

# PHILOSOPHICAL DIALOGUE AS ADVENTURE AND EXPERIENCE THAT HEALS

## El diálogo filosófico como aventura y experiencia que cura

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“For man, when is one thing important? Undoubtedly,  
when it may hurt him. Our body shows us its  
importance when it hurts us; and a friendship  
or a love is worth when it can be cause of pain, and only then”  
(Lain Entralgo, Pedro, 1969).

**Suggested citation:** Escobar, Andrés & Ramírez, César (2020). Philosophical dialogue as adventure and experience that heals. *Sophia, colección de Filosofía de la Educación*, 29, pp. 251-275.

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**Abstract**

The problem to be solved in this text is the contribution of philosophical dialogue as an adventure and experience that heals. The text is justified every time that in the face of a philosophical experience in which fundamental questions seem to be the source of philosophical work, dialogue appears as an excellent opportunity to transform existence and cure the ills that afflict postmodern man. The objective of the text is framed in the life experience of the philosopher who has dedicated his entire life to answering existential concerns but who at present is betting on dialogue as the best way to cure the ills that afflict us. The curative experience from philosophizing transforms the human being and prepares him to face the great problems of his daily work. The used methodology was of descriptive approach in which the sources allowed to approach the dialogical argumentation of philosophizing. The intimate experience of philosophy occurs thanks to the philosophical dialogue that, more than a method, is an experience that enables the relationship with myself, with others and with things through the word, reason and feeling that arises in the becoming of dialogue itself; this is what leads us to understand dialogue as an experience that heals and transforms. Through philosophical dialogue, self-knowledge is achieved that has the power to heal, heal, repair and transform the human person, the “man of flesh and blood”.

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**Keywords**

Philosophy, dialogue, philosopher, advice, transformation, relief.

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**Resumen**

El problema que se pretende resolver en este texto es el aporte del diálogo filosófico como una aventura y experiencia que cura. El texto se justifica toda vez que ante una experiencia filosófica en la que las preguntas fundamentales parecen ser la fuente del quehacer filosófico, aparece el diálogo como una excelente oportunidad de transformar la existencia y curar los males que aquejan al hombre postmoderno. El objetivo del texto se enmarca en la experiencia vital del filósofo que se ha dedicado toda su vida a dar respuesta a inquietudes existenciales pero que en los actuales momentos le apuesta al diálogo como la mejor manera de curar los males que nos aquejan. La experiencia curativa desde el filosofar transforma al ser humano y lo prepara para enfrentar las grandes problemáticas de su quehacer cotidiano. La metodología utilizada fue de enfoque descriptivo en la que las fuentes permitieron acercarse a la argumentación dialógica del filosofar. La experiencia íntima de la filosofía se da gracias al diálogo filosófico que, más que método, es una experiencia que posibilita la relación conmigo mismo, con los otros y con las cosas a través de la palabra, la razón y la sensación que surge en el devenir mismo del diálogo; esto es lo que lleva a entender el diálogo como una experiencia que cura y transforma. Por medio del diálogo filosófico, se logra un autoconocimiento que tiene el poder de curar, sanar, reparar y transformar a la persona humana, al “hombre de carne y hueso”.

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**Palabras clave**

Filosofía, diálogo, filósofo, asesoramiento, transformación, alivio.

## Introduction

The twenty-first century is characterized by multiple circumstances and phenomena involving a particular type of human behavior. Man, in the midst of so many possibilities that the current culture presents to him, enters an apparent crisis that many call a disease or that is morally cate-



gorized as something bad or harmful, but is the human person of today really sick? Does the diversity in which he lives and the possibilities of all kinds make him sick? These are recurring questions to which timely answers are hard to find.

In the cultural context, phenomena such as pluralism, nihilism, dynamism, neoliberalism, spiritualism, scientism, among others, occur. These phenomena are evidence of a complex and heterogeneous historical moment, where everything flows rapidly and in synchrony. The coexistence of different ideologies, creeds, philosophies and methods has placed the human person in a labyrinth from which it is difficult to emerge, causing people's intimacy to develop profound contradictions that are understood as unhealthy, divergent, insane, bad or grotesque.

This experience of a "labyrinth" makes us feel the "flesh-and-blood man" concept employed by the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno (1986) -at a crossroads, where existence becomes totally paradoxical because of the multiplicity of options, ways and experiences that this historical context offers, because they put man in contradictory situations and lead him to an intimate conflict between different instances of his being. So much diversity has made some think that this era is in 'crisis'. An affirmation that is given since, when such diversity arises, there is a tendency to think that the solidity of tradition is directed at the deepest nadirs of cultural memory and that chaos is imposed as a new cultural *ethos*. These conceptions lead, in a natural way, to understand the man of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as a sick being.

In this context man lives circumstances such as loneliness, connectivity, social networks, voracious consumerism, pragmatism, utilitarianism, spirituality, science, technology, progress, etc.; phenomena that have led the person -each person- to an apparent disenchantment from life, from his acts, from his thoughts, from his feelings, even from his projects. The man of flesh and blood discovers the need to look for tools, techniques, ideas, methods that will serve him to get out of the seeming nonsense of all these named circumstances.

In the midst of this panorama, philosophy emerges as an alternative and a proposal to address these issues, thus it is pertinent to elucidate some questions: Has philosophy contributed to this disease or sickly context? Could philosophy cure? Is it possible to speak of therapy or accompaniment to refer to the effects that philosophy has on the one who appropriates it? What is the method that philosophy has for this? Philosophy has had an important influence on the development and conceptualization of the world because thanks to the questions raised



and formulated in the relationship of man with the world, to the answers emerging from this relationship, the philosopher has been able to propose categories and abstractions necessary to understand, name and do in the world, this being the great service that philosophy renders to humanity. However, there also appears a second natural service of the being and the philosophical task, which is the therapy of the soul through advice, accompaniment and thought; as Sánchez says (2011):

We must return to the original sources of philosophical thought, for only when philosophy recovers its strength and self-confidence; only when thought resurfaces with vigor can humanity be rendered the service that philosophy owes it (p. 32).

