

Dialectics IAS

For One-To-One Mentorship

Examiner's Expectations and Evaluation Guidelines

Examiner's Expectations

What the examiner expects in the answer? The answer to this question lies in the question itself. If one reads the question carefully, he/she can read the mind of the examiner. As a general rule, one must focus on the keywords and phrases used in the question. One must also try to sense the overall tone of the question.

Question asked on 7 December 2025

Q. Critically examine Marx's theory of social change. (20)

Key words and phrases: 'critically examine', 'theory of social change'

In this question, the examiner expects from the candidate to examine the ideas of Karl Marx on social change in light of the developments that have taken place historically. The candidate must highlight the key ideas of Karl Marx as well as explain that to what extent and in what forms these ideas of Marx found expression in reality. Be it the idea of dialectics operating in the mode of production, be it the priority given to the materialistic or economic forces in triggering social change, or the ultimate synthesis in the form of communism emanating from the revolutionary transformation of capitalistic order. The candidate must clearly highlight the limitations of Marxian theory with suitable examples. Additionally, alternative explanations explaining social change must also be briefly mentioned. The candidate must support all important arguments with examples from historical evolution of European and Asian societies.

Evaluation Guidelines

An introduction to Marx's ideas – dialectics and mode of production

(20% of the total marks)

Idea of materialistic determinism – alternative explanation offered by Weber (role of religion in social change)

(20% of the total marks)

Idea of revolution – Marx's argument for polarization in light of the empirical evidence of decomposition of capital and labour

(20% of the total marks)

Idea of a classless society (communism) – in light of the case studies from socialist societies indicating existence of socio-economic inequalities

(20% of the total marks)

Alternative theories of social change – Durkheim, Weber, cyclical theory of social change, elite theory of social change, etc.

A brief note on the relevance of Marxism despite its limitation

(20% of the total marks)

Credits: Prof. B. Mohan

Result

Out of the 8 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 10 December 2025, only two answers (by Mudit and Anukriti) could secure 50% marks.

Practice Questions are posted every Sunday.

Best wishes

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Question asked on 14 December 2025

Q. Do you agree that Marxism offers a prefabricate theory of social change.
Comment. (20)

Key words and phrases: 'prefabricated theory'

In this question, the examiner expects a clear understanding from the candidate as to which aspects of Marxian theory on social change are based on empirical facts and which ones are mere products of his imagination. Candidates must support their argument with suitable case studies and examples.

Evaluation Guidelines

An introduction to Marx's idea of dialectical materialism (20% of the total marks)

Aspects of Marxian theory based on empirical facts: rejection of Hegel's dialectical idealism, dialectical relationship between means of production and relations of production, base-superstructure relationship, economic inequality, exploitation of working class, etc. Support your arguments with examples (30% of the total marks)

Aspects of Marxian theory based on speculation: Marx's argument for homogenization, polarization, and imminent revolution (in light of developments related to decomposition of capital and labour, expansion of middle class, welfare capitalism, etc.) – idea of communism and abolition of institution of private property, etc. (30% of the total marks)

Alternative theories of social change – relevance of Marxian methodology in sociological analysis with contemporary case studies (20% of the total marks)

Credits: Prof. B. Mohan

Result

Out of the 14 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 17 December 2025, only two answers (by Mudit and Prerna) could secure 50% marks. Only three answers could secure 40% marks.

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Question asked on 21 December 2025

Q. What is the focus of sociological analysis in the contributions of Emile Durkheim? Give your answer with the help of any one of his contributions. (20)

Key words and phrases: 'focus of sociological analysis'

In this question, the examiner expects from the candidate a macroscopic understanding of Durkheim's sociology. The key phrase in this question is 'focus of sociological analysis'. Here, the examiner is not asking the candidate to explain any particular concept or case study of Durkheim. Instead, the examiner is expecting from the candidate to throw light on the important facets of Durkheim's sociology. For example, the most important aspects of Durkheim's sociology are his focus on positivism (empirical research), focus on social facts (arrived on the basis of empirical data, thus, ignoring the subjective aspect of human behaviour in his study of sociology), focus on general patterns in social phenomena (generalizations based on cause-effect relationships), focus on social solidarity and stability, etc.

