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# From Academia to Action: Philosophical Practice as an Emerging Profession and Paradigm in Contemporary Society

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## Abstract

Philosophical practice has emerged as a transformative discipline that bridges theoretical inquiry and everyday life. Originating in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the field integrates counselling, therapy, and other practical applications of philosophical insights to address existential and pragmatic challenges faced by individuals, groups, and organizations in contemporary society. This article examines the definition, historical evolution, theoretical foundations, and methodologies of philosophical practice, while discussing prospects for professionalization — including certification, ethical guidelines, and integration within healthcare and education systems. Ultimately, this study underscores the potential of philosophical practice to revitalize the relevance of philosophy, foster personal growth, and enhance societal well-being.

## Résumé

La pratique philosophique a émergé en tant que discipline transformative qui fait le lien entre la recherche théorique et la vie quotidienne. Apparu à la fin du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, ce domaine intègre le conseil, la thérapie et d'autres applications pratiques des perspectives philosophiques permettant de répondre aux défis existentiels et pragmatiques auxquels sont confrontés les individus, les groupes et les organisations dans la société contemporaine. Cet article examine la définition, l'évolution historique, les bases théoriques et les méthodologies de la pratique philosophique, tout en discutant des perspectives de professionnalisation — y compris la certification, les directives éthiques et l'intégration au sein des systèmes de santé et d'éducation. En fin de compte, cette étude souligne le potentiel de la pratique philosophique à revitaliser la pertinence de la philosophie, à favoriser l'épanouissement personnel et à améliorer le bien-être de la société.

**Keywords:** philosophical practice; philosophical consultation; philosophical counselling; philosophical therapy; paradigm; professionalization; personal development

## 1. Introduction

In a world characterized by rapid change, cultural diversity, and complex ethical dilemmas, individuals increasingly seek guidance to address personal and existential challenges. Traditional academic philosophy, often perceived as abstract and disconnected from everyday concerns, has struggled to meet these immediate needs. In response, a movement known as “philosophical practice” has emerged, aiming to bridge the gap between philosophical theory and everyday life. While ethics, social philosophy, and political philosophy as taught at universities might be considered practical applications (see Aristotle, 2011), philosophical practice extends beyond these domains. Today, we distinguish among theoretical philosophy (ontology, epistemology, etc.), practical philosophy (ethics, social philosophy, etc.), and philosophical practice. Philosophical practice involves the application of philosophical methods and insights to help individuals examine their beliefs, improve their thinking patterns, and resolve practical or existential problems. It represents a shift from the traditional “armchair philosophy” paradigm to a more engaged, accessible approach that integrates philosophy into daily life.

Originating in Europe and North America in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, philosophical practice encompasses philosophical counselling and therapy, group facilitation, organizational consulting, and philosophy with children, etc. Pioneering philosophers such as Gerd B. Achenbach, Lou Marinoff, Peter B. Raabe, Oscar Brenifier, and Ran Lahav have been instrumental in establishing this field as a distinct profession and paradigm. The movement reflects a growing dissatisfaction with the limitations of traditional academic philosophy and seeks to revitalize philosophy’s relevance by directly addressing the concerns of modern individuals and societies, often presenting itself as an alternative or supplement to psychotherapy.

This article examines the history, theoretical foundations, and practical methodologies of philosophical practice, highlighting its evolution into a new paradigm. The literature review provides a comprehensive overview of existing research and theoretical underpinnings relevant to philosophical practice. It explores the various forms and methods employed by philosophical practitioners, the relationship between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy, and the profession’s efforts toward certification and ethical standards. Additionally, the article discusses the future of philosophical practice, considering its potential to become an integral part of public life and the marketplace, and its role in transforming philosophy into a more inclusive and practical discipline. By analyzing the development and current state of philosophical practice, this study aims to provide insights into its significance as a burgeoning profession and its potential to influence both philosophical research and societal well-being.

## 2. Defining Philosophical Practice: Bridging Theory and Everyday Life

In Abraham Maslow’s (1981) view, the ultimate goal of human existence is self-actualization and fulfilment — a yearning for a good life. While Maslow’s theory of the hierarchy of needs is widely recognized, its applicability varies across different cultures. Research demonstrates that, although basic physiological and safety needs

are universal, the emphasis on higher-level needs such as esteem and self-actualization differs significantly among cultures. In individualistic societies, self-actualization is often seen as the paramount goal, whereas collectivistic cultures may prioritize community and family over individual fulfilment (Hofstede, 2001; Nevis, 1983). Therefore, Maslow's theory is valid across cultures but manifests to different degrees and through diverse pathways.

However, in a world characterized by diverse cultures and values, the coexistence of different ideologies creates a labyrinth of confusion, leading to profound conflicts in personal relationships and inner turmoil. For example, globalization has intensified interactions among cultures, sometimes resulting in identity crises or cultural clashes (Berry, 2005). The rise of social media has amplified exposure to conflicting values, causing individuals to grapple with questions about moral relativism and ethical standards (Turkle, 2011). These conflicts are often perceived as psychological illnesses or moral failings detrimental to humanity. As psychological issues become more severe, individuals increasingly question the world and society but struggle to find definitive answers.

### **2.1 The Emergence of Philosophical Practice**

Philosophical practice emerges as a means to address these challenges, offering a path toward self-actualization by helping individuals explore fundamental questions about existence, meaning, and values. By engaging in philosophical inquiry, people can clarify their beliefs, overcome confusion, and achieve a deeper understanding of themselves and the world — thus progressing toward the self-actualization that Maslow describes. Through philosophical practice, individuals can attain inner peace and fulfilment by aligning their actions with their authentic selves.

As a representative of the applied turn in contemporary Western philosophy, philosophical counselling and therapy, along with various approaches that integrate philosophy into daily life, are collectively known as “philosophical practice.” Philosophical practice involves bringing philosophy into people's everyday lives, typically facilitated by a trained philosophical practitioner who employs philosophical methods — such as utilizing philosophical theories and techniques — to examine individuals' beliefs and improve their thinking patterns through insights into their own experiences. This process helps participants learn to think like philosophers, aiding them in solving practical problems or existential issues they encounter in daily life. Ultimately, philosophical practice leads to greater self-understanding, personal growth, and inner peace.

Regarding the emergence of contemporary philosophical practice, its beginning depends critically on how one defines the term. When understood narrowly as individual consultations intended as alternatives to traditional psychotherapy, philosophical practice is often traced back to its inception in late-20<sup>th</sup>-century Europe (Achenbach et al., 1984). In this context, the methods emphasize individual dialogue using classical philosophical techniques to address personal and existential issues in a private practice outside academia. Although some scholars have attributed the origins of U.S. philosophical practice to claims that Peter Grimes was an early pioneer in this field, the evidence is ambiguous. Grimes is primarily known for his

academic work — teaching Socratic dialogue within university settings and conducting group sessions (for example, with persons contending with addiction) — yet there is scant evidence supporting the existence of a sustained practice beyond these institutional boundaries (Grimes & Uliana, 1998). Moreover, the integration of philosophical inquiry into psychotherapeutic contexts can be seen as one of the precedents from which contemporary philosophical consultations later evolved (Cohen, 2003a; Rogers, 1951).

Broadening the scope to include Socratic group dialogue shifts the historical perspective further back into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Pioneers such as Leonard Nelson and Gustav Heckmann played a seminal role in developing these practices in Germany, where they conducted sessions with workers and other non-academic groups. Their work not only democratized philosophical dialogue but also laid the foundational techniques for engaging diverse publics outside formal academic settings (Heckmann, 1981; Nelson, 1949). This early tradition underscores the possibility of philosophical practice as a public, socially engaged activity rather than one confined to the walls of academia.

