

**ARTIFICIAL PHILOSOPHICAL COUNSELOR:
A MODEL FOR CONSTRUCTING A SOCRATIC DIALOGUE FOR AI
SYSTEMS**

**EL FILÓSOFO-CONSULTOR ARTIFICIAL:
UN PROGRAMA PARA CONSTRUIR UN DIÁLOGO SOCRÁTICO
MEDIANTE SISTEMAS DE INTELIGENCIA ARTIFICIAL**

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Abstract. This article serves as a guide for AI trainers on teaching AI systems to conduct Socratic dialogue. The artificial philosopher-counselor is designed exclusively to understand the client in all their uniqueness, without any biases or preferences that even the most authoritative human philosopher-counselor might possess. It is crucial that the AI acts as a leader, not a follower. We present a general algorithm for conducting Socratic dialogue, which can be expanded and adapted with additional data as needed. Our model focuses on analyzing speech utterances (texts) to grasp the distinctive features of the speaker's thinking and worldview (person), while also aiding the speaker in critically examining their own thought patterns (critical thinking) and understanding the nuances of their worldview (hermeneutics). During the dialogue, it is essential to balance two key stages: the critical stage, which involves examining underlying assumptions (working with presuppositions), and the hermeneutic stage, which aims to achieve a deeper understanding of the speaker's worldview. These attitudes cannot be applied simultaneously, but a thoughtful integration of both is vital for effective Socratic dialogue. Given the limitations of AI capabilities, it is important to ensure that all fundamental conditions for conducting philosophical dialogue are carefully maintained.

Keywords: Socratic dialogue, critical thinking, hermeneutics, questioning, presuppositions, interpretation

Resumen: Este artículo sirve como una guía para los formadores de inteligencia artificial (IA) sobre cómo enseñar a los sistemas de IA a llevar a cabo un diálogo socrático. El filósofo-consultor artificial está diseñado exclusivamente para comprender al cliente en toda su singularidad, sin los sesgos o preferencias que incluso el filósofo-consultor humano más autoritario podría tener. Es fundamental que la IA actúe como líder, no como seguidor. Presentamos un algoritmo general para llevar a cabo el diálogo socrático que puede ampliarse y adaptarse con datos adicionales según sea necesario. Nuestro modelo se centra en analizar las expresiones verbales (textos) para captar las características distintivas del pensamiento y la visión del mundo del hablante (persona), al tiempo que ayuda al hablante a examinar críticamente sus propios patrones de pensamiento (pensamiento crítico) y a comprender los matices de su visión del mundo (hermenéutica). Durante el diálogo, es esencial equilibrar dos etapas clave: la etapa crítica, que implica examinar los supuestos subyacentes (trabajar con presuposiciones), y la etapa hermenéutica, que tiene como objetivo lograr una comprensión más profunda de la visión del mundo del hablante. Estas actitudes no pueden aplicarse simultáneamente, pero una integración reflexiva de ambas es vital para un diálogo socrático eficaz. Dadas las limitaciones de las capacidades de la IA, es importante garantizar que se mantengan cuidadosamente todas las condiciones fundamentales para llevar a cabo un diálogo filosófico.

Palabras clave: Diálogo socrático, pensamiento crítico, hermenéutica, cuestionamiento, asunciones, interpretación.

Introduction

The use of Socratic dialogue is highly effective in clarifying the meaning of concepts or problems that arise in situations where a person struggles to realize certain life goals. Through Socratic dialogue, individuals can reach a deeper level of thinking and a broader worldview by developing skills such as effective questioning, detecting contradictions in their own speech, mastering basic conceptualization, and cultivating disciplined thinking. Additionally, Socratic dialogue fosters easier learning and enhances the ability to maintain a stable emotional state.

Given the rapid pace of AI development, it is now possible to create an artificial philosopher-counselor that engages with clients according to the principles of Socratic dialogue. This artificial philosopher-counselor communicates without any biases or prejudices – qualities inherent even in the most authoritative human philosopher-counselors. The AI's sole focus is on understanding the client in all their uniqueness. An important guiding principle for the AI is learning through teaching, which will greatly benefit the client by expanding their opportunities for self-knowledge.

