

Editorial: Plato or Prozac?

The latest in psychotherapy appears to be philosophical counselling. Is this on the principle that where nothing can be shown to work, anything is as good as anything else? Reading Plato might also have incidental advantages not available to those who are treated with pills, behavioural therapy or non-directive counselling. (As well as curing you, it might make you think.) Or is it that psychotherapists have rediscovered the classical ideal of philosophy as therapy? Can we expect a resurgence of the ancient Stoic virtues or of *ataraxia* or even of Spinozistic rationality among the psychologically afflicted?

Later philosophers have not always provided such positive precedents. Would it really be a good idea to give Kierkegaard to the obsessively religious, or Nietzsche to the paranoid, or the early Wittgenstein to those who have difficulty in coping with everyday normality? Nor is it easy to see how Sartre would help couples sort out their relationships, or Russell someone pathologically insensitive to the feelings of others.

On reflection, it might be better to keep the pills after all.