

Socrates in the Classroom



Bringing Creativity and Thinking Skills into the Educational Process
TA Teachers Conferences, Riga 2012

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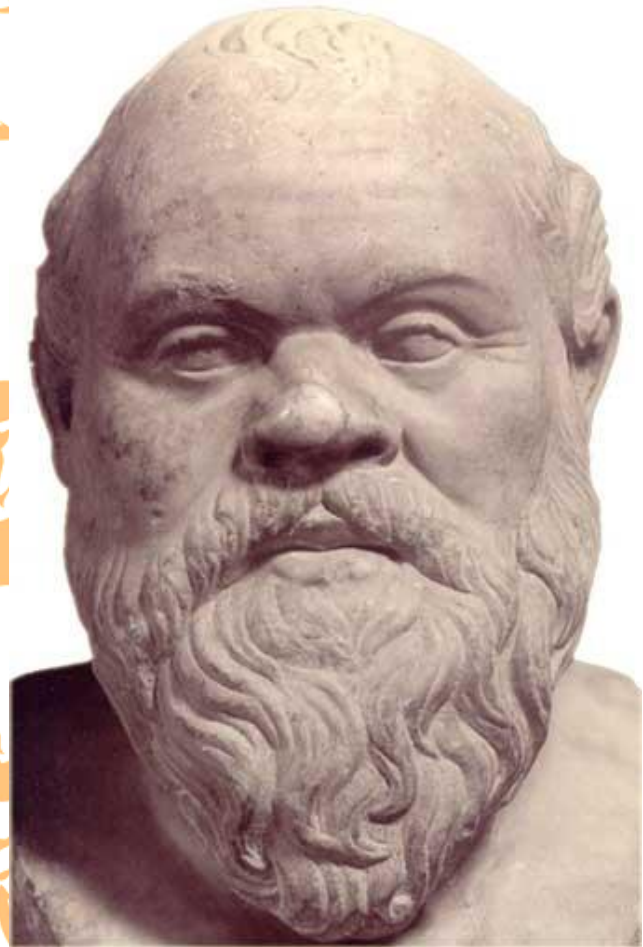
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Socratic seminars

- Antique tradition: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle
- 1899- 1930:
 - Swedish Popular Education, *Folkbildning*: Hans Larsson, Oscar Olsson, Ellen Key
 - Das Sokratische Gespräch: Leonard Nelson
- Contemporary methods:
 - The Paideia Seminar: Mortimer J Adler
 - Great Books' Shared Inquiry: Robert M Hutchins
 - Sokratiska samtal: Lars Lindström, Ann Pihlgren



“Relatives”



- P4C (Matthew Lipman)
- Philosophy with children (Gareth B Mathews)
- Deliberative dialogue
- John Dewey’s “recitation”

Learning to think in seminars

- Learning is interactive and contextual:
 - Habits of mind becomes intellectual/dialogical virtues and later intellectual and moral character/practical wisdom
 - Interpersonal learning becomes intrapersonal
- Intellectual virtues: critical inquiry and refutation
- Dialogical virtues: cooperating to do this



Research shows positive effects on:



- Critical thinking skills
- Language skills
- Self-esteem and higher awareness of self (character)
- Social climate
- Ability to solve conflicts

The seminar study



- 101 students five years old to grade nine
- 5 teachers held recurrent seminars with 7 groups
- Seminars filmed during three years on three occasions
- Group interaction analyzed closely through a phenomenological approach

Procedures



- Body language, direction of glances, and verbal group interaction were analyzed closely
- The analysis focused on how the seminar culture was taught and understood, and if the intended methodology was important.
- Closely reported extracts of the seminar actions after a new idea was presented, or after someone had broken the seminar rules, were made.
- Analyzed by “educational connoisseurship” and “educational criticism”.

Socrates in the classroom



- **Learning the game**
- Teaching the game
- **Rule breaking**
- Playing the game
- **Intellectual habits**
- Distribution of power

Five-year-olds discussing "Pippi Longstocking" by Astrid Lindgren



Learning the game



- Three stages of learning:
 - 1) understanding what the seminar game is about
 - 2) testing the game by focusing on the rules
 - 3) focusing on the intellectual content
- Differences between inexperienced learners of all ages and more skilled participants bigger than age differences
- Younger children more dependent on the facilitator
- Participants of all ages were able to philosophize and improve this from practice

The facilitator's confusion

From five-year-olds discussing Pippi Longstocking.

Dialogue:

Martin: You forgot the D in the beginning

Facilitator: m (.) d'you know (.) I'm just sitting here an' making kinda jotnotes
I'm not writing wholly fully just small (.) scribbling (.)

Facilitator: Martin then why (.)do you think would you like her as a friend? Or
wouldn't you

Martin: Nope

Facilitator: No?

