

A sampling of philosophical counseling frameworks, tools, and practices

Rick Repetti¹

Abstract: In this paper I first argue for a somewhat paradoxically ‘methodless method’ of philosophical practice that includes as many methods as a practitioner can learn and include in their toolkit, as well as no method. Then I overview over a dozen major things, and some minor ones, that philosophical counselors and other philosophical practitioners might benefit from adding to their philosophical practice toolkits. These include: The DIME framework, 4e Cognitive Science, the 4Ps of knowing, the Gestalt change process model, Philosophical Fellowship (aka Philosophical Companionship), Dialectic to *Dialogos*, Nelsonian Socratic Dialogue, Self-Determination Theory, the *Ikigai* Framework, Philosophical Midwifery, the Eightfold Path, the Four Agreements, and Meditation. Where appropriate, I offer what I take to be basic elements of rationale for viewing certain of these items, particularly some that might not appear philosophical from an analytic perspective, as philosophical practice tools as well as an explanation of the basic techniques involved in each tool. In the concluding section, based on already having provided some reasons for thinking otherwise seemingly non-philosophical practices ought to be included in the philosophical counselor’s toolkit, I will add some justification for a broader conception of philosophical counseling that some might think exceeds the legitimate scope of practice for the profession.

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¹Professor of Philosophy, Kingsborough Community College, CUNY, USA
E-mail: Rick.Repetti@kbcc.cuny.edu

Introduction

In this paper I present several conceptual, philosophical, and/or potentially therapeutic frameworks and practices that philosophical counselors and other philosophical practitioners might wish to include in their hopefully expanding philosophical practice toolkits. The multiplicity and diversity of these potential tools of philosophical practice suggests an eclectic approach to philosophical practice, if not a somewhat paradoxically ‘methodless method’ that includes any and all methods that might work, as well as no method.

I begin by addressing this somewhat paradoxical approach in general, as part of the overarching justification for including so many potential items in one’s philosophical practice toolkit. After setting forth some justifications for this perspective, I then turn to each of the following potential tools, in this sequence:

1. The DIME Framework
2. 4e Cognitive Science
3. The 4Ps of Knowing
4. The Gestalt Change Process Model
5. Philosophical Fellowship (Aka Philosophical Companionship)
6. Dialectic to *Dialogos* and Nelsonian Socratic Dialogue
7. Self-Determination Theory
8. The *Ikigai* Framework
9. Philosophical Midwifery, the Eightfold Path, and the Four Agreements
10. Meditation

Overall framework for a methodless method that includes many methods

My philosophy of philosophical practice is inspired by the original philosophical idea that *aporea* – awareness of one’s uncertainty – is not only a good thing, philosophically speaking, but a precondition for genuine sapiential growth. To my thinking, *aporea* does not negate what one does know, but enables one to appreciate the edges of what one knows and the many ways in which there is more to know, or that there is more to what

one knows that one does not know, and this awareness that is on the edges of the known is not only pregnant with intelligibility, but therefore worth exploring with an open mind and humility.

In a similar vein, I take '*philia sophia*' literally, and see 'philosophy' in its original sense as a genuine love of – and thus an intense attraction and heart-felt devotion to – the *acquisition* of wisdom, and thus to whatever practices there are that promise to *cultivate* wisdom, as opposed to the mere intellectual, scholarly, or academic study of *the subject* of philosophy. Consider an analogy. Whereas art historians study art, artists make art. Similarly, whereas academic philosophers study *the subject* of philosophy, lovers of wisdom *practice* cultivating wisdom and devote their lives to its pursuit. More bluntly, whereas academic philosophers *study* the love of wisdom, practical philosophers *cultivate* wisdom.

Of course, the extent to which these things can and do overlap and/or support each other is an open question, on one hand, and the answers to that question likely vary from tradition to tradition and from person to person, on the other hand. In Buddhism, for example, there are Buddhist philosophers who do not cultivate the prescribed practices, Buddhist practitioners who do but who simply accept the philosophical doctrines surrounding and informing them, and Buddhist philosopher/practitioners who integrate both. But all three categories acknowledge that the philosophy itself prescribes the practice as essential to the goal of Buddhism, namely, the attainment of *nirvana*, considered the highest wisdom.

One possessed with the love of wisdom is likely to sense the intelligibility that infuses *aporea*. The medieval thinker, Giordano Bruno, was imprisoned for decades and eventually burned to death on the stake for refusing to deny his understanding that the world must be infinite, since, as he reasoned, no matter how far away one might imagine the edge of the world, he could imagine standing there and shooting an arrow further into the abyss, and on and on ad infinitum. Lovers of wisdom are likely to sympathize, standing as they do on the edge of the boundary between the known and *aporea*, sensing an endless domain of potential intelligibility. I consider any philosophical practice from any individual or tradition as a portal into that infinitely expanding realm of possible intelligibility, and thus as reflecting any such possible pathways towards wisdom as worth exploring.

This is not to disparage academic philosophy. To the contrary, I was trained in analytic philosophy, and I find it incredibly useful as an antidote to pseudo-science, magical thinking, naivete, dogmatism, and other epistemic vices, as well as an excellent tool for examining assumptions, identifying faulty inferences, and the like, on the one hand, and for constructing cogent arguments and theories in support of plausible hypotheses, on the other hand. However, what many analytic philosophers do not yet fully appreciate is that so many philosophical practices other than the sort of propositional and logical analyses that they consider ‘doing philosophy’ also provide powerful tools for the cultivation of epistemic virtues, the greatest of which is wisdom, which, as Socrates and his followers realized, was what unifies the moral and intellectual virtues.

Given my general philosophy about philosophical practice, it is no surprise that I look to all the world’s philosophies for philosophical possibilities, and for practices that might be extracted from them, if not modified and exacted for my own philosophical projects and pursuits. I also look to all the world’s psychodynamic, therapeutic, holistic, spiritual, religious, mystical, shamanic, poetic, artistic, literary, and even alchemical traditions. As one of my first meditation teachers, Ram Dass, once put a similar perspective, once one is firmly established on the wisdom path, everyone and everything becomes one’s guru.

The idea that convergent elements of philosophical wisdom may come from diverse traditions may be illustrated in a cluster of examples. Another one of my meditation teachers (in the Burmese Theravada tradition), Dhamma Dena, once casually described mindfulness as “just extraordinary attention to ordinary experience”. When I heard this, I immediately recognized one of the reasons I had always thought of meditation as a powerful philosophical discipline: philosophy may be described as “just extraordinary attention to ordinary experience”, or, perhaps more accurately, as “just extraordinary *examination* of ordinary experience” and perhaps “and the concepts, language, beliefs, hypotheses, theories, and world view arising therefrom”. While almost any definition of philosophy is likely to include things that should be excluded and vice versa, this one comes close enough for present purposes.

When mentioning this convergence at a recent presentation on philosophical counseling (Repetti 2023a), it was brought to my attention that Jerome Stolnitz, my first philosophy professor, a philosopher who

specialized in aesthetics, defined the aesthetic attitude as a disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness for its own sake (1960). The convergence between these three descriptions – of mindfulness, philosophy, and the aesthetic attitude – is powerful. Any concept, perception, experience, object, process, or relationship can become the object of mindfulness, of philosophy, and of the aesthetic attitude. And while there are at least surface level differences between them, it is not clear that these three categories are entirely distinct. But while examining this question is philosophically interesting and worth noting, we will not pursue that direction of analytic philosophy further on this point here, as that is beyond the scope and aims of this paper. These are some reasons for thinking any conceptual or philosophical framework, tool, or practice may be usefully employed as a philosophical practice method. Let us now consider some reasons for adopting a ‘methodless method’ that includes any and all possible methods. At the core of our consciousness is a kind of metacognitive awareness that is aware of all the objects of consciousness constituting our experience: the senses and their perceptual objects, bodily sensations, emotions, volitions, thoughts, beliefs, values, interests, likes and dislikes, aspirations, reactions, attitudes, orientations, self-images, narrative histories, continuous senses of subjectivity, and the like. We are highly idiosyncratic, despite sharing many common features, such as having any content whatsoever, however distinct, in each of these categories. This is the case for us all, whether philosophical practitioners whose practices are limited to our own sapiential growth, or also geared toward teaching and/or counseling others. Since each of us is unique in so many ways, there is no singular tool that is universally applicable to us all. That would be like thinking every mechanical problem can be solved with the same tool, such as a hammer, or like thinking that every medical problem can be resolved by one medicine or procedure, like morphine or brain surgery, respectively.

Thus, whether one’s philosophical practice is directed only at one’s own growth or at others’ philosophical growth, it is a wise strategy not to restrict oneself to one method or tool, but to be open to any and all of them, and to select a given tool, if any, if and only if it seems appropriate given the problem to be solved relative to one’s experiential wisdom. This is a meta-level strategy, a strategy for flexibly selecting different tools under

different circumstances, and it is consistent with adopting specific tools on the non-meta-level and sticking with them as needed. By analogy, utilitarianism may be construed as a meta-level strategy for any group's selecting of specific operating rules, principles, or norms that are likely to promote the overall good of that group in light of its concrete circumstances (geographical and temporal locus, resources, ecological conditions, political climate, competition, belief systems, etc.).

This view eliminates the problem of cultural relativism, to the effect that different cultures have different ethical norms, as it explains how different sets of otherwise contradictory rules may be selected by different groups under different conditions, without entailing that there are no ethical universals, such as the meta-level greatest happiness principle, which prescribes that each group should select those rules likely to result in its greatest overall wellbeing under its unique circumstances. Similarly, a meta-level principle in philosophical counseling might prescribe that a philosophical counselor should select whatever specific approaches that are likely to be effective with a given client in light of his or her circumstances.

This meta-level strategy is also consistent with the possibility that a practitioner could naturally become an expert in a certain tool for a certain sort or set of problems, and subsequently specialize in that area, in the same way that a certain culture might become specialized in a certain set of specific norms determined by its unique conditions, history, experience, etc. But even such a specialist would be wise to remain open to a broad tool set, as it is doubtful that they will always be addressing all and only those clients with the exact same problem; likewise, cultures that are capable of revision under appropriate conditions stand a greater chance of thriving than cultures that are rigidly attached to their initial operating procedures. One very good reason to be methodless at the meta-level, so to speak, while having access to many non-meta-level methods and tools, is in dealing with others, especially in dealing with philosophical counseling clients. People who seek philosophical counsel are complexly idiosyncratic and typically arrive in a first session, if not in the first several sessions, in such a way that they appear to embody what the psychologists describe as an onion of many layers reflecting Maslow's hierarchy of shifting needs, often presenting one issue as the issue that brought them

into counseling, but another issue or complex set of issues emerges soon after, and eclipses the putative reason they sought counsel.

In my own experience, which includes a couple of years as a Gestalt psychotherapist in training, an ideal and highly effective way to meet new clients – if not older ones, if not everyone else, oneself included – is to adopt an analogue of what Stolnitz described as the aesthetic attitude, what I would call a “philosophical therapeutic attitude”, or simply a “philosophic attitude”, for short, namely, “a disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of the philosophical counseling client for its own sake” (recall Stolnitz on the aesthetic attitude: “a disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness for its own sake”). This does not rule out various intentions, such as the desire to help the client. But this attitude is ideal for getting a clear view of the client, his or her predicament, lifeworld, worldview, and whatever constitutes their cognitive horizon, salience landscape, social commitments, beliefs, aspirations, values, attitudes, expectations, constraints, introjects, projections, assumptions, self-images, and so on.

One justification for this meta-level absence of specific methods is by analogy with the four features of medical analysis: diagnosis, etiology, prognosis, and prescription. By emptying oneself of all expectations and models when observing and interacting with a novel client, but relating to them with the philosophical therapeutic attitude, like the aesthetic attitude, one is better able to observe them as they are, behold them on their own terms, and ‘grok’ them, so to speak, that is, really ‘get’ them at the gestalt level, all of which makes the first stage in the medical analysis analogy possible: diagnosis. I do not mean a psychological diagnosis, such as might be offered by a psychiatrist, e.g., borderline personality or bipolar disorder, but rather a philosophical diagnosis of their existential predicament, of whatever it is that they are struggling with or trying to resolve.

In keeping with the medical analysis analogy, in the same way that a medical examination will proceed by taking a patient’s vitals and asking questions about their symptoms, health, diet, sleep, lifestyle, and so on, a counselor asks questions targeting this or that feature of the client as they present themselves, testing possible diagnostic hypotheses about the philosophic condition and its etiology as relevant data is revealed in dialogue. One cannot adequately determine what an appropriate

philosophic prognosis or prescription could be without first identifying the relevant condition and its cause.

There is admittedly a sense in which applying this medical analysis analogy to one's approach as a philosophical counselor counts as a meta-level *method*, and thus perhaps not literally as a *methodless* method, but it is so open-ended and flexible for it to make sense to consider it a methodless method, at least insofar as it is distinct from any and all specific non-meta-level methods, such as those employed in the various psychotherapeutic and psychiatric models, such as psychoanalysis, CBT, and the like. It is also distinct from various specifically philosophical counseling methods such as philosophical midwifery, which employs dialectic with the intention of revealing an underlying '*pathologos*', as Pierre Grimes calls a false belief about the self at the root of one's self-defeating psychology.

