

# Introduction

## Counsellogy and counselling anthropology

The Polish term *poradoznawstwo* (literally “counselling expertise”), which has no direct equivalent in other languages, is accepted in Polish research circles as a descriptive term denoting research on counselling, the theory of counselling and general reflection on counselling. It is most often translated into English as “counselling science” or “counselling studies”, into French as *science de la consultation* or *conseillologie*, into German as *Beratungswissenschaft* and into Russian as *konsultovedenie*. It has been coined upon the model of such widely used Polish terms as *kulturoznawstwo* (“knowledge of culture”, i.e. various forms of scholarly research on culture) *przyrodoznawstwo* (“knowledge of the natural world”, i.e. the natural sciences), *bibliotekoznawstwo* (“library expertise”, i.e. library science), *językoznawstwo* (“language science”, i.e. linguistics) and *materiałoznawstwo* (“expertise in materials and their use”, i.e. materials science). In all of them, the suffix *-znawstwo* (“expertise”, “knowledge”) recognisably refers to academic reflection on and study of particular phenomena and processes, including those of social life. Complying with the rules of productive derivation, such semantic coinage is fully endorsed by Polish linguists, including Prof. Jan Miodek, a widely recognised authority in this field. Methodologists, e.g. S. Kamiński (1970), define *znawstwo* as “comprehensive and expert knowledge of a specific field”. And T. Kotarbiński (1984) uses the terms *znawstwo*, *teoria* (theory), *nauka* (science) and *dyscyplina* (discipline) interchangeably.

The English eponymous coinage “counsellogy” reflects scholarly and intellectual effort to find an adequate equivalent for the Polish term *poradoznawstwo*, which would convey similar meanings and connotations. While coining the term “counsellogy”, we resorted to the definition by Wilson and Stills (1981), who wrote that “the term multicultural **counselogy** refers to [...] the study of the process of **counselling** from cultural perspective [emphasis mine]”. But our understanding of the term “counsellogy” expands its meaning to include historical, social and

also interpersonal perspectives. Parallel to the names of other sciences (anthropology, psychology, sociology, etc.), the coinage implies that the science of counselling is a distinctive, though admittedly interdisciplinary, branch of scholarship. It has its own distinct research field, peculiar terminology, unique conceptions and specific reliable methodology and procedures. I believe that (re-)inventing the term “counsellogy” concludes the formative phase of the theory of counselling. With counsellogy crystallised as a science in its own right, researchers will be encouraged to expand their explorations and reflection.

The coinage *poradoznawstwo* – “counsellogy” – was introduced also for practical reasons. Doing research on counselling, I realised that the Polish term *poradnictwo* – i.e. counselling – is ambiguous: it often denotes both a certain practice and accounts of this practice. In the latter sense, *poradnictwo* (counselling) comprises conceptualisations of this practice, research questions and problems pertinent to it as well as elucidations of counselling-related phenomena. Briefly, in this sense *poradnictwo* denotes a science.<sup>1</sup> To eliminate the ambiguity, the term *poradoznawstwo* – “counsellogy” – is meant to denote reflection, conceptions, theory or science, as distinct from *poradnictwo* – “counselling” – which should be reserved for the practice only. Thus counselling (*poradnictwo*) is to counsellogy (*poradoznawstwo*) what education is to theoretical pedagogy, adult learning to andragogy or language to linguistics.

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<sup>1</sup> An example of this is provided by the first sentence of the book *Vocational Counselling*: “Let’s first and foremost determine for vocational counselling its deserved place among branches of knowledge whose object is the researching of work and its conditions” (E. Claparède, 1924), or the following passage: “Educational counselling developed neither from one primary academic theory nor even one science. It was doomed to be multi-disciplinary from its very beginnings. [...] Educational counselling is linked in many respects to various academic viewpoints stemming from depth psychology, individual psychology, psychoanalysis and psychological diagnostics. The interpretations of child psychiatry, the sociology of the family and social pedagogy are also not without significance. Educational counselling came into being under the influence of many intellectual trends and currents. In historical terms, the decisive influences were child and youth psychiatry as well as therapeutic and special pedagogy. The next impulse in its development was the influence of depth psychology, psychoanalysis and individual psychology [...]. Subsequently [...] the findings of experimental psychology proved another factor boosting educational counselling” (Jędrzejczak, 1972, p. 13), or: “[...] the analysis of the need for the interdisciplinary character of family counselling indicates a convergence of tendencies” (Ziemska, 1971, p. 14); or else my own definition: “the term ‘counselling’ denotes an organised system of actions refining other actions and also a set of principles regulating the course they take” (Kargulowa, 1979, p. 6). A similar position can be found in Stephen Murgatroyd’s book *Counselling and Helping* (1985).

