

THE Philosophy Clinic



Practical Wisdom at Work

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CHAPTER NINE

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1: How did you get interested in philosophy in the first place and particularly in the possible therapeutic uses and aspects of the discipline?

'First causes' can be notoriously difficult to identify, especially in a continuum. Maybe better to inquire of philosophy how she first became interested in me. Freedom of inquiry has always been my guide; some would say it's congenital. Back in the late 1960s and early 1970s I was youth group leader for the Montreal Humanist Fellowship, which entailed facilitating dialogues on ethics with adolescents. My beginnings as a current practitioner are traceable to the University of British Columbia's Centre for Applied Ethics, where I held a position in the early 1990s. Thanks to media exposure of our work in an ethics-conscious society, members of the public in Vancouver began to approach the Centre, asking to speak with an ethicist. As our university was public, we obliged. That's how I got my first two cases: one phoned-in; the other walked-in.

2: What is philosophy as you understand it?

Literally, philosophy means love of wisdom, which sounds clear but is far from self-interpreting. If you place under the same roof a random assortment of people who call themselves 'philosophers', they will probably disagree over a great number of issues. This suggests either that they have different ways of loving wisdom, or that they have similar ways of loving but understand wisdom in different ways. For me, philosophy is a multi-faceted activity that entails things like contemplating, writing, teaching, provoking thought, inculcating virtue, and occasionally butchering sacred cows.

3: What do you mean by 'philosophical practice'?

By 'philosophical practice' I mean something akin to what Aristotle called *phronesis*, or 'practical wisdom'. It can mean applying one's principles to one's own life, as philosophers have done in every generation since antiquity. It can also mean helping others to interpret their problems and

situations, formulate and articulate their own principles, and apply them to their own lives. Philosophical practice can be done in solitude, or with individuals, groups, or organizations.

4: What essentially is the difference between philosophical counselling and psychological therapy?

Your question seems to pre-suppose some version of Platonism, whereby one can distinguish the ‘essence’ of philosophy from the ‘essence’ of psychology. As there are many schools (i.e. modes) of philosophical counselling, all making competing if not contradictory claims about their proper methods and goals, while at the same time there are apparently hundreds of schools of psychological therapy, which likewise make competing and contradictory claims, it is no mean feat to articulate overarching essential differences. I conceive that many psychological counsellors are harnessed via licensure to medical or pseudo-medical models, and that a good many of them believe they are diagnosing and treating forms of ‘mental illness’ with their respective therapies. Whereas most philosophical counsellors work with clients who are both functional and rational, and not mentally ill: clients who seek at minimum to examine their lives through the lens of philosophical dialogue, and beyond that to make constructive changes by the application of time-tested ideas. Psychological therapy treats new-fangled ‘mental illness’; whereas philosophical counselling is old-fashioned ‘medicine for the soul’. In general, psychotherapy appears rooted in affect, whereas philosophy is rooted in reason. On the whole, it appears that we with different populations, with some potential for overlap.

5: Can you give a concrete clinical case-history from your work that illustrates or underlines an important or unique aspect of philosophical counselling?

Yes, with the proviso that we eschew the word ‘clinical’. Although there are indeed a few practitioners who call themselves ‘clinical philosophers’ – for good reason – I myself have yet to operate a clinic. It almost happened at City College in 2000, but more about that later. Rather, I tend to inhabit an office. So here's an ‘official’ case history.

The client was a high-school Principal, whose recent fund-raising project by students for a worthy charity had gone terribly wrong. To incentivise student participation as fundraisers, prizes had been donated and were raffled off at a closing event. (Kant would have deemed such a move profoundly immoral in principle, while Mill would have praised its utilitarian success.) Things went wrong when the ‘grand prize’ was won

by a student who had not participated in the fundraising. It transpired that she had been given the raffle ticket by her best friend, who had participated. Their parents then got into a squabble over possession of the grand prize itself – a mountain-bike – and this in turn was factionalizing the community.

The client reported that he had lost a lot of sleep grappling with this problem, and also lost some appetite. He felt responsible, and it perturbed him to see his community divided. They had called in a lawyer, which had only escalated the conflict. The Principal sought a resolution that would allow him, as he phrased it, ‘to live with himself’.

Through Socratic inquiry, we unearthed a vital distinction between a legal versus a moral right to possessing something. We further discovered an implicit rule which the organizing committee had neglected to make explicit; namely, that moral entitlement to a raffle ticket was restricted to students who had participated in the fundraising. Tickets, in other words, were not intended to be transferable.

So on ethical grounds, the prize would revert to the rightful possessor of the ticket. Notice, however, that once she took her prize home she was at perfect liberty to gift it to her friend, or gift it back to charity, for that matter. Note also the manifest difference between this and a public lottery ticket, which is completely transferable. If a friend gifts you a public lottery ticket that subsequently wins, she has no moral claim on the prize money (although you may choose to share it).

The Principal was relieved and delighted to present this resolution, or something very like it, to the organizing committee for implementation, for he believed it would appeal to the majority and would resolve the conflict, and would also allow him to ‘live with himself’. In other words, it satisfied his moral intuitions.

The significance of this case -- my very first case, as it happens -- lies in its resolution via moral philosophy and professional ethics. The Principal himself sought a philosophical resolution (after a legal resolution had failed), and not a medical or psychological one. It would be inappropriate to give him a sleeping pill, or to diagnose him with an "anxiety disorder" and give him Paxil, or to psychoanalyse him and discover why he fancies giving away bicycles, because those treatments would be symptomatic only, and would never touch the root of his and his community's ethical problem, which persisted in a noetic domain and needed to be resolved commensurately.

6: Some may regard philosophical counselling as being too rational or complicated or esoteric or academic or even elitist to help people. Does it depend on the practitioner? How does it alleviate suffering?

First, to your opening salvo: indeed, some undergraduate students may regard philosophy itself as too rational, complicated, esoteric, academic or even elitist a subject to be worth pursuing. This might help explain why Philosophy departments are relatively small, compared with English or Psychology Departments. Then again, it would be absurd to claim, on those grounds alone, that philosophy cannot alleviate suffering. There are still plenty of people in the world who are rational, complicated, esoteric, academic, or even elitist, and just as prone to suffering as anyone else. And many of them have been helped by philosophical counselling. To assert that not all people can be helped by philosophy is not to deny that some people can be helped. We have helped a good many.