Similarly, there are some philosophical tools that might fruitfully apply in numerous cases, such as philosophical dialogue, Socratic *elenchus*, argument analysis, phenomenological bracketing, and so on. These are more generic, and some might be considered meta-level tools, whereas other philosophical tools are more specific, such as Grimes's *pathologos*-revealing approach, which only seems appropriate when it seems to be the case that the client is actually suffering from a *pathologos*. The distinctions between generic methods and methodless method are somewhat blurry, but these ways of bringing attention to their differences remain valid and informative despite any difficulty in providing necessary and sufficient criteria to differentiate their perfect definitions.

Again, while the distinction between meta-level tools and truly methodless methods is admittedly fuzzy, an anecdote from meditative traditions might shed light on their relationship. The Beatles' guru, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of Transcendental Meditation (TM), which is primarily a mantra approach, was once debating his pro-method philosophy with a methodless method guru embraced by many hippies drawn to Eastern philosophy, Bhagwan Rajneesh, aka Osho. After some debate, Maharishi said to Osho something like this: You methodless method yogis go around proclaiming no need for method, but you all seem to forget that you got to where you are by practicing methods, after which attainments you seem to think methods are unnecessary.

Connecting this reasoning with our concerns here, I would agree with both of them: we philosophical counselors can grow greatly by cultivating a method, if not many methods, but once we reach a certain threshold of experiential wisdom, we no longer seem to need to conjure them through some sort of algorithmic deliberative analysis. Thus, perhaps beginner counselors ought to learn and practice certain methods that seem to work for them, and master a few of them, if not eventually as many as possible. After counseling many, however, attachment to specific methods tends to fall away. But knowledge of many methods is analogous to having many tools in one's toolbox rather than just one or a few.

While there are many other justifications that may be given for this approach, one more seems important in the philosophical counseling context. And that is that sometimes people come into philosophical counseling not because there is some *pathologos* or other problem with which they are struggling, but simply in order to engage in deep philosophical dialogue with someone they consider philosophically able, so they can expand their understanding, challenge themselves, embrace the edges of where their knowledge and their *aporea* meet, and so on. In other words, they just want to dialogue with someone like Socrates, about life, death, meaning, God, free will, friendship, love, or whatever. Since there is no problem to be solved here, what 'method' or tool is appropriate here? A philosophical counselor who is attached to one method is akin to a contractor who is attached to only a hammer, and who thus treats all things as nails.

The ten potential tools

In this section I introduce, review, explain, and occasionally justify 10 major frameworks, practices, methods, concepts, and/or tools of philosophical practice, and within them or tangentially extending from them, some minor ones, all of which may be especially useful in philosophical counseling contexts.

1. The DIME Framework

Cognitive scientist, cognitive psychologist, and philosopher John Vervaeke, working together with the Respond Network (a group of individuals devoted to creating a community of communities of philosophical practitioners with ecologies of sapiential practices) and a

number of individuals connected with the Vervaeke Foundation, myself included, have collaborated on bringing together the results of an analysis of the sorts of practices that make for a well-rounded, philosophically healthy individual, namely, the DIME framework, an acronym to be explained shortly, for an ecology of practices. An ecology of practices in this context is a group of sapiential practices designed to function as a system of checks and balances in order to reduce foolishness, increase wisdom, and ground, center, and integrate the practitioner within themselves and in their relationships with others and the world. It is informed by the latest “4e” cognitive science, described in the next section.

Each letter in the DIME acronym stands for a domain of practice deemed an important element in a holistic ecology of practices, as follows:

- D: Dialogical
- I: Imaginal
- M: Meditative
- E: Embodied

Dialogical practices: These include Socratic dialogue, mindful speaking/listening, circling, philosophical fellowship, Dialectic to *Dialogos*, philosophical midwifery, philosophical counseling, talk therapy, authentic relating, etc. Interpersonal philosophical interactions serve not only to afford their practitioners the opportunity to dialogue with analogues of Socrates, but to connect individual minds to distributed cognition networks, to provide valuable reciprocal feedback loops from other minds, to afford access to multiple perspectives, and, among other things, to provide a community or social support network, a sense of connection, and shared sources of meaning.

Imaginal practices: These include journaling, contemplation exercises, pretense, visualization, simulation, chair work, role reversal, counterfactual reasoning, and other forms of serious play. These activities can facilitate frame-shifting, enhance perspectives, and improve performance. For but one example, space scientists remote controlling the Mars Rovers who imagined that the rovers were extensions of their own bodies were better able to control the rover’s movements. Einstein claimed that imagination is more important than knowledge. Descartes was in a daydreaming state when he discovered what would be named after him, the Cartesian coordinates that made analytic geometry and our current computer graphics possible.

Imaginal exercises stimulate the counterfactual realm of possibilities, making broader, more liberating perspectives possible.

Meditative practices: These include mindfulness, one-pointedness, mantra, *Lectio Divina*, prayer, etc. William James (1890) remarked that an education that would teach attentional control would be an education *par excellence*. These meditative practices all constitute forms of attention training, and thus they all cultivate attentional control. If one combines meditative attentional control with the philosophical counseling attitude, this could afford a philosophical counseling session *par excellence*. The same skills and attitude may be fruitfully applied to oneself, and to everything else.

Embodied practices: These include things like yoga and *chi kung*, *tai chi* and other martial arts, the Feldenkrais method, mindful walking, jogging, hiking, aerobics, calisthenics, Pilates, dance, gardening, etc. Mind-body interdependence and overall health require a strong, grounded, limber body. Philosophers, especially academic ones, are all too often captivated by what John Vervaeke calls “propositional tyranny”, in that we are so thoroughly identified with our thoughts that we function as if we are disembodied minds (Vervaeke 2020, 2023). A great many of the rest of us suffer from the same Cartesian divorce of mind from body. We need to experience ourselves as embodied biological organisms if we are to become more whole, more in tune with the rest of our embodied being, our emotions, drives, and needs. Developing an embodied practice is an effective way to do so.

How might the DIME framework apply in a philosophical counseling session? A counseling session might reveal that a client is imbalanced or underdeveloped in terms of any of the four factors that the DIME framework is designed to address. They might be insufficiently engaged in philosophical or otherwise stimulating dialogue with others, other than the counselor, in which case they are philosophically isolated (if not entirely socially isolated) social beings, and thus encouraging them to seek out alternate forms of dialogical practice could be beneficial. They might be locked in a limited, narrow, one-sided perspective, in which case they could benefit from imaginal work. They might have very little or no reflective awareness or self-examining practices, in which case encouraging a mindfulness or related meditation practice might benefit them. They might have no embodied, simple exercise, or other movement

practices, perhaps sitting at a desk all day then in front of a TV screen all night, in which case encouraging an embodied practice might help. They might be weak on any or all of these fronts. Simply directing them towards an ecology of practices such as the DIME framework, or alternative substitutes, promises to provide them with a basic ecology of sapiential and eudaemonic practices. I prefer teaching clients tools that will enable them to increase their autonomous agency, and to direct them to connect with communities of like-minded individuals, rather than keeping them on as long-term clients, whenever possible, although some clients prefer remaining as clients. By directing clients to places where they can access parts of the DIME framework, or all of it, I have managed to help many clients move out of counseling and into self-care, accessing their own inner philosopher, their *daemon*. One place where anyone can access all four aspects of the DIME framework is through the Vervaeke Foundation, at www.vervaekefoundation.org or more directly through its Awaken to Meaning initiative, at www.awakentomeaning.com, which offers half-hour morning drop-in online sessions (currently at 9:00 am EST) for each of the DIME aspects on Mondays through Thursdays (I facilitate some of these) and a weekly 90-minute meditation and Q&A session on Friday mornings (at the same time) that I facilitate through the Vervaeke Foundation, initially for its Patreon supporters, but now accessible to all through the Awaken to Meaning initiative.

These offerings are creating an opportunity to belong to an online *sangha*, so to speak, that is, a spiritual community of individuals devoted to sapiential transformation. In Buddhism, it is understood that there are “Three Jewels” on this path toward enlightenment: the Buddha, the *Dharma*, and the *Sangha*, and to become a Buddhist, one simply “takes refuge in” the Three Jewels.

The Buddha is actually a title. The word “Buddha” means Awakened, and it represents the possibility of enlightenment, not necessarily the historical figure, Siddhartha Gautama, who became known as the Awakened after his attainment of enlightenment.

The *Dharma* is the Buddhist equivalent of the Taoist conception of the *Tao*, the Way, and the term was used before “Buddhism” was coined in the modern era. The *Dharma* represents the teachings of the Buddha and/or the ways to come into harmony with the universe as well as the

laws of reality that enable the enlightenment process, and so on. Early Christianity was called the Way, with similar implications.

And the *Sangha* is the community of Buddhists, those who follow the Way, akin to the Church. Buddhism also emphasizes if not elevates the importance and great value of having at least one *kalyanamitra*, a spiritual friend, if not the more the merrier.

While most of us know that having a gym or running partner helps motivate us, keep us honest, so to speak, and thus stay committed to sustaining our athletic practice, it bears highlighting that having a philosophical friend is important. In his book on ethics dedicated to his son, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle claimed that “no man would choose to live without friends, though he could have all other goods”. In our highly transient era of social mobility and novel patterns of cohabitation, the necessity of a philosophical friend in a eudaemonic life cannot be underestimated. While I often describe my role with my clients as that of professional philosophical friend, true friends do not typically pay each other just to occupy that role, so it satisfies my ethical concerns and my caring for my clients’ wellbeing if I can direct them to places where they are more likely to be able to enter into the shared role of *kalyanamitra* with other philosophical aspirants. Often enough, moreover, when my former clients engage in these activities and with these communities of philosophical practitioners external to my private practice, they soon become my equals and some have become my friends. This is not typical of the psychotherapist/client relationship trajectory, nor desirable in general, and perhaps that is a peripheral but relevant difference between philosophical counselors and psychotherapists. This is rewarding, in the same way that it is rewarding for both me and my mentor that, over the many years since my first philosophy class with him, we have become friends.

2. 4e (+ 2e = 6e) Cognitive Science

The discipline of cognitive science has moved significantly away from its earlier Cartesian assumptions since the 1990s, at which time computational and functionalist modes of mind proposed by philosophers like my former professor, Jerry Fodor, dominated the field, according to which the mind is just a biological computing machine that is platform independent, the same way a computer software program can run on many different computing platforms or hardware. On this dualistic Cartesian

model, mind remains independent of matter or body. Philosophers like Evan Thompson have argued persuasively (2010) that mind is not distinct from body, but rather is embodied, embedded, extended, and enactive (the 4e's):

- *Embodied*: Mind is not independent of matter, but rather is inseparably physiological, a higher-order function of brain processes, sense organs, sensorimotor loops, hormonal systems, and other physiological processes, many of which are somatically sentient, hedonic, and thus heavily subject to influence by material forces and phenomena.
- *Embedded*: Mind is not independent of matter, but rather is enmeshed in a host of agent/arena relationships, contexts, ecological niches, embedded in the broader natural world and material cosmos, time/space, etc., and thus heavily subject to influence by material forces and phenomena.
- *Extended*: Mind is not independent of matter, but rather is spread out beyond the head of any individual into and throughout a distributed cognition network of linguistic, cultural, and normative frameworks, and thus heavily subject to influence by material forces and phenomena.
- *Enactive*: Mind is not independent of matter, but rather functions as a sensorimotor mind/world recursively-looped causal agent whose decisions enact changes in the embodied, embedded, extended networks within which it functions, thereby altering reality/world, which in turn alters the agent, and thus while being heavily subject to influence by material forces and phenomena, it also exerts significant influence on those forces and phenomena.

Bringing awareness to the 4e nature of mind can help clients realize that they are also situated in these four dimensions of experience and that their situatedness as such far exceeds the domain of propositional confusion that often constitutes the scope of their narrow concerns, effectively removing philosophical and thus psychological blinders preventing them from seeing the things they are concerned with through a broader lens. It also provides a scientific basis for ascertaining the value of cultivating an ecology of practices such as the DIME framework, which promises to round out and better integrate the various experiential/existential dimensions of the client's lifeworld and functionality.

In the DIME framework, Dialogical practices can activate and impact the extended feature of mind as an interacting node in the distributed cognition network; Imaginal practices can bring the embedded and extended aspects of mind into awareness; Meditative practices can bring awareness to the enactive aspects of mind, as mindfulness of volition and its many relationships with the sensorimotor aspects of mind reveals; and Embodied practices bring direct awareness to our somatic nature as embodied organismic beings.

Recently, two more “e’s” have been explored as important parts of our psychophysiological makeup, namely, emotional and exaptive:

- *Emotional*: We are dependent on, and thus vulnerable to, various affective, hedonic, and related conative forces, as revealed by the fact that when emotional processing is damaged or blocked on a neurological level, decision making becomes impossible. Emotions have cognitive content or value, contrary to the overly rationalistic view to the effect that they are entirely irrational. They seem to be rapid responses based on the sort of tacit or implicit learning that Arthur Reber (1989) began to explore back in the 1970s, and that Daniel Kahneman (2011) associated with the quicker system in his dual processing theory (deliberative thought is slow and comes online much later in evolutionary development, whereas stress hormones like adrenaline and emotions like fear are fast and come online much earlier on in evolutionary development).
- *Exaptive*: Our adaptive evolutionary abilities have enabled us to refashion evolutionary functions for novel purposes, as, for example, our vocal chords have been exapted to make language possible. Our hunter-gatherer ancestors deployed attentional tracking in two major modalities, selective attention (to track predators and especially prey as they move) and open monitoring (global environmental scanning to detect prey and especially predators as they appear in our periphery), skills that are consciously developed in most meditative traditions and applied to self-regulative and self-transformative ends. We are not merely tool makers, but cognitive tool or psychotechnology makers.

