

"Dividing One into Two" and "Combining Two into One"

- Some realization gained in the study of Chairman Mao's thought in materialistic dialectics -

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I

The unity and struggle of opposites is the most fundamental law in the development of things. The method of "dividing one into two" is a fundamental way of knowing things. Dialectics requires us to grasp antithesis in unity and also unity in antithesis in the course of observing, analyzing and handling problems. We must adhere to the concrete historical unity of subjectivity and objectivity and of theory and practice, avoid the mistake of the "left" or the right in departure from concrete history, and correctly bring the role of subjective activity into play.

Things are composed of two opposites which are inseparably linked together. The reflection of this situation in man's mind was expressed as "combination of two into one" by people in ancient China (see Tungshichün [东西均] by Fang Yi-chih [方以智] of the Ming Dynasty).

The action and reaction between bodies are "combined from two into one" to become the mechanical motion of bodies. The attraction and repulsion between molecules inside bodies are "combined from two into one" to constitute physical motion. The combination and dissociation of atoms are "combined from two into one" to constitute chemical motion. The assimilation and dissimilation of protein organic bodies which are formed with carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen among the chemical elements are "combined from two into one" to constitute the vital motion of metabolism. The productive forces and the relations of production, the economic foundation and the superstructure are "combined from two into one" to constitute the social motion of mankind. Theory and practice are "combined from two into one" to constitute the cognitional motion of mankind. It is therefore said that "Motion itself is a contradiction" (Engels: Anti Dühring, page 123) and that "Motion, things, processes, thinking - all are contradictions, (Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. II, page 786.) From all kinds of natural phenomena to human society, thinking, etc., there is nothing which is not a case of "combining two into one."

"Combining two into one" indicates precisely the most basic law of dialectics - the law of the unity of opposites. Comrade Mao Tse-tung said: "The law of contradiction in things, that is, the law of the unity of opposites, is the most basic law in materialist dialectics." (Ibid. page 765.) This is after all the objective world, and the dialectical materialistic world outlook requires people to take all things in the world as "combination of two into one." That is why Lenin said: "The identity of opposites (...the difference between the terms identity and unity is not particularly important...) is the recognition (discovery) of the contradictory, mutually exclusive, opposite tendencies in all phenomena and processes of nature (including mind and society). The condition for the knowledge of all processes of the world in their 'self-movement,' in their spontaneous development, in their real life, is the knowledge of them as a unity of opposites." (Collected Works of Lenin, Vol. XXXVIII, page 407.)

II

Things are after all "combined from two into one." Since this is an objective law which does not change with the will of man, we must know things according to their original look. "Dialectics seeks to study the contradiction in the nature of an object itself." (Ibid. page 278.) How can the contradictions in things be known? The method is "to divide one into two." "The splitting of a single whole and the cognition of its contradictory parts...is the essence of dialectics." (Ibid. page 407.) In "On Contradiction," Comrade Mao Tse-tung teaches us by saying that in order to know the nature

of the process of development of things, "we must reveal the particularity of each aspect of the contradiction in the process, otherwise it is impossible to reveal the quality of the process." (Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. II, page 778.) It is only through studying the different aspects of a contradiction to find out the specific position occupied by each of them, the principal aspect and the secondary aspect of the contradiction, the concrete forms in which the two opposite aspects of the contradiction maintain a mutually dependent and mutually contradictory relationship with each other, and the concrete means by which the opposite aspects struggle with each other in interdependence and in contradiction and after the break-up of interdependence, that the nature of things can be known. This method is the most fundamental and scientific method for knowing the essence and inner connection of things. An objective thing is "combined from two into one," and it is "divided from one into two" only when it is known. The method of "dividing one into two" is also the concrete analysis of the concrete situation.

The use of this method to analyze the human world of today reveals that there are on one side imperialism headed by the United States and the reactionaries of various countries, and on the other side the revolutionary forces of the people of whole world with the people and the proletariat of the various socialist countries as the core. The revolutionary forces of the whole world form the principal aspect of the contradiction, and the situation in the world is that the East wind prevails over the West wind. With the whole world analyzed in this way, we know that the age we are in is an age in which imperialism is on the brink of collapse and socialism is approaching victory. With the contradiction of the world and the fact that the revolutionary forces of the people of the world form the principal aspect known, the revolutionary political party should encourage and organize the masses to launch a revolutionary, strategic offensive, and should not remain on the defensive or retreat strategically.