Second, does it depend on the practitioner? Of course it does, and perhaps the dependency is even greater in our field. I know of no professional art in which the skill of the practitioner does not play a pivotal role: be it engineering, law, medicine, psychology, philosophy; or for that matter researching, writing, or teaching in any field. Finding the right practitioner at the right time, or failing to do so, can make all the difference in the outcome of the given case.

Third, how does philosophical counselling alleviate suffering? In general, it does so via the hermeneutic and maieutic powers of dialogue. Pain or physical discomfort is often a warning that something is wrong with the body, requiring medical intervention. Similarly, suffering or psychic discomfort is often a warning that something is wrong with the soul, requiring (depending on the kind of wrongness) psychological or philosophical intervention. Three of the most efficacious philosophical systems for the alleviation of suffering are Stoicism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Spinoza's philosophy has similar efficacy. What they hold in common is that suffering is a kind of self-inflicted injustice. It is alleviated by adopting views and practices that conduce to treating oneself (and others) justly. Those who treat themselves and others justly become immunized sooner or later, not to pain or physical illness, but against suffering.

Thus a salient distinction here emerges, between the practice of medicine and psychology (on the one hand) and philosophy (on the other). While people are said to be *afflicted by* illness, be it physical or 'mental', suffering for the most part is self-inflicted, and can therefore be alleviated ultimately by the self, or by dissolving the self.

7: Are there any people for whom philosophical counselling may be contraindicated?

This is an excellent question, over which the philosophical counselling community is itself divided. A very few radical philosophical counsellors, of one stripe or another, make the claim that philosophy is a panacea which can (and should) replace psychotherapy and psychopharmacology wholesale. In my view, this claim is aberrant and dangerous. I believe that some persons are either too emotionally disturbed on a persistent basis to be rational and functional, while others are afflicted by variegated cerebral dysfunctions which prevent them from being rational and functional. Such persons are not, in my view, good candidates for philosophical counselling.

Notwithstanding the manifold defects and patent absurdities entailed by the DSM, and notwithstanding the colonization of medicine by ‘big pharma’ and insurance companies, and the industry of frivolous diagnosis and gratuitous drugging it has spawned, there are undoubtedly people who need psychotherapy and/or psychoactive medications, of whom any number may benefit from psychological or psychiatric interventions.

By the same token, since contemporary psychiatry has jettisoned talk-therapy in favour of molecular science – a move to which many ‘old school’ psychiatrists are opposed – it is conceivable that some patients who are being drugged while deprived of dialogue could benefit from both worlds: pharmacology to control unwanted moods and behaviours, and philosophical counselling for self-exploration. This in fact was proposed to me by a European psychiatrist who is head of his department, research program, and psychiatric facility. He wants to bring in philosophical counsellors to dialogue with some of his patients, as an adjunct modality to the ‘molecular psychiatry’ that he is compelled to practice. As I do not speak his native tongue, I cannot participate, but the experiment sounds fascinating.

Indeed, a patient being medically treated for virtually any corporeal ailment or injury might well benefit from philosophical counselling, for example to explore implications of his illness or injury on other dimensions of life affected by his medical condition but lying beyond the scope of medical treatment. No matter which organ is being medically treated – including or maybe even especially the brain – there is surely good cause to lead an examined life concomitantly. That suggests renewed modern potential in the ancient alliance between medicine and philosophy.

Then again, I refrain from seeing clients who are undergoing any form of psychological counselling, psychotherapy, or psychoanalysis. There is simply too much potential for conflicting or dissonant messages. Clients

ought to speak with as many counsellors as they please, but for serious dialogue one at a time seems best.

Most generally, I counsel clients who fit the following scope of practice: 'Philosophical counselling is intended for clients who are rational, functional, and not mentally ill, but who can benefit from philosophical assistance in resolving or managing problems associated with normal life experience. The most suitable candidates for philosophical counselling are clients whose problems are centred in:

1. issues of private morality or professional ethics; or
2. issues of meaning, value, or purpose; or
3. issues of personal or professional fulfilment; or
4. issues of under-determined or inconsistent belief systems; or
5. issues requiring any philosophical interpretation of changing circumstances'.

To date, this scope of practice has been approved by at least five Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) for research purposes by philosophy faculty: originally at The City College of New York, subsequently at The State University of New York at Cortland, Eastern Michigan University, the University of Colorado, and the University of Northern Colorado.

Following an initial consultation, clients whose issues are deemed not to fit within this scope are referred for alternative care. In more than twenty years of practice, I have found that approximately 5% of clients (one in twenty) who seek my services do not fit this scope.

8: Gerd Achenbach founded the first European philosophical counselling centre in Cologne in 1982. However, Pierre Grimes had been practising Socratic midwifery in Southern California since the 1960's, while Paul Sharkey and J. Michael Russell were practising philosophical counselling since the 1970's in the USA. How does your work differ from or align with these other practitioners especially Gerd Achenbach?

These colleagues whom you mention are all giants in the field. Yet none are twins. Pierre Grimes is the leading exponent of Socratic midwifery, based squarely on Plato. In his hands, it is a powerful and efficacious method. J. Michael Russell specializes in applied existential philosophy -- a metaphysical antithesis of Plato. Michael is cross-trained in psychoanalysis, and trains practitioners in both fields. He is fond of utilizing affect to elicit axiological commitments. Paul Sharkey (retired) is a professional ethicist with expertise in public administration, and cross-trained in RET as well as hypnotherapy. Paul is a founding member of both the American Society for Philosophy, Counselling, and Psychotherapy (an academic study-

group) and the American Philosophical Practitioners Association (a non-profit educational corporation). Pierre, Michael, and Paul are great American pioneers of philosophical practice.

Gerd Achenbach is similarly great, and his pioneering endeavours have borne equivalent fruit in Germany. Since Gerd's *magnum opus* is published only in German, a tongue not in my repertoire, I am unqualified to characterize his unique brand of practice. He has a salutary reputation for deliberating ethically and compassionately with his clients. He also alludes to Teutonic mystical influences, e.g. Jakob Böhme. Gerd has an authoritative air, but also an approachable one. For this reason I selected him from a throng of travellers at a Dutch railway station -- without knowing at the time who he was -- to verify directions to a conference we were both attending. He looked like someone 'in the know'.

As to yours truly: I am trained in mathematical physics, philosophy of science, decision theory, applied ethics, and Asian philosophy. To re-iterate: we are all different. *Vive la différence!*

9: What exactly is involved in the process of philosophical counselling? What would you say is its goal or aim or core objective? How do you personally practise it?

