

Sandu Frunză

**Philosophical Counseling
and Communication**

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and Communication**

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1. We Need as Much Philosophy as Technology

We are witnessing a reinvigoration of this century's soul. It is under the sign of philosophy. Transformations taking place in the world built on communication have instituted structures that bring a new challenge to the reflective person, who feels the need to seek and find oneself as a thinking being. I hope that reading this book will help you posit in such a perspective.

Unprecedented development of communication and its means triggers fundamental changes to the relational structure of human beings. Transformations are so deep that they affect one's rapport to oneself, to others, and to reality. This reality also includes the virtual space that has already become a part of the relational reality of daily life. Relations' world affect the very mode of human situating in the real existence and in the virtual one. Hans Jonas anticipated the profound changes that were to take place at the same time with technological development, in connection with improved life quality and human connection with the world. All these are relevant from a bioethical and bio-political view, as well as in terms of changes caused by artificial intelligence development, or by communication technologies development, and by applied ethics in general.¹

¹ Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984).

Transformations are so complex and so deep that they affect the human mode of situating in the world in general and yours in particular. These bring along reflections on the human condition and on new ways of thinking for man and humanity that lead to the need to redefine the postmodern human being. Therefore they indicate an increased importance of philosophical reflection, a return of the whole human problematic to philosophy, and they challenge you to take a reflective and active attitude towards your life.

It is not at all accidental that philosophy entered a stage in which language, dialog, communication have become the most significant and determining themes to philosophy. Aurel Codoban convincingly theorized the system of philosophical ideas and indicated that having practiced the theme of what it is, and then of what we can know, philosophy focuses on the theme of what and how we can communicate.² Thus, if we, as postmodern people, are the subject construing the world in the realm of communication, then philosophical reflection and practice could guide us to several ways to redefine and accomplish ourselves as human beings. Judging by the direction of the development of communication technologies, survivors in the communication world will be only those who understand that in communication a balance is needed that may be summed up in the statement: as much technology as philosophy. It is ever clearer that if reality is built on communication, our life is based on this

² Aurel Codoban, *Introducere în filosofie*, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Argonaut, 1995).

balance: *we need as much philosophy as technology*. The present volume is not about the connection between philosophy and technology. It is a proposal to you to understand the need for a return to philosophy at the crossroads generated by the appearance of the digital generation.

In the era of communication, technological development and digital expansion, philosophy responds first of all to your need to seek. Authenticity is no longer a response to alienation. The development of technology and communication science, as well as of various technologies of the self³, does not cause alienation, it does not lead to estrangement from one's self. It only sets the premises for self-discovery to no longer be available to humanity. Philosophy does not become a reaction against technologization, but rather a form of integrating it in your life. For this reason, a return to philosophy is not a consequence of the need to restore the humanity which has become estranged from its own condition, but a requirement for humans positing in their development. Philosophy opens reflection on acting to avoid forgetting Being as archetype of the human being. In the context of generalized communication, returning to philosophy means taking a first step to escape from the threat of forgetting.

Such an attitude is not only metaphysical. It bears consequences on the relationship of philosophy, communication science and various communication practices.

³ Michel Foucault, *Hermeneutica subiectului. Cursuri la Collège de France (1981–1982)*, Edition by Frédéric Gros under the guidance of François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana, Translated by Bogdan Ghiu, (Iași: Polirom, 2004); Cristian Iftode, *Filosofia ca mod de viață. Sursele autenticității*, (Pitești: Editura Paralela 45, 2010).

The special nature of their relationship may be found in the ways in which philosophical counseling and practices act to develop communication. The presence of philosophy is significant in virtual communication through the informal structures represented by philosophy clubs or cafes, as also through the mechanisms set to motion by ethical, social responsibility, and philosophical counseling, and in some cases by philosophical therapy understood as an instrument to re-establish connectivity and authenticity in inter-subjective communication.

In the present volume, I focus on a few aspects of the role played in your life by applied philosophy, philosophical practices, philosophical counseling and therapy. For this purpose, I am calling on the experience of thinkers devoted to philosophy and philosophical practice such as Lou Marinoff, Emmy van Deurzen, Aurel Codoban and others, as I believe that by presenting their ideas we can support understanding the importance of philosophical counseling in a communication-shaped world.

In “From Philosopher’s Fight with Everyone to Philosophy’s Opening to All”, I focused on Lou Marinoff’s analyses to emphasize the practical philosophy’s relations with theoretical philosophy, psychology, psychiatry and ideology, to understand the specifics of philosophical therapy and counseling as applied philosophy practices. Each of these relations is used as an argument to assert philosophical therapy and counseling as a distinct field of counseling, which Marinoff opines it needs special recognition from the state in the context of professionalizing philosophical practices. Beyond apparently conflicting relations between the practices proposed by philosophy,

psychiatry and psychology, Marinoff believes there is a common interest to all of them: to provide care services at a high professional level. This special vocation of various counseling practices should be the base for reciprocated recognition and cooperation by the distinctive forms of services that are provided. In Lou Marinoff's perspective, philosophical therapy and counseling should be regarded as a most complex way by which the individual can discover his/her own being so as to solve the problems he/she faces at the intersection of the physical, social, virtual, personal and spiritual dimensions.

Marinoff's perspective on philosophical practice as a specific form of counseling may be showcased in the connection between philosophical counseling and communication. In part, the problems that philosophical counseling may solve are determined by the new communication-based society or are a consequence of the new technologies' development, especially of communication technologies. However, the issues under discussion are generally human, and philosophical counseling supposes an intervention at the human condition level. The communication-built world provides a good base to re-discuss these issues for their adapting, redefining, abandoning or reshaping. As we can find in "Philosophical Counseling and the Practices of Dialogue in a World Built on Communication", the increased visibility of philosophical counseling and therapy is a consequence of the importance of communication in the life of the postmodern individual. Some problems are generated by the world reconstruction in communication, others find a better solution in the context of the new world mechanisms. The rapid

development of communication technologies and their increased importance in postmodern human life entail the need for the development of technologies of the self, personal development, and quest for authenticity. In this context, Lou Marinoff stands out as a prominent voice in asserting the importance of philosophy applied to personal, professional and organizational life. He supports the importance of communication philosophy, of philosophical dialogue as a therapeutical method, of existential and ethical counseling. The need for philosophical counseling is closely linked to the dialogical nature of the human condition and the individual's need to build a coherent life project based on a philosophy of life assumed as a personal perspective to understand, interpret and valorize the world.

While we called on Lou Marinoff for his recognition of the autonomy of philosophical practice as a specific practice in support relations, we summoned Emmy van Deurzen's studies because she is among the most authentic voices vouching for the importance of philosophy in contemporary human life. As one can find in "Philosophy, Spirituality, Therapy", as a philosopher and psychotherapist, she advocates philosophy as the foundation of existential counseling and therapy. Starting from the premise that existential therapy is the practical application of philosophy to the analysis, understanding and modeling of everyday life, Emmy van Deurzen aims to reflect on the complex relationships that philosophy, psychology and therapeutic techniques have in building the spiritual life and in asserting man on the four dimensions of existence, from the physical one to the spiritual or religious one.

To reveal the way in which philosophy rediscovers its meanings and asserts itself as the foundation of therapy, I have summoned a few elements that focus on the difference between the religious imagery and that of scientific and philosophical practices. Against this background, there is the need for philosophy to abandon the marginal status it took under modernity's terms, and to show itself as a form deciphering and assuming meaning, transcending human being, and formulating paths that lead to an authentic existence. Philosophical dialogue as a therapeutic dialogue is favored by the fact that, without eliminating the forms of symbolic thought typical of religious communication, philosophy may propose a conceptual, critical and demythologizing way of thinking, in opposition to mythical manifestations but in full agreement with human beings' existential needs. Such an approach becomes more and more important in the context of the development of communication, technology, and new mediated modes of being in the world.

While Emmy van Deurzen places philosophy at the core of therapeutic practices, the existential stylist Aurel Codoban's interdisciplinary position turns philosophy into a fundamental instrument for existential counseling and communication.

In "Philosophy as existential style. From Desire to Love as Communication Instrument", I focused on the fact that philosophical counseling proves to be today among the most complex intervention forms in the post-modern individual's daily life. Aurel Codoban proposes a way to interpret and act in the existential field. He starts from the premise that philosophy must propose a

way of life. He takes on a philosophical practice that builds an ontology of detail in which the fundamental element in the human condition definition is no longer rationality but desire. As an existential stylist, the philosopher elicits in his analysis the benefits of philosophical counseling on the love-desire relationship in the context of transformations in individuals' lives along five dimensions as an existential datum of the human being: physical, social, personal, spiritual and religious. We have to expect a future sixth dimension to add to the five, which will be linked to the presence in the virtual medium. In this context, love as a cognition instrument denotes the way postmoderns use the resources of desire for personal development, alterity cultivation, and subject instituting as relational reality. Bringing together erotic desire and the desire for transcendence, love proves to be a transfiguring force in the postmodern world, even if some of the forms we used to associate to love are blurred or metamorphosed.

I have used Aurel Codoban's philosophical perspective in "Our Daily Body and Its Instrumental Role in Communication" to show that as in religious traditions, the soul organizes entirely the human condition horizon, postmodern culture sets the body as the organizing centre of all significant registers defining human being. Relevant in this sense is the dynamic of relations between metaphysical love, life and death. Body rediscovery creates a series of mechanisms sacralizing it; some even speak about a cult and about ritual mechanisms having a religious charge. On the one hand, the body is attributed a symbolic dimension surfacing in the fight against the

finite and life's lack of meaning. On the other, turning the body into a centre of the existential universe triggers a better delineation of the functions it may fulfill. An important role belongs to the networking function that crosses over the human inhabited worlds, from the physical one to the spiritual and religious one. To highlight these aspects, I called on the reflections in Aurel Codoban's communication philosophy. The new view on corporality brings the image of body as language, as communication instrument and as significant surface. Against this background, the body sets a self-concern whose consequence, symbolically, is a dialectic movement of body and soul nourishing one other and improving one another in light of authenticity.

As a hermeneut and existential stylist, Aurel Codoban proposes a philosophy of love in which love as a significant surface reveals a world of practices, representations, rituals and the assumption of love content that are under the sign of an occidental Eros evolution towards the desire of being desired. In "From Metaphysical Desire to the Desire of Being Desired" I valorized the way in which Aurel Codoban describes the metamorphoses of love through classical theories of desire, that reveal a paradigmatic behavior from the classical age to the postmodern condition of love. Relevant in this sense are the transformations that take place in the field of desire from love conceived in a manner similar to the religious one, fuelled by the metaphysical desire, to love as passion, to the establishing of a love based on corporeality, to the plurality of the self and the emptying of love relations of personal identity of those who engage in the discourse

of love and in its communication. With the generalization of the construction of reality in postmodern communication, love is increasingly proving to be rebuilt on an empty transcendence, a transcendence without transcendence, which accompanies the virtualization of love and the transformations brought about by its association with the virtual space mediated by the new technologies.

Without being a concluding text, “Philosophical Counseling and Human Being’s Continuous Restoration” could play such a part as it provides an opening to the field of philosophical counseling and reveals its importance for personal development. Starting from three authors that are significant for the philosophical practices associated to counseling, I outline several elements that could be the base for everyone’s option for philosophical counseling.

On the one hand, I intend to show that the development of communication technologies and of the technologies enabling virtual spaces construction involves the need for a position vis-à-vis the new reality, which is marked by the digital world’s impact on the individual. The challenge in this life context supposes new approaches of fundamental topics and new answers concerning the human values related to the meaning of existence, personal identity and finding oneself, and also the approach of happiness as a central value in a good life. One solution could be the return to the spiritual traditions and their reevaluation from the perspective of the present postmodern individual’s life, through philosophical dialogue as provided by philosophical counseling.

On the other hand, there is the need to redefine the human being and his/her quest in an expanding existential

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register, with a perpetual dynamics from the real world to the virtual one and back. In this context, philosophy can offer philosophical practices that support human beings in their quest for authenticity, for ways to commit to living their lives in the spirit of the values typical of the postmodern human condition.

2. From Philosopher's Fight with Everyone to Philosophy's Opening to All

2.1. Philosophy, counseling and therapy

The 21st century shall belong to philosophy. Philosophy will help us become free from various forms of barbarianism that may be installed in the absence of a return of philosophy to public life, to ordinary people's life: from technological barbarianism to the extremisms of all kinds, including religious ones. It will be wide spread as personal development philosophy. Taking a life philosophy and practicing it to a large extent will be one way to restore human being, to find oneself and to have a continuous personal development. But philosophy is especially called upon to provide content to communication and counseling.

We can already note that the need for counseling is a reality of everyone's life. It is becoming more and more an important matter for individuals and for organizations. It is true that today, given the easy access to information, at various quality levels, as provided by virtual world development, everyone believes to be sufficiently experienced and connected to the world's wisdom. Everyone may be convinced there is no need for a companion or for any kind of systematic initiation down the road of personal development. Everybody has the illusion of knowledge and unlimited access to the deep resources of one's life. Consequently, there is a self-sufficiency

that may settle in some of our contemporaries' lives who have a rudimentary and superficial access to the data provided by the world's significant surface.

Nevertheless, we find that in the social and individual situations of specific life, consulting an expert by individuals, groups or organizations has become a routine practice, which led to a generalized need for counseling. We call on counselors for the most diverse problems that philosophy has been concerned with along philosophical reflection development: from success or happiness recipes to social responsibility solutions; from particular ways in which we understand or practice love to the adequate understanding of the joy of being together and of the option for various alternatives of relational authenticity in the human sensibility register; from clarifying moral dilemmas to solving the moral crises of large public categories or even society as such. Thus, counseling may be used for varied purposes: from solving conflicts with the ones we engage with in joint effort of professional construction, to the negotiating of deontological codes according to the mission and objectives of our professional organization; from issues regarding the position to a significant problem for ourselves to a nuanced interpretation of life issues; from finding solutions for self esteem and love, to a harmonious construction of respect and responsibility relations with the physical, social, spiritual, religious dimensions and with the virtual dimension developed by the new technologies; from practicing ethical decision based on our community tradition norms and family values, to revalorizing them through critical thinking and reflexive tradition in the history of culture; from

positive thinking development to the critical investigation of arguments and decisions; from personal development to the personal brand and leadership qualities. One may call on the expertise of counselors in a large register encompassing almost all significant aspects of our life, from the role of money in a certain context of our action, to the significance of wealth, prosperity or a better life and the ways to increase life quality; from responsibility regarding individual choices to the responsibility we have to future generations; from how to be better to how each of us should do something for a better world; from existential anguish in the personal register to crisis waves about which mass media warns they are coming to our world; from choosing between to be and to have, to reconsidering the ultimate reasons of existence and the spiritual shaping of values we may appropriate, etc. Counseling practices are beneficial in terms of restored balance, increased efficiency, structured value systems, personal development, ethical efficient communication development, ethical environment for professional action, increased care and responsibility to the world we jointly manage as current property we should leave to be lived in the future, etc. There is practically no piece of our life we could cut out according to various criteria that should stay outside the need for counseling as manifested by institutions, individuals or different public categories. Out of the infinity of problems that individuals, groups or organizations may face, we have listed but a few revelatory for the importance that counseling has in postmodern man's life. Philosophical counseling is one of the counseling forms in full swing in the past years. I shall stop next to one of the most representative

practitioner philosophers, Lou Marinoff, a Canadian by origin, an American by cultural integration, option to practice philosophy and impose philosophical counseling in the spiritual environment of the U.S.A.

Before venturing into Lou Marinoff's perspective on the specifics of philosophical practice, I would like to mention the philosopher's response to the question: what does recommend philosophers for philosophical counseling and spiritual therapy? His response leaves no room for doubt: "Philosophical counseling therefore proceeds by attending to certain kinds of problems through the medium of dialogue. There is nothing mystical or medical about it. Philosophers are trained in the rigors of valid argumentation and the exposure faulty inference; in the heuristics of ampliative logic and the grounds for holding beliefs; in the exercise of moral reasoning and formation of aesthetic judgment; in the theory of making decisions and the justification for acting on them; in the method of resolving conflicts through the building of consensus; in the juxtaposition of scientific knowledge with skeptical challenge; in the maintenance of humanity in the face of dehumanizing aspects of technological change; in the acceptance of personal, professional, and social responsibility; in the acquiescence to conditions imposed by birth and death; in seeking to understand the meaning, realize the purpose, and fulfill the potential of sentient being in a universe replete with mystery, uncertainty, and unknowability".⁴ We have listed here a series of openings that the philosopher makes, which are as many action

⁴ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, (San Diego: Academic Press, 2002), 85–86.

lines for those well initiated in philosophical thinking to use in counseling relations. These openings that a professional trained in philosophy has, provide the possibility to offer counseling and philosophical therapy services aimed at building professional action and a life project based on valid arguments, through adequate clarification of opinions, motivations and beliefs; provide the framework to solve moral and existential dilemmas, a use of the power of thought to transform human beings first of all morally, and also in the entire existential horizon; support the individual first to articulate aesthetic judgement, scientific judgement, judgements that should help live with mystery and the irrational, with love and hate, and later in the integration process into a coherent whole that ensure one's own vision on the world. Philosophical counseling may bring the instruments to support the individual's decision making and rational and emotional justification of actions and their integration in non-conflicting relations, based on connectivity, communication, and dialogue in a technological expansion era; valorizes the ethical datum of a human being to take responsibility for oneself, for the community one is part of and for the other people, as well as for the natural world and cosmos one is integrated in; directs the individual to build harmonious relations between one's life and death, by valorizing daily action down the path of authenticity, synchronized with the way one understands life's sense. But, philosophical counseling and therapy could be useful first of all to solve the individual's unrest and problems as a human being who needs to think about all the significant aspects of life, given the existential datum, involving one's development

in all dimensions: physical, social, personal, spiritual, religious and virtual.

2.2. Coming out of the ivory tower

Lou Marinoff is surprising through his style that combines polemics, conceptual analysis, deep interpretation, existential exploring, therapeutical innovation, efficient counseling development and practical solutions for individuals, groups or institutions. The philosopher gives the impression of being on a battle field, and that at fight's end one anticipates a meeting of recognition and dialogue. All these are a vast process including getting philosophy out of the ivory tower in which the popular imagery and various specialists isolated it, and on the other hand to give philosophy back to the ordinary person and to the daily life.

Considering the stereotypes connected to the contemporary status of philosophy, the question “how about the ivory tower may be legitimate. Is not philosophy an activity essentially cut off from reality, a web of ideas woven in the ivory towers of academic life?” A possible response is that “the ivory tower story is a very good illustration of the way in which, for lack of philosophy and a solid humanist culture, we may get references mixed up”.⁵ A complementary way is that of the cultural vocation of philosophy, its humanist opening, its complementarity with any discourse on the human being, be it scientific or poetical. Ciomoş provides a suggestive relational con-

⁵ Dana Jalobeanu, “Timpul filosofiei”, *Marginalia*, July 20th, 2018, <https://www.marginaliaetc.ro/dana-jalobeanu-timpul-filosofiei/>

struction of philosophy and culture when he states: “if not all men and women of culture started off in philosophy, almost all ended in a philosophical reflection on their own vocation. Happy are those who start with philosophy, happy those who end in it”.⁶ To give importance to philosophical education, in particular, and to the humanist one in general, is often deemed to be a subject for public attention. More and more, public discourse reiterates the conviction that a harmonious development in the 21st century is not possible without the role of humanities and a humanist education.⁷ Despite being marginalized in contemporary society, education is claimed as a balance element in the present civilization development. This marks not only a spiritual field but also an educational one, it extends also to the social, economic and political crisis. Thus, “the current economic crisis may have even been, in Marinoff's view, the result of the educational systems that have failed to instill their students with humanistic virtues”.⁸ When there is talk about the uselessness of the humanities, and especially of philosophy, one believes it is a lack of understanding. To this understanding Marinoff responds by an invitation to thinking, to critical spirit, to reflection in terms of the philosophical systems developed in time or of the philosophical writings of a certain author. Such a process should lead to creating a context

⁶ Virgil Ciomoș, “Filosofia ca a doua opțiune”, 29 March 2010, video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gDpX01wqyQ>

⁷ Mircea Dumitru, “Sfârșitul umanioarelor? De ce mai avem nevoie de educație umanistă în universități?”, *Conferință SCIRI*, FSPAC-UBB, Cluj-Napoca, 10 June 2016.

⁸ Beatrice Popescu, “The Inner Philosopher: Conversations on Philosophy's Transformative Power”, *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 2013, Vol. 9(3), 642.

in which philosophy's theoretical problems should be put in the context of personal, professional or community life. It is the meaning of the known formula: "You'd find this true peace of mind through contemplation, not medication. Plato, not Prozac".⁹

Considering the stereotype representations of the current status of philosophy, although they never abandoned the fortress, philosophers should join the game of the long awaited coming out from the ivory tower and give up returning to the fortress. This means announcing every once in a while that philosophy is returned to the public sphere, that philosophers' theories are more important than ever in practical life. Philosophical practice was never a stranger to philosophers. For this very reason, an additional effort is needed for them to bring back to public consciousness the association of practice and philosophy. Philosophy provided all through its development stages, even to various degrees, instruments for thinking, decision-making and valorization that people used on a daily basis.¹⁰ From its start to the present, philosophy has not been only something to study but rather a certain state of participation to the one studying it, a certain conscience of the fact that theorizing in

⁹ Lou Marinoff, *Plato, Not Prozac! Applying Eternal Wisdom to Everyday Problems*, (HarperCollins Publishers, 2012), 18.

¹⁰ Ran Lahav, Maria da Venza Tillmans (eds.), *Essays on Philosophical Counseling*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995); Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, Edited with an introduction by Arnold I. Davidson, Translated by Michael Chas, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995); Peter Koestenbaum, *Leadership. The Inner Side of Greatness. A Philosophy for Leaders*, New and Revised Edition, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002).

philosophy may be applied efficiently in the personal life. Through the very fact that each person may have access to different levels of philosophical base of his/her existence makes desirable not only philosophy study but also the legitimacy of an existential counselor's intervention who may help the client reach faster and more efficient conclusions to problems. In this context, meeting philosophical systems or significant passages in the philosophical literature to illuminate or change our life is not important, but rather understanding dialogue, the exchange of ideas, constitute the therapeutic aspect that Marinoff lists among top virtues of philosophical practice.

In fact, Lou Marinoff wishes both to give philosophy its dignity back, which seems diminished through the distance from daily life problems, and to increase the relevance of philosophy for contemporary man and the personal, professional and institutional situations in life. Therefore, he rethinks philosophy across three lines of development and involvement, philosophy as practice facilitating discussion and problem solving in various working groups, and philosophy meant to develop the corporation's environment – philosophical practice overlapping in this case what is known as ethical consulting for organizations or ethical counseling.

2.3. Philosophical practice and theoretical philosophy between hostility and reciprocal conditioning

Practicing philosophy in a competitive environment like the American one, faced with market economy exigencies and rules on service exchanges, including counseling,

Lou Marinoff finds himself in confrontation with dominant tendencies typical of a market of ideas and services. Hostility on the part of the other providers of intellectual products, that may be perceived as similar up to a point, is the higher the more Lou Marinoff takes it upon himself to be the front representative of introducing philosophical counseling in counseling practice and in the therapeutical practices of philosophy in the American cultural space. He is for professionalizing philosophical practice and setting it as an important player on the counseling market. Thus, he is in the situation of a competitor compared to other counseling services aimed at a better management of personal life, crisis resolution and finding solutions to the dilemmas of human situating in the world and the efforts to fit in with his/her life. Of the subjects with joint interest elements in human nature investigation, Lou Marinoff disputes with at least two: psychiatry and psychology. In addition to them there is philosophy, which he describes as “theoretical philosophy”, unlike the practical one that he practices.

Therefore, among those who contest practicing philosophers, besides psychiatrists and psychologists, there are the philosophers who teach various subjects in universities. Although there seems to be a war on the position on the counseling market and on the division of areas of influence between different professionals, in reality it is about something beyond such concerns. First of all, it is about redefining the status of philosophy, the ways by which philosophy can be communicated, the relevance of philosophy to individuals’ and communities’ life, as well as the new significance and shaping power

of philosophy by regaining its place of centuries which it had been abandoned. Postmodernity faces us with the pressure of the crisis caused by the marginalized institutional status of philosophy in Western universities, including the ones in Romania¹¹. It is one of the reasons for which philosophers find themselves compelled to redirect philosophy towards solving personal life problems, daily life, personal and professional development, towards an organizational and social responsibility philosophy, rational research of opinions and personal and community beliefs, and towards public space reconstruction. Together with discursive practices typical of theoretical philosophy, forms of applied philosophy are developing, especially those connected with applied ethics, and new forms of philosophical practices are recovered as they were once practiced in various cultural contexts according to the history of philosophy.

It is the very logic of philosophy development that such a process should bring together only a part of philosophers. As it was expected, such a turnout should stir rivalries even among those in charge of philosophical creation and philosophy teaching. Against the background of such debate, Lou Marinoff opines that the best friends as well as the worst enemies of philosophical practice are the philosophy teachers. An important wave of contestation came from professors who teach philosophy in universities. Consequently, a conclusion that may be reached is that “professors of philosophy must assume responsibility for having managed to reduce their subject

¹¹ Sandu Frunză, Mihaela Frunză (Coord.), *Criza instituțională a filosofiei*, (Cluj: Ed. Limes, 2010).

to irrelevancy in the larger community”.¹² Although he too belongs to the academia, Marinoff believes that professors promoted a philosophizing mode that ceased making the individuals engage in relationship to themselves and to the world. In this way, they reduced philosophy to a self-reflexive subject in its conceptual concerns and to an abstract reflection way, distant from human concerns that do not take concepts into account or from the ordinary student who is not attracted to philosophical meditation and speculation. To this way of philosophizing among theorists, practitioners oppose philosophy as a way of life, as ethical communication and privileged interpersonal communication. They wish to return philosophy to the ordinary man, to take it out from self-isolation and give it back the role of active force on public market, the place where it had started flourishing in ancient Western culture.¹³ The call on philosophical practice is a process pertaining to the nature of philosophy and philosophical communication. Marinoff notes that this guiding to a better life was simply called philosophy in the ancient world, experimental philosophy in modernity, applied philosophy at the end of the 20th century, and receives the name of practical philosophy nowadays.¹⁴ By everything it does, philosophy should appear as a living mode based on value communication and a diversity of ways to achieve personal development and authenticity.

¹² Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 3.

¹³ Lou Marinoff, *Ghidul filosofului practician. Teorii, metode, aplicații*, Translated by Florin Lobonț and Vasile Hațegan, (Timișoara: Editura ESP System, 2016), 21.

¹⁴ Lou Marinoff, *Ghidul filosofului practician*, 43.

Although he deems philosophy to have a great intrinsic value, the philosopher states that the value of a product is given not by the producer but by the consumer. For this very reason, he proposes looking not for the bureaucratic milieu of practicing philosophy in academia, but for the past that brings us down at present to the encounter of philosophy and the public market. This tendency is present in philosophy development across the centuries. It got various forms. It could be conceived as a blessing or as a “curse”. However, it has never been estranged from the philosophical spirit. Philosophy proved to be in its manifestations as much theoretical as practice-oriented. In this sense, Marinoff reminds us a few scenes of philosophical life assumed by philosophers themselves. All these situations indicate that far from isolating in a self-sufficient world, the philosopher was always in the midst of great challenges received either as existential data of his/her own life lived with the others, or as unrests in the life of his/her community which he/she felt the call to help solving. These examples of personal and professional life situations in which we can recognize a few of the great philosophers, are mentioned by Lou Marinoff to showcase the very diverse challenges that philosophers and philosophy faced in history. From the privileged status to the marginalized character or problematic one, the philosopher covered the entire range of situations that may seem uncomfortable or dangerous. We may expect anytime that the philosopher supportive of philosophical practice should be at the present and in the future in most delicate situations, considering that he/she is promoting a new field of

activity, believed nowadays to be a new counseling field, and proving to be determined in the effort to professionalize philosophical practice in general and philosophical counseling in particular. The fact that we find Lou Marinoff today in an open confrontation with the academic philosophy, psychology, psychiatry, ideology and with the amateurism that might settle in the philosophical practice, proves the delicate situation of the philosopher fighting to establish philosophical practice as a clear profession with all the invisible forces represented by the above mentioned.

