

Being Skeptical

Working Through a Cynical Mindset

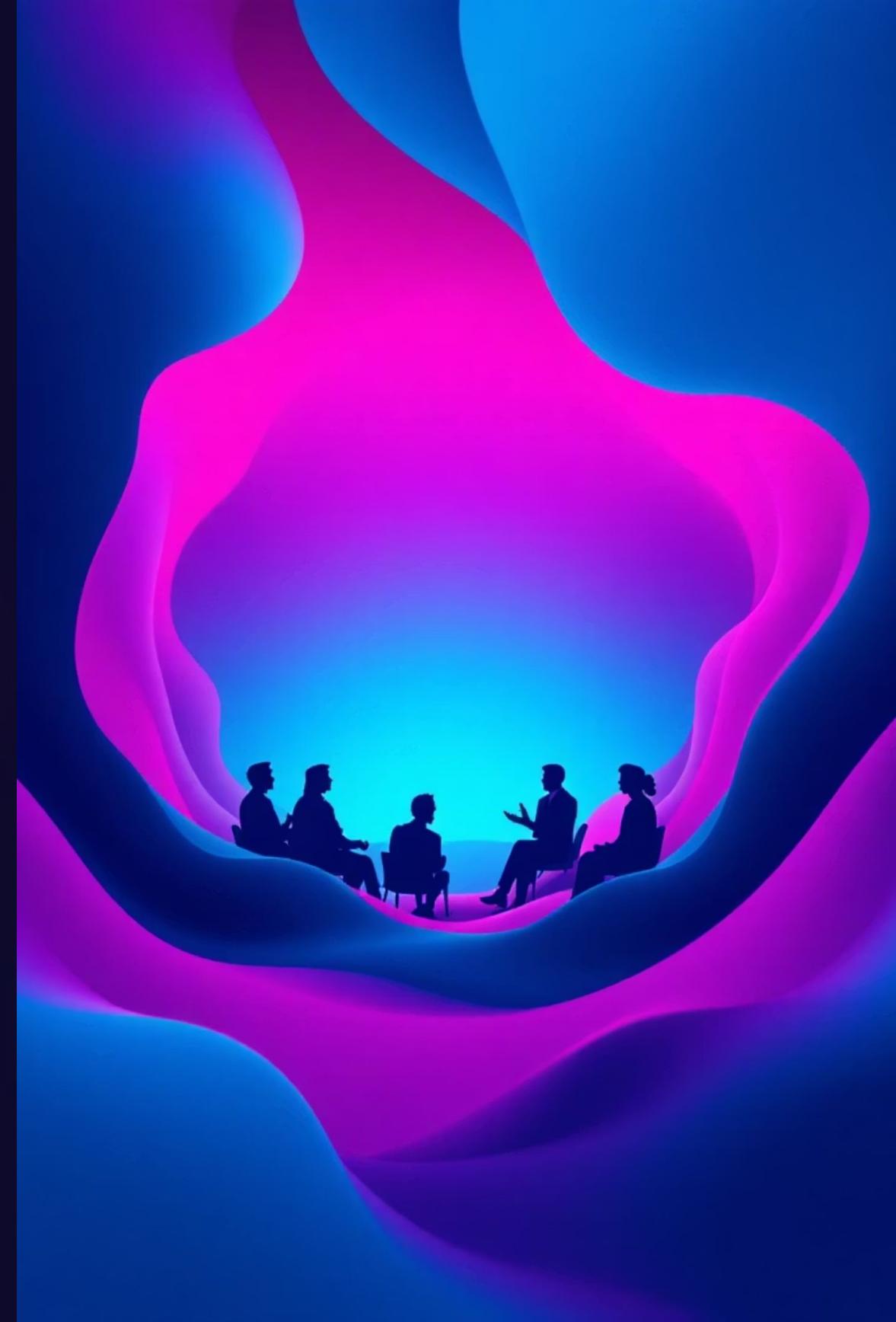
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What Sounds Familiar?

- I doubt this committee will listen to feedback.
- I'm not sure this data is telling us the whole story.
- They say they want input, but they've already decided.
- How often have these reforms worked anywhere?
- Administration only cares about the budget, not teaching quality.
- I don't see any evidence this will be better than what we have.
- We've tried things like this before, and it didn't go well.
- This is just going to waste everyone's time.
- Is there any independent research supporting this approach?
- They act like they want transparency, but they hide everything.
- I worry this will just shift the burden onto us without support.
- What supports will be provided to make this feasible?
- Can we pilot it and see how it works before full adoption?
- Sure, let's do it!

