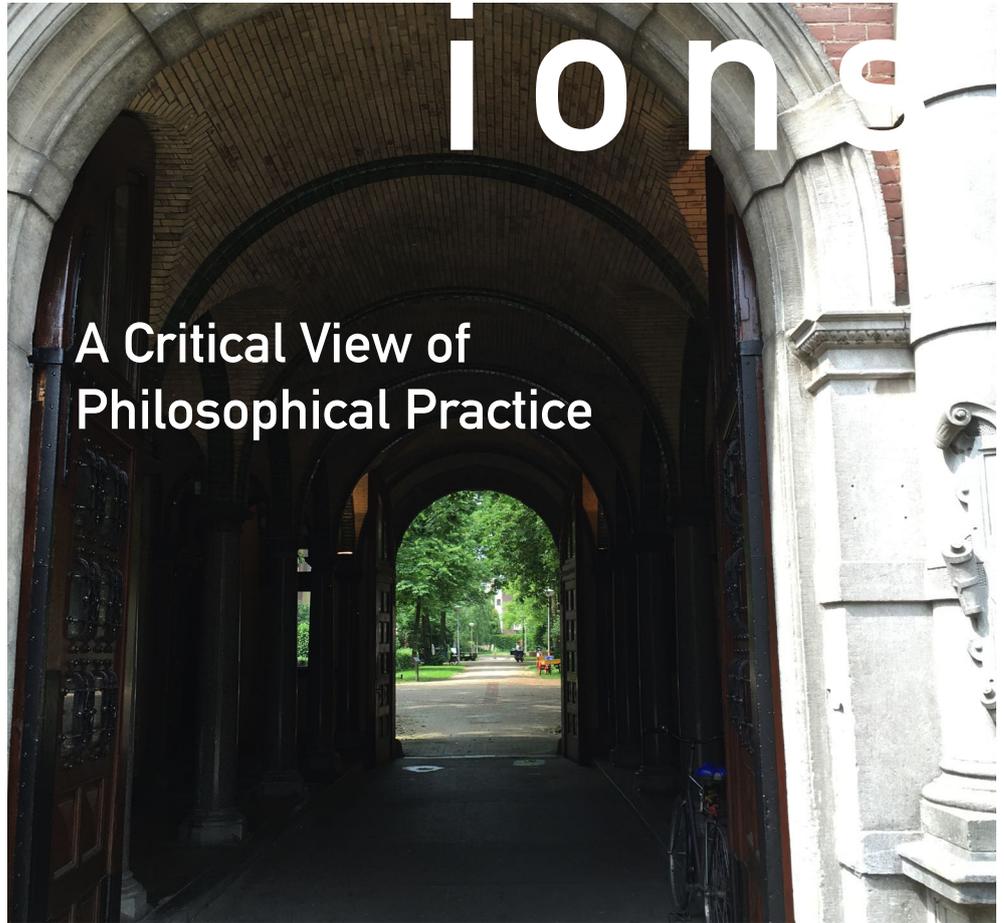


Skeptical Interventions

leon de haas

A Critical View of
Philosophical Practice



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A Critical View of Philosophical Practice

by Leon de Haas

COLOFON

Title: 'Skeptical Interventions. A Critical View of Philosophical Practice'

Essays 2011 - 2016

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Publisher: PlatoPraktijk, Roermond, The Netherlands | www.platopraktijk.nl

Published as a digital booklet

Roermond, February 2018

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NUR 730

ISBN 978-94-90208-04-2

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INTRODUCTION

This e-book is a compilation of eight essays I wrote in the years 2011-2016 in the field of philosophical practice. They all have been published in Journals of philosophy and philosophical practice, or in the proceedings of a conference (see the acknowledgment at the end of the book).

The title “Skeptical Interventions” refers to both the Socratic nature of the dialogical philosophy I practice, and the nature of these essays as critical interventions in discussions about philosophical practice.

Actually the texts are preparatory studies for the dissertation project I am currently working on.

Leon de Haas

March 1, 2018

Roermond (NL)

I. AN ESSAY ON THE JUSTIFICATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

Abstract

Current attempts to set criteria for judging the value of philosophical practice are one-sided focussed on the practitioner's competences, views and methods. In this essay, arguments are carried along to involve the client's perspective in the process of valuing the practitioner's interventions. Joining in with Toulmin's analysis of clinical disciplines, the author characterizes the dialogues in philosophical practices as clinical situations. In line with this, a dialogical approach of the assessment of these interventions is proposed. The dialogical evaluation involves the dialogue between client and practitioner about the concrete interventional process, as well as meta-dialogues with colleagues about the philosophical value of the practitioner's interventions.

Keywords: Philosophical practice; dialogical intervention; justification; valuation; evaluation; assessment; clinical situation.

Practices, sessions, cases, interventions

In this essay I will refer to philosophical practice with four distinguished words. With 'practice' I mean both the acting of philosophical practitioners in general and the economic form in which they offer their services. A 'session' is a temporally unified meeting between client and practitioner. A 'case' is both the question or problem of client ('What is the case?'), and the whole of a series of successive sessions for one specific 'entrance question' of a specific client (the whole process). An 'intervention' is a specific interference of the practitioner into the story or the behavior of a client during a session.

Questions about the value of philosophical practice

Let's say, I am a client (or guest) in a philosophical practice. How can I know whether the practitioner's service is good? Do my subjective opinions or feelings about the meetings with the philosopher suffice? Or do I need objective criteria to judge this service? And are such criteria available? Or suppose, I am a rehabilitation physician who is been asked to cooperate with a philosophical practitioner. How can I know if philosophical counseling is of added value for the patients in my own practice? And, knowing that there are several different professional styles and methods in philosophical practice, how can I choose the best philosophical practitioner?

Up to now, objective or shared criteria for judging the quality or value of philosophical practice are not available. Such criteria are hardly an issue in the community of philosophical practitioners. That is to say, there are some initiatives to phrase such criteria, but not any of these projects has been adopted by the professional community. So far, as to the identity of philosophical practice, this community is divided theoretically and methodologically, for that matter, without public discussions about the differences. The typical practitioner belongs to a particular equally disposed group, or considers himself one of a kind. Whatever the identity, the commonplace is that 'I' or 'we' are good and 'the others' are bad practitioners.

Three types of initiatives can be distinguished. One of the early attempts to catch the generic identity of philosophical practice was Eite Veening's distinction between so-called 'platonid' and 'aristonid' practices. With these two terms, Veening erected a Berlin Wall between the Good ('aristonid') and the Bad ('platonid') in the world of philosophical practices. The Wall was built of some philosophical generalizations, derived from Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies, described as contradictory. 'Platonid' are those philosophical practices that are focussed on the essence of the client's problem and on the 'proper truth' behind the symptomatic phenomena. On the other hand, 'aristonid' practices deal with phenomena themselves, as they appear. Apart from problems with the characteristics of Plato and Aristotle as he described them, a major problem with his approach is that practitioners who are supposed to be 'platonid' in Veening's theory, do not recognize themselves in that profile. So, this theory is not generally accepted; it functions as a grounding theory for those few who follow Veening's views and method.

A second way of identifying philosophical practice, is to arrange a system of the practitioner's competences. An example of this is Peter Harteloh's attempt to determine the generic competences of philosophical practice. He applied a scientific model for quality assurance as used in medicine and care disciplines, whereas he derived the competences from the history of philosophy. He distinguished three basic philosophical competences: "the Art of questioning (Nelson, Goodman, Brenifier); the

Art of interpreting (Achenbach, Marinoff); the Art of understanding being/living (Socrates, Nietzsche, Nelson Mandela, Joseph Beuys, and... many common people)". A 'good practitioner' is supposed to be skilled in the acknowledged competences. As with Veening's approach, this competence theory defines the professional field of philosophical practice, by which it misses the acknowledgement of those practitioners who do not recognize their practice in the competences of Harteloh's system, despite his attempt to propose a generic system. The assumption of this approach is that all practices can be reduced to the same set of generic competences.

Striking in both theories is the emphasis on the beliefs, skills and actions of the practitioner. The client is absent. It is as if philosophical practice can be done without clients. Or at least, it is as if this practice is a unilateral intervention into the client's thinking and life, without any added value of the client. The practitioner just performs his theoretical and methodical skills.

One of those skills is the competence to diagnose (understand, interpret, analyze) in a philosophical way. Young E. Rhee's proposal to establish the identity of philosophical practice (Rhee 2010), is to develop a diagnostic system that is typically philosophical. He proposes to apply the theory of embodied mind and to construct a diagnostic model. By doing this, he incorporates the (problems of) clients into the profile of the philosophical practice. He is doing more than just enumerating the 'great questions of life' or the 'existential questions', like Marinoff and others did. Rhee discusses and evaluates the WHO's definition of health and its typification of mental diseases, and, following these, specifies some typical mental diseases of clients in philosophical practice. Those diseases are considered the main object of philosophical counselors, "in which the mental is the cause as well as effect of diseases". In his theoretical project, a next step to come, is to relate specific treatments to these disease typification.

Although Rhee's theory of the identity of philosophical practice is about the client, i.e., about the client's state of mind, this state of mind is identified by the practitioner's diagnostic theory. In the diagnostic phase of the treatment, the knowledge of client's mind is being reduced to some pre-existing characteristics of the diagnostic model.

Although Rhee takes under consideration the bodily and environmental context of the client's mind, he neglects the concrete relation between client and practitioner. So, in Rhee's model the client's mind is considered an embodied and situated mind, but the situation of the interaction between client and practitioner is not incorporated in the model. The client is considered a representative of a diagnostic type. In the diagnostic phase, the client's problem is understood by the practitioner in terms of the pre-phrased diagnostic typification.

Actually, both Veening, Harteloh and Rhee constructs an identity of philosophical practice merely from the practitioner's theoretical and methodic perspective.

These three practitioner-centered approaches implicitly answer our question of justification by referring to the quality of the practice or practitioner. The criterion of the

quality of philosophical practice is contained in the practice itself. Only philosophers c.q. philosophical practitioners can judge the quality of the practice. Whether this is true or not, clients and non-philosophical critics and partners of philosophical practitioners may rightly claim their own criteria for such a judgment. Is the question about the value of a particular intervention in the case of a particular client answered by referring to the competences of the practitioner and to the characteristics of his intervention? Or is the client himself, i.e., his way of life, way of thinking, way of processing experiences, his context, etc., - is all this a significant factor in judging the value of a specific intervention in a specific case?

Actually, sometimes the practitioner's questioning seems to be an autonomous process in which the client is just following the questions. This is the case with Oscar Brenifier's sessions. But here, too, answering the question about the value of a session implies the client's evaluation. And to what criteria can the client refer, especially when he is not a philosopher? Not to the principles and characteristics of Brenifier's method, but to his own values, expectations, experiences and thoughts. Here, the talk about the value of the session should be a dialogue between two perspectives, the client's and the practitioner's. This may not be Brenifier's opinion about the evaluation of his practice, but it is mine, as one of his clients (I was his guest in some of his sessions). And it is justified for any of his clients to judge his practice from the client's perspective.

This is not to say, that the client's perspective and judgement are the only right and justified criterion for judging the value of an intervention. For the client can be wrong about his experiences, or have debatable opinions. E.g., at the moment the client might resist against some insight the philosophical practitioner has provoked in the session; at a later moment in his life he might see the truth of that insight. It is stated here, that the evaluations of interventions by a philosophical practitioner implies both perspectives, the client's and the practitioner's. In this essay I will explore an approach of the justification of philosophical practice, in which the focus is on the interaction between client and practitioner, and on the client's uniqueness. To understand this, it helps to take a look at Stephen Toulmin's thoughts about the clinical situation.

Generic and unique aspects of the clinical situation (Toulmin)

Oscar Brenifier avoids talking about philosophical practice in situations other than practical sessions. Wherever philosophical practitioners meet, Brenifier stands up and asks who wants to do a session. There are some reasons to agree with him on this attitude. First, philosophical practitioners are, philosophers as they are, inclined to talk about reality in stead of acting real life. Second, as each session of philosophical

practice is unique - because of the uniqueness of the encounter, the dialogue and the persons involved - generalizations are boring and irrelevant. Third, because of this uniqueness of the session, the identity and value of philosophical practice cannot be discussed apart from the concrete sessions.

So, let us investigate this uniqueness. Stephen Toulmin emphasized the relative uniqueness of cases of what he called the clinical sciences, like sociological action-research, economical research, clinical psychology and clinical medicine. A clinical-psychological case is not just the application of general psychological knowledge. Typical for the clinical situation is the attention to what is specific to this person, his problem, his situation. Not what happens in general is the most important here, but what is specific to this case. 'What is the case here?' is a leading question in the clinical situation. 'What fortune or bad luck happens to this person?' Life, as lived by a person, is complex in its daily concreteness; that's why we cannot simply enumerate and reduce experiences as cut-and-dried case-descriptions. The clinical researcher or practitioner must avoid theoretical and diagnostic blinders, and be open to the richness of factors that possibly play a role in the person's problem. General theory can be useful as hypothesis, but takes along the risk of premature intellectual reduction. Understanding this case of this person is not just the application of general knowledge; it is understanding this particular situation by its own characteristics, in the light of what is already known in general. The clinical researcher or practitioner has the competence to encounter this person and his case on a personal basis, a skill called 'phronesis' (practical wisdom) by Aristotle. The personal basis implies that the researcher or practitioner is not only professionally but also personally involved in the clinical situation. Not only are the professional's presumptions, methods and technics influenced by the clinical interactions, his interventions into the other person's life have moral implications.

In this specified sense, a case, i.e., a clinical situation, is unique. The practice of clinical disciplines is not just the application of the discipline's generic knowledge; it respects the person's particular characteristics, history, situation, and emotional, intellectual and behavioral possibilities and preferences. The theoretical generalizations of the discipline have a value as mind openers, hints, and hypotheses, but they have no heuristic value on their own.

To what extent is Toulmin's idea of the clinical disciplines applicable to philosophical practice? First, the dialogical situation in the philosophical practice has the same characteristics; what matters is the guest's particular question or problem in his particular life. General philosophical knowledge plays the same mind-opening and hypothetical role as in the clinical disciplines Toulmin mentions. This is also the case in Veening's approach, when he says that philosophical counseling is the application of general philosophical knowledge. In a dialogue with a client he has to deal with the thoughts and thinking as worded by the client, and with the client's intellectual possibilities. The insight the client will get in the dialogue cannot just be a copy of certain acknowledged philosophical arguments and knowledge. At least, the client understands the brought-up general philosophical knowledge in terms of his situation.

If not, we can rightly doubt if this dialogical situation really is philosophical practice, or rather a situation of teaching philosophy.

So, we can call situations of philosophical practice clinical in Toulmin's sense.

Toulmin's book is not about philosophical practice, but chapter 12 is about 'practical philosophy', which is characterized by avoiding premature generalizations and thinking about human experience and personality. Toulmin stressed the clinical implications of each chosen point of view. Although he did not incorporate philosophical practice, as it is baptized with this name by Gerd Achenbach, into his historical discussion on contemporary, post-Wittgensteinian philosophy, his arguments seem to me applicable to philosophical practice as a new stage in the history of philosophy.

How to assess philosophical practices?

When sessions of philosophical practice are clinical situations, how can we judge their value? Above all, important is the notion of situations of philosophical practice as dialogues. Specific for a dialogue is that two or more persons are involved and that all of them contribute to the content and process of the dialogue. They 'exchange' thoughts, and, doing this, thoughts change, and understanding happens. So, the process and outcome of a dialogue in philosophical practice is the joint work of both client and practitioner. Knowing this, we find that an assessment of the value of a philosophical intervention has to be carried out by both. In line with the dialogical nature of philosophical practice, it is self-evident that the assessment must be a dialogue.

What is that evaluating dialogue about? The client's valuation is decisive. As we saw, it is the particularity of the client and his case, that determines the understanding of the case. If we follow this line of reasoning, it is reasonable that the client's understanding of his problem and process is at the centre of the evaluating dialogue.

However, the client's understanding is not a guarantee for the truth about the value of the dialogical process the practitioner and the client performed together. Maybe the client has explicit or unconscious reasons to deny or neglect certain insights that appeared in the dialogues, although they might appear true to him at a later moment. Moreover, the client might not see or understand some interventional moves the practitioner made with reason. So, the practitioner's experience of the dialogical process might be of importance for valuing that process.

Is the intervention philosophical?

Beside these situational aspects of the client-centered valuation-dialogue, there are some contextual aspects. In the dialogical situation in the practice, the client seems to be detached from his concrete life context. In the sessions, this context is just present in the client's words. His stories about his situations - events, persons, circumstances - cannot be verified by the practitioner. Usually, in philosophical practice, the client's words are taken as how they are presented by the client, and their truth and value are questioned in the dialogue; the practitioner will not verify the story by questioning the client's family, friends, colleagues etc.

As to the practitioner's intervention, although these may be focussed on the particularity of the case, they are structured and guided by the practitioner's view on philosophy and philosophical practice. To understand the interventional process, the partners in the evaluating dialogue have to question that structuring and guiding view. In the perfect valuation-dialogue, as far as it exists, the practitioner would be explicit about that view. In real life, this aspect of the interventions should be discussed between colleagues. That is, in supervisions, intervisions and seminars. In order to avoid generalizing and from practice released talking, these dialogues on the practitioner's structuring and guiding views should be related to real cases. The question is not which philosophers and philosophies have been influencing the practitioner's interventions, but rather how the practitioner's specific historical philosophical context might have inspired and influenced his interventions.

Philosophical practices are called 'philosophical' not by chance. The international movement of philosophical practice came into being when academic philosophers made critical evaluations of the situation of philosophy in the 1960's, seventies and eighty's. The criticisms were about the loss of practical bonds with ordinary life and society. Simultaneously, these critics started experimenting forms of philosophical interventions in society, i.e., outside the walls of the academy. So, philosophical practice is philosophy, seeing itself as a (or even, the) contemporary way out the supposed dead ends of philosophy.

Whereas the word 'philosophy' is used to refer to a variety of phenomena - from general opinions, 'deep' beliefs and 'wisdom' to theoretical systems, and academic philosophy -, 'philosophy' in 'philosophical practice' refers to the age-old traditions that were born in the ancient Greece of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, as well as in the ancient India of the Upanishads and the Buddha, and the ancient China of Confucius, Mencius, Lao-Tze and Zhuang-Zi. These traditions are still alive and they are being maintained, studied and developed at universities.

As a consequence of these origins of philosophical practice, the question must be asked, 'In what philosophical tradition(s) are you doing your interventions?'. As a rule,

it is not the client who is able to answer this question. The practitioner himself must be asked to be explicit about his roots. He is supposed to identify his philosophical profile in professional writings and discussions. In such a professional justification, the practitioner shows how and why he interpreted the philosophers he has been inspired by, and how his interpretation is working in his interventions. Likewise, a practitioner can criticize the philosophical assumptions in the interventions of other practitioners.

Conclusion

Summarizing, an assessment of the value of (a sequence of) interventions in a philosophical practice is, in the proposed approach, a dialogue. Central and leading in this dialogue is the client's perspective. As the interventional process is the work of both client and practitioner, the practitioner's perspective needs to be involved in the evaluating dialogue as well. This dialogue has the same form or structure as the interventional dialogues (so, the practitioner determines the style of the dialogue). Besides, the practitioner puts the structuring and guiding view under discussion in dialogical encounters with his colleagues. On this meta-level of the justification, the practitioner has to make explicit his relation to the philosophical traditions he is working in.

Thus, our starting question, 'How can we know whether the practitioner's practice is good?', is answered by describing the philosophical practice situation as a clinical situation, and then by deducing the characteristic of the assessment as a valuing dialogue between client and practitioner, enriched by professional meta-dialogues in the light of acknowledged philosophical traditions.

Typical to clinical situations is the fact that there is not a valid 'last truth'. In clinical situations, truth is pragmatic, and liable to new arising events, experiences, reasonings and understanding. This counts for valuation-dialogues, too. In this sense, 'the dialogue never ends', be it with the power of the clock and the farewell at the door of the practice.

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II. PHILOSOPHICAL COUNSELING AS **A PHILOSOPHICAL DIALOGUE**

A situative view, and a discussion of the value of Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations

Lecture before the Korean Society of Philosophical Practice at July 8, 2011

In this lecture I will show how a phenomenological approach in philosophical practice works out in dialogical encounters. We will see when we experience the limitations of this approach, and how Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations can help us out. After an evaluation of Wittgenstein's philosophy, I will show how philosophical practice can go beyond both phenomenology and Wittgenstein's investigations.

In this lecture I will introduce the concepts of 'narrative situation', 'observational position' and 'situational understanding'. These concepts are not developed in a theory, but are technical term in the description of dialogical encounters, the same way Wittgenstein's concepts of 'language-games' and 'forms of life' are technical terms (he could have said, "Look, now I am describing a form of life to show how the word 'feeling' is used".)

Keywords: Philosophical counseling, Philosophical Dialogue, Philosophical encounter, Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations, Situation, Narrative situation.

1. Situations of philosophical encounters and situations of everyday life

1

There is a risk in talking about philosophical practice. This is in particular so, when the philosopher in this practice intends to consider every encounter with his guest a unique event with a unique human being.

This, indeed, is my intention, as is Gerd Achenbach's and Anders Lindseth's. With these two great colleagues I share a phenomenological and existential-philosophical inspiration in practicing philosophy.

The risk in talking about philosophical practice is then, to harm the uniqueness of the encounters and the persons we are talking about.

To prevent this harm, it is recommended not to talk in theoretical, generalizing terms but in terms of concrete encounters with concrete persons. So, my talking about philosophical practice is talking about examples of dialogical encounters in my practice. Today, I will talk about some philosophical encounters with two of my guests.

2

One of them, Christine, came to visit me in my practice about half a year ago. We have met five times in a period of four months. The first time we met at her house. The other meetings were somewhere in a wood, while we were walking. (I prefer philosophical walks. In my opinion they fit the nature of philosophical encounters better than sitting facing each other in a consulting room.)

3

The woman was about 60 years old. She lived in a farmhouse, together with her husband, two dogs and two horses. She had a job as an employee at an office of a health care provider. Her husband was unemployed at the time.

4

She started our first conversation. She told the reason why she had contacted me. For three months she had intestinal problems, she suffered bronchitis and insomnia, and she was overwrought. Her and her husband's financial situation was very bad, because of the debts that were too high to pay off. Besides, both were alcoholic and responded aggressively to each other. The company doctor has sent her on sick leave, and had recommended to visit a personal coach. As she already had a long history with psychiatrists and psychotherapists, she preferred to consult me, a philosophical counselor and coach.

5

I turned our conversation into a dialogue by not reacting with interpretations and evaluations of her story. I mean, I did not react like her husband or her sister or the woman next door probably would have done. Nor the way her psychotherapist would have reacted. I can say that, because through our dialogues she told me how these people had reacted to her life stories.

Right now, at our first encounter, she told me a lot about her personal history. Impressive was the story of the psychosis she suffered when she was a teenager. She lived in lodgings in another city, where she was at college. She suffered loneliness in her room in this rather big city. One night a psychosis overtook her. She told me the details of the psychosis, which was still vivid in her mind. By herself she came through this experience and succeeded in returning to this world.

While telling me her story, she suggested repeatedly that I, being a professional counselor, knew how to label her psychological abnormality. I did not affirm this. Nor did her story about the psychosis frighten me. I listened to her as I listen to someone who tells me a story that is important to her; with interest, attention and respect.

As she told me later, she had expected me to label her psychologically, as all therapists and doctors had done before. By not doing so, I had opened her space to tell her story freely, and I had won her trust.

These months, she felt her situation was really bad. She was underweight. At the same time she was both bursting with energy and dead tired all the time. Every day she drank one bottle of alcohol at least, and did hardly sleep at night.

At a certain point, she told that she always feels power in her belly, and she draws energy from there. But now, she seemed to lose it. Absorbing this important truth of her, I advised her to stop drinking, if she wanted to regain that power again, to get herself out of this mess. From that moment she seriously stopped drinking so much.

6

Let us take a look at this encounter. After some social talk about the farmhouse and the horses etc., I asked her why she had called me. Then, she started telling her story. I listened, and I asked questions to be able to listen better, and to imagine myself in her position.

Mark how this opening of the dialogue differs from how Oscar Brenifier opens a dialogue. This French philosophical practitioner always starts with this one question, "What question do you have?" When his guest has no question, than Brenifier refuses to have the conversation. We could say, that his motto is 'no question, no session!'. For him, just a subject for the conversation does not satisfy the conditions of a philosophical dialogue. One of his conditions is, that there is a question to be questioned. From the start, a dialogue in his practice is a question/answer-game. Only the starting question is asked by the guest. From that point, the questions are asked by the practitioner (Oscar Brenifier), and the guest is just allowed to answer his questions.

But what is the guest's question? This guest of mine, Christine, did not answer my question, "Why have you called me?", with a question, but with her story - stories from her recent situations and stories from her lifetime. After about one and a half hour, we talked about the question what I could possibly mean to her. Particularly, she wanted to talk with me, and to clarify her clouded mind. As far as she asked a question, it was like this, "Please, help me to get myself out of the mess that my life is at this moment!" And this is not a question; it is a cry.

Where Brenifier would have turned her out of his consulting room, Christine and I decided to join in with one another.

7

For Oscar Brenifier, the words and sentences the guest speaks, are just words and sentences. That is, they mean something, and these meanings are a question of definition. Time after time, the guest must decide the questions about the meanings of his words and sentences. And Brenifier allows only digital logic, i.e., yes/no, black/white, etc. An 'in between' is not allowed. 'Maybe' and 'possibly' do not exist. With that, the guest is not allowed to say "I feel ..." or "In my experience ...". That is, feelings and experiences are not part of the definition-and-decision-game that is played in Brenifier's practice.

But I must ask here, "Did Christine's words and sentences mean anything at all without her experiences and feelings?". She was not just uttering words then, she was expressing some experiences of her. The meaning of those words and sentences was their use in her expression of her experiences. To understand her story, was to understand her experiences, i.e., to understand the situations of life she was recollecting and telling at that moment of our encounter at her house.

8

What is "To understand the experiences she told me"?

As she tells her story, the verbal and non-verbal language of her story gives me the opportunity to imagine the situations she is telling about. Moreover, it gives me the opportunity to empathize with the experiences she is sharing with me.

This is important. Thanks to the experience-related story she shares with me, I can empathize with these situations of her life.

And as I imagine her situations and empathize with her experiences, I think with her. Not only do I follow her thoughts, as far as she shares them with me, but also can I, in my thinking, relate to her experiences and thoughts. It is exactly this thinking relationship to her experiences and thoughts, which gives me the opportunity to see free ways where she just feels trapped.

9

Here, the concept of 'narrative situation' is useful. The physical situation is the situation of our encounter, at her house or during a walk in the woods. The narrative situation is the situation she evokes while recalling her experiences. As I listen to her, I imagine myself in the situations of her experience, i.e., in the narrative situation she is sharing with me.

At the same time, I observe her situations and experiences. Anyway, that is the philosophical way to empathize, not just empathizing but simultaneously also observing without any judgment, opinion or comments. It is obvious, that I refer now to the phenomenological value of 'Epochè', the suspension of judgment. So, I am present in our narrative situation both as an empathizing friend and as a neutral observer. It is exactly this presence as a neutral observer, that puts me in the position to keep distance from the narrative situation I am experiencing.

As she is her situation, caught in her feelings, emotions, thoughts, inclination, reactions, etc., I sympathize with her but at the same time I observe this emotional situation. This gives me the opportunity to try to share my observations with her. Problem at this point is, that it is typical of her situation that she does not observe herself freely. To put it in phenomenological words, the suspension of judgment and seeing the phenomenon as it is (the so-called 'eidetic reduction') are not automatically given to my guest. So, I am going to challenge her observational position, by mirroring, pointing, questioning and the like. Sometimes, when she is locked up in her emotions and thoughts, I do not succeed, but sometimes I do. When it works, my guest can walk with me into an observational position and look to herself. So, phenomenological Epochè and eidetic reduction are not rules to be followed by my guest. No, I bring them in as observations and try to share them with her while she tells her story.

10

Let me clarify this, using an example. My guest Christine and I were walking in a nature reserve along the Dutch-German border nearby my residence. She told about an event that happened a week ago. It was Christmas, and she was with her sister, who is still living in their hometown, where they grew up together.

At a given moment, her sister was on the phone with a colleague of hers; the issue was that the sister had not turned up at her work. She was, in Christine's ears, aggressive to the colleague. When Christine made a comment about it, her sister directed her aggressiveness to Christine.

At another moment, Christine annoyed about the filthy home of her sister (dirty toilet, shower, kitchen, refrigerator etc.). When Christine made a comment about this, her sister got angry.

Christine tells me, she is worried about her sister because she is looking after herself badly.

11

Remember, we are in the narrative situation of Christine's recollection of the physical situation in her sister's house. Right now, we together are partly in the physical situation of the walk in the nature reserve and partly in this narrative situation. When I ask, how she felt herself in the situation with her sister, she knows nothing to say; she is primarily engaged in her sister's wellness. She just is concerned with her sister, in spite of all her sister's negative energy.

"Do you want to be treated like that?" No, she does not want to be treated like that. "Why, then, do you accept her behavior?" "Because I must care for my little sister!" "Does care for your younger sister necessarily imply that she is allowed to treat you like dirt?" Christine keeps silent, as her eyes look sad and confused.

She tells, that sometimes, especially if they are drunk, her sister comes too close to her and overwhelms her with declarations of love. Christine hates that.

She tells of the past, when she was younger, from the era of feminism in the sixties and seventies, when a few times women came too close to her. She confesses that once she was about to kill a woman who came too close to her; she couldn't help keeping her away from her. She herself was very shocked by this tendency. Since then, this tendency is occasionally back when someone is close to her again, and then, she is very scared of herself.

To her this feels to be a confession, and she says she is glad that I react rather plain to her confession and do not certify her insane.

In our narrative situation of her real Christmas story, I was able to take up an observational position at a distance from all emotions and automatic reactions. From this observational position, I felt the freedom of not being stuck into her emotional tie with her sister. So, I could, in her place - on behalf of her - distance myself from her being involved in the situation and suggest her to distance herself from it, too. But she couldn't; obviously she did not see the possibility or lacked the strength.

Being in this narrative situation, I got the impression that she might be too open to her sister and other people, and because of that couldn't offer resistance to her overwhelming feelings of empathy and sympathy (and, in some other situations, feelings of antipathy).

So, I ask her whether she is open to other persons, whether it is very easy for another person to come into her feelings, and if it is true that she cannot stop it or dose it. She admits. I suggest that it probably would have helped if she could dose it. I speak of her control over the extent to which she allows people to determine her feelings. In the situation with her sister she let it happen that her sister's behavior and emotions determined her own behavior and emotions. Wouldn't she prefer to determine whether and how people come into her feeling? This thought appeals to her highly.

12

Thanks to the circumstance that I am present in the narrative situation she evokes while recollecting her memories, I am able to experience Christine's situation and to have my own feelings and thoughts about it. So I can suggest her alternative ways of living that situation.

To explain this further, let me recall a story of Petra, who was another guest in my practice. For one and a half year, we walked weekly or, later, monthly in the woods and hills. One day, I started our walk, as I always do, by asking, "What situation or event last week impressed you most and want you to talk about?". She said, she participated in a symposium about 'nature and culture'. It was a small party of people from higher social class. Today, Michaël Gorbatschov was present; he would receive the Martin Buber-Plaquette 2008. The symposium was organized by a professor with two Ph.D.'s (Werner Janssen). He opened the party with an educated lecture. Petra was highly impressed by the lecture, especially by the professor's eloquence and sophistication, but she did not agree with some of his statements and arguments.

