Conceptual Article

A philosophical consideration of career counselling: Pragmatic idiographic truth

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Abstract

This article is an exploration of career counselling through a philosophical lens, highlighting its epistemic and ethical dimensions. Career counselling is a technology of the self, reliant on narrative constructions that pragmatically function as enabling fictions rather than predictive truths. The concept of 'pragmatic idiographic truth' is proposed to describe narratives validated through lived experience and consequences. Ethical reflection is positioned as integral to practice, challenging assumptions of neutrality and emphasising counsellors' roles in shaping vocational narratives. Philosophical perspectives illuminate the existential demand for agency and responsibility in navigating work and life.

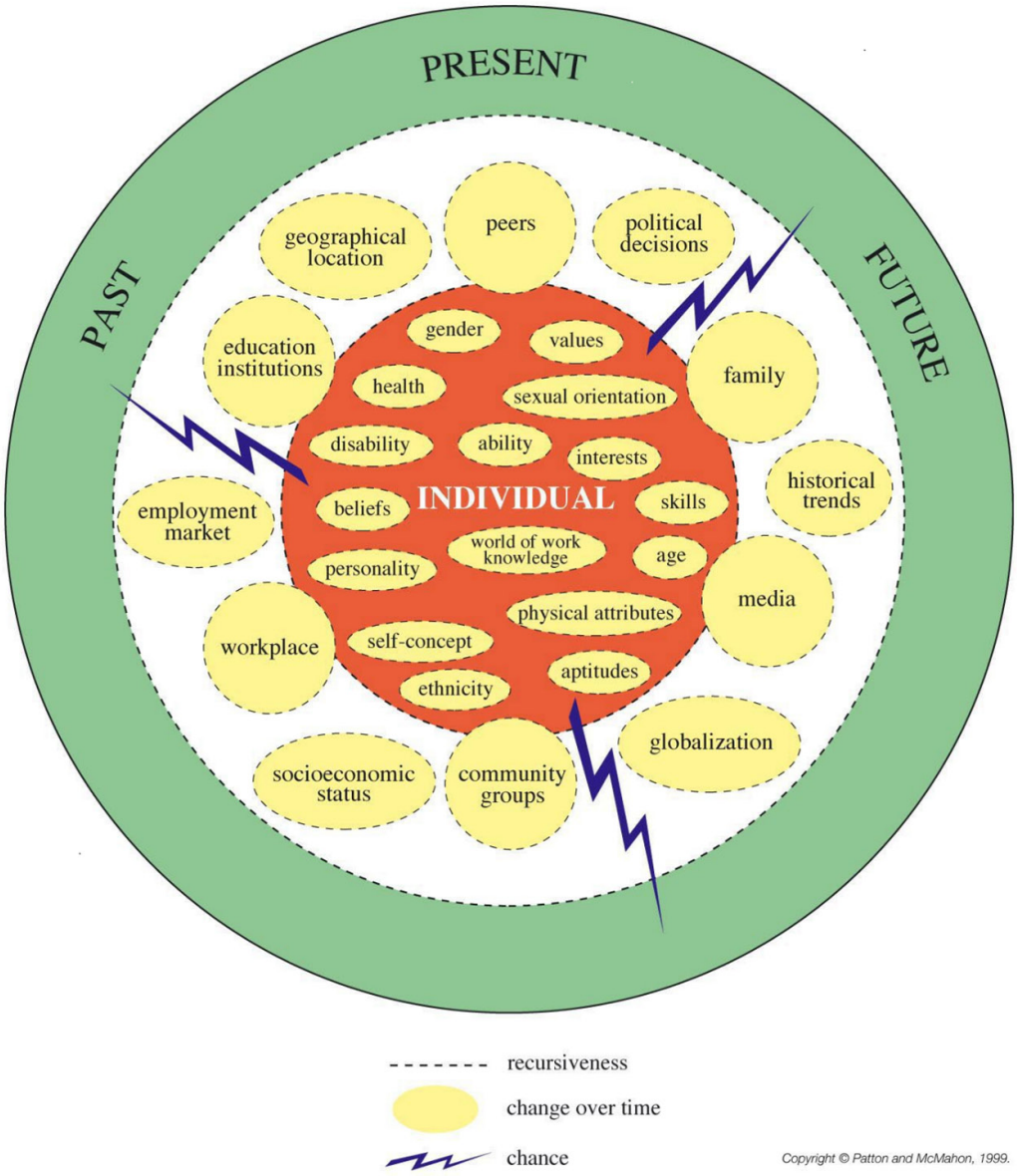
Keywords: career counselling, philosophy, pragmatism, postmodernism, life design, narrative