What makes you suppose that there is an 'exact' answer to your question about process? As I pointed out in *Plato Not Prozac*, some clients present time-delimited *problems*, which require immediate solutions (as in the case of the Principal); others are caught up in *processes* (e.g. divorce, career-change, etc.) which are more open-ended and require the more gradual cultivation of a perspective. In my practice, neither kind of case is handled by a pre-defined meta-process, and only some are handled by a pre-conceived methodology (just when deemed suitable). By my lights, the goal or aim or core objective is ideally to assist and empower the client to become his or her own philosopher, so as to be able to dispense entirely with my services.

10: Principally, is philosophical counselling about making people happier or suggesting ways that their lives can be made more meaningful?

Principally, it depends on whom you ask. In my case, I find this an odd disjunction. Presumably you are not implying that people must choose between a happy life or a meaningful one. In my experience, while most clients do seek to become happier, at least in the longer run, many are sceptical about received "recipes" for instantaneous euphoria that have been mass-marketed to them. That is why they come to a philosopher in

the first place (or occasionally the last) -- to inquire into the nature of happiness itself, and how best in their particular case to attain it. Then again, some clients indeed seek to justify their present unhappiness, or at least to interpret it and give it meaning.

For example, some may gravitate toward Mill's claim that it's better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. Others may prefer Nietzsche's bravado: 'Whatever doesn't kill me, makes me stronger'. Principally, in my practice, the main goal is to help make clients philosophically self-sufficient, so they can live happily, or meaningfully, in a sustainable way that is grounded in their own well-conceived perspective.

11: Do you have a concept of 'mental health'?

Yes, and exactly like you I would confine it to quotation marks.

12: In what sense is philosophical counselling different from spiritual practise?

This depends vitally upon what you mean by 'spiritual practise', a term that admits of many different senses. Increasingly in the West, people describe themselves as 'spiritual but not religious'. This can mean a variety of things. In general, 'not religious' means an absence of commitment to any particular organized sect, and more specifically in the West a rejection of received Judaeo-Christian scripture, liturgy, parochialism, mores, and so forth. There is much less consensus on the meaning of 'spiritual', a *portmanteau* term that admits any number of denotations, many of which are contradictory. For example, the 'classical' spiritualism espoused by Einstein acknowledges a rational and lawful universe governed by some form of higher intelligence but not an anthropomorphized Godhead. Then again, 'new-age' spirituality entails a rejection of science, reason, and objective reality, and their replacement by subjectivity, 'magical' thinking, and patently infantile superstition. Then again, spirituality can entail a secular, or a neo-vitalistic, or even a Pantheistic reverence for life, consciousness, Earth's biosphere, and/or various schools of environmentalism. It can entail a Shinto belief in pervasive spirits inhabiting even inanimate matter. Spirituality can also entail practices of varying philosophical schools, ranging from Stoicism to Vipassana, from secular Buddhism to Taoism.

If 'philosophical counselling' includes 'self-talk', then the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius qualify as both philosophical counselling and spiritual practice (what the Stoics called *askesis*). So for that matter does the *I Ching*.

If on the other hand we restrict the meaning of philosophical counselling to analytical or hermeneutic dialogue between counsellor and

client, such dialogue may not be *ipso facto* spiritual, yet could still point toward spiritual exercises. Rational discourse about spiritual practice may become a prelude to spiritual practice.

13: Philosophical practice incorporates group facilitation, organizational consulting as well as individual counselling. Can you demonstrate how you employ philosophy in the corporate sector, if you do, or outside the clinic?

Philosophizing in solitude, or philosophizing with an individual client, a group, or an organization all constitute modes of philosophical practice. These modes are all educational in aim, scope, and content. They unfold in public, civil, and private sectors. I have worked with teachers, health-care professionals, civil servants, public servants, CEOs, entrepreneurs, and religious leaders alike. Working philosophically with groups or organizations requires different skill-sets than working with individuals, and usually entails methodologies that are more explicitly outcome-oriented and time-delimited. Such methodologies include Nelsonian Socratic Dialogue, Dilemma Training, and Strategic Gaming.

I cannot ‘demonstrate’ these methodologies in an interview, but I have characterized some of them in some detail in my textbook, *Philosophical Practice*¹.

Great pioneers in the area of consulting to private and civil sectors include Peter Koestenbaum (US), whose methodology is trademarked but explained in his textbook (*Leadership: The Inner Side of Greatness*), and Henk van Luijk (Netherlands), whose version of Dilemma Training was adopted by the European Business Ethics Network, and widely disseminated.

14: Is philosophical counselling rooted in the Socratic tradition or do you see it as being more explicitly Stoical in tone and temperament?

At the back of *Plato Not Prozac*, there is a glossary of some sixty philosophers whose central ideas have been useful in my practice. In the sequel, *Therapy for the Sane*, the glossary is expanded to one hundred philosophers. I see philosophical counselling as rooted in the endeavour to awaken our client's inner and perhaps dormant philosopher. Once it awakens, we can then ascertain the school, if any, with which it has the strongest affinity. That school could turn out to be Socratic, or Stoic, or any of a hundred others, or none of them. What philosophical counselling is depends therefore on the dialogue that ensues between the counsellor

¹ Lou Marinoff, *Philosophical Practice*.

and the client, as opposed to some pre-conceived theory that the counsellor foists upon the client.

15: What do you teach in APPA's three-day certification courses?

With respect to APPA's three-day program for counsellors, we give self-selecting philosophers a set of tools they can utilize to build a new practice. Since our minimum prerequisite is an earned M.A. in Philosophy, participants have more than enough theory to become practitioners. What they require from APPA is essentially a professional development seminar, which summarizes for them salient methodological, ethical, legal, economic, commercial, operational, aesthetic, experiential, and co-professional dimensions of practicing philosophy as a profession of counsel outside the academy. Additionally, for those with academic tenure, we provide a blueprint for securing Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct philosophical counselling on campus, as a sanctioned research activity. The APPA program structure is hardly secret; it is publicly visible on APPA's website. <https://www.appa.edu/cctraining.htm>

In more recent years, we have also admitted Affiliate members to these programs. Affiliates, by definition, are professionals in helping professions licensed by states – e.g., lawyers, nurses, physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, etc. – who are desirous of implementing philosophy in their own practices. They are long on trappings of professionalism, but generally short on philosophical skills. By contrast, our Adjunct members are long on philosophical skills, but generally short on professionalism. We have learned that mixing these two populations produces mutually-beneficial effects, as each group learns a lot from the other. Participants with Philosophy degrees become APPA-Certified Practitioners; those with other degrees (e.g. J.D., M.D., M.S.W., R.N., etc) become APPA-Certified Affiliates.