In the break, she approaches him with a critical remark on his lecture. He answers elaborately and with conviction. She is impressed and has no counter-argument.

Now, she tells me, that she was arrogant and staked too high. She says, that she values the professor more than herself. After all, he manages to organize meetings like this and to contribute to the international relations with Russia.

Within this narrative situation of our dialogical encounter, I ask her, "Was your critical remark wrong?" "No", she says, "I was right. I still am convinced I was right." "Did you take your responsibility for that situation at the symposium?" "Yes, I did." "How did you do that?" "I did it by taking the professor's lecture serious and by discussing my criticism with him." "Well, do you think now that you staked too high and was arrogant?" "No", she says, "I still think that my argument is better than the professor's, but however, he is someone who achieved important things in the world, and who the hell am I to give him a talking-to!" "O.k., he might have done important things in the world of international relations, but does this make his words true?" "No", she admits, "that does not make his words true."

13

Petra's aim in our philosophical encounters was, as she called it, "to come into her strength". Her problem was, she said, 'that she was not in her strength'. And now again, in that situation of the symposium and her conversation with the professor, she had the feeling 'that she was not in her own strength'. "If you were not in your own strength", I asked, "in whose strength were you?" "I really don't know", she answered.

What does it mean, 'to be or not to be in your own strength?'

If I were not consciously in the narrative situation of her story, then I could have heard only her words, without the experiences and situations she was talking about. Then, hearing her say, "I was not in my strength", I could have asked her to give me a definition of 'to be in one's own strength'. Then, she might have said something about 'being my Self', 'self' not used here as a reflexive pronoun but as a noun. Or she could have said something about 'being in equilibrium', which might have meant something like either 'equilibrium in character and mind' or 'energetic balance'. And so there would have been other possibilities to define that sentence "to be in one's own strength". While doing this, we probably would have lost the living relation with the narrative situation of our dialogical encounter. The words would have lost their living breeding ground, i.e., Petra's real life situations. And, most important, we would not have complied with Petra's wish to 'come into her own strength'.

14

In phenomenological reduction, I reduce all subjectiveness in my perception, feeling and thinking, and am ready to perceive and understand this situation as she is by herself. What is this "understanding the situation as she is all by herself?". Translated to Petra's situation, "How could Petra possibly come into her own strength?"

First of all, we have to perceive this given situation, i.e., Petra as a participant of that symposium. After having distanced herself from her negative judgment about her

criticism of the professor, she sees her criticism as right and appropriate in that situation. Now I ask her, “As you see your criticism was right, were you in your own strength in that situation?”. “Yes”, she answers, “at that very moment that I uttered my criticism to the professor, I knew I was right and I was in my strength. And now, some days later, I still know I am right. Yes, I was in my strength.” “So, what is to you ‘to be in my own strength’?” “Well, it’s THAT!”, she said, referring to that situation with the professor.

The solution of her problem ‘to come into my own strength’ was not one or another cognitive knowledge about the Self etc., but a question of seeing what she already did do but didn’t know yet. Her opinion of herself, how she judged herself, obstructed her to experience how she actual lived that situation.

Since this dialogical encounter about the symposium, we met in more narrative situations in which she experienced this contrast between how she acted and how she judged herself. Through this dialogical journey in the world of her experiences, she learned to see her strength and to show herself the way out of the fly-bottle of her negative self-image.

15

Phenomenology wants to see the ‘essence’ of a phenomenon by ignoring its concreteness and by understanding ‘that what it IS’. By perceiving the phenomenon without our pre-given opinions and judgments, the phenomenon reveals itself to us. This ‘Epochè’ helps us to really perceive the situation and the other person, to really ‘listen’ and ‘see’. But nevertheless, we listen and see with our ears and eyes, with our brains. How could the phenomenon possibly reveal itself to us without us understanding it in our feelings, attention, thoughts, gestures, etc.?

When Petra understood what happened in her situation with the professor, she said “It’s THAT!”, referring to her presence in that situation. Like a bolt from the blue she understood herself as being present ‘in her own strength’. It was her experience ‘as it was’, freed from her self-judgment, that revealed itself to her.

Must we call this understanding an understanding of the ‘essence’ of the phenomenon “to be in one’s own strength”? No, Petra just understood what she herself meant with ‘to be in her own strength’, and she understood it in the context of her conversation with the professor. Her understanding was not universal and eternal, even not in the context of her own life.

16

When phenomenologists try to understand the universal ‘essence’ of phenomena, they get entangled in statements that claim universal truths about the world and our existence. These statements do not come through the phenomenological test of subjective judgment and prejudice. In philosophical practice, this means that I would entrap my guest in the abstract language games of generalizations, and lead her away from her life experiences.

Where phenomenology contradicts itself and our understanding gets stuck, Wittgenstein's philosophical criticism shows us a way out of the fly-bottle.

2. Understanding Wittgenstein, and going beyond

1

Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations concerned philosophical and psychological theories about thinking, understanding, perception, truth, meaning, ethics, and the like. He criticized the tendencies of these theories to claim the truth about these human phenomena. His criticism was not itself a new theory, it was explicitly not theory, but he tried to show to his readers how philosophical theorizing works and why it doesn't fit the phenomena, the truth of which they are claiming. He showed the practice of those theories by describing the uses of the theoretical terms in situations of ordinary life. These descriptions showed the irreducibility of human phenomena of understanding, perceiving, esthetic and moral judging, etc. The abstract, generalizing concepts of philosophical and psychological theories turned out to implode in these descriptions.

Wittgenstein introduced the concept of family resemblances to do justice to the observation that there actually are similarities and differences between phenomena. By the way, this concept of family resemblances is not a theoretical concept, but a methodic one, used as a technique to respect the occurrence of both similarities and differences in groups of phenomena, like, indeed, in families. So, family resemblance does not say anything about the essence of the members of the group, but is just about the occurrence of similarities together with differences.

2

I consider Wittgenstein's work to be a paradigmatic fact in the history of philosophy. We need to read this work thoroughly and critically, but there is no need to repeat his work. We can go beyond, now. And that means, that we can leave the sphere of criticizing theoretic philosophy, and go on to practice philosophical encounters - or should I say 'to practice encounters philosophically?' - in real life.

3

Here, it is illuminating to say something about the relation between philosophy and real life in Wittgenstein's life and work.

4

Ludwig Wittgenstein described the use of philosophical and psychological concepts as language-games , and these language-games as forms of life . He did not describe his own philosophical investigations as a language-game nor as a form of life. He was explicit about his method , but did not reflect upon his own practice as a form of life.

Actually, Wittgenstein drew a demarcation line between his life and his philosophical investigations, although his philosophical work caused him a lot of personal trouble, as we know from his diaries and from testimonies of his friends.

5

Nowadays, in the slipstream of the late French philosophers Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault , it is allowed to talk about philosophy as a way of life. But 'a way of life' is not the same as Wittgenstein's 'form of life'. A way of life is, for instance, living as a Buddhist monk or a Christian believer or a Stoic philosopher or a modern hedonist consumer. A 'form of life', as Wittgenstein meant it, is for instance playing a game, or cooking dishes, or participate in the traffic, or building a house, or learning a language, or feeling pain, etc. etc.

To Wittgenstein, philosophy was definitively not a way of life. He drew a demarcation line between philosophy and life. With it, there was a difference between philosophy as it was practiced before him and philosophy as he himself practiced it. He showed how philosophers produced their so-called 'philosophical problems' by sinning against the rules of ordinary language. Because of that, those 'philosophical problems' were not more than fictitious, unreal problems. Philosophers were caught in the conceptual prisons that were built by themselves. Wittgenstein devoted many years of his life to show to these philosophers the way out of their linguistic prison.

He dissuaded some of his friends and students from becoming a professional philosopher; they'd better make themselves useful for humanity and society, e.g., as a physician or a psychiatrist. He himself did so as a primary school teacher in Austria and as a medic in World War I and as a hospital laboratory assistant in World War II.

Wittgenstein's way of life was religious, not in the ecclesiastical sense of the word, but in a severe ethical sense. He admired the Russian writer and moralist Leo Tolstoy a lot. He was inspired by Tolstoy's moral interpretation of the biblical Christ as a Christ of charity. Wittgenstein judged himself and his fellow human beings according to severe moral standards. In this ethics, sincerity and the personal responsibility for the wellbeing of fellow human beings were of great importance and dominated his conscience. His personal life can be seen as a painful struggle between the moral social demands that pushed him, and his vocation to unravel philosophy's misunderstandings.

6

There is an analogy between Wittgenstein's early work 'Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus' and his mature work 'Philosophical Investigations'. In the Tractatus the

demarcation line was visibly and explicitly drawn between scientific language and knowledge on the one hand and knowledge of our human existence on the other. In the Philosophical Investigations the demarcation line was invisibly drawn between the liberation of our understanding out of the philosophical misunderstandings on the one hand, and living one's real life on the other hand. Or, better, real life was outside the artificial world of inventing and undermining so-called 'philosophical problems'. In both his early and mature years, Wittgenstein's main concern was real life, being a moral life, in which truthfulness, charity and esthetics were most important.

7

Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations freed our philosophical attention from the prison of false analogies, biased generalizations, overvalued aspects, etc., with respect to understanding truth, meaning, feeling, etc. Mostly, Wittgenstein's work is understood as a theory - i.e., a system of truths - about language-games, private language, perception of aspects, etc. It is obvious that, by doing so, the truth of Wittgenstein's philosophical project is stretched. Wittgenstein described everyday situations of using specific words or sentences. By doing this, he showed how certain philosophical claims on certain 'philosophical truths' (like general theories of meaning) couldn't hold out, because there is not just one and only use of that concept (e.g., how people learn the meaning of words), but that there are more possible and real existing uses - indeed, uses that partly overlap and partly differ (family resemblances).

Characteristic to Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations is that his work is free from any specialized jargon. His philosophical work consisted of disproving all specific philosophic jargon, which was after all the part of the problem with philosophy.

Thanks to Wittgenstein's thorough spring-cleaning in philosophy, we can leave theorizing philosophy and her specialized jargon behind, and turn to real life. There is no need to repeat the cleaning he had done, unless we step into the trap of philosophical rationalizing and theorizing. Then, we need this self-reflection. But otherwise, we can participate in life and have dialogical encounters.

8

As we saw in the example of Petra's situation, it is not just in philosophical theorizing that 'the fly is captured in the fly-bottle'; it is also in situations of ordinary life that it can happen to us. Petra judged herself to be 'not in her own strength'. This was her truth, not only with respect to the situation with the professor at that symposium, but it was true of all her situations. She reduced her presence in whatever situation to this one and only truth about herself. By asking her to remember situations in which she experienced herself quite as 'being in her own strength', I tempted her to put her statement into perspective. She, indeed, remembered such situations. Actually, in some situations she felt more 'in her strength', in others less. It turned out that not every situation of 'being in her own strength' or 'not being in her own strength' was the same. Actually, she described a collection of different situations that partly showed similarities and partly showed dissimilarities. She remained behind in a certain state of 'aporia', she wasn't that sure about her 'weakness'.

Obviously, this was a Wittgensteinian exercise, be it, that it was not directed towards an official philosophical problem, but directed towards what I call a thinking knot in Petra's experience of herself in some of the situations of life she told about.

Thanks to this investigation, Petra's attention opened towards her feelings and thoughts in the situation of that symposium. Phenomenologically speaking, her experience of that situation revealed itself to her attention, to her consciousness. Now, she was able to understand herself as she really was in that situation, i.e., beyond her judging self-esteem. (Note, that I say, "in that situation"; on purpose I do not say "anyway" or "essentially".)

9

Now, we are beyond Wittgenstein's criticism of philosophical problematizing and theorizing. Petra and I were in a real life situation of a dialogical encounter, in which she shared her experience of that symposium situation with me. She told her story and I listened to her and experienced her telling her story, and thus we shared the narrative situation of her real experience. For me, empathy and sympathy happened while I listened to her and perceived her telling the story. So, for me it was mainly an narrative situation, vivified by my empathic feelings. For Petra, the narrative situation was at the same time her real lived situations, i.e., her relived memories of the real situations. Thanks to the power of her living recollection, she was, after having taken off the false truth about herself, able to experience that past situation once more, but now in another way, namely as she felt and thought and behaved in that very situation.

In our encounters, Petra and I walked beyond the phenomenological "seeing the essence" of the phenomenon "to be in one's own strength", and beyond the linguistic criticism of philosophical theorizing. We left the textual world of theoretic philosophy and entered the real physical world of Petra's situations and experiences. Here, she 're-designed' the experiences she made at various situations, in accordance with her apparent ability to 'be in her own strength, as she had discovered in the dialogical encounters. After having discovered this power, she was able to experience new situations more in line with her intuitive determination, despite the ongoing inclination to under-value herself.

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III. SITUATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Towards a theory of philosophical practice

Abstract

This essay is a revised and expanded version of the text which was the basis for the author's Masterclass at the 11th International Conference on Philosophical Practice (ICPP), the 18th of July 2012 at the Humanities Institute, Kangwon National University in Chuncheon, Republic of Korea.

The main goal of the essay is, to contribute to a theory of philosophical practice. To do this, the author develops a criticism of reductionist practices in philosophy. The theoretical point of departure is an abridged survey of the two paradigmatic changes in European philosophy in the 20th century, i.e., Husserl's phenomenology, and Wittgenstein's language game analysis. The line of thinking is illustrated by a case story of the author.

Part I discusses the the phenomenological and linguistic turns in European philosophy. Part II describes and discusses a case story. Part III criticizes two forms of reductionism in philosophical practice, namely psychological and conceptual reductionism. Part IV gives an initial impetus to a theory of philosophical practice beyond any reductionism.

In the present essay, the author is dealing with Western philosophy only, as the origins of post-Modern philosophical practice are rooted in Western philosophy. Lately, Eastern philosophy has been an inspiration for philosophical practice as well.

Keywords: European philosophy, paradigmatic shifts, Husserl, Wittgenstein, reductionism, psychologism, conceptualism, situational philosophy, philosophical encounter, philosophical dialogue.

Introduction

An original motivation for philosophical practice is a definite distance from theoretical approaches of philosophy. Another motivation is a definite distance from psychology and psychotherapy. The identity of philosophical practice is above all a negative identity, it is not theory and not psychotherapy; it promises to be an alternative to both. As a consequence of the anti-theoretical perspective, we hardly find theoretical

researches on philosophical practice. At best, there are some legitimations or grounding theories, like Rhee's and Lindseth's (Rhee 2011; Lindseth 2005, 2010). Most essays which look like theories of philosophical practice, are descriptions of methods and technics (like, e.g., the essays in Staude 2010; see Lindseth 2010). This judgement will not be explained and researched in the present essay. The hypothesis to be defended here, is (a) that leading examples of philosophical practice are guilty of psychological and conceptualistic reductionism; (b) that they, by doing so, ignore the phenomenological and linguistic turns of philosophy; and (c) that, by consequence, philosophical practice has to incorporate these paradigmatic shifts, which I suggest in so-called 'situational philosophy'.

A popular view on philosophical practice says, it is applied philosophy. However, being the consequence of the above mentioned paradigmatic turns, philosophical practice is itself philosophy. We cannot make a distinction like theoretical psychology and applied or clinical psychology. Philosophy is practice (Hadot 1995). On the one hand, philosophical practice implies theory; on the other hand, it needs a theory of philosophical practice. That it implies theory, is to say that theoretical work is part of the practice (proposals for understanding the guest's story, and for conceptual research, etc.). That it needs a theory of itself, is to say that we must be clear about the grounds, goals and methods of the practice.

Philosophical practice is, first of all, not a service but the philosophizing person's life practice. Only if the philosopher has integrated practicing philosophy within his daily life practice, he or she is able to help other people to incorporate philosophy into their lives as well. This statement implies a definite positioning of the author's opinion about philosophy and practice. In my master class at the 11th International Conference on Philosophical Practice, I improvised a presentation of this position, using a case history of myself. In the present essay, I will re-construct that presentation, and complete it with reflections on my philosophical position.

A. Philosophy and Practice

What is theory in relation to philosophy? Maybe not all (as Hadot states), but anyway much of ancient greek and roman philosophy was not primarily aimed at developing theories on the essence of reality, existence and truth. They were practices to deal with existence, i.e., one's own life. Cynic philosophy is an extreme example of philosophy as life practice and exercise, without theorizing words. Stoic and platonic philosophies are examples of philosophy as the practice of 'the care of the self' and 'the care of the other' (Hadot; Foucault), with theorizing explanations and legitimations.

Already in ancient Greece, beginning with Aristotle, Plato's scriptures became sources of theorizing philosophy. Here, theory is not meant as explanation and legitimation of

philosophical practice, but as revelation and explanation of the essence of reality. The goal and task of this kind of philosophy is to develop theories of the essence of being, and of truth, beauty and virtue. While the places of philosophy as life practice are the places of everyday life, the places of philosophy as revealing and explaining theory are the Ivory Tower and its annexes.

Despite some revival of philosophy as life practice in Renaissance (Michel de Montaigne), Modern philosophy refined its theorizing capabilities. Ever since Leibniz, Descartes and Spinoza, philosophy developed as a series of competitive, comprehensive theories of reality, knowledge, ethics, esthetics, and politics. That was mainstream of philosophy in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In the 19th century, however, some 'outsiders' in academic philosophy, related philosophy to life practice. To them, philosophy was not developing the mentioned general theories, but the reflection upon life. Philosophical reflection and living one's life slid into one another. We are talking about, Søren Kierkegaard, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Karl Marx can be mentioned here as well.

In the 20th century, the practical life view of these philosophers outside the Ivory Tower of academic philosophy was continued by phenomenological philosophers (like Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir) and by neo-Nietzschean philosophers like George Bataille, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. In all these contemporary approaches, however, practice is above all present as a theoretical issue. When some action is involved in their philosophy, is it as esthetic practice (Sartre; Bataille) or as a kind of political activism (Sartre; Foucault). When we can understand the philosophy of practice as a description or testimony of a real life practice (as with Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas), then the text looks nevertheless like an theory of the essence of human life.

From the 19th century on, Marxist philosophy has been copied and developed as a social and political philosophy. It had its primes in the first three decades of 20th century, and had a revival in the 1960ties and 70ties. The basis of this so-called historic-materialistic dialectics was the class struggle, of which its theory was the guide and the legitimation.

When, in the early '80ties of the 20th century, Gert Achenbach introduced 'philosophical practice', philosophy as life or political practice was hardly an issue anymore. Besides, academic philosophy had lost its central academic position as the Mother of the Alma Mater.

The crisis of Western philosophy

Philosophical counseling, as developed in the 1980's en 1990's, is a post-Modern phenomenon. It came on in a time that Modern Western philosophy had lost one's way.

The explosive growth of physical and social sciences in the 19th and 20th centuries robbed philosophy of exclusive rights concerning ontology, epistemology, logic, ethics,

and esthetics. Statistically and empirically controlled drawing up and testing of hypotheses became the new acknowledged standard of true and applicable knowledge of reality ('ontology'). Epistemology and formal logic separated from the systems of Modern philosophy, and became, as research and legitimation of the foundations of science, part of scientific industry. Ethics became applied ethics in the contexts of medical and political practices. Esthetics prospered mainly as the sociology and history of arts.

Modern philosophy remained in crisis (Husserl 2012b and Heidegger 2000). Husserl and Wittgenstein draw the conclusions from this crisis; the first in the line of Western metaphysics, the second in the line of modern logic. In both cases, Modern philosophy's practice of speculative, generalizing and reductionist presumptions and universally valid knowledge lost its grounds. And in both cases, method, not theory, was the answer; phenomenological reduction and description, and language game description respectively. Heidegger continued Husserl's reflections, and so did, in his wake, Levinas and Derrida. Wittgenstein's critical investigations of Western philosophy found no followers; this kind of research watered down to formal linguistic analysis of all kinds of concepts.

In the years of post-War cultural and social upheavals, from the 1950's, french Nietzschean thinkers explored alternative ways out of the swamps and dead ends of Modern philosophy's crisis. Here, thinking the Identity of the Subject was criticized, and new ways of thinking the 'not identical', 'organic' body, interwoven into networks, were developed (Deleuze; Foucault).

After the creative period of these Nietzschean philosophers, about 1980, some Western students of philosophy looked for new ways to find a living as a philosopher. They ignored the dilemmatic social and cultural situation of Western philosophy, - i.e. either productive science oriented philosophy or marginalized speculative metaphysics, - and pretended to be able to re-invent so-called 'Socratic dialogue' from scratch. The price they had to pay for this frivolity was an ambiguous genuflection to psychology and psychotherapy. While presenting itself as the counterpart and proper alternative to psychology and psychotherapy, philosophical counseling copied their client setting and therapeutical targets. Only the practice of quoting philosophers from all Western and non-Western history reminds of the philosophical heritage. Doing so, these philosophical counselors contribute to the contemporary fashion of individualism and Self-development, including the use of pseudo-psychological categories and diagnoses.

Let us take a look at those paradigmatic shifts, which were ignored by the post-Modern philosophical practitioners.

The phenomenological turn

In 1913, Edmund Husserl published his 'Ideas' ('Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie'; Husserl 2009). In line with

René Descartes, Husserl distinguished a person's consciousness and the objects of this consciousness. Eighteenth and nineteenth century academic philosophy has yielded a good many philosophical theories and a huge jargon. Husserl established the fact, that philosophers were going round in their own circles of artificial language, and had lost any connection with reality and real life experiences. The first thing to do, was to clean the philosopher's mind from all pre-conceived ideas of the world, including everyday beliefs. He revived the ancient greek notion of 'epoché', the procedure of 'bracketing' all assumptions about the existence of an external world. This epoché resulted in the reduction of all kinds of pre-conceived notions of the world out of the philosopher's consciousness. Husserl used the word 'reduction' in the sense of cleansing, sweeping. This cleansing enables the philosopher to observe and experience the world as it is. Husserl's main efforts were not to know the essence of the world, but to know the essence of the human ability to know the world. The aim of his cleansing the human mind was to survey our consciousness. The phenomena Husserl was talking about, were the phenomena in our consciousness, the world as it appears in our consciousness, in our mind. He showed the untenability of both the Cartesian absolute doubt and the Kantian a priori structure of our mind, and looked for a non-preconceived basis of philosophy. This basis cannot be a conceptual construction; it is a specific kind of experiences. Philosophy is primarily not the development of theories, but a practice, i.e., the practice of experiencing one's experiences of the world. He called the philosopher's domain an exclusively own field of experience (Husserl 2009, "Nachwort", p. 141). The phenomena Husserl was investigating, were those experiences of the world as they appear to our transcendental or 'pure' mind, as he called the mind cleansed of all pre-conceived ideas. So, his phenomenology is the description of 'pure mind' and of the efforts to cleanse this mind. He described the practice of 'pure mind'. Once pure mind is cleansed, we are ready to experience the world as she appears to us, and we can try to understand her as she is by herself (in stead of knowing her in accordance with our pre-conceived ideas).

Since Husserl unmasked biased philosophy, no self-respecting philosopher can philosophize from whatever bias. Unfortunately, a lot of philosophers did and do, not in the least philosophical practitioners, as we will see further on.

The linguistic turn

Some decades after Husserl's 'Ideas', Ludwig Wittgenstein created a comparable but different paradigmatic shift. Probably inspired by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, maybe also by Husserl, but explicitly working from the philosophy of logic, mathematics and language in the 1910's and '20s, Wittgenstein developed a unique criticism of Modern philosophy (Wittgenstein 2009). By means of a explicitly non-theorizing method of description, he showed how philosophical problems result from grammatical and logical errors philosophers make by giving fictional meanings to ordinary words and sentences. To show that, he developed his method of describing

so-called 'language games' as they were practiced in so-called 'forms of life'. While in philosophical theories the meanings of words are created in the philosopher's studio, in his head and at his desk, in ordinary life words get their meanings in the practice of everyday life. So, to know the meaning of an expression, is to describe its use in situations of human life.

Wittgenstein answered questions about generalizations, by describing 'family resemblances' of language expressions, and (in Wittgenstein 2010) by pointing out obvious 'certainties' in everyday life, the doubt of which is useless.

As a consequence of Wittgenstein's sobering way of thinking about alleged 'philosophical' concerns like truth and meaning, and like ethical and esthetic questions, to think those issues means to participate in real life situations, practically or virtually (in our narrative mind; see De Haas 2011b). Because of Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations, the use of philosophical jargon and generalizations brings a brush to the philosopher's cheeks (at least, it should). This jargon deprives the living words from their 'organic' meanings in ordinary 'forms of life', while the corresponding generalizations and partiality reduce real life situations from their irreducible richness and concreteness of meanings.

Since Wittgenstein unmasked the reductionist effects of philosophical jargon, no self-respecting philosopher can recede from everyday life situations and the language used there, and invent and process an own jargon with corresponding problems. But again, most philosophers did and do, including many a philosophical practitioner.

Towards a theory of philosophical practice

Although we can distinguish a few known views on philosophical practice (like, e.g., Achenbach, Brenifier, Lahav, Lindseth, Marinoff, Raabe, Schuster), we cannot say, philosophical practice is based on one or more paradigms. There are just some explicit views. Up to now, objective or shared criteria for judging the quality or value of philosophical practice are not available (De Haas 2011c). Like in philosophy in general, in the world of philosophical practice many different - sometimes each other excluding - ways of practice are active. It seems impossible and not fruitful to try to construct one general theory of philosophical practice. The least a philosophical practitioner can do, is to make his own practice explicit, both in terms of intention and focus, and in terms of explicitation and explication of his background of philosophical tradition(s) (De Haas 2011c).

In meeting his guest, a philosophical practitioner has, explicitly or not, an intention and a focus. The intention can be to help his guest to clear his mind, or to find his own real motives or inner self, or to take a heartfelt moral decision, etcetera etcetera. This intention is accompanied with a specific focus on aspects of the guest's question, story, and answers.

It is shameful to say, but unfortunately quite a few colleagues in philosophical practice are vague, and even not capable, in making explicit both their own way of

philosophizing and their roots in philosophical tradition. The professional community of philosophical practitioners should not allow this situation, and promote the transparency of the philosophical quality of practices.

In the next section of this essay, I will contribute to the explicitation and explication of my way of practicing philosophy, illustrated by a case of my own.

B. A Case Story

In the winter of 2003-2004, my wife and I had a short holiday on the isle of Texel, in the dutch Waddenzee. We had hired a holiday cottage, and walked a lot on the beach and in the dunes with our Briard dog. I was there, but my attention was not. Almost all the time, my thoughts were with my job. I checked my e-mail inbox, answered e-mails, called my assistant to consult on specific tasks, read reports and e-mailed my commentary. The wonderful island of Texel, my wife, my dog - they were just the background of my 'remote control management'.

A couple of weeks later, back home, my wife and I were having breakfast, when, as usual, I complained about being tired and having slept badly. And, as usual, my wife told me to visit the family doctor. As the tiredness and the headache were not deniable, I called the doctor to make an appointment. The next day I was in his practice, and he listened to my list of inconveniences, from sleepless nights and headache to backache and palpitation. He referred me to a physiotherapist, send me to the hospital to have taken blood, and advised me to take a sick leave, and rest; his medicine was called relaxation. So I did.

But to take a sick leave, meant to be subject to the Dutch Health Law. My employer had to arrange a re-integration process for me. I became a patient of occupational doctors, who diagnosed my condition a burn-out. They referred me to re-integration psychologists, assertiveness trainers and fitness groups. They all observed me as some category in their burn-out personality diagrams. They treated me likewise. My condition, identified as a burn-out disease, was supposed to be the consequence of my personal bad habits. They said, I drank too much coffee, had a bad posture, did need more physical exercise, and suffered a low degree of assertiveness. When I wanted to speak about the bad conditions at work, they told me, that those were not the cause of my disease, but my personal bad habits were. Or at least, I could not change those conditions at work, while I could change my own personal conditions.

In between the therapeutic and training sessions, I had a monthly meeting with my team manager. She tried to treat me like the re-integration-specialists did, i.e., as a sick person who had to overcome his personal weaknesses. However, in my opinion it was all about the atmosphere and power relations and lack of cooperation within the company. I wanted to talk about these conditions, but she refused and turned the

conversation back to my individual disease and re-integration process. At that time, I was too vulnerable to resist her organizational power.

That summer, my wife and I visited Slovakia. While I was quite depressive since I took the sick leave, this holiday with my wife cheered me up somewhat. But nonetheless, I kept washed-out and without energy. One day, in the mountains of the High Tatra, I hiked into the mountains on my own. Being an amateur alpinist, my body recognized the free atmosphere of space and breath in thin air immediately. My legs jumped across the rocks, my attention was nothing but breathing, moving, walking and jumping; I was the mountain. No tiredness at all. Up there, at some rock near a pass, I was happy, I laughed loudly, my mind was clear, and I knew there was nothing wrong with my energy. Like with fresh blood, I jumped down the mountain. In a renewed spirit, I joined my wife at a terrace, and told her my experience of that hike into the mountains. From that day on, I found my way out of the blind alley of my so-called 'burn-out'. This way was far away from the psychological and individualizing therapies in the burn-out and re-integration industry. I focused on the situations at the office, and tried to change those situations, of which my personal habits and possibilities were part. Of course, I couldn't change those situations on my own, as I shared them with colleagues and managers. But focussing on the situations instead of one-sided on my state of mind, I succeeded in finding and creating other situations where I could be more 'by myself', and where my possibilities and those of the other people in the situation did fit better. On the one hand, I could, as the chairman of the employees council, play a creative and mediating role in a difficult re-organizational process in the company. On the other hand, I started a process of re-starting my own philosophical practice.

Words, feelings, and competences

Texts and conversations play a decisive role in the management of employees who fall out of the working process.

One day during my 'burn-out' year, two representatives of my employer visited me at my home. I intended to use the meeting to tell my story of the bad conditions at the office. I thought, the two men would be prepared to listen to me, and to understand my point of view. But I experienced a rude awakening. They did not deny the abuses I pointed out, but immediately they made it clear to me, that, although I was a program manager and those abuses affected my program and my functioning as a manager, those abuses were not my concern; I had to leave them to the higher ranked managers in the organization.

What happened in that conversation, was a reduction of the situations in my story to just some aspects. The representatives of the company disregarded the relations between my functioning as a program manager on the one hand, and the functioning of other manager on the other hand, in combination with certain power conditions in the organization. They reduced the situation to my psychic condition. This reduction

was itself an act of power. Because of the power relations in the company, in combination with my vulnerability at the time, I gave up.

I told my story in the company - a story partly shared by my guests, the two men who represented my employer. In stead of sharing my story, and in stead of participating in telling this shared story, they declared themselves outsiders, and hold the power to decide the truth of my story, being the story of a overwrought man who bites off more than he can chew. Telling my story, I revealed some organizational problems and abuses, which higher ranked managers did not want to be mentioned. So, they used their ranks to impose silence upon me.

Within the logic of an hierarchically organized company, it makes sense to allocate power and authority, and to take control of communication processes and personal expression - without saying that it is fair to exercise repression in those organizations. Actually, such organizations are in flagrant contradiction to human relations in a democratic society. All the worse, when physical and psychological counselors exert the same reductions in their practices. And when philosophers reveal as reductionist counselors, Socrates would turn in his grave.