If one adopts a more expansive understanding of philosophical practice — as an “art of living” that emphasizes philosophy as a way of life — the origins become even more ancient and transcultural (Ding et al., 2024b). In this broad sense, philosophy has long served as both a guide for daily living and a source of ethical and therapeutic counsel. Pierre Hadot (1995) emphasizes that philosophy is not merely an intellectual enterprise but a way of life that involves continuous self-examination and active engagement with the world, a perspective evident in the classical dialogues of Socrates and in the practices of the Stoics, such as Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, who cultivated tranquility and resilience through their way of life. Similarly, from ancient Greece, Rome, India, to China, philosophers engaged in consultative and therapeutic dialogue. In China, for example, Confucius not only debated ethical and personal conduct with his disciples and rulers but also promoted social harmony and virtue (Ames & Rosemont, 1998; Zhang, 1999). Although Western philosophy has often been confined to theoretical exploration and rigorous conceptual analysis since the time of Plato, the universal notion of philosophy as an integrative art of life — transcending cultural and temporal boundaries — remains a timeless and influential paradigm.

While the “armchair philosophy” has built a vast intellectual kingdom through systematic reasoning and abstract speculation, its disconnection from the general public and daily life has led to dissatisfaction among many. Philosophical practice emerged from this discontent with traditional academic philosophy, proposing that philosophy should move toward everyday life and address practical concerns. As Hadot notes, the emergence of universities also contributed to the current mode of philosophy. Initially, philosophy was a public phenomenon, with Socrates engaging people in the marketplace. Then, schools emerged, such as Plato’s Academy and the Stoic school, and eventually philosophy became enclosed within universities (e.g., the University of Bologna, established in 1088, received its formal charter (*Authentica Habita*) from Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa in 1158), becoming a branch of science. Now, there is a rediscovery of philosophy as a public phenomenon.

## 2.2 Different Modes of Philosophical Practice

According to their objectives and methods, philosophical practice is mainly divided into three categories: individual counselling or consultations, group facilitation (including philosophy with children in schools), and organizational consulting. It is important to distinguish between *philosophical practice* and *philosophical consultations*. “Philosophical practice” refers to philosophy as a way of life, encompassing a broad approach to integrating philosophy into everyday living. “Philosophical consultations” are specific activities within this practice, involving direct engagement with clients to address personal or organizational issues. Similarly, there is a distinction between *philosophical counselling* and *philosophical consultations*. The term “counselling” carries psychotherapeutic connotations and is used within philosophical practice; however, “consultation” may be preferred to emphasize the philosophical nature of the engagement without the implication of psychotherapy. Individual consultations, group dialogue, and organizational consulting all support philosophy as a way of life.

### 2.2.1 Individual Counselling/Consultation

Clients seeking individual counselling or consultations typically approach philosophical practitioners with specific practical problems or dilemmas, seeking assistance. Historically, when individuals faced difficulties in life, they often turned to psychologists or clergy for guidance and advice. However, due to issues such as lengthy treatment durations, slow effectiveness, reliance on medication, the labelling of individuals as “patients,” and the tendency for symptoms to recur in psychotherapy, some psychologists — notably Albert Ellis — turned to philosophy as a supplement or alternative to psychotherapy. Ellis developed cognitive therapy in psychology and created Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, integrating philosophical principles into psychological practice (Ellis & Harper, 1997; Ellis & MacLaren, 2005).

Not all problems people encounter in daily life stem from psychological or mental disorders. Particularly for modern individuals in this complex and ever-changing world, people often face various existential confusions and dilemmas rather than neurobiological disorders identified in psychopathology. If one’s problems can be resolved by carefully examining, diagnosing, and adjusting fundamental life philosophies — such as one’s worldview, outlook on life, and values — then consulting a philosophical counsellor is more appropriate, rather than seeking a psychiatrist who primarily treats with medication (Harteloh, 2013c). Conversely, if someone is experiencing emotional dysfunction or physiological illness, medical consultation and possible pharmacological treatment are necessary. Nevertheless, even for patients who require medication, the intervention of philosophy can greatly aid their treatment. This synergy between philosophy and medicine underscores the rise of medical humanities today. When people’s thoughts are clarified, their perception of the world becomes clearer, and their inner pain and struggles diminish. Research has shown that alleviating mental anguish can lead to a reduction in physical pain, as psychological stress and negative emotions are known to exacerbate physical symptoms (Gatchel et al., 2007; Lumley et al., 2017). By addressing mental suffering through philosophical practice, individuals may experience improvements in physical

well-being. Therefore, Marinoff, the founding president of the American Philosophical Practitioners Association (APPA), refers to philosophical counselling as “therapy for the sane” (Marinoff, 2004).

In highly industrialized regions — such as the U.S., Japan, China, India, and Europe — existential concerns are pervasive and are often medicalized as depression. In contrast, philosophical practices offer an alternative framework by reclaiming the foundational philosophical form. These practices enable a transformation in which individuals shift from merely functioning in roles like students, managers, or homemakers to engaging authentically as learners, workers, or lovers — thereby transitioning from mere functioning to true existence (Harteloh, 2024).

### 2.2.2 Group Facilitation

Philosophical practice can be conducted either one-on-one or one-to-many — the latter being known as “group facilitation,” a form of philosophical practice involving multiple participants. Informal group facilitation sessions are typically held in cafes, bars, and bookstores. In the early development of philosophical practice, especially in France, public venues like cafes played a crucial role in facilitating dialogue and exchange between philosophical practitioners and the general public (Sautet, 1995). People gathered regularly to participate in discussions hosted by a philosophical practitioner. The discussion topics could be predetermined or decided on the spot through consultation or voting among participants. These topics are of interest to everyone and open to discussion, such as “Is freedom acting according to our own will?” or “Under what circumstances is lying not condemnable?” Due to participants’ diverse academic and professional backgrounds, their viewpoints often differ. Even if consensus is not reached by the end of the discussion, the process involves independent and critical thinking, thereby achieving the purpose of philosophical practice in cultivating thought.

Formal group facilitation has relatively fixed procedures, with the main method being the Nelsonian Socratic Method (Heckmann, 1981; Nelson, 1949), which was later expanded and refined into what is now called “Neo-Socratic” dialogue. The group participating in the practice usually consists of about 10 people, who can be students, homemakers, corporate employees, or government staff, without requiring any prior philosophical background. The philosophical practitioner does not need to say much throughout the process or express personal viewpoints but serves primarily to guide the progression of the discussion. The method moves from a question via examples to underlying principles. These principles are not general or theoretical by nature but are valid for the group involved in the process. Formal group facilitation typically takes place in a relatively enclosed, quiet space, such as a classroom or conference room, but sometimes occurs in libraries or bookstores. Unlike informal group facilitation, formal group facilitation ultimately aims to reach a conclusive answer valid for the group of participants, so discussions may last several days.

Notably, the Nelsonian Socratic Method can be applied to individual consultations as well — for example, by French philosophical practitioner Oscar Brenifier. A question is both the input and output of the consultation. The Socratic consultation

process moves from the initial question of the client, through an analysis of examples from experience, to another philosophical question exemplifying the underlying principles or presuppositions of the client.

### 2.2.3 Organizational Consulting

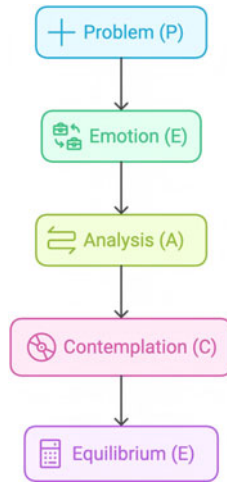
Any organization — whether a government, school, hospital, or company — will face various ethical and moral dilemmas. Organizational consulting refers to the process whereby philosophical practitioners use a series of philosophical techniques to enhance or improve the organization's ethical sensibilities and spiritual ethos (Haġegan, 2019a). Dutch economic philosopher Henk van Luijk argues that wherever there is business, there are moral crises. An ethical organization can provide its employees with a more positive work environment and foster more harmonious collegial relationships, thereby enhancing relationships between employees and customers. Therefore, such organizational consulting is beneficial to everyone and ultimately achieves the goal of maximizing organizational interests (van Luijk, 1993). Philosophical practitioners can be part of the organization or act as external consultants facilitating in-company group discussions such as moral deliberations or philosophical walks.

In Holland, the Nelsonian Socratic Method and the subsequent Neo-Socratic dialogue are fundamental to business philosophy. They are applied in areas such as policy-making and business identity, the promotion of human well-being within companies (often referred to as “human resources”), quality management, and environmental ethics. By engaging in reflective, critical dialogue, practitioners explore the deeper values and assumptions underlying organizational practices, which helps businesses address ethical dilemmas, enhance decision-making, and foster a more sustainable and human-centric approach to corporate governance.