## Counsellogological discourse

The current counsellogological discourse addresses primarily the establishment of friendly interpersonal relationships, the reflective construction of self-identity, the maintenance of synergic communication and the support in solving life problems. Developing in the context of radical social, economic and, in particular, cultural transformations, counsellology is part of post-traditional culture. This model of culture is characterized by inclusion of divergent themes and patterns, defiance of prior traditions, and a particular concern for the autonomy of and clear distinctions between various ideas. First and foremost, the typifying feature of post-traditional culture is the dynamism and enormous diversification of trends, styles and products. As a result, with its multiplicity of social discourses, post-traditional culture is fraught with self-contradictions. A comprehensive depiction of this model of culture – in itself a futile endeavour, probably – certainly exceeds my expertise. Hence I will focus on that part of it which relates to the broadly understood provision of help by certain people to others and especially on counselling, advisory services, consultations and therapy sessions.

These phenomena, processes and facts seem so natural and universal, and additionally so familiar and known of old, that studying or discussing them may appear redundant. And yet, the provision of help – including counselling and related activities – turns out to be as complex and as permanently mutating as other manifestations of daily life. The transformations become evident when help is examined in different context, and above all against the background of post-traditional culture.

The contexts and ramifications of the discourse on counselling are indeed determined by contemporary culture. As such, they are affected by: multiculturalism, consumerism, globalisation, xenophobia, fundamentalism, growing disparities, the discontinuity of traditions, the fragmentarisation of life, the “mass media terror”, the increasing dynamics of change and the instability in the private and professional lives of both the young and the adults. Challenged by these developments, we often feel helpless in the face of oppressive forces and inequalities, even though we currently comprehend them in a different manner.<sup>2</sup> Although we understand that the *idea* of equal opportunities can go hand in hand with considerable inequities in their *realisation*, as J.-P. Fitoussi and P. Rosanvallon (2000, p. 80) claim, we resent these inequalities since they manifestly flout any principle of equality (Sen, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> We increasingly realise that to demand equal incomes or equal access to goods is impracticable. However, we insist on equality of opportunities to realise our plans. Observing the principle of equality, thus conceived, entails in a sense creating for everyone a chance to project their future, to successfully aspire to liberation from history, to design their lives and to reflectively shape their identities.

Participating in post-traditional culture and experiencing inequalities, we apprehensively realise that our appeals and demands to remove oppression, to promote equal opportunities and to instil a new social order are highly unlikely to materialise any time soon. We cannot expect any beneficial stabilization either, because both the politicians in office and the representatives of us – the oppressed patently fail to implement any changes. The politicians' inefficacy stems partly from their failure to understand life's daily burdens and from their refusal to foster social mobility. Deliberately hindering access to some social circles and layers, they put constraints on mobility, which makes people feel increasingly impatient and insecure. Apart from that, however, the political ineffectiveness has also another cause. Namely, some of the currently escalating processes evade the politicians' intervention, because triggered and controlled by transnational corporations, they transcend borders and live lives of their own.

This is only a random sample of phenomena experienced in various degrees across the globe (cf. Bauman, 1997; Gelpi, 1996). They generate continual uncertainty, in which we are repeatedly compelled to make choices without ever knowing which of them might be the safest and most appropriate. The constant and unpredictable change does not only force us into continual vigilance and reflective, dynamic, cognisant inquiry about the unfolding reality we are steeped in. It also makes us seek footholds and points of reference that could provide us with support and guidelines. In such circumstances, we are obliged to continue reflectively controlling and developing our identities, which themselves are subject to pressures ensuing from various sources and are repeatedly put to the test. As Ulrich Beck (1992) pertinently notes, guidance relating to man's private sphere, which actually no longer exists, is still in high demand.