In a nutshell, the structure of those reducing conversations can be sketched as follows.

In the conversation, there is a strict and severe division of roles; the one (manager; counselor) has the direction, and possesses the knowledge of the other's condition and possibilities; the other is supposed to be the object of the process, and follows the instructions. Let's us call the first 'the producer' and the second 'the performer'.

The performer has a theme he or she wants to discuss with the producer. The producer determines the way it will be discussed, and watches over the process of the conversation.

The producer's interventions are focussed on reducing the performer's story to the dimensions he, the producer, wants to admit and control. Mostly, these are aspects of organizational and psychological functioning.

Actually, these kinds of conversations are managerial control processes.

Experiences and situations

The two representatives of my employer came to me, in my house and home. They were my guests, but they did not behave as such. They behaved as executers of my employer's procedures. They turned my home situation into an interrogation and instruction room. Two executers and one victim - that was their idea of our relation. Mentally, they brought in the unspoken knowledge - the three of us knew that - that I was financially dependent on my employer's goodness to keep me as an employee. They had the power to define this situation.

Dependency also characterized the situations with the physicians and psychologists. They were commissioned by my employer and paid by my employer's insurance

company. Moreover, they assumed that they, as professionals, possessed the truth about my condition. And also in this situation, we both knew that, actually, I had no choice than to follow their diagnoses and treatments. I had the interest to create the impression that I accepted their role play. That is not to say, that I really did, but I had to give the impression for the sake of my future in our company.

Strange to say that the physician and the psychologists defined the situations of our meetings from their point of view and not mine. The occupational doctor did not ask me about my situations and experiences at work and at home; he just asked me the questions from his form. He did not look me into the eyes; his eyes were focussed on the computer screen all the time. The psychologists started putting me behind a computer screen where I had to fill in assessment forms for about four hours. With that information they constructed an image of mine. My life experience was reduced to their preconceived categories. They never asked me to tell my story as I experienced it, in my own words. They were not interested into my life and work situations. They reduced my experiences to answers to their preconceived questions.

My manager and her representatives did the same in another language.

In those situations, overdetermined by those who had the social power to do so, I had to play a double role. On the one hand, I joined in their game play (I was their cast member); on the other hand and at the same time, I tried to define those situations my way, from my experiences and dignity. I think, this doubles was an important part of my way out of the dead end I had been ended up. Despite the managers', doctors' and psychologists' structural power to define and determine the situations and conversations of our meetings, I had the mental power to create my own presence, my own perspective of the situation. This changed the situation we shared. Now, a meeting was a complex situation of their managerial perspective and my existential perspective. As I was, because of the power relation, not able to ignore their definitions of the situation, they ignored mine vehemently. They answered my attempts to tell my points of view, i.e., the story of my acts and experiences, by reducing the events at stake to my feelings, values, errors, misunderstandings etc.

I tried to focus our attention to the situations in the organizations. After all, it were situations we had shared a lot. We could have shared our experiences in and with those situations. We could have mentioned and valued our behavior as well as the organizational conditions. Although the manager's representatives were guests in my home, and were, so to say, free to arrange this situation as an encounter and a dialogue, they did not. They did not take the chance to respect their own experiences as well as mine, and to enter a free, uncontrollable encounter.

For my manager, it was more difficult to ignore the fact that both of us, and we together, had spent many hours of our life in situations of our company. It was impossible to ignore the fact that we shared many experiences. Whatever issue we raised, it was clear that we shared the situations and experiences of those issues. However, she avoided to take the meeting as a chance to encounter each other openly and freely in a dialogue about those experiences and situations. On the

contrary, she used her formal organizational power to emphasize the hierarchical relationship as well as the fact that there was only one problem, i.e., me and my burn-out.

The situations with the doctors and psychologists were very awkward. For on the one hand, I would expect, that their task and duty was to help me, i.e., to help me find my way back into my job. In my naivety, I hoped to share my experiences and evaluation of the working situation. I tried to talk about the relations and conditions in the company. But those 'professionals in body and mind' turned out to be programmed to individualize and psychologize my problematic experiences and questions. Like with the managers, no encounters and dialogues were possible.

Philosophical conversations

Being faced with this reality of systematic individualization and psychologizing of the organizational issue, I decided to visit an independent psychotherapist. I was lucky to find one, who was also, and first of all, a philosopher. He had studied both philosophy and psychotherapy. In his practice, he was a philosopher. He did not diagnose me, and there was no 'treatment'. Our meetings were dialogical encounters. The only definitions were the time (45 minutes), the place (his consulting room) and the division of roles (he was the questioner, I was the one to bring in my stories). Each time, he opened the conversation with this question, "What did you experience last week, that you want to talk about?". We talked about my life and working situations, which we tried to describe and understand. His contribution was, to help me remember and describe the situations that bothered me. And he surprised me, when I went round in circles or choked on a groundless certainty about feelings, persons, or situations. Different from the psychologists who were commissioned by my employer, this philosopher-psychotherapist did not reduce me to his diagnostic categories and treatment procedures. Nor did he reduce my experiences to so-called psychological phenomena. 'All he did', was to be there for me during those 45 minutes, to open his unprejudiced attention to me, and to follow the stories of my life critically. 'Critically' meaning here: researching the way I told my stories; he drew my attention to generalizations, vague utterances, obviously forgotten or hidden events or feelings, etcetera. His gift to me was free time and space - together with his critical ears and eyes - to explore my experiences and to find new perspectives for my working life. To me it was very important, that we broadened my so-called 'problem' - identified by the reintegration industry as a 'burn-out' - to the field of situations in the company, including the other persons (managers, colleagues, customers) with whom I shared those situations. Although it turned out, that those other persons were, at the time, not prepared to show that sharing in dialogical encounters with me, my own orientation got space, time and light. I could breath again, and start 'to go my way'. During this process of dialogical encounters with this philosopher, I was aware of the fact that my 'cure' could not be found within the consultation room and within our conversations, but that I had to change my presence and behavior in those situations

at work. It was there, that I had to muster up my courage and to practice behavioral changes. After all, those situations had to change, and if they turned out to be unchangeable, I would have to look for another working place. The real dialogical encounters must take place in the situations at stake, in the company, or at home, etcetera; the conversation with the therapist is 'just' an abstract situation to reflect upon experiences and to practice 'ascesis' and changes of perspective.

I felt acknowledged and supported by this philosopher-psychotherapist, which strengthened my self-confidence. I had taken the opportunity to find out my own way through and out that mess in my company. And I experienced the power of philosophical encounters and dialogues.

C. Reductionism in Philosophical Practice

Unfortunately, many a philosopher and philosophical practitioner is reductionist in performing his or her profession.

Psychologism in philosophical practice

Personalistic forms of psychology are rather popular in nowadays consumers' paradise. A human being is considered to be 'homo psychologicus', i.e., an individual with a 'unique', quasi independent inner life of enclosed emotions, feelings, thoughts, dreams. The pretension is, that the assumed inner life can be observed, analyzed, defined and changed. The condition of an individual's inner life can be measured as healthy (normal, desired) or sick (abnormal, undesirable). An undesirable condition can be cured, i.e., changed into a desired condition. The diagnosis and the treatment are based upon the supposition, that the inner life of all human beings can be measured and understood in general terms of universally valid theories, of which each individual is an occurrence.

Most philosophical counselors use that same process. The only difference is, that their analytic and methodical jargon is not entirely derived from psychology, but also from philosophy (like existentialism, heuristic philosophy, ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, or non-Western sources of 'sage wisdom'). Actually, it is mostly this additional philosophical jargon that legitimates the adjective 'philosophical'. And when they do not use psychological jargon, they still follow the process of individualization and isolation of the inner life. This might be just an aspect of the inner life, as, e.g., thinking thoughts.

Part of the copied process is the consultation setting. The place is the consultation room; the scene is that of two talking persons sitting in chairs and facing each other. The client's words are the world of diagnosis and treatment. Here, psychology or philosophy is the treatment of the client's text (non-verbal language is treated as understandable text as well). All happens in the client's head; his emotions, feelings, desires, inclinations, etc., are present as the client's words.

The mind is taken as a kind of box that exists on itself, and that can be approached, diagnosed and treated on itself in the consulting room. When the client is to do some homework, then this homework is also 'head-work', 'mind work', in the mind box.

So, the client's mind is isolated from the mind's bodily and situational contexts. And situational context is social, cultural, economic and political context, at a macro and meso as well as at a micro level. At best, there is some talk about the context, but then this is merely text about context, in the client's mind box. Here, therapeutic practice is mind practice.

By doing so, philosophical counseling ignores the 20th century philosophical criticisms of individual Identity and abstracted Mind (see above in this essay).

Phenomenological therapy in philosophical practice

Anders Lindseth has documented his phenomenological approach in philosophical counseling (Lindseth 2005 en 2010). In my view, his use of the fundamental phenomenological concepts epoché, eidetic reduction and transcendental reduction deviate from Husserl's use of those concepts. Lindseth applies them to individuals, whereas Husserl's concepts refer to the super-individual field of transcendental experiences and subjectivity.

For Lindseth, the epoché is part of the practitioner's self-reflection. By 'bracketing' his pre-conceived ideas and opinions etc., the practitioner has his own ideas and opinions - his 'pre-knowledge' - as his object. By doing this, the practitioner opens his mind to his guest; he is able to get an unprejudiced impression of the guest's expression. With this open mind, the practitioner is ready to research the phenomenon the guest is expressing and to dig up to essence (eidos) of the phenomenon. And to dig up the essence of the guest's existential issue, is to lead this issue to the guest's 'life themes'.

In Lindseth's approach, the practitioner abstains from interpreting the guest's expressions, but, nevertheless, he reduces the guest's expressions to inner psychic phenomena. He does so by his definition of the counseling situation and by his focus. The philosophical dialogue between the practitioner and his guest is isolated from the guest's real life situations. The phenomena of the epoché and of the eidetic and transcendental reductions are the personal inner psychic and mental phenomena. The guest is taken as a psychic, mental, thinking and speaking phenomenon, not as a situated, acting, interacting person in social contexts. And if he is, then by way of thoughts about it. The process at stake, is an individual psychological process.

Husserl himself has warned against the psychological interpretations of his phenomenology. Emphatically, he distinguishes between transcendental and psychological subjectivity (Husserl 2009, "Nachwort", p. 144-146). The latter concerns the natural-psychological attitude of personal feelings, thoughts, inclinations etcetera, while the former transcends from this 'natural' attitude. The 'phenomenological subject' emerges, through phenomenological reduction, from this natural attitude, to experience his daily, natural, personal experiences in a 'pure', impersonal way, as 'phenomena'. This change of attitude is the heart of Husserl's phenomenology.

So, transcendental subjectivity is exactly not the field of concrete personal feelings, thoughts etcetera. However, in Lindseth's so-called phenomenological approach of philosophical counseling, there is no change of attitudes in Husserl's sense, and the philosophical activity happens as the understanding of the guest's most personal feelings, thoughts etcetera. Lindseth's philosophical counseling turns out to be the description and interpretation of the guest's inner-psychic events. Even though he does not use psychological concepts, he supports his guest to see himself as an inner-psychic event. Here, philosophy reduces the guest to a bundle of psychic phenomena. Husserl's phenomenological technique of epoché is just used to create an open mind to start a process of individualizing and psychologizing.

Conceptualism in philosophical counseling

Besides hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches of philosophical counseling, there are approaches with more analytic and conceptual backgrounds. Here, the philosophical activity focusses on concepts the guest uses. The counselor aims either at the construction of the most fitting concept, or, on the contrary, at the research and undermining of the guest's concepts. Let us look at two examples.

Neo-socratic conceptualism

In the tradition of Leonard Nelson (1882-1927) and Gustav Heckmann (1898-1996), some contemporary philosophers and non-philosophers practice what is called the neo-socratic method of group conversation. Although there are various variations of this method, a common structure can be discerned. The group is monitored by a moderator who does not participate in the conversation itself, but watches over the application of the explicit and strict rules of the conversation. Indeed, the conversation is guided by a rigorous procedure, and the moderator is not involved in the content of the conversation. At the beginning of a meeting, the participants are asked to bring in possible themes for the conversation. By means of personal examples of and experiences with the themes, the group chooses the theme to discuss. Then, a process of sampling concepts and definitions unrolls. In this process, one or some opinions about the theme develop. The conversation ends up with possibly the most supported opinion.

This neo-socratic method of group conversation might serve as a useful technique of opinion building, but its philosophical quality is questionable. In the context of this essay, it suffices to indicate the implications of the conceptualization. (De Haas 2011a contains the report of the author's experience with neo-socratic moderators in one of his workshops.) Assuming that the participants' utterances about the theme are somehow related to their life experiences, the neo-socratic process of filtering and defining concepts consists of reducing those various and hardly shared experiences to the few concepts the moderator chooses out of the many words which cross the conversation room. In the process, the participants' attention is drawn to exclusively the concepts under construction. Experience is reduced to the conceptual labor in the conversation. The theme - originally filled with a wealth of experiences, perspectives, memories and thoughts - is narrowed down to one or a few concepts and their definitions. At the end, some generalizations replace the rich variety of life experiences and perspectives, that are not shared, but reduced.

Brenifier's martial version of neo-socratic conceptualism

Oscar Brenifier's approach of philosophical counseling is one of a kind. He has been called the contemporary Socrates and a Zen teacher or samurai, but also a charlatan and even a risk for his guests. Interesting here is his way of working, i.e., his research of the guest's concepts. A public session at the 11th ICPP in 2012 serves as an example.

Wednesday night, the 18th of July, Brenifier demonstrated a philosophical conversation with a Korean woman. It took place in a small theatre hall at the Kangwon National University in Chuncheon, South Korea. The hall was partly filled with participants of the 11th International Conference on Philosophical Practice. On stage were sitting Oscar Brenifier and his guest, a Korean female philosopher. In between them sat a Korean interpreter; Brenifier spoke english, his guest Korean.

As usual, Brenifier started asking if she had a question. Brenifier only accepts a question as the starting point of his conversations. Not uncommon, that it took some time before the woman had pronounced a question. Then, Brenifier developed his process of interrogating the woman about her question. He took one of the concepts in her question, and asked her to define it. He took each of her answers to his questions as the object of a new interrogation. Again and again, he asked her to be specific about the words she used. He did not accept any answer he judged as vague. Mostly, he asked his guest to give an answer out of two possibilities: yes or no, black or white, good or bad, etcetera. He conducted very strict; he had the lead, he determined the process, the guest had just one choice: to follow the leader. That Wednesday night in Chuncheon, we witnessed what happens when the guests wants to quit.

At a given moment, Brenifier's guest indicated that she wanted the conversation to stop. Obviously, she felt not at ease under the pressure of his questioning and digital

logic (yes/no etc.). Then, Brenifier started asking questions about this decision of her. Soon, she was carried away again by this game of questioning and answering. Her wish to stop was not discussed; Brenifier successfully seduced her to follow him again in his conceptual research.

All the time, the woman was inclined to answer his questions with personal stories, experiences, reflections. Within Brenifier's conversations, that is forbidden. Once it was clear, that Brenifier could not undo this inclination of hers, he took a detour. He started talking about 'the average Korean child' and asked questions about this fictitious child. While answering his questions, she stopped talking about herself and supported Brenifier in re-constructing the character of such a child. Then, suddenly, he asked, "Do you recognize yourself in this Korean child?", and she said, "Yes, I do". His conclusion was, that she herself, like the child she described, wanted to be a perfectionist, and that she must not do that, because it makes her unhappy.

In the debriefing, Brenifier stated, that he just asks questions on the occasion of the guest's questions, and that he does not interpret the guest's answers. However, the detour about 'the average Korean child' turned out to be the guided confirmation of his preconceived interpretation of the woman's question. I observed the closing question ("Do you recognize yourself in this Korean child?") as a pitfall; she answered "yes", and, by saying that, she confirmed his interpretation. But did she really confirm his interpretation? In the process, as we could observe it, it was not transparent, nor logical, that is was her own conclusion.

During the conversation, Brenifier interpreted the closed eyes and the laugh of his guest - the former as a sign of her no longer participating in the conversation; the latter as a sign of agreement with his opinion. Another Korean female philosopher told me, that his interpretations were false; the laugh of a Korean woman, in such a situation, is a sign of respect and politeness, and her closed eyes are a sign of repentance and self-reflection. What bothers is not his mis-interpretation, but the fact that he did not ask his guest about the meaning of her body language; he was quite sure about his interpretations.

Brenifier's counseling is conceptual labour. He draws all attention to the definition of the concepts used by his guest. He has the lead in the game of asking and questioning, and drives his guest to obey the pressure of choosing one answer out of two. Every time the guest wants to answer by referring to her feelings, or by suggesting an answer with more than one values or with a "I don't know", Brenifier will not accept the answer, and urges his guest to choose one answer out of two. In the course of the process, the guest is beaten down, and ends up with the answer that results out of the process - or with no answer at all.

It might be, that Brenifier aims at such a socratic aporía; he himself is not very clear about his aims. It might be, that he actually is a kind of socratic samurai, who seduces his partner in the battle to follow his movements and motions. I have been his guest myself, but I did not experience any mental or spiritual enlightenment. What I did experience, and what several of his guests have told me as well, is that you loose the

relation to your own experiences. It might be useful to loose, for a moment, the the grip on the thoughts and opinions you cherish. But can you find your answers to your questions, when you have lost contact with your experiences (feelings, emotions, impressions, inclinations, thoughts)? If Brenifier's questioning leads to a cleansed mind, what use is it for the guest when she or he is back home, in the situations full of feelings, thoughts, inclinations, habits, etcetera. In Husserl's phenomenology, the 'cleansed mind' does not loosen from the concrete experiences; it keeps related to them, and it is exactly this relation that creates the opportunity to observe, understand and change them.

The very process of defining and choosing concepts to answer one's question reduces one's experiences - as related to the question - to the concepts and statements which survive in the question-answer game.

D. Situational Philosophy

How can we imagine another philosophical practice, free from psychological and conceptual reductions? I suggest, that we look for an answer in relation to the two paradigmatic shifts of 20th century philosophy.

Consequence of the phenomenological and linguistic turns

Both the phenomenological and the linguistic turn of philosophy gets caught up "in the world". Husserl showed how Cartesian and Kantian searches for the irreducible ground of knowledge fail in their own presuppositions. He pointed to where we are in this search, and when we think anyway: we are in the world, as experiencing creatures. Before we start thinking, we are sometime somewhere, and we experience this 'sometime and somewhere'. The same is true for the 'transcendental' mind. The reality of 'transcendental subjectivity' is not a conceptual construction - as by Kant and Hegel -, but itself a special field of experience (before any thought about transcendental subjectivity, there is transcendental experience). It's a human condition to be able to experience one's experiences. So, all our thinking starts with being sometime somewhere, and with experiencing this situation.

Along a different path, also Wittgenstein came to this observation. When we want to free our minds out of the prison of absolute truth claiming language, we have to move to real life and observe the ways people use language in maybe related but specific situations of human life. Here, people live 'forms of life', within which they play 'language games'. We are in a situation of human life, and while doing this, we use language. On the one hand, the language is not our private property; the language

has been developed as a social-cultural phenomenon, and we learned to use it in accordance to its rules, so we could communicate. On the other hand, the way we use the words and sentences here now, is a function of what we are doing in this situation. So, all our actual usage of language starts with being sometime somewhere, and with experiencing this situation - and with following the rules of the language as suitable for this our situation.

All right, we are in real life situations now, and we know that this is the 'ground' where we think and try to understand life. But now what? What can we do to understand our situations of life? How can we answer the questions of our lives?

Second attention

Husserl called the experience of our experiences 'transcendental experience'. From Carlos Castaneda (Castaneda 1979) I borrow the expression 'second attention' to refer to that kind of experience. It is the human possibility to watch one's own presence and experiences (feelings, thoughts, inclinations, desires etcetera). As all experiences, this second attention is not a steady state, but a living, changing event that is an aspect of our bodily involvement and participation in some situation. The second attention to occur, needs 'first' or primary attention in some situation; it is, in a manner of speaking, the overtone of the concrete experience. It is and keeps related to the concrete 'primary' experiences.

The basic philosophical activity in a situation, is to activate the second attention (or second sphere of experience). From this position, the situation and one's experiences of it are not the same they were. We can see them now in a different light and perspective, say, free perspective.

Encounters and dialogues

In the light of second attention, we can meet the situation and our involvement in it in a free mental space. Now, we have the opportunity to free ourselves from our prejudices and presuppositions, and to encounter ourselves and the others in the situation with an open mind. In this state of mind, nothing is defined now, and no one is intending to define anything - not the situation, not oneself, not the others. Now, to understand the situation and ourselves, is to encounter each another and to go in dialogue. In the dialogue, as intrinsic part of the situation, we possibly find some answers to our questions.

Philosophy is just a moment

As second attention is not a steady state but an event, we have to work on it again and again (Suzuki 1980). It gives us the opportunity to put the situation and our involvement in it in another light, for that moment. In this light, we might change the

situation and our experience of it. This change is not philosophy, just the second attention is. Philosophy is just a moment; real life is going on and can be touched by it. (In philosophical counseling, it is important to realize, that philosophical mind is just a free moment, and that changing our life needs presence and action in the real situations of life.)

Philosophical dialogue on existential situations

When we want to develop a style of philosophical counseling that acknowledges the critical insights of 20th century philosophy (both from phenomenology, linguistic analysis, and the french 'difference'-thinking), we have to avoid the pitfalls of psychologism and conceptualism and to change our attitude, intentions and methods.

Here, I use the expression 'existential experiences and situations', meaning those experiences that affect a person's orientation in life, and intervene into his or her way of handling life's challenges and crises. In an existential situation, you are overwhelmed by such an experience; the world, at least your world, as you experience it, is no longer the world you used to live in.

Let us look at things-to-avoid and things-to-do in philosophical dialogues.

Things to avoid in philosophical dialogues

Avoid psychological interpretation of phenomena like emotion, feeling, and 'psychological problem' (depression etc). This implies mental phenomena like 'spirit', 'thoughts', 'logic', etc.

Avoid the language of properness. Don't look for the guest's 'proper Self', 'proper Desires', 'proper I', 'best competences', 'virtues', etc.

Do not stick in words, definitions, concepts. So, do not isolate the guest's thinking from his/her living contexts outside the consulting room.

Don't take interpretation as a goal. Avoid understanding the interpretation of the guest's story as the counselor's competency.

Things to do in philosophical dialogues

Situational focus. Observe emotions, feelings and 'psychological problems' as existential experiences, i.e., as 'non-identical', situational phenomena which are relations in social networks.

Narrative and real life situations. Distinguish between the 'abstract' narrative situation of the philosophical dialogue, and the 'concrete' real situations of the guest's every day life (De Haas 2011b).

The guest's real life situations. Ask for the guest's own real situations, where his/her existential experiences occur.

Descriptions. Encourage the guest to describe his/her emotions, feelings, doubts, phantasies, etc., in terms of his/her situations, i.e. relations, circumstances, social networks, 'micro-politics'.

Situational phantasy. Support your guest to relate freely to his/her experiences of and involvement in his/her situations (here, 'free' means free from judgement, opinions, objectives).

Responsibility. Draw the guest's attention to his/her responsibilities in the situations he or she describes.

Structure of the dialogue

The subject of the dialogue is the guest (client, customer);

The object of the dialogue are the guest's existential experiences and situations;

The philosopher's role is to support the guest's efforts to clear his/her mind towards his/her situated existential experiences and responsibilities;

Daily life situations. The difference between narrative situation and existential situation (see De Haas 2011b) refers the dialogue to the guest's daily life situations 'out there';

The link with reality. Considered from our consciousness, experience is our link with reality. Considered from our presence in the world, experience expresses and constitutes the way we are present in the world. In narrative situations like philosophical dialogues, describing and exploring experiences is the way to relate to our real life situations;

Philosophy's place. The guest's real situations to philosophize, are his/her daily life situations where he or she experiences wondering, questioning, puzzling, troubling etc.

A question is philosophical, when it supports the partner in dialogue to ...

describe his/her experiences in the situations at stake;

be aware of the thinking knots in his/her story;

unknot these thinking knots;

be aware of his/her responsibilities in those situations;

take those responsibilities.

Technique

The counseling philosopher uses, besides dialogical techniques, the techniques of phenomenological epoché and reduction and of language game analysis. In these techniques, asking open and disenchanting questions is as important as observing and unknotting so-called 'thinking knots' (see De Haas 2011b).

Conclusion

Philosophical practice, as introduced in the 1980's and '90s, ignored both the phenomenological and linguistic paradigmatic shifts of Western philosophy, and the Identity-criticism of French 'difference'-philosophers. It reproduces both the individualizing and psychologizing attitude of psychotherapy, and the practice of conceptual reductionism. Philosophical practice that gives an account of the paradigmatic shifts, gives up any reductionism, and develops its practice in and from the guest's situations of life. Not isolated words and utterances, but situated and transcended experiences are the 'matter' of philosophy and counseling philosophers.

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IV. THE PHILOSOPHER'S WORKPLACE

An Essay on Philosophical Craftsmanship and Art

In this essay, the author will raise and answer the question, 'Where is the philosopher's workplace?'. In this question, "place" is meant to be both the philosopher's physical place, and the imaginary place where the philosopher's thoughts are dwelling. Besides, two more questions are implied; 'Who is the philosopher?', and, 'What is the philosopher doing?'

Introduction

In the evening of July 18, 2012, the French philosopher Oscar Brenifier had a counseling conversation with a South-Korean woman. The scene of the action was an auditorium of the Kangwon National University in Chuncheon, South-Korea. The context was the 11th International Conference on Philosophical Practice. The conversation took place in public; Brenifier, his guest and the interpreter were sitting on stage, while a small audience was sitting by and watching.

As usual, Brenifier started with the question, whether his guest had a question. The woman was hesitating; apparently, she couldn't express a clear question at the moment. As usual, Brenifier didn't accept this hesitation; he pushed through his questions to get a question from her. He succeeded, and she gave him a question.

Again and again, In the course of the questioning, the woman answered Brenifier's questions with her personal stories, although he did not ask for it. While he tried to release her thinking from her personal stories, she fell back on those stories all the time. Then, he took a detour, by asking questions about "the average Korean child". This worked; now she could stick to his questions. Later, he returned to the woman's personal involvement, and asked, "Do you recognize yourself in this Korean girl?". She agreed, and then he concluded that she, like the average Korean girl, wants to be a perfectionist, and that she must stop to be such a perfectionist. Here, Brenifier not only tempted her, by devious means, to share his diagnosis, he also gave her a moral talking-to.

Two times in the conversation, the woman indicated that she wished to stop the conversation. Both times, Brenifier reacted by questioning her wish, and succeeded in continuing the conversation. (The next day, the woman told me, that, the second time,

she had decided by herself to continue the conversation, because she was curious about his method of philosophical questioning and that she wanted to experience it.)

In the discussion afterwards, Brenifier maintained that he does not interpret the guest's thoughts; he just asks questions. However, in my observation, Brenifier interpreted the guest's thoughts and her body language. Indeed, the backbone of Brenifier's method is questioning. But his questions are closed and strongly directive; they have a determined structure, which guides the guest's answers rigidly. With his personality and persistency, he forces his guest to answer his question, and to answer the way he wants, i.e., following a bivalent logic. The guest is forced to make choices between two possibilities, yes or no, this or that. No in-between is allowed; no maybe, no perhaps, no both this and that. By complying with this procedure, the guest leaves her own train of thoughts, to follow Brenifier's. His questions serve as a swing which brings the guest into a 'strange' state of mind, in which reliable feelings and opinions are being replaced by decisions that are the result of following Brenifier's rigid questioning. Moreover, Brenifier's questions are not neutral; they contain interpretations of the guest's answers. That was obviously the case in the conversation in Chuncheon, that evening of July 18th, 2012. More than once, he interpreted his guest's body language. When she answered a question with a smile, he interpreted the smile to be the approval of his question. And when she answered a question by closing her eyes, he was sure that she cut herself off the conversation. In both cases, Brenifier did not ask questions to verify his assumptions. Later, a Korean woman, who was, like myself, present in the audience that evening, told me about that body language. According to her, those expressions had a different meaning. A Korean woman who closes her eyes in a conversation, is concentrating well on the other one's words. And when she smiles, she shows respect for the other person.

To put it briefly, Brenifier's way of questioning is directive and interpretive to a large extent. In a way, Brenifier's questioning looks like Socrates' dialogues. As a "midwife", Socrates is also directive, aiming at deconstructing the other's truths. He has his partner in dialogue firmly in his grasp; he directs the train of thoughts, to lead him towards where he wants him, in a state of 'aporia'. But while Brenifier's method is procedural, to wit his severe bivalent logic, Socrates' is not. Socrates has an intention (the intention to bring the other into a state of 'aporia') and an attitude (the attitude of "I know nothing" on the one hand, and of "I shall seduce - if not, deceive - you" on the other hand). But he does not follow a structured procedure. He also expresses a lot more 'love' for his fellow man in the dialogue; a lot more empathy and compassion (mind his 'love' theme).

Outer-academic locations of philosophical practice

In Brenifier's philosophical questioning we recognize a rather recent form of philosophical practice. This practice is characterized by the combination of (i) an outer-academic location and (ii) a conversational form of philosophical practice, together with (iii) the intention to counsel another person with existential questions. This combination has been introduced by the German philosopher Gerd Achenbach (Achenbach 2010).

Achenbach left the philosophers' traditional workplace - like the study room, classroom, library, the conference meeting -, and started to philosophize in the counselor's consulting room. He presented himself, in public space, as a philosophical counselor ("philosophischer Berater", in German).

The relocation of philosophical workplaces had begun earlier. In the 1940's and 50's, Sartre's and De Beauvoir's workplace was preferably the parisian café. Their existentialist followers dwelled in cafés and smoky attic rooms. In the 19th and 20th century, the activistic marxist and neo-marxist philosophers considered the streets and factories their workplace.

Special to Achenbach's relocation was the resemblance to the consulting rooms of psychiatrists, psychotherapists and social workers. Ever since 1981, "philosophical practice" is synonymous with philosophical counseling. We tend to forget the more existentialistic and social-political meanings of the term "philosophical practice". Philosophical counseling is not so much the philosopher's own personal life, nor a social-political activity and action, as it is a service supplied by a retailer at the counseling market.

Let's have a look in the recent history of the positioning of philosophical practice.

Heidegger's 'clearing'

In his Essay 'Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens' (1964; The End of Philosophy and the Assignment of Thinking; see Heidegger 2000), Martin Heidegger notices, that Modern philosophy has tried to think "the matter itself", i.e., reality itself, being itself.

According to Hegel, writes Heidegger, philosophy came home with Descartes' ego cogito. 'Ego cogito' is the excellent 'subiectum' which becomes the 'fundamentum absolutum'. The subject is what is really present, positioned in our consciousness.¹

According to Hegel, being becomes, in the process of speculative dialectics, with itself. The movement of thoughts, i.e., the method, is the matter itself.

The call for "the matter itself" needs the proper philosophical method. However, what actually is philosophy's matter, is already decided before. The matter of philosophy, as metaphysics, is 'the being of the beings', i.e., their presence in the form of substantiality and subjectivity.²

For Husserl, too, the matter of philosophy is the subjectivity of consciousness.

According to Heidegger, the 'principle of all principles' is, for Husserl, first of all not a matter of content, but of method.

In Heidegger's view, Modern continental philosophy has been looking for "die Sache selbst" ("the matter itself") - the world, reality, being - , but has found it in the philosophers' subjectivity.