The use of this method to analyze the socialist society reveals that in the socialist society there are two components or factors, namely capitalism, and socialism and communism, and that there is a struggle between the two roads. The communist factor is waxing strong, while the capitalist factor is gradually weakening and will be thoroughly destroyed in the end. Therefore, the socialist society is a society in transition from capitalism to communism. During this transition period, there are classes as well as class struggle.

This is true not only in analyzing the nature of the times and the social nature of a country, but also in analyzing work in any locality, sector or unit of our country. Work in a locality, sector or unit is itself made up of two opposites, and is "combined from two into one." To understand and analyze it, the method of "dividing one into two" must also be used. No matter how numerous its achievements and merits, work in a locality, sector or unit will not be perfect, and there will surely be some shortcomings or weak links. For the same reason, although a locality, sector or unit may have many shortcomings and even mistakes, yet it will not be wrong in everything, and there will certainly be some achievements, merits and good points.

The same is true with the analysis of a comrade. Although a good comrade may be of a higher standard, have more merits, be more capable and give better performance in work than other people, yet he will not be perfect and flawless, and will also have some shortcomings and deficiencies. A comrade with more shortcomings is also bound to have his merits or good points.

Precisely because things are "combined from two into one," the way to know things is therefore "to divide one into two." This is universal.

Contrary to materialistic dialectics, the characteristics of metaphysics are that things are observed in an isolated, one-sided and static manner, the inclusion of opposite aspects in a single whole is not acknowledged, and there is also no possibility of connecting together the opposite aspects. They [those who use metaphysics] are unable to understand the nature and inner connection of things. Using this metaphysical viewpoint and methodology to understand the human world, they refuse to admit the realistic existence of the basic contradiction in the world, cannot draw a revolutionary conclusion, and draw the opposite conclusion. Because they look at the socialist society

with this viewpoint and methodology, they reject contradiction, and reject the existence of classes and class struggle. As a consequence, they hold that the organ of the proletariat to oppress the exploiting classes by brute force - the state based on proletarian dictatorship - becomes unnecessary, and should be replaced by the "state of the whole people." They hold that the Communist Party, the vanguard of the proletariat in struggle, has also become unnecessary and should be replaced by "a party of the whole people."

When a problem is studied, some people among our comrades are also often in the practice of making unconscious use of the metaphysical method. They see only the contradictory aspect of the problem, but fail to see the other aspect. When things are observed, they often tend to be absolute, holding that good things are absolutely good and bad things are absolutely bad. It is not that "it takes love to know what one hates and it takes hate to know what is beautiful." Quite on the contrary, they look upon the two opposite aspects as standing absolutely against each other. They thus commit the mistake of being subjective and one-sided. They cannot grasp anti-thesis in unity and unity in antithesis, and think in terms of absolutely incompatible opposites. They hold that one is one and two is two. They fail to see that things are "combined from two into one," and they do not "divide one into two" in analyzing things. When one employs this metaphysical methodology to view one's own work or the work of a unit, sector or locality, one often will one-sidedly perceive only the merits, achievements and good points, but fail to see the shortcomings, mistakes and bad points. When this method is used to size up other comrades, units, sectors or localities, only the shortcomings, mistakes and bad points will be noticed. The driving force for development and progress is thus missing in one's own work, and the harmful feelings of self-importance, arrogance, self-satisfaction and conservatism are bound to be engendered.

