

Whatever the Thing, It Is Always a Case of Dividing
One into Two and not "Combining Two into One"

by
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"Dividing one into two" is a technical term which, in a most accurate, most vivid and unusually popular manner, expresses the substance and core of materialistic dialectics - the law of the unity of opposites. Lenin wrote: "The knowledge that a united thing is divisible into two, one contradicting the other... is the substance of dialectics." In this world "all phenomena and processes have a tendency toward contradiction, opposition and mutual repulsion." (Collected Works of Lenin, Vol. XXXVIII, People's Publishing House, pp. 407-8. The underlining is original.) That is to say, whatever the thing may be in this world, it is always a case of dividing one into two, namely, splitting a united thing into two parts, aspects or tendencies which are linked with, dependent on and, at the same time, repulsive and opposed to, each other. Without these two aspects of mutual unification and mutual struggle, things would be unable to exist and therefore to develop. This is an objective law which does not change with the will of man. It exists universally, whether in nature, in human society or in the thinking of man.

However, Comrade Yang Hsien-chen holds this view: "Anything is a case of 'combining two into one'." He cites such examples as the positive and the negative, birth and death, water and fire, and metabolism. Comrades Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ch'ing-shan have spoken in more concrete terms: "From all kinds of natural phenomena to human society, thinking, etc., there is nothing which is not a case of 'combining two into one'." Citing examples in support, they say: "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 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."

What is "combining two into one"? Comrade Yang Hsien-chen says: "Unity of contradictions means only that two sides to a contradiction are inseparably connected." Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ch'ing-shan say: "Objective things are 'combined from two into one,' ...When guidelines and policies are formulated for transforming the world and handling work, it is again necessary to 'combine two into one,' "to connect together and integrate the two opposite aspects." (Underlines mine.)

Briefly speaking, what they call 'combining two into one' is to "connect inseparably and integrate" the two opposing sides of a thing." The "law governing the development of things" is precisely the "connecting together" and "integration of two opposing sides."

In the eyes of the "combining two into one" theorists, there is no struggle between the opposite aspects of a thing. What they can see is only the "inseparable connection," "integration" and "unity" of the opposites.

This viewpoint is not in accord with the original dialectics of things. It has no factual basis. Let us discuss this matter from the examples cited by these writers in order to refute their "theories."

Things Without Life Are Cases of Dividing One into
Two and not Combining Two into One

Nature is various and diversified in form, to generalize, it may be divided into two major categories. One category comprises things without life (i.e., the inorganic world). The other category comprises things with life (i.e., the organic world).

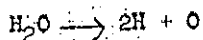
In the world of things without life, attraction and repulsion form a pair of important contradictions. Engels said: "All motion consists in the interplay of attraction and repulsion." (Engels: Dialectics of Nature, People's Publishing House, 1955 edition, p. 48) The phenomena we constantly see, such as approximation and separation, contraction and expansion, absorption and radiation, cohesion and diffusion, union and dissociation, combination and decomposition (dissolution) are different manifestations of attraction and repulsion.

On the one hand, attraction and repulsion are connected with and dependent on each other and, on the other hand, they repel and oppose each other. They are a unity of opposites and not a case of "combining two into one." Engels said: "Where there is attraction, it must be complemented by repulsion." (Ibid., p. 204) Likewise, where there is repulsion, it must be complemented by attraction. The interplay of attraction and repulsion motivates the motion and change of a body. For instance, the motion of a planet round the sun along an elliptic orbit owes its origin to the interplay of attraction and repulsion. If we fail to see the mutual dependence and mutual connection between the two in the belief that there is only attraction or only repulsion, then the planet might either fall on the surface of the sun or leave the solar system. If we fail to see the mutual opposition and mutual exclusion between the two in the belief that they are a case of "combining two into one" for a merger, then they might neutralize each other or counterbalance each other. Whatever the condition, it would lead to the cessation of the motion of the sun. It is precisely because the motion of the solar system is a case of dividing one into two and is a unity of opposites between attraction and repulsion that a planet can revolve in space round the sun. Hence Engels said: "The life process of a solar system presents itself as an interplay of attraction and repulsion." (Ibid., p. 50)

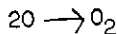
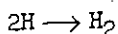
The phenomena of static electricity and magnetism are also a case of dividing one into two. On the one hand, positive electricity and negative electricity and the south pole and the north pole are linked with and dependent on each other and, on the other hand, they repel and oppose each other. Without positive electricity there can be no negative electricity, and vice versa. Without the south pole there can be no north pole, and vice versa. In the case of positive electricity and negative electricity, and the north and south poles, the likes repulse and the unlikes attract each other. In physics, positive electricity and negative electricity and the south pole and the north pole are contradictions which are united with as well as opposed to each other. "Combining two into one" in these cases would result in there being no electromagnetic motion.

