HUMAN AFFAIRS *25*, 471–485, 2015 DOI: 10.1515/humaff-2015-0038

DIALOGICAL AND CRITICAL NATURE OF PHILOSOPHICAL COUNSELLING[1]

BLANKA ŠULAVÍKOVÁ

Abstract: The article looks at critical thinking in philosophical counselling and the concepts upon which it is based. In conceptions that place critical thinking as the basis of philosophical counselling, an important role is played by the Socratic approach to philosophising. The Socratic method in thinking allocates a fundamental role to conversation, and thus to intersubjectivity, and is therefore an alternative to individual ways of thinking. Conversation as philosophical reflection corresponds to the Socratic intersubjective understanding of truth. The author adopts the view of German philosopher H. Schnädelbach who distinguishes between dialogic and doctrinal approaches. The dialogic approach is found in the Socratic-Platonic tradition, while the doctrinal approach is found in Aristotelean approaches. Doctrinal philosophising is premised in the ideal of intersubjectivity which can be achieved by anyone (subjective thought is internalised subjectivity). Philosophical thought as reflection is always implicitly dialogic at the very least. The article considers definitions of critical thinking and provides examples of critical thinking based philosophical counselling from the thinking of Tim LeBon and Elliot D. Cohen, which link both philosophical and psychological approaches. In conclusion it is critical of an excessive focus on rationality in counselling.

Key words: philosophical counselling; critical thinking; "wise therapy"; logic-based therapy.

Interpretations of critical thinking

We see philosophical counselling as a means of seeking identity and the good life. In conversations with counsellors, clients improve the way they process the information that people today can find overwhelming, their creativity (based on the ability to look at things from a new perspective) and also their ability to assess. But they also develop their emotional intelligence, enabling them to improve their self-confidence, motivation, empathy and social skills. Last but not least, they also develop their spiritual intelligence, including not only visions and values relating to the question of 'Who am I?', but also understanding important aspects of human culture, society and the world.

[1] This paper is part of the project VEGA grant no. 2/0048/15

Many philosophical practitioners in their practice is influenced by Socrates. In the thinking process, the Socratic method assigns a fundamental role to conversation; that is, to intersubjectivity, and thus it is an alternative to thinking individually. Conversation as a form of philosophical contemplation conforms to Socrates' intersubjective understanding of truth. Through the proper use of conversation, the Socratic method strives very precisely to ensure unity in the intersubjective relationship with the subject and thereby guarantee critical thinking. German philosopher Herbert Schnädelbach distinguishes between a dialogical and a doctrinal approach. The Socratic-Platonic approach is dialogical, while the Aristotelian one is doctrinal. Doctrinal philosophising presupposes an ideal form of intersubjectivity that anyone can engage in (subjective thinking is internalised intersubjectivity). Schnädelbach is of the opinion that philosophical thinking as reflection is at least always implicitly dialogical, suggesting intersubjectivity. He distinguishes between critical and metaphysical discourse but considers them both to be equally legitimate and scientific and to strive for objectivity and intersubjectivity alike. They differ in their relationship to the object; while metaphysical discourse ensures intersubjectivity in its very relationship to the subject, critical discourse takes the opposite path and seeks to secure its relationship with the subject through thematized intersubjectivity. The consensus in metaphysical discourse results from objectivity, while objectivity in critical discourse is based on consensus (Schnädelbach, 1989, pp. 22-25).

Peter A. Facione (2004) states that critical thinking can be reflective and he refers to a system of reflective thinking. It is a system based on reasons and evidence, and on what we have learnt through analysis, assessment, explanation and self-correction. It is a system that values spiritual integrity, analytical foresight of what might occur in the future, the eradication of errors and searching for the truth. It involves careful considering the essence and causes of our problems (ibid., p.11).

The issue of critical thinking is now largely dealt with in pedagogy. Richard Paul (1992) suggests that there are 35 dimensions of critical thinking that can be used in teaching strategies to develop students' critical thinking.

C. M. Ortiz states that the prevailing opinion on critical thinking is that it is almost synonymous with methods of informal logic, where logic is defined as the study of arguments presented in ordinary language. Since critical thinking is analytical, abstract, universal and objective, many definitions concentrate on how to control and carefully evaluate judgements (Dewey, 1910; Harris & Hodges, 1981; Moore & Parker, 1991 in Ortiz, 2007, pp. 11-12) and on the analysis and evaluation of arguments (Kurfiss, 1988; Fisher & Scriven, 1997)[2].

Linda Elder (2007) defines critical thinking in a different way: People who think critically take care to try and live rationally, sensibly and empathetically. They recognise that human

[2] E.g. J. Dewey defined it as an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief in light of the grounds that support it and the conclusions to which it tends. Harris and Hodges see it as the critical evaluation of the quality of texts in terms of form, style, rhetorical function and consistency of thinking. Moore and Parker define it as carefully and intentionally choosing whether to reject or suspend a decision. Fisher and Scriven refer to it as the skilled and active interpretation and evaluation of observations and communications, information and argumentation. J. Kurfiss talk of analysing inductive and deductive arguments (ibid., pp. 13-14).

thinking is inherently faulty and try to eradicate their egocentric and sociocentric tendencies. They use the intellectual tools critical thinking has to offer—its concepts and principles—to enable them to analyse, assess and improve their thinking. They work diligently to develop the intellectual virtues of intellectual integrity, intellectual humility, intellectual civility, intellectual empathy, intellectual sense of justice and confidence in reason. They realise that, regardless of how skilled they are as thinkers, they will always improve their ability to reason and sometimes they will make mistakes while doing so; nonetheless, they will rid themselves of their human irrationality, prejudices, biases, distortions, uncritically accepted social rules and taboos, self-interest, and vested interest. They attempt to improve the world in any way they can and contribute to a more rational, civilised society. They also commit themselves to life-long practice towards self-improvement. They embody the Socratic principle: *an unexamined life is not worth living*, because they realise that an unexamined life results in an uncritical, unjust and dangerous world.

