

# Laske's Dialectical Thought Form Framework (DTF) as a Tool for Creating Integral Collaborations: Applying Bhaskar's Four Moments of Dialectic to Reshaping Cognitive Development as a Social Practice<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** I am introducing into Dialectical Critical Realism (DCR) a developmental, dialogical, and dialectical epistemology for enhancing adults' cognitive development toward dialectic. I do so for the sake of solving real-world problems in a holistic and transformational manner with a high likelihood of success. Emphasis is put on dialectical thinking as a social practice learned by way of a dialogue method called the *Case Study Cohort (CSC)* method, taught at the Interdevelopmental Institute (IDM) since 2000.

CSC combines dialectical with adult-developmental thinking and listening in real world situations. Through this pedagogical framework, students engage organizational clients as midwives of their own learning and development through teaching, coaching, consulting, and/or talent management activities, even psychotherapy.

In 6 sections, the paper deals with the question of how best to educate CDF-users working as *inter-developmental interlocutors* who have overcome the epistemic fallacy by guided self- assessment through DTF, the *Dialectical Thought Form Framework*. This framework operationalizes Bhaskar's MELD based on Basseches' pioneering studies in the development of dialectical thinking over the adult lifespan. DTF forms part of CDF, Laske's *Constructive Developmental Framework*, whose social-emotional and psychological components derive from R. Kegan's and H. Murray's work, respectively. DTF takes up the challenge of teaching and exercising dialectical thinking in an administered world shaped entirely by analytical reasoning.

Inter-developmental interlocutors are CDF/DTF-users who withstand the onslaught of downloading and de-totalization, and by so doing become teachers, even models of global self- awareness. They develop this capacity by acting as a member of an IDM study cohort, as well as consultants to client organizations whose thinking they scrutinize in expertly guided case studies. As a result, their focus of attention becomes the structure of their own and others' thinking as the hidden root of how the social and physical worlds shows up for them and their clients.

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this article will be published in Bhaskar, R., Esbjorn-Hargens, S., Hedlund-De Witt, N., & Hartwig, M. (2016). *Metatheory for the anthropocene: Emancipatory praxis for planetary flourishing*. London, UK: Routledge.

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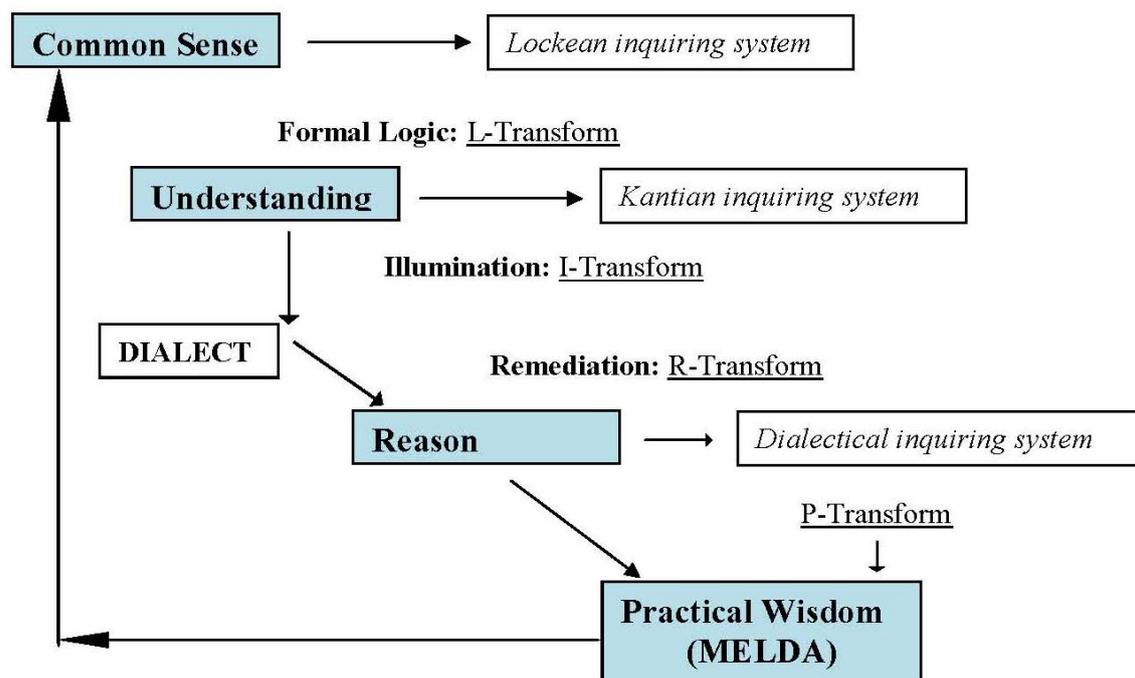


**Keywords:** case study cohort method, cognitive development of adults, dialectical critical realism, dialectical epistemology, dialectical-thinking development, dialectical-thinking interventions, inter-developmental interlocutor, inter-participatory social practice based on dialectical thinking, teaching of dialectical thinking.

*For Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969)*

## Short Definition of the Dialectical Thought Form Framework (DTF)

DTF is a dialogical epistemology that links Dialectical Critical Realism (DCR) to the language-suffused social world by way of both developmental and dialectical thinking. It is equally an empirical instrument for discerning and witnessing how and to what extent the world's ontological structure (reflected in Bhaskar's *four moments of dialectic* referred to as MELD<sup>3</sup>, Bhaskar 1993) unfolds in an individual's mind and speech during a 1-hour semi-structured *cognitive* interview. As an epistemology it is based on the assumption that human consciousness progresses through four eras of cognitive development, which Bhaskar has called *Common Sense*, *Understanding*, *Reason*, and *Practical Wisdom*, and that consciousness encounters its own dialectic during the transition from Understanding to Reason, in four steps, as shown below.



**Figure 1: Bhaskar's four eras of adult cognitive development.**

<sup>3</sup> MELD is an abbreviation of the names of Bhaskar's four moments of dialectic which in his ontology he refers to as 1M, 2E, 3L, 4D. They are epistemologically rendered in CDF a CPRT (Context, Process, Relationship, and Transformation) standing not for dimensions of being but classes of thought forms that spell out MELD in the human mind, thereby defining the structure of human thinking. A lucid description of the relationship between MELD and CPRT is found in Laske's *Dialectical Thinking for Integral Leaders: A Primer*, Integral Publishers, 2015.

The entry of the human mind into dialectic when crossing over from Understanding to Reason was first documented in the transition from Kant to Hegel in the period between 1781 to 1807. According to developmental research done by the Kohlberg School at Harvard between the years 1975-1995, this unfolding begins ontogenetically in late adolescence and ends only with the end of individual life.

As an empirical instrument, DTF bridges DCR and the language-suffused social world through the dialectical listening and thinking capacity of its expert users.

Pedagogically, DTF is exercised by the instructor of IDM study cohorts whose members interview clients in order to scrutinize the thought-form structure of their recorded speech. They do so in the context of clients' organizational function/role, environment, and professional agenda and their team membership. Through such a cognitively focused interview it becomes possible to lay bare the dialectical structure of clients' speech. The assumption made is that the social world is a language-suffused universe, and that it is straightforward to determine empirically differing degrees of clarity to which MELD manifests itself in a particular mind based on the textual or auditory analysis of a DTF interview. Although such an interview is co-created by a DTF interviewer as well as an interviewee (in most cases, an executive), the resulting *cognitive profile* is nevertheless understood as being that of the client.

To determine the degree of clarity of dialectical thinking in a client's speech empirically, a DTF expert collaborates with members of a study cohort of inter-developmentally bonded individuals whose task it becomes to scrutinize traces of MELD in spoken language. The cohort as a whole (which includes the instructor) evaluates ("scores") the cognitive interviews of members' clients. This assures inter-rater reliability based on which valid feedback can be given to clients.