Evaluation Guidelines

An introduction to Durkheim's sociology – especially his contributions in establishing a distinct subject matter of sociology (10% of the total marks)

In Thesis Section, a detailed analysis of his 'focus of sociological analysis' that could be observed in his case studies (40% of the total marks)

In Anti-Thesis Section, highlight the limitations of his 'focus' of sociological analysis with the help of contributions from anti-positivist scholars. Support your arguments with case studies (30% of the total marks)

Relevance of functionalism in contemporary sociology – Paradigm of Functional Analysis (Merton) – neo-functionalism, etc. (20% of the total marks)

Credits: Prof. A. Kumar

Result

Out of the 19 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 24 December 2025, about five answers (by Mudit, Prerna, Rohit, Anshul and Akanksha) could secure 50% marks. Three answers could secure 40% marks.

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Question asked on 4 January 2026

Q. Identify the similarities and differences between Marx's theory of 'alienation' and Durkheim's theory of 'anomie'. (20)

Key words and phrases: 'similarities and differences'

The examiner expects a comparative and comprehensive analysis on Marx's theory of 'alienation' and Durkheim's theory of 'anomie'. The candidate can think over similarities in context of structural approach (both, Marxism and functionalism) and accordingly develop the argument. Both, Marx and Durkheim, also shared the vision of a stable and harmonious society. Yet, some fundamental differences could also be identified in terms of the causes of anomie and alienation, the nature of anomie and alienation, and the ultimate solution offered by both theorists vis-à-vis these social problems.

Evaluation Guidelines

An introduction to Marxian and Durkheimian perspectives (10% of the total marks)

In Thesis Section – similarities – both, Marxism and functionalism being structural approaches – both, Marx and Durkheim sharing the vision of a stable and harmonious society. (30% of the total marks)

In Anti-Thesis Section – differences – in terms of the causes of anomie (pathological division of labour) and alienation (primarily, the institution of private property), the nature of anomie (transitory) and alienation (perpetual and cumulative), and the ultimate solution offered by both theorists vis-à-vis these social problems (40% of the total marks)

Synthesis – a brief note on the relevance of the ideas of both theorists in contemporary society (20% of the total marks)

Credits: Prof. A. Kumar

Result

Out of the 9 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 7 January 2026, only two answers (by Mudit and Disha) could secure 40% marks.

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Best wishes

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Question asked on 11 January 2026

Q. Examine Max Weber's method of maintaining objectivity in social research. (20)

Key words and phrases: 'examine', 'objectivity'

Max Weber is regarded as the tallest in stature among all classical sociologists due to his important and path-breaking contributions either in redefining the subject matter of sociology or in addressing the most pressing methodological issues of the time. In this question, the examiner aims to test not only Weber's conception of objectivity in social sciences but also its examination vis-à-vis the conception of Durkheim, Gouldner, etc.

Evaluation Guidelines

Introduction – Meaning and significance of objectivity in sociology
(20% of the total marks)

Thesis – conception of objectivity by early sociologists like Comte, Durkheim, etc.
(30% of the total marks)

Anti-Thesis – Weberian conception of objectivity in light of social action as the subject of sociology – empathy – value-neutrality – ideal type and limited generalizations
(30% of the total marks)

Synthesis – conception of later sociologists like Gouldner and Mills challenging the notion of value-neutrality in sociology and instead advocating reflexive sociology as a moral sociology
(20% of the total marks)

Credits: Prof. S. K. Gautam

Result

Out of the 10 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 14 January 2026, only three answers (by Aditi, Mudit and Rohan) could secure 40% marks.

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Question asked on 18 January 2026

Q. Distinguish between fact and value in Weber's Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism. (20)

Key words and phrases: 'fact', 'value', 'in Weber's Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism'

Fact and value constitute the core of the methodological debate in social sciences. While Durkheim focuses on facts (social facts), Weber emphasizes on the importance of both facts as well as value. But, striking a balance between the two is not as simple as it seems. This is exactly what the examiner wants to know from the candidate in the context of Weber's work Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism. For the answer, candidate may refer Prof. Brij Mohan's work *Introduction to Sociology: Concepts and Theories* (2022).

