The Three Logics, Reframing and Sleight of Mouth

(Using Logics and NLP to Manage Paradoxes in Organisations)

By Joe Cheal

Introduction

This article introduces the reader to three different forms of logic with the purpose of seeking methods to manage paradoxes, particularly within organisations. The nature of reframing and Dilts' (1999) Sleight of Mouth patterns are also explored in the context of the third logic.

The Three Logics

According to Ford and Ford (1994), there are three different types of logic that may help in the management of paradox: formal logic, dialectics and trialectics. Each of these approaches is a logic which ultimately affects the mindset/thinking model of the individual. For this reason, the difference between these logics is an important distinction to make.

Ford and Ford (1994, p758) suggest that: "When a person is 'operating in' a particular logic, he or she takes its rules and boundaries for granted. Logics pose the problems, provide the language for explaining and understanding them, and determine their solutions. Logics give people their 'reality', the truth, the way things are… when people are unaware that they are using a logic, or are 'trapped' in only one, this point of view becomes an unwitting limitation to what might be seen or understood, restricting their observations and offering no really new alternatives."

The three logics are summarised in Table 1 below, with example references that fall within each of these approaches.

Table 1: Paradox Management approaches (adapted from Ford & Ford 1994)

Logic	What is this?	Example References
Formal	Working in the framework of either/or, maintaining a polarity between two seemingly opposing positions.	Johnson (1996)
Dialectic	Creating a 'third way' or synthesis between the polarities (which are known as thesis and antithesis).	Gademer (1976), Siporin & Gummer (1988)
Trialectic	Shifting outside or beyond the polarity for example by reframing.	Ford & Ford (1994) Carini et al (1995)

As approaches, each has its problems and drawbacks as well as its strengths. Formal logic (or Aristotelian logic) attempts to deal with the paradox by maintaining the either/or frame which means that although it may help to understand a paradox, it does not resolve it. Formal logic has also been criticised for its inability to account for change (eg. Korzybski 1958), and as such is not necessarily a useful tool for organisational development.

Dialectic logic also has its critics (eg. Ichazo 1982, Horn 1983) as it is perceived to create an endless struggle driven by the sense that 'more is better'. For this reason, it has been said to underpin capitalism (Ichazo 1982) and to lead to "the paradox of Malthusian growth in a finite world" (Voorhees 1983). These criticisms are valid when applied to Dialectic materialism, developed by Engels and Marx, but it is less clear that they apply to Hegel's original works on dialectics which was proposed as a model of idealism and was designed to be a positive reframe on what the Ancient Greeks had seen as a negative concept (ironically, that for every concept there is a conflicting opposite) (Gademer 1976). Dialectics did not suit the formal logic quest for absolute truth because every truth appeared to have an equally true opposite. Horn (1983, p13) argues that dialectics promotes conflict and "lends itself to justification of struggle, violence and constant fights." This however is a far cry from Hegel's idealism of synthesis and unity where "it is in the nature of spirit to sustain contradiction and to maintain itself precisely therein as the speculative unity of things opposed to each other" (Gadamer, 1976, p16). Another problem for dialectics is that as a synthesis is formed from the thesis and the antithesis, a new polarity is created at the level of the synthesis and hence a new paradox.

Trialectic logic is a rather new and obscure concept that is hard to quantify and hence hard to reproduce. If dialectic materialism could be compared to a Cartesian/Newtonian dualistic, mechanistic paradigm, then trialectics would be comparable to a holistic, quantum physics paradigm (Dell'Olio 1983). In organisational terms, this would link with complexity theory and systemic thinking. A tool that reflects trialectic logic would be reframing and this is an area where NLP might add value (eg. Dilts 1999).

As a side note, Ichazo's (1982) and Horn's (1983) attack on dialectics are rather deflated when applied to the original idealistic dialectics of Hegel (as opposed to dialectic materialism), which is ironically close to the principles of trialectics; for example, Hegel saw the whole layered system of thesis-antithesis-synthesis as a complex system, calling it the 'Absolute' and the synthesis of thesis and antithesis ultimately comes to an end at the 'Absolute Idea'. (Russell 1954). Others have also noted that the distinction between dialectics and trialectics is blurred (eg. Carini et al 1995).

Using the Three Logics to Manage Paradox

Having explored some of the issues of the three logics, an important question from an organisational perspective is: can they add anything to the management of paradox?

