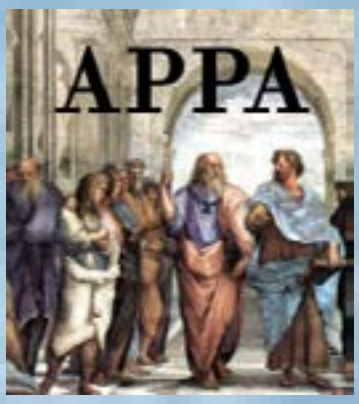


PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

Journal of the APPA

Volume 18 Number 3 November 2023

Editor
Lou Marinoff

Reviews Editor
Leslie Miller

Associate Editor
Carol S. Gould

Associate Editor
Johnson Cheung

Technical Consultant
Greg Goode

Legal Consultant
Thomas Griffith

Report of PROJECT@

Jorge Humberto Dias and Tiago Nuno Gonçalves Pita
How Does a Client Experience Philosophical Consultation?

Articles from APPA's Annual Meeting 2023

Greg Sadler
Ancient Philosophical Resources for Understanding and Dealing with Anger

Carl S. Gould
Philosophical Practice, Body Image, and Body Dysmorphic Disorder

Kevin Cales
When the Client Does Not Know: Regressive Abstraction and Nelsonian Socratic Dialogue in Client Counseling

Shanti Jones
The Pragmatics of Eudaimonia: Lessons from Aristotle and Jane

Poem-Essay

Two Monks: Six Variations
George T. Hole

Biographies of Contributors

https://appa.edu
ISSN 1742-8181

Nemo Veritatem Regit
Nobody Governs Truth

The Pragmatics of Eudaimonia
Lessons from Aristotle and Jane

Shanti Jones
Independent Scholar and Philosophical Counselor, Taos, New Mexico

Old men ought to be explorers
Here or there does not matter
We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion
Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters
Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning.
—T.S. Eliot, East Coker V

Abstract:

This virtues-based philosophical approach to counseling, developed by the author and framed by the highest good, provides the basis for fruitful work with Jane, a 78-year-old woman faced with a diagnosis of progressive supranuclear palsy that left her with the realities of increasing immobility and dependence as well as a finite amount of time. She became depressed and angry and began to wonder what she had made of her life. Within a period of nine months and over twenty-seven sessions, our co-created work enabled the client to move from a place of anger and depression to one of feeling hopeful and at peace—the goals which we had initially established as the highest good that could come out of our work together.

Keywords: *existentialism, eudaimonia, gerotranscendence, highest good, life review, limit situations, meaningful connections, supra-nuclear palsy*

Introduction

While conducting my research on aging, I came across several articles by authors who insisted that people who write about aging should "fess up" about their own age, so I will "fess up" about mine. I am seventy-four years old. Like most everyone, I never imagined myself as this age. Indeed, in many ways I denied it would ever happen to me. On top of that, related to my professional life, I didn't formerly see what value I would find in working with older clients. I had always been excited by the seemingly more open-ended possibilities that came with my younger clientele.

About the time I started admitting to myself that I was in the old category, several people sought my help who also fit into it. With these two situations coinciding, I realized I needed and wanted to become more informed about all aspects of aging, including the philosophical, spiritual, psychological, physical, and cultural. I knew from having read Cicero and Seneca there was wisdom to be gained from aging, but only if one really understood it well.

One of the aspects of philosophical counseling I appreciate is the opportunity to immediately apply what I have learned or am in the process of learning to my work with my clients, as well as to myself.

ISSN 17428181 online © 2023 APPA

My clients and my own encounters with aging were simultaneously being experienced. I wanted to be maximally informed. As with anything I am trying to deeply understand, I read as much as seemed useful and as I had time for, not only in philosophy but also in other disciplines.

As I dove into the world of aging, I was surprised to find that, along with the gloom and doom I had imagined, attaining greater enlightenment, peace, and happiness was also possible. I was re-awakened to the truth contained in "East Coker," where T.S. Eliot writes of "another intensity" and "a deeper communion." Elliot, T.S., Rather than dread, I was beginning to feel excitement. At the same time my older clients and I were experiencing losses, we were also uplifted by what we could see we were gaining. Virtues like kindness, forgiveness, and love simply became easier to practice as we came up against the limits of time, with death closer at hand.