Introduction

As a professional practice, career counselling aims to support individuals making sense of educational choices, work-related choices, and transitions through the lifespan, especially individuals facing disadvantage while entering, remaining within, and adapting to precarious labour markets. Career counselling involves fostering individuals' insights into the psychological, relational, cultural, and structural factors that shape their understanding and experience of education, training, and transitions into and through the world-of-work.

These aims are typically framed as serving the individual, yet these aims and the individual are inseparable from broader social, cultural, and economic influences (Patton & McMahon, 2021). As depicted in Figure 1, the systems theory framework (STF) of career (Patton & McMahon, 1999, 2021) conceives of the individual constituted amidst myriad intrapersonal, interpersonal, social, cultural, and economic influences. Thus, the individual cannot be understood in isolation from contextual influences. Contemporary theoretical perspectives on work and career, notably the *psychology of working* (Blustein et al., 2023), explicitly acknowledge the context-dependent individual by locating education, work, and career within structures of inequality, economic precarity, and constrained opportunity rather than within individuals alone with themselves. I, too, recognize context-dependency; however, here my emphasis is not upon contexts per se. Instead, my focus is on the construction of narratives of identity within and between clients and practitioners who are striving to understand and meaningfully act within their contexts.

Figure 1. Systems Theory Framework of Career



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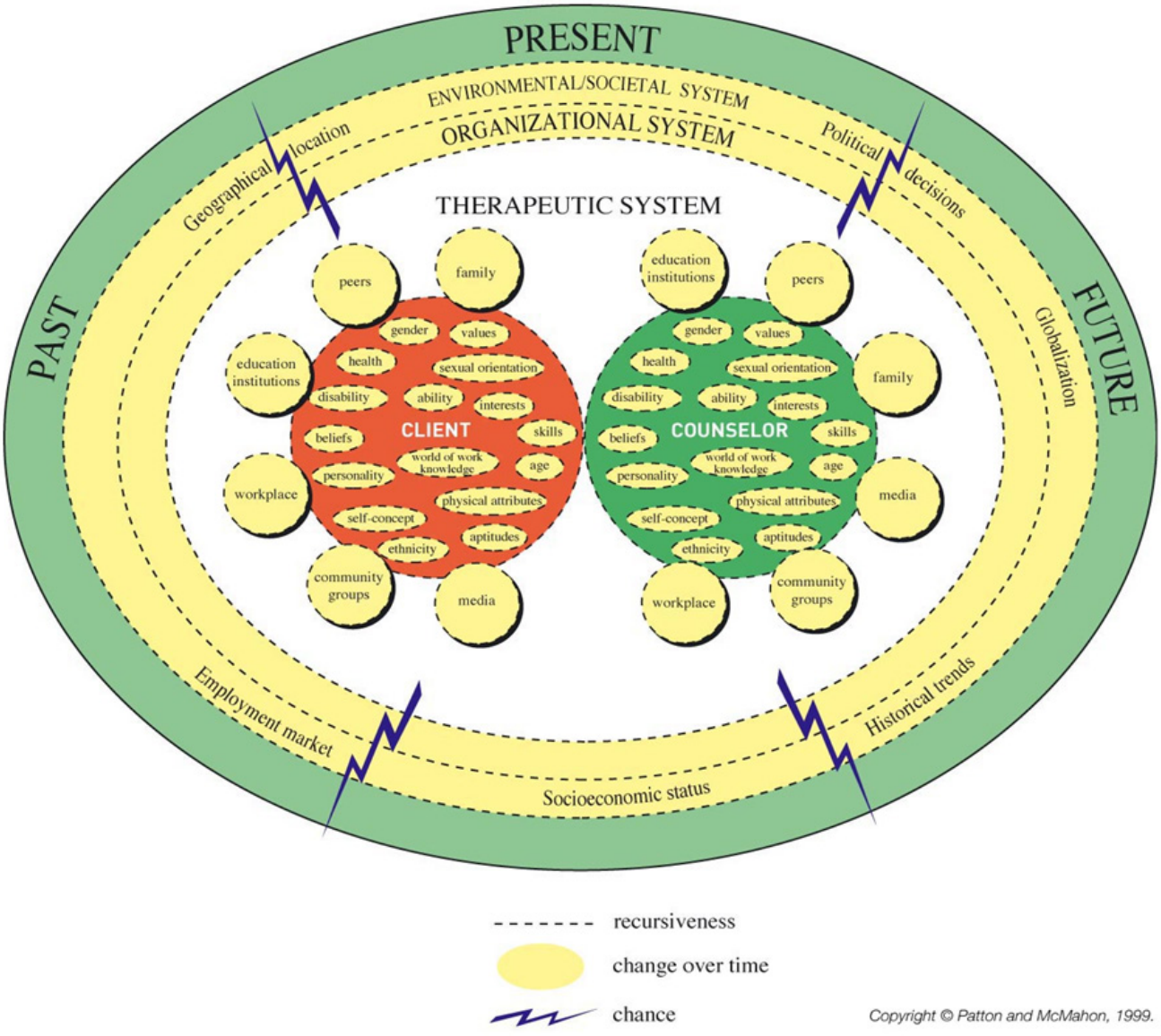
When considered in a wider systems perspective (Patton & McMahon, 2021), career counselling functions as a socio-economic practice that operates at the intersection of individual agency and systemic influences identified in the STF. Thus, there is also another intersection to consider: that of the client and the practitioner. Both client and practitioner, as a dyad, bring their systems of career influences into the psychological space of counselling, as depicted in Figure 2 (Patton & McMahon, 1999). The working alliance (or therapeutic relationship) formed between them is the crucible of their interactions and, ultimately, the effectiveness of counselling (McIlveen & Choat, 2023; Milot-Lapointe et al., 2020). This confluence of systems of influences not only requires analysis for the sake of the client, but also analysis of practitioners who brings their whole person to the relationship and how counselling methods are delivered. As an ethic of reflexivity, practitioners should be consciously aware of their conceptions of the individual, narrative identity, and contextual influences. After all, practitioners' conceptions—unconscious and conscious—affect how they practice.