It was to be expected for these tendencies to manifest every time the philosophical practice started taking shape as a distinct professional practice, either within philosophy, or in the realm of practices typical of the personal, group or institutional counseling. We have experienced hostility towards applied philosophy and applied ethics practiced by philosophers in Romania. Nevertheless, we may note an increase in these concerns both in the philosophy departments and in other departments in universities that encourage applied ethics, professional ethics and deontology, even if philosophy-trained professionals do not always support them. However, philosophers' presence seems to me already significant in the area of applied philosophy. And I could give but a few names here, inevitably being unfair to many personalities not mentioned: Virgil Ciomoș, Aurel Codoban, Mihaela Frunză, Dan Eugen Rațiu, Bogdan Olaru, Ștefan Afloroaei, George Bondor, Antonio Sandu, Sorin-Tudor Maxim, Ana Bazac, Adrian Paul Iliescu, Cristian Iftode, Valentin Mureșan, Laurențiu Staicu, Emilian Mihailov, Marin Bălan, Constantin

Stoenescu, Dumitru Borțun, Mihaela Miroiu, Claudiu Mesaroș, Florin Lobonț etc.¹⁵

A few elements have been highlighted in Vasile Hațegan's attempt to indicate a series of premises for

¹⁵ Virgil Ciomoș, *Être(s) de passage*, (București: Ed. Zeta Books, 2008); Aurel Codoban, *Body, Image and Relationship. From Culture of Knowledge to Culture of Communication* (Saarbruchen, Germany: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013); Mihaela Frunză, *Expertiză etică și acțiune socială* (București: Tritonic, 2012); Dan Eugen Rațiu (ed.), *Politica culturală și artele: local, național, global*, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, 2011); Bogdan Olaru, *Ideea de știință riguroasă. Proiectul husserlian de întemeiere a științelor*, (Iași: Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2004); Ștefan Afloroaei, *Cum este posibilă filosofia în estul Europei*, (Iași: Polirom, 1997); George Bondor, *Dansul măștilor. Nietzsche și filozofia interpretării*, (București: Editura Humanitas, 2008); Antonio Sandu, *Etică și deontologie profesională*, (Iași: Editura Lumen, 2012); Sorin-Tudor Maxim, *Conștiința morală*, (Iași: Editura Junimea, 1999); Ana Bazac, "Philosophy and Reform: a word about current philosophy – religion dialogue within the Romanian educational system", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 10, issue 28 (2011): 108–128; Adrian Paul Iliescu (ed.), *Etică socială și politică*, (București: Ars Docendi, 2007); Cristian Iftode, *Filosofia ca mod de viață. Sursele autenticității*, (Pitești: Editura Paralela 45, 2010); Valentin Mureșan, *Un filosof rătăcit în agora*, (București: Editura ALL, 2013); Laurențiu Staicu, *Trei istorii metafizice pentru insomniaci*, (București: Editura Trei, 2017); Emilian Mihailov, *Arhitectonica moralității*, (Pitești: Editura Paralela 45, 2017); Marin Bălan (coord.), *Atena și/sau Ierusalim. Eseuri despre relația dintre știință și religie*, (București: Editura Universității din București, 2014); Constantin Stoenescu, "Viitorul filosofiei, universitatea managerială și revigorarea spațiului public", în Claudiu Mesaroș (coord.), *Filosofia în universitatea contemporană*, (Timișoara: Editura Universității de Vest, 2017), 37–50; Dumitru Borțun, *Relațiile publice și noua societate*, ediția a doua, (București: Tritonic, 2012); Claudiu Mesaroș, *Filosofia ca act de rescriere. Studii de istoriografie filosofică*, Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2013); Mihaela Miroiu, Gabriela Blebea Nicolae, *Introducere în etica profesională*, (București: Editura Trei, 2001); Florin Lobonț, "Forme filosofice ale consilierii și psihoterapiei", în Lou Marinoff, *Înghite Platon nu Prozac! Aplicarea înțelepciunii eterne la viața de zi cu zi*, Translated by Florin Lobonț, (București: Editura TREI, 2010).

philosophical counseling in Romania.¹⁶ Although contextualizing in the Romanian philosophical landscape is very vague, his studies have the merit of articulating for the first time a manual of philosophical counseling in Romanian. The model for discussion in this book is inspired by Lou Marinoff's books. It is a PhD Thesis coordinated by Florin Lobonț, a promoter of Marinoff's works in Romania. Vasile Hațegan, following the example of the American philosopher, seeks to create the necessary framework to professionalize and institutionalize the philosophical practice. The whole process is designed to tackle the complex connections that philosophical practice outside the university may have with the philosophy taught in the philosophy departments of educational institutions. Such a counseling textbook inspired by the work of Marinoff is relevant in the Romanian philosophical context because it mixes the academic side with philosophical practice. Equally exposed to the academic experience and to the one of a practitioner philosopher, Lou Mainoff does not ignore at all the importance of the theoretical foundation to the philosophical practice and is attached to this creativity type even when he firmly criticizes it.

As regards his disputes with the theoretical philosophy in universities, Lou Marinoff takes a critical stand which is nonetheless balanced. He emphasizes the fact that theoretical philosophy is not bad in itself but rather self-sufficient as it does not accept that it merely represents a part of the mode in which philosophy is done.

¹⁶ Vasile Hațegan, *Consilierea filosofică. De la practică la profesie*, (București: Ars Docendi, 2018), 126–137.

Besides theoretical reflections, philosophers should be significantly concerned with philosophy applications in the daily life, as philosophy should also be “an exoteric and practical guide to leading ordinary lives”.¹⁷ Additionally, the practitioner philosopher cultivates the conviction that there always is a reciprocal support that the theoretical philosophy and the practical philosophy may provide each other. They are part of a common process even though the philosophical discourse and its practice differentiate in the emphases and privileges they attribute. A statement on the two types of philosophy working together that is worth mentioning is Marinoff's conviction that “to legitimize itself as a profession, philosophical practice must establish itself in the Academy”.¹⁸ The theoretical philosophy and the practical one feed each other from the same philosophical creativity resources, they condition each other and have the responsibility to valorize each other.

2.4. Psychiatry and psychology, enemies and friends of philosophy

Marinoff believes that applied philosophy contestation comes actually from those who may be friends and enemies at the same time. He also examines other forms of hostility towards philosophical practice in the same terms of enmity and friendship. He uses such terms when he analyzes the confrontation between certain representa-

¹⁷ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 43.

¹⁸ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 348.

tives of theoretical philosophy and applied philosophy, and holds a similar attitude to psychiatry and psychology.

From such perspective, if philosophers have a critical reaction and rejection of philosophical practices, it is to be expected that the hostility should be stronger from related subjects already well grounded in providing counseling services on the human being that believe they are legitimate in covering the whole sphere of therapies for the soul and human mind. The monopoly of these subjects in the American cultural space may be invoked in any cultural space as status quo, which may render illegitimate attempts by philosophy to gain grounds for its practice that seems to have been abandoned at certain stages in its development.

To understand the confronting situation of philosopher Lou Marinoff in his relations with psychology and psychiatry, it is useful to remember what a psychologist said, namely that “he viewed philosophical counselors as trespassers and poachers on psychological turf”, while the Head of the American Psychiatry Association accused him of practicing medicine without a license, when in reality, Marinoff did not anything except provided ethical counseling.¹⁹

Against such tensioned relations, the philosopher is launching criticism of psychiatry and psychology starting from the ideas inspired by the anti-psychiatric trend developed by psychiatrists like R.D. Laing, Thomas Szasz or Peter Breggin, who rejected the tendencies to medicalize excessively human emotional problems, and fought

¹⁹ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 48.

in various ways for a return of rational and relational dimensions to a central place. In support of his resistance to the excessive medicalization of therapeutic matters, Marinoff provides the example of classifications based on mental disorders, that are more and more sophisticated: “In 1952, the DSM-I listed 112 disorders. In 1968, the DSM-II listed 163 disorders. In 1980, the DSM-III listed 224 disorders. The latest edition, the 1994 DSM-IV, lists 374 disorders. In the 1980s, psychiatrists estimated that one in ten Americans was mentally ill. In the 1990s, it was one in two”.²⁰ Marinoff is against such proactive attitudes to labeling that should have similar weight to medical diagnosis. Marinoff's main reproach is that psychiatry as well as a part of clinical psychology, “does not passively await patients, as mechanics await vehicles. Rather, psychiatry and psychology have colonized not only the health care system, but also the education system, the legislative system, the justice system, the corrections system, the military, and other branches of state and federal government”.²¹

Putting aside the criticism by authors who believe that “the medical model was left behind for years even in the psychotherapy based on deep analysis”,²² dispute along such lines, although important, is not significant for our discussion. Finally, Marinoff's studies do not aim for placing psychiatry and psychology at lower levels, even

²⁰ Lou Marinoff, *Plato, Not Prozac! Applying Eternal Wisdom to Everyday Problems*, 45.

²¹ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 103.

²² Victor Popescu, “De când filozofii se ocupă cu terapia de cuplu?”, *Observator cultural*, no. 523, (07-05-2010). <https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/de-cind-filozofii-se-ocupa-cu-terapia-de-cuplu/>

when he shows their limitations in practice. His entire effort should be associated with his attempt to establish philosophy as a clear subject of counseling practices. In this context, one should understand the discrepancy of opinions with American practitioner philosophers, initially close collaborators with Marinoff, who opted for removing any barriers between philosophical and psychological counseling, promoting the idea of the complementarity of the two counseling types and of the need for a close interdisciplinary cooperation.²³

Despite everything separating them, Marinoff believes that philosophy and psychiatry may cooperate very well to provide care services. He explains the exacerbated conflict between the two on account of media communication, which showcases the sensational and is interested in perpetuating the image of the conflict between the two counseling fields. In reality, psychiatry, psychology and philosophy are complementary. Each has a specific role in the mutual aid and care on a wide range, from counseling and medical therapy to counseling and existential therapy. Although he is against tendencies to turn any human action or feeling that does not follow certain patterns into an object of diagnosis, Marinoff finds a complementarity between philosophy and psychiatry, visible at least under three aspects worth mentioning. Firstly, he believes that beyond the tendencies to supra-medicalize in psychiatry and pseudo-medicalize in psychology, there

²³ Elliot D. Cohen, "How Can You Become a Philosophical Counselor? Beware false dichotomies in pursuing training in philosophical counseling", *Psychology Today*, (Sept 13, 2014). <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/what-would-aristotle-do/201409/how-can-you-become-philosophical-counselor>

are problems of psychiatric nature that philosophy could not treat and for which philosophical counseling could not be used to stabilize the patients. Secondly, he is convinced that despite cases of malpraxis in psychiatric practice, psychiatry is necessary and sometimes sufficient too. Thirdly, philosophers and psychiatrists have a potential for cooperation beyond the diagnosis versus dialogue, medication versus thinking pairs, and each should benefit from taking steps towards the others.²⁴

As regards, psychology, philosophy is different from it first of all through its metaphysical background.²⁵ However, as both are non-medical practices, the philosophical counseling and therapy, and the psychological one have a lot in common. Each may contribute to the development and support of the other. In such context, Marinoff sees the contesting by psychologists as one along the lines of counseling in a market competition. Psychologists contest philosophers' competing with them on a sole counseling market. In such tensioned situation, Marinoff is reproachful of psychologists for ignoring the fact that psychology inherits from philosophy and that philosophy has given psychologists a good home for a comfortable life, as it may be noticed throughout the history of philosophy from Plato to William James. Examining the relationship between psychology and philosophy, Marinoff notes that psychology has had the advantage of "monopolies on nonmedical talk-therapy subsidized by third-party

²⁴ Lou Marinoff, *Ghidul filosofului practician*, 348.

²⁵ Kao Yu-Chih, "The Metaphysical Foundation of the Methodology of Philosophical Counseling", *Universitas-Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture*, vol. 38 issue 7 (2011): 117–132.

medical insurers”.²⁶ Beyond the hostility built on such a monopoly, psychology and philosophy have proven to be complementary in a series of therapy models. This interdisciplinary cooperation, which Marinoff finds as a good example of good practice both for philosophers and psychologists, each being compelled to strengthen the dialogue between philosophy and psychology for mutual professional enrichment.²⁷

We should mention that the philosopher keeps emphasizing that philosophical practice is not of medical nature, even when it takes the form of philosophical therapy. At the same time, Marinoff believes that the majority of philosophical practitioners do not function in fields complimentary to the medical one, as it often happens with non-medical practice of psychologists. Consequently, it does not have among its important activities the concern with diagnosing the disease and indicating treatment.

Besides the fact that philosophy is among the most important of the humanities, unlike psychology, it does not propose a scientific method, but a philosophical one – which, indeed, does not involve any contradiction between the scientific and the philosophical. Marinoff believes philosophical counseling to be closer to an art of living, applicable in a unique way to each individual.²⁸ Consequently, there is the need for one’s personal involvement in one’s life with everything it entails. As an existential counselor, it seems natural to the philosopher that we experience unease, and are concerned with our existence.

²⁶ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 330.

²⁷ Lou Marinoff, *Ghidul filosofului practician*, 354.

²⁸ Lou Marinoff, *Înghite Platon nu Prozac!*, 91.

Philosophical counseling balances accurate answers to the questions articulated adequately and consistently. In this perspective, the dialogue with an existential counselor may gain a self-awareness that should guide towards authentic relationships with one's own being. In this register, one should understand the statement: "If you neglect, ignore or deny the spiritual aspect of your being, you will fail to live life as fully as possible".²⁹

Marinoff does not plan a program in which philosophy replaces or removes psychiatry or psychology in counseling and therapy activities. His main objective is action on all possible planes to defend the dignity of philosophy and to secure its well-deserved place in the partnership with other professions, especially with those with an important component of care, counseling and therapy. Leaving aside what separates philosophers, psychiatrists and psychologists, Marinoff emphasizes what the best above mentioned professionals have in common: "the ability to dialogue effectively with their patients or clients – and one another – about matters of meaning, purpose, and value in life experience".³⁰

2.5. Philosophy's dispute with ideology

Marinoff opines there is a major conflict between philosophy and ideology, the two being hard to reconcile. One of the most aggressive attitudes that we notice with Marinoff is that in connection with the ideology of

²⁹ Lou Marinoff, *The Big Questions. Therapy for the sane or how philosophy can change your life*, (USA: Bloomsbury, 2003), 262.

³⁰ Lou Marinoff, *The Big Questions. Therapy for the sane or how philosophy can change your life*, 12.

political correctness. The open conflict with the manifestations of political correctness takes a radical form in the context in which Marinoff takes this conflict personally, as a problem to be solved in relationship with political correctness supporters in the professional association of practitioner philosophers, who contested various aspects of his activity.³¹

We may note that the philosopher is speaking from inside the conflict he theorizes. He starts from a life experience that is significant to understand and describe the phenomenon. At the base of the hostilities that Lou Mainoff expresses are often his personal experiences, in which his own philosophy as a way of life is at stake. He deems political correctness to be an unhealthy ideology that requires refraining from telling the truth. Nevertheless, truth has to be said on every occasion, even at the risk that some people may feel offended by it. In his view, the offense does not come from the one who tells the truth but from the mind of the one receiving the truth as something offensive. Thus, responsibility should not be set for the representation that may occur in one's mind, but for one's own person and the responsibility everyone has to tell the truth. At the base of the negative reactions as formulated by Marinoff is not the relationship with alterity, diversity or pluralism, but the thematic of philosophy's truth as opposed to ideology contents.

Among the ingredients that the philosopher brings into discourse is the inability of political correctness and of other ideologies to solve the problems facing individuals

³¹ Lou Marinoff, *Ghidul filosofului practician*, 227.

and communities. He reproaches the excesses that political correctness has come to. What is problematic, however, is that the philosopher's fight with political correctness excesses takes him to a radical position close to the violence he complains about in the criticized ideology. Apart from conflicting positions of a personal nature that he raises in this context, Marinoff emphasizes the fact that the Professional Association of Practitioner Philosophers in the United States of America, without encouraging ideological practices, is open to all forms of philosophical practice promoting pluralism and diversity as a natural way of interpersonal relations: "It is an inclusive association that welcomes all who wish to apply philosophy to their own lives and to help others to do so. It has attracted persons of all races, classes, genders, religious persuasions, political affiliations, and philosophical inclinations... by treating all individuals as *persons* in the first place".³² Marinoff does not bring into discussion the value of diversity, multiculturalism and pluralism. He looks fascinated with cultural diversity and the interactions we may establish with people of various thinking types. He shows revolt against the way in which communication contents may be made uniform under pressure from political correctness ideology. The solution he proposes is philosophical intervention, philosophical practice aimed to bring balance by practicing the sense of measure.³³ Against the force of ideologies, Marinoff launches the challenge of philosophical intervention through

³² AJP, "Playing with Ideas. An Interview with Lou Marinoff", *American Journal of Play*, volume 9, number 1 (2016): 16.

³³ Lou Marinoff, *Ghidul filosofului practician*, 335.

knowledge, contemplation, practice of philosophical ideas accumulated in centuries. Philosophy is deemed to be an antidote to the insanity of political correctness ideology.³⁴

2.6. About the recognition and professionalization of philosophical practice

The philosophers with whom Lou Marinoff takes the first steps to establish on American grounds the activity of philosophical counseling practice, opined there did not have to be dichotomies and artificial barriers between psychologists and other practitioners in mental health. Philosophy could be used both by specialists in various counseling fields, and by philosophers as practitioners of applied philosophy.³⁵

Unlike his collaborators, Lou Marinoff believes it is necessary for philosophical practices to have a clear profile and have their autonomy recognized in the general framework of counseling practices and non-medical therapies. Therefore, he calls on his readers to be part of a movement aimed to support the development of philosophical practices, professionalization of philosophical counseling and the institutional recognition of philosophical counseling. In this process of the recognition and legislative regulation of the profession of practitioner philosopher,

³⁴ Lou Marinoff, “Political Correctness is a Form of Insanity”, Dec 22, 2017, Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4HjZ5weGwc&t=199s>

³⁵ Elliot D. Cohen, “How Can You Become a Philosophical Counselor? Beware false dichotomies in pursuing training in philosophical counseling”, *Psychology Today*, (Sept 13, 2014). <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/what-would-aristotle-do/201409/how-can-you-become-philosophical-counselor>

he believes it necessary that a solidarity should exist between practitioner philosophers as professional philosophical service providers and their customers, including through governmental mediation.

Marinoff militates for regulations of the profession under the umbrella of a strong professional association that creates the American Association of Practitioner Philosophers, which provides various certification levels and membership. It is very usual for philosophers to have different opinions or even divergence on issues of common interest. In this case too, practitioner philosophers have a variety of attitudes about the role of the professional association and the types of regulations they should enforce. Opinions are divided and cover a wide range: from the importance of a legislative regulation of the practitioner philosopher profession to the refuse of regulation and strictly of the idea of professionalization, from the idea that only graduates in philosophy should be allowed to practice philosophical counseling to the idea that philosophy should be considered a free practice and be used by all with abilities for philosophical counseling. Marinoff insists that certain standards are necessary first of all so as to distinguish between professional counselors and amateurs.³⁶ He starts from the fact that the respect for professionalism, well advanced in America, renders Americans open to access the counseling services and be willing to pay for them. In this context, securing a certain level of standardization and professionalization is necessary in order to protect the philosophical practice

³⁶ Lou Marinoff, *Ghidul filosofului practician*, 227.

from vulnerabilities and to increase trust in philosophical practices. This triggers the need to formulate qualification standards, skills and abilities formation and development standards, and ethical standards. Professionals need to promote and impose high standards in philosophical counseling, in philosophical practice in general, and to play this card of professionalization in connection with governments in the process of recognizing and regulating the profession.³⁷

To obtain a legislative framework of the professionalization and professional practice, Marinoff reveals the need to beat at least two opposition types: from the outside, on the part of psychiatrists and psychologists, who are not willing to share the counseling and therapy market with philosophers, and from the inside on the part of intolerant academic philosophers or of amateur philosophers, who do not wish to go through a process of their job professionalization.

Beyond any disputes and hostilities, Marinoff advises that we appreciate the new popularity of philosophical practices in terms of what they may provide to postmodern man and women no longer willing to live from the perspective of an illusory past, or of an imagery future, but rather to live life at present. In this sense, his works are meant to be “a guide, not only to the art of loving wisdom, but also to living in the present, whenever that may be”.³⁸ Philosophy is a guide talking to the present man/woman, irrespective of where he/she lives. Philosophical prac-

³⁷ Lou Marinoff, *Ghidul filosofului practician*, 198.

³⁸ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 52.

tice has the merit to showcase this eternal dimension of philosophy, pushed on a secondary place, sometimes, but ready to surface by assuming living an examined life, meaning a life lived consciously, at full capacity, by any willing individual. It is known fact that “in terms of philosophical practice, the philosophical effort is justified to the extent that one feels it provides an existential balance”.³⁹ Such an effort should be constant, until all problematic aspects facing us are solved, and in this case the results will be in steadily growing. Against this background, one may state that “it is possible to add a little philosophy to our life, so we may live a happier, more peaceful and better life”.⁴⁰

Even if there still are tensioned relations, and potential disagreements between psychiatrists and philosophers, Marinoff believes that psychiatry and philosophy each has its own field for expertise and action. Each should enjoy recognition in the care and support systems. Thus, “Those who are dysfunctional by reason of physical illness entirely beyond their control – such as manic-depressives – are helped by medication. For handling that kind of problem, make your first stop a psychiatrist's office. But if your problem is about identity or values or ethics, your worst bet is to let someone reify a mental illness and write a prescription. There is no pill that will make you find yourself, achieve your goals, or do the right thing”, says Lou

³⁹ Cristian Iftode, “Elogiu filozofiei practice”, *Dilema veche*, no. 748, 21–27 June 2018. <http://dilemaveche.ro/sectiune/societate/articol/elogiu-filozofiei-practice>

⁴⁰ Cornel Moraru, “Relevanța practică a filosofiei – de la idei abstracte la viața fericită!”, May 11, 2016. <http://laboratoruldeganduri.ro/blog/2016/05/11/relevanta-practica-a-filosofiei/>

Marinoff.⁴¹ The philosopher positions under the sign of a close interdependent also the relationship between philosophy and psychology. He insists on the special role that the philosophy expert may play together with the psychology expert. He establishes the limits between the two fields of expertise, believing that the dialogue with a psychologist may be a very good start point, while the dialogue with a philosopher may be an excellent finish point. He is convinced that “the balance of psychological and philosophical insight is what will actually benefit most people”.⁴²

A very good solution could be that the dispute between those who are friends and enemies at the same time should be solved on the wider grounds of the complexity of the problems facing them. The disputes between various counseling practices may be brought to the general field of solving problems by communication and building complex connections. The way a symbolic consciousness is built may be a good meeting point.⁴³ The capacity to

⁴¹ Lou Marinoff, *Plato, Not Prozac! Applying Eternal Wisdom to Everyday Problems*, 65.

⁴² Lou Marinoff, *Plato, Not Prozac! Applying Eternal Wisdom to Everyday Problems*, 72.

⁴³ Lou Marinoff, *Puterea lui Tao. Cum să-ți găsești liniștea în vremuri tulburi*, Translated by Florin Tudose, (București: Editura TREI, 2015); Ștefan Vlăduțescu, “Postmodern Convergence of Dao with the Apophatism”, *Postmodern Openings*, Vol. 9 Issue 1 (2018): 129–146; Araceli Rojas, “Reading Maize: a narrative and psychological approach to the study of divination in Mesoamerica”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 15, issue 43 (2016): 102–124; Iulia Grad, “The symbolic dimension of responsibility in organizational communication”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 16, issue 48 (2017): 112–124; Sandu Frunză, “Positive Thinking as Moral and Existential Virtue”, *Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială*, vol. 59 (2017): 261–276.

investigate relational universes and their reconstruction in dialogue with the customer could be another meeting point. To such territory James T. Hansen introduces us when he states: "I believe that this relational principle also applies to ideas. Concepts, theories, and philosophies can be rich sources of connection, renewal, fascination, and disappointment for those who regularly court them. Indeed, these experiences may be particularly engendered by ideas from the helping professions; theories of counseling are born out of a desire to alleviate the suffering of others".⁴⁴ In this way, without wasting too much energy in disputes with the other theorists and practitioners of counseling, philosophers may develop strategies to bring philosophy in the life of the ordinary individual, as part of the personal, professional or community life.

⁴⁴ James T. Hansen, *Philosophical Issues in Counseling and Psychotherapy. Encounters with Four Questions about Knowing, Effectiveness, and Truth*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), ix.

3. Philosophical Counseling and the Practices of Dialogue in a World Built on Communication

3.1. Counseling as Philosophical Practice

Philosophical counseling is a consequence of revealing the complexity of the reality generated by a world built on communication. In its development, communication requires as much philosophy as technology. The development of philosophical counseling is a direct consequence of the growing diversity of ways of communication and the need to create structures of general thinking of the ever-expanding network. Thus, the reorientation of the general public towards philosophy is a consequence of the specificity of the human condition in the 21st century. On the one hand, we find that in the postmodern era the individual is delivered to the fragmentary, losing the personal characteristics revealed by the relational structures that they build as part of their personal identity and integration of various existential levels. In this context, it becomes obvious that “people need more help than ever in reassembling the micro-laser-jigsawed fragments of their lives into intelligible wholes”.⁴⁵ At this level, the importance of practicing philosophers becomes evident, for they can provide counseling and assistance in the recovery of a general, integrative perspective that helps

⁴⁵ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 50.

the individual to design his own presence and the meaning of his life in the general horizon of his existence. Philosophical counseling helps the individual to get out of the state of existential ambiguity and to see the outlines of an existence that is truly worthwhile and lived with as much intensity as possible. On the other hand, we are witnessing today a redefinition of the human condition from the perspective of the reconstruction of reality in communication.⁴⁶ The various forms of philosophical practices can be used both in establishing the general framework of communication and in creating the tools necessary for connecting, in particular by providing the rational fundamentals of action, but also intuitive, ethical or axiological ones or of creative reflexivity which implies the affective and imaginative register.

In this context, a specific field of philosophical practice develops. It involves a joint construction of the philosophical counselor and the counseled client viewed as a partnership. Everything is built on the idea that, with the assistance of a philosophical counselor, the client can benefit from encouragement,⁴⁷ support, mentoring, and all kinds of steps that can help solve and manage more sensitive issues appearing in his everyday life experience. Marinoff has repeatedly stated that this type of counseling

⁴⁶ Aurel Codoban, *Imperiul comunicării. Corp, imagine și relaționare*, (Cluj: Editura Idea Design & Print, 2011). Florentin Smarandache, Ștefan Vlăduțescu, “Towards a Practical Communication Intervention”, *Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială*, Vol. 46 (2014): 243–254; Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson (eds.), *Philosophy of Communication Ethics. Alterity and the Other* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014).

⁴⁷ Lou Marinoff, “Encouragement and Mentoring”, Nov 13, 2012, Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5r-8Qy_HxM

is customer-oriented who can be described as rational, functional, fitting in what we normally mean by normality and health, it is a “therapy for the sane,”⁴⁸ and does not take into account those who are labeled as mentally unstable. The latter must seek another type of counseling, and if they seek a philosophical adviser, he should have the ability to advise them to consult a specialist in psychiatry or psychology.

This division between healthy and sick clients has attracted the attention of Marinoff's critics, who question his view which they find as being based on dichotomy and impractical in the field of counseling. Especially when he is discussing the differences between psychological counseling and philosophical counseling, such a distinction is not able to clarify the specifics of the two types of counseling. Psychological counseling has expanded so much in all spheres of human life and activity that they believe it is at least inaccurate to place it only in the area of medical concern. Instead of the dichotomy of the two types of counseling, a common ground of action for the two types of counseling should be found⁴⁹.

When using the phrase “therapy for the sane,” the philosopher does not intend to draw a line of fault between philosophical counseling and other types of counseling. His concern is focused on describing the elements that

⁴⁸ Lou Marinoff, *Plato, Not Prozac! Applying Eternal Wisdom to Everyday Problems*, (HarperCollins Publishers, 2012), 28

⁴⁹ Elliot D. Cohen, “How Can You Become a Philosophical Counselor? Beware false dichotomies in pursuing training in philosophical counseling”, *Psychology Today*, (Sept 13, 2014). <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/what-would-aristotle-do/201409/how-can-you-become-philosophical-counselor>

can account for the type of clients and the type of issues that philosophical counseling takes into account. Counseling is regarded as part of applied philosophy in close relation with philosophical practices such as existential counseling, philosophical therapy, philosophy with groups and fans, philosophical café, philosophy of personal development, philosophical consultancy for organizations, ethics counseling, philosophy for children, philosophy for people with special needs etc.

The philosophical practice that raises most controversy is philosophical counseling understood as philosophical therapy. It involves therapeutic dialogue as a form of self-reconstruction in communication as a privileged instrument of personal development as a philosophical way of recovering authenticity. When considering this level of interpersonal relationships, the issues that are suitable for counseling or philosophical therapy can be listed as specific problems related to the dilemmas about personal morality or professional ethics; those relating to the value system and their assumption or reconstruction, or reflections on the relationship between values and purposes in structuring a coherent life project. Counseling sessions can address aspects of personal beliefs and their rationalization in the context of real life action involving both rational choices and irrational choices; issues of personal and professional satisfaction or fulfillment, or those that aim at the authenticity theme. But many other issues that require a philosophical interpretation of the dynamics of life, changes in personal existence, projected on a general background of the significance of existence as such can be addressed. Philosophical counseling is a

special type of communication that fits on the defining relationship structure for what the human being is.

3.2. The Golden Triangle of Human Beings as the Foundation of Philosophical Counseling

The need for philosophical counseling, understood as a distinctive type of relating and intervention, is founded by Lou Marinoff in the very way of human's existing in the world. The human condition reveals a special being constituted as a construct of communication that develops throughout three fundamental dimensions: biological, cultural and spiritual. Thus, Marinoff contextualizes and describes philosophical counseling within a triadic relationship, characterized by the presence of the biological, affection and thought. He imagines the whole dynamics of communication with the representation of a triangle in which biology, affection, and thought occupy each one the angles of the triangle. These elements are each in relation to itself and to the other in the form of pairs built on mutual communication.

The biological peak is conferred by the physical nature of the human being conceived as the presence of the organism itself; feelings and habits contribute to the affective component of the actions taken; and the symbolic structure and thought contribute to its noetic component. In the relationships of mutuality implied by the dynamics represented by this triangle, an important role is given to thought. It is placed in a hierarchic order where "thought can hold sway over affect, just as affect can over biology".⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 100.

The premise of such a philosophical perspective is that man is both a biological and cultural being. It can solve its biological problems by resorting to a cultural reformulation and realization of the problems it faces. In this process a whole series of questions of philosophical nature arose, the answers of which depend on the way in which the realization of the human being is conceived on various levels of its existence. In this context, Marinoff assigns philosophical counseling the power to help people resolve or manage their day-to-day problems by changing their focus from the biological dimension that appears at first glance to the cultural issues that demand attention, elaborate, nuanced, and integrated into the natural cycle of life in order to solve them. In this way, philosophical counseling is focused on the process of solving problems and personal development. It can take manifest itself on multiple levels. It can reach the sphere of analysis and examination of beliefs, opinions, doctrines or ideologies that have served as a basis for the person's action in the past, or it can explore such elements that actually influence the person's present life. As it is possible that everything should focus on constructions that seem desirable from the point of view of formulating answers to the fundamental questions that govern life in general, to existential dilemmas manifested as present concern or to the orientation of the meaning of life in future. Throughout extensive analysis, Marinoff revealed that both the formulation of the fundamental questions and the possible answers to such questions are equally important from the point of view of philosophical counseling, such as the formulation of answers to the existential

challenges that intervene in the actual development of life.⁵¹

In a world where efficiency is transformed into intrinsic value, Marinoff finds it more than visible that most of the problems people are upset about is the effect of ineffective thinking. The increasingly important role that philosophical counseling must play in this context is based on the fact that philosophy is based on effective thinking. This stimulation of the efficiency of thought is built by the author as part of the way of being philosophy, it is the foundation of philosophical thinking and philosophy, unlike psychiatry, which is based on issues deriving in general from cerebral chemistry or in contrast to psychology, which starts from a problem that concerns the world of emotions. From this way of establishing philosophy, he comes to derive the specific role that philosophy has in relation to the other two disciplines to support the human being. The special power of philosophical counseling is built on the idea that “philosophy helps people think effectively about their problems, it helps them cultivate effective beliefs and engage in effective behaviors”.⁵²

The special importance given to thinking must be related to the examination of the way of thinking and the way of living in order to build the necessary instruments to reach an authentic life. The search for an appropriate path is what Aristotle called “practical wisdom” (*phronesis*). Such wisdom can lead us to an interpretation of everything

⁵¹ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 76; Lou Marinoff, *Întrebări fundamentale. Filosofia îți poate schimba viața*, Translated by Oana Zamfirache, (București: Editura Trei, 2013).

