

Can philosophical counseling be a special profession to be recognized in Romanian society?

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Abstract: The paper is based on a research that refers to a professionalization solution applicable in Romania, as a result of a mediation process, carried out only hypothetically and starting from the analysis of a phenomenon, the philosophical practice, this being continued with the study of some advantages but also criticism expressed by philosophers, practitioners and specialists from other fields, in which each has arguments and interests alike, for which the proposed solution can be considered as a possible hypothetical agreement, resulting from the said mediation process. The study took into account models created in other countries of the world, as well as the experiences of other practitioners in the field, aspects that confirmed the regulatory trend but also an implicit recognition of the profession of philosophical counselor, now distinct from the philosophical practitioner, which we believe can be successfully applied in Romania as well.

Key-words: philosophical counseling; philosophical practice; mediation; regulation; profession;

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Introduction

A few years ago (2015) I started a research approach in this field from the position of a beginner, who tries to understand a phenomenon manifested in recent years in the world, regarding some practices of philosophy, expressed in the form of counseling applied for the benefit of the individual. The concern for an applied field of philosophy was completed through a doctoral thesis supported and published in Romania (Hațegan, 2018) in which I analyzed the professionalization potential of the field, also putting myself in the role of a mediator, a fact that helped for me to be able to analyze the identified dilemmas or controversies, being at the same time a positioning that imposed a neutral attitude, in order to reach some conclusions on the positions expressed. From the role of mediator, I identified similarities between philosophical counseling and the recognized and regulated profession of mediator, both in Romania and in other countries of the world, a fact that encouraged me to propose the regulatory model of mediation and for the new applied concept of philosophy, respectively philosophical counseling. Maintaining the assumed neutral attitude, we identified the advantages, but also the existing interdependencies, in an attempt to come to the support of those who want to do more to bring philosophy closer, for the benefit of the human, and thus regaining the ground almost lost or appropriated by other fields. In my study I presented a professionalization solution applicable to Romania, as a result of a mediation process, carried out hypothetically, and which started from the analysis of a phenomenon, continued with the study of some advantages but also some criticisms expressed by philosophers, practitioners and specialists from other fields, in which each has arguments and interests alike, a fact for which the proposed solution can be considered as a possible hypothetical agreement, resulting from the mediation process. Of course, we also considered models created in other countries, as well as the experiences of other practitioners in this field, all of which were aspects that led indirectly to a confirmation of the regulatory trend, towards a recognition of the profession of philosophical advisor, but one that is different from the philosopher, as profession.

The final dilemma of my doctoral research was expressed in the form of a simple question: *Is philosophical counseling an impossible profession?* and the answer was one of support for the approach, in the

sense that philosophical counseling can be a special profession that deserves to be regulated; statement that confirms the chosen title of the doctoral thesis completed and publicly presented in 2018, in which the course necessary for philosophical counseling is presented: *from practice to profession*. (Hațegan, 2018)

About the need for a new profession

In order to find a necessity regarding the implementation of a new profession, we started the research carried out with the following question: *Can it the preliminary completion of some basic studies in philosophy be a requirement for access to the new profession?*

In search of an answer, I started from the observation of the access requirements in the liberal professions, and implicitly in the case of the study, where I concluded that the level of training required for a liberal profession is given by the completed higher studies. For the new profession of philosophical counselor, which is to be recognized and legally regulated, the same study conditions will apply as a basis for the preparation and training of the future specialist, followed by a specialization internship in the field of philosophical counseling. At this moment in Romania, two-year master's courses are organized, and through which the training program achieve the professional skills necessary for a practitioner in the new field of philosophical counseling.

But as with any master's program, the general rule of access for this type of program also applies in this case, the course being intended for all graduates of higher education, regardless of the undergraduate specialization followed. From the observation made during the research (being carried out within the master's program organized in Timișoara in 2015), I noticed that there are participants who come from other fields of training, other than philosophy, and who had some difficulties in the first year of studies adaptation (including adaptation to learning in English) being forced to make a greater effort to develop a philosophical thinking or to understand and work with various philosophical concepts, useful for the future specialist. This study program, carried out during two years of master's studies in the specialization of philosophical counselor, we believe can ensure the necessary conditions for the participants in the training program for the future professional. During the observation

studies, we identified the fact that there are areas that can be easily assimilated by the future counselor, especially by those participants who have a foundation of studies in psychology, and those who already have the information necessary to train a counselor, but who still remain in the group of those who make an effort to accumulate basic knowledge in philosophy. In order to improve the training program, I think it would be necessary to periodically survey the participants and the program managers, in order to identify any possible requirements or establish the necessary corrections. But as a liberal profession also includes free access to it, we believe that compliance with minimum higher education requirements cannot be sufficient to train these necessary skills for the future specialist, a fact that also requires the completion of certain levels of specialization for this field. In accordance with this requirement, a shorter specialization variant than the one currently proposed at the level of a master's program can be developed in the future, by accepting the possibility of training based on a short-term training program, carried out in accordance with the training norms professional training of adults, with the inclusion of the training program in the postgraduate level with a minimum limit of training hours required for the professional specialization. Corollary, there are also cases where those interested in the new profession come from higher education graduates, with a degree in philosophy, and related master's studies, who could more easily follow a short-term training internship, by participating in postgraduate programs of specialization in the new emerging profession.