In the DTF framework, evaluation of cognitive interviews happens in terms of *four classes of thought forms*, called CPRT (C=context; P=process; R=relationship; T=transformation). As shown below, these classes directly reflect Bhaskar's MELD (Laske, 2009). The evaluation yields empirical data useful in scaffolding the dialectic-thinking capabilities of an individual or team by way of teaching, coaching, mentoring, consulting, psycho- and socio-drama, and psychotherapy.

It should be clear that the above outline positions epistemology within ontology. As shown below, dialectical thought forms are not perspectives. DTF is cogent only when presupposing a real world that is not permanently withdrawn, as is Sartre's *être en soi*, but can be "grasped" dialectically through what Hegel has called "the effort of the concept (*Anstrengung des Begriffs*).” It is this effort that the IDM certification program in CDF/DTF is designed to re-instill. This effort is the exact opposite of contemporary *downloading*; it corresponds in spirit but not in method to teachings that Adorno and Horkheimer conveyed in their *Hauptseminar* between 1951 and 1969 at Frankfurt University, Germany.

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With Piaget, I am making the assumption that in speaking, humans reveal not only the *contents*, but also the dialectical *structure*, of their movements-in-thought. In this paper, I am detailing how specifically ontological MELD-structures show up epistemologically in DTF-based listening to human speech. As shown in Fig. 2, above, a DTF listener-thinker functions as a bridge between DCR and the language-suffused social world, and thus functions as a transformational agent.

Below, I will detail in what way M. Basseches' work, published in "Dialectical Thinking and Adult Development" (1984) 30 years ago, has built a bridge between ontology and dialectical epistemology, without elaborating in detail the refinements of this great researcher's work that yielded Laske's DTF.

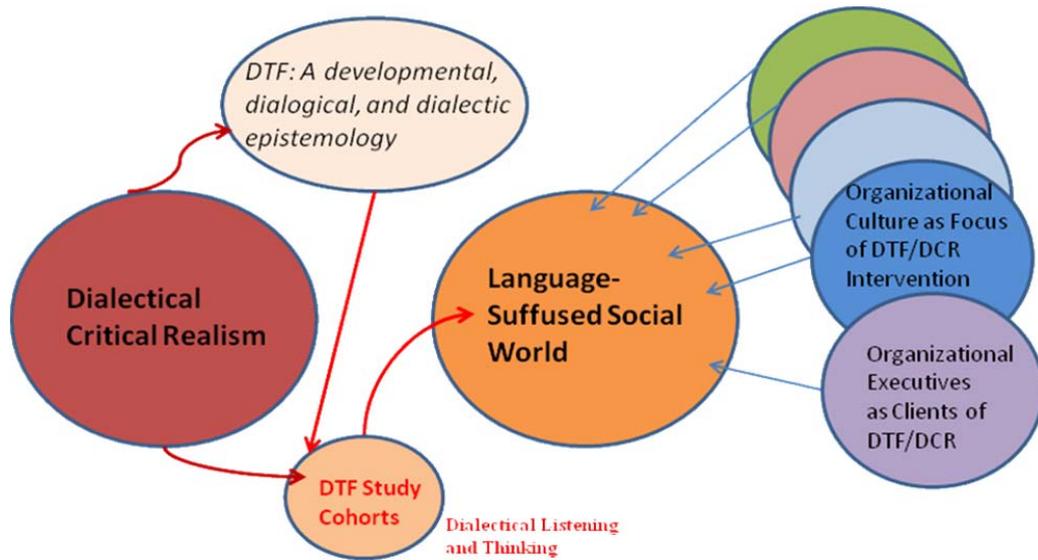
Rather, my emphasis will fall on my teaching practice within pedagogical cohorts whose members, by scrutinizing a specific executive's speech, "wake themselves up" to their own mind's dialectic (that heretofore they were unable to grasp). I will reflect on how and why such a cohort can be seen as a pedagogical context for developing within DCR a dialectical social practice of real-world interventions. I also view a case study cohort as embodying the core of a future critical in-depth social science, and the beginning of integral collaborations poised to solve problems in the real world, such as global warming.

In this way, I am binding collaborative action to what Cook-Greuter has called *construct awareness*, but will use this term in a purely cognitive, rather than (following Kegan and Loevinger) social-emotional, way, as she does. I will envision integral dialectical thinking as becoming the central practice of the integral movement, to the extent that the integral community can actually shift from the reduction of the real world to subjective enactments to the recognition that the mind is constellationally embedded in the real world *inde ab initio*.

## **Operationalizing Bhaskar's MELD Based on Basseches' Dialectical Schema Framework**

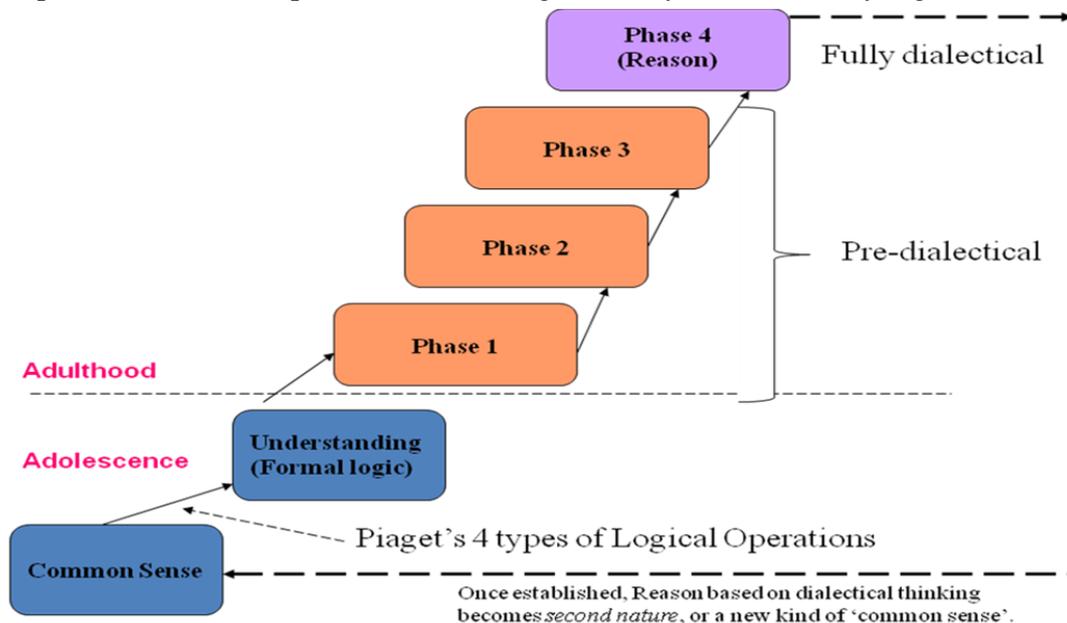
As intimated in Fig. 2, the *Dialectical Thought Form Framework* (DTF) is best understood as serving a bridging function between DCR and the language-suffused world of society's organizations and their constitutive cohorts (teams). For this purpose, it comprises a social-emotional component following Kegan (1982; 1994), a cognitive component following Adorno (1966; 1999), Basseches (1984), and Bhaskar (1993), and a psychological component following Henry Murray (1938). Its methodology is part of an inter-participatory framework through which to further adult mental growth at work and in life.

Although the systemic connectedness of CDF's three components is the focus of my teaching of coaches, consultants, and executives at the Interdevelopmental Institute (IDM; [www.interdevelopmentals.org](http://www.interdevelopmentals.org)), here I will restrict myself to the cognitive component of CDF, which is called DTF. DTF was developed in 1999 in a thesis on developmental coaching, by linking Bhaskar's MELD to Basseches' dialectical schema framework (DSF).



