types of organisational learning 1) single-loop learning: i.e., when the actions within a strategy are changed but not their underlying values 2) double-loop learning: in addition to changing the strategies, the values of the theory-in-use are changed. Learning is trans-individual, that is, it concerns both the behaviour of individuals and the organization itself, which has its own modifiable identity. But Cosentino also seems to be wondering if an even higher level of learning is possible, which includes a sort of restructuring of the self and one's theories about the world and involves abandoning any previous habit of thinking. Such type of creative and transformative learning, based on the questioning of every acquired habit, involves a restructuring of the very identity of both the individuals and the organisation and it is configured as a superior, third-level learning (see Cosentino 2011, p.71 ff).

According to Cosentino, P4Co includes such a 'istanza trasformativa' (Cosentino 2011, p.1). Indeed, P4Co, as a praxis, unties subjects from the static and concluded form of 'identity' by connecting them to the dynamic and interactive form of subjectivation: 'mentre, infatti la dimensione dell'identità si lega a forme di semplice collocazione, la dimensione soggettiva si lega a forme di azione' (Giacomantonio 2008, p.151). Secondly, this transformative process concerns philosophy itself: 'non è solo la comunità a esser[e] modificata, ma la filosofia stessa' (Oliverio 2013,

p.76). The collective dimension and the idea of research-in-common of P4Co could be an example to be followed also by academic philosophy, according to paradigms yet to be devised.[15]

A practice that aims to transform the subjects into something else, changing one's own identity and the surrounding reality, coincides with Esposito's instituting praxis. Indeed, a distinguishing concept of Esposito's instituting praxis concerns the creation of subjectivity, which once again distinguishes it from the constituent paradigm. Within the constituent paradigm, the constituent power belongs to previously identified, stably formed subjects (for example the people, a party, a revolutionary group), who create something totally new from nothing. Instead, the instituting paradigm introduces the concept of 'subjectivation', which means that subjectivity arises 'dagli stessi meccanismi istituzionali ai quali essa partecipa' (Esposito 2021, p. 56). This means that, 'mentre [nel processo costituente] il soggetto precede l'oggetto costituito, senza esserne modificato, nel processo istituente il soggetto non pre-esiste alla propria prassi, ma viene all'esistenza insieme a essa, modificandola e contemporaneamente modificandosi' (Esposito 2020, p. 168). Thus, not only does the instituting practice change the object it is going to establish, but also the subjects activating it. Subjectivity does not refer to well-defined subjects but always to a praxis, to an open process, which is that of subjectivation. This means that the act of instituting something produces the subjectivity and *vice versa* within circular dynamics. By instituting something new, the subject institutes itself, 'trasformandosi rispetto al suo iniziale modo di essere' (Esposito 2021, p. 57).

In this section, I have argued that P4Co represents a good example of instituting praxis as it can activate transformative processes both on its object (an organization, an institution, philosophy itself) and on the subjects involved (the community, individuals). In the next section, I focus on the theme of conflict in institutional practice and in P4Co.

III.7.3 The Political Value of the CPI: the Administration of Conflict

In the previous sections, I explained that Esposito delineates a dynamic, inter-subjective, and transformative conception of instituting praxis that can also be found within P4Co. Such a

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[15] For Ferraro, philosophy in traditional institutional places such as academies is currently a 'protected' philosophy, as it confined 'in un luogo separato dal mondo, ma ben rispondente a logiche ordinarie di potere istituzionale, in uno stato di privilegio formale, che si legittima su sé stesso' (Ferraro 2010, p. 23).

conception opens up to the subjects involved the double possibility of instituting something new whilst being in turn instituted and modified through praxis. But such a perspective of openness to the other cannot exclude the possibility of a clash between different subjectivities. As I am going to show, the detection of clashes between subjects and their administration through institutional mediation falls within the notion of instituting praxis, giving it an eminently political character. In this section, I show that the idea of conflict is central both in Esposito's philosophy and in P4Co. The identification of conflicts and their administration are the elements that give this discipline a political value.