Materialistic dialectics not only admits that all objective things are "combined from two into one," and holds that when things are analyzed, we must persist in the method of "dividing one into two," but also holds that the positions held by the two opposites in a single whole are never constant. Under given conditions, the principal aspect of contradiction is transformed into its opposite. Therefore, when the analytical method of "dividing one into two" is employed, it is necessary to pay attention to finding out the conditions for their mutual transformation. For example, in the capitalist society, as the bourgeoisie holds the means of production and State power, and exploits and oppresses the proletariat, it is the principal aspect of the contradiction. In a revolutionary struggle, the proletariat sets up its own political party, organizes the working masses, builds its own armed forces, and changes the relation of class forces in the course of struggle. The proletariat is thus transformed from the secondary aspect of the contradiction into the principal aspect of the contradiction. It seizes state power, overthrows the old society, and causes the capitalist society to be transformed to a higher plane into the socialist society.

Again, in our work to build socialism, the use of the method of "dividing one into two" to analyze the work of an individual, a unit, a sector or a locality does not cease with finding out the two aspects of the contradiction, namely, the achievements and the mistakes, the merits and the shortcomings. We must abide by the laws governing the two aspects of a contradiction and the transformation of the principal aspect and the secondary aspect into each other, find out and develop the achievements, merits and positive factors, overcome the shortcomings, rectify the mistakes, turn the negative factors into positive factors and the backward into the advanced, and make the advanced even more advanced. The analysis of things in this way enables us not only to know the characteristics of the two opposite aspects in realistic existence, but also to know the development of things, and the laws governing the development of things. Firm adherence to this dialectical method of analysis will make us modest and prudent, never self-satisfied, and moving forward continuously.

Only by persisting in the method of "dividing one into two" can we correctly understand the contradictions within things and the conditions for their transformation, look for ways to reform things, and change our understanding from matter into spirit.

Our object as revolutionaries in knowing the world is to transform the world. "Marxist philosophy holds that the most important problem is not to know the laws of the objective world so as to enable us to interpret the world, but, with such knowledge of the objective laws, to take the initiative in transforming the world." (Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. I, page 291.) Since we employ the method of "dividing one into two" to analyze things and to understand the law of development of things based on "combining two into one," we must formulate lines, guidelines, policies and measures for transforming the world and handling all undertakings and problems according to the laws of the objective things themselves, and implement them in the practical activities of the masses to promote the transformation and development of things.

When lines, guidelines, policies and measures are formulated, it is necessary to connect together and integrate the two opposite aspects.

Our Party has conducted a scientific analysis of the basic contradictions of the world, found out the conditions for the struggle and transformation of these contradictions, and put forward a proposal concerning the general line of the international communist movement: "Proletarians of the whole world, unite! Proletarians, and the oppressed peoples and nations of the whole world, unite! Oppose imperialism and the reactionaries of various countries! Fight for world peace, national liberation, people's democracy and socialism! Consolidate the powerful socialist camp, gradually realize the complete victory of the world revolution of the proletariat, and build a new world free from imperialism, capitalism and exploitation." ("A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement," Jen-min Jih-pao, June 17, 1963.) With this general line mastered by the revolutionary political parties and the masses of the whole world, the socialist revolution is sure to triumph throughout the world.

On the foundation of analyzing the movement of opposites in Chinese society following the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Party and Comrade Mao Tse-tung have formulated the general line for the transition period which calls for "the gradual realization of socialist industrialization of the country and the gradual realization of the socialist transformation of agriculture, handicrafts and capitalist industry and commerce in our country." This general line has basically been realized. In the work of building socialism in China, there are many opposite aspects. First, conditions must be found for connecting together and uniting the opposites, and uniting and integrating the opposites in work. To use symbolic language, this is "to walk on two legs." For example, the general line of building socialism by exerting our utmost efforts and pressing consistently ahead to achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results gives expression of the law of the unity of opposites. Greater, faster, better and more economical results are mutually opposed to and connected with one another, and also condition one another. There is contradiction between greater and faster results on the one hand and better and more economical results on the other. However, greater and faster results cannot be divorced from better and more economical results. Divorced from better and more economical results, greater and faster results cannot in effect be achieved. Better and more economical results also cannot be divorced from greater and faster results. Divorced from greater and faster results, better and more economical results cannot in effect be achieved.

