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Practice Notes

Say It Three Times and It Must Be Evidence-Based Collaboration: Part One (The Problem)

by Frank Domurad

Huzaifa Parhat is a free man. A member of the ethnic Uighar Muslim minority in Western China, he was held as a terrorist and enemy combatant in Guantanamo Bay, along with 16 of his countrymen, until his release in Bermuda in June 2009. He received his day in court a year earlier before a three-judge panel of the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. The justices ruled that the Pentagon's claims that its accusations had to be factual simply because they had been repeated in at least three secret documents were totally insufficient to warrant Parhat's continued detention. So dumbfounded were the judges by the prosecution's assumption that the court would just trust its assertions of guilt without presenting solid evidence, they turned to Lewis Carroll,

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Education

Socratic Pedagogy, Critical Thinking, and Offender Programming

by Peter Boghossian

Researcher: What is justice?

Inmate 6: Standing up for what you believe in.

Researcher: What if you believe weird stuff? Like one of those lunatics who wants to kill Americans? Or what if you're a pedophile?

[*a 20-second silence*]

Inmate 6: I think if you can stand on your own two feet and not care what anyone else thinks about you, and you're willing to fight for it and die for it or whatever, that makes you a man. Whether it's right or not.

Researcher: So being a man would mean to be resolute in your beliefs no matter what? What if you're in the military, like in Rwanda, and you're told to butcher all these people, and you have this skewed idea of loyalty. And you stand up for what you believe, for your country or tribe or whatever, and you just start butchering civilians? Hutus or Tutsis or whoever. Is that just? Does that make you a man?

Inmate 5: Yeah, good point. It happened in Nam [Vietnam].

Inmate 4: What are you saying? That justice isn't standing up for what you believe in?

Researcher: I'm not saying; I'm asking. What is justice? [Inmate 6] said it's standing up for what you believe in. But is it really standing up for what you believe in? Don't you have to believe the right stuff, then stand up for that? No?

Inmate 6: Yeah, maybe. Maybe.

The Socratic Method

A growing body of educational, philosophical, and even popular literature has emerged that explains the Socratic method (Boghossian, 2005; Garlikov, 2003; Strong, 1997) and its epistemological and educational ambitions (Abbs, 1994; Phillips, 2001; Vlastos, 1971, 1994). Unfortunately, there is almost no literature on the use and analysis of the Socratic method in the context of correctional education. This absence is significant, because educational interventions either designed around the Socratic method or that use the Socratic method as an adjunct pedagogy may have the potential to be more effective and less expensive than the two foremost cognitive treatments, Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT) and Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R), in improving the critical thinking and moral reasoning of inmates (Boghossian, in press).

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MRT focuses on reasoning and making the reasoning process explicit (Little, 2000, 2001; Little & Robinson, 1988; Little et al., 1999), and R&R focuses on teaching cognitive skills to offenders by changing underlying thoughts and attitudes that lead to criminal behavior (Fabiano et al., 1991; MacKenzie & Hickman, 1998). This focus on reasoning, in turn, is important because faulty reasoning/thinking often leads to criminogenic behavior (McGuire, 1995), since many offenders have difficulties with problem solving, reasoning, and understanding the most appropriate solutions to problems (Porporino et al., 1991). There is an urgent need for less expensive treatments that can target difficulties in reasoning as well as or better than these two methods.

There is almost no literature on the use and analysis of the Socratic method in the context of correctional education.

The purposes of this article are to analyze and explain Socratic conversations with prison inmates and to identify the critical thinking core elements most evident in these Socratic discussions. To achieve these aims, we will break down and examine four transcriptions of Socratic conversations with inmates in order to show how each conversation fits a Socratic template. At the end of each conversation, I explain briefly which of the six core elements of critical thinking are most apparent. I begin, however, by examining the Socratic method as practiced by the historical Socrates, and then by providing a definition and an explanation of critical thinking.

Five Stages of the Socratic Method

Historically, the Socratic method, found in the Platonic dialogues (Cooper, 1997), dates back more than 2,500 years. In these dialogues, the historical Socrates engages participants by going through several conversational stages. The stages Socrates uses are:

1. Wonder;
2. Hypothesis;
3. Elenchus (refutation and cross-examination);
4. Accept/reject the hypothesis; and
5. Act accordingly (Dye, 1996).

