

Dialectical Thinking for Integral Leaders: A Primer

By Otto E. Laske

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This book shows the reader in what way what s(he) is "thinking about" is anchored in the present thought form structure of her thinking which determines HOW s(he), looked at developmentally, presently thinks. Based on adult developmental research, the book outlines a methodology for understanding your own and your clients', peers', or students' thinking better and move "to the same page" in communicating with them. The book contains many case examples and exercises to learn more about your own thinking and why you may "not understand" others at the depth you wish. It also shows the roots of your limited effectiveness as a leader, with shareholders and teams.

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Editorial Review

From the Author
I wrote this book to forge a simple path to my volume 2 of *Measuring Hidden Dimensions: Foundations of Requisite Organization* (IDM Press, 2008) that contains a comprehensive introduction to, and manual for, using dialectical thinking in business. The reader of the Primer can therefore broaden his/her knowledge of dialectic by proceeding to "Publications/books" at interdevelopmentals.org. The even more adventurous reader can also broaden his/her inquiry into concerns of a more social-emotional -- rather than cognitive -- issues in consulting and coaching which have to do with what Kegan refers to as "meaning making". Both the cognitive and social-emotional strands of adult development are combined in Laske CDF (Constructive Developmental Framework) of which the Dialectical Thought Form Framework dealt with in the Primer (DTF) is just a piece.

While primarily addressing issues of team work and talent management in organizations, the Primer is a pioneering attempt to link developmental, integral, and dialectical traditions. By this is meant that the book outlines dialectical thinking as an achievement of adult development over the life time (not as something that can be learned in a week), and equates "integral" thinking in the sense of K. Wilber with dialectical thinking. Through this link between the Wilber and the Frankfurt School (my teacher Adorno in particular), the challenge is put out to "upgrade" present-day integral thinking to a structurally more sophisticated undertaking than logical thinking in "quadrants" permits.

In addition, the book gives insight into ways of assessing complexity of thinking in individuals and teams based on Roy Bhaskar's *Four Moments of Dialectic* which are seen as comprises 4 sets of dialectical thought forms. Thought forms are conceived of as "mind openers" in discussion and dialog that help teams to boost their way of conceptualizing the world at large and their particular problem to solve in particular. The notion is that people in different phases of dialectical thinking development see entirely different worlds, which explains the often bewildering discrepancies in teams composed of people at different developmental levels.

The Primer is structured around Bhaskar's Four Moments of Dialectic to each of which the book devotes a chapter. The four chapters are preceded by an introduction in more philosophical and adult developmental research issues, as well as a thorough delineation of the Four Moments.

It is a premise of the book that thinking that remains logical is largely wasted in one's life because everybody has the resources to become a dialectical thinker. Where these resources are not seen and/or not supported, they wither on the vine especially since dialectical thinking, in contrast to Asian culture, is dead in Western cultures. What was formerly a part of the culture -- dialectical thinking -- is presently a total no-man's land. The Primer is trying to fill this void, giving educated people a chance to catch up with Asian thinking.

Although these are not spelled out in the Primer, the book has a host of educational consequences for educational reform, from late adolescence onward. College and University programs, not only on the graduate level, could and should comprises programs in dialectical thinking. This is so since the world "seen" by people is entirely a consequence of the structure of their thinking, as is what they say through language and how they behave. Therefore, the neglect of dialectical resources in a society that wants to cope with change and transformation does not pay off.

Finally, I may point to programs in dialectical thinking at the Interdevelopmental Institute (IDM) where for

15 years coaches and consultants have learned what they know about dialectical thinking.

Lastly, the Primer opens a way to address the relationship between social-emotional development in the sense of Kegan (replicated by Wilber) and cognitive development that transcends development of logical thinking as now focused on in research. This research completely leaves out dialectical thinking, nor is it informed by such thinking, and thus largely supporting the present establishment of a world in which everything is at the right place, this being the place where the powers that be need it to be.

As this shows, the Primer has been written by a member of the school of Critical Theory.

From the Inside Flap
The book's table of contents is as follows:
Acknowledgements
Foreword by Jan De Visch (a practitioner of dialectical thinking)
Introduction (to the link between dialectical, developmental, and integral traditions, pointing to the structure of adults' cognitive development)
Chapter 1: An Outline of Bhaskar's four moments of dialectic
Chapter 2: One step beyond logic: Context thought forms
Chapter 3: A second step beyond logic: Process thought forms
Chapter 4: A third step beyond logic: Relationship thought forms
Chapter 5: The end of downloading and the beginning of deep thinking: Transformation
Epilog: A call to action
Appendix A: The four moments of dialectic summarized
Appendix B: Practical examples of complexity handling based on DTF (the dialectical thought form framework)
Appendix C: Compact table of thought forms (expanded from the Primer), with an example of the cognitive assessment of an adult shown visually in a Concept Behavior Graph, leading to 3 scores of the individual's complexity of thinking at a particular time point
Appendix D: Historical origins of the dialectical thought form framework (DTF)

From the Back Cover
Book endorsements are found on the back cover and are as follows:
Dr. Michael Schwartz, Professor of Philosophy, Georgia Regents University, Atlanta, GA, USA
In this short and impactful book, Otto Laske offers the reader entry into the ways of dialectical thinking. Laske maintains that dialectic is the current apex of human cognitive development.
Alain Gauthier, Executive Director, Core Leadership Development, San Francisco, CA, USA
Otto Laske is definitively breaking new ground in his Primer. By fusing integral, dialectical, and developmental thinking, he opens radically new avenues for leaders and leadership teams to learn and transform their organizations. His emphasis on the space where things are not yet seen, as well as on humility, dialogue, and embodiment is critically needed in these times of global disruptive change.
Alex Grimshaw, President and Executive Coach PPS-SyNetAmericas
As a leadership development professional, I am frequently asked how executives can improve their ability to operate in an increasingly complex business environment. Dr. Laske's book sets out a framework that can be used as a diagnostic, and even more importantly, as an approach to support the development of a leader's cognitive ability and maturity. Impressive!
Michael Basseches, PhD, Professor of Psychology, Suffolk University, Boston, MA, USA
In his lucidity on what historically has become of logical thinking, Laske puts to practical use the best resoures of critical philosophical thought available to us today.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Leona Ferretti:

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Sharon Doyle:

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Nathaniel Cornelius:

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David Saenz:

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