Political conflict is precisely the basis of a strand of contemporary political thought that contributed to forming Esposito's conception of instituting praxis. On this front, Esposito's author of reference is Claude Lefort, a disciple of Merleau-Ponty. For Lefort, conflict is the *quid* connecting institutions, society, and politics (see Lefort 1971). The task of politics is to bring out the awareness of the latent conflict within society, a conflict that is inevitably present, given the difference in the interests of the various social partners. Specifically, Esposito suggests that 'la prassi istituente è ciò che rende la società consapevole di essere divisa e del luogo preciso in cui passa la divisione' (Esposito 2021, p.58). For this reason, society and politics are essentially connected, and what differentiates a certain society from another is the way in which power is administered and conflict is managed. Esposito gives the example of totalitarian societies, where the leader and his party exercise all power, unlike democracies where power is temporarily exercised by those who prevail in the political arena. In totalitarian societies, conflict must be annihilated, while in democratic ones, conflict guarantees social change and the transfer of power. In such a framework, 'l'istituzione è ciò che garantisce al conflitto politico di continuare a svolgere il proprio ruolo attivo e regolativo all'interno della società' (Esposito 2021, p. 61). Thus, the institution's primary purpose is to manage the relationship between power and conflict.

According to Esposito, the first thinker who understood the productive character of political conflict as necessary for the political order was Machiavelli. In Machiavelli's *Principe*, conflict is the engine of the political order and, for this reason, it is not only unsurpassable but also original because 'non è preceduto da nulla' (Esposito 2021, p.62). In other words, Machiavelli's political ontology is 'infondata' (Ibidem) since he designs a society that has no foundation, but is rather characterized by a division. Division, - that is, conflict - is the main characteristic of the social, hence antagonism is not a destructive force but rather the expression of society. Society is not the result of a contract formalizing a sortie from a previous state of conflict because, being conflict original

and ineliminable, there is no previous state of nature, as contractualist thinkers such as Hobbes suggested (see Hobbes 1985). But such a picture also presupposes the presence of institutions, an impersonal third-party element that mediates between the conflicting subjectivities and guarantees the general interest, which gives the institution a validity independent from the instituting subjects: 'in essa, tra l'uno e l'altro c'è sempre un diaframma impersonale che filtra l'immediatezza del faccia a faccia, impedendo che l'incontro a due possa degenerare in scontro violento' (Esposito 2021, p. 57.) Thus, institutions' task is to hold opposing interests together, preventing the original conflict from taking on the contours of violence.

Within the fiction of a CPI, the theme of conflict plays a central role too. In describing the structure of a CPI, I showed that the moment of dialogue follows that of debate for a very specific reason. Whilst during the debate the participants' theses are in contrast, in the course of the dialogue an attempt is made to reach a synthesis of the positions expressed. Santi defined such a dialogue as a 'discorso esplorativo': ''L'inquiry talk si distingue […] dal "discorso disputativo", teso a far prevalere un punto di vista antagonista sull'altro, pur condividendo con essi alcuni principi conversazionali di base. [Nella P4Co] si tratta di un "discorso esplorativo" finalizzato alla ricerca in cui gli interlocutori si rapportano criticamente, ma costruttivamente, con le reciproche idee' (Santi 2008, pp. 81-82). As argued by Cosentino, 'diversamente dalla deliberazione a maggioranza che oppone prese di posizione statiche e sancisce l'esito quantitativo del loro confronto, la ricerca in comune appare come processo dinamico che tende verso il potenziale superamento dei contrasti' (Cosentino 2008, p.76).

