‘Dare to be Wise’1: ‘Exchanging the Word’ - a New Philosophical Practice

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1. Introduction

Understanding the meaning of ‘wisdom’ is crucial to truly Practical Philosophy - having such an understanding is the best condition of self. To be properly understood, wisdom needs to be described in a way which de-objectivises it as something ‘beyond’ the person. A clear understanding of wisdom is found in the context of the transitional process I call ‘NU-Philosophical Counselling’ - a process of mutual philosophising derived from Philosophical Counselling but which broadens its scope and concentrates on ‘Non-Utilitarian’ aims. Wisdom, though ‘Non-Utilitarian’ in important respects, is a quality evidenced exclusively in our present experience of life, and its revelation helps to show us the falsity of truth beyond our experience. The general trend of personal progress within the process of NU-Philosophical Counselling may, at different times, be in the form of clarity, wisdom or ‘un-wisdom’. The process of NU-Philosophical Counselling - in its negative statement against the utilitarian stance, and in its positive nature directing us towards something of a better life - is clearly evidenced in a new form of Practical Philosophy I call ‘Exchanging the Word’.

After defining what I mean by NU-Philosophical Counselling, I discuss the nature of what we call, or think of as, ‘beyond’ our understanding: either because we cannot comprehend it, or because it is objectively beyond our ability to understand. This discussion brings into focus our concept of ‘questing’. This leads to a view which identifies wisdom with a process not a product and finds it, although unknown, necessarily ‘within’ the individual. I look at the idea of ‘opening up to possibilities’ and show that this process involves, in varying degrees, the positive features of clarity, wisdom and ‘un-wisdom’. This process is not one which can be viewed with any verbal or intentional exactitude and is part of a framework of risk and novelty. Turning then to the practical process of wisdom, I find that we need to come to terms with the subject/object anomaly of individual experience and act in the present more by having come ‘through’ philosophy than by ‘doing’ it. In defining wisdom I conclude that it is always in respect of something and entirely a practical part of what I categorise as ‘beyond within’. Comparing wisdom with happiness further consolidates the idea that wisdom is a process firmly rooted in the experience of being. I describe how the task of wisdom is itself a practical matter drawn from the individual’s concern with personal meaning related to change, freedom to choose, and action. I propose that this is best found within the mutual philosophising framework of the transitional process of NU-Philosophical

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1 I take my title from J. McT. E. McTaggart’s paper ‘Dare to be Wise’ (McTaggart, 1910), itself inspired by the motto of the University of New Zealand - sapere aude.
Counselling which is always concerned with the meaning of my life. I describe how, by making the activity of being the only worthwhile process in life, NU-Philosophical Counselling - superseded as a transitional process in the form of ‘Exchanging the Word’ - can direct us towards personal wisdom. I conclude that if we are open, modest and focused not on a world which is inaccessibly beyond but on what is ‘beyond within’, wisdom is attainable by us all in a lifetime.

2. NU-Philosophical Counselling

Wisdom is inextricably linked with the meaning of philosophy. In Practical Philosophy, and in particular in Philosophical Counselling, wisdom commonly means ‘wisdom of the person’ - some sort of knowledge or frame of mind needed in order to recognise, pursue and perhaps obtain the good or the good life. But there is confusion about what wisdom means in this way. My intention here is to make clear what exactly is meant by wisdom, and to show how we can more fully understand it in the context of the mutually involving philosophical exchange which I call NU-Philosophical Counselling. NU-Philosophical Counselling is not directed by the Utilities of life dealt with by Utilitarian Philosophical Counselling - success, social improvement or competence - nor misdirected by the hope of gaining for the person something objectively ‘beyond’ the person. NU-Philosophical Counselling is, for me, what marks out true mutual philosophising, and so philosophising for the individual, and the seeking of wisdom contained within the general category ‘Philosophical Counselling’, from what is otherwise either one form or another of corrective therapy or unjustifiable act of faith. NU-Philosophical Counselling, in its engaging function of philosophising with at least two individuals, is close in meaning to ‘Philosophical Companionship’ where wisdom is a product of a type of

Wisdom, as a subject, is almost entirely absent from contemporary philosophical discussion. Nozick, one of the few philosophers who has dealt with the subject seriously, says that wisdom has a ‘double role’, it is ‘conducive to the best life as a means and also [is] some integral part of it’ (Nozick, 1989, p. 268). Nozick believes wisdom has a number of qualities and possibilities and is diverse and is a quality which may not flow from one central understanding. To be wise, he thinks, a person must both have wisdom and act wisely. Wisdom is human-centred and focuses on the needs of the person. Wisdom may be restricted or broad ranging. Wisdom resists explanation - a wise person may not be able to make the experience of knowledge of wisdom explicit. Wisdom is the over-arching quality of judgment and is an important end in itself. Most importantly, wise person ‘is not just our means of connecting most closely to reality, it also is our way.’ (Ibid. p. 276). Wisdom’s ability to understand ‘depth’ is what makes it so attractive to philosophers. But, at the same time, it is holistic, complex and subject to no one general rule, and it is necessarily adaptive. Wisdom need not be a product of great experience or age, nor something in tune with the Aristotelian mean. Indeed, it may be part of an erratic path and be demonstrated more by its tendency to a general course than to its particular direction at any one moment.

A useful collection of predominantly psychological views can be found in Sternberg (1990).

I use Philosophical Counselling as the starting point because, in its regard for the concerns of the other and dedication to pursuing them to the benefit of the other, it best reveals some (though by no means all) of the important elements and potential of mutual philosophising.

There are many different sorts of therapy and counselling and abundant literature to support them all. A good resource to aid reviewing the field is www.timlebon.com.

I know of no better tracking of the driving forces for religious and faith-based conviction than the collection of thoughts in Helm (1999).
Socratic clarity. But more importantly, it is the framework or opportunity to open up a route for the individual who seeks the better judgment of wisdom beyond a presently constricting worldview. NU-Philosophical Counselling is a form of philosophising which reaches out far beyond the confining words of its title. It is not counselling in any conventional sense and its philosophical sense may be more 'derived from philosophy' or be termed 'post-philosophical'. But because its activity 'counsels' the individual who seeks wisdom, and it has its roots in philosophy, the description, though inaccurate, is appropriate. NU-Philosophical Counselling is a 'feedback' system where the individual benefits from another and may, at the same time, benefit that other. It is a system of commitment where speaking precedes understanding and the sense and clarity of 'un-wisdom' may flow from the other becoming more wise.

At the same time, NU-Philosophical Counselling is both negative and reactionary - it is what utilitarian Philosophical Counselling is not, and its terms are created by the existence of that which it is not. In addition, it is confined by its definition and yet, as a process, it has application well beyond that definition. NU-Philosophical Counselling is therefore a transitional process which leads us away from the hindrances of utility and the confines of its own terms, but in itself has not the capacity to describe the nature of Practical Philosophising to which it points.

3. ‘Beyond’

Importantly, Lahav sees the central focus of Philosophical Counselling as an opening up to possibilities, where the philosophical counsellor and counsellee philosophise as part of a general ‘quest for wisdom’ (Lahav, 2001, p. 6) - a search for something ‘beyond the person’ (Ibid., p. 8). We must not misinterpret Lahav’s conception of ‘beyond’ as an ‘objectivised’ reality somehow ‘beyond the person’7. For Lahav, and I share his view, ‘beyond’ is not a ‘domain’ somehow outside the worldview of the individual, but is a state of knowledge currently out of reach but still within the potential of the individual’s worldview. Although it may be presently beyond reach it is within the individual and the individual’s capacity. There are some dangers in seeing ‘beyond’ in this mistaken way, that is as some sort of absolute reality beyond human grasp. Misleading ‘objectivisation’ like this often obscures the real nature of the objectivised object (it being wrongly assumed that the object is a real thing whereas in fact it is not), and can lead us even deeper into the Platonic cave from which we should be attempting escape. Added to this, the habits of mind created by the neoliberal culture of consumerism8 only consolidate on this type of

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6 Philosophical Companionship is discussed in my ‘Thoughts and Reflections’, www.practicalphilosophy.org.uk. It is also an area of enquiry for Ran Lahav, see www.ranlahav.net.

