

A Study of Philosophical Midwifery

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In this paper I propose to cover the following four areas concerning philosophical midwifery:

- (1) Philosophical Midwifery and the transmission of the pathologos;
- (2) verification, prediction, and validation in Philosophical Midwifery;
- (3) how Philosophical Midwifery differs from philosophical counseling and psychotherapy;
- (4) Philosophical Midwifery as a new paradigm and exemplar.

Brief history of Philosophical Midwifery:

Following the publication in the early 1960's of my two articles exploring dialectic as a frame of reference for the dialectic as a mode of psychotherapy and the founding of the Noetic Society for the Study of Dialogue and the Exploration of the Dialectic in 1967, a philosophical midwife program under my direction was begun in 1978 for the Noetic Society and has continued to this day.

Philosophical Midwifery as defined here is an adaptation of Socratic midwifery that utilizes a dialectic as a mode of psychotherapy and as a method for philosophical counseling.

As a dialectic it follows a formal course of questioning; these questions are designed to surface unsuspected false beliefs about oneself that are irreconcilable with the attainment of one's most meaningful and profound goals.

These false beliefs are unspoken conclusions one has drawn from scenes early in one's life, when parents or authorities used critical situations to express their own deeply felt opinions about themselves, the world, and the child. We call such false beliefs the pathologos. There may be several of these pathologos' that are linked together forming the basic structure of one's image of oneself.

The pathologos is supported by themes or ideas that express the pathologos in a secondary way. These themes, in turn, become internalized and turn against oneself as a barrage of thoughts, attitudes and even gestures.

So central is this image of oneself that those in PM face a crisis when they must choose between challenging that mask and living without it. During an examination of the roots

of these problems the subject may terminate their exploration because they recognize how much of their interactions with family and friends depends upon the perpetuation of this mask.

The pathologos forms a new center within the individual because they are split from their own past. The impact of the pathologos diminishes the significance of the past so that a kind of amnesia takes place as the present becomes dominated by the pathologos.

The conclusion, the pathologos, is never discussed, but its lesson survives. Thus, this learning carries great force, partially because it is unknown. Yet we know that we have been restricted, that we must limit ourselves, so that a growing resentment and anger marks the pathologos.

This learning produces images in our mind, it forms ideals that are shadows of the real.

The Transmission of the Pathologos

The transmission of the pathologos occurs in scenes that are structured to make certain conclusions indubitable. The transmission takes place when the subject is in an open, receptive, and creative state of mind. It is when the subject is drawn into their own interests and becomes absorbed in their own challenges that the crisis occurs. If the family were to allow any of their children to continue to be absorbed in their own private world it would be granting the child freedom to determine their own direction in life. The family's own interests would not be the center around which its members must show concern and devotion. It would mean the child could choose their own direction without the guidance, concern, and teachings of the family.

The authority takes this occasion to indicate or draw a boundary around what is possible, and what is permissible. The conclusion they want drawn is that only they have the experience to truly know what is real. The limits they set become the boundary of what is real. They know the limit of their being, and no one should expect them to go further, it is realistic to compromise. The absorbed free state is judged selfish, indifferent, and must be challenged. Regardless of how the alternative is stated, even it is negative and divisive, the acceptance of it becomes the acceptance of that boundary. It becomes the arena of the family teaching and membership and roles follow from its acceptance.

Skillful use of benefits, praise, love, intimidation, humiliation, exile, and coercion reminds all of that boundary.

Thus, through what appears to be genuine sharing and an expression of love, the fundamental ideas that shape and mold one's patterns of thought and future behavior are transmitted.

These scenes for the transmission are not discipline or punishment scenes but are scenes where authorities reveal with or without words their fundamental values. Each of these

transmissions has a specific action, some logos - or intended meaning, and an accompanying state of mind.

Whenever the subject returns to that state or engages in what is most significant to them they encounter an inner prohibition against continuing that activity and either fail in their pursuit or change their goals to more practical goals.

From unique scenes that had a compelling force we concluded falsely about the self and relationships.

Primarily the scene must create the impression that whatever is being said and done is for the subject's benefit. Those who appear as authorities must appear confident, sharing, sincere, noble and proud. For some subjects the authority appears their best, giving the appearance of beauty, and beauty is persuasive. The authority must give the appearance that they care enough to emerge as knowers.

To be convinced by someone that we are ignorant about our very being and deluded about what we regarded as real and important to us requires a very special situation. For the belief to become believable requires great talent.