The administration of the conflict between the parties by means of impersonal philosophical research is what defines a CPI as an entity with a potentially political value. As Cosentino himself states, a community that searches for a meaning is always 'political' as it has passed from the struggle between opposing subjectivities 'al campo aperto della relazionalità' (Cosentino 2011, p. 87). The dialectical structure of the CPI emphasizes the concept of relationality. Relationality is found not only between the various moments of philosophical research, which follow one another, modifying themselves and the community, but also between the participating subjects, who learn to acknowledge the point of view of others, assuming the impersonal position of the researcher.

The impersonal position of researcher is the third-party element that manages the conflict between opposing ideas, making it productive without denying or repressing it. It could be argued that facilitators take on this third-party role but their task is precisely to metaphorically embody the

role of researcher, serving as an example for all. Therefore, assuming the mediating role of the researcher is the task and goal of all those involved.

In this section, I have illustrated the role of conflict in instituting practice and in P4Co. Conflict is not only inevitable but also necessary as it ensures the vitality of the institutions and the functioning of the CPI.

In the next section, I focus on another characteristic that defines the productive character of both the instituting praxis and P4Co, namely the presence of the negative. My aim is to demonstrate that contradictory elements, which seem to negate each other, are present both in P4Co and Esposito's instituting praxis and, nevertheless, they contribute to guaranteeing the dynamicity of both.

III.7.4 The Role of the Negative

In the previous section, I investigated the issue of conflict in Esposito's instituting practice and in P4Co. In this section, I analyse the role of the negative in both.

For Esposito, the instituting praxis is marked by the negative, that is, by the simultaneous presence of two opposing instances which seem to negate each other. Such instances manifest themselves in the noun *institutio* and in the verb *instituere*, and refer respectively to the concepts of stasis and movement. As previously shown, when something is instituted, something that did not exist before is inaugurated, introducing a novelty into a previous framework. However, even if such a novelty is an entity in the making, it is also something conceived to remain, resisting dissolution. A paradoxical characteristic of the instituting praxis is that it erects something that must be able to remain standing. Change and permanence, stability, and movement go together.

But the question that remains is the following: ''come si può preservare una novità senza negarla?' (Esposito 2021, p. 69). In order for the instituting process to be productive, it is necessary that it accomplishes something that did not exist before; such a something is the novel institution, which acquires a further reality with respect to what produced it, an autonomy with respect to the subjective intention that led to its realization. For Esposito, this *quid* is what Hegel called 'objective spirit', that is, the moment when the spirit is realized through the objectivity of the institutions, at the top of which is the State. This is necessary due to the impossibility of the subject to persist without objectifying himself in something that goes beyond him. Therefore, the institution is a contradictory union of freedom and necessity, of negative and positive. In Hegel, the objectification

of the 'spirit' is nothing but the movement of reality, that is 'realizzazione attraverso il negativo' (Esposito 2021, p.70). Thus, the tension between freedom and necessity contains opposites: the state is not oppression but an expression of civil society. Therefore, for Esposito, institutions should not be interpreted as an immovable block of power and oppression, as some anti-institutional movements tend to do, otherwise, the only alternative will be to depose them. Only through the acceptance of the negative, through a relationship with it, is it possible to avoid 'un'affermatività senza confini' (Esposito 2021, p. 71), which necessarily leads to the irremediable clash between opposing instances. According to Esposito, 'la via da percorrere passa per un nuovo nesso tra istituzioni e libertà' (Esposito 2021, p. 73). If institutions are interpreted as guarantors of the holding of society and as possible spaces of freedom, one will consequently opt for their revivification and not for their dismissal.