This text addresses, in an exploratory way, the problem of whether philosophy can, as an advisor on the way to a healing experience, serve in a cultural context of such ample possibilities for people to address and 'resolve' those circumstances that represent problems or difficulties in their lives. For this, a method that for philosophy is as old and familiar as humankind itself will be investigated and proposed: dialogue.

The proposal will be presented in three moments. At first, some considerations are made about anguish and suffering as phenomena that occur in the intimacy of man of flesh and blood. Secondly, with philosophy understood as a healing experience of the one who, in the midst of his circumstances, is distressed and hurting and in a third moment with philosophy as a dialogue that facilitates the process of knowledge in the ways of oneself, of others and things and therefore of healing.

## The human being: anguish, pain and life

Today's culture has presented two interesting concepts that seek to describe the circumstances in which man lives today, which flow in the multiplicity and plurality of possibilities that surround man in his life. All this puts man, the philosopher, in the face of routine, that is, to see and make his life an infinite circularity of actions that begin -in time- to lose meaning and that the person loses his own meaning -of life-. About this Carmona (2019) explains:

The routine is configured as the great danger. Tired of the same, human beings often feel even pleasure as a penalty and eternal happiness as a punishment. The Stoic<sup>1</sup> affirms that, moreover, wanting to change, they

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arrive at the same thing and feel the absurdity of existence, a weight that they seek to alleviate with death (p. 121).

In this perspective, is the human person sick or only living in the circumstances presented to him by his history and culture? It is a question whose difficulty lies in the syncretism that mixes thoughts, creeds and particular circumstances that, despite their differences, seeks to harmonize and generate comfort and ease of living. The person is not to be considered a sick person; he should only be considered a radical living being in pluralistic cultural circumstances. In this sense it is pertinent to use, as has already been done at the beginning of this text, the concept put forward by Unamuno (1986) in his work: the tragic feeling of life: «a man of flesh and blood».

The person is presented with innumerable possibilities that, surprisingly, lead him to contradict himself. Apparently, it may be a manifestation of a disease, but it is only the most radical way to live. Unamuno (2003) expresses it as:

Someone will see a background of contradiction in everything I say (...). Contradiction? I think so! The one in my heart that says yes, and my head that says no! Contradiction, naturally (...). Contradiction! naturally! As we live only by contradictions, and for it; as life is tragedy, and tragedy is perpetual struggle, without victory or hope of it; it is contradiction (p. 11).

This contradiction generates, in those who live these paradoxes, a pain that is not easy to assimilate and understand, when it appears there is the “false conception” of illness, which becomes questions that point to the knowledge or ignorance of oneself.

Under this horizon, man is not a sick or abnormal, he is only a living person, someone who inhabits, builds, seeks and experiences himself in and from the paradox, the anguish, the pain and, therefore, the lived life.

The difference in doing, thinking, saying, believing, creating, solving becomes abnormal, but this is nothing more than the possibility of bringing the person to the deepest and most sublime of himself. On this same horizon, human life is dynamic, dialectical and paradoxical. There is a Heraclitean dialectic where, according to Cárdenas y Fallas (2006):

Nature does not miss statism, its otherness, plurality and unity are consented to in the eternal mutability, in that wave that takes everything and brings it, in that way up and down that they are one and the same (p. 23).

Like nature, the whole universe, the life of the person and, therefore, culture and society are inexorably characterized by dynamics, dialectic-



tics and paradox. In this regard, Unamuno (2007) states that “The man of today is not the man of yesterday or tomorrow, and as you change, change the ideal that you forge from yourself” (p. 315).

The contradiction is natural to the very fact of living. When the contradiction emerges, the paradox does so from within, from intimacy, making us think that what emerges is deposited in a trunk that, in many moments is the trunk of oblivion and, in others, the chest of treasures, this will be called the trunk of intimacy. And is the contradiction actually facilitating or leading to the knowledge of the person himself, leading to the opening of the intimacy trunk? Also, how to penetrate or open the intimacy trunk?

This metaphor leads to think of the trunk as an object that contains other objects, but the meaning of the trunk is multiple; objects that may be a treasure, or objects that are intended to be forgotten or are useless or have lost the value people give them are placed there; any of the meanings referred to makes one think that the object contained there was or is an important or fundamental part of a person, also they are or were known by the one who has deposited them there, even if time takes, possibly, implacable towards oblivion. If the contents of the trunk are treasure, it becomes imperative to search for them. So, what is the treasure that a person can keep or search for so vehemently? It is, of course, your intimacy, your being, your “self”<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the intimate treasure has always been there, inside, but philosophy has, or may have, the right tools for searching and opening of that trunk.

The contradictions that, in many occasions, assault life generate an intimate struggle in the flesh of man, mediated by the questions that lead to the recognition of knowledge or ignorance about something or about himself, according to Carmona (2008):

Questions, paradoxes and eternal contradictions, that is man, an enigma for himself; a assiduous inhabitant of caves and labyrinths (...) for Seneca man has as his mission to construct himself, we proceed from the premise that man is an incomplete being and thus must face his existence from the first moments; he must then commit his forces with the aim of achieving meaning, which will be based on the practice of virtue, or in the imperative tasks of accomplishing them (p. 67).

