Philosophical counselling: Towards a 'new approach' in pastoral care and counselling?

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The practice of pastoral counselling was dominated for several decades by the Rogerian techniques of empathetic listening. To a large extent, healing was predominately related to the realm of feelings (the affective dimension). Rational Emotive Therapy opened up other avenues. However, besides Logotherapy, the realm of meaning and its connectedness to world views and ideas (Plato: forms) remained uncharted in many theories for pastoral care and counselling. In this article it was argued that philosophical counselling opens up new avenues for pastoral care and counselling. Philosophical counselling probes into the realm of different schemata of interpretation. A model for the making of a spiritual existential analysis was proposed in order to detect the impact of the Christian spiritual schema of interpretation on the dynamics of existential networking.

Introduction

Theory formation is the main endeavour in any form of scientific research and academic enterprise. It is the task of the academic researcher to design and produce the 'tools of the mind' (paradigms and theories) to be applied within the reality of the academic, scientific field. One can call this academic reality the 'objects' of research. Inappropriate theory leads to inappropriate models, projects and practices. The reason for this assumption resides in the fact that theories are carriers and containers of the attempt of the human mind to grasp the meaning of daily living in terms of patterns of thinking (paradigms; rational constructions). Theories represent the rational categories of understanding that try to schematise ideas and link them with the realities of the existing world.

Theories, schemata of interpretation, paradigms and rational patterns of thinking determine the networking of human mind and processes of interpretation (hermeneutics). The theory, paradigm or idea behind a human action plays a decisive role in dispositions or attitudes [*habitus*] and the human attempt to come to grips with the demands of life[1]. They determine processes of healing, but can also lead to 'spiritual illnesses' and pathology. They can become outdated, inappropriate and irrelevant (zombie categories)[2]. The idea embedded in theory and expressed in rational categories or paradigms, can change human behaviour. 'Ideas' can promote meaningful perspectives and actions but on the other hand, also instigate the 'the illness of the human mind': that is, skewed perceptions, unrealistic expectations and irrational thinking. In a nutshell: ideas (Plato[3]: the form as pattern of reality) shape and determine human self-understanding within existential realities.

The articulation of hermeneutics in theological theory formation and in the quest for methodology in practical theology underlines anew the importance of philosophy. Philosophy is actually the most primary and fundamental science in terms of theological theory formation. For example, the language of the early Christian church on the Trinity was shaped by the metaphysics of substance, with concepts such as *homoousios* [of one substance] and *hypostasis* [reality]. Even psychology developed from philosophy. In this regard, going back to our philosophical roots can help practical theology and very specifically pastoral theology, to discover new avenues for theory formation in counselling.

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1. Reader (2008:6) aptly points out that the field of practical theology was for many times dominated by the clerical and official paradigm. On the other hand, practical and pastoral theology has been overtaken by ideas from the fields of psychology and sources of therapeutic knowledge. In the meantime the 'hermeneutical model of pastoral engagement' (Reader 2008:6) surfaced and is putting new challenges before practical and pastoral theological reflection.

2. In his book, *Reconstructing Practical Theology*, Reader (2008:1) warns against the danger of 'zombie categories' (Ulrich Beck), that is the continued employment of concepts that no longer do justice to the world we experience and yet, are difficult to abandon because of tradition and also because they are not yet totally redundant. Zombie categories are therefore described as the 'living dead', the tried and familiar frameworks of interpretation that have served us well for many years and continue to haunt our thoughts and analyses, although they are embedded in a world that is passing away before our eyes.

3. According to Plato, knowledge probe into the reality of the form or idea that determines the meaning of appearances. In this regard, Plato referred to, for example, the 'Form of Beauty' as the 'unchangeable' essence of things that have a real existence, independent of our minds (Plato 1946:183).

In order to change people, this framework or form needs to be disputed in terms of the human quest for meaning, therefore the role of philosophy in counselling, that is the need for philosophical counselling.