The presence of the negative can equally be found within the instituting praxis of a CPI. Cosentino maintains that a CPI is a 'community practice of freedom', not denying the possible paradoxical outcome of such a statement. In fact, the concepts of 'practice' and 'freedom' seem to be in contradiction with each other. The notion of 'practice' seems to refer to 'una regolarità e una regolazione congiunta ad una tradizione riconoscibile' (Cosentino 2011, p. 4), which does not seem to agree with the concept of freedom. In fact, as shown, within a CPI, freedom is associated with the creative impersonal movement of philosophical research. Besides, a CPI is based on freedom in that it requires free assent and commitment of all the participants independently: 'Il processo riflessivo non può essere imposto dall'esterno. Proprio perché è riflessivo, se non vuole negare sé stesso, non può essere appreso ma deve essere prodotto dal soggetto pensante' (Cosentino 2011, p. 2). Interpreting freedom and practice as incompatible opposing instances, would perpetuate the usual dualisms between 'teoria e pratica, conoscere e agire, ragione e emozioni, mente e corpo e così via' (Cosentino 2011, p.4). The 'research community as a practice of freedom' aims to undermine traditional dualisms.

Thus, how can stasis and movement coexist, that is, how can the freedom of philosophical research be combined with the uniform regularity of practice? In Esposito's terms: how can a novelty be preserved without negating itself? By making impersonal philosophical research itself a regular practice within institutions and communities and their guiding principle: 'si tratta [...] di una comunità di pratica aperta a una riflessione che non ha per oggetto una pratica distinta e separabile, ma che assume la riflessione come la pratica da abitare e, così facendo, costruisce il suo mondo possibile come forma e stile di vita' (Cosentino 2011, p.5). Using Esposito's categories analysed so

far, this entails making the communal philosophical research a stable, ongoing 'instituting praxis', accepting the paradox of its nature, and rendering it productive. Conversely, this implies that each institution, in order to be configured not as a static block of power, but as an instituting praxis guaranteeing freedom, should take the form of permanent community philosophical research.

In this section, I have argued that in both P4Co and Esposito's instituting praxis there are similar elements that apparently negate each other. On the contrary, the coexistence of opposing instances such as stasis and movement, change and permanence, practice and freedom, is what gives both of them a productive character.

III.8 P4Co's Relevance as an Instituting Praxis

In the previous sections, I investigated the concepts of creation, transformation, conflict, and negative in P4Co, arguing that it is configured as an example of the instituting praxis theorised by Esposito. The management of conflicts between the parties and the ability to incorporate contradictory elements make P4Co a project of political relevance. In this section, I conclude that, from what has been said so far, P4Co's principal value consists in its potential to overcome the distinction between public and private dimensions and to affirm the importance of the 'communal'. According to Cosentino, P4Co represents an ideal of democracy that is not only formal but 'substantial', because it aims to resume the interpretations of democracy that were seen for example in ancient Greece. Cosentino mentions philosopher Castoriadis, who highlighted that Athenian democracy marked the birth of a public political space in which the free examination of its own forms was conceived through the possibility of a continuous interrogation of the established order (see Castoriadis 2007). The established order was generally legitimised by external factors, such as sacred values but, with this internal revolution, it became the object of verification. In other words, it was no longer untouchable but became revisable and changeable. According to Cosentino, Castoriadis aimed to draw a common genealogy between philosophy and the very concept of democracy. In Cosentino's opinion, CPI would take on the task of producing such a connection. More precisely, resuming the relationship between philosophy and democracy would mean restoring, within a CPI, 'quella dimensione del "politico", che Hanna Arendt considera scomparsa con l'avvento e la supremazia dell'*homo laborans'* (Cosentino 2011, p.83). Arendt assumes that, in