Formal logic tends to approach paradox in an 'either/or' fashion, where one must choose one side or the other. Classic decision making tools follow this form, eg. Lewin's forcefield analysis (in Huczynski & Buchanan 2001), exploring the pros and cons of both sides and making decisions from there. Sadly this can sometimes lead to a decision being made by choosing the 'least worst' option. Polarity management (Johnson 1996) takes this a step forward by introducing the idea of movement between the polarities by deciding which of the 'pros' best suits the current situation and then when the 'cons' become too intense, one flips over to the other option until the 'cons' of that option become too intense and then one flips back again. This appears to happen in organisations over long periods of time (eg. centralise then decentralise then recentralise etc.). Other uses of the 'pros and cons' approach might be the 'Helvig square' (Marsh & Macalpine 1999) and 'waving dualities' (Overdurf 2005). One potential by-product of 'polarity management', 'Helvig square' and 'waving dualities' is seeing the issue from a more objective perspective (ie. going meta). This does not change the issue, but may reframe it (explored later in trialectics).

It could be argued that nominalising is akin to Aristotelian/formal logic in that it seeks to create 'things'. It is only by labelling 'things' that the three laws of formal logic can work:
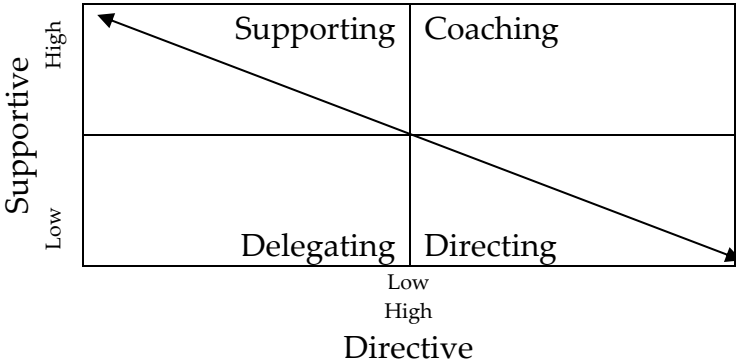
	First Law A=A	Second Law A<>B	Third Law A<>(A+B)
Formal Logic	Law of identity	Law of contradiction	Law of the excluded middle

Between formal logic and dialectics is 'fuzzy logic' (Kosko 1993), which suggests there is a continuum between the two poles of 'either/or'. This would allow for a midway point solution, a balance or a compromise. Although a 'from/to' continuum is an improvement on 'either/or' (in the sense that it provides more options), it might still be considered rather one dimensional. For example, if the result of a negotiation could only be somewhere between win/lose and lose/win, then the *best* result for all parties could only be a compromise – win/win can only occur if a second dimension is added.

If a single dimension continuum is converted to two dimensions, a 'dialectic construct' is created, also known as a 2*2 box, quadrant (eg. Covey 1994, Blanchard et al 1994), managerial grid (Blake & Mouton 1966, Hampden-Turner 1990) or Cartesian Co-ordinates (Bodenhamer & Hall 2004). The idea of dialectics, as originally proposed by Hegel (Gadamer 1976), is to think in 'both/and' terms instead of 'either/or' by taking a thesis and its antithesis and then creating a synthesis or 'third way' (Giddens 2000). In a dialectic

construct, the four quadrants will be: (1) Thesis, (2) Antithesis, (3) Synthesis (both thesis and antithesis) and (4) Inverse Synthesis (neither thesis nor antithesis). Table 2 below uses Situational Leadership (Blanchard et al 1994) which is based on the two leadership types of directive and supportive to demonstrate this process from formal logic to dialectic construct.

Table 2: Situational Leadership from formal logic to dialectic construct

Formal Logic Either Directive or Supportive	Supportive Directive
'Fuzzy Logic' Continuum From Directive to Supportive	Supportive ←——————→ Directive
Dialectic Construct Creating a quadrant using two continuums of low to high for Supportive and Directive.	

Another form of dialectic construct is the Cartesian Co-ordinates that instead of having axis from low to high, has instead plus (positive) and minus (negative). For example, figure 1 below uses the concept of win or lose (with win as plus and lose as minus).

Figure1: Win or Lose quadrant as an example of Cartesian Co-ordinates.

