

# Philosophical counselling/therapy: Praxis and pedagogy

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**Abstract:** Many of the miseries and confusions that besiege humans are sometimes beyond medications. Such are diseases of the soul that defy conventional medications. The old practical approaches to human miseries and confusion about purposes of life have to be resorted to. This is the cogency for philosophical counselling. There is need to introduce this into the classrooms as a way of enlightening people and training practitioners in the mission of making lives more meaningful through a better appreciation of life and its course. This is more needed in the African setting where its introduction would be of great service.

**Keywords:** Philosophical Counselling - Therapy - Curriculum - Therapeutic philosophy

## Asesoramiento/Terapia filosófica: Praxis y pedagogía

**Resumen:** Muchas de las confusiones y miserias que afligen a los seres humanos a veces van más allá de la medicina. Se trata de enfermedades del alma que desafían a la medicina convencional. Debemos recurrir a otras aproximaciones a las miserias humanas y a la confusión sobre el sentido de la vida. Esta es la justificación del asesoramiento filosófico. Es necesario introducir esta aproximación en el aula y en la formación de profesionales para hacer la vida más significativa y lograr una mejor apreciación del ciclo vital y su curso. Esta aproximación es más necesaria aún en el contexto africano, en el cual su introducción haría un gran servicio.

**Palabras clave:** Asesoramiento filosófico - Terapia - Currículum - Filosofía terapéutica

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is both a process and an enterprise. It is involved with the process of acquiring knowledge and the subsequent usage of the knowledge in advancing human development. It is the enterprise involved in the development of material and spiritual aspects and needs of humanity. It is a panacea to most human problems both individually and collectively. One major and primary aim of education is individual development. According to Maritain (1948) this primary aim of education is the conquest of internal freedoms which when failed to achieve will obstruct the achievement of other secondary aims of education such as the social aims. This points to the basic fact that the minds of individuals must be liberated, as a precondition, to gain the required predisposition to contribute meaningfully to the development of one's society and other areas of endeavour in life. By this it means that the primary aim of education must ensure that every factor that hinders the human mind from functioning properly should be eliminated or taken care of through proper education (of the mind).

The way the human mind perceives things can be a problem to itself. The orientations the human mind receives can be its own albatross. Thus experiences, visions (erroneous) of reality, intentions, expectancies and so forth can become toxic to the human being. These are some of the problems that individuals can face and they can constitute chains on the liberation of the human mind or the individual. In view of such situations many areas of specializations spring up to take care of such problems. Thus we have such areas as psychosomatic medicine, psychotherapy, physiotherapy, guidance and counselling, clinical psychology, etc. Majority of these take into consideration solely issues that affect the affective domains or psychomotor domains. The cognitive domain is often ignored to an extent. The mind is only an aspect of the human being or person. Thus the mind alone does not constitute a person or a human being. Philosophy has as its subject matter the human being *in toto*. It studies humans from the ontological, epistemological and ethical dimensions. As humans are complex beings, to understand them, their nature, is a complex one which is taken care of by the project of philosophy.

Some of the problems encountered by humans and their experiences are beyond the medical, psychological and physical aspects of humans. Some are due to the lack of understanding of the basic principles of reality. To understand and solve such problems, the existing therapies or counsellings appear not to suffice all alone in most cases and may thus need additional approaches of a combined nature or a separate and quite new approach. This is where philosophical counselling needs to come to the rescue to fill the 'gap'. In this piece, one looks at what is meant by philosophical counselling. What is its purpose, its history and development? It tries to establish the cogency for the institutionalization of such a discipline in a standard curriculum and as praxis in larger fields of professional practice.