⁵² Lou Marinoff, *Ghidul filosofului practician*, 87.

that happens in a perspective that can be our own philosophy of life.⁵³

If we can visualize Marinoff's triangle, we can say that in its dynamics, philosophical counselors are at the middle of the axis between affection and thought. Located in the noetic angle of the triangle, the philosopher activates the very special power of thinking in the relationships he cultivates with both biology and affection. The growing importance of philosophical counseling is due to the fact that "thought and its powers were sorely neglected in the twentieth century, and marginalized as passive echoes or shadowy epiphenomena of biological and affective phenomena. The noetic vertex was projected onto the biology-affect axis; the triangle collapsed into a straight line".⁵⁴ In this way, the three triads were reduced to one. What seems to be important for the philosopher is to emphasize that if we do not understand this architecture of the dimensions of human existence, the therapeutic relationship can be distorted. If we do not have an adequate recognition of the importance of the noetic angle of this triangular model, we end up collapsing and generating the disappearance of the affective-biology axis. The entire edifice collapses and the triangular relationship is reduced to a linear one in which normal affective states become distorted by being labeled as behavioral disorders or erroneously reduced to various states of illness. The positive aspect of philosophical counseling becomes clear in such context, especially when it comes

⁵³ Lou Marinoff, *Întrebări fundamentale. Filosofia îți poate schimba viața*, 27.

⁵⁴ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 104.

to counseling because it “reconstitutes the triangle, redefines the three dyads, revivifies the mind, restores the balance of powers, and thus refreshes the being”.⁵⁵

Moreover, it is possible to extend this model, which takes into account, in particular, the biological and cultural dimension of the human universe. If we want to take into account a special and distinct dimension of the human being in the form of a spiritual dimension, then the philosopher proposes to extend the triangular model by projecting “a fourth vertex into a third dimension. That vertex would represent the human spiritual, theological, or mythological being, and would transform our triangle into a tetrahedron”.⁵⁶

Such a representation of the human being can take reveal the complexity of the postmodern human being and the metamorphoses that the human condition undergoes. Even in the most secularized of cultures, man rediscovers himself, beyond his other fundamental needs, with his need for spiritual life. Theorists often point to the fact that in real life, human beings, after accomplishing the material, emotional, and intellectual needs, continue to avidly seek out the meaning of their lives. The need for meaning is only partially satisfied if it is not fueled by a special spiritual energy that we most often associate with religious experiences. Spiritual quests can take multiple forms, “people sooner or later seek spiritual pathways through life, whether via traditional organized religions, nontraditional belief systems, perennial wisdom of the East, New Age approaches, or even secular

⁵⁵ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 104–105.

⁵⁶ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 105.

philosophy”.⁵⁷ One cannot overlook Marinoff's observation, often theorized by postmodern philosophers, which show that behind the desires that seem to be of material nature are hiding spiritual aspirations that have not been satisfied. This substitution often occurs as a secular way of satisfying spiritual needs by replacing them with objects in the universe of material things.⁵⁸

3.3. Dialogue as Therapy

The analysis of philosophical counseling practices shows that there is no single method to be used as a standard in counseling activities. Each philosopher uses a specific method. Philosophical counseling takes different forms and sometimes has different goals when it is professed by Ida Jongsma, Rav Lahav, Oscar Brenifier, Jules Evans, Donata Romizi, etc.⁵⁹ Lou Marinoff has

⁵⁷ Lou Marinoff, *The Big Questions. Therapy for the sane or how philosophy can change your life*, 262; Lou Marinoff, *Puterea lui Tao. Cum să-ți găsești liniștea în vremuri tulburi*, Translation and notes by Florin Tudose, (București: Editura Trei, 2015); Lou Marinoff, “What can Eastern Philosophies teach us?”, Jun 12, 2017, Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppq2ThSxjw0>

⁵⁸ Lou Marinoff, *Întrebări fundamentale. Filosofia îți poate schimba viața*, 405.

⁵⁹ Rav Lahav, *Interview with Ida Jongsma, a pioneer of the Dutch Philosophical Practice movement*, June 2014, Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_0vsaSVH74 ; Eli Eilon, *Interview with Ran Lahav – What is “Philosophical” in philosophical counseling?*, November 2014, Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdApyxoWDKI&t=14s> ; Rav Lahav, *Interview with Oscar Brenifier – Who am I as a philosophical practitioner?*, Video: August 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQck9_xYIz4 ; Jules Evans, “How philosophy can save your life”, TEDxBreda, Nov 9, 2013, Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuwYvFINGns&t=211s> ; Donata Romizi, *Creating new frameworks for philosophical practice*,

created his own method, known under the acronym PEACE. Among the appraisals that this method has received, we can mention the one of Aleksandar Fatic, who considered that “Marinoff’s PEACE method is undoubtedly one of the most effective on the market and one of the most existentially realistic for both managers and employees, because it speaks both the traditional ‘rational choice-type’ expectations in corporate decision-making, and the contemporary expectations that corporations are truly about more than just good business decisions: they are as much about vision and change with a view to creating new realities tomorrow”.⁶⁰ This method is considered to be effective for various forms of philosophical practice, but especially for situations of personal counseling and philosophical therapy.

Although he does not believe in a single interpretation, in a single scheme of personal dialogue, assessment, and personal transcendence, Lou Marinoff believes that in some situations it is easier to be successful in the therapeutic relationship by resorting to a five-step method in solving problems with which the customer is confronted. The five steps assumed by the PEACE method are: the problem, the emotion, the analysis, the contemplation and equilibrium. The first step is to identify the problem. It’s a very difficult task. Although naturally every person has the ability to separate their real problems

Aug 14, 2015, Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSuuNjDU2Co>

⁶⁰ Aleksandar Fatic, “Why Lou Marinoff’s PEACE method is a key innovation when applied to corporate settings”, August 31, 2016, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-lou-marinoffs-peace-method-key-innovation-when-applied-fatic/>

from the false ones, it is often difficult to identify the complexity of the problem and the challenges it brings to one's personal lives. Through dialogue, the counselor can support the client in this pursuit of clarification. The second step is represented by a sort of mapping of emotions produced by this problem. It is about drawing an interior map, and the counselor can support the client to organize his/her experiences in a constructive manner. The third step is that of the analysis, which puts together both the external factors (the problem) and the internal ones (the emotions) in order to find the best way to solve the problem. The counselor can be a catalyst here by using philosophy as a tool for analyzing and shaping decisions. The fourth step is contemplation. It involves an effort to integrate all the steps so that they become a life philosophy, with values, ethics, responsibility, commitment to personal development, with the assumption of methods of controlling one's own situation. At this stage, the philosophical counselor can help his client not lose himself in the diversity of recipes offered by various philosophers and try to shape a life philosophy, meaningful from the perspective of his way of being and existing in the world, a philosophy which is effective in solving the problems that may arise in one's life. The fifth step is that of equilibrium. It is a stage of inner peace characterized by the fact that "You understand the essence of your problem and are ready to take appropriate and justifiable action. You feel on an even keel but are ready for the inevitable changes ahead".⁶¹ Philosophy can have such a therapeutic

⁶¹ Lou Marinoff, *Plato, Not Prozac! Applying Eternal Wisdom to Everyday Problems*, 78.

role in achieving inner balance, communicating with others, harmonizing with the outside world, transfiguring relationships with existence as such. The counselor can accompany his client in this process in one session or for several weeks or several months, until the client is certain that the situation is under control.⁶²

It is common knowledge that “the Socratic spirit, the various models of philosophical counseling do not seek to impose upon the client any conception of the world, but use methods to bring to light its own philosophy and facilitate its reflection on it”.⁶³ Each counselor adopts a method that is best suited to the situation his client is. We are therefore witnessing a wide variety of approaches. However, there is a common denominator of philosophical counseling or philosophical therapy practices: the particular importance of dialogue as a therapeutic method and as a method of revealing and resolving existential problems.

The approach is one that leads to an emphasis on dialogue as a development of alterity. The client addresses an existential counselor for philosophical reasons, to understand, to accommodate and even to solve certain existential problems. Although it presumes an understanding of philosophical ideas and doctrines, “philosophical practice does not aim to transform the interlocutor into a philosopher, but rather to put him in a reflexive situation of opening up to self-knowledge

⁶² Lou Marinoff, *Înghite Platon nu Prozac!*, 91–95.

⁶³ Lobonț, Florin, “Forme filosofice ale consilierii și psihoterapiei”, în Lou Marinoff, *Înghite Platon nu Prozac! Aplicarea înțelepciunii eterne la viața de zi cu zi*, Translation, notes, and introductory study by Florin Lobonț, (București: Editura TREI, 2010), 31.

and facilitating personal autonomy. Philosophical practice is a meeting between the philosopher and the interlocutor, who is willing to understand her attitude towards life and towards herself, and as well as the meanings of her own decisions and own orientation towards the world and life. Therefore, philosophical counselling mainly consists of an interrogative reflection – continuing the Socratic tradition – through which the counselling philosopher questions himself and questions others about what gives meaning to life, and the way in which each participant interprets his or her meaning and transforms it into current action”.⁶⁴

Such a Socratic premise of the need to live an examined life, that is to say a life lived with the consciousness of its profound meanings, is used by Marinoff as a starting point for understanding the specificity of philosophical communication and therapy. By placing dialogue in the center of philosophical practices, and especially those aimed at philosophical counseling and therapy, Marinoff draws attention to two formal characteristics of philosophical counseling: 1) philosophical counseling, even when taking the form of therapy, should not be associated with therapy healing practices belonging to the medical field, involving a special type of communication in which a non-medical relationship is established to solve specific human problems; 2) In the personal counseling relationship, the philosophical practice emphasizes that the whole process of counseling follows the dialectical

⁶⁴ Antonio Sandu, “Philosophical Practice and Values Based Ethics: Rethinking Social Action and Core Values”, *Philosophical Practice*, vol. 10 No. 3 (2015): 1619.

model that we find in various phases of philosophy development and especially in the ancient phase when, among other things, dialogue was perceived as having therapeutic valences. It is no accident that some of the best-known writings and philosophical teachings from ancient times were conceived in the form of dialogues⁶⁵, be it an inner dialogue or a dialogue that engages the multiple intersubjective relationship. The dialogical form is functional in this case because it highlights the interpersonal interactions that can be used as elements of the real life of the person that manifests itself in the personal space or in the public space of everyday life. Dialogue is used as a form of the therapeutic relationship because in the practice of counseling, the approach to formalizing language is not significant, but the emphasis is on its use as the main element of human communication. We can now see the importance of dialogue in communication and in the existential situation in relation to alterity as seen by Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas⁶⁶. Following the tradition of Socratic maieutic, philosophers today use dialogue as a practical tool as a way of accessing therapeutic effectiveness.

This is how the philosopher explains that philosophical dialogue is an approach in itself that has an exis-

⁶⁵ Lou Marinoff, *Ghidul filosofului practician*, 93. Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 81.

⁶⁶ Iulia Grad, *Filosofia dialogului și criza comunicării în gândirea lui Martin Buber*, (Cluj: Eikon, 2013); Vianu Mureșan, *Heterologie. Introducere în etica lui Lévinas*, (Cluj-Napoca: Limes, 2005); Antonio Sandu, “A Levinasian Opening on the Affirmative Ethics of Care”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 15, issue 43 (2016): 28–47.

tential motivation. It is based on the individual's everyday problems, with the inherent problems that arise in the actual living of life. The purpose of a philosophical dialogue is not based on a diagnosis, and does not aim at establishing a diagnosis. Philosophical counseling, being an existential therapy that focuses on healthy individuals, initiates a dialogue between a counselor and his client who is concerned about the problems he is facing and which he wants to solve in an efficient manner.⁶⁷ Philosophical dialogue is used by the therapist as "a vehicle for exploring the client's noetic world, with a view to developing a philosophical disposition that enables the client to resolve or manage his problem."⁶⁸ Dialogue involves a relationship between equal partners, meaning that intersubjective relationships are not hierarchized by a diagnosis and do not involve any kind of adversity in ideological disputes that may arise. Counselors support their clients in a therapeutic relationship in which, beyond any diagnosis, what is central is a life lived under the objective conditions of the daily life. Even if sometimes the problems faced by clients involve intense existential tension, they are considered to be natural manifestations of their personal life, "for everyday human problems are not considered as illnesses by philosophical counselors."⁶⁹ Of course, the philosophical counselor must know its limits and have the ability to grasp the imbalances that go beyond its sphere of competence and advise the client to turn to other types of therapy, whether psychiatric,

⁶⁷ Lou Marinoff, *Înghite Platon nu Prozac!*, 44–45.

⁶⁸ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 81.

⁶⁹ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 82.

psychological, or belonging to the sphere of pastoral therapy.⁷⁰

Assuming the problems he faces daily, the individual engaged in a philosophical counseling relationship ends up discovering himself as being able to decipher the meaning of the world by referencing himself as the main source of the self revelation of the meaning and construction in personal representations. Thus, philosophical counseling is described by Marinoff as an existential experience in which dialogue is used as an exploratory vehicle. Dialogue is described as a mutual relationship in which each participant brings his/her specific experience, depending on the role he/she plays in the dialogue. In the case of such a communication device, the client is the one who offers his mental landscape and ideas that shed a light onto his world, and the counselor is the one who fulfills an important role in the guidance required for the most effective philosophical mapping of all landscapes. Even though, through the assumed role play, this communication dynamics is led by the counselor, the actual exploration is done together by the counselor and the one who is counseled in an approach with many customized nuances, at the end of which Marinoff considers that the counseled ends up discovering his own philosophical being.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Bill Fulford, Tim Thornton, George Graham (eds.), *Oxford Textbook of Philosophy of Psychiatry (International Perspectives in Philosophy and Psychiatry)*, (Oxford University Press, 2006); Brent D. Slife, Kari A. O'Grady, and Russell D. Kosits (eds.), *The Hidden Worldviews of Psychology's Theory, Research, and Practice*, (New York: Routledge, 2017); Gordon Lynch (ed.), *Clinical counselling in pastoral settings*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999).

⁷¹ Lou Marinoff, *Ghidul filosofului practician*, 99.

Given that philosophers do not accept the existence of a single method of schematizing dialogue, Marinoff accepts the existence of at least three types of dialogue. He does not give them a name, does not label them according to the content or method they use, but prefers to generically refer to them as type A, B and C dialogues:

- 1) The Type A dialogue is either one of basic philosophical level or one that addresses a particular philosophical theme. It takes place between a philosopher and his client and involves a philosophical exploration, from various perspectives, of a problem and its existential relevance from the point of view of the problems the client is facing. It is a way for the client to access philosophy in order to get advice to support his actions or to help him achieve certain goals. Counseling in this case takes place against the backdrop of a reflexive spontaneity set in motion by the counselor. It brings a certain freshness of thought and a dynamism of decisions and action based on a philosophical attitude fueled by the surprising nature of the questions, answers and solutions that can intervene as a result of the practice of philosophical dialogue.
- 2) In the B-type dialogue, the philosopher recurs to the vision of a particular thinker to lead his client in formulating answers or guiding him to realize the meaning of his own life. The convictions formulated by a certain philosopher are offered as a kind of pill of wisdom that acts therapeutically in treating the existential disorders that are presented by the client who comes before the counselor with a

well-defined range of problems he is facing in his everyday life. The counselor assumes the role of helping him connect with concrete data offered by the world of philosophical ideas, which may be beneficial for the formulation of the solutions he seeks. He is imagined by Marinoff as a sort of guide for those that are lost through the labyrinth of the great library of philosophical thought, and the counselor helps his client reach exactly the right page that speaks in such a way as to seem to him that it is talking about him, about the problems he is facing and about the ways he has to follow to find his way. This dialogue between the counselor and the client is the latter's dialogue with the meanings of the text revealed by some significant elements from the thought of a certain philosopher.

- 3) The Type C dialogue is presented by Marinoff as a kind of "bibliotherapy". Clients who are familiar with ideas within a culture or with a philosopher's way of thinking, use dialogue to explore the context and depth of concepts or ideas for themselves. The philosophical counselor guides them on their journey through their readings and their personal philosophical reflections. The dialogue is based on the client's personal effort to read and explore in order to obtain existential advantages for personal gain as a result of this reflexive and critical thinking process. It is very important to note that this is a very relevant common ground where the encounter between the theoretical and the practical philosophy can take place. This form of dialogue is based on the importance

given to a solid theoretical training, conducted in an academic environment and later used by a counselor in his philosophical practice. This convergence between theoretical philosophy and philosophical practice is one of the most powerful reasons for which Marinoff always emphasizes the importance of the philosopher's professionalization. Thus, and in depth study of philosophy seems to be the first step for the later realization of the decisive step of practicing philosophy in relation to different types of clients, whether individuals, groups or organizations.⁷²

The dialogue is here, on the one hand, as a way of reaching the deeper levels of philosophical thinking to the level at which it becomes relevant from the point of view of the person engaging in a communication and reflection effort with direct consequences in solving the problems they are facing; and on the other hand, as a way of reaching through philosophers and philosophical books the formulation of a personal perspective from the angle of which the individual can look and understand his world and formulate his own philosophy of life. The statement that “The book *Plato, not Prozac*, is an unexpected manifesto for a strong philosophy”⁷³, is to highlight the way in which philosophy is proposed as a central preoccupation capable of improving the personal life of contemporary man. In this context, one can find the answer to the question: when should we turn to

⁷² Lou Marinoff, *Ghidul filosofului practician*, 100–108.

⁷³ Victor Popescu, “De când filozofii se ocupă cu terapia de cuplu?”, *Observator cultural*, no. 523, (07-05-2010). <https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/de-cind-filozofii-se-ocupa-cu-terapia-de-cuplu/>

a philosophical counselor? One of the answers can be found in Marinoff: when you need “a guide, or a mirror, to help you draw your own philosophy into the open where you can see it and work with it. A disposition is something you find genuinely within. It is more like an unearthing and gem than manufacturing a tool”.⁷⁴ On the basis of the assumption of such a vision, formulated with the support of an existential counselor, Marinoff proposes each person to create his own philosophical practice. More than anyone, this should be done by counselors and practitioners belonging to the field of philosophy. The solution for a proper philosophical practice is to avoid the implementation of a unique method of practice. Each counselor must aim to have a personal approach that suites his beliefs and his client’s needs. An additional reason in this plea is that “buying a thriving practice is normally far more costly than establishing one yourself ... we needn't worry about buying anyone else's practice, and should concentrate on building our own practices”.⁷⁵ Such a perspective is based on his conviction that each person has a personal life philosophy. It is often a diffuse one. Working with a counselor, the individual can consciously formulate and assume a life philosophy on which to base their personal development and the participation in his welfare, as well as that of the community in which he is living. For this, people need a dialogue through which they become equipped with tools that allow them to control the problems they

⁷⁴ Lou Marinoff, *Plato, Not Prozac! Applying Eternal Wisdom to Everyday Problems*, 84–85.

⁷⁵ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 278.

face. The dialogue should aim not to establish a diagnosis and therapeutic steps to follow, but to lead to the discovery of the importance of finding the respite necessary to examine one's life in order to seek solutions for peace of mind, for emotional stability and decisional coherence. Dialogue should be based on the openness of the mind towards philosophy, which man naturally possesses.⁷⁶

3.4. Counseling or Philosophical Therapy?

Marinoff believes that many of the anxieties and problems faced by the postmodern man could be resolved by exploring philosophical ideas and philosophical thinking if they were known to those who needed them. One of the ways in which we are persuaded to appeal to philosophy is formulated as follows: “philosophy can change your life by transforming your dis-ease into ease”.⁷⁷ On such a background, we can see the role that a philosophical counselor can have and the therapeutic relevance of philosophy.

Given that philosophy deals with noetic problems, philosophical counseling cannot be associated with medical procedures in psychiatry or psychology because there is no need for medical treatment to solve the noetic problems. When it uses the term therapy, it gives it a broader meaning than the one established through the very narrow sense of medical treatment. Marinoff opts for philosophy

⁷⁶ Lou Marinoff, *Înghite Platon nu Prozac!*, 39.

⁷⁷ Lou Marinoff, *The Big Questions. Therapy for the sane or how philosophy can change your life*, 4.

as therapy. He points out that no semantic constraint of the term therapy is to be accepted. It can be associated with a philosophical situation in relation to the problems of life and the need for personal development of each individual. In this regard, each person should be aware that “The only way to have a true, lasting solution to a current personal problem is to work at it, resolve it, learn from it, and apply what you learn to the future. That’s the focus of philosophical counseling, distinct among the countless types of therapy available”.⁷⁸

In order to reveal the extended meaning of the term, it starts from the meaning that the term has in Greek. The therapist was the caregiver and was identified as a carer who cares for something, without specifying the type of care he practices, and without any sort of constraint on medical care.

We can invoke here a sense of therapy that we find in classical philosophy. Analyzing the context of the Alexandrian culture, with special reference to Philon’s philosophy, Ioan Chirilă reveals that the therapists have philosophical and religious concerns, the term therapist is related to a distinct way of life, one which implies a contemplative life. In this context, therapy opposes medical methods that take into consideration the health of the body. Therapists take care of the soul, take care of the health of the fallen soul into the pleasures, desires, sadness and other passions. They are the ones who have received an education according to the nature and holy laws and are oriented towards the cult of Being. In their

⁷⁸ Lou Marinoff, *Plato, Not Prozac! Applying Eternal Wisdom to Everyday Problems*, 65.

work, therapists use philosophy as the main tool in modeling contemplative life.⁷⁹

In fact, Michel Foucault speaks of “philosophy as a guide or therapy of the soul” when talking about the development of a technology of self he references Epicurus in order to signal that in the context of epicureism the duty of man to care for his own soul refers both to the medical care for the body and to the therapy of the soul, as well as to the service a caretaker is addressing to his own master or in a cult oriented towards a divine power.⁸⁰ In an open hermeneutics of the subject, Foucault combines self-care with the care of the other, combining the physical dimension, the dimension of the soul, but also the one that can be associated with the religious dimension. Through interpretation, he thus creates a connection between the archaic sense of therapy and the postmodern meanings of therapeutic practices.

In line with this broadening of the definition of therapy, a very convincing plea in favor of the assimilation of therapy in specific philosophical methods, is done by the philosopher Károly Veress. He presents to us a very complex form of communication that he calls “hermeneutical conversation.” In the context of such a special type of communication we find a profound meaning of therapy. Thus, when we “talk about hermeneutical therapy, we consider that therapy is not only treating and

⁷⁹ Ioan Chirilă, *Qumran și Mariotis – două sinteze ascetice*, (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000), 56–62.

⁸⁰ Michel Foucault, *Hermeneutica subiectului. Cursuri la Collège de France (1981–1982)*, Edition edited by Frédéric Gros under the guidance of François Ewald and of Alessandro Fontana, Translated by Bogdan Ghiu, (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 20.

healing, it also means care. And care is given to the sick, but also to the healthy one”.⁸¹ This thematization of care is widespread among those who theorize or practice various kinds of counseling, including philosophical counseling. In an era that is marked by the need for an ethics of care, the formulation of solutions to various forms of existential anxiety, a world that presents itself as a world full of crises and anxieties, metaphysical philosophy has a duty to give answers to the kinds of complex relationships which the postmodern individual creates. Transforming hermeneutics into the most adequate philosophical discipline used in philosophical therapy, the author gives sufficient reasons not only “in favor of creating a philosophical hermeneutics as a possible philosophical therapy, but also in favor of understanding therapy itself as a hermeneutical experience. This may be possible if therapy is used as restraint, listening, care and participation, so as to implement and valorize the hermeneutical conversation”.⁸²

Marinoff points out that an ongoing expansion of the use of the term *therapy* is still evident today. As evidence that we have no problem accepting it when we talk about aromatherapy, or “art therapy, music therapy, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy can also be effective treatments for certain problems, though not administered by physicians”.⁸³ All the more, he believes

⁸¹ Károly Veress, “Despre posibila funcție terapeutică a hermeneuticii filosofice”, in Claudiu Mesaroș, *Filosofia în universitatea contemporană*, (Timișoara: Editura Universității de Vest, 2017), 102.

⁸² Károly Veress, “Despre posibila funcție terapeutică a hermeneuticii filosofice”, 110.

⁸³ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 84

there should be no resistance in the use of the term in the expression of philosophical therapy. It comes to remind us of a cultural tradition in which in ancient times, philosophy was considered useful for the healing of the soul, and philosophers were perceived as psychotherapists. If in the first stages of its development philosophy could play this therapeutic role, Marinoff believes that after twenty-five centuries of development and sedimentation of philosophical ideas and practices, philosophy cannot be denied its therapeutic role. Even though, in the meantime, more specialized forms of therapy and psychotherapy have emerged, philosophy is still therapeutic, even if it shares common ground with other disciplines and other therapeutic practices.⁸⁴

There is a certain stubbornness in Marinoff's desire to extend the meaning of the word "therapy" and to defend "philosophical therapy" for at least two reasons: on the one hand, his struggle to impose philosophical counseling and therapy as a distinct field of professional practice, and on the other hand, his constant effort to oppose the accusations that were brought to him while practicing philosophical therapy in the USA where these kind of practices were seen as illegal methods to practice medicine without a license. Similar types of motivation are also the basis of his efforts to eliminate any monopoly in counseling practices and to integrate philosophical counseling and therapy into the provision of professional counseling services, including the provision of health services. Such a struggle for recognition is based on the idea that philosophical therapy and counseling are tra-

⁸⁴ Lou Marinoff, *Ghidul filosofului practician*, 98.

ditional forms of care and support based on dialogue. Therefore, philosophy has to find its place in the range of services the market has to offer customer that may existential problems they benefit support through dialogue and reflection on the are facing. In this regard, Marinoff is advocating “the interruption of the psychological monopoly of dialogue as a health service”. He tries to convince decision makers and the public that “psychologists aren't physicians either, yet they have enjoyed a virtual non-medical monopoly over the talk-therapy referral system. If your physician can refer you to a non-physician (i.e., a psychologist) for talk-therapy of a psychological kind, and have your health-care insurance foot the bill, then your physician should also be able to refer you to a non-physician (i.e., a philosopher) for talk-therapy of a philosophical kind, and have your healthcare insurance foot the bill”.⁸⁵

The desire to integrate philosophical counseling in the group of therapies recognized by public health care has attracted countless criticisms. Those that defend the idea of philosophical therapy try to change the minds of the skeptics. They say that Marinoff was entitled to seek such recognition for philosophy because “critics who object the ability of philosophical counseling to improve emotional suffering, Marinoff shows them many cases of depression, anxiety reduction, and anger control. Even if it does not guarantee the diminishing of emotional suffering, its method and those of other practitioners do not only provide constructive ways of assisting in decision-making, but also ways to reduce anxiety that blocks

⁸⁵ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*, 84.

decision-making or avoids destructive decisions”.⁸⁶ But perhaps the greatest value of philosophy as therapy can be seen in resolving existential “pathologies” related to various alienation phenomena that the human being lives in relation to the traditional way of conceiving the human condition.

Philosophical therapy is all the more necessary, be it philosophical practice, or philosophy as therapy.⁸⁷ It appears as a distinct form of intervention in the practical philosophy and in the field of counseling. Philosophical counseling will gain ground with the foreseeable impact that technological development, especially that related to artificial intelligence, will have on human communication and development. From a philosophical perspective, we can already see that there are plenty of people who become “people who behave like accessories to their equipment, not like pensive beings or social animals at all”.⁸⁸ It is possible to start feeling like “we are becoming human cogs in ever more complex machinery, and that can do strange things to our humanity”.⁸⁹ In these extreme contexts, philosophical therapy will be a very welcome solution. Even when it comes to counseling in the therapist's office, I prefer to speak more about

⁸⁶ Florin Lobonț, “Forme filosofice actuale ale consilierii și psihoterapiei”, in Lou Marinoff, *Înghite Platon nu Prozac! Aplicarea înțelepciunii eterne la viața de zi cu zi*, 32.

⁸⁷ James F. Peterman, *Philosophy as Therapy. An interpretation and defense of Wittgenstein's later philosophical project*, (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1992).

⁸⁸ Lou Marinoff, *The Big Questions. Therapy for the sane or how philosophy can change your life*, 234.

⁸⁹ Lou Marinoff, *The Big Questions. Therapy for the sane or how philosophy can change your life*, 235.

a philosophical counseling, without having any reservations regarding the idea of philosophical therapy. This positioning, on the one hand, allows me to ignore the therapies war, as well as the therapists; critique towards philosophical therapy and, on the other hand, reinforces my belief that the idea of counseling better reflects the method of dialogue and the philosophy of communication at the basis of philosophical practice. Most often, philosophical counseling, in this intersubjective dialogue, takes the form of existential counseling and aims to find a way to achieve authenticity.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Sandu Frunză, “Seeking Authenticity. Philosophy and Poetry in the Communication Construed World”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, Vol. 15 Issue 45 (2016): 162–178; Sandu Frunză, “Seeking Meaning, Living Authenticity and Leadership in Public Space. A Philosophical Perspective”, *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, No. 52E (2017): 23–37.

4. Philosophy, Spirituality, Therapy

4.1. Philosophy and the Religious and Scientific Imagery

In my research so far, I have never encountered a rational valuation of philosophy more full of empathy and spiritual depth than in the texts written by Emmy van Deurzen. Philosophy is restored in all its transformative power in relation to communication and therapeutic dialogue. In her psychotherapeutic approach, the reality is so complex that we can only surprise it by putting into dialogue the particular perspectives that each of the fields of human creation builds upon. That is why communication proves to be an integrative coordinate that can piece together the fragments into a network that becomes consistent through the very reflective act of connectivity. This instrumentalization of knowledge in favor of understanding life and its preparation as a favorable environment for man is best realized through philosophical reflection and positioning in the horizon of the authenticity of being. It refers to all the dimensions of human existence, from the physical to the spiritual or religious one.

