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## Educational counselling in relation to other psycho-social intervention forms

Dr. Elena Dimitriu-TIRON<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*In the introduction to this article, from the point of view of the social-historical evolution of counselling, several levels of its development are identified: the fundamental action level, the level of empirical social knowledge, the level of interaction among science, technology, art and religion and the specific level of socio-psycho-pedagogical intervention. The main part of this paper starts from the classification of models of psychological intervention, elaborated by W. Huber to make it easier for us to differentiate psychotherapy, crisis intervention and counselling. Referring to the definition of Gustad with respect to counselling, we elaborated a personal definition of educational counselling, stressing its characteristics in relation to other forms of psycho-social intervention, including the closest one- psychological counselling. The guide of educational counselling elaborated by Băban stimulated us to conceptualise the differences between psychological counselling and educational. By studying the model of Enăchescu of interaction between counselling and psychotherapy, we noted the detected area of existential difficulty and we considered that we should add educational problems to it depending on age, sex, health of the educational subjects, their social relations, the report results-satisfaction as product of the educational process. The educational reform in Romania after December 1989 focus on: the decentralization of education, education focussed on the subject, a growth of the education's quality, of the performance but also of the satisfaction correlated to all of them. Within this process, educational counselling as circular relation among person-educational problem-significant socio-human context- we consider that it can become a conceptual mechanism but especially instrumental for achieving the educational reform. By noting the larger field of action of educational*

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*counselling compared to that of psychological counselling, we identified its components: school counselling, vocational counselling, professional counselling, psycho pedagogical counselling and career counselling. To draw the conclusions of this paper, we reiterated the report among science, technology, art and religion to define the specific features of educational counselling.*

*Keywords: educational counselling, psychotherapy, crisis intervention, educational problem, orientation-learning, interaction science-technology-art-religion.*

## **Introduction**

The broadest significance of counselling can be found in the very beginnings of human society organization, being very close to the advising one with respect to the community's responsibilities. Whatever they might be (wizards, shamans, astrologists, witmen or counsellors), all those persons had a similar role of healing, guiding, counselling, finding solutions to diverse medical, social, political, personal group issues that the society would face. Throughout the evolution and division of human society into several activity fields: economical, political, juridical, administrative, educational, etc, the counselling activity itself becomes differentiated, turning into a necessity for all these fields. Thus, we consider the action level to be a first level of counselling differentiation.

However, the advising-counselling social action can by no means be separated from the knowledge one that was empirical from the very beginning. Children have always had their parents as personal counsellors, who were more or less prepared, more or less accepted. Neighbours have always counted on each other to ask for or offer advice in certain difficult situations of their existence; it is no use mentioning here a certain category of non-specialist counsellors but almost generic ones for counselling- friends. From all the counselling related empirical activities, the friendship one synthesizes essential features of: listening, sincerity, experiencing emotions and feelings, informing, supporting, guiding, learning, developing. The second level of the advising-counselling evolution could be the level of empirical social knowledge.

The selecting and gathering of knowledge and experience from all activity fields, accessible at a certain point throughout history, led to the elaboration of the first philosophy papers. They contained scientific knowledge, technological information, religious beliefs, artistic messages, moral rules, pieces of advice regarding life etc. Identifying information of counselling nature in philosophical papers may be regarded as the third level of counselling evolution- the philosophical counselling.

The separation of scientific, technical and technological, artistic and religious knowledge from the mother body of philosophy led to the differentiation of sciences, technology, art and religion as specific fields of human knowledge, of action, of artistic creation, of religious belief. The stable setting up of sciences was carried out through the definition of their field of activity, of specific methods and elaboration of laws of nomothetic or ideographic nature depending on the study object of these sciences. If science, at the highest level of its development, comes to elaborate specific laws, technology is defined by assembly of rules of action and transformation of the reality represented by objects, processes and phenomena, materials and objectives mostly. Art represents the field of living reality, of rendering it into ideas, visual or auditive images, into original products in which the mixture of objective and subjective reaches a maximum degree of interaction. The artistic message represents the specific means of transforming reality by art. Religion builds the structure of body or knowledge and norms on belief- which represents a balanced mixture of cognitive, affective and volitive elements, deeply rooted at the field of interaction between conscious and unconscious.

If science elaborates laws, technology elaborates rules, art- messages and religion- beliefs, what is counselling after all: science, technology, art or religion?