Paul Richard and Linda Elder (2008) briefly define critical thinking as a way of thinking about any subject, content or problem in which the thinker improves the quality of their thinking and subjects it to intellectual standards. Well-cultivated thinkers, they suggest, raise fundamental questions and issues, formulating them clearly and precisely; gather and assess relevant information using abstract thinking to arrive at reasoned conclusions and solutions; test them against relevant criteria and standards; are open to an alternative system of thinking and assess, as required, their assumptions, implications and practical outcomes; and communicate effectively with others in finding solutions to complex problems.

The concept of 'critical thinking' within philosophy has been enriched over time. A great many philosophers have contributed their own interpretations. As mentioned earlier, Socrates came up with the question-based method of inquiry which enables knowledge to be rationally justified. This method rejects conflated irrational meanings, insufficient evidence and contradictory beliefs. Socrates highlighted the importance of seeking evidence, carefully examining premises, analysing key concepts and observing the consequences. He emphasised the need for clear logical consistency in thinking. Another thinker to enrich critical thinking was Socrates' pupil Plato. Aristotle is an example of a thinker who used rationality and logical rigour. He laid the foundations of thinking on 'causality' and abstract universalities. In the Middle Ages the thinking of Thomas Aquinas embodied a tradition of systematic critical thinking that emphasised the need for systematic arguments. During the Renaissance many scientists in Europe began critically reflecting on religion, art, society, human nature and liberty. They believed that most areas of human life required analysing and critiquing. Niccolo Machiavelli critically appraised politics, creating the basis of modern critical political thinking. Francis Bacon had an important role to play in developing critical thinking, emphasising the importance of empirically investigating the world, thereby laying down the foundations of modern science. He stressed that, left to their own devices, most people develop false or deceptive tendencies in thinking which he referred to as 'idols'. Fifty years later René Descartes penned a manuscript highlighting the need for special methodological guidance on reason in thinking. He mounted a defence of the need for clarity and precision in thought based on the principle of methodic doubt. At the same time Thomas Moore was developing his model for a new social order and no part of contemporary society was to escape his criticism. He stressed that radical analysis and critique were also

required to create social systems. David Hume pointed out that our logic and conclusions are often filtered by our thinking or by our previous patterns of behaviour. Immanuel Kant introduced many of Aristotle's concepts to the modern world, bringing the rational approach to behaviour and logic into debates on ethics. Ludwig Wittgenstein raised awareness of the importance of concepts in human thought along with the need to analyse conceptions and assess their function and limits. He argued that semantic rigorousness is an essential part of philosophical endeavour and the foundation block of what we now call critical thinking (Paul, Elder, & Bartell, 1997).

Tim LeBon's "wise therapy"

Philosophy in counselling and critical thinking

Tim LeBon, author of *Wise Therapy* (2001), defines philosophical counselling as a kind of counselling that uses philosophical knowledge and methods to help people think through important issues in their lives so they can live wisely (in Evans, 2011).

LeBon integrates philosophical counselling and cognitive therapy because, as he puts it, a rational process can sometimes get stuck in psychological processes. CBT is a kind of psychotherapy that uses cognitive and behavioural techniques, and aims to reduce anxiety rather than attain wisdom. LeBon believes that philosophical counselling and psychotherapy are compatible. He states that many people have been influenced on this by the somewhat extreme opinions of G. Achenbach who views psychology and philosophy as being in competition with one another. It is certainly true that philosophy has something different to offer from traditional psychological approaches; however, that does not mean that philosophical counselling cannot be combined with psychology to create an integrated whole and holistic view on how to make life good. Philosophy seeks life's wisdom, drawing on philosophical knowledge and methods to do so, while psychology focuses on understanding psychological processes and provides techniques to help overcome psychological difficulties, and 'Wise Therapy requires both' (in Evans, 2011). The current version of CBT (the third wave) is, according to LeBon, more philosophical than previous ones. The main difference between CBT and philosophical counselling is that counselling draws on philosophy in its entirety, while in CBT the primary source is the Stoics (ibid.).

In *Wise Therapy* LeBon begins from an interpretation of philosophy that relies on the definition given in the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Honderich, 1995). It characterises philosophy as *rational,* more or less systematic *critical thinking*.[3] This means that instead of statements philosophers tend to use reasoning and arguments as well as observation and experiments in issues relating to the general nature of the world and to justify beliefs and pursue life. Thus the methods LeBon uses in the theory and practice of philosophical counselling are as follows: 1. critical thinking, 2. conceptual analysis, 3. phenomenology, 4. thought experiments, 5. creative thinking.

