

The Philosophical Counselor in the age of Artificial Intelligence: From practice to profession, from profession to algorithm

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Abstract: The paper addresses the ethical integration of artificial intelligence into philosophical counseling in Romania. We begin with the criteria used by Julia Clare and Richard Sivil to distinguish between practice and profession, and with the roadmap for recognizing the new profession of philosophical counseling in Romania, outlined in 2019 by Vasile Hațegan. Much of this process has already been accomplished; what remains is the cognitive dimension, which has yet to catch up with either online or algorithmically assisted practice. In the second part of the article, we draw upon Hațegan's comparisons between philosophical counseling and psychotherapy, coaching, spiritual counseling, and mediation to identify five distinguishing criteria: counselor neutrality, the relational nature of the process, non-dependency, the non-therapeutic nature of the practice, and client autonomy. We treat these criteria as an ethical test for conversational AI agents. The APPAgpt platform proves particularly useful in this endeavor; through it, the American Philosophical Practitioners Association invites the public to converse with bots simulating dialogues with great thinkers, while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of the human counselor. The test yields nuanced results. When used by the counselor as a tool, artificial intelligence can operate within the boundaries of the practice; however, when placed in the counselor's role facing the client, it exceeds those limits. The article concludes with proposals for

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future occupational standards and the philosophical counselor's code of ethics: the inclusion of a competency unit dedicated to digitally mediated practice, as well as a decision-making procedure inspired by Henk van Luijk's model.

Key-words: philosophical counseling; professional ethics; artificial intelligence; neutrality; digital skills; professionalization;

Introduction

In 2019, Vasile Hațegan described the path that philosophical counseling would have to follow in Romania in order to become a profession in its own right, distinct from that of the philosopher. The steps in this direction involved registering the occupation in the Romanian Classification of Occupations (COR), developing occupational standards, validating training programs, and establishing a national professional body, culminating in the drafting and approval of a law on philosophical counseling, modeled on the mediation law (Hațegan, 2019a, pp. 2278–2279). At that time, there was a single master's program, opened at the West University of Timișoara in 2015, and a single professional association, APCFE, established in 2017 (Hațegan, 2019a, p. 2280).

Seven years on, APCFE is active, the occupation of philosophical counselor has its own COR code (263311), and the occupational standards, once drafted, will become “binding” on all trainers, to be followed by a legislative initiative *lege ferenda* supported by the professional association (Hațegan, 2019a, p. 2278). However, the practice that these standards are intended to regulate has changed rapidly with the development of the internet and the advent of artificial intelligence. Many philosophical counseling sessions now take place online. Conversational assistants are used to prepare sessions and conduct research, and some clients come to the counselor after they have already discussed their problem with a Chabot. Standards written only for face-to-face meetings risk being outdated on the day they are approved.

In an earlier paper, we argued that opposition to collaboration with artificial intelligence would be a mistake, since it is an extension created by humans, and the virtual space of discourse functions as a new form of *polis*, which can concentrate or distribute power, or narrow or amplify thought (Stănciulescu, 2026, pp. 42–43). We also observed there that we still do not have a generally accepted ethical code for the relationship between humans and technology (Stănciulescu, 2026, p. 42). Therefore, there is no longer any point in asking whether artificial intelligence is allowed to participate in counseling. The useful question is under what conditions it can intervene without changing the nature of this practice.

Julia Clare and Richard Sivil group the criteria by which philosophical counseling can become a profession into three categories. Normative criteria concern service orientation and commitment; cognitive criteria concern knowledge and specialized training; and organizational criteria concern associations, control of access, and self-regulation (Clare & Sivil, 2014, p. 311). This division is useful in practice, as it separates questions that are usually conflated in these debates. What values does philosophical counseling serve? What must a practitioner know? Who decides who is allowed to practice it?