This need can be illustrated when the practice of counselling deals with several existential issues in life. For example, people enter marriage with a very specific 'idea' about 'marriage' and 'love'. Influenced by the 'philosophy of romantic love' as projected by film and media, couples behave according to the following 'illusion': the proof that he or she loves me resides in the emotion of 'I-am-wanted' and the impression that love exits without conflict and within the possibility of an unqualified 'yes'. Nowadays, marriage is portrayed as a 'living partnership' within the form of 'experiential cohabitation'. The traditional idea of a church or official marriage is becoming outdated. The Hollywood notion of 'instant love' and 'sex-on-appro' become the normative 'idea' that shapes the emotional needs of couples.

Within the gender debate, a very specific idea and philosophy determine male or female identity. For example, the crisis of male identity within the social construction of 'masculinities', points in the direction of the influence of public images shaped by the philosophy of masculinities as projected by the social media. In the counselling of men, these normative philosophies and ideas about masculinity should be disputed and changed in order to 'heal' men. Healing and therefore counselling males has become a systemic issue.

A good example of the impact of communication technology and the mass media on being male or female is the philosophical concept of *hegemonic masculinity*[4]: the athletic male body as a mark of power and moral superiority. It has become a dominant, global idol in Western thought: White, middle-class heterosexuals (Dworkin 2004:158).

Other variations include the *Adonis Complex*, which describes male image and masculinities in terms of a preoccupation with building muscles, a lean body, appearance and good looks in terms of clothing and grooming and often in terms of the size of the penis.

Another social philosophy is the concept of *metrosexuality*, where the male individual is in contact with the female component of his being, but freed from the strict categories and classifications of masculinities of the past. The metrosexual person lives in the metropolis within the different options of 'a Man's World'. The David Beckham icon opens up the world for the metrosexual from the gym to the hairdresser. Metrosexuality, within a postmodern paradigm beyond any past 'isms' and stereotypes, nowadays even becomes the *Übersexual*, where men are portrayed in terms of categories such as the quality of their status and the positive aspects of being male; maleness as excellence and something to be proud of.

4. According to T. Carrigan *et al.* (2004:151–165), the differentiation of masculinities is psychological, but also institutional and an aspect of collective practice. Hegemonic masculinity is to impose a particular definition on other kinds of masculinity (2004:154).

Gender issues (as indicated by the aforementioned philosophical developments in male images) are closely linked to stereotypes and in this the regard the media plays a decisive role. For example, Gauntlett (2002:38) refers to the phenomenon of scopophilia.

Scopophilia is the voyeuristic gaze directed at other people as part of the pleasures of cinema. The pleasure in looking leads to the male gaze projecting its fantasies onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly and vice versa. In their traditional exhibitionist role, women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at. In this regard, the role of magazines in stereotyping should be emphasised. According to Gauntlett (2002:187–191), men should be handsome and self-confident. The ideal is that men should be well built with muscles, good in bed, happy in relationships, witty, considerate, skilled in all things and have sex with many attractive women.

Personal self-esteem, for a male, required public performance. In this regard, boys grew up with the notion of the pre-eminence of men. Men should therefore be the head of everything (Driver 1996:43–65). Notions such as 'male supremacy', 'male chauvinism' and the cultural archetype of the 'super-macho' refer to the dominant positions of men in society. Super-macho, violent body contact sports such as wrestling, football, rugby and boxing enforced this rigid macho image, because in the eyes of viewers the crowds will respond to a player coming back onto the field after an injury: 'What a man!' (Goldberg 1976:112–113).

Within the gender debate, what should be changed in order to heal men is the cultural and philosophical concept of 'patriarchalism'. Without a paradigm switch individual men are not going to change their lifestyles and sexual behaviour. Therefore, counselling men are in need of different and appropriate male images, in order to address many relational and social issues. Within the HIV and AIDS debate the necessity for philosophical counselling has become paramount.

