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The Role of Philosophy in Yogatherapy

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Introduction

In this paper I want to pose the question, what could be the role of philosophy in yogatherapy. This subject came as a result of the following considerations:

I had an interest in how to use issues of Yoga Sutra within the practice of yogatherapy. We had worked out the issues theoretically in our yogatherapy training but transferring them into a useful practice for care-seekers is another question, and I suppose there is no readymade method or technique to do so.

In the last decades in the West it was mainly Psychotherapy that occurred as therapy for people in psychological crisis as well as a tool for counselling in major life crises and even as a tool for self-reflection and self-discovery.

So I started an investigation into the ideas of psychotherapy and had to find out that psychotherapy is not a consistent system of theories, but has developed a variety of different schools, that follow different anthropological and philosophical assumptions. Different schools may even contradict each other or at least are not applicable side by side. If one compares psychoanalysis and systemic approaches one will not find much in common. As a yogatherapist who is not trained in one of those psychotherapeutic schools I found it impossible to enter the field of counselling practice by the door of psychotherapy.

Yogasutra does not observe limits between psychology, philosophy and spirituality. All of them are in tight connection with each other. It is a Western perspective, that we want to discriminate between psychological and philosophical counselling. I will deal with this question in one chapter of this paper.

Why does it make sense?

In the west psychotherapists are supposed to be persons who are trained to function within the health care system. There are officially approved schools of psychotherapy and psychotherapeutic training who perceive themselves as scientifically approved as part of medical care. As a yogatherapist or as a philosophical counsellor I am – according to Austrian law – not allowed to claim being a healer or even a therapist. So what is the foundation and the discrimination behind that? This is a question concerning our practice as yogatherapists and our possibilities of self-definition.

On the other hand it is a philosophical concern in itself to clarify the common use of terms, and to clarify confusions that come up by using general terms in an unquestioned way. Some terms developed their meaning over time by influence of history and found their place in common speech, we use them and are not aware of what we talk about. Especially when we use terms like „psychic“, „psyche“, „philosophy“ or „mind“, „spirit“ we just use them often unquestioned of what we are talking about. Even translating those terms between European languages like German and English is not an easy task.

An example:

A yogateacher in Germany has a yoga school and provides yoga teacher trainings. There is a teacher for philosophy who does her job already for years. Last year she started her philosophy course in a new batch. People should pose themselves the question, „Who am I?“ People should reflect and then give a statement. It was the first time in the career of this teacher that people protested. They called her an agony aunt, somebody who without qualification wanted to experiment with their psyches.

The question „Who am I“ is a fundamental philosophical question. It is of a highly contemporary significance. There is no more religion that tells us who we are in a reliable way, brain research washes away questions of identity, the big systems which explain how the world works have lost their reliability, even natural science gives contradictory answers.

So the question „Who am I“ can be the first step into at philosophical discussion, without bothering anybody in psychic intimacy. A philosophical view of point means a perspective on oneself and others in relation to the world we are living in, including general ideas of explanation or belief. In this example obviously psychological curiosity was presumed where a philosophical point of view was intended. This simple confusion made a whole group rebel.

Terms are often conveyed from one context to another and then „party instead of work...“. So linguistic criticism is a clarification in itself, and Wittgenstein called it a „therapy“ which is a „method of philosophy“.¹

The new interest in philosophy

In the last years there is ^a ~~an~~ new popular interest in philosophy. Philosophy for long time was a mere academic discipline, which had existed drawn back in the ivory tower. Today we find a number of philosophical books in bookshelves of booksellers written by professional philosophers for a broad

¹ Eva Schiffer: Die geistesgeschichtlichen Hintergünde heutiger Philosophischer Praxis. S.47 In: Methoden Philosophischer Praxis 2010

audience.² In many talk shows philosophers are invited to explain their view of the topic. New philosophical magazines give their comments on everyday problems.

In 1981 Gerd Achenbach opened up the first Philosophical Practice in Germany. He started philosophical counselling for people in one to one talks. Meanwhile many others around the world followed and an new profession – the Philosophical Counsellor – was born.³ Prerequisite is said to be an academically trained philosopher. Special trainings for Philosophical Counselling are already available in some places and further are in development.

Starting point for Achenbach and others was the concern to revive philosophy for the questions of every day life and to get it out of universities into real life again.

Philosophical Counselling meanwhile is available in many settings. Besides one to one counselling there are seminars, workshops, philosophical cafés, journeys and business consultancy.

In the last 20 years a considerable number of books on the topic were published, in my considerations I will draw from this literary output to connect it to the question of the role of philosophy in yogatherapy.

I will apply these thoughts then on an issue of Yogasutra to reflect on how to deal with it in the practice of Yogatherapy. To clarify my point I will give some examples of my own work with careseekers.

I am fully aware that theoretical as well as practical this is a first step, further ones, more accurate, more refined and applied on a broader variety of philosophical themes may follow.

Moreover I call into question the meaning of scientific standards. An extensive part of my work went into clarifying, what does this mean for a topic like mine. I had to step back into the history of sciences which gave different pictures for philosophy, psychology and natural science.

2 cf books by Konrad Paul Liessmann in Austria or Richard David Precht in Germany
cf: Richard David Precht: Wer bin ich und wenn ja, wie viele?

3 cf. Detlef Staude: Entwicklung und Entstehung Philosophischer Praxis. S.55ff In: Methoden philosophischer Praxis 2010

Literary review

→ A good thought to have
decided to define terms, that are
too integrated with multi-dimensional
ways

For my research I wanted to bring some clarification into use of the terms psyche, psychotherapy, philosophy and philosophical practice or applied philosophy.

To understand current schools of psychotherapy I found very useful Tomas Slunecko's and Gernot Sonneck's: *Einführung in die Psychotherapie*, (Introduction into Psychotherapy) a textbook for the propedeutic studies of psychotherapy on the University of Vienna.⁴

There is a big list of literature about Philosophical Practice, a new discipline of philosophical counselling. Pioneer is Gerd Achenbach, who published a lot of books.⁵ For this paper I used the works of Lou Marinoff, founding president of the American Philosophical Practitioners Association and Associate Professor of Philosophy at the City College of New York. In his book, „*Plato Not Prozac*“ he gives a vivid illustration of what Philosophical Counselling is in his view, in case stories he demonstrates the philosophical approach in practice.⁶

Detlev Staude gives a collection of articles in his: *Lebendiges Philosophieren. Philosophische Praxis im Alltag*. (Vivid Philosophy. Philosophical Practice in Everyday Life)⁷ I drew a lot from another book, edited by the same author: „*Methoden Philosophischer Praxis*“, a collection of papers on the discussion of methodological questions.⁸ I got some inspirations from Amir, Lydia B. *Three Questionable Assumptions of Philosophical Counseling*.⁹ Daniel Brandt, philosopher and psychotherapist, gives an exploration of the relation of Philosophical Practice and Psychotherapy in his view: *Philosophische Praxis. Ihr Begriff und ihre Stellung zu den Psychotherapien*. (Philosophical Practice, its term and its position regarding psychotherapy). Discussing these questions I will refer frequently to him.¹⁰

Philosophical Practicioners draw from western tradition of philosophy. An important author in the history of the rediscovery of the very practical implications of antique Greek Philosophy is Pierre Hadot: „*Philosophie als Lebensform. Antike und moderne Exerzitionen der Weisheit*“¹¹ (Philosophy as a form of living. Antique and modern exercises of wisdom). Hadot was a classical scholar who emphasised the practical relevance of antique philosophy and inspired modern thinkers, one of the

4 Thomas Slunecko, Gernot Sonneck (Ed.): *Einführung in die Psychotherapie*, Faculas, UTB 2085, Vienna 1999

5 Gerd Achenbach: *Philosophische Praxis*, Cologne 1984

6 Lou Marinoff: *Plato Not Prozac*. Harper Perennial, New York 1999

7 Detlev Staude (Ed.): *Lebendiges Philosophieren*. Transcript Verlag, Bielefeld, 2005

8 Detlev Staude (Ed.): *Methoden Philosophischer Praxis*, Transcript Verlag, Bielefeld 2010

9 Amir, Laydia B.

Three Questionable Assumptions of Philosophical Counseling

10 Daniel Brandt: *Philosophische Praxis*, Verlag Karl Alber, Freiburg im Breisgau 2010

11 Pierre Hadot: *Philosophie als Lebensform. Antike und moderne Exerzitionen der Weisheit*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 2002

most important: Michel Foucault, who writes about practical relevance of philosophy in the third volume of his *History of Sexuality* and edited „*Technologies of the Self*“ a collection of papers on the topic.¹²

Antique Greek philosophy is quoted a lot in this literature and the major texts regarding this issue should be mentioned:

The term of *psyche* or soul, is a greek term and is a major issue of philosophy until modern psychology comes up, so Aristotle, „*Peri psyché*“, „About the soul“ could be mentioned here.¹³

I used the German translation, but the English might easily be found. *Nikomachische Ethik*¹⁴ “Nicomachean Ethics” where the ideas of a good life, of virtues and happiness are found. The other giant of antique philosophy is Plato, the major student of Socrates. In his dialogues we find Socrates' wisdom, because Socrates himself did not write down his ideas.¹⁵

My textual reference writing on yoga is mainly the *Yogasutra* of Patanjali. I used two German translations. One of my teacher R. Sriram¹⁶, which contains commentaries on every Sutra and the translation of Bettina Bäumer, Austrian indologist living in Varanasi.¹⁷ In English I drew on the translation of T.K.V. Desikachar: *Reflections on Yogasutras of Patanjali*.¹⁸

In this place other sources of quotations and learning have to be mentioned too. The teaching of Yoga Philosophy as an applied practice of wisdom is not only transferred in books but also very much in oral teaching. Only when I started studying *Yogasutra* under the guidance of a teacher, and may it be group situations, the oral explanation and transference of oral interpretations that come from a long row of teachers, the guruparampara, these teaching became alive. So it must be mentioned as source the teachings on *Yogasutra* by R. Sriram, first in his training and later on in a *Yogasutra Training* and the teachings of Kausthub Desikachar in the therapy training and mainly for this paper the Seminar of Self Transformation and Bhavana in Vienna 2010.