16: In 2000 your practise in The City College of New York was shut down by college officials who feared that you were offering mental health advice without proper training. Subsequently, you sued CUNY and were then successful in saying that your freedom of speech was stifled. How did and do you respond to your critics in the psychotherapy profession over the above allegations?

To answer your question, I must relate some facts that *The New York Times* chose either to conceal, or to distort. In 1999 City College's Wellness Centre was re-opened after decades of closure on budgetary grounds. The then-incumbent Vice President of Student Affairs, Thomas

Morales, invited APPA to integrate philosophical counselling into the menu of services. Together we raised \$60,000 in seed money to finance this pilot project. By 2000 we had set up an intake process with the Wellness Centre, had a roster of APPA-Certified practitioners standing by, had an approved script advertising the service, and a suite of counselling offices assigned by the then-incumbent Dean of Humanities.

Out of the blue, allegations were levelled by anonymous accusers to anonymous senior administrators, to the alleged effect (or so I was later informed) that philosophical counsellors were practicing psychotherapy without a license, and moreover (according to subsequent sworn testimony by the then-Provost) that persons who dialogue with philosophical counsellors were likely to jump off the Brooklyn Bridge.

So in November 2000 I received a 'cease and desist' order from the same former Dean of Humanities, which outlawed all philosophical counselling activities on campus pending a 'legal review' by CUNY. The Wellness Centre initiative was shut down. We were evicted from the counselling offices. We returned the seed money unspent.

Additionally, and absent any due process or just cause, my IRB-approved research protocol in philosophical counselling, which had already run for a year without incident or complaint, was shut down by the same order. Institutional Review Boards are governed by Federal statutory laws and National Institute for Mental Health guidelines, and City College's IRB had already determined that philosophical counselling is an *educational activity that poses no risks to clients*.

Given no opportunity to learn the precise substance of the allegations that had led to the cease and desist order, I was likewise afforded no opportunity to ascertain the identities of the accusers. It was Kafkaesque. So how could I possibly respond to them?

Had CUNY not lowered its 'Ivy Curtain', a straightforward response would have been: First, even a cursory glance at our professional literature reveals that philosophical practice, in all its forms, is an educational activity. We do not treat "mental illness"; we help clients lead a more examined life. Second: hundreds of philosophical counsellors have worked with thousands of clients worldwide for decades, and to my knowledge there has never been a single case of a client committing suicide, nor for that matter any recorded instance where a client was harmed (or induced to harm himself, or others) by philosophical counselling. That's precisely why the IRB had situated philosophical counselling in the lowest-risk category.

Of course philosophers sometimes counsel clients grappling with decisions surrounding the prospect of terminal illness and physician-

assisted death, but that falls into a different category, namely euthanasia or *rational* suicide.

Psychiatrists and clinical psychologists in New York State, on the other hand, work with populations whose suicide rates are – not surprisingly – ten times higher than that of the average population. Whereas the risk of suicide ensuing from philosophical counselling is essentially zero or, in the language of the City College IRB itself, ‘not greater than the risks entailed by normal everyday life’.

But CUNY declined to engage in dialogue, burying me instead in a landfill of red tape with its so-called ‘legal review’. By 2002 I had no recourse but to seek judicial remedy. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education took my case, secured an attorney to represent me, and we filed suit in Federal Court against several City College administrators, for violations of my first amendment rights and academic freedoms. Coudert Brothers also filed a brilliant *amicus curiae* brief on behalf of APPA, which CUNY vehemently opposed.

The Federal Judge assigned to the case was The Honourable (here I use the term loosely) Sidney Stein. Judge Stein ran a first-rate kangaroo court, and summarily dismissed all the charges. We appealed to the Federal Second Circuit, and won. The Appellate Court roasted Stein alive, and sent the re-instated case back to him for discovery. One by one, and under oath, each defendant sold out his immediate superior, until the Provost's finger pointed to the office of CUNY's Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs. Judge Stein then denied our right to subpoena the Vice Chancellor or his staff, on the ostensible grounds of ‘attorney-client’ privilege. That was an egregious obstruction of justice by the judge himself, as the defendants were in fact represented by the Attorney General of New York State, and not by these senior in-house CUNY administrators who had evidently authorized the ban to begin with, and who were therefore on the verge of becoming defendants themselves – until Judge Stein forbade us to question them under oath. By this juncture it was 2005, and I still had no idea of the substance of the allegations or the identities of the accusers. The Ivy Curtain is just as impenetrable as its Iron or Bamboo counterparts.

Now an amusing sidebar: the Attorney General of New York, whose office represented the defendants, was then Eliot Spitzer, who soon thereafter was elected Governor of New York, and subsequently resigned in disgrace when it emerged that he was transporting prostitutes across state lines, from NY to DC, a felony offence. Spitzer was never charged, but morally chastised. He was cast down from high office to a lowly place, a circle of Purgatory compared to his former station, there to seek redemption doing ‘community service’ for the proletariat of New York

State. In other words, they ‘sentenced’ him to teach law and public policy at City College, where he became my colleague. Now *that's* poetic justice! He was paroled to CNN after only a year. (Those of us serving life sentences had good cause to ponder our own crimes, if we only knew what they were).

A final irony: During those years when my work at City College was prohibited by CUNY (2000-2005), I was on the Faculty of the World Economic Forum, and a regular participant in Davos and other WEF events. In that capacity I performed a range of philosophical services for Fortune 500 CEOs, Nobel Laureates, political and religious leaders, government ministers, global entrepreneurs, ultra-high-net-worth philanthropists, and the WEF itself. So CUNY squandered golden opportunities, both in preventing its own stakeholders from accessing similar services for free, and in failing to capitalize on marvellous opportunities to build public-private educational alliances. What kind of university administration would ban on its own campus work that was valued and encouraged by administrators of the global village itself?

Incorporated in 1960 as the world's largest urban university, CUNY comprises an educational empire of 20-odd colleges, thousands of faculty, and some 450,000 students. CUNY Central, affectionately known as ‘the Kremlin’, sits on no campus but dictates to all: CUNY is a People's Democratic University. The City College is its historic flagship. Founded in 1847 by Townsend Harris, admired as ‘the Harvard of the Proletariat’, City College numbers ten Nobel Laureates among its distinguished alumni, more than any other public institution in the USA.