**Fig. 2. DTF powered by DTF study cohorts serving a bridging function between DCR and the language-suffused social world of organizations.**

Using DTF centrally requires mature dialectical thinking and listening in real time. Its dialogue- propelled way of functioning derives from Basseches’ work in the early 1980s. In 1984, after 6 years of researching empirically the development of dialectical thinking over the individual life span, Basseches published a seminal work called “Dialectical Thinking and Adult Development” in which he presented his findings in a way summarized by Fig. 3, below:



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**Fig 3. The four phases of dialectical-thinking development in adults according to Basseches/Laske.**

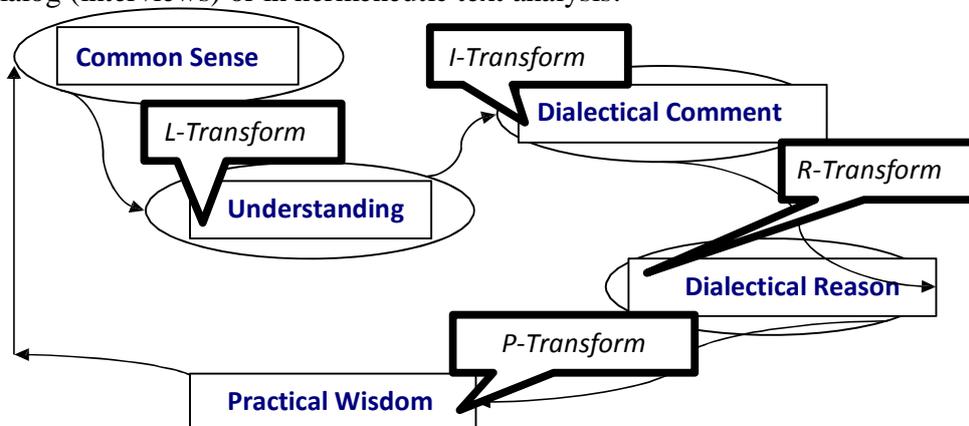
For the purposes of his qualitative research, Basseches created a semi-structured interview in terms of which he dialogued with staff and students of a US college about issues in contemporary education. It was his purpose to answer the genuinely pioneering question “how does dialectical thinking develop over the individual life span?” Basseches asked this research question based on the hypothesis that cognitively more highly developed individuals, represented by teaching staff, would show higher levels of dialectical thinking than students. He measured this developmental differential by way of a “fluidity index” indicating fluidity in the use of four classes of thought forms.

Basseches found by evaluating (“scoring”) recorded interviews that one could speak of four phases (rather than stages) of dialectical-thinking development, where each phase is defined by a maximal fluidity index (phase 1 = >10, phase 2 = >10<30, phase 3 = >30<50, phase 4 = >50). Simplifying Basseches’ findings slightly, one can say that each phase of thinking-development toward dialectic is characterized by the dominance of one of Bhaskar’s four moments of dialectic (MELD), in the order of 1M, 2E, 3L, and 4D (Laske, 2009).

In DTF, MELD is epistemologically represented by four classes of dialectical thought forms called *schemata* by Basseches. The most advanced dialectical thought forms, called “transformational,” entail an understanding of negativity that fully emerges only in phase 4 of cognitive development. DTF is an *action method* for deepening inter-developmental relationships meant to lead to novel, emancipatory experiences via dialectical thinking.

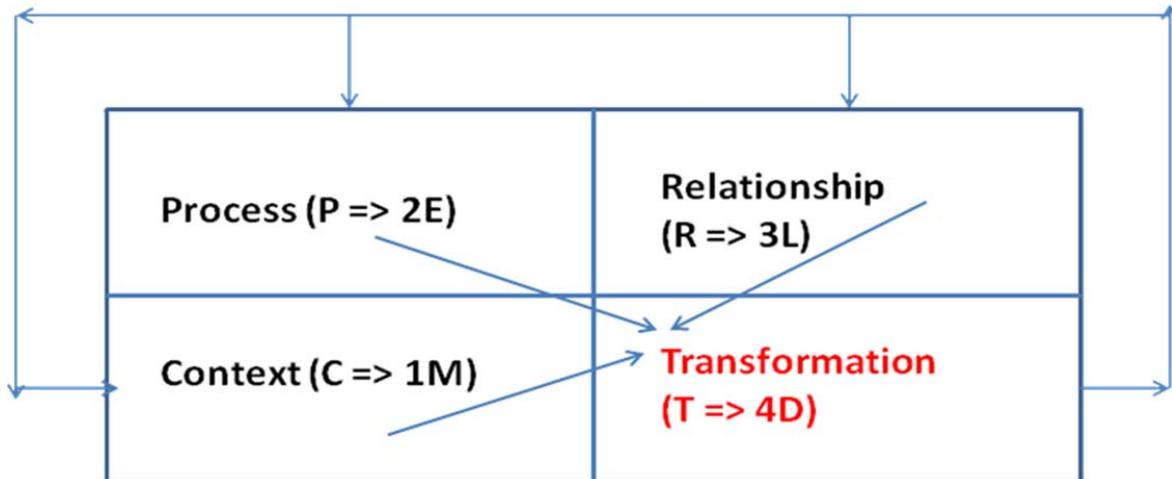
The DTF system as a whole is geared to exploring in real time how MELD maps into speech via concepts. In actual usage, each MELD component, represented by a thought form class, serves as a tool to lay bare a speaker’s or writer’s category errors (e.g. de-stratification) as they occur in real time. The assumption is that by highlighting and giving feedback on such errors, a speaker can move from the actual to the real world.

When we put Basseches’ findings in a context familiar to readers of Bhaskar (1993), shown in Fig. 1, we can see that the four phases of dialectical-thinking development referred to in Fig. 3 fall into the transition from Understanding to Reason. The four phases give rise to different forms of illuminative and remediative dialectical commentary, whether exercised during real-time dialog (interviews) or in hermeneutic text analysis:



**Fig. 4. The four transforms of dialectical thinking according to Bhaskar (1993).**

The I- and R-transforms utilize Basseches' four classes of dialectical thought forms, referred to as C, P, R, and T, a focused and selective representation of Bhaskar's MELD geared to exploring the dialectical structure of dialog or written text in real time (Context = 1M; Process = 2E; Relationship = 3L; and Transformation = 4D):



**Fig. 5.** The four classes of thought forms associated with MELD in DTF (P=2E; C=1M; R=3L; T=4D)

While C, P, and R thought forms illuminate lack of dialectical thought expressed in category errors occurring in speech or text, T-thought forms are *remediative*, sublating and integrating elements held in a speaker's or writer's memory store, and thus absent category errors.

DTF- interlocutors hear, and then showcase, specific category errors made in speech or text. In each of the four classes of thought forms, a particular category error is paramount: de-stratification in C (1M), denial of negativity in P (2E), de-totalization in R (3L), and de-agentification in T (4D).

As Fig. 5 indicates, *transformational* thought forms reside on a meta-level, in the sense that not only are they grounding the other 3 thought form classes (outer arrows), but are simultaneously based on them in a feedback loop intrinsically binding all four classes of thought forms into a transformational system (internal arrows) replicating MELD in thought. T-thought forms capture adult cognitive development as an internalized form of (ontic, rather than agentic) agency, i.e., natural emergence of dialectical out of logical thinking.

Logistically, each of the four classes of thought forms comprises 7 consecutively more complex thought forms, as shown in Table 1, below. "Contrasts" indicate links with related thought forms intrinsic to a particular thought form allowing for fine differentiations to be made.