Philosophical practitioners can also integrate individual counselling and group facilitation techniques to solve specific organizational and interpersonal problems. Marinoff, drawing on his years of experience in philosophical practice, developed the famous “PEACE” process model (see Figure 1), enabling this model of philosophical practice — with organizations and individuals as clients — to spread successfully from North America to Europe and around the world. The PEACE method consists of the following five steps (Marinoff, 1999, pp. 37–51):

- **Problem (P):** Correctly identify the core problems.
- **Emotion (E):** Constructively express the client's emotional reactions to the problems, making subsequent discussion possible.
- **Analysis (A):** Help solve the problems by rationally and logically considering the client's various possible solutions, rather than merely trying to soothe the client or help them move on, as in traditional psychotherapy.
- **Contemplation (C):** Discover the intentions, thought frameworks, and environments that enable the client to make the best choices.
- **Equilibrium (E):** Achieve a state where the original problems are no longer perceived as problematic.





**Figure 1.** Lou Marinoff's "PEACE" Process Model

The philosophical aspect of the PEACE model lies in deeply exploring the rational choices made by individuals. Marinoff believes that the PEACE process is applicable to both individual counselling and organizational consulting. Therefore, he regards the PEACE model as the meta-methodology or universal framework of philosophical practice. Notably, the expression of emotions (E) is where this model overlaps with psychotherapy.

Another method for individual counselling that warrants mention is the philosophical reflection approach as applied by Gerd B. Achenbach, Anders Lindseth, and Peter Harteloh. This method involves a systematic reflection on the client's words from a value-neutral point of view (*aporia*), enabling the client to reconstruct themselves as a person. While it resembles existential psychotherapy in its mirroring techniques, it differs in its philosophical nature and content, emphasizing recursive self-examination. The process moves from form to content, resulting in a renewal of the client's consciousness (Harteloh, 2024).

### 3. Philosophical Practice as a New Paradigm

Dutch philosophical practitioner Peter Harteloh (2013a), drawing on the terminology of philosopher Thomas S. Kuhn, regards philosophical practice as an emerging paradigm in contemporary Western philosophy. The term "paradigm" originally denotes an example or pattern; different scientific paradigms embody distinct ways of thinking, worldviews, fundamental theories, models, methods, tools, standards, and all aspects related to scientific research. According to Kuhn (1962), scientists adhering to different paradigms — such as those supporting the geocentric theory versus the heliocentric theory — experience such profound differences in theoretical perspectives that they effectively "see" entirely different worlds. It is as if they are wearing different lenses that shape their observations. Similarly, the divergence between traditional theoretical philosophy and contemporary philosophical practice is



pronounced. Philosophers from these two communities may hold markedly different understandings and attitudes toward philosophy.

Traditional academic philosophy often considers itself a science independent of the philosopher — a discipline pursued objectively without reference to the individual's personal experiences or perspectives. In contrast, philosophical practice recognizes that philosophy is inherently connected with the person studying or practising it. The notion of a science entirely independent of the scientist was challenged and largely abandoned in the 20<sup>th</sup> century across various fields. For instance, in physics, Werner Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle highlighted the inevitable interaction between the observer and the observed, demonstrating that the act of measurement affects the phenomenon being measured (Heisenberg, 1927). In sociology, the Hawthorne effect, identified through studies at the Hawthorne Works, showed that individuals modify their behaviour in response to being observed, underscoring the influence of the researcher on the subject (Adair, 1984). Philosophy, however, awaited an answer to this anomaly. Philosophical practice emerges as the response to this challenge by acknowledging the inseparability of philosophical inquiry from the philosopher's own life and experiences.

In the traditional “armchair philosophy” paradigm, many theoretical philosophers engage deeply in abstract thinking and inquiries into metaphysical and epistemological issues, often expounding their thoughts and methods using complex and specialized terminology. Laypersons without a substantial philosophical background frequently find these theories inaccessible, and even fellow philosophers may struggle to communicate seamlessly across different schools of thought. Although modern philosophy has made strides in readability and accessibility, its methods have largely remained within established academic patterns, focusing primarily on philosophical writing and scholarly discourse. While such theoretical work holds significant value, if philosophical research does not consider how these viewpoints impact the actual lives of individuals, and if philosophers' theories and methods do not permeate their own lifestyles or provide practical guidance to others, the limitations of such research in practical value become evident. Consequently, the influence of philosophy on human historical development is often less direct and apparent than that of science, which frequently yields tangible technological advancements and societal changes.

Although Harteloh's (2013a) application of the term “paradigm” may not align perfectly with Kuhn's original usage, his characterization of the development and current state of philosophical practice is apt. Kuhn's work led to the sociology of science (later expanded upon by scholars such as Robert K. Merton), providing an analysis of science as a body of knowledge intertwined with social factors (Kuhn, 1962; Merton, 1973). Harteloh's interpretation resonates more closely with this understanding. Comparative studies reveal that philosophical practice has indeed initiated a revolution in the field of philosophical research, precipitating a paradigm shift. As Harteloh asserts, the significance of this transition “lies in philosophy's self-improvement” (Harteloh, 2013a, p. 35). Drawing parallels with Kuhn's description of scientific paradigms, Harteloh contends that philosophical practice has already exhibited the hallmarks of a genuine paradigm: it boasts renowned philosophical practitioners, representative theories and methods unique to philosophical practice, specialized organizations, academic journals, conferences, and professional education and training programs dedicated to the field.

The preliminary formation of philosophical practice as a paradigm is evidenced by several landmark events. Notably, the first International Conference on Philosophical Practice was jointly organized by Lahav and Marinoff in 1994 in Vancouver, Canada, and was attended by 55 philosophical practitioners from around the world. Since then, the conference has been held approximately every two years, with venues including Leusden in the Netherlands (1996, 2010), New York in the U.S. (1997), Bensberg in Germany (1998), Oxford in the U.K. (1999), Oslo in Norway (2001), Copenhagen in Denmark (2004), Seville in Spain (2006), Carloforte in Italy (2008), Chuncheon in South Korea (2012), Athens in Greece (2013), Belgrade in Serbia (2014), Bern in Switzerland (2016), Mexico City in Mexico (2018), online in Russia (2021), Timișoara in Romania (2023), and Zagreb in Croatia (2025). The wide geographical distribution of these conferences underscores the fact that philosophical practice has evolved into a global movement, with influence extending across Europe, North America, East Asia, and beyond.

Since Achenbach established the first philosophical practice organization, the International Society for Philosophical Practice (Internationale Gesellschaft für Philosophische Praxis), in 1982, philosophical practice has rapidly spread across the European continent, particularly flourishing in the Netherlands. By the late 1990s, the number of philosophical practitioners and regional organizations surged, and more clients began to emerge. Philosophical practice received significant attention and enthusiastic coverage from global media. Beyond Germany, formal philosophical practice societies or associations have been established in numerous countries, including the Netherlands, Norway, Israel, Finland, the U.K., Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, the U.S., Canada, Australia, Brazil, South Africa, India, Romania, South Korea, Japan, and China (Hong Kong and Taiwan). Additionally, countries like Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Poland, and the Czech Republic have developed active philosophical practice communities, further indicating the global expansion of the field. These organizations have numerous members and regularly hold philosophical practice-related seminars and workshops. On the websites of the APPA and the National Philosophical Counseling Association (NPCA), one can find hundreds of certified philosophical practitioners within and outside the U.S., along with their contact information.