Speaking of public-private partnerships, did you know that City College hired Bertrand Russell in 1940, to teach logic and philosophy of science? Yet he never gave a single lecture there. His appointment was overturned by a New York Supreme Kangaroo Court of Jurassic proportions. The Socrates of his day, he was accused of impiety and corrupting the youth. Russell was gang-mugged in New York City: by Mayor LaGuardia, Tammany Hall politicians, the Episcopal Bishop, and *The New York Times* (also known to neo-cons as ‘*Pravda*'). Russell was so stung if not traumatized by his persecution in New York that not long after, in a series of lectures given at Harvard, he added to his many academic accolades ‘Judicially pronounced unworthy to be Professor of Philosophy at the College of the City of New York’.

City College lost its autonomy in 1960, when it – along with other formerly free-standing and storied liberal arts institutions in New York, such as Hunter College – was swallowed whole by CUNY: The City University of New York.

CUNY's governance model is unlike that of any other university in my experience. Administratively, it is a branch of the New York State civil service. Contractually, it is an auto factory: CUNY Central is management; College Presidents are plant managers, Faculty are labour; students roll off (or fall off) the assembly line. Politically, it is a Gulag, having capitulated unconditionally to the most strident demands of the hyperbolically radicalized Left during the culture and gender wars. Fiscally, CUNY totters perpetually on the brink of insolvency, ravaged internally by a stage five metastasized bureaucracy, and savaged perennially by budgetary crises in Albany, whose elder statesmen are lately being carted off to prison for a cornucopia of crimes. Just this week, the *New York Post* lambasted Albany as a 'sewer of corruption'.

As I write these words, in 2016, the current Governor of New York just vetoed a bi-partisan bill that had granted CUNY badly-needed financial relief. Faculty have been without a contract for five years, and CUNY refuses to negotiate. At the same time, they are dumbing-down the curriculum and hiking tuition.

So when *The New York Times*, aka *Pravda*, trumpeted in its 2004 Weekend Magazine that I was suing my employer (The City College of New York, they claimed), they were quite mistaken. While I gladly profess philosophy to citizens of New York (and students from 150 countries) at City College, my employer is the one who pays me. Faculty paycheques are minted by the New York State Treasury, which makes me a civil servant, employed therefore by the People of New York state, whom I willingly and gladly endeavour to serve. CUNY's proper role, and educational duty, is to facilitate such service, not to prohibit it. Then again, CUNY's unofficial motto is said to be 'No good deed goes unpunished'.

So much for the 'Punic Wars' of philosophical counselling. I persisted, and carved out a niche with the collaboration of loyal colleagues and subsequently more enlightened City College administrations. Nowadays even leading clinical psychologists at City College support the establishment of a graduate program in Applied Philosophy, including a concentration in Philosophical Practice, for which demand is abundant. If CUNY's supply of red tape were not endless, our proposed graduate program at City College would have been up, running, and overflowing with students long ago. I currently supervise graduate students all over the world, except in my own university.

Then as now, I collaborate with physicians, psychiatrists, and psychologists world-wide. But since good news is never as saleable as bad, don't expect *Pravda* to report it.

17: How do you view the practise of psychotherapy in general?

That sounds like a pretty general question. As some of my best friends are psychotherapists, I view it mostly through their lenses. Generally, we seem to be working in quite different fields, and with significantly different populations.

18: I regard Viktor Frankl as a precursor and pioneer of philosophical practise and logotherapy as a form of philosophical practise (though it is also a psychotherapy and Frankl has a psychiatric classification of mental disorders). I would be interested in knowing what your opinion of logotherapy is and if Frankl's work interests you?

Yes, Frankl's work interests me, and some of it resonates with my experience in practice. Over the years, a good many of my clients have been embarked on searches for meaning. So I concur that Frankl's identification and characterization of a fundamental 'will to meaning' forms the basis of a credible approach to healing, and denotes a 'third school' of Viennese psychotherapy, which successfully rival's Freud's 'will to pleasure', and Adler's 'will to power'. Another brilliant Viennese contemporary of Frankl's, namely the philosopher Karl Popper, contemplated the *demarcation problem*: It is not always possible to draw clear and distinct boundaries, or bright lines of demarcation, between and among disciplines. This is particularly true of philosophy and psychology, which are notoriously prone to overlaps, or common grey areas. Frankl's logotherapy and existential analysis admit of both philosophical and psychological dimensions, and indeed he could be regarded as a kind of philosophical practitioner. APPA has within its ranks several philosophers who are also cross-trained in logotherapy. It does seem to me that Frankl's focus is more on the psychology of philosophy than the philosophy of psychology, but perhaps that is hair-splitting.

19: Who have you been most influenced by philosophically?

Buddha, Lao Tzu, Aristotle, Seneca, Epictetus, Hobbes, Mill, and Thoreau are among the strongest influences.

20: In *Plato not Prozac* you outline five steps for the management of problems: PEACE (problem, emotion, analysis, contemplation and equilibrium). Perhaps you could take me through these stages? Is this your 'method'? Would you not agree with Frankl that what we are seeking isn't homeostasis but a striving and struggling after a meaningful goal (noödynamics)?

To be candid, I lay claim to no unique method whatsoever, but have several at my disposal should they be called for. The 'PEACE Process' does not appear in the original book proposal or manuscript of *Plato Not Prozac*. The publisher phoned me one day and insisted that I come up with a 'paint-by-numbers' formula that explains philosophical counselling to a secular American readership which is mostly unschooled in philosophy, and who are conditioned to consume a new 'self-help' or 'how-to' book every week. That was a pretty tall order. During an inspired long weekend, I came up with the PEACE Process, which is not a methodology, but which characterizes the plausible contours of a philosophical counselling process.

P stands for Problem. If you don't have any problems, you don't need any help. Since most people encounter periodic problems, most people need periodic help. The first task is to identify the nature of the problem, and seek appropriate help. That in itself can be a problem within a problem. In the USA, there is no shortage of diagnoses and remedies. *Caveat emptor*.

E stands for Emotion. Most people experience emotional reactions to problems, and the roots of emotional life are evolutionarily more ancient and deep-seated than those of rationality. Hence it is necessary to express emotions constructively, in order to enable and not impair rational deliberation.

A stands for Analysis (broadly construed). Most people eventually bring reason to bear upon their problems, but their ability to reason may itself be impaired by fallacious arguments and kindred errors correctable by critical thinking. Even so, naked reason alone does not always produce solutions.

C stands for contemplation. Most people are non-philosophers, and have little experience of the process and value of sustained contemplation. An examined life is a contemplated if not contemplative one, and here philosophers can really help clients by opening a reflective space in which new outlooks can be crafted, or new perspectives adopted. This is the stage at which most readers of *Plato Not Prozac* not surprisingly get stuck, and seek philosophical counsel.

