

# THE UNEXAMINED PEDAGOGY IS NOT WORTH PRACTICING

OR, CAN THERE BE A VIRTUAL SOCRATIC PEDAGOGY?

Maughn Gregory  
Educational Foundations

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# CONTEXT

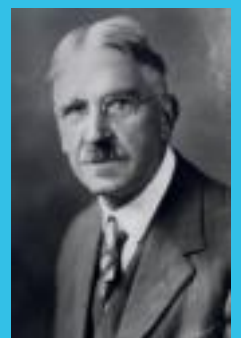
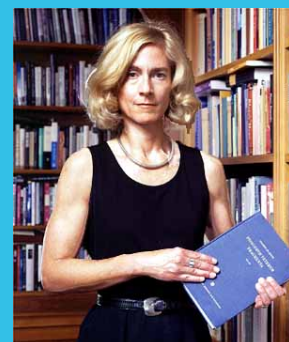
## Educational Foundations

- History & Sociology
- Psychology
- Philosophy




# PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

- What does it mean to be educated?
- What are the purposes of mandatory, free, public education?
- Should all children be forced into some kind of schooling?
- What rights to children bring with them into schools?
- Do schools reproduce or alleviate social inequalities?
- Should schools teach controversial topics like sex education and evolution?
- Should students have any say in what and how they learn?



# WHAT IS EDUCATION FOR?

- Making the most of one's talents
  - Finding one's moral bearings
  - Becoming a citizen activist
  - Advancing disciplinary knowledge
  - Continuing traditions of cultural excellence
  - Pursuing political justice
  - Living meaningfully
  - Getting a job
- 

# PEDAGOGIES AND PURPOSES

## 1. Critical Pedagogy

- **Aims:** Wake students up to various kinds of human suffering and oppression and prepare them to struggle against them.
- **Methods:** consciousness raising, group discussion, collective action



# PEDAGOGIES AND PURPOSES

## 2. **Contemplative** Pedagogy

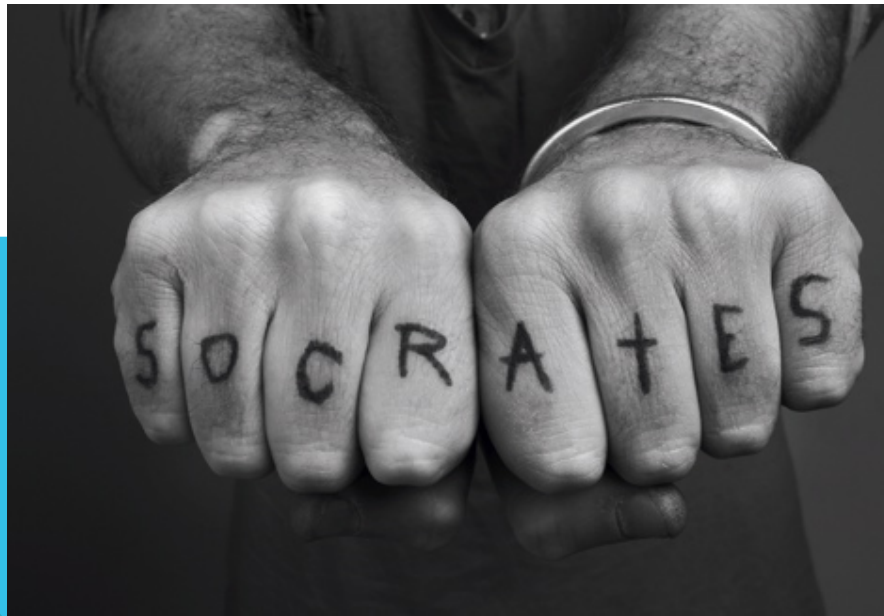
- **Aims:** Help students identify existential purpose & meaning – what it means to live a worthwhile life – and provide students with methods of self-transformation: to cultivate mindfulness, solidity and compassion.
- **Methods:** meditation, contemplative discussion, working with silence.