Even if we do not agree that "the private sphere no longer exists", there is no denying that the "private" struggle with reality can exceed our coping capabilities. Even if we can still successfully cope with everyday, nearly routine, situations and rely on the previously learned and often mechanically applied patterns of behaviour, we find it considerably more difficult to manage in new, unfamiliar or surprising situations. The fixed "formulas" of conduct turn out to be less useful then, but we often discover we are not able to discard them and invent new solutions.

The postmodern reality has two basic effects on us. Either it relegates us to the margins of society, into isolation and enclosure within our own worlds; or it mobilises and intensifies our reflectivity, urging us to repeatedly seek other people's assistance. Then we turn both to our close ones and to specialised professionals. Of course, mutual help is by no means a novelty; neither is seeking competent assistance – of sages, counsellors, soothsayers, experts, therapists, consultants – a recent "invention". Today, however, this assistance is not only markedly more widespread but also more specialised and, first of all, apparently indispensable. The individualisation of people's lives, the multiplicity of problems they experience,

the complexity of their identities and the uniqueness of their biographies, all are the factors that affect the shape this assistance takes, the manner in which it is sought and the variety in which it is employed.

Whereas in the past it might have seemed that advice must be offered to a ruler, a decision-maker or a distinguished artist at the extraordinary moment of uncertainty or crisis, it is clear now that almost any “ordinary” member of society needs counselling, guidance or therapy. Sometimes people seek assistance at specialised institutions, while at other times they elicit it from their close ones or obtain it from readily available sources (such as books and the mass media). Sometimes, people also have entirely unsolicited assistance “showered” upon them by various service facilities or the mass media, and they are unable to “rid themselves” of it. We live in an age of a “counselling boom”, as Bożena Wojtasik observes.

However, the increasing need and opportunity to rely on guidance, instructions and recommendations go hand in hand with their decreasing reliability. Such parallel developments breed two opposite responses. On the one hand, they often muster people’s reflective investment in their lives, but on the other they also fuel such attitudes as xenophobia and fundamentalism conducive to simplification of the world. In many cases, this situation intensifies people’s confusion, strengthens their anxiety and aggravates the misery of their fundamental insecurity. Paradoxically, such reactions are reinforced by new inventions in economy, culture, education and industry. Admittedly, these inventions facilitate everyday life, making people’s work lighter and replacing them in occupations of high health hazards. But at the same time, they make people dispensable: with their jobs taken over by machinery, the “redundant” workers are thrust out of the labour market, significantly increasing legions of frustrated specialists and impoverished social service clients.

Huge disparities in education, property, security and many other spheres of social life are by no means being bridged. On the contrary, the “human gap” – as the Club of Rome Report puts it – is widening. A considerable proportion of society, if indeed not all of us, acutely feel the discontinuity of tradition, time, space and culture, and – worst of all – the discontinuity of their (our) biographical narratives.

While defining the scope of the socio-cultural discourse of counsellology, these developments have frequently been addressed by social researchers, thinkers and moralists, who concede that their impact on all of us is unquestionable. Regrettably, the *methods* of either coping with this influence or helping people handle it have not aroused similar interest yet. In fact, the first counselling services, laboratories, psychiatric centres and professional offices did appear along with the emergence of the social order concurrent with the industrialisation and technological progress. But failing to attract serious scholarly interest, these institutions’

contribution to culture and their “helping” role in the “cosmos” of social life remained largely unexamined. In other words, counsellological discourse has rarely espoused the perspective of philosophical anthropology. Pondering on man’s calling and place in the world, the sense (and meaning) of life or one’s attitude towards oneself and other people is seldom regarded as the main mission of counselling researchers. Reflection on counselling is hardly ever anchored in cultural and social anthropology.