The series of guidelines and policies of our Party are all formulated on the premise of analyzing things which are "combined from two into one" by "dividing one into two" and finding out the conditions for uniting and integrating the opposites. For example, after analyzing the relationship between industry and agriculture, the two major sectors of the national economy, the two opposites of agriculture and industry are integrated, and the general guideline of developing the national economy with agriculture as the foundation and industry as the leading factor is put forward. In our socialist society, there are two kinds of social contradiction, namely the contradiction between the enemy and ourselves, and the contradiction among the people. The political power which handles these two kinds of social contradiction is the people's democratic dictatorship which integrates the aspect of democracy among the people with the aspect of dictatorship toward the reactionaries. When contradictions among the people are dealt with, democratic centralism is enforced. Centralism based on democracy is not one-sided centralism, which will lead to bureaucracy. Democracy under centralized guidance is not one-sided democracy which will lead to anarchy.

Every unit, sector or locality, no matter whether it is advanced or backward, has its merits and shortcomings. Therefore, in the "compare, learn, overtake and help" campaign, the backward must not only learn from the advanced, but also make use of their good points to help the advanced overcome their shortcomings. The advanced must not only help the backward, but also learn good points from the backward to make up their own shortcomings. As a consequence, there must be "help in learning and learning in help."

Every comrade in our revolutionary ranks has his merits and shortcomings, but generally speaking, the merits are of primary importance. Therefore, in ideological work, it is necessary to integrate criticism with citation with chief emphasis placed on citation.

The lines, guidelines and policies of the Party are formulated with dialectics according to the law of development of things. When they are carried out, we must also abide by the dialectical method and link up the opposites on the basis of "combining two into one." The practice of the masses must be guided with these lines, guidelines and policies before the anticipated goal can be attained in the transformation of the world, the handling of work and the solution of problems, and before spirit can be turned into matter.

An objective thing is "combined from two into one." To understand it, it is necessary to divide "one into two." When the guidelines and policies are formulated for transforming the world and handling work, it is again necessary to "combine two into one," to grasp the unity of the opposites and the opposites in the unity. This is the most fundamental viewpoint and methodology in dialectical materialism. The learning of this method is of great significance to practical work.

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"Dividing One into Two" and "Combining Two into One" Are Two Inseparable Aspects of the Law of Contradiction

- A Debate with Comrades Ai Heng-wu (艾恒武), Lin Ch'ing-shan (林青山)
and Hsiang Ch'ing (项晴 (潘庆斌)) -
- by P'an Ch'ing-p'ing

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Having read the article "'Dividing One into Two' and 'Combining Two into One'" by Comrades Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ch'ing-shan ("Philosophy" Supplement No. 433 of Kuang-ming Jih-pao, May 29, 1964) and the article "'Combining Two into One' Is Not Dialectics" by Comrade Hsiang Ch'ing ("Philosophy" Supplement No. 434 of Kuang-ming Jih-pao, June 5, 1964), I feel that they have their noteworthy points, but are also one-sided and subjective.*

Comrade Ai and Lin hold that "'combining two into one' indicates precisely the most basic law of dialectics - the law of the unity of opposites," while "the method of 'dividing one into two' is the fundamental method for knowing things." Comrade Hsiang Ch'ing holds that "what gives true expression to the law of the unity of opposites is 'dividing one into two,' but not 'combining two into one!'" I hold that these ways of looking at things see only one aspect of the problem, but overlook or abandon and even distort the other aspect. We know that the basic core of dialectics - the law of the unity of opposites - is based on "dividing one into two" as well as "combining two into one," and only this kind of "dividing" and "combining" the same thing gives expression to the whole of the unity of opposites in the contradiction. The substitution of this kind of antithesis - unity, "dividing one" - "combining two" in proper sequence constitute the movement (of opposites) in the development of things. There is no room for doubt in this regard. However, Comrades Ai and Lin on the one side and Comrade Hsiang Ch'ing on the other side each adhere to one aspect in rendering them absolute and isolating them. In the unity of opposites in the contradiction, the former sees only unity

* The Hsiang Ch'ing article has not been translated, but its arguments against the "two into one" theory are extensively quoted in this article. - CB Ed.