One of the constituent elements of the crisis, which the postmodern man repeatedly feels and discusses, is the crisis of seclusion. Under these circumstances, we must give back to the contemporary man the dimension of

relationing, of a face-to-face whereness with the other. In other words, we must offer communication, on the one hand, the status of binder for all the structures that focus on particular ways of revealing a puzzle that recognizes existence as a whole, and, on the other hand, to recognize the value of general framework of the development of philosophical construction of personal existential options. Philosophical dialogue is one of the best ways to highlight the benefits of communication and philosophy in the lives of individuals. It may lead to the discovery of a profound form (close to the religious one in its practical manifestations) of spirituality and the transmission of wisdom as a resource of everyday decision, even though the need for philosophy seems to be marginal in the era when there is a need for generalized communication.

Analyzing the current condition of philosophy, Emmy van Deurzen notes that the marginal status to which philosophy has been condemned by ecclesiastical authority in the premodern world is very similar to that which it has been voluntarily chosen by philosophy itself in relation to science once with the scientific and technological development brought into our lives by Western modernity⁹¹. Emmy van Deurzen discovers the paradoxical status of modern philosophy. Paradoxical is that, after breaking free from the subordination of theology which lasted several centuries of theological creation, along with modernity, philosophy voluntarily puts itself at the service of science. First, philosophy seems to be at their service, and then acts as a sort of underprivileged acquaintance

⁹¹ Emmy van Deurzen, *Psychotherapy and the Quest for Happiness*, (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), 2.

of sciences, especially of social sciences that are constantly expanding. Most of the disciplines that have separated from philosophy over time, or those that originated in different domains of human creation that originally belonged to the sphere of philosophical study, tend to manifest a certain discretion towards philosophers and philosophy. Philosophers have always given up a part of their concerns, without then maintaining a close contact with the specific concerns of areas that had an autonomous development, even if this autonomy did not manifest itself in the form of hostility towards philosophy. Most social sciences, though sometimes resorting to the authority of philosophical personalities that we find in textbooks or treatises of philosophy that they consider to be significant to their field of science, show some kind of detachment from philosophy, considering it to be too theoretical, and speculative to their concerns and practical purpose. Philosophy developed gradually in such a way that it gave away part of its main concerns in favor of other disciplines, or have turned them into marginal aspects of philosophical research. From the point of view of communication and counseling, public space and personal space have been abandoned, for example, in favor of psychology, which almost barely occupied the practical ways in which philosophy intervened in everyday life. At the same time, with the imposing in Western civilization of the need to develop the scientific spirit, philosophy failed to become a science of sciences, although its inclination towards totalization, the creation of foundations and the creation of conceptual tools could have recommended it in this respect. Thus, we can ob-

serve how philosophy ends up renouncing its practical and transformational ability, in favor of the social sciences that were just detaching themselves from it. If philosophers once had concerns both in the field of knowledge, of research of the various aspects of human existence, of shaping critical thinking, of formulating practical solutions for life, as well as in the field of strategic thinking, we suddenly find the philosopher deserted by its powers and isolated in relation to the complexity of the problems he addresses.

We can ask ourselves: Where does philosophy's difficulty in negotiating its relationship with other disciplines come from? What is the effort of rationalization and imaginative construction that philosophy must deal? One of the answers can be sought in the ways in which they position themselves, on the one hand, the answers given by religion and science, and on the other hand, the answers given by various philosophers to the problems the individual is facing. In shaping a background image that might help us understand these relationships, Emmy van Deurzen introduces ideology as a way of reporting on reality and assuming a practical perspective on the unfolding of one's own life. We do not focus here on the ways in which ideology can function as a carrier of sacred contents, nor on the elements that differentiate such ideological constructions from the ideologies built up by the values of the sacred. It is worth mentioning that Emmy van Deurzen believes that it is important to show how the meaning of each culture is made by imposing a dominant ideology designed to organize the whole horizon of reality and action. The dominant ideology in

a certain cultural space functions within a culture of religion in which we can find dominant structures and behavioral patterns and beliefs specific to the religious way of organizing reality. Deurzen attributes to this ideological structure of culture the magical force of transforming reality from a space of chaos and ambiguity into one of communication of meaning and signification. In this way, we notice a phenomenon that addresses religion and ideology as cultural systems, but also the cultural function of ideology and religion. We thus understand that “This sacred link uniting the culture can be many different things, but if it is to acquire religious and sacred status it has to be rooted in a mythology which refers to the culture’s origin and which cannot be questioned and has to be taken on faith. We can only truly belong to a culture to the extent that we accept its framework of reference”.⁹²

Despite the pluralism of the representations of the sacred characteristic to the postmodern individual, van Deurzen notes that Western civilization has as one of its fundamental paradigms the imagery of the paradisiac garden.⁹³ It is to be expected that in this context the major existential answers will be linked to such a founding myth. Religion and science are viewed as such visions of the world, and as ways in which man can coexist with his world, be able to improve it in order to avoid the shortcomings and sufferings of everyday. They are constructions designed to give man the power to restore the way to his paradisiacal state, to reach a life lying in

⁹² Emmy van Deurzen, *Psychotherapy and the Quest for Happiness*, 14.

⁹³ Emmy van Deurzen, *Psychotherapy and the Quest for Happiness*, 16.

the vicinity of the imagery of a perfectly happy existence. It is no wonder that problem of happiness is one of the most important in terms of aspirations formulated by the human being through both religions and interventions brought about by science in an attempt to improve human life. From the perspective of such a scientific vision, a successful life must be based on the data provided by science. Emmy van Deurzen believes that we live according to evidence-based recipes only because science proposes such a foundation for building the meaning of a happy life. Thus, “now we no longer adjust our conduct to the old values and well-established routines of our ancestors and forebears nor in terms of the word of our gods, but rather in line with the new evidence provided to us by the latest research. We live evidence-based lives and we take our cues from the media to keep us informed of the latest fashions and values to follow. One day we are told to eat or do one thing for a longer, healthier life, the next the evidence has changed and we are advised to pursue another new fad”.⁹⁴ Such a science that manifests itself in a similar way to religions only proposes an alternative to religion in which evidence-based decisions replace decisions centered on traditional beliefs. Emmy van Deurzen cultivates the idea that science brings with its evidence-based mythology. This scientific mythology seems today inseparable from the Western way of living.

However, one of the very special intuitions formulated by van Deurzen is related to the fact that neither

⁹⁴ Emmy van Deurzen, *Psychotherapy and the Quest for Happiness*, 17.

the religious imagery nor the scientific one can make sense of to the new challenges that the postmodern man has to face. He is faced with the challenge of understanding his connections and his way of dealing with the virtual world: “We need to open our eyes to the challenges and opportunities of the Age of Virtuality and move forward. We are now in a position to face up to human reality as never before and we need to let ourselves do this vigorously. We need to think about the new morality we are capable of”.⁹⁵ Following the analysis ran by Emmy van Deurzen, we find that these challenges can be better understood and faced if we perceive them from the perspective of what is happening in the context of the therapy. She shows us that it is necessary to move past the discussion of human existence in terms of normal and pathological and to resort to a new type of thinking that is beyond this duality. The framework of this type of reflection can be found in the context of philosophical thinking.⁹⁶ As in therapy, philosophy is the major element of the reconstruction of the postmodern human condition, in a similar way, philosophy should be given a central place in solving the issues the development of virtual environment brings to the daily life of individuals. Philosophy is called upon to state its view on all aspects of the fundamental issues of the way in which an individual is living.⁹⁷ The development of communication technologies, especially those related to the construction

⁹⁵ Emmy van Deurzen, *Psychotherapy and the Quest for Happiness*, 35.

⁹⁶ Emmy van Deurzen, “Existential therapy: a philosophical approach to the big questions in life”, May 1, 2015, Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAuQyW45JeA>

⁹⁷ Emmy van Deurzen, *Psychotherapy and the Quest for Happiness*, 38.

of the virtual environment and the communication in the virtual space, offers philosophy the chance to regain the ground it has abandoned and taken by other disciplines concerned with the human being's existence in the world.

Philosophy, unlike religion or science, does not lead us into the garden of a paradise, whether it is imagined in traditional forms, or that it is the new paradise promised by the conquests of science and technology. Without being tempted in any way by mythical construction, philosophy places us on the side of being and proposes an ethical reconstruction based on everyday life projected on the background of the general problems of human existence and condition. Without diminishing the importance of the imaginative function of the human being, philosophy rationalizes human existence, especially through the mechanisms of critical thinking and the metaphysics of sensitivity. It offers the individual ways to examine his own life. Philosophy does not propose a myth of happiness that can be associated with the imaginative constructions of the paradisiacal situation in major cultures and religious systems. It uses the philosophical principles and rules of thinking in order to engage the individual on the path of a perpetual creation of happiness as a state of well-being related to the quality of being human. It is a philosophical imagery that reveals itself in the form of conceptual constructions and wisdom.

From the point of view of the type of imagery they are building, in such a perspective, there seems to be a greater similitude between religion and science than between philosophy and religion, on the one hand, and

philosophy and science, on the other. Without abandoning the realm of symbolic thinking, philosophy resorts to a conceptual, critical, and demythologizing thinking, inconsistent with the mythical manifestations of the other two disciplines – religion and science – as they are represented by Emmy van Deurzen.

4.2. From the Diminish of Traditional Concerns to the Rediscovery of Philosophy

Nowadays, psychology and religion seem to leave no room for philosophy to approach the matters of the human soul and the problems it faces. It is not by chance that there is a widespread tendency to think that psychology is a secular form of intervention in the life of an individual that has replaced religion in many aspects. And the most useful example in this regard is that of the confessor who is replaced by the evidence-based science of the psychologist who possesses the magical, thaumaturgical power of soul-liberation. I am inclined to agree to those who believe that psychology is not the heir of religion, but the great daughter of philosophy. Psychological therapy is not a practice inspired by religion, but a practice inspired by philosophy. It can be considered a scientific form of experimental philosophy. That is why I believe that a collaboration between philosophy and psychology is in the inherent logic of the development of the human being and can lead to a mutual enrichment of the two ways of research on human soul and its everyday life. Whether we promote the idea of an alliance between philosophy and psychology, or think philosophy

as an essential part of psychotherapy, we always have in mind the idea of a co-operation with beneficial reciprocal influence.⁹⁸

But perhaps the most obvious decrease in the importance of philosophy as concern of the postmodern individual is the marginalization of philosophy in relation to religion or psychology and psychological counseling in the educational system. In view of the debate on the institutional marginalization of philosophy in the traditional system of Western education, the question arises: What determines the philosopher that, throughout the historical evolution of philosophy, he reduces its sphere of action and manifestation of its creative power to the point where philosophy is being perceived as irrelevant, both from an institutional point of view and from the point of view of its traditional preoccupations, taken up in the meantime by other disciplines?

This time, I will confine myself in answering this question only from the perspective of revealing the current state of philosophy. Today, as postmodern people with philosophical sensitivity, we are pleased to find that – despite the isolation of philosophy in an ivory tower – philosophy regains its theoretical and practical vocation

⁹⁸ Yaw-Sheng Lin, “Views of 'Change' in Counseling Theories: Co-construction of Philosophy and Psychology”, *Universitas-Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture*, Vol. 38 Issue 1 (2011): 87–110; Oana Lenta, Marius Cucu, “The Jungian Concept of Complex Psychology”, *Postmodern Openings*, vol. 8 Issue 3 (2017): 59–67; Mircea Adrian Marica, “Philosophical Assumptions of Psychotherapeutic Paradigms”, The 6th International Conference Edu World 2014 “Education Facing Contemporary World Issues”, 7th–9th November 2014, *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 180 (2015): 383–388.

and imposes itself as an equal partner in the broad sphere of social and humanist sciences. It is scientifically in a particular way, but it has its distinct place in the sphere of scientific creation specific to postmodernity. In particular, the unprecedented development of communication and technology that stimulates this development leads to an increase in the importance of philosophy and a practical reorientation of philosophy. Until recently, philosophy was accused of self-isolation in its inaccessible world and hiding behind a screen in a jargon that can no longer be perceived as a language in the open communication with others. One of the causes that led to the sedimentation of such a negative image is identified by van Deurzen in the tendency of philosophy to favour knowledge in relation to the pursuit of wisdom. It is suggested that even the newer trends, which direct philosophy to the real problems of the contemporary human existence, only partially succeed in bringing philosophy into contact with life. For van Deurzen, a very good proof in this respect is that an active movement such as that of the supporters of philosophical counselling is not well received in philosophical circles. Au contraire, “philosophical counselling remains a countermovement in the field of philosophy and stands out as an exception to the trend of dis-affectation and the isolation of philosophy as a handmaiden of scientific discourse. Philosophical counselling is itself at risk of being taken over by life coaching, which is often based on cognitive and pragmatic principles”.⁹⁹ At the same time, Emmy van Deurzen

⁹⁹ Emmy van Deurzen, *Psychotherapy and the Quest for Happiness*, 38.

notes that philosophical counselling has never capitalized on its therapeutic potential. From the very beginning, it has been rather a form of mentoring or offering different types of support. Still, philosophical practice has difficulty in being an alternative to therapeutic practices, because it has been conceived in a different way and with a different purpose than the therapeutic one. In this regard, the prospects of two initiators of philosophical practice Gerd Achenbach in Germany and Ad Hoogendijk in the Netherlands are discussed. The two philosophers who have called their practice philosophical counselling, did not consider it to be a form of therapy. In the first case, philosophical counselling starts from the premise that life is the one that shapes the way we think and supports it in setting new directions. In the second case, philosophical counselling must propose a search and understanding of the meaning of life within the client-specific universe and within its own language by opening up access to its own inner world and the existence of contradictions that it must accept, live with all its challenges, and learn to transform it into a life worth living. Emmy van Deurzen notes that the two philosophers do not intend to carry out a therapeutic approach in relation to the pathological aspects of the individual's existence, but to provide support to those who ask questions about the problems they are facing, the meaning of their lives, and to the meaning of life, to a process of self-discovery and the valorization of their own life. Instead, Deurzen is very optimistic about the power of philosophy and philosophical approach in the development of existential psychotherapy and the role that existential psychotherapy

can play in the future development of philosophical counselling and therapy.¹⁰⁰

Beyond criticism of this kind, we can witness today an unexpected development of applied philosophy, either in the form of ethics applied to various professional fields¹⁰¹ or in the form of ethical and social responsibility for organizations, or in the form of philosophical counseling for individuals or groups, or in the form of philosophical counseling offered to special communities or to persons with varying degrees of vulnerability. Philosophy breaks through its forms of communication in the economy, in medical deontology, but also as part of the effort of mutual integration of the results of different sciences. Instead of developing philosophical counseling, Emmy van Deurzen, as a philosopher and psychotherapist, prefers a philosophical practice of therapy in the form of existential psychotherapy.

4.3. Philosophy and Existential Therapy

Reasons for optimism come from one of the most effective ways of practicing philosophy. We find it in

¹⁰⁰ Emmy van Deurzen, *Everyday Mysteries. A handbook of existential psychotherapy*, Second edition, (London: Routledge, 1997), 232.

¹⁰¹ Iulia Grad, Sandu Frunzã, "Postmodern Ethics and the Reconstruction of Authenticity in Communication-Based Society", *Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială*, Vol. 53 (2016): 326–336; Antonio Sandu, "A Levinasian Opening on the Affirmative Ethics of Care", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 15, issue 43 (2016): 28–47; Ecaterina Croitor, "From the Need for Responsibility as Philosophical Investigation to Responsibility as a Product of Moral Conscience; Methods of Operationalization", *Ovidius University Annals, Series Economic Sciences*, Vol. 14 Special Issue (2014): 125–130.

the practices of existential psychotherapy counseling. Emmy van Deurzen confesses that in the mid nineteen eighties, before becoming a trainer, when she worked as a therapist in a psychiatric hospital, she heavily relied on her training in philosophy rather than on what she had acquired during her training as a psychologist. Later on, in her career as a counselor and trainer, she always combined therapy with counseling relying on the alliance between psychology and philosophy. Her therapeutic approach is, however, primarily philosophical. It is also the reason why her system of thought and the philosophical practices she proposes are important both from the point of view of the specialist in psychotherapy and of all the other practitioners interested in exploring the existential problems. She offers us a very broad spectrum for existential investigations because: “the type of counselling and therapy proposed involves assisting people to come to terms with the dilemmas of living. Issues are addressed in moral and human terms rather than in terms of sickness and health. The frame of reference is philosophical rather than medical, social or psychological. The assumption is that people need to find ways of making sense of life before they can make sense of their problems and of themselves”.¹⁰²

In her works, as in the book written with Martin Adams, Emmy van Deurzen places philosophy at the base of existential counseling and psychotherapy. They seek a genuine philosophical solution to all the difficulties individuals face. Thus, philosophy understood as “the

¹⁰² Emmy van Deurzen, *Existential Counselling & Psychotherapy in Practice*, Second edition, (London: Sage, 2002), xiii.

search for truth and the love of wisdom” offers, on the one hand, an open theory of personality and of ways of communicating in the sphere of its transformations, and on the other hand, a practice guided by general principles meant to solve the concrete problems and existential disorders of each person.¹⁰³

Emmy van Deurzen and Martin Adams offer us a guide of tools needed by a therapist in its counseling activities, besides having a good training in philosophy: “In order to practice existential therapy, we need to know our environment, that is, human existence. We need to practice the cultivation of an attitude of open and engaged awareness, focused not only towards the person in front of us but also towards that person’s life, as well as the ways in which his specific problems can be solved together with the solving and elucidation of general human problems that are common to all of us”.¹⁰⁴ The therapist does not need a counseling technique as much as he needs to be familiar with the problems of philosophy and its ways of integrating human issues into a flow of life that is unfolding according to an internal reasoning of life as it is. There is a great variety of theories and practices in this respect. There is no widely accepted method for this type of practice, but is generally accepted is the fact that the therapist must approach life's issues in a philosophical manner. At the same time, he must cultivate an open communication that takes into account the different types

¹⁰³ Emmy van Deurzen, Martin Adams, *Psihoterapie și consiliere existențială*, Translated by Brândușa Popa, (București: Editura Herald, 2011), 8.

¹⁰⁴ Emmy van Deurzen, Martin Adams, *Psihoterapie și consiliere existențială*, 14.

of relationships and the various connections that open up and position themselves on all dimensions of existence. Communication is the one that ensures the horizon of the entire philosophical reflection. The philosophical nature of the approach addresses the ways in which specific personal issues are engaged in a horizon in which what is relevant is the human being, the fact of being, the conditions of a good life or the existence as such. Every problem is considered to be essential from the point of view of personal experience, of the way in which the individual becomes aware of himself, his way of being and his power to transform himself. But it becomes relevant from an existential point of view by projecting what is personal on a screen of general solutions, of existence as an integrative existence. The tools at hand usually include ideas from a particular philosophical work or a philosopher's view or extracts from philosophical works relevant from the point of view of orientation in existence, of elucidation of personal problems and of the rationalization of cohabitation with their own life experiences. This is how we should decipher the statement: “existential therapy is the practical application of philosophy to everyday life”.¹⁰⁵

Among the philosophers that Emmy van Deurzen references, we can mention, for example, some of those who can be associated with existential philosophy, even though they are not all affiliated to existentialist philosophy: Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), Karl Jaspers

¹⁰⁵ Emmy van Deurzen, Martin Adams, *Psihoterapie și consiliere existențială*, 20.

(1883–1969), Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), Martin Buber (1878–1965), Max Scheler (1874–1928), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), Paul Tillich (1886–1965), Albert Camus (1913–1960), Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973), Emmanuel Levinas (1905–1995), Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005), Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), Michel Foucault (1926–1984), Edith Stein (1891–1942), Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986), Julia Kristeva (1941–), Luce Irigaray (1930–), Hélène Cixous (1937–), Martha Nussbaum (1947–) and others.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, Translated by R. Thomte, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980); Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, Translated by W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, (London: Penguin, 1992); Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenological Psychology*, Translated by J. Scanlon, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977); Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy*, three volumes, Translated by E. B. Ashton, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1969); Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Translated by J. Macquarrie and E.S. Robinson, (London: Harper & Row, 1962); Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, Translated by W. Kaufmann, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1970); Max Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, Translated by B. Noble, (London: SCM Press, 1960); Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, Translated by P. Mairet, (London: Methuen, 1948); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Translated by A. Lingis, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968); Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1952); Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Translated by J. O'Brien, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955); Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence*, Translated by M. Harari, (London: Harvill, 1954); Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, Translated by A. Lingis, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969); Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, Translated by D. Ihde, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007); Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, (New York: Random House,

Emmy van Deurzen considers philosophical reflection as being important because it comes to support the creative solution of critical thinking of the essential challenges dealing with solving the problems the individual is facing. She supports finding ways to meet these challenges, be it solutions proposed by psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy or various forms of counseling. Emmy van Deurzen believes that an existentialist approach to life's problems has a particular practical value for the practice of coaching as well: "Where existential therapists focus on trauma, distress and pathology, existential coaches may focus on self-development, existential discoveries and future projects. Both share a commitment to facilitating ideological change through philosophical understanding".¹⁰⁷

One of the affirmations which philosophers should take into account is that "Philosophy has as much to offer

1988); Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, Translated by W. Stein, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964); Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition: A Study of the Central Dilemmas Facing Modern Man*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Translated by H.M. Parshley, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953); Julia Kristeva, *In the Beginning Was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith*, Translated by Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Translated by C. Burke and G.C. Gill, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Hélène Cixous, *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, Translated by Susan Sellers, (London: Routledge, 1994).

¹⁰⁷ Emmy van Deurzen, "The Existential Ideology and Framework for Coaching", in Emmy van Deurzen and Monica Hanaway (eds.), *Existential Perspectives on Coaching*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3.

therapists as psychology”.¹⁰⁸ It has much to offer on the therapeutic dimension. The history of philosophy reveals to us an accumulation of ways of thinking about human condition and the ways of improving the human being. Philosophers have always provided theoretical solutions and have drawn existential maps that individuals can personalize with the paths they find – preferably together with a counselor – as being the most capable of improving their own lives. Even more so can philosophical reflections show their efficiency in the context of contemporary development of human based science and by combining philosophical analysis with the results of evidence-based therapeutical practices. In their turn, therapists should have as much openness as possible to existential problems brought about by philosophy, given that “Working with spiritual principles and values and beliefs is a risky business. It requires therapists to have some philosophical training and some expertise in thinking about life and death”.¹⁰⁹

Underlining the importance of the philosophical foundations of existential psychotherapy, Emmy van Deurzen, demonstrates that the existential approach is by excellence a philosophical one. All disciplines that appeal to the existential register must also appeal to philosophy. This does not mean that researchers in all of these fields

¹⁰⁸ Emmy van Deurzen, “Philosophical Background”, in Emmy van Deurzen and Claire Arnold-Baker (eds.) *Existential Perspectives on Human Issues. A Handbook for Therapeutic Practice*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 5.

¹⁰⁹ Emmy van Deurzen, “A New Ideology”, in Emmy van Deurzen and Claire Arnold-Baker (eds.), *Existential Perspectives on Human Issues. A Handbook for Therapeutic Practice*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 276.

must have a rigorous and extensive training in the field of philosophy, but it is important that they follow a philosophical method of thinking and to discipline their own philosophical way of referring to the human being and his existence.

At the same time, it is necessary to abandon the dogmatic forms of thought, be it scientific dogmatism, evidence-based dogmatism, or religious dogmatism. It should be stressed that Emmy van Deurzen is not against the foundation of evidence-based counseling, but is hostile to her transformation into a dogma similar to religious dogmatism. Therapists and counselors must be driven by the data provided by existence as such, by the human condition and the philosophical reflection that proposes multiple ways of revealing them. The malleability that should be put forth is a direct consequence of the pluralism of the philosophical systems or the processing of the wisdom that the counselor or the therapist can take into account in the research of reality, in the understanding of the representations of the human condition and the world in which the human being acts according to its existential conditionings.¹¹⁰

4.4. Philosophy and Therapy in the Spiritual Dimension

Emmy van Deurzen in her convincing discourse believes that existential counseling implies a detachment

¹¹⁰ Emmy van Deurzen, “Philosophical Background”, in Emmy van Deurzen and Claire Arnold-Baker (eds.), *Existential Perspectives on Human Issues. A Handbook for Therapeutic Practice*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 14.

in relation to therapeutic techniques and healing strategies. Counseling is an approach that involves, on the one hand, the formulation of a personal approach to one's existence and, on the other, an extension of the reflection on the personal situation in a wider perspective, which implies a vision of the world as such and on how personal life unfolds in relation to existence as such. In this way, the individual can find himself in touch with others and everything surrounding him, in relation to his own interiority, but also in complex relationships with the human condition in which he is personally taking part. In such an approach, the emphasis is not on changing conditions, or changing the way of thinking or changing oneself, but on discovering the profound meaning of existence, of the truth-oriented thought, of the meaning that the self follows and can be shaped in a creative manner. This level of depth is one revealed by the philosophical reflection on self and the human condition within the world. Such an approach becomes possible because “existential therapy is firmly rooted in philosophy and ethics. The message conveyed implicitly to the clients is a message about life rather than primarily about themselves”.¹¹¹ Starting from the premise that existence precedes the essence, in the therapeutic relationship it is essential to understand man's way of being in the world and the types of transcendence that help man to discover himself with all the relationships that mark his mundanity. There is no transcendence in relation to a Transcendence, but a transcendence in the horizon of the world, with all the

¹¹¹ Emmy van Deurzen, *Existential Counselling & Psychotherapy in Practice*, Second edition, (London: Sage 2002), 213.

obstacles and challenges that the human being has to deal with.

In this context, Deurzen notes that by exploring the stages of examination and assumption of relations implied by the forth dimensions of existence, the human being ultimately becomes concerned with the profound meanings of existence, those that guide the individual to the discovery of the spiritual aspects and the integration of all these aspects in a way of perceiving life. Thus, on the one hand, the patient may come to the awareness that all the crises, disturbances or fears that fill him are part of life, and solutions must be found to integrate them in his personal experience. But, on the other hand, the therapist can help him find those ways of confronting problems that are based on the truths of life and on the realization that life deserves to be lived with all its promises and shortcomings. Both the therapist and his dialogue partner thus partake in a special performance of ethical and efficient communication in which suffering, worries, unanswered questions and even death are transfigured by the simplicity of assuming one's destiny as an existential project that should be fulfilled with dignity.

The individual engagement in the awareness of the four dimensions of existence implies the orientation towards the metaphysical problem, towards a dimension of conceptual and spiritual abstraction filled with the power to connect human beings with a special energy that many associate with religious representations. Regardless of the burden we associate with religion or spirituality, it is significant that “The spiritual world is the domain

of experience where people create meaning for themselves and make sense of things”.¹¹²

This dimension creates the favorable environment for the manifestation of a very strong motivational energy, correlated with a sense of belonging, of the desire to be together. Such a kind of enthusiasm is considered by Emmy van Deurzen similar to what we notice in the religious register.¹¹³ The religious dimension is not usually part of the relationship based on philosophical counseling conceived by Emmy van Deurzen. However, the introduction of religious themes can be a positive contribution to the therapeutic dialogue. The religious theme is rather considered to be one of spirituality understood as wisdom, so a reflection that can be associated with philosophy, not one related to theology. It is the philosophical reflection that can provide the necessary elements for a life lived in a significant universe, a truth understood as a personal experience in a therapeutic relationship with strong spiritual connotations. Religious therapy is therefore left to pastoral therapy. Pastoral therapy is a distinct part of spiritual counseling that investigates very sensitive issues faced by a religious man.¹¹⁴ But in existential therapy “we do not have to be religious or believe in a god or

¹¹² Emmy van Deurzen, *Existential Counselling & Psychotherapy in Practice*, 87.

¹¹³ Emmy van Deurzen, *Existential Counselling & Psychotherapy in Practice*, 188.

¹¹⁴ Daniel J. Louw, “Philosophical counselling: Towards a 'new approach' in pastoral care and counselling?”, *HTS Teologiese Studies-Theological Studies*, Vol. 67 Issue 2 (2011): Article number 900; Carmen M. Schuhmann, Wendy van der Geugten, “Believable Visions of the Good: An Exploration of the Role of Pastoral Counselors in Promoting Resilience”, *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. 66 Issue 4 (2017): 523–536.

other higher being to know that there is more to life than meets our eyes. Wondering about what is and why it is leads to a healthy attitude of doubt, but also of respect for what transcends us. Anybody's personal guess or belief about this is therefore as valid as she or he wants it to be".¹¹⁵ Emmy van Deurzen manages to avoid controversy over the meaning of spirituality and personal relationship with religion, not by ignoring religion, but by philosophically integrating it into ideology. She uses the term ideology to designate the most general view of existence in the manner in which it is represented and assumed personally as a transforming force implicit in every act of life. Although such an understanding of the concept of ideology resembles that of religion¹¹⁶, Emmy van Deurzen prefers to speak of an ideological dimension inherent in human life and action rather than to speak of a spiritual dimension that might be reduced to religion.¹¹⁷

It is taken into account that, on the one hand, the individual is influenced by the dominant ideology in society, and on the other hand, the individual has a system of personal beliefs, concretized in a way of perceiving existence and the way in which he must act according to that perception. Through existential analysis, philosophy brings to light the ideological foundations of a person and ques-

¹¹⁵ Emmy van Deurzen, *Existential Counselling & Psychotherapy in Practice*, 214.

¹¹⁶ Mihaela Frunză, *Ideologie și Feminism* (Cluj-Napoca: Limes, 2004); Leonard Swidler, *După absolut. Viitorul dialogic al reflecției religioase*, Translated by Codruța Cuceu, (Cluj-Napoca: Limes, 2003).