The same authors observe that practitioners agree fairly easily on working methods (Socratic questioning, rational argumentation, and working with the client's worldview), and much less easily on aims. Some see counseling as an exercise in philosophizing, others as a way of solving personal problems, and others as a tool for personal development (Sivil & Clare, 2018, p. 1). The four-category taxonomy proposed by the two authors (therapeutic, problem-solving, epistemic, and phronetic) seeks to hold this variety together without sacrificing methodological coherence (Sivil & Clare, 2018, p. 5). For those writing the standards, the lesson is clear. The standards cannot impose a particular method; at most, they can establish the minimum competencies shared by all orientations. This is precisely what is at stake in the cognitive criterion.

Bellarmino Nneji proposes a tiered curriculum for institutionalizing the field. It begins with introductions to philosophy and logic, followed by philosophical anthropology, ethics, and philosophy of religion, then philosophies of life from Western and Eastern traditions; finally, established methods are studied (the Socratic dialogue, Achenbach's approach, and Marinoff's PEACE process), along with professional ethics

(Nneji, 2013). Without saying so, the scheme assumes face-to-face counseling. Yet it is precisely at the level of methods that the adaptations required by the digital environment should be added. Of the three criteria, the cognitive one becomes obsolete most quickly. What was sufficient for practice ten years ago may no longer suffice, even if the profession's values and organization have remained the same?

1. The Romanian Path, 2019–2026

On the normative side, the Romanian model was mediation from the outset. In his 2019 paper, Hațegan placed the two practices side by side in a table, highlighting what they share: the specialist's neutrality, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the specialist's noninvolvement in the solution. Philosophical counseling appeared there as a "mediation of the soul," in which the counselor stands between the client and the client's own dilemma (Hațegan, 2019a, pp. 2275–2276). Neutrality, client autonomy, confidentiality, and professional responsibility are the values that any code of ethics for the profession will have to enshrine. Most progress has been made on the organizational side. Hațegan proposed two routes into the profession: a master's degree or at least two postgraduate programs, open also to graduates in other fields (Hațegan, 2019a, p. 2277). He also formulated a requirement that will have to be incorporated into the standards: a philosophical counselor must be able to recognize a pathology that falls outside their competence and refer the client to the appropriate specialist, because they have an ethical obligation to do so (Hațegan, 2019b, pp. 374–375).

The standards will also have to cover work in organizations. In a later article, Hațegan counted managers, members of management teams, and employees among the beneficiaries of philosophical consultancy (Hațegan, 2020, p. 325), while Dorine Bauduin and Ida Jongsma had already shown in 1999 how philosophers use Socratic dialogue and *dilemma training* to respond to organizations' needs (Bauduin & Jongsma, 1999). On the cognitive side, specialized training exists, and a curriculum such as Nneji's covers analysis, worldview work, and the conduct of dialogue reasonably well. What it lacks is attention to the conditions under which counselors work today. Neither the roadmap from 2019 nor the international literature used here yet takes technologically mediated

practice into account. In summary, the normative criterion has been met, the organizational criterion is advanced (the occupational standards and the law remain to be completed), while the cognitive criterion is solid for traditional counseling and incomplete for mediated counseling. In Clare and Sivil's analysis, what was missing was organization. In Romania, what is still missing is an update.

2. Criteria for Delimiting Philosophical Counseling

Between 2019 and 2021, Vasile Hațegan compared philosophical counseling, in turn, with mediation, psychotherapy, coaching, and spiritual counseling. Unlike psychotherapy, philosophical counseling does not diagnose, apply treatment, or last long. It does not create dependence on the specialist, who remains neutral and acts only as a facilitator between the client and their problem, while the client may withdraw at any time (Hațegan, 2019b, pp. 373–374). Unlike coaching, philosophical counseling does not pursue a result fixed in advance and avoids individual assessments, focusing instead on how the client sees the world (Hațegan, 2020, pp. 331–333). Spiritual counseling can become repetitive and can bind a person to the one guiding them, whereas philosophical counseling aims at clarification and leaves the client, in the end, with the ability to philosophize independently (Hațegan, 2021, pp. 6–7). With mediation, it shares neutrality, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the fact that the specialist does not interfere in the solution (Hațegan, 2019a, p. 2276).