Thus things, the contradictions or paradoxes of life lead to the process of self-knowledge, and questions are the means to achieve this goal. But there is a goal: intimacy, the “inside”, as explained by Unamuno (2007):

Instead of saying, go ahead! or up! say: inside! Concentrate yourself to radiate; Let it fill you so you can overflow, conserving the spring. Collect



unto yourself to better give yourself to others, as whole and undivided. I give what I have, 'says the generous one; 'I give what I worth', says the self-sacrificing one; 'I give what I am', says the hero; 'I give myself', says the saint; and you said with him, and by giving yourself: 'I give with me the whole universe'. For this you have to become a universe, looking for it within you. Inside! (p. 320)

Intimacy appears as that trunk which is and contains in itself the riches of the person. But the question remains: What is intimate life? It should not be understood as something that is hidden or flees from the person, on the contrary, it is the most obvious phenomenon<sup>3</sup>, that is, its humanity itself, understood as the body, the thoughts, the history, the space, the spirit, the acts, the feelings, emotions, decisions, consequences, others. In this sense, the intimate is the whole man. When man doubts, thinks, feels, does so with his whole being; Unamuno (2003) expresses it like this: "This other doubt is a doubt of passion, it is the eternal conflict between reason and feeling, science and life, logic and biotics" (p. 78). The author does not speak of intimacy as something superhuman, alien, distant, enigmatic, abnormal, rather it is named and described as the closest and most constitutive of the human person.

All this experience described as the paradox of intimate life appears as something painful, that is, as an uncomfortable sensation that has repercussions in thought and therefore in language; the reality of anguish and pain becomes an awareness of life, for it is only when pain and anguish emerge that one feels and thinks of life -lived and to live- it is in suffering -in anguish -that a process of conscience begins that is sick, because "conscience is a disease" (Unamuno, 2003, p.14). On this same point Linares Huertas (2019) in his doctoral thesis states:

The anguish, it shakes, it attacks, but it reveals to the individual his being free to choose himself, his lack of essence or destiny determining his life. It is an experience in which the world shows itself to be lacking in determination for the subject, forcing him to take the reins of himself (p. 22).

The question, arising from pain and anguish, awakens the conscience, therefore, to ask is the calling and the task of philosophy and the philosopher. An approximation to this could be the one proposed by Unamuno (1986):

My endeavor has been, is and will be for those who read me to think and meditate on the fundamental things, and it has never been to give them thoughts made. I have always sought to agitate, and at best suggest, rather

than instruct (...). I declare myself incapable of it and claim my freedom, my holy freedom, even to contradict myself, if it comes to that (p. 259).

The philosopher's task is not to provide ready-made answers but to formulate problems and to accompany and facilitate the construction of answers. Philosophy is a living knowledge, which beats in systole and diastole, that is, it has a reflective and transforming character.

## Philosophy as a life experience that transforms and heals

In the relationship that man has built with the world that surrounds and inhabits him, he has been forced to know, know it and know himself. The human person has developed the possibility of forming a community to protect himself from other beings of nature that are potential predators and threaten the permanence of human individuals in the world; also to defend themselves from their fellow humans therefore, in interaction and relationship, conflict and differences lead to genocidal and fratricidal attitudes.

In community life, the human person has a direct or indirect encounter with himself, due to the encounter with others and with things; in this encounter, questions arise that provoke in people and societies uncomfortable feelings that seem to make them sick.

In this way, the question 'who am I?' emerges from the dialectic between the self and the other, both in equal conditions of discovery and construction; 'I' is an interaction that, in many cases, does not manage to be dimensioned, it is only in the relationship and in the dialogue that we can start to go deeper within it (the self). It is at this point that philosophy appears as a possibility in the process and the way of entering into the unknown identity of self; then, the philosopher asks and must ask the questions that are sickening, sickening because they worry, cause discomfort, cause deep anguish and arouse the sleeping curiosity to know oneself. On this point, Rafael Sánchez (2011) states:

Philosophy has the function, in our modest opinion, of clearing the pond of human life to see clearly and, in a way, to appreciate the meaning of things and their scope. Philosophy has to clarify (purify, oxygenate and diaphanize) realities of human experience such as ontology, nature, knowledge, bodily existence, intersubjectivity, articulated language, aesthetics, religious experience (phenomenology of religion), axiology-ethics, etc. In other words, it is necessary to 'remove the veil', to reveal that reality which is incomprehensible, blurred and incomplete (pp. 108-109).



To know oneself in a process of self-awareness, of contemplating the circumstances that I inhabit and inhabit me; circumstances engendered by the culture that we constantly face but that, in many moments, we feel that we are getting sick.

In this context the relationship that the person establishes with himself is one of consumption, that is, it is considered important or more human to the extent that it is approved by another in groups or small communities, the person easily loses the sense of himself to the extent that he does not visualize himself as a human person but as something that must be consumed; thus, being and living are a privilege that few enjoy. We spend our lives trying to please others who forget to live our own lives, lest when we realize that it is too late. At some point in life and thanks to others, we must return to those questions that are sickening because of how disturbing they are: Where did I come from? Where am I going? What can I know? And the most important: Who am I?

Underlying this question are other equally stormy and possibly distressing and painful questions: What do I want? What do I have? What do I feel? Why do I do what I do? Why do I do it? What will happen to me when I die? Will death be the absolute end? When these questions assail deep intimacy<sup>4</sup> and we struggle to find the answer; on these questions and answers appears the rational or moral judgment of insanity-illness a logical result of that which logic does not manage to encompass. When these questions emerge from the lived intimacy, they lead the person to know himself in the relationship with others.

It is often said that man is the only being who knows he is going to die. Carmona (2019) makes an interesting allusion on this point: “Death is the limit of all our vanities; in it, all eagerness, all desire, and all desire for power converge” (p. 110). It’s true, we’re finite, our time is counted. But it’s not just that, it’s not just a fear of dying, as an event that eventually has to happen at some point in our future; much less is it the uncertainty of not knowing what’s going to happen next; or even the certainty of knowing what’s not going to happen. The finitude of man, the experience of one’s own death is lived, not as a psychology of fear nor as a problem of knowledge, our finitude is experienced every day, when we find in ourselves an imprint of the infinite.