Philosophical practice has also established a number of academic journals to publish related professional articles, forming a positive interactive model that emphasizes both theory and practice — guiding practice with theory and promoting theoretical reflection through practice. The currently available relevant journals mainly include:

- *Philosophical Practice: Journal of the APPA*
- *International Journal of Philosophical Practice: Journal of the NPCA*
- *Practical Philosophy: Journal of the Society for Philosophy in Practice*
- *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*
- *Journal of Applied Philosophy*
- *HASER: Revista Internacional de Filosofía Aplicada*
- *Journal of Humanities Therapy*
- *Philosophical Practice and Counseling*
- *Interdisciplinary Research in Counseling, Ethics and Philosophy*
- *Journal of Philosophy in Schools*

In 1995, the first anthology on philosophical counselling was published, gathering 14 important articles by renowned philosophical practitioners such as Gerd B. Achenbach, Ran Lahav, Lou Marinoff, and Elliot D. Cohen (Lahav & da Venza Tillmanns, 1995). Philosophical practitioners have also authored many introductory and theoretical books on philosophical practice, providing guidance for those aspiring to become philosophical practitioners (Marinoff, 2001; Raabe, 2001). Popular books written for the general public have further boosted the visibility and recognition of philosophical practice. Some of these books have become international bestsellers, greatly enhancing the field's prominence in contemporary society (Baggini & Macaro, 2012; Cohen, 2003b; Marinoff, 1999; Pigliucci, 2017; Weiner, 2008).

In terms of professional education, philosophical practice has begun to enter academic institutions, receiving attention and support from relevant administrative bodies (Knapp & Tjeltveit, 2005). The University of Seville in Spain was among the first to establish a Master of Arts degree in philosophical counselling. In 2010, the City College of New York approved a plan to establish a Master of Arts degree program in Applied Philosophy, which includes philosophical counselling as a sub-discipline. The APPA and NPCA offer certification programs in philosophical counselling and Logic-Based Therapy (LBT) respectively. The University of South Wales in Australia offers courses in philosophical counselling within their philosophy curriculum. The University of Vienna in Austria provides training programs in philosophical practice and counselling. In South Korea, several prominent institutions have taken significant strides in the academic field of philosophical counselling and humanities therapy (Rhee, 2017). For example, Kangwon National University, Kyungpook National University, Hannam University, and the University of Ulsan each offer undergraduate and doctoral programs focused on these disciplines. Additionally, Dongguk University is scheduled to launch a related program in 2025, further expanding opportunities for academic and professional development in this emerging field.

Currently, several scholars have completed doctoral dissertations in the field of philosophical counselling and practice. Shlomit C. Schuster (1997) analyzed the autobiographies of Augustine of Hippo, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Jean-Paul Sartre, illustrating how philosophical theory and practice transformed these philosophers' lives. Her dissertation concludes that, unlike psychoanalysis' understanding of continuity and consistency, these philosophers achieved personal unity and harmony through practising philosophy in their unique ways. Maria da Venza Tillmanns (1998) developed a theory of philosophical counselling and teaching based on maintaining a tension between theory and practice. Her dissertation focuses on Martin Buber's concept of the dialogical, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the "otherness" of others in counselling and teaching. A crucial aspect is acknowledging and valuing the perspectives of clients or students while maintaining one's own viewpoint, facilitating genuine communication and exchange.

Raabe (1999) critiques existing models of philosophical counselling, arguing for its connection to psychotherapy while emphasizing its unique strengths. He introduces the Free Floating, Immediate Problem Resolution, Intentional Teaching, and Transcendence (FIIT) model, which he asserts is clearer, more practical, and better aligned with philosophical norms. Raabe also explores the advantages of philosophical counselling over psychotherapy. Patrick Neubauer (2000) explored the institutional

development and conceptual foundations of philosophical counselling, examining the philosophical goals of dialogue philosophy and counselling. He conducted in-depth comparisons of different types of psychotherapy and provided case analyses of various counsellors, offering systematic insights into actual counselling practice for the first time in German scholarship.

Xiaojun Ding (2016) developed Analytic Philosophical Practice (APP) to address the limitations of non-analytic approaches. Using tools like the Nelsonian Socratic Method and the Neo-Socratic dialogue, APP analyzes clients' worldviews and seeks to resolve life problems through logical and conceptual analysis. By clarifying concepts, disclosing presuppositions, resolving conflicts, and justifying beliefs, APP fosters critical thinking and long-lasting therapeutic effects. Ding also reflects on challenges in APP's development, such as possible conflicts between analytic and continental traditions and the commercialization of philosophical practice. Richard Sivil (2019) explored the diversity of philosophical practice and its potential enrichment through the concept of *phronesis* (practical wisdom). Critiquing the limits of the Nelsonian Socratic Model, Sivil reimagines philosophical practice as a way of life characterized by transformative aspirations, actionable projects, personal engagement, practical tools, and a coherent system. Drawing on six Western traditions and philosophers — Stoicism, Epicureanism, Immanuel Kant, John Dewey, Søren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Nietzsche — Sivil highlights shared goals (happiness, morality, authenticity) and diverse metaphysical perspectives.

#### 4. Theoretical Foundations and Contemporary Applications in Philosophical Practice

This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of existing research and theoretical foundations relevant to philosophical practice. This section examines the historical development, methodologies, and applications of philosophical practice, as well as its relationship with psychotherapy. By systematically reviewing the literature, we set the stage for understanding the current state of the field and identifying gaps that this research aims to address.

##### 4.1 Historical Intellectual Resources of Philosophical Consultations

Philosophical practice has evolved significantly since the 1980s. Early pioneers such as Gerd B. Achenbach in Germany and Adriaan Hoogendijk in the Netherlands laid the groundwork for the field by establishing philosophical counselling as a distinct discipline. Their work emphasized the practical application of philosophical insights to everyday problems, distinguishing philosophical practice from traditional academic philosophy. Although a wide array of psychologists and psychotherapists like Karl Jaspers, Ludwig Binswanger, Solomon Eliot Asch, Carl Rogers, and Elliot D. Cohen had incorporated philosophical concepts into counselling, Achenbach and Hoogendijk were the first to explicitly initiate private philosophical counselling practices outside academia as alternatives to psychotherapy. This area of research focuses on influential philosophers and schools that provide intellectual resources for contemporary philosophical counselling. By clarifying the theoretical origins and

intellectual inheritance of philosophical counselling, these studies support the legitimacy of contemporary philosophical counselling.

The history of philosophical consultations is deeply entwined with the broader history of philosophy. Philosophers have long engaged in dialogues and correspondences that resemble modern philosophical consultations. For instance, René Descartes extensively corresponded with Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, discussing issues of ethics and the mind-body problem (Shapiro, 2007). These letters can be seen as early forms of philosophical consultations, where philosophical insights are applied to personal concerns (Mochizuki & Harteloh, 2019). The medium has evolved from written letters to face-to-face dialogues, and now to virtual communications, but the essence of philosophical dialogue remains consistent. From Plato's dialogues, where Socrates engages in profound philosophical discussions with various interlocutors, to contemporary virtual consultations, the practice of philosophical dialogue has been a continuous thread in the fabric of philosophy (Chen et al., 2025; Gill, 2012). This continuity underscores the fact that philosophical consultations are not a 20<sup>th</sup>-century invention but have been inherent in the philosophical tradition throughout history.

Philosophical practice draws from a rich array of intellectual resources. The origins of Western philosophical practice are deeply rooted in ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, with scholars focusing on the ideas of Socrates (Chen, 2014; Weiss & Ohrem, 2016), Plato (Holger, 2017), Aristotle (Li, 2010), Epicureanism (Fatić & Dentsoras, 2014), and Stoicism (Mesaroş, 2020). Hadot explored the philosophies of Socrates, the Cynics, Aristotle, Epicureanism, and Stoicism, summarizing philosophy as a way of life. He argued that philosophy calls on people to strive for wisdom through spiritual exercises. Echoing Hadot's view, William Ferraiolo (2010) points out that despite one being a slave (Epictetus) and the other an emperor (Marcus Aurelius), both Stoic philosophers' ideas on self-control can help modern individuals rationally and effectively cope with the inevitable and uncontrollable ups and downs of life, thereby achieving inner peace and leading a good life. Aleksandar Fatić (2014) contends that Epicureanism, as a universal life philosophy, can be a powerful tool for addressing emotional and existential issues in philosophical counselling.

In addition to ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, many modern and contemporary thinkers have contributed profound theories and intellectual resources to philosophical counselling. Donald Robertson (1998) believes that contemporary philosophical counselling draws inspiration from the philosophical thoughts of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Martin Buber, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Leslie Spivak (2004) notes that Kierkegaard's philosophy of human freedom has significant explanatory power and relevance for philosophical counselling. Richard Shusterman (1997), through examining the philosophical theories and lives of pragmatists like John Dewey, Nelson Goodman, Richard Rorty, and Hilary Putnam, suggests that philosophy should be used to analyze and guide personal life, helping people live better.