Scholarly studies on counselling mainly pertained to methods of working with clients in institutions or suggested applying the latest psychological and psychiatric findings or technological inventions in the methodology of advice-giving, guidance or therapy. With such methodological focus, a more general reflection on social and cultural dimensions of counselling was largely missing. And yet, the proper discourse of counsellology can be defined as a transfer of ideas in a communicational exchange and thus as a social action situated “within the boundaries set by understanding, communication and interpersonal interaction” and comprising “part of the wider context constituted by sociocultural structures and processes” (van Dijk [ed.], *Discourse as Structure and Process*, 1997). Such discourse was engaged in, practically speaking, only on a micro-scale and only by those directly involved in provision or reception of assistance.

In Poland, the first attempts to broaden counsellology and attract the interest of both the authorities and opinion-forming bodies were made in the aftermath of the Second World War, when researchers studying vocational counselling focused on the economic implications of dissipating the resources harboured by vocational guidance seekers. Ideologically motivated endeavours followed soon: a network of educational-vocational counselling services was established to provide the whole population of school children with early educational assistance, starting from the onset of elementary instruction right up to graduation from a secondary school and finding the first job. Efforts were also made to formulate the theoretical framework to validate such system and measure the outcomes of its work. Nevertheless, only educational scholars and psychologists, accompanied by a handful of sociologists, andragogues, political scientists and culture experts, were genuinely involved in the study of counselling, with other social scientists remaining largely oblivious to any form of counselling. Suffice it to say that the first Polish seminar on counselling – held in Wroclaw and titled *Counselling in Contemporary Society* – was attended, and in a sense appropriated, mainly by educational scholars and psychologists. They pursued counsellology as inscribed in their respective disciplines.

After the political turnover of 1989, the discourse of counsellology quite aggressively stormed into our social reality. The enormous success of this offensive can hardly be overlooked. The grid of diverse public and private counselling facilities is expanding, advisory bodies and consultation points have become an

inseparable element in companies, organisations and administration, and counsellor training centres keep multiplying. Above all, the proliferation of self-help and advice books, manuals and guides is undeniable evidence of counsellology's assertive spread.

The vigorously and uncontrollably developing discourse has ceased to be the exclusive domain of counsellors working directly with clients or "mediated" by various media. Emphatically, it appears to increasingly attract the social scientists' attention. The point is, however, that their involvement in the discourse should not be limited merely to compiling volumes such as *Jak żyć? 265 sposobów na życie [How to Live? 265 Methods for Living]* (Bednarek, Jastrzębski, Kocur, 1999), valuable though such products might be. Rather, profound reflection should be devoted to the modes of human inquiry into existential issues ("How to live?"), and the research effort should concentrate on registering how such questions are answered in everyday lives or in various forms of assistance.

Noticeably, two approaches to counselling assistance can be distinguished in the hitherto academic research on the utilisation of counselling services. Some scholars (e.g. Bauman, 1995) highlight first of all counsellors' involvement in the prevalent "commodification of risk". They see counsellors as exploiting people's social confusion, growing insecurity and increasing anxiety about the stability of their identities. These scholars also claim that resorting to counselling is, as a rule, a simple response to the ambivalence of the modern world and a nearly automatic attempt to remove difficulties and cope with life. Others (e.g. Giddens, 2010) insist that the link between the complex world and operations of the counselling services cannot be defined in such reductionist terms. They believe, namely, that counselling plays a constructive role in the provision of help since it stimulates and contributes to people's reflectivity. According to them, participation in the counselling process is additionally beneficial in at least three ways. First of all, it helps people alleviate difficulties inherent in the necessity to create – often afresh – their identities. Secondly, it reinforces their successive attempts to maintain social communication (*Bridges not Walls*, 1973, [2002]). And last but not least, it reaffirms them in their endeavours to preserve the continuity of their biographical narratives.