Then, Heidegger reveals that he has used the call for "the matter itself" as a signpost. It should have led us to the determination of the task of thinking the end of philosophy. This end has been given by the rise of modern science, which has taken over the metaphysical and ontological tasks of philosophy. With Hegel and Husserl, the matter of philosophy is the subjectivity. Their problem is not "the matter itself", but the way to represent the matter.³

Heidegger does not reject the idea that "the matter itself" reveals itself in the philosopher's thinking. His point is, that up till now their thinking forgot to think something that is essential, both in reality and in thinking.

Heidegger thinks, that in Hegel's and Husserl's thinking, there is something that remains "unthought", both in the matter of philosophy and in its method. And what is "unthought", is the open space where she is thinking.⁴

Speculative dialectics is how the matter of philosophy appears by itself and for itself. In this way, it becomes present. Such appearing happens, necessarily, in brightness. This brightness is founded on something that is open and free. Brightness plays in the open sphere and fights there with darkness. Only this openness gives way to speculative thinking to think what is thinks.

Heidegger not only follows the movement of the philosopher's thoughts, but, at the same time, sees the philosopher as someone who is present somewhere sometime. And this presence implies an open space, a free area where things can appear and disappear. This open space is both the physical spot, somewhere on earth, and the speculative spot, somewhere in the philosopher's mind. And, Heidegger continues, "We call this openness, which grants a possible shining and showing, the clearing".⁵ With this word 'clearing', Heidegger draws our attention deliberately to the physical reality of the open spot in the forest. The clearing is the condition that makes the light possible, not the other way around. Thanks to the clearing - this spot, freed from trees and bushes - we can be present here, and absent. The sun can shine here, and, at night, darkness can reign.

All philosophy's thinking that follows the call for "the matter itself", is with its method already admitted to the free sphere of the clearing. But philosophy knows nothing about the clearing. It's true, philosophy speaks of the light of reason, but it does not pay attention to the clearing of the Being.⁶

Philosophy is not aware of the open space which forms the condition of her thinking, and where she can speak of the light of reason. As Heidegger puts it, philosophy is not aware of the clearing of being.

As we see, the meaning of the word "clearing" has changed. The literal meaning of the word - the plain image of the open space we are staying - has changed to an allegorical use of the word.

According to Heidegger, both Hegel's dialectical method and Husserl's phenomenological method - despite their great differences - has reality ("die Sache selbst", "the matter itself") presented in and through the method. Heidegger stresses this "presented". He notices, that "the matter itself" is already present by itself and doesn't need the philosopher's method to be present. His way to show this, is his use of the words light, darkness, bring to light, being present, etc. The word 'clearing' plays a key role in his presentation of presence. He is not interested in the philosopher's or thinker's presence; he draws his and our attention to the alleged presence of "reality", of "being", before, in and beyond all our thoughts and methods. Heidegger is looking for a way of thinking that gives light to this presence of "being". His re-meaning of the word "clearing" brings our thinking into his conceptual world of "aletheia" (that which is not hidden) and "presence". Instead of presenting reality in and through a method, like Hegel and Husserl did, he claims the presence of reality in his thinking itself. True thinking doesn't need a method, as it is integral part of reality itself. And "true thinking" is Heidegger's way of thinking, i.e., his re-thinking the traditional ideas of philosophy, which implies revelation of the ideas that were forgotten to be thought. Consequently, he says, that this "forgetting" was an activity of reality itself.

Heidegger's Essay "Bauen, Wohnen, Denken" ("Building, Living, Thinking"; Heidegger 1985), shows that his thinking the "presence", the "place", etc., is locking our attention up in his concepts. A bridge - his example in this Essay - is not just the physical bridge we observe and use; actually, the bridge is the "place" where the cosmic "frame" of the axes of heaven and earth, and of the divine ones and the mortals, gather.

Levinas' criticism

Emmanuel Levinas experienced that and how Heidegger's thinking locks up the attention and draws us away from where we currently are as living and experiencing creatures. Actually, Heidegger went back on the phenomenological step forward out

of the ivory tower of philosophical concepts and theories; he invented his own ivory tower. Levinas showed us (Levinas 1969), that Heidegger is not present. He does not meet the situation, he does not have an encounter with his fellow human beings, he does not look them into the eyes. Heidegger covers up the situation and his fellow human being with the veil of his concepts, which he claims to be the "proper" understanding of this situation and this human being - of Being as such. He overrules the other's self-understanding by claiming the "proper" understanding. So, Heidegger is not "here" now; he is not with the other; he is in his metaphysical concepts and thinking.

In his criticism of Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas opens up our attention, and we see ourselves in this current situation, encountering other creatures, other human beings. Now, encountering the world, the philosopher is free from his interpreting the world. (Levinas' eyes had been opened by Martin Buber.) The philosopher's assignment can no longer be to develop concepts, categories and methods, but consists of cleaning his thinking and attention, and being here with his fellow human beings. This philosopher is no longer busy reducing reality to his concepts and theories, nor trying to manage his observations and understanding through his method. No, this philosopher opens up to the world as it is present here, now. His work is dialogue instead of labeling and interpreting.

Ludwig Wittgenstein's 'forms of life'

In a different way, Ludwig Wittgenstein did the same. He showed us, how philosophical concepts and theories reduce the rich pluriformity of human life - and of the word-meanings we use in the situations of our lives - to a poor jargon of invented generalizations.

Wittgenstein focussed on philosophical concepts of meaning. His concern was the experience and understanding of our irreducible human lives, in which morality, esthetics and beliefs are important. Actually, he criticized the generalizing and reducing way of thinking in matters of life. He showed us, how this way of thinking abuses our language as we have learned it in our socialization. He showed the violence - and logical invalidness - of a language which eliminates the pluriformity of life situations and the richness of the usage of words, in favor of an Ideal Language or absolute Truths.

With his concept of the "language game", Wittgenstein got himself a tool to describe a multiplicity of real life situations of the use of language expressions, when some philosopher claimed the one and only "proper" meaning of words like "meaning",

"feeling", "truth". etc., or reduced the richness of meaning, seeing, etc., to just one aspect of it. To understand the meaning of an expression is to describe the use of an expression, i.e., to describe some language games, - "And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life." (Wittgenstein 2009, § 19)

Along a different way as Husserl's and Levinas', Wittgenstein's philosophy arrived at the real situations of every day life. And like Levinas, this philosopher has left the alleged "philosophical" practice of totalizing and reducing, to find himself present in everyday situations of personal and social life, in which moral responsibility request respect for the uniqueness and reducibility of the situation and the other person.

So, with the jewish thinkers Wittgenstein, Buber and Levinas, European philosophy has cleansed her thinking, and is ready to meet the world, encounter fellow human beings, and assume responsibility - with respect for the other and the situation, with an open mind, without conceptual reductions.

For Levinas, this is what philosophy should be. For Wittgenstein, philosophy is just the cleansing; the rest is life itself, and not a matter of philosophy. Wittgenstein's attitude prevents us from getting our moral mind occupied by abstract concepts (like Levinas' concept of "The Other" carries the risk of specializing the notion of encountering the fellow human being, which might lead our attention away from the real person in front of us).

The Ivory Tower and its annexes

What about the locations and practices of philosophical counselors? They intend to leave the Ivory Tower of academic work. But where are they now?

As we have seen above, Brenifier's philosophical conversation can take place in public. If the guest permits, an audience can be present and observe the dialogue. In principle, you can have Brenifier consult you at any place, which not necessarily needs to be private. Other philosophical counselors consider the guest's questions and problems private. So, their conversations happen at private places like a consulting room.

Group conversations meet the same considerations; they can be private (for the group, like in a business organization, or a class room), or public (like in a philosophical café).

Similar to all these locations is, that they are not the locations of academic philosophy - not the libraries, study rooms and class rooms at university, not the writing pad of the theorizing philosopher, not the lounge in the conference center.

And similar to those forms of philosophical counseling, the subject matter is not - at least not primarily - philosophy as it has been thought and written by professional philosophers, but the life stories and existential questions of "ordinary people", i.e., people who are not professional philosophers.

As in Brenifier's conversational situation, the counselor is not himself existentially involved in the dialogue. He is just "the midwife", helping his guest to express her thoughts and to think clearly. So, when following the idea of philosophy as developed by Wittgenstein and Levinas, not Brenifier is the philosopher, but his guest is. The counselor is just the "midwife". It is the guest who give birth to her thoughts and choices, not the counselor. With it, some counselors are more a "soft" midwife, while others, like Brenifier, are more a surgeon.

Although the location of the counseling is outside the Ivory Tower of academic philosophy, yet, if we look at it from Wittgenstein's and Levinas' perspective, the conversation is abstracted from the guest's real life situations. These situations, and the guest's experiences of it, are at best represented in the guest's stories. Indeed, "represented". In the conversational situation of the counseling, the guest's experiences that are at stake, are reduced to her words, her propositions. For the guest herself, these words are part of her - recollected and relived - experiences; for the counselor they are just words, although his empathy might be activated.

As a philosophical counselor, Brenifier is not interested in the guest's experiences (emotions, feelings, personal life stories), but just in the guest's sentences. He wants his guest to investigate the logic of her sentences. On the other hand, a philosophical counselor like the Norwegian Anders Lindseth (Lindseth 2005) is quite interested in the guest's experiences, i.e., her life story, her emotions, feelings, hesitations, doubts, etc etc. However, regardless of these differences between Brenifier and Lindseth, both counselors confine the attention to the guest's words and sentences, and act as if the guest's mind puzzles can be solved in this conversation. Within the context of this essay, I must stress, that this ambition indicates the philosophical pride that questions of life - existential questions - might be solved in the philosophers' Ivory Tower, or its annexes, thanks to the philosopher's specialized technics or knowledge.

Conversational forms of philosophical practice

In philosophical counseling - and I consider also philosophical cafes and philosophy with kids forms of counseling - philosophizing is to have a conversation, to be in dialogue.

Within the isolated conversational situation, many philosophical counselors reproduce Heidegger's "over-determination" of the guest's thinking.⁷ Even when they do not agree with Heidegger's philosophy, these counselors have "pre-knowledge" (Lindseth 2005) of the guest's existential experiences, deeper thoughts, moral problems in general, etc., etc. Mostly, the relation of these counselors to philosophy is eclectic; they use the history of philosophy - and often the history of "wisdom" in general - as a grab bag of quotes which answer the guest's questions and troubles. Actually, these alleged "philosophical" counselors act like psychotherapists; they changed the psychological jargon for a philosophical terminology. Similar is the diagnostic and problem-solving attitude.

Different from those interpreting and eclectic counselors, both Brenifier and Lindseth respect the developments in Western philosophy since its linguistic and phenomenological turns. Brenifier challenges his guest to use her words critically, and to obey to logical rules (be it the rules of bivalent logic). Lindseth advises his fellow philosophical counselor to take off his or her pre-knowledge about the world and existential phenomena, and to give room to the guest to express her experiences and thoughts in her own way.

Brenifier's and Lindseth's methods are considered opposites. Where Brenifier's method is often called "ruthless" and essentially non-empathetic, Lindseth's is supposed to be empathetic and respectful towards the guest in the conversation. Nevertheless, both methods share the same, say, "geographical" structure. They are located at artificial places, the consultation scene. The guest's thoughts are abstracted from their 'natural' habitat, i.e., the guest's situations of everyday life. As a consequence, the philosophical conversation tempts the guest to lock oneself up in the flow of this conversation, i.e., the words of this conversation.

From the perspectives of Wittgenstein's and Levinas' localization of thinking in real life situations and encounters, both Brenifier and Lindseth must be considered "ivory tower philosophers".

The philosopher's presence

Since the discovery of 'presence' and 'encounter' as the reality and intention of philosophical reflection and conversation - so, since Heidegger, Buber, Levinas and Wittgenstein (let me call it "present philosophy", prepared by Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Husserl) - , the 'natural' place of philosophy is not the antic Athenian "Agora" anymore, neither the study or class room - but the philosopher's own daily life situations.

In this approach of philosophical practice, philosophy is: working on consciousness, on attention and presence. First of all, we are living beings, breathing, metabolism, interacting in natural and social contexts, learning to experience by processing sensory impressions, learning language by participating in social situations and interactions, learning to live by working and by finding our way in the world and in society. While being a living human being, we are able to philosophize; we can reflect upon our experiences while experiencing our situations. "Present philosophy" is the activity of opening our thinking when it is locked up in cognitive absolutisms which work as "thinking knots" and fix our experiencing. "Present philosophy" is our consciousness of the possibility and the moral "call" to respect life, to respect the other creatures we meet. He or she, who philosophizes this way, engaged in life situations, in the act of living, - he or she is a philosopher then.

Philosophy as an art

To live, and to meet our fellow human beings, is not in itself philosophy. Michel Foucault wondered, why everyone's life couldn't become a work of art (Foucault 1984). Typically, this remark shows an "absent" kind of philosophy. As if philosophy is capable of withdrawing the living body from its natural and social surroundings, to (re-)design it as if it were a piece of clay or rock (the philosopher as a secularized god).

In "present philosophy", I cannot (re-)design my life; I cannot create my life as a work of art. But it is possible, while fully involved into the situations of social life, to reflect upon our thinking (in) these situations. And, from this "transcendental" point of view, we can cleanse our thinking, by refloating fixed images and thoughts. So we can open our attention to the situation, and pay attention to the other persons who are present here now.

In this way, we can compare philosophy to the arts. But not by making "my life" to the material of "my creative work". "Present philosophy" can be called art, because the result of philosophical efforts is not one or another "formed material", but, on the contrary, the irreducible "clear" consciousness of (some) reality. Actually, "present

philosophy" is an art without any "material", unless it was "current experience" or "presence".

The philosopher's craftsmanship

As an art, the backbone of philosophy is the philosopher's craftsmanship. It needs a craft to be present with a clear mind, and to pay attention to whom and to what is present here. The philosopher's skills are the ability to transcend one's involvement in the situation, without losing one's engagement; the ability to observe one's own thoughts, feelings, observations, etc., without fixing them in words and images; and the ability to be aware of the words of one's own thoughts, to recognize their fixations and reductions, and to free one's attention out of these knots. These skills need a lot of training, actually, a lifetime training.

As said before, the habitat of "present philosophy" is everyday life, the real life situations. Here, the philosopher's thinking does not meet itself; the philosophizing human being is never alone on this planet. First of all, his family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, colleagues, fellow drivers in traffic, etc etc are involved, i.e., all those with whom he shares his habitat. Then, it might be, that he wants to share his skills with others, who are not "natural" inhabitants of his habitat. He might meet them on the counseling market, or the philosophy class market, etc. He welcomes them as his guests; and he supports them in their wish to be philosophers in their own lives. It is clear, that he can help them strengthen their philosophical skills, and discover the art of clear mind, but they only can train and realize them in the concrete situations of their lives.⁸

By way of conclusion

Obviously, this Essay is a meta-philosophical text, not 'primary' philosophy. It is a reflection upon philosophical practices. The author is hoping that this reflection contributes to the philosophical quality of philosophical practices.

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¹ "Mit Descartes' ego cogito, sagt Hegel, betritt die Philosophie erstmals festes Land, wo sie zuhause sein kann. Wird mit dem ego cogito als den ausgezeichneten subiectum das fundamentum absolutum erreicht, dann sagt dies: Das Subjekt ist das in das Bewusstsein verlegte hupokeímenon, das wahrhaft Anwesende, welches in der überlieferten Sprache undeutlich genug Substanz heißt." (Heidegger 2000, p. 68)

² "Der Ruf 'zur Sache selbst' verlangt die sachgerechte Methode der Philosophie. Was jedoch die Sache der Philosophie sei, das gilt im vorhinein als entschieden. Die Sache der Philosophie als Metaphysik ist das Sein des Seienden, dessen Anwesenheit in der Gestalt der Substantialität und Subjektivität." (Heidegger 2000, p. 68)

³ "Die Methode richtet sich nicht nur nach der Sache der Philosophie. Sie gehört nicht nur zur Sache wie der Schlüssel zum Schloß. Sie gehört vielmehr in die Sache, weil sie 'die Sache selbst' ist. Wollte man fragen: Woher nimmt denn 'das Prinzip aller Prinzipien' sein unerschütterliches Recht, dann müßte die Antwort lauten: aus der transzendentalen Subjektivität, die schon als die Sache der Philosophie vorausgesetzt ist." (Heidegger 2000, p. 70)

⁴ "Die speculative Dialektik ist eine Weise, wie die Sache der Philosophie aus sich selbst für sich selbst zum Scheinen kommt und so Gegenwart wird. Solches Scheinen geschieht notwendig in einer Helle. Nur durch sie hindurch kann das Scheinende sich zeigen, d.h. scheinen. Die Helle aber beruht ihrerseits in einem Offenen, Freien, das sie hier und dort, dann und wann erhellen mag. Die Helle spielt im Offenen und streitet da mit dem Dunkel. Überall wo ein Anwesendes anderem Anwesenden entgegen kommt oder auch nur entgegen verweilt, aber auch dort, wo wie bei Hegel spekulativ eines im anderen sich spiegelt, da waltet schon Offenheit, ist freie Gegend im Spiel. Diese Offenheit allein gewährt auch dem Gang des spekulativen Denkens erst den Durchgang durch das, was es denkt." (Heidegger 2000, p. 71)

⁵ "Wir nennen diese Offenheit, die ein mögliches Scheinenlassen und Zeigen gewährt, die Lichtung". (Heidegger 2000, p. 71)

⁶ "Alles Denken der Philosophie, das ausdrücklich oder nicht ausdrücklich dem Ruf 'zur Sache selbst' folgt, ist auf seinem Gang, mit seiner Methode, schon in das Freie der Lichtung eingelassen. Von der Lichtung jedoch weiß die Philosophie nichts. Die Philosophie spricht zwar vom Licht der Vernunft, aber achtet nicht auf die Lichtung des Seins." ((Heidegger 2000, p. 73)

⁷ I borrow the term "over-determination" from the french philosopher Louis Althusser.

⁸ The author distinguishes between the 'physical situation', which is the situation of the encounter between the philosopher and his guest, and the 'narrative situation', which is evoked by the guest in her story. The narrative situations refer to the guest's real life situations she is reflecting upon. Whereas the conversation between the philosopher and his guest is enclosed within, and mediated by their words, the real situations of philosophical reflection are, to the guest, his real life situations. See: De Haas 2011.

V. WITTGENSTEIN'S LATER PHILOSOPHY

Its Value for Philosophical Counseling. In Reply to Gordon Baker's Therapeutic Wittgenstein- Interpretation

Summary

The question whether philosophical counseling is - or should be - a therapy or not, can be cleared by discussing Gordon Baker's therapeutic Wittgenstein-interpretation. Through Peter Hacker's justified criticism of Baker's reasoning, the author takes Baker's practical intention seriously, and shows an other perspective on Wittgenstein's way of thinking. Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations are a criticism of metaphysical uses of language. Thereby, his focus is on these uses, not on his own position and attitude as a describer of everyday situations and experiences. However, when we yet focus on this position and attitude, it appears that his way of situational philosophizing is closely related to the positioning and attitude of a philosophical counselor. At the end, it is more appropriate to speak of training than of therapy.

Keywords: Philosophy, philosophical practice, philosophical counseling, philosophical therapy, Wittgenstein.

Introduction

„What is your aim in philosophy? - To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle.“ (Wittgenstein 2009 § 309) What or who is the fly? What does the 'fly-bottle' stand for? How do we show the way out?

Answering these and such questions, might be useful to further the professional philosophical quality of those practices that are called 'philosophical counseling' or 'philosophical therapy'.

People visit me in my practice, where we talk about their experiences in everyday life. Something bothers them, and they expect me to bring them some relief. How am I,

being a philosopher, competent to achieve that? Why would, say, my skill to philosophize in Wittgenstein's way, make me competent to counsel my visitors?

Actually, the late Gordon Baker considered Wittgenstein's method a therapy. However, experiences in my practice do not confirm such an immediate usability of Wittgenstein's method in philosophical counseling. Yet my practice is highly inspired by Wittgenstein's philosophy.

In the years 1997-2003, Gordon Baker (Baker 2006) wrote three essays, in which he presented the therapeutical interpretation of Wittgenstein's writings. He believed to see some analogies between Wittgenstein's philosophical method and Freud's psychoanalysis. In his interpretation, he was led by his readings of Friedrich Waismann (Waismann 1968, 2013), existing of Wittgenstein's dictations to Waismann in the years 1929-1932, and of Waismann's own remarks on Wittgenstein's and his own philosophy. The analogies with psychoanalysis were meant to prove the therapeutical nature of Wittgenstein's method. That this method is therapeutical, is not to say that it is psychotherapy. Philosophical therapy is not about psychological problems, but about being puzzled by unclear use of language.

Peter Hacker (Hacker 2006) criticized Baker's interpretation. He demonstrated convincingly, that Baker misinterpreted Wittgenstein's aphorisms, and concluded that Wittgenstein's (late) philosophy is a specific kind of analytical philosophy (see also: Hacker 1996) rather than a patient-oriented, individual therapy.

In this essay, I will underline Hacker's criticism of Baker's manipulative use of citations as well the Waismannian overtone in Baker's interpretation. But most of all, I will complete this criticism with yet another perspective on Baker's project, and demonstrate that a therapeutic view on Wittgenstein's later method certainly is possible.

1. Philosophical therapy

Philosophical practice, as named by Gerd Achenbach in the early 1980's (Achenbach 2010), started as personal counseling. From the beginning it had an ambivalent relation towards psychotherapy. On the one hand, it justified itself by drawing a line of demarcation with psychology and psychotherapy. But at the same time, it copied the psycho-therapeutical model. There is a consulting room, where a practitioner and a client have a conversation, in order to understand and treat the client's psychic, mental or existential problem. The difference between a psychological and a philosophical practice was supposed to be the philosopher's capability to avoid the psychotherapist's bad habits, like medicalization, conceptual reduction, stigmatization, objectification, and the like. The philosopher's warrant should be philosophy itself, i.e., the inexhaustible source of wisdom in the history of philosophy.

The ambivalence in the philosophical practitioners' relation to psychotherapy caused a restraint in calling his practice a therapy. Nevertheless, some of them screwed a sign on their door with the words 'philosophical therapy'. Their justification is the reference to some philosopher or philosophical school, where philosophy and psychotherapy are linked together. Most mentioned are Karl Jaspers (Jaspers 2013a, b) and Viktor Frankl (Frankl 2010). Existential philosophy is an important source, mostly Søren Kierkegaard. Indirectly, Jean-Paul Sartre inspires philosophical therapy, especially through the reception of his work by the anti-psychiatrists Laing and Cooper (Laing 1971) and their influence on some philosophical practitioners.

The justification of the philosophical quality of these practices of philosophical therapy might be given by the explicit reference to a recognized philosopher, who joined philosophy and psychotherapy. But this justification cannot be considered a justification of its therapeutical quality; bungling is still possible.

As philosophical practice, like philosophy, is a patchwork of different, often incompatible practices, there is not a single general criterion to judge all cases. The only measure is the philosophical tradition a specific practice is, implicitly or explicitly, based upon (de Haas 2011b). So, one of the means to justify my own philosophical practice, is to make my philosophical (re)sources explicit. One of them are the late Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations. In our study of the possible therapeutical nature of Wittgenstein's late philosophy, we can use Gordon Baker's therapeutic Wittgenstein-interpretation (Baker 2006). The question is, whether philosophical conversations between a philosopher and a so-called client, accomplished in a way that is inspired by Wittgenstein's late philosophy, can be called 'therapeutic'. We possess two possibilities to answer this question, one being a discussion of Baker's Wittgenstein-interpretation, the other being the comparison of Wittgenstein's philosophical strategy and my practice.

2. Baker's therapeutic interpretation

Gordon Baker considers Wittgenstein's philosophy a therapeutic method. He starts with presenting a quote from Waismann's - „Thinking is (the activity of) operating (or calculating) with signs” - and claims this „slogan” is in Wittgenstein's spirit. Then, he continues: „The key to understanding this slogan is to realize that it is not meant to convey information (e.g. to correct particular mistakes of detail) about the logical grammar of 'thinking', but rather to persuade somebody puzzled by the nature of thinking to acknowledge certain grammatical prejudices in himself that generate his conceptual confusion. Wittgenstein's enterprise has closer affinities with sessions of psychotherapy than with didactic presentations of the logical geography of ordinary

language or with descriptions of the actual shared practice of speaking ‘the Queen’s English’.” (Baker 2006 : 144-145) Decisive in this quote is, that somebody is puzzled and confused by something in himself. Wittgenstein’s practice is supposed to be more a therapeutic session than linguistic analysis; it is meant to cure individuals, not to clear general misunderstandings in the use of language.

2a. The analogy of philosophy and psychoanalysis

Baker’s argument for the therapeutic nature of Wittgenstein’s method is the analogy between Wittgenstein’s philosophy and psychoanalysis. This analogy would demonstrate, that Wittgenstein’s method is a therapy, because it is (a) „patient-oriented”, (b) „directed to a particular kind of disease”, (c) „some form of rational discussion face-to-face with the patient”, (d) a „cure of the patient’s disorder”, consisting „in his achieving an understanding of himself”, while (e) „the patient’s own acknowledgement is indispensable to establishing a diagnosis as correct and to effecting a cure”. (ibidem: 152-154)

Baker mentions six noteworthy points in the comparison of psychoanalysis and Wittgenstein’s philosophy: the resemblance is true for Wittgenstein’s method, not for all philosophy; it is „claimed to hold only in a certain sense”; „the ostensible topic is the explicit articulation of a simile which is working unconsciously in somebody’s thinking”; „it is suggested that a simile may be damaging as long as it is unconscious, whereas it can be rendered harmless by articulating it and acknowledging it as a simile”; the analogy „holds too in some other (unspecified) respects”; and „the analogy itself is not accidental, but rather essential to ‘our method’” (ibidem: 207).

Baker reads the first paragraphs of the Philosophical Investigations, where Wittgenstein quotes and discusses Augustine, as a personal treatment of Augustine’s disease. Likewise, he reconstructs Wittgenstein’s short remark on Heidegger in Waismann’s transcription of a conversation with Wittgenstein at Schlick’s house, Dec. 30, 1929 (Wittgenstein & Waismann 1984 : 68). In Baker’s interpretation, Wittgenstein’s remark has the character of a therapeutic session with this specific patient Heidegger, to cure his discomfort. „What is pathological in his thinking is not the deviance of his philosophical utterances from everyday speech-patterns, but the unconscious motives which give rise to his behaviour. This strategy is pursued in a distinctive form of investigation - seeking for an unconscious analogy or picture, an unconscious conception or a way of seeing things. Wittgenstein’s diagnosis of a philosophical problem (disquiet) is that a philosopher thinks that to convey an important insight he is compelled to say something which seems, even to himself, empty, self-contradictory or meaningless. He experiences an internal tension or conflict. What needs clarification are the motives which occasion such a conflict.” (Baker 2006 : 208) „The problem is somebody’s mental disturbance. Hence philosophical problems, in contrast to all others, can be completely dissolved (BT 421; cf. 431): the individual’s specific disturbance may vanish completely. ‘The problems are dissolved in the literal sense (im eigentlichen Sinne) - like a lump of sugar in

water' (BT 421). In this sense, conceptual analysis is essentially terminable, but other people may develop or continue to have the very same problems - or new ones. For these reasons, the general task of philosophical therapy is, in another sense, essentially endless (Z §447)." (ibidem: 210)⁹

Philosophical questions „arise from intellectual obsessions, compulsions or 'neuroses'" (ibidem, p. 146). „Such questions need to be dissolved rather than solved or answered. The difficulty in dealing with them is to make sense of someone's posing them; for this purpose, we need to trace their origins in his 'mind-set' (preconceptions, prejudices). Dealing with these questions requires sympathetic and sensitive attention to the intellectual character of the person who raises them, a kind of therapy, and the philosopher is cast primarily in the role of a therapist. Frege, for example, needed a kind of treatment, not a lecture on the rational demerits of Platonism in arithmetic and logic." (ibidem: 146-147)

Baker uses the analogy of Wittgenstein's philosophy and Freud's psychoanalysis to identify the first as a therapy for personal diseases. That is not to say, that he considers philosophical therapy a psychotherapy. „... in psychoanalysis problems are traced to experiences or events, in philosophy to analogies or pictures", and „in psychoanalysis we are concerned with patterns of behaviour (e.g. manifestations of an Oedipus complex), in philosophy with patterns in the uses of our words (e.g. connections of mental states with their expressions)." (ibidem: 160-161)

2b. Abuse of quotations

The analogy is primarily derived not from Wittgenstein's Nachlass (Wittgenstein 2000), but from Friedrich Waismann's texts (Wittgenstein & Waismann 1984; Waismann 2013). Baker expatiates on Waismann's philosophy, and from there he draws conclusions on some of Wittgenstein's phrases. Waismann's texts are, first, his notes of Wittgenstein's dictations at Schlick's in 1929-1932, and, second, his own *How I See Philosophy* (Waismann 1968). Baker deals with this book as if it is Wittgenstein's philosophy. The Wittgenstein-phrases in Baker's argument, are in particular found in his writings in the early 1930's. Baker refers¹⁰ to just a few paragraphs in the *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 2009).

PI §308:

„How does the philosophical problem about mental processes and states and about behaviourism arise? - The first step is the one that altogether escapes notice. We talk of processes and states, and leave their nature undecided. Sometime perhaps we'll know more about them - we think. But that's just what commits us to a particular way of looking at the matter. For we have a certain conception of what it means to learn to know a process better. (The decisive movement in the conjuring trick has been made, and it was the very one that seemed to us quite innocent.) - And now the analogy which was to make us understand our thoughts falls to pieces. So we have to deny the yet uncomprehended process in the yet unexplored medium. And now it looks as if we

had denied mental processes. And naturally we don't want to deny them." (PI §308, by Baker erroneously referred to as §309)

Wittgenstein is, in this paragraph, answering the reproach that he is just a „behaviourist in disguise” (§307). In his answer he refers to the vague talking about mental processes and states of mind, i.e. the use of the words process and states in the analogy. Oddly enough, Baker hears something else, i.e. precisely the opposite: „the correlative positive recommendation, at first sight a form of behaviourism ...” (Baker 2006 : 144).

PI §125:

„It is not the business of philosophy to resolve a contradiction by means of a mathematical or logico-mathematical discovery, but to render surveyable the state of mathematics that troubles us - the state of affairs before the contradiction is resolved. (And in doing this one is not sidestepping a difficulty.)

„Here the fundamental fact is that we lay down rules, a technique, for playing a game, and that then, when we follow the rules, things don't turn out as we had assumed. So that we are, as it were, entangled in our own rules.

„This entanglement in our rules is what we want to understand: that is, to survey.

„It throws light on our concept of meaning something. For in those cases, things turn out otherwise than we had meant, foreseen. That is just what we say when, for example, a contradiction appears: 'That's not the way I meant it.'

„The civic status [bürgerliche Stellung] of a contradiction, or its status in civic life [seine Stellung in der bürgerlichen Welt] - that is the philosophical problem.”

The „entanglement in our rules” is not, in Wittgenstein investigation, a personal discomfort, as Baker prefers to see it, but a societal phenomenon.

PI §107:

„The more closely we examine actual language [die tatsächliche Sprache] the greater becomes the conflict between it and our requirement. (For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not something I had discovered: it was a requirement.) The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is now in danger of becoming vacuous. - We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction, and so, in a certain sense, the conditions are ideal; but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need friction. Back to the rough ground.”