+	Win/Lose (+/-)	Win/Win (+/+)
-	Lose/Lose (-/-)	Lose/Win (-/+)
	-	**+**

The trialectical approach might include 'denominalising' and reframing. The process of denominalising is usually linked to NLP (eg Dilts & DeLozier 2000b) but is also is referred to by Hampden-Turner (1990, p131) who argues that "by adding *ing* to…words we convert the noun form to the present participle; not decisiveness but deciding… Once expressed in this way, they are process words… the oppositions are softened and the *adversary structure* disappears." Ford & Ford (1994, p765) inform that: "According to trialectics, there are no 'things' in the world other than change, movement or process. Things, such as people, organisations and ideas, are all names given to abstractions of what are identifiable and relatively constant patterns of movement" Trialectics would therefore imply that paradox is a process and not a thing.

According to Ichazo (1982, p74), trialectic logic is about "the change from one material manifestation point to another" and the movement from one point to another point appears to be that of one frame to another frame. In this sense, 'reframing' captures the essence of trialectic logic. Reframing taps into a rich source of material and hence provides a useful resource for paradox management. Bolman & Deal (2003, p12) refer to 'frames' as "windows, maps, tools, lenses, orientations, and perspectives" and use four broad frames (structural, human resource, political and symbolic) through which organisational reframing can take place. Bandler and Grinder (1982) propose two types of reframing: content and context, and these have been further developed by Dilts with the 'Sleight of Mouth' patterns (1999) and also by Hall & Bodenhamer (2005) with the 'Mind Lines' patterns. Table 3 (below) compares Dilts' Sleight of Mouth patterns to paradox management approaches.

Table 3: Sleight of Mouth Patterns & Paradox Management approaches.

Sleight of Mouth Pattern	Approach	Description of Approach
Apply to Self	Reverse the loop	Convert dilemmas into 'virtuous circles'.
	Act paradoxically to the paradox	Go towards rather than away from fear of paradox.
Intention	Paradoxical intention/ Prescribe the symptom	Deliberately carry out the symptom.
	Positive Intention	Explore the positive intention of a paradox. Use an 'as if' frame.
Consequences	Handling Symptoms	Resolve the symptom of a paradox when the symptom is perceived as the key issue or is a short term 'sticking plaster' solution is needed.
Another Outcome	Confrontation to compare and contrast	Bring the polarity out into the open, so that differences can be resolved.
Chunk Up/Down	Second order change	Reframe the proposition at another level of abstraction and analysis.
	Logical Types	Clarify and separate the levels of the issue and the connections among them.

	Hierarchy of ideas	Whole and parts. An organisation is both a whole and a collection of parts. Category and examples of types and components. Chunk up: *what is this an example of?* Chunk down: *what is an example of this?*
Hierarchy of Criteria	Seeking underlying harmony of values	Resolve through new insights and linkages between conflicting demands.
Change Frame Size	Reconstruction	Move to different level or temporal distinction
	Larger Frame	Put a larger frame around a situation, to understand it in many contexts.
Map of the World	New perspective	Find a world view that integrates and transcends opposing positions.
Reality Strategy	Change what is measured	Develop effective measures and get rid of a lot of them.
Analogy	Metaphor	Shift to a metaphor, to help make the paradox more tangible and see the pattern in a different way. Create solution at level of metaphor, then map back.
Redefine	Paradoxical frame	Seek the positive of the opposite. Redefine the situation by providing a new meaning that has a positive quality.
Counter Example	Elsewhere	Show an example of where the paradox is not a problem, eg. another context, in another organisation.
Meta	Take meta position	Jump outside the frame and take a systems view.
	Transcending	Take multiple meta positions to disassociate.

From an organisational perspective, reframing may be a challenge at an organisational level. In Dilts & DeLozier's (2000b, p1071) definition, to reframe something means "to transform its meaning by putting it into a different framework or context than it has previously been perceived". Bartunek (1988, p151) suggests that reframing in organisations means a change in perception at an organisational level, i.e. "shared meaning or culture". This means organisational reframing is more complex due to interaction between different groups with different perspectives and sub-cultures. There is also a confusion in the concept of reframing which is perhaps more crucial when applied to an organisation – does reframing mean a change of perception, a change of the perceiver, a change of the thing being perceived or a combination? Bartunek (1988) appears to use reframing as a way of changing the organisation from one form to another but this then becomes indistinguishable from classic organisational change management. Perhaps it might be useful to distinguish between reframing an organisation (ie. change management) and reframing an organisational issue (ie. seeing that issue from another perspective perhaps in seeking how the issue could actually be a strength). Although it might ultimately lead to some change management intervention, the reframing approaches highlighted in table 3

apply to reframing organisational issues as opposed to reframing the organisation itself. The question of who or what is actually changing in reframing is an interesting one and may merit further exploration.

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