This approach to professional training open the way for the establishment of new post-graduate training programs, where the philosophical practitioners can be selected as trainers and practitioners from among the newly established occupations, to work alongside other specialists in adult training. The university education units can also diversify the activity in the field of specialized training, by establishing and promoting postgraduate programs, necessary for the new profession.

Both the master's programs currently existing in Romania (at the University of Timisoara and the University of Bucharest), as well as the future postgraduate specialization programs in the field, will be subject to the rules defined by the Romanian university education law (2023), to be certified by the national body of professional representation, which will indirectly confirm, through the notice given to the university at the

establishment of the program, the access to the profession, for the graduates from the training and specialization programs thus defined.

The proposed approach can be yet another confirmation of the opening of philosophy to the applied field, of philosophical practice, by granting training facilities to the university field, as defined in the regulation of the occupation of philosophical advisor, this being already recognized in 2022 and registered in "National register for the classification of occupations", the assigned code (263311) being one specific to the occupational category in the field of philosophy, which is headed by the occupation of philosopher (263301).

The approach has beneficial effects on the entire training activity within the new profession, firmly eliminating any monopoly tendency in the field of training a philosophical advisor, the training attribute being left to the competence of all universities in Romania, interested in developing such specialized programs. Our approach to the regulation and recognition of the profession of philosophical advisor can be beneficial to the field of philosophical practice, with an important impact on current graduates of Romanian philosophy faculties, who can acquire another qualification, one with real chances to practice and obtain income, differently than they have done so far. A schematical presentation for the stages of the recognition of the profession, are shown in the figure below:



Fig. no.1. Proposed stages in the formation and regulation of the profession of the philosophical counselor

The first stage of the regulatory process was the establishment of training programs that can be organized at the level of higher education (master's and postgraduate). The next stage is represented by the professional association, intended for specialists, with the promotion and recognition of the new profession, and the legally established association already has activities in the preparation of the registration documentation of the newly established occupation, as a necessary stage for legal regulation in Romania. The last stage is represented by the recognition of the association as a national professional body, with the mission of continuing the process of professional organization, emphasizing continuous professional training, having the active role of permanent coordination of the activity of practitioners and increasing the prestige of the new profession.

About the skills of the new profession

The profession of philosophical counselor also implies the need to be the depository of specific professional skills, which are the basis of their professional training, acquired or learned during the initial specialized training process. The unique trainer of skills in this new applied field of philosophy is the university education system that manages the training programs, for all the proposed forms, which can be completed with other programs that can be included in the continuous professional training process. I consider it possible that in the regulation of the new profession, the regulatory authority of the profession can accept other alternative professional training programs that meet the national requirements for training and development of the skills and abilities necessary for the profession.

But until that moment, we have two master's programs approved by the Romanian Ministry of Education, being registered in the "National Register of Higher Education Qualifications" (RNCIS). The same approval and registration requirements will be applied to the post-graduate universities courses to be established by various universities in the country, at the initiative of the professional association already established (founded in 2016 as the Professional Association of Philosophical and Ethical Counseling -APCFE).

In the mentioned study I found some concerns on the part of practitioners to define or determine the tasks that a philosophical counselor needed, the requirements necessary to achieve them and what skills or competences can he acquire, through the basic training, aspect which will define access to the new profession. Of course, some skills are already developed in the training programs of philosophy, but now we have the situation in which people who have completed undergraduate studies in other fields, other than philosophy, can have access to the new profession, and who can develop specific skills useful to a philosophical advisor; and for philosophy graduates it will be a good way to improve their knowledge and develop and amplify these skills. Here is also a conclusion on the philosophical skills acquired through philosophical knowledge, and necessary for the profession, expressed as follows:

"Philosophical competence, understood as an increased reflective capacity, then becomes the distinctive competence of all those professions dealing with complex human systems, in which not only the ability to reflect, but especially to help others to reflect constitutes a necessary condition for the effective exercise of the profession itself" (Frega, 2005, 82).