Bringing awareness, inquiry, and curiosity to these additional features of our being only further empowers us and our clients to consciously engage more mindfully on these levels.

3. *The 4Ps of Knowing*

John Vervaeke, mentioned earlier in connection with the DIME framework, has argued that academic philosophy in particular, and our culture in general, are under the spell of propositional tyranny. Propositions and their analysis and manipulation define the majority of academic philosophy, for sure, in the form of arguments and theories, and the bulk of science, as well as the bulk of our culture in this age of information and, more recently, of misinformation and disinformation. As Ram Dass once put it, our attention is mostly situated in the roughly one inch of vertical space spread horizontally just above and behind our eyebrows, basically experiencing all of reality through the lens and in the mode of our thinking of thoughts, ignoring the rest of our being. Propositional knowledge is certainly useful, powerful, and important, and we are engaging with it right here and now, entertaining and evaluating propositions, claims about reality, statements, sentences that can be true or false. But there are at least three other major ways or forms of knowing, which together with propositional knowing constitute Vervaeke's "4P's of knowing". These include:

- *Propositional*: Knowing *that* p, some proposition, is true, false, or undetermined. The realm of academic Western philosophy and science is defined by arguments, theories, and data, all represented as propositions.
- *Procedural*: Knowing *how* to do something. Knowing how to debate, to entertain counterfactuals, to meditate, to shake hands, to ride a bike, swim, cook, etc.
- *Participatory*: Knowing *by being* a certain kind of organism, by doing certain things, by engaging in any activity. Knowing *what it's like* to: be a bat, to dialogue, to dance, to have sex, to enjoy music, to get high on psychedelics, to be in a drumming-invoked trance, etc.
- *Perspectival*: Knowing *from* a vantage point. Knowing the situated view from somewhere, from being in a location, situation, or perceptual locus.

Bringing these alternate ways of knowing into a client's awareness adds another set of dimensions and possibilities into their perspective and attitudes towards themselves and others, supporting their expanding the range of activities they can pursue to reframe their experience and their problems. Let's take a closer look at each of the 4P's.

Propositional knowing: Propositions have truth conditions: they are subject to truth/falsity. They are very powerful, as seen in their prominence in academic philosophy and in the STEM fields of science, tech, engineering, and math. But, as Vervaeke emphasizes, we've fallen under their tyranny. While amassing an increasingly large number of true propositions will increase our knowledge, it will not necessarily increase our wisdom. For there's a lot more to wisdom than just a subset of propositions that we consider not merely proverbial or adages, but even sagacious adages. Worse, with info wars and polarization defining the current societal moment, most of us can't even discern what's true or false. Even if we could, wisdom is not just a collection of facts.

Many counseling clients arrive in sessions entangled in a web of epistemically unjustified propositions. Enlarging a client's epistemology to include the other three major ways and modes of knowing alone can be frame-breaking, insight-producing, and thus empowering and liberating.

Procedural knowing: Wisdom does seem to involve a knowledge about *how* to be, to choose, to live, to do, to interact with others, to understand oneself. Wisdom involves practical skills, skills are mastered, spontaneous enactments of procedures, and procedures are how-to processes, know-how. Skills can be cultivated by doing, by practice, by disciplined repetition of procedures, as emphasized in what Lou Marinoff calls "the ABC's of virtue ethics", named after (A) Aristotle, (B) Buddha, and (C) Confucius, each who independently came upon the concept of virtue as a mid-point calibration between any two extremes of human behavior, neither too much nor too little of it, and its cultivation through repetitive practice: one becomes a good lyre player by religiously playing the lyre.

Emphasizing the fact that almost any attribute of human character can be acquired, developed, and mastered through appropriately calibrated discipline and practice affords clients reassurance that they can change, that they have agency, and that they can take responsibility for how they are, were, and can become. Procedures for becoming more wise and less foolish are priceless.

Participatory knowing: We know certain things simply by being the sorts of beings that we are. As Thomas Nagel (1974) made clear in his thought experiment, when he asks us to imagine what it is like to be a bat, what it is like to 'see' by way of echolocation, for example, we can grasp the idea that how we are participating in being – which includes what kinds of

beings we are, what kinds of bodies we have, what kind of experiences we have had – shapes our knowing of what it's like to be the sorts of beings that we are, and to imagine that other kinds of beings, including other people, experience different kinds of knowing, such as knowing what it's like to be a caterpillar, a baby, a member of the opposite sex, or a member of another religion or political affiliation.

By encouraging clients to engage in different types of activities outside the client's normal or habitual range of behaviors, one affords a client the opportunity to experience life in a different modality, and experiencing life in a different modality affords the possibility of cultivating novel experiential insights. For example, engaging in a sweat lodge, a ritual drumming ceremony, a shamanistic psychedelic experience, a yoga session, a group chanting experience, or a group meditation, one can access the sort of altered state experiences that people in other cultures experience, and thereby cultivate a sense of what it's like to be them. Less dramatically, by going on a roller coaster, playing a new sport, or learning a new language, similarly novel levels of experiential understanding become accessible. In the case of philosophical practice, encouraging clients to engage in formal Socratic Dialogues (as per the Nelsonian Method), Philosophical Fellowship (as per Vervaeke) or Philosophical Companionship (as per Lahav), Circling practices (as per Guy Sengstock), *Lectio Divina* (as per the medieval monastics), or *Actio Divina* (as per Ethan Kobiashi-Hsieh), among other philosophical practices, affords clients the opportunity to experience altered philosophical modes of experience that facilitate frame-breaking and thus sapiential insights.

Perspectival knowing: The ability to take on other perspectives affords clients the opportunity to understand divergent modes of experience, which shifts in perspective facilitate frame-breaking and thus sapiential insights. This is certainly true of divergent modes of participatory knowing, each of which affords a novel perspectival vantage, a distinct version of what it's like to be in that divergent mode of being or experience. As philosophers, we already know and value any and all philosophical procedures that function as what Dennett calls 'intuition pumps' (2014), that is, analogies, hypotheticals, philosophical puzzles or thought experiments that enable us to break frame, see an issue anew. What I would encourage philosophical practitioners to consider adding to their philosophical practices are any and all philosophical tools and

psychotechnologies that function as frame-breaking, perspective-shifting, insight-generating procedures, what I have called ‘consciousness-raising pumps’ or ‘metacognition pumps’ (2022b). One very good one is simply the oft-reapplied Asian metaphor of the six blind men and the elephant, each grasping only one distinct part of the elephant and describing it variously as a spear (tusk), hose (trunk), snake (tail), fan (ear), tree trunk (leg), etc., along with the Jain doctrine of *Anekāntavāda* or non-one-sidedness, to the effect that each cognitive agent has access to some aspect of a multi-aspectual reality, as well as the idea that the more such perspectives one has, the closer to truth one becomes.

This last point is a useful antidote to an unqualified or non-nuanced understanding of relativism. A corollary Jain doctrine, equally useful, is *Syadvada*, translatable as “the doctrine of qualified affirmation”, encourages prefacing every assertion with an epistemic qualifier such as “perhaps”, “possibly”, or “relatively speaking”, etc., in order to counteract any impression of absolute assertion, avoid dogmatism, and the like. Both doctrines support if not entail the Jain principle of ahimsa, nonviolence: there is no good reason the six blind men need to be absolutist about their assertions about the nature of the elephant, thus no good reason for them to engage in violence simply on the basis of their divergent forms of access to the truth. These are all useful ideas for working with clients experiencing rigidity of thought, on the one hand, or paralyzing relativism or skepticism, on the other hand, both of which are extremes of too little or too much reason-reason-responsiveness, and thus both vices according to the ABCs of virtue epistemology.

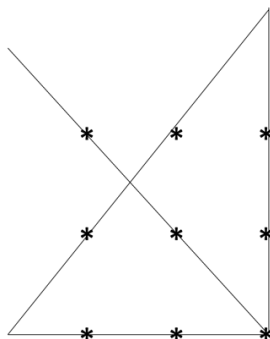
Frame-shifting is a very powerful philosophical counseling tool connected with perspectival knowing, so I will go into the 4th P somewhat more than the other 3P’s. Often enough, all that happens in a successful counseling session is an insight from frame-shifting. Consider this analogy that I often share with clients to encourage them to explore frame-shifting. When I’ve been engaged in marathon training, my quads, hamstrings, calves, hips, knees, and feet experienced much cramping, soreness, and pain, but because I knew these are caused by my intense training, I didn’t worry about them or imagine diseases I might have had that were possibly causing them. However, if these exact symptoms arose without my being engaged in serious athletic discipline, then I might likely have begun to seriously worry about my health. All that differed in these two cases of

otherwise identical physical symptoms was the difference in their framing: serious athletic discipline versus (potentially hypochondriacal) worrying about underlying disease.

After making this sort of analogy, I might question a client about their own case (the one that triggered my mentioning reframing), asking them to reflect on and explore how they are framing their current predicament and to imagine alternate ways of framing it. Is this framing of the case absolute? Or is it better conceived along lines of *Syadvada*? Are there other possible ways of framing it? This approach encourages them to use their own agency and imagination, and can be quite empowering and liberating. Another quite liberating thought experiment that can be used to similar effect is to ask clients to solve the so-called ‘nine-dot problem’. A counselor can literally pull up an image of three rows of three dots (if online, or just draw one, in person), roughly in a tic-tac-toe configuration, as shown below, and task them with trying to connect all nine dots via four contiguous straight lines, without lifting their pen off the paper. Here is the challenge:



When they cannot do so, it might be useful to emphasize that they need to “think *outside* the box”. After allowing them time to try and time to give up, simply show them the solution:



The solution reveals that they were mis-framing the problem, as if there was an assumed parameter constraining the lines to be drawn only

within the imaginary *box* they likely formed mentally by the eight outer dots. This realization facilitates the idea that there may be a similar mis-framing of the client's problem, analogous to the unwarranted assumption of a box-like parameter limitation, thereby encouraging the client to be open to alternative ways of conceiving their predicament.

I have found it useful to inform certain clients about the 4P's of knowing, to suggest that clients explore and cultivate the three P's that are otherwise eclipsed by the 1st P, propositional knowing, to suggest that by experimenting with alternative procedural ways of knowing (2nd P), they will experience alternative modes of participatory knowing (3rd P), which will lead to alternative forms of perspectival knowing (4th P), and to link these ideas with the relevant understandings available in 4e cognitive science and the relevant procedural practices available within the DIME framework for activating the 4e's and the other 3P's.

4. The Gestalt Change Process Model

The Gestalt change process involves four stages, phases, or layers, on divergent understandings, of going out of, and coming back into, contact with reality: the mask, impasse, death, life.

Mask: The mask is the Rogerian, public facing persona, and functions somewhat like a shield, an armor, a façade, and is our norms-conforming, socially-functional, cocktail-party-type face, a self-hiding self, if not more broadly our *modus operandi* for how we operate in the world.

Impasse: When the mask is not working, one senses that they can't go forward or back, that they need help, and this is typically when they seek counseling for assistance with their failed grip on, or contact with, reality. They are stuck and don't know how to proceed. Note that Wittgenstein once aptly described the nature of a philosophical problem as not knowing one's way about (how to proceed). It is often reassuring to discuss this Wittgensteinian philosophical spin on the concept of (psychotherapeutic) impasse with clients.

Death: This is a phase in which the client releases their attachment to and/or identification with their dysfunctional *modus operandi*, surrenders to the unknown, and becomes willing to face reality.

Life: This is when the client comes back into contact with reality, feels alive again, and embraces the excitement of the unknown without immobilizing fear.

People tend to cycle through various versions and iterations of these stages periodically if not frequently with respect to different issues they are dealing with on a regular basis, particularly if they are doing self-growth work. Gestalt views the goal of therapy to help redirect clients to restore full contact in their relationships with themselves, with others, and with reality. The Mask effectively disconnects people from themselves, if even only partly, and thus from their full contact with reality. Impasse is positive, however, and helpful to point out to clients as such, since it is what enables clients to realize that their *modus operandi* isn't working, and thus that change is needed. Awareness of a problem is usually prerequisite to solving it. The Death phase enables acceptance in the Stoic sense, a surrender that enables returning to an open, vulnerable contact with Life, and thus with reality.

It can be useful for a counselor to be on the lookout for these stages in a counseling session, as well as to name and explain them to the client, if it seems relevant and appropriate to do so. For this may help them to better understand themselves and frame what they might be going through in a coherent, supportive manner, akin to how framing leg cramps as part of athletic training eliminates anxiety about them.

There are a number of miscellaneous ideas from Gestalt or related psychotherapies that I have found useful in counseling sessions, in any of the medical analysis analogy roles of diagnosis, etiology, prognosis, or prescription, or for purposes of enhancing clients' understanding or explanatory frameworks. Some are worth mentioning here, albeit briefly.

Maslow's shifting hierarchy of needs: This model works well with the Gestalt model of layers or phases of self, as does the metaphor of the onion layers of self, and the explicit recognition that sometimes these things happen out of typical sequence, and that this is normal. Gestalt clinical practice is guided by the related idea that whatever a client presents in session is what determines the direction of the work, which understanding further supports the meta-level idea of initiating sessions with a methodless method.

