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PHILOSOPHY, SPIRITUALITY, THERAPY

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Abstract: One of the most authentic voices that speaks about the importance of philosophy in the life of contemporary man is Emmy van Deurzen. As a philosopher and psychotherapist, she advocates philosophy as the foundation of existential counseling and therapy. Starting from the premise that existential therapy is the practical application of philosophy to the analysis, understanding and modeling of everyday life, Emmy van Deurzen aims to reflect on the complex relationships that philosophy, psychology and therapeutic techniques have in building the spiritual life and in asserting man on the four dimensions of existence, from the physical one to spiritual or religious one. In order to reveal the way in which philosophy rediscovers its meanings and asserts itself as the foundation of therapy, I have recourse to the exposition of a few elements that focus on the difference between the religious imaginary and that of scientific and philosophical practices. Against this backdrop, the necessity of philosophy to leave the marginal status it has assumed under the conditions of modernity and to manifest itself as a form of deciphering and assuming meaning, of transcending the human being, and of formulating paths that lead to authentic existence is being shaped. The philosophical dialogue, seen as a therapeutic dialogue, is favored by the fact that without eliminating the forms of symbolic thought specific to religious communication, philosophy may propose a conceptual, critical and demythologizing way of thinking, in contradiction with the mythical manifestations, but in fully accordance with the existential needs of the human being. Such an approach becomes more and more important in the context of the development of communication, of technology, and of the new types of existence mediated by it.

Key words: practical philosophy, existential psychotherapy, pastoral therapy, philosophy, spirituality, religious imaginary, religious communication, symbolic thought, existential counseling, therapeutic techniques, Emmy van Deurzen

1. Philosophy and the Religious and Scientific Imaginary

In my research so far, I have never encountered a rational valuation of philosophy more full of empathy and spiritual depth than in the texts written by Emmy van Deurzen. Philosophy is restored in all its transformative power in relation to communication and therapeutic dialogue. In her psychotherapeutic approach, the reality is so complex that we can only surprise it by putting into dialogue the particular perspectives that each of the fields of human creation builds upon. That is why communication proves to be an integrative coordinate that can piece together the fragments into a network that becomes consistent through the very reflective act of connectivity. This instrumentalization of knowledge in favor of understanding life and its preparation as a favorable environment for man is best realized through philosophical reflection and positioning in the horizon of the authenticity of being. It refers to all the dimensions of human existence, from the physical to the spiritual or religious one.

One of the constituent elements of the crisis, which the postmodern man repeatedly feels and discusses, is the crisis of seclusion. Under these circumstances, we must give back to the contemporary man the dimension of relationing, of a face-to-face whereness with the other. In other words, we must offer communication, on the one hand, the status of *liessant* for all the structures that focus on particular ways of revealing a puzzle that recognizes existence as a whole, and, on the other hand, to recognize the value of general framework of the development of philosophical construction of personal existential options. Philosophical dialogue is one of the best ways to highlight the benefits of communication and philosophy in the lives of individuals. It may lead to the discovery of a profound form (close to the religious one in its practical manifestations) of spirituality and the transmission of wisdom as a resource of everyday decision, even though the need for philosophy seems to be marginal in the era when there is a need for generalized communication.

Analyzing the current condition of philosophy, Emmy van Deurzen notes that the marginal status to which philosophy has been condemned by ecclesiastical authority in the premodern world is very similar to that which it has been voluntarily chosen by philosophy itself in relation to science once with the scientific and technological development brought into our lives by Western modernity (van Deurzen 2009, 2). Emmy van Deurzen discovers the paradoxical status of modern philosophy. Paradoxical is that, after breaking free from the subordination of theology which lasted several centuries of theological creation, along with modernity, philosophy voluntarily puts itself at the service of science.