7 C.D. Broad’s idea that brain activity is a barrier to perception, that its function is ‘eliminative’, is an idea taken up by those who believe there is some greater nature of reality ‘outside’ the confined processes of the mind (see most accessibly Broad (2000) or Schilpp (1959)). Instructive and reflective examples of such a search can be found in Huxley (1973).

8 The advent of neoliberalism - an economy based on free market capitalism - has increased wealth held by a larger number of people to levels higher than ever before. This has highlighted and increased the

http://www.practical-philosophy.org.uk
thinking and exacerbate its adverse influence. It is clear, therefore, that Lahav puts before us important aspects of personal possibility which are within the range, if not the immediate sight, of the individual. NU-Philosophical Counselling focuses the energies of the questor clearly on the better judgment of wisdom. There are inherent ambiguities contained in this concept of a utilitarian central focus for Philosophical Counselling and, in the context of NU-Philosophical Counselling, such objective desires can clearly be distinguished from the essential and compelling intention which underlies them - the search for wisdom.

‘Questing’ implies searching, which is ‘looking for’, which implies there is something to look for, which itself implies a possible answer or at least a resolution of some sort. We can accept the general intention of ‘questing’ - it is commonly understood - and it must find a place in NU-Philosophical Counselling. However, to talk successfully in terms of NU-Philosophical Counselling separate from Utilitarian Philosophical Counselling, ‘questing’ needs to be accommodated within the definition without it being part of a consumer exchange. Consumer exchange, like Utilitarian Philosophical Counselling, involves a definite return for something put out. The quest’s aim, and therefore its important associated end, wisdom, is neither necessarily a gain on previously-held wisdom, nor can it be seen as something directly in return for something put out. But the practical aspects of wisdom are not utilitarian. ‘Utility’ here is confined to that which brings about subsequent gain - it is a consumer process of ‘pain for benefit’. NU-Philosophical Counselling, although bringing about gains, involves the individual in an entirely different process, one where giving and receiving are blurred by the ‘feedback loop’ involved in mutual philosophising. This is not to say that they are masked, but more that the exchange which takes place involves an unknown product, as no particular point of origin, or place or arrival. It cannot, as such, be seen as any type of consumer trading. We may well be wise about something, generally wise, wiser, wise after the event, or less wise. Any of these states of wisdom could follow any of the others in an opening up to ‘wisdom’ inasmuch as they would all be related to an ‘opening up’ to possibilities - opening up to a stage which follows another stage. And this gives us a first clue to the true nature of wisdom. Wisdom is the process not the product - it is the transaction, not the acquisition. Wisdom is our involvement in the working towards an increased openness. Wisdom is not the object which draws us for it is within us even if not known or not recognised. In seeking wisdom, our focus should be on the process which leads towards it and not either its attainment or specific nature. Wisdom is a task - maybe an unending Sisyphean task - but it is the product of involvement with this task which is our focus, not the product which that task may bring about. And the state of ‘opening up’ is the state of making oneself ready for change, to be available, free in the face of novelty and creativity, directed only by the draw of better judgment, wisdom or clarity.

In the context of an individual search, ‘beyond’ is a concept of something which
is implicitly ‘experienced as beyond’. As such, it is also ‘within’ the one who experiences, either as an experience of a possibility or as an experience of the thing itself. It makes no difference to the place where experience is - ‘beyond’ is therefore necessarily both ‘beyond and within’ in either case. The idea that ‘beyond’ is some sort of reality beyond our knowing or understanding is both pointless and not true. It is pointless because if it is beyond our knowing or understanding then it can never be part of our worldview, and it is not true inasmuch as anything beyond our knowledge and understanding can never be claimed as anything except unknown. Any ideas born of metaphysical conjecture are necessarily outside the reality of the individual. Only the conjecture itself is within the experience of the one who conjectures.

9 McGhee discusses the problems of holding concepts as seemingly ‘foreign’ to the world of which we are part and points to, if I take him right, the inappropriateness of such a clearly contradictory view (McGhee, 2007, p. 50). Though I find myself puzzled that he views Wittgenstein’s claim that “the world is everything that is the case” as a failure of the imagination (Ibid.).

10 I have no doubt that the world of reality is something other than it appears. Historically, this view stems from Plato, and is, via Descartes’ new suspicion of reality, brought out as a perceptual idealism by Berkeley. Kant put forward a transcendental idealism which in turn led Hegel to the third idealist route - absolutism. This found its form finally in Bradley’s monistic idealism and the conclusions of Collingwood and Greene. Late nineteenth century British idealism was expounded (amongst others) by McTaggart (who most influences my own thought) and Whitehead, and vociferously refuted by G. E. Moore and Russell. My own view is that: (1) What I experience is mostly wrong in that it is misleadingly portrayed in what we call the world of appearance, or that, as a sensory being, I get it wrong irrespective of what the world portrays to me. I have, as yet, found no reason to alter my view on this. I believe reality exists. (2) Because reality exists, knowledge of it, at some point in time, in some way, must at least be possible. I am not altogether sure that this is possible in the span of a single life or even that the living act of being allows such knowledge to be possible to living beings. (3) There is something of this reality which may be accessible, but in our perception of it, it may not reflect the nature of reality in any genuine way, and may be more to do with a more fundamental or real sense of being in life (which may or may not be real) than with a greater reality. (4) That which may be accessible in life, though, is probably very great, indeed, we may find that what is accessible in life is more than we could ever expect, although it may be small compared to what is accessible beyond a life span or beyond the nature of being in life. (5) This compares to my ‘three-fold way’ - more three different views, or perspectives, all of which are available to us and possibly confused together in our experience. They are: ‘one-ness’ - the ultimate realisation, being in a state of complete knowledge of reality; ‘me-ness’ - the world according to me which is in some way part of the real world the nature of which remains mostly or entirely inaccessible. This is the world I can affect by my actions. This world is created by my existence and will not exist in my absence (A sort of ‘sub-level’ of both these can be invoked to be in respect of others: ‘one-ness with others’ and their reality (encompassing their world as they encompass mine), ‘me-ness with others’ (where they only form part of the world of my creation but they remain partitioned from me and my creative being); ‘alone-ness’ - isolation of being which makes no contact with others or (and which may be partly the same thing) something of that which is real. In this state I do nothing to meaningfully affect my world. I am not creative or reflective about the nature of the misleading world of appearance, and I do not account in my world for others and their existence. Me-ness is both my experience and the world of my experience - I am both it and am reliant on it, and there is nothing separate from it. One-ness is a world in which I exist (whether I know the reality of it or not) and within which I hope, or imagine, I can be at different levels of harmony - that I can, however, seems to me unlikely. In me-ness there is no question that there is at least the potential of additional harmony for this world is necessarily a world of harmony. The ‘objective’ world of one-ness remains, in the world of me-ness, the inaccessible world of reality. Only one-ness at the sub-level is available to me in the world of me-ness. (6) The greatest opportunity for change can be found in enhanced freedom within the ‘sub-level’. It may be that change here can afford glimpses of reality but I feel constrained by my belief that reality would still be unknowable. In our world of me-ness we can experience various levels of ‘me’, some which are apparently practical, some transcendental (we could call these ‘sub-level-me-one’, ‘sub-level-me-two etc.).
4. Opening up to possibilities - passing ‘through’ philosophy

There is no doubt that the personal experience of opening up to possibilities means we must confront the novel, often the difficult and challenging, and this may not be easy either psychologically or philosophically. And sometimes our progress may not appear to be at all straightforward. Furthermore, I think we must accept that increased wisdom also may entail ‘progressing towards being less wise’. Indeed, opening up to possibilities will include the distinct possibility of becoming ‘un-wise’, and there is no reason why we should not strive for ‘un-wisdom’. Even as Socrates continued to philosophise, and presumably open up the possibilities to wisdom, he maintained he knew nothing. In this frame of mind, Socrates ‘passed through’ philosophy and experienced the sense of ‘un-wisness’ which brought him to a new sense of ‘wisdom’ - the wisdom of clarity which reveals wisdom in others and brings something stable and real to a world of confused and misleading perception. This is a likely product of the NU-Philosophical Counselling ‘feedback loop’ which attaches to the individuals involved in the task. While the other may become wise, or more wise, the one with whom she relates - the one whose clarity has led to her own increased wisdom - may herself become un-wise. This may be because of the drain on his clarity or because the new wisdom of the other is confusing to him. Such a state need not be permanent and itself may contribute positively to the process of opening up possibilities. The Platonic view of a world ‘beyond’ the world of appearance, somehow ‘outside’ the individual, does not apply to NU-Philosophical Counselling. The reality which is ‘beyond’ is more truly beyond the misleading veil of appearance within the individual. It is not so much that we cannot see what is real, it is more that what we see, we see mistakenly.

