

Got a problem? Try someone trained in philosophy to solve it

JESSE TINSLEY
Plain Dealer Reporter

Socrates, the founder of moral philosophy some 3,000 years ago, had little trouble putting his discipline to practical use during Greece's golden age.

He attracted huge crowds of people and lured them into discussions on politics, liberty, justice and love.

Kerry Tobin of Lakewood, who earned her master's degree in philosophy from Cleveland State University in 2000, doesn't attract large crowds, but she has a following of clients who tap her philosophical training to help solve everyday problems.

Tobin was determined to put her degree to practical use earlier this year after reading Lou Marinoff's book "Plato Not Prozac! Applying Philosophy to Everyday Life."

In June, she became a certified philosophical counselor — a form of "word therapy" that utilizes philosophical principles to help



Tobin

individuals examine their lives and problems.

While philosophical counseling is considerably more widespread in Europe, it has taken root only in recent years in the United States.

"I think it is quite a legitimate enterprise if a practitioner is able to guide a client" to clarity and understanding with proper philosophical tools, said Larry Hickman, a philosophy professor at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale and a past president of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy.

Tobin got her certification from the American Philosophical Practitioners Association.

Philosophy is making a comeback in part because traditional religion is playing a lesser role in peoples' lives today, Tobin said.

Tobin said philosophical coun-

seling is different from psychotherapy.

"Psychoanalysis is concerned primarily with emotional functioning of an individual," she said. "Philosophy is concerned with higher intellectual reasoning ability."

Tobin's clients come to her with a wide range of workplace issues from ethical dilemmas to conflicts with co-workers or management.

She questions her clients to peel away the layers and get at the truth.

This method enables the client to reflect, examine and dissect a belief system to get a clearer meaning and sense of purpose in life, said Tobin.

"It's the original form of talk therapy for helping people."

A national list of philosophical counselors certified by APPA can be found at www.appa.edu.

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter:
jtinsley@plaind.com, 216-999-4889