

## Philosophical Mentoring

*A RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND  
REPORT ON PRELIMINARY  
RESULTS*

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### RESEARCH PROPOSAL

#### Keywords:

Philosophical Counseling (aka Philosophical Mentoring, Philosophical Guidance, Philosophical Encounter, Guided Mutual Philosophical Inquiry, Philosophical Coaching or Philosophical Consultation)

#### Summary:

The first part of this paper contains a view of Philosophical Counseling its methods, and foundational theory. It attempts to define a particular kind of Philosophical Counseling called Philosophical Mentoring. It is the beginnings of a research programme which would flesh out the details of the approach through actual practice. This is a beginning point for further exploration.

The proposal is followed by a report on some preliminary results with respect to two cases done by email on the internet.

### Introduction

Philosophical Mentoring is a new discipline which needs to be defined with respect to Psychological Therapy and Spiritual Ways. There are many Philosophical Counselors who are attempting to define this new discipline as they search for a market from the population who are interested in exploring the meaning of life, or examining their lives or looking for a way to express existential angst. But it is unclear that there is actually a market for these services. And if such a market exists it seems to be extremely small. Most practitioners seem to fall into psychological problem solving while some suggest that they have some spiritual insights to relate. But few have as yet attempted to define philosophical counseling as a discipline and attempted to give it a rigorous foundation similar to other disciplines which would make clear what the unique contribution of philosophical counseling is to the understanding of the human condition. Therefore, I would like to start out to explore some of the issues that I think are important to deal with in the attempt to define this new discipline.

It is interesting that philosophical counseling never developed as a discipline. Especially when we have the image of Socrates before us as the first of the moral philosophers who is portrayed in the dialogues of Plato and Xenophon as doing something analogous to giving guidance or mentoring. It is strange that this image has not spawned a discipline of professional imitators in the history of the Western Tradition. Here we will use Socrates as the image of what the philosophical mentor or guide should aim at and attempt to go as deep as possible into what that role might entail. The problem is of course that Socrates was a gadfly, i.e. as much a problem to the state apparatus as any revolutionary. He was a misfit that undermined the social fabric and the political economy and was eventually done away with by his fellow citizens for

impiety. Also he was confrontational in the sense that he went around and questioned sophists leaving them in confusion because his ignorance seemed wiser than the knowledges, or rhetoric, or other arts they appeared to possess. It is difficult to know what he did think due to the irony with which he expressed his views, but we are led to think that they were somewhat heretical. And finally of course we learn much more about Plato and Xenophon and what they thought than what Socrates actually said and thought because their portrayals of him are warped by their own interpretations of his views and his place in Athenian society.

It seems to me that if we are to define philosophical mentoring, guidance or counseling today we need to take the image of Socrates and bring it into focus within our own world. We are not going to be anything like Socrates was and each of us are going to think that philosophical counseling is something somewhat different. But I believe it is possible to produce the rough outlines of this new discipline might be within our own world if we compare it to the other disciplines and spiritual ways that are available and see what is missing that is similar to what Socrates was attempting to provide in his own society.

What we do see when we look around is an established psychological community which is doing therapy as part of the medical establishment. They take people who have psychological problems and attempt to help them solve these problems, mostly so that they can fit back into the existing institutions and social relations that they find themselves part of. This discipline is voyeuristic, works in private, and deals with the interior of man, i.e. the psyche or when posed more "scientifically" then it deals with behavior, i.e. the outward signs of inward conditions. It establishes therapist-patient relations similar to those of doctors. And the economic relations between the patient, the employer, the insurance

company, and the therapist ensure that only the wealthy or those plugged into the major institutions can afford this therapeutic practice. Due to the fact that the model of the psychologist is the doctor-patient relation, this means that the therapy tends to be politically conservative and support the dominant social models of mores and behavior. It is interested in getting inside of the patient to see what makes them tick and then employing techniques that will "fix the problem" in the most economical way possible, so that social and industrial efficiency is served.

I suggest that philosophical counseling should attempt to break this model. I suggest that it should be social, instead of individualistic and private. Philosophical counseling should be conducted in public and perhaps in social groups where people explore together philosophically meaningful issues. It should avoid voyeurism into the lives of others except to the extent that this is necessary to understand the full philosophical implications of some situation that the subject of mentoring is facing existentially. I suggest that philosophical counseling should be between equals who are engaged in mutual exploration together. It should not be bound by exploitive economic relations between the mentor and the subject of the counseling. Philosophical counseling should either be free, take place for a nominal charge or at least be not for profit, and something that takes place in the leisure of both the counselor and the subject. This makes it so that philosophical counseling is not a commodity but rather a gift from one human being who is interested in wisdom to another. The fact that philosophical counseling should be social, public and free takes it completely out of the realm of psychology which charges for its voyeurism which is indulged in privately under the guise of therapy which is suppose to fit the patient back into an existing set of social and institutional relations. Philosophical mentoring then is

free to question all these social and institutional relations because there is no economic motive for not questioning them. Perhaps the problems to be solved are out there in the world not within the psyche of the individual. Philosophy needs to be free to point out injustices and exploitative institutional situations.

When we look at the life of Socrates we see that he engaged in his mentoring in public and that part of his practice was to confront the Sophists in public. He attempted to formulate new social relations and find ways of transforming existing institutions by thinking about virtue and its relation to those institutions and by imagining completely new societies in which the basic social relations would have been different. He did not charge for the guidance he gave. He did not delve into the interior motives that his various interlocutors had for thinking the way they did. Instead he exposed the flaws in their thought in an attempt to help them see what was wrong with the way they were approaching things. Many times he would merely leave them wondering what had happened to them. When the Philosophical Mentor is not economically bound then it is possible for him to engage in these tactics if that is the best way to display what the real situation is.

So now we get down to the crux of the matter. Philosophical Counseling has not developed because no one can make a living at doing it purely as Socrates did. It does not serve our economic interests and it might undermine social and institutional interests. Philosophy does not claim to solve any practical problems. It is merely a leisure activity for which there is no material substrate that could serve the interests of anyone wishing to make money, i.e. it does not need any equipment to engage in this activity. So philosophical counseling has languished as a human activity since the time of Socrates. Perhaps some have engaged in it in their private relations with others on

occasion but this never found its way into any kind of institutional setting such as the university.

Academic philosophy is not seen as an alternative to Philosophical Mentoring because for the most part it is aimed at looking at the history of philosophy and reinterpreting that. Occasionally academics aim at producing a new philosophy of their own. But the aim never seems to be to help individuals unschooled in philosophy develop their own approaches to the world and life as they are living it which are unique to them. Philosophical Counseling does not assume any philosophical sophistication on the part of the subject. It does not seek to teach philosophy, nor impart a particular philosophy of the practitioner to the subject. Instead it focuses on the issues of philosophical import in the subject's own life and attempts to facilitate the subjects dealing with these issues himself. To this purpose the philosophical counselor uses theories and philosophies that he is aware of as a backdrop for facilitating the exploration of the subject. The main aim of the Philosophical Guide is to practice what Socrates practiced which was philosophical ignorance. This means that the guide avoids pontificating on the philosophical meaning of things and instead sets the stage for the exploration of the subject himself to engage in his own process of discovery.

When we read Plato, we see in the seventh letter that he says that he never wrote about what most concerned him. And that what concerned him most was something that took close companionship over a long period of time, and then it jumped like a spark from soul to soul. This is the mark of spiritual transmission. And so we can think of philosophy from these remarks as starting out as a spiritual discipline instead of something that is merely dependent on reasoning. Today that spiritual transmission has been lost. There is no school of spiritual Platonism. But there are myriad other

spiritual ways. Many psychologists are expanding their discipline into this void in the lives of many who live within the Western materialist culture. There are also many religions and even many cults that serve to give guidance for those who want more out of life but do not know where to find that extra dimension in their lives. Most of these cults or religions are merely sophistries which seem to offer something on the surface but actually lead the seeker on a voyage of discovery that causes him or her to try one spiritual way after another and eventually produces in the seeker a nihilistic result. In the face of these myriad spiritual ways it seems that philosophical counseling has little to offer, unless we allow it to adjudicate between these spiritual ways. Who asks the question, what is a genuine spiritual way, and which one is right for a given individual? Philosophical mentoring can take this question seriously because it leads us to examine the meaning of human spirituality itself and how it should effect the lives of the individual. Thus the philosophical mentor should know about spirituality and be able to help the subject explore which spiritual way is best for him or her. Spirituality is part of the world, and as such it should be open to inspection and examination as are all other parts of the world.

The focus of philosophical mentoring is not inside the individual but society and the world historic situation as a whole. It is public and avoids voyeurism into the individual. When Socrates in the republic sought to look at justice in the soul he first looked at it in the city. He engaged in a public dialogue in a citizen's house as a guest. He did not ask for pay. He did not attempt to solve any ones personal problems. Instead, he attempted to lay bare what justice was within the world and show how that took us up though the layers of the world until we discovered what lay beyond the world's infra-structures which we are most familiar with. In the case of the Republic these journeys are related in *the parable of the cave* and *the*

*myth of Er*. Similarly we can see philosophical mentoring in a similar light as an exercise of exploration that attempts to get to the heart of things in general, i.e. into the infra-structure of the world itself and how that relates to the life of the individual who is being mentored, in a way similar to the way that Socrates was mentoring Glaucon and his brother.