Cynicism



- **Assumes bad faith**
- **Rejects possibility**
- **Shuts down conversation**

Examples:

- I doubt this committee will listen to feedback.
- They say they want our input, but they already made up their minds.
- Administration only cares about the budget, not about teaching quality.



Credulity

- Accepts uncritically
- Risk of poor decisions, groupthink

Example:

Sure, let's do it!

Skepticism

- **Asks for evidence**
- **Encourages inquiry, rigor**

Examples:

- I'm not sure this data is telling us the whole story.
- How often have these reforms actually worked anywhere?
- Is there any research supporting this approach?

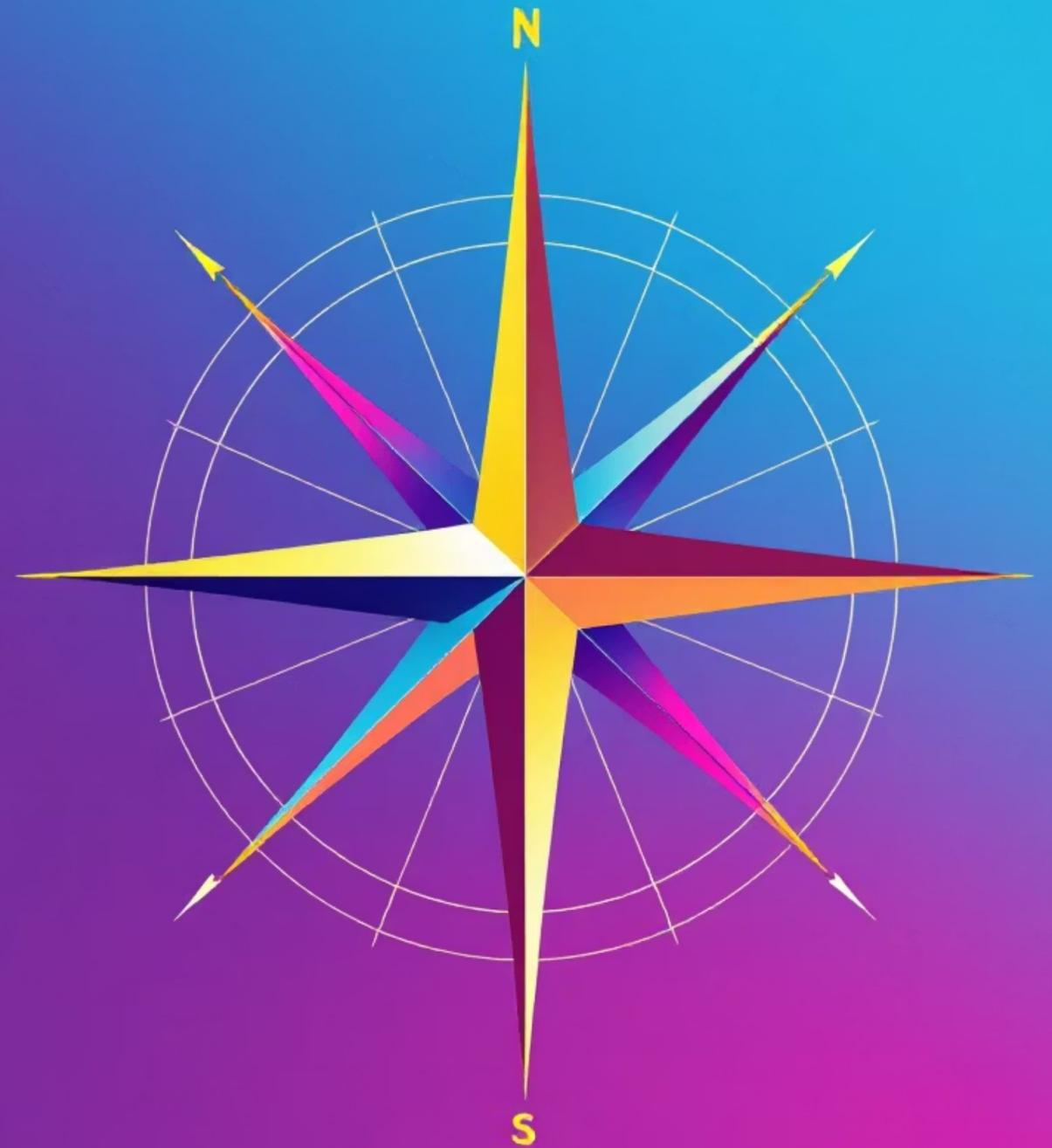


Pragmatism

- **Asks what will work in practice**
- **Moves toward testing, solutions**

Examples:

- What supports will be provided to make this feasible?
- Can we pilot it and see how it works before full adoption?