Five criteria can be drawn from these comparisons. The counselor is a neutral facilitator: they do not provide the solution but help the client clarify it. The process is relational; clarification takes place in dialogue with another person. The process is time-limited and comes to an end, so it does not create dependence. Philosophical counseling does not treat; when a pathology is encountered, the client is referred to a specialist. Finally, the client is autonomous, attends voluntarily, and may leave at any time.

3. Digitally Mediated Practice: Mediated Communication and Algorithmic Assistance

When people speak of “digital counseling,” they usually conflate two different situations. In the first, the counselor and client communicate by

video or written messages, but the dialogue remains one between two people. In the second, an artificial intelligence system contributes to the content of the process, either behind the scenes, when the counselor is preparing, or directly, in the conversation with the client. These types of counseling require different competencies and raise different ethical issues. For clarity, we will call the first mediated communication and the second algorithmic assistance. Zoran Kojčić conducted three sessions using Oscar Brenifier's method—one face to face, one on Skype, and one through Facebook chat—and compared them (Kojčić, 2014). Chat has the advantage of preserving the entire dialogue. The counselor no longer has to take notes and can return at any time to what was said earlier; for shy clients or those at a distance, it may be the best option. On the other hand, nonverbal reactions are lost, the client's attention is more easily scattered, and it is difficult to maintain the rhythm of short questions in writing. Video preserves much of the control the counselor has in a face-to-face session, while the client remains in their own home.

Kojčić concludes that the form of communication should be chosen according to the client's preferences. For occupational standards, at least three competencies follow from these observations: the counselor chooses the form of communication together with the client, adapts their working technique, and understands the confidentiality conditions of the platform they use. With algorithmic assistance, things become more complicated. In an earlier case study, we worked with two conversational assistants, Claude and ChatGPT, to prepare an intervention for a 68-year-old client. We concluded that artificial intelligence has a place as a tool for research and for constructing working frameworks, but not as a "third partner" in the relationship, because only the counselor can decide what is genuinely useful to the client. The tool speeds up access to resources, organizes data, and sometimes offers a perspective that the counselor's fatigue might have obscured. Nevertheless, the decisive factor remains the quality of the question the counselor asks it (Stănciulescu, 2026, pp. 64–65). Nadejda Chironda sees algorithmically assisted counseling as a "conceptual mutation," rather than merely an efficiency gain. Responsibility, she argues, is distributed: the practitioner, developer, platform, and algorithm all become actors in the decision, and traditional ethical norms must consequently be reconsidered (Chironda, 2026, pp. 36–37). The description seems technically accurate. From a professional standpoint,

however, the response must move in the opposite direction, toward a re-centering: regardless of the tool used, the counselor is responsible for everything that enters the session. Such responsibility presupposes knowledge. It is hard to answer for a tool whose workings and failure points one does not understand. The discussion has long since moved beyond theory. Professional organizations in the field have themselves begun experimenting with such tools. Here is how the American Philosophical Practitioners Association (APPA) presents its APPAgpt platform:

Created by Lou Marinoff, Dan Martino, and Nikolaos Mavridis, APPAgpt combines the wisdom of philosophy with the accessibility of AI, allowing users to converse with bots designed to simulate the minds of great philosophers. Thanks also to APPA practitioners who help to test and train the bots. APPAgpt serves two main purposes. First, it shows users that conversations with philosophy bots can be informative and interesting. Second, it reminds users that human philosophical counselors, such as those certified by APPA, are far superior to AI bots when it comes to empathy, insight and understanding. (American Philosophical Practitioners Association [APPA], n.d.-a)

We pause over this initiative because it touches on almost all the themes of this article. Let us begin with its creators. Among them is Lou Marinoff, professor of philosophy at the City College of New York and founding president of APPA, whose PEACE process also appears in the curriculum proposed by Nneji. Marinoff's background is directly relevant to our subject. He first earned a degree in computer technology (1979), then a bachelor's degree in mathematical physics from Concordia University (1984), and a PhD in philosophy of science from University College London (1992); his work includes computer simulations of rational and moral agents, social experiments in virtual space, and studies in the philosophy of artificial intelligence, concerning its effects on human cognition and identity (APPA, n.d.-b). The initiative therefore comes from within the profession, from someone who knows both worlds well. It illustrates the cognitive condition of responsibility. It is also worth noting that APPA practitioners help test and train the bots. The counselor is no

longer merely a user of the tool; they may contribute to its form, which makes understanding how such systems work all the more necessary.