the modern era, the political space would have been lost. In ancient Greece, such a political space coincided with the dimension of the polis. At the time, human life was divided into family life, private life, and political life, that is, public life (see Arendt 1958). Following Arendt interpretation, Cosentino maintains that the radical difference of the modern era would consist 'nell'avvenuta sostituzione del politico col sociale, che ha comportato un oscuramento della distinzione tra dominio pubblico e dominio privato, tra polis e famiglia' (Cosentino 2011, p. 84). In ancient Greece, such clear distinction meant that the space of public life, although intended for very few people, was a place of freedom. Namely, freedom consisted in not being subject to the double constraint of domination over others and from others. Thus, this involved being able to act, collaborate with others and speak without the need for such actions to be immediately profitable and purpose-oriented. This seems to fail in modern society: 'quello che è venuto a mancare è quello spazio 'politico' dell'agire e del fare discorsi liberamente, ossia senza vincoli rispetto alle necessità della vita. *L'homo laborans* ha fatto valere sempre più la sua prospettiva produttiva e riproduttiva fino a renderla coincidente con il ritmo circolare e ripetitivo della stessa vita: produrre per consumare e consumare per produrre.' (Cosentino 2011, p. 85). Thus, P4Co main value would be to restore such a 'public' political space where democracy can be exercised by means of the 'libero esercizio del discorso' (Cosentino 2011, pp. 86 ff).

Here it is possible to trace a point of distance between Cosentino and Esposito, who espouses Lefort's thought. For Lefort, instead of being a space of depoliticization, contemporary democracy is highly political as it is the only regime capable of recognising and symbolising the conflictual nature of society (see Lefort, Gauchet 1971). Indeed, the institutions of contemporary democracies are not conceived to preserve political power but to safeguard and ensure the possibility of the transfer of power amongst a vast and changing number of individuals. This means that, in modernity, 'il posto del potere è vuoto', that is, 'esso è continuamente contendibile dalle parti attraverso la pratica democratica del conflitto politico' (Esposito 2020, p. 215).

In line with Esposito, I believe that contemporary democracies are highly political and potentially offer very broad political spaces, which in part are still to be explored and invented. Therefore, I suggest that the value of P4Co is not so much that of restoring a lost public dimension of the political but, rather, that of taking upon itself the highly political potential of contemporaneity by reinventing new spaces and categories of thought. Indeed, currently, it is not at stake to recover what was present in a distant elsewhere, such as ancient Greece, in which the possibility of the democratic exercise was still allowed to a few. Rather, the challenge of contemporaneity is to

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multiply the pluralist dynamic that is already present in the very structure of contemporary democracies. Similarly, it is not a question of condemning the absence of distinction between public and private but, rather, today's challenge is to break such conceptual antinomy. The real value of P4Co lies in the potential to expand democratic spaces within institutions through the enhancement of the 'communal', which is something conceptually different from both the public and the private. As previously shown, the communal, not unlike the public, concerns everyone but undermines the opposition between public and private. Today, the public and the private refer to opposite categories of law (see Esposito 2010b), whereas the communal is a philosophical notion connecting the two poles, it is one of the many forms of what we have defined so far as 'impersonal', and needs to be studied further.

III.9 Conclusions

In this chapter, I examined whether P4Co can offer novel ideas for the reflection initiated by Italian theory thinkers, and particularly by Roberto Esposito, on the concepts of community and institution. I divided the chapter in two parts: in the first one, I highlighted the peculiar traits that characterize P4Co. Such elements are the variability of the stimulus-text, the interiorised circular setting, the role of the facilitator, the moments of discussion and philosophical dialogue, and the transformative circular relationship between the group and the individual. I then compared Esposito's notion of community and that proposed by Italian philosophical practitioners, focusing particularly on Cosentino's and Bevilacqua's theories. I argued that the structure and methodology of P4Co configure the community not as a being endowed with a substantial identity but rather as a being-in-common, as an openness towards the other. I also maintained that in P4Co, philosophical research embodies Esposito's notion of 'impersonal'.