Evaluation Guidelines

Introduction – Meaning and significance of fact and value

(20% of the total marks)

Thesis – Durkheim's conception of sociology – social facts (30% of the total marks)

Anti-Thesis – Weberian conception of sociology – role of subjective values in guiding human behaviour – empathy – value-neutrality – most importantly, challenges in maintain value-neutrality in the context of Weber's *Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism* (40% of the total marks)

Synthesis – conception of later sociologists like Gouldner and Mills challenging the notion of value-neutrality in sociology and instead advocating reflexive sociology as a moral sociology (10% of the total marks)

Credits: Prof. T. Kumar

Result

Out of the 7 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 21 January 2026, none of the answers could secure 40% marks.

Practice Questions are posted every Sunday.

Best wishes

Dialectics IAS

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Examiner's Expectations and Evaluation Guidelines

Examiner's Expectations

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Question asked on 25 January 2026

Q. Critically examine Max Weber's theory of the Protestant ethics and the spirit of the Capitalism.' Could it be the otherwise possibility that the tenets of the Capitalism must also have effected the emergence of the Protestant ethics? Comment with suitable examples. (20)

Key words and phrases: 'critically examine', 'the otherwise possibility',

In this particular question, the examiner is testing the knowledge of the candidate on Marx as well as Weber, in a single question. The candidate must answer the first part of the question in the light of its second part. Without doing this, the candidate would not be able to do justice with the critical examination of Weber's work on capitalism. For both, Marxian as well as Weberian arguments, the candidate must provide adequate references to case studies and contemporary developments in capitalism.

Evaluation Guidelines

Introduction – Marxian and Weberian perspectives on capitalism
(20% of the total marks)

Thesis – Critical examination of Weberian arguments on the role protestant ethic in emergence of capitalism – a comparative analysis of emergence of capitalism in others societies on account of different factors
(30% of the total marks)

Anti-Thesis – Arguments of Marx and Engels explaining emergence of capitalism in materialistic conditions – their view of ‘ideas’ (protestant ethic) as part of the superstructure (and hence, false consciousness)
(30% of the total marks)

Synthesis – Contemporary theorists on capitalism and its future trend
(20% of the total marks)

Credits: Prof. B. Mohan

Result

Out of the 9 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 28 January 2026, three answers (Mudit, Sneha, Vishal and Apoorva) could secure 40% marks.

Practice Questions are posted every Sunday.

Best wishes

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Question asked on 1 February 2026

Q. What is 'social action'? What is its place in the analytical frameworks of Max Weber and Talcott Parsons? (20)

Key words and phrases: 'social action', 'analytical frameworks of Max Weber and Talcott Parsons'

The examiner, in this question, is trying to test the understanding of the candidate with regard to the subject matter of sociology from multiple perspectives. He wishes to know if the candidate has a conceptual clarity with regard to social action when it is studied in the structural approaches (i.e. social fact, social system, etc.) and interpretive approaches. In the second part of the question, the examiner explicitly expects the candidate to contextualize the concept of social action, in a comparative and analytical argument, within the theoretical frameworks postulated by Weber and Parsons. The candidate must cite suitable examples from the works of Weber and Parsons to substantiate their arguments.

(Hint: Structural approaches primarily focus on the patterned aspect of social action.)

Evaluation Guidelines

Introduction – Social action – evolution in the subject matter of sociology – studied by structural and interpretive approaches from different perspectives

(10% of the total marks)

Thesis – Weber – social action – ‘meaningful response’ – meanings can only be interpreted – limited generalizations only possible – ideal types – e.g. ideal type of social action, authority, etc.

(30% of the total marks)

Anti-Thesis – Parsons – with an objective of developing a comprehensive theoretical framework – offers three guiding principles for sociological theory – but surrenders the principal of ‘voluntaristic action’ to the other two principles – hence, a noticeable change in terminology and his theory could be observed when Parsons moves from ‘the structure of social action’ towards ‘the general theory of action’ – concluding with the institutionalization of social action into a social system

(40% of the total marks)

Synthesis – Contemporary sociology is predominantly Weberian – in light of the limitations of ‘grand’ theory of Parsons – Merton – ‘middle-range theories

(20% of the total marks)

Credits: Prof. B. Mohan

Result

Out of the 17 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 4 February 2026, four answers (Mudit, Prerna, Rohan and Sachin) could secure 40% marks.

