

# What is Psychosophy?

by Yair Golan and Matt Sparks

\*this document is a transcription of a conversation between Yair Golan (YG) and Matt Sparks (MS) that took place on 5th of July 2021.

\*this document is written in male pronouns in order to make it more readable.

## Yair Golan:

Psychosophy is using philosophy as a therapeutic tool.

It's a type of verbal talkative therapy that focuses on the worldview of the patient and how a persons (for lack of another word) philosophy in life affects his decision making and everyday life, where philosophy could be something mundane like the way he appreciates food, or it could be something deeper like how he perceives others and what traits he or she values most.

The goal of the therapy itself is to find irregularities in the person's philosophy, in philosophical terms this is called a fallacy, a logical error in his world view, a contradiction between opposing statements.

After agreeing on such a contradiction or error the goal is to work out a philosophical solution to this error and in this way enrich the world view of the patient and in fact enrich his philosophy.

All while agreeing that a logical, error-proof philosophy is key to maintaining a stable, happy and functioning lifestyle.

## Matt Sparks:

How would you define fallacious or errant worldviews? More to the point, how do you plan to negotiate the subjective nature of personal worldviews with an objective logical/fallacious standard?

Perhaps better to give an example if possible.

## YG:

Great question, and a hard one to answer, I will try

The study of fallacies is a common theme in philosophy, there are numerous types of fallacies some of which are more agreed upon than others, but in a purely philosophical

sense there is a consensus that certain types of logical fallacies exist, they sometimes even get put into mathematical equations. Such as if  $A=B$  and  $B=C$  then would it be correct to say that  $A=C$ , where each variable would be a philosophical statement.

In a therapeutic sense the fallacies and their solutions would be defined mostly by the patient.

If such a fallacy arises in conversation then the therapist would say, "wouldn't you agree that there is a contradiction here?"

If the patient agrees then both the therapist and the patient can try to work on a solution, all while the decider of the best solution would ideally be the patient

This requires the therapist to be sharp witting and keenly in tune with the patient, as he is trying to understand the patients philosophy and look out for contradictions

This is also requires the therapist to be experienced in philosophical debate and practice and be well-versed in different world views and approaches

If you are looking for a concrete example than I would give this example

During the first session of therapy the psychospist and the patient try to sum up the patient's world view in a few sentences, as it were to find his motto in life. The patient would say something like "I believe that an easy going approach in life is best, there is no need to make a fuss out of anything and it is best to go with the flow".

This is a philosophy many people hold.

Later in therapy the conversation focuses on some emergency that happened to the patient somewhere in life.

The therapist notices this and points out, "say, how did your easy going attitude hold up in this situation?"

This is an example of how to try to find fallacies. I would guess that the patient might not think that an easy going attitude is due during an emergency. So the therapist and patient together would try to look for a philosophy suited for emergencies, and perhaps they would try to define what constitutes an emergency - and later what would be the right time to have an easy going attitude and what would be a right time to adjust to the needs of an emergency

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**MS:**

I can see how this would work for simple problems but human beings are complicated and often behave in self contradictory manners given certain situations. As you said, emergencies and existential crises which shake and rattle people's worldviews to the core.

Are you seeking to simply integrate people's worldviews better for mental health in navigating life's challenges? Or advocating for a more stoic approach?

Also how would this apply to self reflective issues? Would you say there is a difference between approaches to self and world? Or is your definition of worldview accounting for self as well as other/world perception?

Also people tend to compartmentalise themselves as a coping mechanism, how would you address this?

**YG:**

While I myself do have my own philosophy in life, and I feel it is pretty robust and well thought out, some people, especially after big life events, have their philosophy tested by life itself. The goal of the therapy is to have the patient test out his philosophy together with the therapist, and in this sense be better prepared for life. The therapist may have his own preferred philosophy, and this may shape the session in some way, but the goal is for the philosophical debate to be between the patient and himself. In a sense the session is a time for self-reflecting, in an intellectual, philosophical way, and this self reflecting creates a philosophy more diverse and better prepared for the challenges of life.

In a philosophical sense there is very little separating between the world and the self. As I believe, life demands a philosophical approach that encompasses both the world and the self and also the way they interact. While thinking out your own philosophy in life you are basically thinking about how you would re-act and cope with different situations that the world would thrust upon you. So there is room for reflection about self-image as well as politics and big-world issues.

As for your questions about compartmentalising. While coping with the world some people try to define themselves strictly, while others try to avoid all definition, while others stray somewhere in the middle. This is indeed a philosophical question worth addressing in psychosophist therapy.