### **The lifeworld and being-in-the-world**

Philosophical counseling differentiates itself from psychology and spirituality by looking outward instead of inward. However, following Socrates we look outward in order to get a view of the inward, by seeing how the inward is differentiated and reflected in the outward. When we look inward then we see the opposite. We see the reflection of the outward inside ourselves. Thus, in psychology we look at our inward dialogues and our images of our relations with others in our life. Or when we look at our spiritual depths we see the images and icons of higher things within ourselves. True spirituality attempts to get beyond all these images and icons. But often this leads only to amorphousness rather than clarity. By looking outside there is a definite clarity, but then instead, we get lost in the details of life which has been split into myriad specialties. It is the job of philosophy to allow us to see the forest without getting completely lost in the trees. Philosophy goes out in order to go inside with clarity. Spirituality and Psychology go inside but often get lost in images of what is outside without succeeding in shedding any light on the roots of our relations with the world. So many spiritual traditions seem to be out of touch with the world as it exists today. Philosophy brings up those points and heretically challenges the spiritual way by confronting the truth of the situation or its realities directly. Genuine spirituality should be able to maintain its

viability in the face of this reminder by philosophy. Genuine spirituality should be energized by that challenge. In the face of examination sophisms and cults should fall away because they all allow delusion to come to dominate over the truth, or reality, or existential meaningfulness. Genuine spirituality should become renewed by these reminders of philosophical questioning. So that genuine spirituality and philosophical counseling should mutually support and entail each other. Both psychological and social relations form a mutual mirroring. Philosophy would clarify these in terms of each other. The problem with psychology is that it is divorced in most cases from any social context. Similarly sociology suffers when we do not take the psyche into account but only look at external indications which are measurable. We can see that when we go deeper inward from the surface of psychology we enter the realm of the spiritual whose problem is that it is amorphous and ambiguous. We can see that when we go deeper outwardly from the surface of the social and institutional relations, then we enter the realm of philosophy in which we question the existing world order radically. It is for this reason that philosophy as "natural philosophy" is the root of all the sciences. What is good about the outward is its clarity and when we question it deeply we find many thorny issues which cannot be resolved because they end up in antinomies. But, if we bring together that outward profundity with the inward profundity of genuine spiritual traditions, then it is possible that the inward will supply the answers for what is not soluble outwardly alone. In other words, we say that thought by itself is not enough, but that it must be accompanied with some amount of reflection or contemplation. With that one finds which of the possible solutions is suitable for himself. Through thought and reflection together it is possible to go further than philosophy on its own can reach. This is why Plato describes his real interest as transmission of spiritual state from soul to

soul. All of his philosophy is a groundwork for that. However, the ground work is necessary in order to differentiate true spirituality from sophistry. So spirituality and philosophy go hand in hand and they are the deeper grounds and origin of the mutual mirroring of psychology and society.

When we look at recent philosophy one school stands out as providing the most in depth look at the world as the encompassing environment of the human being. That school is phenomenology as practiced by Husserl and transformed by Heidegger. Husserl talks about the lifeworld as the lived world which we each inhabit as finite human beings. Heidegger goes on to designate the same thing as being-in-the-world or being-there (*dasein*). What they discovered, by attempting to look at their own experience critically and without presuppositions as much as they could manage, was that the world itself has an infra-structure and that infra-structure impinges on us. We need to understand that infra-structure in order to understand our place within the world. When we look out at the world we are looking at the inner structure of ourselves projected on its screen. So we are ourselves structured inwardly by the same large scale infra-structures we find in the world. If we look only inward we can miss this structuring because of the amorphousness of the inward realm. But, when we clarify it to ourselves it becomes clear that despite the amorphousness and ambiguity of the inward realm that it follows the same infra-structure we find in the world itself at the highest level of consideration, i.e. at the ontological level. When we settle on a genuine spiritual way then we can see beyond these infra-structures into the indeterminate roots of our existence and finitude. But until we understand these infra-structures we tend to become trapped in them. So one way to think about philosophical counseling is the attempt to clarify the infra-structure of the world so that spirituality can get beyond it without being caught up in delusion.

Each of us must live in his or her own lifeworld as beings-in-the-world. As such we relate to the world as we have been taught to, or as we have found works best for us from experience. We tend not to actively explore the infra-structure of our world at the highest level of generality. We tend to accept the infra-structures we find and spend all our lives obsessed by the details of our existence. Philosophical Mentoring though seeks to get the subject to observe and question the infra-structure of the world at the highest levels of generality. It seeks to examine life, not as an abstraction but as lived concretely, and attempts to focus in on the meanings of that life in order to bring into focus those things worthwhile. This is a ground laying exercise which allows the subject to find the approaches to the issues of life that best suits them and paves the way for genuine spiritual practice.

In my own research I have looked at Continental Philosophy and the plethora of kinds of Being that it has discovered. I have attempted to make sense of this menagerie in order to discover what it has to tell me about the infra-structure of my own lifeworld. Eventually I discovered that the various kinds of Being formed a hierarchy of meta-levels which defines the infra-structure of the world at the highest level of generality. This infra-structure dominates everything else within the world including those of us who find ourselves embedded in the Western worldview which has now come to dominate all the other worldviews across myriad peoples and cultures of the earth. Thus, because of its dominance this largely Indo-European worldview deserves to be studied and explored. When we look at it carefully at the ontological level we find that Being itself is fragmented into a series of Kinds of Being. These kinds form a series of meta-levels of Being with specific relations to each other. I propose that this theory of the inner structure of manifestation in the Western Worldview is the underlying reality that Philosophical Mentoring should address. The discovery

that manifestation itself has an infra-structure which underlies all phenomena that appear in the world is foundational to philosophical counseling as the theory of the unconscious is to psychology and the concept of God, or nirvana or other transcendentals are to spiritual disciplines. In other words when we look out into the world we see a specific infra-structure articulated everywhere. This infra-structure appears in our relation to the world as such, not in the individual things. We are oblivious to it for the most part because like fish we are swimming in this medium that is invisible to us. But unlike the theory of the unconscious, which merely says that there are more things in our consciousness than those we are aware of, this theory of the worlding of the world says that our worldview has a very specific infra-structure that effects everything that appears in the world. Thus the foundational theory of philosophical mentoring is positive instead of negative, in the sense that we can look out at the world and see these infra-structures for ourselves phenomenologically appearing.

### **The Kindness of Being**

All throughout the development of Western Philosophy it was thought that Being was a monolith without any differentiation. It was only when Husserl decided to look at his own experience without presuppositions, as best he could, that he discovered that essences were not simple ideas. This was a revolutionary discovery because it meant that Being was not necessarily without structure. Heidegger went on to define the import of this discovery in ontological terms by saying that Being was actually a monolith made up of two modalities. We discovered these in our relations to the world as a whole. He named these two modalities the present-at-hand (Pure Being) and the ready-to-hand (Process Being). The first kind of Being is related to

ideation and is static and fixed. The second kind of Being is related to essences and is mixed with time. For Heidegger these two modes of Being made up the monolith of Being which encompassed in a single infrastructure both the insight of Parmenides that the world is frozen and static, i.e. persists, and the insight of Heraclitus that the world is changing constantly and in flux. Heidegger felt that this formulation solved all kinds of past philosophical problems. For many it raised as many problems as it solved. It set off a search for other modalities of Being which lead to a rich variety of different philosophies. When we look back on all this work we can analyze the different attempts that philosophers made to isolate different modalities of Being. When we do across all the major continental philosophers of this century we find a description of four major kinds of Being which are named different names by the different philosophers. When we compare the meanings of the various kinds of Being found in their works it is possible to recognize when they are in fact talking about the same thing. We can summarize the results in the following table:

Pure Being	Present-at-hand	pointing
Process Being	Ready-to-hand	grasping
Hyper Being	In-hand	bearing
Wild Being	Out-of-hand	encompassing

Each of these levels of Being are not just different modalities but are in fact different kinds. Soon after Heidegger published Being and Time, Sartre came out

with Being and Nothingness. Merleau-Ponty recognized in The Visible and the Invisible that there was a hyper-dialectic between Process Being and Nothingness and that they were antinomies. Thus, he recognized what Heidegger and Derrida also recognized which was that there was another radically different kind of Being that distinguished the two modalities of the Monolith of Being. If we ask what is the difference between the modalities the answer must be something other than the two modalities themselves. Heidegger called this ~~Being~~ (crossed out) and Derrida called it difference (differing and deferring). Michael Henry wrote the book The Essence of Manifestation which brought Heidegger's assumption of the Monolith of Being as an Ontological Monism to light and posited what he called the *Essence of Manifestation* as that which never appeared. This essence was what lay behind the differing and deferring of things in manifestation which acted like the unconscious at the ontological level causing distortions in manifestation which were visible even though the source never appears. Merleau-Ponty reckoned that if Process Being and Nothingness were antinomical and cancelled themselves out then what was left over after the cancellation must be yet another kind of Being which he named Wild Being and attempted to define. Various philosophers have produced philosophies staged at different levels of Being. Levinas for instance produced a philosophy thought to be "beyond Being" but really this meant beyond the meta-level of Process Being. So his philosophy of the Other is really a different way of describing Hyper Being. He says of it that in it ethics and metaphysics collapse together. Similarly John S. Hans talks about Wild Being in terms of Aesthetics and Play. Several philosophers have sought to produce philosophies at the level of Wild Being most notable among them is the work of Deleuze and Guattari or the work of Castorians.

We can see the various kinds of

Being in terms of psychological modalities as Merleau-Ponty started to do in his work The Phenomenology of Perception. He saw the *present-at-hand* was characterized by *pointing* and the *ready-to-hand* was characterized by *grasping*. We can go on to see the *in-hand* as characterized by *bearing* following Levinas and the *out-of-hand* as characterized by *encompassing*. The *in-hand* and the *out-of-hand* are my own terms for the modalities of these higher levels of Being. I have also contributed the psychological equivalent to the out-of-hand as being *encompassing*. In this way I have completed the tableau which lists the kinds of Being, the modalities of being-in-the-world and their psychological equivalencies. Through this work we can now see the fundamental infra-structure of Being as a fragmented structure of kinds of Being that cohere as a series of emergent meta-levels.

### The aspects of Being

Being does not just have meta-levels but it also has aspects. The aspects of being are:

- ◆ Reality
- ◆ Truth
- ◆ Identity
- ◆ Presence

Of these Reality, Truth and Identity are intimately related while presence connects Being to manifestation. The point that we need to make here is that Being has the general form of a ramified theory of logical types which was developed by Russell and has been explained by Copi in his Theory of Higher Logical Types. The aspects of Being give us a minimal system of ramified types at each meta-level and the kinds of Being give us a minimal system of levels of higher logical types. Higher logical types are merely the opposite of meta-levels.