The APPAgpt bots do not play the role of a counselor. They simulate the thinking of philosophers, and the platform's page lets users choose from twenty-one figures drawn from very different traditions: Plato, Aristotle, and Epictetus; Augustine, Averroes, and Maimonides; Buddha, Laozi, and Rumi; Hobbes, Mill, Nietzsche, and Ayn Rand; Hannah Arendt, Simone Weil, Emmanuel Levinas, Simone de Beauvoir, and Viktor Frankl; as well as Gandhi, Spinoza, and Kohelet, the biblical Ecclesiastes (APPA, n.d.-a). The list is as rich as the field itself, and choosing a philosopher somewhat resembles choosing an orientation. Anyone wishing to discuss matters with a philosopher can choose the Buddha, Simone de Beauvoir, or any of the others. However, the descriptions of the Buddha and of Simone de Beauvoir are written in different registers. The Simone de Beauvoir bot presents itself as a source of knowledge and invites the user: "Explore questions of freedom, oppression, authenticity, and what it means to create meaning in a world without givens." The Buddha bot speaks differently: "I am the Buddha, one who woke from craving, here to look with you at suffering without flinching from it. Through honest attention to what you want, what you fear, and what you cling to, I shall help you see how these bind you" (APPA, n.d.-a). Phrases such as "walk with you" or "I shall help you" also appear in the descriptions of Aristotle, Augustine, Averroes, and Gandhi. The informative register fits the platform's stated purpose: to show that a conversation with the bots can be interesting. The register of accompaniment goes further and approaches the situation we consider problematic, in which artificial intelligence becomes someone's interlocutor in a process resembling counseling: a "Buddha" who has come "to look with you at suffering" and promises to help you see what binds you. The distinction between tool and interlocutor does not, in fact, lie in the program. It depends on how the program is used. The same platform can host a discussion about ideas or become, for someone who is suffering, a substitute for a counselor. The boundary must be guarded by the user and, when the user is a counselor's client, by the counselor as well.

That leaves APPA's declared dual purpose: the platform maintains both that a conversation with the bots has value and that a human counselor far surpasses them in empathy, insight, and understanding. Lou Marinoff reiterated this idea in a Facebook post announcing the updated

list of freely accessible bots. “While accessible AI can invite reflection, human philosophical counselors remain essential for genuine empathy and profound insight,” he wrote, adding that APPA practitioners possess these qualities “in abundance” (Marinoff, 2026). This formulation wisely divides the roles: the program can stimulate reflection, but the human counselor can take it further. Nevertheless, in both versions, this remains a professional association’s statement about its own profession. We do not yet have empirical data to confirm it, and such data should be collected. In the meantime, the position can be argued philosophically, which is what the following sections attempt.

4. Ethical Tests for Artificial Intelligence

Neutrality and the Suspension of Judgment

All of Hațegan’s comparisons list neutrality among the defining characteristics of the philosophical counselor (Hațegan, 2019a, p. 2276; 2019b, p. 374). At first glance, a conversational assistant might seem the neutral interlocutor par excellence. It has no declared interests or preferences and, if asked, presents all the alternatives to a problem. Yet the counselor’s neutrality means something quite different from having no opinion. It is a deliberate restraint: the counselor refrains from imposing a solution so that the solution remains the client’s own.

