

A Taxonomy of Socratic Questions

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1999

Questions of clarification

What do you mean by such and such? What is your main point? Could you put that another way? Is your basic point such and such, or yadda yadda? Could you give me an example? Could you explain that further? Would you say more about that? Why do you say that?

Questions that probe problem articulation

So what do you think is the real problem? Can you tell me how you see the problem? What's the issue here? I'm not sure I understand the main problem here? Why is this important to you? Would so and so put the issue differently? Can we break the problem down at all to more than one problem?

Questions that probe assumptions

What do you think you are assuming? What are you taking for granted? You seem to be assuming such and such; do I understand you correctly? All of your reasoning seems to depend on such and such; why have you based your reasoning on such and such rather than yadda yadda? Is it always the case that such and such is so?

Questions that probe reasons and evidence

What are your reasons for saying that? What would be an example? How do you know? Why did you say that? What led you to believe that? What would convince you otherwise? How did this come to be? What difference does that make? Do you have any evidence for that? Why do you think that is true? Are those reasons good enough? Who would also know if that is the case? What would you say to someone who said such and such? What other information do you need? Could you explain your reasons?

Questions about viewpoints or perspectives

How would so and so respond? What would someone who disagrees with you say? What is an alternative? How could you answer the objection that so and so would make? You seem to be looking at this from such and such a perspective; what other perspective could you take?

Questions that probe implications and consequences

What are you implying by that? When you say such and such, are you implying yadda yadda? But if that happened, what else would happen too, and why? What effect would that have? What is an alternative outcome? What would be a bad outcomes for you? What would be a good outcome for you?