In the second part, I analysed the concept of institution and instituting praxis in Esposito's thought, using such a perspective to assess if P4Co represents a vital force, capable of renovating institutions from within. First, I clarified that, according to Esposito, the task of political philosophy is to restore the connection between institutions and life at all levels of society. Such work consists in theorising a type of politics - built around the notion of *bios* - that emancipates and strengthens human life in all its acceptations by means of institutions. I suggested that P4co shares compatible objectives as it aims to hold together life - clearly understood as bios - and the instituting praxis of thought. Successively, I framed Esposito's' instituting praxis through the notions of creation,

transformation, conflict and negative. I maintained that P4Co corresponds to Esposito's instituting praxis as it is 'creatio ex aliquo', it can activate transformative processes both on its object (an organization, an institution, philosophy itself) and on the subjects involved (the community, individuals), and it transforms conflict and negative into productive forces. Finally, I maintained that the specific value of P4Co lies in the potential to expand democratic spaces within institutions through the enhancement of the 'communal', a philosophical notion that aims at overcoming the dichotomy between public and private, as it is a figure of the impersonal. For all the reasons summarised above, I believe that not only does P4Co have a practical political value but its theoretical contents are also relevant to Italian academic political philosophy.

IV.   Conclusions

As stated in the Introduction to this thesis, the main goal of my work was to demonstrate how and why philosophical practices have spread in Italy from the 1990s onwards. I decided to investigate these disciplines from a socio-cultural angle, identifying them as products of a particular environment and as a social phenomenon. My starting assumption was that, once exported, philosophical practices give life to a completely new object of study, as they can be affected by the rules, institutions, economic environment, cultural tendencies, and other historical circumstances that characterize each country in which the develop. To study such a phenomenon in detail, I needed to deploy a multidisciplinary approach and to narrow the scope of my research to two of these disciplines, namely Philosophical counselling and Philosophy for Children. I individuated five main groups of research questions on which I structured my investigations. Notably, I decided to analyse the two disciplines in their initial configuration, identify the reasons behind their introduction in Italy, trace the ways in which they are practiced within the country, highlight the effects that Italian institutional and cultural context is having on the development of said discipline. Finally, my intention was to investigate, from a more speculative perspective, the political value of a new interpretation of Philosophy for Children that has been ideated in Italy, i.e. Philosophy for Community.

By dividing the thesis in three chapters, I came to the following conclusions.

In the first chapter, which I devoted to Philosophical counselling, I have reconstructed the history of this discipline, explaining the dynamics with which it intersected with the spreading of other philosophical practices, giving way to an international movement. Analysing the international literature, I systematized the various approaches of PC proposing my own taxonomy. I identified a *Radical* approach, conceiving PC as an equal, non-therapeutic, meta-methodological, non-aim-oriented, non-theoretically-determined, and critical dialogical exchange between an expert in philosophy and a client. In this group, I listed Gerd Achebach's *Philosophische Praxis,* Lahav's investigation in clients' 'worldview', and Shlomit Schuster's 'trans-therapeutic' philosophical psychoanalysis. I then identified a *Therapeutic* approach to PC, in which the counsellor is a trained practitioner setting the goals of the counselling sessions in accordance with the clients, following a structured methodology to conduct the sessions. I inserted in this group Cohen's Logic Based Therapy (LBT). Lastly, I defined an *Intermediate* approach to PC that has opened a dialogue with mental health disciplines, sharing with them some theoretical and methodological assumptions, and

the aim to improve clients' quality of life. In this group, I included Peter Raabe's and Lou Marinoff's reading of PC.

In the second part of the chapter, I focused on the spread of PC in Italy from the end of the 1990s onwards. I investigated the development of two disciplines that have blossomed from PC, namely the 'counseling filosofico' (philosophical counselling) and the 'consulenza filosofica' (philosophical consultancy).

First, I analysed the socio-cultural factors and trends of Italian society that favoured the entry of these disciplines and their launch in the Italian labour market. I showed that, in the period considered, the Italian labour market was particularly unstable and struggled to absorb graduates in the humanities effectively, thus favouring the introduction of new career pathways for graduates in the humanities, such as philosophical counselling and consultancy. University reforms and particularly the creation of vocational courses encouraged this tendency.