Forms (ideas): The shaping of the human mind

Ideas as the basic form and structure of the human mind can be seen as the driving factors of human behaviour. Theories are structured and evolved around ideas. Sigmund Freud's book, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), changed psychological anthropology in a radical way. Freud's idea about the essence of our being human was expressed in the theory that the human nature consists of the unconscious, repression, infantile sexuality (leading to the Oedipus complex) and the tripartite division of the mind into ego, the sense of self; superego, broadly speaking, the conscience and the id, the primal biological expression of the conscious (Watson 2000:12–13).

In his book on people and ideas that shaped the modern mind, P. Watson (2000:29) refers to Hugo von Hofmannsthal's

remarkable statement in 1905 that the nature of our epoch is multiplicity and indeterminacy. Everything is slipping and sliding. What generations believed to be firm is in fact '*das Gleitende*'.

Einstein shattered the Newtonian worldview of solid substance with his notion of relativity. His theory that all mass has energy as hypothesised in his paper on the electrodynamics of moving bodies, which became known as the Special Theory of Relativity, modified the Newtonian cosmology, based on the straight lines of Euclidean geometry and Galileo's notions of absolute time (Johnson 1983:1). The theory, namely that there is no absolute motion, changed cosmology and paved the way for the so-called cultural interpretation of 'postmodernity'.

The arrival of Max Planck's quantum physics was a remarkable break with the mechanistic and deterministic paradigm of interpretation. Planck described an 'atom' of radiation, which he called a 'quantum'. He confirmed that nature was not a continuous process, but moved in a series of extreme jerks (Watson 2000:25).

In a more popular style, N. Ferreira (2009:4) accuses the church of holding on to metaphors derived from what he calls the mythological period of reflection. With reference to trans-personal psychology and the three phases of pre-rational (archaic, magical, mythological), rational and post-rational, he contents that we are living in a pluralistic-holistic stage that operates according to post-rationalism. The category post-rational refers to holistic and integral reflection, the mode of networking.

In the light of the previous, it is urgent that pastoral theologians, as well as practical theologians, pose the question: What is the under girding theory behind my practice and which idea is shaping my mind within the practice of counselling?

Therapeutic perspectivism

If one can assume that pastoral care is indeed a theological endeavour, embedded in the Christian tradition of caring and spirituality (the tradition of *cura animarum*), a critical discussion on theory formation in pastoral care and counselling in South Africa has become paramount. If we want to move into the paradigm of community care and the pastoral healing of life (an integrative approach); to opt for a paradigm switch from an exclusive societal approach (see in the past the notion of racial discrimination) to inclusivity; from gender prejudice (see the impact of hierarchy and patriarchy on cultural models for masculinity and femininity) to equality; from stigmatisation in the HIV pandemic to destigmatisation; even in our ecclesiology from denominationalism and institutionalism to ecumenical communality, healing and therefore therapy, urgent attention should be paid to the demand for paradigm shifts and the healing of paradigms, perspectives, perceptions and ideas. It is within this context that I want to opt for the

notion of therapeutic perspectivism (the theoretical angle and under girding life view in experiences and observation) and philosophical counselling: the healing of attitudes and intentionality (noetic healing) in the light of the critical question regarding the appropriateness of existing rational categories, belief systems and paradigmatic frameworks of interpretation for daily human behaviour.

Philosophical counselling: The dimension of paradigms and schemata of interpretation in a pastoral diagnosis

'Philosophical counselling' could be viewed as a quite 'new'[5] trend in the practice of counselling. In his book *Plato not Prozac*, Marinoff (1999:24) refers to the relatively recent scientisation of psychology and the psychological industry with the emphasis on talk therapy[6] and the human need for dialogue. With reference to psychoanalysis in psychotherapy, most of the theories are built on the notion of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. It means that because one event happened before another, the earlier event caused the later one. This cause and effect approach, combined with empathetic counselling, leads to the practice of emotional probing and memory analyses. But knowing the cause of one's pain does not necessarily take the pain away or comforts one.