It is a popular belief that human societies are opposed to change at the initial stage. Academic institutions are usually bureaucratic ones and changes to existing traditions do not easily come about talk less of introduction of novel ideas as an academic discipline. This is the hard fact and challenge that philosophical counselling has to face in the face of already existing disciplines that pursue similar issues. But where reason and objectivity prevails one has to see the lacuna which the introduction of philosophical counselling has to fill in the search for the persistent and myriads of problems facing humans in the course of living and achievement of fulfilment in life. The quest to introduce it into the curriculum is a herculean task to be undertaken in the Nigerian context which is full of policy and bureaucratic bottlenecks. In Nigeria this author strongly believes that there is a clear aversion for philosophy in many tertiary institutions, even across Africa. A critical look at UNESCO's (2007) study as reported in the 'Philosophy: A School of Freedom' will drive this viewpoint home and serves as a clear reference point. The situation seems to have remained the same. The philosophy courses or subjects seen as necessary and fundamental for intellectual and human growth and development by great nations are still battling for convictions of the relevant bodies and authorities for them to be allowed into the school curriculum. Outside the philosophy departments in Nigerian higher institutions, there is what appears to be a moratorium on philosophy in the entire educational system. Many conventional universities in Nigeria do not offer philosophy programmes. Even many polytechnics across Nigeria do not have philosophy units nor offer philosophy courses even at the introductory levels. It is believed that they see it as one of the least courses that an institution can boast of having and advertising. It also appears to be a hidden policy of the major regulating body of Nigerian universities that new and emergent universities, both private and public, should not advertise courses in philosophy (and in some certain areas in arts)

## WHAT IS PHILOSOPHICAL COUNSELLING/THERAPY?

Philosophical Counselling or Philosophical Therapy or also Therapeutic Philosophy is a 'new' field in philosophy that sprang up from the branch of philosophy known as applied philosophy or practical philosophy. Practical or applied philosophy involves the application of special areas of knowledge in philosophy into other or new fields of human endeavour. It is a praxis.

The term 'therapy' is a process of providing solution to alleviate human sufferings, diseases and other ailments that afflict the human body or mind. This philosophical counselling or philosophical therapy is a therapy that is offered from the philosophical perspective as an alternative or complimentary solution to some of the problems besieging human life where other therapies are inadequate. The knowledge of philosophy helps humans to understand themselves, the world and life itself. It is such understandings that philosophy uses in providing the necessary therapies to myriads of problems besieging humans that may be quite beyond medications and psychology in the strict sense.

Philosophical counselling is the use or application of philosophical principles and methods of analysing and understanding the ultimate realities of life and humans in the resolution of problems being experienced in the course of living. According to Walsh (2005) it is the interaction with philosophers who have been trained in the rigours of philosophical ways and who are committed to becoming free of prejudice and are able to see what is happening and how this clearly and distinctly can be applied to alleviate the sufferings and problems of others. This points to the fact that the knowledge of philosophy and its understandings of the meanings of life can be employed in the solution to real life issues.

Raabe (2002) believes that life is a complex issue and experience, that in the process of living this life, problems are encountered. Some of these problems are somehow solved by some individuals themselves on daily basis. However when some of these problems become complex and the facts or means of resolving them appear conflicting and contradictory, reasoning about them becomes clearly impaired and confused. It is at this point that the services of a trained philosopher become cogent. This is why he saw philosophical counselling as a process of helping an individual deal with a problem or an issue that is of concern to that individual. He noted that very often conflict of values affects an individual's thinking and behaviour in a very distressing manner to that individual. Thus through a process of philosophically interacting with the individual, a good appreciation of value is achieved making the client see some of the underlying issues relating to a particular value that may be preventing a clear perspective of the issue, and thus arrive at solutions to the problem. This is one of the major roles of philosophical counselling.