¹¹⁷ Emmy van Deurzen, "Reasons for living: existential therapy and spirituality", in Laura Barnett and Greg Madison (eds.), *Existential Therapy. Legacy, Vibrancy and Dialogue*, (London: Routledge, 2012), 172.

tions all the types of dogmatism that one practices in the form of principles of life and action. The philosophical dialogue is meant to clarify these ideological prerequisites, not to replace an ideological option with another. The therapeutic effort focuses on this clarification of beliefs, personal values, and the way in which the personal self is influenced by them in the complex structure of the relationships it cultivates.¹¹⁸ This is the starting point for building a philosophy of life appropriate to the concept of authenticity that the individual aspires to discover on the path of exploring and building his own life's meaning.¹¹⁹ This is even more obvious when existential counseling is associated with coaching. It implies the exploration of crowded situations that an individual has to face and the fructification of all these existential limits in order to overcome the negative states, the anxiety, the disorder or any form of human alienation. The quest for authenticity is considered essential by Emmy van Deurzen, even when she accepts in a Heideggerian manner that authenticity is something similar to the ideal that must always be sought to be fulfilled, that there is nothing that can be defined and precisely bounded as authentic, because it can only be said that there is a quest to over-

¹¹⁸ Sandu Frunză, "Axiology, Leadership and Management Ethics". *META: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy*, Vol. IX, No. 1 (2017): 284–299; Sandu Frunză, "Seeking Meaning, "Living Authenticity and Leadership in Public Space. A Philosophical Perspective", *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, No. 52E (2017): 23–37.

¹¹⁹ Emmy van Deurzen, *Everyday Mysteries. A handbook of existential psychotherapy*, 261; Emmy van Deurzen, "Finding meaning in life", May 2, 2015. Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eMVr_UEBf4&t=2s

come the inauthentic to something more authentic than the current situation. In the search for authenticity, the patient is able to outline a philosophy of life, perceived as personal, in a general context of ideologies that shape the society in which he lives.¹²⁰ Philosophy not only provides a system of theoretical principles and conceptual thesaurus, it does not merely propose a rational way of perceiving the sciences and knowledge in general, it does not become more valuable by the fact that it creates a language and an esoteric world, accessible only to a small group of initiates. We have tried to show that philosophy also brings a practical dimension that can be valued in ethical communication, in improving the postmodern human condition, in confronting the everyday problems of the individual, in understanding the new forms of spirituality and the religious and ideological manifestations that the postmodern man has to face in the search for solutions to the challenges brought by new developments in technology, knowledge and communication. But our whole approach was mainly driven by the intention to reveal that, in the vision built by Emmy van Deurzen, philosophy finds the best ground to manifest itself in its therapeutic dimension at the present time.

¹²⁰ Emmy van Deurzen, “The Existential Ideology and Framework for Coaching”, in Emmy van Deurzen and Monica Hanaway (eds.), *Existential Perspectives on Coaching*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 6.

5. Philosophy as Existential Style. From Desire to Love as Communication Instrument

5.1. Philosophy as a way of life

I propose an encounter with love in a philosophical perspective developed by an existential stylist. He challenges us to understand philosophy as an existential style that should bring balance to our life. This philosophy is designed so that you, postmodern human being, may find yourself in it. If positive results in your professional life were not lacking; if you live with an innocent freedom everything emotional you take upon yourself responsibly; if you have a living standard above average in your generation; if the educational system has provided sufficient resources but your option for personal development at a new level is still open; if you are comfortable when you look in the mirror but nevertheless you feel that something is not visible enough on your face, that something is missing which you were never willing to admit was absent in your life, it means you are at a stage in your personal development that needs the support of an existential stylist. Philosophical counseling may be a solution to take one more step forward to personal accomplishment and growth together with the others. I do not want to exclude the fact that you may call on a variety of counseling forms for this purpose. But I believe that philosophical counseling is an alternative not to be refused.

One name in the Romanian cultural context that we associate to theoretical reflection and philosophical practice is that of philosopher Aurel Codoban. In his most known book, *Amurgul iubirii*¹²¹, he states: “I do not aspire but to be an existential stylist”.¹²² In view of this statement, Aurel Codoban reveals himself as a hermeneut of love who construes an ontology of detail. The starting point is the relationship between reason and desire. His philosophical reflections on desire are meant to take us out of the traditional way of thinking about existence and invite us to take a road to “recover what was existential and initiatory in the old philosophy, accepting criticism and going from philosophizing to interpreting, because interpreting involves understanding and only understanding may change life. This hermeneutic of love belongs to the ontology of detail as its finality aims to change our life in view of what for reason is merely detail. The ontology of detail in the existential sense, a philosophy reaching its purpose, that of a profane initiation in the absence of any assumed charisma”.¹²³ Philosophy as a way of life must be understood as a form of life representation in a lived intensity similar to the one described by Nietzsche when he talks about cultural styles and associated ways of life like an art of living.¹²⁴ Aurel Codoban does not

¹²¹ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii. De la iubirea pasiune la comunicarea corporală*, (Cluj-Napoca: Idea design & Print, 2004).

¹²² Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 15.

¹²³ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 15.

¹²⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nașterea tragediei*, Translated by Ion Dobrogeanu-Gherea and Ion Herdan, (Iași: Editura Pan, 1992); Aurel Codoban, “Nietzsche și politesimul modernității târzii”, in Aurel Codoban, *Exerciții de interpretare*, (Cluj: Editura Dacia XXI, 2011); George Bondor, *Dansul măștilor. Nietzsche și filozofia interpretării*, (București: Humanitas, 2008).

intend to provide an efficient method to guarantee results at the end of the road you have followed. His proposal is for a philosophy as a way of life, an existential style.

5.2. Love and the ontology of detail

The new philosophy proposed by Aurel Codoban is centered on love, because love is the most complex communication way that Western man has developed so far. Considering one of the most famous statements by the philosopher: “communication construes reality”¹²⁵, we had to anticipate that love and communication would always be at the base of the existential construction style proposed by Codoban. To him, love institutes significance, it is a mode of existential expression. Even when we deem it the most important of expressions, it still remains among the possible ones. Love, therefore, pertains to a register of interpretation that we achieve in the realm of a symbolic world conscience.¹²⁶

Such an understanding of love has its place in the interest zone of Aurel Codoban whom Elvira Groza adequately describes as “a restorer of symbolic messages and trainer of messengers, who proposes a philosophy model

¹²⁵ Aurel Codoban, “Comunicarea construiește realitatea”. Interview by Timotei Nădășan, in Timotei Nădășan (coord.), in *Comunicarea construiește realitatea. Aurel Codoban la 60 de ani*, (Cluj: Ideea Design & Print, 2009).

¹²⁶ Aurel Codoban, *Exerciții de interpretare*; Sandu Frunză, *Comunicare simbolică și seducție. Studii despre seducția comunicării, comportamentul ritualic și religie* (București: Tritonic, 2014); Sandu Frunză, “Ethical leadership, religion and personal development in the context of global crisis”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 16, issue 46 (2017): 3–16; Sandu Frunză, “Seduction, Communication and Leadership”, *Transylvanian Review*, Vol. XXIV No. 3, (Autumn 2017): 137–148.

that recovers signifying rationality, truth's perspective as interpretation and world metaphor as cryptic text to talk about being's absence-presence and about divinity's silence".¹²⁷ In the journey to symbolic systems that he proposes, the philosopher advises to take for main companion not modern rationality but desire, the postmodern opposition of that rationality. Aurel Codoban notes that in the past desire was treated as something secondary, as a detail of man's feelings as a rational being. With postmodernity, what used to be a detail becomes central in man's experience. Human nature has to be explained in terms of this ontology of detail. Guided by such companion, we shall learn how up-to-date is the ancient philosophy in which, together with Plato, we find that "the presence of desire tells us that we are not from this world in which we are now but rather belong to the other world, namely to the absolute. Desire is the way in which our hunger for the world of essence as prisoner beings in the world of appearances".¹²⁸ Although this feeling of the absolute is always present in the Western man, Aurel Codoban proposes being aware of and appropriating a few details that have intervened in the cultural development of the Western man, whom we find at the end of a creation process culminating for the moment in the postmodern thought. Choosing desire is the most important nuance of all accompanying life registers.

So as to understand the complexity of relations involving desire and love understood as a cultural phenomenon, let us remember that philosophical reflections

¹²⁷ Elvira Groza, "Despre seducția comunicării", *Familia*, Series V, Year 51 (151) Nr. 1 (590), (2015): 120.

¹²⁸ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 27.

have the tendency to distinguish between desire and love, positioned at two different levels of human being accomplishment. A classic example is that of Jose Ortega y Gasset, who separates desire from love. He opposes desire to love because desire involves a tendency to possess the desired reality, to such extent that it gets to be part of the one experiencing the desire to possess. This explains the fact that desire disappears as soon as it is satisfied, while love is an ever-renewing desire, endlessly growing. The philosopher argues the passive nature of desire, which demands that the desired object settle in its world, and the active nature of love par excellence, which supposes going out of oneself to live in the other, to assert the other as one's gravity setting the whole existence into motion.¹²⁹ In this way, a hierarchization of desire and of love is instituted, in which love is always in the privileged place. Such positing of love, deeply rooted in the Christian culture, belongs to the history of the Western spirit and permanently adapts to it.

However, irrespective of the philosophical distinctions that we could make regarding the behavior of the one who desires and of the one who loves, or of the alternatives in the accompanying emotional registers, we cannot ignore the fact that love cannot oppose love and cannot be separated from desire. Among the multiple facets it may display, especially two specific types of desire may account for the way love functions: on the one hand the erotic desire, on the other the desire for transcendence. Both forms of desire appear to be fundamental because

¹²⁹ Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Studii despre iubire*, Translated by Sorin Mărculescu, (București: Humanitas, 1995), 11.

they pertain to the existential datum of the physical world – the first of the worlds we can highlight when we see man as inhabiting the five worlds: the physical world, the social and interpersonal relations world, man’s internal world, the spiritual world and the world of the sacred. This world structure that man inhabits with his entire being was showcased by the existential therapy theorizing man’s belonging to four dimensions.¹³⁰ Given the context of Romanian spirituality, and the fact that Aurel Codoban is a remarkable philosopher of religions¹³¹, I preferred to divide the fourth dimension into the spiritual world and the world focused on assuming the sacred and religion as such. In terms of this existential datum, of the man inhabiting the five worlds, we have to accept that the physical world is a permanent concern to the human being who is at the intersection of several energies under the form of desire.

The erotic desire is based on the fact that existence is a source of pleasure and we have to fully enjoy its pleasures. Among the sources of pleasure, the erotic pleasure is most intensely experienced by the human being. It is physical and metaphysical at the same time, being always accompanied by a symbolism integrating it into a symbolic construction form that favors the unification of the worlds successively inhabited by man. World plurality

¹³⁰ Emmy van Deurzen, Martin Adams, *Psihoterapie și consiliere existențială*, Translated by Brândușa Popa, (București: Editura Herald, 2011); Rollo May, *Descoperirea ființei. Fundamentele analizei existențiale*, Translated by Victor Popescu, (București: Editura Trei, 2013); Laurențiu Staicu, *Trei istorii metafizice pentru insomniaci*, (București: Editura Trei, 2017).

¹³¹ Aurel Codoban, *Sacru și ontofanie. Pentru o nouă filosofie a religiilor*, (Iași: Polirom, 1998).

pertains to the way in which we try to describe, understand and conceptualize the five worlds. Desire is abandoning oneself and returning to oneself at the same time, and this aspect is best revealed in the way man valorizes this dimension of the Eros in the daily life.

As regards the desire for transcendence, it also belongs to the physical world. This explains it in close connection to the existential datum of man's finitude. Finding oneself as a finite being in a universe perceived to be either vast or endless, man experiences the need to go beyond the limits of human finitude as a desire for transcendence to the infinity. The desire for transcendence is, in Paul Tillich's terms, a quest for the ultimate reality¹³², that we normally include in the Western concept of God. It is present in the physical world tightly linked to limited corporality and earthly life finitude. The desire for transcendence is tied to the presence of death and appears often associated to its overcome. The two desire forms, suggestive in the understanding of the physical world, are part of a wider complex of desire that we call love. Often in symbolic thinking analyses we find references to the proximity of death and love or even to their bound. Love and death togetherness are facilitated, among others, by this encounter of erotic desire and the desire for transcendence in the intimacy of love. We may ask – like Rosenzweig¹³³ – whether love comes from the divinity

¹³² Paul Tillich, "The Meaning and Justification of Religious Symbols", in Sidney Hook, (ed.), *Religious experience and truth. A symposium*, (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 3–11.

¹³³ Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, Translated by William W. Hallo (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971).

and man lives all his loves with God's love over him. Or we may ask whether God is loved with extremely human love extrapolated and totalized in the imagery of the sacred in divinity – like Feuerbach does.¹³⁴ Irrespective of the way in which we ask the question, there is no shred of a doubt that we cannot separate the idea of love from the idea of transcending and transcendence, even if we may open a debate on the authentic forms of its representation. Love includes the two desire forms (erotic and transcending), no matter how transfigured its hypostases might appear to us. Aurel Codoban has in mind this “desire metaphysics” when he states that “the Western representation of love is the specific product of a religious sacralization of sexuality, whose interdictions and taboos add to the Platonian ontology of transcendence”.¹³⁵ The metamorphoses series known to love reveals an axis that crosses the worlds shaping the personal ego. It is born in the physical dimension and takes an ascending path in the experience of each world to the religious one. In this way one should understand the statement: “in philosophy, love is the shaped, tamed, cultivated desire”.¹³⁶ As an existential stylist, Aurel Codoban possesses the art of this philosophical cultivation of the passage through worlds, of unifying ruptures and concepts settling in a germination for an ever new crop, for a growing feeling that life is worth living.

¹³⁴ Ludwig Feuerbach, *Esența Creștinismului*, Translated by Petre Drăghici and Radu Stoichiță (București: Editura Științifică, 1961).

¹³⁵ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 8.

¹³⁶ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 7.

5.3. Taming desire and raising the subject in communication

One of the resources in desire theorizing remains, beyond time, the Freudian theory of the libido.¹³⁷ Eros, be it together with Thanatos or not, is often deemed to be a permanent resource of spiritual energy and personal development. One of the major forces used by Aurel Codoban to build his vision on desire is a personal understanding of Freud's idea about desire as an organizing and transfiguring factor of the entire human existence. Quite importantly, he notes that in the impulse theory, "desire is in the sphere of what we traditionally call love, because it is linked to sexuality, the protean and metamorphosing nature of satisfying it is probably the most explosive of psychoanalysis discoveries".¹³⁸ The need for love of post-modern man and man of all times is what triggers most complex forms of integrating perspectives of erotic desire and elements of "metaphysical desire" in a joint discourse, with impeccable internal logic – love discourse and its varied spiritualized nuance. This resignification of sexuality leads the philosopher to a new image of the reconstruction in desire dynamics. Desire is valorized as a form of subject's self-discovery which becomes actual desire. Such desire celebration is based on a post-modern discourse on the libido as relational communication structure. In terms of love as communication form – proposed by the existential stylist Aurel Codoban – in

¹³⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Dincolo de principiul plăcerii*, Translated by George Purdea and Vasile Dem. Zamfirescu, Foreword by Vasile Dem. Zamfirescu, (București: Editura "Jurnalul Literar", 1992).

¹³⁸ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 61.

fact, “desire is the wish to be desired”.¹³⁹ The subject construction in relationship with the other is based on the individual’s capacity growing to become both subject and object of desire in a logic of being and nonbeing, presence and absence overlap, of recognized alterity and self-totality.

It is no mere accident the fact that such philosophical perceptions may be found, in various forms, in the motivational literature. One of the most substantive proposals to valorize sexual desire transfigured for personal development, success and even substantial financial gains is that proposed by Napoleon Hill. Erotic desire taming, shaping and cultivation are important to Napoleon Hill for one’s health, stimulated creativity and even genius-quality. Emphasizing the extraordinary power of sexuality when shaped as a transfiguring force, Hill states that “the libido is the highest and most subtle form of human emotion. It increases the mind’s vibration pace like no other emotion and turns the brain’s imaginative faculties to function along the parameters of a genius”.¹⁴⁰ In terms of communication, Napoleon Hill posits his analyses against the background of energies put together by the minds deciding to participate in the Superior Intellect. This way, he opines that erotic energy may participate in the mind-to-mind communication in which the enhanced creativity translates into greater success.

Although as an existential stylist he let himself be fascinated with the various forms of combined feeling

¹³⁹ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 67.

¹⁴⁰ Napoleon Hill, *Despre succes. Cele mai bune sfaturi*, Edition revised and updated by Patricia G. Horan, Translated by Vlad-Octavian Palcu, (București: Curtea Veche, 2013), 86.

and imagery, Codoban does not go so far in his reflections like Napoleon Hill in valorizing erotic desire. In view of bringing together in the act of love the two types of desire (erotic and transcending) it is significant that he is interested in “setting coded coordinates of interpersonal relationships based on desire (appetite capacity), feelings and sexuality, with the purpose of eroticism (pleasure), in their historical variants and actual status. It is a hermeneutics of interpersonal relationships, interested in the way these relationships have been shaped by the religious and philosophical definition of desire and by their representation in the Western novel series of love types: Greek-Latin Eros, Christian agape, passion-love, Don Juan love, romantic love, confluent love (corporal-symbiotic)”.¹⁴¹ All these elements that make the subject of the book *Amurgul iubirii* construct the idea of an irreversible transformation: that of substituting the position of the soul in Western tradition by the centrality of the body. Aurel Codoban shows the way previous eras imposed love forms such as passion love or romantic love that generated changes in the rapport body and soul that were reversible. With postmodernity, a phenomenon appears that the philosopher deems irreversible – the subject is born not from rational philosophical reflection but from desire, and through generalized desire as the centre of existence. The soul is no longer the main support, the body is and its new mythology of postmodern corporeity. As a matter of fact, in the spirit of such a mythology associated with science, religious studies abound in texts bringing together religion, nature, the

¹⁴¹ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 13.

body, medicine and spirituality, in an effort to reunite the natural and the supernatural, the material world and its hidden spiritual qualities.¹⁴² In such a context, unlike the unifying tendencies of the soul (and the imagined stories of the soul mates are relevant in this sense), the body brings separation and difference, that is the alterity, “pleasure reconsiders difference versus unity, diversity versus uniqueness”.¹⁴³ In view of philosophy as a way of life, a field of reflection and hermeneutical practices opens to valorize personal development starting from corporal communication and non-verbal communication practices. It is one of the fields in which Aurel Codoban excels as an existential stylist, as we shall see in his studies on gesture semiotics.

5.4. Love, ideology, and political correctness

Aurel Codoban’s reflections are valuable to the understanding of what occurs in the physical world because “our corporal existence is the one that provides the possibility for love, passion as well as violence and

¹⁴² Richard McDonough, “Plato’s Cosmic Animal Vs. the Daoist Cosmic Plant: Religious and Ideological Implications”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 15, issue 45 (2016): 3–23; Clara Mironiuc, Nicolae Ovidiu Grad, Horațiu Silaghi, Alina Cristina Silaghi, Ion Aurel Mironiuc, “Bioethics and Religion: Some Implications for Reproductive Medicine”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 16, issue 47 (2017): 90–103; Ilinca Untu, Alexandra Bolos, Camelia Liana Buhas, Dania Andreea Radu, Roxana Chirita, Andreea Silvana Szalontay, “Considerations on the Role of Palliative Care in the Mourning Period”, *Revista de Cercetare și Intervenție Socială*, 58 (2017): 201–208.

¹⁴³ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 90.

domination”.¹⁴⁴ Consequently, the physical dimension is the support to the other worlds, may they be personal, internal or social. The social world of interpersonal relationships may serve personal development as long as it is shaped by the love principle. Thus, the social world combines with the spiritual dimension of the religious and ideological creation. In a world in which intolerance is growing, we may use the tools proposed by Aurel Codoban as existential stylist to promote cohabitation and tolerance, even if we risk getting farther from the philosopher’s intentions. When we highlight such development of Aurel Codoban’s thought, we have to mention that he is not a theorist of multiculturalism and political correctness, but has substantial reflections on art sociology, anthropology of religion, sociology and philosophy of ideologies. So that, showcasing the potentially positive consequences of the resignification of love and ideology relation is benefic to the understanding of the opening that philosophy as a way of life may have.

Let us remember that Aurel Codoban noted: “the feeling of love seems to be universally spread. But we have to distinguish between the feeling of love and the idea of love adopted by a certain society and a certain era. The idea of love represents a set of rules, norms and codes based on which we can locate, identify, recognize and define love. Sometimes reflections on love become the ideology of a society and then we deal with a way of life, an art of love, an ethics, aesthetics and etiquette

¹⁴⁴ Aurel Codoban, *Gesturi, Vorbe și Minciuni. Mic tratat de semiotică gestuală extinsă și aplicată*, (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2014), 149.

of love”.¹⁴⁵ We may notice today a particular mode by which love may be associated to the ideology of the Western society. In philosophy’s view as an existential style, we may valorize this art of combining ethics and etiquette.

In postmodern world, a series of metamorphoses of the sacred occur in social, organizational, and institutional practices, and in inter-human relationships.¹⁴⁶ The art of love, associated to a way of life and a new world vision manifests in a way that diminishes previous forms but takes over part of the contents of traditional etiquette. In the Western world in which love used to be the organizing factor of the entire existence, we note that love’s central place is taken by the centrality of the respect as a foundational value for social conventions. Respect becomes the central value cultivated in professional environments and involving diverse forms of public cohabitation. Love culture is doubled by the culture of respect, and the choice to position oneself in one or the other culture does not seem simple. To emphasize the new encounter mode between love and ideology, I shall mention that one of the forms of harmonious cohabitation is generated by tolerance practices. In terms of communication, a special phenomenon is asserting tolerance as political correctness. Such a practice of tolerance would not have been

¹⁴⁵ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 23.

¹⁴⁶ Iulian Boldea, “Politics and Religion. Challenges and Ideological Openings”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 16, issue 47 (2017): 104–109; Lars Rhodin, Xin Mao, “Religious pluralism: a Habermasian questioning and a Levinasian addressing”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 16, issue 46 (2017): 49–62.

possible without an increased importance of communication in the life of postmodern man. Political correctness is a consequence of the development of a tolerance discourse in the communication-built society. As a complex communication phenomenon, it brings about a new philosophy of linguistic practices and of interpersonal relationships construction languages. Considering that “Tolerance is the respect, acceptance and appreciation of the wealth and diversity of our world’s cultures, ways of expression and manners of expression as human beings”¹⁴⁷, political correctness must be associated to the respect and balance that man puts into interhuman relationships. Giving too much emphasis to the extreme manifestations of political correctness practices in certain specific American social and political contexts¹⁴⁸, we risk eluding the benefits brought by multiculturalism and political correctness in the American cultural milieu and subsequently extended as practice to of dialogue in all the regions where the will to construct open societies existed. Its beneficial effect lies first of all in the fact that it represents the indulging eye of tolerance we turn to the other. Its benefits are visible especially in the situation in which, since we do not have something positive to say, we plan at least to have the decency to not say anything negative about the realities we perceive to be different from our normal expectations, irrespective of

¹⁴⁷ *Declarația principiilor toleranței* la încheierea Conferinței generale a UNESCO, Paris, 16 November 1995.

¹⁴⁸ Edward Behr, *O Americă înfricoșătoare*, Translated by Doina Jela-Despois, (București: Humanitas, 1999).

our usual representations about life and the others.¹⁴⁹ From this perspective, as we tolerance, political correctness is the capacity to refrain from doing harm. Political correctness is tolerance. Political correctness is one's assumed wish to do good. It does not function as a threatening *big brother*. It represents the good eye and the wish to do good and the joy to share the world's kindness with those who appear to belong to other worlds but with whom one lives every day. As a practice of tolerance, political correctness does not resemble love but it teaches us that being good means all or nothing.

Although different from it, like love, political correctness is, in the postmodern terms of tolerance practices, a kind of call from paradise, a nostalgia of the being that comes for each and situates all differently and equally authentically in existence. Let us not forget, however, that the virtue of love may grow until it reaches the paradisiacal state. It can also suffocate us and take us to its hell if, step by step, we go deeper in its extreme and obsessive forms of its practice. Aurel Codoban says that "Excessive love, fetishizing sacralization of the loved object or of love are pathological. Excessive love that we direct to someone unsettles – by infatuation or pride – or leads to misfortune".¹⁵⁰ Likewise, political correctness, when out from the comfort zone of respect, pushes us to the hell of violence and to an empty wish for understanding among people. In interhuman relationships, a sense of

¹⁴⁹ Terence Rajivan Edward, "Taking the concepts of others seriously", *META: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy*, vol III, No. 1 (2016): 143–153.

¹⁵⁰ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 11.

measure must be promoted as a constant moral and spiritual growth. It makes tolerance a practice of respect, capable to reach everyone's heart and clear the way for all following it. Tolerance is a complex form of appreciation and self respect that one gracefully and gratefully turns to the others.

This is the main reason for which we should turn tolerance into a way of life. It must not develop into an ideology nor be abandoned to ideological practices, because they are inclined to take extreme forms. The sense of measure must govern it in all the particular aspects we may find in our daily life. Tolerance must be a way of being and of encountering the other in an existential dialog opening continuously towards respect and reciprocity. The essential is given by the light each one puts into the other to lit one's own life. In the philosophical thought, Levinas provides a constructive view fighting any violence, in which alterity is valorized by the very fact that the Infinite may be read on the Other's face – a good opportunity to bring it into existence.¹⁵¹ In Christianity, this light was called love, love for the one close to you which is built on the love for oneself. Although routinely it is not associated to love, political correctness is a secular value rising from the urge “Love your neighbor like you love yourself“ (Leviticus 19: 18).¹⁵² If we bring into discussion the interpersonal relationships sphere and place it on the grounds of the need to cohabitate, we may

¹⁵¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalitate și infinit. Eseu despre exterioritate*, Translated by Marius Lazurca, (Iași: Polirom, 1999).

¹⁵² *Biblia sau Sfînta Scriptură*, (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1982).

note one of the most generous ideas which, although not enunciated for this purpose, is in support of the need to recognize alterity: “What we may hope for from love is to impose alterity, difference, nonidentity and the obligation to recognize it... The alterity we have the occasion to meet is the presence of the other. If there is a place in which the other may be credited, may become a purpose for us not a means, this place is love”¹⁵³, states Aurel Codoban in his reflections on the hermeneutic of love.

We are, thus, before an existential style practiced under the sign of presence, ethics and imperative respect. Recognizing the value of alterity includes this existential style built on the value of the human being in intersubjective relationships, even if it already coexists with several existential styles.

5.5. Desire reconstruction and philosophical counseling

When self-identified as an existential stylist, Aurel Codoban merely proposes an intellectual exercise more often called philosophical counseling. Such a proposal brings a major benefit to the one accepting it, because it is a type of service of limited circulation on the ideas market, of support and services. Aurel Codoban carries out such an activity as a volunteering service to his community. In this sense, he calls on informal meeting and dialogue frameworks, in the proceedings of the professor of philosophy, love hermeneutics, non-verbal communication or effective communication. In addition, there

¹⁵³ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 12.

is his quality of theorist of multiple modes to reconstruct reality in the communication process, which brings additional contribution to his professionalism as an existential stylist. Such a source to improve life's quality and beauty should not be eluded because although it has developed very much in the past years and has penetrated Romania too¹⁵⁴, philosophical counseling should be seen as a rare blue flower one must enjoy every time one has the chance to access it. Philosophical counseling is learnt over long periods of time, is lived and experimented permanently. A good philosophic counselor is the one who allows being invaded by text complexity to the same extent he/she allows the turmoil of life's complexity. The mystery of texts and of one's own life are useful instruments to decode the unknown in other people's lives, may they be metaphysical crises or simple approaches of philosophical dilemmas marking one's existence. All these ought to be visible but leave gentle traces in the other's world. As a philosopher one cannot enter the other's life and not make your presence felt, as much as one cannot enter the others' souls like you went into mud with your boots. Once the process is closed, philosophical counseling should leave the impression that it came with a flame born in the personal concerns from people's wisdom and the experience of lived life.

Such a flame belonging to natural world but always feeding on its own supernatural resources is, in its turn, love. If you listen to Aurel Codoban's thoughts on love, you will find that love is such a powerful force that is

¹⁵⁴ Lou Marinoff, *Ghidul filosofului practician*; Vasile Hațegan, *Consilierea filosofică. De la practică la profesie*.

available to you because its source is not outside but deeply rooted in yourself, in the totally special energies born from desire. This explains the fact that love brings you closer to Being, it is manifested as an internal peace of your presence aspiring to reach transcendence. As long as you exist in the physical dimension, you cannot lose love and love cannot leave you unless you have abandoned yourself. Love brings the graceful state of your presence with all the other beings in the calm energy you use to connect with those you wish to live the same life. Precisely for this reason, we say about love that it is a form to manifest communication. It aims for the depth of each man and each human being, as it indicates the imagery world beyond finite forms, a model of any connection expansion. In this sense, we need to understand Aurel Codoban's statements which give love the quality of "paradise legacy".

However, we must not forget the existential philosopher's statement that "we are witnessing the dusk of love as metaphysical desire. Pushing it on a secondary plane in the love dynamics of this metaphysical dimension leads to a favoring of erotic desire. At the same time with the consecrated centrality of the body in the postmodern experience, "love – or "relationship" – no longer functions based on the archetype model, which was that of the androgyny and soul mate, but rather based on the difference and plurality of egos constituting us. Having thus access to multiple egos of various bodies, the sexual, erotic collector or even belonging to passion-love and romantic love, builds a collection of bodies or even souls that in late postmodernity, different from Plato, keeps

them disjoint, does not want to amalgamate as archetypes. From the detail of uniqueness, one moves to the uniqueness of detail”.¹⁵⁵

There is, however, a turning point that we may note as a potential field of desire reconstruction through specific intervention by an existential stylist. As a cognition instrument, love supposes a very complex dynamic. It keeps to itself the possibility to recover a permanent aspiration to transcendence and a presence of the Transcendence in the ideal of this aspiration. It is true this form of metaphysical love, that involves ascertaining the subject in rapport to the absolute, no longer has the face described by Christianity. It did not evade into the post-modern representations of the sacred either. It starts from the reality of the body and its spiritual integration in the ego construction imagined along the five dimensions (physical, social, personal, spiritual and religious) that appear to us as an existential datum of the human being.

Such a process consecrating the human being, that supposes all existential dimensions, is possible because an indicator of postmodern crisis is the fact that “Personal life has become an open project: sexuality is now accessible in the development of various life styles in which interactions must be permanently negotiated and solved”.¹⁵⁶ It is only now when love is threatened with emptying its metaphysical content, that the accompanying desire and pleasure are not reduced only to sensuality and physical pleasure.¹⁵⁷ Pleasure always has a camouflaged spiritual

¹⁵⁵ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 97.