Counselling is science to the extent to which it is founded on theories, scientific methods and rules, which were checked and confirmed. For instance, the psychopedagogical laws of adaptation may represent the foundation of a scientific explanation in counselling. The scientific nature of counselling becomes more and more dominant if the latter elaborates new field related or research theories and methods. We wonder whether these new theories and methods that stress new truths automatically lead to the efficiency of counselling. Counselling is more a field of efficient action than of real knowledge. The efficient action is ensured by the identification and elaboration of rules of transforming reality- a field which belongs to technology. In a paradoxical manner, even if the technology phenomenon does not match the humanist sciences one, W. Huber(1997) shows that this one designates a fundamental aspect of psychological assistance and intervention, Thus implicitly of counselling, that is what we consider. The effectiveness of action in the field of socio-psychological-educational intervention is not ensured by the scientific truths elaborated by sciences involved, but by the application rules of these scientific truths to the specific situation, to the living and real person, to the respective moment.

Counselling is a psycho-educational technology if it elaborates rules of creation, transformation and control (Bunge, 2008) of some specific processes on positive and beneficial purposes (for instance the rule of guidance-learning). But do all these specific rules always apply the very same way, no matter the person, regardless of the way work is done, individually or in group, with some methods or another?

Counselling is art because it acts on a sensitive field (the educational issues- in case of educational counselling) applies methods, techniques and procedures of modelling the subject's personality in a different and creative way, adapts the reality of the subject's ideas, experiences, volition and (educational) behaviour to the (educational) environment's reality.

The (educational) counselling does not act upon the objective reality as such but on the psychological image of this reality which is reflected in the subject's mind, personality and (educational) behaviour. The educational counselling interacts with religion at the belief level, as religious and psychological beliefs both have a similar cognitive, affective, volitive structure that have the role of preparing and guiding the subject. But, if in the religious beliefs transforming mechanisms are external to the person or group as they are of divine nature- in the psychological one, the personality's modelling and transforming mechanisms are internal as they are discovered and guided towards adaptation and effectiveness by counsellor in relation to the counselling subject.

In (educational) counselling, theories may be true, laws may be significant, methods and techniques may be appropriate, and the counselling outcomes may be void. In other words, the operation was successful, but the patient is dead. The (educational) counselling outcomes are not measured by the confirmed scientific truths but by the effectiveness of adapting all these truths to a issue, situation, patient. This fact is achieved through the interaction among the scientific, technological, artistic and religious components of (educational) counselling.

In our opinion, the interaction among science, technology, art and religion led to the evolution of knowledge and human action to all these preoccupations known under the generic name of branches of socio-psycho-educational intervention. This may be considered to be the fourth level of counselling evolution.

### **Conceptual differentiations**

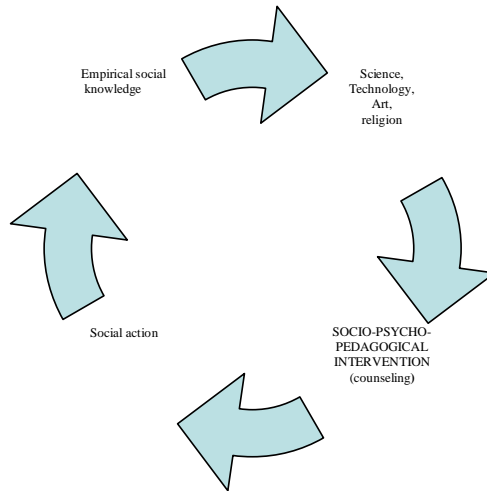
In socio-psycho-educational intervention, there is that *know-how* that goes beyond all rules but, unlike art, the action is judged by objective criteria of efficiency and by their suitability to scientific information- W. Huber showed. He ranges psychological intervention methods depending on their gravity centre, distinguishing three groups:

- a. *prevention*, rehabilitation, counselling,
- b. *crisis intervention* and accompaniment;
- c. *psychotherapy* in a narrow sense

We can notice that at the first level of the methods importance of the psychological intervention there can be found psychological counselling. In our opinion, the educational counselling also belongs to the same category of mostly

technological interventions with respect to rule and efficiency. This one has the educational issues as action field, addresses the educational subjects, by means of specific methods acquired through the interaction of the psychological technology with the pedagogical one.