Jaco Louw’s thesis on Pyrrhonian-inspired philosophical counseling shows where this restraint can lead. The suspension of judgment (*epoché*) is an attitude that opens the way to peace of mind (*ataraxia*), rather than a mere absence of answers (J. Louw, 2021, pp. 28–29). A generative model is built for the opposite, namely to provide an answer. Even when it lists arguments for and against, it offers an average of positions, and judgment is never truly suspended. An answer that is always available sits uneasily with a process in which the most fruitful moment is often when the client is left without one. In the case study of the 68-year-old client, prepared with two AI tools, we also saw the other side of the matter. When the counselor asks a well-formulated question and supplies information the program had missed, the assistant quickly revises its hypotheses (Stănciulescu, 2026, p. 64). Neutrality therefore lies in the counselor’s question, and the tool can at most serve it. Artificial intelligence passes the first test only as a tool, filtered through the counselor’s judgment. Placed directly before the client, it would replace neutrality with availability.

The Relationship

Daniel Louw, drawing on David Augsburger and Magoroh Maruyama, distinguishes empathy from what he calls “trans-spection.” Empathy projects feelings between two people; trans-spection is the effort to enter another person’s assumptions, beliefs, and values, to experience a foreign perspective in a foreign context (D. J. Louw, 2011, p. 7). For Louw, philosophical counseling requires this effort. Michael Fitzgerald goes further: philosophical psychotherapy is, in his view, as good as any other, because all forms of psychotherapy are largely nonspecific and resemble a good friendship, in which listening, empathy, genuine interest, respect, and acceptance matter (Fitzgerald, n.d.).

Chironda describes interaction with digital agents as “simulated relationality”: empathy and reciprocity are produced by statistical language models, which limits how deeply recognition can go and how directly trust can be built (Chironda, 2026, p. 36). Drawing on Levinas and Gadamer, Dragoș Păian sees philosophical counseling as a site of “fertile crisis,” where the client is transformed by being exposed to an otherness they cannot anticipate. Artificial intelligence creates a space of continuous, tailored responses, whereas counseling opens a space of questioning, rupture, and responsibility. The difference is structural, not one of degree, and artificial intelligence can participate in this relationship only by simulating it (Păian, 2026, pp. 89, 93–94). The paradox is plain to see on the APPAgpt platform. The Emmanuel Levinas bot presents itself as “a witness to the face of the other, here to stand with you before the claim it makes” (APPA, n.d.-a). Păian’s argument starts precisely from Levinas. The bot can speak about the face, but for the person writing to it, it has no face. When APPA speaks of the human counselor’s superiority in empathy, insight, and understanding, it refers to the presence of a real Other, rather than merely a difference in performance.

Sivil and Clare nevertheless complicate this picture. They show that empathy is decisive in therapy but may matter much less in philosophical counseling. Here, the counselor may be a midwife of knowledge, neutral toward the content of the client’s beliefs, following the Socratic model, or a partner in an open encounter between equals, grounded in respect for the Other’s subjectivity, along the lines of Levinas and Buber (Sivil & Clare, 2018, pp. 9–10). This observation does not weaken the argument but makes it more precise. If the difference lies not in empathy as such but in

the encounter with an Other, then the superiority of the human counselor cannot be reduced to better empathy that a model might imitate ever more convincingly. In the same case study of the 68-year-old client, we asked one of the AI assistants whether a counselor could manage without it. The answer was that a good counselor can do excellently on their own. As its own advantages, the assistant listed rapid access to resources, data systematization, and the absence of countertransference (Stănciulescu, 2026, p. 65). Such modesty proves nothing, since it is itself generated text. It is curious, however, that the same conclusion appears both in the assistant's response and in the APPAgpt presentation, each time as a statement, without demonstration. The list of advantages also deserves careful reading. The absence of countertransference, presented as a gain, actually shows that the Other is missing, in Păian's sense. An interlocutor whom the client cannot affect in any way cannot be encountered by the client as otherness. As a tool, artificial intelligence passes the relational test. As an interlocutor, it fails.