12 Michel Foucault: Sexualität und Wahrheit. Band 3, Die Sorge um sich. stb, Frankfurt am Main 1986

orig: Histoire de la sexualité. vol,3. Le souci de soi, Gallimard, Paris, 1984

Michel Foucault: Technologies des Selbst. Fischer, Frankfurt am Main 1994

org: Technologies of the Self, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst 1988

13 Aristoteles: Über die Seele (About Soul): In: Vom Himmel. Von der Seele. Von der Dichtkunst. DTV München, 1987

14 Aristoteles: Nikomachische Ethik. Reclam 1969

15 compare any translation of Platons Dialogues in any language

16 Patanjali: Das *Yogasutra*. Von der Erkenntnis zur Befreiung. Einführung, Übersetzung und Erläuterung von R. Sriram. Theseus, Berlin 2006

17 Patanjali. Die Wurzeln des Yoga. O.W.Barth Bern 1976

18 TKV Desikachar: Reflections on Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

Method

This project follows in its method the rules of discourse. Within a certain framework of current discussions the topic makes sense as a contribution. The questions are: How to discriminate between philosophical and psychological approach and why so? What means "philosophy" in our context and how can we transfer it into practice? These are questions currently discussed between psychotherapists and philosophers and so can provide material for a study.

On the one hand I follow theoretical reflections found in literature and use them for my own argumentation, on the other hand I prove and question my own experiences with careseekers.

In presenting a dispute I will define my position in reference to it.

„*Methodos*“, ancient Greek für method is derived from two words: *hodos* – "way" and *meta* – "to, to where".¹⁹ The term originates from Plato. In his famous academy the reflection of one's own life used to be practised as an exercise. One followed one's way of life in reflecting it silently, by bringing arguments and criticism. Plato chose the term *methodos* to name this exercise. Until then the term was not in use, since then and later until today it is a central term in various fields.

So originally method signifies the way or following a way.²⁰

In addition "meta" means to define the superordinate perspective. Meta-level, meta-theory defines the theory which reflects the theory itself.

Meta-hodos, the meta-way, the way that reflects the way already covered, the way that overviews the way.

„In the meta-position of the reflection of method we can argue about an activity, we can prove it and we decide how to go on.“²¹

Within modern technology or natural science often every step of action is defined, the method of action is arranged and repeatable. But even then the accomplishment will not always be the same, not all methods are exact instructions. A method is a way which, if we plan it, we can go more than one time.

Sometimes the situation forces us to make a detour instead of bringing direct and effective results. Even if we have expected something else we have to change the way.

Within a philosophical treatise method means following the loop way, if we avoid it by force we risk a failure,²²says Walter Benjamin.

¹⁹ vgl. Anders Lindseth: Von der Methode der Philosophischen Praxis als Dialogischer Beratung. In: Detlev Staude: Methoden Philosophischer Praxis. p.72

²⁰ Gadamer: Vom Zirkel des Verstehens. I: Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 2, p. 48f.

²¹ Lindseth: p.74

²² Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften 1, p.208

Method also means a procedure with considerateness and an underlying plan of action.

Lindseth distinguishes between methods that let some space and develop along with their subject and methods which don't let space but define their subject.²³

Methodology in this treatise does not follow the rules of methodology given in natural science but the rules of philosophical scholarly discourse. The task is to move within a current temporary discussion in a meaningful, useful and innovative way, incorporating existing opinions. I chose the way of staying open for the subject, so the subject codetermined the way, the method, so that in the end I could present it as a way of reflection which made sense and brought about useful results.

A discourse does not neglect conversational partners. So I try to stay comprehensible where academic philosophical literature may use hardly understandable lingo. I presume that readers of this text come from different corners of knowledge and may appreciate this. I also presume that readers may be more familiar with the theoretical foundation of Yoga and Yogasutra than that of Western philosophy, so I don't repeat basic information about Yoga contexts (as that would be necessary for a mere western, even academic audience) but maybe some of the history of occidental philosophy. I understand my role not only in taking part in the discourse but also in presenting it. I apologize the simple or maybe sometimes confusing quality of my English.

Following mediums of research were used:

- source texts of Yoga
- source texts of ancient Greek philosophy
- texts of canonical occidental philosophy historical and temporary
- texts following the temporary discussion about the topic
- notes taken in trainings with T.K.V. Desikachar, Kausthub Desikachar and R. Sriram
- my observations in working with groups and care-seekers and connected interpretations

23 Lindseth S. 75

Definition and differentiation between Philosophy, Psychology, Psychotherapy and Philosophical Practice

All these differentiations are demarcations of developments within the occidental history of science. In Yogasutra we find all of them in a unity. Nonetheless in our yogatherapy training a basic knowledge in academic medicine and western psychology is demanded, but not a basic knowledge in western philosophy. Why is this so? On the one hand because academic medicine and academic psychology constitute the health care system. On the other hand maybe because the healing benefits inherent to philosophy are often perceived as a part of psychotherapy. This would be no problem as long as there would be no legal differentiation between the application of psychotherapy and philosophy, but there is. Only methods based on natural scientific medicine can claim a place in the health care system.

Hence the first chapter will raise the question of the meaning of the term science in relation to psychology and philosophy as sciences. Second chapter will differentiate the two in relation to their subject. The third chapter explores the relation of psychotherapy and philosophical counselling.

Philosophy and Psychology as western sciences

Philosophy

The word philosophy is derived from *philos*, friend and *sophia*, wisdom. Generally this is translated as "love for wisdom".

The historic perspective

For a long time in the west philosophy was understood as the occidental history of philosophy beginning in ancient Greece. Like in many disciplines also in philosophy eurocentrism is the mainstream. At the best Non-European philosophies were compared (with European), but not in serious dialogues, more like a comparison of exotic flowers. Especially Indian Philosophy was received by Western scholars during times of colonialism. Max Müller could be mentioned as one of those philologists who translated a number of Sanskrit texts. Many texts are only accessible for the west thanks to their work. Nonetheless until today Indian or Chinese philosophy did not become

part of the general academic canon which a student of philosophy has to pass. A serious dialogue or polylogue is still to come.

According to the history of science in the west philosophy was called the mother of sciences or the first science. From philosophy all sciences developed in the form of secessions. They separated to find their own domain.

Aristotle²⁴ was a natural scientist, a scholar of physics, biology and astronomy, theologian and philosopher in one person. The history of science is a history of specifications. Theology separated from philosophy in the Middle Ages, it took along counselling and spiritual guidance and claimed it as domain of religion. Philosophy became a part of academic training in the medieval universities, the underlying training for all disciplines, but restricted to academic training. With enlightenment natural science separated. Sir Isaac Newton was still called a natural philosopher. Natural science formed its own domain, later medicine joined natural science to shake off quackery. Only in the 18th century psychiatry emerged as a part of medicine and so part of natural science.

Until the 20th century philosophy and psychology stayed twins, until with Behaviorism at the beginning of the 20th century the irrevocable break happened.²⁵

With Sigmund Freud²⁶ psychoanalysis and the basis for today's psychotherapies was built. For Freud the physical body as well as the psyche were subjects of a natural scientific approach, although he built the foundation of his system on philosophy. Some of today's psychotherapeutic schools are explicitly based on systems of philosophy like Daseinsanalyse or Systemic approaches.

27

In the philosophy of yoga we don't find all these specifications. The fundamental break in consciousness brought about with modern times in the west did not happen in India in the same way. A break with traditional belief systems, a radical change in perspective that made rationality to the main foundation of knowledge. Modern sciences are a product of European enlightenment including a lot of positive and negative implications. We should be conscious of this background when we claim scientific standards for yogatherapy.

24 Greek philosopher, 384-322 B.C., pupil of Plato, mentor of Alexander the Great

25 comp. Lou Marinoff: Plato not Prozac! p.21

26 Austrian neurologist 1856- 1939

27 comp. Thomas Sluneko und Gernot Sonneck (Ed): Einführung in die Psychotherapie

The meaning of scientific respectively academic standards

Is the claim for scientific standards the claim for academic standards, the claim for scientific methodology different than the claim for academic methodology? In German the term science encompasses natural sciences as well as humanities, we talk about natural sciences and human sciences, social sciences etc. Each of them developed their own standards and methods.

For philosophy scientific, resp. academic references are defined by the accepted canon, which is the occidental history of philosophy beginning in ancient Greece more than 2000 years ago. Philosophy means reflecting fundamental questions of humanity in context of discussions and ways of reflection developed within this framework. Academic philosophy is always consciously reflecting its own history. Immanuel Kant²⁸ formulated the fundamental question as follows:²⁹

What can I know? epistemology

What shall I do? ethics

What can I hope? religion

What is the human? anthropology

Still basic specific fields of academic philosophy.

We can say scientific standards in the field of philosophy arise from arguing fundamental questions within the context of the accepted canon and current discourses.³⁰ Evaluation comes from the academic community. Contributions not fitting in these standards are ignored or disqualified, p.e. as esotericism or simply popular but not serious.

Practical Philosophy finds its application today mainly in fields of ethics, eg. medicine, biology, genetics, political theory, meta-theory of social justice etc. Philosophy as a tool for reflection in everyday life or self-understanding outside of the walls of universities had been disappeared.

However its comeback is on the way, how – we will discuss later.

Psychology

The history of psychology as an academic, i.e. scientific discipline dates from 1879, when Wilhelm Wundt³¹ opened up the first laboratory working on psychological phenomena. Wundt's approach

28 German philosopher 1724–1804

29 Kant in Staude/Gutnecht p.125

30 I already mentioned above the eurocentrism of this approach, intercultural philosophy is a field within academic philosophy, which works on standards that encompass a global history of philosophy and a so called poly-log of the many voices. Not only in a comparatistic way but in respecting each other's contributions.

31 German physiologist, philosopher and psychologist 1832- 1920

counts as the starting point for psychology as science in its own right because he used the empiric methods of natural sciences and worked out the fundamentals of methodology. That means psychology defines itself as a natural science from its origins. This is an important turning point. Up to this point in history, the soul, the psyche, counted as subject of philosophy, reflection and introspection. From now on the soul, psyche starts to become an object of natural science, a part of nature that can be laid under the microscope of the scientist. Sigmund Freud who started his career as a neurologist follows this point of view in his discoveries. He esteems himself as a natural scientist, who starts to work on the soul by the means of science and at the same time by the means of the soul.