E stands for Equilibrium, or Equanimity. Successful contemplation of a problem results in a resolution of some kind, and thus a return to an unstable homeostatic state of being. This state is reinforceable and sustainable by philosophical ideas or principles emerging from the contemplative stage, for they are active (not inert) and can be re-applied if a similar situation arises again. That said, such homeostasis is always perturbable by some new problem, or novel set of circumstances, in which

case the whole PEACE Process may need to be revisited on some future occasion.

While (as anticipated) I did draw some flak from colleagues for inventing a "method" to placate the demands of the American 'self-help' publishing industry, in fact many colleagues later affirmed that the PEACE Process described, in a general way, the contours of many of their cases as well.

Ultimately, I would disagree with Frankl (and Darwin, and presumably yourself) if you hold that that human beings necessarily seek struggle and strife. For most flora and fauna on this planet, life is indeed little more than a remorseless Darwinian (and Malthusian) struggle for existence. Human beings are fully and sadly capable of replicating and perpetuating this pitiless biological struggle via their psychological, social, and political institutions. Viktor Frankl himself lived through – and transcended – the most bestial period in human history to date. That said, humans are also capable of living without contention, even when immersed in a sea of discord. In this sense, the goal of philosophical practice is to help clients free themselves of the received prejudices, distorted judgments, and deluded cravings that sustain a condition of perpetual struggle and strife. Even the hurricane of existence has a tranquil eye.

Unlike Augustine and Freud, I do not view man as a congenitally sinful or psychosexually sick animal. And unlike Frankl, I do not view struggle and strife as necessary either. I say this with respect, for few could have walked in Frankl's shoes and lived. He was remarkable, not only in his ability to survive his horrific times, but also to forge some kind of healing gift for others out of his devastating experience. I came to know Eli Wiesel at Davos, and he radiates a similar quality. Eli says repeatedly, and truly, that it is impossible for anyone to imagine what Auschwitz was really like, unless they were there. My generation was fortunate indeed to have been born after the Holocaust, and to have come of age with Woodstock. Hippie counter-culture celebrated many facets of humanity at its best, for a change, instead of its worst. It is never a struggle to dream beautiful dreams, nor does it always require strife to enact them.

21: What techniques or methods do you employ in a counselling session? Would you describe your work as eclectic, humanistic?

I employ whatever techniques or methods seem most helpful to the particular client, including no techniques or methods at all. Yes, I am eclectic and humanistic.

22: Is philosophical counselling a form of existential analysis?

I'd say it's the other way around. Existentialism is a relatively recent school of philosophy. Therefore existential analysis is a relatively recent form of philosophical counselling.

23: How does the therapeutic dialogue ensue between you and a client/counsellor/patient?

I do not call myself a 'therapist', nor do I claim to offer 'therapeutic' dialogues. That term has been largely appropriated by licensed professions, and American philosophers are at legal risk if they use it. I am always amazed at how much freer you are at your end of the pond, at least with usage of language. A dialogue simply ensues with clients, and the power of dialogue itself can lead to useful insights. Ultimately, the most important words are uttered by the client, who from that moment on will have become his own philosopher, and no longer requires my services.

24: What is the typical length of a traditional philosophical counselling session and do you use a chair or couch?

Most philosophical counsellors, myself included, work a standard 50-minute hour. My clients and I sit in chairs, either in person or via Skype. I have never used a couch for counselling purposes, nor do my colleagues.

25: Are there any regulations governing its practice? Should there be?

The field of philosophical counselling, like the larger domain of philosophical practice to which it belongs, is completely unregulated by American states, and by other countries that allow free speech. (Since freedom of speech is dead letter on most Western university campuses, all bets are off there.) Philosophical counselling would almost certainly be banned by theocratic or tyrannical states that already prohibit the teaching of philosophy, broadly construed.

After years of debating the burning question of regulation, a rough consensus has emerged among practitioners in the US. It holds that anyone who wishes to call himself a 'philosopher', a 'philosophical counsellor', or a 'philosophical practitioner' should be absolutely free to do so. At the same time, it avers that persons who meet a reasonable standard of professional practice – i.e., who hold a graduate degree in the field, hold a nationally-recognized certificate issued by an appropriately-constituted body, and who abide by a suitable code of ethics – ought to qualify for certification by states.

This position is analogous to that of Accountancy: Anyone in the US may call himself a Public Accountant, and indeed there are large

accounting firms that offer seasonal employment in that capacity. *Caveat emptor*. By the same token, persons who meet an appropriate professional standard that is regulated by states, may become Certified Public Accountants. Consumers are free to hire PAs or CPAs, or for that matter to use commercially available software to complete their income tax returns. Consumers who wish to be more-or-less assured of the "gold standard" of service hire CPAs.

Similarly, a consensus in our field holds that anyone can call himself a Philosophical Counsellor (PC), while one who is willing and able to meet an appropriate professional standard, regulated eventually by states, may become a Certified Philosophical Counsellor (CPC). At present, that's only a vision.

But let me re-iterate my unwavering support for the defence of philosophical counselling as constitutionally-protected free speech. In other words, *no government (let alone any university) has any business prohibiting conversations between philosophers and others*, especially if others voluntarily seek such conversations.

In the USA, a lot hinges on this ephemeral term 'mental illness'. I once had the ear of a sympathetic American judge, and posed to him two rhetorical questions. 'First, Your Honour, is it not the case that in matters of criminal law, we uphold the principle of presumption of innocence?' His Honour affirmed the proposition. 'Second, Your Honour, is it not similarly the case that in matters of civil law, we uphold the principle of presumption of sanity?' His Honour smiled wanly. 'Presumption of sanity?' he mused aloud. 'It's bold, but I like it'.

You may well laugh at that. But in fact the psychologists who allegedly instigated CUNY's prohibition of my research are also part and parcel of a gargantuan 'mental health' industry backed by big pharma, whose presumptions increasingly err on the side of 'mental illness' by default. On their view, 'mental illness' has been on the rise for decades, to the extent that just about everybody was, is, or will shortly become 'mentally ill'. Many Europeans do not realize, for example, that US insurance companies will not reimburse counselling psychologists for services rendered unless their patients are diagnosed from the DSM. This also implies that the more diagnoses one can make, the more third-party reimbursements one can recover. So perhaps it is no coincidence that 'metal illness' has attained 'epidemic' proportions in the US. Scandalous? Yes. Surprising? No.