First, philosophy seems to be at their service, and then acts as a sort of underprivileged acquaintance of sciences, especially of social sciences that are constantly expanding. Most of the disciplines that have separated from philosophy over time, or those that originated in different domains of human creation that originally belonged to the sphere of philosophical study, tend to manifest a certain discretion towards philosophers and philosophy. Philosophers have always given up a part of their concerns, without then maintaining a close contact with the specific concerns of areas that had an autonomous development, even if this autonomy did not manifest itself in the form of hostility towards philosophy. Most social sciences, though sometimes resorting to the authority of philosophical personalities that we find in textbooks or treatises of philosophy that they consider to be significant to their field of science, show some kind of detachment from philosophy, considering it to be too theoretical, and speculative to their concerns and practical purpose. Philosophy developed gradually in such a way that it gave away part of its main concerns in favor of other disciplines, or have turned them into marginal aspects of philosophical research. From the point of view of communication and counseling, public space and personal space have been abandoned, for example, in favor of psychology, which almost barely occupied the practical ways in which philosophy intervened in everyday life. At the same time, with the imposing in Western civilization of the need to develop the scientific spirit, philosophy failed to become a science of sciences, although its inclination towards totalization, the creation of foundations and the creation of conceptual tools could have recommended it in this respect. Thus, we can observe how philosophy ends up renouncing its practical and transformational ability, in favor of the social sciences that were just detaching themselves from it. If philosophers once had concerns both in the field of knowledge, of research of the various aspects of human existence, of shaping critical thinking, of formulating practical solutions for life, as well as in the field of strategic thinking, we suddenly find the philosopher deserted by its powers and isolated in relation to the complexity of the problems he addresses.

We can ask ourselves: Where does philosophy's difficulty in negotiating its relationship with other disciplines comes from? What is the effort of rationalization and imaginative construction that philosophy must deal? One of the answers can be sought in the ways in which they position themselves, on the one hand, the answers given by religion and science, and on the other hand, the answers given by various philosophers to the problems the individual is facing. In shaping a background image that might help us understand these relationships, Emmy van Deurzen introduces ideology as a way of reporting on reality and assuming a practical perspective on the unfolding of one's own life. We do not focus here on the ways in which ideology can function as a carrier of sacred

contents, nor on the elements that differentiate such ideological constructions from the ideologies built up by the values of the sacred. It is worth mentioning that Emmy van Deurzen believes that it is important to show how the meaning of each culture is made by imposing a dominant ideology designed to organize the whole horizon of reality and action. The dominant ideology in a certain cultural space functions within a culture of religion in which we can find dominant structures and behavioral patterns and beliefs specific to the religious way of organizing reality. Deurzen attributes to this ideological structure of culture the magical force of transforming reality from a space of chaos and ambiguity into one of communication of meaning and signification. In this way, we notice a phenomenon that addresses religion and ideology as cultural systems, but also the cultural function of ideology and religion. We thus understand that „This sacred link uniting the culture can be many different things, but if it is to acquire religious and sacred status it has to be rooted in a mythology which refers to the culture’s origin and which cannot be questioned and has to be taken on faith. We can only truly belong to a culture to the extent that we accept its framework of reference” (van Deurzen 2009, 14).

Despite the pluralism of the representations of the sacred characteristic to the postmodern individual, van Deurzen notes that Western civilization has as one of its fundamental paradigms the imaginary of the paradisiac garden (van Deurzen 2009, 16). It is to be expected that in this context the major existential answers will be linked to such a founding myth. Religion and science are viewed as such visions of the world, and as ways in which man can coexist with his world, be able to improve it in order to avoid the shortcomings and sufferings of everyday. They are constructions designed to give man the power to restore the way to his paradisiacal state, to reach a life lying in the vicinity of the imaginary of a perfectly happy existence. It is no wonder that problem of happiness is one of the most important in terms of aspirations formulated by the human being through both religions and interventions brought about by science in an attempt to improve human life. From the perspective of such a scientific vision, a successful life must be based on the data provided by science. Emmy van Deurzen believes that we live according to evidence-based recipes only because science proposes such a foundation for building the meaning of a happy life. Thus, „now we no longer adjust our conduct to the old values and well established routines of our ancestors and forebears nor in terms of the word of our gods, but rather in line with the new evidence provided to us by the latest research. We live evidence-based lives and we take our cues from the media to keep us informed of the latest fashions and values to follow. One day we are told to eat or do one thing for a longer, healthier life, the next the evidence has changed and we are advised to pursue another new fad” (van Deurzen 2009, 17). Such a science that manifests itself in a similar way to religions

only proposes an alternative to religion in which evidence-based decisions replace decisions centered on traditional beliefs. Emmy van Deurzen cultivates the idea that science brings with it evidence-based mythology. This scientific mythology seems today inseparable from the Western way of living.