Some scholars also interpret philosophical practice through the lens of traditional Chinese philosophy, including the teachings of Confucianism (Chen & Ni, 2016; Lu, 2004; Su, 2011) and Daoism (Guo, 2023; Lahav, 1996). Ding et al. (2024a) explore the integration of Confucian principles of self-cultivation into contemporary

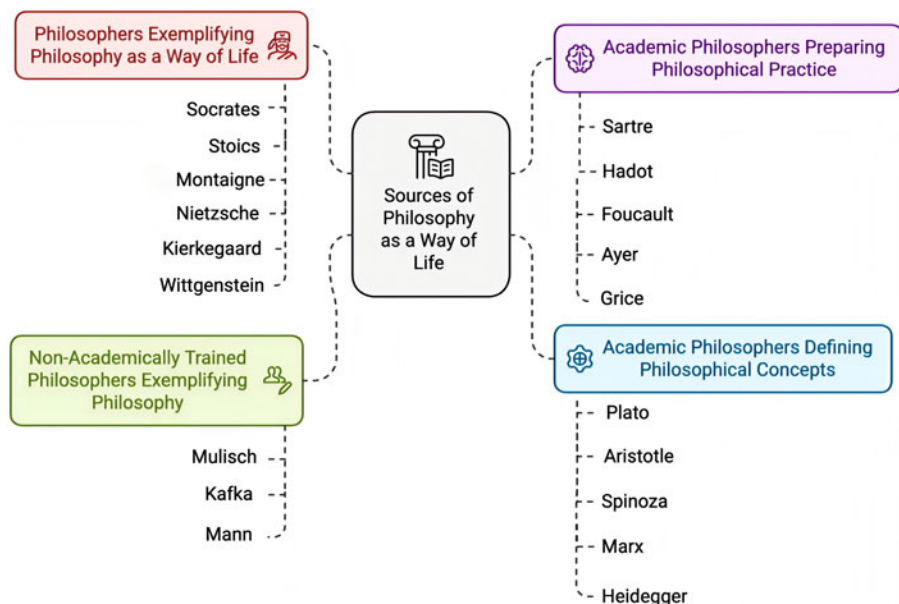


Figure 2. Sources of Philosophy as a Way of Life

philosophical practice, emphasizing the combined application of *gongfu* (effort) and *jingjie* (spiritual state) in achieving unity of knowledge and action.

Xichen Lv (2007) combines Albert Ellis' Rational Emotive Therapy and Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy with Daoist concepts such as adapting to nature, accepting circumstances, and the interdependence of fortune and misfortune to address anxiety and depression. Additionally, some scholars incorporate religious perspectives into philosophical practice, drawing on Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, and other traditions to supplement its intellectual resources (Casewell, 2022; Devarakonda, 2023; Hsu, 2011; Louw, 2011; Pilpel & Gindi, 2019; Su, 2020). An important contribution to philosophical practice is Achenbach's (2010) anthology *Zur Einführung der Philosophischen Praxis*. This collection compiles his key lectures, essays, dialogues, and conversations that encapsulate his pioneering work in philosophical practice. He emphasizes the importance of engaging with clients in open-ended philosophical dialogues, moving beyond rigid methodologies to foster genuine philosophical exploration.

In general, philosophical sources define philosophical practice as inherently philosophical, even though the philosophers referred to might not have been practitioners in the modern sense. There are basically four kinds of sources (see Figure 2):

**(1) Philosophers Who Exemplify Philosophy as a Way of Life:** This category includes philosophers like Socrates, the Stoics (e.g., Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius), Michel de Montaigne, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Wittgenstein. They lived their philosophies, embodying their philosophical principles in their daily lives.

**(2) Academic Philosophers Who Prepared the Way for Philosophical Practice:** Philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Pierre Hadot, and Michel Foucault fall into this category. They bridged the gap between academic philosophy and philosophical practice, with Sartre, for instance, using plays, novels, and essays to disseminate existentialist ideas. Additionally, the ordinary language philosophy developed by A. J. Ayer and Paul Grice laid the groundwork for philosophical consultations with clients and guests who lack formal academic training.

**(3) Academic Philosophers Who Worked on Concepts Suited for Defining Philosophical Practice as Philosophical:** This includes philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Baruch de Spinoza, Karl Marx, Martin Heidegger, and others who developed foundational concepts and theories that inform philosophical practice.

**(4) Non-Academically Trained Philosophers Who Exemplify Philosophy as a Way of Life:** This includes authors like Harry Mulisch, Franz Kafka, Thomas Mann, and others who, through their literary works, explored profound philosophical themes and contributed to philosophical discourse.

#### **4.2 Defining the Concept of “Philosophical Consultation”**

When examining what philosophical practitioners are actually doing, a philosophical consultation can be defined as a one-on-one dialogue between a philosopher and a client (guest) in a private space, discussing questions, problems, worries, or themes in thinking or life using philosophical means and with a philosophical idea in mind (Harteloh, 2023). This definition aligns with a general definition of psychotherapy as an interaction between a psychologist and a client for treating an unwanted mental state or disturbing behaviour with psychological means — a technique that can be learned or trained, aimed at a specified goal, with a theory of the normal and abnormal in mind. However, the differences between psychotherapy and philosophical consultations lie in the underlying idea (pathology versus philosophy), the intention (treatment versus discussion), object (unwanted mental state versus theme in life), means (standardized technique versus philosophizing), and relationship with the client (hierarchical versus “co-thinker”). A philosophical consultation can best be considered a philosophical investigation into meaning in line with the later Wittgenstein’s approach to philosophy as a form of therapy for the intellect (Wittgenstein, 1953).

Robertson (1998) considers philosophical counselling, like applied ethics, to be a subfield of applied philosophy. In philosophical practice, practitioners and clients deal with personal, specific life issues. Philosophical practitioners, inspired by academic philosophy, use a series of philosophical techniques to make their dialogues with clients genuinely philosophical, addressing clients’ private, concrete life problems.

Lahav (1995) views philosophical counselling as a form of worldview interpretation, proposing that different philosophical counselling approaches have various methods for interpreting worldviews. He asserts that underlying the diverse



approaches in philosophical counselling is a principle: different aspects of everyday life can be interpreted as expressions of one's concepts of self and the world. These concepts can be experiential or philosophical, and their sum constitutes a person's worldview.

Lydia Amir (2004) equates philosophical counselling directly with its methods, suggesting that it is a collection of approaches that use philosophical ways to solve problems and dilemmas in daily life. Schuster (1999) believes that philosophical counselling entails philosophical care for the client's self through autonomous dialogue between the counsellor and the client.

#### **4.3 Goals and Values of Philosophical Consultations**

Philosophical practice is not merely the application of philosophy to an independent object, case, or person; it is philosophy as a way of life — living philosophical concepts. It represents a mode of philosophy where the act of philosophizing defines philosophy itself. One of philosophical practice's primary aims is to discuss or resolve everyday cognitive dilemmas, shape individuals' life philosophies, and establish personal value systems. Philosophical consultations support philosophy as a way of life, enabling participants not only to think about philosophers or philosophy but to philosophize themselves.

Michael Grosso (2012) regards philosophical counselling as a conceptual art, asserting that its purpose is to help clients view their problems in new ways, enabling them to overcome these issues differently. Yohsuke Tsuchiya and Mai Miyata (2015) consider philosophical counselling a feasible tool in Philosophy for Children (P4C) to develop children's intellectual virtues. Beyond training in thinking methods and the pursuit of wisdom, some researchers advocate that philosophical counselling is an important means for ethical virtue education. Barbara Jones (2012) views cabaret comedy as a form of philosophical counselling, where performers provide moral education to the audience by narrating personal stories of universal significance. James A. Tuedio (2003) points out that philosophical counselling does not promise ultimate utilitarian outcomes; the philosopher's sole responsibility is to engage in continuous inquiry and questioning.