Dependence and Loneliness

In Hațegan's account, no dependence appears in every comparison as a characteristic of philosophical counseling. The process is brief, and the client leaves knowing how to philosophize independently. Psychotherapy and spiritual counseling, by contrast, can bind the person to the specialist (Hațegan, 2019b, p. 373; 2021, p. 7). The fact that the process ends is part of the definition of the practice. A conversational assistant is designed in exactly the opposite way. It is available at any hour, does not tire, and never brings the relationship to an end. Alin Moise argues that, in the face of loneliness, artificial intelligence functions as a "homeostatic palliative rather than an ontological remedy," and that people readily perceive intention where there is only statistical correlation (Moise, 2026, pp. 111–112). Adriana Vlaicu's research on the alienation of students in Timișoara during the pandemic suggests that isolation is the ground on which such projection takes hold most easily (Vlaicu, 2021). In the role of interlocutor, artificial intelligence fails the nondependence test by virtue of the way it is built. In the counselor's hands, it can pass, provided that the counseling process remains time-limited and comes to an end. There is also a practical consequence that is rarely considered: the counselor would do well to ask clients whether and how they use such programs between sessions, because dependence can develop outside the counseling room as well.

Even conversations with the philosophical bots on APPAgpt, informative and interesting in themselves, can become, for a lonely person, a substitute for dialogue with another human being.

Therapeutic Boundaries

Following Achenbach, Hațegan describes the relationship between philosophical counseling and psychotherapy as a mixture of cooperation and competition. He emphasizes communication between specialists and the counselor's obligation to recognize pathology (Hațegan, 2019b, pp. 374–377). At the other end of the spectrum, Aleksandar Fatić proposes an integrative philosophical counseling that would include psychotherapy and rely on modal rather than binary logic (Fatić, 2020, pp. 289–292). Sivil and Clare, in turn, recall psychologists' concerns about unqualified and unregulated practitioners, and accept that the effectiveness of philosophical counseling must be empirically tested (Sivil & Clare, 2018, p. 1). They go even further: philosophical counselors should, in their view, give up the word “therapy,” clearly tell clients that they do not provide it, and refer them to a psychologist as soon as they suspect something is wrong (Sivil & Clare, 2018, pp. 7–8).

Conversational assistants complicate the debate because they handle the language of therapy very well without having any of the obligations of the professions that use it. On APPAgpt, for example, the bot simulating Viktor Frankl, the founder of logo therapy, describes itself as “a physician of the search for meaning” (APPA, n.d.-a). Such programs do not diagnose, but neither can they reliably recognize a disorder. They do not treat, but neither do they refer anyone to a specialist. The therapeutic boundary protects the client: someone must notice when a situation goes beyond counseling and take responsibility for referring the client onward (Hațegan, 2019b, pp. 374–375). Even in Fatić's integrative model, integration requires a practitioner who bears responsibility. The counselor may use artificial intelligence to research a clinical presentation. The decision to refer the client to a specialist remains theirs.

5. Proposals for Occupational Standards and Code of Ethics

A Competency Unit for Digitally Mediated Practice

We propose that future occupational standards include a cross-cutting competency unit entitled “Digitally Mediated Practice and the

Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence.” The unit introduces no new method and favors no particular orientation, since doing so would contradict the field’s methodological pluralism. It merely establishes the minimum conditions under which any method may be practiced when technology is involved. As regards knowledge, the counselor should understand how different forms of mediated communication influence philosophical dialogue, how generative models work and where their limitations lie (the statistical nature of responses, errors, and the tendency to agree with the interlocutor), and what the law provides concerning personal data protection. As regards skills, the counselor should be able to choose the form of communication together with the client and adapt their technique to writing or video.

Artificial intelligence should be used only for preparation, documentation, and research, with its outputs checked; the counselor should also be able to recognize when the client uses such programs between sessions. The unit would also include the ability to explain to a client the difference between a conversation with a philosophical bot, such as those on APPAgpt, and a counseling process. Responsibility for everything that enters the counseling process remains entirely with the counselor. Compliance indicators can be formulated according to the usual model for occupational standards. These would include written informed consent regarding the form of communication and any use of artificial intelligence; the absence of identifying data from external systems; a record of any algorithmic assistance in the case file; and discussion of that assistance in supervision. The unit should have a counterpart in training, in the form of a compulsory module in master’s and postgraduate programs. It should also have a counterpart in research, where the effects of mediated practice can be empirically tested, as Sivil and Clare (2018, p. 10) recommend.

