Training in Dialectical Thinking to support Adult Development

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Agenda

Training in Dialectical Thinking

- Presentation

- Interactive Session

- Questions and Feedback

Core Assumptions

1. Adult development involves developing the capacity to notice how one is thinking

2. A person can learn to identify his/her "thought structure in use" or "thought form" underpinning any content – Meta-thinking.

3. A person can also notice what is missing or absent from her/his thinking

4. A conscious choice can then be made to "think differently".

Theoretical base for our concept of Dialectical Thinking

Michael Basseches:
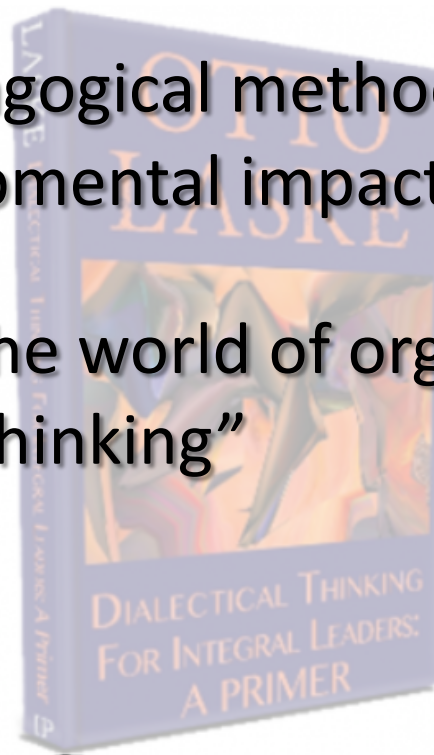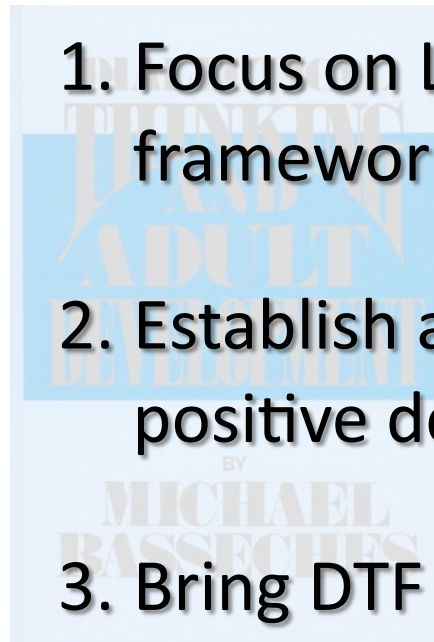Dialectical Cognitive
Schematas
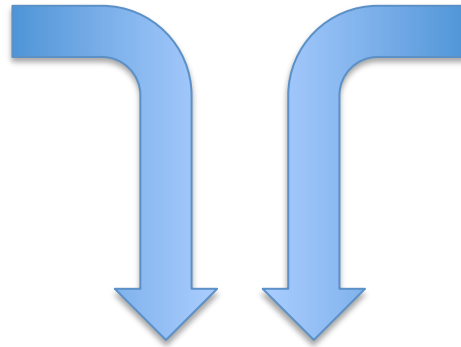
Roy Bhaskar:
Dialectical Moments
of Reality

Otto Laske:
Dialectical Thought
Forms

Our Approach

1. Focus on Laske's "Dialectical Thought Form" (DTF) framework

2. Establish a pedagogical methodology that has a positive developmental impact on adults.

3. Bring DTF into the world of organisations as one form of "meta-thinking"

There are 4 simple classes of dialectic thought forms

**Context /
Big Picture**

**Process /
Emergence**

**Relationship/
Common Ground**

Transformation

12 Core Dialectical Thought Forms (Iva Vurdelja)

Context

Process

Relationship

Transformation

Three kinds for each class: -

a) Points to, identifies or distinguishes a thought form

b) Describes and elaborates the thought form

c) Links with other thought forms

Table of 12 Thought Forms (TF)

Context/ Big Picture	Process/ Emergence	Relationship/ Common Ground	Transformation
Cp: Setting of a part within a whole	Pp: Emergence of what was not apparent or was absent	Rp: Common ground between elements bringing them into relationship	Tp: Limits to the stability of systems leading them to transform
Ce: Structure and stability of a system	Pe: Interaction between entities to change themselves	Re: Structure of relationships	Te: Developmental movement of systems
Cl: Multiple contexts and perspectives	Pl: Embeddedness in continuous process and time	Rl: Patterns of influence in a relationship	Tl: Integration of systems leading to evolution of new entities