Interventions: Whether interventions are offered as prescriptions for homework, e.g., suggesting the client read a particular philosophical text, engage in journaling, or develop an ecology of practices as in the DIME framework, or as in-session activities, e.g., role reversal, chair work, or *Lectio Divina*, interventions are explicitly framed in Gestalt as speculative

hypotheses to experiment with, in a spirit of serious play, somewhat akin to trying on different outfits in a clothing store and looking at oneself in the mirror with them on to see which ones fit best. They are explicitly based on counselor intuitions that are understood as tentative, if not even as philosophical therapy games or game-like practices, and as either landing or not landing for the client, as helpful or not helpful, as the client sees fit. Sharing these metaphors (trying on clothing, playing games, etc.) is itself supportive, as their articulation can help remove or prevent the potential tension that might otherwise accompany the serious aspect of serious play.

Introjects: These are internalized negative judgments that we have acquired based on others' externalized projections onto us, typically from authority figures in our developmental phases, but possibly also contemporaneously from partners, elder relatives, co-workers, superiors, etc. For example, a blue collar or low-income parent might have instilled in their child the belief that they are relatively powerless victims of circumstance lacking agency over their low-economic conditions, together with a poor self-image, which these parents themselves likely inherited from their own parents, and so on. These problematic beliefs may be detected and revealed through philosophical midwifery, or any variety of dialogical or imaginal practices. A client's becoming aware of them, and interrogating them with the aid of the counselor, can be liberating. While this approach resembles psychotherapy, it is distinctly philosophical insofar as its focus is on the interrogation of beliefs and their evidentiary and logical grounds, or the lack thereof, although these investigations can and often do have powerful emotional effects, primarily liberating ones.

Anxiety: Where it seems appropriate, anxiety may be analyzed as a cocktail of (i) excitement, which itself is life-affirming, and (ii) fear, which itself can be useful in proper proportion, but which is often revealed upon analysis to function as a negative prediction on the basis of little-to-no evidence or perhaps on the basis of self-defeating introjects. Examining the grounds for negative predictions can reveal them to be unfounded, thereby enabling the client to convert the negative valence of anxiety into the positive valence of life-affirming excitement, perhaps assisted by encouragement to face the unknown with courage, and thereby put things into proper perspective.

Worrying: Similarly, worrying may be reinterpreted or reframed as "praying for what one does not want", akin to repeating positive-thinking

affirmations. Only in the case of worrying, one is repeating self-defeating negative affirmations that are likely to reinforce negative, self-limiting behaviors and thus they are likely to lead to self-fulfilling prophecies of failure. Casting them in this light reframes them in a way that affords clients a leg up against simply accepting them as is.

Dream work: Dream work in Gestalt theory is understood to involve no lexicon of interpretive meanings, except for a few general notions. First, all dream content is the client's own mind undergoing the typical (probably pan-mammalian) processes of digesting, associating, interpreting, remembering, and predicting experience. Second, every element in a dream is potentially meaningful, for the same reason. Third, whatever the dream-image container is that is framing the dream experience, for example, if the dream's episodic content is occurring in a house, a playground, or a landscape, that container may often be fruitfully understood to represent the dreamer's sense of self in the dream. (These three hypotheses, along with many other ideas in Gestalt, are not top-down theoretical constructs to be imposed in clinical sessions, but vice versa: they have arisen bottom-up out of countless clinical sessions as experiential insights from analysis of clinical sessions.) Lastly, the therapist's role is not to interpret the dream, but to help the client interpret it. It is worth mentioning here that Grimes often encourages his philosophical midwifery clients to bring any dream into a session, and he simply interrogates the client, repeatedly, asking:

What was it like to experience this or that part of the dream? What was their mental state at that moment? What memories does the client have about previous times in their life when they experienced that same mental state, or the first time? What does the client think about any beliefs or assumptions that might have been formed at the inception of that mental state, which might be at root in connection with that state? And so on. Similarly, he does not interpret the dream, but simply uses Socratic dialectic to interrogate the dream, helping the client to interpret it.

Cognitive dissonance: Observing and querying any appearance of putative cognitive dissonance that might be revealed in the client's bodily signals, gestures, facial expressions, intonational changes, and so on, explicitly as suggestive of cognitive dissonance, and/or just interrogating these expressions without any suggestion of cognitive dissonance, are powerful tools in the Gestalt session. For example, a client's clenching a fist

when claiming to be happy, sighing when claiming to be stuck, smiling when expressing anger or fear, and so on, might be reflected back to the client as possibly indicative of cognitive dissonance and queried as such. Simply articulating that one has noticed that when the client talks about a certain person, aspiration, project, or other item, they seem to be displaying physical excitement, among other examples, can be a way of bringing a client's tacit emotional valence or even their tacit knowledge into their salience landscape and thus of rendering these things amenable to metacognitive analysis.

Somatic voice: Another technique is to empower what may be described as the client's somatic voice, by asking them about a certain feeling in their body, such as any of the somatic signs just discussed above: If that sensation, etc., could speak, what would it say? This is an example of imaginal work (recall the DIME Framework). It also taps into mechanisms discussed in Internal Family Systems theory, according to which we are a collection of selves or self-parts that can benefit from engaging in dialogue with each other (Schwartz 2023). Thus, the engaging the somatic voice in sessions can be very helpful in terms of facilitating perspectival shifts, articulations of otherwise inchoate feelings, and so on.

Chair work: Chair work is another form of imaginal work or serious pretense, more specifically of polarity therapy (alternating between occupying different poles within the psyche), in which the client is asked to imagine that the other person involved in their issue is sitting in a chair just a few feet directly across from them, and to tell the imaginary other aloud what they think about their issue, and then have them literally get up and go occupy that chair and pretend to be that other person answering them while looking back at the now empty original chair and imagining what the pretend version of themselves looks like while listening to the imaginary other who they are then pretending to be, and vice versa, repeatedly. This can make it obvious to the client how they are holding back from expressing their thoughts and feelings, as they confront their own intimidation even in the face of the imaginary other, among other insights. I'll say a bit more about this in the next subsection, on journaling.

Journaling: A perhaps less dramatic alternative than chair work is to have the client do something like chair work, but in written form, perhaps in their journal, by writing the other a letter, then having the imaginal other write a letter back (which the client writes, pretending to

be the other), and so forth. What often happens is that once the client can articulate and confront the imaginal other (whether in chair work or the journaling version), confronting the real-world other becomes much easier, and frequently happens earlier on in the process than the counselor expected. In other words, I've often given clients such a letter-writing journaling homework assignment (addressing the problematic other) for the next session, and they come to the next session having already actually confronted the other person in real life that they were supposed to only confront imaginally. As my first Gestalt psychotherapist, Neil Smith, put it to me once in my own case of confronting a then-difficult person, confronting the inner version of the other is the harder part: once you do that, the outer version of them is easy. He was right.

Creative adjustments: Another useful concept in Gestalt is the way it frames what Freudians describe as 'defense mechanisms', or perhaps other psychotherapists describe more positively as 'coping strategies', but which Gestalt reframes in an even more optimistic light as 'creative adjustments'. Gestalt views the mechanisms that take us away from full contact with the presently undesirable or intolerable aspects of ourselves and/or our relationship with the world as healthy functions of psychological homeostasis, creatively tailored to our current needs and limitations. One thing to query about creative adjustments, after pointing this out to clients, is that while they were probably wise when they were first adopted, it should be explored whether they are still functionally appropriate and useful, still serving our needs and honoring our limitations. Framing them this way removes the negative connotations of pathology and reframes them as healthy tendencies which, if not calibrated against our current situation, might be in need of revision. By adopting this attitude, a counselor comes across as supportive, rather than judgmental, but without being enabling of a client's no-longer-useful strategies.

5. Philosophical Fellowship, aka Philosophical Companionship

Ran Lahav (2016) has developed a method of 'deep' philosophical immersion in select, curated, meaningful texts that is similar to *Lectio Divina*, which he calls 'philosophical companionship', and which John Vervaeke has tweaked slightly as 'philosophical fellowship'. I'll say more about *Lectio Divina* in the section below on meditation, but it might help to understand the spirit of philosophical companionship/fellowship by first understanding the outlines of *Lectio Divina*. *Lectio Divina* (originally and

literally “divine word”; nonliterally, sacred text, as in scripture) is a way of engaging contemplatively with deeply meaningful texts, in three stages. First, one reads the relatively short passage (perhaps a paragraph or a page at most) aloud, slowly, with proper intonation, mindfully, thoughtfully, trying to really take it in. Second, one reads it silently to oneself, perhaps even more slowly, making sure to grasp the meaning of each clause. And third, one then closes one’s eyes and contemplates its meaning, listening to one’s inner voice, higher self, or the intimations of one’s conception of a higher power, for any meaningful associations, interpretations, or intelligible implications that might arise in response.

Philosophical fellowship operates along similar lines. Philosophical fellowship may be understood as a completely naturalistic or secular version of a philosophical ‘séance’, that is, a case of invoking and presencing the mindset or philosophical outlook of the sage who authored the curated text – not literally conjuring a disembodied supernatural being, but simply taking on their perspective, analogous to putting on another’s eyeglasses to see what the world looks like through them. One of my Kant professors in grad school at CUNY, Arthur Collins, once suggested we play what he called ‘the belief game’ before critiquing any philosopher: try to believe what they do, and see the world through that lens, in order to more fully understand what they see, with the assumption that they see something worth seeing. Only then are you fully qualified to critique their view. A similar idea may be found in Rappaport’s Rules, one of which suggests that we conjure a steelman argument for any view we intend to critique before critiquing it, so the person whose view is being critiqued can know that we truly understand their view before assessing it.

Philosophical fellowship can be done in groups of up to three to six participants, perhaps ideally with four, but it can also be done between a philosopher counselor and one client. It proceeds as follows.

The facilitator, who can but need not be the counselor, chooses the sage and the passage, briefly explains some context about the sage and perhaps about the text, and then reads the also relatively short passage, slowly, contemplatively, etc., the same as with *Lectio Divina*. If there are more than two participants, the facilitator selects the sequence of their engagement; if there are only two people, the counselor leads, and the client follows. The facilitator then selects one sentence, claim, or clause from the text that was just read aloud, which shorter passage reflects the

highlight of the larger passage in some sense, stating it aloud, or ‘chanting’ it, with proper intonation, and then each participant in sequence ‘chants’ the same statement in their own voice with their own intonational emphases. This phase repeats four or five rounds through each participant, in sequence, each participant entrancing themselves in its meaning, invoking the sage’s mindset, intending to embody it. In the next phase, each participant states one to three sentences at most, expressing what they think the chant or the larger passage invokes, evokes in them, or provokes, and this is repeated for four or five rounds through each participant. Next, each participant speaks freely for a maximum of three minutes along the same lines, but going deeper, at most one to two rounds each, in sequence. Next, the procedure of sticking with the established sequence of speakers is dropped, and the participants engage in a kind of spontaneous jazz riffing on the same threads of meaning, ideally entering a flow state. More on that flow state shortly, in the next section on Dialectic to *Dialogos*.

Philosophical counselors are generally quite good at suggesting philosophical readings for their clients to explore, both in and out of sessions, so-called ‘bibliotherapy’, which can include films, pieces of art, etc. But this sort of ‘deep philosophy’ practice structure can help anyone to really bring a text alive for themselves or for a client in a very empowering way. This procedure also invites clients to do philosophy with the counselor in a way other than the typically unstructured format that often defines philosophical counseling sessions. The structure and rules of this philosophical ‘game’, so to speak, assign roles that both constrain participants to remain relevantly focused on task, on the one hand, while affording them the opportunity and perhaps the psychosocial license to publicly role play and thus to embody and enact the mindsets of various philosophers, on the other hand. This is another legitimate sense of ‘doing philosophy’ that complements the more commonly intended sense of that term involving constructing arguments and engaging in critical analyses.

6. Dialectic to Dialogos and Nelsonian Socratic Dialogue

This section unites these two distinct approaches for two general reasons. First, because they are very similar in many ways, yet importantly different in other ways. And second, the ways in which they differ make them very complementary, a point that bears emphasizing by keeping them together in the same section.

John Vervaeke (2020, 2023) has devised the method of Dialectic or *Dialogos*, which is very similar to philosophical fellowship, on the one hand, and to Nelsonian Socratic Dialogue, on the other hand. The main difference between this method and philosophical fellowship is that, instead of a text as focal point, a virtue concept is used, which is what makes it similar to Nelsonian Socratic Dialogue, which attempts to define a virtue concept; but it differs from the latter by not engaging a procedure that resembles an hour glass in structure (which moves from participants' examples of experiencing the virtue concept at the top of the hour glass to one representative participant example and a definition extracted from it at the center of the hour glass, and then tests it against the other examples toward the bottom of the hour glass). The rules of this philosophical game are as follows.

Ideally, there are four participants, although three can work, if need be, collapsing the last two of the roles into one. Four roles are assigned or chosen: Proposer, Listener, Scribe, and Herald. Proposer proposes their initial claim about what they think at least partly constitutes the target virtue concept, as an *assertion*, e.g., "Courage is the appropriate response to danger". Listener mirrors the proposal in their own words, interrogates Proposer about it, and helps Proposer *amplify* the claim until Proposer feels heard and understood. Listener then expresses *appreciation* for whatever aspects of the claim land for them. Scribe then reports back the stages of the claim that emerged or unfolded up to the final version of the proposal, for purposes of review. Herald then reports any gestures, moods, excitement, confusion, etc. that Herald noticed during the discussion of the proposal, as potentially helpful feedback (which calls to mind earlier remarks about somatic clues in Gestalt work). Listener then *anticipates* what might be missing from the working definition, what might need to be added to it, or how it might otherwise be altered. All participants then pause in *aporea*, open to how what has become established about the virtue leaves unaddressed possibly unknown aspects of the virtue. Thus, the sequence involves five A's: assertion, amplification, appreciation, anticipation, and *aporea*.