Figure 2. The Therapeutic System



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Toward an ethic of reflexivity

A thorough analysis of the practitioner-in-systems-of-influences requires explicit integration of ethical reflection into career counselling theory and practice. Addressing this challenge requires more than additional evidence or procedural innovation about the evident effectiveness of career counselling (e.g., Milot-Lapointe & Arifoulline, 2025; Whiston et al., 2017). Practitioners will continue to refine and consolidate their methods and theoretical foundations through systematic inquiry and research which is consistent with established *paradigms* (Kuhn, 1996) until something new comes along. Instead, the analysis calls for an *ethic of reflexivity* (McIlveen, 2015b) and reconceptualisation of the epistemological assumptions that guide counselling practice, recognising knowledge as provisional, experience-based, and person-specific. An ethic of reflexivity requires practitioners to assume moral responsibility for how their theoretical perspectives, values, and social positioning shape narratives through which clients interpret and 'design their lives' (Savickas et al., 2009). When understood in this way, an ethic of reflexivity enacted by the counsellor can provide the orienting framework within which career narratives are formed, evaluated, and revised. Such an orientation invites both counsellor and client to engage with questions of value, responsibility, and integrity with greater transparency, establishing career counselling as a practice concerned not only with effectiveness and outcomes, but also with the lifelong challenge of living a good life.

Philosophical reflections provide the conceptual resources needed for an ethic of reflexivity. By situating career counselling within a philosophical framework, practitioners can better support clients to confront uncertainty, responsibility, and meaning in a world of work that offers few guarantees. For this reason, the future development of career counselling depends not only on theoretical and methodological sophistication but also on engagement with philosophy. Ethical inquiry, for example Aristotle's (1976) analysis of human flourishing, offers a conceptual foundation for examining the values that underpin career counselling for the good life. Although moral philosophy and ethics have exercised enduring influence on many scholarly domains, its systematic application to career counselling remains scarce and underdeveloped. Likewise, other branches of philosophy (e.g., epistemology, political) are rarely given overt attention in the literature of career development.