For Rosner (2004) philosophy can gainfully be employed as a source of insight with which philosophical insights and methodologies in a therapeutic setting. In approaching the problems of its clients, it uses the traditional method of critical thinking in addressing issues of fundamental concern about the human condition. In essence, he pointed out that the problems of concern of philosophical counselling are beyond the terrains of both psychiatry and psychology (psychotherapy) which deal with issues of brain disorders and other pathologies. Many of such problems are beyond the traditional psychotherapies. Many of the problems of life are about 'worth', the misplacement and misconceptions about 'worth' that can bring them peace of mind, equanimity but on the long run the obverse is the case. They begin to experience anxiety and restlessness. People pursue vanities in place of worth. This often leads to crisis in life. The need to discuss such issues in the course of interaction may elude or be really insignificant to other therapies, but these are important issues for philosophers who have fundamental understanding about the human condition itself.

For Gowans (2010) philosophical therapy is analogous to medical treatment and important because it is able to modify a person's beliefs so that he/she could overcome mental disease and attain psychological health. He strongly believed that the Buddhist and Hellenistic traditions of philosophy have approaches analogous to medicine in dealing with some of the troubles of the human mind and soul.

## HISTORY, DEVELOPMENT/PROFESSIONALIZATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL COUNSELLING

One can say that philosophical counselling is as old as philosophy itself especially as was practised by Socrates in the course of his interactions with the Sophists. He equated philosophy with the practice of medicine and midwifery. For Socrates, strictly speaking, the aim of philosophy is to improve the human soul by ridding it of false ideas which sicken it. This then became the primary challenge of philosophy. Many of the Socratic and Hellenistic Schools within the period of Socrates took the task of finding a solution to this challenge. Two schools of philosophy remained prominent and dedicated to the accomplishment of this (life-saving) or 'soul-saving' task of philosophy. They are the school of Epicurus – Epicureanism and the Stoic school – Stoicism. These schools made serious attempts to diagnose the problems of the human condition and proffer some remedies to them. Their approach is what distinguishes them. Their philosophies then became therapies to the myriads of problems besieging human lives.

It is popularly believed that Epicurus, the founder of the epicurean school (Epicureanism) laid the foundation of philosophy as therapy. He came to the summation that:

Empty are the words of that philosopher who offers therapy for no human suffering. For just as there is no use in medical expertise if it does not give therapy for bodily diseases; so too there is no use in philosophy if it does not expel the sufferings of the soul (in Long and Sedley, 1987, p. 155).

Epicurus believed strongly that philosophy can bring tranquillity to the troubled souls of humans. Such thoughts and practices pervaded the Hellenistic period of philosophy and many of the schools in this period arose as responses to the troubles of the human condition. Socrates was seen as a forerunner of philosophical counselling. He strongly believed that the way we humans conduct our lives can constitute misery for us. He maintained that philosophy will help us rid our lives of such miseries. This was how he reached the conviction that 'an unexamined life is not worth living' and thus exhorted humans to 'know themselves' very well. This is how philosophical counselling helps in giving one insight about one's life and life in general with regard to its meanings. It helps in the clarification of values and worth in life.

Seneca, a member of the Stoic school of philosophy which was also seriously involved in the search for the problems of the human condition, believed that the subject matter of philosophy is to counsel humanity. This he expressed in his *Letter to Lucilius*. He pointed out that it is in philosophical counselling that lives that have been ruined and those on the way to ruins can find hope and assistance. This because he believed that philosophy helps one to understand and appreciate more the values in life and the values of life so as to know what is worth pursuing in life for the tranquillity of the human soul. Thus philosophy for the Stoics is the only study that has the panacea to the achievement of tranquillity – *ataraxia*. Another Stoic philosopher, Cicero, in his *Tusculan Disputations*, maintained that philosophy is an art of healing the soul. He stressed that this art must be pursued with all our resources and strength so that we can be our own physicians. In essence the art of philosophy can help one become his/her own physician or on the other hand offer or play the role of a physician to another through philosophical counselling.