Questioning the validity of these two opposite stances seems pointless. Undeniably, both have their well-grounded rationales as some people certainly reach for a counsellor's assistance as they would for a stimulant (and with similar consequences, by the way), while others use it like a medication: only after deep deliberation and a failure of their own prior efforts. Such paradoxical combination of disparity and validity heralds vibrant future for counsellology. Struggling for so long to be fully admitted into the academic discourse on a par with other social sciences, counsellology may very soon become both more vigorous as well as very complex and multi-faceted. The concerns that open up for it spark not only formal but

also ethical controversy pertaining to what issues are thematised in counsellological debates, what arguments are brought to the fore and what aspects of culture are implicated in them.

Andrzej Koźmiński seems to have anticipated such progress of counsellology, noticing more than a decade ago that some “products of social sciences” are not adequately researched, even though they are of current interest and have a market character.

The market is rife for advisory, educational and assessment services which all think tanks specialise in, for training and publishing services. [...] following this is the vast consultation practice, etc. This phenomenon seems insufficiently recognised, somewhat stemming from the mass culture of post-industrial societies and somewhat affiliated with the practices of social science. I believe that it is here that the wild frontier of social sciences runs. It is worth studying, be it only because it is grounded in social sciences, and yet the standards of academic correctness, essential though they are, can be applied here only to a variable, and often modest, extent (*Wyzwania..., 1999*, pp. 131-132).

That the counsellological discourse is not only present but also conspicuous is further evidenced by Anthony Giddens, who claims that “not just academic studies, but all manner of manuals, guides, therapeutic works and self-help surveys contribute to modernity’s reflexivity” (2010, p. 2). The prominent thinker emphasises also that far from merely mirroring people’s “concerns” and deepest experiences, all the components of “modern reflexivity” mentioned here depict our reality as well as, crucially, shape it.

It also turns out that counsellology, manifestly practised and often descending into a “grey area”, affects many people. It involves those coping with their everyday lives and facing up to new situations; those offering help to them, irrespective of their rationale and agendas; those seeking counselling because their decisions have a critical impact on their own and other people’s lives; and finally, those studying assistance to recognise, comprehend and interpret its types and manifestations as well as to consolidate the knowledge on this subject. Counsellology definitely can and should be a domain of counsellologists, that is researchers capable of integrating and generalising the multi-faceted trends, issues and findings into one discourse.

Regardless of whether he would define himself as such, I see Anthony Giddens as a model counsellologist. Apart from educationalist and psychological texts, his *Modernity and Self-Identity* (2010) is to my knowledge the only book-size study that reflects on counselling, guidance and therapy as social processes and underscores the enormous importance of counsellological discourse in contemporary, post-traditional culture.

Jean Guichard suggests that such reflection can be labelled as **counselling anthropology**. Nonetheless in this book I give this discourse a slightly different “local habitation and a name”, deliberately coining the phrase **discourse of counsellogy/counsellogical discourse (*dyskurs poradoznawczy*)**. The core of the discourse as conceived of here is depiction of counselling by means of “intermediary links”, i.e. scholarly analyses of its selected areas and aspects and their implied meanings. Yet the very term **discourse of counsellogy** suggests also a recapitulation of the discipline’s prior developments and pointing out new vistas that open up for it.

I realize that using the term “discourse” in a book title is quite a risky enterprise in itself. As J. Szacki notices in his *Historia myśli socjologicznej [The History of Sociological Thought]* (2003, p. 95), the word “discourse” has made a stunning career in the contemporary humanities; and it is increasingly difficult to ascertain if it still retains any meaning whatsoever, for it is used in many different ways and not infrequently as a “learned” term for any longer utterance or text. Here I use it deliberately in its epistemological sense as a denotation of a certain system of knowledge. Hence, by the discourse of counsellogy I mean both a certain manner of viewing social reality and the human being in it as well as a specific practice (Foucault, 1972). I treat it as one of the discourses currently in circulation in the social sciences and in everyday reality. Presenting it, I intend to outline certain science/knowledge of counselling, its tenets and assumptions and also the areas it pertains to.