Testing of current AI systems has revealed significant shortcomings: (1) they are not trained to incorporate arguments discovered during the dialogue within the original context; (2) they lack training to apply logical analysis to evaluate the dialogue process itself; and (3) they do not integrate their dialogue skills into a cohesive, guided counseling process.¹ It is crucial that the AI functions as a facilitator rather than a follower.

The database we propose is designed for AI trainers who can prepare an AI system to act as an individual philosopher-counselor using Socratic dialogue techniques in a text-based format. The database includes a general algorithm for developing Socratic dialogue, which can be enriched and adapted with additional data. Specialists can use the database to train the AI system to recognize and differentiate the proposed dialogue blocks, enabling it to conduct a meaningful dialogue by asking questions and responding to the interlocutor. This requires labeling the data appropriately for AI training. After the data is entered, the expert must assess the performance of the neural network. If errors or inaccuracies are found, adjustments should be made and the training repeated to ensure the system delivers useful questions, reliable answers, complete and accurate information, and ethical interactions.

¹ ARKOUDAS, Konstantine: “GPT-4 Can’t Reason”, available in <https://www.preprints.org/manuscript/202308.0148/v1> (last access August 30, 2024)

Socratic dialogue

Socratic dialogue involves engaging with speech utterances (texts) to understand the distinctive features of the speaker's thinking and worldview (person). It also helps the speaker to develop critical reflection on their thinking attitudes (critical thinking) and to gain a deeper understanding of the unique aspects of their worldview (hermeneutics).

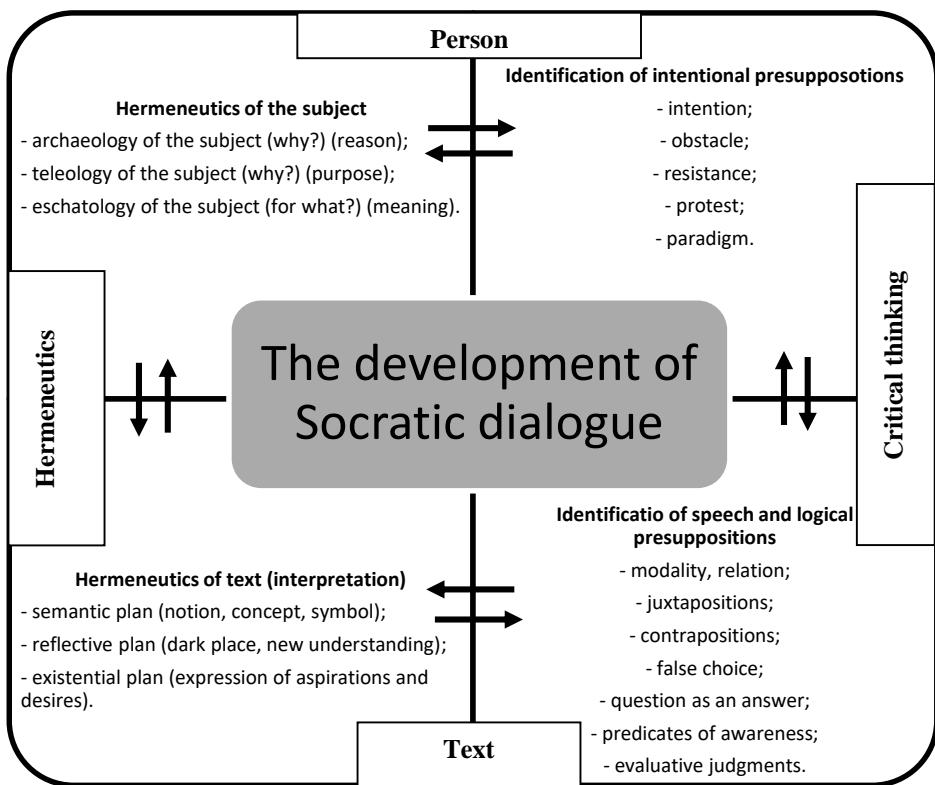


Figure 1. Model for the development of Socratic dialogue

Since a person's external speech is often automatic, it does not always accurately reflect what they are truly thinking. First, some statements may not express any concrete thought at all but instead reveal manifestations of their emotional state. Second, people often use speech to disguise or conceal their true thoughts about themselves, others, or situations, sometimes unwittingly misleading both themselves and others. Therefore, the philosopher-counselor's task is twofold: to help the interlocutor analyze their speech utterances to uncover hidden thoughts or meanings masked by external speech, and to assist in synthesizing thinking based on key notions and concepts that are meaningful to the interlocutor.