[3] Concerning the general nature of the world (metaphysics or theory of existence), the justification of belief (epistemology or theory of knowledge) and the conduct of life (ethics or theory of value). LeBon discusses all these in his book (LeBon, 2001, p. 3).

'Critical thinking involves testing whether arguments stand up to critical investigation and seeing whether we have good reason to accept them' (LeBon 2001, p. 4). Critical thinking is, according to Le Bon, the most useful kind of philosophising in counselling and its value lies in the fact that it enables clients to make more rational decisions, and acquire more balanced beliefs, values and emotions (ibid.).

For LeBon there are two different ways in which philosophy can become part of counselling. These correspond to two approaches to philosophy discussed by Purton (1993). The first is the attempt to create favourable outcomes, for instance, how to live, and the second attempts to clarify and raise questions. The first is performed by providing answers to questions relating to the goals of the therapy, for instance, 'What is a good life?' and 'How can we strengthen the meaning of life?' Throughout history philosophers of various schools have attempted to answer these questions but perhaps the most noteworthy are the existentialists and the utilitarians.[4] LeBon considers both existential and utilitarian answers to the question of the "good life" to have appeal. Nonetheless, there is a need for caution in using this kind of knowledge; counsellors should not use their philosophical "knowledge" as if it were objective scientific fact nor should they use their opinions to dogmatically wield influence over susceptible clients.

LeBon considers the second method to be less controversial and extremely promising. In it philosophy is used to unrestrictedly clarify, ask questions and explore insofar as the topic is concerned. Counsellors can use clients' life philosophy to simplify their view of the world by asking them questions about their premises and other potential alternatives. This is a kind of philosophical counselling that involves working on oneself by examining key points in one's conceptions. In this way the counsellor can help the client 'examine life'. This examination may relate not only to premises such as those above but also values, options and actions.

Socratic method

In his *Wise Therapy* (2001, pp. 46-47) LeBon explains how philosophical counselling solves the issue of the good life using the Socratic method.

1. The first step is to ask the client to explain generally what the good life is.
   LeBon describes this stage as follows: 'According to Plato's dialogues, Socrates generally began his quest for the good life with a request for an account or definition of a key concept. Philosophical counselling has much in common with the Socratic approach, not least the notion that one is "midwife" to the ideas of the client. Asking for such an account helps to make explicit the implicit views they have about, in this case, what makes life go well' (LeBon, 2001, p. 45).

[4] Existentialists think that authenticity is important and that people should acknowledge the givens in life—for example, they have to acknowledge that their own meaning is their mortality. Hence they defend a certain way of existence—a way of life that corresponds to the values of existentialism. Van Deurzen-Smith (1994) says that counsellors should 'investigate and rigorously apply the laws of existence'. By contrast utilitarians think the good life is one that maximises happiness. In this perspective the philosophical counsellor should encourage the client to examine the consequences of their actions, look at the alternatives and be aware of what it means to be happy.

2. The next stage is to philosophically test the proposed definition of the "good life".
   The definition is now the subject of mutual exploration in which the counsellor and client consider the validity of the definition: Can we think of any opposing cases? Do we have a clear idea of what the concepts we have used mean? In this phase it is possible (although not essential) to discuss the proposed definition in light of the thinking of scholastic philosophers.
3. Testing the proposed definition of the "good life" in relation to experience.
   It is likely that using the traditional tools of philosophical analysis will prove beneficial here. Good philosophical counselling involves a fluid dialectic between each of the three phases with the intention of arriving at an account that encompasses insights from abstract analysis and from tests through life experience.
4. Helping connect the adopted definition of the "good life" with practice. The previous two stages are Socratic in nature aiming at *sophia* (intellectual wisdom), while the last is Aristotelean in that it is generally concerned with *phronesis* (practical wisdom). For clients, just as for Aristotle, it is important not only to know generally what the good life consists of but also that this knowledge can be used in real cases. This phase can involve philosophical dialogue on what practical wisdom is.

Philosophical method Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy

Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is, according to LeBon, partly a philosophical therapy that aims to identify and correct errors in thinking that lead to emotional disturbances. In CBT the consultant discusses these kinds of errors with the client and how they might be corrected; the client learns to monitor the automatic thoughts to which they might apply. LeBon provides two lists, the first containing relatively standard 'errors in thinking' and the second philosophical methods to help the clients deal with these errors. (The errors include: generalisation, personalising guilt, black-and-white thinking, jumping to conclusions, catastrophising, disqualifying the positive, mental filter, and "shoulds" and "oughts".) If the cognitive therapist wishes to correct errors in thinking, he or she will ask questions relating to these seven negative thoughts.

Rational-Emotive Behavioural Therapy method

LeBon describes the REBT method as rational justification for beliefs, decisions and values. REBT is a form of cognitive therapy associated with Albert Ellis that has stronger philosophical roots than CBT. CBT is philosophical only insofar as it has Stoic roots,[5] but it is also an attempt to teach clients how to avoid errors in critical thinking. While in CBT the emphasis is on distortions in the conclusions people draw in factual statements (e.g. "I'll never find a job"), REBT focuses more on irrationality in client evaluations (e.g. "It is awful that I'll never find a job"). REBT equates well-being comfort with happiness and holds that evaluations that are inconsistent with happiness are irrational. REBT therefore combines neo-Stoic theories of emotional self-control with hedonistic neo-Epicurean ideas about value (LeBon, 2001, pp. 14-15).