What is shared at this time becomes the message and the authorities become believable as they transmit the belief. The way they appear becomes the ideal for knowing and for truth. In the presence of what seems like greatness we become like that ideal. When it is the subject's turn to play the knower they can imitate that scene; the gestures, expressions, and attitudes displayed become part of the reservoir of responses.

These beliefs were transmitted to us in our youth in scenes designed to convince us that in the very act of sharing beliefs we can gain membership in group belief and a role within the family. Rejecting these beliefs would challenge what was presented as truth and that would run the risk of losing a relationship important for one's survival. But to persuade others about the truth of reality when one is ignorant of its nature is a form of sophistry.

The pathologos scenes are relatively rare but their importance is far reaching. The learning can't be challenged for to do so would question the integrity and role of authority. These scenes are enacted when subjects are young and still dependent upon the family for survival.

The beliefs and attitudes of the family that are communicated at such times are always at variance with one's own immediate experience, but to reject these false beliefs would be tantamount to rejecting the sincerity and truth of the authority. The scene is a model for sharing, it becomes a model for revealing, and it is when the authority appears most confident and knowing.

The pathologos functions as a model since our behavior is consistent with the pathologos we learned. The learning frames the model as the behavior is its copy. Thus, when we

find ourselves in scenes that are analogous to those early scenes in which we learned the pathologos we use that learning as a strategy for dealing with the present. This is the origin of the cyclical nature of the pathologos. Unknowingly we apply lessons learned in the past to circumstances that appear similar.

As one explores how the model relates to its copy one understands most directly just how the copy is generated and how it is derived from the model. It is through such encounters that one grasps the essence of the dynamics of the model and copy. Thus, what may appear to be irrational in man's behavior proceeds from false beliefs about one's self, and with the discovery of their particular origins and the reasons why they were maintained, a person can be free of the consequences of such beliefs, free of the pathologos.

Through these events the subject accepts that they are wrong and the authority is right. It is never openly discussed and so a conclusion is formed that has not been put into words.

The transmission of the pathologos can be traced through generations; it defines the family-clan beliefs and becomes a sign of acceptance.

When we risk seeking for ourselves our highest and most personally meaning goals we surface the pathologos and it becomes fully manifest. The art that can surface these beliefs, can demonstrate the reasons for their persistence, can trace their influence upon one's present difficulties, assist in the struggles, and resolve them is called Philosophical Midwifery.

Verification, prediction, and validation of Philosophical Midwifery

The conclusions of such dialectical sessions are always tested in one's experience, which are then reflected upon to determine what other explorations are required in the quest to resolve and eliminate the causes of one's ignorance and its disastrous effects upon one's life. The challenge to test one's conclusions in everyday events that are analogous to pathologos scenes is no easy task because it requires courage to face those events with a new understanding, it takes a cool headedness to remain fair to the events discussed.

Prediction: The patterns of behavior discovered provide a basis for prediction in general. In their particular occurrence they are unpredictable but why they occur in their particular occurrence is understandable. Those who gain insight into their problems learn to anticipate the manifestation of the pathologos and can predict their occurrence.

Validation: Since the questions form the basic method for surfacing these previously unknown beliefs, and for the subsequent analysis, then both the process of surfacing and the analysis are parts of a repeatable methodology.

A validation study of the Grimes adaptation of this Socratic Philosophical Midwifery was presented at the Psychological Association in 1986. It demonstrated that "significant elements of GDRP (Grimes' Dialectic as a Rational Psychotherapy) are prescriptive and have the capacity for verification and evaluation

without requiring external diagnostic criteria such as the DSM-III. Thus, the long held belief that a rational psychology is, in principle, incapable of either being empirically verified, or of affecting emotionalized behavior, is rejected."

The resultant data provides a base line from which changes can be distinguished and, if necessary, psychological profiles can be constructed. The data is also analyzable according to the basic categories of Philosophical Midwifery.

Since both the method and the analysis of its data are based upon only the language and ideas of the subject there is no need for any external interpretation. The level of human behavior explored is not superficial since it reaches the depth of "emotionalized behavior". Once surfaced it can be effectively engaged and resolved.

Those sharing the procedures and methods of Philosophical Midwifery can validate its findings and come together to pursue a set of common goals and ideals. Its practitioners can reach relatively unanimous conclusions about this field of study. In becoming members of a common intellectual tradition they become part of a culture whose roots are Hellenic yet it reaches into the present. It can be expected that in the future practitioners will extend this dialectical approach to the study of the mind, not only into areas of belief but also into areas of understanding and knowing.

