



# शोधामृत

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## Philosophical Counselling Model Based on the Insights of J. Krishnamurti

**Abstract :** Philosophical counseling-an emerging discipline that draws on philosophical inquiry to address human concerns, finds rich resonance in Krishnamurti's philosophy, which emphasized on choiceless awareness, freedom from psychological conditioning and direct perception of truth. This paper examines the concept of philosophical counselling through the lens of the philosophical work of J. Krishnamurti. It analyzes core ideas of Krishnamurti's philosophy and highlight the underlying tendency of philosophical counseling. It highlights the approaches adopted by him which are relevant and applicable to current discourse of philosophical counselling. The study argues that Krishnamurti's approach offers a distinct model of counselling that prioritizes radical self-inquiry, non-authoritative dialogue and the dissolution of the illusory self as fragmented subject. This paper concludes that integrating Krishnamurti's insights into the current discourse of philosophical counselling, enriches its efficacy by advancing transformative understanding and relational presence.

**Key Words :** Philosophical counselling, conditioning, Choiceless awareness, dialogue, togetherness, transformation, illeism.

**Introduction :** Philosophical counselling also known as philosophical practice or clinical philosophy is a contemporary movement in the practical applications of philosophy. It applies philosophical methods to existential and day-to-day life problems. It involves a dialectical approach of therapy between two or more

people. This movement emerged in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, inspired by both analytic philosophy and humanistic traditions, as an alternative to psychological therapies (Littmann,1994)<sup>1</sup> but is known to be rooted in Socratic Tradition which viewed philosophy as a search for the Good and the Good life. Socratic method was a method of dialogue, that stimulated critical thinking in order to draw out ideas and possible solutions, which is a major requirement even today as people tend to be shallow in addressing many of the existential queries. Even while the most fundamental question of human life, 'knowing oneself' is being totally overlooked today, how can we understand the complexities of life, which require tremendous attention to solve. So, philosophical counselling finds its vital place in the current scenario of human life. Unlike conventional therapy, philosophical counselling emphasizes conceptual clarification, reflective dialogue, examination of values, assumptions and lived experience.

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986) was a great philosophical thinker whose work centered on freedom from psychological constraints and thought-based conditioning. Though Krishnamurti was not a counsellor in the professional sense, his immediate and radical insights regarding human aligns with the aims of philosophical counselling : to facilitate harmonious and peaceful living, to promote self-understanding and to end suffering. Also the technique of communication adopted by J. Krishnamurti, marked by a dyadic style 'pariprasna', a sense of togetherness with absence of persuasion and authoritativeness, a unique way of communication, which leads to a genuine feeling of self-reliance and psychological oneness with others and to see things 'as they are,' definitely provides vital insights for the practice of philosophical counselling. This paper explores the elements of philosophical counselling embedded in Krishnamurti's Philosophy and highlights how we can enhance the practice of philosophical counselling by incorporating Krishnamurti's insights.

**What is Philosophical Counselling :** Philosophical counselling emerged as a distinct practice in the 1980s, spearheaded by figures such as Gerd Achenbach and Lou Marinoff. Achenbach, often called the "father" of philosophical counselling, sought to revive philosophy as a practical means to address human problems rather than an academic discipline confined to universities (Achenbach, 1984)<sup>2</sup>. Marinoff's work popularized the idea that philosophical insight could help resolve life issues, ethical dilemmas, and emotional suffering (Marinoff, 1999)<sup>3</sup>. Philosophical counselling typically involves one-on-one dialogue wherein clients articulate existential concerns—such as identity, purpose, moral conflict, freedom, and anxiety—and counsellors facilitate exploration by questioning assumptions and clarifying conceptual frameworks. It is a broad approach of analyzing, interpreting and communicating deep philosophical theories and principles in order to understand and examine the existential problems of an individual to gain more clarity about his position in society and the world at large. " It is a very subjective approach where the problems may be due to conflicts within

oneself or with outside public, which trap an individual into irrational thinking and it becomes difficult to come out of it. The most common issue reported is the entrapment of one's own ego state which leads to emotional, mental, spiritual and physical problems that may lead to conflicts in life."<sup>4</sup>