In PI §106:

„... we must stick to matters of everyday thought, and to get on the wrong track ...”.

In these paragraphs, Wittgenstein is attacking the illusion of an ideal language in his own early philosophy (the Tractatus). Baker, however, sticks his own phrase to the quotation of PI §107:

„In any particular case, the philosophical therapist may labour in vain; with regard to prejudices (or demands) there is no friction! (PI §107)” (Baker 2006 : 147)

PI §112:

„A simile [Gleichnis] that has been absorbed into the forms of our language produces a false appearance which disquiets us. 'But this isn't how it is!' - we say. 'Yet this is how it has to be!'” Again, Wittgenstein is in discussion with his former philosophy, not expressing his later philosophical approach. Yet, Baker concludes: „Consequently,

therapy primarily takes the form of persuading the patient to acknowledge that things need not be as he had said they must be, or that things may be as he had said they could not be.” (ibidem: 151)

In PI §3, Wittgenstein notes, that the system of communications Augustine describes, holds for just a narrowly circumscribed area of communication. Baker, however, associates the following phrase with §3:

„He [the philosopher] tries to show them [his ‘patients’] how to trace their disquieting confusions and unanswerable questions to conflicts in ways of seeing things - especially in ways of their wanting to see things; to their own prejudices or dogmas clashing with each other and generating fogs which make clear vision impossible (PI §3).” (ibidem: 152-153)

PI §124:

*„Philosophy must not interfere in any way with the actual use of language, so it can in the end only describe it.
„For it cannot justify it either.
„It leaves everything as it is.
„It also leaves mathematics as it is, and no mathematical discovery can advance it. A ‘leading problem of mathematical logic’ is for us a problem of mathematics like any other.”*

This paragraph might be considered Wittgenstein's ultimate rejection of a therapeutic conception of his later philosophy. Baker, however, resumes this paragraph with the one word ‘acknowledgement’, i.e. the patient’s acknowledgement of the therapist’s focusing attention on aspects of language to which the ‘patient’ is blind (ibidem: 159).

PI §131

„For we can avoid unfairness or vacuity in our assertions only by presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison - as a sort of yardstick; not as a preconception to which reality must correspond. (The dogmatism into which we fall so easily in doing philosophy.)”

With „model”, Wittgenstein is referring to „language-games”; he talks about their function in his philosophy. Baker pulls PI §131 in a therapeutic context: the role of language-games is

„to make a confused person conscious of neglected aspects of his own practice (ibidem: 162).

PI §115:

„A picture held us captive. And we couldn’t get outside it, for it lay in our language, and language seemed only to repeat it to us inexorably.”

Here, too, Wittgenstein is referring to his early philosophy, the Tractatus. Again, Baker positions this remark in a therapeutic argument. The same counts for Baker’s citation of PI §129.

PI §129:

„The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something - because it is always before one’s eyes.) The real foundations of their inquiry do not strike people at all.

Unless that fact has at some time struck them. - And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful.”

This relates to PI §124 (see above). It is a general statement on his method of describing the way we already use language, without any interference. Baker calls it an example of therapy taken from Wittgenstein's work (ibidem: 163).

Baker reads Wittgenstein's texts with colored glasses that filter it in a therapeutic sense: he sees problems of individual patients and their therapeutic treatment. He quotes Wittgenstein's work modestly.¹¹ The direct quotes from Wittgenstein's work are mostly not as convincing as the quotes from Waismann's work. Especially the words and sentences that are supposed to proof the therapy-thesis, are Waismann's and Baker's. Prepared by those sentences, the Wittgenstein-quotes get that therapeutic perspective. The therapy-picture is prepared by Baker's paraphrasing Waismann's notes, and the reader is in the right mood to understand the scarce Wittgenstein-quotes in this therapeutic model.

3. Hacker's criticism of Baker's interpretation

Peter Hacker discussed Baker's therapeutic Wittgenstein-interpretation thoroughly (Hacker 2006). He shows that Baker's argument is based on an invalid interpretation of both Wittgenstein's and Waismann's philosophy. The rare examples of the philosophy-psychoanalysis analogy in Wittgenstein's work do not serve the conclusion that his philosophy is a therapy. Besides, the use of words like 'disease' and 'cure' is not to consider philosophical problems as personal diseases that are to be cured in individual treatments. On the contrary, it is all about problems of language, i.e. more about cultural than individual diseases. As to Waismann, Hacker shows that Baker over-emphasizes Waismann's remarks on the therapeutic nature of his philosophy. It is, so to speak, more about the 'Ivory Tower' way of thinking (metaphysical thinking) than about an individual's personal use of language.

Indeed, in Wittgenstein's aphorisms, we find many small conversations. Quotation marks indicate that somebody makes a comment or asks a question. Then, somebody reacts or gives an answer. It seems to be that the second one is Wittgenstein, i.e. the philosophical investigator, and the first one somebody else. Baker calls this person 'the interlocutor', the partner in the conversation. He allocates the interlocutor the role of a 'patient'. His picture of Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations is, that Wittgenstein is the therapist of the interlocutor. In the texts, written by Wittgenstein himself, there is, however, not a single indication that Wittgenstein was, in his own mind, involved in a therapeutic session with this

‘interlocutor’. It is not possible to demonstrate Wittgenstein’s method as a therapeutical one by means of Wittgenstein’s texts.

3a. The methodology Baker imputes to Wittgenstein

Hacker asks if Wittgenstein really thought that psychoanalysis provided a model for his method of philosophizing, and if it really dominated his work in the early 1930’s and even his later work. Indeed, in the early 1930’s, Wittgenstein thought that there was an analogy, but in his posthumous work (the Nachlass) there are only five distinct remarks on the matter (Hacker 2006 : 11). In the Philosophical Investigations, the therapeutic method is mentioned twice: „first in stressing that there are many philosophical methods, just as there are different therapies (PI §133), and later in the suggestion that ‘The philosopher treats a question; like a disease’ (PI §255). In addition, Wittgenstein uses the metaphor of a philosophical ‘disease’ that is rooted in a one-sided diet of examples (PI §593). There is nothing further to be found in the Nachlass on therapy, but the medical analogy between philosophical problems and philosophical confusion, on the one hand, and diseases and illnesses, on the other, is common. But it is important to note that the seemingly insoluble philosophical problems are conceived to be ‘diseases’ of the intellect that have their seat in the form of representation (MS 115, 110) - not in the weaknesses of individuals.” (ibidem: 14)

Hacker mentions Ayer and Malcolm, who both reported about Wittgenstein’s reaction on Ayer’s suggestion that John Wisdom’s view of philosophy could be taken as a pointer to Wittgenstein’s. Wisdom’s view, according to Ayer, tended to treat philosophy as a department of psychoanalysis. Malcolm described Wittgenstein’s reaction: „I believe another thing that angered him was the suggestion that in his conception philosophy was a form of psychoanalysis, a suggestion that I had heard him explicitly attack, on two occasions, as based on a confusion. ‘They are different techniques’, he had said.” (Malcolm 1984 : 48)

Hacker investigates the methodology that Baker „imputes to Wittgenstein”. First, is Wittgenstein’s philosophy primarily therapeutic? It’s true, analogically spoken Wittgenstein’s later philosophy has a therapeutic goal.

„Philosophical problems are conceptual. They involve misunderstandings and misconstruals of the conceptual articulations of our language (or, in a later idiom, of our conceptual scheme). Hence they are solved (PI §133) or dissolved (BT421) by the articulation of the relevant grammatical structures and by the elimination of the various misconceived ideas that stand in the way of attaining a clear view of how a particular network of interrelated concepts hangs together. Philosophy is then therapeutic in so far as it restores the bewildered to an optimal intellectual state of good sense - akin to good health (here lies the analogy with therapy).” (Hacker 2006 : 15)

Second, is Wittgenstein’s methodology person-relative and patient-specific? The subjects with which Wittgenstein was concerned, were, as Hacker shows by means of quotations from the Nachlass, „the concepts of meaning, of understanding, of a

proposition, of logic, the foundations of mathematics, states of consciousness, and other things' - not 'the confusions of my friends and acquaintances in Vienna and Cambridge'" (ibidem: 16).

„Wittgenstein did not open the Investigations with a quotation from Augustine because he was concerned with Augustine's tormented confusions, [...] nor was Wittgenstein concerned with giving the saint a psychotherapeutic session.” (ibidem: 17)

Malcolm writes that Wittgenstein told him

„he decided to begin his Investigations with a quotation from [Augustine's] Confessions, not because he could not find the conception expressed in that quotation stated as well by other philosophers, but because the conception must be important if so a great mind held it.” (Malcolm 1984 : 59-60)

As far as Wittgenstein considered his philosophy 'therapeutic', it is not a therapy for 'weaknesses of individuals', but of generally accepted ways of thinking in philosophy, like logicism, intuitionism, Platonism or idealism.

Third, is Wittgenstein's philosophy a face-to face 'talk-cure'? Wittgenstein „had a liking for the interrogative methods of Socratic dialogue (on a modest Bemerkungen scale) in his writings" (Hacker 2006 : 19), but

„it would be wrong to suppose that he was involved in 'face-to-face talk-cures' (save perhaps in his lectures and conversations). [...] He relatively rarely addressed the conceptual muddles of specific people other than those of his youthful self - which he treated as exemplary.” (ibidem : 18)

Fourth, did Wittgenstein shift the responsibility for philosophical confusion to the patient? While Baker claims that according to Wittgenstein we are not the 'victims' of the grammatical features of our languages, but only of our own prejudices and dogmas, „Wittgenstein attributed philosophical confusions to grammatical features of our languages" (ibidem: 19, cf. BT 423 and 424).

„So we are, to a large degree, 'victims' of the misleading forms of our language. 'Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by means of language' (PI §109)" (ibidem: 20).

Fifth, did Wittgenstein compile a 'dossier' of grammatical facts? Hacker's answer is no. What he did, was describing how words are 'normally' used in everyday life.

„The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders of how words are used (BT 415, 419; PI §127)". „The task of philosophy is to describe the use of words for a particular purpose, to tabulate the rules for the use of words, and arrange them in a perspicuous representation that will dissolve a particular problem or range of problems.” (ibidem: 21)

„There is no dogmatism or any risk of dogmatism", as Baker thought, „in citing mundane grammatical facts that any user of the language will recognize. After all, the worst that can happen is that someone may reply that he uses the word differently. So be it - then Wittgenstein will hear his explanation of how he uses the word, and pick up the argument from there.” (ibidem : 22)

Sixth, are 'pictures' the main source of error, and cannot one combat a picture with an argument? Indeed, Wittgenstein held that we are misled by 'pictures' ('Bilder'), as Baker claimed, but Baker overlooked, that Wittgenstein used the word 'Bild' in many different ways, like conception, model, emblematic representation. But more important, „Wittgenstein ascribed philosophical error and confusion to many sources other than pictures”, like the forms of our language, our tendency to neglect the uses of expressions, our disposition to seek for generality where it is unavailable, our desire to explain conceptual forms rather than merely describing them, our tendency to construct theories in philosophy, our disposition to emulate the methods of science, and so forth.” (ibidem: 23-24). Besides, other than Baker claimed, „Wittgenstein did not hold that a picture can be combated only with another picture” (ibidem: 24). He used arguments to support the proposition that the meaning of a name is not the object that it stands for, and against the view that every assertion contains an assumption, or against the view that an ostensive definition fixes the foundations of language by connecting indefinables to simples in reality that are their meanings (ibidem: 26).

3b. Baker and Waismann

Baker leads Waismann as a witness. Hacker, however, shows that this witness did not say what his advocate claimed. Baker „reads into Waismann’s essays things that are not to be found there at all, and, then proceeds to ascribe them to Wittgenstein.” (Hacker 2006 : 9) Waismann’s later philosophical views, like his article ‘How I See Philosophy’ (1956), was, according to Hacker, hugely influenced by Wittgenstein, but „written to distance Waismann from Wittgenstein, not to reiterate his views” (ibidem: 8). Hacker demonstrates this by 5 examples, which I will not mention here. To keep it short, one of Waismann’s aphorisms reads ‘Wittgenstein - the leading thinker of our day: namely, the one leading to falsehood’.

4. The describer’s position and attitude

Hacker’s criticism of Baker’s therapeutic Wittgenstein-interpretation leaves us behind with a strict analytic interpretation of Wittgenstein’s philosophy. From the perspective of philosophical counseling, however, we must ask, if Baker touched an interesting aspect of Wittgenstein’s philosophy. Maybe, he was right in ‘tasting’ the therapeutic smell of this philosophy, but wrong in identifying the source of the smell? Possibly, experiences with philosophical conversations with individuals might clarify this question. As source of such experiences, I will take my own philosophical practice

with people who want to reflect upon their existential experiences and questions. It will show, that Wittgenstein's philosophy as such is only of very limited use in such conversations, but that his philosophy presupposes a specific positioning and attitude that are indispensable in such conversations. It's the attitude of the non-biased descriptor, and the descriptor's positioning in concrete, actual situations.

4a. My thesis

My thesis is, that a Wittgensteinian investigation presupposes that the describer positions himself in real situations of human life, and that he adopts an attitude of open, non-biased attention. The proof of this thesis is not in some conceptual reasoning, but in the practice of doing such an investigation. Due to lack of space in this essay, I can only point to such practices. I will roughly outline the kind of encounters I have in my philosophical practice, and the place Wittgensteinian investigations might have in it.

4b. Positioning: Where are we when we philosophize?

The actual situation of philosophizing in counseling is primarily and basically the geographical place where a host and a guest meet. The host offers his¹² (4) philosophical attention; the guest wants to think about one or more of her 'existential' experiences that are very important for understanding her daily existence and for her sense of purpose in her life. In the core, a situation of philosophical counseling is this encounter. Only if the host is receiving his guest without playing whatever role, nor applying whatever technique, nor imposing whatever knowledge, a real and open encounter can happen.¹³

The guest's life story is at the center of her's and the host's attention in this encounter. So, we both move our attention to the guest's tale of her experiences in specific situations of her life. We always start with fresh, recent experiences of situations that does matter in her feeling of urgency in her current daily life. I have called these situations the current or 'physical' situations, in contrast to the 'narrative' situations, i.e. the situations in the guest's story (de Haas 2011a). While we are present in the physical situation, our attention is in the landscapes of her memories. Her's is filled with her experiences, pictures, feelings, thoughts; mine is filled with representations, impressions, associations of what she tells. There we dwell, to perceive what happens, to focus on some aspect, to describe the situation. She wants to understand, she tries to remember, she hits upon something unnoticed and unexpected, she gains an insight. I walk with her in this landscape, and ask what happens; I suspect things that she doesn't tell and I ask about it; I am curious about what she does or just doesn't do; I notice a knot in what she tells, a moment that her experience is locked up in some dark picture or concept, and I challenge her to let the light shine on this stagnation or digestion in her experience, a blind spot in her consciousness of the situation told.

All the time, we realize that the landscape in which we are wandering, is just an imaginary landscape. Her memories are real, our experiences are real, but these happen here now, in our philosophical encounter, not in the real situations of her life. In this philosophical space, she feels the freedom to let those memories happen and to relate to them freely, to receive my critical, challenging, but also loving and clarifying remarks with open heart and mind. But she knows, that soon she will go back home, back in the situations and experiences where she lives her existential confusion and questions.

The situations of our philosophical encounters are training situations. While wandering in the imaginary landscape of her memories, I mirror her story, her pictures, her words, her behaviour, the ways she relates to the situation and to her experiencing the situation. She learns to perceive herself, she practices this perceiving herself, she trains for relating to herself freely. That is not easy; it takes time. The space where our philosophical encounter happens, is a gym for self-reflection and self-relating.

4c. Attitude: What is the philosopher doing?

When I am going to meet a guest, I prepare by clearing and opening my mind. I do this by exercising zazen, i.e. by paying all attention to where I am and to what I am doing, while not attaching it to anything specific. With this attitude - in this position - of unconditional attention, I am here for my guest, listen to her, look at her, see her, experience her, talk to her, give her tea, as long as we are together here.

I ask her, what did you experience recently and did matter to you, what was of vital importance for you? She tells me about some situation she experienced lately. By doing so, she relives that situation, and gives me the opportunity to imagine that situation and her experience of it. Now, we share an imaginary world, originating from her real life experiences. While we walk together in this landscape, I observe how she is present in this, her world. If necessary, I can intervene in the situation told. For that is what she wants: to share her experiences with me, and that I'll be here with her in these situations told, and help her becoming aware of what is happening. And that is all I do. I do not diagnose, nor do I treat her of whatever disease or problem of hers. If there happens some diagnosis or treatment, it is not by me, but by herself - thanks to the philosophical space of our encounter.

Of what kind are my interventions? When I am not able to imagine the situation she is telling, I ask her to be more precise. When I have the idea, that she is not telling an experience but categorizing or conceptualizing it, I ask her to be more concrete about what happened, her feelings, etc. When I have the impression, that she is talking around something, avoiding an important aspect of the situation and her experience, I try to draw her attention to that aspect. In all cases, I am sensitive to the vividness and dynamics of her experiences, and consider it my task to foster it and to draw her attention to it.

My advantage in the 'narrative situations' is, that I am not involved in the same way my guest is. While she is interwoven with it - with her feelings, emotions, thoughts, inclinations, routines, desires, etc. -, I have the possibility to be a non-biased observer. So, I have the opportunity, to relate freely to the situation and her feelings and thought. In this sense, I am an example for her, helping her to recognize and practice those philosophical skills.

The philosopher's attitude is not a posture, not a status-quo; it is a practice, an activity, that you have to realize again and again.

4d. Epochè and empathy

In a philosophical encounter, the philosopher is supposed to free his attention from explanations, interpretations, diagnoses, judgments, prejudices, certainties, purposes, second thoughts, etc. This phenomenological skill of epochè is the basics of philosophical counseling. This attitude is not cold, unfeeling, distant, not-concerned. On the contrary, it is rooted in empathy. The philosopher allows himself to be touched and affected by his guest's presence and experiences, and he touches, so to speak, his guest, her story, her feelings, her attention and thinking.¹⁴

The philosopher's attention is open to the guest's actual presence and experiences; it is not primarily focussed on concepts. It is about her story, about how she appears in her story and in telling her story, not about the grammar of her sentences, nor about the definition of the words she uses - at least not primarily and mainly.

4e. Metaphysical 'knots' and 'metaphysical autism'

Of course, it can happen that the guest's story gets stuck in some vague words or pictures, or, on the contrary, in some robust concepts and certainties. These knots in the story lead our attention away from the situation, and locks it up in those too foggy or too bright words. Usually, those knots are metaphysical knots. By that, I mean that one holds some abstract meaning of a specific word (like 'my real inner Self', or like 'I know it is true, because I feel it's true'), being under the impression that it is the truth about a 'reality' that usually is not observable and not understandable (like the meaning of life, the power of will, the reason why the sickness struck you). As the person who uses language by weaving such knots, is actually capturing her attention and consciousness in these linguistic constructs, I call it 'metaphysical autism'. This person knows for sure in a case that is incomprehensible to common sense, and by that, he or she closes his attention to much that is appearing, not inclined to encounter the situation with an open mind. (Unfortunately, many a philosopher and even philosophical counselor suffers from metaphysical autism, being the philosophical truth or method he believes to be generally valid.)

Many of those knots in the language of a guest are examples of odd usage of language, comparable to those that Wittgenstein investigated by describing language

games. To be sure, it is improper to do such an investigation in the flow of philosophical encounter. To refloat a language knot in the guest's story, you cannot describe a series of language games which might be played with the keyword of that knot. You can give one or two examples of other uses of that word or expression, i.e. show one or two other perspectives. And this change of perspective might help the guest to be aware of the relativity of the meaning she gave to those words.

Actually, the very nature of Wittgenstein's language-games is often misunderstood. Describing a language-game is not the description of a specific situation, but of a series of situations of using a specific word or expression. A language-game is a type of situations in which a word or expression is and can normally be used (like 'functional communication on a building site', or 'saying that you're in pain'). The rules are specific to that that type of situations.

So, strictly speaking, an Wittgensteinian investigation is improper in a philosophical encounter on someone's existential experiences and questions. But that is not to say, that Wittgenstein's sensitivity to language knots and philosophical autism is not relevant; on the contrary. Moreover, Wittgenstein's positioning and attitude, while describing language games, is certainly relevant.

5. Situational implications of Wittgenstein's strategy

The practitioner's discovery of the positioning and attitude of the Wittgensteinian describer of language games, can be supported by close reading Wittgenstein's remarks on his later philosophy. But more important, that discovery is supported by the fact, that Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations can only be imitated by taking Wittgenstein's position and attitude while describing language games.

5a. Wittgenstein's perspective in the Philosophical Investigations

We are easily deceived by Wittgenstein's perspective in the Philosophical Investigations. He is focussing on metaphysical ways of philosophizing, which he criticizes by confronting the metaphysical - i.e. inclusive, shifting, objectifying, generalizing and totalizing - meanings of specific words and expressions with the variety of possible meanings those words and expressions have in real life. His strategy is, so to speak, to undermine the Ivory Tower of metaphysical philosophy by focussing the spotlight on the multiplicity and variety of situations c.q. usage in real

everyday life. His aim is this subversive revolt against the metaphysical masters in the Ivory Tower.

This subversive perspective leaves unexposed, that the rebel himself has a position and an attitude: the other side of the perspective. He is present outside the Ivory Tower and moves around in the irreducible patchwork-landscape of everyday situations, where restricted and rule-governed sets of linguistic tools are used to produce situation- and activity-specific meanings. Here, in everyday life, we are not concerned with metaphysical autism in the Ivory Tower, but with what matters in everyday life. And indeed, this is the guests' perspective in our encounters, and therefore it is my perspective. Actually, it is the perspective of the situational philosopher, it is Wittgenstein's.

5b. The guest's perspective in the philosophical encounter

The encounter of the philosopher and his guest is more than the exchange of words; it happens in a space, it takes a while, and two human beings are meeting, experiencing and perceiving the situation and each other, and exchanging words. While present in this situation and experiencing it, these two persons move into the imaginary world of the guest's story, i.e. in her experiences as they appear in this story. In the physical situation we share this narrative situation. Both we experience this current situation, where we are now physically, and at the same time we experience the narrative situation – from different perspectives and contexts. Both 'worlds' are intermingled.¹⁵ The words are not isolated; they are carriers of meanings, playing their roles both in the topical and in the narrated and imagined experiences.

Describing real experiences, is the philosophical way of telling a story of your life. The description may contain perspectives, judgements, opinions, prejudices, etc., but it is itself without any bias. „Philosophy must not interfere in any way with the actual use of language, so it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot justify it either. It leaves everything as it is.“ PI §124) Initially, the guest is not inclined, and even not able, to describe her experiences in this non-interpretative way. The narrator is identical with the narrated experiences, which she re-lives now. The philosophizing host, however, is able to look at them with a free, non-interpretative mind. It is the mind of Husserl's phenomenological reduction (Husserl 2009), and the mind of Wittgenstein's language-game-description. With this engaged but non-interpretative mind, the host is able to notice knots in the guest's story and experiences, and to interfere into the story-telling, and by that in the guest's experiences. In the course of time, the guest may see the value of that attitude and associated skill, and starts to imitate it. Actually, a series of philosophical encounters, is a gym where the guest is trained to philosophize, i.e. to relate freely to his experiences.

6. Conclusion

Although, in Hacker's analysis, Baker's therapeutic Wittgenstein-interpretation turns out to be invalid, it is yet possible to uncover the usefulness of Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations in philosophical conversations on personal existential issues. Its value lies in the presupposed attitude and positioning of the describer of language games c.q. forms of life - the non-biased storyteller.

It is one of two: either you explain and treat psychic diseases (psychotherapy), or you practice to relate freely to your experiences (philosophical training). Learning to perceive and untie knots in your attention and thinking (i.e. in how you use language), is one of the skills to be practiced.

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⁹ In this essay, the following abbreviations of Wittgenstein's works are used: BT (Big Typescript), TS (TypeScript), Z (Zettel), PI (Philosophical Investigations).

¹⁰ Here, by way of example, I limit the quotations to Baker's first article about this issue, „Thinking about “Thinking””.

¹¹ I.e., TS 213 (the so-called 'Big Typescript'), TS 220, the so-called 'Intermediate Version' of the Philosophical Investigations reconstructed by von Wright, Zettel, Culture and Value, Philosophical Grammar, Wittgenstein's Lectures, The Blue and Brown Books, and just a few paragraphs from the Philosophical Investigations.

¹² I use 'he' and 'his' for the host, and 'she' and 'her' for the guest, for the simple reason that I am telling here my practical experiences (so, the host, that's me), and that most of my guests are female.

¹³ Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas introduced the notion of 'encounter' into Western philosophy. Philosophical practice, as I do it, is practicing philosophy as an encounter.

¹⁴ Cf. Merleau-Ponty's notion of sensibility in his work note 'Chair -Esprit', June 1960 (Merleau-Ponty 1979 p.312-314).

¹⁵ Cf. both William James' „radical empiricism” and Merleau-Ponty's notion of sensibility.

VI. A SKEPTIC'S LOOK ON PHILOSOPHICAL THERAPY

A Criticism of Restorative Philosophy

Abstract

Philosophical practice is a historical and social phenomenon. As such it reflects and reproduces developments in the society which it is part of. In Western countries the post-industrial mass culture of the Self can be seen as a struggle with 'nihilism'. Attempts to proclaim a philosophical therapy are both part of the culture of the Self, and, particularly, a sign of resistance against the loss of philosophical identity. In the context of the Industrial Revolution philosophy lost substantial crafts to the new sciences and humanities. In different ways, Husserl and Wittgenstein gave due consideration to that loss, and developed new practices of philosophy. Their paradigmatic innovations are known as the linguistic and phenomenological turns, the latter radicalized by Levinas. In this essay, the work of the three protagonists is called the 'Open Senses' paradigm. After World War II this paradigmatic revolution has been ignored, or at least debunked. Peter Raabe's book on philosophical therapy is discussed as a present-day example of restorative philosophy in the field of philosophical practice.

Keywords: Philosophical counseling, philosophical therapy, therapeutic philosophy, phenomenological turn, linguistic turn.

Introduction

In Volume 5 of this Journal Peter Harteloh advocated a diagnostic philosophy (Harteloh, 2014). In the same Volume this approach was criticized. First, Peter Raabe judged that philosophical diagnosis is a step backward in the development of mental healthcare (Raabe, 2014). Second, Vaughana Feary and Lou Marinoff vehemently attacked what they call "Philosophical DSM", as it is harmful to philosophical practice (Feary & Marinoff, 2014).

In the present essay I will contribute to the criticism with a historic argument. Taking the phenomenological and linguistic turns of Western 20th century philosophy as a

paradigmatic milestone, I will discuss diagnostic and therapeutic approaches of philosophical counseling as restorative movements back behind those paradigmatic shifts. Peter Raabe's plea for a therapeutic philosophy will be taken as an example of restorative tendencies in philosophical counseling. Although he rejects philosophical diagnostics, yet he advocates psychotherapeutic philosophy.

Peter Raabe is philosophy professor at the University of the Fraser Valley, Canada, and philosophical counselor. In 2014 his book 'Philosophy's Role in Counseling and Psychotherapy' was published. As a writer and counselor he is a leading representative of so-called 'philosophical practice', a branch of philosophy for about 30 years. So, we have reasons to take his book seriously. That will be done in this essay, which is a criticism of his psychotherapeutic approach of philosophy. His book is representative of mainstream philosophical counseling, even when counselors just refuse psychotherapy. Raabe, too, opposes psychotherapy, i.e., in its medical and psychological forms. He promotes philosophy as the proper earth mother of all psychotherapeutic talk therapy. Moreover, he detects and advocates a philosophical paradigm shift of mental healthcare.

Philosophical counseling or therapy can be considered as a player on the present-day counseling and coaching market – or rather, as a very small player. In fact, it is hardly a serious party. Raabe's book can be read as a marketing action. He tries to proof philosophy's huge significance for mental healthcare.

He is not alone in his attempt. For more than 50 years Western philosophers are busy finding a new identity. This identity had been undermined by the scientific revolution in the 19th and 20th centuries, and by the related phenomenological and linguistic turns in Western philosophy.

The author of the present essay uses the critical reading of Raabe's book to question the regressive and restorative trends in philosophical counseling and therapy. The underlying thesis is that in 20th century Western philosophy a paradigmatic revolution took place, here named 'the Open Senses paradigm'. The second thesis is, that philosophers who tried to restore pre-revolutionary philosophies have neglected this paradigmatic revolution. Third, it is shown that therapeutic approaches of philosophical counseling are part of these restorative trends.

1. The problem of the philosopher's identity and market position

Although the term 'philosophical practice' was not new, Gerd Achenbach used it in a new way. In the context of the student revolts of the 1960s en 70s 'praxis' was used in the Marxian way, i.e., referring to social and political action.¹⁶ Achenbach, however, referred to practice as in law practice or therapy practice. In 1981, when he started his practice in Germany, the student population at philosophy departments had grown enormously. While, in the 70s in the Netherlands, you still could choose from multiple jobs as a philosophy teacher, in the early 80s graduate philosophy students were dealing with a saturated job market for philosophers. So, they were looking for new jobs.

Achenbach's motivation to start his practice rooted in the student revolts of the 1960s (de Haas, 2015). Experiences with psychiatry in his personal environment, together with his experience of the unworldly nature of academic philosophy, inspired him to a life coaching approach to philosophy. In Amsterdam, a group of job-seeking students took Achenbach's idea of practice, and made their own approach to it. A new professional practice for philosophers was born. Since then, worldwide a growing group hopes to make a living out of philosophical practice.

With his initiative, Achenbach was not a stranger in Western philosophy at that time. The yearning for individual autonomy and psychological self-help was born in the 60s ad 70s, and caught fire in the 'post revolutionary' aftermath. Philosophy was rediscovered as 'the art of living' (Hadot, Foucault), and as therapeutic practice (Nussbaum).

Whereas in the 1950s, 60s and 70s Western philosophy was a lively melting pot of opposing neo-Marxian, phenomenological, hermeneutic, existentialist, and analytic schools, from the 80s onwards post-Modern relativism and socio-political inertness found their way. Philosophy became more like a neutral technique for thinking and talking. 'Participation in socio-political practice' was downgraded to 'an offer on the market for well-being and happiness'. The heyday of the Consuming Ego began. The homo psychologicus et economicus (Polednitschek, 2013) developed his egocentric life practice of self-diagnosis and self-realization. Both the post-Modern relativistic epistemologies and lifestyle philosophies, and the existentialist-inspired psychotherapy found fertile ground in the restorative atmosphere of the post-60s mass culture of 'the Self'. The new philosophy had a random and eclectic relationship with philosophical traditions, and paradoxically it combined cognitive relativism with truth claims. After all, it considered truth a constructed and accidental phenomenon, but at the same time it

claimed to be the inventor and owner of this truth. Its brainpower would be ideally suited to bring this post-Modern truth to light. Strikingly, this claim is substantiated with references to ancient Greek and Roman philosophy.

2. Restorative trends in contemporary philosophy

Characteristic of the dominant philosophy after World War II is the amnesia regarding the pre-war revolutions in Western philosophy, namely the so-called phenomenological and linguistic turns. Actually, even during the birth of these paradigmatic revolutions, the restoration had started. Husserl's phenomenology was, according to Husserl, deformed by psychologistic adaptations as well as by Heidegger's new ontology. Gadamer turned skeptic phenomenology into a philosophical hermeneutics. And practitioners of linguistic and analytical philosophy of the time (like Russell and Waismann) misunderstood Wittgenstein's language game description, which was meant to be a non-theoretical criticism of theoretical philosophy.