¹⁵⁶ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 100.

¹⁵⁷ Epicur, *Epicur și epicureismul antic*, Bilingual edition by Andrei Cornea, (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, București:

tension, even if this is not always determining to the contextual significance that pleasure, and love implicitly, may have. This may be a starting point to develop a connection and a dialogue with the way love is understood in the community one belongs to. In such a context, philosophical counseling may create solutions to solve the crisis and may provide instruments to negotiate authenticity.

Humanitas, 2016); John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

6. Our Daily Body and Its Instrumental Role in Communication

6.1. Rediscovering the body and its sacredness

Postmoderns rediscover the body in the effort to rediscover themselves. Valorizing one's own corporality becomes part of the need to assert one's authenticity and personal identity. The body is the main element around which the human condition idea is built. It is almost impossible to describe the various individual manifestations of this condition if we attempt to ignore the fact that the human being is characterized by manifesting as a subject in a body with personal traits. As a matter of fact, the thematics of personal identity always considers, as a fundamental element of the interference with oneself and with the others, the interface of human beings' embodied nature. No matter what other elements are involved in defining humans, the body is a must. As it happened so far with the soul, the body is imagined as an intrinsic value. Thus, the body becomes a center around which the whole existence is organized, having a wide significance range. The body structures the various types of relationships aimed at valorizing the body as a source of experiences that may be associated with experiencing life's sacredness and ritualizing behaviors in our daily life.

In this context, one of the most interesting perspectives on the human body's rediscovery and valorization

is found in Aurel Codoban's reflections of communication philosophy¹⁵⁸, love hermeneutics, existential counseling and postmodern religiosity.¹⁵⁹ Aurel Codoban notes that we have reached a time in the cultural evolution in which "the body seems to be nowadays the great winner in our world history. It has gotten to be omnipresent in our civilization's discourse and practices, and its display, more or less nude, knows no limits of censorship or contrary symbolism. It is present for oneself, not in anyone's name, and the unwavering attention it receives has the exclusive reasoning of a cult".¹⁶⁰

Highlighted here is one of the most powerful forms to valorize and sacralize the human body. By projecting his philosophical reflections against a double charged, Christian and humanist, background, Aurel Codoban achieves a synthesis of significances pertaining to corporality. However, on the one hand, the area of sacred remnants camouflaged in the corporality imagery is displayed, following procedures we may read in Mircea Eliade's convincing dialectic of the sacred and the profane.¹⁶¹ Actually, Aurel

¹⁵⁸ Aurel Codoban, *Body, Image and Relationship. From Culture of Knowledge to Culture of Communication* (Saarbruchen, Germany: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013).

¹⁵⁹ Sandu Frunză, "Does communication construct reality? A New Perspective on the Crisis of Religion and the Dialectic of the Sacred", *Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială*, vol. 35 (2011): 180–193; Sandu Frunză, "The relational individual in a communication built society. Towards a new philosophy of communication", *Transylvanian Review*, vol. XX, No. 3 (2011): 140–152.

¹⁶⁰ Aurel Codoban, *Imperiul comunicării. Corp, imagine și relaționare*, (Cluj: Editura Idea Design & Print, 2011), 7.

¹⁶¹ Mircea Eliade, *Sacrul și profanul*, Translated by Brîndușa Prelipceanu, (București: Humanitas, 2013); Mircea Eliade, *Nașteri mistice*, Translated by Mihaela Grigore Paraschivescu, (București: Humanitas, 2013).

Codoban is one of the most original philosophers of religion, who construes his own approach of the religious phenomenon starting from the works of Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu.¹⁶² On the other hand, we find forms of body sacralization procedures, typical of postmodern man, marked by phenomena of life and corporal being reasoning, emptied of any mystery.

In Christian thinking, we are used to see the entire effort to spiritualize, to found the human being mystery, as coming from action of the soul as source of noblesse, purity, spirituality. Dumitru Stăniloae, one of the most significant Christian theologians in the 20th century, stated that “in the human soul, there are powers that organize matter in the body and act through it”.¹⁶³ Consequently, the body is an instrument created by vital energies for human historical action. The human being is soul in the flesh, given the fact that according to the human condition definition, man is a spiritual being par excellence, and compared to his spirituality, all the other elements are merely secondary. The soul is the centre and the margins, it is the origin element, the source of authenticity and ultimate scope, characterized by a perfection to be read in eschatological key. Benefitting from an energy source that may be associated to divine energies, man can transfigure his being’s corporal aspect. Most obvious is this possibility of human capacity to overcome biological, corporal feelings, through spiritualized feelings, integrated within the absolute manifesting horizon. A good exam-

¹⁶² Aurel Codoban, *Sacru și ontofanie. Pentru o nouă filosofie a religiilor*, (Iași: Editura Polirom, 1998).

¹⁶³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, (Craiova: Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, 1987), 41.

ple for the Christian way of thinking about this spiritualizing effort is provided by Dumitru Stăniloae when he describes the transcending phenomenon in the reciprocated participation in the other's being, through the spiritual effect of the total love relationship (body and soul): "Man and woman have in their joined seed, concentrated, not only their bodies, but also, in a whole, each body and each soul, and their joined souls in the union of their bodies, give birth not only to a new body, but also to a new soul, certainly not without God's work".¹⁶⁴ The body is alive through love, and is embodied in the total offering of both in love. In this way, the soul of divine nature and the body of biological nature become a unique reality, without confusing or canceling one another. In a theological view, this union is fed on the union of human nature and divine nature in the person of Christ, and is permanently open to humanity in Christians' access to the Eucharist. The human body is thus always reinterpreted theologically in an eschatological and Eucharistic view.

Unlike in the theological interpretations of the body, Aurel Codoban proposes a cultural view in which, without putting aside the Christian symbolism, the body is seen through the lens of Western cultural models. One of them is that of love, as it is expressed in potential interpretations of the androgyny myth described by Plato in his *Banquet*.¹⁶⁵ One of the most important steps of perfection through love in Plato's philosophy brings forth the beauty of bodies and their perfection. If we consider

¹⁶⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, 41.

¹⁶⁵ Platon, *Banchetul*. Marsilio Ficino, *Asupra iubirii sau "Banchetul" lui Platon*, Translated by Cezar Papacostea and Nina Facon, (Timișoara: Editura de Vest, 1992).

this stage of the need for body perfection, we note that the Western culture has exaggerated in its unilateral interpretation of the androgyny myth, in the symbolic quest for the soul mate. But the androgyny myth must function as a total myth, as a totality myth. Recovering the unity broken once by the separation of the originary androgyny is the finality of the entire magical action of love. The absence felt by the one in love urges attaining the final scope, to recover the unity of the mutilated body. Love, the erotical enthusiasm sending beings on the quest for the other half is only the means, the recovery of totality is the scope. In the Western explanation of love, we have forgotten the scope in the name of the spiritual participation to the world of Ideas. However, we have abandoned the body as a necessary condition for the magical recovery of oneness in the spiritual love of the two halves seeking to attain love. In this way we should understand Aurel Codoban's statement that "satisfying love means, to Plato, a recovery of the primordial androgyny, a return to the original indistinction, similar to a return to the sky of pure Ideas and to quenched desire".¹⁶⁶ Postmodern man experiences love at this level, of similitude Corporal union occurs in a logic similar to participation in the world of Ideas.

Of course, postmodern man can no longer recover the Eucharistic imagery of reflection on the body except for calling on a theological logic. However, using the philosophical reflection, he may think of a new symbolic integration of the biological body. One such example may be that of the mythologies that Aurel Codoban places at

¹⁶⁶ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 29.

the foundation of passionate love, inspirational to contemporary man. One seeks a model to understand corporality by which it regains its dignity, so that the body should not be compelled to end as a corpse. One feels the need for a transcendent dimension attached.

6.2. Death and the body's symbolic investment

One of the ways to protect the statute of the body is the symbolic shaping of corporality. Due to its finitude, the body is associated to a symbolic communication system aimed at diminishing the anguish prior to the inevitable end. Death gets a dimension in eternity just because it is conceived as part of a complex system of sacredness generating constructions. In this perspective, the feeling of eternity is born out of impotence: man's vulnerability before its awareness of being a finite being, at least as regards the corporal resources. The body is the one that makes out of death a totally special reality. In the absence of the body centrality in the explanatory system of human life, death may lose its metaphysical force. Closely connected to the finite human being, death is the one that sets itself as a need to transcend and as a presence of transcendence.

We have here an open perspective on life de death, with a reciprocated integration force that functions both in the existential reality and in the imaginative registers. This explains the possibility to see the body as an imagined entity or rather, closer to Aurel Codoban's spirit, as a phantasmatic body. Abandoning the paradigm of death as an event somewhere down the existence line, we note

that the human impossibility to accept death's inevitability created the situation in which "Death may appear as an unnatural interruption of life and as a bad thing. One may suppose that the first summons of this evil was the indistinct representation of life and death, a sort of *coincidentia oppositorum* supported by the indistinction between the reality of the oneiric world and of the daily world".¹⁶⁷

In such a symbolic and integrating perspective, the idea of death is closely correlated to the need to build a coherent view on the meaning of life. As a self-transcending form and as a form revealing transcendence, the meaning of life overlaps in the postmodern imagery the meaning of death. Death becomes something absurd to a life perceived as meaningless. Only by the fact that we have the capacity to give meaning to our own life, death starts having a meaning. It becomes coherent in the meaning investment process, through the configuration of meanings heading to the future. It is one of the reasons for which life and death may equally contribute to building significance, making it possible to construct a life meaning therapeutics.¹⁶⁸

It is not at all accidental that in the revelation at the foundation of Western civilization, God's embodiment

¹⁶⁷ Aurel Codoban, *Exerciții de interpretare*, 118.

¹⁶⁸ Viktor E. Frankl, *Omul în căutarea sensului vieții*, Translated by Silviu Guranda, (București: Meteor Press, 2009); Rollo May, *Descoperirea ființei. Fundamentele analizei existențiale*, Translated by Victor Popescu, (București: Editura Trei, 2013); Emmy van Deurzen, Claire Arnold-Baker (Eds.), *Existential Perspectives on Human Issues. A Handbook for Therapeutic Practice*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

becomes a necessary event in the human becoming logic and in the logic of the divine intervention in human life. In the Western imagery, absolute transcendence becomes body and restores itself the entire creation centered on man as a holder of transcendence marks. This Christian contribution to the development of the religious outlook and imagery, is the most important part of the legacy that postmodern man may valorize in his commitment to rethink the rapport to corporality. The body is no longer the source of darkness and suffering, as no longer can it be a source of pleasures ending in increased intensity. The body is positioned, at the same time with Christianity, in a border zone that makes possible the encounter between the sacred and the profane, between flesh and flesh transfiguration.

This is a good opportunity for postmodern thinking to establish connections between humanist philosophies recovering the body and valorizing corporality, on the one hand, and the symbolic legacy of Christianity in the successive secularization stages of religious significance and human life representations, on the other. A possible symbolic reconstruction of the body may be the one that reintegrates to the body both its life and death. Life and death inseparateness in such a unitary structure brings the body close to the Being, makes it inseparable from Being. In existential reflections, the phenomenon is similar to the one in which Christian thinking associates to the death and resurrection of the body. Christianity gave resurrection to man to make death more bearable, to mark the possibility to cancel anything lacking in the being of the body in a process of exiting death through resurrection.

This is the utmost spiritualization of the body that the Western man could conceive. It gives the body its maximum content in that the Christian revelation sets a transfiguration of the body through death and resurrection, thus giving the body its own identity through its death and resurrection. This way, death appears in Christianity as a form of sacrifice and love.

In Aurel Codoban's reflections on love we note that philosophy tends to place desire at the foundation of love explanations. The metaphysical desire is directed towards an absolute entity, while desire understood as Eros is most often directed towards finite entities. Postmodern man attempts a fusion of the two types of desire. Therefore, the ambiguity in the way Aurel Codoban explains the androgyny myth and the soul's desire to return to the sky of ideas, mediated by the death of the body. Such ambiguity is maintained by the fact that we connect soul's ascension to the issue of immortality and reinterpret death in this view. This difficulty is overcome if we understand that "any desire is ultimately a desire for death, because any desire is the desire to no longer be what we are, to exceed our limits. The passion-love means allowing destiny to exceed our limited and boring freedom and responsibility. We have in ourselves a sort of passion for death, which is hard to repress: we all want to be different from what we are, which is to die as an individual form"¹⁶⁹ followed within strictly delineated parameters by a certain stage of our becoming. This way, we have to accept that any desire conceals death as a symbolic form of exceed-

¹⁶⁹ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 28.

ing the individual and entering the symbolic register of existence, which implicitly means a release from soul's pressure and human freedom to assert the corporal being.

Against the background of its symbolic recovery, the body may become a mystery to be explored, cultivated and valorized to the highest degree. It is not idolized, nor turned into a fetish, but rather a subject of ultimate concern. Although rendered absolute as an ultimate reality, the body benefits from a concentrated interest similar to the one that we normally associate to types of behavior in the sacred. It is a witness to itself and to its relational universe, it fills symbolic content into the whole world and posits itself in the midst of sacralizing ritual forms. Life and death coexist, cohabit and maintain our flow through time. Irvin D. Yalom stated: "death permanently whispers under the thin membrane of life, and vastly influences our experience and acts".¹⁷⁰ Life as such becomes, this way, the ground for a series of complex connections developing under the sign of transcending and transcendence, even though they do not call on a trans-mundan transcendence.

For a clearer perception of the way in which Aurel Codoban connects life and death, the body and language, and its symbolism we need to appropriate the statement: "Human existence is, to our philosophy, a transcending without transcendence... Therefore, my interest to the two situations in which this transcending without a transcendence exists: love and death".¹⁷¹ Love accompanies death,

¹⁷⁰ Irvin D. Yalom, *Psihoterapia existențială*, Translated by Bogdan Boghițoi, (București: Editura Trei, 2010), 43.

¹⁷¹ Aurel Codoban, "Comunicarea construiește realitatea", 11.

which in its turn accompanies the dying body. Only in such expansion, may one discover oneself, and develop at a higher level.

6.3. Love, Life and Death

By putting postmodern human existence under the sign of transcendence without transcendence, Aurel Codoban's interest is focused on two forms in which it can manifest: love and death¹⁷². We usually say that love is attracted to beauty, so love is mostly related to life. When it is associated with death, it becomes nostalgia, it becomes longing, it is projected as an escape from the bosom of being. It is love that brings the gifts of life and offers itself to life. The most beautiful gift that love gives to life is the listening in silence. Such an active silence helps life ignore the whispers of death, the murmur of passing measured by the rhythm of nature, the funeral dynamics of the ritualization of life. Love is the one that envelops us with the breath of its presence, it encompasses us with its arms to keep us from being tempted by what the poets have described as the sweet kiss of death. In relation to our own life, there is no more faithful spirit than that of love. The fidelity of love is proven by the fact that, once we receive it in our lives, it only requires us to encourage it to watch and keep us in balance. Free from any obligation, love makes us feel free, more hopeful, to offer joy, to refuse the slavery of any kind of sadness and have

¹⁷² Aurel Codoban, "*Comunicarea construiește realitatea*", 11; Aurel Codoban, *Exerciții de interpretare*, 118; Aurel Codoban, *Imperiul comunicării. Corp, imagine și relaționare*, 21.

the power to never bend the knee in the face of death. Such a perspective derives from the way we relate to our existence from the perspective of the relationship between being and nothingness. Love is part of being human and always involves engaging in enriching the being with every love experience individuals undertake. Compared to love, which is the fullness of life, death is just an absence, a lack of being, which has no consistency, although in its absence the western man can no longer define his being, his presence, his fullness. This explains why there are human beings who are content with the simple fact that love exists, thus believing they are safe. This increase in security is one of the primary forces that underlines the role that love plays in someone's life. However, other dimensions can be added to this. I would like to mention here only the relational aspect, the intersubjective and social dimension of love. One of the forms in which it manifests is visible in the act of weeping. If you love, you will never feel that you are crying by yourself, but your negative emotional state will always be accompanied by the feeling of an ineffable presence, which is nothing else but love itself.

This may be a reason to trust those who claim that the desire to love is born out of fear of loneliness. But I have always affirmed that the desire to love is rather born from the desire and the joy of being together. If we want to introduce the theme of fear, then I believe that our life has a deeper meaning if we explore fear on a more profound level and replace the fear of loneliness with the fear of death.

Although the angst in the face of death, as it was approached by existentialist philosophies¹⁷³, is one of the most productive ideas in the philosophy of personal development, I would rather associate this fear with the feeling of numinous.¹⁷⁴ Let us remember that Rudolf Otto explains the experience of the sacred from a double perspective: on the one hand, it offers an experience of extraordinary fascination in the face of spirit's greatness and infinity that flows into an empirical experience, and on the other hand, equally overwhelming is the failure experienced through the fear of not totally losing yourself in an experience of infinite life.¹⁷⁵ This fascination, doubled by the shudder in the face of Absolute Presence, can be used as a metaphor for how love can be experienced on a personal level, depending on the different types of experiences individuals have throughout their lives. Fascination and anguish can also be part of the ritualization of the distance that love helps us transit between the limits of life assertion and the limits of death.

This dimension of total personal involvement is characteristic for the relational subject who has internalized love. With such statements that offers a view of a life and death polarity, I do not want to suggest an interruption of the permanent relationship between life and death as

¹⁷³ Søren Kierkegaard, *Frică și cutremur*, Translated by Leo Stan, (București: Editura Humanitas, 2002).

¹⁷⁴ Aurel Codoban, *Sacru și ontofanie. Pentru o nouă filosofie a religiilor*, (Iași: Editura Polirom, 1998).

¹⁷⁵ Rudolf Otto, *Sacrul. Despre elementul irațional din ideea divinului și despre relația lui cu raționalul. Despre numinos*, Translated by Ioan Milea and Silvia Irimiea, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Limes, 2015).

distinct realities, but I want to emphasize that we can control the negative effects of such a common journey (we experience both life and the progression towards death) by the fact that love silently conceals death, fueling with its enthusiasm the power of life.

Death appears to us as a historical event that intervenes in the life of the individual as a kind of end point only because we judge death strictly from the point of view of the physical dimension of human existence. If we approach this from a spiritual perspective, we may notice that although it is very comfortable to define death as a landmark for the end of life, the presence of love is an indicator of the concomitance of life and death, even in systems where it is shown to us that at a certain time, we reach a point where life and death take on completely different paths, one towards eternal life, another towards death associated with decay and disappearance from the mundane register of existence.

It is not by accident that we find life and death under this form of *coincidentia oppositorum*. Aurel Codoban's reading of Mircea Eliade's texts on sacred and profane reveals that the two realities cannot be separated not only because they reflect a unique human stance but also because with postmodernity, we can decipher a concealment of the sacred in the profane¹⁷⁶. The emptiness and the fullness, the presence and the absence are symbolic ways of referring to being. From the perspective of an

¹⁷⁶ Aurel Codoban, "Conceptia lui Eliade despre realitatea și sensul absolute: O transcendență dezantropomorfizată și slăbită", in Aurel Codoban, *Exerciții de interpretare*, (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia XXI, 2011), 126.

ontology of love, life and death represent different ways of expressing existence, which can be defined through the relation to being. A further understanding can be found in the philosophy of communication if we bring into discussion the role that word and silence can have. Aurel Codoban said that “through the problematics of silence the problematics of being is introduced in communication... Silence is the unspoken state of words... Silence is the scent of being”.¹⁷⁷ Active silence or the silent listening that love offers us in the face of life and death problematics becomes plausible through a way of thinking that affirms “philosophies asset of being the first-called to the succession of religion... it is now the gnosis of a negative transcendence”.¹⁷⁸ In such a philosophy, love becomes a form of metaphysical desire in whose name one can live, but can no longer die.

6.4. Body centrality in the postmodern human condition construct

Man is positioned at the interface of transcendence and immanence. Such a position is mediated not only by the intertwined mundane and transmundane imagery, but also by the fact that the Western human paradigm is the one looking upon man in view of the body and soul unity. Structured in a Christian way of understanding, the Westerner’s perception on the human being is linked

¹⁷⁷ Aurel Codoban, “Tăcerea divină și comunicarea umană. O ipoteză de lucru”, in Aurel Codoban, *Exerciții de interpretare*, (Cluj-Napoca: DaciaXXI, 2011), 237.

¹⁷⁸ Aurel Codoban, *Filosofia ca gen literar*, Second edition, revised and enlarge, (Cluj: Ideea Design & Print, 2005), 104.

especially with his immortal soul, privileged in understanding human condition in connection with the passing body. In such a context, we may join Aurel Codoban to see the way in which the paradigm change occurs and leads in the Western Christian culture to a very nuanced understanding of man as a body and soul being. Thus, “until the beginning of the 20th century, Western thought has been governed by the hierarchical metaphysical dualism of soul and body through which the body was excluded not only from communication but also from the sphere of culture in general. The body has been religiously and philosophically devalued and kept at bay through discipline and will, through the stringency of ritual”.¹⁷⁹ Gradually, the emphasis on soul centrality in the Christian thought shifts to the postmodern thinking of body centrality. Such thinking does not intend to be anti-Christian even if it often sets off either in contradiction with theological thinking, or in reply to traditional interpreting, or to dispute the religious dialog on reality. It is rather about the need to strike a balance that postmodern man shows as a way to recover the body which has been degraded by so many religious representations. We should merely identify here forms of human life sacralization that keep the symbolic importance provided by the Christian world, but with ways to emphasize and fill in human significance, valorized at different intensity. When we place such constructions face to face with Christianity, we should rather see them as non-exclusive alternative

¹⁷⁹ Aurel Codoban, *Body, Image and Relationship. From Culture of Knowledge to Culture of Communication*, (Saarbruchen, Germany: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013), 13.

forms, in some cases even derived from Christianity or from the dialog with it, instead of viewing them in conflictual positions.

Apparently, postmodernity becomes irreconcilable with the Christian view. Aurel Codoban shows that “when man was planned as a created being, predominantly with soul, his nature was planned top to bottom, from the transcendent essence to his particular flesh embodiment as a person... we have come to give to the body the respect that was once given to the soul. The change is not so much in reality – we are so far viewing man as body as we were viewing man as soul – but rather in a paradigm shift. Only now is the soul inevitably forsaken”.¹⁸⁰ In fact, we are not so far from the Christian valorization of life. Even when the soul seems forsaken, it does not leave the symbolic game of corporality. This is something similar to body abandonment or to the death of the body in the ascetic or mystic views. The mystics of the soul’s union with the divinity did not abandon the body, it rather transfigured it, the body was improved to such extent that it kept the individuality and personal experience at the time of the passing to the supranatural world, in the godly process.¹⁸¹ Even when the body becomes light, as on the Mount Tabor, it acquires a type of experience in which the corporal dimension is perceptible in the encounter experience and is recognizable as such.

¹⁸⁰ Aurel Codoban, *Imperiul comunicării. Corp, imagine și relaționare*, 23.

¹⁸¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ascetică și mistică creștină sau teologia vieții spirituale*, Note on the edition and Postface Sandu Frunză, (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 1993), 337.

When talking about abandoning body thematics, Aurel Codoban's statement should be interpreted similarly to the lone cry, to the feeling of being forsaken that Jesus had in the Getsemani Garden. It is about feeling abandoned, which but confirms the intimacy of coexistence, the inevitability of a connection and the sacredness of the connectivity that it brings with it. Extolling corporality and its centrality mean but a relaunch of man in full swing of his natural, corporal life for his harmonious integration in the system of connections that life as such involves. The concern for the soul does not disappear, it is camouflaged in this need to live and fully valorize the immanent structures of personal behavior.

If in religious terms we may say that the body is temple to the soul, with the lay interpretation of corporality we may say that the temple is not only the temple lived by a spiritual entity. It is equally the resident of the temple. An important aspect in this sense is revealed by the corporal reconstruction, a major concern to contemporary man. One of the significant fragments in Aurel Codoban's text shows that "Relaxation, massage, bioenergetic techniques are all, like fitness, aerobic and body building, therapies and techniques starting from the body and working the body. There seems to be a cult of the body everywhere".¹⁸² Even if, according to the author, this change is under the sign of a diminution of significance, the emphasis being on pleasure, relaxation and fun, the symbolic dimension is not lost in this focus on the body.

Attached to the symbolic dimension is a form of immanent spirituality. One of the forms in which this may

¹⁸² Aurel Codoban, *Imperiul comunicării. Corp, imagine și relaționare*, 7.

decoded is the mirror image. For instance, physical exercise in front of the mirror is part of an external mirroring process which occasions an internal mirror. The presence of the mirror is important in what we attach to the body-language as a symbolic image of the body. In a relational philosophy view, mirroring supposes exiting from oneself and mirroring in the other, as well as a recovery of the self in the practice of this act. I do not exclude that somebody may fall into a kind of narcissism trapping one in front of the mirror. Still, everything occurs in an atmosphere typical of the communication world. Thus, the corporal reconstruction techniques or physical exercises suppose, for a background, a return to oneself, a recognition of the self, a sort of return to oneself and a self recognition. They have a meditation on the need for change. We may accept Aurel Codoban's idea, according to which in view of gesture semantics, "the current interest in corporal language only recently has started involving one's own symbolic corporal language".¹⁸³ However, once the interest in one's own body has started, it will also manifest as personal experience at all existential levels – from the physical one to the social, personal and spiritual one. Such a form of internalization leads to a probing for the ultimate significance that each individual may take further until his/her own culture horizon permits it. Thus, the body becomes part of culture, of interest in oneself, of the life style leading to an ideal version of good life, experienced personally and at community level.

¹⁸³ Aurel Codoban, *Gesturi, Vorbe și Minciuni. Mic tratat de semiotică gestuală extinsă și aplicată*, 93.

6.5. Body as communication instrument

Aurel Codoban speaks about a cult of corporality centered on the body itself. Nevertheless, he insists it is not the body itself, but the body valorized as a communication instrument that sets the new tendency in understanding and sacralizing the body in contemporary man's life. Consistent with the statement that "communication construes reality"¹⁸⁴, his discourse is not about the body as such, but about the body constructed for us. This way, he turns the body into a symbolic entity, valuable in itself because it has the resources to show itself, express and communicate. If for a long time philosophy excluded the body from the its area of concern in the philosophy of communication, in the society based on communication we are in the situation in which "the idea of the body as language, of the communication-body could assert and develop only in an environment dedicated to interpersonal relations therapy and to the pragmatic aspects of communication"¹⁸⁵. Aurel Codoban reproaches philosophers for their lack of interest in the body, and notes that philosophy did not have a problem "accepting the guess, or intuition of the state of the other's soul, communicating directly, even telepathically, between souls"¹⁸⁶, but did not have as open an attitude toward the body.

Aurel Codoban takes us to follow the Hegelian type of construction of alterity to argue that the other is perceived first of all as a body. With postmodernity, the relationship,

¹⁸⁴ Aurel Codoban, "Comunicarea construiește realitatea".

¹⁸⁵ Aurel Codoban, *Imperiul comunicării. Corp, imagine și relaționare*, 15.

¹⁸⁶ Aurel Codoban, *Imperiul comunicării. Corp, imagine și relaționare*, 9.

mediated by the awareness of the presence of the other, is no longer an intersubjective relationship, but one involving two bodies. The body thus enters the communication field: “The idea of alterity was to the same extent like the idea of immanence the one by which the body enters modern Western thinking. As long as the soul is in dialogue with the total alterity of the divinity, the body becomes the way a soul appears to another soul”.¹⁸⁷ Viewed according to the communication philosophy, the widest spread way to valorize the body as a communication instrument is that of “the body as language”. The importance paid nowadays to the body as language is rendered by the fact that in universities that educate and develop youth in the communication field, we have elevated to science the use of corporality to communicate and decode this communication. One of the courses in communication that students seem to enjoy the most is in non-verbal communication, based on generalized body language elements and hermeneutical practices associated to it in the professional world, in public space and in generally in communication situations.

When he talks about body communication, Aurel Codoban means face expressions, eyes movements, physical expressivity, various hand and legs movements, tactile messages, voice modulation, according to regular semiotic practices.¹⁸⁸ All these are analyzed with new nuances

¹⁸⁷ Aurel Codoban, *Imperiul comunicării. Corp, imagine și relaționare*, 10.

¹⁸⁸ Allan Pease, *Limbajul trupului*, (București: Editura Polimark, 1993); Septimiu Chelcea (coord.), *Comunicarea nonverbală în spațiul public*, (București: Tritonic, 2004); Paul Ekman, *Emoții date pe față. Cum să citim sentimentele pe chipul uman*, (București: Editura Trei,

by gender, age, culture. Usually, body language supposes a face-to-face communication situation.¹⁸⁹ However, research indicates that the interest in non-verbal communication has extended to a wide diversity of manifestations, from direct interactions to communication mediated by virtual space and new.¹⁹⁰ One potential question that may come up is turned into a hypothesis in the reflections on non-verbal language. It supposes a choice between the primordial corporal significance intrinsic in corporality manifestations and the prime symbolic theories on corporality based on which the entire gesture semiotics is developed into a corporal language hermeneutics. Irrespective of the area to which we took this working hypothesis, we have to note the effect in discursive practice. It translates in an increased importance paid to corporal language and use of body as communication instrument and body as language.

Although he talks about a cultural determination of gestures, originating in the religious, magic, alchemic, astrological symbolism substratum, or in mystic esoterism, repeatedly appearing is the idea that the body “is not a sign of precise significance, like the word, or a syntactic sign cluster, like verbal messages, but it is rather crossed by what we could call signifying intentions”.¹⁹¹ The

2009); Joseph Messinger, *Gesturile care vă vor schimba viața. Căștigați încredere și stimă de sine*, (București: Litera, 2012).

¹⁸⁹ Aurel Codoban, *Imperiul comunicării. Corp, imagine și relaționare*, 15–16.

¹⁹⁰ Aurel Codoban, *Gesturi, Vorbe și Minciuni. Mic tratat de semiotică gestuală extinsă și aplicată*, 146.