The shift towards philosophically counselling[7] is a shift towards wisdom and its connectedness to meaning, future orientation, life views and the realm of ideas or convictions. Its aim is to help you apply the narrow insights that you learn about yourself to the big picture of your life; 'to integrate every conceivable insight (psychological insights being just one kind) into a coherent, workable outlook on and approach to life' (Marinoff 1999:30–31). It is therefore the contention of Marinoff (1999:31) that if the root of your problem is philosophical, nothing on your pharmacist's shelves is going to give lasting relief:

> Drugs don't do anything in the outside world – even with a mood softened by Prozac, you'll still have to deal with a sadistic boss or a cheating partner or a bureaucratic bank.
>
> (Marinoff 1999:33–34)

Philosophical counselling is aware of the fact that for healing to take place, the outside world and the framework for meaning, as well as the interpretation of events, need to be changed. Healing implies more than empathetic listening and talking (verbalising). Healing also implies paradigmatic changes and the development of a functional philosophical disposition toward your situation. Rather than dwelling on the question: How do you feel? Philosophical counselling poses the questions: What is your framework for meaningful

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5. 'Philosophical counselling is a relatively new but rapidly growing field of philosophy' (Marinoff 1999:7).

6. 'Counseling psychologists have a virtual monopoly on government licensing of talk therapy ...' (Marinoff 1999:24).

7. See Sperry (2002:15–16). Philosophical counselling entails a process involving a logical, analytical and noetic evaluation of the meaning dimension of different concepts and how they are related to basic existing paradigms and ideas or ideologies, as well as to different existential dimensions of life.

living? What meaning, purpose, or value is implied? What is motivating you to decide for a very specific direction or definite goal? How do you envision a possible outcome and what are realistic options? What are the factors preventing you to act according to the eventual goal? What do you hope for?

All of these questions cannot be separated from their philosophical context, which is determined by different schemata of interpretations and patterns of thinking (paradigms).

In philosophical counselling, aesthetics is more fundamental than ethics and morality. It is about the beauty of life, which is the mode by which one interprets the challenges in life in order to grow into a deeper sense of significance and gratitude. Aesthetics is the existential mode of thanksgiving in terms of grace and not in terms of fate. In this regard, philosophical counselling probes into the human art of daily living and wisdom decision-making. 'Philosophical counselling is a practical application of what has been largely an academic pursuit; it is a contemporary pragmatism whose goal is to deal with what actually matters in people's everyday lives and to re-establish theory as a useful instrument to a higher philosophical practice: the art of living wisely well'(Raabe 2001:4).

In essence, philosophy is a passion for healing in order to use astonishment and amazement [*verwondering*] as a vehicle or tool to bring about a profound transformation of the individual's mode of seeing and being, a transformation of our vision of the world and a metamorphosis of our intentionality[8]. It is called a 'worldview interpretation' or wise therapy (LeBon 2001:9). Schuster (1999:72–74) refers to philosophical care. He is so convinced of the value of philosophy in care and counselling that he even admits as a psychologist that it seems to be 'preferable to choosing a theologian for philosophical talks' as a result of the tradition of pastoral healing in *cura ani*marum.

Philosophical counselling can be described as the method of transcendent inquiry (trans-spection and pro-spection) into the realm of meaning and significance. It investigates a person's network of believes and facilitates progressive clarification of life-ordering values, commitments, conceptual orientations and meaningful connections. It describes a process of philosophical and transcendent inquiry (Raabe 2001:206) into a person's 'theory', paradigms or worldview, very specifically how this worldview is related to human suffering and the problem of theodicy. In this regard, philosophical counselling is a method for helping people to live and to look at the world in a more thoughtful way (Raabe 2001:217). It probes into the realm of 'conceptual vicissitudes' (Schefczyk in Raabe 2001:164) and helps to identify a gap between a person's actual way of life and any potential ways of life that could foster hope and encourage a person to take responsible decisions [*respondeo ergo sum*].

The value of philosophical counselling in pastoral care is that it helps a person to differentiate between meaning as the pursuit of happiness (the optimistic approach) and *spiritus* ('*logos*'): options to instil a vivid hope in terms of a different approach to the future (pro-spection) (the hopeful approach). As a spiritual endeavour in a Christian approach to life it poses the question of *ethos*: 'What are you intending to sacrifice?'