Addressing this omission represents an important next step for the field. To that end, in this article I address two perplexing matters (for me at least) with some trepidation, for:

> He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster. And when you gaze long enough into an abyss the abyss also gazes into you. (Nietzsche, 1886/2003; Aphorism § 146)

First, I grapple with the nature of narrative truth; then I consider how that narrative lived as *pragmatic ideographic truth* empowers the individual to reclaim itself, if courageous enough.

These two interlinked issues have intellectually tormented me since my readings of postmodern literature (e.g., Foucault, 1972; Rorty, 1999) and narrative psychology (e.g., Bruner, 1990; Sarbin, 1986) destabilized my hitherto settled psychological understanding of the individual. For example, if an individual's experience of personal identity is

constructed in language (as discourse/narrative) and dialogue with self and others, how can the individual objectively think about itself without using the very language (discourse/narrative) in which it is constituted? 'Thinking therefore I am' is not an entirely satisfactory solution because I cannot think about myself without using the language (discourse/narrative) that constitutes my thinking about myself. Am I just an automaton, an embodiment of discourse from which I cannot transcend? How can I know if I am a duck or a rabbit (cf. Wittgenstein, 1968)? And if I cannot discern whether I am a duck or a rabbit, then how can I ethically engage in career counselling which purports to facilitate individuals' exploring their identities in and through discourse/narrative which constitutes themselves and the world-of-work? Then I stare into the abyss.

Here, staring into that abyss, I do not purport a solution to the problem of not knowing answers to those questions. Instead, as an act of ethical reflexivity, I commit to a process of trying to understand how I construct the problem-to-be-solved and the questions to be answered, all the while admitting that my capacity to understand is constrained by the language and discourse in which and by which I am constituted as a sentient being.

On narrative truth

Søren Kierkegaard's (1843/1967) observation that human existence is retrospectively interpreted while prospectively enacted captures a central tension in career counselling. In some ways, this notion is like living one's life going forwards while looking backwards to know where one has come from, as if stumbling along in moments of life anxiously anticipating unseen traps and snares. Likewise, clients are asked to commit themselves to future possibilities even though such commitments can only be grounded in interpretations of prior experience. Career counselling therefore operates within an unavoidable epistemic limitation: it supports decision-making and action in the absence of definitive knowledge about future outcomes. In practice, this limitation means that career counselling is organised around a reflective examination of biographical experience as a means of orienting future action. Counsellor and client jointly review patterns of meaning shaped by psychological, social, and cultural influences, not to discover fixed vocational truths, but to generate interpretations that render the present intelligible and the future actionable. On this basis, possible directions are imaginatively formulated, tentatively endorsed, and pragmatically tested in everyday life.

This approach to career development theory and career counselling is representative of the 'narrative turn' (Rossier et al., 2021) and is exemplified by career construction theory (Savickas, 2013, 2020) and narrative career counselling (McMahon & Abkhezr, 2025). Whether (narrative) career counselling resolves Kierkegaard's existential dilemma is open to question. Career counselling can facilitate forward movement only as far as clients acknowledge that projections derived from past experiences are inherently provisional because the past may be re-interpreted at any time in the future. Therefore, future-oriented narratives are best understood not as reliable predictions, but as negotiated commitments sustained by hope, courage, and a willingness to act without guarantees.

Counselling that takes life as retrospectively interpreted while prospectively enacted is existentially fraught. David Hume (1748/2007) questioned whether inference from past experience can justify expectations about what will occur next. His scepticism rested on the observation that humans are psychologically inclined to infer causation from temporal

proximity or repetition, even though such inferences lack logical necessity. The mere sequencing or co-occurrence of events does not, by itself, warrant conclusions about cause and effect. Yet humans routinely impose causal explanations on patterns they observe, mistaking habituated expectation for justified knowledge.

But can we—humans—live our lives otherwise? Do we not need some albeit imperfect beliefs of and reasons for what is prospectively real and likely to occur in life to get out of bed and carry on? Thus, despite the torments and privations of context, meaningfulness and reasons to keep going forward into an unknown future life are essential (cf. Frankl, 1959/1984).