It is for these reasons we say that we are introducing Philosophical Midwifery as a new paradigm for the understanding of human problems.

Psychotherapy, Philosophical Counseling and PM

As it was necessary to distinguish Philosophical Midwifery (PM) from psychotherapy it is now important to distinguish it from philosophical counseling while accepting the fact that it is a mode of philosophical counseling.

The basic differences that separate PM from both psychotherapy and PC are

1. that the kind of problems it explores are already well defined,
2. its method is well established,
3. its subjects are pre-selected, and
4. that its goals are clearly philosophical.

PM did not come into existence full blown, rather it has gone through many changes in its some forty years of development and I should say that much of it was the result of working not only with others but for working on my own problems.

Those entering this kind of dialectic know the kind of questions that will be asked, they know that they will uncover unsuspected beliefs that have blocked their own most meaningful pursuits, and they know that this exploration will bring them to recognize the origin of such false beliefs, what maintains them, and how the process of discovery brings them to a new kind of understanding. But, most importantly, they recognize that

this kind of exploration will challenge their most fundamental beliefs, that it is likely to make them reexamine their life goals, and in the process little if anything they formerly believed will remain as it was. Both parties of the PM dialogue are aware that the possibility of such a turning about of their lives is the theme of the larger search for meaning within a Platonic context. Thus, PM is not for everyone, but it is for those whose vision of their life can benefit by learning and exploring Platonic philosophy.

Indeed, the need for PM is for those who desire to pursue a Platonic vision of philosophy. This is because the pursuit entails not only mastering the literary works of the Platonic tradition but attempting to confirm in one's own experience the most profound ideals of Platonic philosophy. Now, this necessarily includes not only learning to dialogue and exploring the dialectic but entering into the contemplative path. It is for this reason that PM is essential to those aspiring to be Platonic philosophers because the blocks and obstacles one experiences in this noblest of quests manifest most clearly the pathologies. Thus, they become the proper objects of study for PM. In PM both parties learn most directly, not from theory, how false beliefs arise, how they are made believable, how they are transmitted, and what chains us to them. For in understanding this we can be released from its chains and folly.

Challenging the sophistry on this level is facing the task of freeing ourselves from the shackles of the cave. In addition, PM also challenges the sophistry of the many, of society, and as it does so it helps put an end to an ignorance that is expressed in another kind of false belief.

PM is an essential part of philosophy since philosophy regards as its domain the identifying, challenging, and the eradication of ignorance and sophistry through the exercise of understanding. In so far as Platonic philosophy encourages the practice of contemplation for a vision of beauty and to behold the Good, it also has a need for a way to understand and overcome the blocks and obstacles encountered along the path.

However, this is not to suggest that the many forms of PC should adopt this approach in its counseling since the many forms of PC may be guided and influenced by a different kind of thought than that of the philosophy of Plato.

It is for these reasons that we say that PM is a mode of PC. Again, since psychotherapy does not identify false beliefs as the psychogenic cause of behavior and emotional problems, PM is not part of psychotherapy but PM may resemble it in some respects, therefore it is a mode of psychotherapy. But both psychotherapy and PC may be able to adopt some part of this method in their practice and if it benefits others then it is serving a good purpose.

Kuhn's Criterion for a new Paradigm and Exemplar

The practice and methods of PM conform to Thomas Kuhn's criterion

for a new paradigm and exemplar. In this book, "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions", he argued that scientific revolutions proceeded from new creative ideas he called paradigms. His work generated much discussion, conferences were held to discuss his idea, articles praised and criticized his notions, and as a result Kuhn's added an appendix to his work to answer his critics and to reformulate his idea of a paradigm. We shall use this reformulation of Kuhn's in our discussion of a paradigm since with it we can bring several distinctions together under the name of paradigm and in doing so we will adapt it to our purpose.

According to Kuhn's idea a paradigm should be understood in two senses. He says that,

"On the one hand, it stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community.

And on the other hand, it denotes one sort of element in that constellation, the

concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science. (185) "

In this respect PM equally shares with the members of its community an entire constellation of beliefs, values and techniques.

PM applies its methods to concrete problem solutions which are the application of models and examples that are the basis for a wide range of solutions for a class of human problems.

Kuhn substitutes the idea of exemplar for his notion of models or examples and in so doing he distinguishes the role of exemplars in science.