Other views liken philosophy and philosophical counseling to an art, defined in Raabe's Handbook of Philosophical Practice, which refers to Catherine McCall's view that "practical philosophy is not a skill but an art". Regarding this aspect, Peter Raabe asks himself a question to which he has not yet found an answer:

"If there is a difference between the 'art' of philosophical counseling and the 'skills' resulting from combining the techniques and procedures of philosophical counseling with the aptitudes and personalities of philosophers?" This issue has not received much attention in the philosophical counseling literature" (Raabe, 2001).

It is necessary to develop the professional skills specific to a specialist in philosophical counseling, without which his actions can be difficult for professional success.

Peter Harteloh has a study of philosophical counseling skills, making a classification of the skills acquired through this type of practice, which he defines metaphorically as: the art of questioning, the art of interpretation and the art of understanding. The author of the study analyzes what are the tasks to be followed, along with the requirements that must be met to achieve them, and places all these elements in relation to the three types of competences, which can thus be obtained through the new profession (Harteloh, 2010).

If we refer to the tasks that fall to a specialist in philosophical counseling, we can highlight the most important ones, such as: facilitating thinking and reflection processes through thinking exercises, reading some texts from philosophy, improving dialogue and communication, clarifying problems or dilemmas, applying the concepts of philosophy in everyday life, clarifying personal experiences and developing an own lifestyle, changes in thinking and attitude towards certain states or events (Harteloh, 2010). In the requirements chapter, through which these tasks can be fulfilled, we also find other aspects: the use of dialogue, the use of suitable questions, listening and interpreting a problem in philosophical terms, the use of logic, bringing to attention some concepts, texts or theories from philosophy, the use of examples from philosophy, the explanation of some philosophical texts, empathy with advice and creativity in counseling. These are just some of the skills that a specialist in philosophical practice must learn, in the exercise of the counseling profession.

For the realization of a professional training program, I believe that it must also contain other elements, such as: the academic study of some texts from philosophy, by going through an indicated bibliography; learning the Socratic dialogue and other philosophical research techniques, both individually and in groups; studying some biographies, but also interpreting one's own biography; using real-life examples or using recommended narratives, developing critical thinking and creativity; learning the elements of philosophical reflection or meditation, the art of questioning and argumentation; elements of logic and communication.

Here are the more important groups of skills, where in the first place we have philosophical skills, which refer to the philosophical knowledge necessary for an advisor in this field, who needs to create a thinking style based on philosophy.

Another type of competence derives from psychopathology, that is, a specialist must easily distinguish specific cases of mental disorders, in which case they will decline the competence or request the agreement of the therapist in the field.

In order to carry out their mission of philosophical counseling, the specialist must develop some skills to guide the thought processes necessary for the client, to help them recognize the meanings and values by which they are guided, or to stimulate the need to do philosophy or even for individual philosophical reflection.

Returning to the philosophical skills necessary for the profession of philosophical counseling, they were presented in detail by Stefania Contesini, who refers to five groups of skills, namely: conceptualization, argumentation, judgment, evaluation and moral sensitivity. Regarding the field of philosophy applied in organizations, Contesini refers to other necessary philosophical skills, such as: the analysis and exploration of concepts derived from management, the use of rhetorical strategies, dialogue and communication, the application of ethics and the resolution of conflicts, including ethical ones (Contesini, 2016). Another presentation of the skills necessary for a philosophical counselor was given by the practitioners Paolo Cervari and Neri Pollastri (2010), who list the philosophical skills, being divided into classes of skills, followed by social skills and ethical or even psychological skills, which they argue that they are essential to the application of the philosophy within an organization.

I believe that all these professional skills necessary for a practical philosopher, regardless of whether he is called a consultant, advisor or facilitator, can be used with the same potential within individual or group counseling, or applied at the level of smaller communities or categories, but with their adaptation to the concrete conditions of practice. Taking into account the types of competences provided in the "Romanian Methodology - elaborated by CNCIS" which defines the Matrix of the National Framework of Qualifications in Higher Education, about the documentation for the approval of professional training programs, master's and postgraduate programs, that must be prepared, having as a model the professional and transversal competences provided in that matrix. The analysis of these requirements reflect the existence of two types of competences, the professional ones, which contain the necessary knowledge and skills acquired in the training process, and the second

group contains the transversal competences, which interfere with elements of personal development, social interaction, including the personal responsibility.