(Laske 2015: 30)

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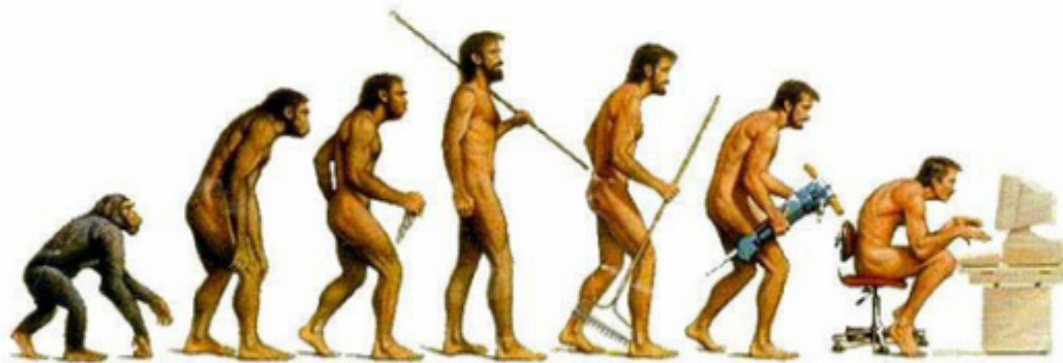
Context Thought Form : Ce
Structure and stability of a system

- Theme: Description of a larger whole in terms of its structure, elements, layers, functions.

- Image: An integrated system

Transformational Thought Form : Te Developmental movement of systems

- Theme: Describing the transformation of a system to achieve higher levels of functioning

- Image: Showing a developmental progression through forms

Questions as Mind Openers

Context/ Big Picture	**How do you see what you describe relating to what is going on in the bigger picture?**
Process/ Emergence	**If you think of this situation as continuously evolving, what do you see happening next?**
Relationship/ Common Ground	**Do you think that the elements that you describe could be related in any way?**
Transformation	**How might what you describe be combined and integrated into another contrasting system?**

Exercise Grid

Progression →

Depth ↓

	IDENTIFY (other's TFs)	REFLECT (on own TFs)	USE (TFs in speech/ text)
SIMPLE (4 TF classes)	Analyse/ classify pictures/texts	Reflect on a problem	Ask questions Describe/ illuminate
MEDIUM (12 TFs)	Compare texts	Reflect on a personal goal	Rethink a problem
COMPLEX (28 TFs)	Analyse structured interview	Reflect on values Evaluate	Coach a process

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Workshop Structure

1. Pre-work: Self Assessment

2. Stimulate interest

3. Explain Dialectical Thinking

4. Bring the thought forms to life

5. Practical Exercises
   - Thought experiments
   - Pictures
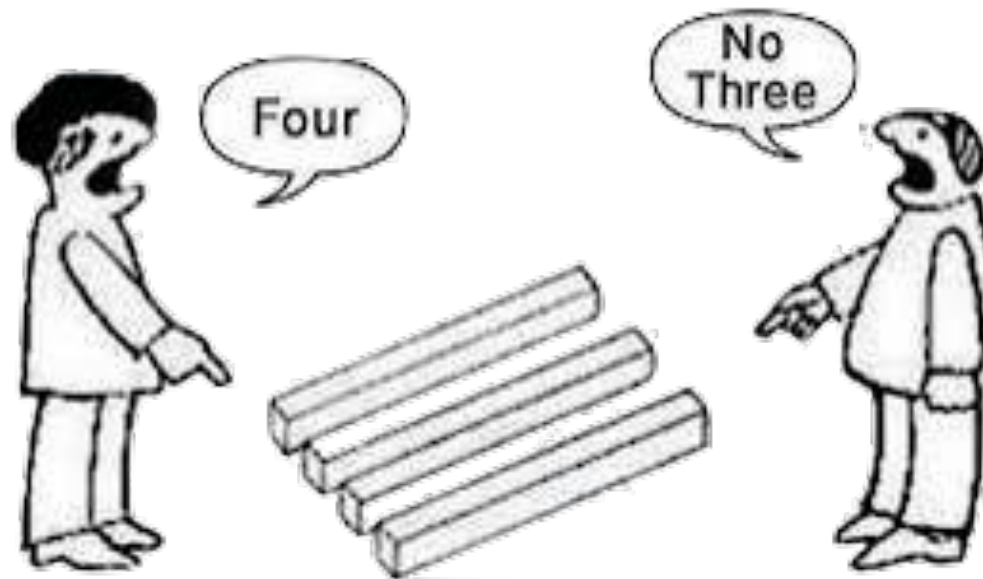   - Texts
   - Dialogue