Schemata of interpretation: The hermeneutical background of philosophical counselling

In the tradition of Christian theology, nine philosophical schemata of interpretation[9] can be identified that played a decisive role in theological theory formation:

- The *Hellenistic schema* and the connection to the paradigm of cause-and-effect thinking. Its impact on theology was the notion of the immutability of God.

- The *metaphysical schema* (substantial thinking and the ontology of beyond) and its connection to the dualistic schism between the seen world and the unseen world. As a result of the subject-object split, the spiritual realm became removed from the secular realm. Its impact on theology was the schism between God (vertical approach with the emphasis on transcendence) and the cosmos (horizontal approach with the emphasis on the empirical phenomena).

- The *mechanistic schema* and its connection to rational explanations. For all the unsolved problems of life, God should be introduced as a *Deus ex machina*. In terms of a cause-and-effect schema, God operates as the instigator of all life events and suffering. God becomes the unmovable first logic and rational explanatory principle within the chain of life events (movements) emanating from the blueprint of Gods provision and deterministic election (theological positivism).

- The *imperialistic schema* and its connection to the paradigm of power as expressed in dominionship (authority or omnipotence as force). According to the Constantine paradigm, God's Kingdom should be understood in terms of a militant or ruling power. God reigns as a 'Superman' or 'Ceasar' and determines every sphere of life. The church becomes a cultural institution with God as the official head of a powerful establishment. God's omnipotence was seen as the exercise of power (force); God became *The Pantokrator*.

- The *patriarchal schema* and its connectedness to the paradigm of status: from the top, down to the bottom. God acts as the great Patriarch. He dominates human beings and instructs them according to the pedagogic principle of judgement and punishment.

- The *hierarchical schema* and its connection to superiority (the monarchic tradition). Life is viewed as an ordered system. At stake are position and differentiation. The latter is structured in terms of importance, status and position along the same lines of class differences. In such

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a model, the tension between superiority and inferiority determines people's understanding of God: God as royal King and ruling Judge with his prescriptions formulated in unchangeable laws.

- The *economic and materialistic schema of wealth, achievement, development and affluence*. The paradigm at stake is management: Life is to be managed in terms of materialistic goals driven by money, profit, development and progress. God becomes an official and public idol: the God who safeguards prosperity. God is then high-jacked to serve our selfish needs. Belief becomes a religion; it is misused as a good investment to bypass tragedy. The Kingdom of God becomes a stock exchange: God as Director and Manager.

- The *schema of communality and interconnectedness:* the *'ubuntu'* philosophy. This is why Kahiga (2005:190) asserts that traditional African epistemology cannot be isolated from life events.[10] The African paradigm is therefore about life and human events of interconnectedness and relatedness. Life never stands on its own, but is embedded in the dialectics between life events and death. 'Life is a thesis and death is its antithesis. Life is to embrace and death is to depart and to isolate. The synthesis between life and death is becoming' (Kahiga 2005:190). Human life is seen as an infinite becoming or progression and each human person ought to be an agent of this traditional cultural reality:

> The spirit of *Ubuntu* – that profound African sense that we are human only through the humanity of other human beings – is not a parochial phenomenon, but has added globally to our common search for a better world.
>
> (Mandela 2005:82)

J. Gathogo (2008:42–43) links the notion of *ubuntu*[11] to hospitality and the generosity of giving freely without strings attached. It can be seen as a philosophy and way of life, 'an unconditional readiness to share' (2008:42). It describes interdependence as described in the proverb that says: *Gutri gigatuirie kingi*, 'All things are interdependent' (Gathago 2008:43). *Ubuntu* is basically both a philosophical and religious concept that defines the individual in terms of his or her relationship to others. It is supposed to articulate a basic respect and compassion for others. According to Gathogo (2008:44), *ubuntu* illustrates that Africans were not incapable of philosophising as G.F. Hegel maintained. Instead of Rene Descartes's *cogito ergo sum* [I think therefore I exist], the African asserts 'I am because we are', or 'I am related, therefore I am' [*cognatus ergo sum*] or an existential *cognatus sum, ergo sumsu* [I am related, therefore we are]. As indicated by Gathogo (2008:46), this parallels with the concretisation of Heidegger's Being as Being-with in his Dasein-analyses[12].