Philosophical counselling of Elliot D. Cohen

Synergy between philosophy and psychology

Elliot D. Cohen shows how philosophical therapy (as developed on a therapeutic basis) and psychological therapy work together in synergy (especially Rational-Emotive Behavioural Therapy – REBT). He states that the bifurcation of psychology from philosophical practice is artificial, impractical and self-destructive (Cohen, 2004, p.1).

Cohen begins from the belief that many emotional and behavioural problems are the consequence of poor logic. Similarly, psychologist Albert Ellis based his system (Rational-Emotive Behavioural therapy – REBT) on a similar belief that behavioural and emotional problems are rooted in irrational thinking. For Cohen philosophical counselling is a hybrid discipline in that it uses philosophical methods and theories. It is not pure philosophy but applied philosophy that becomes psychological. It is a philosophical-psychological therapy. It has to solve a whole range of emotional and behavioural problems on a psychological basis. This battle must be grounded in a comprehensive theory—one that systematically explains the links between cognition, emotions and behaviour. It has to provide a set of tools—techniques, skills and so forth—with which to apply the theory. It must also be empirically tested. The history of clinical psychology can take pride in the steps it has taken in this field, whereas philosophy in the form of philosophical counselling is only just beginning to test the waters (ibid., p. 6).

As E. D. Cohen has emphasised, it would be rather arrogant to suggest that philosophers need not call for wisdom in psychology and yet claim they were applying the "wisdoms of the ages". Nevertheless, it is equally unrealistic to deny the philosophical roots of psychology and psychotherapy.[6] Rational-Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT), for instance, is based on a series of philosophical premises that highlight the importance of human subjectivity in interpreting reality. It has borrowed from ancient Stoic philosophy, especially from Epictetus who stated that people are not disturbed by the events in their lives but rather by their interpretation. Behavioural techniques then are intended to strengthen rational choice and to overcome irrational tendencies.

Many of the emotional and behavioural problems that people experience in their lives are inevitably linked to fallacious inference; in other words, they are based on bad logic. Philosophical methods can be used together with a catalogue of fallacies of reasoning to provide a treasure chest of logical tools that can be used to help avoid self-destructive, regrettable decisions (ibid., p. 12).

---

[5] REBT draws mostly on the teachings of Epictetus who in discussions with his pupils, focused almost exclusively on ethics and on leading the good life in accordance with Stoic ideas and in an almost fatalistic manner. Epictetus compared his school to a hospital where people come to be cured of their illnesses. In order to find happiness you first need virtue and virtue we have control over. All the rest—wealth, health, renown—are external things we do not have control over and that are "indifferent" (*adiaforos*) for a happy life. The following are quotes by Epictetus:
'Happiness is not getting what we want, but wanting what we get.'; 'You can be invincible, if you never enter a contest where victory is not in your power.'; 'Demand not that things happen as you wish, but wish them to happen as they do, and you will go on well.'

[6] J. Šulavík's *Metaphysical implications of psychotherapy* (2001) is inspiring on this.

There is clear potential for improving the reciprocity between philosophical and psychological practice, and there are numerous ways of doing so, any of which may succeed and should not be sabotaged.[7] They should work together in harmony, which means developing a psychological counselling that is more philosophical, and a philosophical counselling that is more psychological. By driving a wedge between them it falsely posits the mutual substantive relationship between the philosophical and the psychological.

What is Logic-Based Therapy?

E. D. Cohen describes Logic-Based Therapy (LBT) as "a variant of the theory of psychotherapy known as Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT)[8]. It is also a leading modality of 'philosophical practice' (or 'philosophical counseling')" (2013, p. 2). It works by helping the client overcome unrealistic conclusions derived from irrational premises. LBT therefore provides the critical thinking tools designed to correct the client's erroneous reasoning; identifying and refuting its irrational premises; and building philosophically grounded premises, guided by a corresponding amount of 'transcendental virtues', such as respect (of oneself, others and the world), metaphysical principles, courage and temperance. It concerns behavioural change to overcome irrational tendencies and cultivate virtuous habits (ibid., p. 2).

Cohen's conception of philosophical counselling has attracted criticism from Ran Lahav who disagrees that philosophising is used primarily to help clients overcome their

---

[7] Here Cohen is referring to the attitude of the American Philosophical Practitioner's Association (APPA), which under the leadership of L. Marinoff broke away from the American Society for Philosophy, Counseling, and Psychotherapy (ASPCP) co-founded by Cohen. The ASPCP was founded on the basis that philosophical and psychological approaches are the foundation of philosophical counselling, while the APPA seeks to rely exclusively on philosophical approaches. The mission of the first society for philosophical counselling is 'to foster the study of issues relating to philosophy, counseling and psychotherapy', while the second is to define philosophical practice as a series of philosophy based activities that are not internally linked to psychiatry or psychology (Cohen, 2004, pp. 3-4).
L. Marinoff stresses that philosophical practice is 'therapy for the sane'; he talks of 'therapy for common sense' seeking to highlight that a person's 'philosophical problems' are not the same as their 'psychological problems' (Marinoff, 2002). E. D. Cohen's rather pointed response to this was 'The implication is that those clients who "need" psychological counseling are "insane" while those eligible for philosophical counseling are sane' (Cohen, 2004, p. 4). He adds that this simply encourages the stigmatisation of those seeking psychological counselling. 'The idea that there is a breed of clients that is "too sane" for psychological counseling and one that is "not sane enough" for philosophical counseling is an unfortunate bifurcation of two fields that can gain much by working in concert with one another' (ibid., p. 5).