In order to summarize the above discussion, we can draw the following scheme which highlights the epistemological status of (educational) counselling, at the crossroads of science, technology, art and religion, being founded on a type of technological knowledge, of efficiency rules but it also has effects of technological nature, that is of efficient transformation of the relation between educational subject-significant educational environment



*Figure 1: Stages of educational counselling evolution*

By establishing the category the (educational) counselling belongs to, let us analyze some definitions of counselling, in order to detach its essential elements but also to differentiate it from other forms of psycho-social intervention. J. Wallis (1978) considered counselling (advising) to be a dialogue in which a person helps another person who faces significantly important difficulties. F. Inskipp and H. John (1984) show that the advising (counselling) is a way of interacting and answering another person so that the advised person can exploit his/her thoughts, emotions and behaviour to gain a clearer self-understanding and later to learn how to find and use his/her strongest points (resources) so that he/she can face life more efficiently by making appropriate decisions and taking suitable steps.

The definition of the Advising British Association (1989) is - as Oancea shows in 2002, - the thoroughness one: “the advising is using with competence and high-principle relation in order to favour self-knowledge, self emotional accept,

optimal growing up and development of professional resources. Its purpose is to offer the occasion to work as satisfactory as possible by a complete use of resources” (p. 23).

By selecting out of the presented definitions the descriptive elements specific to educational counselling, we can show that:

- the issues tackled by counselling are: situational difficulties, normal obstacles of life, self-knowledge, self-understanding, clarification, auto-accept, growth, optimal development of personality in relation to its environment;
- the counselling relation is a relation that aims at helping, supporting, guiding, preparing resources belonging to the individual subject or group, at fitting the life environment of great value in this respect;
- the counselling process has a mostly dynamic nature aiming at increasing efficiency, solving the educational issues, providing the educational subject with specific technologies.

As for intervention and rehabilitation, the scientific intervention focuses on preventing diseases or ameliorating physical or psychical states. We can notice that prevention addresses- according to the author who draws up this classification- disease.

The psychological counselling is relatively limited to the extent to which the specialist helps a subject to see a more or less specific issue more clearly and make up his mind to find a solution. All these issues that occur at the reality level (such as choosing studies or profession) are related to personality within the context in which the subject lives and may lead to the necessity of support in form of *counselling* (more or less specific advice accompanied by psychological procedures) or of *guidance* (advice with more directive forms) or to psychotherapy.

The crisis intervention relates personality more deeply to context relations. On the one hand, it addresses the solving of internal and urgent issues that go beyond the adapting capacity of a sick or healthy personality (for instance the critical moments of a disease or serious events such as accidents, death, and divorce) and on the other hand, it aims at calming suffering and preventing the negative psychological, medical and social consequences. It is an intervention that resembles psychological counselling but intensity, urgency and complexity differentiate them. Psychotherapy in a narrow sense is different from the previous psychological interventions mostly due to its wider and more complex objective. “Psychotherapy is a conscious and planned interaction process which intends to influence the behaviour disorders and suffering states which by a consensus (between patient, therapist and reference group) are said to be in need of a treatment by psychological methods (communication) which are most of the time

verbal but also non-verbal with respect to a defined purpose, collectively elaborated if possible (minimizing symptoms and/or the structural change of personality by means of some techniques that can be learnt on the basis of some theories of normal and pathological behaviour” (Strotzka, 1978).

The first one to use the term of psychotherapy in the culture history is Socrates (Platon, 1986) who highlights the moral importance of taking care of the soul (*psyché therapia*). This moral importance of psychotherapy has much decreased lately, which led to the reduction of its good effects. Salaude offers the following definition of psychotherapy: “curing diseases by use of ideas, images, affective states, intent, volition and other mental phenomena of sick persons in order to rehabilitate the soul and moral equilibrium of the patient, Piéron(2003) states that “psychotherapy is an assembly of techniques focusing on the treatment of mental diseases by psychical procedures, pedagogical methods, persuasion, suggestion, psychoanalysis”. According to Camus and Pagniez, psychotherapy is the assembly of methods through which we act upon the sick spirit or the body of the sick person through spirit’s intervention.