The goals of philosophical counselling include:

1. **Clarification of Beliefs and Values** — Identifying incoherent or contradictory beliefs (Spinelli, 2007)<sup>5</sup>.
2. **Self-Understanding** — Increasing awareness of personal thought patterns and life priorities (Battista & Almond, 1973)<sup>6</sup>.
3. **Ethical Deliberation** — Assisting individuals in navigating ethical conflicts (Deurzen, 2002)<sup>7</sup>.
4. **Autonomous Decision Making** — Empowering clients to make choices aligned with coherent values (Nussbaum, 1992)<sup>8</sup>.
5. **Existential Insight** — Helping individuals confront human limitations such as finitude and uncertainty (Yalom, 1980)<sup>9</sup>. To deal with complications with existential questions such as meaning or purpose of life.
6. **Organisational or institutional consulting**- to deal with complications like business ethics, human resource management, social, political and environmental issues, career and professional issues, issues with academic institutions related to students etc.

Philosophical counselling is dialogical rather than prescriptive. Counsellors do not diagnose psychological disorders; instead, they engage clients in reflective reasoning that supports self-directed insight and transformation. It addresses issues arising from lack of clarity in self-understanding and thought process only. It is not an alternative to clinical psychology. It confines itself with client's present problems, assumptions and values.

**J.Krishnamurti's Philosophy: A Brief Overview** : Jiddu Krishnamurti was born in 1895 in British India. Discovered as a potential "World Teacher" by the Theosophical Society, he later renounced all affiliations with organized religion and institutional authority to pursue independent inquiry into human consciousness (Lutyens, 1985)<sup>10</sup>. Krishnamurti's philosophy rejects systems, gurus, and authority; it emphasizes direct perception, inquiry into the nature of the self, and psychological freedom. Thought, as a faculty, is rooted in the past. Krishnamurti asserted that suffering emerges when thought attempts to solve psychological problems that are intrinsically non-linguistic and non-conceptual (Krishnamurti, 1973)<sup>11</sup>. Krishnamurti argued that individuals are bound by conditioned responses shaped by culture, memory, tradition, and fear. Such conditioning obscures direct perception and generates suffering (Krishnamurti, 1948/2020)<sup>12</sup>. For Krishnamurti, the distinction between observer and observed perpetuates conflict. He contended that the psychological self—constructed through memory and thought—separates itself from experience. Real insight arises when this

division dissolves (Krishnamurti, 1969)<sup>13</sup>. Krishnamurti emphasized *inquiry* without dependence on external authorities. True understanding, for him, arises from direct investigation of one's own consciousness and experience, without succumbing to beliefs or doctrines (Krishnamurti, 1980)<sup>14</sup>.

"Krishnamurti's epistemology, then, consists in the postulation and investigation of a non-conceptual and non-dualistic mode of knowing, and in the assertion that it is only by means of this mode that we can know reality" (Holroyd, 1991)<sup>15</sup>.

Krishnamurti rejects the usual ways of knowing by emphasizing on 'not-trying-to-know' and attaching importance to 'silencing the mind'. He invites us on an adventure in a pathless land of unlimited freedom of mind. In the spirit of this freedom, Krishnamurti propels us into a way of thinking that is not dictated by or aligned to any religion, institution, political thought or philosophy as these frameworks are binding and limited. In fact, he urges us not to take anything for granted or limit ourselves to any given perspective including his own. In fact, Krishnamurti himself dismissed the label of 'philosopher' and "discouraged people from regarding what he had to say as a contribution to philosophy" (Martin, 2003, p.1)<sup>16</sup>. Yet, his emphasis on skepticism and questioning are vital for both philosophical investigations and spiritual investigations. (Jayakar, 1996, pp. 399-400)<sup>17</sup>.