In the first stage, *wonder*, Socrates asks a philosophical/moral question, such as:

- "Why obey the law?" (*Crito, Republic*);
- "What is it to be virtuous?" (*Apology, Meno*);
- "What's worth dying for?" (*Apology, Crito*);
- "When is punishment justified?" (*Gorgias, Crito*);
- "What's the best life to lead?" (*Republic*);
- "Should you harm a bad man?" (*Republic*); or

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make it so, so too, simply bringing stakeholders around a table again and again to "work together" to solve a strategic challenge will not achieve collaborative advantage. Too much is at stake for us to continue down this potentially destructive path. If the research is crystal clear about anything, it is that collaboration, when properly understood and practiced, can indeed be an indispensible organizational mechanism for dealing with our wicked problems. But first we must be willing to listen to what the research tells us about how best to use rather than abuse this invaluable tool. We must, in effect, do evidence-based collaboration.

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- "What is justice?" (*Republic*) (Cooper, 1997).

Questions are asked in order to further define the idea in question; i.e., Socrates seeks definitions for the terms about which he inquired, starting with general questions and systematically narrowing the inquiry.

In the second stage, *hypothesis*, responses to the question are offered by one or more participants. If we use a sample question from above, "Should you harm a bad man?" several responses could follow, such as, "Yes, because it will teach him a lesson," or "No, because you could get caught." Possible responses to the question "What's worth dying for?" could be, "Nothing," or "Respect," or "Honor." This second stage is fairly straightforward. Only the response in question is addressed; there is no evaluation of the response.

The third stage, *elenchus* (or *elenchos*), is at the heart of Socrates' practice. Through discourse (sometimes referred to as "cross-examination") Socrates offered counterexamples to the hypotheses of his interlocutors. For example, if the question being examined was, "Should you harm a bad man?" and the hypothesis or response was, "Yes, because it will teach him a lesson," then a possible counterexample to this response would be, "But what if harming a bad man makes him a worse man? What if the lesson he learns is to become angrier, more bitter, and more resentful? Like a lot of the guys on this cell block. Should you still harm a bad man?" This is a counterexample because it provides an example or instance that may make the hypothesis offered false.

The *elenchus* has several related purposes. One purpose is to examine whether the entire set of beliefs (or a particular belief) held by the participants is mutually consistent. According to Carpenter (1999), "By highlighting inconsistency, the elenchus would force its participants to sharpen and refine their moral concepts" (p. 7). Carpenter goes on to write, "[I]t would show the interlocutors the inadequacy of their ordinary moral training, and it would teach them the extent to which their ordinary moral beliefs are unstable and are in need of radical revision" (p. 7). Question and answer and counterexamples are the defining characteristics for this stage of Socratic practice.

At this juncture in the conversation, the counterexample is either accepted or rejected. Continuing with our example from above, possible responses to whether a bad person ought to be harmed are, "Are you kidding me? If he becomes worse, then he deserves it. Next time he'll think twice," or "Yeah, maybe you're right, but he has to be harmed nonetheless. You have to harm him because if you don't, then you'll lose respect."

This interchange segues into the fourth stage, *accepting or rejecting the hypothesis*. If the counterexample is accepted, then the discussion goes back to the second stage, and another hypothesis is

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elicited (Dye, 1996). For instance, the counterexample would be accepted by someone who said, "Yeah, you're right. But maybe you should harm a bad man for other reasons, like letting other bad men know that you're not to be messed with." Alternatively, the counterexample could be rejected by both parties, who agree that it was neither necessary nor sufficient to undermine the hypothesis. If the counterexample is rejected, then the hypothesis is accepted as being "provisionally" true. If there are other counterexamples that could show the hypothesis to be false, then Socrates returns the discussion to stage three. After this process of examining claims has been exhausted, then one can *act accordingly*: namely, one can act on the findings of one's inquiry. Hence we have a "formula" and a working definition for the Socratic method that was practiced in the Platonic dialogues by Socrates.

What Is Critical Thinking?