„*Psyche* ist ein griechisches Wort und lautet in deutscher Übersetzung Seele. Psychische Behandlung heißt demnach Seelenbehandlung. Man könnte also meinen, dass darunter verstanden wird: Behandlung der krankhaften Erscheinungen des Seelenlebens. Dies ist aber nicht die Bedeutung des Wortes. Psychische Behandlung will vielmehr besagen: Behandlung von der Seele aus, Behandlung – seelischer oder körperlicher Störungen – mit Mitteln, welche zunächst und unmittelbar auf das Seelische des Menschen einwirken.“³²

Paraphrase in English: “Psyche is a Greek word, in German it means: soul. A psychic treatment therefore is a treatment of the soul. One could think it means the treatment of the illnesses of the soul, but this is not the meaning. Psychic treatment means: treatment of the soul, treatment- of mental or physical disturbances- using means which directly affect the soul.”

From scientific point of view it is discussed if psychoanalysis is a part of psychology or to a greater extent a theory between medicine, neurology, psychiatry and philosophy. In Freud's self-esteem he was a scientist who created something exceptionally new, which was able to replace the old philosophy.

„Wo Philosophie war, soll Psychoanalyse werden.“³³

“Where there was philosophy shall be psychoanalysis.”

The following history of psychology and psychotherapy is the history of formation of a variety of

32 Sigmund Freud: Psychische Behandlung (Seelenbehandlung). In: Mitscherlich, A. et al. (Hg): Sigmund Freud Studienausgabe, Frankfurt a.M., Ergänzungsband, p. 17

33 Sigmund Freud: in: Daniel Brandt: Philosophische Praxis, p. 128

different schools, which follow different philosophical prerequisites and partly contradict each other.

Many schools are not intermateable.

„In der Psychologie [...] bedeutet fast jeder Forschernamen ein neues System, ein mit allen anderen Systemen unverträgliches System [...] Es ergab sich in der Geschichte der Psychologie keine zu vereinbarende Folge von Lehren, die zu einer Einheit zusammengewachsen wären und zu einer Psychologie in der Form kontinuierlich höher steigender Entwickeltheit geführt hätte, sodass diese Psychologie in sich ein festes und weit verzweigtes Feld von sich gegenseitig fundierenden Axiomen, Theorien und speziellen Methoden vereinigt hätte.“³⁴

“In psychology [...] almost every new name of a researcher means a new system, a system which is not compatible with all the other existing systems [...] In the history of psychology there is no consistent succession of teachings, which could represent an unity and could mirror a continuous development. Psychology is not a stable and complex system of axioms and theories and methods, which is somehow united.”

What is the soul? What means Healing? What is the method of Healing the Soul?

The answer will differ according to different schools, since there is no common theoretical base.

Only the common goal, namely Healing of the Soul is able to be expressed.

Brandt observes missing scientific standards: There is not much discussion on tradition and development of existing teachings, but again and again new conceptions of personality arise on the horizon of discourse. Often these conceptions are more or less speculative. Validation often happens more by popularity and discipleship than by scientific prove, more politically than scientifically.³⁵

In Brandt's view in particular schools there happens a restriction on a particular way of thinking and model of research, which again produces its own conceptions in form of hermetic theories.

Underlying ideas of man or methods cease to be questioned. A variety of rigid and simplified systems standing side by side emerge, not being able of interrelated discussion and not open for further development or change.³⁶

One common way is to form a common model of personality and use it as underlying formula for research. Well known examples are:

Freud's psychoanalysis: He uses the underlying idea of man as a *homo natura* who is determined by

34 Hermann Drüe: in: Brandt p.32

35 cf. Brandt p. 32

36 cf. Brandt p. 30

the economy of his drives.

Behaviourism: Man is an empty organism determined by scheme of stimulus and reaction.

Rogers humanistic approach: the idea of the fully functioning person. Man has an inherent potential, which at the best can be actualised.³⁷

Besides discursively (theoretically) based theories there are approaches based on natural science and medicine, using quantitative experimental methodology.³⁸

Some thoughts reflecting the area of conflict in which psychology and psychotherapy are today between the claim of scientific standards and focussing on the individual.

These thoughts may be of some relevance for yogatherapy as well.

Modern psychology finds itself in an balancing act between on the one hand medical scientific demand and the task to accompany the individual soul.

First is a rectification for its place in the modern health care system. Only clients who are classified as "ill" get financial support of the system. Only psychotherapists accredited by the system are allowed to diagnose illness.

Quotation of the German law of psychotherapy:

„Ausübung von Psychotherapie im Sinne dieses Gesetzes ist jede mittels wissenschaftlich anerkannter psychotherapeutischer Verfahren vorgenommene Tätigkeit zur Feststellung, Heilung oder Linderung von Störungen mit Krankheitswert.“ (Psych. Th, §1 Abs.3)³⁹

paraphrase: "The practice of psychotherapy is accredited for all psychotherapeutic procedures with scientific foundation, its goal is to verify psychic illness and to heal or soothe it."

Commentators see a contradiction between the scientific claim vor quantifiability and repeatability and the claim of an individual approach to the person. Psychology dealing with the individual person deals with a human being in his or her sense of self and this cannot be quantified. And if so an important part of individuality and subjectivity gets lost. Brandt feels that psychotherapy loses its subject, namely the individual soul by running after scientific standards.

With regard to its contents psychotherapy is in the same area of conflict. On the one hand it works as a remover of disturbances and illnesses on the other hand it has the goal of being a tool of

37 cf. Brandt p.31

38 cf. Brandt p.33

39 cf. Brandt p.124

development of the whole personality and its way of living.

This tension is reflected in the discussion among psychotherapists and psychologists. On the one hand there is a tendency to reduce psychotherapy to its healing function and save its reputation as a serious part of healing professions. Others think that psychotherapy would lose its central function giving up its role as a guidance for the soul.

If the goal of psychotherapy is not healing alone, what else is its purpose? Where is the border between health, normality, disturbance and illness? A broad discussion, but not our theme here. It is just to be noticed that today in the 21st century we have arrived in some kind of a therapeutic worldview. Almost everybody in every moment of his life seems to be in need of therapy. The question is if we really need therapy to meet the challenges of our lives, the normal ups and downs and crisis or if we are on the way to view the whole life as case for therapy.

In these thematic contexts we find psychotherapy today and I think these arguments may be useful as well in reflecting the role of yogatherapy. Especially if yogatherapy seeks to be recognised by scientific standards.

The differentiation between Psychology and Philosophy in terms of their subject

The term soul, ancient Greek "*psyché*" is the subject of psychology and psychotherapy. The soul, the inner life of man, introspection, the subjective emotional, motivational, cognitive, volitional aspects of human existence are understood as the psychic dimension.

This psychic dimension is analysed in all its phenomena and elements in psychology. In psychotherapy the individual soul shall be cured from its suffering and shall be supported in its maturing and unfolding. The scientific psychological research uses certain methods to bring out its subject. Therapy uses certain methods of treatment to improve the subjectively felt suffering or to remove blockages that disturb further personal development.⁴⁰

Introspection and self-reflection are tools of psychotherapy. Psychology as a science investigates in psychic phenomena, their function and structure in relation to human experience, imagination and behaviour. Subject is the subjective processes of life, the inner life. Man makes himself a subject of perception in introspection. Psychology researches the inner process and how it manifests and

40 vgl. Brandt: S 26

expresses itself. The objective world is only interesting as far as it is a condition for the psychic process, its objective reality has no relevance for psychology. Themes like nature, culture, the mind in its cultural or historic dimension is only of relevance regarding its influence on the subjective, psychic structure.⁴¹

Objectivity regarding intellect, mind or spirit is not intended by psychology and is not part of its definition. The question of how to live a life in the right way, the question of reality of life, the question of the right forms of subjectivity, questions of virtues, values and valid norms, questions of orientation and justification in the concrete process of life are not theme of psychology or psychotherapy.

The questions above are philosophical questions. The subject of philosophy claims objective relevance. In short the subject of philosophy is truth.⁴²

Of course this is a subject we cannot easily find or even define, but as human beings we also feel the urge to seek it and to claim its relevance.

Brandt formulates: „Die Wahrheit des Subjekts thematisiert die Relation von Leben und Erleben.“⁴³ paraphrase: “The truth of the individual brings into sight the relation of life and experience.”

The question of the relation of objective being of the individual and his or her feelings and imaginations of objects. The relation between feeling and what is felt, the relation between imagination and what is imagined, of thought and what is thought, of will and action, the relation of me and what I think of myself. In philosophical terms: the relation between the term and its object in respect of the self.

The philosophical question is how the individual perceives itself as a part of the world, a part of history, of culture. Which are the values he or she choses for orientation in life. How can the individual lead a meaningful life. We live our lives and we have to set ourselves in relation to things, objects and other human beings, we have to adopt attitudes.

41 Brandt p. 170, cf pages 170–179

42 Of course every science is committed to the truth, but the definition on what kind of truth the science is built on is not questioned. the respective science is only concentrated on its subject. Science relies on terms of truth which are culturally, historically developed. These terms are subject of philosophy.

43 Brandt p.172

„Der Grund, der Boden, auf dem das Verhältnis zu uns selbst und den Inhalten unseres Erlebens erst möglich wird [...] das Woraufhin des Erlebens und Verstehens unseres Daseins nennen wir Sinn.“⁴⁴
paraphrase: “What we call meaning is the foundation, the ground on which the relation between ourselves and our experiences becomes possible, the aim of our living and understanding of being.”

Our conviction of an underlying meaning is the condition of all reflection. When we reflect on the world, we have agreed that it makes sense to do so.

In reflecting on the world as a whole and in reflecting on the relation between individual and the outer world we have arrived in the realm of philosophy.

Psychotherapy and Philosophical Practice

The derivation of the word psychotherapy: In his dialogue “Laches” Plato used the term „psyches therapeia“⁴⁵

Psyché means the soul, *therapeia* in ancient times meant a companion

psyches therapeia means: a companion for the soul

Soul for Plato is the intermediate between the eternal, the immortal and the mortal, the volatile. For Plato and Aristotle the soul aspirates life into dead matter. In our every day understanding still soul is what leaves the body after death.⁴⁶

Only in the 18th century the word therapy adopted the meaning of healing in the sense of becoming healthy and then shifted into the fields of medicine.

The modern term of psyche as the subjective inner space, as the subjective part of human nature is comparatively young.

We already discussed the situation of psychotherapy today as a variety of different, partly contradicting schools. Each school respectively developed its own theory and ways of treatment.