Since we are analyzing a new profession, applied to the field of philosophy, it must also contain some professional skills specific to philosophy, derived from it. The training and initial training programs in the new profession will include, in addition to the necessary knowledge of philosophy and other disciplines related to the profession, as well as the development of practical skills necessary to solve problems or life situations subject to counseling. Staying with the skills necessary for philosophical counseling, analyzed by Cervari and Pollastri, who identified the classes of argumentative skills, which generate practical philosophy skills, in the following order: logical, linguistic-communicative, critical, analytical, hermeneutic, demonstrative, systematic, evaluative, reflective, creative (Cervari, Pollastri, 200). Of course, the development of a skills grid remains a future topic for practitioners, but also for those who will work in the training and professional training process, without which a profession cannot exist. The elements presented here can only be a premise for the continuation of this extensive process of regulation and approval of training and training programs in the new profession, which they can soon become realities.

Assessments resulting from research

The research project started from a series of questions that graduates of undergraduate courses in philosophy have upon completing their studies, namely: *What can I do with my graduation diploma? How can I put it in value?* But to the answer to these questions, which we all intuit, we must also add the data of a sad reality that shows us that only a very small percentage of the graduates of the faculties of philosophy can later put to value the knowledge they acquired during their university studies, to find a job in the field in which they learned and to work as philosophers, and implicitly to have an income from the practice of this profession. But let's ask again: *What is the real cause of this impediment, which philosophy graduates face more and more often?* From the answer to this question, I learned that there are few jobs in research, the same is the case with teaching positions in philosophy, in Romania the philosophy class is often

eliminated from schools or transferred to optional subjects, and in universities the number of students in this specialization is in continuous decline. *But doesn't Romanian society need philosophers or philosophy practitioners?*

It seems that the curriculum also discouraged any attempt to put philosophy into practice, being oriented towards learning philosophical tools, mainly academic, which tend towards theorizing, conceptualizing and abstracting. In the same study, I identified in some practitioners in applied philosophy numerous references and references to famous philosophers, to currents of philosophy that can be used by practitioners to form and develop useful skills and necessary for the new concept of philosophical counseling, and I conclude the ideas that have arrived at, that support the research, as important steps on the way to the regulation of the new profession. If we study the elements of historiography regarding the appearance in the contemporary world of the first philosophical counseling offices, we will notice the fact that the first to take the initiative were philosophers, we are referring here to the profession of philosopher, acquired through university training.

Thus there appeared the first premises that generated the initiative to put philosophy into practice, namely: the model of philosophical practices manifested in antiquity; various philosophical works that refer to the need to put philosophy into practice, and last but not least the appearance of some psychotherapeutic practices that took elements from philosophy in their way of working, which they then attributed to themselves as their own applications, here we refer especially to the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry, which have taken over ideas and practices specific to philosophy. Another premise that influenced the new current of philosophical practice was the natural need of philosophers to support themselves, especially those who have specific education and training in the field of philosophy, but who did not have the chance to apply for a position within an institution academic or educational, in order to manifest as a professor of philosophy, a situation that a large part of graduates with a degree in philosophy face and who are put in a position to requalify for other fields of activity, adapting to a dynamic and competitive economy. The next category of people interested in this applied field were some therapists or specialists in various forms of counseling or people in the didactic field, who, in addition to training in

their current profession, had a university training with a degree in philosophy, but who for various reasons they did not capitalize on the knowledge of philosophy acquired.

With the emergence of these distinct philosophical practices, some of the philosophers who went on to other qualifications expressed an interest in returning to philosophy; some braver ones have separated their therapies or specializations from their philosophical practices, which they have developed distinctly, within the implementation stream of philosophical counseling, as an activity distinct from any therapeutic, didactic, or counseling practice. I believe that this segment of practitioners, with a double training, have a great advantage in the application of philosophical counseling, in the sense that they can more easily identify the limit in which they can act as philosophical counselors, a limit that makes the difference between philosophical practice and therapeutic practice, to solve a life situation of the advised person. Not by chance, in the training program of the philosophical counselor were also included ways to identify pathologies specific to psychology or psychiatry, in order to identify the limit up to which they can act, without interfering with the necessity or requirements of a therapy applied to the advised case.

It is also recognized that there are no contraindications to the practices of philosophical counseling, if we look through the lens of their application to people undergoing various therapies, and the collaboration between the philosophical counselor and a doctor or therapist can be beneficial to the person who manifests a certain pathology. Perhaps not by chance, professor Lou Marinoff gave a more special title to his book of philosophical practices, namely: *Plato not Prozac!*, as a metaphorically expressed exhortation to prioritize applied philosophy instead of specific medications (Marinof, 2000).

A final category of people interested in learning and developing practical skills in philosophy are the specialists who train in philosophical counseling and who are people with basic training in various other specializations other than that given by a bachelor's degree in philosophy, people who need a specialization in a new applied field, philosophical counseling. The solution for this group of people is to train in the profession of philosophical counselor following one of the proposed training programs (master's or postgraduate program), as a distinct specialization in the field.