Once this round has been completed, Listener, Scribe, and Herald each move up one place in the sequential queue, and the original Proposer becomes the new Herald (or Scribe/Herald, if there are only three players). All participants play each role, with as many full rounds as there are

participants, and then go on to a philosophical version of jazz riffing. These (three or four) rounds are viewed metaphorically as sticks or logs of dialectical wood, and hopefully their rubbing together will spark and ignite the Logos, understood in the Platonic sense of the inherent intelligibility tacitly contained in the essence or Form of the virtue concept, to flow into the dialogue in this final round where, as with the final round of philosophical fellowship, the established sequence and formality are dropped in favor of spontaneous free-form speech about the targeted virtue concept, which, if successful, becomes *Dialogos*, the embodiment of the Logos in a dialectical, dialogical flow state.

Flow states are, according to many who have experienced and subsequently reported on them, among the most fulfilling, meaningful, intrinsically rewarding states. They typically eclipse internal cogitation, internal dialogue, self-talk, and the like, and they typically foreground implicit, nonconceptual knowing and cascades of intuitive, nonverbal insight (Csikszentmihalyi 2008). To attain a dialogical flow state is rare, by comparison, but incredibly enriching and powerful for philosophers, philosophical counselors, and philosophical counseling clients.

Nelsonian Socratic Dialogue is as powerful and as useful as Dialect to *Dialogos*. However, whereas Dialect to *Dialogos* can be practiced with only two participants, counselor and client, Nelsonian Socratic Dialogue can only be practiced in groups, with no fewer than four participants plus a facilitator and ideally no more than a dozen participants and a facilitator, although I have successfully conducted one with an entire philosophy class of about 20-some-odd students in its three-hour meeting period. Thus, I will not say much more about it here, also because it is a well-known form of philosophical practice. But I wish to add that for group philosophy practices, it is one of the best methods. Also, whereas Philosophical Fellowship aims at embracing *aporia* and is thus largely apophatic, Nelsonian Socratic Dialogue aims at consensus and is largely cataphatic. The inclusion of both practices in an ecology of dialogical practices is therefore an ideal way of engaging the sort of opponent processing that cognitive scientist John Vervaeke (2020, 2023) suggests for balance and self-correction along the path of transformative sapiential growth.

7. Self-Determination Theory Framework

Self-Determination Theory is considered the first theory of positive psychology, although – and because – it predates the use of that term.

Whereas prior to positive psychology, much if not most psychology was devoted to understanding and addressing psychological pathology, positive psychology is devoted to understanding and addressing psychological flourishing. According to proponents of this widely-respected theory, studies show that people experience the greatest wellbeing when at least these four major factors (among some additional, less essential factors) are present and satisfied:

- *Intrinsic interest*: Having anything that one engages for its own sake, such as a hobby, sport, craft, research, nature, or anything one loves, values, or which brings joy.
- *Autonomy*: Independence, being able to determine significant aspects of one's own life, decisions, etc., as opposed to, say, being overly directed and constrained by a micromanager, parent, spouse, etc.
- *Competence*: Being adequately skilled at enacting one's obligations and what matters to oneself.
- *Connection*: Healthy relationships with others or with anything greater than oneself. (Ryan and Deci 2000)

One might be autonomous at one's job, but lack skill at it, or vice versa: one might lack autonomy at one's job, and thus be unable to enact one's excellent skills there. One might be autonomous and skillful at many things, but find nothing intrinsically interesting or rewarding. One might score high on all three of these things, but be socially isolated and not motivated by any project larger than oneself.

It is validating, informative, enlightening, and empowering to just recognize and understand that these four factors are essential in an ideal or eudaemonic life. It thus can also help reveal what's missing, thus what's a source of pathos (e.g., meaninglessness, cynicism, etc.), and thus what needs to be addressed in a given client's life. Any relatively longer-term deficiency in any one of these areas is likely to undermine a client's philosophical wellbeing and thus may benefit from receiving explicit attention and inquiry in a philosophical counseling session.

8. *Ikigai*: *Raison d'Etre*

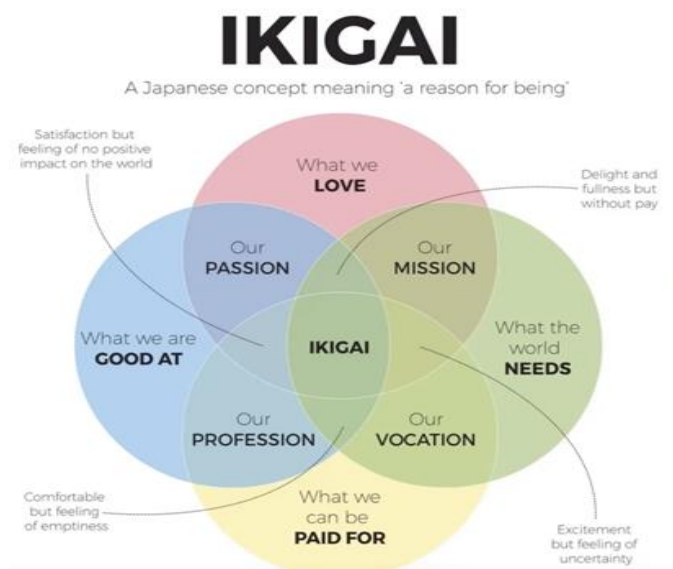
The concept of *Ikigai*, a Japanese term for *reason for being*, is described as more readily discernible when four factors connected with it are identified:

- What you love

- What you're good at
- What the world needs
- What the world will pay for

The annotated Venn diagram below presents a visual depiction of these categories, how they ideally intersect (and thus how they might fail to), and how to understand the meanings of these intersections. By analyzing the things that do or do not fall into each category for a given person, and seeing what, if any, is found overlappingly present in all four categories (which would be the ideal sweet spot at the center of the Venn diagram below), one is guided to consider the ideal possible careers, professions, vocations, or avocations that one might wisely take up or build towards, in order to attain *eudaemonia*, via a more holistic, integrated, practical lifepath that is more likely to secure wellbeing. The recognition of how one's distribution of abilities pan out relative to this ideal convergence of the four factors can help the counselor help the client figure out what might need to be pursued in order to improve the client's lifepath.

Many seek life coaching from philosophical counselors, coming to us for guidance on how to conceive a new direction, a new career, a new chapter in life. The *Ikigai* framework functions as an intuitive tool that helps isolate the relevant issues. It can reveal what's good and promising as well as what's missing, what needs to be explored and/or addressed. It can be validating, informative, enlightening, and empowering just to recognize these four factors in an ideal lifepath or what in Buddhism is termed "right livelihood".



9. Philosophical Midwifery, The Eightfold Path, and the Four Agreements

This is likely not news to many who will read this, but for those who might not be familiar with him, however few they may be, Pierre Grimes is the founder of philosophical counseling, specifically of the form of it he calls ‘philosophical midwifery’, and more broadly of philosophical practice in the U.S., since the 1960s. He is the founder of the Noetic Society and inventor of philosophical midwifery, a form of Socratic inquiry that specifically targets what he calls the client’s *pathologos*, mentioned earlier: the client’s core false and self-defeating belief about the self (similar to what psychologists call an ‘introject’), a negative projection about the self that was typically imposed on one by a caretaker, authority figure, or other dominant role figure or influential figure, typically in one’s youth, e.g., “I am [some negative self-image: e.g., fragile, stupid, unlovable, weak-willed, cowardly, etc.]”. Philosophical midwifery attempts to uncover the client’s core *pathologos* primarily by analysis of the client’s dreams, the mental states the dreams conjure, and the memories of previous instances of the same mental states, where some early real-world experience likely involved the *pathologos*, the negative image of the self that was likely imposed on the client from an external agent, internalized, and allowed to negatively influence the agency of the client. Simply bringing this *pathologos* into awareness is liberating. I have witnessed Grimes perform this on a number of occasions, with significant results.

It may be useful to note that in Buddhism, what is considered the primary confusion or original ignorance responsible for all suffering in all sentient beings is supposed to be confusion about the true nature of the self, namely, taking it to be an autonomous entity independent of everything else in the universe, of primary importance, and thus worth promoting and becoming attached to its pleasures and rejecting its pains (respectively, ignorance, attraction, and aversion, or, in more extreme cases, delusion, greed, and hatred). Thus, a Buddhist interpretation that might integrate Grimes’s insight might consider the primary ignorance to be something like ‘the universal *pathologos*’ (a generic one shared by all unenlightened sentient beings) and perhaps each unique individual’s version of the *pathologos* would be their idiosyncratic form of the *pathologos*. Sharing this parallel with clients might help them to accept the fact that they are not at all unique in bearing this deficit.

Since Buddhism addresses what may be understood as the universal *pathologos*, it makes sense to construe it as a form of ‘universal philosophical midwifery’. While there are reasons for religious Buddhists to resist treating Buddhism as a philosophy rather than a religion, here we must extract the philosophy for present purposes, and set the religious elements aside. The philosophical and philosophical practice elements of Buddhism strike me as superior to the religious elements, but it is not necessary to argue for that view here. Let the reader decide.

The philosophical framework of Buddhism is captured in the Buddha’s first talk on the Four Noble Truths, mentioned earlier, along a medical analysis analogy in which each truth represents, in sequence, diagnosis, etiology, prognosis, and prescription. Let’s sketch this framework, for while philosophical practice is detailed only in the prescription, the validity of the prescription hinges on the validity of the diagnosis, etiology, and prognosis. Also, having an understanding of the framework that makes sense of the prescription will help encourage us to take the medicine being prescribed.

The First Noble Truth is the diagnosis that all unenlightened sentient beings are subject to existential dissatisfaction, often summarized as suffering. Birth, aging, illness, and death are classical Buddhist examples of suffering, as are not getting what you want, losing what you have, and even getting what you want eventually no longer satisfies. Even happiness fades, and when it does, there is existential dissatisfaction or malaise.

The Second Noble Truth is the etiology of this suffering: ignorance about the nature of the self as an independent, centrally important entity whose pleasures are to be grasped at and whose pains are to be averted, excessive versions of each of which are delusion, greed, and hatred – construed as the three poisons. We are erroneously and excessively attached to our pleasures and averse to our pains, and we erroneously think that satisfying our desires will lead to our happiness, so we wind up becoming pleasurable experience addicts, and are never permanently satisfied. This is the cause of our universal pathology.

The Third Noble Truth is the prognosis that there is a cure to this dis-ease: *nirvana* is the antidote, the reversal and thus the removal of the cause, which brings about the eradication of the three poisons.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the prescription, the medicine that we need to take to implement the cure: The Eightfold Path to *nirvana*. This consists of eight “Right” factors that need to be conscientiously attended to and recalibrated toward *nirvana*, plausibly construed in this context whatever calibration of that factor that is likely to lead toward mental freedom, as opposed to mental bondage: View, Intention, Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, One-Pointedness, and Mindfulness. The last two items here are dealt with separately in the next section on meditation. There is an intuitive reason that View is the first item, despite the teachings to the effect that these need not be viewed as sequential: The universal *pathologos* is an erroneous view, a false belief about the self. Eliminating that will eliminate erroneous intentions, once we no longer think chasing our hedonic tails is the way to go. This will improve our speech, actions, and livelihood, etc. Working conscientiously on any of these items promises to improve each of the others, so the sequencing is not essential. A similar view, perhaps somewhere in between Grimes’s idiosyncratic *pathologos* and the Buddha’s universal *pathologos* is Don Miguel Ruiz’s analysis in his small, easy-to-read book, *The Four Agreements*, which contains a number of related ideas and strategies for dealing with *pathologoi* (plural of ‘*pathologos*’, though Ruiz doesn’t use these terms) that many find useful. While I’m not endorsing the implicitly shamanistic or otherwise New Age metaphysics sprinkled throughout this book, I think his analogue to the *pathologos* is helpful. Briefly, Ruiz (1997) explains that we are born largely innocent and empty of beliefs, analogous to blank discs or computers, and we are given a cultural download of beliefs and norms, analogous to a computer program, but one which contains many viruses. These are what I consider *pathologoi*. Ruiz claims that we are domesticated by punishments and rewards to *agree* to this download because as children we are completely dependent on those who are raising us, and we lack the autonomy to *disagree* with them. As adults, however, it is wise to review them all to determine whether we ought to continue to *agree* to them.

This process of reviewing all our beliefs with the intent of deciding whether to continue to agree with them is reminiscent of Descartes’s asking us in his First Meditation (1641/1997) to see if we can doubt any and all of our beliefs, with the understanding that if we can doubt some proposition, then we are uncertain of it, in which case we don’t know it – if we knew it, we’d be certain of it, and we cannot both be certain. And

uncertain about the same proposition at the same time, from which it follows that if we doubt it, we do not know it, and if we do not know it, we have reason to reconsider whether to accept it. Only Ruiz offers a different way to address our dubiously held beliefs. His suggested approach is to adopt what he describes as four new agreements, which, if adopted, will help to increasingly extricate us from the false agreements that were imposed on us during our domestication process before we attained enough agency and autonomy as adults to choose to disagree. These four new agreements are as follows:

- Don't make assumptions.
- Don't take things personally.
- Be impeccable with your word.
- Do your best.