Examples

1

They say they want our input, but they already made up their minds.

Cynical

2

Is there any real evidence this policy helps students?

Skeptical

3

We could try it in one program before going all in.

Pragmatic

4

They said it'll be fine. Let's just go with it.

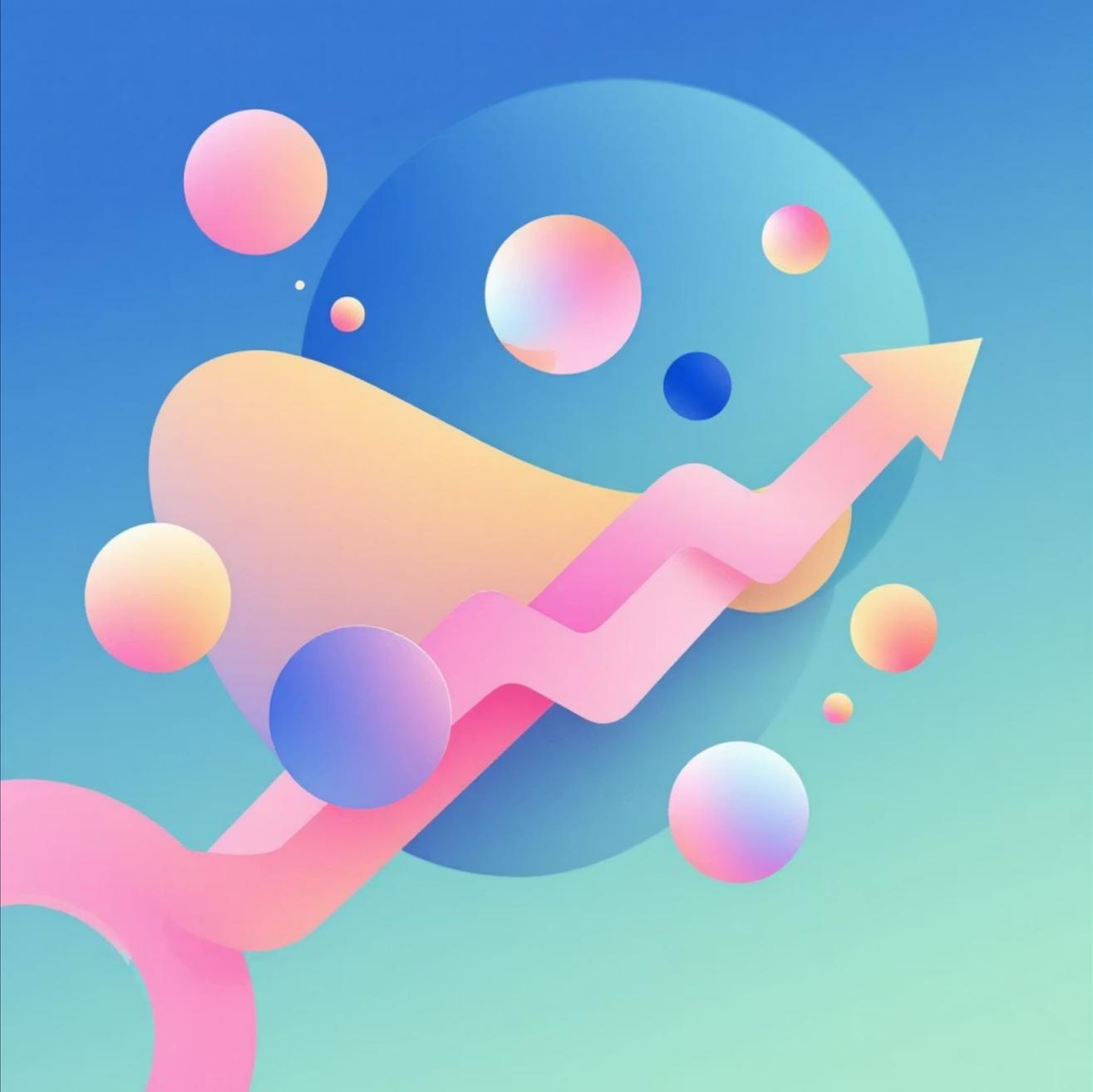
Credulous

Your Department Is Adopting A New Policy.