Critical thinking is characterized as the cognitive process of forming reasoned and reflective judgments about what to believe or what to do (Facione, 2000, p. 4).

As noted above, two successful cognitive behavioral programs, MRT and R&R, both aim to improve the reasoning and critical thinking abilities of inmates, but it is not immediately evident what reasoning and critical thinking are, and how they are defined. (R&R uses the term "critical thinking.") (Ross & Fabiano, 1991).

While it is certainly true that these concepts are difficult to define, this does not mean that there are no adequate definitions. The largest and most comprehensive study to date on critical thinking and reasoning was published in 1990 by the main professional organization for philosophers in the United States, the American Philosophical Association (APA). While there is no evidence that the creators of MRT or R&R had access to this study, it is clear that the language and the referents are the same, and that the concepts detailed in this study provide a clear explanation about what qualities in inmates MRT and R&R wish to improve.

The study used a Delphi technique to reach consensus about the definition of critical thinking. A Delphi technique has a fairly simple methodology. Facione (1996) best explains the Delphi technique methodology as it was used in this APA study:

> A central investigator organizes the group and feeds them an initial question. [In this case it had to do with how college-level critical thinking should be defined so that people teaching at that level would know which skills and dispositions to cultivate in their students.] The central investigator receives all responses, summarizes them, and transmits them back to all the panelists for reactions, replies, and additional questions ... [T]he central investigator summarizes the arguments and lets the panelists decide if they accept them or not. When consensus appears to be at hand, the central investigator proposes this and asks if people agree. If not, then points of disagreement among the experts are registered (p. 8).

In a research project that lasted approximately two years, the APA chose its panel of experts from among "forty-six men and women ... in the United States and Canada. They represented many different scholarly disciplines in the humanities, sciences, social sciences, and education" (Facione, 1996, p. 7). Moreover, all 46 scholars were "widely recognized by their professional colleagues to have special experience and expertise in [critical thinking] instruction, assessment, or theory" (APA, 1990, p. 4).

At the end of the study, the experts came to a consensus about what critical thinking and reasoning are, how critical thinking can be defined, and what its core elements are. (Definitions of the core elements can be found in Appendix A at the end of this article.) The report describes, defines, and details the ideal critical thinker and lists the core elements of critical thinking. (The APA report does not make reference to how critical thinking can be taught; it only states what critical thinking is.) The following is the consensus statement regarding critical thinking and the ideal critical thinker:

> We understand critical thinking to be purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based (APA, 1990, p. 3).

Breaking this definition down may make it clearer. Critical thinking is judgment that is purposeful and self-regulatory. This judgment then results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference of evidence, concepts, methods, criteria, and contexts.

The APA's (1990) *Delphi Report* also went on to detail what it termed central or core critical thinking skills. The consensus among the experts was that critical thinking has six core elements:

1. *Interpretation:* Comprehending and expressing meaning or significance;
2. *Analysis:* Identifying the intended and actual inferential relationships;
3. *Evaluation:* Assessing logical strength;
4. *Inference:* Drawing reasonable conclusions;
5. *Explanation:* Stating the results and justifying one's reasoning; and
6. *Self-regulation:* Monitoring one's cognitive activities.

Each of these elements of critical thinking corresponds to some part of the consensus statement of critical thinking given in the APA's (1990) *Delphi Report*. (A further breakdown of these elements can be seen in Appendix B.) These six categories are considered to be core or central categories that the ideal critical thinker would possess.

Socratic Conversations Analyzed

The following transcribed conversations are from a mixed methods research study conducted at Columbia River Correctional Facility in Portland, Oregon in 2003 (Boghossian, in press). The educational intervention, called *Introducing Socrates*, was attended by 10 inmates, Monday through Thursday, for two hours each day. The class was structured in 30-minute segments, using a 25-on/five-off timetable: i.e., every 30 minutes, a new question was examined. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a new Socratically based curriculum on raising inmates' critical thinking and moral reasoning skills and on identifying early indicators for treatment compliance (e.g., whether inmates enjoyed their treatment and were engaged by it).

