

Dialectics

[Linguistics](#), [Language](#)



Dialectics has been considered as one of the three original liberal arts known to classical philosophers as the Trivium, with the other two as rhetoric and grammar. Dialectics has been considered as one of the three original liberal arts known to classical thinkers as the Trivium, with the other two as rhetoric and grammar. During the ancient times in Greece, dialectic's forte was at the affairs of persuasion, very much like its sister counterpart rhetoric. Dialectic's purpose was to resolve discrepancies and disagreements through logical and rational discourses.

The simple approach and explanation to how dialectics work is through the three step process of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, which was postulated by a German idealist philosopher named Georg Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel. He identified that for which, say a given premise, would be the emergence of a proposition (the theses) only later to be refuted (hence the anti-thesis of it). Being in this state of unacceptability, the only alternative is to arrive at a higher understanding or denial of the supposed presupposition of the thesis and anti-thesis forming a third proposition termed as the synthesis.

A more simple and un-Hegelian example to understand dialectics is, let's suppose you just got a hold of a brand new cell phone. Being new to you, you have a limited understanding of it. You start on a state of ignorance knowing that its only purpose or the only reason for having one is to enable you to communicate. (thesis) Sooner or later, one way or another, the batteries will run out(assuming it is not a solar powered device) and it will stop functioning, hence the opposite of communicating or not being able to communicate. anti-thesis)

Only then when you have a deeper understanding that for a cell phone to work and operate it needs a power source and learning the concept of recharging/changing the power source(a synthesis is reached and you gain a higher knowledge about the cell phone)will you get it to function properly again. Frederick Engels and Karl Marx, two very well-known revolutionary thinkers during their time applied this philosophical thought in studying the ideal and material condition of the world.

It has been the theoretical foundation of Marxism which led to the development of dialectic materialism, which is simply the combination of Hegel's theory of Dialectics and Materialism and Historical Materialism, the application of dialectic materialism instudying history. The first principle of dialectics according to Frederick Engels is that everything, be it physical and material objects to real world processes, is made of opposing forces or opposing sides. (Fleck) To elaborate on this principle just look at everything around you.

Everything works like a magnet. Objects hold each other because of the opposing forces that keep them from flying separately. The chair you sit on tries to break away from the earth, but the planet's gravity keeps it from doing so, the sun is held together by gravity which counteracts the nuclear reaction from its core. Even seemingly abstract concepts are made of opposites. For instance, to have an idea of the concept of bad, we need an idea of what is good, to have an idea of what is hot, we need an idea of what is cold and so forth.

This is what Engel called the interpenetration of opposites which he frequently referred to as the unity of opposites. Many critics have argued on

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this property of dialectics which up to until now, many thinkers, new and old alike have yet to settle. Another important principle of dialectics that Engel stated in his work about dialectics is that in everything, gradual changes lead to turning points. (Fleck) What happens is that the two opposing forces in a process of change push against each other. Change would be gradual if one side is stronger than the other one.

But when the other side becomes stronger, there is a turning point, much like when too much trees is cut down in a mountain slope, a mud slide occurs (turning point), you heat a kernel of corn until it turns into popcorn (turning point). This is what Engel referred to as the principle of the transformation of quantity into quality. Quantitative change results from the steady but continuous dominance of one opposing side or force. Things then follow a qualitative change when the other or opposite side dominates the other.

The third principle of dialectics is that changes moves in spirals, not circles. (Fleck) Around us processes of change are cyclical in the sense that at first, one side dominates, then the other as in the cycle of day and night, breathing in and breathing out, one opposite then another. Engels claims things turn in cycles. However, it is not indispensable that they would return to where they came from and how they started. It is therefore cyclical but not circular. Change is ever-changing, moving in spirals.

This principle is referred to by Engels as the law of negation of negation. This seemingly complex principle, according to Engel goes on and on in everyday life. This happens when one side overpowers the other making the first negation. The dominated side then overpowers the dominating side at some

point making the second negation. This is what law of negation of negation explains. In real-life drama, dialectics play a crucial role, in communications specifically in day-to-day normal conversations more than we ought to think.

Traditionally, dialectics has been considered as a linguistic process that leads to generation of new ideas and thought by one's apprehension of a contradiction and paradox between two or more opposites. In layman's term, a conversation starts with stating a point of view followed by the others verification of its validity or questioning it from other points of view. In this whole conversation process, the clash of ideas or propositions trying to reach a consensual agreement which in turn is still ultimately questioned from other perspectives.

Much like dialectics, in dialogues there is an imminent clash of ideas that are going on between individuals which ultimately lead to a consensus. The use of the dialectical approach or method in analyzing our history has long been used by its pioneer thinkers, more notable in arts, philosophy, science and religion. This may have been due to the analytical and critical capability of dialectics in explaining why and how changes occur which is essential for historians in probing the past.

By pinpointing what stream of thinking and clashing ideas during a particular epoch, much can be surmised to wisely presuppose what will would or could happen next. Dialectics is essential in understanding fully the how's and the why's of how things happen. It provides the tool that gives wisdom on knowing the factors of change in a society and how it is ultimately molded

and formed. Another concept that is noteworthy in the field of dialectics is called the ``principal contradiction'', termed by Mao Zedong.

This is defined as the contradiction in all things that needs to be resolved first and foremost. In determining what the principal contradiction in a thing, it is necessary to look at the overall or main goal of it. The three principle of dialectics namely. (1)the unity of opposites,(2)quantity into quality, and (3)negation of negation fits clearly on how to identify and possibly solve the principal contradiction in our society though it does not give a clear blueprint on what should be done.