# PEDAGOGIES AND PURPOSES

## 3. Socratic Pedagogy

- **Aims:** Prepare students to engage in truth-seeking inquiry – aimed at reasonable belief, value and action.
- **Methods:** Formal reasoning, metacognition, inquiry dialogue, problem solving.



# PEDAGOGIES AND PURPOSES

Does the latest mandate, program, technology, political maneuver, etc. *inform* or *deform* these ideals of what it means to be educated?

- NCLB
- Twitter
- Vouchers
- Oprah
- e-portfolios
- union busting





# SOCRATIC PEDAGOGY: THE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY



# STAGES OF DIALOGICAL INQUIRY

**We ask our questions  
& decide which ones  
to begin with.**

**For each question, we  
come up with possible  
answers and test them  
with reasons.**

**We narrow down on  
the most reasonable  
answers.**

# THE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY

## **Social Dimension:**

We listen carefully to each other, We sometimes help each other express ourselves, Each person's views are taken seriously, We challenge other people's views respectfully, We make sure most of us are contributing

## **Cognitive Dimension:**

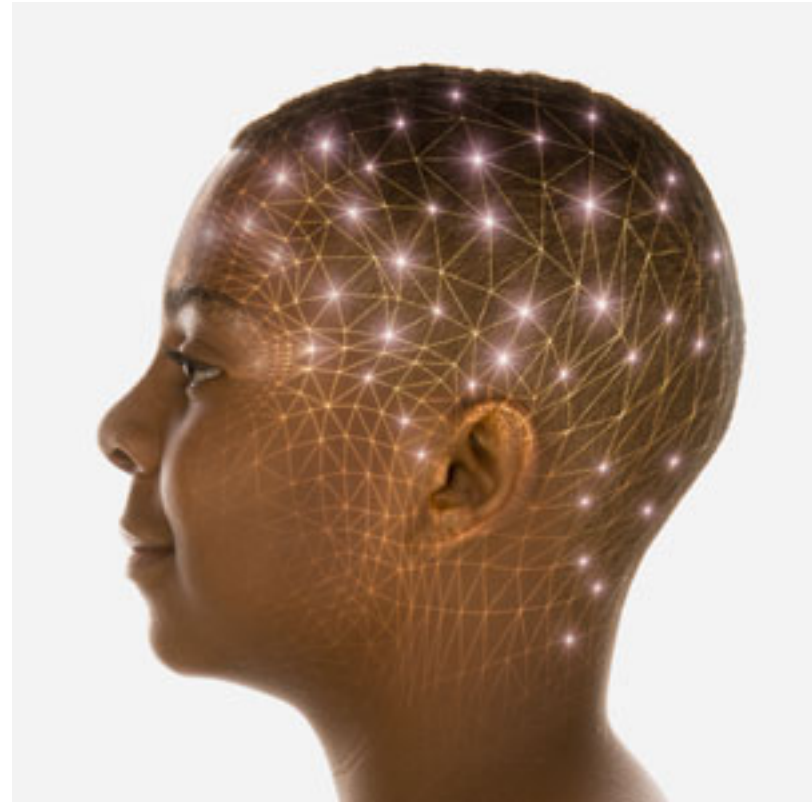
Clarifying our terms, Giving good reasons, Offering examples and counter-examples, Identifying assumptions, Making careful inferences, Creating hypotheses, Imaging consequences, Look for missing perspectives, Building on each other's ideas

**Direction / Progress: We follow the inquiry where it leads**

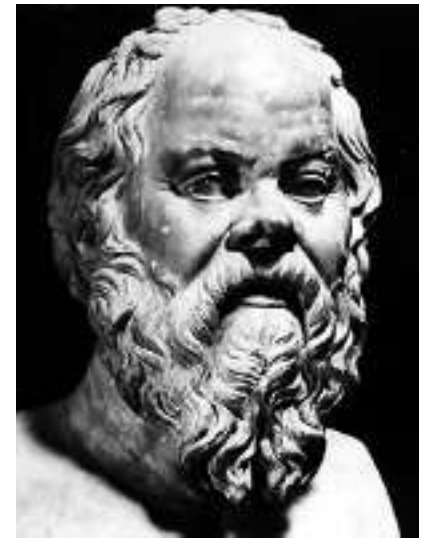
**Meta-Cognition: We take time to think about our own thinking and inquire into the merits of our inquiry**