Faculty say:

- “Admin will ruin it as usual.”
- “Sure, let’s just implement it immediately.”
- “What evidence do we have this will help students?”
- “Can we pilot it and see how it works first?”



An abstract graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a background with a gradient from blue at the top to green at the bottom. Overlaid on this are several colorful, semi-transparent shapes: a large yellow and orange arrow pointing upwards and to the right, a large blue circle, and several smaller circles in various colors (pink, orange, blue, purple). The overall style is modern and vibrant.

Focus Points

- **Self awareness of cynical thinking**
- **Avoid blanket acceptance**
- **Explore evidence-based options**
- **Engage in useful directions**

The Four Dispositions

Credulity

Uncritical acceptance of claims

—Vulnerable to error and manipulation

Skepticism

Demanding evidence before belief

—Can lead to paralysis and endless doubt

Cynicism

Assuming bad faith, rejecting possibility

—Destroys trust, shuts down possibilities

Pragmatism

Focusing on practical testing/solutions

—Risks short-termism, neglects values

The Four Dispositions:

Engaging with Students

Cynicism: Avoid immediate judgment. Understand the student's perspective or situation.

Credulity: Don't uncritically accept without inquiry. Ask clarifying questions, rather than just believing or dismissing.

Skepticism: Model intellectual curiosity. Ask for evidence, give opportunities for them to critically evaluate information.

Pragmatism: Focus on practical solutions and pathways forward. Work with students to identify actionable steps.

