

Teleological links between Philosophical Counselling and Logotherapy

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Abstract: This paper will indicate the methodical and subject tangents between philosophical counselling on the one hand, and logotherapy – a psychotherapeutic direction developed in the middle of the last century by the Austrian psychiatrist and neurologist Viktor Frankl – on the other side of the evaluation spectrum. Three main points will be settled in the focus of the elaboration. The first is a technique of the Socratic dialogue, special characteristic of both approaches set forth in the title of this presentation. Yet we can also comfortably say – of almost all psychotherapeutic schools and techniques. With an emphasis on maieutic as the basis of the psyche-hermeneutic process – dynamic disclosure of the person’s essence and its intentional *telos*. The second point refers to reaching the meaning and purpose of a person as the intentional core. The third point is aimed at reaching the spiritual dimension of the person, viewed as a teleological synthesis and reachable aim of the both approaches. In conclusion, the paper will be put forward that now it is a fruitful time for the therapeutic relationship on the global scene to return to its philosophical foundations methodologically and subjectively. Opening the doors for providing and spreading the “philosophical spirituality” as the global paradigm, enabling humanistic encounter and the philosophical dialogue on the wide global horizon.

Key-words: philosophical counselling; logotherapy; purpose; meaning; interdisciplinary; spirituality; Viktor Frankl;

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Introduction

When we speak about the general teleological feature of culture and humanism, and about the civilization preservation in general, we are speaking about the constant improvement, growth and progress driven by various challenges and crises along the way. Following the give line – philosophical counselling as part of the movement of philosophical practice, and psychotherapeutic school logotherapy and existential analysis, eminently correspond to the settings of this cultural growth frame. Furthermore, when we speak about the purposefulness of the counselling and psychotherapeutic process, we are talking about the upbringing and establishing the field for the fruitful growth of the client's intentional meaning in the world, and the world in her person as well. About her acceptance regarding her own essence, and her excepting the counsellor/therapist role as a capturing mirror of her being, providing her with wide orientation scope. When we speak about the basic method of orientation and implementation of the process in question – we are undoubtedly speaking about a talking cure (Marantz Cohen, 2023), about living dialogue. In the most useful case – about the guided Socratic dialogue – the basis of wide spectrum of psychotherapeutic relationship (Overholser, 2010). In this paper, teleological tangents, i.e. links of purposefulness between philosophical counselling and logotherapy will be set, following the progress path of the persons, societies, institutions, as well as of the humanism in the general account. With the hypothesis that both perspectives – philosophical counselling and logotherapy – are a kind of logical and rational response to the various challenges, issues and crises. Which arise in the contemporary age of overemphasized focus regarding the technique and economic growth, and analogically – with the severe deficit in a moral orientation context. Above all – a deficit in a communication and dialogic context, directed to the subject of life-wholeness. A dialogue that extends from an individual level to the wider social – institutional and disciplinary ones. We will evaluate the importance of dialogue between various perspectives and approaches which is a necessity in the context of mental health care in the community. And which, throughout the counselling and psychotherapeutically process allows adequate use of language and words to take on adequate it's methodical, and often times magical integrative curative power.

Power of the dialogue – home (*oikos*) of the given link?

Well, what could be a teleological tangent field of encounter between philosophical counselling and logotherapy? There are a handful of links, and a whole article could be written about each of them, yet in this short study we are highlighting the following as the most significant.

Above all – power of words and its meaning, settling clients' hermeneutical and ontical grammar. Extending this grammatical meaning to the field of one's existential purpose and aim. Which, of course, implies the relationship of the individual with the world, and the world within the individual as well, on the path of integration with the life wholeness. And which furthermore implies the transformation of the clients' point of view on this hermeneutic phenomenological road, using a „listening and conversational cure” within the counselling and therapeutic relation as the main tool. Which assumes dialogue between client and counsellor, but also with client and his self – directed to his positioning in the world. Providing integrative thinking and orientation knowledge/action within this highly creative (*poietic*) process full of meaning and purpose. Marked with the bioprotectionistic sensibility.

In his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl gives this explanation of his position of what ultimately derives human action:

“Man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a secondary rationalization of instinctual drives. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own *will* to meaning.” (Frankl 1992, p. 98)

Historically speaking, Viktor Frankl's logotherapy is a strong humanistic reaction to the Freud's dogmatic (reductive) psychoanalytic concepts, with a critique focus on the reductionist approach with which it is being marked. Especially in the context of gaining pleasure as the ultimate goal and *telos* of the person. On the other hand, philosophical counselling and philosophical practice represent a return to the basic tenets of humanism erected on the models of the great ancient philosophers, and focused on philosophy and philosophizing as a way of

life (Hadot, 1995). I would say that philosophical practice, with a focus on philosophical counselling, is a „cry of philosophy“ to get back to the original practical and spiritual settings. To descend from the „sole theoretical towers“ and reside in the community of knowledge, directed to the society oriented work scope. And regarding the logotherapy – it is a cry for the humanization of the psychotherapeutic paradigms (Lukas, 2019), placing a person and his potentials in focus, and not her pathology, defect and deviation as basic frames.