When Socrates is told by Chaerephon that Pythia of Delphi has proclaimed him, not just wise but the wisest of all men, Socrates is confused - believing that he is not wise, he cannot understand how he can at the same time be the wisest. All he can do, he thinks, is doubt the word of the oracle. The ‘empirical’ Socrates sets off to investigate - he seeks an engagement with another. He goes to a man who considers himself wise but is not. Socrates tells him as much and concludes that,

I am certainly wiser than this man. It is only too likely that neither of us has any knowledge to boast of, but he thinks that he knows something which he does not know, whereas I am quite conscious of my ignorance. At any rate it seems that I am wiser than he is to this small extent, that I do not think that I know what I do not know (Plato, Apology, 21d).

10 cont.

I can imagine one-ness with others - a harmony - as complete as a life could embody, but I cannot imagine one-ness with reality which I believe is beyond embodiment in a life. For me, ‘transcendence’ may well show me a ‘different world’, but as soon as it is revealed it will be part of the living world of me-ness. Although the idea of knowing something of true reality is more than tantalising, for me it remains soberingly improbable. However, the sub-level of one-ness has more than enough to offer without the confusions associated with (that is our unavoidably confused view of) the possible nature of reality. For me, it seems, the only realistic ‘beyond’ is ‘within’.

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The ironic nature of this intrigues Socrates and, checking it out further, he decides that those who think they know something are more foolish and those who think they know nothing are wiser. He realises the ‘process of wisdom’ as more important than any objectivised view of what it is to be wise. Socrates’ ‘midwifery’ may well concern trying to show whether ‘the offspring of a young man’s thought is a false phantom or instinct with life and truth’ (Plato, Theaetetus, 150c) - a mere image or a legitimate truth - but his ‘wise effort’ is found in his endeavour to reveal truth to others, and in particular, one with whom he relates in the asymmetrical relationship of teacher and student. This relationship is found in NUI-Philosophical Counselling, although it is more noticeably interchangeable (predominantly because it is less likely that we sincerely believe Socrates knows nothing). This imbalance is important in that wiseness may be with one while clarity and un-wiseness may be with the other. Socrates, says of himself, ‘I have no sort of wisdom, nor has any discovery ever been born to me as the child of my soul’ (Ibid. 150d) - not only does he know nothing, he says, he has not even had an original thought. It is not Socrates’ wisdom which leads him to philosophical triumphs, but it is because of his unknowing clarity that he can ‘deliver’ the wise thoughts of others who become capable, in his company, of having them. And it is this clarity which has the capacity to reveal wisdom in others. By doing this, Socrates is ‘Exchanging the Word’\(^\text{11}\) - sharing his clarity, and allowing it to return having ‘enwisened’ the other. And importantly, he does not wait until he knows before he ‘exchanges’. He shares what he knows of clear thinking but the results are received by the other. And what comes back from his ‘exchange’ is movement within the process of wisdom itself. There is an inherent inexactitude in progressing along this path - ‘Exchanging the Word’ is risk-taking and necessarily defiant of complete description. But it is not the word itself, or its close meaning which is the conveyor of the intention, it is the use of it, what it conveys, how it is part of what is formed in the act of transmission. Camus says, ‘A symbol is always in general and, however precise its translation, an artist can restore to it only its movement: there is no word for word rendering’ (Camus, 1975, p.112).

In his pursuit of ‘wisdom creation’ by ‘Exchanging the Word’, Socrates lets nothing stand in his way - no person or position daunts or distracts him, he acts with complete freedom of thought. His gift is a courageous capacity for releasing the creative power in others, even though, and at the same time that he gives them the benefit of his aid, he never craves for himself the consequent self-improvement brought about by its liberation. Socrates shows us that the questioning and explanatory form which invokes creative wisdom in the other is the greatest philosophical gift, the offering of which, if our search for wisdom, should be our primary philosophical aim. Socrates finds stable reality not in self-deception or desire for personal wisdom, but in the clarity of mind and the freedom found in the personal gift of uncompromisingly offering himself fully to the needs of the other. For Socrates, the progress towards ‘un-wisdom’ is complete when measured against the wisdom it solicits from the other with whom he is engaged.

\(^\text{11}\) I am led to use this term by Wittgenstein who says, ‘It is impossible for words to occur in two different ways, alone and in the proposition’ (Wittgenstein, 1922, 2.0122).
5. The practical process of wisdom

We must not be tempted to think that ‘questing for wisdom’ is more than a process. Like reality, it does not imply the idea of a mental objective which can in turn ‘create’ the object itself. As such it would be a misleading description of purpose, because it causes the importance of the purpose to be subsumed within the over-arching meaning of the object of the quest itself. In truth, the matter is the other way around. The over-arching importance is in the process of the quest and not the result of its pursuit. And this importance is amplified when we realise that we must have some knowledge, or concept, of the object of our undertaking in order to undertake it. In other words, we must have a certain level of wisdom available to us before we can undertake to quest for it - we must go ‘beyond’ wisdom to find wisdom. In the same way that ‘questing for wisdom’ implies moving ‘beyond’ wisdom, so the act of ‘philosophising’ implies moving ‘beyond’ philosophy. As with Socrates, it seems unlikely that we will attain wisdom in philosophy, though it may be possible to become wiser using our knowledge of philosophy and operating ‘beyond’ it. And, this movement towards the ‘beyond within’, may be because of another whose gift is the clarity of the non-self-seeking companion - of such another Socrates is the exemplar.

Yet there remains an uneasiness about wisdom as a process and as the gain of philosophy, itself being found beyond it and therefore in its absence. Although we easily understand as meaningful such expressions as ‘doing philosophy’ (implying an immediate and on-going activity) or ‘having a philosophy’ (implying the activity of ‘having’ or possessing something even if we are not immediately engaged in that something), we do not so easily understand the expression ‘quest for wisdom’ (implying moving ourselves towards a predetermined goal which we somehow seem to presuppose we know in advance of actually achieving). This is puzzling because ‘doing philosophy’ and ‘having a philosophy’ are reasonable examples of a mental activity or state and we might expect ‘quest for wisdom’ to be similarly amenable to comprehension as a mental act or state. However, although ‘questing’ for wisdom (that is ‘having a quest for wisdom’) is ‘doing’ something, it is ‘doing’ something which is, to all intents and purposes, not available, because the quested for object is necessarily beyond reach in the future. According to how strongly we believe in the future, this makes this state of mind either trivial (in that we are intractably in the present no matter how strongly we believe in the future) or meaningless (accepting that future possibilities are not part of a real ‘future structure’ but are merely our projection of the constant becoming of present). But in either case, trivial or meaningless, ‘questing’ (moving towards) something as yet unattained relies so much on the present act of pursuing that the sought object is lost in the merely possible future. There are dangers in using terms such as ‘questing’ in practical endeavour. It detracts from or dilutes what is