This philosophical practice proves effective both for clarifying the meaning of concepts used in speech and for elucidating problems arising in situations that hinder a person's ability to achieve life goals. By revealing the automatisms of emotions, speech, and actions, individuals can reach a deeper level of thought and worldview. This is achieved through the skills of asking precise questions, detecting contradictions in their own and others' speech, and mastering fundamental skills in conceptualization and disciplined thinking. Socratic dialogue also helps distinguish viewpoints and opinions from personal beliefs, creating an easier path to learning. Moreover, it fosters the ability to maintain a stable emotional state.

Thus, Socratic dialogue offers opportunities to analyze speech utterances for presuppositions (belief systems), uncover hidden meanings, and synthesize thinking based on concepts, images, and symbols. Through this process, Socratic dialogue addresses two fundamental questions: how to think and how to be. Its central attitude is one of conscious ignorance.

The famous Socratic dictum, "I know that I know nothing," finds its continuation in the dialogue – this is why Socrates asks questions

rather than providing answers.² Following St. Augustine and Descartes, radical doubt enables self-reflection and questioning of one's beliefs: I am the questioner = I am the doubter. Thus, "Socrates the critic has inspired skeptics".³

The truth of beliefs is tested through logic, which allows one to step outside oneself and adopt the perspective of an external observer of one's thoughts and speech. According to Plato's Socrates, the capacity for self-awareness and conceptual clarification emerges through the course of dialogue.⁴

Concept (notion)

The definition of concepts plays a central role in Socratic dialogue. The search for the true meaning of concepts is what distinguishes Socratic dialogue from sophistic dialogue. Unlike Socratic dialogue, sophistic dialogue does not aim to discover objective truth, as sophists consider the speaker (person) to be the measure of all things. In contrast, Socratic dialogue seeks to find a universal definition of a concept – its absolute meaning. A concept serves to differentiate

² For more information on the specifics of Socratic questioning, see: BENSON, Hugh: "Socratic Method", in Morrison, Donald (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 179-200; BETT, Richard: "Socratic Ignorance", in Morrison, Donald (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 215-236; DORION, Louis-André: "The Rise and Fall of the Socratic Problem", in Morrison, Donald (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 1-23.

³ BETT, Richard: "Socrates and Skepticism", in Ahbel-Rappe, Sara & Kamtekar, Rachana (eds.): *A Companion to Socrates*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2006, p. 298.

⁴ See: MATTHEWS, Gareth: "The Epistemology and Metaphysics of Socrates", in Fine, Gail (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 379-402; ROWE, Christopher: "Socrates in Plato's Dialogues", in Ahbel-Rappe, Sara & Kamtekar, Rachana (eds.): *A Companion to Socrates*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2006, pp. 159-170.

objects within one set from those in another, generalize objects within sets, and express the substance or essence of things. How is a concept formed? The process follows this algorithm:

- 1) Analyze the previous concept, image, or symbol.
- 2) Abstract by selecting relevant features.
- 3) Compare these features, categorizing them as positive (present), negative (absent), essential (mandatory), or nonessential (optional).
- 4) Synthesize a new concept, image, or symbol based on this analysis.

Logic

Logic represents a distancing from the self that transcends the factual in order to grasp the general and conceptual (pure reason). According to Hegel, logic enables us to discover:

- 1) In nature: modes of organization, structures, and forms.
- 2) In the human being: subjectivity and its social objectifications manifest in law (constraints – what I can and cannot do), morality (freedom – what I should and should not do), and ethics (will – what I strive for and what I avoid).
- 3) In spirit: the World Soul expressed through art, religion, and philosophy.⁵

The distinctive feature of the dialogical logic in the Socratic method is its constant alternation between two modes of thought: first, the search for similarities between things that initially appear different; second, the discovery of differences between things that at first seem