Philosophical and psychological accounts of how humans conceive of and experience time provide a useful foundation for understanding contemporary narrative approaches to identity and career development. Heraclitus's (500 BCE/2001) river metaphor—that one cannot step into the same river twice—captures an ontological claim about human existence: stability is illusory, and life unfolds as continuous change. Identity, in this view, is not a fixed essence but an ever-shifting configuration within processes of becoming. Similarly, William James (1890/1952) perspective on lived experience proposes that the human stream of consciousness is structured temporally, with thought unfolding as a continuous flow rather than as discrete, isolated moments. The perception of sequence—of one experience following another—provides the psychological basis for coherent thought, explanation, and meaning. People actively seek continuity across experiences, not simply because it is logically sound, but because it enables understanding and orientation in an otherwise fragmented stream of events. Psychological continuity, therefore, arises not from sameness over time but from the experiential linking of successive moments. This linking of experience is a will to meaningfulness, of understanding the now and anticipating the future while comprehending life retrospectively (Kierkegaard, 1843/1967).

Despite the philosophical weaknesses of inductive reasoning (Hume, 1748/2007), individuals continue to live as if the future can be anticipated through narrative continuity. Human life is organised through stories that connect remembered experience with imagined possibilities, even when such connections exceed what logic can securely justify. Narrative psychology resolves this philosophical conundrum by explaining how individuals sustain a sense of self amid ongoing change. From this perspective, identity is constructed through autobiographical narratives that integrate interpretations of the past, understandings of the present, and anticipations of the future (McAdams, 1993). Narrative identity does not negate instability; rather, it provides a sense of coherence by organizing lived experience into an intelligible temporal sequence.

Career construction theory (Savickas, 2013, 2020) draws directly on this narrative logic by conceptualizing career development as a process of meaning-making rather than prediction. Careers are understood as evolving life stories authored through action, reflection, and adaptation in response to changing personal and contextual conditions. Rather than uncovering objective truths, narrative career counselling facilitates the construction of provisional meanings that support engagement with education, work, and life. In this sense, narrative counselling produces forms of truth that are pragmatic and therapeutic rather than demonstrably predictive. These narrative constructions function as *enabling fictions*: they allow people to interpret their past, maintain a sense of identity in the present, and commit themselves to action in the present and future, despite uncertainty.

Pragmatism—most prominently articulated by William James (1907/2000)—may be used as an epistemological stance toward personal meaning and generating enabling fictions. Within this framework, truth is not conceived as correspondence with an objective future but as a provisional orientation shaped through lived consequences.

> Pragmatism, on the other hand, asks its usual question. Grant an idea or belief to be true, it says, what concrete difference will its being true make in anyone's actual life? How will the truth be realized? What experiences will be different from those which would obtain if the belief were false? What, in short, is the truth's cash value in experiential terms… Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events' (James, 1907/2000, p. 88).

Regarding career narratives and identity, I refer to these enabling fictions as 'pragmatic idiographic truth'. They are practical (pragmatic), personal (idiographic) proofs (truth) for understanding self and the world and acting accordingly. Career counselling exemplifies this stance as far as it relies heavily on interpretive engagement with a client's biographical history to formulate plausible directions for future action. Such reliance reflects the fundamentally inductive character of counselling practice and the attendant vulnerability highlighted by philosophical critiques of induction (viz., Hume, 1748/2007).

From a pragmatic perspective, ideas and beliefs acquire the status of truth through their effects rather than their origins. The central question is not whether a belief accurately represents reality in an abstract sense, but whether it proves viable in guiding action and sustaining experience over time and in contexts which test the validity of beliefs. Truth, in this view, emerges through its practical consequences. Ideas are validated through what they enable individuals to do, feel, and become in their contexts which may foster this personal truth or prevail against it.

This pragmatic orientation applied to career counselling foregrounds interpretation and reinterpretation as the primary means by which meaning is established in and through narratives. Clients selectively recall, reshape, and sometimes imaginatively reconstruct elements of their life history to sustain coherent self-understandings. Through dialogue, counsellor and client jointly develop narratives that function as provisional explanations of the past and tentative commitments to the future. These narratives are not verified once and for all; they are continually tested through subsequent action and experience.

Once a narrative orientation is adopted, individuals often attend selectively to experiences that appear to support it. Psychological research has long documented this tendency toward *confirmation bias* (Nickerson, 1998), particularly in interpersonal contexts where expectations subtly shape perception and interaction. When experiences align with the guiding narrative, confidence in its validity strengthens. When contradictions arise, individuals may search for alternative confirmations that preserve coherence rather than abandon the narrative altogether.