It is precisely in this confrontation between finitude and infinity that man becomes finite in a more inescapable way. Because that violent discordance that man is, refers him incessantly to the power that bases him. To put it another way: from the inside of his own being man relates



to the Other that he is not, but to which he is necessarily linked. About this Jaramillo (2006) in his philosophy as a medicine, states:

What is thought as an answer to our questioning will hardly become a universal work. For this reason, some and most of them assume their own response. Thus, men speak to themselves without the desire to transmit. They feel safe in their cave. However, it must be borne in mind that, if we exist, we do so not only and exclusively by ourselves, but by our relationship with the other and with the other, by the gallop of otherness (p.15).

The relationship becomes a dialogue that will be characterized by mutual listening, by the question as the access key to mutual knowledge and dialogue as a transformative element. In this way philosophy emerges as a medicine that transforms -sick- ignorance or knowledge into wisdom.

The question is uncomfortable because, as Socrates understood and practiced, it presupposes a vital disposition to seek without boastful assumptions a true and absolute knowledge of oneself, of others and of things; about this Mantovani (2011) refers to by saying: "Dealing with philosophy means, therefore, transmitting a passion that stimulates deepening, does not settle for superficiality, does not hide the problems behind easy conciliations" (p. 77). This Socratic attitude and practice was considered in his time madness and crime, and today this attitude is taken into account, as Professor Carmona (2002) states: "The question keeps us awake at night, does not allow the tranquility of what has already been conceived and mastered, it is an uneasy and destabilizing path" (p. 98).

These questions make us sick and distressed in the traditional language of modern rationality because they make us aware of what we are, what happens to us, what we want, what we lack; thus, as said by Unamuno (2003), man is "(...) a sick animal" (p. 14), if man, in this sense, is sick, he needs a cure<sup>5</sup>. Philosophy must be seen as a contemplative, meditative and transforming knowledge:

Philosophy, as an exercise of meditation on inner life, does not free us from real human misery, but allows us to understand it as possible or real life at that particular moment, but proposes to put ourselves above this reality and take the path of inner life, of the Sui priest, winking at fortune, taking advantage of time and turning it into an expression of being. Do not worry about outside circumstances that we cannot change, take care of yourself, as we strengthen understanding and acceptance of the nature of things. This activity does not eliminate the pain or tragedy of living, it seeks to make it an aesthetic of living, as long as it



accepts it with irony and strength. The end of the life of Socrates and Seneca is proof of this (Carmona, 2019, p. 111).

The path of contemplation and meditation, leading to the transformation of inner life, is the philosophical question. The human person constitutively possesses and has developed the question; it appears as a substantial and constitutive element of the human person to make himself to the world and to make his world. In philosophy, the question has a special disposition and character; in philosophy the question can have two ends -that, although they seem different, aim at the same thing and are science and self-knowledge; in both, knowledge is the goal; the question is not an instrument, is the path.

Man asks for everything, the material and the immaterial, the necessary, the not so necessary, for others and for himself... for everything. The human person, in his interaction with what surrounds him, is assailed by the curiosity that always mobilizes him to knowledge and its deepening; the questions are inherent to the human being.

As tradition shows, philosophy asks questions that lead to the knowledge of the reality that surrounds the human person and with which he or she relates. The Greeks wondered about the 'physis', that is, that which was their all and in which was all (heaven, earth, gods, men, arts, laws, nothing, etc.), then they wondered about man; also philosophy asked about God, power, beauty, knowledge...; as can be seen, man -the philosopher- asks for all that is worthy of thought and knowledge. Philosophy has also asked itself about the man of flesh and blood, as Miguel de Unamuno (2003) puts it: "and this concrete man, of flesh and bone, is the subject and the supreme object of all philosophy, whether he likes it or not" (p. 3).

In both cases, the philosophical question is and must be objective and rigorous in order to achieve both ends (science and self-knowledge); however, the philosophical question, not only possesses these two characteristics, also enjoys others, the philosophical question is ironic and critical. About this, Tinajero (2011) states:

So it is important that the spirit does not lose itself in vain abstractions or allow itself to be imprisoned by the ghosts of the imagination, and understand that every inner monologue -or "dialogue" with itself, if you will- is always the internalization of a social dialogue; if we are not clear, we end up getting the self to tell the conscience what it wants to hear beforehand (p. 49).

Socrates, Nietzsche and Unamuno understood and made of the question a vital experience in practice, that is, they made way to enter



into intimacy, to achieve a goal more sublime than the mere knowledge of the “physis” or “ideas”, the ‘knowledge of self’. On this Carmona (2002), speaking of the strength of the dialectical method, says:

It does not establish truths, it undoes opinions and beliefs, it staggers everything that has no firm argumentative support, it brings out doubt in front of knowledge that was believed solid because it is rooted in tradition. The question has that effect, it does not claim truth as an answer, it wants to undo ideological assumptions and show the weakness of its arguments and their unsustainability. The next question wounds pride, betrays ignorance, strips, disarms; later it tries to build a path of reasons, of everyday evidences, simple but forceful (p. 98).

One can clearly see the approach of a method based on reason, but in speaking and asking for the human person, arguments are not just a rational or logical matter. The question must lead the ‘flesh-and-blood man’ to feel and think from the concrete of his life. The philosophical question, rather than a method, must be an inner experience of oneself and of the world that is inexorably given.