Husserl's phenomenology and Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations were serious attempts to draw conclusions from the scientific revolutions. Philosophy's ontology had fallen apart in many specialties, which continued as independent sciences and humanities. Mother Philosophy had lost her child Logic to mathematics. Was there anything left of philosophy, except fundamental research in the field of scientific knowledge? However different their approaches were, both Husserl and Wittgenstein criticized the continuation of old metaphysics in modern science, and reduced philosophy's core business to the non-interpretive, merely perceiving description of what occurs outside.¹⁷ (Husserl went a step further, and tried to identify the possibility of this kind of perception and description in the so-called 'transcendental subject'.)

Actually, the 'turns' in philosophy were two fires of a paradigmatic revolution. These philosophers had unmasked theoretical philosophy as conceptual illusion, i.e., as biased knowledge and linguistic monstrosities. To sincere philosophers it was no longer possible to believe in philosophical knowledge. As in Socrates' practice, philosophy is precisely the skeptic-critical investigation of claims to knowledge.

However, this new paradigm – which, indeed, is a renewal of the ancient Socratic paradigm – was hardly recognized. Even more, philosophers continued selling their opinions as so-called philosophical knowledge and insights. In the 1940s through the 70s the philosophical statements were those of rebelling neo-Marxists and existentialists; from the 80s onwards the statements are those of moralistic lifestyle ideologists. In the core, those philosophers' drive is the yearning for a new

philosophical identity. Raabe's book is a case of such yearning, resulting in a huge new Identity, philosophy as the mother and ground of all psychotherapy ever.

Peter R. Raabe's theory of philosophical therapy

Raabe's book is partly a criticism of the application of the so-called medical model in mental healthcare, and partly the construction and justification of an alternative theory of mental health and healthcare. His criticism can be seen as conceptual analysis, and serves the justification of the theory. The theory is presented as the ultimate rescue of mental healthcare, and has at its core the revival of therapeutic philosophy, which allegedly was the nature of ancient Greek and Roman philosophy.

Raabe's construction of a new philosophical identity unfolds as the rigging of old desires, yearning for Philosophy as the Mother of all wisdom and self-realization. He finds support in the texts of other philosophers of the restoration of old ontological and moral philosophy. Actually, quoting these texts is his main argument.

3. The paradigmatic revolution in 20th century Western philosophy

The Industrial Revolution came not alone. It was accompanied by revolutions in society, culture, politics, science, technology, – and philosophy. The need for industrial and social technologies stimulated the privatization of the different ontological and epistemological aspects of philosophy. Science exploded, humanities were specialized, logic mathematized.

The exodus of the empirical and theoretical sciences and humanities inspired to proclaim the End of Philosophy (Husserl, 1956; Heidegger, 2000; Baynes & et.al., 1987). Mother was abandoned by her children. What now was the meaning of her existence?

In the 19th century Karl Marx, a philosopher and journalist in the German Rhine area, was concerned with the poor masses in the new industrial suburbs, and tried to find a proletarian philosophy, thinking from the perspective of the poor and oppressed. For this purpose he turned around the Hegelian system of dialectic thinking. He replaced the priority of the pure mind through the priority of labor. He stated that philosophers had interpreted the world enough, and that now it was time to change the world (Marx, 1968). Instead of the theoretical mind came social-political practice.

Philosophers were supposed to participate in the class struggle, on the side of the proletariat.

Friedrich Nietzsche distanced himself from the whole tradition of Western philosophy. First, he disenchanting the belief in whatever objective Truth, by pointing to the linguistic character of those claims (Nietzsche, 2015) (de Haas, 2015). Second, he developed a metaphorical and aphoristic way of writing philosophy, to catch the 'nihilistic' nature of his time, and to outline the contours of man overcoming man (Nietzsche, 2012).

In the decades around 1900 the German mathematician and logician Gottlob Frege criticized psychologistic approaches of the meaning of judgments and sentences. He inspired both Husserl and Wittgenstein. The first developed his phenomenological way out of the crisis of philosophy. The second abandoned any theorizing philosophy whatsoever, just to show how people simply use words in the social practice of everyday life.

The 'Open Senses' paradigm

Usually, philosophers speak of the two turns in 20th century philosophy, namely the phenomenological and the linguistic turn. The first is Husserl's merit; the second is the focus caused by the connection Frege established between philosophical issues and language (Rorty, 1992). I consider Wittgenstein's radical intervention in the linguistic turn to be its ultimate version.

Emmanuel Levinas gave an important shift to the phenomenological turn. He criticized the idealistic character of Husserl's philosophy, and described what happens when human beings meet and experience the other's suffering.

In my ongoing research on philosophical practice I add the three 'turns' together into an overarching paradigm of 'Open Senses'.¹⁸ The aspects of this paradigm are a radical criticism of metaphysics; the priority of perception and non-interpretative description over the (re)production of knowledge; the importance of the philosopher's extra-textual situation and experience; and a strong sense of the both linguistic and dialogical nature of our knowledge.

Criticism of 'metaphysics' and the primacy of perception

Metaphysics is a philosophical term with various meanings. It can be synonymous with ontology, the theory of Being; or it can be used to indicate all that transcends human experience; or the area of transcendental experience. Heidegger called all European philosophy metaphysics from Plato through Nietzsche. This tradition was metaphysical, because it forgot to ask for Being itself; it is "onto-theo-logy". The Vienna Circle philosophers rejected metaphysics because of its non-empirical, non-logical, and speculative nature. So, they considered Heidegger's philosophy to be nonsense. Young Wittgenstein, the author of the *Tractatus*, did not reject the issues of

metaphysics, but the attempts to talk about those issues. Levinas criticized the ontological claim to know (the essence and totality of) reality; to him metaphysics was about the relation with the neighbor, with the fellow creature, whose otherness and transcendence cannot be restricted.

In the context of our paradigmatic revolution, I use the word 'metaphysics' to indicate the Western philosophical desire and claim to know the essence of reality by means of conceptual construction and discursive texts. Husserl's phenomenology started with banishing biased knowledge from consciousness, to be able to perceive the extant – someone or something in the current situation – as it appears (a phenomenon). Although he then still fell back into metaphysical longing for the essence of the perceiving subject, his revolutionary act had occurred: philosophizing begins with forgetting the already known, and with the non-biased perception of the concrete here and now. Levinas' criticism of Husserl took this further, when he unmasked the latter's 'transcendental subject', and described what happens when human beings meet. He characterized this as the ethical happening of a passive being-occupied by the Other's suffering, and as the substitution of suffering and responsibility. So, the metaphysical desire and claim (Levinas called it the ontological desire) to know the totality and essence of all being has been replaced by the awareness of the concrete, irreducible and basically ethical encounter of two human beings.

The mature Wittgenstein criticized metaphysics in a unique way. His aim was to show the grammatically nonsensical, i.e., socially nonsensical nature of philosophical use of language. The construction of so-called philosophical concepts results in meanings that mean nothing in everyday social intercourse. To avoid telling himself such nonsense in constructing a philosophical theory, he developed his anti-theoretical writing of short separate paragraphs.

To sum up, the protagonists of the Open Senses paradigm are related in terms of criticism of metaphysics in the sense of the desire and claim to know the essence of reality by means of conceptual construction and discursive texts. All three of them argued by showing (describing) what happens in front of our eyes and cannot be denied, be it the perception of what appears to our senses (Husserl), or our experience of our fellow human being (Levinas), or our experience of how we use words in everyday social situations (Wittgenstein). The showing – by description – of what is extant debunks biased interpretations, violent knowledge, and philosophical problems, respectively.

Situation, experience and epochè

Although the three protagonists were still stabbing in a writing (textual) philosophy, in all three cases the writer's position virtually was outside the text. Husserl's texts were in fact mainly meta-philosophy about phenomenology as the practice of perceiving phenomena, and about the presupposed 'transcendental subject'. This subject finds himself embedded in the life world, be it as a constituting subject. Levinas showed the

idealistic and self-affirmative nature of this subject. The paradox of such a philosophical subject is, that he experiences himself embedded in the life world, in intersubjectivity, but nevertheless thinks he – as a self-conscious human being – transcends the world and constitutes all knowledge about the world. So, Levinas radically described experiences of this intersubjectivity, as experiences of the irreducible connectedness of human beings.

Both Husserl's and Levinas' perception and description of the extant presupposed the wiping of the thinking mind. The perceiving and experiencing – i.e., the embodied and situated – philosopher frees his awareness from whatever thoughts (epochè) to pay attention to what or whom is encountering him.

So, while the phenomenologist is supposed to go outside whatever text and move into real situations of our life world, Levinas does the same, be it virtually, in his textual representation of human proximity and encounters.

The later Wittgenstein, too, went outside the text in an imaginary way. To show the nonsensical use of words in case of so-called 'philosophical problems', he described language games. 'Language game' is a technical term to indicate one of the typical ways a specific word can be used in a language community. We know how it can be used, because we are socialized in this community and have learned how to use it. To indicate this inherent connectedness of the use of words on the one hand and situations of life on the other, Wittgenstein used the technical term 'form of life'. So, a form of life is one of the typical kinds of situations a word is used in and gets its meaning.

However Wittgenstein did not reflect upon it, his language game description implies the describer's positioning outside the text. Virtually, in his imagination, he is somewhere sometime in some situation. This enables him to describe the exemplary situation (exemplary of a specific language game) without interpreting or explaining the use of words in this situation.

For that is what our protagonists did: they described an experience of the situation they were part of, without interpreting the described. Here, philosophy is not to know things; it is perceiving and experiencing what appears, without wanting to explain or interpret it. Any explanation and interpretation would be an act of arbitrariness, violence, or nonsensical use of words.

Language

The three protagonists do not resemble one another. Especially the awareness of the role of language in our thinking has not developed equally strong. Actually, Wittgenstein is the only one to see the basic role of the use of language in the existence of so-called philosophical problems. Despite their notions of biased knowledge, the terrorism of knowing, and the technique of epochè, Husserl and Levinas naively went to work on developing their own theories. The first his ideas on

pure experience and the transcendental subject; the second his views on 'the Self' and 'the Other'.

Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations were a serious and consistent attempt to philosophize without any philosophical concepts, statements and jargon whatsoever. To research nonsense, and to avoid nonsense, the philosopher must only speak ordinary language, and not want to develop some 'philosophical' knowledge.

„Philosophy must not interfere in any way with the actual use of language, so it can in the end only describe it.

For it cannot justify it either.

It leaves everything as it is.” (Wittgenstein, 2009, p. § 124)

„Philosophy just puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. - Since everything lies open to view, there is nothing to explain. For whatever may be hidden is of no interest to us.

The name 'philosophy' might also be given to what is possible before all new discoveries and inventions.” (Wittgenstein, 2009, p. § 126)

„The work of the philosopher consists in marshalling recollections for a particular purpose.” (Wittgenstein, 2009, p. § 127)

Neutral description and dialogical encounters

Shared property of the three sources of the Open Senses paradigm is the descriptive activity. The phenomenologist describes the – through epochè reduced – phenomena without the bracketed interpretations. Levinas described the encounter as a passive happening of being possessed by the Other's suffering, - a description abstaining from the Ego's preconceived knowledge. Wittgenstein described instances of language games as they are given in social situations, without adding any interpretation or explanation.

With Levinas and Wittgenstein dialogues were implied in the description, be it virtual or real. Wittgenstein inserted short conversations in his descriptions, to represent nonsensical uses of language in the games he investigated. Although Levinas' descriptions were not dialogical, dialogue was an important aspect of the reality he described – the reality of human nearness and encounters.

The interventional nature of dialogical philosophy

Especially Levinas' and Wittgenstein's texts are interventions in the prevailing and dominating ways of philosophizing. The interventional nature of their practices determines the characteristic forms of their texts. Actually, in both cases the motivating and argumentative power of their writing hides under the polemic intervention.

Here philosophy is not the production of statements but the demolition of concepts and propositions in favor of the non-reducible fullness of life.

Open senses

When philosophy is the desire and the effort to know the truth of the mysteries of life (its essence, its sense, its consistency), then we are speechless. That is, the answer is not the construction of concepts and theories. What is presented as a truth of reality itself is found to be just a construction of words. Conceptual definitions of words confirm and repeat the philosopher's thinking; it is an autistic thought movement. So, the attention and awareness being liberated from thoughts, the senses can receive what is already present and happening in the world. The philosophical effort consists of cleansing the mind, to be able to perceive and receive the lived situation. Its habitat is the current encounter; its medium is the open dialogue. Philosophizing is opening our attention, by refloating our words. Its medium is dialogue, serving our search for truth, which never is whatever 'philosophical answer', but the answer of life. Such sobering presence implies the strength to be present without conceptual and theoretical certainties. (This is the strength Husserl and Levinas tried to understand with their concept of the 'transcendental subject' and the concept of 'Self', respectively. In a Wittgensteinian perspective these attempts are valuable but counterproductive.)

4. Negligence of the paradigmatic revolution

However, although we seem to have arrived at a *aporia*, at an obstacle on the philosopher's road, most philosophers take shortcuts, and go on telling Truths about the world and human existence.

Phenomenology became psychology, or a new ontology, or hermeneutics – its opposite and denial. Language game description became truth and meaning theory – its disabled sister.

Existentialistic lifestyle

The end of World War II and the trauma caused by the Holocaust brought creative anarchistic individualism in post-war culture. After the terror of the systems it would be possible for each individual to create your own life, as you want it to be. This culture of the Self originated in smoky existentialist bars and attic rooms in the forties and fifties.

In the post-World War II decades Europe and Northern America were enriched by the subcultures of the Existentialists and the Beat Generation. Here philosophy and art

were a new lifestyle, an art of living. The autonomous individual became reality. Life was to be invented by the individual; conformism was taboo.

Sartre turned out to be one of the ideologists. He transformed Husserl's phenomenology and Heidegger's existential ontology into a theory of the individual who is doomed to freedom and has to design his own life. A new kind of philosophical knowledge was born – generally valid anthropological knowledge of 'my' existence and freedom. Thus Sartre ignored the pre-War paradigmatic revolution, and restored the philosophical claim to knowledge by developing a new philosophy of the Ego (or, a philosophy of the New Ego).

In the end, the subcultures of the Existentialists and the Beat Generation were esthetic experiments and a new kind of philosophical statements. Their hippy offspring in the 1960s and 70s would develop from a social-cultural experiment to a fashion style. Through the hippy subculture and student revolts of the sixties and seventies it became mainstream in the present-day consumer culture. Existentialist and beatnik statements devalued to fashion styles on the consumer markets, and to quotable slogans in poses of wisdom.

Since the 80s, philosophical lifestyle became one of the topics of philosophical theory. Psychologists and psychiatrists assimilated the new philosophies of self-determination and the Self, to develop their techniques of mapping and constructing the Unique Me. New generations of philosophers went along that trail, to promote marketing concepts like 'the philosophical art of living' and 'the philosophical care for yourself'. Actually, these new ideologies are a matter of selling books.

Rediscovery of Hellenistic philosophy

Part of the stylization of the philosopher as the specialist in the field of the art of living is the interpretation of ancient Greek and Roman philosophy in terms of self-care and self-therapy. In the 80s, French philosophers Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault were trendsetters. In Germany Wilhelm Schmid determines the lifestyle jargon. In the US Martha Nussbaum is a successful writer of practical philosophy, about all kinds of issues of feelings, ethics, education, etcetera. In France Michel Onfray is doing the same, and he established the People's University in Caen. Their Swiss colleague Alain de Botton is a bestselling writer, who started The School of Life in London.

A basic justification of these contemporary practical philosophies of understanding and living your personal life is the revival of Hellenistic philosophies. Epicurean hedonism, Stoic techniques of self-development, cynic self-control, and eclectic relativism are extracted from the attic and hyped as much more important than Plato and Aristotle. Moreover, the latter are re-interpreted as precursors in the Art of Life. Socrates is not the agitator in Athens's public places anymore, but the first practitioner of self-care and self-knowledge.

At the beginning of the 21st century the lifestyle philosophies are popular. In this era of the loss of existential meaningfulness and of moral and cognitive guidelines (identified

by Nietzsche as 'nihilism'), those philosopher-writers contribute to new Meaningful Stories, suitable for home, garden and kitchen.

The myth of the better diagnosis and the better therapy

Husserl's phenomenology was a breeding ground for existentialism. Heidegger focused on 'Da-sein', the particular existence of 'beings', in distinction from 'Being'. Sartre changed Heidegger's ontology into a theory of the self-creating individual. Thrown into the world without any personality, each of us has to create his own life script. While Sartre's existentialism still had psychological and psychotherapeutic aspects, anti-psychiatrists Laing and Cooper worked this out further. They transformed existentialist anthropology into the speculative justification of so-called 'anti-psychiatric' psychiatry.

Another source of existentialistic psychology and therapy was Kierkegaard, Hegel's personalistic antipode in early 19th century. He inspired existentialist psychiatrist-philosopher Karl Jaspers, who was also familiar with phenomenological psychology, with Heideggerian ontology, and with Eastern traditions of wisdom.

From the 1920s through the 1960s he contributed to the development of philosophy as a non-scientific kind of knowledge. His ideas can be considered as a philosophy of life ('Lebensphilosophie' in German), operationalized in a diagnostic system and a therapeutic practice. It is about non-scientific wisdom (philosophical belief), interpersonal communication, and the transcendence of individual existence.

Influential in so-called humane psychotherapies are Viktor Frankl's logotherapy and existential analysis. This analysis focuses on the will to meaning ('logos'), while the therapy is based upon the client's supposed belief to find a meaning in his life. The will to meaning is considered to be the motivating and driving force in human beings.

The Self-centered, wisdom based, and self-realization supporting ideologies and strategies of these humane therapies fit well with personalistic and spiritual trends in post-industrial society. They claim to be the better alternatives of the inhuman, objectifying, and cold-technological practices of science and medicine. Their diagnostic theories and their healing treatments are claimed to be superior, humanly speaking.

Philosophical therapy

Although philosophical counseling was introduced in the 80s and 90s as explicitly not psychology and not psychotherapy (Achenbach, 2010) (Marinoff, 2009), in the bosom of the Philosophical Practice movement so-called 'philosophical therapy' found its way. They connected well with humanistic developments in psychotherapy, like the existential, client-centered, and cognitive therapies. Some examples are Heutz, Van Deurzen, and Raabe.

Educated in Jasper's psychopathology and wisdom philosophy, as well as in anti-psychiatric treatment, Dutch theologian-philosopher Will Heutz development a kind of 'samurai' style of philosophical therapy. (de Haas, 2014)

Dutch psychotherapist-philosopher Emmy Van Deurzen developed a practice of existential therapy in the UK. Her philosophical counseling is based on the philosophies of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger and Sartre. Her book ' (Van Deurzen, 1988/2012) is considered authoritative among existentialist therapists and philosophical counselors.

German born Canadian Peter B. Raabe adapted a hermeneutical philosophy for counseling, and recently published his book on philosophical therapy.

5. Raabe's justification of philosophical therapy

Why should philosophers want to compete with the prophets, moralists and pastors of our time? Is it the need to find a job? Is it the need to invent a new philosophical identity? Is it the desire for spiritual guidance in their own lives? Whatever the cause, 'sage' philosophy is flourishing. Let's look at Raabe's therapeutic philosophy as an example.

Raabe's meta-philosophy

It is helpful to distinguish between philosophy and meta-philosophy. According to Peperzak

“a reflection on the practice and theory of philosophy constitutes a meta-philosophy” (Peperzak, 2012, p. 74).

In philosophical practice, theory is by definition meta-philosophy. Here, philosophy is considered to be the practice of philosophizing in a conversational encounter, as opposed to philosophy as a theoretical activity at a desk or in a lecture hall. At least, that is what many a philosophical practitioner believes. However, if theorizing is creating speculations about phenomena, then a lot of philosophical counselors theorize in their counseling, and not just about it bit as the basic practice. In my opinion, Raabe is such a theorizing practitioner, not only in his book but also in his counseling.

On the basis of the distinction between philosophy and meta-philosophy, Raabe's book is meta-philosophy. He reflects upon his way of counseling, and he speculates about philosophy's therapeutic roots in history, and about its paradigmatic role in the future of mental healthcare.

(By the way, the present essay is meta-philosophy as well.)

A client-centered/cognitive method; the Luke case

Raabe's book includes a chapter with three cases from his practice. The case descriptions make a connection between his practice and his meta-philosophy. Let's look more closely at the Luke case, i.e., at the way Raabe intervenes in Luke's story.

„After I had spent some time researching the confusion, contradictions, and obscurity surrounding Luke's diagnosis of schizoaffective disorder and paranoia, I decided that my best course of action was to find out more about Luke himself, to try to figure out just how much of his diagnosis was based on actual organic pathology and how much of his distress was perhaps the result of his life's circumstances.” (Raabe, 2014, pp. Chapter 10, “Three Case Studies”)¹⁹

Here, the counselor's intention is to find an alternative diagnosis of the client's mental disturbance. At the end of the first session, he “suggested we might want to discuss his self-esteem in a future conversation”. This suggestion was the result of the counselor's interpretation of Luke's life story, and the future discussion should contribute to the diagnosis. As Luke's story had to do with his former problematic stay in a catholic monastery, the counselor suggested, “to think about what sort of God it was that would require him to endure such a difficult life”. The philosophical counselor wants to do some conceptual research. He ...

“... suggested that perhaps he was seeing meaning where there was none”, and “gave him the example of a flower vase he has received as a gift which has no intrinsic meaning but in which he might see a great deal of meaning because of the personal value with which he had invested it.”

The idea is, that this intervention is philosophical, because it is about meaning. But couldn't a psychology-based counselor do the same? Raabe's answer would be, then, that this psychological counselor is in fact doing philosophical work. Is it so easy? Is a question about meaning simply a philosophical question?

Both Husserl and Wittgenstein made a clear distinction between philosophy and psychology. Although each of both used different words and arguments, the idea was that psychology is about finding causes of psychic phenomena, while philosophy is about a non-interpretative perception and description of phenomena or the use of words.

At the end, Luke did not show up at an appointment, which he announced by email. The reason he gave, was that he figured out “who God is for me” and that “the mind reading symptom has gone away”. A change in his understanding of God occurred. He became aware of the role of the (wrong) interpretation in his paranoia. So, the counseling was about the (cognitive) cause of his (mental) discomfort. Although being cognitive, the cause is a mental cause. Actually, Raabe describes a psychological research of psychic symptoms, as well as the cognitive-therapeutic treatment of that discomfort. The counseling was diagnostic in the sense that the counselor did not offer an interpretation, but a way of self-diagnosis and self-treatment. The counselor's

interventions are aimed at focusing the client's attention on some concepts in his story, and on conceptual changes. Raabe's way of counseling appears to be a mixture of client-centered and cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy. On the one hand he leaves the diagnostic work to the client, be it that he is quite directive in focusing the client's attention. On the other hand his directive questioning is aimed at identifying and changing concepts that constitute the client's story. The cure is in the cognitive-conceptual change.

In the book, the case description is followed by an annotated version of it. Raabe comments a series of case fragments. They make clear his intentions and his way of thinking as a philosophical counselor. It is striking that he asks many questions to which the answers can only be generalizations. How does ...; what is ...; does life have ...; can a person ...; is there ...; what makes ...; why do people ...; is ... always good "What is a mind? What is thinking, and how do we do it? Can only humans think?" All those 'What, Why, How' questions aim at generally valid statements, serving the client's self-diagnosis. This self-diagnosis is directed towards a kind of abstract theory of the client's Self. The treatment consists in replacing theory A by theory B.

In one of his emails, Luke wrote that "the thing that helped me the most from our conversations was the idea that I am free to belief what I want". Here, we see philosophical counseling as accomplice of the contemporary culture of the Self and the Autonomous Me.

In short, Raabe's way of philosophical counseling or therapy is, first, finding conceptual and cognitive causes of mental discomfort; second, to focus the client's attention and thinking on these causes in terms of abstract concepts and statements; and, third, to convince the client to change his conceptual-cognitive belief. Philosophical therapist Raabe may be reluctant to diagnose, he certainly is directive in the kind of diagnosis the client makes himself. The client does the philosophical work; the counselor is 'just' the facilitator. This client-centered kind of philosophical therapy is about so-called 'philosophical' knowledge, and about cognitive-behavioral change.

Raabe's thesis of the philosophical core of psychotherapy

Raabe predicts and proclaims a paradigm shift in mental healthcare. In the chapter on 'Recovery, Cure, and Philosophy' he states:

"The paradigm shift that is called for consists of a number of permutations: from 'the mind is the same as the brain' to 'the mind is the non-material content within the material brain'; from 'suffering from a mental illness' to 'suffering from painful emotions and distressing thoughts'; from 'biomedical treatments with drugs' to 'talk therapy'; from 'psychologically oriented psychotherapy' to 'counseling and psychotherapy based on the practice of philosophy'; from 'philosophy only as after-the-fact therapy' to 'philosophy as preventive medicine'; and from 'stabilization' to 'recovery' and 'cure'."

And Raabe's goes on:

“A sweeping paradigm shift in thinking about the causes and appropriate treatments for so-called mental illnesses can't be far away. The current biomedical platform is creaking and swaying under the heavy load of counter-evidence refuting that paradigm.”

„The explicit use of philosophy in counseling and psychotherapy avoids some of the most common pitfalls inherent in a non-philosophical approach.” (Raabe, 2014, pp. Chapter 11, section 'A Paradigm Shift')

Philosophy is superior:

„But unlike standard psychotherapy, the use of philosophy has the potential to bring the client to a cognitive and emotional state, and an ability level, that is actually superior to that which led them into their emotional suffering and cognitive distress in the first place.” (Raabe, 2014, pp. Chapter 11, section 'Philosophy')

An intervention in medical approaches of mental health

Initially his argument is a string of analytical interventions in medical approaches of mental health. Concepts like cause, body and mind, brain, mental illness, human suffering, emotions, meaning, prevention, recovery, cure, are discussed. The medical meanings are critically researched, and countered by 'philosophical' heuristics, i.e., by interpretations from philosophical literature.

The conceptual analyses are not new; others have done it before, and Raabe quotes them. Oddly enough those analyses result in what they seem to discuss, i.e., the Cartesian dualism of body and mind. Raabe chooses sides with the mind, with the mental, and he casts philosophy as the owner and preserver of the mind.

Multiple strategies

The job that needs to be done is the convincing proof of philosophy's parenthood and power source of all psychotherapy and mental healthcare. Raabe uses multiple strategies, from invoking the ancient masters of philosophy, and the impeachment of medical concepts, to the appropriation of mental health, and the rigging of a diagnostic and therapeutic philosophy.

He gives philosophy its own existential domain. He claims it, and defends it against the medicalization of the mind (the soul). Part of the claim is, that it was already the domain of ancient philosophy, as was the mental treatment. In an eclectic and appropriating way all kinds of thinkers are annexed. For instance, Husserl and Wittgenstein are called as witnesses, by presenting them in psychological disguise.

The reconstruction of ancient Greek and Roman philosophical philosophy is a substantial part of Raabe's plea for a philosophically nurtured paradigm shift in mental healthcare. He draws from the above-mentioned sources in contemporary philosophy. It gives him the opportunity to sum up so-called philosophical knowledge of mental health, and philosophical skills to prevent and to treat “suffering from painful emotions and distressing thoughts”. He proclaims the healing power of reasoning skills.

Raabe describes Socrates as a counselor and therapist for psychic and existential problems. However, how can you read such a figure in, for instance, Plato's dialogue *Laches*? This is about counseling in questions of education, but the parents are not desperate, and, more important, the counselor is not Socrates but Laches and Nicias are. Socrates is critically thinking along with the others, and skeptically questioning their arguments and opinions. That's Socrates' role: to intervene skeptically in the others' thinking in public affairs (Polednitschek, 2013). This 'skill' is completely missing in philosophical therapy.

A marketing strategy

Raabe's book smells like justification; justification of the superiority claim of philosophy as not only the better alternative of psychology and psychotherapy, but also the actual origin and core of it.

The rhetorical style is mainly the art of quoting. The statements are true because others already wrote it down, be it the ancient philosophers or the contemporary humanists.

At the end, Raabe's proof of the philosophical core of all 'good' psychotherapy is the mirror image of his proof of the originally therapeutic nature of philosophy. This vicious circle serves the excessive self-presentation of a philosopher attempting to greatly expand his unsightly market niche.

Conclusion

Seen in a historical perspective, so-called 'philosophical therapy' is part of both the contemporary mass culture of 'the Self', and of philosophers' search for a new identity. This search is evoked by the historical event of the dismantling of philosophy in the context of the Industrial Revolution. The protagonists of paradigmatic revolution in 20th century Western philosophy processed this event by reviving and renewing its skeptical and experiential core. Nevertheless, many philosophers ignore this paradigm shift, and try to restore pre-revolutionary concepts of philosophy in the form of 'the art of living', 'self-care', and 'philosophical therapy'. Raabe's book 'Philosophy's Role in Counseling and Psychotherapy' contributes to this restorative hype.

Hopefully, the discussion of the restorative nature of philosophical therapy, as meant by colleagues like Raabe, will bring back the critical roots of philosophical practice. At issue is not a disapproval of psychology and psychotherapy, but the development of encountering and dialogical philosophy, in the wake of the linguistic and phenomenological turns of contemporary philosophy.

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¹⁶ In 1977, the author of this essay called the intervention practice of critical philosophy in the context of community development projects 'philosophical practice', in his Master thesis (University of Amsterdam, July 1977, unpublished typescript).

¹⁷ This thesis will be defended in the author's dissertation on philosophical counseling in the perspective of the linguistic and phenomenological turns of Western philosophy, which he hopes to defend at Stellenbosch University in 2018.

¹⁸ The author is working on this thesis of the Open Senses paradigm in his dissertation; see the previous note.

¹⁹ The quotes are from the e-book version of Raabe's book, so without the pagination of the paper version.

VII. CONTEMPORARY SOCRATES

Philosophical Practice as a Way out of the 'Aporia' of Modern Philosophy

Introduction

In 1981, German philosopher Gert B. Achenbach appropriated the word pair 'philosophical practice' to name a counseling-like philosophical service. His concept of 'praxis' differed from Karl Marx'. In the 19th century, Marx criticized the philosophical practice of 'explaining the world', and replaced it with the social-political practice of 'changing the world' (the 11th Thesis on Feuerbach). In the 20th century, especially in the roaring twenties, sixties, and seventies, the Marxist idea of praxis revived. In the 1960's and 70's, philosophers wanted philosophy to be practical in a social-political sense. In Achenbach's consulting room, however, the philosopher's practice is not a social action, but a therapeutic conversation.

It turned out that Achenbach touched a raw nerve: he was not the only young philosopher craving for alternatives for the academic professional practices. In the early 1980's, the jobs at the philosophical institutes were occupied; the new generation longed for non-academic ways to earn their money as a philosopher. Achenbach's 'small business man' profile of the philosophical practitioner provided for a need. This profile was shaped after the psychotherapist model, but at the same time, it was negatively defined against both ('unworldly') academic philosophy and ('psychologizing') psychotherapy.

In the 80's and 90's, there were several dozens of philosophical practitioners in the Western world. Nowadays, we have to count in several hundreds worldwide.