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12 Wittgenstein points us in this direction when he says, ‘My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognises them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.) He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly.’ (Wittgenstein, 1922, 6.54).
the individual’s present experience. The practical endeavour becomes too wishful and too easily part of something not accessible in practice - that is the future. Spending our time thinking about something continually beyond our reach like this, is indeed ‘kill[ing] time without injuring eternity’ (Thoreau, 1937, p. 7). Such thoughts are neither productive nor influential. Added to which, philosophising (about) a ‘quest for wisdom’ is just the kind of abstract pursuit that generally detaches philosophy from popular understanding of anything at all practical. If NLI-Philosophical Counselling (as the transitional process towards Exchanging the Word) is to attend to a person’s world-view (and this is a general aim which remains from Utilitarian Philosophical Counselling (LeBon, 2001, p. 9)), it must reside in the present which is where a person’s world-view, although having a future dimension in the act of anticipation, belongs. Philosophising ‘beyond the person’, in the sense of philosophising about something outside the person’s experience, is the realm of metaphysics where, even though thinking, as ‘doing thinking’, is still taking place, whoever is doing the philosophising makes a distinct attempt to reduce the personal, by ‘de-subjectivising’ the matter in hand to the benefit of the abstract. In NLI-Philosophical Counselling we are concerned with philosophising ‘with the person’ now, not, for example, on behalf of our self in respect of some possible future circumstance. Detaching ourselves from such future tasks brings our attention back to the potential clarity of the ‘now’ of being. This conflicts somewhat with our obvious and seemingly innate ability to detach a ‘form’ of our self from what we still consider to be our self - what Nagel calls the ‘view from nowhere’ (Nagel, 1986). This ‘me’ that asks such questions as ‘what shall I do?’ as though the questioner somehow sits ‘outside’ the self who is being analysed, is an unavoidable part of existence. We are necessarily as one both subject and object of our thinking (Ibid., pp.54-66). And so we might find our natural ‘self-ness’ makes us uncomfortable with Yalomean ‘obliqueness’ - the common experience in life where the subject can inhabit a subjective/objective world ‘oblique’ to the primary subjective world (Yalom, 2000) - because, as well as having to accept a third tier of existence, the ‘primary subjective world’, in our ‘detachment’ as subject we feel deeply involved with the objective self which forms our interest. In a similar way we may be even be uncomfortable with ‘de-subjectivising’ metaphysics, where the subjective interest is reduced merely to a tool used to pursue the theoretical object. In this case seeing, not only the detached subjective self somehow ‘sitting apart’ from its object - the self ‘within’ - and regarding not the objective self but instead the theoretical and non-existent world of external ‘reality’. To counter such discomfort we need to recognise the harmonious singularity of the subjective/objective self and its nature as the active present experience of being.

6. Wisdom defined

‘Wisdom’ itself is ambiguous. In seeking a definition of philosophy, resort is commonly made to the ancient Greek term ‘philo-sophia’ and its generally accepted meaning, ‘love of wisdom’. Because ‘philo-sophia’ can be identified with the natural origin of philosophy, the assumption often made is that this definition is sufficient even though it is built on a presupposed understanding of the term ‘wisdom’ which
is largely misunderstood. Wisdom can be seen as a bringing together in accord both understanding and practice - a reflective practice concerned with ascertaining fundamental reality which leads (or can lead) to establishing judgments of what it means to live a good life. Given the complexity of human life, general principles of human behaviour are hard to establish and this, together with the general lack of attention paid to what a good life constitutes in the post-classical Western tradition, often means that the searcher turns to the innate obscurities of Ancient, Eastern and Oriental thinking. And this is not surprising as, unfortunately, the original meaning of wisdom as a restricting foundation for philosophy is fairly meaningless to us these days, as indeed is our broader understanding of philosophy itself. As Quinton points out, many of the enquiries originally part of philosophy have now ‘detached themselves from it’ (Quinton, 1995, p. 666). It is, therefore, sometimes inappropriate that the term ‘wisdom’ is too eagerly co-opted into any contemporary discussion which is remotely philosophical. Quinton’s shortest and least controversial definition of ‘philosophy’ as ‘thinking about thinking’ (Ibid.) is fairly sobering, and perhaps a little sterile, but as a starting point it is accurate and sufficient, nevertheless. My own definition of philosophy as an activity that, ‘helps us to ask questions that concern our existence in relation to our place as individuals in an often puzzling world’ (Rochelle, 2000, p.7) gives attention to our central role in the process of individual endeavour which, although not elaborate, is a sufficient description. We must be equally clear about what wisdom means to a contemporary ‘Western’ person (that is, someone exposed broadly to the neoliberal consumer culture which has its recent origins in the Western tradition). The modern definition of ‘wisdom’ as a noun is ‘the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment, the quality of being wise’ (New Oxford Dictionary of English, 2001). As such, wisdom as a noun, as a thing in itself, has little meaning - wisdom as the quality of ‘being wise’ is necessarily analytic and self-defining. Having ‘good judgment’ is a desirable quality, however, it remains meaningless without a context, as do the states of ‘having experience’ or ‘having knowledge’. Wisdom is more meaningful in its adjectival sense, for example, although ‘good’ judgment implies something either of a qualitative or moral sense, it could be a judgment upon any matter. ‘Wisdom’ is always in respect of something else. Unfortunately, the fact that adjectival ‘wisdom’ is attached to an object, does not allow us to meaningfully discriminate between the objects themselves in respect of the adjective which describes them. For example, a wise counsellor cannot be differentiated from a wise cricketer in the wise sense. Although one is a counsellor and one a cricketer, the wisdom that each has as an attribute may be because of individual talents unconnected to their vocation. The wise counsellor’s wisdom may be of cricket, the wise cricketer’s wisdom may be of counselling.

‘Wise’ implies, in its adjectival or adverbial sense, a broad range of attributes, skills, experience, bodies of knowledge and suchlike that are somehow applied in a wise way, that is in a way that causes someone else to say or think that someone is wise or is acting wisely. Wise actions are usually cautious, measured and performed with

13 Interestingly, as the drive for improved wealth and the taste for consumption increases so does the trend to turn to ‘alternative’ forms of religious, social and economic practices.
care. The wise person should not make mistakes and, if they do, it is unlikely we would consider them wise. But this can only apply to their particular wisdom - a wise philosopher may be unwise in many other respects. In this way, a separate ‘wisdom’ can be attached to every human function or endeavour. As God himself asks Job, ‘Who can number the clouds in wisdom?’ (Job 38: 37).

Wisdom, according to Solomon, speaks in the first person singular (inasmuch as I am the judge of my own wisdom). However, although we may accept this for Solomon who is already wise, for the rest of us, this seems improbable. How can we rate the worth of wisdom if each of us is our own judge? It is reasonable that someone else (who may be ‘unwise’ like Socrates) could judge us as wise, but unreasonable that we should judge ourselves as wise. Indeed, such self-judgment may in itself preclude us from wisdom on the basis of self-aggrandisement as this is counter to the modesty necessarily an attribute of wisdom. And anyway, judgments about our own wisdom would pre-suppose enough wisdom to make any judgment about our own wisdom. So we could only make the judgment if we were already wise and yet could not make such a judgment because this precludes us necessarily from being wise. Solomon, of course, knew that he had wisdom, he did not have to acquire it. Solomon received his wisdom as a gift from God. In the same way, Socrates considered himself constrained by heaven to be un-wise. And here we have a clue to the regard we have for wisdom and how highly we rate it. Both Socrates and Solomon are indicators of the mystic link between wisdom and the ‘beyond’ that is culturally so imbedded in the West. There is nothing more ‘beyond’ than God who is the only one who can ‘show you the secrets of wisdom’ (Job 11: 6). In fact, the expression ‘the wisdom of Solomon’ is used to convey that which is unattainable (in the sense of ‘unable to reach’, in other words absolutely ‘beyond’), and this is not surprising as few would expect to receive it if it could only be bestowed directly by God. At the same time, it would be an unwise person who, like Socrates, thought that the reason why she was unwise was because heaven had prevented it. Wisdom like this is an aspect of the divine, something necessarily beyond our reach, something super-natural. Yet this very super-naturalness is beguiling - it draws us ‘beyond’ the constraints and frustrations of the everyday. But we should not be misled by the deeply fixed and innate attraction this view has to Western culture. When we think of something which seems beyond our grasp, or beyond our immediate ability to describe, we should be cautious about too quickly ascribing it some divine or other-worldly attribute (of something we think lies ‘beyond’), or of accepting it as something of our culture, indefinable yet sceptically resilient.

