

Reflections on Socratic Thinking

Michael C. Thompson

Giftedness is a Socratic state of being that requires a Socratic form of learning.

The effect of certainty is to stop thought.

In brainstorming, as in Socratic thinking, the investigation is conducted because an answer is being sought, not taught.

Critical, convergent thinking, regardless of quality, is not enough.

The essence of Socratic teaching is authentic asking.

The affective domain forms the human framework for the cognitive domain. The purpose of ethics, for example, is not to become logical; it is to become kind. In the process, logic is required.

Knowledge is a Socratic Object.

Elements of Socratic Instruction

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1. Meaning

Only the most meaningful content should be used as the basis of Socratic teaching.

2. Authentic Questions

Ask questions that are questions, not answers under shroud.

3. Open Thinking

For open questions, use open forms of thinking: reason, synthesis, divergence, evaluation, care, intuition.

4. Waiting for Answers

Listen to the silence of open thinking.

5. Honest Discussion

Provide a good-faith, neutral atmosphere for the exchange and development of students' ideas.

The IDOLS

of Francis Bacon

1. The Idols of the Tribe

Intellectual Faults Common to All

- a. the tendency to suppose greater order in nature than there is.
- b. the tendency to support a preconceived opinion by affirmative instances.
- c. the tendency to generalize from too few instances.
- d. the tendency to ascribe reality to abstractions.

2. The Idols of the Cave

Errors Caused by Individual Idiosyncrasies

- a. the tendency to make all things reflect some favorite subject.
- b. extreme fondness for what is ancient or modern.
- c. excess in noting differences or resemblances.

3. The Idols of the Market Place

Errors Caused by Language

- a. the tendency to give nonexistent things names and then suppose them to really exist.
- b. the tendency to apply names which have been hastily abstracted from a few objects recklessly to all objects which have the faintest analogy with them.

4. The Idols of the Theater

Philosophy that Obstructs the Humble Search for Truth

- a. sophisticated idol: forcing nature into an abstract schemata and seeking to explain by definition.
- b. empirical idol: leaping to general conclusions from few and limited experiments.
- c. superstitious idol: allowing poetical and theological notions to corrupt thought.

Thinking and *Feeling*

Adapted* by Michael C. Thompson

memory: recall

cognition: comprehending

reason: avoiding logical errors

synthesis: identifying similarities

divergence: thinking of alternatives

convergence: choosing one alternative

evaluation: deciding value

ethics: deciding moral value

analysis: breaking into components

application: using ideas

intuition: getting ideas from the blue

imagining: making mental images

emotion: feelings

aesthetics: having artistic experiences

disassumption: escaping assumptions

*This list is a synthesis of Bloom's Taxonomy, influences from Barbara Clark's research, and a few other ways of thinking that seem to me to be indispensable to teaching.