6. Follow-up

Results/Feedback from the pilot

- "Pictures were a really good way to explore different thought forms"

- "Mind-opening questions are a most useful way to trigger new thinking"

- "Magic! The problem I brought has gone away

Participant reactions

It is really confusing!!!

- "Get practical right from the start – leave the theory for later"
- "So interesting but too many ideas, constructs and complexity"

Results/Feedback from the Workshop

Strengths

- Rich content, new!
- Wide variety of exercises
- Portable framework
- Images to stimulate thought
- Mind openers

Weaknesses

- Too complex, abstract
- Too much theory
- Tricky dynamics – easier for some than others
- A single day is not enough

Outlook – evolution and change

- Follow up days

- Collection of images

- Card set with mind opening questions

- Introductory video

- Self-assessment test

- Relationship with social-emotional stage

- Article on didactics of dialectics

- Special interest / discussion groups

Challenges

1. 28 thought forms in the schema

2. Dialectical thinking makes some people uneasy!

3. Lack of hard evidence that dialectical thinking helps

4. People's capacity to think dialectically may be domain dependent

5. Praxis: Moving from thinking to doing : practical transformation
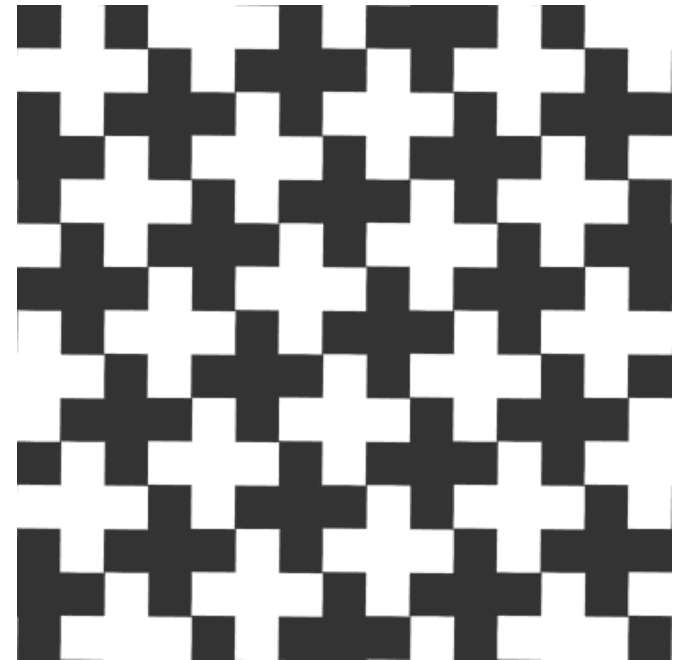
Thought Experiment - The Glacier

Refer to the image of the McCarty Glacier

How would you describe what has happened/is happening?

What would you suggest to reverse this?

What class of thought forms are you using when you answer the above?

McCarty Glacier - Alaska

How would you describe what has happened/is happening?

2004

1909

1

Exercise 3 – Using Mind Openers

Split into pairs, one person to be the interviewer and the other person, the interviewee. The interviewer invites the interviewee to select a question from the handout and to answer it.

The interviewer listens and chooses from any or all of the mind openers as appropriate to get the interviewee to elaborate on their answer.

After 5 minutes, swap roles and repeat.