"While most psychological theories uphold the idea of self as a cornerstone of the personal transformation, Krishnamurti believes that the 'self' is illusory. He emphasizes that people's belief in the permanence of this illusory self is at the core of human psychological make-up. This, in turn, is responsible for individual suffering, conflict in relationships, and many social problems".<sup>18</sup> Thus according to Krishnamurti this 'self' comes into existence through the process of construction of images resulting from experiences. We project a self-image based on the past or future rather than being present in the 'fact' of the present moment. Though these identifications are beautiful and ecstatic in a particular moment, they ultimately lead to suffering. Discussing the pervasiveness of the images, Krishnamurti highlights that we are constantly surrounded by images and it has become such an integral part of our lives that we have come to believe that we need images to live, rather than directly encountering 'facts' or 'reality'. He goes so far as to say that the simple act of thought itself leads to the creation of an image. Thus, all beliefs, philosophies, ideologies, perspectives and theories are images since they are not facts. since there will always be a separation between the person and his/her image, our understanding of the other always remains incomplete. Even the relationships based on the images are not genuine because the images are unreal. In this regard, Krishnamurti maintains that only when one's mind is completely silent, completely blank (of images), only then can one 'truly' see the 'unnameable' or the 'unknowable', like love or truth.

**Philosophical Counselling and Krishnamurti :** Though Krishnamurti dismissed any sort of philosophy or philosophical framework/ system, there are valuable insights

underlying in his unintentional dialogues. We can extract some underlying assumptions in his deliberations. First assumption is that one is solely responsible for his own transformation. One has to look for One's own truth. No expert, guru or authority can do it for you. They can only facilitate. You have to investigate the truth yourself, not to accept or imitate others even Krishnamurti himself. The role of facilitator is just to guide you so that you do not depend on external authority and find out the truth yourself. This is very valuable insight for philosophical counselling as counsellor should not behave like an authority but only as facilitator and gives total freedom to the client to investigate at his/her own. The second underlying assumption is that mental constructions or images are the biggest barrier in the quest for the truth. The attempt is to witness without creating any mental image of what one sees. Through such an inquiry one comes out of all the psychological traps and realizes the truth and this realization solves the fundamental problems of one's life and this serves as an actual foundation to resolve other shallow issues of day to day living. The third underlying assumption is that mind must be empty and quiet in the discovery of truth. When mind is totally silent, devoid of images, actuality reveals itself. Krishnamurti calls this state 'choiceless or unintentional awareness'. This is the state of pure awareness in which your fragmented being(self) dissolves and you become the whole existence. In this state there happens transformation or mutation in brain cells and you enter in a new dimension of living which is total, unconditioned and beyond thought(time). This state is to be lived in, not to be explained because any explanation would reduce it to thought and images. The moment one would attempt to describe it, it would cease to be. Thus the fourth underlying assumption is that the truth is unknowable, it can only be lived in. Krishnamurti says truth is a pathless land, it can not be experienced, it is experiencing.

These assumptions/insights embedded in Krishnamurti's philosophy are pivotal to the practice of philosophical counselling. If these insights are incorporated into the methodology of philosophical counselling, it will enhance the efficacy of philosophical counselling. Philosophical counselling based on the Krishnamurti's insights would seem contrary to most of the psychological approaches of counselling that attempt to improve or alter the self as it negates the self rather than affirming it. He believed that "one's trying to make oneself into a better person would not make one better, but more conflicted" (Martin, 2003, p.4). Thus philosophical counselling inspired by Krishnamurti's thought aims at dissolving the images that one has created of the self and others no matter how old they are. It advocates choiceless awareness about all the facts of life in the present moment. Only this can resolve the problem in actuality. This type of counselling enables the counsellee to look for his/her own path rather than relying on the counsellor. Philosophical counsellor, in this respect, would engage with the counsellee not as an authority but as a co-traveller/friend in their journey inwards as if both are investigating the truth of the problem together. Counsellor would open a dialogue with the counsellee with realization that there is no privileged position from

where one can give directions or suggest answers. A philosophical counsellor inspired by Krishnamurti would constantly remind the counselee that “it is meditation, not thought, that is the vehicle to those truths about ourselves that we most need to know” (Martin, 2003, p.2). This quest to know on one’s own, coupled with critical questioning, leads to a kind of interaction between the counsellor and the counselee that one finds in some dialogues of Socrates, such as Apology, Meno, and Theaetetus (Plato, 1961)<sup>19</sup>.