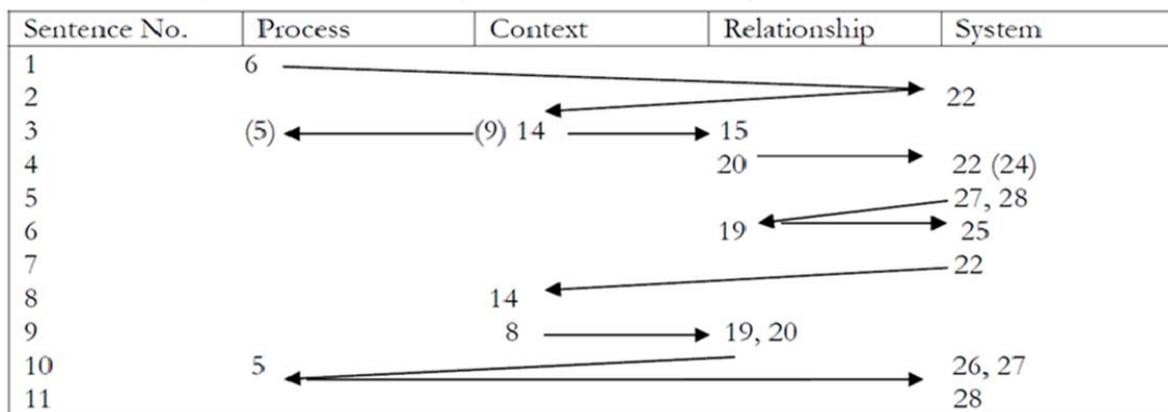
**Table 1: DTF Taxonomy of Dialectical Thought Forms**

<b>Process TFs (2E)</b>	<b>Context TFs (1M)</b>	<b>Relationship TFs (3L)</b>	<b>Transformational TFs (Meta-systemic) (4D)</b>
<p>Illumination</p> <p>1. Unceasing motion, negativity</p> <p><i>Contrast: 22</i></p>	<p>Illumination</p> <p>8. Contextualization of part(s) within a whole; emphasis on part</p> <p><i>Contrast: 10-13</i></p>	<p>Illumination</p> <p>15. Limits of separation. Focus on existence and value of relationship</p> <p><i>Contrast: 16-21</i></p>	<p>Remediation</p> <p>22. Limits of stability, harmony, durability (incl. quantitative into qualitative changes)</p> <p><i>Contrast: 3, 12, 23</i></p>
<p>2. Preservative negation, inclusion of antithesis (non- A)</p> <p><i>Contrast: 27</i></p>	<p>9. Equilibrium of a whole; emphasis on whole</p> <p><i>Contrast: 10-13</i></p>	<p>16. Value of bringing into relationship</p> <p><i>Contrast: 15, 17</i></p>	<p>23. Value of conflict leading in a developmental direction</p> <p><i>Contrast: 2, 22, 24</i></p>
<p>3. Composition by interpenetrating opposites, correlativity</p> <p><i>Contrast: 19-22</i></p>	<p>10. (Description of) structures, functions, layers, strata of a system</p> <p><i>Contrast: 8-9, 11-13</i></p>	<p>17. Critique of reductionism and “de-totalized,” thus isolated, entities separated from their shared common ground</p> <p><i>Contrast: 18-21</i></p>	<p>24. Value of developmental potential leading to higher levels of individual and social functioning</p> <p><i>Contrast: 1, 23</i></p>
<p>4. Patterns of interaction</p> <p><i>Contrast: 2, 19-20</i></p>	<p>11. (Emphasis on the) hierarchical nature of layers systems comprise</p> <p><i>Contrast: 9</i></p>	<p>18. Relatedness of different value and judgment systems</p> <p><i>Contrast: 20</i></p>	<p>25. Evaluative comparison of systems in transformation</p> <p><i>Contrast: 10, 14, 26, 28</i></p>
<p>5. Practical, active character of knowledge</p> <p><i>Contrast: 23</i></p>	<p>12. Stability of system functioning</p> <p><i>Contrast: 9, 22</i></p>	<p>19. Structural aspects of relationship</p> <p><i>Contrast: 4, 15-17, 20-21</i></p>	<p>26. Process of coordinating systems</p> <p><i>Contrast: 15-16, 25</i></p>
<p>6. Critique of arresting motion (reification)</p> <p><i>Contrast: 7, 28</i></p>	<p>13. Intellectual systems: frames of reference, traditions, ideologies</p> <p><i>Contrast: 9, 28</i></p>	<p>20. Patterns of interaction in relationships</p> <p><i>Contrast: 4, 21</i></p>	<p>27. Open, self-transforming systems</p> <p><i>Contrast: 2, 22-24</i></p>
<p>7. Embedding in process, movement</p> <p><i>Contrast: 3-4, 6</i></p>	<p>14. Multiplicity of contexts (non-transformational)</p> <p><i>Contrast: 25, 28</i></p>	<p>21. Constitutive, intrinsic relationships (logically prior to what they relate)</p> <p><i>Contrast: 2-3, 15-20</i></p>	<p>28. Integration of multiple perspectives in order to define complex realities; critique of formalistic thinking</p> <p><i>Contrast: 2, 6, 16</i></p>

In DTF, these 28 thought forms, refined from Basseches’ *Dialectical Schemata Framework* (DSF), serve at least five different functions, whether in scrutinizing speech or text. These are:

1. Dialectical listening tools;
2. Dialectical text analysis tools;
3. Cognitive (interview) prompting tools;
4. Mind opening (retroduction) tools; and
5. Mind expanding tools.

By using DTF thought forms as listening and assessment tools, an adult’s *movements-in-thought*, articulated in an interview or written text, can be empirically assessed, both in terms of the DTF Fluidity Index and other cognitive indexes deriving from it (Frischherz, 2014a).

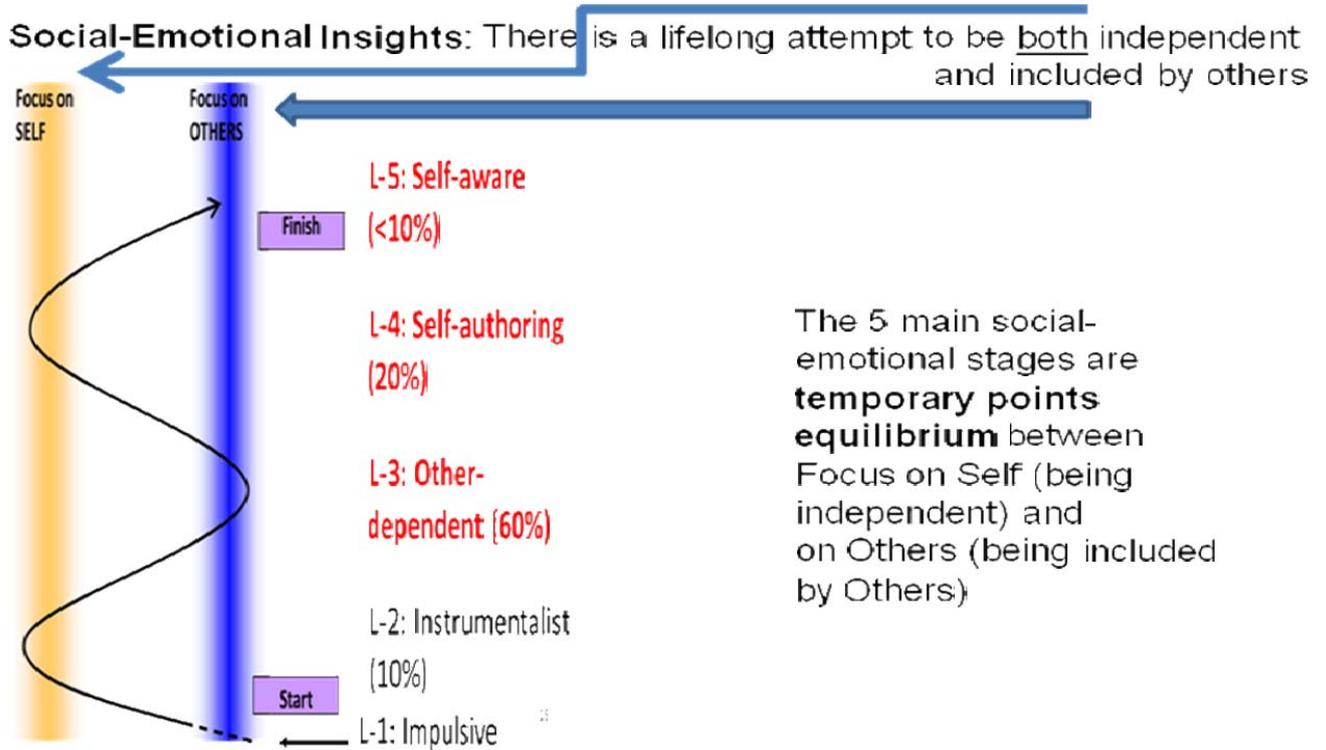


- Fluidity Index = 3+4+5+10=22
- Cognitive Score = [14, 19, 24; 48(%)] – hollow transfer thinking
- Systems Thinking Index = 48 (%)
- Discrepancy Score = (4+10) : (3+5) = 14 : 8 – Manager C is a better constructive than critical thinker