Some years ago, I developed a philosophical approach to my work which I wrote about in several articles published in the Korean Journal of Philosophical Practice and Counseling (Jones, S., 2017, 2018). It is a four-pronged approach that includes a neo-Aristotelian search for the Highest Good, a phenomenological viewpoint which looks for meaningful connections within the client's world, an eye towards relevant existential concerns, and attention to the pragmatic changes the client will have to make to arrive at their version of happiness. You will find these four philosophical ways of thinking woven into the structure of both this paper and in the case study.

I hope the ideas contained here will inspire the reader to want to deepen their understanding of the aging process with its many opportunities for growth and mastery of wisdom, but also to be better able to apprehend all the possible richness you will have the lucky chance to experience when an older client comes into your consulting room.

A Neo-Aristotelian Approach to Aging

A cornerstone of my work with clients is our agreement to search for the Highest Good within their particular situation. No matter what problem they face, this is our aim. "The Highest Good" is a term coined by Aristotle, who basically equated it with happiness achieved through living a virtuous life and with questions like, "What reasons are there to stay alive?" and, "What makes life worth living?" According to him, the happiest individual was virtuous. As such, he takes part in philosophical activities, develops his competency to reason and engage in moral activities, and displays his capacities for justice, generosity, and temperance.

Over the 2,345 years since Aristotle's death, many thinkers of different persuasions have addressed the topic of achieving happiness. As a result, our ideas about it have expanded and changed. In contrast with Aristotle, when we say that someone is living happily, we imply that they are very glad to be alive. The person deems that, on balance, their deepest desires are being satisfied and the circumstances of their lives are turning out well. Realizing that, they have an especially affirmative attitude towards their life and its potential fulfillment (MacIntyre, A., 2007).

Our idea of happiness, then, is more personalized and flexible than Aristotle's. Whereas Aristotle's view is that a person is happy only if he comes fairly close to the ideal life for all human beings, we think a person is happy because their life meets a certain standard they have set for themselves. They find their life highly desirable, and they feel there is nothing they can now do that would make their lives significantly better. As I work with my clients, it is this broader perspective that I keep in mind.

Problems, crises, conflicts, fears, and dangers that must be dealt with in the light of the Highest Good are characteristic of every age. At the same time, the peculiarities of aging must be kept in mind when working with older clients. This will help us to assist them to better navigate the tough choices and difficult decisions specific to their stage in life and help to ensure things turn out well.

One of the most obvious problems older persons deal with is that no matter how hard they might work to stay young, the aging process inevitably brings about a weakening of their physical and mental capacities. Such things as the loss of memory, decreased mobility, weakened eyesight, and physical pain become distractions. Greatly increased physical pain can lead to a lessened capacity for pleasure, while failing intellectual capacities impair their ability to engage in valuable activities. These impairments limit their lives, making it more difficult to satisfy their desires. Where is the good to be found in that?

Here is where the philosophical counselor can return to the wisdom of Ancient Greece—in particular the Stoics, and Cicero—who rejected Aristotle's claim that old age was an evil. Instead, they welcomed later life as the zenith of a person's capacities for virtue (Cicero, 2016(). This idea seems especially possible in today's time because as we continue to alleviate the negative effects of the aging process, older people are better able to utilize the talents, skills, and virtues they have developed. They are better able to continue their long-term projects and to enjoy the fruits of their labors, all of which leads to their Higher Good.

If we go along with Cicero and assume that old age can be a time of greater virtue, are there any virtues that could be helpful for older clients to identify and cultivate? Of course, the classic virtues like practical knowledge and wisdom are always valuable throughout a person's whole life. In addition, the feminist philosopher, Sara Ruddick, suggests that the virtues of old age are to be found and exercised in relationships. Her list includes curiosity, the capacity for delight, a concern for others and for forgiveness, the capacity to accept, to adjust, and to appreciate, and the ability to assert a wizened independence (Ruddick, S., 1995).