⁵ See: HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich: *Hegel's Science of Logic*, Allen & Unwin, 1969; WHITE, Nicholas: "Socrates in Hegel and Others", in Ahbel-Rappe, Sara & Kamtekar, Rachana (eds.): *A Companion to Socrates*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2006, pp. 368-385.

the same. This alternating process characterizes the dynamic, back-and-forth rhythm of Socratic analysis.⁶

The rules of Socratic conversation are as follows:

- 1) Seek the truth; do not strive to win an argument.
- 2) Study people, not just their judgments.
- 3) Evaluate arguments on their merits, regardless of who presents them.
- 4) Speak directly and only say what you truly think.
- 5) Apply the principle of ‘one witness’ – treat your interlocutor as a judge assessing your testimony (judgments).
- 6) Adhere to the principle of trust.
- 7) Do not take offense or insult the other person.

Two questions: how to think and how to be?

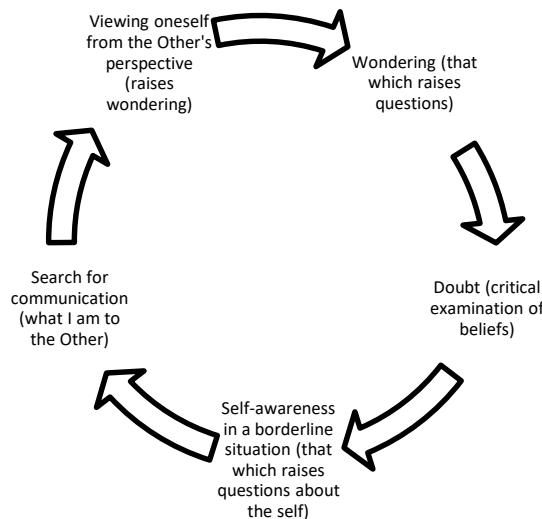


Figure 2. The relationship between the epistemological and ontological aspects of Socratic dialogue

⁶ FARNSWORTH, Ward: *The Socratic Method: A Practitioner's Handbook*, Boston, Mass.: Godine, 2021, p. 127.

According to Plato, the essence of Socratic dialogue lies in two key processes: *elenchos* (testing, posing challenging questions, and seeking contradictions) and *maieutike* (self-transformation through acquiring new knowledge and experience).⁷ These are achieved through philosophical questioning, which also reflects a unique emotional state. Managing emotions during Socratic dialogue is as important as addressing thoughts, as emotions directly reveal a person's state of mind throughout the conversation.

The Socratic method holds that people should not be separated from their views. This therapeutic stance means that along with the statement, the individual who made it is always subject to examination. If the interlocutor proves inconsistent, the problem lies with the interlocutor, not with the statement itself. The dialogue is conducted based on premises borrowed – even if erroneous – from the opponent.

There are beliefs people openly express and others they silently hold. Meaningful progress in conversation cannot occur until both are brought to light. Therefore, one of the Socratic questioner's roles is to encourage honesty. While sincerely expressed opinions will be challenged and tested, the person presenting them will not be condemned.

Philosophical questioning

The ability to ask questions is the fundamental requirement for conducting a Socratic dialogue. To ensure that questioning effectively advances the conversation and opens new avenues for

⁷ Ibid, p. 93. See also: BURNYEAT, Myles: "Socratic Midwifery, Platonic Inspiration", *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, no. 24, 1977, pp. 7-16; LEE, Mi-Kyoung: "The Theaetetus", in Fine, Gail (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 260-285.

exploration, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the different types of questions. These include:

- 1) Closed questions, which elicit yes or no answers.
- 2) Open questions, which allow for free-form responses.
- 3) Rhetorical questions, which are essentially categorical statements that do not require an answer but reveal the speaker's beliefs.