[8] LBT theory and practice probably began to emerge in mid-1980 when E. D. Cohen began working on it; it is now being further developed by others. The theory of LBT began with the idea that many debilitating and self-destructive emotional and behavioural problems may largely be the consequence of bad logic. At this time the treatment of behavioural and emotional problems was exclusively the domain of psychologists and not philosophers. And psychologists were not trained in logic or philosophical analysis. Even today there are many counsellors who are unable to fully appreciate the reciprocal, substantive, intrinsical relationship between philosophical and psychological counselling (ibid., pp. 2-3).

personal problems by analysing their beliefs about or attitudes to their situation. He thinks this approach reduces philosophical counselling to a tool for promoting client satisfaction; philosophising is used merely as a means of helping the client feel better regardless of how intellectually rich, conceptually grounded or spiritually deep it is. Whether counsellors' philosophising is deep or shallow, coherent or a pile of isolated clichés is irrelevant; what is important is that the client's problem is solved and that he or she becomes happy. Approaches of this nature, Lahav believes, no longer see philosophy as the search for wisdom for its own sake but use it for other purposes so it is no longer philosophical counselling but a kind of 'philosophytherapy' (Lahav, 2001, p. 8). Lahav therefore clearly defends the "purely" philosophical approach to philosophical counselling mentioned above.

As noted earlier, Cohen considers philosophical therapy to be logic-based therapy that helps the client identify, correct, and overcome bad logic. Psychological approaches are traditionally used to provide causal explanations for human behaviour. These approaches look for the basic causal laws that shape clients' behavioural and emotional problems. To a certain degree REBT is concerned with seeking out the underlying causal laws of human emotion and behaviour and in this respect it is psychological. The "ABC theory" of REBT largely reflects a causal explanatory approach of 'activating events', 'beliefs', and 'behavioural and emotional consequences'. According to this theory, certain activating acts together with certain beliefs (especially absolutist "should" or "musts" *cause* certain behavioural and emotional consequences.

On the other hand, since REBT attempts to cast doubt on and correct clients' irrational beliefs and offers them the tools with which to do this, it is a philosophical approach. It is also philosophical in the sense that it is based on the ancient Stoic principle that it is not events that disturb people's lives but the way in which they *think* about these events. However, when REBT uses this philosophical doctrine from the perspective of ABC theory, it uses it more as a psychological than a philosophical approach—it looks for the causes of behavioural and emotional consequences (effects).

The LBT approach is different despite coming from the very same Stoic doctrine as REBT since a philosophical approach is used to apply it. Instead of speaking in the causal language of activating events and their consequences it uses the language of reasoning and logic—premises, conclusions and logical deduction. LBT makes a dynamic contribution to REBT by spreading its philosophical wings. It rejects the traditional psychological commitment to seeking out the causes of clients' behavioural and emotional problems. Instead it locates the etiology of these problems directly within the logical framework. To overcome fallacies it uses the substantial resources of classical philosophy as strong antidotes. Thus LBT is a dynamic, flexible, constructivist variation of REBT.

Metaphysical premises of Logic-Based Therapy [9]

LBT is based on four main metaphysical premises relating to human emotions, human errors, reality and human freedom. These four main premises are as follows:

---

[9] This section is based on Cohen's book: *Theory and Practice of Logic-Based Therapy: Integrating Critical Thinking and Philosophy into Psychotherapy*, 2013.

1. People justify their emotional and behavioural problems on the basis of irrational premises in practical reasoning;
2. Human beings are inherently fallible. Their behavioural and emotional arguments tend to contain fallacies;
3. Behavioural and emotional problems tend to come from absolutist perfectionist constructions of reality;
4. Human beings have inherently strong wills that can be used to overcome fallacious behavioural and emotional reasoning.

Logic-Based Therapy approach [10]

Cohen (2014) presents six steps in LBT:

1. The first step is the need to the formulate emotional reasoning (practical judgements) that the client makes when feeling and acting self-destructively;
2. The second step is the need to identify any cardinal fallacies in the client's premises, that is those that LBT acknowledges have a tendency to ruin people's personal or interpersonal happiness;
3. The third step is the need to refute identified fallacies; to show that they really are irrational thoughts;
4. The fourth step involves identifying the main virtues the client can use to compensate for their fallacy and live more happily;
5. The fifth step is to adopt a philosophy that supports the main virtues of the client;
6. The sixth step is to draw up an action plan of how the client's philosophy can be put into practice.

In point number 5 the aim is to answer the question of "What kind of philosophical thinking can lead to increasingly greater self-respect?" In seeking an appropriate philosophy, LBT respects the client's own faith system. So if the client is religiously inclined then he or she can look for a suitable religious philosophy to help foster his or her self-respect. There are many different philosophies that can be used; the LBT therapist can help the client find an appropriate philosophy or can provide him or her with books to read (philosophical bibliotherapy). Once the client has found a philosophy, he or she is ready to put it into practice, to use it in life—the sixth step.