The Australian philosopher, John Finnis, has identified seven states and activities as being integral to human fulfillment. Life, knowledge, practical reasonableness, play, aesthetic experience, friendship, and religion, when pursued in combination with one another, enable a person to flourish (Finnis, J., 2011). Being old will likely present challenges to all these experiences, the satisfaction of which will be determined partly by choices people made in the past. So, given their challenges and limitations, how can we help older clients interact with these activities? Doing so will help them as they strive to achieve the Highest Good in this last phase of their life.

Existential Issues Related to Aging

It is often thought that old people are wasting their time or letting time waste them. Since it is likely that most people do not know how to be old, this idea is not surprising. Like all stages of life, to live well requires certain skills and virtues. Old age is no exception. Yet, due in part to the denial that they are ever going to grow old that often accompanies a fear of old age and death, and due also to a lack of education about aging, many people are ill-prepared for the experience itself. Therefore, when an older person wants to engage with philosophical counseling, it is helpful for the counselor to be acquainted with some of the more salient existential issues that might be pressing upon them.

Distorted Beliefs

One of the obvious truisms about aging is that our culture's current obsession with youth detracts from a great deal of aging's value. Intuitions, assumptions, and ways of reasoning about old age by young and old alike have helped to condition the way we think about larger, more basic questions. What it means to live a life, much less a good life, what it means to be a person, what it means for society to be just, what is entailed in living in time—these kinds of considerations can easily get lost when people come to focus on, and believe, that the negativity of other's reactions to them will be increased by their perception of them as an old person (Small, H., 2007).

As philosophical counselors, we are in a good position to help our older clients identify reasons why they might value themselves and others less simply because they are older, our aim being to help alter their irrational thinking about it. For example, a reason for decreased self-esteem among the elderly includes the fact that most people find older people physically less attractive. Is that a good reason to value oneself less, or is there something we can suggest to our clients in order that they might think about this potentially onerous situation in a more reasonable way?

In this situation, thinking about beauty in an instrumental, rather than only an aesthetic, way can be a helpful corrective. Instrumentalism is a pragmatic philosophical approach which regards something in relationship to its practical purpose rather than in some kind of ideal terms. In the case of beauty, we not only value being physically attractive to others because the media has encouraged a culture of beauty, but because being attractive also has value instrumentally. For example, it is easier for physically attractive people to find partners, to obtain sex, to get jobs and promotions, better tables at restaurants, fewer speeding tickets, and the benefit of the doubt.

With all such benefits, who wouldn't want to be and remain beautiful forever? However, for many of us, our physical appearance was never something upon which we were able to trade. When thought about in this way, a decrease in physical attractiveness will have minimal instrumental discomfort for us, and "losing" our attractiveness doesn't seem so bad (Scarre, G., 2016).

This is only one example of how clients can be helped to change their perspectives on getting older. As clients experience losses beyond the more superficial one of looks - like the loss of mobility, significant relationships, and coveted living situations—the philosophical counselor can direct their attention to things that can be gained. Their longevity brings a greater perspective on the totality of life, along with a potential for greater wisdom, meaning making, and dignity (Phillipson, C., 2013).

Another source of irrational thoughts and feelings for older people is that when they see or feel traces of getting older and of aging, they are reminded that they are getting closer to death. Issues of mortality and a sense of loss stare back at them. Although we have been dying since the moment we were born, most people don't want to think about the fact that one day they will no longer be around. As a philosophical counselor, the more you can acquaint yourself with major worldviews on death and dying, the better able you will be able to help your clients develop their own world view, one in which they could envision death as coming for, rather than as being against, them. The therapeutic conception here aims to achieve an attitude of equilibrium and serenity through acceptance of the unchangeable fact of death.

When we help our clients think about competing theories of value they have about aging, they will be encouraged to reflect on the ways in which they have structured their lives up to this point. This

will help them to openly acknowledge what aging will deny to them, and to shift their focus towards an appreciation of what aging can bring to them. At the same time, as they reflect on their attitudes, they can alter those that do not serve them well. Instead of focusing on superficial things like physical appearance, we can encourage our clients to continue to enjoy themselves while engaging in valuable activities and relationships.