James (1907/2000) acknowledged that new interpretations rarely replace old ones wholesale. Instead, people tend to adjust existing belief structures incrementally, preserving continuity while accommodating change. What counts as a satisfactory explanation is therefore never absolute; it is judged relative to the person's values,

expectations, and tolerance for disruption. From this standpoint, pragmatic idiographic truth is always partial and adjustable—a matter of degree rather than certainty.

> New truth is always a go-between, a smoother-over of transitions. It marries old opinion to new fact so as ever to show a minimum of jolt, a maximum of continuity. We hold a theory true just in proportion to its success in solving this 'problem of maxima and minima' (James, 1907/2000, p. 31).

Such openness to revision places individuals before an existential demand: to act without guarantees and to assume responsibility for interpretations that could, at any point, prove inadequate. As Søren Kierkegaard (2002) observed, commitment requires courage precisely because understanding never fully determines willingness. Yet without such commitment, identity and agency risk fragmentation. The tension may be resolved by smoothing narratives; that is, to organize experience so that discordant or troubling events are reinterpreted in ways that preserve a sense of continuity, intentionality, and personal coherence (Bruner, 1990). Thus, as a 'therapeutic lie', pragmatic idiographic truths enable actions.

Career counselling must therefore create a milieu in which clients can invest trust in the narratives they co-construct, not because those narratives are incontrovertibly true, but because believing in them enables action. In this sense, career counselling serves as a crucible for pragmatic idiographic truth, supporting individuals to engage creatively and resiliently with education, work and life amid uncertainty, rather than remaining immobilised by the anxiety of indeterminacy.

The ascendent individual in context

Career counselling can be understood as a form of self-related practice that participates in the shaping of identity and social positioning within socio-economic context. Drawing on Michel Foucault, career counselling may be viewed as a *technology of the self* (Foucault, 1988) through which individuals are invited to work on themselves in ways that align personal conduct with prevailing social norms and economic arrangements. The life-design paradigm for career counselling (Savickas et al., 2009) exemplifies this orientation by offering narrative and adaptive resources through which individuals actively compose vocational narratives and identities (i.e., pragmatic idiographic truths) suited to fluid and uncertain labour markets.

The notion that the helping professional operates as a neutral technician has become increasingly untenable. Just as psychoanalysis is no longer understood as a value-free procedure conducted by a detached observer, career counselling cannot plausibly be framed as an intervention delivered by a morally neutral expert. As depicted in Figure 2 (Patton & McMahon, 1999), client and counsellor bring their respective individual career influences to their dyad which is embedded within contextual influences. Career counsellors inevitably participate as interpretive and evaluative agents whose questions, assumptions, and preferred narratives reflect implicit views about what constitutes a worthwhile and meaningful life (e.g., emancipatory communitarian approach; Blustein et al., 2005). Whether acknowledged or not, these ethical orientations shape the counselling process.

Accordingly, appeals to relativism—often associated with postmodern and social constructionist traditions—offer limited refuge. A reflexive stance requires recognising: first, that empirical research, however rigorous, cannot exhaustively justify the tacit aims embedded in counselling practice; second, that the narratives co-created in counselling function as provisional sense-making devices rather than literal truths; and third, that the counsellor's own commitments inevitably inform judgements about direction, possibility, and value. Ethical engagement is therefore not an optional overlay but an intrinsic feature of practice.

These considerations place the construction of self at the centre of ethical inquiry in career development. Contemporary vocational theory conceptualises selfhood not as a fixed entity but as something progressively shaped through activity and choice, moving from being acted upon to acting intentionally and ultimately authoring one's own life trajectory as self-as-actor, self-as-agent, and self-as-author (Savickas, 2013, 2020). Authorship, in this sense, entails heightened agency as well as increased responsibility. The individual who assumes narrative control over their career must also bear responsibility for the risks, uncertainties, and potential failures such control entails.