In the absence of divine connection, anything beyond our reach as an objective absolute must be considered permanently beyond our reach. In practical terms, any striving we do towards something ‘beyond’ must have its value in the striving. Wisdom is merely a hazy image - like the horizon - it may attract our attention and direct our path, but in truth it will never be seen clearly and will remain an object forever beyond our reach. In respect of philosophy, wisdom has a clear meaning, it is, according to Kekes, a ‘form of understanding that unites a reflective attitude and a practical concern ... what philosophy is meant to be the love of’ (Kekes, 1995, p.
912). But ‘philosophical wisdom’ is not true wisdom in itself, nor is it wisdom for
the person. And, problematically, ‘philosophical wisdom’ is what philosophers often
think of as wisdom itself, even though this is not necessarily what wisdom stands
for without philosophy. The transitional process of NU-Philosophical Counselling,
although philosophical, taps into something deeply practical - personal freedom
and openness to change. Any ‘wisdom’ involved in NU-Philosophical Counselling is
practical ‘wisdom’ in that it is always attached to something individually practical.
As the process of openness to increased wisdom (for the individual or another) is
pursued in the form of Exchanging the Word, any such wisdom will be born of
the clarity and gift of ‘un-wisdom’. And anything which we imagine or experience
as ‘beyond’ must always, in truth, be regarded as ‘beyond within’, and regarded
separate from the idea of an absolute reality which is permanently ‘beyond’ the
world which may always be one of confusion and appearance (Rochelle, 2008).

7. Wisdom and happiness
Wisdom, irrespective of its embodiment in the term philo-sophia, does not necessarily
deserve the unreserved respect it sometimes receives from philosophers. Happiness,
according to Aristotle, is the only ultimate end. It is, he says, never in respect of
something else and is the most complete end which persons pursue - it is ‘something
final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action’ (Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics,
1097b, 21-2).

The obvious distinction between happiness and wisdom in the manner
of personal conduct, and its place in Aristotle’s hierarchy of ends, should cause us
at least to question our respect for wisdom. It is possible that we admire wisdom
so much because it is culturally attached to philosophy, whereas happiness, on the
other hand, can be obtained merely by, for example, gaining pleasure from a poor
joke. In this relative sense, wisdom has a more ‘serious’ aspect than happiness
and therefore attracts a higher regard (particularly from the ‘serious minded’).
But wisdom has great qualities - the propensity for caution, modesty, balance and
assuredness.

It would, as I have said, be considered immodest to judge yourself wise, particularly
if you were incautious, immodest, lacking in a balanced view or were victim of
intellectual hesitance. In this way, as we have seen, we can see that wisdom also has
the desirable quality of self-effacement built into its defining terms. On the other
hand, we may be happy by being joyful, eager to look to our future, immodest,

We more commonly think of happiness as ‘something in our lives’, ‘something we feel’. Russell says ‘The
happy man is the man who lives objectively, who has free affections and wide interests, who secures his
happiness through those interests and affections and through the fact that they, in turn, make him an
object of interest and affection to many others’ (Russell, 1930, p. 243). A more psychological interpretation
of happiness provides useful insights into an empirically based view of what it is like for us to be happy.
A full and accessible description of this understanding of everyday experience of happiness (or the lack
of it) can be found in Eysenck (1994).

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or self interested. Yet, we may act impetuously, have a badly unbalanced view, be morally untoward and get things wrong, and still be pleased to say we are happy. In other words, we can only be wise if our objective attributes can be called wise attributes (and then only by another who is sufficiently wise to make such a judgment), whereas to be happy we need only to feel the subjective state of being innately happy (and the judge of this is unavoidably myself). Seen in this way, compared to happiness, which, according to Aristotle, has a good claim as an ultimate end, wisdom is clearly a process - wisdom cannot logically follow from happiness, though happiness could logically follow from wisdom. And although, as far as its attributes are concerned, this view does nothing to enhance the value of wisdom, it shows that, although it remains relatively defined, it has a different qualitative sense to happiness.

If we cannot meaningfully articulate wisdom (without a dependent object) then, as a thing in itself, it cannot be considered a real object of desire. And if it is a condition we can only attach to another, then it cannot rightly form the basis for a personal goal. If it is something which lies ‘beyond’ the world of experience, then to experience it, requires either divine intervention or some sort of Platonic transcendence. As a concept, objective wisdom may embody some of our grandest wishes, but we should not live deluded by the view that we may attain it - ‘Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent’ (Wittgenstein, 1922, p. 189). We must accept the reality of our present lives, accept that setting impossible, objective goals which do not form part of our phenomenal world - goals that are strictly ‘beyond’ - is pointless, time wasting, and misleading. Such an activity would be like working out how to attain faith - pre-supposing or imagining that logic is a path to a condition that truly can only be acquired by an inner sense of ultimate and unshakeable belief. Instead, wisdom should be regarded more properly as an experience of the process of being - something that we do, something that is part of the practice of life. Wisdom is truly nothing more grand. It is, as Nozick puts it, ‘practical; it helps. Wisdom is what you need to understand in order to live well and cope with the central problems and avoid the dangers in the predicament(s) human beings find themselves in’ (Nozick, 1989, p. 267). In other words, we can become wise only in respect of things which, although part of our experience, are not our subjective self. Passing ‘through’ philosophy and realising the de-objectivisation of a ‘wisdom beyond’ may help us do this. And it would be a false claim to say that anything (including philosophy) had made us wise. If, for example, as Aristotle claims, happiness were truly the goal, then wisdom about happiness may be very useful

Aristotle views happiness as identified with a life fulfilling its potential and grounded in reason (Aristotle, 1941), as such, it has a connection to Mill’s utilitarianism with its emphasis on fulfilment and self-realisation. Mill believed happiness could be found on an ascending scale (Mill, 1962), whereas Bentham saw it as a ‘blissful’ state (Bentham, 1996). They both believed, however, that ‘degrees’ of happiness could be calculated, as could the consequences of actions which may lead to happiness or otherwise.

A clear sighted and practical-minded discussion on happiness which still belies its cultural genesis can be found in Russell (1930).

If we accept Aristotle’s claim that happiness is the ultimate ethical end, we are forced to conclude that, as an ethical virtue, wisdom must be subordinate to happiness.

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and may guide us in the acquisition of happiness. And, if wisdom is subordinate to happiness in the causal hierarchy, then the acquisition of happiness could not cause us to be wise. In this sense, wisdom is a utility in that it enables a goal to be obtained, and this is a sense distinct from the concept of wisdom as a process without goal or end.