Exploring Meaning

Human beings are unique in their capacity to seek and create meaning. To accomplish this task at any age, they must consider the totality of their physical, psychological, spiritual, social, and intellectual realities. Here the question is, what are the specific conditions unique to the elderly that can bring the fulfillment of meaning making to their lives?

Because they are, in most cases, closer to death than those younger than them, elderly people more acutely experience the fragility and finality of life. Their experiences of transience can lead to disillusionment about how things that bring them happiness slip away, often at the drop of a hat. On the other hand, since permanence is an illusion, coming to grips with the impermanence of all things can bring about a calm view of life—one that is not easily achieved when a person is trying to hold on to what they thought they had (Baars, J., 2012).

With death closer at hand, old people come to grasp the fact that their life will, beyond a shadow of a doubt, come to an end. If they embrace this reality, they can see, experience, and understand the brevity of life and its entirety in a way they could not have before. This can lead to living more consciously and bringing the increase in meaning and satisfaction that a conscious life can yield.

Because older people experience suffering, pain, and finitude their personal identity will be challenged and changed. At the same time, their knowledge of Self and the clarification and deepening of the meaning of their life can be further developed. The acute experience of life's finitude gives older people a better chance to distinguish between the important and the unimportant. As a consequence, their life can become more fulfilling than it was before when they were free from such concerns.

When people are old, they are forced to slow down, to pause and to calmly look both backward at where they have been, and forward to what they want and need to do with the time they have left. It seems we need to have a consciousness of the significance of our finitude, limitations, and vulnerability, for which old age in provides the opportunity. These dimensions combine to form a philosophical perspective, one which helps us to know what is real. They are essential tools for what has been called by Erik and Joan Erikson "gerotranscendence," which can be defined as the process of attaining the profound as one perishes (Erikson, E., Erikson, J., & Kivnick, H., 1986)

Aging as a Limit Situation

Limits are instructive when it comes to knowing ourselves. The limits imposed by old age and death are no exception. A misapprehension of the limits of life can result in essential forms of human failure. However, since limits and the situations they impose also have the capacity to open the ground for greater wisdom, understanding their value is essential to successful philosophical counseling whether our clients are young, or old.

When an individual hits up against one or another of the limits of life - for example, an accident or illness, the loss of a relationship or job, an inability to fulfill one's hopes and desires, or old age and death - he is challenged. These kinds of situations don't have an immediate or obvious resolution. In addition, as much as he might want to, the individual cannot shape his life and reality to his own expectations, even if he tries his very best. These situations are undeniably difficult and painful. There is no way to escape them, and they invariably cause the person to feel alienated from himself, from others, and from life.

That said, limit situations also give rise to many positive outcomes. For one, they can elicit existential questions that are intimately connected to a person's way of life and conduct such as, "Who am I?" and "What do I really value?" They can be opportunities for restructuring a person's life or for making necessary restitution. Though very uncomfortable and trying, these situations where a person is at a limit offer tremendous potential for growth in wisdom and strength (Marinoff, L., 2003).

If we are lucky, old age will be a part of each of our lives. We cannot change the limits it imposes, but by surrendering, and through acceptance, we can allow ourselves to be changed. If we are to help our older clients to develop what could be called an "art of aging," we must support them in sustaining and enlarging their possibilities to grow.

We can aid our older clients to celebrate aging as a vital part of life by encouraging them to acknowledge both the potentials and the limitations, the pleasures and the sufferings, and the continuing vitality, competence, and vulnerability of aging. As in all phases of life, the yin and the yang are inseparable. We can also help our clients to approach and understand possible meanings of situations that are typical, yet generally more prevalent in old age, such as suffering and loss (Cumming, E., & Henry, W., 1961).