Right from the beginning, philosophical practitioners have been working on the professional development of their practice. They meet at international conferences (the 14th will take place in 2016 in Bern, Switzerland). There are associations in several countries all over the world; some of them publish a journal and organize courses for starters. The number of books on the different forms of philosophical practice is growing. And ever since 1981, the original 'individual conversation' form of practice has been complemented by other forms, particularly group conversations, philosophical café, and philosophy with children.

Nevertheless, in spite of the efforts to professionalize the practice, it is absolutely premature to call this practice a profession. We still do not have shared criteria for comparing and judging philosophical practices, nor do we have a substantial quantity

of recorded and documented cases. Just a few practitioners published video recordings or transcriptions of cases of philosophical practice.

In the first part of this essay, I will propose criteria for comparing cases of philosophical practice, which I call 'discriminating parameters'. In the third part, I will characterize my own way of philosophical practice in terms of discriminating parameters. I will use the 'supportive mountain guide' metaphor. This 'guide' metaphor serves to characterize the way I support my guest's self-reflection and change. This way of philosophical practice has been developed as a reply to the two aporias of Modern Western philosophy: Husserl's phenomenology and Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations. These aporias will be explained in the bridging second part.

A. Discriminating parameters of philosophical practice

The international community of philosophical practitioners lacks a shared body of knowledge concerning the aims, methods, and ethos of philosophical practice. There is just an unreflected patchwork of views and approaches. Some of them are explicitly developed from an elaborated look at philosophy and philosophical practice. Some others seem to hardly be substantiated.

Just a few practitioners explicitly demonstrated their way of doing philosophical practice by means of videos, books, articles, and workshops. As their work is distinctive, I call them 'paradigmatic practitioners'. Quite a few practitioners follow their way of working, or, at least, are inspired by it. There are paradigmatic practitioners in any branch of philosophical practice. For instance, in philosophical counseling Gerd Achenbach, Lou Marinoff, Anders Lindseth, Ran Lahav, Peter Raabe, and Oscar Brenifier can be mentioned; in neo-Socratic dialogue ('Nelson style') Gustav Heckmann, Jos Kessels, Dries Boele, and Kristof Van Rossem; in philosophical café Marc Sautet; in philosophy for children Matthew Lipman and Oscar Brenifier (this list is far from exhaustive).

Because we lack a covering and systematic survey of views and methods in philosophical practice, we can merely try to discover certain patterns of similarities and differences. In this section of the essay, I will propose a way to map the landscape. I draw from several sources: books, articles and videos, as well as interviews I had with colleagues, and workshops and lectures I attended at conferences and seminars. So what I present here is an 'educated impression' of the landscape of philosophical practice.

1. Involvement: formal or material

To what extent is the philosophical practitioner involved in his guest's worries, questions, stories, problems, wishes, desires, emotions, and etcetera?

i. Formal involvement

The so-called 'moderators' of neo-Socratic dialogues are, as moderator, not engaged in the content of the guest's story, but primarily in the process of the conversation and thinking. Any question, any theme, is fit for a neo-Socratic dialogue. The moderator's main task is, to regulate and manage the process of 'thinking together'. The various 'schools' or 'styles' in the moderation of neo-Socratic dialogues can partly be recognized by their procedures and ethos. Some are more detailed and rigorous in rule giving and enforcement than others. Jost Guido Freese (Germany) limits the quantity of rules to four, and he permits a certain degree of anarchism and rebellion in the group conversation, while most strict neo-Socratic 'facilitators' are rather detailed in rule setting and strict in maintaining the procedural structure.

I call this kind of (individual or group) counseling 'formal', because the counselor is primarily focused on the formal aspects of thinking and discussing. The existential concern of what is being thought and discussed is the guest's matter, not the philosopher's.

Eite Veening (Netherlands) works formally, as well. He does not use the severe neo-Socratic procedures, but applies the focus and instruments of analytic philosophy. Though he is, as a human being, really concerned with the guest's existential worries, as a philosophical counselor he supports the formal process of the guest's thinking.

Young E. Rhee (South-Korea) has a comparable formal approach. His frame of reference is the philosophy of mind.

Dries Boele (Netherlands) works as a moderator of neo-Socratic dialogues, but does not seem to be formal in his approach. The same goes for the approach of Hans Bolten (Netherlands) and Kristof Van Rossem (Belgium). They stress both the moderator's personal involvement in the conversation, and the importance of rule setting and enforcing. They seem to balance on the edge between a formal and material approach. I call approaches 'material', if the philosophical practitioner is mainly focused on the content of the guest's question, story, propositions etc. I should call Bolten & Van Rossem's approach 'hybrid'.

ii. Material involvement

French philosopher Oscar Brenifier's approach is also Socratic, but different from the neo-Socratic dialogues. He demonstrates his way of individual counseling at lots of places, from YouTube to conferences and village squares. Superficially observed, he seems to focus only on his guest's words and sentences. He plays with logic and

pushes the guest to logical choices, which sometimes means that he drives his guest to helplessness, if not despair. But it is this pushing which betrays Brenifier's focus: at the end, it is not on the meaning of words and the logic of arguments, but on what happens in the guest's mind. Once in a conversation, Brenifier told me that, in philosophical conversations, he is out for deregulating the guest's mind. He aims at forcing the guest out of his or her familiar ways of thinking. At the 11th ICPP in South-Korea, Brenifier used the 'samurai' metaphor for characterizing his approach; it emphasizes the radical, sometimes aggressive nature of his interventions. At such moments, he is a warrior. He can also be compared to a Zen master, who deregulates the student's familiar mind and is not willing to please this cozy mind. So I would say Brenifier's approach is material, rather than formal, in spite of the formal-logical looks of his conversations.

Ran Lahav (USA and Israel) is a distinct example of a practitioner's material focus. He refers to Plato's cave metaphor. His concern is to have his guest become conscious of his 'cave'-like mental situation, and to challenge him to get out of the cave. Lahav uses the concept of 'perimeter', i.e. the perceptive and conceptual circle someone is mentally imprisoned in. He listens to the guest's story, to discover patterns of perimeters and perspectives. And once discovered - above all by the guest himself -, the practitioner starts to influence the guest towards a perimeter change. Of course, the conversation happens by means of words and sentences, but the counselor's attention is not primarily focused on the language. Here, the philosopher is mainly interested in the guest's existential situation, not in the logic of his or her language, and neither in the formal process of the conversation.

Other examples of a material focus are practitioners who mainly care for existential or spiritual goals, such as 'personal development', 'enlightenment', 'a good, or moral life', etc.

2. Object: semantic or pragmatic

The discriminating parameter 'involvement' concerns the degree of engagement in the content of the guest's words, or life experiences. Does the practitioner participate in the guest's 'inner' processes, or is he simply performing the 'outer' (i.e., formal, or technical, or organizational) conditions of the process of the conversation? The parameter 'object' is related to materials of the practitioner's intervention. Here, the philosopher works with either the semantic or the pragmatic aspects of the guest's utterances.

Most neo-Socratic moderators are mainly interested in the semantic aspects. What is the meaning of the guest's proposition - in general, and in the case of the guest's issue? Within the context of the conversation, specific personal experiences are only allowed as examples of the meaning of a word, sentence, or argument. It is not the purpose - or not even allowed, as with Brenifier - to elaborate the guest's specific personal experiences. In the semantic approach, the concrete example might be more or less detailed, but at the end, the conversation works with the semantics, not with the pragmatic context of the words, i.e., with concrete situations and experiences.

In the practice of colleagues like Lahav, Lindseth, and Heutz (Netherlands), the philosopher's attention is focused on the pragmatic context of the guest's story: his or her existential troubles and worries, the biography, the desires, the life style, etc.

3. Objective: explanation or investigation

The discriminating parameters are related to aspects of the practitioner's focus, attitude, intention, aim, and way of working. Besides involvement (professional and personal engagement) and object (material of the intervention), the philosopher's objective is of importance: what does he want to achieve in the conversation?

Famous yet trivial is Socrates' proposition that he doesn't know anything; that he is just asking questions. Brenifier tells the same (he did so after a counseling conversation in public at the Kangwon National University in South-Korea at the 11th ICPP). Socrates was not striving after whatever definition of the concept at stake, nor after whatever explanation of the theme under discussion. He just was investigating, without the aim to explain. Moreover, his focus was to undermine any definite definition and explanation. He aimed at 'aporia', i.e., the experience of being jammed on your way to grasp a definition or explanation.

Anyway, here we see a difference between Socrates and Brenifier, as the latter ends up answering the guest's question - albeit the guest's and not the philosopher's answer (Brenifier's endeavor is maieutic, like Socrates').

In general, neo-Socratic moderators have an investigational objective. Although most guests want to get explanations and solutions, the philosopher does not. The philosopher's task is to question and undermine the guest's cognitive certainties, in order to stimulate his or her own thinking. The guest is challenged to distrust his or her familiar thoughts and thinking, and to keep searching for new possibilities and perspectives.

Also, practitioners with so-called 'existential' focus of attention are generally willing to interpret the guest's story, to solve his or her problem, and to advise some alternative

behavior or even an alternative life style. Lahav and Heutz are examples of such an objective (the former more modest than the latter).

As to the 'objective', we also see 'hybrid' approaches. The practitioner focuses on investigation techniques (e.g. conceptual analysis and logical clarity), but cannot resist the urge to push the guest into some (desired) cognitive or moral direction.

4. A practitioner's 'profile'

With the three discriminating parameters in mind, it is possible to sketch a profile of a specific philosophical practitioner. So, for instance, the way Brenifier practices individual philosophical counseling is material as regards 'involvement', semantic as regards 'object', and investigating as regards 'objective'. Lahav's approach is material as regards 'involvement', pragmatic as regards 'object', and investigating as regards 'objective'. Van Rossem's approach is hybrid as regards 'involvement', semantic as regards 'object', and also hybrid as regards 'objective'.

I use Brenifier, Lahav and Van Rossem as examples, because they published video recordings of sessions on the internet (Van Rossem's are in Dutch). So, the reader can assess my profiling. Other profiles might be derived from articles, books and workshops. Anders Lindseth (Norway) is definitively engaged in the guest's story, and his object is the experiential and situational content of the story. At first glance, his objective seems more investigating than explaining. However, because of psychological bias in his philosophical attention, his approach must be considered hermeneutically framed.

Canadian philosopher Peter B. Raabe's approach is emphatically aimed at understanding and explaining the guest's story. Raabe's involvement is material (the content of the guest's story, experiences, desires, etc.). However, in his approach we clearly see a strategic plan; the process is structured by Raabe's ideas about the steps in the client's process (Raabe's "tree of knowledge"). We could call this a formal feature of his approach. His object is not strictly the language of the story, but the guest's life practice. Dominant in his approach is his objective to explain the guest's issue and to find an answer to his or her question. In fact, Raabe considers philosophy "a therapeutic method in mental healthcare".

Thomas Polednitschek (Germany) is highly engaged in the existential content of the guest's story and his object is not just the strictly situational context of the story, but also its historical and political-social context. Actually, the explanation and solution of the guest's personal problem can only be established by a historical and socio-political diagnosis and by acts of socio-political revolution. So, Polednitschek's approach is dominantly aimed at a preconceived explanation (his socially-critical theory), and at a super personal solution (a social revolution).

My thesis is that every philosophical practice moves between the extreme values of the discriminating parameters. The so-called 'hybrid' practices move somewhere in between the extremes.

In the following paragraphs, I will position my own practice in this landscape. It starts with my philosophical roots.

B. The aporia of Modern western philosophy

In the 19th century - the age of booming capitalism, industrialization, urbanization and social masses - philosophy started to go through her menopause. As a function of industrialization and social-political management, the natural and social sciences were released from their 'mother' philosophy. Thereby, philosophy lost her credibility with regard to empirical knowledge of the world. In her life change crisis, philosophy looked for ways out. On the one hand, philosophers developed as servants of science, specializing in grounding scientific methodology and knowledge. On the other hand, philosophers tried to regain philosophy's supremacy and comprehensiveness. In the 20th century, this dichotomous development went on.

Already in the early years of Modern philosophy's crisis, Friedrich Nietzsche was aware of it, and looked for ways to overcome it, without bowing to the supremacy of Modern science or to the haughty agony of speculative philosophy. He considered philosophy's crisis to be a part of Europe's social-cultural crisis, and pricked her idea of truth.

In his early essay on 'Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne', Nietzsche wrote how the 'Wille zur Wahrheit', the will to truth, functions in human societies. It is an aspect of our survival. 'Wahrheit', truth, is just another means to survive. It consists of representations of the world, mere metaphors, which are reduced to one another by means of concepts. Truth is the fiction that a human society imagines because of self-preservation - and which it considers to be the world itself. The medium of this fiction is language, the words.

What is a word?, he asked. A word is a neurophysical-auditive occurrence ("the image of a nerve stimulus in sounds").

Truth - it is made by humans when they convert words into concepts. Truth is a verbal, conceptual reality. We think that we can catch all kinds of specific concrete phenomena, each full of aspects, into the one and only concept, in which just one specific characteristic is named.

Truth is a property of the representation which we produce in our language, not a property of the world, the truth of which we pretend to see through.

Since then, all of Nietzsche's works breathe the spirit of this insight. He will, as an heir of European philosophy, never preach whatever truth. With him, philosophy no longer constructs understanding and explaining concepts. This philosopher, who puts a seal on the end of heuristic and hermeneutic philosophy, is a poet. He writes metaphors of his experiences, as a contemporary in the 19th century. His texts are études, not symphonies.

By unmasking philosophers' truth, Nietzsche revealed Modern philosophy's aporia: we meet an insurmountable obstacle; we cannot continue on the road of 'truth'; we are perplexed. How could we possibly rescue philosophy's legacy, her 'Grail'?

After Nietzsche's Socratic intervention into Modern philosophy's consciousness and self-confidence, no sane philosopher can sell any interpreting or explaining utterance about the world as philosophical knowledge. Yet many a philosopher does so; even many a philosophical practitioner.

1. Philosophical practice as a consequence of Modern Philosophy

As said, philosophers tried and still try to find a way out of philosophy's menopause along two paths: as servants of science (the 'scientific road'), and as rescuers of speculative, truth-telling philosophy (the 'speculative road'). As I see it, the majority of philosophical practitioners moves along in one of these currents - or commutes between them. However, taking the aporia of Modern philosophy as exposed by Nietzsche seriously, I cannot continue the escape routes. I must follow the brave and radical 'Nietzsche road', as explored by two scouts: Edmund Husserl and Ludwig Wittgenstein. The first followed the speculative road, the second the scientific. Both met somewhere in between and beyond. They carried out their explorations in the three decades following Nietzsche's death.

2. Husserl's 'natural attitude'

Husserl started his career on the 'scientific road'. He contributed to the foundation of mathematics. In his approach, he focused on the analysis of psychological processes that are needed to obtain the concept of number. From that, and inspired by Brentano, he became interested in consciousness, which became his main topic of investigation. Here, his path crossed the 'speculative road'.

Going back beyond Kant and Hegel, René Descartes' Meditations were Husserl's main source of inspiration. It was not so much Descartes' methodic doubting as it was his radical restart of philosophy. That is what Husserl's project was on the threshold of 19th and 20th century: a radical restart of philosophy. He had to find this zero. It could not be Descartes' doubting, for that is a cognitive play, leading towards self-invented concepts and meanings.

Husserl observed Descartes' actual situation, when he was writing the Meditations. Descartes was explicit about it in the Meditations; he described where he was, and indicated the time.

"[...] I [...] arranged for myself some time free from interruption. I am alone and, at long last, I will devote myself seriously and freely to this general overturning of my beliefs."

"[...] for example, the fact that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a dressing gown, holding this page in my hand and other things like that. Indeed, how could I deny that these hands or that body is mine unless perhaps I think that I am like some of those mad people whose brains are so impaired by the strong vapor of black bile that they confidently claim to be kings when they are paupers, that they are dressed up in purple when they are naked, that they have an earthenware head, or that they are a totally hollowed-out shell or are made of glass. But those people are insane, and I would seem to be equally insane if I followed their example in any way."

Descartes was aware of being at that time in that room, and aware of his senses and sensory perceptions. In the process of doubting, he was an observing man. He described his perceptions and asked whether he could doubt their certainty. He did not start from his concepts, but from his perceptions.

Later, in the 2nd meditation:

"For example, let us take this wax. It has just been extracted from the honeycomb. It has not yet completely lost the taste of honey and it still retains some of the scent of the flowers from which it was collected. Its colours, shape and size are obvious. It is hard, cold, easy to touch and, if tapped with a finger, it emits a sound. Thus it has everything that seems to be required for a body to be known as distinctly as possible. But notice that, as I speak, it is moved close to the fire. It loses what remains of its taste, its smell is lost, the colour changes, it loses its shape, increases in size, becomes a liquid, becomes hot and can barely be touched. Nor does it still emit a sound if tapped. But does the same wax not remain? It must be agreed that it does; no one denies that, no one thinks otherwise."

Descartes restarted philosophy by describing and considering his concrete perception, his experience of the current situation, where he was right at that moment. That was the only way to restart philosophy.

Husserl did the same in the new historical situation at the transition between the 19th and the 20th century. As Descartes' age was the beginning of Modern science and philosophy, Husserl's was the crisis of Western science and philosophy. Both positive science and speculative philosophy has lost its sense. Philosophy had to re-think itself to re-think science. Here, Husserl proves to be a vanguard thinker, who picks up the loose ends of both the scientific and speculative escape routes. His genius came to expression in his Cartesian inspiration: 'let's forget what we all think we know, at least for a while; let us pay attention to what presents itself to us; let us experience the world before interpreting her'.

Husserl started his fundamental phenomenological consideration by describing his own concrete situation. He did it with what he called "the natural attitude", an attitude that is not yet - or not anymore - infected and clouded by intellectual thinking. We can boost our natural attitude by means of 'epochè', i.e., by bracketing our intellectual pre-knowledge, our conceptual and cognitive bias (say, philosophy's conceptual and cognitive heritage). Thus, we are capable of really perceiving the world, i.e., to allow ourselves to let the world appear as it appears by itself. Of course, we are not value-free. Husserl was aware of Kant's transcendental analysis; as human beings, our senses have been defined; our mind is structured - and structuring. But in our natural attitude, we are capable of being aware of those definitions and structures; we can see them. And thus we can try to understand the nature of our consciousness. This understanding was the main objective of Husserl's project, searching for an answer on the sciences' and philosophy's crisis. But his revolutionary achievement was his farewell to heuristic and hermeneutic philosophy (despite the reversion in the work of his most promising student), the exposure of the philosopher's situation, and the re-discovery of the philosopher's presence, senses, and experience.

3. Wittgenstein's 'dada'

Ludwig Wittgenstein's early work was, like Husserl's, on the 'scientific road'. Actually, the new scientific approaches in philosophy in the first decades of the 20th century were progressive. They took part in the liberal movements of those years, both socially and politically. There is kinship between the new developments in the Modern arts, music, literature, and architecture on the one hand, and the formal-mathematical innovations and discoveries in the border areas of the philosophy of language and the fundamental researches in mathematics on the other hand. In Wittgenstein's Vienna, and more specifically in his parental home, cultural Modernism emerged from the old

body of Habsburg culture. The metamorphosis was painful, and accompanied by a lot of artistic and philosophical gloom.

One of the esthetic strategies to leave the old, concealing, and lying culture was the expressionism of feelings and thoughts. Another strategy was the minimalism of esthetic forms and the functionalism of design. Wittgenstein's Tractatus was a strict expression of this latter strategy in the field of the foundations of mathematics. On the other hand, from 1929, he worked in the spirit of expressionist esthetics, more specifically dada. A comparison between Marcel Duchamp's Fountain (1917) and Wittgenstein's philosophical remarks and investigations (from 1929) might very well be possible. Duchamp took a urinal out of its usual context and presented it at an official exhibition. It was a scandal. It offended the current way of perceiving and judging works of art - merely by being presented next to 'real' works of art in a museum. By its public presence, this 'readymade' and exhibited urinal, found in real everyday life ('trouvaille'), cracked the esthetic 'aura'. This esthetic intervention forced a sense of the constructed and random nature of the transcendental truth of works of art. Art is what we consider to be art; it is not art by itself.

Likewise, Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations intervened in the Ivory Tower of philosophical truths. Like Duchamp, he presented readymades in a sacred space - in this case the temple of Philosophical Wisdom. His readymades were pictures (descriptions) of common situations of everyday life, - situations where ordinary people live their lives and by doing so, use some language.

As the meaning, or function, of Duchamp's urinal changed with the situational context (first it is a tool to pee, then it is a tool to discuss concepts of art), so change the meaning of words and sentences with their context, i.e., with the change of their usage in situations of life.

And as Duchamp's Fountain was a statement before the community of artists, curators, and art critics, so were Wittgenstein's Investigations statements before the community of philosophers, mathematical theoreticians, and psychologists. These developers of general theories were his public. On the screen in the Ivory Tower, he projected pictures of everyday language use in everyday life. As a 20th century Socrates, his objective was to crack the limited but self-confident truths - i.e., the pinned and absolute meanings of words and sentences - of metaphysical thinkers of all kind.

Unfortunately, he only showed us just the pictures in the context of his intervention in the Ivory Tower. He described situations of everyday life as statements against metaphysical use of language. He left us no descriptions because of the situations themselves. Yet it was his presence and experience in real life situations that made it possible for him to find examples of everyday use of language.

At the end, Wittgenstein showed the oddness of the so-called 'philosophical' use of language. Such usage creates meanings that have no sense in everyday life, or at least shuts out a variety of possible meanings - it reduces or even destroys the meanings that are meaningful in life. He who speaks a 'philosophical language' is

locking oneself up in his self-devised word meanings. In sharp contrast, Wittgenstein stopped talking and thinking philo-language to give his attention to daily life itself. Only at the price of inhuman reduction of life can life be understood and improved in universal, generalizing, reductive and self-devised concepts and propositions. From this ethos, the problems of life can only be understood and solved in the situations of everyday life, by those who live these situations, speaking the situation's appropriate language. This, at least, is a consequence of Wittgenstein's interventions in the Ivory Tower.

4. Situation, experience, meaning, and the outsider view: what now?

The nagging question in the state of 'aporia' is, 'What to do now?'

Let us first summarize and sketch this 'aporia' as left behind by Husserl and Wittgenstein.

It is impossible to understand the world by inventing philo-languages and by applying self-made 'private' meanings to phenomena in the world. As soon as you leave your philosophical self-righteousness and open your mind and senses to the world as it presents itself to your senses, you will acknowledge the constructive and illusionary nature (Nietzsche) of your thoughts and ideas. Then, you cannot believe in your own 'truths' anymore, - at least not in an unquestioning way. So, philosophy cannot be an interpreting and explaining discipline anymore. It is left behind with this notion: in the end, we cannot explain the world; at best, we can clean our discursive mind, and open our senses to what, or to whom is approaching us. But then what?

We are now here, in the current situation, attentive as never before ... - but how can we understand our problems of our existence and deal with them now? Are we at the mercy of the statistically controlled and controlling sciences, these henchmen of 'mediocrity'? Or are we at the mercy of common sense, the henchman of 'normality'? Or ... are there any routes through or past the 'aporia'? I think that the notion of 'philosophical practice' can help us to find and try out these routes as indicated by Husserl and Wittgenstein, our scouts. Let me show the contours of a practice that follows the scouts.

C. The 'supportive mountain guide' metaphor of philosophical intervention

This essay is not the place to thoroughly work out a case study. It would need the comparison of multiple cases. So, I will use a metaphor to outline the contours. The metaphor can be summarized as follows.

I am your guide in the landscape you know the most of. Wandering through the landscapes of the experiences you recall and relive, I walk next to you, with you. I am amazed, and from wonder and amazement, I ask you questions about what I experience in your landscape. And it happens that I see things that you do not mention in your story.

To what extent am I your guide? In so far that my questioning brings you to look at things that you were not aware of, or to question the way you saw it. And most important of all, I am engaged in your walk but at the same time, I am not entangled in the 'intrigues' like you are. In a certain sense, I am a free man in your landscape. I am a trained and experienced guide. I can stand above the emotions and thoughts that are being caused by the dangers of the mountain and the weather. Because of that, I can show you how a trained and experienced hiker keeps standing in such circumstances.

You might be inspired by me, and learn from the way I move through the landscape. From time to time, I present you some exercises. All the time, it is your landscape, your way of experiencing your landscape, your way of finding your way.

Let me be more specific about the meanings of this metaphor.

1. Actual, narrative, and 'back home' situations

If I expect you to visit me in my practice - it can be the consulting room, or a forest path, or a restaurant, or wherever -, I will prepare myself. Fifteen minutes before our meeting, I stop doing the things I was doing. I prepare my attention for you - not with thoughts or ideas about you and our meeting, but by emptying my mind. Possibly, I

do some zazen and t'ai chi exercises. When we greet each other, I can give you all my attention. Attentively, I am all yours.

Then, if you have not already started yourself, I will ask you what you want to talk about. I expect you to tell me experiences. If you tell statements about your experiences - evaluations, generalizations, considerations, diagnostics, etc. -, I am not able to envision your world. So, I ask about the events you are talking about. Please, picture me the situation where it happened. Who are there? What are they doing? What are you doing there? Why do you act like you do? How do you experience the situation? What are your thoughts? Etc. etc. I challenge you to remember and relive the situation in detail.

Thanks to the human faculty of empathy, I am not just imagining the situation - I can be there, too, not the way you do, but my way: feeling, moving, experiencing, acting. I am in your situation - like in dreams.

It is an imaged situation for the both of us. For you, the images of your memories; for me, the images your story evokes in me. I call it the narrative situation. Together, we move through the narrative situations you create.

The more stories you tell, the more horizons of your landscape come to light. In the course of time, when we keep wandering together, I familiarize myself with the situations of your life, with your typical movements, with the way you experience the world, with the way you tend to deal with situations. And, hopefully, on the go, you will see yourself better, and you will learn to guide yourself.

We must not forget that, wandering, we are in these narrative situations. Actually, breathing and with our senses and organs, we are here, sitting in the consulting room, or walking around in the forest, or wherever we meet. I call it the actual situation. It is here that you and I encounter each other. It is here that we trust or do not trust each other. It is here that I am your host and you are my guest. It is here that your eyes get wet. It is here that we laugh. If we would forget the difference between the actual and the narrative situations, we would either cross borders of intimacy, or lose ourselves in imaginary worlds.

So, the situation in the story is not the situation of telling the story, but neither is it the situation that is being told.

You tell me stories of your life. In fact, you are telling me your experiences. The story is not the experience itself. Nor is the experience the situation itself. We can not but live in our experiences. But we can be aware of the tenseness between 'world' and 'experience'. And we can be aware of the difference between actual (or 'physical') and narrative (or 'imaginary') situation.

If we would ignore the difference between the narrative situations you are telling here and the real situations you are living in your daily life, then our meetings would just be an illusion. You would merely get some thoughts and an inner picture of insight, but back home, nothing would change. At best, our encounters are a refuge for you - like refuges in the mountains. For the time being, you are potentially free from the

circumstances that cause your desire for supportive encounters like these. The real art of philosophy is to have the courage, the power, and the skills to do the Baron Munchausen trick or the Red Kite acrobatics back home, in the real situations of everyday life, where you meet the people you share your life with, where you have your duties, where you encounter yourself.

2. The Red Kite metaphor of philosophical overview and focus

I often use the Baron Munchausen metaphor of philosophical overview and focus. It suits the situation 'mired in the swamp of your life'. Then it is great, when you are able to pull yourself up by your ponytail. But as a positive power in whatever situation, the Red Kite metaphor suits better. This metaphor stands for the core skill of philosophy. It is what was intended in philosophical concepts like 'transcendental subjectivity', 'autonomy', 'stoic asceticism', etc.

The red kite glides and prays over the field, ready to grab its prey. The philosopher's gliding and praying is his 'epochè', his 'phenomenological reduction', his 'ascetic' presence. And what is his prey? It is the biased opinion, the cognitive reduction, the stubborn perspective, the self-invented meaning, the all-covering blanket of too much theory, etc. etc. It is the object of Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations, i.e., situation-odd mistakes in thinking, in using words - as well as the object of Levinas' essay on the exteriority, i.e., the urge to think 'totality'.

Unlike the red kite, the philosopher's praying and grabbing is not for the sake of the eating; it is for the sake of presence. Once the bias is consumed, the attention can be here, with this situation. So, such philosophical interventions serve our presence. Being present in the actual, current situation, instead of in our own mind stuff, we can try to understand the situation - not by constructing new mind stuff, but by encountering each other and by engaging in dialogue.

That is 'philosophizing', given the 'aporia' that Husserl and Wittgenstein left behind for us. I do it when I am allowed to be your philosophical guide, and it is what you are doing when you try to be your own philosophical guide.

3. Knots in your attention

The conceptual and perceptual bias leaves traces in the language of your stories. While describing situations of your experience, you may be vague about certain aspects, or give a value judgment instead of a description, or speak in general instead of concrete terms, or be very definite in your judgment about someone or something, etc. At such moments, you do not give me and yourself an unobstructed view of the situation. You turn into yourself, into your concepts and percepts. I like to challenge your vagueness or certainty, and ask you about what might be hidden or enclosed in this 'rugged' word or sentence of yours.

The cure is not the linguistic analysis of your statement. When walking in the experiential landscape of your life story, I do not focus on the words you use, but on the situations you experience. By showing you other yet unseen aspects of the situation, or by suggesting another possible perspective, I dare you to break out of your conceptual or perceptual knot. The breaking-out is your work, not mine. So, your experience is the material, not the mere words and linguistic constructs.

When you unravel the knots in your attention, new horizons might appear and open - horizons of the world that is your habitat.

4. Horizons

In Husserl's description of the situation, the notion of the horizon is important. When I try to describe a situation, it proves impossible to be exhaustive and complete. Can I catch all the details in my description? Can I see the sources of the sounds that come from outside? Am I present in the presentations of the surrounding streets I have in mind? And as soon as we share our impressions of this room, my perception of it turns out to be different than yours.

I cannot help but be biased, as much as I do my best to get rid of all conceptual and perceptual bias. I am just a man and I observe as a human being. The fly in the room lives in a totally different room, even though it is the same room, probably (at least, so we tacitly assume). I just can try to reduce the bias.

What I call 'my room' proves to be an elusive 'thing' (Kant's 'thing in itself'), a neutral display on which everyone projects its images. Although, 'neutral'? The room is not just a neutral screen, it is 'hard' and full of values and meanings by itself; it 'talks to us', it 'appears to us'. We make our pictures out of these appearances.

The world we live in, where we live our lives, is the world as we experience it. What we call 'reality' is a texture of perspectives and sliding horizons. While wandering with you through the landscape of your experiences, I ask your attention for possible

perspectives and horizons: you are more than your ego; you are the situations you live in - biologically, socially, etc.

5. Guiding the guest's Quest

The picture of the philosopher guiding his guest through the foggy and cluttered landscape of his or her experiences is, indeed, just a metaphor. But metaphors can tell things that cannot be told 'literally'. What is to be told here?

What kind of mountain guide is meant here?