**Fig. 6. Cognitive Behavior Graph of a manager, showing the movement in thought of his interview, associated with DTF cognitive scores (Frischherz, 2014a).**

### **The Integral Movement is Composed of Upwardly and Downwardly Divided Cohorts Characterized by Social-emotionally Determined Thinking Limits**

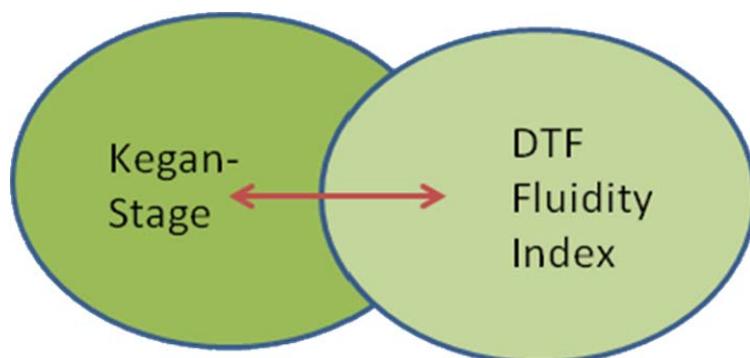
I have introduced you to a framework for working with clients (including students) by merging dialectical with developmental thinking, for use by teachers, coaches, consultants, and managers as clients’ dialogue partners. These clients always reside in social cohorts characterized by a wide variety of thought-form structures apparent in listening to their speech in semi-structured interviews. When heard through the lens of CDF (i.e., analyzed both social-emotionally and cognitively), verbal language expressions show clear structural differences in thinking. When these differences are scrutinized in empirical case studies, one finds that specific Kegan-stages are associated with specific limits of dialectical thinking capability (measurable in terms of the DTF fluidity index and related cognitive scores).



**Fig. 7. Social-emotional stage progression according to Kegan.**

This is, of course, to be expected since making meaning at a specific Kegan-level presupposes residing in a specific phase of dialectical thinking capability.

On account of the fact that members of a cohort make meaning along Kegan’s trajectory of social-emotional stages while also residing in a specific phase of dialectical-thinking development, we can speak of cohort-specific *thinking limits*. In teaching and carrying out organizational interventions, the intrinsic nexus between a social-emotional Kegan-stage of *meaning making* and a particular phase of *making sense* of the world through dialectical thinking clearly comes into view, as intimated in Fig. 8 (see also Laske, 2009: 253).

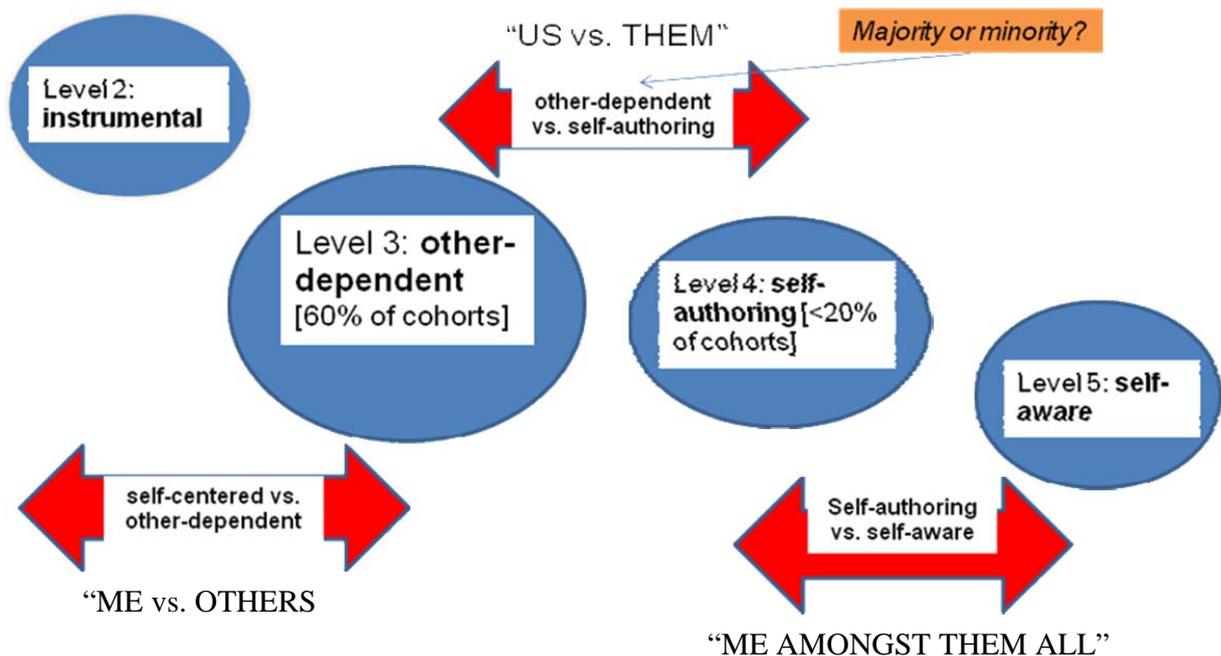


**Fig. 8. Nexus between social-emotional meaning making and cognitive sense making in CDF.**

In terms of pedagogical pragmatics this entails that the social-emotional structure of integral cohorts has a direct bearing on how far programs of DTF-dialectical thinking can help shift integral thinking from Bhaskar's argument-based dialectic to a developmental and dialogical epistemology required for using DCR in the organizational world (not to speak of a shift from Wilber's enactments to dialectical thinking). DTF delivers a straightforward metric for whether a particular cohort succeeds or fails in that transition.

Taking into account that integral cohorts whose members reside at one and the same Kegan level are largely fictitious, we view integral cohorts more realistically as composed of a developmental majority vs. minority within a particular Kegan-range (2-3, 3-4, 4-5). I will refer to these cohorts as *upwardly or downwardly divided*. It therefore makes sense to think about the composition of the integral movement itself in terms of developmentally different cohorts shown in Fig. 9, and detailed further in Figs. 10 and 11, below.

1. *Upwardly divided level-2 cohorts (UD2)*; majority at level 2, minority at level 3
2. *Downwardly divided level-3 cohorts (DD3)*; majority at level 3, minority at level 2
3. *Upwardly divided level-3 cohorts (UD3)*; majority at level 3; minority at level 4
4. *Downwardly divided level-4 cohorts (DD4)*; majority at level 4, minority at level 3
5. *Upwardly divided level 4 cohorts (UD4)*; majority at level 4, minority at level 5
6. *Downwardly divided level 5 cohorts (DD5)*; majority at level 5; minority at level 4



**Fig. 9. Social-emotional differences between cohorts, leading to the distinction of 6 structurally different developmental types of cohort, further detailed in Fig. 10 and 11.**

In each cohort, the developmental tension between majority and minority results in idiosyncratic social-emotional cultures characterized by specific *thinking limits* that stem from the different levels of *cognitive development toward dialectic* of the cohorts' members. In Fig.

10, below, I refer to these thinking limits by the term “stratum”, thereby differentiating the quality of management of complexity members of a particular cohort are capable of, as well as the specific thematic focus of their universe of discourse at the workplace (Jaques, 1998).