Tianqun Pan (2021) advocates for thought analysis, combining Socratic dialogue with logical analysis to alleviate cognitive-induced suffering and help people achieve better lives in the technosociety. Marinoff suggests that many modern mental issues stem from deep existential problems, value conflicts, and the search for life's meaning rather than mere biochemical imbalances. His book *Plato, Not Prozac!* challenges traditional perceptions of mental health interventions, demonstrating how philosophical ideas can address psychological problems and enhance mental well-being (Marinoff, 1999).

Qian Ouyang (2012) views philosophical counselling as a form of practical philosophy that rejuvenates the "spiritual healing" function of philosophy. Additionally, fostering critical thinking is a key objective. Ding et al. (2022) advocate using Socratic dialogue to cultivate critical thinking, viewing philosophical practice as a dialectical process that examines and exposes ineffective thinking patterns leading to false or inconsistent beliefs, thereby avoiding logical fallacies.

Blanka Šulavíková (2011) explores the central role of critical thinking in philosophical practice, particularly through Socratic dialogue, to achieve an understanding of truth (Ollinheimo & Hakkarainen, 2023). Philosophical practice is also seen as a crucial means and technique for achieving humanistic care in ideological and political education (Huang, 2011, 2014; Wang, 2018; Yu, 2021). The core of humanistic care in ideological and political education lies in value care, aiming to alleviate spiritual crises characterized by loss of meaning and misdirected value pursuits. To address these issues, Xisheng Wang proposes “thought counselling” to resolve intellectual dilemmas, relieve spiritual distress, and enhance the effectiveness of ideological and political education (Wang, 2014, 2018).

Furthermore, philosophical counselling supports philosophy as a practice, an art of living, guiding individuals in the pursuit of a meaningful and well-examined life. This involves adopting philosophical principles that promote personal growth, ethical behaviour, and emotional balance. By integrating these aims, philosophical practice seeks to enhance overall well-being and autonomy.

#### **4.4 The Relationship Between Philosophical Consultations and Psychotherapy**

Philosophical practitioners address a wide range of issues, from personal existential crises to ethical dilemmas in professional settings. The versatility of philosophical practice makes it applicable to a broad audience, enhancing its relevance and impact.

An important mission of contemporary philosophical counselling since its inception has been to challenge the theoretical assumptions, methods, and effectiveness of psychological counselling and psychotherapy. Many researchers view philosophical counselling as an alternative to psychological counselling and psychotherapy, attempting to provide rational life guidance independently through philosophical counselling without using any psychotherapeutic means (Achenbach et al., 1984; Marinoff, 2001; Raabe, 2010). Contrarily, J. Michael Russell (2001) argues that simply comparing what philosophical counsellors and psychotherapists do and why they do it reveals no clear and distinct boundary between the two. Amir (2004) also points out that a decisive component in philosophical counselling is the philosophical counsellor’s relevant psychological expertise and experience; otherwise, the counsellor may become lost in their own philosophical labyrinth.

Philosophical practice shares some similarities with psychotherapy, particularly in its focus on personal development and problem-solving. However, there are key differences. Philosophical practice emphasizes philosophical reasoning and dialogue, while psychotherapy often focuses on psychological theories and therapeutic techniques. Understanding these differences is crucial for defining the unique contributions of philosophical practice.

Scholars often differentiate between philosophical practice and psychotherapy based on concepts, theoretical foundations, objectives, methods, and target audiences (Dâlcu, 2022; Fischer, 2011; Sivil, 2009; Valencia Magallón, 2019; Wei, 2013; Yang, 2015; Yu, 2010). Some argue that philosophical counselling is more effective than psychological counselling in clarifying clients’ confused belief systems or providing better beliefs (Li, 2015). Harteloh (2023) notes that philosophical practice transcends traditional psychotherapy by focusing on resolving philosophical issues in life through dialogue,

rather than merely treating psychological disorders. Other scholars view philosophical counselling and psychotherapy as complementary (Cohen, 2013a; Hațegan, 2019b; Liu & Ge, 2011; Zhou & Liu, 2009). However, there is debate over whether philosophical counselling can be considered a form of therapy (Šulavíková, 2012).

Some researchers believe that although philosophical counselling cannot completely replace psychotherapy, psychotherapists need to utilize philosophical counselling to provide clients with more effective and profound means of alleviating psychological disorders. Therefore, they view philosophical counselling as a supplementary tool to psychotherapy (Cohen, 2013b). Jon Mills (2001) asserts that philosophical counselling is a form of psychotherapy, but it requires structure and guidance to develop into a reliable approach for solving psychological problems — a “philosophical-psychological” paradigm in theory and practice.

In exploring the relationship between philosophical consultations and various forms of psychotherapy, it is evident that certain psychotherapeutic approaches have deeply rooted philosophical foundations. Sigmund Freud introduced theories that delve into the unconscious mind, exploring concepts such as *eros* (life instincts) and *thanatos* (death instincts) (Freud, 1920/1955). Freud’s speculations on these fundamental human drives reflect philosophical inquiries into human nature, ethics, and the meaning of existence. Some contemporary scholars suggest that Freud’s work straddles the boundary between psychology and philosophy, positing that he could be considered a philosopher in his own right due to his profound reflections on the human condition (DiCenso, 2005; Falque, 2020; Wakefield, 2018).

Similarly, Rogers’ Client-Centered Therapy emphasizes the individual’s subjective experience and innate capacity for self-actualization (Rogers, 1951). This humanistic approach fosters an environment of empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard, enabling clients to explore their inner thoughts and feelings freely. The focus on personal growth and self-exploration resonates with philosophical counselling’s emphasis on dialogue and self-understanding. Rogers’ approach is sometimes regarded as philosophical because it centres on existential themes, such as authenticity and the search for meaning, which are fundamental concerns in philosophy (Cooper, 2003).

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), while already acknowledged for its Stoic roots, also reflects principles associated with Descartes. Descartes’ emphasis on rational thought and doubt (“*cogito, ergo sum*”) underscores the power of cognition in understanding reality (Descartes, 1641/1998). CBT posits that dysfunctional thinking patterns contribute to emotional distress and behavioural issues, and by challenging and modifying these thoughts, individuals can achieve emotional well-being (Beck, 1976). The Cartesian focus on systematic doubt and rational analysis parallels CBT’s techniques of identifying and restructuring maladaptive beliefs (Hofmann et al., 2013).

Furthermore, Systems Therapy, including Family Systems Therapy developed by Murray Bowen (1985), introduces a holistic perspective by considering individuals within the context of their relationships and broader social systems. This approach aligns with philosophical notions of interconnectedness and the social dimensions of human existence, as explored by Buber in his concept of the “I-Thou” relationship

(Buber, 1970). Philosophical consultations often incorporate discussions about the individual's role within their familial and social networks, examining how these relationships impact their personal challenges and philosophical outlooks (Goldenberg et al., 2016).

In summary, while philosophical consultations and various psychotherapeutic approaches may share common goals and overlap in certain techniques, philosophical counselling distinguishes itself by grounding its practice in philosophical theories and methodologies, explicitly. It emphasizes open-ended dialogue, critical reflection, and the exploration of existential questions, aiming to empower individuals to construct their own meanings and philosophies of life. Psychotherapy has its roots in philosophy, yet its adoption of a medical/therapeutic model often obscures these underlying philosophical foundations. Recognizing the interplay between philosophy and psychology enriches both fields, offering a more comprehensive understanding of human thought and behaviour.

#### 4.5 Diverse Methods and Models of Philosophical Consultations

Philosophical counselling exhibits significant methodological diversity, reflecting the varied philosophical resources and approaches that practitioners draw upon in their counselling activities. Philosophers may adopt different methods they find effective as vehicles for engaging with clients, with common approaches including the Socratic dialogue, phenomenological analysis, and existential questioning. These methodologies aim to foster self-reflection and critical thinking, enabling individuals to gain deeper insights into their lives and challenges.

While philosophical practice is often thought to require a methodical or structured approach to guide its process, this assumption is not universally accepted. Raabe (2001) argues that the field of philosophical practice has yet to reach a consensus on whether specific methods are necessary or if there should be a single definitive method. Achenbach argues against the necessity for any specific method. He believes that philosophical practice should be flexible and adaptable, emphasizing the importance of a free, open-ended dialogue that responds to the unique needs and contexts of each individual (Achenbach et al., 1984). Rigid adherence to a particular method, in his view, could constrain the dynamic and exploratory nature of philosophical inquiry.