Philosophical counselling and rationality

In philosophical counselling three strands of criticism on rationality have developed. One of these is concerned with inadequate use of the Socratic approach, the second is about REBT and related concepts, while the third relates to the over-evaluation of rational approaches in philosophical counselling.

In relation to Socratic inquiry Jon Mills points out that if in philosophical counselling there has been an attempt to formalise the standard approach to conducting philosophical

[10] We have used Cohen's "Logic-Based Therapy to Go". In *Psychology Today*, March 19, 2014 to summarise his approach to philosophical counselling.

counselling, then it has been through the use of dialectics. But the use of dialectics is not unambiguous; it contains disparate practices. There are no clear rules or approaches on dialectical exchange; nonetheless, it remains the cornerstone of the majority of philosophical counselling sessions. In an attempt to adopt more specific dialectic techniques, some counsellors have turned to the Socratic approach whose methods contain three main elements: (1) systematic questioning, (2) inductive reasoning, (3) and universal definitions. By asking systematic questions philosophical critique becomes the initial aim of the counselling process. Critique enables clients' thoughts and opinions to be clarified, their rigorousness and inductive arguments assessed particularly in relation to their definitions in an atmosphere of critique or confrontation. In exploring clients' interpretations, definitions, relations, consequences and judgements, logical inequivalency can be eliminated. Dialectical methods can be used as the main orientational tool in philosophical counselling or it can be used to complement existing methodological strategies. The way in which dialectics is conducted determines the success of the counselling session. If it is used lightly and gently as a research tool for investigating the client, it can be constructive and pleasant. Mills, however, points out that it is also used radically and can be destructive, harmful and ineffective. Critical use of cross-examination or elenchus—the systematic exploration and refutation of ideas composed of logical arguments using selected series of questions—may ultimately lead to mental destabilisation. Insensitive kinds of questioning, and timing and direction, can lead clients to feel misunderstood and shameful. In philosophical counselling strict and uncompromising use of Socratic dialectics that goes beyond the boundaries of ethical and professional behaviour can be very dangerous to the client's mental balance. Aggressive dialectic strategies are simply therapeutically ineffective and unproductive. The client will find it difficult to philosophise freely if his or her psychological integrity is under threat. Another potential limitation to the dialectical method is its strong adherence to a rational and logical framework. The key is to determine when and how to use sufficiently gentle dialectical interventions. Optimally effective, dialectical intervention has to be sufficiently flexible so as to account for the many parallel processes and internal organisations affecting the client's intrapsychic, interpersonal and social world (Mills, 2013, pp. 100-111).

Donald Robertson[11], an advocate of another approach criticises REBT for the following inadequacies:

- It uses the everyday language of popular psychology which is confusing and idiosyncratic. This affects the didactic nature of REBT.
- It considers conative concepts such as 'wishes' to be cognitive concepts, which is philosophically problematic.
- It over-pathologises the client's life problems in that it encourages the client to self-critically reflect and so deals with his or her emotional problems every day.
- It adopts a controversial instrumentalist attitude to rationality.
- It causes moral egoism and makes social interest a conditional value.
- It assumes consequentialism and ethical egoism without making its moral and ideological foundations explicit to the client.

[11] Robertson developed Cognitive Behavioural Therapy – CBT.

- It is very confused about its own conception of rationality.
- It is insincere in its appeals to logic and philosophy.
- It should be rejected on the basis of its wider implications and internal logical inconsistency.
- It lags behind psychoanalysis and humanistic psychotherapies as far as self-understanding is concerned (Robertson, 2000, p. 36). [12]

Arto Tukiainen, on the other hand, criticises Cohen: 'I am inclined to think that my approach to Philosophical Counselling includes Cohen's Logic-Based Therapy. We have a common background in Stoicism and emphasise Epictetus's concept of reframing as well as the idea that our emotions are frequently a function of our value judgments. But I believe that Cohen's outlook is unduly narrow in the sense that we also find much useful material in other ancient schools, including Platonism, Epicureanism, Cynicism and Skepticism. Even within Stoicism Cohen tends to put quite a lot of emphasis on its active, voluntaristic tendencies...' (Tukiainen, 2009).

Shlomit C. Schuster (1999b), in her contribution to the 5th International Conference on Philosophical Practice in Oxford, focuses her attention on Albert Ellis's REBT which she has compared with philosophical counselling approaches from the perspective of attitudes to rationality. She has found a number of similarities between the two and also some clear differences. Schuster stresses that philosophical counselling (unlike REPT) accepts various kinds of rationality and even considers irrationality to be meaningful.

Schuster criticises the definition of philosophical counselling formulated by Roger Paden (1998), which is very similar to REBT. It says that philosophical counselling is aimed at a process in which the counsellor works with the client to critically reflect on opinions and life problems, primarily defined by the client. These life problems must stem from the philosophical problems implicit in the world view of the client. Paden states that philosophical counselling should resemble REBT more. Schuster cautions that Paden's and Ellis's approaches together with critical reflection and rational therapy can be contrasted with Roger's type of counselling which is based on an unconditionally positive approach. (Ellis rejects Roger's type of self-understanding.)