In the four conversations that follow, I ask inmates an open-ended question,

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drawn primarily from the Platonic dialogues (Plato's works), and then I use the Socratic method to guide them through a process of systematic examination of their responses to those questions. The purpose of this process is linked to the purposes of the study: to teach inmates how to engage ideas, how to increase their critical thinking and moral reasoning ability, and ultimately how to decrease criminogenic needs and thereby decrease recidivism. At the end of each conversation, I show briefly how the conversation elicited or strengthened one or more of the six core elements of critical thinking.

Finally, the following Socratic conversations were chosen because each illustrates a slightly different aspect of the Socratic method. The first conversation matches strictly, and even formulaically, individual comments to stages of the Socratic method. It is a good conversation for understanding a "by the book" Socratic discourse. The second conversation shows "horizontal learning," or how inmates learn from each other and not just from the facilitator (Boghossian, 2002). The third conversation shows that dialogues do not have to end in personal or communal revelation to be successful. The fourth conversation shows that through the Socratic method inmates can reinforce what they already know.

Conversation 1: What Is It to Be Virtuous?

In the following dialogue, we see the application of each stage of the Socratic method:

Researcher: What is it to be virtuous? ...

Inmate 1: My ultimate thing in my life is to always be true to my family and the people I call friends. To hold that above *all* else. And if I call a person my friend, you know, that takes it to a whole new level.

Researcher: What if one of your friends comes to you and says, "Dude, I've gotta dispose of this dead body. You've gotta help me"?

Here we see the first three stages of the Socratic method. It begins in *wonder*, with an initial question. In this case, that question is, "What is it to be virtuous?" A *hypothesis* is then offered: "To be true to my family and the people I call my friends. To hold that above *all* else." This is the statement or the thesis that becomes targeted for refutation. Next, there is an attempt at an *elenchus*, a statement or series of statements presenting a "what if" or counterexample. In this example, however, the "what if" statement was not sufficient either to secure agreement with further premises or to make the inmate reevaluate his initial response. Because I could not get the inmate to agree to what I thought was an eminently reasonable premise, I could not secure agreement with further premises, and I could not get him to agree that the hypothesis that he offered was suspect:

Inmate 1: Hey, it's simple for me, right, wrong or indifferent. If I'm calling them my friend, what do we gotta do? Where do we gotta go?

At this juncture another inmate targeted the hypothesis by offering his own counterexample:

Inmate 2: [*to Inmate 1*] What if he says, "Dude, we gotta go rape this girl? Look, I need you to hold this girl down while I rape her."

Inmate 1: [*to Inmate 2*] You're on your own, brother.

Inmate 2: [*to Inmate 1*] But he's your friend.

This was an effective counterexample because it showed the limits of friendship while calling into question the initial hypothesis. Inmate 1 did not revise his hypothesis at this juncture but clarified what he meant:

Inmate 1: Still. If I'm gonna call a person a friend, first of all, I know he's not gonna go out and rape no girl. I'm gonna make sure when I choose someone as a friend it's not gonna happen like that [*snapping*]. I look to my life to find a couple of friends throughout my whole life. And to be that they'd have to share some of the same virtues I hold.

Researcher: So if somebody does come to you and ask you to do something like this, then they're not really your friend?

Inmate 1: No.

Researcher: No? Is that right? Friends don't ask friends to dispose of dead bodies for them.

Inmate 9: You don't know none of our friends.

This last comment was, perhaps, a reason why my initial "what if" was not effective. It is far from my life situation for anyone to ask me to dispose of a dead body, but it is not far from their life situations. This is also a good example of why one can not learn the Socratic method by using "stock" or "canned" examples. What works in one context or in one conversation may not work in another.

What follows is an outstanding illustration of a counterexample. It was this example that was effective in causing a reevaluation of the initial response, and Inmate 1 finally called his hypothesis into question. What was most interesting about this development, however, was that this was not my example. Inmate 5 gave a far more effective counterexample, and even made my pedestrian example seem anemic. I was at a loss regarding in what direction I could move the conversation and what proposition I could offer either to call into question the hypothesis immediately or build a case against it by securing agreement to further premises. Moreover, this exchange also provides an example of how a Socratic teacher knows that students are learning how to examine ideas by making effective counterexamples: It becomes clear when other students apply what they have been learning:

Inmate 5 gave a far more effective counterexample, and even made my pedestrian example seem anemic.