Even conditions that our clients cannot change or did not choose don't have to remain meaningless. We can promote their on-going dignity and their being able to meaningfully integrate limit situations into their lives by posing questions like, "Can some harmful event that strikes you as utterly meaningless still be or become meaningful?" "How can you continue to live in a meaningful way when confronted with aging, being in pain or dying? These kinds of questions can enable a client to acknowledge the realities of life - in this case, the realities of the limits of aging. Answering the question, "How can I approach this in a meaningful way?" enables the on-going dignity of being the Subject of one's life, the highest form of existential sovereignty.

Personal Narrative and the importance of Life Review

The quality of a person's existence cannot be established in a moment. Rather, it takes a whole life to truly grasp. This is one reason working with older clients can be rewarding—they have an almost completed story to tell. One way philosophical counseling can help older clients to appreciate the quality of the life they have lived is through the recounting of their lives—the telling of their personal narrative. Doing so enables clients to see their life in a more integrated and coherent way and to further appreciate it in the process.

Being born, growing up, aging, and dying are universal processes. Especially in these times when so many people feel anonymous and replaceable, it is not uncommon to find clients who don't really value their lives because "everybody does those things." But these experiences never take place in general. They happen to specific persons in specific circumstances, and they are central to forming

a person's identity. This is why it is important for the philosophical counselor to take time to listen and respond to the client's personal narrative. "What have I done?" and "What should I do?" can only be answered against a background of some knowledge of who I am, which can only be identified and articulated in the telling of the particularity of one's life story.

As people look backward, it is inevitable that emotions such as regret, guilt, and anger will come up. They can't change what happened, so what is the value of these "trips down memory lane?" What emotions are worth investigating?

As people approach death, many are more likely to consider their past through an ethical lens. This can be a time in which guilt and responsibility, autonomy and solidarity, transgressions against the self, and fulfillment have become real to the individual. Rather than thinking of stories from the past as a waste of time and energy, they can be seen as acknowledgements of one's commitments and concerns.

Strong retrospective emotions, both positive and negative, tell me who I am, what I have done, and to what I have been committed. They pose a question—"Did I/do I stand by this or that?" For those reasons, the clients' emotions as they arise within their personal narratives can play a valuable role in helping them to understand, express and declare who they were, and who they are now (Nussbaum, M., Levmore, S., 2017).

Case Study

When Jane and I began our work together, she was 78 years old. Having retired from civil service three years earlier, she moved to Taos, New Mexico from the East Coast to live closer to her daughter. In our first session, Jane reported she had been healthy all her life. Recently, however, she was diagnosed with progressive supra-nuclear palsy, a rare neurological disease that affects one's body movements, walking, and balance. The most severe disabilities start occurring within three to five years of the disease's onset, with complications that can include pneumonia, choking, head injuries, and fractures. There is no effective treatment for supra-nuclear palsy. It carries with it a fifteen-year life expectancy from the time of diagnosis.

As a result of her diagnosis, Jane felt angry and depressed. Already her mobility was compromised, and she was having trouble with her balance. Her neurologist had suggested she consider ceasing to drive. Naturally, Jane was anxious about how she would handle herself, and life, if she were totally to lose her ability to function. And, although we all know we are going to die someday, it is quite another situation when we are told that our time will soon be finite.
Towards the end of our dialogue, I briefly explained to Jane what my approach to our work would be. I wanted her to gain some understanding of the purpose of our dialogues. That way she could give her consent to it, or not. Jane was immediately excited about the idea of working towards her Highest Good, so I seized the opportunity and asked her if she could identify what the Highest Good that she could achieve through our work would be. Without much prompting, she said that even with this fatal diagnosis, she would like to die happy and at peace.

That was all I needed to know to move us on towards thinking together about a few of the practical things she would need and want to do to achieve the state of eudemonia. Although we didn't then

have time to get into the specifics, nor did we begin to exhaust the possibilities, strengthening her important relationships and organizing her estate were two things that immediately came to Jane's mind.

Before she left that day, Jane committed to making appointments with her lawyer to draw up a will and to establish a medical power of attorney, and with her estate planner to ensure her finances were in good order. She admitted that it was depressing to live in a dirty and disorganized house, so she also committed to better organizing her life by "getting in there and using some elbow grease" to start cleaning out a few drawers among the many that desperately needed it. Although doing such things may not seem philosophical in nature, the road to eudaimonia is paved, not simply with complex ideas and good intentions, but also with pragmatic actions, which much of Jane's work over the next nine months would consist of.

