

TOK Socratic Seminar Prompts Q1 (new)

Your main task is to try to own a few of these prompts (since we won't get to them all) and either *ju-jitsu* and reverse the premise of the prompt and show how flawed the question is or unpack its assumptions/implications/relevance to specific branches of TOK diagram. Main challenge will be using personal experience, all the classes you've had, all the knowledge and case studies and books/movies/documentaries you've seen, historical examples and other global cultures/knowledge communities in order to **PROVIDE CONCRETE REAL WORLD EVIDENCE** to the TOK-world question

DAY ONE

LANGUAGE PROMPTS (15+min)

- 1a) Some experts (athletes, dancers, musicians, visual artists, cabinet makers, lab technicians, mechanics, surgeons, etc.) may have acquired knowledge that is difficult to describe in words. Does this mean that other Ways of Knowing play a more important role than language in knowing how to do something? (07 Q8)
- 1b) Can language be compared with other human forms of symbolic representation, such as conventionalized gestures, sign language for the deaf, painting, dance, music or mathematics? What might language share with these other forms in the communication of what we know? In what ways might it be considered distinct?
- 1c) 2012: Compare and contrast knowledge which can be expressed in words/symbols with knowledge that cannot be expressed in this way.
- 2a) "All of the other Ways of Knowing are controlled by language." What does this statement mean and do you think it is a fair representation of the relationship between sense perception, emotion, reason and language? (05 #3)
- 2b) Is it possible to think without language? How does language facilitate, extend, direct or limit thinking?
- 2c) (04 #5) "Words are more treacherous and powerful than we think." Evaluate the extent to which the characteristics Sartre claims for words affect – negatively or positively – different Areas of Knowledge. Provide real-world examples from at least 2 AOKs.
- 2d) What did Aldous Huxley (1947) mean when he observed that "Words form the thread on which we string our experiences"? To what extent is it possible to separate our experience of the world from the narratives we construct of them?

OTHER TOK STUFF TO DISCUSS

- I. Is it an oversimplification to claim that some Ways of Knowing give us facts while others provide interpretations? (M07)
- II. "In order to find out how things really are, one must understand the filters through which one perceives the world." Discuss and evaluate this claim. (M04)
- III. Can literature tell the truth better than other Arts or Areas of knowledge? (M07)
- IV. Is knowledge in mathematics and other Areas of Knowledge dependent on culture to the same degree and in the same ways? (M05)
- V. "Tell me how you're conducting your research and I'll tell you what you're looking for." To what extent do the methods used in different Areas of knowledge determine the scope of the research and the conclusions you can reach? (M06)
- VI. Sometimes we hear reasoned arguments that oppose a view to which we are emotionally committed; sometimes we hear a passionate plea for a view we have good reason to reject. Bearing this in mind, discuss the importance of reason and emotion in distinguishing between belief and knowledge. (M06)
- VII. Discuss the ways in which value judgments should and should not be used in different Areas of Knowledge. (M07)
- VIII. What are the differences between the following: information, data, belief, faith, opinion, knowledge and wisdom?
- IX. Does making a knowledge claim carry any particular obligation or responsibility for the knower?
- X. "*The ultimate protection against research error and bias is supposed to come from the way scientists constantly re-test each other's results.*" To what extent would you agree with this claim in the natural sciences and the human sciences? (N12)
- XI. Does knowledge come from inside or outside? Do we construct reality or do we recognize it? **DO WE ALL SHARE ONE OBJECTIVE REALITY OR NOT?**
- XII. Are the following types of justification all equally reliable: intuition, sense perception, evidence, reasoning, memory, authority, group consensus, and divine revelation?
- XIII. *Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.* (Albert Einstein) Do you agree? (N12)
- XIV. Do the images of a web, building blocks, concentric circles, a spiral, or a grid make a convincing description of the interconnections in the ways of knowing and areas of knowledge? In what ways might these metaphors be useful?
- XV. The idea of a "theory of everything" is tantalizing (in neurology, in physics, in economics, etc), but is it a helpful or counter-productive thing in the pursuit of knowledge?