For the category of philosophers interested in this applied field, as well as that of philosophers who have been requalify in other fields, but who show an intention to return to philosophy, we propose as a form of preparation and training in philosophical counseling the completion of short-term programs, such as postgraduate, to be recognized both by the qualifications authority, but also by the professional body established to regulate the profession. This last training option could also be applied to people who hold a doctorate in the field of philosophy or humanities, who, in order to be recognized as specialists in the new profession, could follow a specialization in the field by applying for a postgraduate training internship. I believe that researchers who have acquired the title of *Doctor of Philosophy* with a specific theme of philosophical counseling can meet the necessary and sufficient conditions from the start to have direct access to the profession, based on the doctoral research completed in the field, and they can follow specialization internships, as part of continuing professional training programs. Here is a schematic presentation of the proposed solution to be applied in Romania for access to the profession of philosophical counselor, according to the figure below:

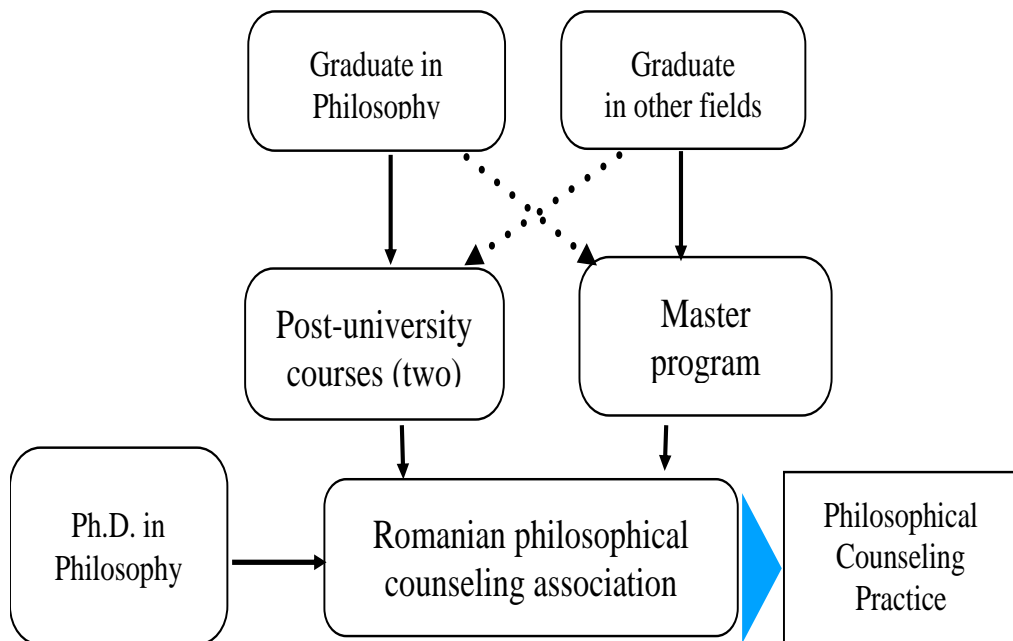


Fig. no.2. The solutions for access to the new profession of philosophical counselor in Romania

From the point of view of training and professional training in the field, we believe that the proposed training programs must be developed strictly in the university environment, after their approval by the specialized authority, namely the *National Framework of Higher Education Qualifications - CNCIS*, followed by the professional organization that proposed the regulation of the new profession. After entering the profession, it will be necessary to organize a continuous professional training system based on well-defined criteria, in which practitioners have the opportunity to train continuously, through various forms of training organized through the professional organization that will regulate and represent the profession.

Let's not forget the criticism expressed by some philosophers who claim that the place of philosophy is only at the academic level, and who had opinions and reactions against the practice of philosophy in this form of philosophical counseling, one of them being Gerd Achenbach himself, considered in Europe the founder of counseling philosophical, he considered that no specific regulation of philosophical practice is necessary. This positioning supports the idea that a philosopher can freely practice any form of philosophical practice, considering that the profession of philosopher is already regulated and unanimously recognized in the world. Through this approach, I believe that the profession of philosopher is strictly protected, in order not to allow access to philosophical practices except for philosophers, having as an indirect effect the fact that all those tendencies to practice philosophy will be kept active within other specializations or fields in which they will use and adapt, in an unapproved way, techniques and methods specific to the applied philosophy, to be presented as part of their own therapy or counseling procedures.