The philosophical question is ironic because it leads each person to identify his own ignorance -that of himself and of the world- because it reveals the truth of ‘the made truths’,<sup>6</sup> ‘is ironic because it shows, without modesty and rightly, that which science or the person does not want or cannot clearly see, because it is a question that takes us away from the comfort zone, from the automatism, from the knowledge elaborated and structured of ourselves, of the others and of the things generating a discomfort that is natural at the moment of having come out of the darkness of a cave in which it has been for a long time. In the text *In Dialogue with the Greeks*, Fallas (2006) states about the first Socrates presented by Plato:

Socrates here shows his apparent irony, that more than a cruel attitude towards the disciple, it is only a gesture of confidence in the possibilities of his discernment. There is no mockery, as is evident in *Eutropism*, where, more than a dramatic dialogue, there is a perfect comic representation of two street children, as we say by their coarse and rude art of pancreaty, stuck to doctors of thought. No, the ironic capacity of Socrates overcomes mockery, translating it into a feeling of surmountable impotence in the disciple, and even in the possible opponent.

All that remains is to resume the discourse that is managed and to see its weaknesses from within, knowing that we are in search of a truth and that what we had assured was partial, made us insufficient. Refute, but as a synonym of arguing.



To be able to be ironic with oneself may be the mission: to know myself in front of the universe of understanding in front of me, and perhaps to know that in the end I make a fool of myself with it, because being an old man I could not offer him an alternative -taken from Lysis- (p. 82).

The question has an ironic mood that leads those who ask and those who are asked the question to enter into the intimacy of the world and to bring the world into their intimate lives; the scientific question about the world also leads to the intimate question about the life of those who ask. Two examples of this are the two great scientists of the twentieth century, Einstein and Hawking, who, from their questions and answers for science, generated other reflections on the environment, happiness, politics, god, life, death, time; these are produced by the intimate relationship of these with their questions, that is, that when formulated presents an object that must be thought, felt, analyzed, created and believed, as says Gadamer (1997), not only asks to know, but to feel life, thinking about life and living life:

To ask means to open. The opening of the question consists in that an answer is not fixed. The question remains open with regard to any decision-making and confirmatory judgment. The meaning of the question consists precisely in exposing the questionability of what is asked (...). The real question requires an opening, and when it is missing it is basically only an apparent question that does not have the real meaning of the question (...). The same applies to the rhetorical question, in which not only is there no one, but there is not even anything really asked (p. 440).

The question does not in itself contain an answer; rather, it seeks the answers as it articulates the relationship of the person asking with the object asked, that is, it opens the possibilities of knowledge that naturally result from the question. Those who ask do so from the openness to seek, therefore, the question endows the capacity to transcend the instant, to contemplate multiple possibilities, not to be content with the apparent and to deepen constantly.

The question is an externalization of the doubt that assails and emerges from the philosopher's internality in his relationship with the environment; thus, the question manifests the natural desire to know, as Carmona (2002) expresses it: Doubt has led him to the desire to know, has put him on the path of inquiry; it is then demonstrated that knowledge is a conquest through a process, in the case of Plato, dialogical-conceptual [...]” (p.105).

The philosophical question is critical because it leads to the knowledge of oneself; philosophy has used the question as a principle that points to a deep, concrete and living goal; on this Unamuno (1986), in his *Intimate Diary*, states:

¡Know yourself! Repeat this constantly, since worldly wisdom has it as a principle of philosophy. But understand by them to study oneself as if were a strange being, as just a specimen of humanity, as a scientific matter, psychologically. Know your self is reduced to a cold formula of purely intellectual knowledge, to anatomic science and nothing more. But not knowing oneself a concrete and alive individual, as the individual and concrete self, a vessel of miseries and sins, of greatness and of smallness (p. 50).

Philosophy is presented as a transforming experience because in the relationship of the 'flesh-and-blood man' with philosophy begins a path of self-knowledge that transforms ignorance into the principle of wisdom; where so-called ignorance is the initial stage of a costly and painful process of intimacy that empties, breaks and deconstructs to walk towards something' that could turn out to be unknown and uncertain for the philosopher and his companion. The transformative possibility of philosophy does not lie in the achievements or responses, which possibly occur in the process, it is the process itself that transforms.

All this dialogical experience has or must have an end; this end does not remain in mere useless self-knowledge, Rather, this knowledge must lead to transformative actions and strategies-if in dialogue the accompanied person discovers the need to transform some of his convictions, ways of proceeding, ideas, etc.-.

## Philosophical dialogue: an experience that heals and transforms

“Only those who feel dissatisfied with the available possibilities of linguistic expression think philosophically, and only think in common when the indigence of those who take root in formulating statements that have to be credited for themselves is truly shared”

(Gadamer, 2006, p. 88).

In referring to philosophical dialogue, one can first think of an analysis of language as the basis of the very fact of dialogue; but it is not necessary in this text to delve into reflections or studies elaborated by philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Saint Augustine, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Gadamer, among others; the dialogue here is not the subject of a reflection from the field of language, is a reflection from the understanding of it as a philosophical experience and as a possibility of cure or transformation.



However, from the structural analysis of the conversation, made by Juan A. González de Requena Farré (2012), it is pertinent to consider and identify, in the process of the dialogue, the discursive structures that occur naturally in it. We distinguish the realized movement and its discursive function, so that each turn generates at least two categories: one relative to the conversational movements and their mode, as well as another referring to the discursive functions and their range. In any case, several movements and various functions may be performed in the same speaking time. Our categories of conversational analysis of philosophical dialogue are therefore as follows:

**Table 1**  
**Conversational movements and discursive functions contemplated**  
**in this conversational analysis (p. 118)**

Movement	Mode		Function	Range
<b>Interpellation</b>	exclamative: Tell me what you think!		solicitude	Proposition: Describe the scene to me  Attitudinal: Forgive me if I offend you  Metadiscursive: Are you saying that what I say is not true?
	enunciative: I think it is necessary to analyze the concepts			
	interrogative	Open; what do you think?		
Closed: Do you think the conceptual analysis is accurate?				
<b>Answer</b>	Congruent: You are right		expression	Proposition: That author wrote many books  Attitudinal: I can't take it anymore!  Metadiscursive: We can say that this statement has to be understood as an example.
	divergent	Rejection: On the contrary I disagree		
		Evasive: I don't know what to think of your approach		

Looking at the table, we can identify some typologies of responses: congruent, divergent and evasive and divergent Rejection. They are all part of the natural mode and process that occurs in conversation and, therefore, in philosophical dialogue; not only should philosophical dialogue be thought of as the object of structural analysis, it can and should also be subject to a reflection from its nature to find that possible restorative experience of philosophy through dialogue.