8. The task of wisdom - the ‘beyond within’

Our first ‘wise’ task - a task in the process of being and becoming wise - is to ground ourselves in the world in which we exist. There is the constant danger with philosophy, even ‘practical’ philosophy, of allowing philosophising to run quickly away from the realm of the everyday, the realm of the person - the phenomena of the person’s life. Although the person deals with many things beyond their personal realms (for example, abstract thinking about metaphysics, the sceptical limits of induction, creativity, considering a sense of purpose, and so on), these things, although influencing the person’s thoughts or actions in some way, cannot be said to be an essential part of everyday life. If we are in need of food in order to survive, it is unlikely that we would consider pondering the limits of induction a priority, and we may hesitate to bet our life savings on the future chance of discovering ontological reality. Hume warns us of not being able to lead a sane life if scepticism is taken too seriously, and in so doing he graphically marks out the distinction between the abstract (and apparently less real) and the practical (and apparently more real). He says of the speculative philosopher, ‘when he awakes from his dream, he will be the first to join in and laugh against himself, and to confess, that all his objections are mere amusement, and can have no other tendency than to show the whimsical condition of mankind’ (Hume, 1975, Section XII, Part II, sec. 128). As well as reminding us not to take life so seriously, Hume informs us of the real pitfall of the logical pursuit - thinking that there are serious consequences in its performance. The life I lead is real. It may not be metaphysically real, but it is real for me. We can be rightly edified by simple concerns (as Thomas À Kempis recommends (Kempis, 1952)), but they are more than just edifying - simple concerns are central to our existence, and we lose track of them at our peril.\[18\]

The ‘beyond within’ is that which is ‘beyond’ our reach but ‘within’ us inasmuch as it is presently obscured from and so as yet undiscovered and not realised. ‘Beyond within’ becomes known as ‘within’ when we embody it upon our discovery of it. Whatever is ‘beyond’ the individual is part of the individual’s sense of what may be beyond. This refers not to some absolute objective entity which is ‘beyond’ our phenomenal world and which, if real, will always remain beyond, but to the experience of the ‘beyond’ which is ‘within’ the possibility or actuality of our experience.

If something is beyond, then we do not know it. If we come to know it, then it is within. Anything unknowable remains forever beyond. Anything forever beyond is

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18 This is not an isolated thought in literature, history, religion, art or philosophy where it is abundantly expressed.
pointless to us. Only if we come to know it in some way is it in any way relevant. Anything we come to know is always within.

There are certain things that necessarily we cannot know - things which it is logically impossible for us to know. For example, in life, we cannot know ‘heaven’ which is a place reserved for the spiritual existence of the dead. It is reasonable that logical impossibility precludes things from our knowledge of them, as logical possibility appeals to a deep inner common sense and appeals to what we feel intuitively to make sense.

There are other things which we do not know but which we may know at a future present time. It is logically possible that we may know these things, but may not be practically or technically possible, empirically possible or possible on common sense grounds, at this time. For example, we may not know any entity, context or form which is beyond our comprehension, but this is not to say we will not know such things at a future present time when technical difficulties are overcome, if there is a change in the universal ‘laws of nature’, or when there is a change in the way ‘common sense’ is defined and appeals to our intuition. We may not today comprehend the form of another universe but that is not to say we will not be able to comprehend it in a future present time though it remains at the moment that the universe which we ‘cannot logically comprehend’ must remain unknowable.

Because we do not know these things now but may come to understand or comprehend their nature in a future present time there is a sense in which such understanding is ‘within’ us as potential - nothing logical has precluded us from knowing these things so they can be part of us at any such time that they become possible. Anything logically possible in this way cannot be ruled out from actually possible in the future. So, although beyond us in one way (presently not possible), these things are also within us (potentially within us), they are ‘beyond within’ - they are beyond our knowledge but within our logical potential. We do not already know them but they are not ‘beyond’ our potential.

Although there is a category of things which are beyond us (those things which are logically impossible), all other things outside that category are possible and therefore cannot be said to be ‘beyond’. Because something is beyond us in place (we cannot see, touch or otherwise sense it), or beyond us in time (we have not yet experienced it but may do so at a future present time) this does not lead to the conclusion that it is beyond us. This sense of within can be thought of as a potential which is available to discovery in any part of the near or distant future. Such things are not absolutely beyond and cannot be part of what we consider ‘beyond’ the person - they are always ‘beyond within’. This means, for example, that a revelation, does not come from ‘beyond’ but is somehow ‘unlocked’ as part of what is within us but not previously known.

We must not confuse the distinctly practical phenomenon of the ‘beyond within’ with seeking the other-worldly or the mystical. We must not be misled by looking for an entity which is separate to the genuine world of human experience. Such a mistake can lead us into the fanciful which, as Hume warns us, may be fascinating.
9. The task of wisdom - the quest for meaning

The concept of ‘quest’, even without its object ‘wisdom’, enables us to distinguish further between what we have so far roughly described as Utilitarian Philosophical Counselling and the transitional process of NU-Philosophical Counselling. Some individuals presenting themselves to Philosophical Counselling will be on a ‘quest for wisdom’ in the non-Nozickean (that is, non-practical) sense, others will not. Some may request practical help - they may wish to feel happier, to resolve a moral dilemma, to come to a decision, to find some enhanced meaning in their lives - and any of these questors may spend valuable time with a Utilitarian Philosophical Counsellor. On the other hand, others will be questing for something they think of as ‘beyond the person’ - something transcendental which exists, they believe, as an object separate from themselves to be witnessed or understood. Though it would not be without exception, those seeking this type of benefit would generally find it in some faith-based endeavour, mystical, or religious following - something which has the underlying fabric of dogma (that is, a metaphysical belief, acceptance or rejection of which would alter the subject’s religious or faith-based position (McTaggart, 1997, pp. 3-4). Others may be interested in how a life can change, how we can establish meaning in an absurd world\textsuperscript{19}, how it is possible to act and choose freely\textsuperscript{20}. These individuals may be best engaged in thinking with a NU-Philosophical Counsellor (or more properly ‘taking part in the process of mutual philosophising which I am calling the transitional process of NU-Philosophical Counselling. Within the NU-Philosophical Counselling companionship such basic individual concerns can be thought about without the confusing utilities of the day-to-day or the misty and misleading horizons of an objectivised ‘beyond’. It is within this context that the individual, benefitting, to some extent or another, from the received gift of Socratic clarity, and within a framework of opening up to a full range of possibilities, may best further the search for personal wisdom.

\textsuperscript{19} Firmly imbedded in philosophical thinking is the idea, or suspicion, that life might be in some sense absurd. It is found in the pointlessness of life analysed in Ecclesiastes, is central to the Cartesian world which entertains the possibility of life controlled by an evil demon, and finds its greatest expression in the mid-twentieth century movement of French existentialism pioneered by Jean-Paul Sartre. Though it is not essential to existentialism that absurdity is the case, it is legitimately associated with it. Sartre claims that original choice is ‘absurd’ because it is itself based on choice, human reality is absurd ‘not because it is without reason but because there has never been any possibility of not choosing oneself’ (Sartre, 1969, p. 479). Following Sartre (and Camus), the idea of the world as absurd became the central theme of the ‘theatre of the absurd’ of which Samuel Beckett is the foremost exponent. Beckett’s analysis of the absurdity of faith in Waiting for Godot was a turning point in the relation of philosophy to drama. For a late twentieth century description of absurdity, see Nagel (1979).

\textsuperscript{20} Whether freedom is available in our lives, whether our activities are somehow determined, or whether there is, in varying degrees, a mixture of these effects and constraints at different times, is an abiding source of human enquiry. Interesting discussion and starting points can be found in Honderich (1990) and Moore (1912).
The meaning of *my* life is important to me in an entirely different way than *the* meaning of life or *my* meaning of life. Although both can be combined in achieving transcendence, *my* need to be wise about something practically useful is different from my undertaking a quest for wisdom about meaning or beneficial meaning for *me*. NU-Philosophical Counselling is concerned with the meaning of *my* life. It is not concerned too much with the transcendent ‘beyond’, nor with the utilitarian concerns of things which meaningfully influence my life. NU-Philosophical Counselling embraces the changes we can make in our lives by understanding that which is ‘beyond within’. The process of NU-Philosophical Counselling is concerned with discoveries that have impact and reality for the experience of the individual. For example, considerations about my social success, or puzzling out the nature of some transcendent absolute, would only be relevant in the sense of how they are separate to the matter of the NU-Life. As such, the transitional process of NU-Philosophical Counselling sits between the utility and the transcendent, and occupies a position concerned primarily with personal meaning related to change, freedom to choose and action. In this sense, it adopts a roughly neo-Epicurean stance, taking little account of major external forces (which can be ignored or discounted as different levels or degrees of anxiety), and powerful social influences (which, though influential, are essentially irrelevant to the understanding of *my* life and the ‘beyond within’). Wisdom gained from the transitional process of NU-Philosophical Counselling, or its expression in Exchanging the Word, is in the form of the individual’s increased ability to find answers about important questions of the individual’s own life. Such a freshly informed person may well be considered ‘wise’ by others, and may make ‘wise judgments’. And this person, or the other involved in the mutual philosophising process, may feel the sense of clarity which comes from a personal state of ‘un-wisdom’. This NU-Life enables progress for the individual by making the activity of being the only worthwhile process of life.