The *hermeneutical schema of interpretation and meaningful networking*: the integrative approach. Hermeneutics (derived from *hermeneuein*) refers to the art of explanation and interpretation as the attempt to understand the meaning of different texts within the vibrant fibre of inter-textuality. This process includes verbalisation, speech, translation and the communication of a message (Smit, 1998:276). In this regard, the interpretation of metaphors and symbols in terms of the interrelatedness of systemic networking becomes important. Its impact on God-images is that theology becomes involved in the quest for meaningful God-images that can promote meaningful (hopeful) norms and structures for a humane living. For example: God as a Covenantal Partner and Soul Friend for life; the God-with-us embodied (the pneumatological inhabitation of the Spirit) in human bodies and existential categories[13].

The previous examples indicate a close connection between philosophical schemata and the paradigmatic issues implied in theory formation and fundamental views on the value and meaning or significance of life. It does not mean that the schemata are in themselves necessarily good or bad. They should not be assessed in terms of morals. They should be assessed as necessary cultural and philosophical paradigms, noetic frameworks of interpretations, to be used in all forms of theory formation.

The importance of the recognition of schemata of interpretation is that it creates a noetic awareness that can help care givers to probe into the realm of the patterns of thinking and ideas that shape human actions. Schemata of interpretation reveal the praxis within the practice. With praxis[14] is then meant the intention within an action that serves as the motivational factor for human behaviour. Schemata of interpretation imply more than merely intra-psychic factors that can be detected by psychoanalyses. Schemata of interpretation reveal the commitments that reveal significance and the human quest for meaning. They are the containers of ideas that even transcend the rational categories of the human. To a certain extent, they are connected to what can be called the spiritual realm of our human existence: the realm of ideas, norms, values, wisdom and life views (philosophical patterns of reasoning). In order to deal with the question of appropriate God-images for example, it becomes vital for the making of a pastoral diagnosis (to differentiate between

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10.The present is the arena of life in its fullness and as such, it is to be celebrated now. The fullness of life lies on earth in the present (despite the threat of evil, disease, pain, chaos and death). See Twesigye (1996:216).

11.In defining *ubuntu*, Gathogo points out that it is critical to underline that it is described differently amongst the various African communities. 'For instance it is called *Uhu* among the Shona of Zimbabwe; *Ubuntu* among the Ngunie speakers of Southern Africa; *Utu* among the Swahili speakers of East Africa; and *Umundu* among the Kikuyu of Kenya, among others' (2008:45).

12.Gathogo (2008:51) pointed out how tribalism, the abuse of women, bribery and corruption and the reducing of an individual to nothing in the community, can harm and discredit the whole principle of *ubuntu*.

13.More schemata could be identified: for example the democratic schema of individual self-actualisation and its connectedness to human rights; the systemic schema of global networking (globalistion), intersubjectivity and interrelatedness.

14.Thus, for Aristotle, praxis is guided by a moral disposition to act truly and rightly; a concern to further human well being and the good life. This is what the Greeks called *phronesis* and requires an understanding of other people. Practical wisdom [*phronesis*] involves moving between the particular and the general. The mark of a prudent man [is] to be able to deliberate rightly about what is good and what is advantageous for himself; not in particular respects, e.g. what is good for health or physical strength, but what is conducive to the good life generally (Aristotle). We can now see the full quality of praxis. It is not simply action based on reflection. It is action which embodies certain qualities. These include a commitment to human well being and the search for truth and respect for others. It is the action of people who are free, who are able to act for themselves. Moreover, praxis is always risky. It requires that a person 'makes a wise and prudent practical judgment about how to act in this situation'. We can say that word and action, action and reflection, theory and practice are all facets of the same idea. This action is not merely the doing of something, what Freire describes as activism and Aristotle as *poiesis*. *Poiesis* is about acting upon, doing to: it is about working with objects. Praxis, however, is creative: it is other-seeking and dialogic. (Smith 1999:http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-praxis.htm).

appropriate or inappropriate convictions of faith) to probe in pastoral counselling into the noetic realm of life.