Secondly, I highlighted the main causes of the scarce purchase that philosophical counselling and consultancy had as professions. The first cause was early practitioners' difficulty in defining the new specialties theoretically. Namely, there was a general theoretical disagreement on both the purposes, the methods, the definition of the two disciplines, and the role of philosophical counsellors and consultants. In my opinion, the absence of clear and shared definitions and aims is hampering the distinction between the two disciplines and between them and other helping professions. Moreover, practitioners' efforts to make the professions appealing to a potential audience risk adjusting the practices to market trends, which could hinder these disciplines' innovative drive. The second cause is the inhomogeneity of the Italian training offer and the lack of rigour of access criteria, which compromises the philosophical foundations of the profession whilst not valuing practitioners with a course of study in Philosophy. Besides, within the training courses, the two disciplines are often combined with other philosophical practices. Such hybridization risks provoking a general theoretical flattening in that the different theoretical assumptions of each specialty may be neglected, especially when modelled and adjusted according to their usability in different application contexts. A similar risk is also evident in the information material that can be found on the Internet, as the distinction between philosophical counselling and consultancy theorised in specialist journals over the last two decades is often ignored. Thirdly, I showed that the recent law 4/2013 recognizing philosophical counselling and consultancy as 'unregulated' professions did not contribute to delimiting their professional field nor effectively regulate them.

Lastly, I argued that the contextual presence of a high number of psychologists in the regulated field risks making the sector market unbalanced due to an excessive offer.

Thus, I came to conclusion that all these elements combined hinder the emergence of these disciplines as well-defined professions with a recognisable and rigorous identity and, above all, they risk trivializing them by characterizing them as products to be sold to a very broad and heterogeneous public of aspiring practitioners.

In the second chapter, I analysed P4C. In the first part of the chapter, I reconstructed the birth of P4C, analysing Mattew Lipman's intellectual pathway. I highlighted the philosophical background informing his ideas and the socio-cultural context that inspired his project, explaining the methodology of the 'Community of Philosophical Inquiry' (CPI) and P4C's critical aspects.

In the second part of the chapter, I focused on the introduction of P4C in Italy. First, I argued that P4C's initial difficulty in entering the Italian school system was due to the philosophical relevance of the Italian traditional historicist teaching method, which have been difficult to replace with other methodologies coming from different philosophical traditions throughout the whole twentieth century. According to the still dominant model, philosophy is linked to the study of history, it is reserved to high school students, and it is mostly connected to the study of philosophers' thought through the textbook.

In my critical-historical reconstruction, I showed that this system has been scarcely changed, even though the debate concerning the teaching of philosophy has always looked for different theoretical references, and alternative didactic methodologies. Nonetheless, I illustrated that, from the 1980s onwards, a new reading of philosophy didactics and of the very conception of education began to emerge, encouraging the adoption of new teaching approaches, including P4C. Issues such as the enhancement of logical and argumentative skills, the role of the teacher, and the practical employability of philosophy, which are at the core of P4C, became central within the Italian debate and 1990s institutional reforms of philosophy teaching.

However, the educational reforms enacted from the end of the nineties onwards have overthrown the cultural orientation of the Italian school, twisting its educational objectives. The overall shift towards a logic of exploitation of skills and an efficiency-driven model of education contributed to the gradual technicalisation of the Italian school, which seems to be increasingly market-oriented. I argued that such a new conception inevitably affects the contents and the teaching methodologies of school subjects - including philosophy and experimental projects such as P4C - since the learning objectives are framed within the new theoretical outlook. I claimed that,

when applied in such a context, some traits of P4C - such as the emphasis on the acquisition of logical and reasoning skills, the rigid structure of the CPI, and facilitators' non-specialistic training pathway - risk turning this discipline into an instrument at the service of this ideological framework that estimates learning as the capacity to integrate into a given context rather than change it.