Martin: Never

Facilitator: Never (.) why never

Martin: Becau:::se (.) she's a girl (↑)

Rule breaking

- Rules were broken because they were
 - A) not understood
 - B) broken intentionally to manipulate or to test
 - C) broken for something considered a higher purpose
- The game was restored if:
 - verbal interruptions were treated in an intellectual manner
 - when necessary open corrections
- The seminar outcome was dependent on whether the participants considered the seminar to be safe

Fascilitator's contradiction and support

From five-year-olds discussing Pippi Longstocking.

Dialogue:

Facilitator: Would you like Pippi as your friend?

Tom: Nope

Facilitator: No? And why not?

Tom: She:'sa girl (↓)

Facilitator: No but (.) you have friends that are girls

Tom: Mm sometimes yah (.) bu' not Pippi

Facilitator: Not Pippi, but if she was (.) boy then

Tom: Not (.) no

Facilitator: But but is it really so Mart (.) eh Tom that you think so

Tom: Yes

Facilitator: You who usually play a lot with the girls

Tom: Mm atleast instead smaller boys it doesn't matta if it's a girl or a boy

Facilitator: So it doesn't matter

Tom: Mm

Facilitator: Okay

Intellectual habits



- Intellectual habits relied heavily on dialogical virtues, ensuring a context where “bold” ideas might be tested
- The ritualized structure supported this
- It was essential to grasp that the individual should not be held personally responsible (or rewarded) for ideas
- The relationship was built anew in every seminar

Idun conducts

From five-year-olds discussing Pippi Longstocking.

Dialogue:

Facilitator: a real such (.) but I was thinking now you said Ricki ma:rty do you think he looks like her or