The practice of philosophical counselling

It should be made clear that philosophical counselling is less a 'technique' or 'skill'. It is more about processes of understanding. In order to relate philosophical counselling to the practice of counselling, the following four approaches or models can serve as examples of what is meant by philosophical counselling in the counselling practice pastoral care.

The making of a spiritual, existential analysis in a pastoral diagnosis

In an existential analysis the presupposition is that existential experiences which shape human responses and *habitus* is fundamental to life experiences and conceptualisation. With reference to the contribution of existential philosophy, one can identify five existential categories that are general and universal and therefore existent in all cultural activities and human behaviour.

They categories include anxiety; guilt or shame; doubt and despair or dread; helplessness or vulnerability and frustration, anger or aggression. Related to them are the following compulsions:

- the urge to be validated and acknowledged
- the urge to be successful and perfect
- the urge for absolute control over future events
- the urge for independence and power and the urge to possess (greed).

In an existential model, the following existential needs can be identified:

- intimacy (the need to be accepted unconditionally for whom one is without the fear for rejection)
- freedom (deliverance)
- hope and the anticipation of something new or different
- the need for sustainable support systems
- life-fulfilment, satisfaction or happiness.

In philosophical counselling, the pastoral question is whether the spiritual framework for life can be connected meaningfully to the existential issues that can become a threat to *sinduiding*

[meaning-identification]. Within Christian spirituality, one can identify the theological categories of grace (unconditional love); forgiveness and reconciliation; resurrection hope; the support system of *koinonia* [fellowship] and *diakonia* [service] and the sacraments as indication of God's faithfulness and fulfilled promises emanating into a life of joy and gratitude.

Table 1 (see bottom of page 6) can be viewed as a kind of graphic portrayal of the network of existential realities and how it can be connoted to the spiritual realm of the Christian faith. The method implied is hermeneutics, which wants to illuminate the possible connections between life issues and spiritual paradigms. It is not an explanatory model in the sense that it reveals causes; it only displays possible connections between intention, attitude, existential realities and belief systems.

For example, Table 1 helps pastoral caregivers in the making of a pastoral diagnosis to understand how existential issues, possible compulsions and basic life needs, are connected to one another. It is now the task of a pastoral hermeneutics to link the relevant spiritual issue with the need, compulsion and related existential reality. If the existential issue at stake is anxiety (the fear for loss and rejection), a pastoral caregiver should probe into the possible compulsive realm of honour and pride (the obsession to maintain oneself at the cost of somebody else and the selfish demand to be acknowledged by all means). The deflection should be in the direction of intimacy: the need for acceptance within relationships. The appropriate spiritual category that is applicable here is God's grace (the knowledge of faith that I am accepted unconditionally for whom I am by God without the fear of rejection). This spiritual perspective can bring about change and healing in the sense that it creates a sense of dignity and identity despite the existing anxiety. One can say, it brings about a different perspective (philosophical mindset) and changes the fixed perception and idea created by the anxiety. The focal point becomes intimacy as guaranteed by grace.

From the previous discussion, one can indeed conclude that, in terms of the spiritual realm of our being human, worldviews are playing a fundamental role in our attitudes and intentionality and thus, the reason why pastoral care should take philosophical counselling seriously within processes of communication and verbalising.

Reframing

Another example of philosophical counselling is the

Table 1: Network of general and universal existential categories within the realm of Christian spirituality.