In our nine months of working together, Jane and I engaged in many dialogues involving various existential issues. In the beginning of our work, we started to identify the meaningful connections in her life as she related her personal narrative. Who and what did she value? Jane's meaningful connections consisted of her family (a daughter and son-in-law and two grandsons), and her close friends. She also identified with her long-time striving to be a kind and generous person. Knowing these things would help her decide where she would want to place her efforts as she moved towards greater flourishing.

Fear and guilt were powerful states of being that she had been uncomfortably but meaningfully connected to throughout her life. Principally, Jane had been plagued with the fear of not being good enough, and she continued to experience guilt over the death of her infant son, born many years before. These things contributed to her not having been able to fully claim being the Subject of her life and to having been less authentic than she would have liked to have been.

Much of Jane's fear was due to cognitive distortions in her thinking—like catastrophizing future events, telling herself she should or must do certain things, and seeing her glass as half empty rather than half full. Her mental biases had been fueling her anxiety and making her feel bad about herself. As she learned to recognize her irrational thoughts and how they were contributing to her misery, and as she learned techniques to alter them, Jane gradually became less fearful. Other things which helped her to be less afraid were meditation, making lists, reviewing the day for the good things that had happened, sharing her fears with family or friends, and listening to music.

After some probing, Jane and I discovered that her guilt over the death of her son was both existential and neurotic. Existential were her guilt feelings about not being able to prevent his death. To that end we spent time researching the possible causes of the hole in her son's heart which was present at birth and which at that time was not treatable. It is what brought about his death. We found that, since there was no conclusive cause, it was irrational for Jane to condemn herself for being a murderer.

The neurotic part of Jane's guilt involved her internalization of essentially irrelevant and irrational rules and values. For example, she thought a good person could always produce a good outcome, so why didn't she? Once again, helping Jane to see her irrationality helped her to put the issue of her son's death to rest. Now, rather than saying she has one child, she became more authentic by

telling people she had two children—her now grown daughter, Carrie, and the other a son, Andy, who had died in infancy.

Like Sartre, who informed us that man is nothing other than what he makes of himself and is solely responsible for his existence, Jane wondered what she had made of her life. Did it all add up? Could she feel proper pride in her accomplishments? Could she leave this planet feeling that she had fully harvested the life she had been given?

We explored these themes through her telling her personal narrative. As she talked, I listened for any meaningful connections to her reasons for downplaying the many good things she had accomplished, both in her career and home life. Downplaying had kept her from realizing how much her life really did add up. Among other things, Jane's daughter and grandchildren were faring well. As a state employee she had helped innumerable people find subsidized housing, and she had taken good care of her invalid mother for the last fifteen years of her life. Irrationally focusing on the negative prevented her from appreciating all that was positive.

As mentioned before, as her supra-nuclear palsy progressed, Jane was going to face numerous limit situations. Her ability to move around, to drive, and to live independently would likely be gone in the foreseeable future. Along with her diagnosis and her age, the ultimate limit situation—death—was staring her in the face. What freedoms would she be able to retain as her physical freedoms decreased? How would she cope as she confronted her finitude? How would she deal with this disease that could seemingly render the whole project of her life empty?

I suggested to Jane that she begin to look at other options for herself when the time came when she cannot live alone. We agreed she should include her family in her decision, since they will be affected by it. I led her through a Buddhist meditation on death, one in which the person rehearses all the ways they and others they love could die and in which they visualize giving up all their material possessions and any other attachments the person has. This enables the person to "die before they die."

We also discussed how, as her body deteriorated, she could continue to find ways to give meaning to her life. For Jane, there were two pragmatic things she committed herself to. First, she was going to be a good role model for her family as she demonstrated how a person can consciously depart from this world responsibly and with dignity. Second, to the best of her ability she would be kind and generous to those around her.