Meta-levels go up and higher logical types go down toward foundations. Russell came up with the ramified theory of logical types in order to take care of paradox. From this we can infer that Being's overall infra-structure is a paradox which the aspects and meta-levels attempt to unfold and render non-paradoxical. It has taken me many years to understand how the aspects and kinds of Being are interrelated. But now it appears to be clear. Being is itself a paradox. It is opposite the super-rationality of existence. As the mind attempts to deal with that paradox it constructs something like ramified type theory to attempt to isolate the aspects and kinds. By this means it only deals with certain segments of the overall paradox at a time in attempt to make it palatable to reason. But when we look at it globally and recognize that the aspects are orthogonal to the kindness of Being then we see that it has the infra-structure of the ramified type theory for the first time.

What this means is that the aspects appear at each meta-level of Being. So each aspect is transformed emergently at each higher meta-level of Being. There is not just one concept of truth but truth at each meta-level and the same is true for the other aspects. This gives us a series of sixteen aspects.

FACETS	Truth	Identity	Reality	Presence
Pure Being	Pure Truth	Pure Identity	Pure Reality	Pure Presence
Process Being	Process Truth	Process Identity	Process Reality	Process Presence
Hyper Being	Hyper Truth	Hyper Identity	Hyper Reality	Hyper Presence
Wild Being	Wild Truth	Wild Identity	Wild Reality	Wild Presence

This fact that each aspect transforms



as we move to higher and higher meta-levels is little appreciated by most philosophers. It means that Being ultimately presents us with a faceted infra-structure where each facet is like a part of a mobile in which all the facets intersect all the others as they move in the mobile.

For instance, Truth at the level of Pure Truth means verification. But it transforms at the next level up into Process Truth which is the Showing and Hiding of unconcealment that brings forth the truth. At the next level up Hyper Truth is what we see when the Unconscious reveals itself. Hyper Truth is the truth that is never manifested but which haunts the truths that are uncovered. Wild Truth is the final level and that appears when we realize that the revealed truth and the secret truth are ultimately the same. After that there is only the emptiness of existence where ultra-truth itself becomes an empty construct.

If we were to look instead at identity we would see that Pure Identity is what we get in formal systems that have tautologies at their root. Process Identity is the next meta-level up and it is what Heidegger calls the belonging together of Sameness in Identity and Difference. At the next level up we have Hyper Identity which occurs when the undecidable enters the picture. Suddenly identities are ambiguous and multifarious. This is what Derrida calls differance which he explains by way of differing and deferring. It is embodied ambivalence. The final level up is called Wild Identity. We see that in something like Hegel's 'absolute reason' in which the myriad varieties in their concrete details become identical in a sense, this is to say identity within and though difference, i.e. knowledge of the self though the other. Beyond that there is the ultra-identity of the sources of difference themselves in existence.

If we look instead at reality, then we see Pure Reality as the product of testing

which like verification needs to be repeated often. Process Reality occurs when there is a continual regime of testing that never ends. We find this in some critical professions where they must continually be retrained to continue to hold their certification. Hyper Reality is a departure at the next higher level of reality where the simulation or test is more real than 'reality' itself. For instance some simulation environments allow for scenarios that are very unlikely to occur in reality but we can make them happen as if they were real in order to prepare for them. In Hyper Reality the game becomes more real than normal mundane 'reality'. Finally, at the last step up there is Wild Reality in which we can no longer discern what is real and what is not real, what is the game and what is reality. Beyond that is the ultra-reality of existence itself.

If we look at the next aspect, then we need to consider Pure Presence. Pure Presence is static and fixed presentation of a product with illusory continuity. Process Presence is the underlying mechanism behind the presentation. The process of presentation is called appearance. Hyper Presence is the appearing of the always already hidden as a disruptive force within the presentational process which distorts the final product which is held within the illusory persistence. Wild Presence is when we cannot tell the difference between the things hidden and presenting behind the appearances and the appearances themselves. Beyond that is the realm of ultra-presence that is never presented but merely is found lying around ignored which is called existence.

All of these facets taken together give us a picture of Being in its totality which is utterly fragmented. We look at these facets as if for the first time and wonder at the complexity of the paradox of Being that our Indo-European ancestors forged. It is this mobile of facets that we find ourselves caught within. The ones that exhibit this encompassing the best are the Analytic

Philosophers who are realists obsessed with Truth and Identity because they think reality can be formalized, or at least wish it could. They of course reject introspection and phenomenology which concentrated instead on presences. Thus philosophy is divided against itself. Phenomenology develops into ontology of the kinds of Being while Analytic Philosophy stays within the realm of the more orthodox concentration of philosophy on aspects. The kinds of Being are hidden behind the veil of illusory continuity of Pure Identity, Pure Presence, Pure Reality, Pure Truth. It is the heirs of Husserl that break through this veil mostly by his recognition of the fundamental difference between simple ideas and essences. By doing that they reveal the transformation of the aspects at the various deeper meta-levels of Being.

It is this new ontology of the fragmentation of Being that we now have to work with in our approach to philosophical counseling. This is a theory like the theory of the unconscious which gives us deep insight into the infra-structure of the world. It turns out that the western world has conserved this underlying infra-structure for thousands of years. If we look back at the Vedas we find it in the differences between the Vedic gods. We find it in various Indo-European mythic traditions. In fact, once we start looking for it it appears everywhere. Because these four different meta-levels of Being synergize to produce the face of our world to us in concrete phenomena. We can look at these faces of the world in various disciplines and even in our selves as we consider how the facets of Being fragment our lives and the lives of others. This has to do with manifestation and that effects all disciplines not just psychology. Manifestation as a whole is fragmented in the Western Worldview. We experience this in our lives and see it in the nihilism all around us. Philosophical Counseling needs to see these infra-structures in the world and in the subjects of counseling and use this knowledge to help the subjects unify

themselves within this fragmented world they inhabit. Unlike psychology, this basic theory is explicit and well formed. It contains within it something like the unconscious that appears on the third meta-level of Being. But this unconscious is the Essence of Manifestation, not the unconscious of an individual nor society but the unconscious of manifestation itself. The unconscious is basically split between psychological and social unconsciousnesses as has been pointed out in The Production of Desire. But this split unconscious that mutually mirrors each other has an origin in the unconscious of manifestation which is always already lost. We see it in the primal scenes like that of the Well and the Tree of the Indo-Europeans. But more than just a theory similar to that of the unconscious that founded psychology or a theory of alienation from sociology we have a contextual structure that gives the concept of the unconscious of manifestation a structurally articulated situation within which it is expressed. Thus, the theory of the fragmentation of the mobile of Being is a much richer and more profound notion than the amorphousness of the unconscious which is a mere absence made present by indications. The theory of kinds and aspects of Being that combine into the facets of Being shows how the Essence of Manifestation plays off of and ultimately becomes an integral part of manifestation at the higher level of Wild Being.

### **Empirical Ontology and Existence**

One of the interesting things about this ontology of the kinds of Being is that it is the first empirical ontology. It is empirical because it is testable and thus refutable. This is because it says that there are only four meta-levels of Being and no more. It implies that the fifth meta-level is utterly unthinkable. Thus it leaves us with a challenge to think the fifth meta-level of Being. If we can think it the prize would be the expansion of our being-in-the-world to a

new meta-level of Being.

Unable to think the fifth meta-level my self I have instead thought about the fact that it seems unthinkable. And I have come up with an interpretation of that unthinkableness. My interpretation is that the fifth meta-level is the same as what Buddhists call Sunyata or Emptiness. This interpretation leads to the idea that when we exhaust Being and leave it via its fragmentation we walk out into the light of existence. What Being sees as its groundless we see as the bedrock of existence itself beyond Being which is inherently empty. This is an interpretation of the unthinkableness. There may be other interpretations of the unthinkableness which are equally valid. But I believe that this interpretation leads to some very interesting horizons worth exploring that are expressed in Buddhist metaphysics, especially in Mahayana Buddhism and particularly in the Haun Yen School.

In general we can think of Being as a presentational system whose object is to produce illusory continuity. What it holds in persistence over time is the mirroring between the self and the world. Thus the inner structure of the world and the inner structure of the self are isomorphic as Plato suggests though Socrates in the Republic. This is why we can look out on the world and discover things about ourselves as microcosms in the macrocosm. But when we reach the fifth meta-level we come to a precipice of unthinkability. We know we have come to the end of Being at that point because Parmenides himself said that "Being and Thinking are the Same". When we reach what is unthinkable then we have somehow come to the otherness of Being. That otherness is Existence. We can think of existence in this way: What exists is what is found (wajud in Arabic) beyond the presentational system or prior to the presentational system. We can think of existence as what is not of one aspect nor its

opposite. So existence is neither true nor false, real nor unreal, identical nor different, present nor absent. Existence is what is other than Being. If we realize that Being is the projection of continuity on what is manifest then we can think of Existence as the projection of discontinuity on what is manifest (kun in Arabic). Existence and Being are opposites of each other. The Indo-European worldview has developed the concept of Being as a kind of dynamic persistence. Chang says that Being is a subtle clinging and craving from the Buddhist viewpoint. Thus for the Buddhists Being is a manifestation of Mara (Maya) the illusion that causes suffering. The Buddhists were Indo-Europeans who escaped from the veils of Being and saw existence beyond those veils. For the one encompassed by Being the sight of Existence is enlightenment. Similarly for the one who is embedded in existence and does not know Being or has escaped from the pall of Being then seeing the deep unity beyond discontinuity is an even deeper kind of enlightenment.

"Genuine Spirituality" refers to those practices which make us aware of the original void in manifestation beyond the projections of discontinuity and continuity. We can name three traditions at least that approach this limit of subtlety and sophistication: Indian Buddhism, Chinese Taoism, Islamic Sufism. Each of these traditions have different goals but each to some degree approaches the definition of the original void. Genuine Spirituality is utterly formless. All other traditions that associate forms with the ultimate comprehension of the source of manifestation are considered lesser degrees of spirituality. Any tradition that is not mentioned but which also destroys all the idols like Zen Buddhism, Philosophical Taoism and Islamic Sufism is also considered genuine. Genuine in this case means specifically that formlessness is utter with respect to the non-comprehension of the ultimate reality and meaning of the world and the self. If there is a specific concept or

experience that captures the ultimate then it is not considered genuine by this terminology. This does not mean however that these other ways are not salutary but only that they do not approach the ultimate that the finite human existent is capable of encompassing.