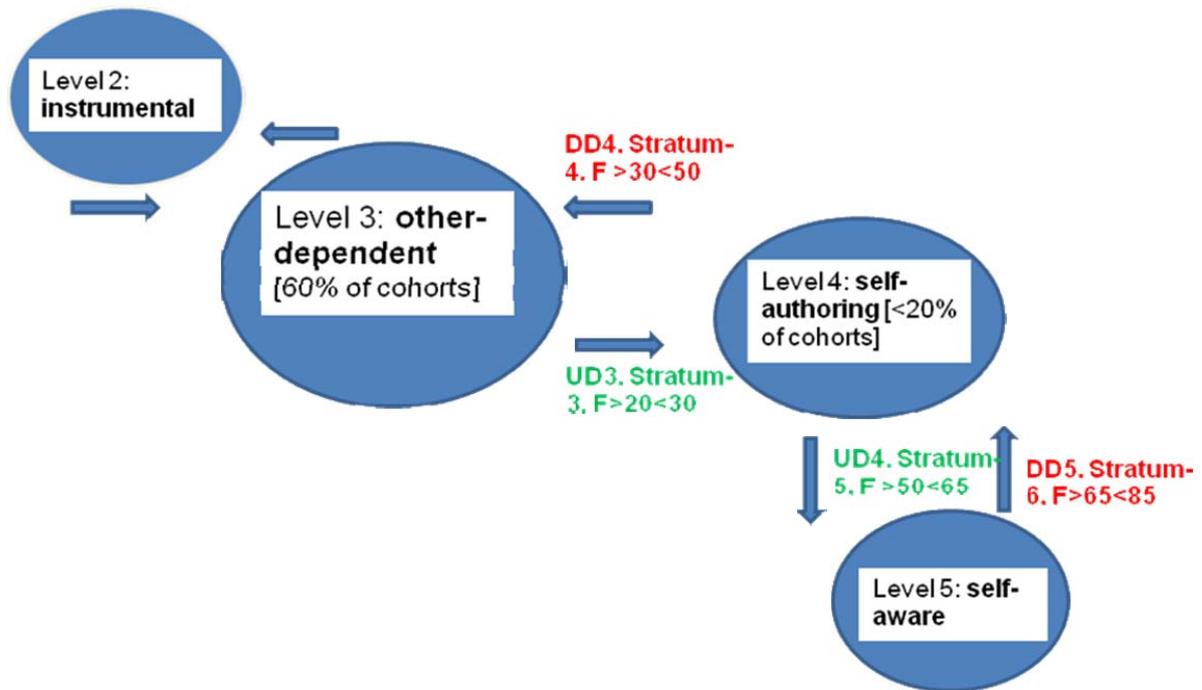
		Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
		F=>0<10	F>10<30	F=>30<50	F=>50<85
Stratum 1	Stratum 2	Stratum 3	Stratum 4	Stratum 5	Stratum 6
F=>0<10 Declaration	F=>10<20 Debate	F=>20<30 Discussion	F=>30<50 Discussion	F=>50<65 Discussion	F=>65<85 Dialog
Stratum 1 Team (UD2)	Stratum 2 Team (DD3)	Stratum 3 Teams (UD3)	Stratum 4 Team (DD4)	Stratum 5 Team (UD4)	Stratum 6 Team (DD5)

**Figure 10. Thinking limits (F) of 6 developmentally differing cohorts, calibrated in terms of the DTF Fluidity Index.**

As we move from UD2=Stratum-1 cohorts (in which the cohort majority resides on Kegan-level 2) to DD5/Stratum-6 cohorts (in which the cohort majority resides on Kegan-level 5), their thinking limits, in terms of dialectical-thinking capability, are dramatically altered.

For example, a downwardly divided level-4 cohort (DD4; in which most members reside at Kegan-stage 4 while a minority remains at level 3) has a surer grasp of absence and negativity than an upwardly divided level-3 cohort (UD3), and this cognitive differential can be precisely assessed through DTF. Importantly, this differential is likely to determine the relationship of a cohort’s *interpersonal* process to its *task* process. The latter is determined by cohort members’ phase of dialectical thinking, and in more immature cohorts tends to become overwhelmed by cohort members’ interpersonal process.

We can say, then, that each of the six cohort types distinguished in Fig. 11 is characterized by a peculiar quality of discourse fully aligned with its thinking limits. For instance, according to Fig. 11, even logical debate is unlikely in a UD2/Stratum-1 cohort, while a UD3/Stratum-3 cohort can be expected to have a beginning grasp of absence (DTF process thought forms; 2E), having begun to acquire thought forms articulating negativity that are missing from a more immature consciousness. Clearly each of these subgroups has its own epistemological subculture that, in turn, demands a differentiated pedagogical approach to dialectical thinking.

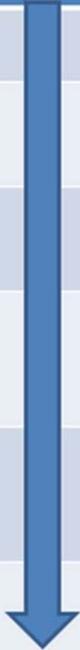


**Fig. 11. CDF cohort typology showing the social-emotional and cognitive developmental differences between cohorts. (Level-3 cohorts are shown as the most numerous).**

As shown in Fig. 12, the higher the cognitive stratum of a cohort, the more cohort members are capable of handling complexity in terms of MELD and its DTF thought-form equivalents. Consequently, they will be increasingly open to conceptualizing issues referring to future potentials, rather than being wedded to the status quo, thus differing in terms of transformational thinking capacity. Simultaneously, true dialogue will increasingly become possible and so will an autonomous task process not compromised by a cohort's interpersonal process.

These assessment-based considerations of developmentally different cohorts lead to the question of "how to guide integral cohorts on a developmental journey that amounts to a mental growth assignment?"

Type of Team	Focus of Universe of Discourse	Predominant Moment of Dialectic	Need for Thinking Dialectically
Stratum-1; UD2	Service and Execution Excellence	Context thinking; Focus on Present	Present
Stratum-2; DD3	Service Differentiation and Optimization of Practices	Start of Process Thinking Working with Difference (Negativity)	
Stratum-3; UD3	Rethinking Operational Processes: New Value Streams, Change Management	Advanced Process Thinking ; Beginnings of Relationship Thinking	
Stratum-4; DD4	Creating Breakthrough by Developing and Testing Alternative Strategies	Strengthening of Relationship Thinking; Beginning Coordination of C, P, R thought forms	
Stratum-5; UD4	New Business Models, Re-shaping of competitive position	Increased Coordination of C, P, R thought forms, leading to Transformational Thinking	
Stratum-6; DD5	Repurposing Industry by Provoking Unconventional Uses of Services and Tools Offered	Equilibrated Thinking in Terms of All Four Moments of Dialectic	Future



**Figure 12 (for column 3, see also Figure 1, upper left) Cohort differences in the ability of handling organizational complexity as a function of social-emotional composition and phase of dialectical thinking measured through DTF.**

## ***A Train the Trainer Program and Peer Training Program in Dialectical Thinking: IDM’s Case Study Cohort Method (CSC)***

The answer to this question adopted at IDM is referred to as the “case study cohort” method of teaching (CSC). Its name derives from the fact that IDM study cohorts are organized around the pedagogical goal of writing a developmental case study on a single organizational client. The case study involves carrying out a social-emotional as well as cognitive interview (if not also administering a psychological questionnaire), to be evaluated by cohort members for the purpose of giving feedback to clients under the supervision of the Director of Education. The latter functions as a supervisor who also guarantees assessment inter-rater reliability. Along the IDM certification track, writing such a case study requires 10 months of study of both dialectical and social-emotional thinking and listening, in work with interviewees coming from both for-profit and non-profit organizations. As a consequence, it is organizational clients whose concerns provide the real-world environment for students’ learning and development, acting as midwives of their development into expert CDF/DTF users.