Don't make assumptions. Ruiz suggests asking questions instead of making assumptions, e.g., about another's motives or meaning, thereby avoiding becoming entangled in interpersonal drama. One of the most popular assumptions and causes of problems that I see in counseling sessions, if not among people in general, is the tacit assumption that the individual is a good mind-reader: not in the sense of being telepathic, but in the folk psychology sense of being able apply what is called a theory of mind to discern the motives and beliefs of others and predict their actions – what may appropriately be called *a good motive whisperer* (cf. a dog whisperer, someone who knows how to understand, and thus train, an otherwise untamable dog). Folk psychology is the term used to describe our pre-scientific theory of mind which functions in the language of beliefs, desires, and actions instead of the scientific language of neurological, biochemical, and behavioral states. The basic idea in folk psychology is that beliefs about reality inform what is desirable, and desires guide actions. For example, if I believe it would be worth taking a karate class this evening and that I have easy access to one at the local dojo where I am a member, this will incline me to want to do so, and this intention will guide me to do so. Conversely, if others see me take that class, they can reasonably infer from my action that I believed it was worthwhile for me to do so, that I wanted to do so, and that my desire is what led me to do so.

We generally do well with deploying this folk theory of mind to explain, justify, predict, and retrodict human behavior, and individuals with an underdeveloped theory of mind don't do as well. People on the

autism spectrum often have an underdeveloped folk theory of mind, but what I'm getting at here is a hyperactive one, that is, one that reads interpretations into the belief/desire/action triad that are not likely to be there. For example, someone who is unable to discern a conversation partner's general level of diction, education, and cultural literacy and tailor their speech in order to be understood by their conversation partner is at least partly deficient in their theory of mind, on the one hand, but someone who is overly cynical about innocent others probably has an overly hyperactive folk theory of mind. This is probably related to the evolutionary psychology explanation to the effect that being hyper-vigilant in the detection of mind and agency has greater survival value than the opposite, for animals that are more keen to detect potential agency in the movement in a nearby bush are less likely to be eaten by predators than animals that are less likely to do so, assuming the movement was caused innocuously by the wind. Thus, evolution placed a higher value on hyper-agency-detection, which is intuitively associated with greater suspicion about agent motives, than hypo-agency-detection, which is not. For similar reasons, we tend to treat negative things more negatively than we treat otherwise equal but opposite positive things.

In light of these considerations, Ruiz's formulation of this new agreement about assumptions may fruitfully be tweaked to prescribe not that we never make assumptions, but that our assumption-making needs to be examined and calibrated to function more effectively, the same as any other ability that would be perfected into a virtue: neither too little nor too much, under the circumstances. Were we to put a Buddhist terminological spin on this virtue-epistemological perspective on motive whispering, we might describe it as 'Right Theory of Mind' or, more broadly, 'Right Epistemology'.

These sorts of considerations may be appealed to in order to explain a client's inflated sense of their own motive whispering, rather than judge it, but more importantly to place a client's inflated sense of their own motive whispering into perspective. The language of motive whispering is appropriate in the philosophical counseling context because it is often enough to ask a client how good of a motive whisperer they think they really are, as a way to get them to back away from their often unjustified assumptions about others' motives. The same effect may be achieved by asking questions that might reveal the client's inflated sense

of motive whispering: How do you know that is what she thinks? What is the reason for thinking he will react that way? What's your evidence for assuming her bad intent? What's the risk in assuming positive intent? Etc.

Don't take things personally. By not taking things personally, one adopts a Stoic and/or Buddhist attitude about phenomena just happening, as opposed to happening to you because of some deficit in you, as opposed to impersonal forces in the world or functions of deficits in others. This principle is related to the assumption principle, for when we take things personally, there is typically an assumption about how the other person has mistreated us, e.g., if someone has cut us off on the road, we may assume that they think they are better than everyone else, more entitled, selfish, narcissistic, and so on, and we take this as an insult to our person. But it may be that they have a serious emergency and otherwise never drive in an aggressive fashion.

I once entered a Burger King to buy an Impossible (plant-based) Burger for lunch, and there was a fellow there in front of me on the line toward the register dressed in what might be described as a gang uniform, with what appeared to be the sort of tattoos one probably acquired in prison, and with war-like body language. As someone who grew up in a violent ghetto, a martial artist with a 4th degree blackbelt in a fierce style (Shotokan), and a simultaneously compassionate Buddhist-like nature, when he turned to make eye contact with and size me up, I naturally smiled, spontaneously expressing friendliness, and perhaps my own internal sense of comfort with this man. If I recall, I was on my way home from teaching at the college, and perhaps I appeared as a nerd or pencil-necked geek to this fellow. Perhaps people who look like me normally look away in fear when given the alpha male eye-contact test by a gangster like him. I'm speculating with motive whispering here. But what is more interesting than my own motive whispering in this case was his motive whispering, for he took a clearly martial gestural step back and adopted a hostile facial expression and body language towards me, as if I had violated his command of the public space as a visibly threatening, dangerous type character. Immediately sensing his misinterpretation of our encounter, I instinctively gave him the functionally equal if not superior gaze of another alpha male, tinged by the utter absence of fear and a humorous appreciation of the moment, and then I also instinctively shifted gears into a neutral modality, disconnecting from the primal level of engagement,

effectively ending the challenge. The point is, he took my initial smile personally, clearly on account of his motive whispering assumptions about me, but I did not take his code-of-the-streets machismo personally. So many acts of violence among aggressive males are triggered by alpha males locking eyes and taking their motive whispering assumptions personally.

I read of an incident that occurred some years back just outside the entrance to the subway in Union Square, New York City, in Union Square Park, which park I would often sit in on a bench before or after my session with my Gestalt Psychotherapist at the time, either preparing for the session or processing it, either in meditative contemplation or in my journal. Sometimes, a group of devotees of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, founder of the Krishna Consciousness movement, often referred to as the Hare Krishnas (since they frequently chant “Hare Krishna” in public), had set up camp just yards away from the subway entrance, chanting devotional hymns to Krishna, one of the main forms of meditation in Bhakti Yoga. As someone who has devoted many hours to this sort of practice, I often would sit nearby, enchanted by their musicality and the fact that strangers would stop to join in the devotional chanting in the heart of New York City, myself included. Sometimes there would be aggressively or otherwise disruptively behaving individuals who seemed to be imbalanced, talking loudly to themselves, yelling indiscriminately into the air, or sometimes directing their aggression at random passersby. Being in either the Gestalt mood or the Bhakti Yoga spirit, or both, I rarely took any of it personally, even if one of these people seemed to be occasionally too close to me, possibly directing their behavior at me, but in such cases my danger-detector would light up, so to speak, alerting me to the fact that this imbalanced person might decide to take me personally, in which case I had to be ready to take them personally – not in the sense that I was somehow responsible for their directing their issues at me, but simply in terms of the fact that I was about to be personally targeted, and needed to be ready to make it personal. This can be done in an impersonal manner.

The incident that I read about which happened just in front of the subway entrance in that park, however, involved a deranged individual who apparently stood near the entrance to the subway and yelled out something like “I’m going to punch the next white man I see”. It is a busy spot in the park, with many people passing each other as they enter and

exit the subway entrance or pass through that area, and often loud, even in the absence of the Hare Krishnas. Immediately after announcing this, the man punched the next white man he saw, who happened to be in his 60s, knocking him to the ground, where he banged his head on the concrete, and died days later in the hospital as a result. Recalling that I had been in blissful if not altered states of reverie in that very area in that park on numerous occasions (I saw that therapist there as part of my training in Gestalt, and continued to see her for years afterwards, as I derived great benefit from the work), I imagined the possibility that even I might have been that victim, if I had heard this deranged man's announcement, but didn't take it personally enough.

As with the reinterpretation of Ruiz's advice not to make assumptions, tweaked into a Right Theory of Mind approach to simply be more mindful about one's assumptions rather than to never make any, so too a better interpretation of Ruiz's new agreement about taking things personally would probably be to be more mindful about taking things personally, rather than to never take them personally. Sometimes they are intended to be personal, but need not be taken personally. Sometimes they are not intended to be taken personally, but we probably ought to take them personally: we are, after all, persons, and in personal relations with others. As with almost anything, it depends: the devil is in the details – and so is the angel. If someone expresses great generosity, love, devotion, and trust in your direction, it is worth at least considering that it might be wise to take it personally.

Be impeccable with your word. By maintaining impeccable speech (or communication, more broadly, which includes listening), one removes oneself from the potential entanglement in others' minds, and aligns oneself only with what is true, with what one knows, and with what one really thinks and means. This is the Buddhist of principle of Right Speech. Speech, both sides of it (speaking and listening) functions to transmit thoughts from one mind to another, to conjure mental states in other minds. It is almost the same as telepathic mind control: we utter the equivalent of otherwise meaningless sounds that function as mind-manipulating incantations, bringing about thoughts and mental states in others, and them in us. In Indian philosophy, thought becomes action when it enters into speech, manifesting in the world outside the mind of the speaker.

In the same way that chair work, letter writing, and journaling are so powerful in terms of making thoughts manifest, simply by placing them into the objective form of speech or writing, so too ordinary speech has that power. We unwittingly allow our minds to take on so many mental states through whatever speech or communication we consume, which includes books and films and social media and so on, mental states that we probably would not intentionally seek out consciously or deliberately, which is the functional equivalent of just letting random forces in the world feed various food items, drugs, and other substances into our bodies.

In light of some of these and similar considerations, I would tweak this new agreement, as well as Right Speech, into Right Communication, or, perhaps more specifically, Right Mind-to-Mind Mental-State Transmission, since speech is only one form of communication, and communication functions as a mode of mind-to-mind mental-state transmission. Framing it this way might make it easier to remember how important it is to be mindful of what enters and exits our minds through speech and other forms of communication, like that gangster's body language in Burger King and even my initial smile in response to it.

Do your best. Trying one's best may or may not involve maximal effort, but what determines which amount of effort is more appropriate in any given context is what matters more, thereby understanding what the Buddhists call 'Right Effort' as smart effort or trying wisely rather than trying with all one's might or energy. For example, on a day with low energy, it would be unwise to push oneself too much. However, being a couch potato is likely to entail insufficient effort. In discussing this new agreement, Ruiz emphasizes the idea that when our efforts fail, we ought not to beat ourselves up over them, but instead simply pick ourselves up, figure out what went wrong and thus what may be improved, and move forward.

This calls to mind the Stoic metaphor designed to illustrate the dichotomy of control, to the effect that the archer can practice perfecting their discipline of archery to the best of their ability, to a level of excellence, but once the arrow leaves the bow, whether or not a gust of wind or other interference prevents the arrow from hitting the bullseye is out of one's control, so there is nothing one can do about it. If one misses the mark, which Ruiz claims was an earlier meaning of the term 'sin', there are

generally two plausible explanations: either (i) the archer had not perfected the art of archery and/or did but failed to express that expertise in releasing this arrow, which accounts for arrow missing the mark, in which case the archer ought to invest greater efforts into the practice, or (ii) although the archer has perfected the art of archery and expressed that expertise in releasing the arrow, some archery-extrinsic factor accounts for the arrow missing the mark, e.g., some prankster directed a laser pen beam at the archer's eye just as he was about to release the arrow, or another object was tossed in the direction of the arrow, veering it from its intended target, in which case there is no need for the archer to alter future efforts. In the former case, it makes sense for the archer to regret missed opportunities to perfect the art of archery, or inadequate prior efforts, etc. In the latter case, the Stoic idea of viewing desired outcomes beyond our control as being 'preferred indifferent' – as being preferred, on the one hand, but remaining indifferent to or unperturbed by them if the undesired outcome arises, on the other hand – is more appropriate.

As with the other new agreements, this one is probably better taken as a call to be more mindful of how one calibrates one's efforts to the tasks at hand, as well as how to best assess one's previous efforts, entertain regret, and respond accordingly with renewed, revised intentions regarding the same issues going forward.

While these four new agreements seem like simple tools, they can be quite useful, precisely because much of what keeps us in the matrix of unhealthy interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships are cases when we are not following these four agreements. One way of understanding what is especially good about the four new agreements is that they are the sorts of tools a client may use outside of sessions in their daily lives in order to do what may be understood as a modified form of philosophical midwifery on themselves. For this reason, among others, clients almost always find this book, or even a brief summary of these ideas, quite useful.

10. Meditation

I am a philosopher of meditation (Repetti 2022a), a multiple-decades practitioner and teacher of it, and a strong advocate of its almost universal value (Repetti 2016). Here I offer some elements of a rationale for meditation for philosophers, philosophical practitioners, and philosophical counseling clients, and an explanation of a number of different meditation techniques.

In his excellent introduction to meditation, *Journey of Awakening: A Meditator's Guidebook*, Ram Dass – one of my first and most beloved meditation teachers – quotes a saying from the Taoist meditative tradition:

A man does not seek to see himself in running water, but in still water. For only what is itself still can impart stillness into others.

Chuang-tse, in *The Wisdom of China and India* (Dass 1978, 126)

By analogy, one who is not wise cannot impart wisdom to others. Philosophical counselors need to be wise in order to attempt to impart wisdom to others. Being still in the meditative sense is not merely being in a trance while sitting on a meditation cushion, but being fully present whenever one is off the cushion – being in a clear, lucid, calm state of metacognitive consciousness, receptive, empty of preconceptions and distracting thoughts, fully attentive to whatever is arising in the present moment. Philosophical counselors are ideally still in this sense, at least when first encountering, experiencing, observing, listening to, questioning, and learning about where a client is, existentially. Thus, as philosophical practitioners, we can benefit from cultivating meditative practices that will enhance our ability to be still.