Kuhn's description (p.186-7) includes:

1. Concrete problem-solutions which can be studied by students in their education;
2. technical problem solutions published in journals detailing findings of the research conducted by scientists which serve as further examples of the application of the exemplars to particular sciences;
3. symbolic generalizations of these exemplars which are studied and learned by all members of the particular science;
4. and, acquiring exemplars provides learners with the "ability to recognize a given situation as like some and unlike others that one has seen before" .

These four ideas are most important for Kuhn since as he says these "first led me to the choice of that word (paradigm)"(187).

In the practice and methods of PM the following points parallel the above:

1. PM's methods are clearly stated for the practice of PM, problem solutions and case examples have been provided, and are distributed to those wishing to learn of its methods and philosophy;
2. the publications of PM have detailed its findings, and set out its methods, which can serve as examples of the application of exemplars of this study;
3. generalizations and models are provided which are studied by practitioners and are learned by all of its participants, but these are not symbolic generalizations of its methods.
4. the exemplars of PM provide the learners with the ability to recognize a given situation as like and unlike others that have been studied and encountered previously. Thus, the exemplars provide rules, procedures, and the ability to apply them. Once learned, as Kuhn says, the "recognition of similarity must be as fully systematic as the beating of our hearts."

Kuhn's second sense of a paradigm includes the sociological function of exemplars. He says,

"One of the fundamental techniques by which the members of a group, whether an entire culture or a specialists' sub-community within it learn to see the same things when confronted with the same stimulus is by being shown examples of situations that their predecessors in the group have already learned to see as like each other and as different from other sorts of situations.(193)"

This last point can be said of PM, for those sharing these ideas come together as a sub-community of learners. They explore the principles of PM and learn to apply them to a wide range of cognitive functions such as daydreams, spontaneous fantasy, and dreams since the same dynamics of believe formation underlie all these functions.

Kuhn's insistence that the practitioners of science are fundamentally puzzle-solvers separates him from those who understand theoretical constructs to be more than conventionalistic hypotheses. However, in respect to the problem- solving in Philosophical Midwifery, we regard our theoretical constructs as possible insights into the nature of mind and into the hierarchical structure of our reality. In this way we contribute to a tradition whose roots are Platonic.

As with the introduction of a new paradigm, PM has introduced a set of analogical structures, metaphors, and similes to express the pathologos. In this way PM provides the

group with a set of preferred permissible language constructs to communicate their findings. (184).

We have shown that PM is "simple, self-consistent, and plausible" (185) and while it may not be compatible with other theories currently employed it is consistent with the Platonic tradition. Further, PM is much like the sciences, in that it values simplicity, scope, and precision in its constructs. Our procedures and analyses of human problems employ methods that are capable of refinement and so are capable of being self-correcting mechanisms. Again, since our models are based upon understanding the dynamics of pathologos problems, these models are always provisional and as more precision is introduced it is expected that more accurate models will be constructed to exhibit additional insights.

But Philosophical Midwifery differs from the sciences in its predictive power since in the sciences it is the particular that must be determined, while in philosophical midwifery prediction lies in understanding general patterns of behavior and thought.

As a result of our work it is possible to discuss Philosophical Midwifery in its own terms, in terms of its models, and its traditions. Thus, its practitioners can reach relatively unanimous conclusions about this field of study. In becoming members of a common intellectual tradition they become part of a culture whose roots are Hellenic.

As we have noted, examples of Philosophical Midwifery can be studied and reflected upon by its practitioners. From these examples learners will be able to recognize patterns of pathologos behavior that express themselves in key words. These words or expressions must be recognized because they lead to the recognition of similarity underlying pathologos behavior. Once their role is identified these case studies can be selected and presented as exemplars in various education programs. Clearly, this study will have an impact on our culture because it presents a plausible and self-consistent theory that is supported by a body of evidence that is compatible with other theories and can be discussed as having parallels to existing mathematical and theoretical models.

It can be expected that in the future practitioners will extend this approach to the study of the mind, not only into areas of belief but also into areas of understanding and knowing.

It is for these reasons we say that we are introducing Philosophical Midwifery as a new paradigm for the understanding of human problems.