All of them aim to heal the psyche and to support the soul to unfold.⁴⁷

44 Brandt p.89

45 Platon: Laches 185 e

46 Martina Bernasconi: Philosophische Beratung und Psychoanalytisches Denken. In Detlev Staude (Ed.): Lebendiges Philosophieren. p. 38

47 Vgl. Thomas Slunecko und Gernot Sonneck (Ed)

Philosophical Practice or Philosophical Counselling is a comparatively young discipline. It came up within the last thirty years and spread globally since then. The pioneer was the Gerd Achenbach who started his practice in 1981 in Cologne, Germany. Philosophical Counselling follows up ancient Greek philosophy in seeing theory and practice of philosophy as a unity. In ancient philosophy practising philosophy naturally meant a practice of life and life style. Philosophy aimed at the conduct of life. So original occidental philosophy gave an orientation in questions of life practice. The ideal of a practical succeeding life in terms of happiness and ethical righteousness was the goal of philosophical insight. The correspondence of theory and practice results in the realisation of the happiness⁴⁸ of the wise man.

„Der archaische Begriff der Philosophie war, schlicht gesagt, der eines Wissens, in dem zwischen praktischen und theoretischem Wissen nicht getrennt worden ist. Wenn der Begriff der Weisheit problematisch geworden ist, so hängt das damit zusammen, daß diese Einheit von theoretischer Erwägung und Beziehung auf ein richtiges Leben zerfallen ist.“⁴⁹

paraphrase: “The archaic term of philosophy was, simply said, that of a knowledge which did not discern between theoretic knowledge and practical knowledge. If the term of wisdom has become problematic, so it is because the unity of theoretical consideration and relevance of it for the right life has fallen apart.”

In greek philosophy the search for the right life and the search for the happy life become one in the question for the good life. In his ethics Aristotle defines the good life as life that combines ethics and personal well-being. Personal well-being is only to be realised in being in harmony with the world around. Personal virtues and virtues of character have to be exercised and trained. Philosophy even encompassed mental training exercises and spiritual exercises without religion.

Socrates⁵⁰ himself did not write down his philosophical thoughts. They are only passed down by his disciples like Plato. But in this dialogues passed down by Plato and in other testimonials about Socrates we can feel the transformational power which lied in his way of philosophying. Socrates moved in public places and involved all kinds of people into conversations.

48 The Greek term for this happiness is: eudaemoia

49 Theodor W. Adorno: Philosophische Terminologie. p. 186. cf Brandt p. 105

50 Greek philosopher 469-399 BC

Protagoras stated:

„Denn ich will eigentlich nur den Satz prüfen, aber es ereignet sich dann wohl, dass dabei auch ich, der Fragende und der Antwortende geprüft werden.“⁵¹

“I only wanted to prove his sentence, but then it happened that, also me myself the one who posed the question and who answered was proved.”

and:

Alkibiades stated:

„Denn weit heftiger als den vom Korybantentanz Ergriffenen pocht mir das Herz, und Tränen werden mir ausgepresst von seiner [des Sokrates] Rede; auch sehe ich, dass es vielen anderen auch so ergeht. Wenn ich dagegen den Perikles hörte oder andere gute Redner, dachte ich wohl dass sie gut sprächen, dergleichen begegnete mir aber nichts noch geriet meine Seele in Unruhe darüber [...] Von diesem Marsyas aber bin ich oft so bewegt worden, dass ich glaubte es lohnte nicht zu leben, wenn ich so bliebe, wie ich wäre.“⁵²

paraphrase:

“Far more than even the wild dancing of Cybele, his (Socrates’) speech has moved me; my heart is pounding, tears escape from my eyes, and I can see that others feel as I do. On the other hand, wenn I listened to Pericles or other good speakers I thought that they indeed spoke well, but nothing moved me nor did my soul become restless (...) However, this Marsyas moved me so much that I felt I no longer wished to continue living, should I remain as I had been before.”

Socrates developed a technique of conversation, which he called *maieutics*, the art of a midwife. In a kind of dialectic questioning he helped the interlocutor to question his own deeper being and to find himself in the centre of existential questions. He pushed people in questioning their lives and their convictions.

In the course of history the direct connection between philosophy and practical life was lost and philosophy became a merely academic study.⁵³

Philosophical practice follows up the ancient tradition. Wisdom is understood as an art of living. But today’s philosophical practice does not only follows ancient antique philosophy but draws from the whole treasure of philosophical traditions. A large variety of perspectives are quoted and used. Lou Marinoff, philosophical counsellor originating from the USA and Professor on City College New York jumps between ancient antique philosophy, European enlightenment, Romantic, modern

51 Platon: Protagoras 333c

52 Platon: Symposion 215e- 216a

53 Brandt sees the reason for this in medieval scholastic philosophy, which devaluated profane life and saw in philosophy mainly a servant of theology. p.116

an postmodern theories, East and West. He presents ideas of Buddhism, Confucius, Lao Tzu and the I-Ching to his clients. Interestingly I found no comments on Yoga philosophy, maybe he did not study it. So I think one useful output of my investigations could be that Yoga philosophy enters the international field of Philosophical Practice.

„We take philosophy out of purely theoretical or hypothetical contexts and apply it to everybody’s personal, social and professional problems. [...] Depending on your problem we examine the ideas of philosophers most applicable to your situation, those you would be most inclined to relate to. [...] I’d act as a guide to elicit and illuminate your own ideas, and possibly to suggest some new ones to you.“⁵⁴

Not all philosophers use global philosophy as a whole, many are specialised, are more at home in one or the other corner of the histories of wisdom.

An important point is that philosophical counsellors don’t try to teach people ideas of philosophy so that they understand it in the correct way, but they use philosophical ideas to question old perspectives and to bring in new ones, useful ones. Our postmodern world does not provide ready solutions or belief systems. The postmodern human must be able to find an orientation in a variety of possible world explanations, Weltanschauungen and different values, he must be able to decide, to choose, to find his way. The philosophical counsellor helps in orientation.

How does the philosophical counsellor work? His goal is to make the wisdom of philosophy accessible to his clients, so that this wisdom can enrich their life and can empower them to develop wisdom for their own life. The counsellor is not the wise, he is a guide. In the term of wisdom the philosophical quality of the dialectic of individuality and generality, theory and practice is contained. Wisdom is concrete truth, truth that is connected to persons and situations, it has the quality of incorporated knowledge. A sign of wisdom is that it proves its value in practical life. Wisdom can be called the leading term in philosophical practice.⁵⁵

„Weisheit ist die objektive Entfaltung des Bewusstseins, welche die subjektive Entfaltung des Bewusstseins impliziert [, ...] ist die Gestalt jenes reflektierenden Bewusstseins, das nicht allein an der Objektivität des Bewusstseins sich mißt, sondern das, damit so etwas wie die objektive Erfüllung

54 Lou Marinoff: Plato not Prozac. Applying Eternal Wisdom to Everyday Problems. p.6

55 cf. Daniel Brandt: p.135

ihm gelingt, bereits eine bestimmte Entfaltung des Subjekts notwendig voraussetzt.“⁵⁶

paraphrase: Wisdom means an objective unfolding of consciousness, which implicates the subjective unfolding of the consciousness. It is this form of consciousness which does not only concentrates on the objectivity of consciousness, but to be really objective, a certain unfolding of the individual consciousness is a necessary prerequisite.

Philosophical Practice aims at the evolvment of the individual, so that it becomes capable to recognize its possibilities and is able to chose. Its goal is wisdom and the capability for a good life.

Summary

We can shortly summarize: The subject of psychology is the soul, the psychic domain, its structures and phenomena. Its practical application for the individual is psychotherapy. The goal of therapy is the healing of the soul and the relief from suffering. Health is understood as well in a medical as in a holistic way.

The subject of Philosophical Practice is the truth. Truth is thought to be the underlying meaning, it requires an objective dimension not intended in psychotherapy.

Philosophical Practice helps clients in finding their personal truth. Goal of Philosophical Practice is wisdom in combining subjective and objective dimensions of life.

The subject of psychology is the soul (psyche), the goal of psychotherapy the healing of the soul (psyche).

The subject of philosophy is truth, the subject of philosophical practice is wisdom.

⁵⁶ Theodor W. Adorno: Philosophische Terminologie. p. 132, in: Brandt p.136

The role of philosophy in yogatherapy

The transformativ potential of philosophy

Perspective

How we see the world will not only change our mood but also our well-being. All of us may have felt one day, that changing the point of view or getting a new perspective on something, for instance by reading a book, could open up a new window in our outlook into the world and maybe for a moment we could feel that if we could keep this outlook we would change.

Often unconsciously we hold on to views, opinions or judgements without questioning, if we really see things like that, if this is really our opinion or if we really would judge like this.

The change or just the expansion of perspective can be a healing, liberating and animating change. The question is, how do we find a new perspective? How do we find the right perspective fitting into our situation and fitting with our personality? How can we internalise it in a way that it can become a sustainable force of transformation in our life? How can we make it consistent, so that it stays with us?

Those who have made the experience that a change of perspective is possible, will at the same time have made the experience that our views are limited, they always give us a cutout of something greater. Things can be perceived and evaluated in many different ways. If we have made this experience by really shifting our view, we will become more tolerant people, we will be able to change our point of view to understand that of others.

An expansion of the horizon of understanding normally is experienced as uplifting and enriching, even can create new dimensions of meaning.

In how we see the world we experience ourselves.

Orientation

How can philosophy give support in orientation and why should we need support in orientation? Ancient Greek philosophy was taught to be applied in practical life and life conduct and so is Yogaphilosophy. Today questions of life conduct are mainly found in the domain of wellness, fitness and esoterism. I do not talk about life style but more about the art of living that encompasses also the way we live our values, our judgement for actions. An orientation how we find our place

within a complicated world.

Especially in highly industrialised countries the need for orientation in questions of meaning and ethics seems to be big. A number of studies show that even though people are wealthy, even though they benefit from the accomplishments of medicine and science and even though they are politically free, they don't feel to lead a meaningful and therefore happy life. They feel to be under practical constraint by their jobs, their expectations. What they can achieve does not seem to make them happy.

At the same time the big general guiding principles like religion, general moral guidelines and social traditions disappear, even the idea of the never ending progress of technology or science is shaking. There are no ready made parameters how to find meaningfulness in life. So for the modern human it is a necessity to learn to evaluate and to prove what is right and what is wrong and how to lead a meaningful life. Tools of philosophy can offer the equipment for this attempt.