Once we have formed a bridge between the metaphysics of Being and the deeper metaphysics of Existence as Emptiness or Void then we have discovered the way to relate thinking and spirituality. Basically Thinking occurs in the realm of Being as self presentation in the mind. As Heidegger says we go on a path of thinking as we explore our world. But we need to interrupt our travel along that path with reflection, i.e. passive internal listening to the source of our existence which approaches genuine spirituality. This passive internal awareness is directed at the formlessness beyond form and anti-forms cancellation and it has no technique, i.e. behavioral form. In other words it allows continual spontaneous transformation of one's state as a response to what appears in ones mediation after the thoughts have stopped. In this state as Hui Neng says in the Platform Sutra one avoids attachment to particular thoughts. One does not attempt to stop thought entirely, merely to allow it to languish due to in attention. Attention instead is upon the void and what appears from it of meanings and sensory images that are not projected by ones self.

When we define spirituality we do so in order to be more specific about philosophical counseling. It is because philosophical counseling within thought must make room for meditation and for the meanings and imaginal sensory forms that will well up when we stop the suppressive succession of thoughts that cover up existence. Philosophical mentoring needs to make the non-nihilistic distinction between genuine and non-genuine spiritual traditions and it needs to make the place for meditation within the interstices of thought where

reflection can take place. But philosophical counseling does not care which genuine spiritual tradition that the subject picks as the basis of their depth exploration of the world. If the subject picks some other spiritual way that cannot be called genuine then the mentor will know that there will be some disturbance of the process of unfolding that the subject will encounter that will need to be taken into account. The main point is that one will move back and forth between thought and reflection in the pursuit of the meanings that upwell from the void which give life meaning and the sensory things that upwell from the void as imaginal inward perceptions that give intimations of what lies beyond the realm of forms at the deeper archetypal level.

Philosophical Counseling is the outward opposite of Genuine Spirituality. Outwardly at the surface is the social and inwardly at the surface is the psyche. As we go deeper inward we find eventually the genuinely spiritual that is not associated with any technique or form. As we go deeper outward we find eventually the infra-structural patterning of the world which we see in the fragmentation of Being. That fragmented nature of Being which is intrinsic to the world leads us on to discover existence. Existence is the projection of pure fragmentation or discontinuity on everything. When we find that Existence is empty then suddenly we realize that it is a mirror to the deep inward of the meanings and sensory images that upwell within. With philosophical mentoring we go outward in order to go inward. When we just go inward without paying attention to the outward then the formlessness at the heart of the self remains ambiguous and amorphous. But if we go outward first, i.e. we think about our world and our place in it before we reflect on it and our place in it, then when we come to the deep formlessness of the inward we see wonders with very definite meanings and sensory manifestations.

Philosophical Mentoring does not seek to inculcate this model into the subject. Rather it uses this model as the means of understanding what the subject is experiencing as they explore their world. The model is used to help them avoid sophistries. Sophistries are always manipulations of forms for some effect. What is beyond form cannot be used in sophistry. Thus, the subject needs to learn the meaning of sophistry in their own lives, which is the basic thing that Socrates attempted to teach. If there is a technique for reaching ultimate existence, if there is some concept associated with it that can be grasped, if there is some experience that goes with it which is its hall mark, then it is not genuine spirituality and has some degree of sophism involved in it.

Philosophy means love of wisdom. Wisdom is what occurs when we go beyond holding on to any concept, technique, experience. It is when we realize the Nonduality that David Loy talks about. All concepts, techniques and particular experiences can be defined over against something else and thus set up dualities in experience. Philosophical Mentoring focuses on the distinctions the subject makes in his or her life and attempts to help the subject see how to make non-nihilistic distinctions instead of nihilistic ones. Nihilism is the poison that dualism exudes. Non-nihilistic distinctions are those that cut through existence at its joints as Socrates suggests we must do rather than crosswise against the grain. Positing non-nihilistic distinctions that are non-dual and super-rational is a struggle. But that is the struggle of philosophy that seeks accord between the self and the world. Philosophical Counseling seeks to help the subject make these hard distinctions in their own lives and attempts to facilitate their looking beyond the dualisms that bind them out into the freedom of non-dual descriptions of their self and their world which supports their human finitude the best way possible.

In this way the empirical ontology

that discovers that there is no fifth meta-level of Being gives way to an appreciation of the emptiness of the bedrock of existence. The discovery of this link between Being and Existence in the heart of Being, i.e. at the fifth meta-level, becomes the bridge between thought and reflection, between philosophy as love of wisdom and genuine spirituality. In the optimum situation the subject will pick some spiritual tradition that goes beyond forms to formlessness and one can help them understand the relations between the meditation practices in that spiritual way and the exploration of the world by thought in philosophical examination and pursuit of the inner structure of the world as lived by the subject.

### **The Subject of Investigation**

We call the person who is being guided, mentored or counseled the subject. We do this provisionally and as a starting point because that is the traditional way of thinking in our tradition. But we clearly see that in this terminology the "subject" is the one who is subjected to the counseling, mentoring, or guidance as if it were a dualistic domination. We quickly want to leave this starting point. We do that by way of the realization that as we traverse the different levels of Being in its various aspects the subjected self transforms. For instance, when we move from Pure Being in which subject/object dualities exist for us to Process Being then subject and object collapse into their mutual origin and are transformed into *dasein*, being-there or being-in-the-world. At that level Heidegger does an analysis of *Dasein* and finds that the entity has three characteristics: understanding, talk and disclosedness. The intersection of these which gives us the essence of *Dasein* is Care. For *Dasein* his relations to the world are amorphous and are captured by moods that pervade everything, like anxiety. We can look at this level in terms of reality, identity, truth and presence.

Heidegger is looking at it mostly in terms of presence. The characteristics he sees are dasein's relations to the other aspects of Being. Talk obviously relates to truth, discoveredness relates to reality, and understanding to identity. So the structure of Dasein is found in its embedding in the other aspects of Being from the viewpoint of presence. Care captures the key concept that dasein is attempting a dynamic clinging in the world to the things that he cares about. The mood of anxiety encompasses everything because of the fact that changes might at any moment take away the things that the dasein cares about. The ultimate of this is death which takes everything away from dasein in this world. So Heidegger notes that dasein becomes authentic to the extent that dasein confronts the possibility of dasein's own death. We see that dasein is grasping at straws in this world as it falls toward its death.

What we soon realize is that this same kind of analysis can be done at each of the meta-levels of Being. At the next level below dasein which we have called Hyper Being we find instead of being-there a query. The query asks why is there something rather than nothing which Heidegger calls the ultimate question. In other words after realizing the own-most possibility of death dasein goes on to begin to question the why of the world. Thus, begins the search for meaning. Levinas tells us that this is the level of bearing. In bearing the mother bears the child but also the child bears the ministrations of the mother, good or bad. At this level ethics and metaphysics collapse together so that a non-ethical metaphysics is no longer acceptable. Rather we need to find the meaning of our life in the face of our finitude and death. Here who we are becomes bound up with how we act toward the other. The otherness of the other becomes our primary problem as we realize that all we are is made up of some strange inversion of that otherness. We can likewise see that the ultimate otherness is what does not manifest

either in ourselves nor in the intersubjective cohort we are a part of. Thus Truth, Identity, Reality, and Presence all have to do one way or another with the manifesting of the unconscious. But this is not just the personal unconscious of Freud, nor the *Collective Unconscious* of Jung, nor the outward social unconscious of Marx but somehow the origin of all of these. Michael Henry called it the *Essence of Manifestation* and related it to the spirituality practices of Meister Eckhart. It is described as that part of manifestation that never ever manifests. It breaks the assumption of Heidegger that there is an Ontological Monism, i.e. that Being is one complex of modalities and it instead bows to the ultimate conclusion that Being may be ultimately fragmented. All the images we have of the unconscious are various dark images of the *Essence of Manifestation*. It perturbs Reality, Identity, Truth and Presence in fundamental and irreducible yet subtle and difficult to detect ways. The query finds that its question must ultimately be about its own ground and it finds its own ground dark. Oedipus, as the first philosopher according to Goux is a perfect example of such a question that comes to question itself and finds that it is fated in an inexplicable way. The query becomes a self-questioning which never ceases and ultimately leads to the realization that Socratic Ignorance is the only possible way to approach the world.

When we go on down to the level of Wild Being this query transforms into an enigma, a piece of fate, the search for why is given up, and as Deleuze and Guattari say in *Anti-Oedipus* it is replaced with a question of 'how'. In other words "what works" takes precedence at the level of Wild Being. They describe the breakdown of the individual as a locus and instead see partial objects called desiring machines held in a network of the social field across bodies. We would improve slightly on this model by recognizing that desiring machines must be complemented by disseminating machines. Here the concept of

machine is non-dual. It means anything that "works". What works is defined as a network of disseminations and desires that connect up as a network of partial objects within the field of the social where the demarcations between bodies is no longer seen as essential as it is normally thought to be. Here we see the individual as what is there, as what asks about its own what, as slowly dissolving into the social field. Here intersubjectivity is finally primary to the subject. Disseminating machines produce semen and semantics, in other words Eros and signification become intermixed as they are in Plato.

When we look at The Play of the World by John S. Hans we see another vision of the meta-level of Wild Being which is not so nihilistic as that painted by Deleuze and Guattari. There just as ethics collapsed into metaphysics at the third meta-level so here aesthetics collapses into metaphysics. Hans sees playfulness as the sign of the presence of Wild Being. If we consider instead the work of Arkady Plotnitsky then we find a vision of Wild Being inspired by the work of Bataille and Derrida as well as Bohr. The social field is seen to be both undecidable and uncertain in ways that highlight anti-ontological and anti-epistemological complementarity like that discerned by Bohr to be at the heart of quantum mechanics. The field is then described in terms of what Bataille called the general or global economy which is full of blackholes and miracles. The complementary relations between our views of this field are ultimately undecidable in a way similar to that Godel described. The social field in these terms a macro-quantum mechanical goo out of which we socially construct individuals with responsibility in our Western societies. Another view of this goo is the magma of Castoriadis which he describes in The Imaginary Institution of Society. Deleuze and Guattari describe it in Thousand Plateaus as a rhizome, that is a network with no beginning nor end nor hierarchy which is multiply connected in a myriad ways which can never be completely

known like the burrows or castles of Kafka.