Jaramillo (2006) makes an analysis on the transformation of dialogue into language -understand the language as an object of study- with some important questions:

All this change in language that culminates in the return to “the normal” and to the discourses of power, leads to a question that so far has not been asked: Where has been left the function of dialogue in all the discourses of techno-power? Has dialogue been removed to give way to a new myth called language, public health and normalization? Dialogue has continued since the birth of philosophy; we cannot ignore the fact that language, speech and dialogue went their long way. But the dialogical dynamics have been abandoned in the course of a manifestation involving the being, to be a formulation of diagnosis and judgment that incapacitates the person on the level of his self, self-understanding and the action of self-knowledge that unveils its interior (pp. 34-35).

It is possible to contemplate that the dialogue has been established as a normalizing mechanism that loses its character on the way to intimacy to become a pragmatic tool -in its negative sense- that is, the dialogue can be used to diagnose, stereotyping and classifying the accompanied to prescribe formulas, this implies that the companion assumes the role of judge and therapist; In philosophical dialogue, the accompanist must not establish a role of judge over his companion; his role must not be that of power or of judgment; rather, his role must be a critical conscience that questions and accompanies the process of self-knowledge.

As can be seen, dealing with the problem of philosophical dialogue goes far beyond the merely epistemological field to be seen and experienced as an intimate and vital matter. However, it must be asked: how should philosophical dialogue be so as to lead the dialoguers to the goal of knowing themselves and, in this way, to be able to do intimate works of personal transformation or healing? For dialogue transforms and heals.

Dialogue must start from a phenomenal reality such as plurality, that is, from the simple observation of those who participate in dialogue as diverse from one another, and this supposes the first stage in proposed philosophical dialogue; the recognition, this is the first step for the dia-



logue to flow in two directions namely: “from inside to outside and from outside to inside”.

Referring to recognition implies that all those who participate in the dialogue are open to see, feel, believe, think, identify themselves in the very flow of the words that intersect as questions and answers, as theses and arguments, like sharing emotions and sensations, as intimate and vital fluid.

Recognition is the diagnostic phase in this dialogue that seeks to transform, but in order to do so one must begin by recognizing what the person is and what he has in himself. This recognition is given to the extent that the intimate and vital relationship is established between those who dialogue, because sharing the experience of the discovery of ignorance and the possibility that this generates to know(oneself), facilitates the construction of a prophetic scenario, pedagogical and therapeutic dialogue thanks to philosophy.

But the recognition is not limited to the “self” in a selfish way, it becomes the recognition that the person -I or himself- makes of the other as another and, in this mutual recognition it is possible to establish a philosophical dialogue that leads to the “knowledge of oneself”. In this way, in the philosophical dialogue, Jaramillo (2006) insists that “we seek to move towards the opening of horizons and senses deposited in the person. Their attachment to language but not to the norm” (Jaramillo, 2006, p. 35).

But not only recognition is one of the stages of philosophical dialogue. The second moment is the common work employing questions and answers that lead to the knowledge of oneself, of others and of the other; a process that could be called surgical since with the questions goes, gradually, making incisions in the knowledge or preconceptions that people have about themselves and about the world; this is the path to wisdom in the intimate experience of Socrates by philosophy, as expressed by Carmona (2002), namely: “to do what is proper to us and to know oneself” (p. 102). Thus philosophical dialogue is not merely instructive, it is an experience that goes beyond the innocuous and linear transmission of knowledge, to be an intimate experience of oneself and of the other in dialogue.

In this way, philosophy ceases to be intellectual or scientific or poetic or conceptual talk, to be “flesh and blood” of the one who makes philosophical dialogue a living from oneself for the other. This suggests that, in addition to the recognition of the plurality of dialogues, philosophical dialogue requires solidarity that leads me to do something for the other. Thus, the prophetic, pedagogical and transforming function of philoso-



phy leads the philosopher to immerse himself intimately in the use of the word as a tool for penetrating and allowing himself to be penetrated by the dialoguers into himself.

The question is an essential part of philosophical dialogue, because it opens, temporarily or permanently, the doors of the person who asks himself to knowledge as a sufficient and infinite possibility. Socrates emphasizes wisdom understood as virtue, but here dialogue is concerned with the person as the beginning and end of all dialogue. Carmona (2008) refers to this as follows:

Philosophizing will be from Socrates a double exercise of inquiry and suspicion, an exercise that will require a new attitude in the philosopher, keeping open the question, sustaining the tension of the gaze on the things of the world, on the things that concern man, to the being human of man (...) (p. 14).

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Later Carmona (2008) also affirms that “Socrates is aware of his task as a philosopher: to propose to the men of his time to take care of the soul and cultivate its attributes” (p. 15), as is evident, virtue is the transversal axis of the Socratic dialogical experience, but in the present reflection is the “flesh-and-blood man” the source and end, because naturally dialogue leads to the experience of caring for and cultivating the person, not the soul, of the whole human being.

Thus, philosophical dialogue as an experience that heals and transforms must be based on an axiological premise: solidarity; dialogue is and must be solidarity.