Practice Questions are posted every Sunday.

There will not be a practice question next week. Candidates are requested to revise Parsons thoroughly.

Best wishes



DIALECTICS IAS

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Question asked on 15 February 2026

Q. Talcott Parsons' theory of social system has been criticized as a veiled status quoist ideology. Critically examine how valid and justified is this criticism. (20)

Key words and phrases: 'Parsons' theory of social system', 'veiled status quoist ideology', 'critically examine how valid and justified is this criticism'

This question is not about describing Parsons' theory of social system but analyzing the criticisms against it. How valid and justified is the criticism that Parsons' theory of social system is nothing but a veiled status quoist ideology? Candidates must read Parsons from the suggested sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of his concepts and theory.

Evaluation Guidelines

Introduction – Objectives of Parsons for sociology – Social System as subject matter – Social System as a concept (10% of the total marks)

Thesis – Parsons’ theory of social system – Context – Three guiding principles for theory building – Transition in his works from the study of Social Action to Social System – Emphasis on Equilibrium in the Social System – AGIL – Overemphasis on Culture over Agency – Theory not substantiated with Empirical Research – Hence, criticism of ‘a veiled status quoist ideology’ (40% of the total marks)

Anti-Thesis – Is Parsons’ theory totally status quoist? – Inter-exchange between the subsystems of the Social System and Cybernetic Hierarchy of Control reflect Dynamism – Change could be triggered either by the change at the level of Energy or Information – Social Evolution is a twin process of Differentiation and Integration – Idea of Adaptive Upgrading – Offered a Multilinear Theory of Social Change – Incorporated the idea of ‘Diffusion’ in his theory of Evolutionary Universals – Explained Gradual Change – Substantiate your arguments with suitable case studies (40% of the total marks)

Synthesis – Relevance of Parsonian Theory in contemporary context - Post-Parsonian developments in sociological theory – Merton – Middle-Range Theories (10% of the total marks)

Credits: Prof. B. Mohan

Result

Out of the 8 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 18 February 2026, only two answers (Mudit and Vishal) could secure 40% marks.

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Question asked on 22 February 2026

Q. Bring out a comparative analysis of Marxian and Parsonian views of social change and examine the relevance of each view for social development in the contemporary India. (20)

Key words and phrases: 'comparative analysis', 'relevance...in the contemporary India'

The examiner expects from the candidate to bring out a comparative analysis of Marxian and Parsonian theories of social change. The candidate must clearly highlight the source or cause of change, process of change and nature of change as discussed by Marx and Parsons. The second part of the question demands the linking of the respective theories of social change with the developments in contemporary India. Candidate must justify with examples that to what extent each theory is relevant in understanding social change in India.

Evaluation Guidelines

Introduction – Social change – studied from multiple perspectives – Structural-functionalism, Marxian and Cyclical theories, etc. (10% of the total marks)

Thesis – Early theory of social change – Structural-functionalism – Comte, Spencer, Durkheim – [Parsons – Evolutionary and gradual social change – Cybernetic hierarchy of control – Evolutionary Universals – Processes of Differentiation and Intergration – Multilinear or neo-evolutionary theory of social change] (40% of the total marks)

Anti-Thesis – Marx – dialectical materialism – institution of private property – class-conflict – revolutionary social change (40% of the total marks)

Synthesis – Highlight the limitations of both perspectives and indicate their relevance in understanding social change in contemporary India (10% of the total marks)

Credits: Dr. T. Sivarajavel

Result

Out of the 8 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 25 February 2026, only three answers (Mudit, Akanksha and Rohan) could secure 40% marks.