Left without the big and meaningful world explanation modern man is also in danger to end up in functionalism. To function becomes the main goal. There is a potential for development in professional careers to some extent, there is the goal to accumulate material property for wealth to some extent, but often these goals become a compensation for metaphysical desires.

Stress and suffering under excessive demands of the environment are common phenomena of our civilisation, caused by a lack of orientation and the feeling of being a victim of practical constraints. People feel disempowered to unfold their potential. What stays is a feeling of helplessness.⁵⁷

At the same time there are numerous offerings to fill the lack of meaning. There are religious groups, all kinds of models how to understand truth, consumer goods which promise happiness, beauty and contentedness.

Where there is no ready made model how to find meaning, the theoretical liberty to form one's life is big. Liberty is not only a freedom it is a claim and can be a burden. Everybody of us is today requested to appropriate the values that define his or her life. Not only for ourselves but also for the society we live in.

Philosophy will bring this into consciousness, it will help in developing the capacity to question and clarify our positions, in accordance with our feelings and our personality. The capacity to argue for whatever is important for us and the capacity to first clarify what is important and why will help to bring back autonomy in matters of life conduct to the individual.

⁵⁷ For the whole analysis of loss of orientation in modern life cf: Schiffer p.30-44

I have seen this in my work with care-seekers:

A woman, aged 35, again and again feels to be on the border to burnout. She has a job, two small children, the family is ready to sell the flat in the city to move to countryside, where they are going to build a house.

A very common situation and a very common kind of feeling being overloaded. Yoga practice helps a lot, relieves stress, brings energy. But the crucial shift happens with a simple reflection:

What were the steps that brought me where I am now?

Did I want these steps? Did I voluntarily do them? How the present situation is a result of these steps? Do I still agree with what I have started? So did I myself create this situation? Do I still want it and agree with it? And: If I did so – I will be also able to choose how I will go on, I am able to change the situation. I am not a victim of what happens to me.

In her case this kind of reflection helped to drop the feeling of just being thrown into too much by outer circumstances. It helped to see, that actually she does and did what she wished for and that she has the empowerment to decide how to create the next steps. The feeling of being overloaded vanished.

This is of course not a receipt for everyone, just an example.

Meaning

The analysis of expectations, making expectations conscious and question them is a necessary step to design our lives. This encompasses the questioning of cultural and social values in relation to our own values. Being conscious of these will unburden the individual. It will be strengthened in developing own values and living them. Reflecting *yamas* and *niyamas*⁵⁸ will be of invaluable help. But meaning itself is an issue. Without the underlying security of meaning we loose our foundation. In terms of Yogasutra we will loose our *śraddha*⁵⁹.

We can think on rebuilding *śraddha* in psychological way in rebuilding confidence and self confidence. We can think on rebuilding *śraddha* in a spiritual way in rebuilding faith. How can we rebuild *śraddha* in a philosophical way? In rebuilding meaning.

Meaning is connected to understanding. Actually the process of understanding itself is the creation

58 *yamas* and *niyamas*, cf. Yogasutra, 2.30- 2.32 and 2.35- 2.45

59 *śraddha*, cf. Yogasutra, 1.20

of meaning. We understand by interconnecting parts of what we have understood before to new ideas, view and thus create a new understanding and a new meaning. We weave a web of denotations, a web that will be a net to carry us. So whatever web of meaning we create together with what we perceive, we will be the creators of meaning and at the same time will be influenced by it. We can help people in creating and finding meaning and understanding.

Distance

Philosophy uses reflection, to develop a conscious perspective. To be able to reflect we have to step back from ourselves, to get some distance. May it be a distance towards ourselves, because we make ourselves the subject of reflection or a distance towards the world. Maybe we have to step back from our convictions to prove them.

“Your goal is here to adopt a disposition toward an attitude, a way of regarding your overall situation. The dictionary would tell you a disposition means a prevailing tendency, inclination, mood, or temperament. [...] But in this book disposition is another way of saying a philosophical outlook. To find yours you need to step back from the immediacy of your problem, the power of emotion, the logic of analysis [...] overarching philosophical way of looking at it, reconcile yourself.”⁶⁰

„Psychologie bleibt im subjektiven Erleben, Philosophie bleibt dem Gesamtzusammenhang des Themas verpflichtet. Philosophie setzt eine gewisse Ich-Ferne voraus.“⁶¹

paraphrase: “Psychology stays within the subjective experience, philosophy is committed to the overall context. Philosophy assumes a certain distance towards the Self.”

Summary

Personal problems can be seen in the broader framework of cultural and civilising phenomena: Stress, loss of orientation and meaning, practical constraints, the feeling of helplessness. Understanding and reflection can be a part of emancipation and a step to autonomy. The understanding that there are many possibilities to perceive and to view, that there are always alternatives to how we feel and think. Understanding reality and thus finding meaning and fulfilment is not granted but a fruit of active examination. We have to take responsibility for our lives and thoughts and by doing so will be gratified.

60 Marinoff: p.42

61 Martina Bernasconi p.44

Meaning is a result of creative understanding and is a deep urge in us as human beings. By making somebody reflect we assist his ability to rebuild his net of meaning.

A certain distance towards oneself is a prerequisite for philosophical investigation. So some mental calmness and clarity must be there. For a very disturbed mind psychotherapy or other tools of yoga might be the better option.

In this chapter I gave some themes and qualities of philosophy which might be useful as well in applying yoga philosophy in addition with other tools of yoga. I gave some examples to trace these themes into Yogasutra.

In the following chapter I will more in detail focus on only one theme of philosophy and will bring it in connection to Yogasutra. Examples of working in practice will follow.

Ethics

Ethics is a sector of philosophy. In our modern world it is quite common that ethics is confused with morality. Morality is normative and expresses the common rules of a society in form of laws written or unwritten. If morality loses its connection to its ethic foundation it can become an empty framework of directives and can even be oppressive. Ethics is the foundation of morals and need not be normative. Ethics in philosophy encompasses the reflection about what is good and what is the highest good we could long for. Rules of general morality result from our conviction what is right and what is wrong.

Many authors miss a certain basic ethic understanding in modern society. They state a lack of responsibility for society and life as a whole. Ethics confused with normative morals is quickly felt of being oppressive. It is almost a reflexive reaction to reject the discussion of norms.

„In ethischen Fragen – also in Fragen der persönlichen und kollektiven Lebensführung – wird nicht selten regressiv reagiert statt reflexiv argumentiert. So wird beispielsweise reflexartig von verkürzten und veralteten „Moralvorstellungen“ ausgegangen, mit leerer Rhetorik und flachen Stereotypen die eigentliche Frage abgewehrt. Diese Abwehrstrategie äußert sich in Sätzen wie ‚Ich lasse mir nichts vorschreiben‘ oder ‚man kann doch den Leuten nichts verbieten‘“⁶²

“In ethical questions as well in questions of individual and collective life conduct often people react instead of arguing. In a kind of a reflexive reaction one assumes abbreviated and old-fashioned

62 Eva Schiffer: p.31

ideas of morality and reacts in phrases like: Nobody can tell me how I should live. or: You cannot prohibit people from what they want to do.”

There is a historic reason for this kind of misunderstanding. We find it in the naturalistic world view of the modern world. Enlightenment has liberated the individual from paternalistic restraint and hypocritical moral of religion but the attitude of rejection itself is still there in our bones. We live if all values would be projections on a neutral naturalistic world. And like this banish the discussion about values into the realm of personal taste, whereas the general attitude is reduced on the maximization of profit.⁶³

„Der Dialog über das gute Leben ist im Laufe der Neuzeit verstummt.“⁶⁴

paraphrase: “The dialogue about the good life has fallen silent in modern age.”

„Für den heutigen Menschen scheint das gute Leben mit Lebensstil und Besitz – etwas Wohlstand, Komfort, Status, Erfolg – vor allem aber mit der Abwesenheit von Schmerz, Leid, Schwäche, Beschränkung und Sorge verbunden zu sein. Glück und das gute Leben werden als Zustand und Ziel gedacht; als etwas was wir anstreben und was wir dann „haben“. Zu den „Mitteln“, welche zu diesem Ziel führen sollen, gehören Aus- und Weiterbildung, Wissen, Kommunikation, Information, Effizienz, berufliche Netzwerke, Management, Know-how, Fitness, Einfluss und Geld.“⁶⁵

paraphrase: “ For the contemporary human being the good life seems to be connected to wealth, convenience, status, success and the absence of pain, suffering, weakness, restraints and sorrow. Happiness and the good life are thought as condition and goal, something that we long for and then we possess it. The means to reach it are: training and further training, the accumulation of knowledge, communication, information, efficiency, professional networks, management, know-how, fitness, influence and money.”

I’ll leave up to you to decide if this analysis of our times is convincing or not. I find it coherent as a diagnosis.

As a counterpoint philosophical literature points at ancient Greek ethics as “ethics of ambition”⁶⁶.

63 Charles Taylor states a “curse of our modern, naturalistic culture”, the inability to discriminate between arbitrary projections and cultural interpretations leads to an impoverishment of feeling and phantasy in our spiritual resources.

(Sources of the Self) Schiffer p.31

64 *ibid.* p. 60

65 *ibid*

66 German: Strebensethik

Eudaemonia, ancient Greek for happiness, is the goal individual as well as political action. Happiness is a consequence of activity not of possession. The good life is not good because it makes feel well. It is personal ambition which brings about a feeling of general harmony and rightness. The good life is activity, meaning and value are found in the way of living, in the practice of life itself. Aristotle talks about the concordance of soul and virtues. Virtues here are qualities of character, which have to be formed by exercise. Virtues are for instance diligence, friendliness, justice and humour. They are excellences of character, dispositions towards appropriate ways of living, not only for acting, but of judging and feeling. This kind of character-exercise in daily living needs attention, Aristotle calls it “the care of the self”⁶⁷. To be virtuous, truthful and to live a human and good life are one and the same.

The term care here denotes not only a general attitude or an attention for one’s self but in addition to it also those actions through which one cares for his Self. Actions for purification, transformation and change. This includes a number of practices and exercises, which indeed have a long tradition in occidental culture, philosophy and spirituality.⁶⁸

In modern times the discussion about the good life was outsourced in separated sectors of life and so into the private field, like ecclesiastic pastoral care, wellness and lifestyle magazines and coaching, astrology etc.