<i>Categories (according to Aristotle, Kant)⁸</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Answers</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Substance (essence)	Who? What?	Singular judgment (who or what is)	This is Ivan. This is a table.
Quality (Property: Reality, Negation, Limitation)	Which one? What kind?	Affirmative (such properties exist) or negative (such properties do not exist)	A table is a piece of furniture with a raised horizontal surface. A table is not a piece of upholstered furniture.
Quantity (Unity, Plurality, Totality)	How many?	General (all) or private (some) judgments	All tables are pieces of furniture. Some tables have built-in drawers.
Place	Where?	Judgments of localization and concretization	The table is in the kitchen. We gathered around the dining table at three o'clock.
Time	When?	Temporal judgments	The meeting was yesterday. The event happens every Monday.
Relation (Inherence,	How? How so?	Hypothetical (if-then) and	When you wash your hands, and then sit down

⁸ THOMASSON, Amie: “Categories”, in Zalta, Edward (ed.): *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2019, available in <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/categories/> (last access August 30, 2024).

Accident, Reciprocity)		categorical (obligation) judgments	at the table. You must wash your hands before sitting down.
Modality (Possibility, Existence, Necessity)	How? In what way?	Judgments of possibility, existence and necessity	Maybe I will sit at the table. I am sitting at the table. I need to sit at the table.
Causality and Dependence (Cause and Effect)	Why? For what purpose?	Judgments about cause or purpose	The table is here because it was brought. The table is here to be dined at.

In philosophical dialogue, the question ‘why’ should be used sparingly. First, it can prompt the interlocutor to become defensive or feel accused, as they may interpret the question as a challenge. Second, overusing ‘why’ can steer the conversation away from self-knowledge toward abstract theorizing.

A special emotional state

According to Aristotle, the conclusion of a practical syllogism – an inference related to action – is necessarily compelled.⁹ In such a syllogism, the major premise invokes an ‘ought to’ action, and the minor premise represents a particular instance of that action. The conclusion is the action itself that the major premise necessitates.¹⁰ Notably, in everyday practical syllogisms, this conclusion also carries an emotional component.

⁹ PRACTICAL SYLLOGISM: in *Sparknotes: Nicomachean Ethics terms*, available in <https://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/ethics/characters/> (last access August 30, 2024).

¹⁰ BLACKBURN, Simon: “Syllogism”, in Blackburn, Simon (ed.): *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 425.

In the Logic-Based Therapy (LBT) approach developed by E. Cohen, practical syllogisms are used to analyze emotional reactions through intentional objects (O) within a person's belief system that trigger strong emotions (R), where R represents the intensity of the emotional response.¹¹

The interlocutor's reasoning can be structured as follows:

Major premise: Belief system (If O, then R)

Minor premise: Event (O)

Conclusion: Emotional consequences (Therefore, R)

During Socratic dialogue, questions target the major premise to uncover the underlying intentional presuppositions. If these beliefs withstand critical questioning, the person achieves better understanding of their attitudes. If not, the false ideas within the major premise can be reconsidered.

Irrational false beliefs – considered 'emotional poisons' – can be countered by virtues, which serve as moral antidotes.¹² The focus is not on the cause of the problem but on the emotional state the problem generates. Individuals should master their moods and take responsibility for their emotional responses. This approach facilitates a therapeutic placebo effect characterized by:

- 1) Positive expectations and hope.
- 2) Establishing an open, trusting relationship with the world.
- 3) Adopting a virtuous and conscious way of life.

The table below shows which false beliefs can be opposed to which virtues. By identifying false beliefs in the major premises of practical syllogisms during Socratic dialogue, the interlocutor's thinking can

¹¹ See: COHEN, Elliot: *Critical Thinking Unleashed*, Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.

¹² See: COHEN, Elliot: *The New Rational Therapy: Thinking Your Way to Serenity, Success, and Profound Happiness*, Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006.

be guided toward comprehending their situation from the standpoint of the corresponding virtue.

<i>Emotional poison (irrational belief)</i>	<i>Moral antidote (virtue)</i>
Life is dangerous (idealized expectation: I should be perfect, and life punishes me for my mistakes)	Life is safe (realistic acceptance: I am human, striving for ideals, and life teaches me to learn from mistakes)
Hostility of the world (damnation)	Openness to the world (respect)
Conformism (jumping on the bandwagon)	Authenticity
Egocentrism	Empathy
Manipulation	Empowerment of others
Intolerance	Self-control
Hasty conclusions	Evidence-based thinking
Indifference	Involvement

This table illustrates how false beliefs, which generate unhealthy emotional responses, can be counteracted by cultivating corresponding virtues. In Socratic dialogue and therapeutic practice, guiding interlocutors to recognize these connections supports more balanced emotional well-being and clearer thinking.