In the following paragraphs we will indicate some more elements from philosophical counselling and logotherapy domains that are at the same time operatively crucial, mutually upgradable and intertwined.

Philosophical Counselling methodical links

Each of us encounters different moral dilemmas and questions that can be classified as philosophical, finally existential questions, and often we have no one to talk to about it. This is exactly what philosophical counselling offers at the high level. The client talks to a person who is an expert in philosophical analysis and problem thinking from different perspectives (philosophical practitioner). The goal is to understand problems and issues in a deeper way and together consider different solution options, the goal is to settle and provide philosophical orientation.

In its essence, philosophical counselling is considered as an individual ethical consulting, reflecting the most original application of philosophy as a practical activity. This practice traces its roots to the Western philosophical tradition where the first philosophers, especially ethicists, acted as public advisers, as socially engaged intellectuals, and not just academic teachers present as a rule in cabinets, conferences and academic articles (Raabe, 2002, p. 13). Their work included advising rulers and ordinary people on issues of good life, moral decisions, obligations and personal rights.

Today, philosophical counselling is re-emerging as a popular form of service delivery, especially in the United States and Western Europe (Lobont, 2021). This practice presents philosophy as a daily, practical activity, using the multi-millennial experience and thinking of great human minds throughout the history.

It is especially appropriate for solving moral dilemmas that often arise both in professional (Fatić, 2017) and personal situations and surroundings. The great potential and the great application of philosophical counselling is imposed in modern times – marked by the development of technique, the growth of wealth that was not accompanied by orientation in terms of finding the meaning and moral growth of individuals and societies. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the development of this philosophical movement has emerging for the last 40 years as the direct humanistic reaction and need. Philosophical counselling expands the academic operational scope of the discipline of philosophy, but also approaches other disciplines and represents a kind of active patch and upgrade of the many segments.

Taking fundamental pragmatic marks into account we can underline that philosophical counselling process helps solving problems. Through the consulting relation it is provided basically by the Socratic dialogue, ones we could call „integrative living dialogue“. By which maieutic tools for the client`s autonomy is being provided and proceeded.

We propose that philosophical counselling has high academic potential as well (Lobont, 2021). We set hypothesis that directing the academic philosophy to the field of philosophy practice is a part of its historic evolution progress. We claim that the philosophical counselling should not turn away from the academic frame, just like academic philosophy should not turn its back to the practical frame.

Regarding the high therapeutic potential of philosophical counselling Peter B. Raabe notes:

“Philosophical counseling does not pathologize interpersonal conflicts and moral dilemmas. It does not define extraordinary people as abnormal nor does it define ordinary people as sick, damaged, abused, or traumatized after having endured extraordinary experiences. Philosophical counselling emphasizes the individual’s strength and the present, not supposed weaknesses and the past. There is no demand that the client contractually commits to a predetermined time span or minimum number of sessions with the counselor. While philosophical counselling does not consider symptomatic relief its goal, it can be rehabilitative, and clearly therapeutic in its effect.” (Raabe, 2002. p. 15)

Logotherapy methodological links

Logotherapy is characterized by a set of exact psychotherapeutic techniques, founded by Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, and later upgraded and expanded mostly by his student Elisabeth Lukas. The foundation is the dimensional ontology (McDonald & Perry, 2023), with the focus on ones` spiritual dimension, observed as a dialectical synthesis of the biological and psychological ones. The basic techniques and aims used within the logo therapeutic process are:

- autotranscendence, deflexion, change of our attitude towards the life, paradoxical intention
- living dialogue/Socratic dialogue
- search for the meaning
- providing a meaning and purpose even in the cases of severe suffering
- Focusing on the spiritual dimension of the person.