Schuster stresses that philosophical counselling as understood by Achenbach is based on unconditional respect for the client; however, this does not prevent a dialogue between partners. This is unlike REBT, where the therapist confronts the client's worldview and life philosophy since people should live rationally. Achenbach's practice can be characterised as open inquiry, characterised by sincere communication between counsellor and client. The counsellor encourages the client to explain him or herself. The element of wonder is part of the dialogue. This does not share much in common with the comprehensive, logical and rationally guided approach of Paden's philosophical counselling nor with Elliot Cohen's which is very similar to Albert Ellis's REBT, but it is based on solid logical foundations.

[12] Robertson, however, positively assesses Ellis D. Cohen's approach, whose methodology, he suggests, could be used to raise REBT to a new level of theoretical refinement. One must hope that Cohen's approach also overcomes the hyper-empiricism and anti-philosophical tendencies of classical REBT. In any case Cohen's steps to develop counselling methods involve the use of formal logic which Robertson believes is deserving of attention (ibid., p. 37).

However, just as irrational beliefs form the main source of people's spiritual problems in Ellis's work, so they do in Cohen's.

In his concept of philosophical counselling, Achenbach, as Schuster emphasises, includes investigations into the nature of irrationality and rationality or inquiries into the coherence or harmony within the client's life if it seems appropriate for the client. This is why poetic and religious manifestations of feelings and concepts are part of philosophical counselling regardless of whether poetic and other artistic and spiritual expressions are considered to be rational or irrational. Approaches that do not consider irrationality to be a potential, meaningful way of life or as material for philosophical reflection ignore, Schuster believes, a fundamental part of people's internal world and frequently the absurd reality of life.

Jon Mills (2013) also disagrees with an excessive emphasis on rational methods. He is of the opinion that if rational and cognitive premises become the single focus of philosophical counselling, then other potentially valid areas of philosophical inquiry, including emotional state and other psychic configurations, may be sacrificed and minimised.

Maria daVenza Tillmanns begins from a Buberian I-Thou interpretation, where the relationship between counsellor and client is described as a special creative space, a unique situation, in which the art of philosophising takes place. The dialogue between them is a two-way give-and-take between the client and counsellor, the outcome of which is understanding and extending perceptions confirmed within a true relationship. Philosophy as art (and not method) helps build trust. In her understanding of philosophical counselling Maria daVenza Tillmanns emphasises that life is never unproblematic and that it cannot be reduced to a series of problems that have to be resolved. Philosophical counselling deals with life as a whole and not with individual problems. It is dialogic in the sense understood by Martin Buber, which means that it is aimed more at interaction between people than at what is going on inside the person (psychologically, emotionally and rationally) and attempts to resolve these personal problems. Life itself does not allow itself to be reduced to something that can be rationally understood; rationality is very important in our lives, but it cannot be used to plug gaps or a lack of trust. Understanding cannot be reached by developing increasingly complicated categories of thought. Tillmanns believes that these categories are a part of life but that they cannot become the basis of life. Philosophy as art (and not an ivory tower scientific discipline) helps us develop dialogues that engage with the world directly and not through a priori categories of thought. It involves the person as a whole being and not simply his or her intellect. The essence of philosophical counselling via dialogue is to learn to react to life as a whole being. Philosophical counselling resolves questions about the premises on which our life, opinions and values are based (Tillmanns, 2013, pp. 132-138).

We are of the opinion that philosophical counselling must be grounded in critical thinking. However, that does not mean that there is a need to exaggerate the value of rational approaches and methods to the extent that they squeeze out a multi-faceted and multi-layered perspective of reality and the opportunities philosophy offers.

References

Achenbach, G. A. (1995). Philosophy, philosophical practice and psychoterapy. In R. Lahav & M.Tillmans (Eds.), *Essays on philosophical counseling* (pp. 61-74). New York: University Press of America.

Achenbach, G. A. (1997). On wisdom in philosophical practice. *Inquiry: Critical thinking across the disciplines*, Spring, *17*(3), 5-20.

Buber, M. (1995). *Já a Ty* (I and Thou). Olomouc: Votobia.

Cohen, E. D. (1995). Philosophical counseling: Some roles of critical thinking. In R. Lahav & M.Tillmans (Eds.), *Essays on philosophical counseling* (pp. 121-132). New York: University Press of America.

Cohen, E. D. (2003). Philosophical principles of logic-based therapy. *Practical Philosophy* (Spring 2003), 27-35.

Cohen, E. D. (2004). Philosophy with teeth: The be wedding of philosophical and psychological practices. *International Journal of Philosophical Practice*, *2*(2).

Cohen, E. D. (2005). The metaphysics of logic-based therapy. *International Journal of Philosophical Practice* 3.1. Available at: www.rebtnetwork.org/library/metaphysics.pdf Cohen, E. D. (2013). *Theory and practice of logic-based therapy: Integrating critical thinking and philosophy into psychotherapy*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Cohen, E. D. (2014). *Logic-based therapy to go*. *Psychology Today*, March 19, 2014. Available at: http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/what-would-aristotle-do/201403/logic-based-therapy-go

Cohen, E. D. *Logic-based therapy: The new philosophical frontier for REBT*. Available at: www.rebtnetwork.org/essays/logic.html

Deurzen-Smith, E. van (1990). *Existential therapy in individual therapy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available at: http://gramata.univ-paris1.fr/Plato/

Dewey, J. (1910). *How we think*. Boston: D.C. Heath & Company.