As your guide, I do not have another objective than to accompany you during your walks through the landscape of your relived memories. I do not set goals - not even the goal to teach you philosophical skills, let alone to interpret and explain your experiences or to offer you a therapeutic change plan. It's you yourself who sets goals like that. The only thing I do is let you tell your story as concrete and as 'lived' as possible, and ask questions about what I experience while sympathizing with your story. And while doing this, you might be stimulated to be more aware of your situation and experience than before. You might be aware of blind spots, stubborn thinking knots, dominant perspectives, etc., in your consciousness. You might discover hidden motives or unexpected statements. And most of the time, my questions and remarks might be the incentive for that insight, - but it's you who sets the goals, does the thinking, and is making conclusions. Not me. I am just the supportive guide, however important my support may be to you. I am materially involved, pragmatically hearing your story, with no objective.

In the mountains, there are two types of guides: those who are supportive, and those who take the customers by the hand. The latter type of mountain guide – let us call him the shepherd - paves the way for his clients. These are consumers; they want to be led by the guide and do not have the will, possibly not the talent, maybe not even the guts, to move through the mountainous landscape on their own. Eventually, they want to be rescued by the shepherd whenever they find themselves in danger through their own fault. The customers do not want to learn mountaineering; they want to consume the 'mountain experience' the guide can give them.

The supportive guide – let us call him the zen master - has a very different clientele. These clients want to be mountaineers themselves. They want to learn and practice. At any time, they want to wander through the mountain landscape by their own, recognize and avoid the hazards, while being able to rescue themselves and others. The zen master doesn't want to go into the mountains with consumers; he wanders just with those who strive to cross the glacier safely on their own. He offers them his experience in the mountains - and his ability to teach them in a supportive and challenging way.

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VIII. PHILOSOPHERS WITHOUT A CASE

Method and case description in dialogical-narrative philosophy

Abstract

One of the key issues in discussions on philosophical practice is the question about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of using methods. Related to the methodological discussion is the question whether it is possible, or desirable, to describe cases of philosophical practice. In either discussion professional philosophical arguments are mingled with moral arguments, even with accusations of immoral behaviour. Partly, there is a Babel-like confusion. Supporters of methods think of it in terms of means, system, and structure, without any moral purposes or intentions. The adversaries, on the other hand, think of methods as instruments of immoral, if not inhumane behaviour. Using a method is considered an act of (cognitive) violence towards the guest in the practice. That is exactly the reason why they reject any use of methods in philosophical practice. This argument is transferred to the discussion on casuistry. Supporters argue that we need case descriptions in our striving for intersubjectively controllable quality of philosophical practice. Adversaries accuse them of precisely undermining philosophical quality by descending to an instrumental way of thinking.

The author of this essay tries to leave this scene of battle. He joins in with the Modern tradition of philosophy as a method, especially with the phenomenological and linguistic turns. With some references to experiences and observations in his own practice he sketches the philosophical practitioner's 'active-passive' presence in conversations as a method with which the practitioner focuses his own presence and participation in the dialogue, without determining whatever route and aim for his interlocutor. He clarifies the practitioner's presence and acting in narrative dialogues by means of chalking out characteristics of some 'academic' approaches. Thus, a picture of philosophy as a dialogue of narratives is presented to the reader.

Keywords: Philosophical practice, narrative, dialogue, method, description.

I. Introduction

1

Ever since its inception in the 1970's and 80's, the philosophical practice movement has been struggling with its theoretical and methodological justification. Its identity has been foremost negatively determined. There is a double demarcation, on the one hand against academic philosophy, on the other against psychiatry and psychotherapy. It wanted to be neither mere reasoning about the world, nor a technical management of the soul. Both demarcations tell more about the philosophical practitioners than about the disciplines they criticise. Obviously, they need to distinguish oneself towards theoretic philosophy to underline the social benefit of their so-called 'practical' way of philosophising. But at the same time they want to shout from the rooftops that they are neither psychologists nor psychotherapists - or they claim to be the better psychologists and psychotherapists (cf. Raabe 2014).

2

Part of the quest of identity is the discussion about method. What kind of method could be typical of philosophical practice? Can it be derived from academic philosophy, or is a new method needed? Or are methods in general the opposite of the very idea of philosophical practice?

3

Connected with the discussion about method is the need of case descriptions. After all, to present and teach a method is to identify it in concrete cases. Case descriptions are rather rare in the literature on philosophical practice. However, in workshops approaches of this practice are presented by performing real or role-played conversations on site. Some practitioners (like Brenifier) consider such performances the only possible way to present and discuss philosophical practice. A discussion without the practice having performed on site would not be the kind of meta-discussion that does justice to the very idea of philosophical practice. For the same reason, other practitioners think that any such performance is just a caricature of real philosophical conversations. The public setting of the performance would disturb the intimate nature of each philosophical encounter. Moreover, because of the public setting it would be impossible to the guest to express real existential experiences.

4

In this essay, I will give a rough sketch of both my impression of the discussions about method and case description in the philosophical practice movement, and of my own approach. The sources of my perspective will come up briefly, i.e., Husserl's, Levinas', and Wittgenstein's descriptive philosophies.

II. Do methods objectify the other person?

5

Achenbach, the auctor intellectualis of philosophical practice as a kind of philosophical service to ordinary people in ordinary life, stands by the definitive rejection of any method in philosophical practice (in: de Haas 2015). Marinoff can be considered his opponent in this discussion when he specifies a step-by-step-plan in his best-selling 'Plato, Not Prozac!' (Marinoff 2009). Besides, in the field of philosophical group conversations, the Nelson-inspired Socratic facilitators use rather detailed procedures. So, as to method we can distinguish Pro's and Con's in the philosophical practice movement. Does this distinction have any sense? Is it helpful to further the quality of this kind of philosophy?

The practitioner's conscience

6

The decisive rejection of any method is morally motivated. Using a method is, in this view, an immoral act towards the guest in the practice. It would make this person an object. The objectifying technics are the pre-conceived ways of thinking and diagnosing, and the procedural ways of structuring the encounter and the conversation. The ethical principle of philosophical dialogue should be to meet the other person without any cognitive objectification, considering this person an irreducible human being.

A possible objection to this view is the observation that practitioners who cherish this methodical allergy, actually show particular patterns in the way they carry on conversation. So, e.g., you can detect some specific Achenbachian way to participate in philosophical conversations (de Haas 2015).

7

Another possible objection concerns the professional quality of philosophical practice. Practitioners work with clients, and interfere in their vulnerable and fragile experiences and feelings. So, in social-moral perspective, they are in duty bound to justify their interventions in the clients' lives. If you act in the social field of mental or existential interferences, both the client and community can demand to give account.

8

Related is the argument that philosophical practice to be really philosophical needs a justification of its philosophical quality. One of the questions asked here is, „How is your practice related to one or more traditions of philosophy?“ The relation can be to schools or so-called Great Philosophers, and to Eastern, Western, or whatever other cultural traditions.

Preconceptions of the word 'method'

9

Both those who reject methods in philosophical practice and those who embrace it make a very specific use of the word method. The rejectors associate this word with treating the interlocutor as an object. To their opinion, having a method is to force the other person into a template, which they think is immoral. You can say this position has been widespread among followers of Achenbach's way of counselling. The embracers on the other hand have a rather technical concept of method, merely being tools to make the conversation transparent and goal oriented (see, for example, Staude 2010).

10

So, method is considered either an explicit, well-considered, and goal-oriented way of interfering in the client's considerations and self-reflection, or a means of power to make a 'thing' out the living human being the other person actually is. If it is the latter, then method should be rejected, so is the argument. However, are these the only alternatives, either goal-oriented technique or method-less encounter? Is a third position possible, a kind of philosophical conversation that is neither a goal-oriented method nor without any method (or, paradoxically, both a goal-oriented method and without any method)?

11

It is important, here, to be more specific about the word 'goal'. In this essay, I am interested in the practitioner's goal. Of course, usually the guest in the philosophical practice has his or her own goal, e.g., getting a clear mind on his existential trouble. The question, here, is if it is possible and desirable that the practitioner sets goals for the guest?

At this point the question if a non-directive yet working method is possible urges itself upon us. Are methods necessarily teleological for the guest, or can a method be

source-driven, so to say. Must a philosophical practitioner be motivated by a pre-conceived goal for the dialogue and the guest, or can he be driven by intrinsic motivation without aiming at any such external goal? Can only an external goal get the conversation moving in the 'right' direction, or can the direction be invented and developed en route, driven from within instead of from ahead?

IV. A method without an object, is it possible?

Objectification

12

What is meant by 'objectification' in the reproach with the same name? The word indicates the action the methodically working practitioner exerts on the other person in the conversation. It is a cognitive action; the other person is understood in such a way, that his allegedly cognitively irreducible being yet is reduced to some concepts and theories. The reduction is considered the inhumane and immoral objectification of the other person.

13

Another idea of objectification is possible. When it is not a cognitive reduction but a poetic metaphor, this 'picture' of the other person will not deprive him of his irreducible singularity, but enable the interlocutors to share experiences without reducing them to whatever conceptual thing.

Achenbach's position

14

As said before, the plea for a method usually takes the form of a step-by-step plan, like in goal-oriented counselling and coaching. Only rarely the method has been derived directly from methods as developed in academic philosophical traditions. Gerd Achenbach has the reputation of rejecting any method whatsoever. It does not say, that he does not have a method, i.e., a specific way of having conversations with guests in his practice. His method-allergy has to do with respect for the guest in his practice. So, he considers 'method' to be a goal-oriented and beforehand structured

system of meeting the guest. He rejects this picture of method. Yet his philosophical conversations reveal his finger marks. As he told me, and as I would like to rephrase him, in Achenbach's meetings with guests some philosophers' voices might be heard in his contributions to the conversation. Emotions, moods, feelings, thoughts, and inclinations he does not have in his own life experience, are somehow familiar to him thanks to other philosophers, like Kierkegaard's anxiety, Schopenhauer's or Cioran's despair, Stirner's depression, etc. So, to him the great philosophers in Western history did him learn deep and essential ways of experiencing the world and our existence. Now he can transcend and enrich his own subjective way of being in the world. „So I am familiar in the most different worlds of experience, ways of thinking, and world views.” In this way he can be helpful to his guests. „Then, you do not go to meet the other person with your own thinking, feeling, judging, experiencing, but you are prepared to project yourself in this person's way of thinking, feeling, experiencing - i.e., in the human being's sensitivity.” (De Haas 2015)

15

Implicit in this picture of Achenbach's way of being in a philosophical dialogue, is an idea of the centre of the dialogue. The centre is the guest's feeling and thinking, not the philosopher's. It is the guest who is the author and protagonist of the life stories he is telling in this meeting, and of the thinking process as well. Exactly here lies the reason of Achenbach's methodical scepticism. The philosopher must not direct the guest's feeling and thinking, but support the guest's own search for meaning, sense, or whatsoever. Achenbach's 'method' is a method of how the philosopher is present in the dialogue, and how he intervenes in the guest's flow of telling his life stories - not with his own goals, and not with a procedure, but with an open mind, capable of entering the other's sensitivity and thinking, and prepared to serve the guest's will to travel in his world of experiences. He is the guest's fellow traveller, in the guest's search for some light in the darkness of his self-consciousness.

Method in Modern Western philosophy

16

In Modern philosophy, method is one of the central themes, if not its backbone. Actually, it is the ancient Socratic vein in Western philosophy - to doubt and critically investigate our supposed knowledge and opinions. Socrates seduced his interlocutors to investigate their own opinions by themselves. Socrates himself did not pursue a 'better' knowledge; he just wanted to clear what was supposed to be knowledge. Descartes, however, searched for the indubitable ground of all questionable

knowledge. He found it in the self-consciousness of being the one who is thinking. While Socrates' scepticism did not have a cognitive end, Descartes' did. So did Kant's search for the Holy Grail of the ultimate ground of knowledge, his transcendental criticism that ended in his construction of rational categories. Husserl went back to Descartes, and found the subject's 'pure experience' as the source of all 'intentional' experiencing and knowing.

17

Roughly, the Kantian 'categorical' way and the Husserlian 'experiential' way stand for two methodical approaches in contemporary philosophy. On the one hand there is the abstract and mathematical construction of grounds of scientific knowledge. On the other hand there is philosophy as the practice of experiencing the available world without cognitive bias.

Typically, Wittgenstein was a prominent thinker in both directions, first with his *Tractatus*, then with his *Philosophical Investigations*. Although his experiential approach was not like Husserl's; he developed a more consequent Socratic method, even though he did not understand, at least not appreciate, Plato's dialogues.

By the way, there is a third approach. It goes back to pre-critical ways of philosophising - philosophy as a way of non-critical theorising. They utter opinions, which cannot withstand any critical investigation in the Socratic tradition.

18

I mentioned Socrates. Rooted in pre-Achenbach times but partly integrated in the Philosophical Practice movement, philosophers and non-philosophers practice the so-called 'moderation of Socratic dialogues'. It has been initiated by the German neo-Kantian Leonard Nelson in the context of the labour unions, but is adopted as a method of group conversation. The rather open and intuitive process of investigating opinions, as seen in Plato's early dialogues, are re-structured as strict procedures of thinking. Whereas Socrates' dialogues end in experiences of the final unsuitability of words and definitions, the neo-Socratic moderators strive for (shared) knowledge, i.e., word definitions. If Socrates was present in such 'neo-Socratic factories', he would have asked his sceptical and critical questions just at the moment where the moderator was satisfied with the 'group result'.

19

Achenbach's methodical scepticism has its counterpart in Feyerabend's methodical anarchism (Feyerabend 2010). However, whereas Feyerabend pleads for creativity, guts, and chance in knowledge-oriented practices, Achenbach refuses any goal-oriented and biased mode of operation in philosophical conversations. Feyerabend's open and creative attitude is instrumental in finding new ways in scientific research, whereas Achenbach's attitude is not instrumental to whatsoever. Achenbach's method is a method with no end, no goal. It is aimless. Actually, his method is not 'anarchistic', because it does not violate any rules, as is the case in Feyerabend's

recommendations when he pleads for breaking rules of scientific method as established by the community of scientists.

Eclecticism

20

More than methodical anarchism and methodical not-knowing, methodical eclecticism is leading in philosophical practice. Here, the history of philosophy - from all corners of the world - is treated as a grab bag where you can rummage about for whatever opinion, knowledge, or way of thinking, depending on the question or issue your client utters in the conversation.

Somehow or other, philosophical practitioners tend to have a relation of adoption and application with philosophical traditions. Practice is supposed to be an outer-academic activity in which academic-philosophical methods, knowledge, wisdom, or ways of thinking are being applied and consumed, for the sake of the customer. That the applying philosopher does not like to talk of 'application', 'consumption', and 'customer', is irrelevant.

The phenomenological and linguistic turns of Modern philosophy

21

It is my philosophical life's work to develop philosophical practice as the continuation of Modern Western philosophy. I take the so-called 'phenomenological' and 'linguistic' turns of Western philosophy seriously. They have challenged us, philosophers, to be aware of the prejudices and bias in our so-called 'philosophical knowledge', and of the linguistic nature of our so-called 'deep thoughts'.

22

In this essay, I will not dwell too long on Husserl's and Wittgenstein's legacies in my practice. I am doing that in my dissertation, a work in progress at the time. Here, I will only paint a rough picture of both turns.

Husserl's phenomenology criticizes the philosophical habit to start thinking with the assumptions, opinions, and theories we already have. His alternative was to temporarily get rid of all bias in our attention, and to 'freely' perceive and experience the present world as it appears to us through the senses. He thought that we humans could do that thanks to our power to 'purely' experience our experiences of the world without interpreting the 'intentional' experiences as so-and-so.

Whereas our experiences are experiences of (phenomena in) the world (they are intentional; 'I experience [something]'), we are capable of experiencing the intentional experience (I 'see' myself experiencing something). Husserl called this non-intentional experience 'pure', and found its possibility in so-called 'transcendental subjectivity' (Husserl 2012). So, epochè, bracketing off our pre-knowledge of what we perceive, is an act of transcendental subjectivity. In the epochè my pre-knowledge is not annulled; it just is suspended temporarily by the power of transcendental subjectivity, i.e., by experiencing (non-intentionally) myself experiencing the world (intentionally). This power is of great value for dialogical-narrative encounters in philosophical practice. It enables the practitioner to simultaneously experience the guest's narrative (empathy, sympathy, involvement, engagement), and to be an 'attentive outsider', capable of transcending whatever understanding of the narrative and the narrator.

Rendered into philosophical practice, we could say that the philosopher's perception and experience of the other person is not pre-conceived in whatever bias or pre-knowledge (either a conceptual model or a goal-driven procedure), but is unselfishly and unbiased open to the interlocutor's experiences and thoughts.

Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations criticize the philosophical habit to think about the world by inventing unreal meanings of words, 'real' meaning here, 'as we use words in everyday life, and as we have learned to use them when we were children'. Words have their meaning in the practice of life; philosophers are inclined not to understand life with the words as they are alive in the practice of life, but with word-meanings that are invented at the desk, outside of the living communication of everyday life. His criticism was not a theory against other theories, but a matter of showing (describing) situations of the use of words in everyday life as opposed to the unreal philosophical usage (the description of so-called 'language games').

In my opinion, Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations are first and foremost a criticism of what he considered an erroneous, confusing, and misleading way of philosophizing, in which issues of human importance are understood by inventing word-meanings by isolating words out of their vital social habitat. That this is the case, he shows by describing examples of 'normal', i.e., socially operative usage (examples of 'language games', described as 'forms of life'). The description is a presentation of what is evident in social practice. So, the description does not interpret (explain) the described language game / form of life. (Wittgenstein 2009, §§109-130)

In dialogical-narrative philosophy, Wittgenstein's critical practice of non-explanatory ('neutral') description can be transformed to a dialogical practice of ('neutrally') re-telling the guest's story.

For that matter, that the practitioner re-tells the guest's story in a 'neutral' way does not mean that he does not have an emotional or moral interest in his guest. On the contrary, it is exactly his engagement that drives him to help his guest 'clean' his mind. All the time, he is present in the dialogue both as an involved fellow human being and as a critical co-thinker. (Anyway, it is impossible to philosophize without being present as a human being, although many a philosopher tries to do so.)

For the record, I do not put Husserl on a par with Wittgenstein; their philosophies are quite different. What they have in common, is, first, their historical and social-political roots (Jewish intellectuals in continental Europe in the decades of World Wars I and II), and, second, their revolutionary interventions in Modern Western philosophy (see Husserl 2012a; Janek & Toulmin 1996). Common to these interventions is a criticism of all philosophical knowledge that is not rooted in our common (or 'natural') world, and a methodical approach of philosophy. Their methods differ thoroughly, but they are kindred in that they try to find a new beginning in Western philosophy "after the end of philosophy", i.e., after the booming emancipation of natural and social sciences from philosophy (see Baynes 1987). Philosophical practice can be seen as another attempt to re-invent philosophy after "philosophy's end". Anyway, dialogical-narrative philosophy, as I practice it, is indebted to both Husserl and Wittgenstein.

Dialogical and narrative encounters in philosophical practice

23

Some weeks ago, I had a workshop with some other colleagues, to show my way of philosophical dialogues. The first who offered to be my guest in the dialogue, immediately phrased a question. Apparently, he was in the supposition that a philosophical conversation should start with a question. His question was about an issue that bothered him, but not really kept him awake. It did not have an existential urge to him. It was just such an issue, which we have got all of us all the time; habits and disrespects we all have. So, it was not odd that he hardly could remember a situation where that issue was at stake. Narrative dialogues need narratives, i.e., experiences, life stories. Here, life is at stake. There is a divorce between this person

and his life, as Camus put it (Camus 2015, p. 20), where I experience myself as a stranger in my own life ('absurdity'). Such a meeting, such a dialogue is not just a word play. It is not an intellectual exercise, however hard thinking is involved.

The second participant who offered to be my guest, shared a real existential issue of hers. It was about the relationships between her and her mother, and between her and her own daughters. She was full of memories, and she could tell a lot about it, in the way of telling her experiences in a lot of different situations. I supported her story telling, and while doing so, I re-told her story in more 'neutral' words, which were less interpretative, less possessed by interferences between descriptive memories and emotional involvement. (I will come back to this later.)

So, in narrative dialogues real life experiences are needed, and the experiences at stake must be at the edge of our will to live, in Camus' sense. The world as I was used to live in, the world that I experienced, does not fit anymore. It is no longer 'my world'; it is devoid of any meaning and sense. Jaspers called it 'border experiences', 'border situations'. More or less, the need to philosophy is an answer - in the meaning of a reaction - to such an 'existential' experience. It is a matter of life and death. Our life is at stake. „There is just one really serious philosophical problem: suicide”, Camus opened his book on absurdity. According to Camus, questioning the sense of life is the philosopher's task. If the answer is no, then suicide seems to be the logical consequence. Camus, however, considered this consequence the wrong reaction, as it is an escape from the irreconcilable tension in our experience of the world, when the world cannot be caught in our understanding of the world. Camus chose to accept the irreconcilable and incomprehensible; an acceptance that is not only related to Nietzsche's "Yes!", but also to Husserl's phenomenological reductions. It is also related to the philosophical practitioner's power to experience the guest's existential experiences and, at the same time, to 'distance' himself from the guest's experiences (a paradoxical event that I call "ascetic engagement").

24

Yesterday, a colleague showed his method, Systemic Structure Constellations (which is not quite the same as Family Constellations). We were a group of six practitioners, and practiced a constellation. It enabled us to experience the method, instead of just talking about the concept. As I understood it, this method is a kind of narrative technique. There is someone whose issue is being represented in a kind of role-playing. Here, it was a story of mine. The other persons in the group represented persons, and/or feelings, or concepts etc. in the life story I wanted to clarify. Under supervision of the moderator, they played situations, or rather, relations, which followed from my story. The play was abstract, compared with my real experience of the issue I had brought in. But yet it was tangible enough to touch my feelings with regard to my story.

The moderator asked me to focus on a better version of the issue I told. So, the play represented a desirable situation. Being the 'subject' of the play, I could really experience something that concerned me in my heart, as it were. The play was my

story re-told by the players and the moderator. Now, I could experience this re-told and thus objectified life story of mine. It was a kind of Brechtian estrangement technique, which confronted me with myself, and urged me to think about my situation and myself.

One of the colleagues present showed some scepticism. He had noticed some manipulative, seductive, and maybe deceiving tricks and usage in the moderator's directions and proposals to the players. He asked, „Is philosophy not quite the reverse; is it not about the criticism of deceiving, seductive, and say, rhetoric use of language?“. I agreed. The Constellations method is a narrative technique, which can be used in different kinds of group counselling and coaching. A philosophical use of the technique, however, would require such a sceptical investigation of what we say, and of how we say it., and what we do when using the technique.

V. Does dialogical-narrative philosophy have 'cases'?

Method and case in philosophy: descriptive philosophies

25

A phenomenologist perceives and describes particular phenomena in the world without considering them specimen of a species. A phenomenon is considered to be an existence in itself within its particular horizons in the world. Here, philosophical perception is the art to have the phenomenon appear as it appears by itself. And philosophical description is the art to find the words and expressions that take the otherness and singularity of the phenomenon into account.

26

Wittgenstein perceives the words we use in the 'form of life' we are using them in. To understand the meaning of a word is to describe the form of life it is used in. To show the philosopher's 'unreal' usage, Wittgenstein describes the 'real' use of the same words. While the improper use is an 'unworldly' interpretation of the word meaning, the language game description must be free from any interpretation (Wittgenstein 2009, §126). The usage is described 'as it is', i.e., as we are used to use those words in our (language) community.

27

A phenomenologist does not perceive and describe cases; he perceives and describes particular phenomena that are not considered 'cases of a class or species'. A Wittgensteinian investigator describes cases. After all, a language game is a case - an example of a possible use of a specific word. It is the investigator's goal to show the obviousness of the philosopher's misuse; the example serves as evidence for this accusation. To be able to do that, the investigator must have 'lived' pictures of situations of human life, and of language usage in such situations.

Rendered into philosophical practice this means that the philosopher perceives and describes the experiences as told by the interlocutor without explaining them. He experiences them with an open mind, and he describes them 'neutrally'. Actually, he 're-tells' the stories told in this 'transparent' way.

28

So, in dialogical-narrative conversations in philosophical practice, method is the way the philosopher wanders in the experiential landscape of his guest, and each conversation is unique. He is aimed at experiencing, through dialogue and narrative, the guest's experiences as the guest tells them, and at re-telling the guest's stories in that 'neutral' and 'transparent' way. He does not aim at whatever desired effect in the guest's consciousness or thinking or experiencing. Of course, there is a good chance that there will happen something in the guest's mind and feelings, but this effect is not planned and controlled in the practitioner's method. His method only serves the purpose to focus his attention on being present here for the guest, unselfishly and unbiased.

VI. Philosophers without a case

Sharing experiences

29

While meeting my guest, and being in dialogue with her, I experience her experiences of her situations. And while wandering in the landscape of her experiences, I can experience myself experiencing her landscape. I realize an 'ascetic engagement' in her experiential world. That is how and why I can be valuable to her in this meeting. My interventions might work as shifts in her way of experiencing her own world.

Experiencing me, experiencing my experience of her experiences, she might notice what I am doing. And maybe she tries to imitate my behaviour. Then, she will be inventing the philosophical art of ascetic engagement by herself (De Haas 2015a).

30

Plato's 'cave' might be a proper metaphor for expressing my relation to my experience of my guest's experience.

In the world, and being part of the world, we always are in situations, each being special and particular. The situation within the cave is different from the situation outside the cave.

We always are (in) a situation in the way of experiencing the situation (cf. William James 2007). The man's experience of the cave is different from how he experiences the cave when he returns later. Furthermore, his experience can change on site, e.g., in the transition from inside to outside, and later in the transition from outside to inside. Experience is either more or less static (the condition in the cave) or dynamic (the two transitions). In the transitions, learning processes might occur.

Plato wants us to see, that powers are working in us that transcend our individual human existence. As all life on earth is possible thanks to the sun, which is 'transcendental' and 'universal' to all of us, and thanks to the evolutionary processes, so human experience and thinking are possible thanks to our 'universal' source of creating and giving values to the world.

Later, with Descartes, we find this back as the cogito, with Kant as the transcendental subject, with Hegel as the absolute mind, and with Husserl as the subject that is capable of pure experience.

In Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations it is working, too, although not as a concept but as the activity of non-explaining description of how we use words in concrete situations.

How do we know that? We know it through our experiences. There are situations that we experience the absence of sense, meaning, and value - and we experience it as absolutely absent. These are Husserl's pure experiences, Camus' absurd situations, and Jasper's border experiences. We are in the middle of the world, in a situation, but at the same time this world is absolutely strange to us, in the sense that it is void of any value. Initially this is not a problem; it is just a fact. Only through fear-reactions and thought-reactions to the 'emptiness' of this situation, we begin to get grip on the world by creating value, sense and meaning. With a philosophical consciousness we realize again and again that such a grip indeed is inescapable but not more than a palliative at the end. Some philosophers sneer about it, others accept it as part of the human condition.

31

In dialogical-narrative philosophising, method is how you are present. It is not a structured way to treat the interlocutor's story, that would be applicable to whatever

story of whatever person. No, it is not a 'way', it is receptivity and responsiveness for the experiences told, yes, for the other's experiences. That is why each meeting, each conversation is different. That is why every interlocutor creates a different conversation. Receptivity and responsiveness, comparable with what Levinas called 'the most passive passivity' that changes into responsibility before we can think about it. (Levinas 2013)

32

No method without some matter, and no method without something that matters.

„Methods imply a metaphysics, and unwittingly betray conclusions that sometimes they pretend not to know yet.” (Camus 2015, p. 28)

Are existential experiences quite the same as psychic problems? There is the tendency in philosophical counselling to identify the clients' motives as psychic problems, and then, to call them 'existential'. Conversely the word existential is often understood in psychological terms.

Actually, philosophical practice is not limited to therapy-like settings; existential experiences are broader on the one hand, and more specific on the other. Philosophical dialogues can be developed in various kinds of situations, like indeed psychotherapy-like sessions, or supervision, or organisational settings, or everyday meetings with friends and family, or encounters in the public space, or inner dialogues with yourself, or philosophy classes, or political discussions, or whatsoever.

33

In my practice, people do not have expectations as regards my method or goal. They want to talk about what bothers them. They want me to help in this self-reflecting telling and thinking. They themselves have goals; they want clarity in the experiences that they worry about and that trouble them. Yes, they have chosen me consciously and deliberately; they do not want to be diagnosed and treated like in psychiatry and psychotherapy, or in any 'managing' and procedure-driven counselling and coaching.

34

Once again, I do not have goals for my guests; I only have goals for myself, as their interlocutor, to be attentive, and 'neutral' (ascetic and sceptical engagement).

35

I am present for my guest. The only thing I want is to be here now with her and for her. She feels the urge to tell me her experiences. She wants to share them with me. So, I listen, and her experiences become my experiences. I experience the experiences she tells me. Told experiences, mediated by the words she utters, by the sound of her voice, and by the gestures of her face and her body.

36

Being with her, and talking with her, I practice philosophical 'epochè', which is explicit in Husserl's, and implicit in Wittgenstein's method.

37

What bothers her is in her experiences. How she deals with her world, is in her experiences. Her thoughts are part of the dealing. They are part of the way she experiences her world - the way she is present in her world.

38

My method is the way I am present with her and for her. It is not structured in advance. It is not aiming at whatever goal I set for her or for our dialogue. It is just being present with her, to share her experiences. At least I have no goals for her, just for myself. I confront myself with the task to be with her and for her. And as I 'am' her experiences for the moment, I take care and responsibility for these experiences. Doing this, I actually intervene in her story, and through that in her experiences.

39

Afterwards, you can reconstruct the way I was present. If you can distinguish some pattern in the way I am present with my guests, then it is not a procedure but the nature of my attention and involvement. Yet, you might call it my method - my way, my nature.

40

Actually, I am present with my guest the same way as I am present with myself. So, the self-reflection I practice in my guest's story telling is like the self-reflection I do in existential experiences of my own.

41

My philosophical self-reflection is an ascetic engagement in my experience of the situation I am in, or I am remembering. We had better skip words like 'transcendence' and 'transcendental', which certain philosophers like to use. Better is Husserl's expression, that 'I experience my experiences', or that 'I experience myself experiencing the world'.

The practitioner's mind is a beginner's mind

Each meeting with a guest in my practice - be it in my room or at whatever place - is a situation void of any purpose, void of any goal setting. Every new philosophical meeting with another person is a new encounter, which I receive and enter with an open mind, without any program. If I want to be philosophical in the encounter, I have to make an effort to stay awake, and not to dream my own thoughts and bias. To be there with and for my guest, is not a stable and steady state. Time and again I will

have to give myself a wake-up call, and I will have to struggle for unconditional and unbiased attention and engagement. (Cf. Suzuki 1980)

VII. Conclusion

Philosophical practice, developed and practiced as a consequence of the phenomenological and linguistic turns of Modern philosophy, is dialogical and narrative. The philosopher's participation in these dialogical encounters is methodical, in the sense that the philosopher has a specific way of being present and of participating in the encounter. He just has goals for himself, not for the guest. As each philosophical encounter is a 'coincidence', structured by the human beings who are meeting and talking here at this moment, each encounter and each dialogue is unique. Even if it were possible to 'catch' the meeting in a recording and description, this would not be a representation or instance of some 'class' of philosophical conversations. Moreover, the very encounter cannot be reduced to a transcription of an audio-visual recording of the dialogue, because the verbal and non-verbal expressions of the interlocutor are just a vehicle for the inner experiences and for the sharing of the experiences. A report of a philosophical conversation would require each interlocutor's own story of the encounter and dialogue; also a meta-story of the encounter.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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