Solidarity starts, in this approach, not from the pursuit of virtue for itself and for other citizens, but from the person, the recognition that we make of ourselves and of the other, where this recognition becomes respect, responsibility and, finally, in solidarity, which ultimately validates philosophical dialogue as an experience of counselling that enables healing or transformation. The question is presented, then, as an evidence of the solidarity of those who accompany-the philosopher-and a correspondence of those who allow themselves to be accompanied; the question is the mechanism for deepening the knowledge of ourselves, a self that is me and that is another at the same time. For this reason, the philosopher becomes a surgeon, because his questions open the intimate life of all the dialoguers to see their “the flesh and bones” without conceptual euphemisms and theories without vital foundation; philosophical dialogue must be medicine.

But the dialogue gives rise, thanks to the continuous questions and answers, to the painful process of seeing, criticizing and deconstructing those judgments and prejudices that the dialoguers have constructed on themselves, the others and the other; this is uncomfortable. For it is not easy to contemplate the possibility of ignorance and contradiction. The apparent certainty provided by the knowledge fact -as it has been called in the light of the thought of Miguel de Unamuno (1986) - is not easy to crumble, therefore, the philosophical question must be sharp and incisive, based on ignorance as a principle and not on the knowledge established as dogma or an unquestionable and irrefutable paradigm; in this way there can be a willingness to learn and this learning generates a healing and restorative transformation.

A third phase of philosophical dialogue emerges, this is transformation, rather than substantial change, it is a process, it is hard work that begins with the discoveries achieved through the solidarity exchange of questions and answers and continues to transgress that which has always been believed about oneself and others.

But what is the first thing to be transformed? The inability to listen to oneself and others while in dialogue, to transform the reluctance to be questioned and to respond from the truth -which recognizes ignorance- to such questions. The active listening and transformation of the discourses of power that are established on the presuppositions of knowledge and life, are issues that must be worked out during the philosophical dialogue. The urgent need to assume a skeptical, and not dogmatic attitude is established in philosophical dialogue since skeptical questions lead us to discover and learn, to deconstruct to reconstruct, to ask to continue asking about the given answers, while dogmatism naturally leads to judgment, moralization, and violence.

It is also necessary to transform the capacity to solve serenely the problems that arise in life; to be able to open or let open the intimate 'trunk' and to emerge as our authentic, healthy, serene self; or tormented but willing and open to dialogue, to inner search and mending. As Jaramillo (2006) states:

The "normal" or the "pathological" should not be the problem of dialogue; that is, the exteriority of the discourses of power, should be unmasked to welcome a restorative dialogue that comes to mean more than them in the experience of life; that required by language (...) (p. 37).

The transformation does not start from a medical diagnosis, starts from the intimate and vital knowledge that is achieved in the dialogue;



Epicurus<sup>7</sup> (2007), in one of its aphorisms considered in the Vatican sentences, reflects on the word of the philosopher saying:

Vain is the word of that philosopher who does not remedy any ailment of man. For, just as there is no benefit from medicine that does not expel diseases from the body, there is no benefit from philosophy, if it does not expel sickness from the soul (p. 117).

What does philosophy intend? To heal, to help people to live. The philosophical dialogue brings the interlocutors (accompanied and accompanying) to an important opening of themselves that enables knowledge, and with it, to discover elements that must be worked out by the interlocutor in order to transform themselves and seek a fuller life; Therefore, philosophy cures because it transforms through the word that names, understands, embraces, builds, destroys, leads, misleads, clarifies, confuses, gets sick and healthy, among other things. It is pertinent to ask: how is this use done? And the answer is the “dialogue”; that, beyond being a dialogue between two or more people, becomes -from the foundation proposed and lived by Socrates- shared life experience.

With dialogue Socrates sought the knowledge of himself, but by observing in detail and making an analysis of the above, it is possible to trace that dialogue starts from the life -intimate experience- and arrives inexorably at it. About this Jaramillo (2006) points out:

In dialogue aspects of life are recreated, but in words, the force of life is not contained, there is a lack of passion, sensation, the intuitive, in them is the empire of a simulacrum which in the discourses of all powers has been taken as truth only for convenience (p. 37).

Jaramillo (2006) has been carrying out studies and practices that start from dialogue as a therapeutic method from a hermeneutic horizon: “dialogical therapy is a comprehensive interaction of the relationships of our internality with the exercise of what the world presents to us” (p. 41); which goes beyond a merely hermeneutic matter, the word or philosophical dialogue. In order to heal the human person, it must be vital that due to the questions emanating from the intimate experience of the life of the philosopher and of those who dialogue with him, leads, not only to understand but to intimate with himself in his questions, possible responses, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, actions, words, emotions, contradictions, environment, etc.

Ruiz (2002) affirms that “When we speak of dialogue it is more a matter of an art than of a technique or an instrument, through which we



exercise our natural capacity to speak” (p. 47). In approaching these words, it is possible to note that the nature of dialogue transcends the methodological to be something more intimate and personal. Lines later he adds:

That it is a good means several things: the possibility of not exhausting the intimacy of the language in the noise of information; the opportunity for the representative world of the other to be meaningful to me; to be able to meet a shared sense of goods and things; widen our particularity and be aware of our limits, as well as be able to recognize others and recognize us in others (Ruiz, 2002, p. 47).

Thus, philosophical dialogue is and must be a “transforming force”, as Gadamer affirms (1992, p. 206). Thus, dialogue cures because it teaches and transforms. Moreover, it has a healing power because it transforms into wisdom the ignorance of believing that something is known, and wisdom as a path of self-knowledge, a transforming knowledge.