With this approach, the so-called professional plagiarism practiced by some categories of specialists from various therapies or methods in the field of counseling or training is facilitated, being a plagiarism tacitly accepted by philosophers, perhaps not voluntarily, but only as a result of an inaction towards the initiative to build and recognize the new qualification, specific to the applied philosophy. We also note that this position highlights another major impediment, caused by the fact that the training curriculum for a philosopher contains few elements intended for learning and developing practical philosophical skills, of the type acquired by a practitioner in philosophical counseling, or the curriculum proposed

for students from philosophy does not contain enough disciplines dedicated to philosophical practices, to be assimilated to those proposed in the new profession. But if the specialization in the new profession will be done only through postgraduate or master's programs, this fact will implicitly lead to a specialization of the profession, which has a major advantage, in the sense that both philosophy graduates and those from other specializations with a degree, starting from the premise that university programs, master's or postgraduate, are unanimously recognized in the world and which can be assimilated to any training and specialization program, being fully accepted in the new profession.

Now we also assume the role of a mediator between the two positions presented, one being the one through which philosophers support a practice in this form of philosophical practices, these remaining strictly in the field of specialization of a philosopher, and the second direction is that of regulating a new profession with open access and other specializations in other fields, but only after completing some training and specialization programs, to which I referred previously.

Through the proposed solution, we thus bring a solution to both positions, without harming any of them, and the role assumed by the mediator is to insist on reaching an agreement on the two positions expressed, with real benefits to philosophy, as well as applied, for philosophical counseling. With the ending of this conflict, sometimes smoldering and undeclared, but often manifested by both sides, the result of the mediation may have the effect of opening the way for the regulation of the new profession, of philosophical advisor, and will remove any interpretation or suspicion of plagiarism that may arise in both camps.

Through the proposed mediation, we will manage to build a more respected image of applied philosophy, manifested through the new profession of philosophical advisor, to be unanimously recognized by both specialists and philosophers.

Another specific application of mediation, hypothetically applied in research, was the mediation of the positions sometimes expressed among the practitioners of philosophical counseling: some being for the practice of philosophical counseling strictly by philosophers with a license in the field, who also support the fact that excessive regulation of to another profession, other than that of a philosopher; and the second position being those who support the possibility of practicing philosophical counseling by

means of specialists specifically trained in philosophical counseling, training to which people with a license in other fields can also have access, but who can specialize through training in the new profession. This second category includes all those who come from related therapies, who already apply the philosophy in their practice, in various ways, and people who want to specialize, by going through training and specialization programs, similar to the training courses organized by US professional association APPA (appa.edu).

The hypothetical mediation of the two approaches resulted in the generation of an acceptance from both presented categories, through which both possibilities of access to the new profession can be accepted, by accepting the fact that the proposed training or specialization program is imperatively necessary and useful. Thus, these diametrically opposed or contradictory approaches can cease, as they are not beneficial to the application of philosophy for people, and the proposed regulation will bring added value to philosophical practices, which are currently practiced in various ways or personal interpretations.

The construction of a unitary regulatory system can create the premises for a permanent supervision of new forms of practice, which can be recognized and regulated, and the recognized status of the profession will also change the public perception towards philosophical practice.

I believe that the regulatory process will lead to a natural selection of specialists interested in practicing philosophy under this new form of philosophical counseling, leaving the place dedicated to philosophy of the academic type, and without affecting in any way the respect it has earned over the centuries. Also, the new profession that I support can become a successful liberal activity, recognized and regulated in our country, which will keep a permanent connection with philosophy, as a permanent source of inspiration, and philosophy can in turn more actively support development and recognition of the new profession. Philosophical counseling can even have the role of a child, with whom the parent, here philosophy, can be proud and whom it can support and guide permanently.

I am for the introduction of continuous professional training within the new profession, as an active element to improve the activity, to stimulate permanent research in the applied field of philosophy, in which academic philosophy will have an important role, by developing new specialization programs or by the action of collecting, interpreting and

presenting research results in the new applied field. Collaboration and cooperation are the elements that can be followed, and which will eliminate the current trends of criticism and contradictory debates, which can have indirect effects on philosophy.

Maintaining the positioning in the area of the mediation process, I noticed that a practitioner in philosophical counseling applied to groups, like the philosophical cafe or other group meetings, where the practicing philosopher or the specialist in philosophical counseling has an active role as a facilitator of the practice, as so does a mediator in a mediation process. A similar approach takes place in individual counseling, where the practitioner indirectly also develops a mediation process, which can take place between his client and his problem or dilemma.

Based on these observations, we studied some specific characteristics of a mediation process, in comparison with the studied philosophical counseling practices, reaching the conclusion that there is a closeness and similarity between the two processes, that of the mediation of a conflict by a specialized mediator and that of philosophical counseling by a qualified specialist in this field. Thus, we tried to show the similarities between the analyzed philosophical counseling concept and the existing mediation process, which is already accepted as a regulated liberal profession in Romania (Hațegan, 2019). Starting from the similarities between the two processes, I also studied the organization and regulation of the mediator profession, which I consider to be a particularly useful source in the process of regulation and organization of the new profession and qualifications analyzed, that of a philosophical advisor, and the regulatory process can successfully follow the model already established for the regulation of the mediator profession, with the necessary additions, specific to this activity.