¹⁹¹ Aurel Codoban, *Gesturi, Vorbe și Minciuni. Mic tratat de semiotică gestuală extinsă și aplicată*, 11.

philosopher says that what is most obvious in public communication is the fact that social relations impose upon corporal interactions the clarification and behavior ritualizing that renders significance to corporal manifestations. Thus, the body becomes important in varied communication contexts. There may be distortions in this infusion of significance emptying initial meanings but keeping the symbolic structure of communication.¹⁹² Proofs of this are the communication situations widely spread in commercials, music clips, commercial and cultural communication, etc.¹⁹³

The philosopher notes that gestures start falling off the body into a movement of expressivity competing to the one of the body as language. They belong, however, to a common reality, that of the relational function of communication. Aurel Codoban also examines other functions of the corporal language, like the expressive function, the phatic, conative and even poetic function. We are interested here only in the relational aspect, because our body reconstrues itself in the postmodern thinking in this effort to reconstruct the relations of the individual with his own inner world, with the world shaped by interpersonal relations, with the world of interactions in the environment or with the world of entities and spiritual manifestations. Each time, the body intervenes with

¹⁹² Aurel Codoban, *Imperiul comunicării. Corp, imagine și relaționare*, 19.

¹⁹³ Georgio Agamben, *Nuditatea*, Translated by Anamaria Gebăilă, (București: Humanitas, 2014); Martin Lindstrom, *Buyology. Adevăruri și minciuni despre motivele pentru care cumpărăm*, Translated by Mihnea Sofonea, Preface by Paco Underhill, (București: Publica, 2011); Pascal Bruckner, *Paradoxul iubirii*, Translated by Irina Mavrodin, (București: Editura Trei, 2015).

its relational function. Overestimated corporality appears to the author as a paradoxical situation in which “The body seems to disappear behind its own visibility... The body presence, the imposed corporality denotes the Western culture’s adhesion to a certain communication type, although different from the information transmittal–relating. Imposing communication as a relationship is in fact a celebration of the body’s pure vitality, namely of “nude life”, lacking the old symbolic-cultural determinations”.¹⁹⁴ Still, as a communication instrument, the body is saturated with existence.

One should note here that the author does not mention the disappearance of the symbolic function of the body, even though he places it in an obvious dissolution. In the statement according to which the body may disappear in its own reconstruction, a new way to expose the body is indicated, the one based on communication. Such a phenomenon occurs as the whole reality is built on communication. The body cannot become real except by achieving itself in a process of its communication. Precisely for this reason we must accept that with the body-language a metaphysical dimension of corporality persists. The body is saturated with being. But the old symbolism of the human body is replaced with a new one. The way in which the body-image game becomes relevant in the postmodern culture is significant, for the position of the body against the soul. The body is not in opposition to the soul, nor its replacement. It is reevaluated symbolically. Aurel Codoban shows that “In reality,

¹⁹⁴ Aurel Codoban, *Imperiul comunicării. Corp, imagine și relaționare*, 25.

the body was an interface not so much of the soul as of the cultural programs interfering with it. And the dialectic of the sacred and the profane says that any desacralization is a kind of resacralization, as much as in communication where every decoding is a recoding. The presence of the body in the public space and the interest in communication, as a reconstruction of the relationship and not as information transmittal is thus also the consequence of “sacralization” of the nude life in ethics, politics and law studies”.¹⁹⁵

One of the ways to empty the old contents associated to the symbolism of corporality lies in the statement: “But our consumerist era’s sins are to eat without being hungry, to drink without being thirsty, and to make love without loving”.¹⁹⁶ Undoubtedly, the ideologies of consumerism had an important role in the way the body self-consumes or is consumed. A new symbolic order is instituted here, very visible especially in the representations of erotism or of the erotic of the body in communication, with all the stereotypes associated to such representations.¹⁹⁷ The promise of a well-being state denotes

¹⁹⁵ Aurel Codoban, *Imperiul comunicării. Corp, imagine și relaționare*, 24.

¹⁹⁶ Codoban, Aurel, *Amurgul iubirii. De la iubirea pasiune la comunicarea corporală*, 32.

¹⁹⁷ Mihaela Frunză, Iulia Grad, Sandu Frunză, “Ethical Aspects of Gender Stereotypes in Romanian Advertising”, *ESSACHESS. Journal for Communication Studies*, vol. 9 no. 1(17) (2016): 143–157; Dumitru Filipeanu, Florin-Alexandru Luca, Carmen Anton, Mihaela Cananau, Alina-Costina Luca, Emil Anton, “The Impact of Social Networks on the Individuals as well as Socio-Cultural Stereotypes and Social Dependence on this Source”, *Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială*, vol. 51 (2015): 122–134; Tom Reichert, Jacqueline Lambiase (eds.), *Sex in Advertising: Perspectives on the Erotic Appeal*, (New York: Routledge, 2002).

new faces of desire and a new type of affection in which “Consumer behavior seeks to obtain bodily welfare because if the body feels well, man feels well, in obvious opposition to those old practices that valued the asceticism of the body for the well-being of the human”.¹⁹⁸ In addition its other functions, the body as language enters a dynamic of consumption and symbolic exchange.

6.6. Body as restoring principle of the human being

In terms of communication and personal development, we note that postmodern man attributes to the body the founding role for all types of relations in which its development may be involved. This centrality of the body is given by its integration into a system valorizing human condition in conformity with valorizing existence according to communication and the construction of deep meanings of existence in communication. In such context, Aurel Codoban indicates the importance of the fact that “the body came to be omnipresent in our civilization’s practices and discourses. Now more than ever and apparently out of the sudden the body is perceived, theoretically and practically, as the *situs* and the means of numerous signifying systems: the expressiveness of the voice, gestures, behaviors or, from another perspective, cosmetics, clothes, signs of social status, of institutionalized relations, of politeness and etiquette, of feelings

¹⁹⁸ Ioan Hosu, “The empire of communication: body, image and relation”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 11, issue 31 (2012): 201.

and attitudes, related to roles and social positions, signs of arts or of its own vitality. This generalized inversion of the asymmetrical relationship between body and soul, customary for the Western world – for the profit of the body, along with the corporeism of our days determines the body to enter the scene of communication and imposes the idea of body as language”.¹⁹⁹ Thus, passing from soul centrality to body centrality in the views on human condition in the Western culture is seen as a return of man to a natural environment, as a rediscovery of man as part of nature. Such statements do not counter the idea that what is natural and biological is significant, but rather the body culturally built in communication situations. A return of the body to itself, under the form that in Michel Foucault’s terms could be named self-concern²⁰⁰, to suppose the association of the physical; dimension importance with that which spiritualizes man through internalizing and placing in a cultural discourse.

Such perspective compels nuances as regards nature and culture, the biological body and human body built as language, between body and its image. Considering a wide range of interpretations, when Aurel Codoban establishes similarities between the obvious triumph of the image and the triumph of corporality in contemporary culture, she deems believes: “Because what was wining, were only meanings of body, only body as language, and not the body as such in its metaphysical meaning, what triumphs now, in this civilization, is a particular type of

¹⁹⁹ Aurel Codoban, *Imperiul comunicării. Corp, imagine și relaționare*, 7.

²⁰⁰ Michel Foucault, *Hermeneutica subiectului. Cursuri la College de France (1981–1982)*, 13–14.

image”.²⁰¹ In this view, the discussion on non-verbal communication is very useful here because “Gestures, that are purely human, are in fact intermediates allowing the passage from nature to culture, from body and behavior to signs and significance, to signs and collective validity of collective validity”.²⁰²

With postmodernity, benefitting from such a universe of significance, the human being re-enters possession of its own body. After for a long time, the history of western culture impressed upon us the fact that man is the owner of his soul and has to take special care of it, we note that the body catches up.

The human being rediscovers responsibility to its own body and gives it special treatment. I shall not open discussions on the extent to which we are owners and when we have total control over our body. It is complicated to decide on the liberties of using the body, often depending on modernity proving us that we are not the rightful owners of our own body or of parts of it. The state may intervene and take away this possession from us. This is a visible fact in the legislation regulating various aspects of bioethics and biopolitics on the human being as a corporal being.²⁰³ Such provisions may contradict

²⁰¹ Aurel Codoban, *Body, Image and Relationship. From Culture of Knowledge to Culture of Communication*, 24.

²⁰² Aurel Codoban, *Gesturi, Vorbe și Minciuni. Mic tratat de semiotică gestuală extinsă și aplicată*, 16.

²⁰³ Mihaela Frunză, Cristina Gavriluță, Beatrice Ioan, “Could body parts be considered property? Bioethical, Anthropological and Metaphysical Issues”, *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Philosophia*, Vol. 58 No. 2 (August 2013): 125–143; Julian J. Koplin, “The Body as Gift, Commodity, or Something in Between: Ethical Implications

the idea that man is the owner of his own body. A property may not only be ceased, donated, offered as gift, but also traded. A special part of bioethics restricts us in this sense.

Other challenges to corporality and its importance in the postmodern man's life may come from the transhumanist theories that diminish the importance of the body through justifications favoring tendencies to improve features (including biological) of the human being.²⁰⁴ As regards instrumentalizing the body, we may expect new intervention forms of the new technologies in the human life, including those focusing intimacy of human manifestations. For example, it is likely for new theories of pleasure to appear since the interaction with beings created through artificial intelligence may replace even sexual pleasure that we conceive is dominated by the corporal encounter with love register.

Any dangers that may be caused by an alienation of the human being shall be eliminated as long as the symbolizing functions of the body will be protected and valorized. Among the multiple functions of the body as

of Advanced Kidney Donation”, *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, vol. 42 issue 5 (2017): 575–596.

²⁰⁴ Michael Hauskeller, *Sex and the Posthuman Condition*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Antonio Sandu, Loredana Vlad, “Beyond Technological Singularity – the Posthuman Condition”, *Postmodern Openings*, vol. 9 issue 1, (2018): 91–108; Aura-Elena Schussler, “Pornography in Transhumanism – Towards a Sexuality of Singularity”, *Postmodern Openings*, vol. 8 issue 1, (2017): 41–56; Tanja Staehler, Alexander Kozin, “Between Platonic Love and Internet Pornography”, *Sexuality and Culture*, vol. 21 Issue 4 (2017): 1120–1139; M. Yavuz Acikalin, Karli K. Watson, Gavan J. Fitzsimons, Michael L. Platt, “Rhesus macaques form for brand logos through sex and social status based advertising”, *Plos One*, vol. 13 issue 2 (2018): art. e0193055.

language, we focus first on the relational function, because “any human communication is communication with somebody before it is the communication about something”.²⁰⁵ The relational function is manifested at all levels as an existential given in the personal development of human condition: relations with the physical world, with the social world, with entities and spiritual beings, with one’s own internal restoring totality. This complex relational structure functions under the sign of total restoring of the human experiences.

According to a symbolic image, we note that as we can draw from the postmodern reinterpretation of the androgynies myth, applied to the dual nature of any human, and the essentialism of body and soul. The body as a part stands for the whole as much as its totality gives itself in each of the parts. This way, the dichotomy body and soul is overcome and their integration in the definition of the human condition is achieved. We are used with the totality of the human being, deeming the body to be secondary to the soul or something that needs to be mortified through ascetic techniques. The new way to perceive the body transforms it into a totalizing principle. Constructing itself, the body reveals an increased concern to internalize and showcase the beauty of the soul on the human face, charged with a special sacredness, in connection with the image construed in communication with the body. Having such a base, the totalizing of corporality is in the spirit of a revival of the ideal of

²⁰⁵ Aurel Codoban, *Gesturi, Vorbe și Minciuni. Mic tratat de semiotică gestuală extinsă și aplicată*, 146.

kalokagathia, in a version adequate to contemporary man's expectations.

We are on fertile grounds for philosophical counseling. In terms of the human being's existential datum, the physical dimension reveals the centrality of the body as a foundation to the personal construction and development. The body becomes a kind of *alpha and omega*, both in its version of body subjected to corporal techniques of personal improvement, and as a body aimed to support human totality along the lines that appear as an existential datum. Postmodern body representations are called to constitute a new diagram of the symbolic representation of the cosmos, a new way to interpret the human microcosm. At the same time, they reveal an organizing factor of social life and of individual quests for the self in the effort for a dialogue. The dialogue state is the one recovering the whole human being, beyond body and soul separations, the elements mirroring one another and being transparent to each other. In symbolic language, we can say that the philosophical counseling starts with this situation in which the soul is transparent to the body, and the body secures the transparency of the soul. In body reinterpretation, in Aurel Codoban's manner, philosophical counseling may facilitate body integration in the development of the technologies of the self that may add meaning, authenticity and value to the person seeking this type of counseling.

7. From Metaphysical Desire to the Desire of Being Desired

7.1. An introduction to Hermeneutics of Love

I propose that we explore the philosophy of love as it was theorised by Aurel Codoban. The metamorphoses undergone by postmodern love compel us to a philosophical reflection on love. The hermeneutics of love developed by Aurel Codoban is a strong argument in favour of the statement that philosophy and communication will become indispensable for the 21st century individual. As technological development will occupy a more significant place in our lives and our concerns, we must expect a new propensity to find the place that philosophical reflection has in our real life, as well as our virtual life. The new technologies will be a pressure factor that will generate a return to the fundamental questions about the meaning of life, the fundamental values, the new meanings brought into existence by the new ways of instrumentalizing reality. This time there will be no recourse to philosophy as a discipline associated with scientific reflection, it will not be an epistemological approach, as we have seen in the cultural experience of modernity, because it is not knowledge but communication that will reveal the importance of returning to the foundations of life. From the perspective of a love hermeneutic, such as that developed by Aurel Codoban, we can expect at least two sources of increased interest in philosophy.

On the one hand, the centredness of the body seems to be an important source, with the imperative it introduces in the reconfiguration of the particular elements of the condition of the postmodern man; with the need to re-think the existential dynamics assumed by the relationship between the physical, the social, the personal, the spiritual and the religious world; revealing the importance of love in the proper understanding of life and death interferences. On the other hand, the development of new technologies becomes significant, questioning the human condition and the necessity of redefining it, especially the elements based on the real-virtual complementarity, the improvement of the physical and mental performances of the human being, the rethinking of sexuality and love under the pressure of practices characteristic to the virtual environment.

7.2. From Love as Passion to the Sentimental–Erotic–Appealing Postmodern Model

As is the case of personal development masters, Aurel Codoban is interested in revealing a set of rules, norms, codifications that allow us to spot, identify, recognize, and even define love. His approach, however, takes into account the fundamentals on which these rules, norms and codifications can be built. At least three authors should be remembered when talking about the perspective on love presented by Aurel Codoban: Denis de Rougemont, René Girard, Hugo Friedrich²⁰⁶. Each of these can be

²⁰⁶ Denis de Rougemont, *Iubirea și Occidentul*, Translation, notes and index by Ioana Cîndea-Marinescu, Preface by Virgil Cîndea

found, in various ways, as spirits that enrich the author's reflections over an extended period of his career as a philosopher and existential counsellor. Their ideas germinate his personal perspective on metamorphoses that take place with the passage of the spirit of Western love from love as passion to love emptied of the meanings of ultimate transcendence and the transformation of desire into pure transcendence.

In a very complex interpretation exercise, the philosopher uses love-passion as it is described by Denis de Rougemont to reveal what the western sentimental-erotic-appealing model has become. Love-passion is a valuable resource in understanding what is happening with love in the horizon of Western sensitivity and thought, because, on the one hand, it reveals the special and unique character, the exceptionality of love, and on the other hand, it is a concentration of what can be designated as a metaphysical desire, that particular type of desire for transcendence in which the one who loves aspires to an absolute of love and even gets to identify himself and the object of his love with the Absolute. In this way, love is closely related to desire. And in its evolution, it becomes substituted by desire at least in the role of the primary source of the positive energy of desire, whether it is related to pleasure, or to the desire of achievement on a spiritual or religious plane. When religious dimension is brought into discussion by Aurel Codoban, the

(București: Univers, 1987); René Girard, *Minciună romantică și adevăr romanesc*, Translated by Alexandru Baciu, Preface by Paul Cornea, (București: Univers, 1972); Hugo Friedrich, *Structura liricii moderne*, Translated by Dieter Fuhrman, (București: Editura Univers, 1969).

religious horizon considered is not that of Christianity. Horizons are considered, such as those of forms of spirituality remote from religious practices in Christianity, or forms of ancient philosophical spirituality, such as the erotic imagery associated with Platonism. Or philosophical reflections such as the one proposed by Spinoza are valued in order to eventually reach the experiences of a desire closer to what is happening today with love, as those derived from the postmodern valorisations of Freudian psychoanalysis. At least three aspects draw our attention in the analysis of the author of *Amurgul Iubirii*. First of all, we have a desire for the mortification of the body and the aspiration towards the realization of desire in the ideal plan of love. Second, we have the desire as the foundation of human condition, of the transformation of the body into an instrument of action in order to grow the soul to self-redeeming, free of passions and embracing the joys of life. And third, we have desire as associated with the profound psychic structures. It is a type of unconscious who, through phantasms and symbolic thinking, ensures the erotic balance of humans. Human reality is bound to communication and interpretation, everything becomes representation and discourse, no matter the plane in which it exists, always tells us something about desire; embodying, in fact, the desire itself²⁰⁷. These ways of analysing love are relevant from the point of view of different ways in which love is associated with desire and eventually becomes defined by it, even if, obviously and every time, it takes the form of metaphysical desire.

²⁰⁷ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 60.

In order to understand the metamorphoses assumed by the dynamics of desire, it is necessary to understand the nuances undergone by the theme of desire for thinkers who, over time, profoundly influenced the Western discourse on desires, thinkers like Plato, Spinoza or Freud. Thus, we must note that, for Aurel Codoban, “for Plato, the most important stance is the sky of pure Ideas, the object of desire; for Spinoza, man is the subject of desire; for Freud is desire itself, which later on constitutes the subject and object of desire. So, in Plato it is the soul, in Spinoza it is the soul and the body, in Freud it is more about the body, because in modern philosophy the classic relationship between soul and body becomes the relationship between conscious and unconscious, and the unconscious, the psychical resort of corporality, is primordial to the conscious”.²⁰⁸ Thus, we are exploring some classic theories on desire in order to gather the necessary suggestions for shaping a corporeal theory of desire.

Of particular relevance to the configuration of love in Aurel Codoban's vision is the new ontology of love that is built on the metamorphoses that psychoanalysis brings into the shaping of the postmodern human condition. It is based on the premise that we are witnessing a reconstruction of the human in which desire cannot be fulfilled, and if it is fulfilled, this happens only through symbolic games, through the involvement of the imagery register of representations. The subject finds itself in a universe of discourse, representation and interpretation in which the other intervenes as a resort from which an answer is expected, from which it is expected to leave

²⁰⁸ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 61.

a mark on language, in which to mirror itself as presence, in a world where transcendence is absent, and life is emptying. In this context, the philosopher notes that psychoanalysis urges us to reject classical theories of love that generally put us in two generic situations: 1) either tell us that we fall in love with someone because we consider him to be beautiful, good, smart, glamorous – as Platonism did; 2) convince us that we find someone beautiful, good, smart, glamorous only because we have already fallen in love with him – as happens in love as a projection described by Spinoza. Instead, we are offered a third solution: to value our contradictory tendencies that situates us between positive and negative, between permission and interdiction, in a process of transgression in which we are the beneficiaries of the phantasmatic production of our assessments and live its fascination.²⁰⁹

Describing the sentimental–erotic–appealing model of postmodern Western, Aurel Codoban combines the desire for pleasure (even if the passion of love seems to be too diminished) with the desire for transcendence (even if it is a transcendence without transcending). The philosopher overthrows the relationship between being and nothingness in accordance with the overturning generated by the soul’s taking over of the soul in love as passion. This corporealization of love, emptied of being, is presented as a transcendence towards a negative transcendence, emptied of existence, and finally, as we shall see, the world of love becomes emptied even by the presence of the body. With the experience of love in

²⁰⁹ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 79.

virtual reality, “the body becomes only a kind of absolute signifier, emptied of determination”.²¹⁰

7.3. The games of desire and the desire of being desired

Love becomes a game of desire. The consumerist society stimulates the pleasure of consuming, including erotic consumption²¹¹, and due to the impact of communication, it seems to be accompanied by an endless consumption urge. This excess of the desire to consume is also reflected in the desire for pleasure that appears to us especially as the desire to be desired. The individual thus enters a role play depending on the object of desire and the intersubjective relationships he projects on them. Role playing belongs to a world of representation and to a way in which the imagined subject projects itself on various dimensions of existence. I personally think that these representations are of a single, self-projecting self. However, adopting a different interpretation, Aurel Codoban believes that with postmodernity we are under the sign of a plurality of selves that contravene the authority of a monolithic self. The world of the personal self must be fairly represented in the form of a cluster of selves, which are constituted as multiple instances of our personal reality. This contributes both to the positioning of oneself in relation to one’s consciousness and

²¹⁰ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 119.

²¹¹ Roy F. Baumeister, Tania Reynolds, Bo Winegard, Kathleen D. Vohs, “Competing for love: Applying sexual economics theory to mating contest”, *Journal of Economic Psychology*, vol. 63 (2017): 230–241.

to the positioning of oneself in relation to alterity, which is regarded as a focal point of one's self. Thus, the philosopher believes that what happens in love is that "in fact, we do not want another, we desire the other's desire, and the desire of other returns to the subject ego of desire to be desired, to give it a unique identity. Postmodern love is not so much a dialogue, but an echo. The ego is decentralized and pluralized".²¹² In this symbolic game, in relation to alterity, occurs a process in which one of the selves defeats or co-ordinates some of our selves, a phenomenon the philosopher uses to reveal an "interpretation of love as a psychic *coup d'état*, which gives power to one of these selves".²¹³

This thematization of alterity reveals two significant moments: one in which the soul is the one that establishes the relational structure, and the other in which the body is the one that mediates the language of alterity. On the one hand, we notice that "as long as the soul is in dialogue with total alterity, the body is a simple receptacle of the soul".²¹⁴ An entire tradition of love revolves around love as a completion of the soul, as a tool of purification, beauty and enlightenment, without neglecting the body as a bearer, truly temporal, of the nobility of the soul. The soul is connected to the experience of being and to the knowledge of the absolute, of man and of the world that can bring them together, of what we have often called the median space of the religious experience, but also of the existence lived under the sign of what Aurel Codoban considers to

²¹² Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 81.

²¹³ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 81.

²¹⁴ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 89.

be the space where the manifestation of metaphysical desire take place. Once love manifests itself in the building of reality through communication, love becomes communication itself, in the process in which we witness the growing importance of communication in regard to corporal communication. In this context, “Convergent or simbio-corporal love implies that every communication starts from the body, not from the soul, as in the case of love-passion”.²¹⁵ Although passion seems to be a coordinate strongly related to the loving soul, it appears to us rather as a ballast for the body, which tends to replace passion with pleasure. The postmodern man seems to oppose the passive dimension of passion to the active enjoyment of pleasure, of pleasure in its biological dimension, associated with sexuality, but also of the subtler pleasures we associate with all kinds of consumption, including the consumption of spiritual products. Among the consumed products, however, the most visible, of course, is the category of products that we can associate with sexual pleasure. The phenomenon is described by Aurel Codoban as follows: “There is a kind of love-symbiosis – especially in the form of juvenile cohabitation – of limited duration, in which the partner is more of a growing partner, evolving together and partner of sexual exercises. Sex has more and more the character of work without anything mysterious or frightening, of a dexterity that can be learned and needs to be learned”.²¹⁶

Despite the fact that the philosophy of alterity has become accustomed to a interpretational key in which

²¹⁵ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 123.

²¹⁶ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 97.

alterity was thought, in a very rigorous sense, as an interpersonal relationship based on reciprocity, which is a dialogue that is reflected in language²¹⁷, we find the existence of many forms of construction and establishment of alterity, determined by the metamorphoses brought about by communication in the register of postmodern love. In a world where the monolithic ego is replaced by a plural self, or more precisely by a plurality of selves that each individual assumes, it is self-evident that consumer behaviour is also changed in accordance to this plurality. Thus, “in the Western societies defined by overconsumption, the register of signs has changed: there are rather more signifiers than signified; we are more credited with the reality of the signifiers. Now sexuality no longer needs a meaning to cover it and masquerade it. It represents itself; it has become its own sign, it is a simulacrum. Before, it needed a meaning under which, as a signifier, it could gain a legitimate reality. Change is possible because the cultural codification has changed, because a new epistemology has been installed because it belongs as a sign to another text. The new codification

²¹⁷ Martin Buber, “Distance and Relation and Elements of Interhuman”, in Martin Buber, *The Knowledge of Man: A Philosophy of the Interhuman*, M.S. Friedman (Ed.), Translated by M.S. Friedman and R.G. Smith, (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1991), 49–78; Márcio Junglos, “The Nature of Intersubjectivity in Buber, Husserl and Waldenfels: An Encounter, an Intentional Constitution, or a Happening?”, *Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy*, vol. IX no. 2 (2017): 716–736; Robert Gibbs, *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994); Antonio Sandu, “A Levinasian Opening on the Affirmative Ethics of Care”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 15, issue 43 (2016): 28–47.

is punctuated by corporality and communication”.²¹⁸ Post-modern love, as a form of interpersonal communication, implies a corporeal communication and takes place at the interference of the tensions that the new form of codification of body language and generalized communication implies.

From the perspective of the new cultural code of love, Aurel Codoban speaks of “a corporeal communication that measures its efficiency, not to say authenticity, by the pleasure produced or obtained. With it, new wishes appear, which, although we can no longer call them metaphysical, are not less desires of Absolute: the desire for absolute pleasure or absolute narcissism, addressed to our own body, more metaphysically this time, to the body in general, as an absolute signifier. The *Twilight of Love* means, as for any cultural form, the twilight of a certain type of communication, discourse and vocabulary, but also the emergence of others, which, however different they may be, cannot escape due to their nature of language, the desire for the Absolute”.²¹⁹ Love in its multiple social and personal manifestations²²⁰ can always surprise us with its manifestations. Love undergoes a process as happened with sexuality in the past: the unconstraint

²¹⁸ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 92.

²¹⁹ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 123.

²²⁰ Mihai Stelian Rusu, “Theorising love in sociological thought: Classical contributions to a sociology of love”, *Journal of Classical Sociology*, vol. 18 issue 1 (2018): 3–20; Cătălina-Ionela Rezeanu, “Reflexive Transformation of Intimacy in Late Modernity Theories: Some Critiques and Conceptual Alternatives”, *Postmodern Openings*, 7 (1) (2016): 35–54; Pascal Bruckner, *Paradoxul iubirii*, Translated by Irina Mavrodin, (București: Editura Trei, 2011).

of love is just as playful as the games of the mind.²²¹ Thus, the Western man does not need to be anxious in the proximity of the transformations that love suffers. We do not have to hurry to declare love's time of death after failing in the apocalyptic attitude of Western theorizing of all kinds of deaths, fortunately unfulfilled.

Love in its twilight is coded this time by an empty transcendence, by an Absolute emptied of being, the desire itself is emptied of being, and seems to establish itself as a form of absolute, even a tameless desire, the desire that consumes itself without ever reaching satisfaction. This status of communication and corporeality was preceded by the situation where the tendency of the one who loves is to impose itself as an object of desire in a manner similar to the one in which devotion to the gods could be perceived as a practice of the love of the religious man. Emptied of religiosity, such a ritualic behaviour is emptied of its own transcendence, and the only transcendence seems to remain that of the body itself, while the only desire that still functions is the desire to be desired. In such a register of alterity, Aurel Codoban asserts that "Desire is a desire in relation to the desire of another, for man constituted as a subject of nothingness, essentially deprived of Being, desires to be the being that is lacking in another, the being which the desire of the other installs it in existence. We desire someone else's desire, we are crave to be loved because in the centre of our subjective being we are constituted of nothingness. We want the desire because Being is sprayed like golden

²²¹ Thomas Laqueur, *Corpul și sexul de la greci la Freud*, Translated by Narcis Zărnescu, (București: Humanitas, 1998), 223.

splashes of stars onto the black surface of the nothingness, or because, just as for the Asian religions, the Absolute has proved to be nothingness".²²² Desire reflects upon itself. In this way, the loved one tries to fill something that is felt as a lack or absence of being. The one who wants love resorts to the mediation of alterity as a game of erotic mirroring in which the difference is only the desire to be loved.

7.4. Communicating desire and the challenges introduced by the new technologies

The fact that today's entire reality and its knowledge are rebuilt in the context of communication inevitably leads at least to the need to question the ethics and metaphysics of new technologies as they will increasingly influence the way in which we understand the universe, as well as the way in which we understand the individual in relation to himself, the position of man in relation to others, and the position of man in the universe. Rethinking love in such a context is inevitable for philosophical meditation. And we have to expect an increase in the interest in philosophy as a way to position yourself in relation to this existential problem of great intensity.

Aurel Codoban's reflections reveal that an increase in the importance of new technology-mediated communication can even transform love as passion into a relationship based on body language, image transmission, phantasms, gestures that we can perceive in many forms, but they are abundant in advertising for adults or in matrimonial

²²² Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 69.

or erotic advertisements whereby “generalized communication in Western societies besieges us with sex scenes, exquisite bodies, with “shameless” confessions in the media, phone-sex on, sex on the internet, neoprene costume with electrodes, teledildo”²²³ and many other forms of communication through which virtual space is presented as the privileged place of rediscovery of privacy. Most often, those who talk about love in the virtual environment do it in order to tell stories about them in order to prove that they are worthy of love.²²⁴

This lead, on the one hand, to a supersaturation of the exposure of body image, and on the other hand, a withdrawal of the body from the plane of immediate contact, of epidermal interaction, penetration into the energetic intimacy of the other. Although we apparently have a predominant presence of the body, Aurel Codoban reveals that we are actually witnessing a de-corporealization through the excessive use of the body as language. The body is no longer important in its material form, but as an interface or as a communication tool, thus the body is stripped of its own corporeality, being replaced by its image, which is no longer under the pressure of personal attributes. The philosopher warns us that in the post-modern world “It is believed that this “body liberation” will lead to greater intimacy. But... the bodies seem to be still separate in the anticipation of technologies capable of introducing them in communication (of course sensual-sexual). It is true, however, that the message, not

²²³ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 118.