Despite these critical factors, I maintained that recent theoretical novelties which emphasize P4C's creative elements and its ethical contents, may counterbalance some problematic aspects of the practice. In particular, Philosophy for Community (P4Co), an original Italian declination of Lipman's P4C, is addressed to adults, and aims at expanding in institutions such as prisons, hospitals, companies, rehabilitation centres, etc. I believe that this new practice has interesting implications pertaining the notion of community and institution that intersects with contemporary Italian political philosophy, and particularly with Roberto Esposito's research path.

Therefore, P4Co has been the object of my third chapter. I divided the chapter in two parts: in the first one, I defined the peculiar traits that characterize P4Co. Such elements are the changeability of the stimulus-text, the interiorised circular setting, the non-directive role of the facilitator, the dialectical moments of discussion and dialogue, and the transformative circular relationship between the individual and the community. I then compared Esposito's notion of community and that proposed by some pioneering Italian philosophical practitioners. I argued that P4Co's structure challenge the traditional reading of community as it configures the community not as a being endowed with a substantial identity but rather as a being-in-common, as an openness, or a 'duty' towards the other. I also maintained that in P4Co, philosophical research embodies Esposito's notion of 'impersonal' as it looks for a 'logos comune' surpassing the individual's opinions. In the second part, I investigated the concept of institution and instituting praxis in Esposito's philosophy, using such a perspective to assess whether P4Co can be considered a vital force In Esposito's definition, capable of renovating institutions from within. First, I clarified that, according to Esposito, the task of political philosophy is to regenerate the connection between institutions and life at all levels of society. Such work consists in theorising a type of politics – built around the notion of *bios* – that emancipates human life and enlarge spaces of freedom by means of institutions. I suggested that P4Co has the same objectives as it aims to hold together life – conceived as bios – and the instituting praxis of philosophizing in common. Successively, I conceptualised Esposito's instituting praxis through the notions of creation, transformation, conflict and negative. I maintained that P4Co corresponds to Esposito's instituting praxis as it is 'creatio ex aliquo', it can activate transformative dynamics both on its object (an organization, an institution,

philosophy itself) and on the subjects involved (individuals, the community), and it turns conflict and its inner contradictory elements into productive forces. Finally, I suggested that P4Co's main value consists in the potential to expand democratic spaces within institutions through the enhancement of the 'communal', a philosophical notion that aims to dismantle the conceptual antinomy between public and private, as it represents a declination of the impersonal. For all these reasons, I concluded that P4Co does have a practical political value and that its theoretical contents are undoubtedly relevant to current Italian academic political philosophy.

I believe that overall, using the methodology I outlined in the introduction to this thesis, I gave an important contribution to frame these disciplines not only as supranational philosophical currents but also as a national social phenomenon, as I highlighted the strengths, weak points, contradictions of each practice, and the theoretical potential of their recent developments, composing a coherent and defined framework.

I hope to have defined a multidisciplinary line of enquire that can be extended to other philosophical practices and/or to new disciplines in different fields. Besides, I hope that my work could encourage academic research to investigate further the socio-cultural phenomenon of philosophical practices, enlarging the scope of my research.

For example, the analysis that I propose in the first two chapters approaches the problem from a perspective that I would define as 'external', that is, it proceeds from the study of the context to explain and understand each practice: in other words, I demonstrate that there are cultural, economic, juridical, and institutional factors 'external' to such practices that inevitably impact the various disciplines, modelling and modifying them. However, I acknowledge that an opposite, more 'internal' perspective should also be considered, which would imply, for example, dealing with the following research questions: what is the relationship of practitioners with the discipline they practice? How do they apply it? What do they expect? What studies have they done? What kind of clientele do they have? How much time do they devote to their work?

Due to a lack of funds, it was not possible for me to carry out extensive field research, but I suggest that, for future research, interviews be organized both with practitioners and users of the various disciplines, both on a regional and national basis, in order to better outline their cultural profile, their expectations, and the job opportunities in the various Italian regions. In this way, it will be possible to delineate a truly comprehensive picture of such a complex and fascinating phenomenon.

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