Preface, "A new approach to dialog: Teaching the dialectical thought form system"

Otto Laske, March 2017

Can you imagine being part of a dialog in which you not only listen to *what* your interlocutor is saying but also to the underlying *structure* of his or her thinking? If you had knowledge of the thought-form structure of human sense making (which is the topic of this article), this way of listening, called "dialectical", would enable you to point to what is *cognitively incomplete* (absent) both in your own and others' thinking.

Clearly this kind of structural listening would help you deepen real-time dialog. Being no longer limited to paying attention solely to the content of what is said and focusing as well on the thinking that generates the content, could become the beginning of a *culture transformation* in organizations and institutions.

In a team and group context, you would be able to point to interlocutors' thought gaps in a compassionate way. Such gaps are not "academic". They are more serious than that since they translate into gaps between how people think and how reality works.

It is this kind of dialog that the present article introduces. The article paves the way for an intelligent reading of the *Manual of Dialectical Thought Forms* (DTFM), which in the near future will become available in pdf form at www.interdevelopmentals.org under *Publications*.

The article introduces cutting-edge tools for complex and nuanced thinking, made possible by M. Basseches' and my own research on adult cognitive development. In contrast to currently hyped "hyperthinking" (http://www.hyperthinking.net/) which never transcends formal logical thinking, the tools presented in the introduction to the Manual enable you to learn complex thinking from a tradition 2,500 years old.

Why is this noteworthy?

It's noteworthy in a predominantly *monological* culture as ours which, although dialog is often extolled, in the structure of its (logical) thinking remains bound to a simplistic *transfer* model of communication. This is in contrast to embracing a dialogical model of mind according to which what is "real" in the world is interactively constructed *conceptually* by the parties to dialog (see the bibliography in the Introduction).

In the author's view, a monological conception of *mind* leads to great losses in making sense of the world in realistic ways, in the sense of Bhaskar's *Critical Realism,* both in life and the sciences. Extending thinking to dialectical thought forms takes an important step toward realism because it provides us with tools for understanding not just "change", but *transformation*.

In this article, this step is made by associating Bhaskar's *four moments of dialectic* with sets of empirically validated thought forms deriving from studies in the cognitive development of adults (Basseches 1984; Laske 2008). Thought forms are seen as *mind openers*, and thus as naturally dialogical, not monological, tools.

The introduction to DTFM is structured in three parts:

1. Foundations of real-world dialog
2. Dialoguing tools of dialectic
3. Teaching programs for, and applications of, dialogical dialectic.