Wild Being is definitely the most interesting of the meta-levels and there has been a long struggle to find a way to build a philosophy at this meta-level. We can think of it as the frontier of Being. From there Being looks like a chaotic system as Castoriadis describes at the beginning of The Fragmented World. It is as if it were all surface or a field in which there was not enough headroom to describe full concepts nor their relations. Even deconstruction of the subject at the level of Hyper Being assumes that there is enough room to work to do our deconstruction. Rather in Wild Being there is not enough room to work, we only have partial objects, partial concepts, partial networks all mixed together as we lose the capability to sustain distinctions. Beyond that frontier of Being there is literally no-thing. Only unthinkable void or utter emptiness remains as Being completely collapses in on itself.

At the level of the query there was still enough room to formulate the question of ourselves. At the level of Wild Being we are utterly encompassed. It is as if we had returned to the womb. There are no voluntary ministrations of the mother but only the unity of their organisms biologically as a symbiosis. An excellent example of a text that mimics this state is James Joyce's Finnegans Wake. It is a rhizome of words. There we are engulfed by language itself so we cannot make sense of it or separate ourselves from it. L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E poetry attempts to perform the same function, i.e. getting inside the opacity of language. So the question implodes in on itself at this level and we find unmeaningful utterances like the words of the schizophrenics that Deleuze and Guattari cite in Anti-Oedipus. They are not mute but they are not speaking any language that we can make sense of either. It is clear that this meta-level in some sense is where madness takes over and there is a collapse of the world. But because this is where the

world collapses it is also the origin of the world itself, the primal chaos of mythology out of which the first things arise. The query collapses into utterances which may or may not have meanings, all we can say of them is that they work for the one who utters them because that one has collapsed back into the primordial social soup from which all the individuals arise and to which they return.

One of the great contributions of Deleuze and Guattari is to make the observation that when unconscious contents arise, that if they are related to anything then they are not completely unconscious. Truly unconscious contents must be orthogonal to each other. Thus, they talk about desiring machines hanging out of the body-without-organs like badges on the chest of a general. Each badge is an orthogonal eruption of a partial object -- as disseminating or desiring machine -- out of the social field but also out of the unconscious. Here the personal, collective and social unconscious have collapsed into each other. This is because at the level of Wild Being we realize that what was seen as the never manifesting *Essence of Manifestation* is shot through and through what is manifest. We lose even the distinction between the *Essence of Manifestation* and Manifestation itself. It is out of the ambiguity and amorphousness of Wild Being that all distinctions arise which we socially construct as we refine them though the various meta-levels down (up?) to the level of Pure Being though the intervening emergent levels of Hyper and Process Being.

### **Emergence and Nihilism**

One of the key findings of my research has been that genuinely emergent entities come into the world via the four meta-levels of Being. This is to say that for something to be utterly new and unheard of within the world it must have originated in Wild Being and traversed through Hyper Being and Process Being before entering

Pure Being. Any seemingly new thing that did not traverse all these levels is categorized as Artificially Emergent. This distinction allows us to understand the phenomena of Nihilism as we experience it in our world. Nihilism is the destruction of meaning. Normally this is accomplished when two extreme dualistic opposites are produced and allowed to conflict within the world. Nihilism is produced when these seemingly different elements are found to actually be the same thing. For instance, Democrats and Republicans appear different but when they become incumbents in office they work together to preserve each other's status and privileges. Capitalism and Communism appear different except when you realize that so called communist nations are merely state capitalism. As Baudrillard says in The Mirror of Production they both endorse the view of man as only useful if productive.

Nihilism has three degrees. Passive nihilism ignores and diverts resources from groups that it wants to sap the meaning from. Active Nihilism fights openly and destroys the meaning of individuals and groups. Radical Nihilism commits genocide destroying en masse the bearers of meaning.

Our worldview generates nihilism as the background upon which it presents artificial constructions as if they were new. But occasionally the worldview itself completely reorganizes. These reorganizations are the genuinely emergent. They are complete reorganizations from the ground up originating at the chaotic source of all distinctions and gaining momentum from there to restructure and repattern the whole world.

In actuality what is occurring is what is called the intensification of nihilism. Each new thing seems as if it will solve all the problems that existed in the last phase of organization of the worldview. But after the advent of the emergent thing we find we are always in a worse situation. Arguelles talks



about this in his book Transformational Vision which sees western history as a series of intensifications of hell on earth. Plato's Republic describes a similar kakatopia, a city of the gods unfit for human habitation. He presents us with a "going down" to Perius where a new god is being introduced into the city. It is a city of dualisms where mind is split from body, where the household is destroyed, where men and women are treated the same, and where children do not know their parents. This world of utter nihilism became instead a utopian ideal for the Western tradition, like Sheria of the Odessey it was an unreal utopia which was really hell on earth.

When the genuinely emergent event occurs the distinctions that bind it are rooted in the bedrock of existence and it traverses all the stages of Being as it traverses the temporality of its coming into being. These distinctions rooted in the natural complex beyond the projections of Being spontaneously upwell though the chaos which is projected as the groundlessness of Being and those non-nihilistic distinctions transform though each level until they come to Presence in Pure Being. This upwelling of non-nihilistic distinctions from the non-dual substrate of existence completely repatterns the world occasionally and anomalously. It turns out that this rare phenomena is actually the key to understanding the infra-structure of the world. In the emergent event the different kinds and aspects of Being cohere to present a unitary face to the inhabitants of the world. That unified face is the apprehension of the shock wave of the emergent eventuality as it inundates and overwhelms the world we live in in ways we cannot understand and control. It is this genuinely emergent eventuality that gives the underlying infra-structure to the world and it is from it that meaning flows into the world from the bedrock of existence which has spontaneously upwelled from the void. This upwelling can be seen as a clearing *of* Being, instead of a clearing *in* Being, in the sense

that Being itself cancels out when this genuinely emergent event occurs and when it reappears it is built up on a different coherence within Being.

Philosophical Mentoring needs to be aware of this infra-structure of Being in kinds and aspects that combine to produce facets and how the configuration of the facets that are like intersecting and interfering mobile pieces which occasionally turn to produce a new world coherence. In existence this kind of change in a worldview is fluid. But in the Indo-European worldview that is rooted in resistance to this change it occurs in stops and starts. In other words the worldview is resisting change with all its might but eventually the foundations crack and give way and then there is abrupt discontinuous change all of a sudden unpredictably instead of smoothly. Philosophical Mentoring attempts to bring the subject's (dasein, query, enigma) attention to this underlying infra-structure of the world so that change can be integrated into ones view of the world. Emergent Events can occur inwardly or outwardly. Thus the subject is encouraged to be on the outlook for emergent events on the horizon and in the self. When it occurs inside the self it is called creativity. When it occurs outwardly then it is the arising of new and astonishing unheard of features of the world. When it occurs and we catch the wave of emergence then this is one of the most exhilarating experiences anyone can have in their lifeworld.

### **Paradox and Super-rationality**

Part of what the philosophical mentor does is attempt to acquaint the subject (dasein, query, enigma) with the difference between the super-rational and the paradoxical. As we have seen Being itself is a paradox and the self embedded within the world is an enigma, while the world itself is a labyrinth. So we do not need to be coached

on what paradox is. We are paradoxes each of us. We are the creators and the victims of each other's double binds. Paradoxes occur when antinomic opposites are allowed to intermix and fuse. In order to get out of that endemic situation we need to understand the super-rational. But that is difficult because of the assumption of Excluded Middle. Western Logic assumes bi-valence. But we might contrast that to Indian Logic that includes the possibility of both...and (para-consistency) and neither...nor... (para-completeness). Nargarjuna the great Buddhist logician defined emptiness as the difference that makes a difference between the both...and and the neither...nor... and so he went beyond Indian Logic and established the logical basis of Buddhist philosophy. The difference between the both...and... and the neither...nor... is the paradigm of the non-dual. The non-dual is not between the two dualities, but off center between the two dualities taken together and what is other than them. This is an extremely important point. What is non-dual lies as the boundary between the dualities taken together and what is other than them.

Super-rationality is the opposite of paradox. Paradox says that we can take the two duals and allow them to merge. Super-rationality says that if they are dualities then they are the really intrinsically the same and that what we need to consider is what lies between them and otherness. The two duals are held apart yet together so we can see their similarity yet difference. If they are nihilistic then at this moment we see that they are really the same, i.e. there is no real difference between them. We do not allow them to merge, but we say that both are true simultaneously without interference with each other. This is so because we have exposed the root of their similarity in the face of what they are different from. Non-duality is not holism. Holism says that the two duals form a whole with internal differentiation. Non-duality says that the duals are not really dual in the face of what is different from

them without assuming that they are a whole. The difference is important. Holism produces a dialectical sameness within which the duals are thesis and anti-thesis. Holism is synthetic. Non-duality does not posit a whole but only that the two duals can both be true at once without interfering with each other or producing something beyond either of them. Non-duality holds the duals separate and apart yet also together without assuming dialectical synthesis. We call this approach holonomic rather than holistic. In other words we look at the internal ordering of the holons rather than at the synthetic whole.

Nargarjuna's argument is subtle and sophisticated in the way it defines the non-dual and super-rational. When we see a distinction that has its own existence beyond our projections then we can call such a distinction in the natural complex non-nihilistic. The non-nihilistic is both non-dual and super-rational at its root. It is the primary purpose of Philosophical Counseling to help subjects (dasein, query, enigmas, ecstatic existents) to make non-nihilistic distinctions beyond their own projections in their lives. We can pick any distinction as the beginning place for such an exploration. But it is best to pick some distinction that is either meaningless to the subject or significantly meaningful. We pick distinctions that are out in the world but which the subject is intimately implicated in. Then we begin to explore their position with respect to this distinction and the other related distinctions. We attempt to determine if the distinction has been undermined by nihilism or if it is significant then how the significance is being generated. Then we attempt to look at the distinction in terms of the natural complex and discern how the subject relates to the distinctions in the natural complex, by covering them up and projecting upon them or by exploring them and highlighting those distinctions that are naturally or traditionally present in the lifeworld. Finally we attempt to see if the status of this distinction sheds any light on

the existential situation of the subject him or her self. Thus over time the subject is slowly acquainted by the process of making distinctions for themselves by having those distinctions critiqued by the mentor or by the subject himself.