Critical thinking (identifying presuppositions)

The critical stage of dialogue involves working with presuppositions. Through questioning, the goal is to identify and clarify both intentional and logical presuppositions. The principle of logical censorship applies here, meaning the dialogue demands consistency, objectivity, brevity, and relevance in judgments. A presupposition is the implicit, prior knowledge on which a speaker relies in an utterance. This knowledge may be general (common understanding of the world), specific (such as professional

expertise), or habitual speech patterns (stable word connections in sentences). Presuppositions establish the context of an utterance. When this context is grasped, the presupposition becomes understandable. Presuppositions are typically personal and individual, yet they claim universal meaning. Usually, they go unreflected upon during speech because they underpin communication and support argumentation – they are, in a sense, the shadow side of speech.

Speech presuppositions can be detected through the modality of verbs (e.g., ought, must, can, want), adjectives and adverbs that express attitudes toward the object of speech. Additionally, rhetorical questions, shaped by the questioner's belief system, indicate presuppositions. Logical presuppositions include:

- 1) Juxtapositions: judgments based on conditional forms such as *if..., then..., as soon as..., then..., or when..., then... etc.*
- 2) Contrapositions: judgments framed with comparative forms such as *the more..., the more..., so much..., how much... etc.*
- 3) Statements containing false choices (e.g., "To be home at nine! Deal?").
- 4) Questions framed as answers (e.g., "Tell me why you like going to school?").
- 5) Predicates of awareness starting with phrases like *you realized that..., you are well aware that..., you surely noticed that..., or anyone would agree that... etc.*
- 6) Evaluative judgments beginning with phrases, as *it is important..., it is necessary..., it is strange..., it is obligatory..., or it is surprising... etc.*

Intentional presuppositions reflect the interlocutor's belief system and general life rules, namely:

- 1) The intention connected to their idea of the good.
- 2) The obstacle to the good revealed during the dialogue.
- 3) The resistance arising when the interlocutor cannot share their idea of the good.

4) The paradigm, or the way they interpret the good.

Socratic dialogue does not require interpreting or analyzing presuppositions in depth; what matters most is that changes occur within the interlocutor's belief system. This enables them to consider previously unthinkable ideas, opening new avenues for thought, fostering discoveries in understanding and argumentation, as well as in self-awareness and self-control.

Hermeneutics (understanding and interpretation)

The hermeneutic stage of dialogue is the stage of understanding. It requires open-mindedness, attentive listening, open-ended questioning, and a deep exploration of the interlocutor's system of ideas or worldview. The principle of freedom of speech – or freedom of self-expression – applies here.

Hermeneutics is the art and practice of understanding and interpretation. True understanding demands the suspension of critical judgment, embodying the principle of mercy: listening to the interlocutor without forcing the dialogue or imposing one's own guiding comments.

Although hermeneutic and critical attitudes cannot be applied simultaneously, a balanced combination of the two is essential for effective Socratic dialogue. These attitudes represent different approaches to developing the conversation. Critical thinking pushes the dialogue toward precision, brevity, and logical consistency, often requiring the sacrifice of the personal for the sake of the universal. In contrast, the hermeneutic attitude fosters deep personal involvement, seeking to reveal what is unique in the individual. It moves away from universal, impersonal truths to honor the particular and special aspects of each person.

Hermeneutics of text (interpretation)

According to Ricœur, interpretation is a long journey to the person through language. Mere semantic clarification remains incomplete until it is shown that understanding polysemantic or symbolic expressions becomes a moment of self-understanding. Thus, the semantic approach is inherently connected to the reflective one. However, the subject who interprets signs and thereby interprets themselves is no longer a detached *Cogito* – a disinterested, introspective observer. Instead, an existing person discovers that they are in being before they believe or control themselves.¹³ The interlocutor becomes personally engaged in the interpretation, deeply involved and affected by it.

The semantic plane of interpretation involves uncovering multiple meanings through the interpretation of concepts, ideas, images, or symbols.