When Frankl discusses the spiritual dimension of the person, it is important to take into account and to understand that he considers it as the specifically human reality – a fundamentally specific characteristic and mark of man in general. It is precisely by this dimension, Frankl argues, that man is different from other living beings. In the colossal book *Unheard Cry for Meaning*, he notes:

“In this context I would like to stress that the human dimension – or, as it is also called in logotherapy, the no logical dimension – goes beyond the psychological dimension, and thus is the higher; but being “higher” means only that it is the more inclusive, encompassing the lower dimension. Findings within the individual dimensions cannot be mutually exclusive. The uniqueness of man, his humanness, does not contradict the fact that in the psychological and biological dimensions he still is an animal. Therefore, it is perfectly legitimate for us to use the sound findings of both psychodynamically and behavioristically oriented research, and to adopt some of the techniques that are based on them. When these techniques are incorporated into a psychotherapy that follows man into the human dimension, as logotherapy does, their therapeutic effectiveness can only be enhanced.” (Frankl, 1984, p. 23)

Summarized – the spiritual dimension that we consider in this article as the operational frame of logotherapy, and the philosophical counselling as well, represents the field of the person's wholeness, and not the escaping into some kind of the transcendence. The eclectic foundations of logotherapy are also expressed in the provided quotation. In relation to the logotherapy operative methodical instrumentation, it is worth underlining the techniques of dereflection and auto-transcendence, which Frankl describes with the following words:

“As we see, anticipatory anxiety has to be counteracted by paradoxical intention; hyper intention as well as hyper reflection have to be counteracted by dereflection; however, ultimately is not possible except by the patient's orientation toward his specific vocation and mission in life. It is not the neurotic's self-concern, whether pity or contempt, which breaks the circle formation; the cue to cure is self-transcendence.” (Frankl, 2000, p. 132)

Frankl's most significant student and continuer – Elisabeth Lukas – adds that dereflexion is a kind of ignoring something that can be ignored, and that would not become better by reflecting, but worse. At the same time, it is more than ignoring and much more than a distraction manoeuvre. Not only does it mean to look away from oneself, but above all to look at oneself, and the latter nevertheless means expanding the spiritual horizon, restoring autotranscendence and discovering new dimensions of values and meaning in the patient (Lukas, 2019). Logotherapy is, Lukas believes, exactly the *revealing psychotherapy*. It does not bow to the illusion of a healthy world, but it seeks the one which is still healthy. The curable one within our unhealthy world, so it (logotherapy) can be put in the hands of a restless, lost, desperate person who deeply longs for healing. We can add that logotherapy is *apriori* striving for the person, not for her pathologies and disbalances.

Philosophical counselling and logotherapy as a clear answer (remedy) to the crisis of meaning?

Back to the given statement – let's add that logotherapy is a kind of a resistance movement against the improper perception of the crisis as a

necessary disruptor of psycho-physical balance, and insofar it can be seen as "a meaningful weightlifter on the scales of a person's progress". And insofar as a potential promoter of the whole society whose current crisis is manifested primarily in the crisis of alienation and ontic mechanization and digitalization, as we already noted.

But again – even in such an apparent closed stage, there is an obvious, increased and intensified need of persons and society for spirituality, which we witnessed not so long ago, during social and social distance at the time of pandemic measures. It was in this era that the need for philosophical counselling and also logotherapy flourished (Moldovan & Simbotin, 2024).

Summarized – in the context of the modern age of usually cold economized ideologies and paradigms, and the considerable spiritual split of man, let us observe and promote philosophical counselling and logotherapy as a "spiritual patch" for grasping the person. As well for fixing dialogic and moral holes within science as such, on the way to permeating with the meaning of scientific reflection in principle.

Which in modern times often takes on a dehumanized form manifested in the frame of fragmentation of scientific disciplines that do not strive for dialogue and integrity, and which do not strive for the integrativeness of life. Unfortunately, man (but also other living organisms and biological factors that condition them) are unfortunately often seen as biological machines prone to spoilage, which is mechanically treated with the mechanical means of cheap plastic happiness and temporary dopamine satisfaction.

With an additional problematic note of viewing man as an economic decimal intended primarily to accumulate profit, taxation, and marketing advertising as a general humanistic benchmark. Reductively determined by material utility, within the often meaningless "carousel" commodity replacement that is an end in itself, with the reduction of an individual person to a psychophysical dimension, as Viktor Frankl would skilfully assert it. In these segments, we notice the crisis of modern science and politics, which are still considered highly curable. Like Frankl would say "world is not healthy, yet it is curable" (Frankl, 2000). We will turn back to the spirituality evaluation in the later paragraph.

Social implementation and wide-spreading potential within the framework of interdisciplinary cooperation

When we speak about bridge cooperation in the terms of some more links of the practical application, multiple expediency looms. For example, to work with vulnerable groups, with institutionally marginalized individuals. Such as: palliative domain patients, immigrants, (Rahgozar & Gimenez-Llort, 2020), families of severely ill people, people with addiction problems, prisoners and former prisoners (Barrientos-Rastrojo, 2023) and many others.

