

## Serbia: A philosophical alternative to Freud's couch



Dr. Aleksandar Fatić, philosopher and founder of the new centre

*The worldwide trend from America, namely seeking psychological support from practicing philosophers, has been adopted in Serbia as well. It offers an alternative to classical therapeutic options. In Belgrade, a practicing counselling centre was recently opened which works in keeping with the methodology of the "US Association of Practicing Philosophers."*

Such centres that are run by specialized philosophers and ethicists have sprung up all over North America and Western Europe. The philosopher Dr. Aleksandar Fatić, a renowned Belgrade analyst with a background in social sciences and law, is the founder of a new counselling centre and academic collaborator of the "American Association of practicing philosophers" in Eastern Europe.

### A different approach

Unlike psychology that views the person needing therapy as an emotionally unstable individual or psychiatry, a branch of medicine that sees the problem as a disease or as the early stage of a cerebral illness, the considerably older philosophical approach based on counselling sees the problem as a highly meaningful event with serious consequences for the person seeking therapy," Dr. Aleksandar Fatić explains to wieninternational.at. "The practicing counselling centre treats the patient as a dialogue partner who needs support and guidance in solving a problem," Dr. Fatić clarifies. His patients include

people who have problems in their professional life and worry about the future or who are unable to fully develop their real potential.



## Chaotic turmoil

Seen from a philosophical perspective – what does self-awareness and identity look like in Serbia after two difficult decades that were characterized by wars, international isolation and continuing economic crisis?

"The present mind-set of the Serbs can be described as reflecting a sort of chaotic unrest turmoil," as Dr. Fatić puts it. This state has already been lasting for a very long time and is constantly being reinforced by the sense of hopelessness in many realms of life. One of the consequences of depressions in ever more people is also a higher suicide rate, which, in turn, leads to a collapse of social welfare and health care system. Recently a whole Serbian family tried to kill themselves because of debts that totalled 500 euros. This reflects the extremely brutal system in which we live today," Dr. Aleksandar Fatić relates.

## Mothers and daughters

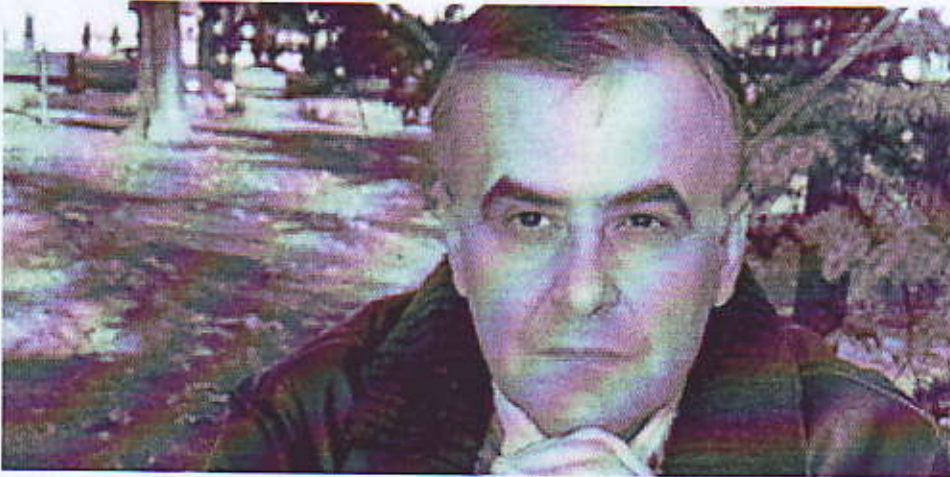
But also the stereotypes one finds in Serbia differ dramatically from reality. "Often it is assumed that due to the wars that took place in recent decades there is also a higher proclivity to violence in the family, in particular against women. But this is not the predominant problem in Serbia according to Dr. Fatić. Very often parents have problems with their children – as Fatić explains. Here there is a lack of energy and willingness on the part of the parents to sacrifice everything for their child, which is sometimes a necessary thing to do. "Surprisingly, the clear majority of people calling us are mothers because of their daughters, even though we always thought that the relationship between mother and son or father was especially vulnerable," Dr. Fatić explains. The tensions in these relationships are generally a result of depression. Often there are also addiction problems in Serbian society. Serbian men in their middle or later years of life are the population group that is most vulnerable.

## First contact

In der first philosophical session the counsellor establishes the basic aspects of the psychological problem afflicting the client seeking therapy. In subsequent sessions the significance of the problem for the client, the role of other possible factors, values, beliefs, reactions and life plans are analysed. Step by step the

most important motives for the client are revealed, helping him/her to decide for essential values and to also defend them. The client receives the necessary support to be able to develop real strategies for solving the problem at hand.

"In this form of counselling there is no psychoanalysis taking place for many years, which requires time and great financial sacrifice of the patient," Dr. Fatić observes. "The goal of the counsellor is to solve the problem within a month to maximum a year".



Fatić: "We live in an uncaring system"

## “Medicine“ for the educated

According to Dr. Aleksandar Fatić it is generally the educated who seek out the support of a philosopher and it is these people who would like to get their lives under control again without having to resort to psycho-pharmaceutics.

"The success of a therapy depends on the type of problem. According to statistics, the maximum success of psychotherapy in the case of marital problems is 40-50 per cent. In philosophical counselling the percentage lies at 80 per cent but everything, of course, depends on how the counsellors see success," as Dr. Fatić notes. "For some counsellors it is a success when the marriage is salvaged. For others it is a success when the marriage is dissolved in a non-traumatic way and the former spouses can have friendly contact with each other. For other counsellors by contrast success means that the person seeking therapy and his family can achieve the greatest possible amount of happiness, stability and security", Dr. Fatić said in wrapping up his conversation with wieninternational.at.

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