Inmate 5: What if your best friend was married to your sister, and in a rage he killed her? Then he said, "Hey, look, brother, I screwed up big-time. I need you to go help me bury this body."

Researcher: Boy, talk about what's one instance of a thing, that's really better than I could have ever done.

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This counterexample, offered by Inmate 5, ultimately dissuaded Inmate 1 about the truth of his hypothesis. The conversation went on to more directly focus on the question of virtue. There was no final agreement about what virtue is and how it relates to friendship.

This example illustrates a Socratic way to examine ideas, through the systematized process of question and answer that seeks to cast doubt on claims to moral knowledge. It illustrates the examination of ideas by showing a transparent and easy-to-use process. Finally, while these examples may seem remote or even alien, they are not out of the arena of life possibilities for the men in this group. With any luck, none of the inmates will ever be in the position to decide whether they will help their friends dispose of a dead body. If this situation, or one like it, does arise, however, both this conversation and this way of subjecting moral decisions to a critical thinking process may prove to be invaluable.

Conversation 1: Critical Thinking Core Elements

The two critical thinking core elements most evident in this dialogue are *evaluation* and *inference*. The first core element, evaluation, is seen in subsequent responses to the initial claim, and particularly in Inmate 5's response regarding burying one's sister. Discrete examples of inferences can be seen throughout the dialogue, especially with regard to the relevant assent to propositions at each stage of the discourse (e.g., when clarifying the demands of friendship). Throughout the discourse, inmates drew "reasonable conclusions" that allowed the conversation to proceed with new, set, or established conditions. These conclusions then formed the basis for assent to further propositions, in which evaluative judgments were once again brought to bear (e.g., the scenario of raping a girl or telling the researcher that he does not know any of their friends).

Conversation 2: What Is the Best Life to Lead?

In the beginning of this conversation, nine of the 10 inmates believed that the type of life Mother Teresa led was morally equivalent to the type of life led by Adolf Hitler. By the end of the discussion, there was an agreement that not all lives are morally equivalent:

Researcher: What's the best life to lead?

Inmate 5: To die with all your goals accomplished.

Researcher: Then one must have set one's sights too low.

[*Inmates talk among themselves.*]

Researcher: Are there certain types of lives that are better than other types of lives? Can we all agree that the life of Mother Teresa is better than the life of—

Inmate 4: Hitler.

Researcher: Yeah, Hitler.

[*Nine inmates respond "no"; one says "yes."*]

At this point in the discussion, it is important to note that the inmates provided the example. I did not offer Hitler's life as an example of a bad life; in fact, it did not occur to me to suggest such an extreme example. This is important because the inmates were evaluating whether or not there is a way to make a judgment about moral equivalency, and their interest was amplified because it was *their* example that they were defending—not that of the researcher. They had a vested interest in defending their claim:

Researcher: No? We can't agree to that?

Inmate 7: Bullshit.

Inmate 2: It depends who we're asking.

Inmate 3: It's biased because it's your opinion and your opinion is always biased.

Researcher: Is the life of the tyrant the best life?

Inmate 2: Depends.

Researcher: If you ask a warlord if he's a warlord, he'll say no. If one really is a tyrant, one will never refer to oneself as a tyrant.

Inmate 9: True.

[*Inmates nod in agreement.*]

Researcher: How do you make a judgment about what's right or wrong?

Inmate 2: Common sense.

Inmate 7: What about morals?

Researcher: I hate to plug it, but don't you have the process now [the Socratic method], counterexample, instances of a thing that make statements false, and if you can think of them, then it's probably not the best idea?

Inmate 10: Which is a kind of common sense.

Researcher: Yeah, codified or formalized.

Inmate 5: What's the justification for being a tyrant?

Researcher: Well, my question is, is there a way to step outside and say, hmm, bad to be a tyrant, good to be this. You said common sense, but [*indicating various participants*] his common sense is different from his, and from his, and from Hitler's.

Inmate 9: True.

Researcher: OK, well, maybe there's not a best type of life to lead, but isn't leading certain types of lives better than leading other types of lives?

Inmate 9: No.