With the engagement of philosophical counsellors and logo therapists within a holistic system of mental health care in the community, we notice enrichment and improvement of the various current social and institutional issues. Also, philosophical counsellors have a strong potential contribution impact in the context of working with students and young people by expressing and promoting the critical thinking (Zoabi, Lobont, 2022), but with seniors² as well. To whom the group aspect of public gathering within philosophical cafes gives a strong social impact and growth.

Philosophical counselling has high corporative work potential as well. Aleksandar Fatić writes:

“Why is this aspect of leadership philosophically relevant and, vice versa, why is philosophy relevant to it? Primarily because we need a consensus on values and interpersonal styles in order to facilitate collective leadership: honesty, sincerity, and genuine care for colleagues, etc. While all companies tend to profess a high regard for such socially accepted values within their organizational walls, in reality the situation can be very different.” (Fatić, 2017, p. 229)

² On counseling for seniors, Lou Marinoff claims: “As seniors will lead increasingly active lives for more years in the coming years, the question arises as to what they might do with the gift of additional time. As usual, the corporeal dimension of their existence receives some adequate attention; the noetic dimension, inadequate attention. The potential for philosophy for seniors is vast, and virtually untapped.” (Marinoff, 2002)

Overall – the work scope gradation and placement of obligations and target groups, which are rounded by counselling and psychotherapy frame, could be flexibly modified according to individual needs. Implementing projects and initiatives at domestic and international levels, and by subsidizing counselling work, we could enable the implementation of the philosophical practice in a wide horizon of society. In the long-term context – striving to, and calling upon national institutions to provide coefficients for the employment of counsellors.

At the same time the challenge and the beauty of this hard process is the one that it gives the opportunity to “impose” ourselves on society with our own creative propulsive engagement as a strengthening impulse of great and wide significance. Especially in the current era, which is still marked by wounds sustained during the pandemic crisis (Lobont, 2021).

We argue that the social need for philosophical counsellors and logo therapists on the global level is greatly present. This can be clearly evidenced by the widespread philosophical practice around the world, and also by rapid growth of the desire for spirituality (de Diego-Cordero et al., 2022) in recent times. Potentially opening the doors to logo therapy's return to the world stage in a big way, connecting scientific, spiritual and cultural perspectives.

Toward the Conclusion – on the Path of the Philosophical Spirituality?

Following the Frankl's thoughts and directions, we accept the projection of the person's spiritual dimension, observing it as the most philosophical form and grasp of both therapeutic and counselling work. And while doing so we grasp philosophy as an integral part of the life of the community. Following the given line, spirituality is being approached as undeniable, unavoidable part of the human being and culture. Which is important to underline especially in the contemporary era, as we already marked – technicalized and digitalized – where people are craving for spirituality. Spirituality observed as the ones' wholeness, not as a kind of escaping to the transcendental field! Hereby approached as the space in which the various organic and mental differences are being exceeded. And as the path to the person, understanding and responsibility regarding her and other lives in the responsible, sensible way. This kind of epistemic and

ontic integration we name “philosophical spirituality”, a concept based on the pillars of hermeneutics and phenomenology. If we accept the idea of spirituality as the manifestation of the wholeness, then our linked perspectives (philosophical counselling and logotherapy) open up a fruitful field of meeting, contact and constructive dialogue between various fields of knowledge and pragmatic endorsement. Constructive in the sense of interdisciplinary connection between various perspectives and disciplines, on the way of understanding the purpose and progress of individuals and society as the unified domain.

Toward the conclusion, we put forward the thesis that only with an integrative, holistic, historical grasp of individuals, and their hermeneutic-grammatical ascension through this wholeness, we can talk about health, balance and homeostasis. We set the hypothesis that this is the humanistic *telos* secret ground. In the direction in which philosophical counselling and logotherapy can guide us with valuable guides and trajectories. Philosophical counselling – by raising awareness of philosophers and recalling ancient roots, and logotherapy – by humanizing psychotherapy by recalling philosophical foundations as its operational core.

Approached from the Frankl's logotherapy point of view, the impetus of these efforts in the general social scale is an aspiration on the way to over step reductionism and pan determinism (Frankl, 1985) which permeates various elements of the disciplines socially jurisdictional for the evaluation and treatment of mental difficulties, conditions, disorders and diseases. Primarily biologically induced psychiatry and neuroscience, as well as the psychology and cognitive science – observed from the social disciplinary spectrum of the scientific frame. In this critically induced integrative attempt, the value of logotherapy and philosophical counselling is observed as a possibility of improving and expanding the aforementioned disciplines. By no means as an attempt to annul and annihilate them.

And it is precisely this trans disciplinary and pluriperspective mark of philosophical spirituality, and the intentional focus on the search for meaning, that is inherently imbued with communicative and dialogical foundations. Inherent to the framework of philosophical counselling and logotherapy, which are in great measure teleologically linked.

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