So this is a common view among intellectuals and I am quite sure that Yoga and Yoga philosophy is perceived as a part of wellness, esoteric-movement by many. We will have to point out Yoga-philosophy is a philosophy in the truest sense of the word and that verily by this back door of wellness and esoteric it has already entered minds of millions of people.

Yoga philosophy has that capacity which we described above of ancient Greek philosophy to directly interconnect philosophical insight and relevance for everyday life.

67 ancient Greek: *epimeleia heautou*

very interesting: the word *epimeleia* is related to *melete*- exercise and meditation

68 cf: Michel Foucault: The care of the Self. In: The history of Sexuality, part 3
and: Pierre Hadot: Philosophy as a way of Life

Applied ethics in Yogasutra

Yama and niyama

We can follow up the idea of excellences of character as we have seen in the ancient philosophy. We find a similar idea in the *yama* and *niyamas* the two first limbs of the eightfold way of *aṣṭāṅga*⁶⁹.

We can easily find their similarity to the antique virtues. Meditating upon *yama*, qualities linked to our environment and *niyama*, qualities linked to ourselves, we realise these qualities within ourselves, will live the qualities and thus will change actions and behavior.

“As with our attitudes to others and our environment, these priorities establish themselves and the correct attitudes develop concurrently with our rectification of errors and actions which cause problems.”⁷⁰

The qualities of character are not only listed in Yogasutra but later for each of them there is one *sutra* depicting the inner change of the person who mastered it. *Yama* and *niyama* are not a list of moral commands but a series of qualities to be exercised and internalised to transform. The idea of the “care of self” fits in here very well too. There are many motives in Yoga which could be quoted as care for Self. The *yama* and *niyama* especially fit well together with the Greek ideas of virtue, because in their simplicity they are applicable in every life, be it that of a householder, a professional or a monk.

And in their openness to the world they interconnect the attention on the spiritual growth of the individual self to the way we are living together with others and the environment. So the placement on the first and second place in the eightfold path is not by accident. The whole practice of Yoga stays without effect if we neglect virtues regarding other beings and ourselves.

Bhāvana

If we esteem *yama* and *niyama* as qualities to be actualized fully by permanent exercise we can go on to the next term of Yogasutra, which makes clear that the Sutra talks about more than just theoretical ideas. It is the term *bhāvana*.

Sanskrit *bhāvana* derives from the root *bhū-*, to be, to become, to manifest

69 Yogasutra, 2. 29

70 T.K.V. Desikachar: Reflections on Yogasutra. p.64

It means the manifestation of a theme or a quality by the whole person by making it a permanent focus of the mind. *Bhāvana* can become an exercise all around the clock as an anchor for the attention. It can also be part of a regular practice of concentration which can lead into meditation. So *bhāvana* is not a quality itself but means the way how the mind starts manifesting a quality. It includes focusing the mind, concentration, but also imagination, and an idea of what is the quality to be manifested might be to find a way into the quality, even though the first imagination and idea may change and the intensity of the quality may increase. By practising and repeating the focus into the *bhāvana* a quality manifests in the person which will have an impact on action, on thought, on environment. The quality established takes up space within the person and lets other facets of the person step back, namely what is called *antarāyas*⁷¹, or hindrances in Yogasutra. So *bhāvana* initiates a transformation process.

Bhāvana is not emotion even though it can be focused on emotion. It is a focused attention towards the quality of emotion. It prepares the vessel in which emotion can flow.

Focusing on *bhāvana* needs a calm mind, so all the yoga practices we know will support it. It must be practised otherwise it will become stuck as an idea of the mind, it will not unfold its potential.

Bhāvanas can become themes of meditation or anchor for the attention in every day life, or both.

Many themes, like the above mentioned yamas and niyamas are appropriate to become a *bhāvana*, many of the concepts of the Yogasutra and we won't list them all here.⁷²

There are two kinds of *bhāvanas* of which Yogasutra talks explicitly as "*bhāvana*", I will highlight both here.

pratipakṣabhāvana

Yogasutra 2.33

vitarkabādhane pratipakṣabhāvanam

When these attitudes are questioned, self reflection on the possible consequences of alternative attitudes may help.⁷³

71 Yogasutra, 1.30

72 A famous example for the intensity of a bhavana can be seen in Mahatma Gandhi who made ahimsa and satya his leading principles

73 Translation of T.K.V. Desikachar, p. 64

Patanjali: Yogasutra, 2.33 in German translation of R. Srirams, p.127

Unsicherheit in Bezug auf die Umsetzung von Yama (den Disziplinen im zwischenmenschlichen Verhalten) oder Niyama (den Regeln des Alltagsverhaltens) lässt sich durch Bhavana (die intensive Einstellung) auf das Gegenteil von dem, was wir für richtig halten, lösen (Bhavana auf die Gegenposition)

German translation of Bettina Bäumer, p.120

Bei einer Behinderung durch störende Gedanken soll man über das Gegenteil meditieren.

These attitudes are the *yamas* and *niyamas*. So if there is a doubt or an insecurity regarding these qualities the intense focus on the contrary – quality is recommended.

pratipakṣa derives from *prati-* counter, contrary and *pakṣa-* wing

The intense focus on the contrary wing, will help to clarify if an action is in accordance with *yama* or *niyama*, or if the decision, or only the imagination of a situation is in accordance with the quality intended. My position needs to be proved by reflection. Focus on the contrary may mean to put myself in someone else’s position and then to prove of my perception is still the same. Or if by changing perspective my attitude has changed or my attitude is affirmed. *Pratipakṣabhāvana* provokes a change of perspective to create a distance from my own view and from the situation. It forces the mind to move, it is a deeply philosophic tool.

Sutra 2.34⁷⁴

“For example, a sudden desire to act harshly, or to encourage or approve of harsh actions, can be contained by reflecting on the harmful consequences.....”⁷⁵

Sutra 2.34 specifies how reflection on the contrary may work.

I shall leave my own standpoint, to prove my motivation, and if I am not the committer if am in complicity with the committer, or if by just looking away and let something happen I am involved as well. Is there a motivation of greed, anger or ambiguity and will it lead to suffering or fear to anybody? Is it intense or moderate?

If one really proves his attitudes in this way the ethical foundation is strong. The best action for the person and all beings around is intended.

maitri, karuna, mudita, upekṣa

Yogasutra 1.33

maitrīkaruṇāmudtilpopekṣāṇām sukhaduḥkha punyāpunyaviṣayāṇām bhāvanātaścittaprasādanam

74 German translation of R. Sriram: Sich intensiv auf das Gegenteil einstellen bedeutet, dass wir unsere bevorstehende Tat hinterfragen: Zieht sie mich in Richtung Verletzen, Lügen, Verunreinigung, Unzufriedenheit, usw.?

Wenn ich nicht direkt Täter bin, bin ich vielleicht der Veranlasser der Tat oder der freudige Zuschauer? Hat die Tat Gier, Wut oder Unklarheit als Motivation? Ist sie mild, mäßig oder intensiv? Wird sie enlose Folgen (Leid, Verwirrung, Angst...) mit sich bringen? p.128

75 T.K.V. Desiskachar: Reflections on Yogasutras of Patanjali, p.65

“In daily life, we see around us people, who are happier than we are and people who are less happy. Some may be doing things worthy of praise and others may be causing problems. Whatever be our usual attitudes towards such people and their actions, if we can be happy for those who are happier than ourselves, compassionate towards those who are not as happy, pleased with those, whose activities are praiseworthy and remain undisturbed by the errors of others, our minds will be very tranquil.”^{76 77}

The qualities or virtues to be actualised by *bhavana* are four:

maitrī, love or friendly affection

karuṇā, compassion

mudita, appreciation and enthusiasm

upekṣa, discernment

We can understand these as being deeper and broader than *yamas* and *niyamas*. Each of them put into practice will have a huge power of transformation.

We all know them as a kind of emotional states in reacting towards other humans or towards things or situations. Situations may evoke them within us in a more intense or more moderate way. Now it is recommended here to us to establish them within in us in a refined, more sustainable and adequate way, adequate means appropriate for the object or situation.

Object or situations are listed in the Sutra as well: a *sukha*, happy person or situation deserves an attitude of love and friendly feeling from our side, a situation or person in *duḥkha*, suffering deserves compassion, a positive situation or successful person deserves our supporting joy and appreciation and a negative action or person deserves our clear rejection. If we so react and act our mind will be clear. I think here we are near the good life of Aristotle. Appropriate feeling not for the comfort of our soul, but for the rightness of action and reaction itself proved by a calm *citta*.

Citta is more than only mind, it is the whole psycho-mental being.

But we should not confuse or misunderstand *maitrī*, *karuṇā*, *mudita* and *upekṣa* with just emotional states. They are more attitudes manifested within the whole person or character. An excellence of character like mentioned above, they result in an all over refinement.

76 *ibid*, p.35

77 Translation of R.Sriram: *Citta*, das meinende Selbst wird allmählich klar, wenn wir uns aus inneren Überzeugung, jeweils freundlich, hilfsbereit, begeisterungsfähig und verzeihend gegenüber Menschen verhalten, die sich in Situationen des Glücks, des Unglücks, des Lobenswerden oder Ächtenswerden befinden.”

Translation of Bettina Bäumer: „Die Verwirklichung von Liebe, Mitleid, Heiterkeit und Gleichmut in bezug auf Freude und Leid Gutes und Böses (führt zur) Abgeklärtheit des Geistes.“ p.63

The four *bhāvanas* have to be exercised with full attention.

What are the ways of exercise?

Reflection:

A person may reflect how these emotional states already appeared in his life and in how far he thus can follow what is meant in the sutras. There might be concrete examples. It might happen that a person gets an easy access to one or two feelings but not to the others. This does not matter too much, working into one quality and deepen it will make more accessible the other as well.

We can ask ourself what was the situation? Is it always the same kind of situation which brings about a feeling of the *bhāvana*? Was it only once in special situation? How did it feel, what quality did it reveal in me? How did my perception change in that moment? How did my action change? How can I focus my attention to give space to this quality in my spirit?

Or if we take the way of *pratipakṣabhāvana*:

When was it impossible for me to feel in the appropriate way. For instance in the presence of a happy child I feel just nerved or in an situation, when I am betrayed why I could not react clearly rejecting? etc. And why so?

Situations to tie on might be different for different people but the qualities themselves are seen as inherent to our human nature and thus can be developed by everyone who really works for it.