# EXAMPLE: PRIMARY SCHOOL PHILOSOPHERS

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoyS\\_v5Tdo0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoyS_v5Tdo0)



# Can there be a virtual Socratic Pedagogy?



# ONLINE, SYNCHRONOUS FILM DISCUSSIONS

1. A place online (URL) where students can access film segments (10 minutes):
  - Existing segments on PBS Video, NJVID, YouTube, or the websites of conferences or professional organizations
  - Convert a VHS or DVD in your collection to a video file and upload it to your personal, private channel on Vimeo or YouTube

# ONLINE, SYNCHRONOUS FILM DISCUSSIONS

2. A place to meet online to discuss the film: Blackboard IM (simple, similar to other online chat / IM programs, I use for virtual office hours)
  - Students can borrow a laptop at Sprague Library or use a computer in the University Hall lab if they bring their own earphones.
  - Open Bb IM, right-click on the name of the course, select “Group Chat,” and click “Invite.” This opens a group chat room, and puts everyone in the class in it.



# ONLINE, SYNCHRONOUS FILM DISCUSSIONS

## 3. Discussion Protocols

- Be sure your photo is uploaded in the Bb IM program, so we will see it when you post a chat line.
- This is meant to be an open discussion. You should feel free to ask questions, state opinions, respond to other people, etc. Please remember to keep the spirit of inquiry, by giving reasons and analyzing arguments.
- If you want to respond to a particular comment, use the “@” sign and the person’s name, like this:  
“@Maughn: I completely disagree with you ...”



- While we chat, you may share other internet sites that are relevant to our discussion by posting them in your chat line.
- If you don't want to hear the “bong” sound every time someone posts, you can turn that off: click File, Preferences, Alerts, and un-check “Play Sound.”
- You are welcome to chat during the film (you should pause the film while you do that, so you don't miss anything). I may post some comments during the film segments, and you are welcome to pause and respond to them, but you don't have to.



- The pace will sometimes be fast, with many people posting comments at once, giving us a lot to read through. When that happens, don't panic, we will slow down. You don't have to read or respond to everything.
- If you lose your connection, and can't get back into the group chat room, send me a private chat to let me know.



# ONLINE, SYNCHRONOUS FILM DISCUSSIONS

Transcript example ...

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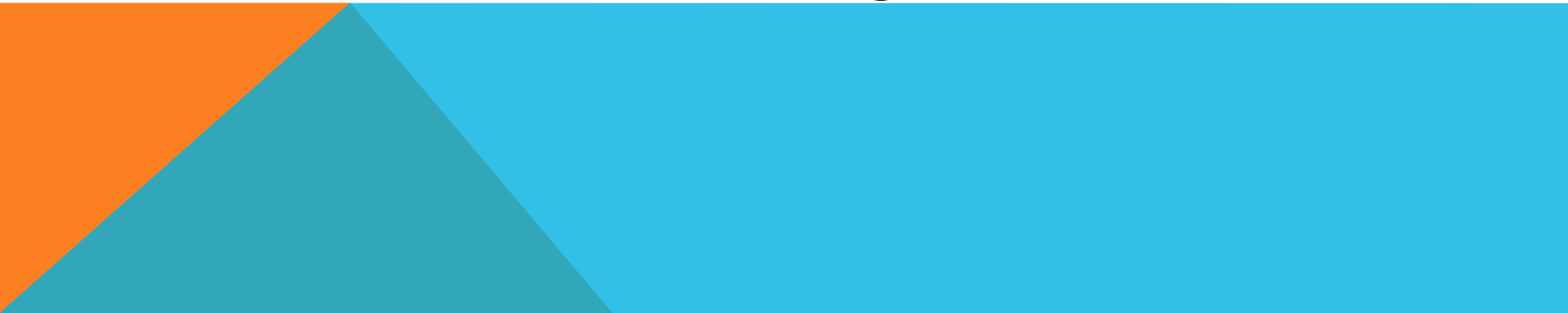
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# ADVANTAGES