DAY 2

LANGUAGE PROMPTS (15+min)

- 1a) Ezra Pound once said “the sum of human wisdom is not contained in any one language, and no single language is capable of expressing all forms and degrees of human comprehension...” Do you agree or disagree? Analyze the statement and your response. What view of humans and the nature of intelligence comes from this view?
- 1b) 2012: ‘The vocabulary we have does more than communicate our knowledge; it shapes what we can know’. Evaluate this claim with reference to different areas of knowledge.
- 1c) What may have been meant by the comment “How strangely do we diminish a thing as soon as we try to express it in words” (Maurice Maeterlinck)? What do we gain, and what do we lose, when we name something?
- 2) 2010: “*We see and understand things not as they are but as we are.*” (TRY TO USE LANGUAGE)
- 3) To what extent does a personal experience elude expression in language?
- 4) How do computer languages compare with the conventional written and spoken languages of everyday discourse?
- 5) Is the capacity to acquire language innate?
- 6a) In what ways does written language differ from spoken language in its relationship to knowledge? Can control of written language create or reinforce power?
- 6b) What is the role of language in creating and reinforcing social distinctions, such as class, ethnicity and gender?
- 7) To what degree might different languages shape in their speakers different concepts of themselves and the world? What are the implications of such differences for knowledge?
- 8) To what extent is it possible to overcome ambiguity and vagueness in language?

REASON PROMPTS

- 9) If knowledge claims cannot be rationally defended, should they be renounced? Is the answer to this question dependent on the area of knowledge of the claim?
- 10) What, if any, are the advantages of expressing arguments in symbolic terms? Are the ambiguity and vagueness of conventional language eliminated by this formulation?
- 11) Is reason purely objective and universal, or does it vary across cultures? Is logic purely objective and universal?
- 12) To what extent do you agree with André Gide’s view that, “L’illlogisme irrite. Trop de logique ennue. La vie échappe à la logique, et tout ce que la seule logique construit reste artificiel et contraint. *Donc* est un mot que doit ignorer le poète, et qui n’existe que dans l’esprit.” [Lack of logic annoys. Too much logic is boring. Life escapes logic, and everything built on logic alone is artificial and limited. *Therefore* is a word that the poet must ignore, that exists only in the mind.]?

OTHER TOK STUFF TO DISCUSS

- A. Can we know something that has not been proven true? (M04)
- B. If someone says, “I know this music,” how can the claim be evaluated? Compare your answer with the evaluation of claims in Areas of Knowledge other than the Arts. (M04)
- C. “Art upsets, science reassures” (Braque). Analyze and evaluate this claim. (02 #3)
- D. If education means learning to see through the clichés of one’s time, how does learning in the different Areas of Knowledge and in TOK contribute to this education? (M06)
- E. Do questions like “Why should I be moral?” or “Why shouldn’t I be selfish?” have definitive answers as do some questions in other Areas of Knowledge? Does having a definitive answer make a question more or less important? (M06)
- F. “In the natural sciences progress can be made, but in the arts this is not possible.” To what extent do you agree? (N13)
- G. How much of one’s knowledge depends on interaction with other knowers?
- H. In what sense is a community of knowers like bees constructing the labyrinths of their hive or a group of builders constructing a building? What is the best metaphor you can come up with (generally or for a specific knowledge community / profession)?
- I. “Technology both enables us to produce knowledge and limits the knowledge that is produced.” Discuss with reference to two areas of knowledge. (N13)
- J. “... our knowledge is only a collection of scraps and fragments that we put together into a pleasing design, and often the discovery of one new fragment would cause us to alter utterly the whole design” (Morris Bishop). To what extent is this true in history and one other area of knowledge? (N13)
- K. Can we have beliefs or knowledge which are independent of our culture? (N12)
- L. What are your thoughts about the 4 new WOKs (faith, intuition, imagination, memory)? Do any/all belong in TOK diagram?
- M. “*It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts*” (Arthur Conan Doyle). Consider the extent to which this statement may be true in two or more areas of knowledge. (HELLO: econ!) (N12)
- N. Which is more unknowable: the world out there (stellar space, demographics, geology, etc) or the world in you (brain science, psychology, the nature of creativity)?