DTFM 2017 Acknowledgements

My manual of dialectical thought forms, the only existing one in the world today, derives from a confluence of two major "turns of mind", the first exercised by M. Basseches in 1978-1984, the second by R. Bhaskar in the early nineties of the 20th century (1993). By serendipity, these two turns amount to a very big shift which brings human thinking closer to becoming aware of itself.

Importantly also, the big shift is a liberating one in a cultural climate where "developmental theory" has sadly been reduced to focusing on self-positioning in the social world, referred to as "meaning making". This reduction of human thinking to the social world is a sign of our time in which the relationship of thinking to reality, and thus truth, has been lost.

It was Basseches who first saw the need to separate social-emotional meaning making from cognition broadly considered. It was Basseches who first saw that while "ontology" is denigrated in the scientific world, every science makes up its own shallow ontology, or theory of what is real, on the fly -- without acknowledging it.

Under these circumstances, the fact that Bhaskar established new ontological principles (called MELD) was a breakthrough of great importance, although it was partly taken back by his venturing into speculation à la Ernst Bloch's "The Principle of Hope" when he extended MELD to MELD-ARA. (The integral community is still on the path of hope rather than reality ...).

For this manual, what counts is MELD. The thought forms the manual details are not tools for speculation but for a renewed "effort of the concept" in the sense of Hegel. They are dialogical tools for understanding oneself by way of understanding others, as happens in cognitive interviews. They refresh Vygotsky's insight that individuals internalize what they hear in the social world and play it back to themselves since they are, as well are on their way to becoming, social beings. The thought forms also refresh P. Linell's and Markková's insight *that the nature of mind is dialogical*, not monological: that our movements-in-thought move toward what is *conceptually real* in dialog with others, not as actions carried out by monads.

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Most readers will be unfamiliar with dialectical thinking, and that's quite okay. Nobody in our nominalistic and formal-logic based world has much of a chance to think holistically (although many try) and even fewer have ever realized that since the world is in unceasing transformation, it does not open up its secrets to logical thinking. Systems thinking comes a little closer to what is conceptually real in the world, but most often capsizes in logical thinking, and rests its case there. Of course, the final judgment on machine learning is not out; however, heaping one logical system upon another as sub-totalities of an undefined larger system does not bode well ...

The reader of the manual would do best to consider it the template of a workbook for learning to strengthen complex thinking (or, as they say now, "complexity thinking", as if there were any other ...).

The reader should be aware of four important aspects of what the manual teaches:

- First, DTF* bridges the gap between "world" and "thinking" (ontology and epistemology). It teaches us how to use Bhaskar's four ontological principles called MELD as a set of epistemological principles "in the mind" (MELD-in-the-mind). In this way we are led to using four powerful perspectives on, or ways of thinking about, the real world that in coordination with each other give us a deep understanding of the world's complexity.
  [*DTF: The Dialectical Thought Form Fram2work taught in this manual and volume 2 of Hidden Dimensions, Laske, 2008, 2017)]
- Second, by unfolding each component of MELDitm as a "class of thought forms" DTF connects "logical" to "transformational" thinking, thus leading us to challenge our systems thinking in order to reach a high degree of agility as well as openness to change, especially in team dialog.
- Third, by making MELDitm accessible to logical thinking, DTF becomes a cutting-edge tool for enhancing cognitive development for living, teaching, consulting, team work, and social science research. In this way, DTF becomes a tool for *culture transformation*.
- Fourth, by unfolding MELDitm through thought forms in day-to-day communication, DTF assists both individuals and organizations in narrowing the gap between "how humans think" and "how reality works". As a result, DTF leads us to a higher level of *Critical Realism* as to *what is conceptually important to understand about the world*.

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When I was first introduced to dialectical thinking in 1956 (60 years ago), I was as baffled as the reader may be today. Take heart! Today, my joining of Basseches' and Bhaskar's work appears to me as a personal fulfilment. My hope is that the seeds of this work will spread.

A few pieces of advice:

- There is no sense in trying to learn thought forms if one has not developed a good "feeling" for the four moments of dialectic (MELD) all of which can be learned equally well by using texts or images, given an expert instructor. (After using texts for a long time, I now prefer images, but they shouldn't be too simple.)
- There is little sense in trying to learn thought forms if one sees them as no more than "cognitive tactics". As already Basseches saw in 1984, one needs to exercise them in order to build up *in oneself* a "model of dialectic" by which to re-organize one's cognitive functioning.
- As a consequence, if one prematurely focuses on outcomes other one's own self development, e.g., "to get things done in the world", one will most likely not get very far in shifting one's ability to think to a higher level.

A difficult subject matter takes time to unfold *even in the mind of its originator*. I owe it to my students Nick Shannon and Bruno Frischherz to have succinctly characterized the IDM program in meta-thinking I developed and taught between 2005 and 2015 (ESRAD presentation 2016, The Hague). They clearly outlined the steps one needs to take to make dialectical thinking work for oneself. The table below summarizes these steps.

Action → Approach↓	Identify [others' TFs]	Reflect [on own TFs]	Use [in speech and/or texts]
Moments of Dialectic	*Begin to build an internal model of dialectic by understanding the nature and relationship of Bhaskar's four moments of dialectic (1M, 2E, 3L, 4D)*		
Simple (**4** TF classes **CPRT**)	*Analyze/classify* pictures/texts	*Reflect* on a problem	*Ask* questions, describe and illuminate
Medium (**12** TFS *p,e,l*)	*Compare* texts [on same topic]	*Reflect* on a personal goal	*Rethink* a problem
Complex (**28** TFs)	*Analyze* a structured interview	*Reflect* on values; *evaluate*	*Coach* a process
Expert	*Analyze* the TF structure of speech flow in real time	*Reflect* on TF constellations heard or self-formulated in real time	*Model* TF constellations for others in real time

IDM Teaching Program for Meta-Thinking
(refined from Shannon & Frischherz 2016)

My estimate is that the whole program outlined above and followed step by step will take a year to complete. But that holds true only for learners who do not get fixated on "outcomes" except their own development.

I invite those who love to teach to design their own program for learning dialectical thinking (but not before having learned it themselves). Having taught such a program between 2005 and 2015 at the Interdevelopmental Institute, I invite them to share with me their experiences in doing so.

Otto Laske
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