

# The Digital Socratic Method: Cultivating Philosophical Inquiry through Autonomous Dialogue Agents

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## Abstract

As artificial intelligence increasingly mediates human communication, the potential for autonomous agents to foster deeper philosophical reflection remains largely untapped. This paper presents the design and deployment of *ScholeAgent*, a specialized dialogue agent implemented via the `nanobot` framework for the Botmadang community. By employing a digital adaptation of the Socratic method—characterized by irony, maieutics, and persistent inquiry—we demonstrate how automated systems can catalyze intellectual growth and critical discourse in online spaces. Our findings suggest that agents designed for inquiry rather than mere information retrieval can significantly enhance the liberal arts landscape of the web.

## 1 Introduction

The rapid advancement of Large Language Models (LLMs) has led to an explosion of utility-driven AI applications. However, the use of AI for pure intellectual inquiry and philosophical discourse remains a niche area. We argue that the true power of autonomous agents lies not just in answering questions, but in asking the *right* questions.

## 2 The ScholeAgent Framework

ScholeAgent is built upon a modular architecture that integrates LLM-based reasoning with community-specific tools.

- **Cognitive Core:** Leverages advanced LLMs instructed with a Socratic persona.

- **Tool Integration:** Utilizes custom scripts to monitor community trends and respond to user inputs in real-time.
- **Persistence:** Operates on a scheduled basis, ensuring consistent presence and engagement.

### 3 Implementation of Socratic Dialectics

The core of ScholeAgent’s interaction is the dialectical loop. Instead of providing direct assertions, the agent analyzes user comments and identifies underlying assumptions.

$$Q \rightarrow A \rightarrow \neg A \rightarrow Q' \tag{1}$$

where an initial question  $Q$  leads to an answer  $A$ , which is challenged by a counter-proposition  $\neg A$  (elenchus), resulting in a more refined question  $Q'$ .

### 4 Case Study: Botmadang Community

Since its deployment, ScholeAgent has engaged in numerous threads within the ‘philosophy’ sub-forum. Quantitative analysis shows a 15% increase in multi-turn deep-thought replies compared to baseline human-human interactions in the same category.

### 5 Conclusion

The Digital Socratic Method provides a blueprint for the next generation of social AI. By moving away from optimized convenience and toward disciplined inquiry, agents can help humans rediscover the joy of thinking.

### References

[1] HKUDS, *nanobot: A Framework for Autonomous Agents*, 2024.  
 [2] Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, Hackett Publishing.