According to Binswanger(1920), psychotherapy is the medical exercise which doesn’t use the hand, tools or medicines, light, water or air, electricity or cold but it uses the human language, the words through which a person gets in contact with another, acting this way upon him. Counselling is placed at the first level of psychological intervention, next to prevention and rehabilitation. Blos, Pepinsky show that this one addresses those persons that face difficulties of situational nature of this life, who don’t possess a neurotic, pathological character, being the victims of some pressures coming from the external environment. Thorne (2000) considers counselling to be a form of psychological support similar to psychotherapy for normal persons with life problems. Robinson pleads the necessity of counselling for those persons who wish to reach a superior level of life, to overcome certain obstacles or to build personal strategies of life. Its objectives would be: the personality’s growth, the acquisition and use of its own independence, the personal fitting to the situations of every day life, and undertaken responsibility. Gustad (2009) defines counselling as “a process of guiding-learning which takes place in the reality space between two persons, a couple where the adviser who has competence in psychological issues offers his patient methods that suit his needs, in relation to the context of life events, a personal program being established this way and this one includes the following: self-awareness; understanding situations; evaluating their effects; realism and practical sense upon solving certain critical situations; restoring the balance with life reality; the subject’s positive evolution.



### **The specific of educational counselling**

If we refer to this definition, in our opinion the educational counselling represents the process of guiding-learning- that addresses the educational subjects (pupils, students, adults who learn) as well as their educational parents (parents, teachers, employers) in order to provide them with the most efficient methods, techniques and procedures that can handle and solve their educational problems. The educational problem is a difficult educational situation for the subject who addresses the (educational) counsellor, presenting cognitive features (lack of clarity, psychological fog, ambiguity), affective features (stress, discontent, anxiety), volitive features (indecision, doubt) leading towards the behaviour's blockage (the subject can not solve a problem all by himself/herself). Thus, he/she addresses a specialist- the educational counsellor that could help him/her solve this difficult situation.

By analyzing these definitions, we can notice that counselling as well as psychotherapy or assistance and psychological assistance are generally considered to be psychological technologies. The most frequent words that are used to define these fields of activity are: taking care, using, assembly of techniques, interaction process, supporting, guiding-learning. The psychological assistance and intervention are activities founded on the fundamental and technological knowledge that need a certain competence for applying technological rules to particular cases. However, even if this activity is considered to be a continuum, there are specific differences from one level to one another. The most important differences between psychological interventions of different level may be synthetically rendered as follows:

The action field of counselling is psychic normality, the one of the crisis intervention is normality in limit situations and that of psychotherapy is mostly the pathologic in the broadest sense and not the disease. Counselling focuses especially on the conscious ego, the crisis intervention focuses on the conscious and troubled ego, psychotherapy focuses on the unconscious ego in relation to the conscious one. Counselling seeks to restore the balance with the environment, the same way as crisis intervention, psychotherapy mostly seeks to restore the internal equilibrium with itself. Psychotherapy can be seen as an assembly of well defined methods depending on the school it belongs to, the crisis intervention is founded on urgent methods and procedures and counselling is a synthesis of methods.

Counselling has an average duration, the crisis intervention a short one, psychotherapy may have a short, average or long duration. For us to better highlight the features of the 3 types of psychological interventions, we draw the following table:

Table 1: The features of psychosocial intervention forms

<i>The features of psychosocial intervention forms</i>			
<i>Intervention type</i>	<i>COUNSELLING</i>	<i>CRISIS INTERVENTION</i>	<i>PSYCHOTHERAPY</i>
<i>Approached issue</i>	<i>Normality Existential difficulties Current issues</i>	<i>Normality Physical, psychological disease Limit situations</i>	<i>Pathology in a broad sense Personality disorders</i>
<i>Activated psychological level</i>	<i>Conscious ego</i>	<i>Conscious ego in a predominant way</i>	<i>Unconscious ego in relation to conscious ego</i>
<i>Methods</i>	<i>Methods synthesis</i>	<i>Efficient procedures</i>	<i>Delineated methods depending on the psychotherapeutic school</i>
<i>Purpose</i>	<i>External balance with the environment</i>	<i>External balance</i>	<i>Internal equilibrium in a predominant way</i>
<i>Duration</i>	<i>Average duration (1-14 sessions)</i>	<i>Short duration (1-3 sessions)</i>	<i>Duration - short - average - long (months, years)</i>

Even if psychotherapy and counselling seem to be very well delineated as fields, they meet in what was called the area of existential difficulty of that person who faces problems of adaptation to the situations of life of relational-external type or problems of internal psychological equilibrium.