However, one of the very special intuitions formulated by van Deurzen is related to the fact that neither the religious imaginary nor the scientific one can make sense of to the new challenges that the postmodern man has to face. He is faced with the challenge of understanding his connections and his way of dealing with the virtual world: „We need to open our eyes to the challenges and opportunities of the Age of Virtuality and move forward. We are now in a position to face up to human reality as never before and we need to let ourselves do this vigorously. We need to think about the new morality we are capable of” (van Deurzen 2009, 35). Following the analysis ran by Emmy van Deurzen, we find that these challenges can be better understood and faced if we perceive them from the perspective of what is happening in the context of the therapy. She shows us that it is necessary to move past the discussion of human existence in terms of normal and pathological and to resort to a new type of thinking that is beyond this duality. The framework of this type of reflection can be found in the context of philosophical thinking (van Deurzen 2015). As in therapy, philosophy is the major element of the reconstruction of the postmodern human condition, in a similar way, philosophy should be given a central place in solving the issues the development of virtual environment brings to the daily life of individuals. Philosophy is called upon to state its view on all aspects of the fundamental issues of the way in which an individual is living (van Deurzen 2009, 38). The development of communication technologies, especially those related to the construction of the virtual environment and the communication in the virtual space, offers philosophy the chance to regain the ground it has abandoned and taken by other disciplines concerned with the human being's existence in the world.

Philosophy, unlike religion or science, does not lead us into the garden of a paradise, whether it is imagined in traditional forms, or that it is the new paradise promised by the conquests of science and technology. Without being tempted in any way by mythical construction, philosophy places us on the side of being and proposes an ethical reconstruction based on everyday life projected on the background of the general problems of human existence and condition. Without diminishing the importance of the imaginative function of the human being, philosophy rationalizes human existence, especially through the mechanisms of critical thinking and the metaphysics of sensitivity. It offers the individual ways to examine his own life. Philosophy does not propose a myth of happiness that can be associated with the imaginative constructions of the paradisiacal situation in major cultures and religious systems. It uses the

philosophical principles and rules of thinking in order to engage the individual on the path of a perpetual creation of happiness as a state of well-being related to the quality of being human. It is a philosophical imaginary that reveals itself in the form of conceptual constructions and wisdom.

From the point of view of the type of imaginary they are building, in such a perspective, there seems to be a greater similitude between religion and science than between philosophy and religion, on the one hand, and philosophy and science, on the other. Without abandoning the realm of symbolic thinking, philosophy resorts to a conceptual, critical, and demythologizing thinking, inconsistent with the mythical manifestations of the other two disciplines - religion and science - as they are represented by Emmy van Deurzen.

2. From the Diminish of Traditional Concerns to the Rediscovery of Philosophy

Nowadays, psychology and religion seem to leave no room for philosophy to approach the matters of the human soul and the problems it faces. It is not by chance that there is a widespread tendency to think that psychology is a secular form of intervention in the life of an individual that has replaced religion in many aspects. And the most useful example in this regard is that of the confessor who is replaced by the evidence-based science of the psychologist who possesses the magical, tautomurgical power of soul-liberation. I am inclined to agree to those who believe that psychology is not the heir of religion, but the great daughter of philosophy. Psychological therapy is not a practice inspired by religion, but a practice inspired by philosophy. It can be considered a scientific form of experimental philosophy. That is why I believe that a collaboration between philosophy and psychology is in the inherent logic of the development of the human being and can lead to a mutual enrichment of the two ways of research on human soul and its everyday life. Whether we promote the idea of an alliance between philosophy and psychology, or think philosophy as an essential part of psychotherapy, we always have in mind the idea of a co-operation with beneficial reciprocal influence (Lin 2011, 87-110; Lenta, Cucu 2017, 59-67; Marica 2015, 383-388).

But perhaps the most obvious decrease in the importance of philosophy as concern of the postmodern individual is the marginalization of philosophy in relation to religion or psychology and psychological counseling in the educational system. In view of the debate on the institutional marginalization of philosophy in the traditional system of Western education, the question arises: What determines the philosopher that, throughout the historical evolution of philosophy, he reduces its

sphere of action and manifestation of its creative power to the point where philosophy is being perceived as irrelevant, both from an institutional point of view and from the point of view of its traditional preoccupations, taken up in the meantime by other disciplines?