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Question asked on 1 March 2026

Q. Discuss Merton's contributions in exploring the relationship between theory and research. Support your arguments with suitable examples. (20)

Key words and phrases: 'relationship', 'theory', 'research'

In this question, the examiner is looking for the relationship that was highlighted and explained by Merton through various case studies in his articles *The Bearing of Sociological Theory on Empirical Research* and *The Bearing of Empirical Research on Sociological Theory*.

Evaluation Guidelines

Introduction – a brief introduction on the meaning of ‘sociological theory’ and significance of research in sociology – in the light of early phase of emergence of sociology (10% of the total marks)

Thesis – *The Bearing of Sociological Theory on Empirical Research* – with case studies and examples (40% of the total marks)

Anti-Thesis – *The Bearing of Empirical Research on Sociological Theory* – with case studies and examples (40% of the total marks)

Synthesis – an academic conclusion highlighting the developments in contemporary sociological theory and research (10% of the total marks)

Credits: Prof. B. Mohan

Result

Out of the 8 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 4 March 2026, only three answers (Anurag, Vishal and Sachin) could secure 40% marks.

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Best wishes

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Question asked on 8 March 2026

Q. In modern structural-functionalism, Merton's effort to develop a "Paradigm" for functional analysis is the most significant one. Evaluate this statement. (20)

Key words and phrases: 'modern structural-functionalism', 'paradigm', 'evaluate'

In order to answer this question, the candidate must have a thorough understanding of classical functionalism as well as modern structural-functionalism. The examiner is clearly looking for the contributions of Merton in methodology of functional analysis. To evaluate Merton's contributions, the candidate must make a comparative analysis of his 'paradigm of functional analysis' with the 'classical functionalist approach'. The candidate must support his arguments with relevant case studies and examples.

Evaluation Guidelines

Introduction – Meaning of Functionalism – Contextualize the Functional Approach with the early phase of emergence of sociology (10% of the total marks)

Thesis – Features of the Classical Functional Approach – Contributions of Comte, Spencer, Durkheim and Parsons – cite relevant case studies and examples – Highlight the limitations of Classical Functional Approach (40% of the total marks)

Anti-Thesis – Merton's Paradigm of Functional Analysis – Explain its features and advantages over the Classical Functional Approach – support your arguments with the help of case studies and examples (40% of the total marks)

Synthesis – an academic conclusion highlighting the relevance of multiple sociological perspectives for a comprehensive understanding of social reality (10% of the total marks)

Credits: Prof. S. Kumar

Result

Out of the 9 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 11 March 2026, only four answers (Rohan, Aditi, Anurag and Sachin) could secure 40% marks.

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Question asked on 15 March 2026

Q. Discuss the differences between Merton's and Durkheim's conception of anomie with the help of suitable examples. (20)

Key words and phrases: 'discuss', 'differences', 'anomie'

The examiner expects a clear understanding of the concept of anomie as used by Durkheim in his initial work *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893). The candidate must contextualize the concept in terms of socio-economic and political conditions prevailing in Europe at that time. Then, he must clearly highlight the improvisations made in the concept by R. K. Merton in his work *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1949). The key differences center around the source or cause of anomie, its nature and consequences. The candidate must explain with clarity the transition in the concept of anomie from an abstract and vague concept (Durkheim) to a more specific one (Merton).

Evaluation Guidelines

Introduction – Meaning of Anomie – Contextualize the concept in the early works of Durkheim (10% of the total marks)

Thesis – Anomie as explained by Durkheim – Cause, nature and consequence – cite examples (30% of the total marks)

Anti-Thesis – Merton's concept of anomie – Cause, nature and consequence – Support your arguments with the help of examples from the theory of deviance given by Merton (50% of the total marks)

Synthesis – An academic conclusion highlighting the usefulness of the concepts of anomie and alienation (Marx) in understanding the transition in society (10% of the total marks)

Credits: Prof. B. Mohan

Result

Out of the 15 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 18 March 2026, only five answers (Aditi, Sachin, Adif, Priyamvada and Vishal) could secure 40% marks.

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Question asked on 22 March 2026

Q. Is reference group theory a universally applicable model? Elucidate. (10)

Key words and phrases: 'reference group theory', 'universally applicable', 'elucidate'

This question is an intelligent question by the examiner. The examiner intends to test the analytical skills of the candidate by asking this applied question. The candidate must clearly explain reference group theory of Merton and offer satisfactory arguments about the extent to which the theory is applicable in contemporary society.

