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On the Communication and Practice of Philosophical Counselling and Philosophical Practices

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Abstract: It is inevitable that philosophical practices will become a significant concern in the Romanian cultural space. Following the example of Western counseling practices, Romanian thinkers began to theorize and practice different forms of applied philosophy and philosophical counseling. One of the most productive and creative voices in the field of applied philosophy is Professor Antonio Sandu. The volume Consilierea filosofică apreciativă [Appreciative Philosophical Counselling], along with other works published under his signature, is a major contribution to the development and implementation of philosophical counseling. Antonio Sandu's texts can be used as a starting point for the theoretical construction, for the exercises of the practitioners, but also for those who want a support for the institutional construction of the training programs in the philosophical practices and philosophical counseling.

Keywords: *Antonio Sandu; philosophical counselling; philosophical practices; appreciative philosophical counselling.*

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Philosophical counselling is considered more and more as a solution that can be used in our cultural space. The various types of counselling leave room, even if still modest, for this practice of dialogue and wisdom that we find in the form of ethical and deontological advice, interpersonal counselling, group counselling, personal development counselling based on philosophical principles, philosophical cafes, philosophical debates, philosophical mentoring, philosophical counselling online, in the form of philosophical interventions of critical thinking, etc.

Although there seems to be a marginal concern for the Romanian philosophers of today, in recent years there is a clear concern for the applied philosophy and for the development of philosophical practices in the area of local philosophical reflection. We have such concerns in most university centers, some of them developing into real points of creativity on the horizon of philosophical practices and counselling. The trend is a positive one and I think it manifests itself, on the one hand, in the form of a responsibility that the philosophy professors in universities feel in relation to their own profession, and to the needs of the society in which they live, and on the other hand, in the form of a creativity that responds to human sensitivity and expectations of its harmonization in the context of technological developments that have taken on a scale that always takes us by surprise.

Although in many of the countries where, during the last 40 years, philosophical practices have been developed, we notice that they gain viability by detaching from the academic way in which philosophy was made, I think that in Romania such an endeavor must come from the university environment and be structure in relation to various demands of the society, of the market, of individuals facing the most complex problems in daily life. It is a moral duty of philosophy teachers (especially those from Universities, but not only) to render philosophy one of its traditional forms and uses, which has been placed in parentheses or left on a secondary level during certain periods of teaching, communication and application of philosophy.

Appreciative Philosophical Counselling (Sandu, 2019) is a book that very well marks this type of concern under the coordination of Antonio Sandu. This is a collection of texts written by Antonio Sandu and part of his collaborators. Of the 10 chapters of the book, two are written by Antonio Sandu with Simona Ponea and one is written with Ana Frunza. If the articles and books published so far portray him as a significant thinker in the field of applied ethics and applied philosophy, this volume also brings us the signs of a creator of a philosophical thinking school, with relevant concerns in ethical and philosophical counselling.

Antonio Sandu appears to us as one of the most representative voices in philosophical theory and practice. We notice that the texts published in time by Antonio Sandu create a very valuable resource, not to be overlooked for our topic. Not even a shallow analysis of the philosophical counselling in Romania, such as that proposed by Vasile Haţegan in the "Premises of the philosophical counselling in Romania" (Haţegan, 2018, 126-137), contained in the first handbook on philosophical counselling published under the signature of a Romanian author, could not ignore the need to make a reference to Antonio Sandu's works, even if the author left out other valuable Romanian authors who should not have been absent from such a work. Considering the short period of time since we can talk about relevant contributions in philosophical counselling in the Romanian cultural space, we can aim to say that Antonio Sandu is already a classic of reflections on the practices regarding ethical consulting and philosophical counselling.

The *Appreciative philosophical counselling* advocates the philosophical use of appreciative methods, imposed in the western world starting from the works of David Cooperrider, and in the Romanian academic space by authors such as Antonio Sandu and Ştefan Cojocaru. Thus, the author considers that "Appreciative teaching of philosophy can be seen as a way of making philosophy, more precisely an applied philosophy. We propose the transformation of the classic lectures into true *philosophical counselling* modules, starting from the interpretation of the students' own life experience, related to the philosophical themes and motives". (Sandu, 2019, p. 222)

We have a very good intuition here. Philosophical counselling must be learned in philosophy programs. There is no contradiction between the academic way of philosophizing and the various ways of applying philosophy, as we can see throughout the history of philosophy, even though most often this type of philosophical intervention only considered an elite to which it was intended. Today we see a democratization of access to counselling in general, and it is natural that this phenomenon should also include philosophical counselling, which we must offer to beneficiaries of any kind, who are on the value scale of their own lives.

Antonio Sandu, as a university professor, refers to the application of this requirement to his most natural proximity when he states that "The current destiny of philosophy in the educational space is to put in the hands of students ways of understanding and interpretative tools regarding the processes of continuous negotiation of the underlying interpretations and principles, as well as of the ways of decrypting the meanings hidden in the interpretation process itself. (Sandu, 2019, p. 222)

Starting from such a perspective, we expect that as we have admirable works of history of philosophical ideas and concepts, we will also have systematic and applied works on philosophical practices. Moreover, we expect that in addition to the role of creators of philosophy and teachers of philosophy, graduates of philosophy will also enter the field of various forms of applied philosophy and become practitioners and counsellors in various areas of the need for philosophical reflection and dialogical modelling of life experiences.

One problem that acutely appears towards the end of the ideological constructions proposed by Antonio Sandu is that regarding the professionalization of philosophical practices and philosophical counselling. As he once did, the author states that only persons who have followed a consistent philosophy program must enter the market for philosophical counselling. Antonio Sandu tells us: "we draw attention to some tendencies that appeared even within the community of philosophical counselling practitioners, to send philosophical counselling in derisory through inefficient, didactic and reductionist professional training, which generates an interpretative derivation of the idea of philosophical counselling for a therapeutic discussion, vaguely humanistic and non-systematic ". (Sandu, 2019, p. 237) Although I do not know such training programs, I think the danger of such enterprises may arise. Therefore, philosophy programs at universities should provide this type of training at the end of a systematic cycle. At the same time, specialists in philosophy could resort to multiple forms of lifelong learning that they offer in the form of postgraduate programs aimed primarily at philosophy graduates, but also graduates from other social and humanistic disciplines who already have a good background in the field of philosophy. I also think that we should leave the philosophical counselling to those who have followed training programs in the field of philosophy. But in some areas, reality has taken us forward.

We must notice the existence of a philosophers' inability to exercise philosophical practices in the past. In order to respond to urgent needs in their own fields of activity, the specialists with different competencies have carried out ethical practices and ethical counselling (in more or less philosophical forms) in the field of their personal or organizational action.

We cannot ignore at least the example of ethical practices. Ethical, deontological practices and ethical counselling and consulting were largely abandoned by people with philosophical training, so specialists in various fields took up ethical discourse and applied it in solving professional problems. Philosophers can recover this field of action, but things have evolved so that they no longer believe they can claim exclusivity in such

practices, which already prove successful by being developed by professionals who have competencies in their own areas of expertise, and have also resorted to a training in the field of ethics. In the future, not only training programs will be developed for those who choose to specialize in the field of philosophy, but also postgraduate programs intended for practitioners in other fields.

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