This time, I will confine myself in answering this question only from the perspective of revealing the current state of philosophy. Today, as postmodern people with philosophical sensitivity, we are pleased to find that - despite the isolation of philosophy in an ivory tower - philosophy regains its theoretical and practical vocation and imposes itself as an equal partner in the broad sphere of social and humanist sciences. It is scientifically in a particular way, but it has its distinct place in the sphere of scientific creation specific to postmodernity. In particular, the unprecedented development of communication and technology that stimulates this development leads to an increase in the importance of philosophy and a practical reorientation of philosophy. Until recently, philosophy was accused of self-isolation in its inaccessible world and hiding behind a screen in a jargon that can no longer be perceived as a language in the open communication with others. One of the causes that led to the sedimentation of such a negative image is identified by van Deurzen in the tendency of philosophy to favour knowledge in relation to the pursuit of wisdom. It is suggested that even the newer trends, which direct philosophy to the real problems of the contemporary human existence, only partially succeed in bringing philosophy into contact with life. For van Deurzen, a very good proof in this respect is that an active movement such as that of the supporters of philosophical counselling is not well received in philosophical circles. Au contraire, „philosophical counselling remains a countermovement in the field of philosophy and stands out as an exception to the trend of dis-affectation and the isolation of philosophy as a handmaiden of scientific discourse. Philosophical counselling is itself at risk of being taken over by life coaching, which is often based on cognitive and pragmatic principles” (van Deurzen 2009, 38). At the same time, Emmy van Deurzen notes that philosophical counselling has never capitalized on its therapeutic potential. From the very beginning, it has been rather a form of mentoring or offering different types of support. Still, philosophical practice has difficulty in being an alternative to therapeutic practices, because it has been conceived in a different way and with a different purpose than the therapeutic one. In this regard, the prospects of two initiators of philosophical practice Gerd Achenbach of Germany and Ad Hoogendijk in the Netherlands are discussed. The two philosophers who have called their practice philosophical counselling, did not consider it to be a form of therapy. In the first case, philosophical counselling starts from the premise that life is the one that shapes the way we think and supports it in setting new directions. In the second case, philosophical counselling must propose a search and understanding of the meaning of life within the

client-specific universe and within its own language by opening up access to its own inner world and the existence of contradictions that it must accept, live with all its challenges, and learn to transform it into a life worth living. Emmy van Deurzen notes that the two philosophers do not intend to carry out a therapeutic approach in relation to the pathological aspects of the individual's existence, but to provide support to those who ask questions about the problems they are facing, the meaning of their lives, and to the meaning of life, to a process of self-discovery and the valorization of their own life. Instead, Deurzen is very optimistic about the power of philosophy and philosophical approach in the development of existential psychotherapy and the role that existential psychotherapy can play in the future development of philosophical counselling and therapy (van Deurzen 1997, 232).

Beyond criticism of this kind, we can witness today an unexpected development of applied philosophy, either in the form of ethics applied to various professional fields (Grad, Frunzã 2016, 326-336; Sandu 2016, 28-47; Croitor 2014, 125-130) or in the form of ethical and social responsibility for organizations, or in the form of philosophical counseling for individuals or groups, or in the form of philosophical counseling offered to special communities or to persons with varying degrees of vulnerability. Philosophy breaks through its forms of communication in the economy, in medical deontology, but also as part of the effort of mutual integration of the results of different sciences. Instead of developing philosophical counseling, Emmy van Deurzen, as a philosopher and psychotherapist, prefers a philosophical practice of therapy in the form of existential psychotherapy.

3. Philosophy and Therapy

Reasons for optimism come from one of the most effective ways of practicing philosophy. We find it in the practices of existential psychotherapy counseling. Emmy van Deurzen confesses that in the mid nineteen eighties, before becoming a trainer, when she worked as a therapist in a psychiatric hospital, she heavily relied on her training in philosophy rather than on what she had acquired during her training as a psychologist. Later on, in her career as a counselor and trainer, she always combined therapy with counseling relying on the alliance between psychology and philosophy. Her therapeutic approach is, however, primarily philosophical. It is also the reason why her system of thought and the philosophical practices she proposes are important both from the point of view of the specialist in psychotherapy and of all the other practitioners interested in exploring the existential problems. She offers us a very broad spectrum for existential investigations because: „the type of counselling and therapy proposed involves assisting people to come to

terms with the dilemmas of living. Issues are addressed in moral and human terms rather than in terms of sickness and health. The frame of reference is philosophical rather than medical, social or psychological. The assumption is that people need to find ways of making sense of life before they can make sense of their problems and of themselves" (van Deurzen 2002, xiii).