Existential issues: The threat to dignity	Compulsions: Excessive human quests	Existential life needs and being needs: Courage to be	Christian spiritual dimensions: Spiritus
Anxiety: experience of loss or rejection	To be acknowledged and validated; seeking honour and pride (Plato)	Intimacy: affirmation and self-actualisation	Grace: unconditional love; role of God-images
Guilt or shame	To be perfect; success; achievement (avoid failure)	Freedom or deliverance	Forgiveness or reconciliation
Despair or doubt	The quest for absolute security, safety or certainty	Anticipation: meaning and trust	Eschatological realm of hope determined by the belief in the cross and resurrection of Christ
Helplessness or vulnerability	To be independent and in control (power: to dominate or abuse)	Support system	Fellowship, koinonia or diakonia
Frustration or anger (disappointment and frustration; structural issues: poverty, unemployment, violence or crime)	To possess and to have (greed)	Life fulfilment or direction or transformation	Gratitude and joy or promissio-therapy or ethics; see the role of the sacrament of baptism and holy communion

reframing model proposed by D. Capps (1990:10). His argument is that when we change the frame, we change the meaning. Changing the frame in which a person perceives events in order to change the meaning is called reframing. When the meaning changes, the person's responses and behaviours also changes.

Renaming

Renaming is the attempt to deconstruct existing inappropriate names (labels) a person is giving to life events and to introduce a different category that represents the meaning and significance of the existing problematic area in a more appropriate way. For example, a couple is planning for a family. The wife resigned her job. At the same time the husband moved into another job and is spending a lot of time to get it from the ground. After the birth of the first child, the wife interprets her spouse's investments in the new business as a loss of love. The message she received is: he does not love me; we do have a marriage problem. After a counselling session, the husband was totally surprised to hear this, because his intention was to provide an income for his family and to create financial security. He did that as an act of love and as an investment into the relationship. After the wife understood his intention, she renamed the problem. It is not a marriage problem or a problem of love but a problem of readjustment, namely how to adjust to a total new dimension in their marriage: the dimension of family. Therefore, it is a problem of family adjustment and not a marital crisis per se.

Interpathy, inter-spection and trans-spection

In his book, *Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures*, D. Augsburger (1986:29–30) refers to interpathetic caring, the process of 'feeling with' and 'thinking with' another. Such an attempt requires that one enters the other's world of assumptions, beliefs and values and temporarily take them as one's own. He is referring to M. Maruyama (1986:30), who coined the concept of 'trans-spection'. With trans-spection is then meant an effort to put oneself into the head (not shoes) of another person. Whilst empathy is a projection of feelings between two persons in epistemology, trans-spection 'is a trans-epistemological process which tries to experience a foreign belief, a foreign assumption, a foreign perspective, and feelings in a foreign context' (1986:30).

Inter-spection is the awareness of the interrelatedness and interconnectedness of meaning within the network of relationships. More or less what is meant by *ubuntu* philosophy: I am a human being through another human being. The perspective of the other is important for processes of healing: How does the other perceives and experiences me?

Trans-spection deals with the worldviews and philosophy of the other. How does he or she perceive the cosmos and in what does he or she belief?

Conclusion

Philosophical counselling is part and parcel of the process of hermeneutics in pastoral care. It is the attempt to probe into the realm of ideas or forms, paradigms and their relationship with different schemata of interpretation as embedded in and influenced by, cultural settings and different worldviews and cosmologies. In order to understand human attitude [*phronēsis*, *habitus*] one has to make a pastoral diagnosis of the belief systems that determine human behaviour directly or indirectly, as well as the intentionality as related to a vivid hope and the anticipation of a meaningful future.

Table 1 is designed to clarify the notion of a pastoral hermeneutics. It can be applied in the making of a pastoral diagnosis. It furthermore links the spiritual realm of the Christian faith with the existential realities of life, and can be used as an assessment tool in order to bring about change regarding skewed perceptions and inappropriate paradigms. The impact of the Christian spiritual categories on existential realities and fixed belief systems or inappropriate ideas about life and our being human can be viewed, on the level of a pastoral methodology, as philosophical counselling.

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