While relating her personal narrative, Jane identified another existential issue that had plagued her all her life—her inability to say "no." She had let people abuse and take advantage of her due to this shortcoming. She recognized that her mother and father had made her feel guilty about saying "no," and that part of the reason she didn't say "no," was because, like so many other people, she wanted to be liked. She was afraid if she said "no," others wouldn't like her.

Jane recognized that by saying "no," to the world in various ways, she would be saying "yes," to her own destiny and individuality. She would be able to display more potency in her ability to be self-defined and loving towards herself and others. She realized that to be happy and at peace, her highest good, she had to learn to say "no." I suggested she make a list of things and people to whom she needed to say "no." Two of the things, among others, that she came up with were a punishing

God and friends who made unreasonable requests. With practice, she was able to be strong, unwavering, and effective at putting her foot down.

In the meantime, during these various philosophical discussions, Jane continued to put time into real world efforts that would help her to flourish. She carried on with cleaning, organizing, and decorating her home. She spent increased amounts of quality time with her daughter and her family. She organized regular get-togethers with neighbors and became more committed to her volunteer activities. As her spirits became more and more elevated, these activities became self-reinforcing as she realized how much they added to her happiness and well-being.

Over our time together, Jane became better at accepting what she could no longer do. She hired a housekeeper and a gardener, brought home more food to go, and stocked up on items she would need for those days she just didn't feel like driving. We identified advantages of her being slowed down. She reflected on the fact that she is more appreciative, discerning, and prudent. She works harder to understand the other person's point of view. And, through this process, she gained in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

Jane committed to being the best grandmother she can be. That became her primary reason for continuing to live, no matter what she might suffer along the way. She identified being the best person possible, being an example, showing her care and interest, and being more patient and kind, as the ways she would accomplish this, her ultimate goal in life.

In the beginning of our ninth month of working together, Jane came to her session with the news that she felt she was ready to stop seeing me. She had achieved her goal of being happy and at peace with herself and her life. In addition to the pragmatic things she had done, we reviewed some of the things she had learned which contributed to her feeling that way. Jane said she is now able to look at herself more rationally and truthfully. She has a positive, supportive voice in her head, rather than one that is condemning. She is resolved over the death of her son, is less frightened, and is more committed to helping others.

About a month after Jane terminated our work, she called me on her birthday. She had been enjoying several parties and get-togethers with family and friends and wanted to let me know what a turn around this was from the year before when she could barely celebrate her life as she faced impending disability and death. For myself, I felt deeply gratified that my structured and guiding view on philosophical practice had led to such good ends. Our enriching dialogues which led to so many specific, positive changes in Jane's life are measures we could together point to which indicated the success of our concerted efforts. As a philosophical counselor who aims for the highest good of her clients, I could not have asked for more.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude with two vignettes. The first concerns me in my early thirties when I had the good fortune to read a well-written morality tale by Willa Cather entitled, "Death Comes for the Archbishop." The novella illustrates the kind of person death comes for, rather than against. Reading this story constituted the first time I had considered that a person did not have to be frightened of death—it could actually be a friend of sorts, coming towards you in a peaceful manner. Willa Cather's work remained like a Zen koan throughout my adult life, one which I have solved

more thoroughly through my research, writing, and work with older clients. I hope my work will be helpful to you and to your clients as you struggle with your own individual koans surrounding aging and death.

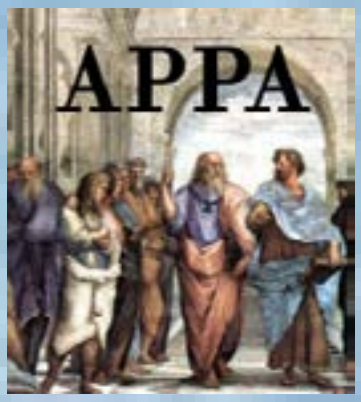
My second vignette is one more story I would like tell you related to Jane. In that same phone call I mentioned above, she told me, as part of her efforts to create a more aesthetic home, that she had moved her bed from a position of facing a wall to facing the big picture window that looks out towards Taos mountain, one of our very sacred spaces. For me, this effort of hers parallels the efforts she made in our work together. She went from facing a brick wall, to having a spiritually uplifting view of her life, and her death. In the words of T.S. Elliot, in her end was her beginning.