Behind the scenes the philosophical mentor has a model of the relation of paradox to non-duality that is drawn from topology. That model sees the lemniscate as the model of the non-nihilistic distinction, and then that devolves into the mobius strip which in turn devolves into the kleinian bottle and finally into the hyper kleinian bottle which contains the sphere of ambiguity which is the very embodiment of paradoxicality. By using this model the mentor can consider the degree of paradoxicality or super-rationality that the subjects conceptions exhibit. The true void is thus defined as the half way mark between these interpenetrating extremes of super-rationality and paradoxicality, thus it falls between the mobius strip and the kleinian bottle as topological models. In other words super-rationality has to accept the existence of paradoxicality and vice versa. Just as existence is as pure discontinuity is the opposite of Being and that the truth of manifestation is somewhere between them. True void is always between the extremes, what ever extremes you can imagine, out in the utter formlessness of the void itself where there is no form, no hand hold. The mentor always attempts to keep in mind the fact that if we ever capture meaning, or the true nature of existence that it is necessary to go beyond that limitation and reach the true limits of our ability to comprehend. It is there that reflection pays off in astonishment.

Being itself is intrinsically paradoxicality and its facets are an attempt to render it comprehensible. Existence is itself super-rational and non-dual and the source of non-nihilistic distinctions. But the true void is between existence and Being in pure manifestation which is neither

continuous nor discontinuous. Pure manifestation **both** neither *exists* nor *does not exist* **and** it neither *is* nor *is not* **yet it both** neither *exists* nor *does not exist* **and** neither *is* nor *is not* from one aspect while from another aspect manifestation **neither** neither *exists* nor *does not exist* **nor** neither *is* nor *is not* **yet it both** neither *exists* nor *does not exist* **and** neither *is* nor *is not*. If that does not confuse you I don't know what will. In other words we always just go deeper and deeper into the non-duality until we reach the bedrock of formlessness that is true void or real void or identical void or present void. Being is wrong. Existence is less wrong but still does not hit the mark. For the one in existence Being is enlightenment. For the one in Being existence is enlightenment. A worldview with Being gets started because the true void is non-dual between connection and disconnection. For the one projecting existence as pure discontinuity then realization of connection is crucial. For the one projecting Being as pure continuity then realization of disconnection is crucial. Connection and Disconnection are both true simultaneously without interfering with each other. But the ultimate is neither connected nor disconnected and is beyond capturing with this or any other distinction. Learning to live with this state of affairs yet continuing to make distinctions in the life world that strive for non-nihilistic status is the roots of wisdom.

### The World Patterning

When we deal with the world we need to know that it has a particular history and a particular pattern. This pattern is the result of socio-historical development. But more than anything else it is patterned by emergence. There are several different ladders by which we can view emergence working in the western worldview. One ladder is called ontic and the other is called ontological. The ontic ladder points to what

is discovered out there about the physus. The ontological ladder is about the projections we project on what we find out there.

The ladder of the ontic differs depending on the scientist you hear summarizing the findings of science as to the emergent levels it has discovered. Science pushes pure reductionism to an extreme and what cannot be reduced becomes an emergent level of phenomena. One might articulate the levels something like this:

- ◆ Gaia
- ◆ Society
- ◆ Organism
- ◆ Organs
- ◆ Cells
- ◆ Macro-molecules
- ◆ Molecules
- ◆ Atoms
- ◆ Fundamental Particles
- ◆ Quarks
- ◆ Sub-Quarks

This list is something like what we have found "out-there" by applying reductionism. But the other list is more interesting because it is the natural forms that our projections take which forms a series of emergent levels that can be applied to any of these outward levels. These are articulated by the unmitigated application of skepticism.

- ◆ Pluriverse
- ◆ Kosmos
- ◆ World
- ◆ Domain
- ◆ Meta-System
- ◆ System
- ◆ Form
- ◆ Pattern
- ◆ Monad
- ◆ Facet

Each of these emergent levels occur

in the Logos rather than in the Physus. They are levels of complexity or thresholds of comprehension. They naturally occur in our own writings about the world as a series of levels but normally they are not clearly distinguished.

There is another couple of series which relate to limits and limitlessness. One is a series of levels of information processing in the individual and the other is a series of levels at which emergence can occur in society.

- ◆ **Absolute**
- ◆ **Existence**
- ◆ **Ontos**
- ◆ **Episteme**
- ◆ **Paradigm**
- ◆ **Theory**
- ◆ **Facticity**
- ◆ **Suchness**
  
- ◆ **Insight**
- ◆ **Realization**
- ◆ **Wisdom**
- ◆ **Knowledge**
- ◆ **Information**
- ◆ **Data**
- ◆ **Givens**

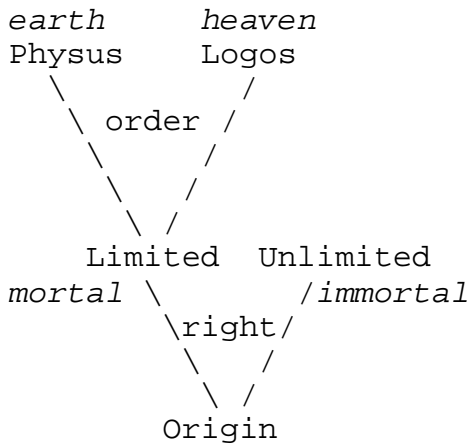
Which combine to give the following interleaved hierarchy:

- ◆ Absolute
- ◆ *insight*
- ◆ Existence
- ◆ *realization*
- ◆ Ontos
- ◆ *wisdom*
- ◆ Episteme
- ◆ *knowledge*
- ◆ Paradigm
- ◆ *information*
- ◆ Theory
- ◆ *data*
- ◆ Facticity

- ◆ *givens*
- ◆ Suchness

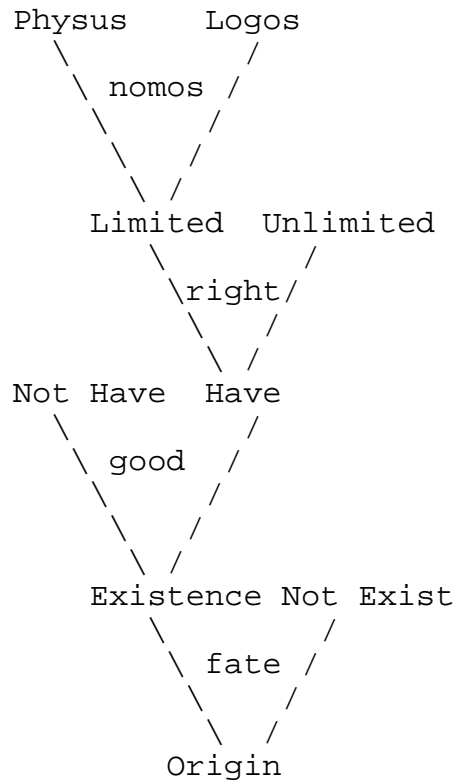
This second pair of ladders interleave. They go from suchness to the absolute and from the given to insight in terms of information levels for the individual. The point is that both of these series are emergent levels like the others but they define the way that the individual and the social group handles emergent events. The emergent event can occur for the individual at any level of his processing capacity and it can also occur in the society at any level of its organization of knowledge.

These three four ladders together form the basic framework of the world in the meta-physical era. In that era the word has the following form:



This patterning was established since the advent of the metaphysical era after the mythopoietic era in which the mortals and the immortals arose out of the differentiation of heaven and earth. It had its advent with the philosophies of Thales and Anaxamander. Within the dualisms there exist non-duals embedded in the chiasms. The purpose of philosophical counseling is to give life to these non-duals. In this case there is nomos,

or *order*, and the Sanscrit radical *rta*, or *right*. There are also some deeper non-duals at lower levels as we differentiate the origin.



These are the levels of the worldview when we look deeper into them. Underlying Being is Having and underlying Having is Existence. Existence is split into inward and outward finding that both have their roots in Manifestation. The deeper nonduals are the Good and Fate. The Good is the source of endless variety of the myriad things. Fate the recognition of the ultimate source of everything as being singular and unique.

All these non-duals can be found in Plato's works, especially the Laws and the Republic. The Laws is a meditation on Nomos and is called by that name. It seeks to order the city so that it will be long lasting. In doing so Plato gives the first description of an autopoietic system, i.e. self-organizing system. The Republic on the other hand is ostensibly about Justice. But justice means to Socrates the distribution of rights in the city. So this other book which describes the

unlivable utopian city is about *Rta*. *Rta* means Cosmic Harmony. In Greece it became Excellence or Arte. To us it means what is right or the spirit of the law. Within the Republic Plato takes us up to see the source of the Good which is likened to the sun and is said to contain the intelligibles that are beyond form. The parable of the cave takes the unwilling prisoner out to see this archetype. But the city that Socrates presents in the Republic is one where Socrates himself could not live. It is only as it begins to deteriorate that we begin to see how Socrates works to transform our ideals into realities by his mentoring. He shows us the four stages of devolution of the utopian city which corresponds to the four moments of the entry of the emergent event in reverse. In other words we watch the city go out of existence by the opposite route that the new goddess that is being introduced to the city comes in. To see how powerful these ideas are for us today we only have to see that the Constitution of the U.S.A. contains our *nomos* and appended to that came Bill of Rights. Also in the U.S. Declaration of Independence is a reference to *Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness*, i.e. the Good.

What is normally ignored is the fact that Plato describes another myth in the Republic. That myth is about Er who is brought back from the dead. In the midst of that discussion appears a rainbow which stands opposite the sun of the Good and represents Fate. So by this means we can locate all the non-duals within Plato's two longest books. These non-duals are the source of all meaning in the Western Tradition. They are hidden within the dualities produced by the tradition. We need to ferret them out and show how they confer wisdom on us if we exercise our discrimination with regard to the non-duals. Philosophical Mentoring should attempt to bring these non-duals alive again within the western worldview.