The regulation of the profession only establishes in the most practical way what are the rights and obligations of the practitioner, their way of working, but also how they can be represented. These elements lead to the realization of a desired recognition of the profession, which can be opposed both by those who practice it and by the beneficiaries, to whom the proposed new philosophical practice is addressed, being different from any therapy or counseling in the field. This fact will generate the correct and legal premises for the development of the new profession, of the type of a liberal profession, achievable by approving the profession, by

establishing the professional association, as a professional body for the representation and supervision of the profession, following the elaboration of the ethical code of the profession, of the norms of professional deontology, necessary for the recognition of any profession, being also a form of trust and safety of the quality of the service offered. Like any recognized liberal profession, philosophical counseling will have all its characteristics, here we mean including ensuring the secrecy of the meeting and protecting the information derived from the counseling process, with immediate effect in creating a professional prestige.

Membership of a professional body recognized by the state can be beneficial for each practitioner, in the sense that it indirectly offers a real guarantee to the recipient of these practices, the client who will turn to the philosophical advisor, being also an indirect recommendation of his services. When a graduate wants to act on the basis of a qualification or skills legally acquired within the national education system, they need a recognition of their qualification, which can be opposable to everyone, and which gives them the right to value the skills and knowledge accumulated, in a legal framework and protected by the state, through the forms of recognition of qualifications and professions.

Practitioners' registration in professional associations will bring them independence of their practice, both in relation to the state, which will ensure immediate recognition, but also in relation to other professions or qualifications. I believe that the approach of establishing some university training and training programs in this new field is particularly useful and important for the training of future specialists in philosophical counseling and we propose that the training and specialization programs, such as master's or postgraduate, can be developed in as many university centers as possible in Romania, thus encouraging the active participation of philosophy teachers from the country and established practitioners in the field. We thus support the need for the first postgraduate level courses to come to the support of graduates with a degree in philosophy, to not give up on putting into practice the knowledge of philosophy acquired during their initial studies. These philosophers, withdrawn or disillusioned with their very choice of philosophy, will now have a real opportunity to return and specialize in philosophical practice, so necessary for the common people, a fact that will bring the philosophy graduates a certain personal satisfaction, manifested both in a material and professional form, being

also an incentive to reactivate them as philosophers, to become active participants in philosophical debates, even at an academic level, through the permanent training programs they will participate in the new profession.

This opportunity will also be beneficial for university philosophers, offering them the opportunity to actively participate in the creation of training programs in the new specialization, as a challenge to research the procedures or work techniques proposed in the new field of philosophical counseling, but also by putting practice of philosophy, for the benefit of a person who had no direct contact with philosophy, in any of its forms of expression. It is time for each side to prove that it is truly concerned with seeking and preserving the wisdom of humanity, now in a form that is necessary and useful to the common people, just as the philosophers of old did. Through this approach, which we consider constructive from many points of view, the role and importance of philosophy in human life will increase, that is to say, it will return among people and for people, facilitating a wider access to the treasury of wisdom held by philosophy.

In all the situations presented, about manifested confrontations, our approach remains one of mediation, in the sense that we demonstrate an attitude of clarification on the divergences that have arisen, followed by collaboration and cooperation on various levels, which can lead to the elimination of any disputes or adversarial debates, with the realization of real benefits in both directions. A similar approach, viewed from the point of view of mediation as a process, is for the sometimes more tense relationship manifested in various occasions or situations, between academic philosophy and philosophical counseling, emphasizing the need manifested by philosophical counseling to call upon and rely on academic philosophy, which can actively participate in the realization of the training and improvement programs of the new profession that is taking shape. In the study there are practitioners who support the thesis that only a philosopher can best exercise the profession of philosophical advisor, among which are noted: Gerd Achenbach, Ran Lahav, Neri Pollastri; on the other hand, they are practitioners who claim that this profession can be exercised by a specialist trained in philosophical counseling, and who can also come from other specializations, other than philosophy. In this area, Lou Marinoff is positioned, a philosopher who advocates for the training of specialists from other fields of activity, based on a training program agreed

in the profession; being followed by Peter Raabe, in the field of psychology by his primary qualification. I am still in favor of the need for mediation, in the sense of not wasting time with various confrontations of ideas and opinions on this topic, with the acceptance from both sides of the fact that the promotion of the profession can advance without divergences, and in the training project and qualification in the new profession, both career philosophers and specialists from other fields will have access, who will follow one of the proposed forms of professional training.

