

Socratic Method by Socrates

1,009 words

Why do people need to ask question? You probably think so simply that the purpose of questioning is just to get the answer! It seems to be right, but not always. Sometime the intent for asking some question is not only for the answer, but for instigates others to think. But the simple questions alone would not be enough to generate effective thinking. There is a method that guides the way for effective questioning to gain useful and beneficial answer. This method has been introduced in the Ancient Greeks time by a well known philosopher named Socrates.¹ Socrates's most contribution to mankind was Socratic Method, which also involve with questioning.²

Socrates was considered as one of the philosopher that has many influences to the world, especially in terms of philosophy.³ Socratic Method is one of the ways he usually used to find the answer of the subjects, which also lead to the disclosure of one's ideas and the existence of knowledge that relies in it. But this method's goal is not really for the answer, but for encouraging people to think deeply and carefully when answering the question and the use of reasons to support their own thoughts or ideas.⁴

¹ N.S. Gill, About.com Guide. "Socrates - The Greek Philosopher Socrates." *About.com*. 4 February 2012. <<http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/socratesbio/p/Socrates.htm>>

² Wikipedia contributors. "Socratic Questioning." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 1 February 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socratic_questioning>

³ Jean Brun. *Socrates*. 1962. p.vii-viii (introduction)

⁴ Wikipedia contributors. "Socrates" *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 1 February 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socrates#Socratic_method>

In Socrates lifetime, Socratic Method would begin by Socrates asking for a definition on some specific topic which the person that he is talking with is experts at. However, their definition would be only a hypothesis in the eyes of Socrates because it could be either true or false. Then he would bring it into a discussion between him and his speaker so that the ideas are not solely based on one person. But in Socratic Method, Socrates's job is not to prove that the hypothesis is right, but on the contrary, he would prove that it is wrong. So as the conversation went on, Socrates would make some contradictions by asking another question which opposes to definition that was given from his interlocutor. The purpose of conflict question is to point out mistake that appears on what another has been defined. The contradictions would make the speaker thinks more carefully on their next answer to avoid mistakes and still maintain or prove for the correctness of their hypothesis. But if they cannot come up with any reason that can proves that the hypothesis is right, Socrates would conclude that the hypothesis is false.⁵ But as mention in the second paragraph, the objective of using this method is for encourage one to think and reasoning. Therefore, it does not matter if the answer would be defined or not, but at least, that person has been thinking profoundly on the issue.

Nowadays, there is existence about the various use of Socratic Method. As a student, everyone would have met different kind of teachers in their lifetime. Each of them has their own teaching techniques. Some might be concentrating on giving out information, lectures, or motivate students in participation, etc. But from all the teaching method, which would be the most effective one? If consider carefully into the education system nowadays, somehow we would found that there is the use of Socratic Method as

⁵ Wikipedia contributors. "Socratic Method" *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 4 February 2012 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socratic_method>

one of teaching technique. For example, in some classes, the teacher would incite their students to think by asking question, just like Socrates. They use Socratic Method while asking the questions to their students as a way to encourage thinking for ideas and use reasons to support it. Hence what students have learned are not only comes from instructor words, but also from their own process of thinking. With this style of instill knowledge, the students would be able to obtain clearer understanding in the subjects, attain the true knowledge, and be able to use it in their real life. Therefore, it benefits the students more when they do not just memorize everything for the exam, but truly understand it. So could the use of Socratic Method be considered as one of the best way to educate people? Of course, yes.

And especially in law school, which Socratic Method found to be one of the very beneficial uses. There have been many law schools that use Socratic Method as a part of teaching, such as the law school of the University of Chicago.⁶ Because discussion is very important in law sector, so the effective logical thinking skill is needed. People who engage themselves in the law sector would have to discuss variety cases that had been brought up to them. And also, as a lawyer, they would have to maintain their position in the court.⁷ They have to use the reasons to protect the defendant or support the plaintiff that hires them. So the use of Socratic Method in law school is to help the students practice using the reasons in the most effective ways in order to win the case.

Also, we would found that Socratic Method in used in debate a lot. In the debate, the arguments between teams are more likely to be arguing from difference perspective

⁶ The University of Chicago Law School. "The Socratic Method." *The University of Chicago Law School*. 7 February 2012. <http://www.law.uchicago.edu/prospectives/lifeofthemind/socraticmethod>

⁷ Exforsys Inc. "The Role of a Lawyer." *Exforsys Inc. Execution for system*. 10 February 2012. <<http://www.exforsys.com/career-center/career-tracks/the-role-of-a-lawyer.html>>

rather than the facts. Winner would be the one that can represent their points of view with least weakness of it so that another team would find it hard to dispute.⁸ But if there is a winner then there would also be a loser. So how could you win the debate? In the past, when Socrates argued with others by using the Socratic Method, he never lost in the arguments; because no one could prove that what Socrates said was wrong.⁹ So if one knows how to apply the Socratic Method and use it well in the debate, they would be more likely to win because this method would lead another team to end up with conflicts between their constructive and their own points.

In conclusion, the Socratic Method is useful in various ways and can be adapted to use in different situations. Even though the Socratic Method is just only the way to achieve knowledge that Socrates uses to define his philosophy, which he is famous for. But it still has a lot of contributions to all people since the past until present.

⁸ Wikipedia contributors. "Debate" *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 7 February 2012 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Debate>>

⁹ Sharon Ryan. "Wisdom." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.) 7 February 2012. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/wisdom/>>