[*Nine inmates shake their heads to indicate "no."*]

Researcher: You don't think so? Like [Inmate 4] said the other day, you don't think it's better to be kind to somebody than to be mean to them?

Inmate 7: No.

Researcher: I can't even get you guys to agree to that?

[*Nine inmates say "no"; one says "yes."*]

The next comments exemplify responses from people who have been steeped in the Socratic process. There is a series of counterexamples and counterexamples to those counterexamples. An additional point to note about the discourse thus far is that five of the inmates were actively participating. What this dialogue does not show, however, is the development of prosocial modeling (Barton & Osborne, 1978; Boghossian, 2005; Rex & Crosland, 1999); the other inmates were extremely attentive to the conversation, nodding their heads and indicating support for the comments of others. By the end of the conversation, eight of 10 inmates have participated, but the discourse itself stands as a Socratic model for all the inmates:

Inmate 3: Isn't it false to walk through life lying? Even if you don't like that person just to make them feel

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better? Why not just be the way you are to every person?

Researcher: And what if you're a nasty bastard to everybody?

Inmate 1: Isn't it better to be raised rich than poor?

Researcher: It's certainly better to not be raised hungry.

Inmate 7: But doesn't adversity build character?

Inmate 2: Would you rather be spoiled and full or starving and mean?

Researcher: Aristotle says you can't even talk about being virtuous until you have the basics: food, shelter, clothing. Unless you have food, shelter, and clothing, the whole concept of being good doesn't make any sense.

Inmate 5: Survival.

Researcher: Exactly. If you're starving, then of course you're gonna steal.

Inmate 5: That goes with everything.

Researcher: OK, so then we can agree that the beginnings of a good life are food, shelter, and clothing.

[*All the inmates nod or say "yes."*]

Inmate 2: Survival is everything.

Researcher: OK, so why can't we then construct another tier above that, and say food, shelter, clothing is on the bottom of our edifice, our foundation, then the next level is ...

Inmate 4: Self-respect.

Again, here the inmate provided the response. Inmate 4 was not told that self-respect was an intrinsic good, and that a life with self-respect was better than a life without self-respect. He generated this example entirely on his own:

Researcher: Yeah, or to be a nice guy, or to have a reasonable job, or good friends, or whatever.

[*The inmates talk among themselves.*]

Researcher: OK, so then we can say that there are certain types of lives that are better than others.

Inmate 5: Yeah, I guess so.

They arrived at this conclusion by force of reason and by reasoning from their experiences. I wanted the conversation to continue with a Socratic question that morally compared the life of Adolf Hitler to Mother Teresa, but unfortunately, time ran out. Inmates were not *told* that certain types of lives were better than others, but *they arrived at this conclusion* through directed questions. After the discussion, if asked whether one type of life is better than another, they would undoubtedly respond "yes" and would mean it.

Conversation 2: Critical Thinking Core Elements

The two critical thinking core elements most evident in this dialogue are *evaluation* and *explanation*. This can best be seen in the dialectical exchange among Inmates 3, 1, 7, 2, and the researcher; in particular, participants were able to assess the strengths of claims made by both the researcher and their peers and to articulate coherent and pertinent responses to those claims. Each question was responded to with another relevant question, and each response deepened and further challenged the initial hypothesis—walking through life lying, being raised rich rather than poor, adversity building character, and being spoiled and full rather than starving and mean. All demonstrated strongly the ability to assess the logical strength of a claim. Finally, these articulate and salient responses also comport thematically with the broader discussion, further indicating that at each stage of the discussion, inmates are engaged in the ongoing process of evaluation.

Conversation 3: Was Jesus Clever?

A common misunderstanding of Socratic practice is that it necessarily ends in a personal revelation, or that the initial question is solved to everyone's satisfaction. Not all discussions end with inmates experiencing moral clarity or experiencing moral and intellectual growth, but not all must in order for the treatment to be considered successful. Depending on the individuals involved and the persistence of the teacher, there may be no resolutions to questions. The following is an example of an unresolved conversation with one of the inmates during the five-minute break in day three of the treatment:

Inmate 6: You made a comment about Jesus needing to be clever.

Researcher: I was asking, was Jesus clever?