Tom: He's good looking

Facilitator: He's g

Martin: He sings we:::ll

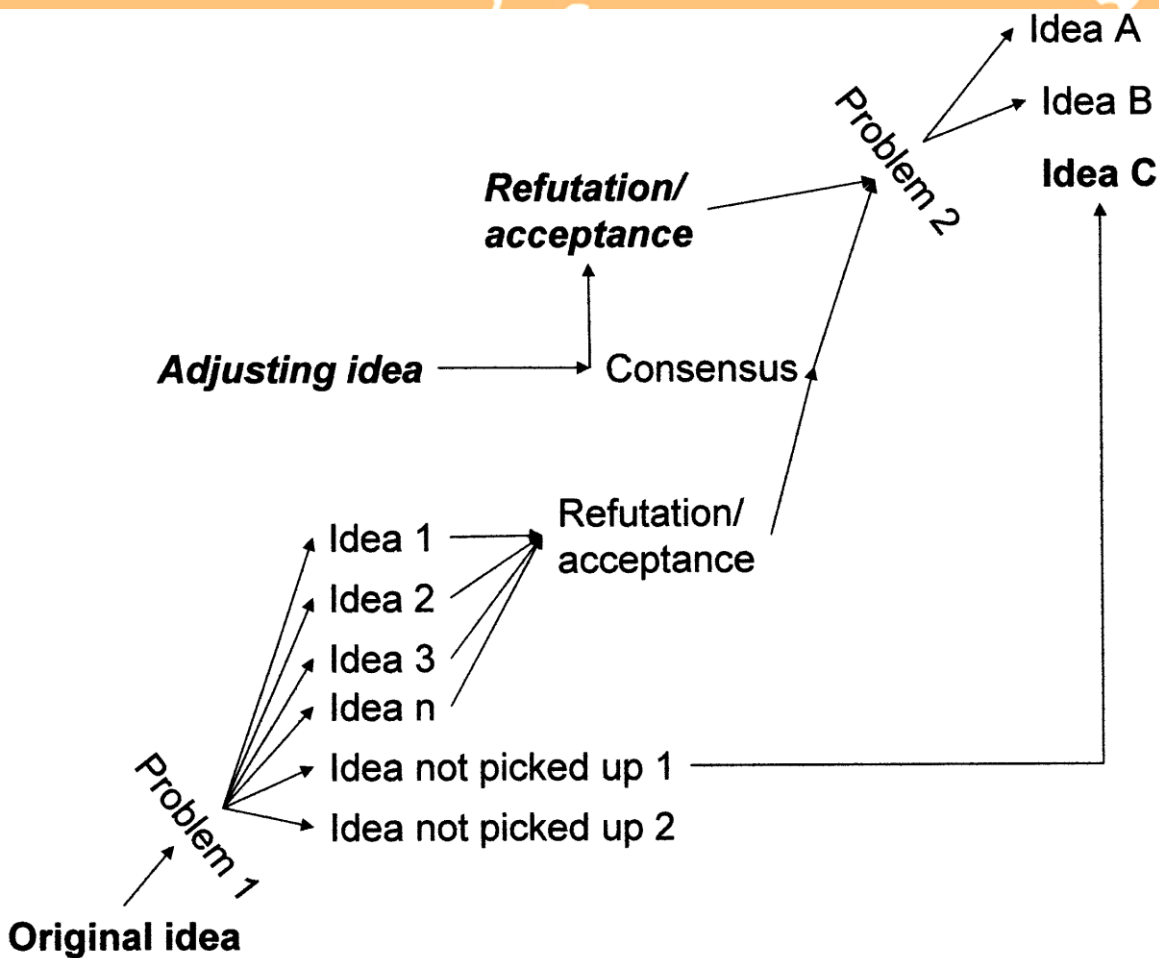
Facilitator: He's good looking buh

Tom: He sings good if itsounds

Facilitator: Sings good areya areya (.) are you good then that is

Tom: Yah you're popular

Advanced intellectual process



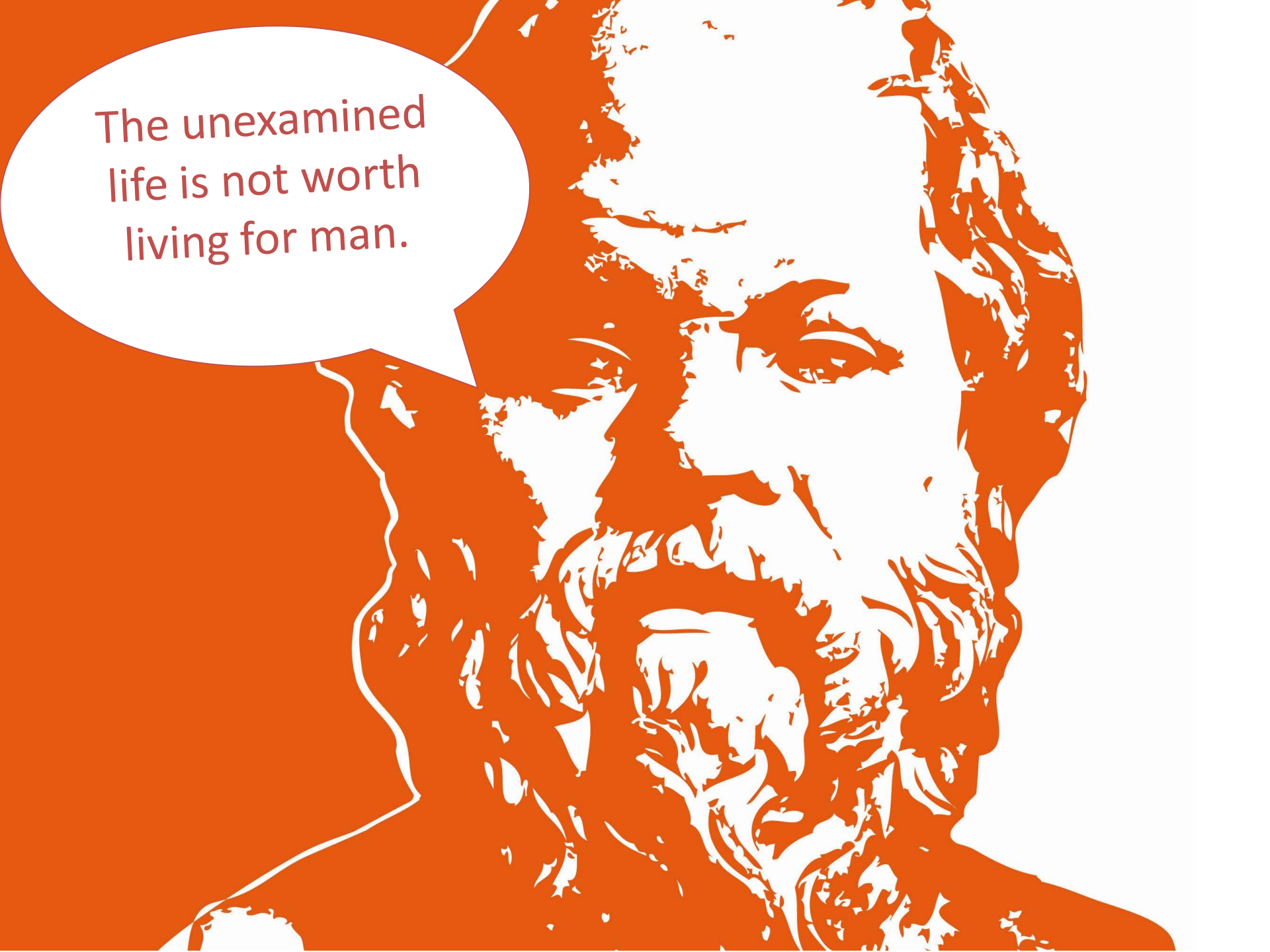


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Film: www.urplay.se

”Jakten på det demokratiska
klassrummet”

Freinetskolan Mimer



The unexamined
life is not worth
living for man.