I would add that the therapist does not claim to have answers to every issue at hand, but at least can provide a suitable atmosphere to ponder and think about these interesting questions.

**MS:**

What qualifications should a psychosophist therapist have?

What does a typical psychosophy therapy session look like? What is the ideal number of participants?

What are the ideal outcomes for psychosophic therapy and can they be measured? Is this something that one "stops" doing after achieving a certain goal? or is it more of a continual process of adaptation and learning?

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**YG:**

Since this is a new field, there are no criteria yet to be practicing in this field, and currently I am the only one practicing it as far as I know. Ideally a psychosophist should be well versed in philosophy as well as in psychology and mental health issues.

A typical psychosophy therapy session can look like anything. It can be a group therapy session where different people share their world views and ideals one against each other (in a civil way) or it can be a one-on-one session or even a self reflection experience possibly. Within the session one can make use of different tools including texts, drawings, diagrams, art and any other accessories necessary to get the point across.

The ideal outcome of a psychosophy session would be to resolve lifelong tensions and questions, as well as find new questions to ponder about.

As psychosophy can be a pretty intense experience it can differ from conventional psychology in the sense that it does not have to happen on a week by week basis. It could be a once-in-a-lifetime session, or it could be daily, or just a period in life which requires self reflection.

As is the nature of philosophy and human thought, there are always new questions and challenges, so it could be a lifelong process as well.

Regarding your question about measuring outcomes, this is truly a tricky subject as with any psychology. I think one of the best ways to measure success would be to record the patient's own evaluation of his progress. Also in the case of severe mental illness one could record a decrease in hospitalizations, suicides, violent behaviour and an increase in productivity and happiness.

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**MS:**

What can psychosophic therapy offer that modern psychiatry and mental health practitioners cannot?

Do you see any weaknesses to the psychosophic approach or potential challenges/setbacks?

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**YG:**

Psychosophy is not meant to replace any current method of treatment, it is meant to add a somewhat holistic element to current therapy programs - given the patient new tools to figure out life in the form of philosophical solutions.

One challenge that a psychosophist faces is to become too ingrained in his own philosophy, and to perhaps try to define other people's approaches for them.

Helping someone philosophically requires you to remain open to \*their\* world view and accept the challenges they face.

There could be many setbacks, as the attempt to re-define your philosophy may become a challenge to some.

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**MS:**

What is the role of the group in psychosophy? Is it still organized in a therapist/patient manner? or does the group have a larger role to play?

What advice would you give to someone considering psychosomatic therapy? Why should they consider it? What makes a good candidate?

What inspired you to develop this approach to therapy?

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**YG:**

A group psychosophy session is potentially much richer than a one-on-one session. It becomes a sort of round-table where different worldviews collide and take new shapes. It is indeed a challenge as a host to keep the discussion focused and civil at times.

In a group psychosophy session each participant becomes a source of inspiration for new philosophy, not only the therapist/host.

Psychosophy was originally designed to treat people with severe mental illness, as the nature of severe mental illness is such that it challenges and re-shapes your philosophy. But other life events such as death of a close one, divorce, other disasters could potentially have the same effect on a person's worldview

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I believe every person could benefit from time spent reflecting on philosophical issues, but perhaps not all of them need a therapist for that.

This theory was inspired by my own battle with mental illness. I found that my journey to recovery and rehabilitation was riddled with philosophical questions and answers.

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**MS:**

As a last question, how can people participate in these sessions? Where can they get in touch? How should they prepare? Should they bring anything etc.

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**YG:**

I am still working on figuring everything out, but looking for @yair\_drori\_golan on instagram and messaging me could be a good start.

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**Conclusion, YG:**

To conclude, psychosophy is in fact a new type of methodology for psychological therapy aimed at treating the patients worldview.

When I conduct psychosophist therapy I try to look for the psychological and philosophical habits of the patients, the statements comprising his inner dialog and philosophy, and try to test those out against different subjects, topics and situations.

Psychosophist therapy has so far been tested in group sessions as well as solo sessions and the results seem to be encouraging,

The ultimate goal of psychosophist therapy is to bring high-level intellectual debate into the lives of the patients and through that into society, creating a habit and norm of philosophical thinking and understanding aimed at enriching an individual's life. By enriching the individual's philosophy, and challenging the patient to think logically and conclusively there is the potential of resolving life long questions and tensions, tensions that when resolved could ripple out into society and help make social progress in the way of answering questions and finding new ones to ponder about.

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