26: Do you see any connections between philosophical counselling and psychoanalysis? Would your work be closer to Sartrean philosophical psychoanalysis, Stoic therapy, Wittgensteinian therapy or another?

I see little connection between philosophical counselling and psychoanalysis. Their respective assumptions, aims, methods, and models appear profoundly different. I also see little connection between your two questions here. My work is closest to whichever philosopher's ideas are most helpful to a given client at a given time. And once again, I eschew the word "therapy," which in the US is largely the 'property' of licensed professions.

27: How many sessions, on average, do people need when undergoing philosophical counselling? Would you see people for years?

Once again, this depends on the nature of the counsellor's practice and the client's issues. I preferentially gravitate toward short-term work; as little as one or just a few sessions. Of course some cases require a few months, and occasionally a year or so. If a client appears to require more than that, I generally refer him.

28: May I ask your rate?

Yes, you may ask.

29: What books either explicitly on the subject of philosophical practise or by famous figures in the history of philosophy would you recommend to readers? And, what would your personal favourites be?

Once again, please consult the glossaries at the back of *Plato Not Prozac* and *Therapy for the Sane*. There you will find dozens of canonical titles useful for readers and counsellors alike. These glossaries are not exhaustive, but are illustrative.

30: How popular is philosophical counselling at present?

'Popularity' is a rather elastic term. While philosophical counselling is not currently 'trending' on any major news-feed, it has put down roots worldwide, and has established itself as a serious movement and credible field. The numbers of clients and practitioners continue to grow, as well as the number of countries in which they practice. As mentioned, the demand by young philosophers for graduate programs is substantial, and opportunities for philosophy graduates to practice outside the academy are likewise growing.

Seen through my eyes, the vital signs of popularity are strong. APPA is thriving, and our Journal is now in its eleventh years of publication.

Demand for interviews, lectures, and programs is on the rise world-wide, perhaps especially in East Asia. In recent years I have given extensive lecture series in China, Japan, and South Korea. Next week (February 16-23, 2016) a contingent of twenty-one students from Kyungpook National University in South Korea will visit City College to participate in an intensive 20-hour seminar in Philosophical Counselling, taught by yours truly. And so forth.

31: How does it connect (if it does) to the anti-psychiatry movement?

To re-iterate, a few radicals within our movement identify with the anti-psychiatry movement. I hope it is by now clear that I am not against psychiatry; far from it. I have collaborated with psychiatrists in several countries, including Irvin Yalom and Ronald Pies in the USA, Hans Nybeck in Sweden, Johannes Thome in Germany, and Albert Werkmann in France.

What most philosophical counsellors do assert, however, is that the latter half of the 20th century witnessed a hyperbolic medicalization of the human condition, in tandem with the colonization of medicine by the pharmaceutical and insurance industries. I do stand four-square against consumer fraud, and that includes the spurious diagnosis and gratuitous drugging of non-medical human problems in general, and in particular of culturally-induced discontents.

32: Do you incorporate meditation or mindfulness into your practice or personal life?

Yes, on both counts. I introduce Asian philosophies and their associated practices to my clients whenever they may be applicable or helpful. As a lifelong devotee of Asian wisdom traditions, I practice daily in my personal life.

33: What would you say to those academic philosophers who would view ‘practical philosophy’ as a subtle form of Sophistry? What do you think Socrates would say about philosophical counselling? Where does it stand within the tradition?

This debate is getting to be ‘old hat’. Every discipline in the Academy has both theoretical and empirical (or pure and applied) branches. This is true of all sciences and humanities, including philosophy. Any philosopher who claims that philosophy itself is or ought to be purely theoretical, and devoid of practical application, is mistaking the part for the whole. That’s arguably sophistry. Theory and practice are both necessary; each complements the other.

Where does philosophical counselling stand within the tradition? Very close to the centre, as the following well-known philosophers themselves attest, from antiquity to the present:

Epicurus: 'Vain is the word of a philosopher that does not heal any suffering of man'.

Seneca: 'Shall I tell you what philosophy holds out to humanity? Counsel ... you are called in to help the unhappy'.

Thomas Hobbes: '... it is peculiar to the nature of man to be inquisitive into the causes of the events they see, some more, some less; but all men so much as to be curious in the search of the causes of their own good and evil fortune'.

John Dewey: 'Philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers, and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men'.

Martha Nussbaum: 'The whole point of medical research is cure. So, too, the whole point of philosophy is human flourishing'.

Need I continue in this vein? I could give you fifty pages more of kindred testimony.

Finally, you ask what Socrates would say. He already said it, if we credit Plato, for example in the *Thaetetus*:

My art of midwifery is in general like theirs [real midwives]; the only difference is that my patients are men, not women, and my concern is not with the body but with the soul that is in travail of birth. And the highest point of my art is the power to prove by every test whether the offspring of a young man's thought is a false phantom or instinct with life and truth.

Contemporary Socratic midwifery, for example as practiced so adeptly by Pierre Grimes, achieves precisely this goal, for women and men alike. The main compound premise is firstly that the potential for virtue is innate in people, yet sometimes needs to be awakened (or 'birthed') by a the analogue of a midwife; and secondly, that false beliefs about oneself and one's relation to the world (called 'pathologos' by Grimes) need likewise to be identified and expunged, for they inhibit the exercise of virtue and the attainment of happiness.

Thus the original meaning and intent of 'psychotherapy' is philosophical, qua 'caring for the soul', and not psychological, qua 'treating mental illness'. Over the years, many American journalists ironically mislabelled philosophical counselling as a 'new and

controversial form of psychotherapy'. One might equally well assert that some psychological psychotherapy is a 'new and controversial form of philosophical counselling'.

34: Is philosophical counselling evidence-based?

The success of evidence-based medicine since the early 1990s has furthered its spread to many other professions, e.g. nursing, psychology, and education among others. According to Wikipedia, evidence-based practices repose on three pillars: (1) the best available research evidence bearing on whether and why a treatment works, (2) clinical expertise (clinical judgment and experience) to rapidly identify each patient's unique health state and diagnosis, their individual risks and benefits of potential interventions, and (3) client preferences and values.

On this view, philosophical counselling does not and probably cannot satisfy all three criteria. As to #1, our evidence is more anecdotal than statistical, owing to relatively small samples. We do know *that* philosophical counselling works in many cases, but I am unaware of any universal theory that satisfactorily explains *why* dialogical processes (in general) can be so helpful. And once again, we are not offering 'treatment'. As to #2: we are mostly *not* clinicians. We make no diagnoses, and our interventions are in the lowest risk category (i.e. the same 'risk' as getting out of bed in the morning, or crossing the street). Having successfully failed the first two criteria, we certainly meet #3: our client preferences and values are the background on which our dialogue is configured.