References

Baars, J. (2012) Aging and the Art of Living. Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press.
Cicero, M. (2016) How to Grow Old. (P. Freeman, Trans.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Cumming, E., Henry, W. (1961) Growing Old – The Process of Disengagement. NY, NY: Basic Books, Inc.
Erikson, E., Erikson, J., Kivnick, H. (1986) Vital Involvement in Old Age. NY, NY: W.W. Norton & Co, Inc.
Finnis, J. (2011) Natural Rights and Natural Laws. Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ Press.
Jones, S. (2017). A Practical Approach to Achieving the Highest Good in Philosophical Counseling. The Korean Society of Philosophical Practice. Vol. 7, 189-228.
Jones, S. (2018) A Surprising Use of Philosophy The Korean Journal of Philosophical Practice. Vol 8, 39-71.
MacIntyre, A. (2007) After Virtue. Notre Dame, Indiana, Univ. of Notre Dame Press.
Marinoff, L. (2003) The Big Questions – How Philosophy can Change Your Life. London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.
Nussbaum, M.,Levmore, S. (2017) Aging Thoughtfully. NY, NY: Oxford Univ. Press.
Phillipson, Chris (2013) Aging. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
Ruddick S. (1995). Maternal Thinking – Towards a Politics of Peace. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
Scarre, Geoffrey, ed. (2016) The Palgrave Handbook of the Philosophy of Aging. London, UK: Macmillan Pub. Ltd.
Small, Helen. (2007) The Long Life. NY, NY: Oxford Univ. Press.

Shanti Jones, Ph.d. is a level II APPA certified philosophical counselor in private practice in Taos, NM. Her research interests include philosophical counseling and practice. To that end, she has published articles on these topics not only in the Journal of the APPA, but also in other philosophical journals. She has presented her work at APPA annual conferences, as well as at the IPPC and the WPC. Shanti is an ordained priestess in the Lindisfarne Community, a Celtic branch of the Anglican Church, and a Certified Zen Human Design Practitioner.

Correspondence: shanti@barbaraujones.com



PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

Journal of the APPA

Volume 18 Number 3 November 2023

Editor
Lou Marinoff

Reviews Editor
Leslie Miller

Associate Editor
Carol S. Gould

Associate Editor
Johnson Cheung

Technical Consultant
Greg Goode

Legal Consultant
Thomas Griffith

Aims and Scope

Philosophical Practice is a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the growing field of applied philosophy. The journal covers substantive issues in the areas of client counseling, group facilitation, and organizational consulting. It provides a forum for discussing professional, ethical, legal, sociological, and political aspects of philosophical practice, as well as juxtapositions of philosophical practice with other professions. Articles may address theories or methodologies of philosophical practice; present or critique case-studies; assess developmental frameworks or research programs; and offer commentary on previous publications. The journal also has an active book review and correspondence section.

APPA Mission

The American Philosophical Practitioners Association is a non-profit educational corporation that encourages philosophical awareness and advocates leading the examined life. Philosophy can be practiced through client counseling, group facilitation, organizational consulting or educational programs. APPA members apply philosophical systems, insights and methods to the management of human problems and the amelioration of human estates. The APPA is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

APPA Membership

The American Philosophical Practitioners Association is a not-for-profit educational corporation. It admits Certified, Affiliate and Adjunct Members solely on the basis of their respective qualifications. It admits Auxiliary Members solely on the basis of their interest in and support of philosophical practice. The APPA does not discriminate with respect to members or clients on the basis of nationality, race, ethnicity, sex, gender, age, religious belief, political persuasion, or other professionally or philosophically irrelevant criteria.

Subscriptions, Advertisements, Submissions, Back Issues

For information on subscriptions, advertisements and submissions, please see the front pages of this document. For information on back issues, APPA Memberships and Programs, please visit https://appa.edu.

https://appa.edu
ISSN 1742-8181

Nemo Veritatem Regit
Nobody Governs Truth