Meditation

It might happen that a person feels a very deep response in himself for one quality, for instance *karuna* and thus it makes sense to make an object a theme of mediation. One of the *bhāvanas* can have the potential to bring about a deep transformation.

An example for a person who had deeply actualised and thus transformed her personality, her life and her environment might be Mother Teresa.

Action

The actualisation of the four *bhāvanas* will show in the actions committed by a person. The qualities actualised in a person will be perceived by others and will have an impact on our actions.

At the same time *bhāvana* can be exercised in action, acting with an attitude of friendliness, compassion, uplifting appreciation and clarity.

There is not one or two methods we can learn, it has to be understood by concrete lives, otherwise it stays an empty idea. But there is no end to the creativity of the care-provider to make *bhāvanas* accessible to care-seekers.

And as care providers we should always be open to let creativity also to our care seekers. We should not try to persuade them that the Sutra is really good and they should practice the *bhāvanas* and we should not try to teach them the correct meaning, because we have understood just in this or that way. Correct teaching of philosophy might find place in a yoga teacher training, in a situation of therapy the care-seeker needs space to develop his own understanding. So we should let enough space for individual interpretation. Own understanding means access to the building of meaning, and will enable the care-seeker to integrate the concept in a productive and lively way into his life according to his understanding. So always new facets of meaning and interpretation may be drawn from the Sutras.

Examples for the application of the concept of bhavana in yogatherapy

The four bhāvanas in a Yoga Seminar

In a teacher training group two ladies were pregnant at the same time. One should give birth in December the other one in February. The first baby died just before birth within the womb of the mother. "He was born, but he did not open his eyes" were the words of the e-mail she wrote. The group reacted very supportive, they wrote a card and sent it to hospital. She accepted the support positively, wanted that we should light a candle for her during seminar and recite. So we did. And she really felt carried by the group. Five weeks later she came to the next seminar, everybody was sensible for her situation. This time the second pregnant lady was not there, she was going to give birth soon.

The real difficult situation came after again five weeks when both of them should come together again in a seminar. One who had just lost her child and the other who had just given birth and wanted to bring their baby along. Both ladies had their yoga practice according to their very different situations but this was an new challenge now for both of them. The first one felt a great fear of seeing the baby and felt it was too early for her to be in confrontation with this situation, she doubted if she should come and thought she might not bear it and would have to leave the room. The second too was overextended, having to deal with a new born and being confronted with the suffering of the other one.

The day was prepared on many levels, conversations on the phone, both of them brought a person for their personal assistance, one a friend, the other one the father of the baby to help taking care of the baby. There were two candles, to fulfil a wish of both, in the room to welcome both of the babies.

I decided to start the weekend with a theme of Yogasutra: The four *bhāvanas*

The reason was: starting with practice would have meant that everybody is focused on him- or herself on his or her mat. Starting with recitation would have touched the emotions directly. A silent start in meditation would have brought the danger to fall into mourning too. Starting with philosophy meant focusing on something outside of oneself, but at the same time staying in contact with the theme of emotion, which should not be excluded. It meant staying together, reflecting discussing together not each one concentrated on himself, it meant giving space and let space and being held by the group, not for one's sake or anybody's sake, just for the interesting theme which was on the programme.

We did not go too much into depth for the beginning, I asked the group to keep the ideas in mind over the weekend, we would come back to it in the end.

There were some sensitive situations during the days, but both stayed and gave their best.

On the last day of the seminar we came back to the topic. It was presented in a neutral way:

We react in different ways towards our environment: If we are moved by the happiness of a friend we react with love, moved by the suffering of a friend with compassion, moved by a friend who has done something great with joy and appreciation, moved by the betrayal of a friend with calm distance and eventually with forgiveness.

We discussed all kinds of examples, and refined the concept of each of them, *upeksa* came out to be the most difficult. There was no silent reflection or meditation.

After the seminar the lady who had lost her child came to see me.

She said that this was really a lucky coincidence that we just now came to this topic. She had found herself in many of the ideas and also the theme of getting distance was important for her. She had also realised that she had to collect all her attention to get through the seminar, consciously being with her inner theme not putting it aside. She consciously saw and heard the baby one time, another time she practised but could not do both same time. This also was, she felt, a kind of attitude within the situation. It gave her the insight that with this attitude she could master the situation actively and at the same time had the feeling to grow by it, it gave her the confidence that one day she will be able to come back to normal life being stronger than before. But still it is a way there.

My analysis is: To pick out emotions and how we deal with it as a central theme, but on very general base, made it possible for her to reflect the one or other point without getting too near to her wound. There was some distance towards her suffering but not the ignorance or diminution of it. She could deal with her situation, without being personally asked for it, everybody could do so as well. She could think along and establish connections however she liked, could find positions, step in step out however she liked and most important: could connect her personal situation to something more great, in a greater context. In the end she invigoratedly left a situation which she had feared so much before.

For me this is really an example of philosophical practice. It shows how philosophy can work consciously applied on 1) a certain situation in a certain framework and 2) for an individual person. These aspects we all know from one to one work in yogatherapy of course have to be considered always. There is no receipt. One has to go with the individual.

When I entered the weekend I was not sure if it would end up in a psychological disaster. But after all myself grew with it too. It was the situation and the persons who led my decisions, which candles, which flowers, which themes ... The same situation with other persons around might have been different. The chosen theme was an important part, it developed an dynamism which was carried by its meaning. The meaning bore fruits, although it was not the first goal to establish a correct understanding of the text. I think the choice of the theme, the topic, the text is in essential point in philosophical practice.

The four bhāvanas as a matrix for every day life

After this seminar another participant came to meet me. She felt that she had understood the *bhāvanas* in a certain way and wanted to get clarification. She had understood the four *bhāvanas* as a kind of grid pattern in which she could observe her own reactions in the relation to the situations of every day life. If the situation is happy it is easy to be happy, to feel love, to be open and full of affection. But what if I don't feel happy and open? Maybe the situation is not really happy or it is me, I am not able to love or to open up maybe. If there is suffering around me, do I react with compassion or ignore it? Can I be joyous with somebody else's success? If a situation becomes dislikable can I step back and get clarity? She made *bhāvanas* an instrument for self perception. And she made another point: Does *bhāvana* mean also an attitude towards myself? And she gave an example: She had a conflict with her seven years old son, she observed her own impatience and disapproved it. Can she get a distance towards her own impatience and can she forgive herself? And if forgiveness is within the idea of *upekṣa*, isn't that there are situations and

actions too bad to be forgiven? Is understanding by stepping back and perceiving with discernment in every case forgiveness?

It is remarkable that this lady who was in the same seminar like the first one had taken home another input. She took a session with me to clarify it and to bring it in relation to her own life. In her case the interpretation accentuates differently, it is thanks to her creativity of understanding that she finds another access. But in both responses to the theme we clearly find the theme, both are right, are correct. The topic can be read in different ways. The variety of the effectiveness of a theme emerges from the hermeneutics of the text in relation to the respective life.

Applied philosophy in a long-term process of yoga-therapy

This case story is to demonstrate how the elaborated ideas come into practice within a process of yoga therapy.

This is not the place to describe the whole therapeutic process in all its details of how all the yoga tools were used, but to show how specifically philosophical ideas found their way into the process and what was their effect within the process. Nevertheless the gross outlines of how yoga was used as a whole to meet the needs of the person are given, so the situation can be understood appropriately. Structural details of her spine etc. are not mentioned here, even though they were of course taken into account to design the practices.

This is the story of a Lady (L.) of 36 years, who suffered of panic attacks when she first came for a yoga class. We then met over two years and still meet. The process encompasses twenty classes between sixty minutes, ninety minutes and two hours, as talking is an important need of her. There would have been more than 20 sessions, but in the beginning she quite often cancelled classes, because she did not feel stable enough to move in public traffic, weakness and fear were too strong. Her profession is being a teacher and this always caused a lot of stress on her and partly she was not able to fulfil her responsibilities.

When L. came for the first time she has had a number of panic attacks in the months before, she described herself as being completely exhausted after a divorce and after having refurbished an old house she has inherited. She felt she could not breath deeply, she felt existential fear, as she had no fix job but teaches language courses, she said, she felt like in a corset, she had a heart arrhythmia, one heartbeat missing from time to time (that is what she reported, I never could verify it by taking her pulse), she felt "pressed out like a lemon", her nose was chronically blocked, she had a feeling of heat going to her head. The Pulse showed Vata-Pitta and was weaker on the right side. This first

time it showed no missing beat and no irregularity, a rate of 68.

She was in psychotherapy for 6 months, Gestalt therapy, she met her therapist on a regular base and also phoned her up in situations of emergency. She stayed in psychotherapy along with yogatherapy. Within her therapy she had learnt analysing her situation, and every time she came, she brought along new images to describe her situation and brought a lot of explanations about herself.

Like: "I am in a crisis and have to rediscover myself, I don't have to make everyone happy, I should not take everything personally." It was obvious that she became very nervous when she described her problems, her voice started trembling and became higher.

We started the process in August. From August to October there were four classes, there were some appointments which she had cancelled. The practices were altogether calming. Two practices a day, morning and evening practices, prolongation of exhale, some sound, some palming, education of breath, her theme was letting go.

From the beginning on I noticed a strong mental entanglement she had with her problem, I could hardly stop her talking and explaining, and she insisted on talking, preferred to take longer classes than missing talking besides practice. I decided to first work on pacification and later on seek a way to bring in some kind of introduction of *upekṣa*, distance towards her Self and her situation. In this period there were panic attacks from time to time, mainly during the night before teaching.

There came a turning point from the 5th to the 6th class:

Panic attacks had stopped, she felt „wonderful“, she again felt a joy to live. She had arrived on metro and had even enjoyed the musicians there, whereas before she had had hard times to enter the metro at all. In her opinion the turn had come through the use of *śraddha* Mantra along with the practice and also in Meditation. In addition, in our last talk, we had mentioned the sentence: „Everything that comes is good.“ This phrase was the result of the observation, that actually now things turned out very well in her life, and she was still frightened by every new day. When she repeated the Mantra and the phrase all tensions in her back softened supported by some arm movements. Also the notion of a clear discrimination between the practice she does for herself and the teaching.

Everything went well for three months, then she accompanied her grandmother on her deathbed. She again exhausted herself, the phrase was no more valid, because she could not accept this death. She had had a deep relation to her grandmother, tensions in her back came back, the nose was blocked again, at least there were no panic attacks.