In her works, as in the book written with Martin Adams, Emmy van Deurzen places philosophy at the base of existential counseling and psychotherapy. They seek a genuine philosophical solution to all the difficulties individuals face. Thus, philosophy understood as "the search for truth and the love of wisdom" offers, on the one hand, an open theory of personality and of ways of communicating in the sphere of its transformations, and on the other hand, a practice guided by general principles meant to solve the concrete problems and existential disorders of each person (van Deurzen, Adams 2011, 8).

Emmy van Deurzen and Martin Adams offer us a guide of tools needed by a therapist in its counseling activities, besides having a good training in philosophy: "In order to practice existential therapy, we need to know our environment, that is, human existence. We need to practice the cultivation of an attitude of open and engaged awareness, focused not only towards the person in front of us but also towards that person's life, as well as the ways in which his specific problems can be solved together with the solving and elucidation of general human problems that are common to all of us" (van Deurzen, Adams 2011, 14). The therapist does not need a counseling technique as much as he needs to be familiar with the problems of philosophy and its ways of integrating human issues into a flow of life that is unfolding according to an internal reasoning of life as it is. There is a great variety of theories and practices in this respect. There is no widely accepted method for this type of practice, but is generally accepted is the fact that the therapist must approach life's issues in a philosophical manner. At the same time, he must cultivate an open communication that takes into account the different types of relationships and the various connections that open up and position themselves on all dimensions of existence. Communication is the one that ensures the horizon of the entire philosophical reflection. The philosophical nature of the approach addresses the ways in which specific personal issues are engaged in a horizon in which what is relevant is the human being, the fact of being, the conditions of a good life or the existence as such. Every problem is considered to be essential from the point of view of personal experience, of the way in which the individual becomes aware of himself, his way of being and his power to transform himself. But it becomes relevant from an existential point of view by projecting what is personal on a screen of general solutions, of existence as an integrative existence. The tools at hand usually include ideas from a particular philosophical work or a philosopher's view or extracts from philosophical works

relevant from the point of view of orientation in existence, of elucidation of personal problems and of the rationalization of cohabitation with their own life experiences. This is how we should decipher the statement: "existential therapy is the practical application of philosophy to everyday life" (van Deurzen, Adams 2011, 20). Among the philosophers that Emmy van Deurzen references, we can mention, for example, some of those who can be associated with existential philosophy, even though they are not all affiliated to existentialist philosophy: Kierkegaard (1980), Nietzsche (1992), Husserl (1997), Jaspers (1969), Heidegger (1962), Buber (1970), Scheler (1960), Sartre (1948), Merleau-Ponty (1968), Tillich (1952), Camus (1955), Marcel (1954), Levinas (1969), Ricoeur (2007), Derrida (1978), Foucault (1988), Stein (1964), Arendt (1998), de Beauvoir (1953), Kristeva (1957), Irigaray (1993), Cixous (1994), Nussbaum (1994) and others.

Emmy van Deurzen considers philosophical reflection as being important because it comes to support the creative solution of critical thinking of the essential challenges dealing with solving the problems the individual is facing. She supports finding ways to meet these challenges, be it solutions proposed by psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy or various forms of counseling. Emmy van Deurzen believes that an existentialist approach to life's problems has a particular practical value for the practice of coaching as well: „Where existential therapists focus on trauma, distress and pathology, existential coaches may focus on self-development, existential discoveries and future projects. Both share a commitment to facilitating ideological change through philosophical understanding” (van Deurzen 2012, 3).

One of the affirmations which philosophers should take into account is that „Philosophy has as much to offer therapists as psychology” (van Deurzen 2005a, 14). It has much to offer on the therapeutic dimension. The history of philosophy reveals to us an accumulation of ways of thinking about human condition and the ways of improving the human being. Philosophers have always provided theoretical solutions and have drawn existential maps that individuals can personalize with the paths they find - preferably together with a counselor - as being the most capable of improving their own lives. Even more so can philosophical reflections show their efficiency in the context of contemporary development of human based science and by combining philosophical analysis with the results of evidence-based therapeutical practices. In their turn, therapists should have as much openness as possible to existential problems brought about by philosophy, given that "Working with spiritual principles and values and beliefs is a risky business. It requires therapists to have some philosophical training and some expertise in thinking about life and death" (van Deurzen 2005, 276).