10. Beyond the transitional term ‘NU-Philosophical Counselling’ - ‘Exchanging the Word’

Like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Utilitarian Philosophical Counselling has Stoic appeal but, as with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Utilitarian Philosophical Counselling is insufficient to cater to an appropriate range of meanings for an individual who is seeking true personal meaning. Corrective training, or life-

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21 Like William James, I identify the ‘I’ as the ultimate thinker - the only one who is self-concerned - and like those he pre-empted (notably, in literature Gertrude Stein, and in philosophy A. N. Whitehead), I recognise essential ‘me-ness’ as a process or, in some ways, a ‘stream of consciousness’ (see James, 1957). Interestingly, James can be identified as the one responsible for prising what became the ‘psychological’ aspects of philosophy of mind from the core of late nineteenth century British philosophy. As such, he (along with the like, for different reasons, of Bradley, T.H. Greene, and R.G. Collingwood) must take responsibility for some of the confusions of the place of philosophy of mind within the context of philosophy and so for the uncomfortable naming of ‘Philosophical Counselling’ as something which attempts, in one sense, to blend the two - a discomfort I believe caused by an initially false distinction.

22 As well as Epicurus (Inwood, 1994, O’Connor, 1993), anxiety reduction as a route to happiness is famously (and accessibly) found in the autobiographical reflection of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (Rousseau, 2004).
formulation, necessarily ignores individual concerns in favour of the repressive or short-term behavioural benefit to the individual. The risk of mistaking the ‘beyond within’ as some sort of transcendental ‘beyond’ is that, in objectivising as a goal something ‘beyond’ the world-view of the individual, the individual’s attention is drawn by something which can never truly be known. The transitional process of NU-Philosophical Counselling avoids these difficulties as it seeks to resolve questions like this in terms of the individual and the individual’s place in the world. NU-Philosophical Counselling - in seeking non-utilitarian benefits - does not resort to quasi-religious and demonstrably inaccessible fantasy worlds. If a person has concerns ‘beyond the person’ then the only meaning this can have in the NU-context is as a concern of the person - a concern about the person’s life - and this is merely the ‘within’ concerned with that which is seemingly or apparently ‘beyond’ the ‘within’. NU-Philosophical Counselling recognises that, although some practical concerns are apparently more or less practical than others, they are, nevertheless, all the concerns of the subject, inherently personal, and fundamentally meaningful. The transitional process of NU-Philosophical Counselling undertakes to explore, identify, and rationalise the misconception of utilitarian or transcendental anxieties based on misconceived personal hopes, or of false hopes for objectivised reality beyond the person. If it has a therapeutic value, in the sense that ‘counselling’ has a therapeutic value, then it is within the framework of helping the individual identify that, in truth, concerns about personal gain are based upon the anxiety of current inadequacy, and that seeking something objectively ‘beyond’ is a reflection of anxiety based upon unknown fears. This sense of inadequacy is driven largely by the utilitarian world, and the reduction of such anxiety can be discovered by a reduced attachment to that world and what it offers. Anxiety brought about by unknown fears can be attributed to anxiety about failing to match up to the advertised potential of the utilitarian world, or because of a misunderstood attachment to the idea of an objectivised ‘beyond’. A better understanding of the objects of desire found in the utilitarian world, and a clearer picture of real subjective, as opposed to misleading objective, reality can help in reducing anxiety attached to these.

Nor is NU-Philosophical Counselling confined within the conventional parameters laid down by the counselling counsellor/client relationship. Indeed, NU-Philosophical Counselling may have few of the acknowledged methods of counselling - no defined relationship between individuals (especially no hierarchical relationship), and may have no explicit philosophical ingredient. It is because of this that ‘NU-Philosophical Counselling’ is a transitional term used more to highlight its ingredients than to be a descriptor of its practice.

The next philosophical phase in the transitional process of NU-Philosophical Counselling, necessarily ignores individual concerns in favour of the repressive or short-term behavioural benefit to the individual. The risk of mistaking the ‘beyond within’ as some sort of transcendental ‘beyond’ is that, in objectivising as a goal something ‘beyond’ the world-view of the individual, the individual’s attention is drawn by something which can never truly be known. The transitional process of NU-Philosophical Counselling avoids these difficulties as it seeks to resolve questions like this in terms of the individual and the individual’s place in the world. NU-Philosophical Counselling - in seeking non-utilitarian benefits - does not resort to quasi-religious and demonstrably inaccessible fantasy worlds. If a person has concerns ‘beyond the person’ then the only meaning this can have in the NU-context is as a concern of the person - a concern about the person’s life - and this is merely the ‘within’ concerned with that which is seemingly or apparently ‘beyond’ the ‘within’. NU-Philosophical Counselling recognises that, although some practical concerns are apparently more or less practical than others, they are, nevertheless, all the concerns of the subject, inherently personal, and fundamentally meaningful. The transitional process of NU-Philosophical Counselling undertakes to explore, identify, and rationalise the misconception of utilitarian or transcendental anxieties based on misconceived personal hopes, or of false hopes for objectivised reality beyond the person. If it has a therapeutic value, in the sense that ‘counselling’ has a therapeutic value, then it is within the framework of helping the individual identify that, in truth, concerns about personal gain are based upon the anxiety of current inadequacy, and that seeking something objectively ‘beyond’ is a reflection of anxiety based upon unknown fears. This sense of inadequacy is driven largely by the utilitarian world, and the reduction of such anxiety can be discovered by a reduced attachment to that world and what it offers. Anxiety brought about by unknown fears can be attributed to anxiety about failing to match up to the advertised potential of the utilitarian world, or because of a misunderstood attachment to the idea of an objectivised ‘beyond’. A better understanding of the objects of desire found in the utilitarian world, and a clearer picture of real subjective, as opposed to misleading objective, reality can help in reducing anxiety attached to these.

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The next philosophical phase in the transitional process of NU-Philosophical Counselling,

23 The relationship may not be based on exchange of money for time, and who is the ‘beneficiary’ of the exchange may be ambiguous.

24 NU-PC may never explicitly involve any mention of philosophy or philosophers and may not even utilise basic philosophical method.
Counselling is best characterised by the expression ‘Exchanging the Word’\textsuperscript{25} By simple focused questioning (similar to ‘interviewing’), which concentrates entirely on the world of the other, the philosopher draws out specific matters of relevance to the individual’s life and from this exposes more general principles. \textsuperscript{26} The Word is unknown by the philosopher until it is exposed by the process, so the process itself feeds back into a system of enlightenment which benefits both the philosopher and the other.\textsuperscript{27} Exchanging the Word reshapes our common understanding of philosophical counselling into something which can happen between people without any of the obvious connotative trappings of philosophy or counselling, but which can bring some of the benefits of both together with more.

My belief is that Practical Philosophy, if it is to be truly practical, can be (indeed, needs to be) brought to those beyond the recognised sphere of philosophy in ways which are essentially non-philosophical.\textsuperscript{28} If indeed Practical Philosophy needs introducing into the world of the everyday, then I think this can only be done by philosophers prepared to ‘exchange’ philosophy in the NU-way.\textsuperscript{29} And it

\textsuperscript{25} My first idea for an expression descriptive of this process was ‘Preaching the Word’. Although it spoke of an intention not part of NU-exchange (NU-exchange is not a formal ‘delivery’ or ‘address’ and does not sit well with the moral connotations associated with ‘preaching’), it had some appeal - the philosopher (or ‘counsellor’) has some ‘missionary’ zeal, and engages individuals purposefully in the philosophical process. In this sense it seemed to me a form of ‘preaching’ - the philosopher not the other knows that philosophical enlightenment is the best outcome of the process. However, despite my attachment to his term, I was persuaded to set it aside by Ran Lahav’s insightful observation that ‘the words inside you reverberated with the familiar expression “preaching the word” but really referred to a similar but different expression’ (Lahav, 2007 A). But, although dissuaded from using it to define the outcome of the transitional term NU-Philosophical Counselling, I find it an appropriate description of the engagement where the ‘word’ itself is the inspiration.