Philosophical practice is appropriately understood to be part of a contemplative way of life and a of sapiential path. Meditative practices are contemplative and sapiential. Recall that mindfulness just is extraordinary attention to ordinary experience, philosophy just is extraordinary examination of ordinary experience, and the aesthetic attitude just involves directing our full awareness to anything for its own sake, all of which combine in what I've described as the philosophical counseling attitude. Meditative practices thus enable us to cultivate the philosophical counseling attitude, first of all with ourselves: to take a step back from our cognitive apparatus and look at it with curiosity for its own sake, that is, to understand how we are, rather than just looking at the world through our cognitive apparatus. This figure/ground shift in perspective, akin to taking one's glasses off to look at them instead of looking at the world through them and by means of them, as Vervaeke repeatedly emphasizes (2022), affords us some distance between our awareness and our thoughts, beliefs, volitions, values, self-images, and so on, which detachment makes new insights possible and supports transformative growth.

Before we would guide or recommend meditative practices, ideally, we ought to do them ourselves. In sessions, we can use them, teach them, guide them, walk clients through them, either briefly at the beginning of a session in order to help clients check in with what is alive for them or what they are carrying, or at any point in a session when they might seem useful, say, to make room for *aporea*, to more deeply contemplate or digest an idea, to imagine a counterfactual, to take on another perspective, and so on. More often we will recommend them.

To recommend them, however, it might be good to first explain why they're philosophically useful. They have many philosophical justifications. Some justifications have already appeared here and there, so there may be some overlap or repetition, but some useful justifications to share with clients are as follows:

First, recall that Dhamma Dena, Buddhist meditation master, defines mindfulness as extra-ordinary attention to ordinary experience, philosophy may be understood similarly, and Jerome Stolnitz defined the aesthetic attitude as a disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness for its own sake.

Second, recall that meditation is attention training, and William James once claimed that an education that could train attention would be an education par excellence (*Principles of Psychology*).

Third, my own student research offers data that I consider better than argument (Repetti 2010b). Over the course of a few years I exposed several sections of my otherwise identical introductory philosophy courses to divergent numbers of meditation sessions as compared to otherwise identical sections of the same course that served as control groups. In some classes, namely, the control groups, meditation was never introduced. In others it was introduced between two times and 12 times, and in one course it was how we began class every day. These meditations were all very short mindfulness practices. On the first and last day of class students reacted to a set of philosophical statements (about their attitudes towards or understanding of knowledge, reality, value, etc.) using a Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree), and every time they meditated they followed it by filling out the Toronto Mindfulness Scale (TMS), an empirically validated scale that reveals changes in ability to sustain attention, intrinsic interest, and detachment from thoughts, typically after five sessions. Analysis dramatically revealed

that the more times a student meditated, the greater the variance was between their responses to the philosophical statements on the first and last days of class. A fairly conservative interpretation of this result is that meditative practices supported a greater sensitivity to philosophical penetration. A more interesting result was with the TMS: while the TMS shows that exposure to five sessions is typically necessary to produce measurable changes on that scale, even students who only meditated twice showed significant philosophical changes on the philosophical statements survey.

Philia sophia is the love of wisdom, and a true lover of anything will embrace anything that might enhance that love. Contemplative practices are sapiential tools, thus they promise to enhance and cultivate wisdom. Philosophical wisdom is not entirely or even essentially propositional, but also procedural, a knowing how, as well as perspectival, an understanding. Socrates's *sophia* and his *daemon* are not only propositional, but seem to involve a kind of noesis or gnosis. Contemplative practices foster noetic experiences and thus philosophical gnosis.

Meditation is appropriately to be considered a philosophical counseling tool for a host of reasons. Meditation is a way to sharpen the cognitive apparatus, and to facilitate the sort of transparency-to-opacity frame-shifting discussed above in which see the mind can take off the metaphorical mind-lenses, like a pair of glasses, and look at them, rather than through them. Phenomenological exploration of consciousness and selfhood will be enhanced by cultivating meditative clarity and stillness. The practice enables us to dispassionately explore our own beliefs, desires, emotions, values, self-images, goals, and actions, and our underlying premises for each. Meditation enables us, through practice, to experience altered states of consciousness, and thus to shift our paradigms. It can help us to regulate our thoughts, emotions, desires, first by being able to see them more clearly, and then to more voluntarily approve or disapprove of them, to up-regulate or down-regulate our attention, energy, and efforts towards them and our attitudes about them. It can help us to awaken the inner philosopher, the philosophical counseling attitude, the philosophical disposition.

Meditation can be a very helpful way to create a contemplative mood, as in my philosophy classes, as a way to start session, both to make counselor and the client more fully present, at ease, intrinsically curious,

and so on. It is a way to help a client enact a philosophical mood, a mental state, a thought experiment, a counterfactual, and so on. It can serve as an always-available way for a client to access an inner well-spring of existential nourishment. Ram Dass once described the greatest value of meditation as evident to him at those times when he found himself out of its practice, at which times he became aware that he “was walking around with a lot of undigested experiences”. Meditation can function as a great form of existential digestion, akin to the dreaming and dreamless states we pass through each night, but undergone consciously, and thus more volitionally integrated into our psyches.

It can help to shift clients into the big picture perspective, thereby reducing their preoccupation with things that might be needlessly weighing them down. It can help clients escape habitual mental states and behavioral patterns, if not reduce the extent to which they succumb to (relatively mild cases of) depression, anxiety, OCD, and addiction tendencies (all of which involve attachment to and identification with repetitive ideation). It can be used in any session when the client begins to ramble, helping to bring the client back into the present moment, into the session. Teaching clients meditation is giving them a powerful self-support practice, introducing them to an inner philosophical watering hole, metaphorically speaking, where they can hear the voice of their *daemon*.

Stoic meditation techniques

These all seem to revolve around their distinction regarding the dichotomy of control: that is, the distinction between what can vs. what cannot be controlled. These can be introduced through mere discussion of, or guided contemplation on, how the distinction works. Related to this distinction is the idea that worrying is like praying for what you don’t want (irrational), the idea that anxiety is just excitement (good) plus fear (an irrational prediction, which reasoning is adopted in CBT, which is based almost entirely on Stoicism), and the practice of the Serenity Prayer.

Pre-meditatio malorum: One visualizes the day ahead, imagines a bad event, and prepares how one will react toward it with the dichotomy of control in mind.

The View from Above: One visualizes one’s consciousness expanding to all spacetime, enacting the view *sub specie aeternitatis*.

Post-meditatio: One reviews the day before retiring, considering what may have been suboptimal in one's responses to events, and imagines more optimal alternatives.

Journaling: If it helped the greatest Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, whose journals have been published as *The Meditations*, it can help anyone.

Contemplation on the Dichotomy of Control: Things are either under our control or they are out of our control. There is no sense fretting over anything that is, was, or will be out of our control. All we should allow our attention to be directed towards are things that are in our control. Events caused by anyone or anything other than ourselves are not under our control, although we may exert tremendous causal influences over them through things we can control, for example, if one is a parent, manager, coach, etc., but even in such cases, as the saying goes, you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink. What we can control, though we may not realize it, is our beliefs, intentions, emotions, attention, and actions.

Beliefs: The beliefs we form about many things that are not absolutely certainly true or absolutely certainly false admit of a voluntary element. How we frame and interpret an event is at least partly up to us, e.g., whether we run with our initial interpretation of another's behavior, motives, etc., and take it personally, or more mindfully consider plausible alternatives.

Intentions: While perhaps a majority of our desires, needs, and motives might arise spontaneously and appear to us as givens, we can exert voluntary influence over many of them. Whether we want more potato chips or popcorn while watching a film, for example, is really up to us, despite how ingrained our associative habit of film and munching may have become: we can decide not to water that habit of intention.

Emotions: We are even more naturally inclined to view emotions as involuntary givens than we view intentions as givens. But these, too, are amenable to voluntary efforts, particularly our stress-related responses. While we cannot control the most of the adverse events that life presents us, we can control whether or not we let them stress us out.

While this may not be something we can do at will, such as feel happy, there are indirect ways to cultivate this ability, e.g., by cultivating

greater attentional autonomy, which can redirect our attention away from distressing features of a situation towards more desirable features of it.

Attention: In commuting, we can fight frantically, tooth and nail trying to take advantage of every tiny opportunity to place one's vehicle into an empty space in the next lane, getting frustrated when such attempts are thwarted by like-minded or oblivious others, or we can decide to make the music playing or the passing beautiful foliage more salient and worthy of our attention, or attending to an interesting audiobook or podcast, thereby creating the conditions under which, instead of getting frustrated, we are able to enjoy being relaxed, at ease, and content. Our ability to choose what to direct our attention to, what to thereby make salient, and thus what will condition our subsequent experiences, perceptions, and emotional states is a powerful form of psychological autonomy. Of course, meditation exercises are exercises in attention training.

Actions: Some of our actions are automatic, spontaneous, or habitual, but the majority of them are amenable to voluntary control. Right Action, from a Buddhist perspective, implies that we are able to control our actions, and choose to only enact those which tend to lead to *nirvana*, or mental freedom, and to refrain from those that tend to lead to mental bondage. The Stoics would agree. Even serious addictions – deeply ingrained habits – can be reversed.

Contemplation of the dichotomy of control feeds into a greater mindfulness of our control over our beliefs, desires, emotions, attention, and actions. It is worth contemplating together with a client in session, as well as encouraging it as homework, perhaps in the form of bibliotherapy, suggesting various Stoic texts.

Miscellaneous Secular Techniques

Choiceless awareness: Just being aware, without doing anything to control your attention, is how Jiddhu Krishnamurti (2018) describes his methodless method or pathless path: meditation is a state of lucid awareness that happens, not something you do. Recalling the debate between Maharishi and Osho, however, Krishnamurti had a lot of practice before he decided to let go of methods. Krishnamurti suggests that instead of trying to be more spiritual or religious and thus seeking meditative tranquility, we would grow more in wisdom if we simply examined our most mundane states, like jealousy, feeling stupid, or acting foolishly.

On my interpretation of his philosophy of meditation, if not more generally of life, at least for present purposes to try to render it more comprehensible in the shortest time frame relative to other ideas already presented, it seems reasonable to construe his attitude towards how we should pay attention to every mundane moment, instead of secluding ourselves in eyes-closed withdrawal into some mystical state, as somewhat akin to Grimes's attitude about how we should look into the meaning of every dream element for a clue to our *pathologos*, but only with the same inquiring attentiveness in every waking moment, deeply observing, for example, how we walk up the stairs, sit in a chair, eat our lunch, and so on, with a similar intent of uncovering *pathologoi* in every moment that are blocking us from freedom in that moment.

Krishnamurti is also keen to emphasize that all knowledge and belief is of the past in a sense, or dead, as he often refers to it, an idea that is perhaps more readily comprehensible as being akin to an epistemic version of the collapse of the wave function: it is resolved, closed, unchanging, inert, lifeless, and so on. Restricting ourselves to fixed conceptual constructions, he reasons, is limiting, and disconnects us from the vitality of the present moment in its unknown, open character, as well as tends to reduce our openness to all the possibilities. This aspect of his philosophy seriously influenced Bruce Lee to reject the traditional martial arts training emphasis on kata, ritualized choreographed fighting sequences, like ritual dances, in favor of training to be more responsive to whatever arises in sparring contexts under more spontaneous conditions (dos Santos 2020). Again, as the Maharishi might have noted, like Osho and Krishnamurti, Lee had many years of training in kata before deciding to transcend them. Similar observations are made by jazz musicians after years of training in Classical music conservatories, although some musicians make counter-arguments. My son, Alex, for example, who attended the Music Conservatory at Brooklyn College, thinks that while Classical training can certainly help, it can also inhibit musical creativity. One specific point of disagreement between him and one of his Music professors was over whether certain sequences of chords and the like are discordant, and whether or not that can ever be a good thing. As a composer of progressive rock and metal music, Alex thinks discordant elements in a piece can be valuable. I agree.

Perhaps Krishnamurti's advice, like that of Ruiz, might need to be tweaked for the average person. Contrary to Krishnamurti's complete rejection of method, then, the analogy of one Zen teacher (whose name I forget, who gave a Dharma talk at the CUNY Fall Mindfulness Lecture Series in the early 2010s) comes to mind. The Zen Master once said that meditative practice techniques are like training wheels on a bike: once you learn how to ride a bike, they are no longer needed. On one of my appearances on the Integral Stage (YouTube series) with Bruce Alderman and Layman Pascal, Layman mentioned that another meditation teacher once said something like this: Meditative or mystical experiences are like accidents – they just happen. But the more you practice meditation, the more you become accident prone. (Alderman, Pascal, and Repetti 2022) This seems to be a reasonable midpoint between the method vs. no-method approaches and it resonates with my experience and my overall philosophies of meditation and of philosophical practice.

Transcendental Meditation: TM, made popular in the West by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the Beatles' guru, consists mainly of repetition of a mantra, a meaningful word or phrase, often in Sanskrit. Studies show good results for this, but I think the sorts of results studied are philosophically limited – not that the technique of mantra is necessarily as limited as the aspects of its effects that were studied. For example, in his book, *The Relaxation Response*, Dr. Herbert Benson explains how he extracted a generic mantra technique, and got quantifiable physiological improvements in terms of reduced heart rate, blood pressure, and stress. Philosophical uses of meditation go deeper than these simple goals, which are nonetheless nothing to sneeze at.

Versions of mantra practice, such as repetitive prayers (like doing the rosary), *kirtan* (responsive chanting), or chanting of hymns, among countless variations, may be found in most of the world's religious traditions, as well as in tribal, shamanic, and other traditions, often accompanied by drumming or other musical accompaniments. Such practices may produce powerful meditative effects, including deep trance states, if not ecstatic states.