My starting point is philosophical anthropology; thus, *poradoznawstwo* (counsellogy) can be treated as a version of counselling anthropology. In this discourse, participants in the counselling process are understood as self-constituted individuals. It is assumed that a person’s cognitive effort can be instrumental in forming his/her personality and finding his/her vocation. Facing such tasks in specific, often difficult, new and unpredictable socio-cultural circumstances, a person can cope with the challenge by engaging in a relationship with the Other, with a counsellor. As reflective individuals embedded in the cultural, social, political and economic realities, the counsellor and the counselee create “projects of being-in-the-world”, and the counselling relation becomes a life-designing process (Guichard, 2005; Savickas, 2005; Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, Guichard, Soresi, Van Esbroeck, Van Vianen, 2009; Savickas, 2011). Within such framework, it makes sense to view both a counselee and a counsellor as *homo consultans*. Similarly to *homo faber* (a working human being), *homo ludens* (a playing human being) or *homo patients* (a suffering human being), *homo consultans* is a participant in social life and interactions, with counselling and being counselled interwoven with a network of other activities and self-reflectivity.

In many respects, the structure of the book meets the requirements laid down for a degree dissertation: it is composed of a theoretical part (Chapters 1 and 2), a methodological part (Chapters 3 and 4) and an empirical part illustrating

a variety of discourses (the remaining chapters). However, these parts are not formally separated from each other, because the empirical part does not deal with the classic solution of methodological and thematic problems raised in the preceding parts. Whenever I employ one of the many available methodological options, it is solely as an example of how such approach can be applied and by no means as a model stipulating how it must be applied. In Chapters 5 to 8, the analyses of various areas of and phenomena in counselling cannot, as Prof. Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka notes in her review of the Polish version of this book, be taken too literally, for they are meant just to illustrate an approach rather than to depict any “real”, precisely identifiable case.

The book’s layout corresponds to counsellology’s current methodological knowledge and, first of all, reflects its character. Explaining the concepts of “counsellology”, “counselling anthropology” and “counselling”, I follow the developmental chronology of counsellological research in keeping with the traditional paradigm of a continuous narrative. The empirical part, however, does not exactly elaborate on the main theses, and its lines of argumentation are not representative, as the principles of empirical research require. The book is rather a kind of mosaic composed of texts constructed upon different methodological assumptions, which – in my opinion – may serve as a starting point for developing a grounded theory. Consequently, one chapter is based on the positivist research on the effectiveness of vocational guidance published earlier in *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* [Culture and Society]; another chapter relies on Margaret Mead’s generation gap theory, which aptly characterises the situation in counselling conceived as an activity with postfigurative roots; two other texts apply the interpretative approach to counselling, and still another one is written from a postmodernist position. Some of the chapters are slightly altered versions of the already published texts or conference papers. Others are original material for the first time in print. Since each of the chapters can be treated as a self-enclosed entity, they can be read in any order.

Since counsellology is relatively young, many of my proposals are admittedly tentative. Hence, the questions on either culture or intense human experiences raised in this book are best approached as an inspiration for and an invitation to further discussion. I sincerely hope that, in time, older, well-established disciplines will more extensively contribute to the counsellological discourse, expanding its scope with issues central to their reflection and research. Along with their more pronounced involvement in counsellology, some subjects I tackle will undoubtedly be more profoundly explored and diversely interpreted, while other ones will probably be discarded.

I definitely hope that this book will engage not only researchers and practitioners of counselling, guidance or therapy. My intention was also to target a wider readership, including graduate and postgraduate students of pedagogy, psychology, medicine and social work, who prepare for work with people in need

of help. The objective of this book is threefold: to serve as a handbook, to enable the readers to make sense of their work and to inspire them to self-reflectively study it. I would greatly appreciate the readers' comments on the degree and extent of this book's usefulness, and hereby I welcome them to join the discussion and the research.

Meant to facilitate the reading, a Glossary at the end of the book contains explanations of the terms and expressions used throughout it. Some of them may differ from the colloquial or popular usage. To further urge reflection on the issues raised here, each chapter concludes with questions that I find pertinent to it. I think the following two should suffice for the Introduction:

- *How does the discourse of counsellology differ from discussions about counselling?*
- *What evidence is there for the spread of a “counselling boom”?*