In this way, it is possible to infer that the philosopher fulfils a role of accompanist in this transforming dialogical dynamic, which in some cases could serve as therapy for those who attend this -from this proposal- we can call counseling; Cavallé in his text *The Philosophical Counsel: An Alternative to Psychotherapy* (2004) makes an important characterization of these roles:

The philosopher advisor, inspired by Socratic maieutics, tries to incite, invite, provoke, inspire..., but in no case gives prefabricated answers or transmits his particular way of thinking. Its purpose is to become expendable as a counsellor, to foster the autonomy and independence of the counsellor by providing him with the necessary keys to become his most solid and qualified consultant. The aim is to strengthen the consultant’s ability to help himself, to encourage him to find within himself his main source of inspiration and clarification, to invite him to take responsibility for his own state and well-being by showing that he has full capacity to do so (p. 7).

Referring later to dialogue as the axis of philosophical counsel, she adds:

The axis of philosophical advice is always dialogue, a free and open dialogue that at all times respects and promotes the sense of autonomy and total responsibility of the counsellor. This dialogue seeks to open up options that until now were unknown to us, to clarify ideas, to reveal to us higher dimensions of ourselves, to explain those beliefs that block us in achieving our objectives and, in general, to help us to live with more awareness, clarity and depth (Cavallé, 2004, p. 6).



The philosophical counsel requires, on the part of the philosopher advisor, a double mobilization, to enter into his own personal “personal depth”, that is, to commit to his own personal work; the second movement is the solidarity displayed in the dialogue, a dialogue characterized by freedom, autonomy, truth and transformation.

## Conclusions

Philosophy has been an experience that transforms, because it has allowed humanity to think and feel; this is why philosophy naturally makes possible the transformation from a process of making oneself and making the world in an intimate relationship with it.

The intimate experience of philosophy is given due to the philosophical dialogue which, rather than method, is an experience that makes possible the relationship with myself, with others and with things through the word, reason and sensation that arises in the very nature of dialogue; this is what leads to the understanding of dialogue as an experience that heals and transforms.

Dialogue has been in philosophy, not only a tool for the elaboration of discourse or discourses, but philosophy itself; dialogue is the natural way that philosophy is and unfolds, it weaves and cures because it allows one to enter into the knowledge of oneself, to intimacy and thanks to it, is possible a transformation or a cure. Healing does not refer to physical health or the result of a psychological procedure, it refers to the possibility of knowing and opening oneself to knowledge, broadening and transforming the perception of oneself, others and things.

The philosopher in all these relations -and in the dialogue itself- has a role in two directions, namely, he/she who intimates with philosophy, with himself, with the other and with things in an open dialogue, without prejudice, or without judgment that bias their questions and the possibilities they open for themselves and for everyone who enters into dialogue with them; Philosophy for the philosopher has to be an honest and transforming intimate experience of himself and, at the same time, it impels him to solidarity; about this Rafael Sánchez (2011) states:

The honest philosopher dedicates himself to philosophical activity not so much because of the “determining human impulse to knowledge”, but rather because of the willingness to serve society. It is not for personal boasting, but for the benefit of humanity. Philosophy, in this sense, comes to be something like a ditch that carries the water of thought, without the



purpose of drowning the hopes of men of a better world, but to “give to drink” to those who thirst for the meaning of existence, of the world and of history, to water the parched land of identity, meaning, dynamism and direction. Reason, in harmony with faith, must bring light, where darkness breeds barbarism, desolation and suffering (pp. 113-114).

A second role is that of accompanist and advisor who in the dialogue proposes questions that lead his companion to that intimate transforming experience of himself that, in turn, leads him to a sapiential relationship with others and things. To transform is not to change radically, it refers to perceiving oneself and perceiving the possibilities and going into them to live them.

Philosophy more than a science, with an object and method, is an intimate experience of life. As an intimate experience, it is based on what we have called “an intimate trunk” but it also has it as its goal because, by penetrating through dialogue in it, we achieve self-knowledge that has the power to heal, cure, repair and transform the human person, to the ‘man of flesh and blood’, namely to the philosopher and to anyone who engages with him.

## Notes

- 1 Carmona refers to Seneca.
- 2 The “Self” to which reference is made is presented to the philosopher as a paradoxical phenomenon for himself; since he is considered, at the same time, as an intimate trunk -the most proper and near- and as something alien and distant, lost in the past or in the making. The task is to find the way and the tool to open that trunk.
- 3 “Phenomenon”, understood from the etymology of the word: φαίνόμενν, which means “what is there, what is evident”.
- 4 Understand the expression, deep intimacy, not from traditional connotations of foundation, substratum or essence; rather, as that which remains latent in the paradoxical life of each person or community.
- 5 The term cure is taken as the sensation resulting from the transformation that naturally results from the process of dialogue.
- 6 At this point, it must be considered that in referring to “made truths” it applies in the field of science, religion, art, philosophy and man himself; we therefore refer to tradition. The truths of science are refutable, falsifiable or debatable, how much more contingent are the truths that each person creates about himself? This question leads us to ask what is man? And we will simply say that he is an unfinished, finite and fallible being.
- 7 Epicurus, p. 55. Aphorism attributed to Epicurus by H. Usener [Epicurea, fr. 221; Porphyry, Ad Marcellam, 31, p. 294 7-8, A. Nauck (ed)]. According to H. Chadwick (The Sentences of Sextus, Cambridge, 1959, p. 178, n. 336) this sentence is Pythagorean.

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2011 ¿Qué enseñar y para qué enseñar filosofía? *Revista Sophia*, 10 11-36, enero-junio. ISSN impreso: 1390-3861. ISSN electrónico: 1390-8626. <https://doi.org/10.17163/soph.n10.2011.01>

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Document reception date: December 8, 2019

Document revision date: January 15, 2020

Document approval date: April 20, 2020

Document release date: July 15, 2020