



The Liberal Arts Tradition

with Dr. Kevin Clark and Ravi Jain

Lesson 8: Dialectic (or Logic)

Outline:

Dialectic

- The student failed to perceive adequately the question. Dialectic is the art of right thinking, logic.
 - Logic is thoroughly traditional, but the beginning of dialectic (with Plato and Socrates) gives the idea that there is something bigger and more robust than the rules of making valid inferences.
- **Truth is not having all the right answers, but that you come to understand by conversation that is continually livened by following the question.**
- We learn in dialectic the **art of language that helps us join the conversation** not the art of language that helps us defend our assertions about our own positions.
- We learn that the office of dwelling in language is something that we share together and it builds community.
- The art of asking good questions and responding on point to questions, of being able to discern when a question is going to lead somewhere and when one seems to be a dead end is precisely the kind of skill that is necessary for people who are going to be seeking after the truth to have.
- The most enlivening conversations that we have are when the questions have been really good and really engaged. The questions did not stifle conversation, but opened up possibilities for understanding.
- The essence of the art of dialectic is the skill of opening the questions that will open up understanding, conversation, and the ability to enter into a text.

Is there still a role for logic in dialectic?

- This is the way that I may be able to engage you in questions, and be able to understand whether your answers to questions avail themselves of further questions.
- It is not just about asking questions, but also testing answers.
- Logic is encountered first in conversation, and over the course of entering the conversation through pursuing the question more logical principles emerge until it is appropriate to learn a system of logic.
- The distilled art/science of right thinking begins in conversation where a teacher helps students respond on point to a question, then a system of logic can be learned.
 - This is the logic of catechism.
 - Who made you? God made you.



- Before the Enlightenment, theology is taught as questions.
- Theology is an answer to a question. Who is this God? The King of Glory it is he.
- If you begin with questions, it sometimes leads to more questions.
- When we come to a text, we are seeking an answer to a question. Then we ask the text more questions.
- *The art of asking questions leads us to meaning, they don't know meaning if they don't know to what question the text is an answer.*