We use this method of teaching in two forms:

1. An “artisan” (esoteric) form for educating CDF trainers (<http://www.interdevelopmentals.org/assessment-certification.php>).

2. An applied (exoteric) form for those not intending to become CDF or DTF experts, but rather striving to use these frameworks in immediately rewarding applications, including starting a new business ([http://www.interdevelopmentals.org/Applied\\_CDF\\_Courses.php](http://www.interdevelopmentals.org/Applied_CDF_Courses.php)).

In full recognition of the pragmatic demands of students' organizational clients, a case study is about people-in-context, especially executives, and this is reflected in the structure of the cognitive interview that explores executives' *internal workplace* i.e., the way executives conceptually represent their function, tasks, work environment, and professional agenda (Laske, 2009; Jaques, 1998). These clients form the *invisible cohort* associated with IDM study cohorts. Meta-theoretically, each case study takes on clients' epistemic fallacies and category errors that condemn them to positivistic thinking and downloading rather than allowing for deep, dialectical thinking. For this reason, by using DTF for revealing executives' movements-in- thought and giving them feedback on the structure of their present thinking in terms of MELD, DCR could move closer to acting as an *educational* force within society.

As my colleague J. DeVisch has shown in two recent books (2010; 2013), absence of dialectical thinking in executive teams not only obstructs social change, but also eventually leads to companies' sub-performance or even demise. Executives' epistemic fallacies, which ultimately sabotage emancipatory change within and without companies, clearly come to light during a 1-hr recorded and transcribed cognitive interview scrutinized by an entire IDM study cohort. Structurally relevant interview "bits" are weighted in terms of the clarity of thought forms articulated therein, a method of qualitative research that when applied to written text such as annual reports is referred to as *dialectical text analysis* (Frischherz, 2013; 2014a). It is a hallmark of dialectically complex texts that they invite to be scored not only in terms of single thought forms, but constellations of thought forms from different classes (Adorno, 1999: 134ff.), as shown by the example below.

Cognitive interviews center on laying bare clients' category errors and epistemic fallacies. These are seen as hindering the speaker from living in the real world. Category errors are thought to come to light in the way base concepts are differentiated by clients. In the interview fragment quoted above, the *base concepts* of "force field" and "system stability" are explored by the interlocutor. By way of the DTF Thought Form Scoring Sheet shown, the study cohort mentally reconstructs the client from a third-person perspective for the purpose of cogent feedback.

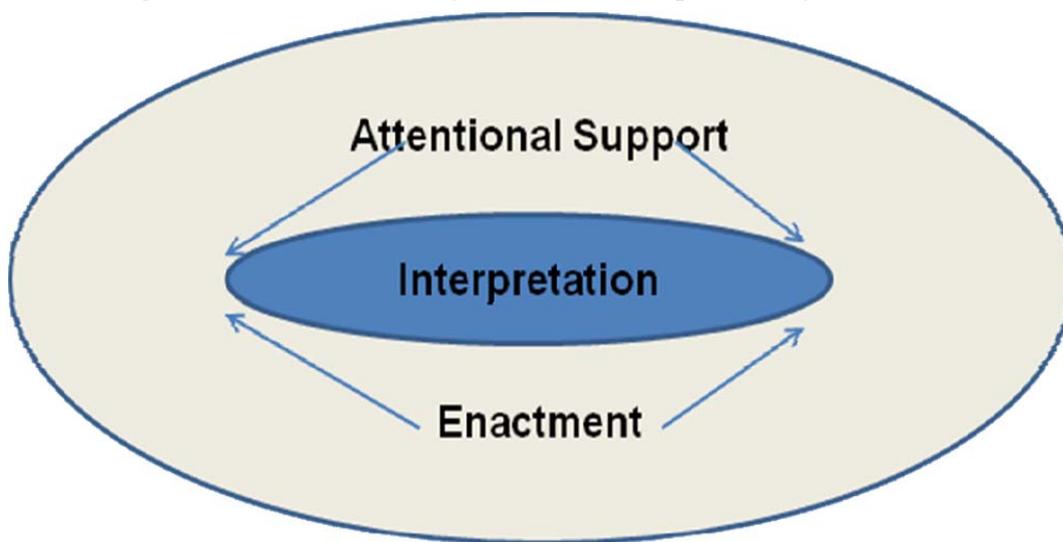
As this demonstrates, work with CDF, including DTF, is based on dialog, not argument. It is focused on the unpacking of assumptions that lead to category errors in the sense of Bhaskar's retrodution, but for the purpose of assisting clients in their work or life in real time.

**Table 2: IDM case study, Thought Form Scoring Sheet. Fragment of a transcribed cognitive interview, cohort-evaluated for the purpose of establishing the interviewee's (executive's) cognitive profile as a basis of feedback to her about the structure of her present thinking; from a 2009 IDM case study.**

<p><b>Bit Number &amp; Thought Form</b></p> <p>(weighted from 0 to 3)</p>	<p><b>Questions to Ask Yourself:</b></p> <p>1) What structural evidence leads you to selecting this Thought Form? 1. 2) If several Thought Forms are applicable, explain your choice.</p> <p><i>Note: Weights are assigned to Thought Forms only across the entire interview, not individually.</i></p>
<p><b>Cognitive Interview, Task House</b></p> <p>(Base Concept #1= “force field”; #2 = “stability”)</p>	
<p>Bit #3,</p> <p>TF 21 [weight = 1] (constitutive, intrinsic relationship)</p> <p>TF 22 [weight = 1] (Limits of stability, harmony, and durability)</p> <p>TF17 [weight = 0.5] (Critique of reductionism)</p>	<p><i>Interviewer:</i> You seem to be taking into account what other force fields are playing a role in this company, and what the circumstances are under which this project has started ...</p> <p><i>Interviewee (Consultant):</i> Well yes, I was referring to certain forces, some tearing things apart, others holding things together, and the conflict energy needed to transform the status quo.</p> <p><i>Interviewer:</i> If you look at those force fields more closely, what do you see?</p> <p><i>Interviewee:</i> Well, the dilemma lies in that efficiency should be increased while no one would lose their job. This is a human resource problem since probably some people do not have the qualities they need to be peak performers. So management wants to lift up the organization towards a more service oriented organization. One issue is the accountability level on which people should perform in their new roles. Another issue is to prepare these people to take a quantum leap. However, they will probably not be able to make this leap under the present reward system, or given what their competences are. So there are many conflicting forces I am seeing, but I doubt that my clients are seeing them. I see a gap between reality and how it is viewed by my clients. But I cannot close this gap for them; I need to educate them so they can see it.</p> <p><i>Interviewer:</i> What does that say, you think, about the system's stability?</p> <p><i>Interviewee:</i> We'll have to consider that there is an external force field as well, and together with the internal one, it may rip the company apart. We are now in a financial crisis, and we haven't seen the deepest point yet. So people are looking at efficiency and they have never, never been confronted with the fact that they will have to lay-off people. They won't be able to do it before the end of 2009 because they signed an agreement with the union. So they won't risk that. Except if they would be confronted with extreme situations. Until now they have government support. But I expect they will be asked to take hard measures by the first half of 2010. And they are not at all preparing for that.</p>

	<p><i>Justification of the Scoring</i></p> <p><i>In constructing his internal workplace, the speaker sees individuals determined by the constitutive relationships they are in that have defining quality (relationship TF 21); he also points to the overall systemic context as a factor determining the issues that will need to be considered by clients (transformational TF 22). Finally, he articulates a weak critique of reductionism (TF 17), highlighting that his clients are not looking at the outside world.</i></p>
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DTF dialog is carried out differently in the three complementary modes, as shown in Fig. 13.



**Fig. 13. The three dialog modes of DTF as used in coaching and consulting.**

In real time, one of these modes is typically the dominant one, the other two functioning as supports. All three modes require deep listening to clients, but in different ways. In *attentional support*, in focus is discerning the dialectical thought form structure of a client's speech flow, while *interpretation* seizes upon the client's category errors. Once these have been revealed to the client through commentary or questions, the interlocutor proceeds to remediating them, enabling the client to make possible sublations and differentiations (enactment). In this way, not only is analytical reasoning critiqued, but *novel experiences* leading to cognitive development are created clients.