²²⁴ Aurel Codoban, *Gesturi, Vorbe și Minciuni. Mic tratat de semiotică gestuală extinsă și aplicată*, 118.

the person, seems to matter, for the moment”.²²⁵ With an erotic experience mediated by computers or phones, there is a misappropriation of the sense of corporeality in the postmodern mentality. The postmodern imagery has shifted the emphasis from the soul to the body, a shift made possible, in Aurel Codoban’s view by a natural logic that loads the body with the fullness of meanings once associated with the soul. In the order of symbolic meanings, the body was full of being, thus gathering all the burden of meaning carried by the soul. More than that, it had the capacity to create proximity to the presence of the other in which a common identity could be created from desire and reaching to love, because the bodies could move the energy of souls and even capitalize on love as an act of live of the closest encounter. Thus, the body, in its direct interaction with the other, spoke of itself, of the soul, but also of the pleasure and transcendence that it could live together with the other. The body had the capacity to make present in their unfolding the two fundamental types of desire that underlie love: the desire for pleasure and the desire for transcendence. With a love mediated by new technologies, real relationship is no longer required. Love no longer implies any obligation towards the presence of the other whom you relate to as a human presence that reveals a self with a well-defined identity.²²⁶

With the mediation created by means of communication, the body becomes only a mean of communication used after it has been stripped down of the contents of

²²⁵ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 118.

²²⁶ Aurel Codoban, *Imperiul comunicării. Corp, imagine și relaționare*, 43.

the relational subject that ensured the personal identity of the individuals taking part in the erotic game. Aurel Codoban considers this to be the case because “when communication is electronically mediated, but also on other stances of communication, the body has only the identity of an assumption. Electronic means of communication do not allow unwanted identification. It does not matter who the other person is, it's important for the chat to be surprising. We might be tempted by the idea of a return to the Platonic quest for the “soul-mate” if it were not about generalized communication here, where love reveals its purely relational essence. Even more so, anonymous or masked electronic communication seems to be connected to the idea of something fantastical, imagery, being a way of signifying”.²²⁷ This way, a trans-human world is installed that transcends the human horizon not through its enrichment but through its impoverishment, voiding it of the real contents of the erotic experience and the joys of love.

When love becomes a pure relationship in the virtual environment, individuals have nothing but relationships, they enter into a relationship, they no longer participate in the mirage, phantasms and the transfiguring power of love. However, the philosopher also offers us a reason for not being too pessimistic: “However, we must admit, following certain internet psychosociologists, that there is a careful separation between the two areas: on the one hand sexuality, the multiplicity of bodies and preferences accessible on the internet, and on the other, those that belong to your private space. Desire, at least

²²⁷ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 119.

in its meaning of transgression and phantasy, seems to persist, or even have a comeback with the generalization of communication”.²²⁸ Although we seem to gradually move from the physical horizon into the virtual one, the separation between the real world in which we live and the virtual one which we only perceive – it is only a perceived reality – is still sufficiently well-defined, even in the case of the generation which we define as belonging to digital natives. Love must be associated with a register of positive thinking.²²⁹ The physical world and the virtual horizon are still well defined, so that the virtual imagery cannot unify the representations of what we can identify as “a world”, even if, gradually, in the future, we will most likely have to take into account the virtual dimension as an existential given, along with the physical, social, personal, spiritual and religious one.

7.5. For a Philosophy of Love

The metamorphoses taking place in the world of desire compel us to an ethical and philosophical rethinking of love. The results of such a philosophical investigation should clarify a few things, including: to what extent the finitude of the corporeal being determines the unicity of love in our relationship with the idea of death; how can life be valued by the exaltation of love; to what extent is the biological body placed on a second plan, replaced

²²⁸ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 119.

²²⁹ Sandu Frunză, “Positive Thinking as a Moral and Existential Virtue”, *Revista de Cercetare și Intervenție Socială*, vol. 59 (2017): 261–276; Sandu Frunză, “Positive thinking as an experience of personal development”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 16 issue 47 (2017): 19–31.

by the virtual body with the development of new technologies; if there is a power characterizing the virtual transmitted through technology as a force that can substitute the satisfaction of desire, the need for love; to what extent the communication of love in the virtual environment changes the paradigm of love as it is experienced by the postmodern man in the everyday reality of his existence, etc. In the case of such pursuits, philosophy can help rediscover the importance of a person and provide solutions for the person's reconstruction within communication. It is one of the reasons why I have used several interpretations and some hermeneutical and existential solutions presented in his works by Aurel Codoban as an existential stylist.

The world built on communication gives us a perspective on love in which life becomes an intrinsic value in that love acts as a balance factor in the existence of the person who must accept cohabitation in a unique dynamic of death and life. In the “empire of communication”, the metaphysical desire is associated with the Logos, and death is emptied of the logos. Death no longer appears as a landmark of anxiety that we use to enjoy all the things we receive from life. Death is not the darkness according to which we perceive the light of life. An adequate understanding of life requires an existence within love. Thus, we are facing a metaphysical perspective on love, not one that associates the love of death in its biological register, as it happens in some studies that analyse this relationship in biological or social terms.²³⁰ Love does

²³⁰ Lena Lange, Barbara Zedler, Marcel A. Verhoff, Markus Parzeller, “Love Death – A Retrospective and Prospective Follow-Up Mortality

not feed itself with death because love always gives itself, attracting at the same time the return of things and beings onto itself. In such a symbolic register, it is very simple to integrate body mortification, ascetic death, or the mystical passage between worlds to an experience of resurrection – meaning the rebirth through the transcendent force of love, through the transcendent force it assumes. That is why we can accept that love is auto sufficient, not in the sense that it is sufficient to itself, but in the sense that love appears as infinite energy by the way it is carried by souls and always brought back to itself.

With the postmodern codification of desire, we note the ways in which communication determines a set of games of desire through which the body is identified as the centre of the configuration of any language of love. In this way, the principle of pleasure is associated with consumption, including consumption of erotic production, to a stage where the body itself is absent from the structure of desire. This way, love is reduced only to the desire to be desired. The two main types of desire, the desire for pleasure and the desire for transcendence are not absent. Even when they can only be perceived as a form without content, the desire for pleasure becomes self-referential, and the desire for transcendence refers

Study Over 45 Years”, *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, vol. 14 issue 10 (2017): 1226–1231; Courtney Nations, Menzel Stacey Baker, Eric Krszjzaniek, “Trying to keep you: how grief, abjection, and ritual transform the social meanings of a human body”, *Consumption and Culture*, vol. 20 issue 5 (2017): 403–422; Ștefania Matei, Marian Preda, “Status After Death. Understanding Posthumous Social Influence Through a Case Study on the Christian-Orthodox Tradition”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 15, issue 45 (2016): 257–282.

to an empty transcendence, which obviously leads to the emptying of love of existence.

Profound transformations take place with the development of new technologies. These come to interfere with love and the practices of desire. In order to understand the structure of this manifestation of love in the future, it is necessary to decipher the philosophy that forms in the background of the practices of the desire from the virtual environment.

In the age of digitization of the interpersonal encounter, of the disappearance of the subject as an actor that brings with it the face-to-face presence, the problem of recognition seems to be no longer obstructed by the proximity of the difference, first of all because the necessity of face-to-face presence is replaced by an interface that intersects the presence of the other. Identity created in the virtual environment no longer requires physical presence, reciprocity and dialogue, because it seems to exclude violence, conflict, coercion. In a world that seems to be built on the principles of freedom, which is no longer bound by the actual presence of the other, all these forms of pressure exerted on the individual seem to no longer have a factual reality. They can only be manifested as a discourse, be it a rhetoric of images, or the persuasive force of the word.

Alterity is no longer conceived in terms of the encounter with the other, because the other is no longer regarded as a goal for us, but rather as a mean by which we strengthen narcissism and orientation towards oneself. It is true that Aurel Codoban insists that one of the prerequisites of a worthy love is to love ourselves because

we could not know how to love others without loving ourselves.²³¹ With the absence of the other (and the abundance of one's presence), something like the absence of the presence of transcendence happens. As in the case of transcendence, the ontological register of transcendence changes completely; in the case of love, what changes completely is the horizon of identity construction. This no longer requires love as a meeting place for alterity, because alterity is reduced to an object that satisfies the need of the individual to rediscover oneself. Alterity is no longer an end in itself, nor a purpose of the encounter, because it becomes only a very important factor, indeed, of the reconfiguration of personal self. In order to trigger the process of such a reconfiguration, to increase its rhythm and to increase its efficiency, the postmodern individual most often needs the support of an existential stylist. This is an uncharted and worth developing ground for philosophical counselling.

Reflection on love is based on the human need for love. As Aurel Codoban reveals, the twilight of love only refers to certain practices of love. Love must always be renewed, and the philosophical reflection on love must keep up with the metamorphoses that occur in the horizon of love. The need for love is accompanied by the need for philosophy. The postmodern man is called upon to establish after a long process of announcements of successive deaths – from the death of God to the death of man, after having undergone a profound process of deconstruction of reality, of deconstruction of meaning, of circumventing authenticity.

²³¹ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii*, 12.

8. Philosophical Counseling and Human Being's Continuous Restoration

8.1. Philosophy, communication, and human becoming

In the present volume I wished to showcase the importance of philosophical counseling in our world built on communication. The perspective I am proposing is the one of communication and philosophical counseling. Philosophical counseling opens multiple possibilities to connect philosophy with other fields dedicated to deciphering nature and human becoming. I have chosen in this book three thinkers whose inspiring ideas belong to a revelatory complementarity. Philosopher Lou Marinoff is a kind of knight fighting to restore the public dignity to philosophy. He is for regaining a lost territory for philosophy, one that has to be recovered even against the will of those inhabiting it who will be its masters.²³² Psychotherapist and philosopher Emmy van Deurzen is a messenger of balance. She believes in the power of philosophy to change the world, in the individual's capacity to construct philosophical stories leading to an assumed life philosophy.²³³ Philosopher Aurel Codoban takes comfortably the position of an existential stylist.

²³² Lou Marinoff, *Ghidul filosofului practician*.

²³³ Emmy van Deurzen, *Existential Counselling & Psychotherapy in Practice*, Second edition, (London: Sage, 2002).

He challenges us to go beyond his own theories associating philosophy either with the freedom from the pressure of the religious spirit, or with a camouflage in a fruitful relationship with literature.²³⁴ From this standpoint, the philosophical counselor is able to mediate between academic philosophy and diverse philosophical practices available to the counselor and the counseled to develop on the existential horizon. From this perspective, it is necessary to build up a series of technologies of the self²³⁵ enabling a very fluid dynamic in postmodern man's responses to the digital world challenges in his life.

Each of the three thinkers above highlights the relational importance of philosophical practices both according to the maieutic method and to the philosophy of dialogue or to the ontology of communication. In their analyses we note that there is no difficulty to philosophy in the communication field as there is nothing to prevent it from developing philosophical practices, especially philosophical dialogue and philosophical counseling.

The return to the main trend in postmodern man's concerns appeals to a need for balance in postmodern life: the communication-built world triggers the need for a continuous philosophical reflection associated to the technological development. Amplifying this reflection creates the context to assert applied philosophy and philosophical practices. One possibility to express this context

²³⁴ Aurel Codoban, *Filosofia ca gen literar*, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1992).

²³⁵ Foucault, Michel, *Hermeneutica subiectului. Cursuri la Collège de France (1981–1982)*, Edition by Frédéric Gros under the guidance of François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana, Translated by Bogdan Ghiu, (Iași: Polirom, 2004).

generically is summed up in the statement: as much technology as philosophy. Actually, beyond self-limitations imposed by various philosophers in the course of philosophical creation development, philosophy has been constantly oriented not only toward interpretation, conceptualization and knowledge, but also toward the individual's daily life and his/her community's problems – even when it aimed to solve some most abstract problems of an existential nature about the ultimate reality.

Philosophy as a way of life may be assumed by you and any other person through participation in a philosophical counseling program. Recovered as a way of life, philosophy is able to provide some of the most significant experiences. I would like to include here a quote from Lou Marinoff, as an analogy, if you asked me to tell you what one feels at the end of a philosophical counseling session: “Did you happen to play a musical instrument seriously, that is daily? If you did, you already know what I am talking about. It is that wonderful moment that may be captured right before the first musical note. The silence you feel while unmoved near or, more precisely, with the musical instrument. The object is beautifully tuned, and your mind is burning with the music you are about to play. Before you let the music be, you feel fresh, full of energy and inspired. The sun is shining, birds are singing, and the stage on which you are about to start an unforgettable experience is awaiting”.²³⁶ I think the words of Lou Marinoff (whom you can see on the internet playing

²³⁶ Lou Marinoff, *Puterea lui Tao. Cum să-ți găsești liniștea în vremuri tulburi*, 72–73.

the guitar)²³⁷ are fit for a symbolic expression of some aspects concerning philosophical counseling. The spiritual state described here may be associated with the feeling that after the counseling session you can go back to life's symphony and bring your significant contribution to its perfection. Actually, reading this paragraph, I felt a vibration like I had a very long time ago, when for the first time I read: "Truth will set you free".²³⁸ I believe that philosophical dialogue has the effect of experiencing one's personal freedom on the infinite significance horizon of one's own life for the participants in the dialogue during philosophical counseling. I am convinced that, in most cases, philosophical counseling may lead to unique experiences in life. The quote above makes me think of the search for harmony, the idea of finding meaning, of personal opening for an inspiration always postponed because, in reality, you refused receiving it.

It might be that after participating in a philosophical counseling session you do not have the unforgettable experiences you have dreamed of. But this does not mean that, if you are in the middle of an existential dilemma, of a crisis about the meaning of life and of your mode of situating in the world, or troubled by metaphysical unrest, or in any similar situations, it is not worth trying this dialogical way to solve your problems. However, philosophical counseling may also be a solution for simpler

²³⁷ Lou Marinoff, "S.L. Weiss: Two Minuets", 2014, Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMckOX8REng>

²³⁸ Ioan 8:32 in *Noul Testament*, Version revised, edited and commented by Bartolomeu Anania, with the support of many others, Second edition revised and completed, (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al BOR, 1995).

life situations, such as the need for personal development, the wish to understand success philosophy or the will to understand your own contribution to your happiness and that of your community.

8.2. From assuming meaning to seeking support in philosophical counseling

One of the frequent questions in the philosophical counseling dialogues is about the ways in which a general problem, like the meaning of existence considered philosophically, may become familiar to one who cannot find one's own meaning in a life faced with daily challenges.

We have to mention that in philosophical practices, even general problems like that of the meaning of existence may be tackled both in their abstract dimension, as referring to existence in general, and in the practical dimension of meaning in one's personal life, reflected in the choice of values and in the daily action based on the respective values. In other words, if you ask yourself such questions, you can find that life's meaning is about you, as an individual at the horizon of meaning. If your quest for meaning intensifies, you may resort to therapy forms, like logotherapy²³⁹ or you may plan to participate in philosophical dialogues on the meaning of life during philosophical counseling. This way, you can attain

²³⁹ Viktor E. Frankl, *Voința de sens. Fundamente și aplicații ale logoterapiei*, Translated by Dana Mares, (București: Editura Trei, 2018); Viktor E. Frankl, *Strigătul neauzit pentru sensul vieții. Psihoterapie și umanism*, Translated by Mihai-Dan Pavelescu, (București: Meteor Publishing, 2018).

a creative revalorization of your restlessness by means of practices in understanding, interpreting and shaping your own life. Among the multiple meanings rising during the interpretation process based on the participation in the dialogue, an ethical (philosophical) interpretation perspective is the one in which life's meaning is to be found in the permanent effort to be a better person. It is about the quality of being good cultivated as a state of mind, as a mode of being, as a way to bring things into being, as a natural way of making others participate in the simple intrinsic kindness of the human being.

We may add to this the fact that in order to live a meaningful life, you have to try to be generous and sensitive to all the needs of the people around you to the same extent to which, out of love and respect for yourself, you are generous with your needs, aspirations and especially with your loves. This does not mean at all that you leave afar what is typical of yourself and of those who make your own existence a better one, in line with your projections of self-development.

At the same time, living meaningfully supposes having certain serenity about what may be less appealing in your life. To be detached, to smile, even, as if the good Creator were standing somewhere on the side and laughing with you.

Do not react with an overrated energy to the evil brought about to you by the others. Keep your energy to accomplish your ideals. Do not waste it to defeat others' inability or impossibility to do good by doing bad. Anyhow, from the perspective we have discussed here, the history of philosophical reflections on life clearly shows

that life never forgives those who forget that the meaning of life is in the good brought to one's own life and in full harmony with what has important significance in other people's lives.

At the end of the day, life puts each of us where our place is, where our deeds, thoughts and communication mode are. Although sometimes it seems there are people who easily gain everything, the important and stable things are the ones achieved with sustained effort, and especially by investing love and trust in the communication with others.

This communication horizon is the one that delineates the meaning of life from the absence of meaning. Within it, we have to practice our own philosophy of life. We can go the hard way by ourselves in the effort to express the basics of our own philosophy of life. We do have the possibility, however, to allow being fascinated with its general configuration, in dialogue with an existential counselor, by combining philosophical counseling with communication.

One of the approaches of meaning, as found in Emmy van Deurzen's work, is trying to assimilate the four needs as enunciated by Roy F. Baumeister – the need for efficacy, the need for value, the need for self-worth, and the need for purpose²⁴⁰ – correlated with the four existential dimensions (physical, social, personal and spiritual) that the human being has to achieve in the quest for meaning. The need for efficacy is associated with the importance we give to the impact we wish to have on the world we

²⁴⁰ Roy F. Baumeister, *Meanings of Life*, (London: The Guilford Press, 1991).

live in. In common sense it appears to be like the need to leave something after us, a wish to make something memorable as an important visible landmark in the physical world. Probably, this need should be correlated in its meaning with the idea of the finitude of one's own life and with the need to tame this finitude of the physical elements of one's personal existence. The need for value is connected to the social dimension, to the need to build the world of interpersonal relationships in an axiological coherence beyond which one should see the significance generated by the intersubjective network. It is to achieve the leap from concerns for the physical world to those for the world of relationships. The relational structure is the one confirming that, in fact, significance is built on the communication with the others, that the significance-bearing sense to this life pertains to the relational nature of human beings. The need for self-valorization is about a return of the intersubjective being to the world within. This relationally construed being refers not only to objects' world and natural world, not only to other beings' world, not only to invisible beings' or spiritual entities' world but also to one's own world within perceived as the self in the self valorization process. The personal self organizes the entire existence. It is the main beneficiary of the whole personal development process and the element around which all elements of philosophical counseling should coagulate. As regards the need for purpose, it aims for the spiritual world. This fourth level of existence described by Emmy van Deurzen, starting from Roy F. Baumeister's analyses, reveals and keeps significance as participatory in life's meaning.

Focusing here are most energies that unite, in a continuous transcending, all the four dimensions of existence we are concerned with in the existential counseling. This dynamic is a way to bring together the four worlds (physical, social, personal and spiritual, the latter also including the religious dimension). In my future texts, I shall try to add a new dimension, the virtual one, increasingly significant to digital era man. The existential dynamics at all these levels of human development is the one that accounts for personal accomplishment and for the awareness that the individual, thus integrated, lives a better life in the sense of living a life perceived to be happy.²⁴¹ Philosophical counseling provides a very good support so as to set this dynamics to motion, to place you in harmony with the mechanisms of transcending.

8.3. Good life and happiness

In my philosophical counseling experience, I realized that a common question is: how should you live your life without losing yourself? You can lose yourself either in your loneliness, or in the stir of exhausting relationships with the others while seeking happiness and fulfillment. There is always the risk of unbalance. One of the difficulties in our life resides in the fact that when we accept the philosophical idea that we are all “condemned” to happiness, we do not reflect enough on the multiple consequences such a perspective may have upon us. Any response to questions on this topic should start with the

²⁴¹ Emmy van Deurzen, *Psychotherapy and the Quest for Happiness*, (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), 152.

awareness of the communication situation we are in. We have to look into the way in which we set our inner communication to motion, as this is the dialogue partner of our deep being inner voice. In this sense, we can use the model of the Russian dolls, *Matrioshka*, and imagine descending on each of the layers that our inner life supposes, with the multiple identities subsuming to an imagery ego, unique in its action coherence. Each expression of the identities represented by the successive dolls we put into one another should be expressed in a unique voice. In such a process, philosophical reflection should aim especially for the transformations occurring in the experience of unifying the multiple layers of our being, which although appear as multiple egos are but expressions, representations of our inner world, of communication situations building up the individual's inner life.

Also, we have to consider the importance of our outer orientation. Most often, this orientation is recognized as part of a real communication. During communication, we are indebted to a classical scenario that involves some poles marking the connection as regards transmittal, message, medium and reception. Each of them is manifested under plural forms, can multiply and change roles in specific actions. The multitude of persons connecting to this structure may be conceived as the community participating in the reality construction during communication. We experience comfort in relationship to the community we are part of to the extent that we are closely participating in a voice we can perceive to be unique, despite the various expressions and nuances of language. It is

about integrating into a symbolic context that we experience as if we spoke the same language. And sometimes we can feel that even if we do not put it into words, we do not verbalize our feelings, thoughts and will to strengthen connectivity with the others. It is illustrative – for this need to harmonize inner life with life as a community member – the way in which we understand happiness.

When you personally experience happiness, you should see that, although we perceive happiness deeply as an inner state, happiness is an inter-subjective reality. It can be lived only in a process of bringing the other into your existence, as a personal subject engaged in your feelings' world, exposed to your joys, a being becoming part of your specific experiences. Happiness does not necessarily involve reciprocity but does include the obligation of another presence to partake in your material comfort, which gives good quality to life, in your pleasure or even in voluptuous feelings and satisfied desires, biologically and spiritually, in rewards pouring from diverse sources onto your being. The presence of the other may be perceived as an anticipation of achieving happiness as soon as you have met all conditions opening you to accepting it. Although it is a profound inner experience, you cannot be happy in your loneliness, that makes the multiple voices of your ego be in harmony, even if being lonely may be a good start to build a life whose joy of living has deserted you. Happiness is not only a self-accomplishment process, but also a quest for vicinity, for fulfillment in a relationship, for a dialogue and togetherness in the joy of being human. Typical postmodern human optimism helps us understand that there are few things that we

cannot do by ourselves, there are only few achievements that are not only up to us. Happiness is one of these few things involving as a necessity connection with the other. Happiness only exists as a shared reality, as communicated reality. It cannot be reduced to an inner dialogue. For this reason, experiencing it, we have the impression that it is opening us towards the infinite, it is a transcending form to the infinite, which tells us about persons' endless virtuality, about the infinite opening at the merge point between our inner life and the life lived as an experience illuminated by the intervention of the other. You may recognize the presence of happiness when all these happenings touch your inner life in positive ways, and this return to the inside should be visible in your action in communication and in your activity with the others.

Reading the book on the quest for happiness written by Emmy van Deurzen,²⁴² I remembered one of the books on the secrets of happiness. It is a book by Richard Schoch which opens with the statement: “unhappy is the history of happiness!”²⁴³ As a historian of ideas, he introduces us to the theme of happiness in such a surprising manner meant to stir our reflective affection and shake our weak sensitivity as postmodern people, who have forgotten to find the meaning of happiness in connection with older or newer philosophical and spiritual traditions. Such a statement puts us in the position to see ourselves as beings living seemingly in ignorance of the secrets of happiness,

²⁴² Emmy van Deurzen, *Psychotherapy and the Quest for Happiness*.

²⁴³ Richard Schoch, *Secretele fericirii. Cum putem învăța din trei milenii de căutări*, Translated by Ciprian Săucan, (București: Humanitas, 2008), 9.

that could be understood from the classical wisdom traditions. The best solution left to this human being at the end of the human development cycle, would be to resume concerns with intercultural dialogue and rebuild its axiological universe starting from a personal reflection to get close to philosophical thinking paradigms. Happiness supposes, among others, also such effort of reflection on existential matters. In this sense, Richard Schoch says: “no matter how happiness appears in our life, it will inevitably be in the context of our fundamental concerns, not of those accidental or passing, and irrespective of our intent, it will involve each time the same coordinates: pleasure, desire, reason and suffering”.²⁴⁴

No one among contemporary philosophers has succeeded to emphasize better both the metaphysical and quotidian nature of desire like philosopher Aurel Codoban. Having been convinced that “In the beginning was the Word”,²⁴⁵ or “In the beginning was the Love”,²⁴⁶ or “In the beginning was the relationship”,²⁴⁷ Aurel Codoban persuades us that “In the beginning was the desire”.²⁴⁸ Philosophical counseling may be used by an existential stylist, as Aurel Codoban submits, to build with you, as a partner in the philosophical dialogue, the ways that you may take to avoid being – or remaining – lost. It has been noted that desire may lead to losing the privileged way

²⁴⁴ Richard Schoch, *Secretele fericirii*, 33.

²⁴⁵ Ioan 1:1 in *Noul Testament*.

²⁴⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Sfînta Treime sau la început a fost iubirea*, (Bucureşti: Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al BOR, 1993).

²⁴⁷ Martin Buber, *Eu şi Tu*, Translation and preface by Ştefan Aug. Doinaş (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 1992).

²⁴⁸ Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii. De la iubirea pasiune la comunicarea corporală*, (Cluj-Napoca: Idea design & Print, 2004).

and to an even less perceptible loss, the loss of oneself. Philosophical counseling may support you turn desire into a creative force and transfigure it pending your inner state and the logic of your own life. Philosophical counseling relies on the infinite beneficial resources of desire, set to motion by a reflecting attitude and an enthusiastic action under the specific conditions of one's life.

8.4. A life not assumed is a lost life

Western man wants to be in control of life. Without this control, one does not feel free. And in the absence of freedom, postmodern man is unhappy. I would like to remind you of two converging aspects. Firstly, from the Socratic tradition we have had the idea that the life which is not carefully scrutinized by the one living it may be a lost life, or even one not worth living. Secondly, many of us would be repeatedly fascinated when reading, often fragmentarily, Immanuel Kant's words: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and steadily we reflect upon them: the *starry heavens above me and the moral law within me*".²⁴⁹ I associate the stimulating words of the German philosopher to the idea that the postmodern world places the relational subject at the core of world and life contemplation, and in the centre of responsibility and moral creativity. This return into oneself of the postmodern man is not attained like a look into the mirror, but rather like a reflective attitude to existence and a descent to the inner

²⁴⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critica rațiunii practice. Întemeierea metafizicii moravurilor*, Translation, introductory study, notes and name index by Nicolae Bagdasar, (București: Editura IRI, 1995), 186.

life depth. This attitude is in the logic of the Socratic thought that stirs us into analyzing our own life, into a permanent inquiry into the issues facing us as participants in the community life and in everyday life. The fascination we experience both in front of the starry sky and of the light stands for a type of mirroring in which the duty to our own life becomes a dimension of the human condition.

Not at all accidentally, there is a wealth of titles of works making us think and rethink various aspects of our personal life. For instance, in Romanian culture we note that the call on thinking comes both from studies privileging the importance of philosophical thought, such as Gabriel Liiceanu, *Nebunia de a gândi cu mintea ta*, as well as works like Norman Vincent Peale, *Forța gândirii pozitive*, David J. Schwartz, *Puterea magică a gândului*, Brian Tracy, *Schimbând gândirea îți schimbi și viața*, and others.²⁵⁰ The importance given to thought brings us out from the paradigm of the philosopher distanced from life as such, lost in contemplation and brought back to the world only occasionally.

We are still haunted culturally by the image of the philosopher described playfully by Socrates himself: “As

²⁵⁰ Gabriel Liiceanu, *Nebunia de a gândi cu mintea ta*, (București: Humanitas, 2016); John C. Maxwell, *Începe să gândești*, Translated by Iris Manuela Anghel-Gîtlan, (București: Editura Amaltea, 2005); Norman Vincent Peale, *Forța gândirii pozitive*, Second edition, Translated by Marius Chitoșcă, (București: Curtea Veche, 2013); David J. Schwartz, *Puterea magică a gândului*, Revised edition, Translated by Marius Chitoșcă, (București: Curtea Veche, 2010); Brian Tracy, *Schimbând gândirea îți schimbi și viața*, Third edition, Translated by Angelica-Raluca Căliman, (București: Curtea Veche, 2011).

Thales also says, while watching the stars and looking up, he fell into a well. A Thracian servant, full of spirit and funny, laughed at him and said that he was striving to know things in the sky but missed the ones in front of him and at his feet. The same word of wisdom is true to all those who spend their life on philosophical concerns. Indeed, such a person ignores not only what a neighbor does but also barely knows whether the neighbor is a human being or a beast! Instead, he/she investigates *what a man is* and what is appropriate for ‘it’ to do or suffer unlike the others”.²⁵¹ However, the philosopher representing Thales in this story, rightfully criticized by Socrates, came down from his indescribable world, even from his tower in which some had isolated him, and now we find him more and more present, either in interdisciplinary studies, or involved in various forms of applied philosophy or even experimental philosophy. He may be your partner in dialogue in sessions of philosophical counseling.

Philosophy looks so much better today in the proximity of science and of technological development, and especially of communication technologies and of those related to artificial intelligence. Thinkers nowadays resume a tradition in which philosophers knew that philosophy could not be in opposition to science, as, according to Immanuel Kant, “science (critically researched and steadily guided) is the narrow gate leading to the *wisdom doctrine*, if by this we mean not only what *we do* but also what should be a guide to *teachers*, to prepare well and make known the way to wisdom, which everyone would take,

²⁵¹ Platon, *Theaitetos*, Translated by Andrei Cornea, (București: Humanitas, 2013), 119.

and protect the others from taking the wrong ways: a science whose depository should always be philosophy".²⁵²

And especially, philosophy looks good around and in the middle of life. Reflecting on one's own life is a form of ritualizing the dynamics of the entire existence. In this process, cosmic lights and the inner lights of the human being, participate in the quotidian life game as in a mystery of harmony between the microcosm and the macrocosm. In full swing of communication technologies, philosophy has to develop technologies of the self that should make it possible to maintain and develop human beings' authenticity. When I voiced the imperative: "We need as much philosophy as technology!" I hoped that the various philosophical practices would find resources of significance to build the meaning of life and strengthen human condition in the digital era. At the level of intervention requested by human beings about their personal life, I believe that a great responsibility to solve problems falls on philosophical counseling. Do not hesitate to use it as an instrument for your becoming.

²⁵² Immanuel Kant, *Critica rațiunii practice. Întemeierea metafizicii moravurilor*, 188.

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