These aspects come out of the scheme presented below:

Table 2: Counselling and psychotherapy interaction

<i>The area of normal</i>	<i>The area of difficulty</i>	<i>The area of pathologic</i>
<i>Intervention type</i>		<i>Intervention type</i>
<i>Educative Supporting the capacities of action Situational Solving the current issues Consciousness awareness Solving the normal life issues</i>		<i>Of focalized support Reconstructive Empathetic communication Analyzing the psychological states Focussing attention on the conflict issues of unconscious Solving neurotic conflicts or other issues of emotional nature</i>

As in this scheme, the area of difficulty remains empty to a certain extent, it should be completed.

Depending on well defined criteria, according to us this area should be delineated as follows (Dimitriu, 1998):

- Depending on the age facing the difficulty: a) childhood (ex. problems with the play groups) isolation, aggressive children, hyperactivity; b) adolescence (ex. love problems)- lack of any relationship of friendship, love, delinquent groups, juvenile prostitution; c) youth (ex. couple problems) - late, precocious marital relations, divorce, family's disorganisation, extra-marriage relationships; d) maturity (ex. family, profession) multiple marriages, job's instability, unemployment, strike, change of profession; e) oldness (ex isolation, uprooting) -the death of close persons (husband, children etc), health problems, nervous depression specific to age;
- Depending on the sex of the persons requesting counselling: a) of oedipian type (precocious, late, unusual sexual relations, prostitution); b) identification with one's own sex (choosing a heterosexual or homosexual partner and its psychological consequences); c) homosexuality (accepting gay couples); d) transexuality (changing of sex, personal and social consequences); e) of couple.
- Depending on the relation results-satisfaction in: a) period of instruction (short, average, long): proportioning school effort; school orientation-interests; b) profession (if the new, more, it was personality structure-profession-salary and family);
- Depending on health: a) frequent diseases (psychological consequences of frequent diseases); b) serious diseases (psychological consequences of serious diseases); c) cureless diseases (psychological consequences of cureless diseases);
- Social relations: a) shyness; b) delinquency; c) rape; d) murder;

Depending on the severity degree, the problems with a relatively low severity degree make the object of counselling. In the next table, W. Huber presents the list of different problem fields:

- Children: a) education, instruction, professional orientation; b) problems of sexual education; c) molested, beaten, sick children; d) shelter for young people; e) tutorship assistance;
- Family: a) family planning; b) parental education; c) family problems, professional reintegration; d) family and adults assistance;
- Woman specific problems: a) woman's health; b) nutritional behaviour (slimming, overweight); c) psychology and aesthetic surgery; d) rape, beaten women; e) receiving and reintegrating prostitutes; f) menopause disorders; g) the problem of single women;

- Sexual and couple problems: a) sexual education; b) male and female homosexuality; c) frigidity, impotence; d) marriage counselling; e) mixed marriages, immigrants; f) separation and divorce; g) separate couples and educative problems;
- Old age: a) loneliness; b) physical and psychical involution; c) the life partner's death; d) the socio-professional status decline; e) retirement.
- Professional problems: a) integration into activity; b) psychological and social problems; c) spare time organization; d) orientation, training, readjustment; e) permanent education;
- Health disease:-education for health and preventive medicine (AIDS, drug abuse, alcohol, drugs, tobacco, medicines);-nutrition, heart, diabetes, teeth;-problems related to hospitalization and its consequences;-psychological preparation and survey of medical and dental interventions;-support in chronic and terminal diseases and in relation to their consequences (prostheses, organ grafts) and professional reintegration; former psychiatric patients, family problems and reintegration;

Despite the fact that the educational activity is previous to the development of psycho pedagogical sciences, psychological counselling comes before educational counselling. The development of new trends and psychotherapeutic schools after 1950 trained and formed new specialists related to psychologists, counsellors. As Băban (2000) also showed, the main differences between educational counselling and psychological one can be synthesised as follows:

Table 3: Psychological counselling *and* Educational counselling

<i>Current no</i>	<i>Psychological counselling</i>	<i>Educational counselling</i>
1.	<i>Addresses to all normal persons but who face existential difficulties so that they can restore their equilibrium with the environment.</i>	<i>Addresses to the educational subjects (pupils, students, adults who study) who face difficulties specific to the educational process (learning, readjustment integration, performance, relating)</i>
2.	<i>Takes place in the psychological cabinet</i>	<i>Takes place in the methodical counselling cabinet or in the classroom during the counselling classes.</i>
3.	<i>The psychological counselling object is represented by psychological phenomena: anxiety, phobias, obsession, attempts to commit suicide etc.</i>	<i>The educational counselling object is represented by educational phenomena: absenteeism, aggressiveness that involves the target group, difficult relations between educational partners, school and professional orientation.</i>