In a society steeped in analytical reasoning, retroductory scaffolding of clients' cognitive development is difficult, encountering many psychological and institutional obstacles that have to be managed by DTF-schooled coaches and consultants. Similar difficulties apply to teaching DTF, in my experience.

The success of a case study cohort hinges on whether cohort members achieve an equilibrated use of the three dialogue modes they are taught in preparing the case study. Each of the three dialogue modes is rehearsed separately, before being linked to others.

1. In the first step, *interviewing*, emphasis lies on *attentional support* for the purpose of discovering the thought form structure of a client's speech. Interpretation and enactment function as supports.
2. In the second step, *interview text analysis*, the cohort dialog focuses on the *interpretation* of a client's interview text in terms of score-able DTF thought forms. Again, the other two modes serve as supports.
3. In the third step, *writing the case study itself* (enactment) is achieved. Each cohort member's task is to pull together in a coherent synthesis all empirical evidence gathered about a client, to document his/her cognitive as well as social-emotional profile. The thesis culminates in a written feedback report formulated on a level the client can readily understand. Through this report, the client herself is given the opportunity for enactment in subsequent evidence-based (team) coaching or mentoring sessions.

In short, an IDM case study cohort schools its members as *inter-developmental interlocutors* who are able to develop their clients, as well as themselves, in emancipatory ways. How far this goal is achieved by each cohort member can be demonstrated by longitudinal CDF assessments of cohort members, one prior to the case study and the other 3 years later (Frischherz, 2014a).

## **Conceiving of Dialectical Thinking as the Integral Movement's Central Social Practice: Esoteric and Exoteric Programs for Teaching Dialectical Thinking**

I have shared some details of the DTF *Train the Trainer* certification program in dialectical thinking in the larger environment of CDF. I have largely dwelt on the "artisan" form of teaching DTF, as exemplified in Fig. 14, to make clear how the manifestation of MELD in human speech is assessed by using the DTF system of thought forms collaboratively. In my experience, this approach is the royal road to learning dialectical thinking, compared to using meditation, discussion, hosting, holocracy, or something even more fashionable. This is the case because students' subjective experience of DTF is balanced against the objective goal of understanding a specific interview text.

There exists a 2<sup>nd</sup>, "exoteric" or "peer", form of teaching dialectical thinking through DTF whose recipients are managers and executives, rather than CDF/DTF trainers. This second form of teaching is already carried out by those IDM students who work in organizations as consultants, coaches, and mentors, even managers. I think that DCR could begin to show its educational relevance for the organizational world when armed with DTF tools in both forms of teaching.

## **Conclusions**

I would say more generally that through CDF, the severance of dialectical from adult-developmental thinking and listening – which in my view characterizes the contemporary integral community – is shown to be not only one-sided but ineffective. Especially Basseches' work, now 30 years old and further refined in DTF, is highly beneficial in demonstrating just that. The further severance of social-emotional from cognitive development issues, equally

widespread today and a legacy of Wilber, is another setback for promoting the pulse of freedom through dialectic. This separation of two intrinsically linked dimensions of consciousness – social-emotional and cognitive – was also practiced by the Frankfurt School including Habermas. I have come to see that this approach ultimately risks reducing dialectic to an academic tool for philosophical culture critique, that is, to a kind of hermeneutic exercise able to fill many books and confound many young minds whose retroduction experiences have no foundation in actual client problems.

The severance of developmental thinking from dialectical thinking is, in my view, equally counter-productive, as is shown not only by the state of the art in the contemporary adult-developmental sciences, but more blatantly by pop-talk about *evolution* that resides far above any valid empirical data base. The store house of epistemic structures accumulated by neo-Piagetians since the 1970's is, to speak with Adorno, rooted in anything but untrammelled dialectical thinking.

These epistemic structures, which have a shocking redundancy (as do developmental models) in fact stand in the way of deep thinking about the human condition, shining a light on nothing but the present state of the social sciences. Since, as we now know, it takes an individual human consciousness a life-time to fully develop its dialectical powers, we need to invest more in educating our contemporaries in dialectical thinking, in ways that take what is known about the trajectory of dialectical-thinking development into account.

In this context, it seems to me that we can use DTF thought forms (Fig. 6) as seeds for developing new, DCR-instantiating, epistemic structures now lacking, instead of borrowing from the neo-Piagetian storehouse. The new DTF-based epistemic structures to be developed will have to be context-sensitive to adult cognitive development over the lifespan. We can develop these structures taking into account the four phases of dialectical-thinking development (see Fig. 3) for whose cogent empirical assessment DTF was originally designed.

As we now know empirically, there exist four different human *Inquiring Systems* that gradually emerge and merge over the human lifespan (Fig. 1). While the Lockean (empirical) Inquiring System does help individuals transcend Common Sense, Hegel showed us 200 years ago that this transcendence remains epistemologically weak. Even when we move to a Kantian Inquiring System, as the sciences do, we fail, as Bhaskar's work has shown, to move closer to the real world because of falling prey to the epistemic fallacy. It is thus imperative that we take advantage of the early stirrings of dialectic in the adolescent mind that Basseches' research has revealed, and build on its momentum, to secure a broader constituency of dialectical thinkers, both in academia and the world of organizations and politics.

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According to my 15-year teaching experience at IDM, a student who has submitted two CDF case studies based on the "artisan" (rather than the "peer") schooling described above, is ready to enter a program for becoming a trainer of DTF dialectical thinking. Such a student has internalized the dialog partook in during the case study cohort process, and has, in addition, committed to writing her understanding of transcribed interviews in deep dialog with herself. Not

only such a person's way of thinking, but also her way of listening to others and communicating with them, has been substantially transformed: she or he can now see the real world as being in unceasing transformation, with herself as a part of it. Once she is so aware, she has become a transformational thinker who is motivated to become an agent working on behalf of the wicked global issues that beset humanity at this point of our history.

I would see DTF trainers certified by IDM as ambassadors of dialectical thinking as much as of DCR. The two make a good practical marriage. DTF practice having become part of students' professional life blood, they can help not only individual clients, but commercial organizations and political factions "get real" about the real world, as most of my students already do. In addition, DTF-trained individuals can begin to influence the social sciences, not only the developmental sciences, and promote a dialog between sciences based on dialectical thinking, something presently non-existent.

If, after reaching maturity in individuals' middle twenties, analytical reasoning is not given a chance to move on to higher phases of dialectic, developmental arrest sets in. The ensuing stasis only deepens individuals' helplessness on account of feeling trapped in the administered world that Adorno predicted 50 years ago. The origin of this helplessness, while it can be covered up by dazzling – even integral – contents, is the structure of adults' thinking that is not on a par with what the contemporary world cognitively requires of its citizens. In what I have shared in this paper, a blueprint for pedagogical action against this contemporary predicament, lack of dialectical thinking, can certainly be discerned and developed further.

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My ultimate concern in this paper has been one of extending DCR into social practice. "E-ducere" means "to lead out of", and if there is one thing to lead out of it is the absence of dialectical thinking in our culture, already diagnosed by H. Marcuse in the early 1960s (Feenberg & Leiss, 63-71). Since dialectical thinking seems no longer to be viewed as "salon communism", due in part to Roy Bhaskar's work, there is perhaps a chance that we could establish institutes of dialectical thinking as think tanks of the future, threatened as this future now is by global warming. If developed as part of the Institute of Education at this University, a *Center of Dialectical Epistemology* could establish a pioneering agenda: to teach dialectical thinking in an administered world shaped by excessive analytical reasoning. Before addressing the thinking limits of contemporary organizations, however, such an institute would first have to address those of the integral movement's own cohorts.

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