The reflective plane of interpretation involves linking the understanding of the text – its content and speech – with self-understanding, leading the interlocutor to ask, ‘Do I understand myself?’ This doubt unfolds on two levels: first, the discovery of a dark or unfamiliar area in one’s own interpretation, where what was once taken for granted now becomes questionable; second, the growing realization of what the interlocutor initially did not understand or perhaps chose to ignore at the start of the dialogue.

The existential plane of interpretation involves the interlocutor’s understanding of their aspirations or life interests, along with their desire to pursue and satisfy these interests.

¹³ RICOEUR, Paul: *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 49.

The semantic plane of interpretation

According to Ricœur, interpretation is an intellectual effort that involves deciphering the meaning behind the apparent meaning, revealing the multiple layers contained within the literal sense.¹⁴

Dialogue should develop according to the principle of narrative horizontality – that is, the narrative is interpreted not through a vertical hierarchy of importance (important versus unimportant), but rather through horizontality, which uncovers the horizon of the narrator's worldview. In this way, the story told (the *noematic* aspect, or features of the narration) reveals the qualities of the narrator (the *noetic* aspect, or features of personality) because the narrator prioritizes their own worldview horizon.

Allegories play a crucial role in Socratic dialogue. An allegory is a means of making the abstract concrete and the concrete abstract; it is the representation of ideas through imagery. Allegory can reveal the absurdity of being certain about something because a concrete image can point to a hidden or deeper idea. It helps us understand that hidden idea by allowing us to literally 'see' it through the image. Moreover, the dialogue facilitator can 'mirror back' to the interlocutor the problematic attitudes and language they express. While the context may shift, the same words, reasoning, and emotions used by the interlocutor are reflected. This confrontation with absurdity encourages the interlocutor to reconsider the validity and quality of their argumentation.

The reflective plan of interpretation

According to Ricœur, reflection is the process of appropriating our effort to exist and our desire to be through the works that testify to

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 51.

this effort and desire.¹⁵ In the context of Socratic dialogue, this work takes the form of the speaker's narrative. Engrossed in their story, the narrator often overlooks paradoxes embedded within the narrative, skipping over them as the story unfolds. It is essential for the facilitator of the Socratic dialogue to draw the speaker's attention to these paradoxical moments.

A paradox challenges thinking by revealing the complexity of the world and the incomprehensibility of reality. It highlights the limits of belief and teaches humility and moderation. Paradox also trains intuition and fosters thinking through uncertainty. It provides a unique pleasure – the pleasure of loss – where disrupting cognitive stability becomes not a problem but an enjoyable realization of one's ignorance. However, the narrator's reaction to a discovered paradox may be ambivalent, ranging from surprise, joy, and openness to paralysis of the will. A well-conducted Socratic dialogue clarifies that paradox is not a dead end but an open door to self-discovery.

During Socratic dialogue, when a paradox is encountered, one should be able – using the terminology of E. Spinelli – to transform a dissonance conflict into a consonance conflict.¹⁶ A dissonance conflict is the negative experience of inconsistency, where reality clashes with one's habitual worldview, often closing off or blocking thought. In contrast, a consonance conflict is the positive experience of uncovering unforeseen, unexpected insights through the collision with reality, which opens and awakens thought.

The existential plane of interpretation

According to J. Lacan, the subject does not so much speak as appears or 'shows up' in conversation.¹⁷ Existence is defined by desire and

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 58.

¹⁶ SPINELLI, Ernesto: *Existential Therapy: The Relational World*, London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2014, p. 145.

¹⁷ See: BUCHAN, Mark: "Lacan and Socrates", in Ahbel-Rappe, Sara &

effort: effort represents positive energy and dynamism, while desire points to lack and need. In Socratic dialogue, the challenge of reflection must transcend itself by engaging with the problematics of existence, since reflection always occurs within and through interpretation. Desire serves as the foundation of meaning and reflection, revealed through the decoding of desire's underlying strategies or 'tricks'. There is no independent existence of desire outside interpretation; desire is always interpreted. While we can discuss the mysteries or riddles of consciousness, it remains ultimately elusive and beyond grasp as a standalone entity. Consequently, the existential plane of dialogue presupposes the expansion of the interlocutor's self-knowledge through a clearer understanding of the motives underlying their judgments and actions. This represents the deepest level of understanding, accessible only through introspection. Socratic dialogue facilitates the interlocutor's attainment of such profound self-awareness.