The ontological emergent hierarchy

and the sociopsychological ones form loops and in that way express their non-duality. Our world is made up of these emergent heterarchies which are on the form of the differentiation of Physis from Logos and of the Limited from the Unlimited. It is this same distinction that informs the aspects of Being. Physis is represented by Reality and Presence while Logos is represented by Truth and Identity. We test presences for reality and we use logic to inform speeches with coherence. The philosophical mentor needs to know the shape of the world so that he can understand where the subject fits within that matrix and what relations exist for the subject with respect to the non-duals. Here philosophical mentoring can provide a genuine service because these fundamentals have been lost in our tradition since Plato and so by returning to them we are returning to our own roots.

### Onto-mythology

It is not just the worldview that undergoes all these emergent transformations but also the selves of the subjects within the worldview. So the self has a legacy which resonates with the mythopoietic construction of the world as well as the metaphysical construction of the world. This is why the practice of onto-mythology is crucial to the understanding of the self because it is the only way to understand these mythic resonances that we find within ourselves despite our now being around in the mythopoietic era. Jung explained these in terms of the collective unconscious. We explain it by the fact that all the prior transformations of the worldview remain coded into the worldview as it stands for us. The last major configuration was the mythopoietic. Now we are well into and probably at the end of the metaphysical era. But it is not as if the mythopoietic vanished. It is still there as a substrate of the worldview and the selves that it produces. So when we look back at our Indo-European

worldview and see that the differences between the gods in the Vedas are an image of the Kinds of Being then we realize that the ontological infra-structure of the worldview rooted in Being is incredibly conservative. When we follow Dumazile's work and see that this same infra-structure appears in all the different Indo-European lands, then we see how wide spread these mythic structures were and how well they were preserved against the changes involved in the Indo-European diaspora. So when we look out at our world today and see these kinds of Being discovered by modern Continental Philosophy we are seeing very old structures within our worldview which has now spread out across the world and has become dominant. So it is important to continue the Onto-mythological studies that link the infra-structures of the self and world today with those of the past. Other worldviews may have different intrinsic structures. Especially those based on a recognition of Existence rather than a construction of Being such as the Chinese and Islamic worldviews. We need to compare the worldviews that are rooted in existence with those rooted in Being and understand the similarities and differences. We need to understand the relations between these worldviews and the spiritual ways they have produced.

Ontomythology is a practice of looking at the ontological meanings of myths. This can be done not just to cultural and traditional myths but to modern myths. Myths are intersubjective thought in the mythopoietic age. In that age there was no individual thought. Individual thought started with the metaphysical era. But we can still understand the difference between intersubjective thought and individual thought within our own world. That is why philosophical mentoring is an important discipline because it allows us to get together and think together and within that social dialectic develop our own thoughts further than we would be able to alone. It is possible to look at our own experience and identify in

it the play of the meta-levels of Being and the Aspects of Being and their interrelations in various mobile facets. It is possible to identify the roots of our existence beyond our projection of self. And it is possible to see that existence as empty and out of that emptiness see the spontaneous upwelling of meaning and sensory images which give us some inkling as to what lies beneath the surface of our inward dimension.

This exploration of the depths of the self through the outward exploration of the world by philosophical questioning is the way that Socrates pointed out for us to follow. Philosophical mentoring is the outward initial movement which makes an inward movement of inquiry possible. If we go inward without first going outward we merely end up in the outward, in the mirroring of our relations with others in our lifeworld. By going outward first we end up being able to go deeper inward though a combination of thought and reflection together.

### **Fourfold Method**

Heidegger pointed out the fact that Poetry and Thought are the Same, and that we can get at certain things through poetry that we cannot get to with thought and vice versa. An important point in Philosophical Mentoring is that the Subject engages in both poetic and thinking expressions in order to attempt to zero in on what is most significant to the subject himself or herself.

Also there must also be a movement back and forth between expressiveness and meditation. Meditation with an object is called contemplation while meditation without an object is called reflection. In language we oscillate between poetry expressing our feelings and prose expressing our thoughts. In meditation we oscillate between diary entries expressing the results of our contemplations and aphorisms

expressing the results of our reflections.

In this way we construct a fourfold method, moving back and forth between poetry, essays, aphorisms and diary entries. These are the expressions of our attempt to move between thought and poetry in self-expression, and reflection and contemplation in our meditation. This fourfold series of activities mirrors what Heidegger calls the self-mirroring of the *fourfold* of the world. At the center of this fourfold is existence.

At this center we expect to client to find an upwelling fountain of meanings within themselves. Thought once it finds that center will circle around it. Reflection will attempt to stand within the fountain itself. Contemplation will see its results expressed in our lives. Poetry will express its ecstasy. Together thought, reflection, contemplation, and poesy embodied in the essays, aphorisms, diary entries and poems will express the uniqueness of the individual subject. No one can tell you what you should think, how to express your spirituality, or how to feel about things. Each of us must discover that for themselves. But it helps to have a guide who lends an intersubjective dimension to thought and thus allows thought to go deeper.

### **The Conscious Maturity Method**

One method that the philosophical mentor might use is that of modeling maturity. In this method some issue of significance is selected by the group engaged in philosophical exploration. The group would then make distinctions concerning the issue and see where everyone falls in the landscape produced by those distinctions. After the differences of the members of the group have been registered then they engage together in producing a maturity model of the topic under consideration. The maturity model basically encapsulates the steps that anyone needs to go through to reach the

optimum level of maturity with respect to the topic. Then, once some consensus has been found with respect to the maturity model then a discussion is held where active listening is encouraged where the different members say how they feel about the various positions with regard to the issue. After the open discussion then the group is asked to reassess how they fall with respect to the network of distinctions and the maturity model. Then they rank each other with respect to both the net of distinctions and the maturity model. Finally the group discusses what the protocol should be to move up the maturity model from one stage to the next. Each member is asked to set some goals with respect to moving up the maturity model scale and perhaps formulate their own personal action plan.

This method might be repeated for different kinds of maturity. We might revisit a particular kind of maturity occasionally to see what progress has been made. In the mean time each individual continues their own program of thought and reflection, recording their progress in poetry and diary entries. Particularly interesting poems or thoughts might occasionally be shared among the group.

Philosophical mentoring can be done on an individual or group basis with regard to any topic, but in general it is best if we coordinate this work in the context of an overall framework of conscious maturity progress. Each of us can define what maturity means for them and the group can define that together. But the concept of maturity gives us an umbrella to measure the progress of the individuals and the group over time. Maturity can be equated philosophically with sophistication and depth of questioning. Since we can have maturity with regard to many different complexes of issues it is a means of exploring the world in its various facets. Some examples of areas where maturity might be sought are the following:



- ◆ Psychological
- ◆ Social
- ◆ Spiritual
- ◆ Character
- ◆ Ethnic Diversity
- ◆ Work
- ◆ Morals and Ethics
- ◆ Philosophical
- ◆ Environmental
- ◆ Life-transactions
- ◆ Educational
- ◆ Personal Processes

These are all facets of the world which have implications for how we carry out our lives. A goal of general maturity along each of these dimensions would be laudatory. By expressing a maturity goal and then specifying the steps to attain that goal by the group we are able to render concrete our exploration of the world's various domains.

An example maturity model might be something like this for spirituality:

- Immersed in Mundane Life without thought of spirituality.
- Aware of alternatives but not yet committed to any spiritual way
- Actually considering spiritual alternatives and how those would enhance one's life or not
- Engaged in a spiritual path or having found other alternatives that serve the same purpose for oneself.
- Committed to a spiritual life or knowing why one has no such need of commitment.

The idea is not to impose a maturity model on the group but to have them come up with the distinctions, the maturity model, and the protocol for advancing along the model both separately or together. This sets

the scene for exploring the world and gives the materials that may have philosophical significance. Maturity as a concept gives unity to all the various aspects that are explored. All the individuals can set their own goals with respect to these maturity frameworks that they have helped construct. Maturity in general sets up the situation for the interaction of the group but gives the individual some idea of the landscape of the world as others see it and allows him to see the variety of responses of others to the same dilemmas.

### **Exploring Domains and other Ontological Levels**

Each of these areas for which we might create a maturity model may be called a domain. Normally domains are chosen as specialized disciplines as they are defined in the university or in industry. But here we can take a complex of issues and produce a slice of the world with respect to that complex of issues. We would call that slice a domain. We explore the world by taking different slices and going through the maturity model development method for each slice. This process allows us to develop what each individual thinks about that domain and then from that we might develop really philosophical questions that cut across domains and explore those at a deeper level, i.e. at the level of the world itself.

All the elements within the domain that are identified are, of course, forms and those forms have patterned content. So once we have identified the domains, then it is easy to step down the levels to deal with defined entities within the domain and specify at some level of abstraction as it is useful to the subjects what the components that appear within the domain are and what their attributes are. Once this has been done then it is possible to go upward and begin to deal with the system and meta-systemic issues

within the domain which govern the interactions of the components. We can deal with the systemic issues by realizing that all systems are just social gestalts. So the group can talk about how they see the organization of the components within the domain creating wholes and how these break up into parts. This leads to the consideration of the meta-systems that are the fields that lie between the systemic wholes. Meta-system refers to environment, situation, milieu, context, etc for the wholes that are found within the domain.

If we deal with these lower level natural complexes at their various levels of complexity then we can proceed also upward to consider the synergy of the domains in the world. Each individual is a nexus of the domain slices and thus feels their maturity or immaturity with reference to various domains. Each individual must chose where they will spend their time developing maturity and where they will accept lower levels of maturity. So each individual becomes situated in their world by the various slices and the conscious maturity stance they take toward each and all together. From this vantage point it is possible to look at these various distinctions and levels of maturity that they have forged with others and situated themselves within and begin to consider these with respect to the aspects of Being and the kinds of Being and the various facets of Being that intersect like a mobile that interferes with itself as the various pieces move independently yet together each effecting the others. We can look at the distinctions that are made and ask ourselves if they are nihilistic or non-nihilistic distinctions. This includes the distinctions revolving around the issue chosen as a topic or the distinctions between levels of the maturity model. We can look at how these distinctions that spontaneously arise in the group reflect the dualistic structure that occur in the Western Worldview and how they might become non-dualistic. The amazing thing about philosophy is that any

detail of existence or any being can be the starting point for a look at the infra-structure of the world and an elucidation of its meaning. Each participant can use this rich material generated out of the group as a basis for their own reflection and thought about life and their place in the world. When we begin to go up from the level of the world we can go on to consider our place in the Kosmos and perhaps for the spiritually inclined our place in the pluriverse.