Thus if we talk of conceptual alignment, some points are common between the process of philosophical counselling and Krishnamurti’s approach. Both philosophical counselling and Krishnamurti’s philosophy prioritize reflective inquiry and self-understanding. Krishnamurti’s focus on freedom from psychological conditioning parallels counselling goals of facilitating autonomous decision-making. Both traditions recognize that clarity of thought enhances life choices and well-being. Philosophical counselling uses dialogue to explore beliefs and assumptions. Similarly, Krishnamurti used dialogue—not as argumentation, but as exploratory inquiry—that helped others question their own psychological structures (Rowan, 2001)<sup>20</sup>. Philosophical counsellors employ Socratic questioning to reveal hidden assumptions. Krishnamurti’s method involves radical questioning of deeply held beliefs: “Who are you? What is this ‘I’? What is the nature of fear?” These questions aim not for intellectual answers but for perceptive transformation. The emphasis on questioning aligns with philosophical counselling’s analytical approach.

But on the other hand Krishnamurti takes it to deeper level, at the core of the human consciousness, trying to address the root cause of human suffering. He aims at actual or complete solution of human miseries (not temporary or partial or shallow solution). Traditional philosophical counselling emphasizes conceptual clarification. Krishnamurti expands this by encouraging *experiential insight*: a direct, immediate observation of one’s thoughts, sensations, and emotions without interpretation. This approach deepens philosophical enquiry into lived experience, expanding counselling from concept analysis to awareness-based transformation. In conventional counselling, the self is often assumed as the subject observing problems. Krishnamurti’s insight that the observer *is* the observed dissolves this duality. Philosophical counsellors can incorporate this by helping clients notice how self-imagining creates psychological boundaries. This shifts counselling from a self-as-fixed entity towards fluid, relational knowing. For example... When a client expresses fear, Krishnamurti’s inquiry is not “What is the cause of your fear?” but rather “What is the nature of fear in this very moment?” Such inquiry reveals fear not as an abstract concept, but as a felt phenomenon arising in consciousness. Krishnamurti warned against psychological authority. Traditional counselling often positions the therapist as an expert. Philosophical counselling inspired by Krishnamurti emphasizes co-inquirers rather

than expert counsellors. The counsellor does not interpret or prescribe, but facilitates clients' self-observation and inquiry, supporting autonomy rather than dependence.

**Methodological implications: A Krishnamurti inspired Counselling Model :** Though Krishnamurti rejected the role of any type of method or system in resolving the fundamental problems of human life, yet we can detect some underlying methodology embedded in his teachings such as shared inquiry or mutual dialogue or pariprasna (intensive questioning in order to move beyond conventional thought pattern, allowing the mind to reach a state of unconditioned perception.).He negated all the methods because when we frame methods or systems, it becomes conceptual and we are again entrapped in the same thought pattern. This leads us nowhere and makes the problem more complex. He insisted on the observation of 'what is' without any conclusion/judgment/expected answer. loosely we can call it a method, but it is not a method in conventional sense, which is to be understood, but it is to be lived in the present moment. It is art of living rather than a conceptual method. The Counselling inspired by Krishnamurti's approach consists of **present-moment observation** (the counsellor helps focus attention on sensations, thoughts, and emotions without labeling them.), inquiry into assumptions (through open-ended questions, clients examine underlying assumptions and meanings attached to experiences, this inquiry follows Krishnamurti's spirit of *questioning without an expected answer*), recognizing psychological structures (clients begin noticing how thought patterns form identities and emotional responses. This recognition is not framed as pathology, but as an observation of the conditioning that shapes experience).