This was the first time she talked to me about the origin of her fears. It was completely natural to her to locate the origin in this psychological explanation and I suppose she has worked through this with her psychotherapist. And this is the story:

When she was 13 years old, she had a violent English teacher. He used to press two finger against the throat of the kids and used to say, „See, I need only two fingers to choke you.“ He shouted a lot in class room and pointed with fingers on kids. One day he took the scarf she had a around her neck and pulled it together, she could not untighten it immediately and had the feeling to suffocate. After this day every time before class her hands became blue of fear. Since then she always felt fear when she felt not to succeed immediately in a situation. When she was 26 heart arrhythmia started. For the next six to seven months of our process she was in an up and down of better and worse times. We went through different ideas and mantras, because she brought new ideas again and again. So she wanted to reflect on *santoṣa*, wanted to recite the name of Ganapati, because he is the remover or obstacles etc. In the bad phases there were severe tensions in the muscles of the back and she explained that her therapist saw this as a typical symptom of exhaustive depression. There were also some irregularities of heartbeat, the panic attacks did not come back. She again and again got involved into conflicts with colleagues, because she put a lot of effort in relationships and joint projects, put didn't get the expected gratefulness or engagement of others. She felt to exhaust herself for others. But she was able to follow her profession, there was a tendency of continuous bettering.

In the following I will show some of our conversations of the following months up to now, where the ideas de-identification, distance, *upekṣa* and change of perspective came in.

Situation one:

At this point the reason of the momentary down was the illness of her dog, who probably would die and that disturbed her sleep. Severe muscle tensions disappeared, now there was a weakness of muscles and trembling. There was the fear of a backlash and again there was conflict with a colleague.

We talked about some practical interference, how to clarify the situation and how to help her sleep ...

L: „Everything is too big for me, I am eaten up by things from the early morning on. I am not able in this situation to save space for my practice“

I told her as a practice from now on she should not answer her e-mails right away but should wait for 2-3 days, not answer phone calls immediately, keep a space between them and herself. I explained the idea of distance, actually the idea of *upekṣa*, but didn't call it like that. I gave her the practice to first take space for herself in the morning, to not go into her normal mental reasoning straight away, just doing her practice, even without reasoning like, „I do this to strengthen my self

confidence.“

So on the one hand get distance from things, distance from own mental reasoning.

On the other hand we discussed her idea, always to work for others because she had a lack of self-confidence. If she just did what she did without identifying always with this feeling I am giving, I am giving and implicitly expecting something for it, people would react differently when she clearly could claim for her part. So also in relation to others she is asked to get into a position of more distance and de-identification with her acting.

The practice should help her to reinforce in herself, what we had worked out in the conversation.

Situation two:

A conversation

L: I am completely jazzed again. I had a class yesterday and became so nervous again as I had not been for a long time. I wanted to teach a very interesting topic but then felt I could not, it would not work out like I wanted and so I started trembling and felt fear.

Me: Fear not to be able to express in an adequate way?

L: Yes I felt too small to do it, I made pressure on myself. I felt tears coming but could manage to make a joke, so that nobody realized.

Me: People did not realise? How did they react finally?

L: Nobody realised, they really liked the class.

Me: This can happen normally in situations of teaching that things work out in a different way than we have planned. But people liked it?

L: Yes.

Me: Isn't that a good experience that you were not in a good state at that moment but you were able to teach in a way everybody was happy?

L: (she starts laughing, her voice stops trembling) Oh yes!

Me: And who could manage that in such a competent way? Who made a joke to save the situation? Who had the overview what to do in the right moment?

Me: (She laughs all the time) It was me!

A spontaneous shift in perspective on the whole situation happened in this moment and the identification could shift to a positive view of what had happened and on how she acted.

We then had a conversation on the inner perceptive authority, who made her capable to depict her experiences again and again so clearly. And about the shift of identification to this perceptive authority.

Some real change of perspective has happened in this class.

Situation 3

Some months later ...

L: Three days ago I climbed up the stairs, suddenly I felt the fear coming and then the whole scenario appeared before my eyes, I would have to go to hospital.

Me: Was it a panic attack?

L: No, I calmed down and actually nothing happened. I even worked that evening, a part of myself did not engage. And then yesterday I had so much energy, did a lot of asanas, I felt no blockage, no muscle pain. I did even asanas I am normally not able to do.

In the following conversation we established the thought that some tastes of panic attacks and fear, some tastes of the old patterns may come up again and again but that there is an authority in herself that is able to stay centered. This was shown by her own expression: the whole scenario came up, she expressed it like watching a drama. If this authority gained more and more stability, old patterns might lose their influence more and more.

But even in the good times it is necessary to stay centered, because then she tends to exhaust herself again in too much action and engagement.

After the conversation, we did a quite physical intense practice. In the end of the practice I let her do a meditation: Just sit quiet, feel if there was a place in her body where she felt at home, where you she could stay while she watched and felt her body, her breath, her thoughts, her personality, her feelings, whatever came and went.

I let her sit for a while, while I drew the practice and watched her.

Afterwards I asked her:

Was there a place in your body, where you felt home?

L: Yes and I was astonished, I had expected it in my belly, but then I was drawn to my heart very clearly, even though I am very delicate here. Then there came a big silence.

I understood something new. When I am present within myself, all other things become smaller and they are more far away. I can fill the space in myself, other things stay outside.“

She then spoke about her misunderstanding, that only by losing herself into things, she thought that she would live intensively, to feel intensively. But when she was quiet within herself, she more easily could watch things as they are.

Results, Conclusion, Future Prospects

Philosophy here is seen as a tool of yoga-therapy. It's role in counselling can be discriminated in current discussions among psychotherapists and philosophers. While psychotherapy works in the fields of psyche, the realm of subjective self-perception, philosophy works in the field of general perspectives and has a claim of objectivity towards truth.

Functions of Philosophy in the therapeutic process

Sense-making

Active understanding and reflection helps to create meaning. Not only a meaning which runs behind reality to understand what is going on, but creative meaning which creates a feeling of fulfilment and liveliness.

In Yoga-therapy this happens partly by talk, partly by exercises initiated by the therapist to make understand. Not the correct understanding of philosophical concepts but the sense-making, meaningful understanding, the care-seeker who actively produces sense for himself is in the focus of applied philosophy.

Sense or meaning functions are rebuilding trust (*śraddha*) and liveliness.

Becoming clear about one's perceptions and positions

Often it is unconscious to people that they permanently judge their environment. They have ideas of what is right and wrong without being conscious of it. Becoming conscious of one's underlying value system, taking a position consciously will help to clarify one's decisions and actions.

Self-articulation

As soon as people are consciously deciding for their values, articulation to others helps in dealing with others, be it in conflicts of concerted actions.

Change perspectives

A change of the point of view can influence well-being and health crucially. That can mean a radical change or just the insight that more than one point of views are possible. If there can be an overview over more than one points of view, tolerance and understanding may emerge.

In a very radical sense of the word, change of perspective is *the* cure recommended in Yoga

Philosophy. If the change of perspective makes possible a de-identification of *citta* and *drsta* the person is liberated from all suffering. In little dosages we can introduce this kind of loosening the tie between the perceiver and his identification with what he perceives.⁷⁸

A breaking up of egocentric self-referentiality

Philosophy's view goes outside into the world. It's subjects are matters of truth, ethics, the development of an attitude towards the world. It might make sense in some situations after a time of self-referential introspection to orientate again outside, even if one is not completely cured or healed. Sometimes an engagement into something outside ourselves or in something greater than we are ourselves may have a healing effect.

To be able to reflect, to take a certain distance towards the Self, to change perspectives a certain mental and psychological health is requested. In some cases a psychiatric or psychotherapeutic approach may precede. On the other hand, Lou Marinoff is convinced, in some cases people don't need psychotherapy because they have philosophical problems, so by treating them in psychotherapy they don't find help.

How does philosophy integrate in the therapeutic process

In my examples and in the case story, I showed different kinds of application

- 1) A topic can be chosen by the therapist to initiate a reflection. Instruments are conversation and reflection.
- 2) A topic can be worked out by meditation, it may happen that new insights occur or that something felt vaguely is internalised more intensely.
- 3) In the case story the process worked on more than one level simultaneously:

The idea to introduce *upekṣa* was there in my mind very early, but I decided to stay with pacification first, pacification of breath and nerves. Over time in many of the stories the care-seeker brings along the issue of taking a step back occurs in different ways. The idea is there at the back of my mind, so I recur to it in the respective contexts of her situations. Simultaneously she develops in her whole practice, the mind calms down, nerves become more stable, breath calms, she gains

⁷⁸ cf. case story

experiences of silence and peace within herself. So all the time the practice of *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *mantra* and some meditation is there besides my effort to introduce some kind of *upekṣa*. The insight grows on many levels, not only an intellectual one. In the conversation, when I ask her: “who has mastered the situation so confidently?” and she answered “It was me” there happened a spontaneous change of perspective in that moment. But she already had went a long way before this could happen.

Later it happens the other way round, at first distance is a theme of conversation, then in meditation she gains a new experience of it. Conversation laid a framework of meaning, nevertheless the following experience was startling but made sense within the framework of meaning.

In this case study the philosophical input is carried by myself as the therapist, it recurs again and again, it is my trace. Many other ways of interventions might be possible, some of them I showed in my examples.

Outlook

In this thesis I took a long way to carve out territories – between disciplines, between the claims for scientific and professional standards. I did not want to write down my personal ideas without placing them into a general context of discussion.

One future prospect which emerged in front of my eyes is that Yogaphilosophy deserves to be part of Philosophical Counselling, given this is a profession working along with the whole treasure of philosophy produced in the course of human history. This might be a by-product of this thesis.

Within Yoga-therapy I pointed at philosophy as a precious tool we can handle along with other yoga tools. I wanted to point out what means philosophy in contrast to a psychotherapeutic approach, this may give us the confidence as yoga-therapists to study yoga philosophy and work with it without being trained psychotherapists and to argue about our approach.

For professional philosophers among yoga-therapists it might be an additional possibility to define their profession as philosophical counsellors. Like for doctors, physiotherapist or psychotherapists it is an additional legitimation in the professional field.

With regard to contents it would be the next step to work out the ways of philosophical interventions in more case studies and examples in a variety of philosophical themes which are provided in the rich tradition of Yoga philosophy.

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