Hermeneutics of the subject

According to Ricœur, it is through interpretation that the *Cogito* discovers behind itself what might be called the archaeology of the subject. Psychoanalysis reveals existence as the existence of desire, discovered primarily within this archaeology of the subject. In contrast, other hermeneutic approaches, such as the hermeneutics of the phenomenology of spirit, locate the source of meaning not behind the subject but in front of it. This perspective is known as the hermeneutics of prophetic consciousness. Thus, the teleology of the subject stands opposed to its archaeology.¹⁸

Kamtekar, Rachana (eds.): *A Companion to Socrates*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2006, pp. 463-475.

¹⁸ RICOEUR, Paul: *Ibid*, p. 65.

Archaeology and teleology reveal the *arche* (origin) and *telos* (goal) that the subject can understand and master, but this is not the case with the sacred, which asserts itself in the phenomenology of religion – the eschatology of the subject. The sacred symbolically signifies the alpha and omega of all teleology. These alpha and omega are not possessed by the subject. Instead, the sacred calls upon humanity and, in doing so, declares itself as the ordering force of human existence, believed absolutely as both an effort to be and a desire to be.

These radically opposed hermeneutics each move, in their own way, toward the ontological roots of understanding. Each speaks to the dependence of self on existence but from different angles: psychoanalysis reveals this dependence through the archaeology of the subject; the phenomenology of spirit, through the teleology of images; and the phenomenology of religion, through the signs of the sacred. In this sense, existence – as it manifests in Socratic dialogue – always remains interpreted existence. Through interpretation, existence reveals its multiple modalities of dependence: on desire (highlighted in the archaeology of the subject), on spirit (highlighted in teleology), and on the sacred (highlighted in eschatology).

Conclusion

Philosophical counseling is the qualified assistance a philosopher provides to a person facing a complex life problem or a challenging worldview issue – for example, when certain life values conflict, when life loses its former meaning, or when reflection alone fails to break a repetitive cycle of thought. Through Socratic dialogue, the philosopher-counselor helps the interlocutor uncover hidden prerequisites, unspoken assumptions, and conflicting values – everything that may obstruct the search for alternative perspectives and potential solutions. The philosopher-counselor acts as a guide,

mentor, or helper who awakens the inner philosopher within the interlocutor.

Socratic dialogue offers tools for philosophical thinking, not ready-made prescriptions or advice. This process enables individuals to grow and develop their own philosophical understanding of the world and to realize their unique being within it. From this viewpoint, philosophizing is not about constructing general, abstract theories but about expressing a particular way of being in the world. The philosopher-counselor also helps interlocutors assess the confidence they place in their mental constructs, which they might mistake for objective facts, and assists in diversifying habitual concepts that may lead to conceptual dead ends.

Our proposed model of Socratic dialogue development can be automated using AI. This requires conducting experiments with Natural Language Understanding (NLU) and Natural Language Generation (NLG) technologies, specifically by training a GPT model. One of GPT's most groundbreaking features is its ability to perform novel tasks it has not been explicitly trained for – a learning paradigm that combines unsupervised pre-training on massive datasets with controlled fine-tuning on task-specific data, such as that presented in this article. Once fine-tuned, GPT could potentially act as a philosopher-counselor.

Several competencies must be integrated into such an AI philosopher-counselor model, including: understanding core philosophical concepts (mainly from European philosophy); the ability to explain philosophical terminology in simple, accessible language; skill in conducting Socratic dialogue; aptitude in identifying presuppositions; capacity for logical analysis and detection of logical errors; and the ability to apply philosophical ideas within the interlocutor's personal context. It is important to be realistic about the current limitations of AI – to distinguish which challenges can be overcome through fine-tuning and which remain insurmountable for today's GPT models.

Nevertheless, modern AI models demonstrate remarkable and inexhaustible capacity for learning. The more interaction occurs with such a model, the better it ‘understands’ us, allowing it to pose increasingly profound questions. Ultimately, this dynamic can contribute significantly to human self-development.

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