



INSTITUTE FOR  
ADVANCED  
DIALECTICAL  
RESEARCH

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## Thinking Positively about the Power of Negative Thinking

*World's first dialectical institute established on World Philosophy Day*

**SEATTLE, Washington** — Philosopher Herbert Marcuse described dialectic as “the power of negative thinking,” but that hasn’t stopped the founders of the newly-established Institute for Advanced Dialectical Research from thinking positively about their new endeavor. They chose Nov. 19—World Philosophy Day—during a worldwide pandemic, to launch the world’s first institute dedicated to dialectical thinking . . . and they think the timing couldn’t be better.

“One thing we’ve learned from the global pandemic response is that we aren’t limited to interacting with people locally or at big conferences in far-away places,” says Jersey Flight, the institute’s Director of Interdisciplinary Research. Discussion groups, book clubs, lectures, even those big conferences, he notes, have all moved online. “Connecting from quarantine has taught us that distance is no longer a barrier to intellectual engagement and collaboration, whether it’s with people in our own neighborhoods or in other countries around the world.” Dealing with the virus has been challenging for everyone, Flight says, “but it has also created unexpected opportunities for forging fruitful partnerships and developing dialectical thinking.”

Dialectic is one of the oldest branches of philosophy—dating back to ancient Greek times—but its modern form begins with the 19th century German philosopher, G.W.F. Hegel, who showed how our thoughts and experience can develop through a process of contradiction and negation that leads to higher levels of thinking and awareness.

“Dialectic is relevant in a surprisingly wide variety of fields,” says Executive Director, Justin Burke, DPhil, “from philosophy and psychology to physics and linguistics, but it’s rarely studied in its own right.” Dr. Burke, who did his doctoral research on Hegel at Oxford, recalls, “As a student, I used to think of dialectic in purely philosophical terms, but I’ve come to understand what Hegel meant when he said dialectic is all around us.” Several years ago, after a lecture, someone in the audience had a question about Hegel and Martin Luther King. “I had to admit I wasn’t aware of a link between them,” he says. “Later, I was surprised to find that Dr. King had written about Hegel and dialectic in his autobiography.” And King wasn’t the only one—Dr. Burke says he discovered that Nobel Prize-winning physicists have written about dialectic: Niels Bohr, Wolfgang Pauli and Werner Heisenberg; there are dialectical biologists, psychologists and sociologists; there is a journal of *Dialectical Anthropology*; there are emerging fields of dialect, such as neurodialectics and dialectical linguistics. There are also established disciplines, such as dialectical education and Critical Theory, plus non-western traditions, including Chinese, Indian and Russian dialectics. Considered as a group, Dr. Burke says, “There are dozens of potential areas ripe for research and, hopefully, the propagation of dialectical thinking.”

To carry out this research, the institute has established an international forum—the first of its kind—for discussion and debate about dialectic under headings such as “Hegelian Dialectics”, “Quantum Mechanics” and “Dialectical Psychology”. In another first, the institute has also launched a journal of dialectical research, and will organize an annual symposium on dialectic.

More information is available on the institute's website or by contacting Communications Coordinator, Moira MacKenzie:

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