Inmate 6: He chose to die. He was God incarnate. His purpose was to be the sacrificial lamb for all sinners.

Researcher: OK, so would you consider Him a greater man for having made that sacrifice?

Inmate 6: Absolutely.

Researcher: OK, so what if the lesser men around Him were actually clever and prevented Him from achieving that mission?

Inmate 6: The lesser men didn't want Him to achieve His purpose.

Researcher: Yeah, but if the lesser men, who were clever, prevented Him from achieving His purpose, then couldn't you say that the virtue that He should have had was cleverness because that would have enabled Him to achieve His purpose? I mean it couldn't have been a sacrifice unless He chose it, and in order for Him to have chosen it, He had to have the possibility of choosing otherwise. Therefore, He could have not chosen it and failed.

Inmate 6: He achieved His purpose.

Researcher: Could He have failed, or was He destined?

Inmate 6: He could have failed. He had a choice.

Researcher: So then He might have needed cleverness to increase the likelihood of success.

Inmate 6: Go back and read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Researcher: That doesn't answer the question.

The inmate later told me that he had been thinking about that conversation for two weeks. When asked if he had come to any new conclusions, he said that he was not sure. So while the discussion did not end conclusively with an agreement on whether Jesus needed to be clever or whether cleverness is a virtue, the conversation did morally, philosophically, and intellectually engage the inmate.

It is important to note that lack of a definite resolution does not mean that the discussion was useless, or that it would translate into moral ambiguity, or that the treatment was a failure. Part of what it means to have a successful treatment is to get inmates to think about and engage critically these sorts of questions and

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ultimately translate this thought process into moral action. The process of thinking about these questions and leading more examined lives may not just have the practical consequence of decreasing recidivism. *The act of moral engagement is itself a type of transformation*, or evolution, with profound implications for making choices about the sort of life one leads. Even if there is no definitive answer to moral and philosophical questions, the examined life is worth living, and an enormous body of corrections literature points to the fact that a reflective and contemplative life is less likely to lead to criminal behavior (Blud & Travers, 2001; D'Zurilla & Goldfried, 1971; Freedman et al., 1978; Porporino & Fabiano, 2000).

An enormous body of corrections literature points to the fact that a reflective and contemplative life is less likely to lead to criminal behavior.

Conversation 3: Critical Thinking Core Element

The critical thinking core element most evident in this dialogue is *interpretation*. Certainly Inmate 6 thought about, clarified, articulated, and defended his beliefs about a subject for which he had a great deal of passion. But moreover (perhaps as an initial condition for exhibiting these core components), he displayed a moderate degree of interpretation at each stage of the brief conversation, comprehending and expressing meaning or significance in the researcher's objections and comments. This process was most evident in the middle section of the dialogue, where he responded, "The lesser men didn't want Him to achieve His purpose." This response indicates that he is both following the dialogue and finding or constructing meaning in the researcher's responses.

Conversation 4: Can a Greater Man Be Harmed by a Lesser Man?

Socratic conversations may not change or even challenge people's beliefs, but rather, reinforce what is already known. This outcome does not detract from the treatment either, and, depending on participants' interest in the subject, may still be engaging. For example, the following is the transcription of a conversation that took place on day three:

Researcher: Can a greater man be harmed by a lesser man?

Inmate 7: Only physically.

Researcher: What about morally? Pure virtues [relating to an earlier discussion]. In a moral arena, can a greater man be harmed by a lesser man?

Inmate 7: No.

Researcher: What if the greater man is a completely virtuous man, but he's just not that smart? But the lesser man is a very clever, manipulative, and devious man? Can not the lesser man harm the greater man?

Inmate 2: If he was clever, wouldn't he be the greater man?

Researcher: Is being clever a virtue?

[*All the inmates nod or say "yeah."*]

Inmate 3: To be truly virtuous, one would have to exhibit *some* standard of cleverness.

Inmate 8: Yeah, we're surrounded by that every day.

[*Inmates talk among themselves.*]

Inmate 7: A lesser man can hurt a greater man physically, but a greater man, who's virtuous, can not be hurt any other way by a lesser man.

Inmate 9: Yeah, the lesser man has no ammunition. He has nothing.

Inmate 2: Yeah, physically he's able to hurt you, only then.