<i>Current no</i>	<i>Psychological counselling</i>	<i>Educational counselling</i>
4.	<i>Is achieved by the graduates of faculties of psychology, pedagogy and social assistance.</i>	<i>Is achieved by the graduates of university studies or of some courses of specialization in educational counselling.</i>
5.	<i>The applied methodology has psychological nature specific to different trends and psychological and psychotherapeutic schools (psychodynamic, behaviourist, Rogersian ones etc)</i>	<i>The applied methodology is psycho pedagogical of alliance between the predominantly behaviourist methods and pedagogical methods.</i>
6.	<i>The time devoted to counselling ranges between one to fourteen sessions.</i>	<i>The time devoted to the counselling process ranges between the same limits up to the moment when the educational problem is solved.</i>
7.	<i>In psychological counselling, the patient's unconscious is also involved by the mechanisms of projective transfer towards the counsellor's ego.</i>	<i>Counselling activates the patient's psyche conscious mechanisms.</i>
8.	<i>Offers a clinical and curative model</i>	<i>Offers an educational model owing to its preventive nature that develops the individual and group potential.</i>
9.	<i>Focuses on the psychologist's familiarity with the patient so that the latter can overcome the psychological problems.</i>	<i>Focuses on the patient's self-knowledge for him to overcome his educational problems.</i>
10.	<i>It reduces the risk for some psychological problems to appear.</i>	<i>It facilitates the educative process, ensures the educational subjects adjustment and integration.</i>

This way the educational counselling has a larger area that, according to us, contains the following:

- School counselling- which is achieved for pupils with school problems such as absenteeism, school failure, behaviour and conduct disorders, and is achieved in school through the collaboration of the class teacher with the other teachers and psycho pedagogue professor; Vocational counselling which focuses on educational issues related to talent, interests, aspirations, passions. It takes place in school, high school, faculty, at work.

- Professional counselling which focuses on the optimal choice of profession, on making the best of one's competence through qualification and profession; it takes place in high school, faculty, at work.
- Psycho-pedagogical counselling which focuses on the problem of psychological phenomena (anxiety, phobia, obsession related to educational situations) - it takes place in school, in family, in the psychological cabinet, in medical centres.
- Career counselling focuses on choosing and achieving the optimal career route of the educational subject. It takes place in high school, faculty, at work, in specialized cabinets by means of the career counsellors.

The conclusions that we can draw out of the presented definitions and classifications refer to the fact that the counselling process addresses the problems of readjustment-integration of a person to the reality of his/her own life, in order to establish an agreement with these ones and to solve critical situations (Cojocaru S, 2003).

The essential differences that distinguish the three levels of psychological intervention can be noted in the following table:

*Table 4: The three levels of psychological intervention*

<i>Complexity level</i>	<i>Intervention type</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>Prevention Rehabilitation Counselling</i>	<i>preventing diseases and disorders improving the physical and psychical state clarification, support, orientation-learning</i>
<i>II</i>	<i>Crisis</i>	<i>situational nature serious and urgent problems sick or healthy persons overcoming crisis</i>
<i>III</i>	<i>Psychotherapy</i>	<i>interaction, conscious and planned process consensus among patient, therapist, reference group well defined purpose structural or focalized change</i>

Despite their technological nature, counselling as well as the other psychological interventions are at the crossroads of: science, technology, art and religion. Thus, science provides counselling with theories and psychological, pedagogical, sociological laws which will support the action steps of counselling. If the hypotheses formulated on the basis of these theories and laws will be efficient, in the

counselling process they will strengthen their scientific role. Technology provides counselling with rules of action that transform a certain reality. In the counselling process what really matters is by no means its establishment as science but the most efficient way in which it can be solved. Art is the field in which reality is reflected and transformed by means of the artistic message. The message as mechanism of world's transfiguration specific to art can be considered to be the contribution of art to the development of counselling. Counselling doesn't act upon reality as such but upon the psychical image of this reality and its purpose is the creative beneficial transformation of the counselled person.

Religion comes into contact with counselling at the belief level. Religious or psychological beliefs have the same motivational structure, preparing and orienting the subject.

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