Evaluation Guidelines

Introduction – Meaning of Reference Group and Reference Group Theory – Relevance in Identity Formation and Relative Deprivation (10% of the total marks)

Thesis – Theoretical Paradigm of Merton underlying Reference Group Theory – Contextualize your arguments with the help of Merton's Paradigm for 'Functional Analysis' especially Middle-Range Theory (40% of the total marks)

Anti-Thesis – Compare and Contrast Theoretical Paradigm of Merton underlying Reference Group Theory with the ambitions of universal generalizations of early sociologists – Support your arguments with the help of case studies and examples [Hints (Against the argument asked in the question): Is Sanskritization a Universal Phenomenon?, Identity Formation of Indigenous or Native Population? Revitalization Movement?, etc.] (40% of the total marks)

Synthesis – An academic conclusion highlighting the usefulness of the concept of Reference Group and Reference Group Theory in understanding Relative Deprivation, Social Conflict and Social Change in contemporary society (10% of the total marks)

Credits: Prof. B. Mohan

Result

Out of the 12 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 25 March 2026, only two answers (Rohan and Sachin) could secure 40% marks.

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Question asked on 29 March 2026

Q. According to Mead, “We play a key role in our own socialization.” Explain. (10)

Key words and phrases: ‘Mead’, ‘socialization’, ‘explain’

In this question on Mead, the examiner intends to test the understanding of the candidate on Mead’s social behaviourism. The candidate needs to explain the process of ‘the triadic matrix’, role-taking and role-playing. One can also mention the constituent elements of self i.e. ‘I’ and ‘Me’.

Evaluation Guidelines

Introduction – Mead’s social behaviourism (in contrast to Watson’s radical behaviourism) (20% of the total marks)

Thesis – Explain the process of ‘the triadic matrix’, role-taking and role-playing with examples (60% of the total marks)

Anti-Thesis – (in a short note, the Anti-Thesis can be combined with Synthesis)

Synthesis – A balanced conclusion highlighting the complementarity of symbolic interactionist and structural approaches (Durkheim, Parsons) in the process of socialization and construction of self-identity (20% of the total marks)

Credits: Prof. B. Mohan

Result

Out of the 8 answers received by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 1 April 2026, only one answer (Aditi) could secure 40% marks.

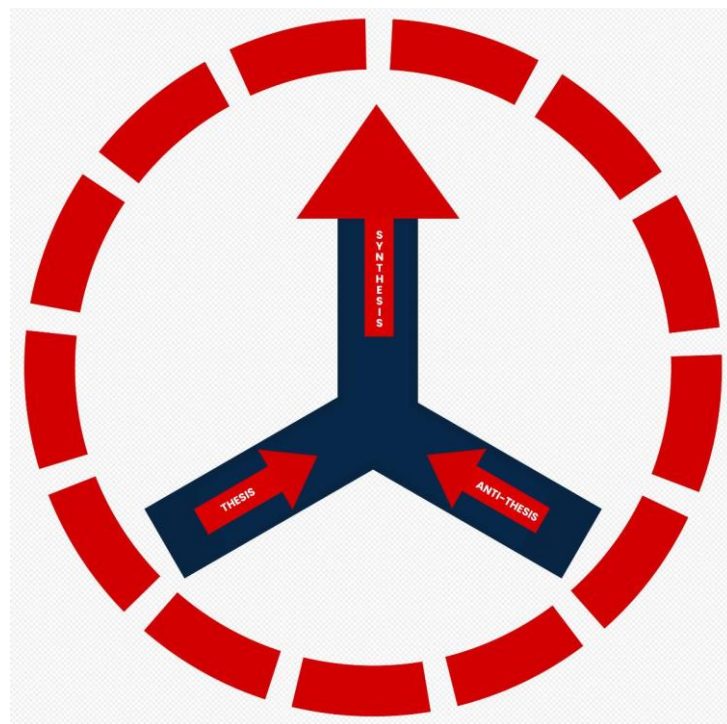
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Best wishes

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