"There is a crack,
a crack in everything
-that's how the light
gets in"
(Leonard Cohen)
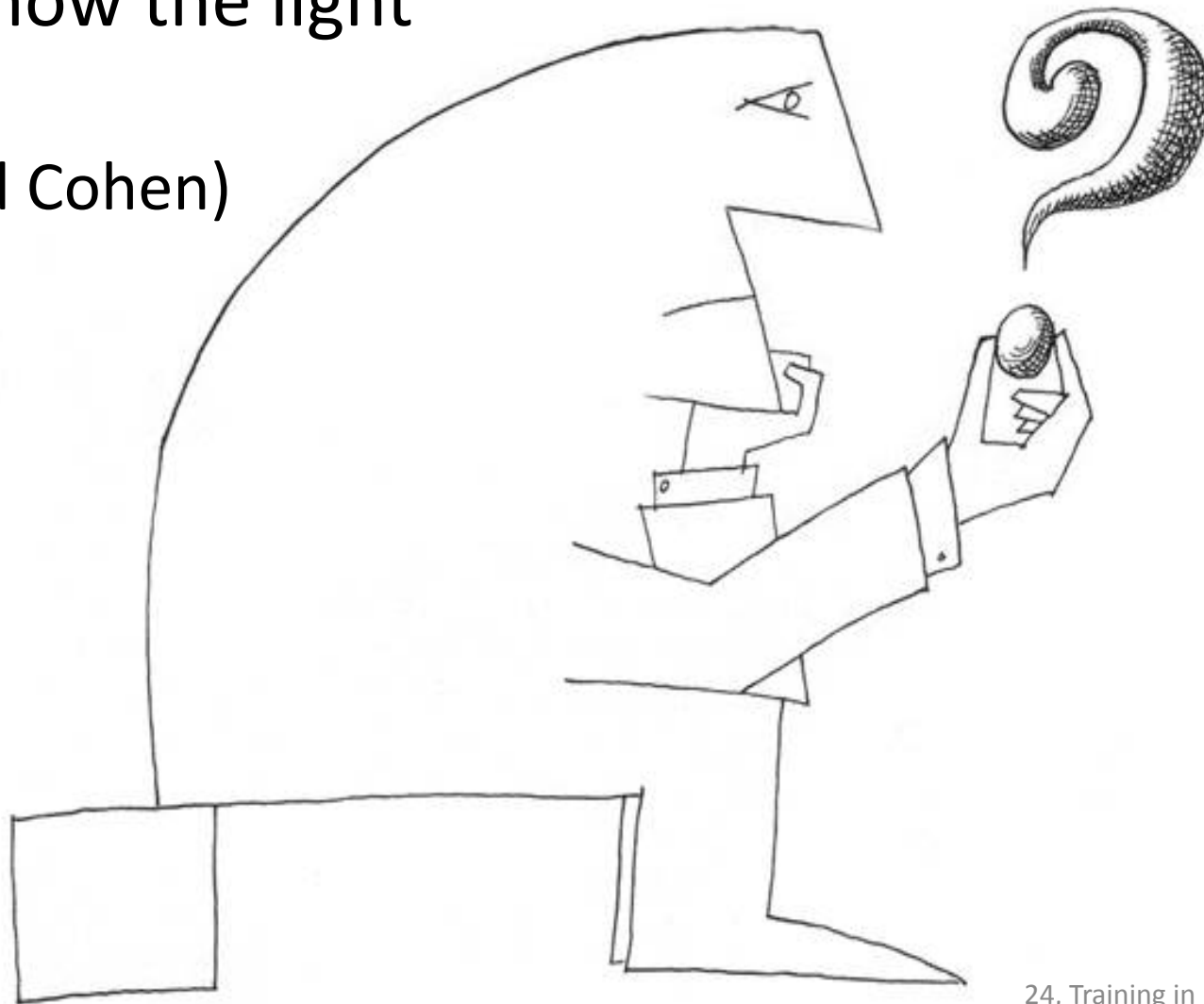
References and Links

The following may prove useful for further information:-

Basseches, M (1984) "Dialectical Thinking and Adult Development"

Bhaskar, R (2008) "Dialectic – The Pulse of Freedom"

Laske, O (2007) "Measuring Hidden Dimensions of Human Systems: Foundations of Requisite Organisations"

www.interdevelopmentals.org : Otto Laske's Interdevelopmental Institute
- Books, articles and courses

https://roybhaskar.wordpress.com : References the work of Roy Bhaskar

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TO4FaaVy0Is : Roy Bhaskar outlining his theory of Critical Realism

www.integralpatterns.com : Bernhard Possert's diagrammatic representations of dialectical thought forms

http://home.igc.org/~venceremos/index.htm : Dialectics for Kids