Harteloh (2013a) argues that a philosophical consultation should be guided by a central philosophical idea. When a philosopher translates a client's expressions into concepts — such as justice, freedom, or happiness — and situates them within their historical context, the consultation attains a distinctly philosophical character. For instance, if a client discusses autonomy, the consultant can examine the concept's definition and its role in the client's worldview by relating it to its philosophical heritage. Consequently, the consultant may offer alternative interpretations that broaden the client's perspective and help resolve their dilemma (Harteloh, 2023).

In light of these differing perspectives, our exploration of philosophical practice acknowledges both the potential benefits of methodical approaches and the arguments for a more fluid, individualized practice. This balanced view allows for a broader understanding of how philosophical practice can be effectively conducted,

accommodating various philosophical traditions and practitioner preferences. The emphasis on principles over prescriptive methods aligns with the core tenets of philosophy, encouraging adaptability and personal transformation through critical reflection and dialogue.

When considering method versus principle, Achenbach posits that philosophical counselling is characterized not by a fixed method but by the flexibility to apply various approaches (e.g., analytics, phenomenology, hermeneutics) in a manner tailored to each client. Instead of adhering to a uniform procedure, the process is guided by overarching philosophical principles (Achenbach et al., 1984). According to Achenbach, counselling should not adhere to a standardized method, which risks reproducing the person as a product of that method. Instead, embracing philosophical principles allows for individual adjustment and empowers the person to reconstruct themselves authentically in response to their unique situation.

Various scholars have proposed different methods and forms of philosophical practice. Representative approaches and principles include:

- Beyond-Method Method (Achenbach et al., 1984)
- Spiritual Exercises Method (Hadot, 1995)
- Worldview Interpretation Method (Lahav, 1995)
- PEACE Process (Marinoff, 2001)
- FIIT Method (Raabe, 2001)
- Existential Method (Russell, 2001)
- LBT (Cohen, 2003a)
- C.I.S.A. Method (Li, 2007)
- Roman Stoicism Method (Lahav, 2009)
- Neo-Socratic Dialogue (Littig, 2010)
- IDEA Method (Ferraiolo, 2010)
- Issues Tree Method (Raabe, 2013)
- Thought Analysis (Pan, 2013)
- Thought Counselling (Wang, 2014)
- Epicurean Method (Fatić & Dentsoras, 2014)
- Humor Method (Amir, 2014)
- Poetry Method (Rolfs, 2015)
- APA Method (Ding, 2016)
- Reflexive Method (Harteloh, 2023)

Philosophical practice also encompasses various forms such as philosophical cafés (Ding, 2019; Grosso, 2002; Harteloh, 2019; Katinić & Janeš, 2021), P4C (Daniel & Auriac, 2011; Juuso, 2007; Pan, 2007), and philosophical walks (Harteloh, 2013b). Harteloh expands the concept of the philosophical walk, framing it as more than a physical activity, but as an exploration of the mind. By walking, choosing specific routes, and engaging in dialogue, philosophical walks encourage interaction with nature and society, fostering deep philosophical reflection. For instance, a philosophical walk was held at Nanjing University in 2013 (Harteloh, 2021). Harteloh's approach integrates core philosophical skills like contemplation, questioning, and conceptualization, creating a unique experience that connects concepts, philosophical wisdom, and place.

#### 4.6 Admission Criteria, Training Methods, Value Norms, and Ethical Guidelines in the Philosophical Consultation Industry

As a relatively young profession still maturing and improving, philosophical counselling faces practical issues related to its operation and development. Eric Hoffman (2003) provides a reasonable plan for the future development of philosophical counsellors and organizations, advocating for standardized training and clear professional guidelines. David A. Jopling (1996) cautions the public about potential dangers that might arise in certain situations involving philosophical counselling, highlighting the need for ethical vigilance. Mills (1999) examines the professional ethical codes issued by the Canadian Society for Philosophical Practice, the APPA, and the American Society for Philosophy, Counseling, and Psychotherapy, pointing out ambiguities within these codes and advocating for clearer ethical standards. Schuster (1999) offers practical advice for American philosophical counsellors concerned about legal liability, emphasizing the importance of ethical practice and professional responsibility.

Recent studies have further explored the professionalization of philosophical counselling. Julia Clare and Richard Sivil (2014) discuss the standards for training and certifying philosophical practitioners, emphasizing the need for comprehensive education that includes both philosophical knowledge and counselling skills. Tim LeBon (2001) examines the ethical responsibilities of philosophical counsellors, highlighting the importance of establishing clear ethical guidelines to protect both clients and practitioners. These discussions underscore the ongoing efforts within the philosophical counselling community to formalize training programs, standardize qualifications, and enhance the professional integrity of the field.

Specifically, prominent issues in the education and training of philosophical consultation include:

##### (1) Philosophical Competencies as Part of the Program

Philosophical competencies are central to training programs for philosophical practitioners. Harteloh (2010) highlights critical skills for philosophical counselling, including logical analysis, ethical reasoning, hermeneutical understanding, and dialectical dialogue, while categorizing practical skills as questioning, interpreting, and understanding. Practitioners must excel in constructing and deconstructing complex arguments, identifying underlying assumptions, and facilitating meaningful discussions. They should also develop metaphors to articulate and clarify meaning during client interactions. Moreover, familiarity with both Western and non-Western philosophical traditions equips practitioners with a diverse toolkit to address clients' concerns from multiple perspectives and situate their discourse within a long-standing intellectual tradition.

##### (2) Literature Used in the Program

Training programs incorporate a wide range of philosophical texts to establish a solid theoretical foundation. Core readings include classical works like Plato's dialogues, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, alongside modern texts such as Wittgenstein's *Philosophical*

*Investigations* and Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Practical works, including Achenbach et al.'s (1984) *Philosophical Practice* and Marinoff's (1999) *Plato, Not Prozac!*, link theory to application. This diverse curriculum enables practitioners to draw on relevant ideas during consultations. Furthermore, it enables students to identify philosophical reference points that substantiate their practice as inherently philosophical.

### **(3) Requirement of a Master's Degree in Philosophy for Entry**

As philosophical practice builds on the inherent human capacity for philosophizing, the requirement of a master's degree in philosophy for entry remains contested. Academic training does not necessarily produce the communicative skills essential for effective philosophical practice; a graduate may excel in theoretical philosophy yet lack the aptitude for engaging, practical dialogue. Conversely, a non-academically trained individual can develop strong skills in questioning, speculating, and interpreting ideas during interpersonal communication. In everyday language, such a person is simply regarded as "a philosopher." Organizations like the APPA argue that advanced academic training ensures rigorous understanding of philosophical methods (APPA, n.d.). Critics contend that strict requirements may exclude capable practitioners and overlook interdisciplinary insights. The debate centres around balancing the need for rigorous philosophical expertise with inclusivity and recognition of diverse educational backgrounds (Clare & Sivil, 2014).

### **(4) Admission Criteria for Persons Without a Master's Degree in Philosophy**

For applicants without a master's degree, alternative criteria may include portfolios, prior studies, and relevant professional experience. An entry interview conducted by experienced philosophical practitioners can serve to assess and recognize an individual's aptitude as a philosopher, based on their attitude and mode of reasoning. Some programs offer foundational courses or assessments to evaluate philosophical competencies. These pathways aim to maintain standards while broadening access to the profession (LeBon, 2001).

### **(5) Development of the Student (*Bildung*) and Duration of Training**

The development of the student, or *Bildung*, refers to the holistic educational process focused on personal and intellectual growth. The student must develop a personal practice style by integrating the program's core elements — cultivating wisdom, studying philosophers' biographies as models, interpreting original texts, and engaging in targeted exercises. Programs typically span 1–2 years, combining theoretical instruction and study of examples with supervised practice, workshops, and mentorship. Requirements vary; the focus is on knowledge, interpersonal skills, self-awareness, and ethical sensitivity (Mills, 1999).