This therapeutic view and approach of philosophy was somehow drowned in the medieval period when philosophy went more abstract and dogmatic. This quest to redirect philosophy to become once more practical started appearing again in the modern period. Descartes, Nietzsche, Kant, Dewey and Wittgenstein observed that philosophy has deviated and gone out of the practical. They were of the opinion that philosophy should face important questions of everyday life. This appears to be the road back to sanity through the course of philosophical counselling which thus redirects philosophy back to its original track. Philosophy thus has to deal with the problems confronting humanity, through clarification of perspectives that may bring confusions to human conditions. Thus philosophy now has to be practically involved outside the four walls of academic institutions. It now has to undertake a somehow clinical dimension, a therapeutic one.

The earliest glaring efforts to make philosophical counselling a distinct field of practice from academic philosophy of the classroom started in the 70s. According to Raabe (2002) this quest was spurred by Peter Koestenbaum's publication of the book *The New Image of the Person: The Theory and Practice of Clinical Philosophy* in 1978. This is one of the earliest campaigns for the autonomy and practice of philosophical counselling as a distinct field.

This now became a movement that later crystallized in 1981 when Gerd Achenbach opened his practice outlet in Cologne, Germany. He later founded the 'Society for Philosophical Praxis' as a counselling profession around 1982.

Since then renowned philosophy clinics for counselling have been emerging and there are abundant literatures and reference guides. One of the bestsellers is Professor Lou Marinoff's (1999) *Plato, Not Prozac*. Prozac is a brand name of a psychotropic drug, an antidepressant regimen. It has become a popular prescription for cases of mood disorders and anxiety. Thus some therapists have concluded that such cases are related to the imbalance in the brain chemistry and needed reversal through such drugs as Prozac, Serotonins, Ritalin, etc. Due to the unsuccessfulness of these drug regimens in the treatment of such ailments there now came a contention on whether such ailments are due to really a chemical imbalance in the brain. Thus it appears that such life problems are not matters of body chemistry but can be a wrong perception about life. This is the basis of the recommendation of philosophical counselling by Marinoff (1999) instead of psychotropic drug regimens. One can thus see that some of the problems of the human condition may be due to lack of proper philosophical insight, as can be attested to by Rosner (2004). Marinoff (1999) sees philosophical counselling as the world's second oldest profession.

For one to become a professional philosophical counsellor, one needs a special training to and advanced degree in philosophy. It implies that one needs to be vast in many philosophical discourses to be in a position to apply insights from such meaningfully into the different problems facing the human condition which would be brought to him/her by various clients. This is a great way for a philosophical counsellor to be successful in the practice. From another perspective, designing an academic curricular for 'would be' practitioners will be ultimate for training young practitioners.

### **THE PHILOSOPHICAL COUNSELLOR WILL SEE YOU NOW**

The philosophical counsellor is not involved in issues with clients that require the conventional scientific tests for diagnosis and use or prescription of drug regimens especially as in psychiatric cases. See Schuster (1991). This is often the major divide between it and other therapies obtainable in other fields of practice. Philosophical counselling deals with people who are normal sanity-wise in the sense that it is not for 'mentally' sick people (psychosis) i.e. serious pathological conditions. It deals with people with normal mental health conditions. According to Marinoff (1999) it is for people who are sane. This is the reason for the recommendation of 'Plato' instead of 'Prozac'.

According to Walsh (2005) philosophical counsellors deal with clients who are experiencing and suffering a kind of 'rip or tear in the fabric of their lives', a rip or tear they caused in themselves even without being able to identify the origin or even deny the existence of such an idea. They might even in some cases accuse others of causing such thereby looking for the solution at the wrong place and thus ensues the sense of helplessness, despondency and be strangely complacent. This goes a long way in affecting their level of social relationship. In view of this, life begins to be questioned by the individual, does life have value and how does one value life? What is happiness? Such mental disturbances deprive the individual real spiritual freedom. Thus people are wealthy and materially sufficient but not spiritually relaxed and thus happiness eludes such people. Thus clients who seek philosophical counselling include such who lack contentment and happiness.