Underlining the importance of the philosophical foundations of existential psychotherapy, Emmy van Deurzen, demonstrates that the existential approach is by excellence a philosophical one. All disciplines

that appeal to the existential register must also appeal to philosophy. This does not mean that researchers in all of these fields must have a rigorous and extensive training in the field of philosophy, but it is important that they follow a philosophical method of thinking and to discipline their own philosophical way of referring to the human being and his existence.

At the same time, it is necessary to abandon the dogmatic forms of thought, be it scientific dogmatism, evidence-based dogmatism, or religious dogmatism. It should be stressed that Emmy van Deurzen is not against the foundation of evidence-based counseling, but is hostile to her transformation into a dogma similar to religious dogmatism. Therapists and counselors must be driven by the data provided by existence as such, by the human condition and the philosophical reflection that proposes multiple ways of revealing them. The malleability that should be put forth is a direct consequence of the pluralism of the philosophical systems or the processing of the wisdom that the counselor or the therapist can take into account in the research of reality, in the understanding of the representations of the human condition and the world in which the human being acts according to its existential conditionings (van Deurzen 2005a, 14).

4. Instead of Conclusions: Philosophy and Therapy in the Spiritual Dimension

Emmy van Deurzen in her convincing discourse believes that existential counseling implies a detachment in relation to therapeutic techniques and healing strategies. Counseling is an approach that involves, on the one hand, the formulation of a personal approach to one's existence and, on the other, an extension of the reflection on the personal situation in a wider perspective, which implies a vision of the world as such and on how personal life unfolds in relation to existence as such. In this way, the individual can find himself in touch with others and everything surrounding him, in relation to his own interiority, but also in complex relationships with the human condition in which he is personally taking part. In such an approach, the emphasis is not on changing conditions, or changing the way of thinking or changing oneself, but on discovering the profound meaning of existence, of the truth-oriented thought, of the meaning that the self follows and can be shaped in a creative manner. This level of depth is one revealed by the philosophical reflection on self and the human condition within the world. Such an approach becomes possible because "existential therapy is firmly rooted in philosophy and ethics. The message conveyed implicitly to the clients is a message about life rather than primarily about themselves" (van Deurzen 2002, 213). Starting from the premise that existence precedes the essence, in the therapeutic relationship it is essential to understand man's

way of being in the world and the types of transcendence that help man to discover himself with all the relationships that mark his mundanity. There is no transcendence in relation to a Transcendence, but a transcendence in the horizon of the world, with all the obstacles and challenges that the human being has to deal with.

In this context, Deurzen notes that by exploring the stages of examination and assumption of relations implied by the fourth dimensions of existence, the human being ultimately becomes concerned with the profound meanings of existence, those that guide the individual to the discovery of the spiritual aspects and the integration of all these aspects in a way of perceiving life. Thus, on the one hand, the patient may come to the awareness that all the crises, disturbances or fears that embound him are part of life, and solutions must be found to integrate them in his personal experience. But, on the other hand, the therapist can help him find those ways of confronting problems that are based on the truths of life and on the realization that life deserves to be lived with all its promises and shortcomings. Both the therapist and his dialogue partner thus partake in a special performance of ethical and efficient communication in which suffering, worries, unanswered questions and even death are transfigured by the simplicity of assuming one's destiny as an existential project that should be fulfilled with dignity. Thus, the therapeutic situation requires a philosophical dialogue in which "both therapist and client will constantly be reminded that earth is a place somewhere between heaven and hell, where much pain and much joy is to be had and where some degree of wisdom can make all difference" (van Deurzen 2002, 215).

The individual engagement in the awareness of the four dimensions of existence implies the orientation towards the metaphysical problem, towards a dimension of conceptual and spiritual abstraction filled with the power to connect human beings with a special energy that many associate with religious representations. Regardless of the burden we associate with religion or spirituality, it is significant that "The spiritual world is the domain of experience where people create meaning for themselves and make sense of things" (van Deurzen 2002, 87).

