

## Dialectics

- In philosophy, **dialectic** is an argument or debate between different people. In Medieval Europe, dialectics (or logic) was one of the three beginning liberal arts all together known as the trivium; the other members being rhetorics and grammar.

The goal of the dialectical process (*dialectic* or *dialectics*) is to try to resolve the disagreement through rational talk, and the search for the truth in the matter.

Dialectics has three main ideas:

- 1: Everything is made out of opposing forces/opposing sides.
  - 2: Gradual changes lead to turning points, where one force overcomes the other.
  - 3: Change moves in spirals not circles.
- Dialectical theory describes and explains the development of systems which exist in the world.
  - So, Everything in a social system at any point in time is either a something (i.e. a thesis) or not that thing (i.e. its antitheses). As a result of the interaction of thesis and antithesis a new situation in society (i.e. synthesis) emerges for which the original thesis and antithesis have interacted and merged.
  - Dialectical analysis identifies pairs of social elements which co-exist, are dependent on one another and which interact with each other.
  - The concept excludes subjective elements such as emotional appeal and the modern pejorative sense of rhetoric.
  - The concept of dialectics was given new life by Hegel, whose dialectically synthetic model of nature and of history made it, as it were, a fundamental aspect of the nature of reality .
  - In the mid-19th century, the concept of "dialectic" was appropriated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and retooled in a dynamic, non idealistic manner. It would also become a crucial part of later representations of Marxism as a philosophy of dialectical materialism.

## Hegelian Dialectic

The formula, abstract-negative-concrete, suggests a flaw, or perhaps an incompleteness, in any initial thesis—it is too abstract and lacks the negative of trial, error, and experience. For Hegel, the concrete, the synthesis, the absolute, must always pass through the phase of the negative, in the journey to completion, that is, mediation. This is the essence of what is popularly called Hegelian dialectics.

## Marxist Dialectic

is a form of Hegelian dialectic which applies to the study of historical materialism.

It purports to be a reflection of the real world created by man.

Dialectic would thus be a robust method under which one could examine personal, social, and economic behaviors. Marxist dialectic is the core foundation of the philosophy of dialectical materialism, which forms the basis of the ideas behind historical materialism.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels proposed that Hegel's dialectic is too abstract.

In contradiction to Hegelian idealism, Marx presented his own dialectic method, which he claims to be "direct opposite" of Hegel's method:

My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e. the process of thinking, which, under the name of 'the Idea', he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of 'the Idea'. With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.

Kant's views on Dialectics :

The first half of the *Critique of Pure Reason* argues that we can only obtain substantive knowledge of the world via sensibility and understanding.

Very roughly, our capacities of sense experience and concept formation cooperate so that we can form empirical judgments.

The next large section—the “Transcendental Dialectic”—demolishes reason’s pretensions to offer knowledge of a “transcendent” world, that is, a world beyond that revealed by the senses.

“Dialectic,” says Kant, is “a *logic of illusion*” (A293): so in his vocabulary, a dialectical idea is empty or false.

However, the *Critique of Pure Reason* should not be read as a demolition of reason’s cognitive role.

Kant certainly wants to delimit the bounds of reason, but this is not the same as arguing that it has no role in our knowledge.

Three points are crucial:

- 1) the relation of reason to empirical truth;
- 2) reason’s role in scientific enquiry; and
- 3) the positive gains that come from appreciating reason’s limits.

## References

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