In the proposal regarding the organization of these training programs, I insist that they be organized only at the university level, with the participation of specialists in the teaching of philosophy as well as philosophers from the academic area, together with practitioners specialized in the new profession. These proposed training programs may be subject to accreditation by the specially qualified institution for university programs (CNCIS), from the point of view of the professional skills delivered at the end of each training program, which will give greater weight to the new qualification.

The 2022 regulation that took place in Romania, by including the occupation of philosophical counselor in the "Classification of occupations in Romania" has become a real form of recognition of the new occupation, being a natural premise for the legal development of this activity, in accordance with the characteristics specific to a liberal profession.

If we refer to all the controversies related to the regulation and development of a specific profession of philosophical counseling, they can lead us to an erroneous conclusion, that of being categorized as an impossible profession. This classification can be based on several arguments, such as the opinion of those who place philosophical counseling in the category of a profession without an object or without a well-defined goal, and others place it in the category of a profession that has not defined its rules and methods specific, opinions that were generated by different currents of opinion manifested even among practitioners. Returning to the main characteristics of the presented philosophical counseling, we can conclude that this new practice represents another way of doing philosophy, that of moving towards a form of dialogue with other people, giving up the philosophical solitude of the past. Philosophical dialogue remains the main characteristic of philosophical counseling, as a practice that takes place between two

people: between a philosopher and a non-philosopher or between a specialist in applied philosophy and a person who wants to learn to outline their own philosophy of life. Although not therapy, philosophical counseling can have therapeutic effects, in the sense that it resolves or clarifies the subject's problems; it can also be considered a helping profession, in the sense that it provides advice and help to a person; or it can teach them to do philosophy, being a counselor through the help offered; and the fact that it solves certain problems does not mean that it is a result service, but it can be repaid like any service rendered to a person. Considering these characteristics, philosophical counseling can be considered a special profession that deserves special regulation.

This approach to the exercise of some philosophical practices now brought "to light" detaches itself from any form of interpretation on the proposed new skills, eliminates any confusion that can be made with the occupation of philosopher or with other therapies that also use philosophical practices, thus eliminating any improvisation from any direction or even a possible offense that can be indirectly brought to these established and recognized professions. Practically, there is a passing into legality of some practices that until now were assumed indirectly and undeclared by other occupations.

Thus, philosophy put into practice is and can become useful for the benefit of any person, starting from the age of conscious childhood to old age, and through philosophical counseling it can come to the aid of any person who wants to learn to philosophize. We support the exhortation expressed previously, that of learning to live a normal happy life with the help of philosophy, thus making a transition from analytical and theoretical philosophy, often manifested only at the academic level, to a philosophy put into practice and applied for the benefit of as many as possible persons on this planet, for the benefit of ordinary people seeking wisdom, and who can actively participate in the realization the professional training programs so necessary in the new profession.

Conclusions

In this paper, I have outlined what can be the path to be followed in Romania for the implementation and recognition of a new professional occupation, an initiative that can be subject to a regulatory procedure by

law, so that philosophical counseling is included in the category of liberal professions in our country. The procedure for the recognition of this new profession requires a good knowledge of the necessary procedures and requirements, as well as the possibilities to be followed by those interested in this endeavor. I recommend to those involved in the process of regulation and recognition of the profession of philosophical counselor that throughout this process they collaborate within the team, to show openness to suggestions from other entities, and from practitioners in philosophy or those who seek to work in counseling, aiming to maintain and the development of the primordial connection with academic philosophy, from which it originates.

I believe that the whole process of regulation of the proposed philosophical counselor profession can be permanently improved with ideas, opinions or solutions, from those who have accumulated experience in philosophical practice or from those from the university environment who are active in the area of training in applied philosophy, but also from graduates of already existing training programs.

A collaboration of all the factors involved can lead to the rapid realization of the recognition of this new profession, using the proposed regulatory models, and thus highlighting the existing training potential in Romanian university education, giving a real chance to those graduates of a license in philosophy to be able to do more with all the accumulated knowledge, but also in support of those who have a certain connection with philosophical practices and who will be able to activate in a regulated and recognized form within the Romanian society.

I strongly believe that it is an opportune time for philosophy to stop standing aside, to become actively involved in the life of the city, as Socrates and other philosophers did in antiquity. The need for some philosophical practices is obvious, all that remains is to apply them through philosophical counseling, to make philosophy more useful to people, organizations and communities. I believe that the ultimate test of the proposed solution of professionalization can be verified in fact, by applying the new concept of philosophical counseling in real life, with specialists trained and dedicated to this new field of philosophy, which can now be put to the benefit of people.

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