35: Would you accept that there exists unconscious mental processes and, with Freud, that every philosophical counsellor would need to undergo his own 'analysis' as 'patient'?

A really interesting question. To the first part, yes I would accept (with qualification) that there exist unconscious mental processes. My view of the unconscious is not, however, congruent with Freud's. I rather prefer a more contemporary computing metaphor: A digital computer has an operating system, which runs many processes in the background, while the user runs many others in the foreground. This background/foreground distinction is analogous (maybe homologous) to the unconscious/conscious distinction. And even though I do no formal dream-work with clients, I happen to agree with Freud that dreams are a 'royal road' to the unconscious.

To extend the digital computing metaphor, most operating systems permit the user to inspect or interrogate the central processing unit (CPU),

in order to ascertain explicitly which processes are running in the background and, if desired, to remove some or add others. Dialogue with a client is not so very different; through Socratic questioning, the client can be led to an explicit identification of implicit assumptions or judgments that he has either repressed into the unconscious (the Freudian view), or has accepted uncritically and integrated into his habitual background mental routines (the Socratic and also the Buddhist view). Once having made explicit what was implicit, philosophical dialogue can then further serve to assist the client in modifying erroneous or deleterious assumptions and judgments. That is arguably the simplest form of philosophical counselling, essentially a species of critical thinking.

Things become more complex when the client's operating system itself obstructs or prevents such modifications to its background, even though the client may be consciously aware of this. People who have been politically or theologically brainwashed (or equivalently subjected to mind-control by a cult), or who are carrying too much debilitating psychological baggage foisted upon them by their upbringing, may need to drastically modify if not erase their operating system itself, and replace it with a different and more salutary one. It is no coincidence that the psychological term for this kind of treatment is 'de-programming'.

The problem here runs deeper than mere habits of thought; people form strong emotional attachments both to their operating systems and to the programmers who maintain them, even when they become trapped in unenviable situations because of these self-same commitments. If one's operating system is itself the cause of one's suffering, then it ought to be changed. That's easy to say, but harder to accomplish.

The problem of 'resistance' is well-known to psychotherapists and psychoanalysts, and Plato recognized it well before them. There may even be some ironic 'survival value' in defending self-harming myths, or clinging to dysfunctional beliefs, but always at the corollary cost of unhappiness.

In either kind of case, whether the client's main problem is rooted in background mental routines or in the operating system as a whole, it is necessary to make what is implicit explicit, in order for positive transformation to ensue. That means making the unconscious conscious. While Freudian psychoanalysis is one way to accomplish this; I know of at least two other means to that end. One of them, which I experienced personally back in the 1960s but do not recommend to clients, is LSD. In common with other hallucinogens (e.g. mescaline, peyote, DMT, etc) LSD can 'melt down' the boundary between the conscious and unconscious mind in a jiffy, but there are many associated and unpredictable risks. The

far safer and more time-tested route lies in ancient Indian yogas and subsequent Buddhist practices, which in general are intended to dissolve *avidya*: a fundamental ignorance of the true nature of reality, which afflicts all grasping minds, and prevents their liberation from suffering. The dissolution of *avidya* sooner or later makes the unconscious conscious, although that is not its ultimate goal.

Finally, you ask whether (*à la* Freud) every philosophical counsellor ought to undergo philosophical counselling. I would say that most philosophical counsellors whom I know have willingly done so, but perhaps not in the way you envision. The compulsory psychoanalysis of would-be psychoanalysts -- which necessarily drags on for years -- is reminiscent of nothing if not initiation into a priesthood. For philosophical counsellors, the process is more comparable to dentistry: most dentists want and need to have healthy teeth, and they maintain their dental health not only by visiting other dentists periodically, but also and vitally by sustaining their own personal regimen of dental hygiene. That said, there is no mandated number of hours (or years!) that they must spend in a dental chair in order to become reputable dentists themselves.

Not dissimilarly, every philosophical practitioner I know, myself included, has received philosophical counselling from a colleague at one time or another. As well, most of us sustain our own regimens of 'philosophical hygiene' -- whether by ascetic practices, and/or the kind of self-talk that Marcus Aurelius practiced in his *Meditations*.

36: Plato felt that we couldn't change society (*polis*) without first changing ourselves (*psyche*). Is there any link between philosophical counselling and politics?

Indeed there is a link, and given the ground we have already covered, you can see it plainly. As you say, on Plato's view a just society is one composed by and large of just citizens: that is, citizens who have successfully managed to harmonize their souls (i.e. their minds and characters), by bringing into balance the soul's rational, emotional, and instinctual elements. Once again, that is the etymology of 'psychotherapy': attending to the soul.

The Socratic role in this process was two-fold: not only a midwife to the birth of virtue (we are all 'pregnant with wisdom', says Plato), but also a gadfly on the horse of state, stinging citizens into political awareness when necessary.

In like fashion, philosophical practitioners have stung consumers into awareness of the predatory capitalism that drives the industry of frivolous diagnosis and gratuitous drugging of non-medical problems, problems that

are culturally-induced and therefore that require commensurately cultural remedies. On top of that, we are not seeking to engage in the health care industry's inevitable 'turf-wars' over money; rather, we are motivated by a Socratic devotion to truth, or some kindred aspiration. Needless to say, there's a lot of money, power, and political clout behind the 'mental health' industry, and we are bound to be perceived as a threat for seeking to liberate clients from it. So although our actual work with clients is substantively philosophical, we philosophical counsellors are also, by definition, necessarily at times political activists. This plays out in different ways in different cultures, like so many variations on a theme.

Our brand of political activism naturally segues into consumer advocacy. This was brought home to me one day in 2003, when I received a phone call from Ralph Nader, the *sine qua none* of American consumer advocates. He wanted to acquire a number of copies of *Plato Not Prozac* for his foundation's library on civics. We had a delightful and eye-opening conversation in this vein, and I happily donated the books.

As it happens, I have recently contributed a book chapter on this very topic, *Philosophical Practice as Political Activism*. The book is forthcoming in 2016: *Socrate à l'agora*, edited by Mieke de Moor, VRIN, Paris.

37: Finally, what has the study and practise of philosophy done for you personally?

Personally, it has led me to lead a more interesting and meaningful life than I ever could have imagined, and hopefully to do more good than harm to the sentient beings of this world.

38: Any final comments you would like to have included?

Just a 'thank you' for asking so many thoughtful and engaging questions.

References

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