In conclusion it is the author's opinion that the study of Philosophical Midwifery would benefit by a formal institutional setting, one that could provide the conditions for further exploration and research into:

a model of the dynamics of false belief (the pathologos) which has been made based upon Clifford parallels, hyperspace models, and can be discussed as having parallels to existing mathematical and theoretical models;

the study of dialogue as an exploratory tool for understanding the cognitive dimension of man and in so doing bring an understanding to the struggles and paths of man's most significant and profound achievements;

the study of dialectic that includes not only Plato, Plotinus, and Proclus but key Eastern authors, such as Nagarjuna, Chinul, and Shankara;

the application of the principles of dialogue for research into institutional and social problems;

the identification of the range of problems that are most effectively dealt with through Philosophical Midwifery;

providing the conditions for joint ventures with cognitive psychology, transpersonal psychology, theoretical physics and mathematics;

providing for the publication and distribution of all relevant findings.

Clearly, if such resources and conditions were in place it would return philosophy to its origins while bringing to it scientific procedures that would verify and corroborate its findings. It is likely it would present a vision of man that has long range implications for the future of society and its institutions.

Reference: Kuhn, Thomas S., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, third edition, 1996, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London.

Pierre Grimes Workshop, Introductory Remarks and Exploration

One of the distinguishing marks that separates Philosophical Midwifery from philosophical counseling (PC) is that all such subjects are required to be thoroughly familiar with the set of questions that guides the midwifery exploration. These questions also function as an outline for its procedures and insure that both parties in the exploration are following the methods of APM. It is understood that these questions may be varied and to some degree improvised upon but only when their direction functions within the outlined procedures. The sessions of APM may vary in length but the advice is not to go beyond 90 minutes unless there is some clear justification for it that is shared by both parties. It is possible to explore all these questions and reach a solution to the subject's problem in one session but that is unusual since many sessions may be required depending on the nature of the problem presented, levels of difficulty encountered, and the experience of the midwife.

These dialogue sessions of APM are audio taped, they become the property of the subject, and it is expected that they will be studied between APM dialogue sessions. The particular causes or roots of the problems explored have as their common source the acceptance of a false belief about oneself and the nature of reality. The false belief that generated and sustained the problem is called the pathologos. The pathologos is always, in principle, incompatible with the attainment of one's meaningful goals. Most subjects have a small finite number of basic problems. These problems interrelate and form the basis for cycles of subject's continued inability to realize and maintain their most profound goals. As a result subjects are urged to pursue these goals because it is in this way that the pathologos will most clearly manifest itself. After a subject has explored

several APM dialogue sessions, they are encouraged to outline them, pin them on the wall, and discuss their underlying themes.

These themes can readily be seen in a subject's dreams because many of our dreams focuses on what we ignore in our waking world and presenting them in our dreams offers an opportunity to realize the significance of what we have ignored in our past and present. The study of dreams is perfectly consistent with Plato's Republic because there we find Socrates urging the study of dreams as a way to perceive and ponder what is not known about our present, past and future. The analysis of dreams utilizes the same method as that for the exploration of the pathologos. It is of the utmost importance for a philosopher to explore dreams in this way because it can be seen, most directly, that the mind is working for one's benefit. The realization that in dreams we are presented with the nature of our pathologos becomes evidence that the mind functions as beneficial creative power through an artful dramatic setting that mirrors those events of our waking world that we ignored but which are most significant to our own development.

Now, we are going to do a workshop on the APM. But, first let us be sure we understand the difference between a problem and a difficulty. A problem is a block, it keeps one from their goal; it has steps or stages to it and it causes one to depreciate the goal once it is gained. Further it is cyclical and that means one has experienced something like it again and again. A difficulty on the other hand are those troubles one faces and can overcome in the quest of one's goals but they are not of the kind that necessarily blocks one from the attainment of those goals.

Let me first outline the stages through which I will proceed to explore a problem. I will ask when those very blocks occur, the state of mind or feeling that accompanies it, how similar it is one's other recent experiences, and I will explore the history of that kind of experience in order to discover what beliefs lie at their root. The exploration will search for the reason why one believed the false beliefs about oneself since they block one's own maturity and development.

I will, however, not explore a problem here if to do so might surface material that might embarrass the subject. If such material appears to be immanent I will shift and explore it in more general terms and invite the volunteer to continue in private any issue that does surface, if they choose.

Anyone care to try our APM?

S: Yes, I'm sorry I'm a little late, so I'm not sure what kind of a problem I'm supposed to pose but I'd gladly try the method.

P: When you are involved in something that is personally significant to you, not something practical, but something you judge to be meaningful to you, and discover you can go a certain distance but find you are blocked and cannot go any further then we call that having a problem. Would you like to explore one?

S: Yes