Researcher: So now that we've examined this, we can have more confidence in our belief that a lesser man can not harm a greater man.

In this conversation, while there was an agreement about the initial claim, the fact that other questions were generated from the inquiry shows that five of the 10 inmates were engaged. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that this conversation took place on day three. From our previous conversations on days one and two, I can state with a high degree of confidence that inmates would never have arrived at this conclusion at an earlier point in the treatment.

Conversation 4: Critical Thinking Core Elements

The critical thinking core elements most evident in this dialogue are *analysis* and *inference*. Inmate 2 infers that cleverness makes one a greater man. (Note that inferences do not have to be logically necessary; they merely need to be reasonable or sensible conclusions that follow from given premises.) Inmate 3 adds support while refining the claim in his next response: "To be truly virtuous, one would have to exhibit *some* standard of cleverness." This exchange demonstrates that the participants have drawn reasonable conclusions both from the initial question presented by the researcher and from the responses of their peers. Furthermore, analysis can be seen in the participants' ability to identify the inferential relationships throughout the dialogue. Again, this process is most clearly seen in the succinct exchange between Inmate 2 and Inmate 3.

Applying the Socratic Method

Hopefully, through reading the analysis and explanation of these conversations, correctional educators will gain a better understanding of the application of the Socratic method and how it can improve inmates' critical thinking skills. While there is an enormous corpus of correctional, educational, and even philosophical and psychological literature documenting the importance of learning how to think critically and reason morally, it is unfortunate that the Socratic method is not employed more frequently to achieve these goals within the context of correctional education. (Socratic conversations may also provide a welcome relief from formulaic curricula found in some existing treatments and interventions). Ultimately, it is my hope that Socratic pedagogical elements can be incorporated structurally into the

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curricula and the learning objectives of existing correctional educational programs and that correctional educators can add Socratic techniques to their daily lessons to foster inmates' critical thinking skills.

Appendix A
Core Critical Thinking Elements: Definitions

Interpretation: "To comprehend and express the meaning or significance of a wide variety of experiences, situations, data, events, judgments, conventions, beliefs, rules, procedures, or criteria" (APA, 1990, p. 13).

Analysis: "To identify the intended and actual inferential relationships among statements, questions, conceptions, descriptions, or other forms of representation intended to express beliefs, judgments, experiences, reasons, information, or opinions" (APA, 1990, p. 14).

Evaluation: "To assess the credibility of statements or other representations which are accounts or descriptions of a person's perception, experience, situation, judgment, belief, or opinion; and to assess the logical strength of the actual or intend[ed] inferential relationships among statements, descriptions, questions, or other forms of representation" (APA, 1990, p. 15).

Inference: "To identify and secure elements needed to draw reasonable conclusions; to form conjectures and hypotheses; to consider relevant information and to educe the consequences flowing from data, statements, principles, evidence, judgments, beliefs, opinions, concepts, descriptions, questions, or other forms of representation" (APA, 1990, p. 16).

Explanation: "To state the results of one's reasoning; to justify that reasoning in terms of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, and contextual considerations upon which one's results were based; and to present one's reasoning in the form of cogent arguments" (APA, 1990, p. 18).

Self-regulation: "Self-consciously to monitor one's cognitive activities, the elements used in those activities, and the results educed, particularly by applying skills in analysis and evaluation to one's own inferential judgments with a view toward questioning, confirming, validating, or correcting either one's reasoning or one's results" (APA, 1990, p. 19).

Appendix B
Critical Thinking Core Elements: Subcategories

1. Interpretation	Categorization
	Decoding Significance
	Clarifying Meaning
2. Analysis	Examining Ideas
	Identifying Arguments
	Analyzing Arguments
3. Evaluation	Assessing Claims
	Assessing Arguments
4. Inference	Querying Evidence
	Conjecturing Alternatives
	Drawing Conclusions
5. Explanation	Stating Results
	Justifying Procedures
	Presenting Arguments
6. Self-Regulation	Self-examination
	Self-correction

From the American Philosophical Association Delphi Report (APA, 1990, p. 12)

Socratic conversations may provide a welcome relief from formulaic curricula found in some existing treatments and interventions.

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