Raabe (2002) gave an account of clients who are caught in the crossroads of threatening thoughts of old age especially in Western societies. For this group a problem ensues; a sort of crises about how to reconcile a younger self-image and the advancing stage of senility. For such people a crisis of understanding of life and its meanings can be devastating. Thus the doctor of philosophy has to organize an interactive session to give/ensure a clear apprehension of aging gracefully and the next stage after life itself.

The philosopher-counsellor has to be knowledgeable to address the issues and essences surrounding the technology of bionics and cryonics (these are areas in philosophy of technology) when handling cases related to advancements in age and fear of growing old. There are certain necessary and inevitable ends that face the human condition. These need appropriate orientations and dispositions before their being experienced.

Rosner (2004) delineated instances for which clients need the services of a philosophical counsellor which are of course different from those of psychiatry and psychology or other pathologists. Such instances include coping with death, clearing up conceptual confusions, resolving value conflicts, etc. In such cases, despite the fact that other therapies may suffice, this paper believes that philosophical counselling has a unique role to play here. The most outstanding of an instance where a philosopher's attention is needed is in the example of what he addressed as 'mid-life crises'. This he maintained is not *prima facie*, a psychological problem but a problem involving life events and therefore needs a philosophical interpretation of life and its events. Such a person is not undergoing a pathological or disorder sort of problem. This is a confrontation one experiences while trying to assess one's life and achievements coupled with the necessary satisfaction. In such a situation what is needed is a conceptual clarification of the meaning and value of life. Thus there is need for advanced and real critical thinking to address the issue. Rosner (2004) later gave two instances of people with cases of mid-life crisis. One is a client approaching the age of 50 years and feeling that his life is more than half over while realizing that he has not accomplished all he wanted within his life span. Thus he is not sure of the remaining half of his life, assuming we have an average life span of 100 years. The other client has already accomplished the goals he set for himself but still finds himself feeling unfulfilled, thus he begins to ask himself, if this is all there is. These are crises which people face; some are latent while some are manifest. He pointed out clearly that these are not clear issues of disorders or pathologies. These are issues bordering on conceptions (wrong) on the meaning of life. He pointed out that these are clear issues of existential questions regarding the priorities and meaning of life. These are cases where specially trained people in the understanding of the human condition will now come in. This is where philosophical counsellors remain distinct from other counsellors and therapists. Existentialist approach often employed by psychotherapists is limited and different from other philosophical approaches to life issues as Epicureanism and stoicism especially in matters of views concerning 'life' and 'death'.

In such situations as above, the doctor of philosophy, i.e. the philosophical counsellor, will be engaged with his/her client in an interactive dialogue to appreciate the entire scenario and be better placed to offer appropriate recommendations and solutions. According to Rybar (2008) the counsellor will then apply speculative, critical, conceptual and personal experiences on each concrete case in simple, clear and understandable language. He further maintained that the counsellor should soothe the clients' agitated thoughts, help them to better understand their life motivations and orientations in order to appreciate themselves better in their worlds.

This writer believes that in many African settings especially in the West African region, there is serious need for philosophical counselling. Many cultural and social practices are surrounded with superstitions and there are serious repercussions as outcomes of such beliefs. Such examples include widowhood practices, various beliefs held as causes of childlessness, perceptions about deaths, burial rites, girl-child education, etc. Many enlightened people are also seriously involved in these. This author strongly believes that this issue of superstition is due to the type or nature of religious evolution obtainable in Africa before the advent of Christianity and colonialism which still has endemic traces in the present day Africa. Superstitions are modes of thought but such in many cases have dire consequences that call for serious reorientations at both individual levels and collectively. Sometimes and to a great extent it becomes a serious barrier to human and social development in Africa. These later aspects could be achieved through the school curriculum. This is one of the major problems that have to be fought from the within. Many cultures and worldviews have what some observers may call their 'dark ages', the onus of challenging and analysing critically such cultures and worldviews is that of philosophy as a special discipline. This will help in the liberation of the inner self. This is one of the leitmotifs of this paper.