Yet such authorship unfolds within labour markets and government policies which are detached from and indifferent to individuals' lived experiences, anxieties, and aspirations. Although qualifications, competencies, and skills remain necessary for employability, they are insufficient for addressing the deeper anxieties that accompany vocational decision-making, learning, and earning a decent living amidst the uncertainties of economic and political trends. As Søren Kierkegaard (2002) argued: assuming responsibility for one's own life requires courage when confronting the unknown, for somewhere 'between understanding and willing lie excuses and evasions' (Kierkegaard, 2002, p. 262). A person must either cling to their own constructed truth—however illusory—or risk descending into madness, where every experience threatens to appear as contradiction, bringing with it the terror of a psychological collapse of the very sense of self.

From a Stoic standpoint articulated by Marcus Aurelius (2011), the image of the individual as a performer fulfilling a role offers a useful ethical orientation toward work and life. Stoicism emphasises disciplined acceptance of circumstances that fall outside personal control, coupled with focused commitment to the responsibilities one can discharge. Rather than treating adverse conditions as personal affronts, the Stoic ideal encourages measured engagement, restraint in complaint, and satisfaction derived from performing one's duties conscientiously. Marcus Aurelius articulated this ethic by urging citizens to act according to the requirements of the common good without seeking recognition or sympathy: 'Don't work as a miserable drudge, or in any expectation of pity or admiration. One aim only: action or inaction as civic cause demands' (Aurelius, 2011, p. 86). Given that economic, political, and employment conditions may not always be optimal for an individual at a point in time, taking a Stoic attitude to prevailing hardships is not an easy ask of any person.

Nonetheless, adopting a Stoic orientation may reduce the psychological burden associated with occupational hardship by reframing unavoidable difficulties as part of one's life rather than as personal injustice. Indeed, the psychotherapy based on stoicism, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (Ellis & Dryden, 2007), has been effectively integrated into career counselling to support clients' challenging beliefs that diminish their esteem and motivation (e.g., Otu & Sefotho, 2024).

Friedrich Nietzsche (1878/1994, 1886/2003) insisted that individuals are ultimately responsible for shaping their own lives.

> Will a self. Active, successful natures act, not according to the dictum 'know thy self', but as if there hovered before them the commandment: will a self and thou shalt become a self. (Nietzsche, 1977, p. 232)

In this view, the self is not merely adapting to external circumstances but actively producing its own trajectory. Life is lived not as a rehearsal for some external justification, but as an affirmation of one's choices, even in retrospect. Nietzsche's emphasis on authorship demands that individuals accept responsibility for the consequences of their commitments and actions rather than attributing outcomes to fate or institutional favour or constraint.

> Life as a product of life. However far man may extend himself with his knowledge, however objective he may appear to himself—ultimately he reaps nothing but his own biography. Nietzsche (Nietzsche, 1878/1994, p. 238)

Nietzsche's position also resonates with the epistemology of pragmatic idiographic truth. His acknowledgement that meaning is sustained through self-endorsed interpretation underscores the role of conviction in enabling action. Nietzsche argues that human excellence is grounded in the capacity to affirm one's own existence rather than deriving meaning from obedience to external mandates. In this view, individuals are called to engage in life vigorously and assume ownership of their commitments, rather than subordinating themselves to inherited purposes or institutional imperatives. Nietzsche's thought offers a psychological counterweight to forms of social theories that erode agency, thus confronting individuals with the responsibility to actively shape their lives.

This stance is neither cynical nor antisocial. It rejects resignation without endorsing contempt for others, emphasising instead the ethical seriousness of self-determination. Interpreted in this way, Nietzsche can be seen as a precursor to later critiques of discourses imposed by social institutions, yet his position diverges sharply from relativistic postmodern accounts that dissolve standards of value altogether. Rather than denying evaluation of the world's impositions upon individuals, Nietzsche relocates it: judgments of good and bad are grounded in the individual's capacity for self-affirmation, responsibility, and creative engagement with life.

To affirm a narrative is not to claim objective certainty; instead, it is to commit oneself to a course of action in full awareness of self's contingency amidst systems of influences, regardless of whether they are pernicious, benign, or favourable. Far from endorsing nihilism, Nietzsche's philosophy insists on the ethical seriousness of such commitment: individuals must generate value through lived engagement rather than inheriting it from external authorities.

The notion of self-authorship delineates complementary ethical orientations within career counselling. One orientation moderates suffering by clarifying the boundaries of control; the other orientation energises agency by demanding ownership of one's future. Both

converge on a crucial point: living well in uncertain conditions requires neither resignation nor illusion, but the courage to act in accordance with meanings one is prepared to claim as one's own.