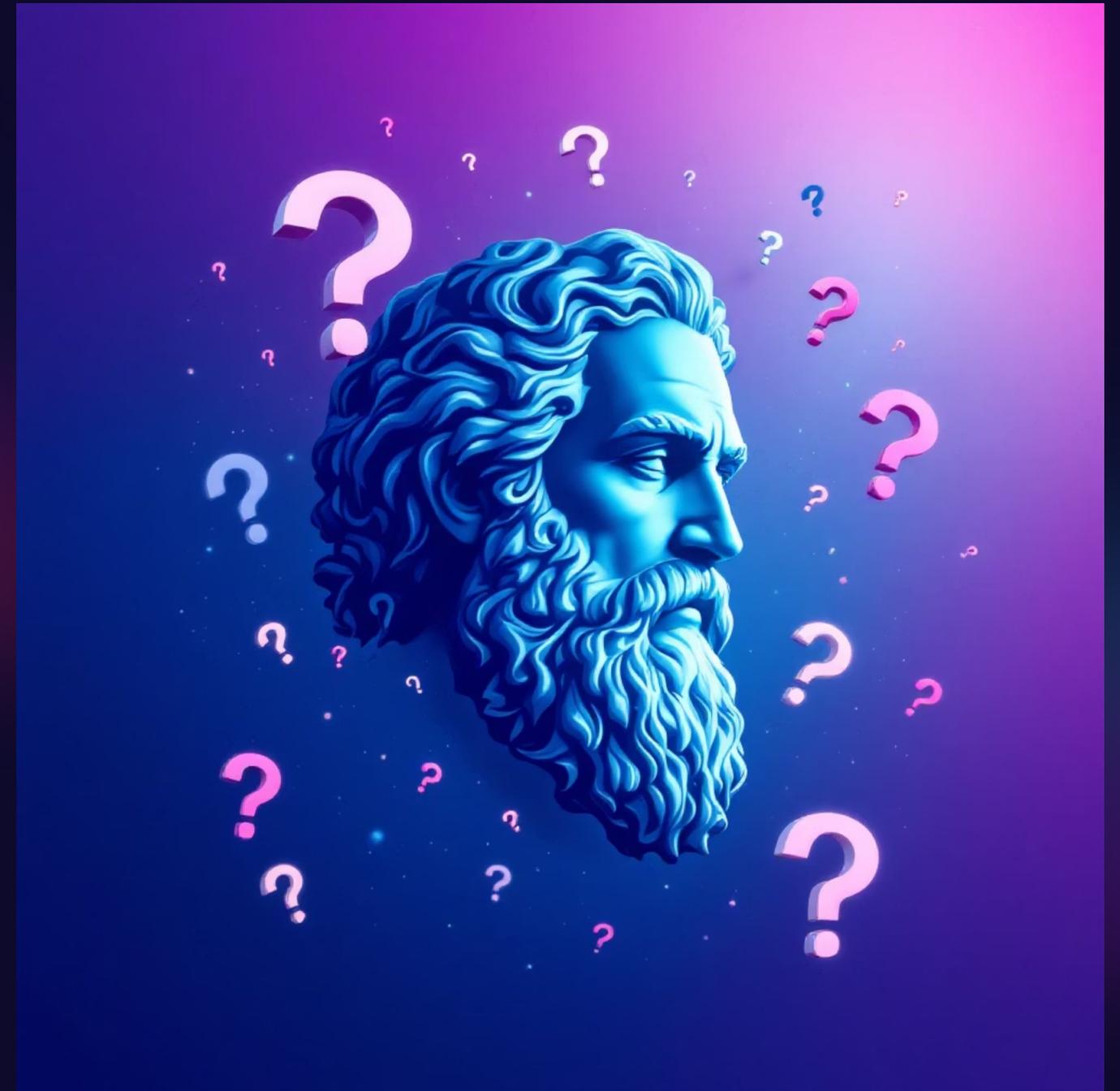
Socratic Method

Questions upon Questions

Guided Inquiry: Ask probing questions to explore topics and arrive at their own conclusions.

Critical Thinking: Encourages students to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize.

Identifying Assumptions: uncover and challenge, create a more nuanced, balanced perspective.



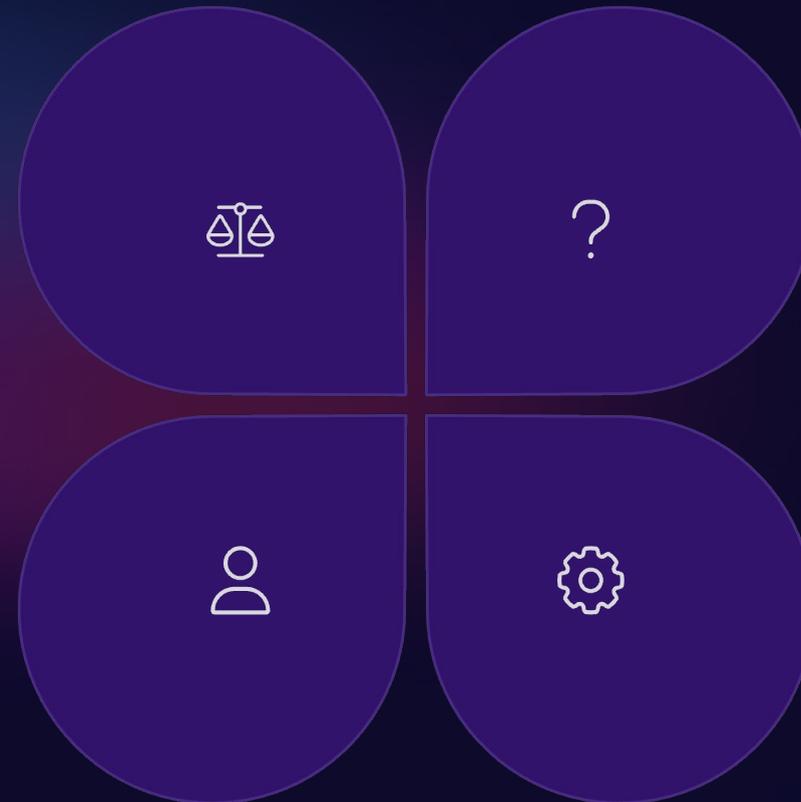
Key Takeaways

Balance is Key

*Avoid extremes of credulity
and cynicism*

Build Culture

*Foster critical but
constructive academic
dialogue*



Encourage Skepticism

*Promote evidence-seeking
inquiry*

Support Pragmatism

*Focus on testing, piloting,
and practical solutions*

OK, but how do I do this?

Step One: Interrupt

Stop, Question



Step Two: Shift

Replace, Mechanism

Step Three: Test

Act, Propose

Thank you!

Questions?

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