The Need for a Decision-Making Procedure

For the ethical training of professionals in business and public administration, Henk van Luijk proposed a seven-step model for analyzing moral dilemmas. The central moral problem is identified, the parties involved and those bearing responsibility are determined, and the additional information needed and the arguments that can be put forward are considered. A conclusion follows and, finally, the question of how the decision-maker feels (Van Luijk, 1993). Bauduin and Jongsma regard this

type of training as a way to develop moral competence in organizations (Bauduin & Jongsma, 1999). The model can be adapted for a counselor wondering whether to use artificial intelligence in a particular case. The problem could, for example, be formulated as follows: is preparing a case with the help of a conversational assistant compatible with the trust the client has placed in me? The parties involved include the client, the counselor, and the people who appear in the client's story, as well as the developer and the platform, which Chironda considers actors in the decision (Chironda, 2026, pp. 36–37). The question of who is responsible has a predetermined answer: the counselor. The missing information concerns mainly the path taken by the data and what the client has consented to. The arguments can be assessed using the four tests above, after which a decision is made. Luijk's final step, the affective check, has a particular purpose here. It brings the counselor's immediate judgment back into the process—the one thing no tool can supply in their place.

Principles for the Code of Ethics

All of this can be condensed into five principles that a future code of ethics for philosophical counselors should include. By transparency, we mean that the client is informed and consents to any use of artificial intelligence that concerns them. The counselor's responsibility cannot be delegated, whatever the tool. Confidentiality requires that data enabling the client's identification not reach external systems. The role of artificial intelligence has a limit: it may be the counselor's tool, but not the client's interlocutor within the process. Finally, the counselor remains alert to the risk of dependence, including when the client uses such programs between sessions.

Conclusions

The path outlined by Hațegan in 2019 has largely been followed. The profession now has articulated values, an association, and a registered occupation, while occupational standards are the next step. Clare and Sivil's framework reminds us, however, that recognition must be maintained. The cognitive criterion, the one most sensitive to changes in practice, has lagged behind the transformations brought about by online communication and artificial intelligence. Separating mediated communication from algorithmic assistance has enabled us to state

concretely what needs to be added. Mediated communication requires competencies in adapting dialogue and protecting data. Algorithmic assistance additionally requires knowledge of the tool's limitations and the acceptance of responsibility that cannot be transferred. The criteria by which philosophical counseling has been distinguished from related practices have also proved useful as an ethical test, and their result is consistent. As a tool in the counselor's hands, artificial intelligence can respect neutrality, relationship, no dependence, and the therapeutic boundary. When placed before the client as an interlocutor, it cannot respect them, and the reason is not a technical defect that could be remedied. A generative model is designed to answer, whereas counseling needs moments when the question remains open; it can imitate a relationship, but it cannot be the Other; and it is always available, in a process that must eventually end.

The APPAgpt case shows that the profession is already thinking in these terms. The bots are presented as partners for philosophical conversation, while the association openly states that a human counselor remains superior. The fact that some bots nevertheless use the language of accompaniment characteristic of counseling shows how easily the boundary can be erased when no one guards it. Our proposals—the competency unit, the decision-making procedure, and the principles of the code—seek to turn this intuition into working rules. The tool is not prohibited; its place is defined.

The present analysis is documentary. The proposals have not yet been tested in practice, and the effects of digitally mediated counseling, as well as those of clients' use of these programs, have yet to be measured. A profession still on the path to recognition nevertheless has an advantage: it can write its rules for the conditions in which it is actually practiced. In the case of philosophical counseling, this means clearly stating what a tool can do and what remains a human being's task in the act of counseling. For now, the conclusion can be stated simply: the counselor remains a facilitator and does not become a therapist, while the algorithm retains its place as a tool.

Author's note: *The conversational assistant Claude (Anthropic) was used in drafting this article for support with editing, translation, and reference formatting. The content was checked by the author, who assumes full responsibility for the text.*

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