Elder, L. (2007). *Another brief conceptualization of critical thinking.* In Defining Critical Thinking. Available at:

http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/defining-critical-thinking/766Evans, J. (2011). *Tim LeBon on philosophical CBT*. Sunday, November 13, 2011. Available at: http://philosophyforlife.org/tim-lebon-on-philosophical-cbt/

Facione, P. A. (2004). *Critical thinking: What it is and why it counts.* Millbrae, CA: California Academic Press. Available at: www.mdaa.org.au/archive/05/manual/app2.pdf

Honderich, T. (Ed.). (1995). *The Oxford companion to philosophy*. Oxford: OUP.

Lahav, R. (2001). Philosophical counselling as a quest for wisdom. *Practical Philosophy,* 7-19.

LeBon, T., & Arnaud, D. (2001). Towards wise decision-making III: Critical and creative thinking. *Practical Philosophy*, pp. 24-32.

LeBon, T. (1999). *Socrates, philosophical counselling and thinking through dialogue.* Fifth International Conference on Philosophy in Practice (pp. 131-142). Oxford: Wadham College.

LeBon, T. (2001). *Wise therapy*. London: SAGE publications.

Marinoff, L. (2002). *Philosophical practice*. San Diego, New York, Boston, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto: Academic Press.

Mills, J. (2013). Philosophical counseling as psychotherapy: An eclectic approach . In E. D.Cohen & S. Zinaich, Jr. (Eds.), *Philosophy, counseling, and psychotherapy* (pp.100-111). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Morstein, von, P. (n.d.). *Philosophical Counselling.* Available at: http://www.philosophicalpractice.ca/Morstein-on-PC.htm

Ortiz, C. M. (2007). *Does philosophy improve critical thinking skills*? (Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts). Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, The University of Melbourne.

Paden, R. (1998). Defining philosophical counseling. *The International Journal of Applied Philosophy*, *12*(1), . 1-17.

Paden, R. (2013). Defining philosophical counseling. In E. D. Cohen & S. Zinaich, Jr. (Eds.), *Philosophy, counseling, and psychotherapy* (pp. 16-33). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Paul, R. (1992). *Critical thinking: What every person needs to survive in a rapidly changing world.* Rohnert Park, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking.

Paul, R., Elder, L., & Bartell, T. (1997). *California teacher preparation for instruction in critical thinking.* Sacramento, CA: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2008). *The miniature guide to critical thinking*. Announcing the 28th Annual International Conference on Critical Thinking. University of California at Berkeley. The Foundation for Critical Thinking. Purton, P. (1993). Philosophy and counselling. In B. Thorne & W.Dryden (Eds.), *Counselling: interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 152-170). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Robertson, D. (2000). REBT, philosophy and philosophical counselling. *Practical Philosophy, 3*(3), 28-38.

Schnädelbach, H. (1989). *Zum Verhältnis von Diskurswandel und Paradigmenwechsel in der Geschichte der Philosophie.* In D.Krohn *Das Sokratische Gespräch*. Ein Symposion, Hamburg: Junius.

Schuster, S. C. (1995). Report on applying philosophy in philosophical counseling. *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*, *9*(2), 51-55.

Schuster, S. C. (1999a). Philosophy practices as alternative ways to well-being. *Radical Psychology*, Summer 1999b, *1*(1). Available at: http://www.radpsynet.org/journal/vol1-1/Schuster.html

Schuster, S. (1999b). *Philosophical counselling and rationality*. Paper presented at the Fifth International Conference on Philosophical Practice, 27-30 July, 1999. Oxford, UK.

Šulavík, J. (2001). *Metafilozofické implikácie psychoterapie* [Metaphilosophical implications of psychotherapy]. Bratislava: Album. Šulavíková, B. (2006). *Autenticita a dobrý život.* Bratislava: Album.

Šulavíková, B. (2010a). *Možnosti filozofickej praxe.* Bratislava: Album.

Šulavíková, B. (2010b). *Filozofický rozhovor ako priestor pre rozvíjanie kritického myslenia.* In Občianstvo, participácia a deliberácia na Slovensku: teória a realita (pp. 357-375). Bratislava: VEDA, Vydavateľstvo SAV.

Šulavíková, B. (2011). *Otázky pre filozofické poradenstvo.*Bratislava: Album.

Tillmanns, M. (2013). Philosophical counseling: Understanding the unique self and other through dialogue. In E. D. Cohen, S. Zinaich, Jr. (Eds): *Philosophy, counseling, and psychotherapy* (pp. 132-138). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Tukiainen, A. (2009). *Philosophical counselling and philosophy as a way of life: Wide conception of wisdom.* Available at: http://www.artotukiainen.net/practphil.html

Tukiainen, A. (2010). Philosophical counselling as a process of fostering wisdom in the form of virtues. *Practical Philosophy, 10*(1), 48-57.

Wheway, J. (2004). The dialogical heart of intersubjectivity. In C. Mace (Ed.), *Heart and soul. The therapeutic face of philosophy* (pp. 105-124). London and New York: Routledge.

Xenofón (1972). *Vzpomínky na Sokrata* [Recollections of Socrates]. Praha: Svoboda.

Institute for Research in Social Communication,
Slovak Academy of Sciences,
Dubravska cesta 9,
841 04 Bratislava 4,
Slovakia
E-mail: ksbkblan@savba.sk