Future directions

The effectiveness of career development interventions is rightly subject to empirical scrutiny and it is evidently an effective means of supporting individuals to making sense of their educational choices, work-related choices, and transitions through the life (e.g., Milot-Lapointe & Arifoulline, 2025; Whiston et al., 2017). But delivering career counselling (and other services) as if it were morally and politically inert is not an option. Empirical scrutiny alone cannot resolve the philosophical quandaries that are implicit in career counselling practice and what is deemed effective, for whom, and why. Decisions about what constitutes a desirable life course, a worthwhile form of work, or an acceptable trade-off between security and fulfilment are not settled by data alone. These matters and decisions are conditional on value judgments of what is good, and good for whom. Enter philosophy.

My intellectual and professional journey has been influenced by Professor David Blustein, whom I regard as a moral lightning rod for the science of vocational psychology and professional practice of career development. Blustein's prosecution of his humanistic agenda (e.g., 2019; 2023) exemplifies how scholars and practitioners in the field career development can be a force for the greater good. In his magnum opus, *The Psychology of Working: A New Perspective for Career Development*, Blustein (2006) called for an experience-near understanding of and connection to the issues and people of interest to researchers and practitioners.

> Empathic understanding can help researchers to make their values more explicit as they are exposed to aspects of participants' lives that may have been inaccessible or inadequately understood. (Blustein, 2006, p.240).

Consistent with empathic introspection and experience-near understanding, is Blustein's call for an *emancipatory communitarian* approach to research and practice. Toward that end, Blustein and colleagues recommended that the discipline should 'strive to instil a critical consciousness—not just among the powerless but the powerful and privileged' (Blustein et al., 2005, p. 167). They did not shy away from taking an overt moral and political stand, in stating 'We agree that a social justice agenda is inherently political and ideological in that it is based on an overt recognition and promotion of a particular set of values' (p. 167). Blustein's (2006, 2019, 2023) affirmative grounding of his psychology of working within a moral and political frame epitomizes the intellectual and professional transparency needed to ensure that scholars and practitioners are accountable by way of their ethically delivering evidence-based practices and, moreover, are accountable to whom they profess to serve.

In this article I have addressed just two quandaries inherent in the field of career development, its predominant science (vocational psychology), and one of its practices (career counselling). There are many more matters that could be and should be the grist of philosophical considerations because they involve contentious issues which are inherently moral and political (e.g., employment, unemployment, and employability; curricula and

pedagogies for schools and universities; immigration). Consider those examples for a moment. Career development practitioners are working amidst their systems of career influences (as depicted in Figure 1; Patton & McMahon, 2021) and within the space of their influences converged with their clients (as in Figure 2) in which their moral and political inclinations overtly or unconsciously influence their practices. Therein lies a conundrum which demands an ethic of reflexivity.

Conclusion

I began this article with a confession of the intellectual torments which derailed my settled psychological understanding of the nature of an individual. As a psychologist practitioner and researcher, I provisionally resolved these torments by critically challenging misuse and abuse of the scientific and professional practices within the field of career development (McIlveen & Patton, 2006; McIlveen & Perera, 2019) and through the scientific and professional application of a theory, namely theory of *dialogical self* (Hermans et al., 1992; McIlveen & Patton, 2007). Years later, doubts remain.

Through philosophical considerations, I have grappled with the nature of narrative truth, narrative as pragmatic ideographic truth, and a hopeful reclamation of the individual from the morass of discourse in which nothing seems stable. Metaphysics and moral philosophy have furnished provisional explanations and solace, but I remain vexed. For, as I wrote in an earlier version of this argument, philosophical questions remain:

> At this crucial juncture, I do not find solace in the amoral relativism of postmodernist thinking that made way for social constructionism in career development. Nor should I. For if I am to be honest with my clients and myself, I must admit to (a) the limitations of scientific research that provides the evidence for my practices of career counselling as a technology of self; (b) the fictional qualities of pragmatic idiographic truth that comprises the co-construction of stories that generate action; and (c) my will that is inherent in my ethical stance, as it were: that is, my belief on what composes the good life. (McIlveen, 2015a)

What is true? What is good? Do I have the courage to go forward as if I know the answers? Do you?

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