A typical line of questioning in an Exchanging the Word encounter might follow this pattern: How long have you worked here? Do you like working here? What is it about working here that you like? Why do you like that particular feature? Do you think that particular feature is an important aspect of our lives? Why do you think this? What has led you to think this? Is this idea part of what you believe in as part of your life? Do your beliefs change or are they constant? How do your views on this represent what you think life is like? What are the greatest values in life? Why are these so important? Which is the most important one? Why do you think this? Why is this value of such particular importance?

As the engagement proceeds, the questioner may well find it useful to contribute more as his or her own clarity is increased by the activity. At the same time, it has been shown that a clear focus needs to be kept on the other, and involvement in the life or experience of the philosopher should remain outside the exchange (Rochelle, 2007).

Lahav says, ‘What is special about it, so it seems to me, is that it does not try to analyze anything, to make a statement about anything, to tell the other person “you are X or Y”. The role of the exchanged word is not to carry information, but to do, to act, to transform both the conduit of the word and the other person’ (Lahav, 2007 B).

In my experience, outside departments of philosophy in universities, philosophy becomes increasingly patchy in its distribution and interpretation. Though there are cultural and social differences in the understanding of what philosophy can mean in the everyday world, for many, it means at best ‘the meaning of life’, at worst a subject which begins with ‘P’ which gives it a muddled association with psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy, or physiotherapy (Rochelle, 2007).

It is an old argument to propose that philosophy should be part of everyday life - the difficulty is how this can be achieved. Thoreau tells us, ‘To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically’ (Thoreau, 1995, p.9). Buber bases ethics and theology in the context of the dialogue-

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'Dare to be Wise': ‘Exchanging the Word’ - a New Philosophical Practice

is by practising this NU-way in which philosophers (even though they may have no answers) ‘Dare to be Wise’, that the process of en-wisening will be possible for the greatest possible number of people.

The transitional process of NU-Philosophical Counselling is a mutual event which may most easily involve two individuals, though, in its ‘Exchanging the Word’ form, it may be stimulated by the activity of one and may cause others to be involved. Casual meetings with persons unknown are fertile ground for Exchanging the Word, as the nature of such meetings means that there is no proclaimed or identified ‘philosophical’ perspective or motivation. The absence of such a perspective or motivation reduces obstacles, expectations and pre-conceptions all of which can contribute negatively to creating the mental space necessary for ‘enwisenment’. The prerequisite of the meeting is that the other has a spell of uninterrupted time to take part in the process. The benefits in the ‘feedback system’ ignited in the circumstances of Exchanging the Word may be diverse in their direction, power and effect, but they will always produce mutually dependant philosophical enlightenment to some degree or another in each individual. Exchanging the Word is an asymmetrical process but this is not incompatible with ‘exchange’. What is exchanged may be balanced (a mutual sense of enlightenment) but it may equally be imbalanced or even unknown (for example, one person may knowingly benefit while the other does not, or one may be unaware of the benefit which is either given or taken).

The focused questioning of the philosopher, concentrating wholly on the other, moves both individuals to a new philosophical position. This new position may, for either participant, be in the form of witnessed wisdom, acknowledged self-wisdom or clarity, emotional linking or response, insight or change of mind. In the other, it is likely to be a wisdom borne of an increased self-understanding motivated by the focused questions of the philosopher. In the philosopher it may occur initially as a new realisation (or ‘realisational’ enhancement) discovered from the novel way, or novelty of, the other’s explanation, focus and response to focus. Exchanging

29 cont.

encounter. He thinks authenticity and responsiveness attained within the I-Thou relationship with the other, nature or works of art, make possible a glimpse of God (Buber, 1950). It is this practical involvement with the everyday which the NU-exchange process can achieve.

30 Interestingly, and sometimes contrary to the general belief that ‘having time to spend’ is a leisurely pursuit confined to those with no, or a self-regulated, working environment, I have found that people engaged in menial and lower-paid occupations are more likely to have a sincere interest in the process of enwisening available in the context of Exchanging the Word (Rochelle, 2007).

31 It is not easy to measure increased wisdom in the other, though it is easy to record senses of personal enhancement in the philosopher. Here are three brief examples:

Tony: told me about his faith in a deeply-held belief and how this brought him to regard seriously the consequences of his actions and therefore his conduct in life. This produced in me a greater of understanding of belief, of action motivated by belief, a sense of the fragility of our worldview, and a strong sense of what it is to have unshakeable belief.

Bob: told me about his experiences of hardship in World War II and the seemingly unnecessary loss of a friend. This produced in me a sense of the resistant nature of the self to hardship and loss. How long
the Word is, above all, a creative activity which has the capacity to bring about philosophically novel change in the individual. As such it is the very distillation of meaningful Philosophy in Practice.

11. Personal wisdom is attainable in a lifetime

In summary, wisdom is within each of us - attainable and realisable within a lifetime. It can be exposed, not by focusing upon ‘objects’ beyond our knowledge - for anything beyond our knowledge may always remain so - but on that which, although beyond our present realisation, abides within us. Such realisation is connected to everyday life - to others, the world and all things which form our worldview. Wisdom is a process of becoming more ‘available’ to the world, letting go of the hindrance of pre-conception and dogma, and instead opening up to the novelty of creation, freedom, action and change. Openness is essential to the process of questing for wisdom, for without it there can be no discovery. We have to be open to the creative novelty and be prepared to act upon it freely and with meaning if we are to make any progress within the general ‘process of wisdom’. From the ‘process of wisdom’ comes good judgments and these react together with what it means to us to lead a good life. Making judgments like this does not prohibit our discovery of what is presently ‘beyond’, indeed it makes clearer the direction we must follow, for no route can be followed without judgments. As wisdom increases on the basis of openness to the potential of the individual it both utilises and produces qualities of wisdom and good judgment, qualities of what it is we consider elements of the good living individual - caution, modesty, balance and assuredness. Practical Philosophy in the form of exchanging the Word can expose wisdom as part of a process of increased clarity within an individual whose reduced anxiety and increased openness is fostered by stepping away from philosophy itself and the utilitarian gains available in the neoliberal world.

Opening up the possibilities for wisdom is an active, risk-taking process - ‘in seeking truth of all sorts many virtues are needed, industry, patience, humility, magnanimity ... courage’ (McTaggart, 1910, p. 37). We must not weaken or dilute this essential practicality of being by seeking the satisfaction of personal gain or the salvation of ‘heavens’ beyond our own world. The objectivised world ‘beyond’ is of particular danger. In pursuing it, we run the risk of concocting something that we do not know into something we think we may know and that is better than the

it can sometimes be before we are able to even review some of our deeply held issues. How our lives are so different from others and how we need to make an effort to understand in any way the experience of life of the other.

Sheena: told me how a lifetime’s work led to redundancy and how the consumer interests of the world she lived in had led to a sense of hopelessness in the future. This produced in me a strong sense of an underlying nature of humanity which transcended the more obvious needs and desires which humanity portrays as its nature (Rochelle, 2007).

A method of measuring increased wisdom, clarity or philosophical enlightenment in the other, and any such method’s implementation is a subject of my current research.

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world in which we exist. This, the territory of faith-based belief and dogma, can be a dangerous and apologetic world of self-deceit. Each of us occupies our own world, and there are as many worlds as there are occupants. We are, as individuals, primarily engaged in the way of world making (Goodman, 1978), and world making is a simple, wise and practical matter which is always ‘beyond within’.

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