### **ANY COGENCY FOR A CURRICULUM?**

What has philosophical counselling got to do or offer that psychotherapy does not? This is a likely question – that would crop up in the minds and mouths of many confronted with the issue of philosophical counselling ordinarily, before any detailed appreciation of it. Some people see a big gulf between philosophical counselling and psychotherapy (e.g. Cohen, 1995); some see such differences as blurry (Raabe, 2001). Many see philosophical counselling as a failsafe or a complement to psychotherapy while some see it as filling a vacuum beyond or left by psychotherapy. These are signs that there are very important and strategic roles to be played by philosophical counselling.

In view of the above, there is even need to professionalize it through the rigours of formal training. There are reported instances in Europe and America where philosophers are employed in clinics to complement the works of psychotherapists for the improvement of the human condition. The holistic cure of human ailments sometimes needs a synergistic approach. It is not that these two areas can't be independent despite the seeming complementary roles. The fact that is being established is that philosophical counselling plays a role in the healing and improvement of the human condition in such areas discussed in earlier/sections.

To harness and ensure that the fruits of this old and recently rejuvenated practical part of philosophy are well reaped, there is cogency for a detailed curriculae in this field. First there has to be an appreciation of what 'philosophy' is all about. This is necessary because, this is an aspect of the field of 'applied philosophy'. This would enable neophytes to understand the idea of philosophical thinking and investigations. Logic, which is also encountered at the introductory level, is an essential component and accomplice of philosophy. It is very indispensable in this field of philosophical counselling. This can be introduced at the first level of the training period of the programme.

Secondly, at the intermediate level, following the introductory stage, there is need for knowledge and appreciation of such courses as Theodicy, Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Anthropology, Ethics. These would enable the would be professional understand the nature of what it is to be human (philosophical anthropology) which also deals with both the cultural, social and spiritual dimensions of a human being. Theodicy will help in a clear understanding of the nature of God (supernatural) as the designer of the universe. Philosophy of Religion would enable one to be able to establish the position of humans in relation with their beliefs with reference to the supernatural. These are very essential because the clientele of the philosophical counsellor is unlimited and the approach must be from a clear objective analysis of events and situations which the client would present.

Thirdly there has to be a detailed and rigorous undertaking in studies across the Western and also the Eastern philosophies that deal with philosophies of life, living and even death. Such philosophies include the Hellenistic, Christian, Buddhist, etc traditions. This is what this paper believes to be the apex that disposes the prospective professional to confront such issues perturbing clients based on some of the solutions proffered by these philosophies to the problems confronting the human condition. There are a great mass of works (literatures) from the Western traditions in this regard. However these are suggested curriculae.

Pedagogically speaking such undertakings are not left for the bulk who bump into such literatures for literary studies' sake or those who appreciate them as novels came across on a bookshelf. The analysis of such classical and contemporary literatures needs orientations in hermeneutics. It needs a critical mind that can assess the ideas expressed, the contradictions in the views of the philosophers or latent loopholes. There is need for total deconstruction of the texts of these philosophies for a clear understanding of their implications and operationalizations in real life situations.

Fourthly and finally at this stage, there is also need at this stage for the appreciation of the methods and approaches to philosophical counselling techniques. Despite the fact that each professional has the right to device any method that would ensure the efficiency of his/her services, there is no gain saying the fact that one would learn a lot from understanding the methods that have proved successful by some foremost professionals already in the field. Such include: the old and classical Socratic Method, the Four Guide posts of Gerd Achenbach (1984) or the PEACE process of Lou Marinoff (1999).