Once we have a view of the facets of our world that is important to us then we can begin watching for the emergent events that change the meanings and arrangements of natural complexes. Emergence gives us a quantal model of change that can be applied at many different levels. The group itself can become sensitized to those changes and the levels that they occur on either socially or in their own individual information processing. Being on the outlook for the internal and external emergent events gives us a basis for observing the fine points of the advent of change in the world.

### **Meta-levels of Change and Learning**

The way that the levels of Being are articulated in our experience is by defining the meta-levels on which change and learning occur. Change is in the realm of physus and Learning is in the realm of logos. But these phenomena are not uni-dimensional. Instead they both occur in meta-levels. These meta-levels have been defined in my Tutorial on Advanced Process Architectures. We can consider the meta-levels of learning as Bateson did in Steps to the Ecology of the Mind. These he compared to the meta-levels of motion. In the physus with regard to humans these can be expressed as the meta-levels of Change. Learning and Changing together can be defined as process. That process can be done as an individual or as a group. At the meta-levels Change and Learning can either be considered separately

or together. If they are considered together then Learning to Learn or Changing Change together is defined as process improvement. At the third meta-level the two together, i.e. change<sup>3</sup> and learning<sup>3</sup>, can be thought of as process innovation. At the fourth level the two together, i.e. change<sup>4</sup> and learning<sup>4</sup>, may be thought of as emergence itself. What is beyond emergence is unthinkable. For further details of this model see the tutorial. The point is that the group's process of developing maturity models for the various domains can be thought of in terms of these meta-levels of learning and change. We can recognize the maturity development process and study how it works within the group. In this way the group can become conscious of its own activities. We can innovate how these processes might be carried out better as we go along. And finally we can look for emergent events, quantal changes coming from the inside or the outside which cause the processes to become repatterned. By making the group aware of its own processes we prepare the way for the recognition of existence.

## Existence

What the group needs to eventually notice is that the whole process of coming up with maturity models is a ruse to get them thinking about the world and its coherence by situating them within it. When we start working with the various maturity models then we naturally fall into a presentational mode associated with Being and we begin developing coherent and continuing delusions about our selves and others that play upon our delusions about who we are outside the group setting. Eventually we begin to recognize this fact and perhaps wonder what is beyond the presentational delusion. At that point we become attuned to existence perhaps. Existence is what lies outside the presentational system. What is there but never shown or hidden prior to the

presentations. This becomes apparent when we begin to ask about maturity itself as a concept. Why should we strive for maturity in our dealings with the world? Is maturity the right goal? It is presented as the aim of the group and the individual is motivated to attempt to become more mature in their relations with various aspects of the world. But why? Why maturity? It is a pretext only for getting together and talking about various aspects of the world and in order to contextualize ourselves within it. Once we begin to do that then we would expect the participants to begin to question the goal of maturity. When they do that then we begin to consider what is beyond the presentational system that the group is organized around. We begin to see existence impinging on the operations of the group and its goals. Maturity was what was presented as a goal and context. But what we really want to see is the group break out of the umbrella of maturity to consider other factors. We want them to do this spontaneously and on their own. But as soon as they begin questioning maturity that was set up as the purpose of the group by the mentor then we can treat these excursions as occasions for the consideration of the difference between Being and Existence. What exists is everything else outside the paradigm of maturity mongering. Non-duality treats the mature/immature continuum as something over and against everything else. It is that boundary that we do not normally see of the presentational system that is the essence of non-duality and what is hidden by the assumption of the excluded middle. Once existence beyond the presentational system of Being begins to intrude on the group, once they have had their fill of talk of maturity, once they have begun to consider what else there might be as goals for the group, then is the time when we can begin to consider non-duality and the importance of the non-duality and the nihilistic distinction.

Buddhist enlightenment is a similar ruse. The one seeking enlightenment

organizes their whole self around that project. Then one day they realize that there is no such thing as enlightenment. Suddenly the self organized around that project vanishes and it takes with it the entire organization of the darkneses of the self that were organized around that project, like a ship sinking into the ocean. Thus enlightenment occurs. Enlightenment occurs by the ruse of Enlightenment. There is no such thing. Enlightenment is the realization that there is no such thing. Similarly maturity is a ruse. When maturity itself sinks then the group breaks out of that presentational system into a wider world with myriad purposes. What they learn from that should dwarf everything else they learn about the facets of the world.

### **Research Proposal**

What has been outlined here is an initial stab at defining what Philosophical Counseling (or mentoring, or guidance, or coaching) might be. We have posited a foundational theory and described how it might be implemented. What is needed is a forum for trying out this model and seeing what works and what does not work. Though this practice we may be able to refine the theory or perhaps change it completely. But at least this gives us a good starting point along with a method. It is thought that the idea of conscious maturity might appeal to people itself and be a means of securing their participation in philosophical counseling situations. One problem in our society is definitely a lack of maturity even in older individuals. Experience in itself does not necessarily lead to maturity. Maturity only comes with reflection and thought on experience. Knowledge and experience do not necessarily combine synergistically to produce wisdom spontaneously. Instead it is the reflection and thought concerning knowledge and experience that produces wisdom. The love of wisdom is something that only comes once we taste wisdom itself.

Philosophy arrives when we love wisdom more than anything else. Philosophy in its true sense is something that needs to be developed over a long time and then it jumps from soul to soul like a spark. It is transmitted when one gives the gift of wisdom to another. The normal problem is that even if one has some bit of wisdom there is no one primed to receive it. It is hoped that Philosophical Mentoring might develop a universe of discourse about the facets of the world which makes for the right conditions for the mutual exchange of wisdom between the members of the group. The point is to leave the duality of teacher and taught behind and for the whole group including the mentor to become the taught as ideas and images well up that no one of the group knew before spontaneously within the group process. This is the true dialectic of Plato. The embodiment of that is the goal.

### **PRELIMINARY FINDINGS**

#### **Practice**

Since writing this research proposal the program has been pursued by setting up on the Internet the Philosophical Counseling Research WebSite. I called for volunteers on the [philo-guild@freelance.org](mailto:philo-guild@freelance.org) and [philos-counsel@freelance.org](mailto:philos-counsel@freelance.org) email lists. From this six volunteers appeared. Of these two volunteers with specifically philosophical issues could be distinguished. They agreed to proceed with the experiment in philosophical mentoring. They also agreed to allow their sessions to become research cases. Both sessions suffered from the lack of time on the part of the participants. However, one session only partially began and then was abandoned due to the fact that the counselee did not have time to fully participate. The second session has been completed and stands as a good example of the philosophical mentoring approach. Screening volunteers became a problem so the WebSite

was closed down in order to allow me to concentrate on the cases at hand. From these cases it has become possible to further formulate the method of philosophical mentoring and to substantiate that there are people who do have philosophically significant issues that could use this kind of mentoring, even if they are rare. However, more experimental cases need to be performed in order to further substantiate the method and the incidence of people with philosophically significant issues in the population.

In both cases the presenting issue concerned meaning of life. In one case there was a feeling or mood of existential angst. The angst was over the fact that life had no meaning. In the other case there was a question as to where meaning came from and how could it stand up against the nihilism of the dominant scientific view of the world. The first case never came to the point of resolution due to extraneous circumstances. In the second case we ended up reading Heidegger's What Is Called Thinking together and the subject accepted Heidegger's critique of Science which basically says that science did not know its own basis of meaning, so it could not be the judge of other bases of meaning. This seemed to put to rest the question that the counselee had originally came with. After that the session disintegrated as did the first due to the lack of time to pursue the session on the side of the counselee.

### Notes

As the sessions progressed I concentrated on attempting to refine my idea of the proper method for philosophical mentoring. I eventually settled on the idea of the simultaneous pursuit of poetry, thought, reflection and contemplation in the form of poems, essays, aphorisms and a diary. Since neither of the counsees performed all these aspects of the method it is not clear what the

result of that might be. I am considering a self-test in order to verify the method further or seek other volunteers who might actually perform all the aspects of the method.

In the course of the sessions I sought to focus in on finding primal scenes of philosophical significance which would lend themselves to an ontological interpretation in terms of the kinds of Being. Such a scene was found in one case.

I also volunteered to read pertinent works along with the counsees and discuss them with respect to the issue raised by the counselee. This seemed to work very well but was, of course, time consuming.

Ten weeks seems like the right length of time for a session. The amount of correspondence was not so great that I could not manage to do two sessions at once.

There was a security problem that caused us to abandon the WebBoard as the place to do the counseling. After that private email lists were set up and this seemed to work very well. However, as we were using the web-site it was nice to be able to organize the materials so easily. Some combination of private email and WebBoard website should be ideal for email sessions in the future.

When people do not pay for something it is clear that they do not value it and thus have a hard time keeping it at the top of their priorities. Thus offering counseling for free many not be a viable way of collecting research material though cases. What is good about doing the sessions over the internet is that everything to do with the session is preserved and can thus be studied later. So the internet is a good tool but it is hampered by the fact that personal contact is not possible and that internet interaction concerning a free service does not remain at the top of the list of priorities that a counselee has in their lives.

## **Philosophical Mentoring -- Kent Palmer**

All in all the two sessions that were begun turned out to be very good as a basis for understanding the dynamics between the mentor and the client and helped to formulate more specifically the steps in the theory. This new formulation is presented in a ViewGraph presentation given to the Philosophical Counseling session of the Local UCI Philosophy conference organized by Martin Young and Kent Palmer for October 24<sup>th</sup> 1998. It is called Philosophical Mentoring: A Fundamental Theory and can be seen at <http://dialog.net:85/homepage/mentor02/index.htm>.

Further analysis and critique of these cases will be forthcoming in a separate paper.