Thus we can explicate some salient features of the philosophical counselling model inspired by Krishnamurti's philosophy as follows:

1. **Non-Authoritative Engagement** — The counsellor refrains from advice or interpretation, fostering client autonomy. J. Krishnamurti commonly addressed himself in the third person (illeism) during his dialogues and public talks, most frequently referring to himself as 'the speaker' or simply 'K'. He positioned himself as a 'lamp' that helps someone look, rather than a master to be followed.
2. **Direct Observation of Experience** — Emphasis is on immediate perception of thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations and reactions in daily life without conceptual framing i.e. to observe the mind without control, suppression or condemnation. Krishnamurti calls it passive or choiceless awareness. This is also called observation without observer/the 'me'/the ego.
3. **Shared Inquiry** — Counselling sessions centered on collaborative questioning that explores the nature of problems as lived phenomena. Inquiry progresses in the spirit of togetherness and friendship as if counsellor and the client were two friends sitting together to look into life's problems.
4. **Observation in the mirror of relationship**—According to Krishnamurti to be is to be related<sup>21</sup>.We live in relationship. This is our actuality. He emphasized watching

oneself in the mirror of relationship, understanding how one reacts to people, ideas and the world-as the primary way to understand the self.

5. **Truth is a pathless land**-According to him truth can not be reached through any method, dogma or organized belief system<sup>22</sup>.His 'method' is to examine and discard all methods.

**From the discussion above, it is evident that the perspective of philosophical counselling based on Krishnamurti's ideas is non-directive and comes close to Roger's person- centered therapy<sup>23</sup>. But Krishnamurti appears to be far more radical in his approach.**

**Theoretical and Practical Challenges :** While integrating Krishnamurti's philosophy into counselling, several challenges also arise. Krishnamurti's ideas are philosophically dense, potentially inaccessible to individuals unfamiliar with introspective inquiry. Counsellors must balance rigorous philosophical engagement with accessible dialogue. Krishnamurti's approach yields subjective transformations that resist quantification. Researchers may need qualitative methodologies—such as phenomenological analysis—to evaluate effectiveness. The non-directive approach requires careful ethical navigation. Clients in deep psychological distress may require structured support beyond philosophical inquiry. Integration with other therapeutic practices must respect professional boundaries. Although empirical research directly linking Krishnamurti's philosophy to counselling practice is limited, thematic overlaps have been explored in mindfulness therapy, existential therapy, and awareness-based approaches (Germer, Siegel, & Fulton, 2005)<sup>24</sup>. These therapeutic frameworks share significant findings with an emphasis on present-moment awareness and self-observational clarity. Future research could involve qualitative studies of Krishnamurti-inspired counselling interventions, assessing client experiences of change, relational dynamics, and shifts in self-perception.

**Conclusion :** Based on the above discussions we can say that Krishnamurti's philosophy offers a profound conceptual foundation for philosophical counselling. His emphasis on self-inquiry, freedom from psychological conditioning and the dissolution of the observer/observed divide aligns with core aims of philosophical counselling: to foster insight, awareness, and coherent living. Integrating Krishnamurti's insights re-frames counselling as a co-inquiry into lived experience rather than a diagnostic or directive process. By this integration we can enhance the efficacy of philosophical counselling, as solutions provided by conventional counselling are merely checks and balances i.e. these solutions are temporary, partial or shallow. It appears that we have got clarity in our problems but after some time we again get entrapped in the same distorted thought patterns and problems appear again with more intensity. If we understand Krishnamurti's insights, we can end this vicious cycle as Krishnamurti's insights aim at actual and complete solution of life miseries. While practical and methodological challenges remain, Krishnamurti's philosophy expands the scope of philosophical

counselling, bridging analytic reflection with existential depth. This integration supports a counselling practice that not only clarifies thought, but transforms the quality of consciousness itself and this may be of great help to suffering humanity.

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