There is also need at this final level for an orientation in the ethics of the profession. Of course there must be regulations guiding professional practice, thus philosophical counselling is not left out. These codes of conducts may vary according to cultures and societies. However there must be international standards. The occasion for philosophical counselling is not an occasion for the conversion of clients to one's philosophy or dogma or ideology. It is noteworthy that since this paper is arguing for the professionalization of this field of knowledge and service, the recommendation and focus of this paper remains appropriate at the tertiary level of education. Experience and high level of knowledge and understanding is very necessary. This implies that it is for higher education levels. It can also be furthered that introducing it at the lower levels will equally achieve great impacts. This only however has to serve as a propadeutic. The childhood philosophy or 'philosophy for children' (P4C) introduced by Mathew Lipman (1976, 1988) can serve as a pedestal to introducing philosophical orientation early

in life for the understanding of life and its meanings. Philosophical counselling involves a lot more. This may be left for another strand of the argument in another paper.

## EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

Philosophical counselling, from the fore goings, necessarily will fill a vacuum in the quest to solve the myriads of problems besieging the human condition. Its practice and effects have been on-going in many areas of life and in many different and at the same time in some unpopular places. Only the wary and the circumspect can observe this. Being seen as a therapy for the sane, its practice in informal places as described above may escape the average observer or critic. This is because wherever there is wise counsel, even over a cup of beer or tea, to solve any life issue or problem, clarification of ideas and thoughts, there, philosophical counselling has taken place.

Philosophy from the time of its origin has been very inquisitive of the nature of reality (material). It later, at the age of the Socratics became a practical affair as exemplified in Socrates. It then centred on humans and their conditions in the society with recurrent questions in the areas of what is life, what is the good life, what is happiness, what can bring about happiness and a life of self – fulfilment, what is the nature of the soul, what is pain, what is death, etc. After this stage in its growth, there was a paradigm shift, a shift that made philosophy to become confined to the four walls of a classroom. This is academic philosophy. This is the type of philosophy or attitude that made some 'outsiders' see it as having nothing to contribute to human welfare and development. Some even went to the extent of seeing it as a dead discipline, a position which provoked Etienne Gilson (1950) to declare that "philosophy will always bury its undertakers" (p. 316).

With the passage of philosophy into one and half a millennia, and witnessing the development in complexity of myriads of problems confronting humanity, it felt the onus to come and give a helping hand as is natural to it. Recent developments in many societies indicate that technological developments and capitalist consumerism has grossly ignored the care for the human soul. The health of the body has taken priority over the health of the human mind, a sort of negative bifurcation of the human person. The quality of a good life should not be measured on a material standard alone. Many statistics and indexes indicate irregularities or disparities between increased standards of living and happiness or contentment. Majority of people with increased standards of living are not really happy and contented in life. A life devoid of happiness can be a very short and abrupt life. A happy life can only emanate from a tranquil and contented soul. As is often maintained by the classic Hellenistic philosophers, philosophy heals the diseases of the soul and mind which definitely affects the body (see Epicures, Socrates, Pyrrho, Confucius and Mencius). This is the bottom line of philosophical counselling.

Increased living standards, technological developments are some of the major variables in the great divide between the North and the South or between the Western developed countries and their developing counterparts. The question that comes to mind in this issue of happiness and tranquillity of the soul is that why is it that despite the hardships faced by those in some of these developing countries, especially in Africa, coupled with lower standards of living, the suicide option and rate is lower than their developed counterparts. What philosophies of life are prevalent in these cultures that influence their attitudes to life? These call for philosophical reflections which can help in counselling. It is a widely held belief that comparatively there is nothing like a superior philosophy, what matters is their level and degree of objectivity and coherence.

The establishment of a philosophical practice in counselling is not out of place and not new in the philosophy world. Rather its institutionalization as a separate intellectual pursuit as an avenue for its professionalization is what is being campaigned for here. This logic is believed to be clear and precise with the belief that reason will definitely and ultimately prevail in the long run for the respective audience and most importantly policy makers to heed to this clarion call in the quest to save humanity collectively.

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