Anticipating a possible objection here, I would emphasize that I'm not encouraging something like tribal dance in a philosophical counseling session, of course. But I am suggesting that some of these sorts of things

that might have transformative, mystical, sapiential, or alternative forms of philosophical impact are worth exploring. More importantly, some might be relevant items to suggest to clients, in the way that I will often suggest any or all of the practices in the DIME framework.

For example, some clients are drawn to the Bhakti Yoga path of devotion, cultivating a relationship with the sacred. For them, *kirtan* is worth considering, and it is available at many yoga centers and ashrams. Krishna Das is a renowned *kirtan* master, and devotee of the same guru as Ram Dass, who holds what are akin to *kirtan* concerts all over the world, and he has many albums that people can purchase to practice *kirtan* on their own. Another example of something that might be worth recommending to a client, although not a form of mantra at all, but instead a form of embodiment or movement practices that some philosophers might reject on the ground that they are not necessarily philosophical in the analytic sense, might be something like Rafe Kelley's "Evolve, Move, Play: Movement Training for Humans" retreats, for clients who are too disconnected from their bodies, perhaps thinking too much, under the spell of propositional tyranny. Alternatives might include suggesting a walking or running practice, Tai Chi, or martial arts. The point is that the things that a counselor might benefit their clients by recommending need not themselves be philosophical. Often times simple time management advice and other practical strategies can serve as solutions to problems clients are blocked by, but are mis-framing as existential confusion, anxiety, and so on. Again, while certain activities might not themselves be essentially or even remotely philosophical in the sense that might drive this potential objection, they can be part of an ecology of practices embedded in a philosophical way of life, geared toward *eudaemonia* (flourishing, wellbeing), *phronesis* (practical wisdom), and *sophia* (philosophical wisdom). The idea of integrating somatic and otherwise not-intrinsically-philosophical practices in an ecology of practices oriented toward enlightenment is as old as the Vedic philosophy, and is explicit in the *Ashtanga Marga* or Eight-Limbed Path (of and toward Yoga, conceived as union with ultimate reality) as formulated by the ancient Indian yogi and sage, Patanjali, in his *Yoga Sutras* (Hartranft 2003). The third 'limb' of Ashtanga Yoga is the practice of performing asanas, motionless poses, the extraction of which element from this tradition has become the popular conception of yoga in the West, as mere exercise, but which was originally

formulated to give the yogi a limber, energized, healthy body for purposes of meditative practices. Surely, simple physical poses are not explicitly philosophical, but they play an important role in this highly philosophical tradition. One very simple meditative benefit to mantra practice is that after some time the mantra becomes second nature, and often spins in the mind on its own, an ever-present reminder to maintain mindfulness. Another is that it can be consciously conjured to eliminate an ear worm (a melody or commercial jingle one cannot otherwise stop from spinning in one's mind). Another is that it serves as an easy meditative attentional target, the more one has invested time doing it. It may also function as a mental broom, sweeping away internal dialogue.

The only caveat I would suggest regarding mantra is that it might be wise to consider it a form of meditative training wheels, and to be on the alert against becoming attached to it. It is a method, not a goal.

Mindfulness: Mindfulness is one of the two main meditative techniques in Buddhism and is all the rage, with millions of secular practitioners around the world using it in increasingly diverse contexts, from classrooms to board rooms and prisons, to the point where both traditional practitioner and cultural critics are critiquing it by labeling it as “McMindfulness”. The Buddhists object that it is divorced from the larger ethical, spiritual, and sapiential philosophy of Buddhism, Christian fundamentalists object that it is functioning as a gateway drug to other religions or stealth Buddhism, and cultural critics object that it tends to get practitioners to internalize external systemic injustices as internal stresses to sublimate, thereby making them the equivalent of more docile, more milk-producing cows and eliminating their agency as social justice advocates. While there is some truth in each of these objections, I have defend even McMindfulness (Repetti 2016) on the grounds that it is an almost universal medicine. Any increase in mindfulness is a decrease in mindlessness, and mindlessness is at the center of most human errors, accidents, and bad decisions. Ellen Langer wrote a great book about it, *Mindfulness*, long before it came on the scene as a meditative practice, primarily as an antidote to mindlessness. It is medicine for the soul.

Religious Techniques

One need not be religious to practice meditative techniques derived from religions, such as *Lectio Divina*, mantra, or meditations on the One.

John Vervaeke's acclaimed YouTube series, "Awakening from the Meaning Crisis", and his more recent series, "After Socrates", both go to great lengths to describe what he suggests we as a culture could use to address the meaning crisis created by the rise of science and the loss of faith, which he calls a "religion that is not a religion", basically, his prescription for an ecology of sapiential practices which he has designed to try to reverse engineer enlightenment. I have recorded several mantras on my website, for anyone who wishes to hear how they may be chanted, and learn what they mean. Prayer is a form of meditation, which some have described as speaking to God, whereas meditation is listening to God. Rupert Sheldrake has suggested that we may fill this void by revisiting our birth or ancestral religion, not as nostalgia, attempting to put on a set of beliefs we no longer can accept, but looking for whatever meaning we can find there. I would suggest that many of the religious practices that are meditative or contemplative may serve this purpose.

Two Representative Techniques from the Buddhist Eightfold Path

The last two elements on the Buddhist Eightfold Path, which path is the Fourth Noble Truth (the prescription, in its medical analysis analogy, the first three truths being the Buddhist diagnosis, etiology, and prognosis), are concentration or one-pointedness and mindfulness. On one interpretation, the differences between these two may be understood as follows:

- One-pointedness: narrowly focused awareness, targeting a single object, such as the breath, sound, a physical sensation, etc.
- Mindfulness: monitoring, witnessing, observing, spectating the stream of consciousness or the entire field of awareness, without judgment.

Another interpretation is:

- One-pointedness: training attention to maintain an intended focal point, narrow (as above) or broad (the entire stream of consciousness).
- Mindfulness: being aware of, mindful of, whatever one is focusing on.

I see them as one technique with two aspects combined: maintaining an attentional focal range with mindful awareness of the

object of focus (cf. a flashlight's field of light and the intensity of the light within it). My attitude towards these competing views, despite the importance of these differences within and between various Buddhist traditions, is the proverbial "six of these, half a dozen of those". These differences have relevance in some contexts, but not here.

One-pointedness: One-pointedness is described well in Patanjali's *Yoga sutras*, and Buddhism predates that text, but the technique predates Buddhism, clearly, since the Buddha explains that he learned the technique from two of his yoga teachers before he invented Buddhism. The still lake is a metaphor for the goal of this practice: tranquility, mental quiescence, clarity, and laser focus. Attentional control, the opposite of ADHD, as exhibited in being able to sustain attentional fixity on a select object or at a desired range. Sustained, this causes trance states, mental energy, tradition claims it as the root of the cultivation of psychic powers. It enables practitioners to reduce internal dialogue, self-talk, ongoing commentary. It promises increased patience, ability to abide jarring thoughts, emotions, desires, etc. Will power, the ability to not act on impulse, to ignore distractions, and the like, is increased. The Buddha once claimed he can think or not think any thought he wants to think or not think, have or not have any resolve he wants to have or not have, etc., an ability I describe as freedom of the mind, which includes freedom of the will, freedom of attention, freedom of emotion, and freedom of all things subject to voluntary manipulation (Repetti 2019).

Mindfulness: Keeping in mind the different ways to understand the difference between mindfulness and one-pointedness sketched above, add let's add another framing: one-pointedness involves focused awareness and mindfulness involves open monitoring. Just as one-pointedness admits of a still lake metaphor, mindfulness in this sense admits of a stream metaphor: one is tasked to watch the entire stream of consciousness, without judgment, reaction, or control, and if these arise, to see them as further features of the stream. This enables practitioners to watch mental states as they arise without identifying with or acting on them, which fosters detachment from them. Detaching from mental states enables one to see them impersonally, thus more clearly. Sustained cognitive penetration into the mind's patterns leads to insights about its functional patterns, associative triggers, and thus greater intimacy with the causes of one's own mentality and behavior. Focused, mindful familiarity with the

subtlest movements of mind is an exercise in developing the discriminative ability to identify and differentiate the various elements in one's cognitive/conative phenomenology, leading to greater self-awareness and increased wisdom. I have over 100 recordings of online meditations that I have led for the CUNY community since the pandemic began, when we relocated my previous on-campus weekly meditations to online ones, available at <https://www.dropbox.com/home/meditation%20videos> or at my website at <https://www.rickrepetti.com/meditation-to-the-people>.

Conclusion

As noted in the Introduction, none of these potential tools are being offered as prescriptions (except the suggestion to the effect that philosophical practitioners ought to practice meditation themselves, for their own spiritual/philosophical development), but only as descriptions of tools that philosophical practitioners might consider adopting. As with meditation, however, it would be wise to experiment with any practice before implementing it with a client, although there are obvious exceptions: one need not have experienced everything that one is competent to prescribe.

I offered some justifications for philosophical counselors including certain practices that do not appear to be inherently philosophical in their philosophical toolkits, when there are good philosophical reasons in favor of our engaging in them ourselves, prescribing them to our clients, or even employing them in sessions. In a similar spirit, I would like to conclude this paper by offering a broader conception of the possibly legitimate roles of a philosophical counselor that are presently excluded from relatively standard interpretations of the legitimate scope of practice for the profession, reflected in the professional ethics codes for the profession.

For example, let us consider some statements from the American Philosophical Practitioners Association (APPA) that are relevant to my point. I should note that I was certified as a philosophical counselor by APPA and am currently a VP, a Member of the Board of Directors, and on the teaching faculty, so this is the ethical code of my own organization, to which I am deeply committed. Of course, and this is especially true for philosophers, there is no inconsistency between being equally committed to critical analysis even – if not especially – of one's own cherished beliefs

and commitments. Philosophical practitioners will refer clients for appropriate alternative care if the clients' problems are adjudged to be not primarily philosophical in origin, or not amenable to philosophical approaches (APPA, n.d., Part I, § iii.).

The spirit of this passage is clear, but two parts of it are ambiguous. First, ought we to refer clients to other types of professionals who will be the ones to provide appropriate alternative care, or can we refer them to alternative activities that function as forms of care ourselves, such as the DIME framework? That example seems unclear, but my intuition suggest that referring clients to DIME practices seems reasonable. Second, many clients' problems are adjudged to be not primarily philosophical in origin, but nonetheless amenable to philosophical approaches. However, the quoted passage uses the disjunctive 'or' in an ambiguous manner: is it being used in the inclusive or exclusive sense? I see no reason why we ought not to address any problem that is not inherently philosophical itself in nature, but which is nonetheless amenable to philosophical approaches. I have suggested earlier that sometimes the converse is appropriate: an inherently philosophical problem might be amenable to an inherently non-philosophical solution. In such cases, ought we to refrain, e.g., from telling a client that we think they might resolve much of their existential anxiety if they learned how to better prioritize their projects, learn time management skills, or just use an agenda? Many problems that are typically brought to psychotherapists, life coaches, and gurus are not inherently philosophical, but are amenable to philosophical approaches, and vice versa.

They should not mislead the client about their credentials and should not hold themselves out (either implicitly or explicitly) as mental health counselors, psychologists, or authorities in any other field for which they are not otherwise qualified (APPA n.d., Part II, § viii). Of course, as a rule no professional should mislead clients in any way (setting aside debates about the possible exceptions to principles of informed consent in medical ethics, issues of medical experts acting *in loco parentis*, etc.), but the exception regarding being an authority in any other field for which we are not qualified does not exclude any other field in which a philosophical counselor *is* qualified. In this case, however, the word 'qualified' is ambiguous between *skilled* and appropriately *credentialed*.

Ethically speaking, not legally speaking, many who are credentialed are poorly skilled and thus not actually qualified in this sense, though legally qualified, and vice versa. Pierre Grimes, for example, is highly qualified to do deeply psychotherapeutic work analyzing dreams in order to uncover the client's *pathologos*, although he rejects the idea that his method of philosophical midwifery requires professional credentials: One is either able to do philosophical midwifery or not. Socrates and the Buddha both lacked any professional credentials, but both were highly qualified to advise people in roles that render those of the average licensed psychologist and the like relatively unqualified by comparison.

Philosophical practitioners should not employ techniques or methods not associated with training in philosophy (for example, hypnosis or other psychiatric/psychological interventions) for which they are not otherwise qualified (APPA n.d., Part II, § ix).

I agree with this, which is why I suggested that philosophical counselors generally should not advise clients to take up meditation, for example, unless they themselves have become competent or 'qualified' as practitioners. But this was advice, not a professional ethical restriction. Surely, someone who does not practice meditation, or any other otherwise wholesome practice, ought to be able to wisely prescribe any one of these practices, so long as they know enough about it to make a good judgment call about it in the case of a particular client, all things considered.

Many clients come to us looking for philosophical guidance, and in the course of it their need for life coaching, therapeutic assistance, spiritual teachings, and/or simple practical advice might emerge. I do not think APPA's Code of Ethics actually forbids a philosophical counselor – who is qualified in the sense of being skilled – from providing such services under certain circumstances. Of course, if something only a psychiatrist is qualified to treat emerges, unless one is also a psychiatrist, one ought to refer that client out to a psychiatrist. If one has no skill in any area other than philosophical counseling, then it is advisable for the philosophical counselor to refer the client out to professionals who are competent to prescribe appropriate alternative forms of treatment. As with so many other things, the devils and the angels are in the details.

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