### **(6) Graduation Criteria (Thesis, Consultations, Supervision)**

Graduation requires both academic and practical achievements. Students may complete a thesis or research project demonstrating their grasp of philosophical counselling principles. However, the most crucial requirement is that they



demonstrate their skills through a series of recorded consultations. Practical components often include at least one year of supervised consultations to develop hands-on experience. Supervision by experienced practitioners ensures skill refinement and ethical adherence (Hoffman, 2003). For example, according to the guidelines set by the Korean Society of Philosophical Counseling, in order to qualify as a professional counsellor, candidates must hold a master's degree or higher, complete over 240 hours of philosophy-related coursework, participate in more than 160 hours of workshops, engage in at least 50 hours of societal activities, and complete over 70 hours of activities under the supervision. In addition, they are required to present at least one counselling case and publish at least three independent research papers.

In summary, the academic community has developed relatively mature and comprehensive research on the theories and applications of philosophical counselling, achieving significant breakthroughs and innovations in developing various counselling models and methods. In particular, Chinese scholars have made substantial achievements in theoretical introductions and in excavating the practical thoughts and wisdom in traditional Chinese philosophy (Ding et al., 2024c). The continued growth and professionalization of philosophical counselling hinge upon addressing these educational and ethical considerations, ensuring that practitioners are well-equipped to meet the evolving needs of clients. Philosophical practice offers an alternative career path beyond traditional academic roles. Instead of pursuing positions as teachers or researchers after completing an academic study in philosophy, students can be trained to become practicing philosophers. This approach enables them to conduct private practices outside of the university setting, serving a diverse clientele that may include individuals, schools, or companies. This form of practice emphasizes the practical application of philosophical insights, fostering direct engagement with real-world dilemmas while also drawing on the rich traditions of philosophical inquiry.

## 5. The Future of Philosophical Practice: Professionalization and Public Engagement

As philosophical practice continues to gain momentum, it stands at a pivotal juncture between traditional academic philosophy and practical application in society. The evolution of philosophical practice not only influences how philosophy is perceived but also opens new avenues for professional development and public engagement. This section explores the professionalization of philosophical counselling, its current status, challenges, and potential future directions.

### 5.1 The Rise of Philosophical Counselling as a Global Profession

As a new dynamic in philosophical research, philosophical practice has given rise to a distinct profession: philosophical counselling. In some respects, the professionalization of philosophical counselling has preceded theoretical research or at least progressed simultaneously with it. The establishment of a specialized philosophical practice institution by German philosopher Gerd B. Achenbach in 1981 marked the

formal beginning of contemporary philosophical counselling in a private practice outside academia. It is important to distinguish between philosophical practice and counselling; while the philosophical practice movement predates this period, explicit philosophical counselling truly began with Achenbach, building upon earlier implicit integrations of philosophy in psychological counselling.

As previously discussed, philosophical counselling, as a form of consultation, engages clients in philosophical dialogue to help them reflect on significant life events, resolve grief and pain arising from major transitions, and find meaning and purpose. These are crucial issues that most people face at some stage in their lives. Rather than merely applying the insights of great philosophers — a concept more suited to psychological counselling — philosophical counselling involves co-philosophizing with clients, fostering a collaborative exploration of ideas and beliefs.

At present, many philosophical counsellors practice part-time; their primary roles involve teaching and conducting academic research in universities or colleges. However, some work full-time in this field and operate as freelancers. Philosophical counselling is not yet a traditional job category and has not been incorporated into government-regulated labour market or healthcare systems. It remains largely a personal endeavour by philosophers employing their intellect and knowledge, characterized by distinctive independence. Some philosophical practitioners establish their own institutes, create personal websites, and affiliate with philosophical practice associations to attract clients and generate business. Their communication methods are not limited to face-to-face conversations but also leverage the conveniences of the digital age, developing consultation methods using modern communication tools such as telephone, email, and video conferencing platforms like Zoom or Tencent Meeting.

### **5.2 Advancing Professional Standards and Qualifications in Philosophical Counselling**

For philosophical counsellors, philosophy has become a tool that not only enriches lives but also provides a viable career path, enabling them to make a living and establish themselves professionally. In today's global economic climate, this is undoubtedly encouraging news for philosophy graduates who face significant challenges in the job market. Many philosophy departments have included "philosophical counselling" as a potential career direction for philosophy graduates in their enrollment brochures and provide or recommend relevant professional training courses to students.

To obtain professional qualifications and become a certified philosophical practitioner, certain conditions must be met. Taking the APPA as an example, certification can be achieved through invitation, application, or training. Distinguished practitioners may be invited to become Certified Members or join the APPA Faculty. Experienced practitioners meeting APPA requirements can apply for certification. The APPA also offers Level I (introductory) and Level II (advanced) programs in counselling, facilitation, and consulting. Programs are conducted globally under APPA Faculty supervision, covering foundational skills, advanced case analyses, and practical applications. The APPA emphasizes professional virtues of expertise, excellence, and integrity, with stringent certification standards to ensure high-quality practice.

Currently, alongside the rapid increase in the number of philosophical practitioners, the client base for philosophical practice is continually expanding. More individuals, groups, and organizations are consciously and proactively seeking help from philosophers. A comparative analysis of user traffic data via the Similarweb platform shows that in May 2025, the official APPA website recorded 3,512 visits — representing a 51.39% decrease compared to April 2025 — with an average on-site visit duration of 38 seconds. In contrast, the NPCA website registered 2,267 visits in May 2025 — a 49.36% increase over April 2025 — with an average on-site visit duration of 2 minutes and 25 seconds. Additionally, the influence of philosophical practice on mainstream academic philosophy is becoming increasingly significant. The interaction between philosophical practice and academic philosophy, traditionally limited to teaching and theoretical research, has yielded fruitful results.

Philosophical practice reveals new approaches in philosophical research, necessitating the introduction of new resources and methods distinct from traditional philosophical exploration. In other words, it employs existing philosophical theories and methods in innovative ways or from different angles in daily human life. The field of philosophical practice is undoubtedly exciting; its emergence closely links philosophy with issues that laypersons care about. Simultaneously, philosophical practice is striving to become a genuine discipline within the academic philosophical establishment. As an application of philosophy, it has raised new philosophical questions in many aspects of philosophical life (Li et al., 2024).

Therefore, philosophical practice is both a profession — a new member of applied philosophy — and a philosophical topic — a new paradigm in philosophical research. The shift from a theoretical paradigm to a practical paradigm essentially transforms philosophy from an exclusive, elite academic pursuit into a secular culture in which everyone can participate.

## 6. Conclusion

Philosophical practice represents a transformative shift in how philosophy is perceived and applied, moving from abstract academic exercises to a practical discipline directly addressing everyday concerns. By bridging theory and practice, philosophical counselling offers individuals, groups, and organizations tools to navigate existential challenges, clarify beliefs, and achieve personal growth. The emergence of philosophical practice as a new paradigm revitalizes philosophy's relevance and contributes to societal well-being.

Professionalizing philosophical counselling is critical for establishing its legitimacy and effectiveness. Developing standardized training and ethical guidelines, examining the efficacy of philosophical counselling methodologies, and integrating philosophical practice into healthcare systems can enhance its accessibility and impact. As the field evolves, addressing challenges related to professional recognition, educational requirements, and public engagement is essential.

Comparative studies between philosophical counselling and traditional psychotherapy can illuminate strengths and areas for improvement, identifying how philosophical practice can complement and enhance existing therapeutic approaches. Cross-cultural research is essential to adapt philosophical practice to different societal

contexts, acknowledging variations in cultural values, philosophical traditions, and communication styles. Additionally, the exploration of digital platforms for philosophical counselling warrants attention, especially in expanding access and accommodating the evolving needs of a technologically interconnected world.

Interdisciplinary collaboration between philosophers, psychologists, and other mental health professionals can enrich both theoretical and practical aspects of philosophical practice. By bridging gaps between disciplines, practitioners can develop holistic approaches to address complex human experiences. Moreover, integrating philosophical practice into educational systems (e.g., P4C) could foster critical thinking and ethical reasoning from an early age, promoting a more reflective society.

In conclusion, philosophical practice holds significant potential for enriching lives and transforming societies. By embracing philosophy as a way of life, practitioners and clients engage in meaningful dialogues, fostering a deeper understanding of the human condition. Ongoing development and integration of philosophical practice will contribute to a more compassionate and enlightened world.

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