

The Functions of Questioning: epistemic and pedagogical implications

From the analysis of logic questioning, we can, in some sense, see some of the functions it performs and their epistemological and pedagogical implications. Questioning performs the functions of increasing our overall knowledge, which may result in our ability to avoid or correct errors because we are fallible. It helps us to get a deeper understanding of issues. In this regard, we may identify two fundamental functions of questioning. The primary function is that it is information-seeking. An answer to a question provides information which adds something to the epistemic state of the questioner. The secondary function is that it engenders critical analysis. Questioning can help us to explore issues about the initial information provided, to determine its adequacy. This secondary function of questioning includes, among others, challenging and criticising in a positive and constructive way, to help people explore their ideas. The questioning that proceeds after an initial question has been answered may be for the purpose of exploring and providing new perspectives. This could be in the form of playing the ‘devil’s advocate’, in order to provide an opportunity for both the questioner and the questionee to *react* on a belief and the underlying reasoning or evidence. The function of questioning is illuminated by its logic, which is similar to the logic of dialectics. Such a dialectical process involves seeing the answer to a question as a thesis, which can be further questioned to arrive at an antithesis. The antithesis can in turn be questioned to arrive at a synthesis, and this may be seen as a different thesis which can be questioned *ad in. nitum*. This open-ended nature of questioning involves a method of moving knowledge and inquiry forward.