This dimension creates the favorable environment for the manifestation of a very strong motivational energy, correlated with a sense of belonging, of the desire to be together. Such a kind of enthusiasm is considered by Emmy van Deurzen similar to what we notice in the religious register: „Many religions, especially more primitive ones, build their ceremonies around this type of experience. Healing rituals do the same thing. Healers, shaman or priests on these occasions allow themselves to merge with their protégés in a movement towards God, nature or some other power identified as superior to people and thus as capable of absorbing their distress and replacing it with renewed strength” (van Deurzen 2002, 188).

The religious dimension is not usually part of the relationship based on philosophical counseling conceived by Emmy van Deurzen. However, the introduction of religious themes can be a positive contribution to the therapeutic dialogue. The religious theme is rather considered to be one of spirituality understood as wisdom, so a reflection that can be associated with philosophy, not one related to theology. It is the philosophical reflection that can provide the necessary elements for a life lived in a significant universe, a truth understood as a personal experience in a therapeutic relationship with strong spiritual connotations. Religious therapy is therefore left to pastoral therapy. Pastoral therapy is a distinct part of spiritual counseling that investigates very sensitive issues faced by a religious man (Louw 2011, 900; Schuhmann, van der Geugten 2017, 523-536). But in existential therapy „we do not have to be religious or believe in a god or other higher being to know that there is more to life than meets our eyes. Wondering about what is and why it is leads to a healthy attitude of doubt, but also of respect for what transcends us. Anybody's personal guess or belief about this is therefore as valid as she or he wants it to be” (van Deurzen 2002, 214). Emmy van Deurzen manages to avoid controversy over the meaning of spirituality and personal relationship with religion, not by ignoring religion, but by philosophically integrating it into ideology. She uses the term ideology to designate the most general view of existence in the manner in which it is represented and assumed personally as a transforming force implicit in every act of life. Although such an understanding of the concept of ideology resembles that of religion (Frunzã 2004, Swidler 2003), Emmy van Deurzen prefers to speak of an ideological dimension inherent in human life and action rather than to speak of a spiritual dimension that might be reduced to religion (van Deurzen 2012, 172).

It is taken into account that, on the one hand, the individual is influenced by the dominant ideology in society, and on the other hand, the individual has a system of personal beliefs, concretized in a way of perceiving existence and the way in which he must act according to that perception. Through existential analysis, philosophy brings to light the ideological foundations of a person and questions all the types of dogmatism that one practices in the form of principles of life and action. The philosophical dialogue is meant to clarify these ideological prerequisites, not to replace an ideological option with another. The therapeutic effort focuses on this clarification of beliefs, personal values, and the way in which the personal self is influenced by them in the complex structure of the relationships it cultivates (Frunzã 2017, 284-299; Frunzã 2017a, 23-37). This is the starting point for building a philosophy of life appropriate to the concept of authenticity that the individual aspires to discover on the path of exploring and building his own life's meaning (van Deurzen 1997, 261; van Deurzen 2015a). This is even more obvious when existential counseling is associated with coaching. It implies the

exploration of crowded situations that an individual has to face and the fructification of all these existential limits in order to overcome the negative states, the anxiety, the disorder or any form of human alienation. The quest for authenticity is considered essential by Emmy van Deurzen, even when she accepts in a Heideggerian manner that authenticity is something similar to the ideal that must always be sought to be fulfilled, that there is nothing that can be defined and precisely bounded as authentic, because it can only be said that there is a quest to overcome the inauthentic to something more authentic than the current situation. In the search for authenticity, the patient is able to outline a philosophy of life, perceived as personal, in a general context of ideologies that shape the society in which he lives (van Deurzen 2012, 6). Philosophy not only provides a system of theoretical principles and conceptual thesaurus, it does not merely propose a rational way of perceiving the sciences and knowledge in general, it does not become more valuable by the fact that it creates a language and an esoteric world, accessible only to a small group of initiates. We have tried to show that philosophy also brings a practical dimension that can be valued in ethical communication, in improving the postmodern human condition, in confronting the everyday problems of the individual, in understanding the new forms of spirituality and the religious and ideological manifestations that the postmodern man has to face in the search for solutions to the challenges brought by new developments in technology, knowledge and communication. But our whole approach was mainly driven by the intention to reveal that, in the vision built by Emmy van Deurzen, philosophy finds the best ground to manifest itself in its therapeutic dimension at the present time.

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