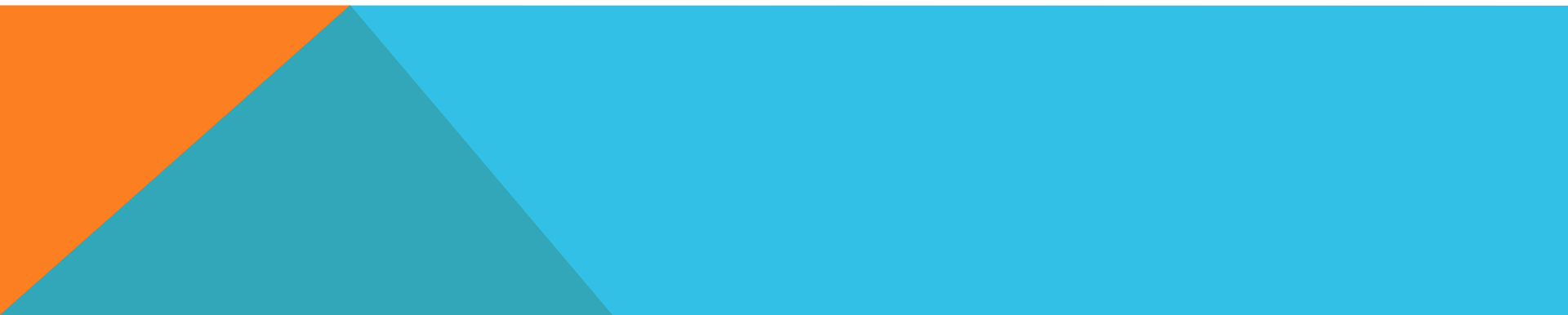
- Students enjoy the freedom and spontaneity of not having to wait to be called on or to speak one at a time, especially in a class of over 30.
- This format generates much more conversation – many more ideas being exchanged – than is possible in fact-to-face dialogue where only one person (in each group) can speak at a time.
- Most of the conversation is not professor-student-professor, but student-student. This is something I insist on in class as well, but it happens more naturally in the chat room.
- It's easier for shy people to express themselves in the chat room than in class.
- I can save the transcript of the discussion for subsequent reflection.

# DIFFICULTIES

- Sometimes there is a lot to read at once, and multiple lines of conversation are crossing each other, so it can be difficult to follow – though in fact, it is manageable.
  - Students who don't type fast participate less than students who do.
  - Some students on campus had WiFi disruptions; some had personal computers that crashed and couldn't get to another computer in time to finish the session.
  - The fast pace and multiple lines of conversation make it more difficult for students to reason carefully and sustain an extended line of argument
- 

# AMELIORATIONS

- Ideas generated here can be taken up in more deliberate classroom dialogues, and in argumentative writing.
- Students compare and contrast multiple dialogue formats, in terms of social interaction, quality of reasoning, inquiry outcomes, etc.
- Habits cultivated in one format transfer to others.



# SOCRATIC PEDAGOGY RESOURCES

- **Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children:** [www.montclair.edu/iapc](http://www.montclair.edu/iapc)
- *Philosophy for Children Practitioner Handbook* (Montclair: IAPC, 2008), ch. 2 on Community of Inquiry.
- J.T. Dillon: “Research on Questioning and Discussion,” *Educational Leadership* (November 1984), 50-56, online at <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0Bx54mtYXcEL2cHZtMlVibjVxMGc/edit>.
- Nussbaum: *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton University Press, 2010), esp. ch. 4.
- The Good Thinker’s Toolkit:  
<http://www.creighton.edu/ccas/philosophyforchildren/toolkit/index.php>

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