Chemical motion is also a case of dividing one into two. It is the unity of such opposites as combination and decomposition (dissolution). Combination and decomposition are concrete manifestations of attraction and repulsion in chemical motion. Engels said: "All chemical processes may be summed up as chemical phenomena of attraction and repulsion." (Ibid., p. 174) In this connection, what Engels described as chemical attraction is precisely the combination of atoms, and what he described as chemical repulsion is precisely the decomposition of molecules. All chemical reactions, whether those of combination and decomposition or those of displacement, are motion in opposites of combination and decomposition. Take, for example, the reaction ($2H_2O \rightarrow 2H_2 + O_2$) of the decomposition of water (H_2O) into hydrogen (H_2) and oxygen (O_2):

First, water molecules decompose into their components of hydrogen atoms (H) and oxygen atoms (O):



Then, two hydrogen atoms combine to make a hydrogen molecule, and two oxygen atoms combine to make an oxygen molecule:



From the process of reaction in the decomposition of water we can see that combination and decomposition are entirely opposite in character. They oppose each other and repel each other. However, they are also a unity. A process of chemical reaction is not only an action of combination or decomposition but also a unity of such opposites as combination and decomposition. The interplay of combination and decomposition gives shape to chemical action. If there is no opposition or repulsion between combination and decomposition and if it is a case of "combining two into one" for a merger, no chemical motion is likely to take place.

Mechanical motion is a very simple form of motion. It is also a case of dividing one into two and not "combining two into one."

In mechanical motion, action and reaction form a unity of opposites. Where there is action, there is always reaction. Without reaction there can be no action to speak of. Action and reaction are equal in extent but they go in opposite directions. The interplay between contradictory bodies motivates the mechanical motion of these bodies. Mechanics tells us that within a sealed system the sum total of the action and reaction between bodies is equal to zero. This means that if action and reaction do not oppose and repel each other and if they merge together by "combining two into one," it will be impossible to "constitute" the mechanical motion of bodies.

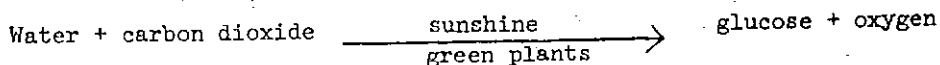
A Thing with Life Is a Case of Dividing One into Two and
Not "Combining Two into One"

A thing with life is also a case of dividing one into two and not "combining two into one."

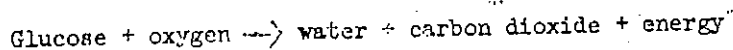
Engels said: "Life is the mode of existence of protein bodies, and this mode of existence essentially consists in the constant self-renewal of the chemical constituents of these bodies." (Engels: Anti-Duhring, People's Publishing House, 1956 edition, p. 82) Protein bodies form the foundation of life. They bear the main load in vital motion. Without the self-renewal of these bodies, i.e., metabolism, there can be no vital motion.

The metabolic process of protein bodies is also a case of dividing one into two. It is the unity of assimilation and dissimilation as opposites. Assimilation and dissimilation are general contradictions of vital motion, constituting a pair of basic contradictions in the world of life. Their interplay sets in motion the continuous self-renewal of protein bodies. As soon as metabolism ceases, life will come to an end and protein bodies will decompose.

Assimilation and dissimilation repel each other and stand in opposition to each other. Assimilation is a process in which organic bodies extract matter from their external environment and remold it. Accompanying this process is the storage of energy. For example, green plants with the sun shining on them utilize water and carbon dioxide to produce synthetically glucose or other organic matter, releasing oxygen at the same time. This is a process of assimilation:



Dissimilation is the process of the decomposition or consumption of the matter within organic bodies. Accompanying this process is the release of energy. For example, the action of decomposing glucose and oxygen into simple matter and releasing energy is a process of dissimilation:



Assimilation and dissimilation are opposites but they form a unity. They are linked with each other. Without assimilation in material synthesis there can be no dissimilation in material decomposition. Without the release of energy from dissimilation no assimilation can take place.

Vital motion is a process in which assimilation and dissimilation form a unity and at the same time struggle against each other. Without the interplay of assimilation and dissimilation there can be no vital motion. If there is no repulsion or opposition between assimilation and dissimilation and if, by "combining two into one," they merge together, then the metabolism of living things will cease and life will come to an end.

All things with life are evolving continuously. Their evolution is also a case of dividing one into two. It is the unity of heredity and variation as opposites.

Heredity is a conservative factor in the evolution of living things. It preserves the species of these things and maintains the stability of their types. Variation is a progressive factor in this evolution. It makes it possible for changes in living things to take place, thus leading to the formation of new types of living things. Heredity and variation are opposites; they repel each other. Nevertheless, they constitute a unity. In the course of evolution they condition each other and one cannot do without the other. If there is only heredity, there will be no differentiation in species and new species will not be formed. If there is only variation, there will be no relatively stable species.

The unity and struggle of heredity and variation prompts living things to change and develop. But the theorists of "combining two into one" hold the view that there is neither opposition nor repulsion between heredity and variation and that there is only a close connection, a mutual link-up between them. Then, basically there would be no evolution in living things.

All Things in human Society Are Cases of Dividing One
into Two and Not "Combining Two into One"

In human society all things are cases of dividing one into two and not "combining two into one."

Human society is a society filled with all kinds of contradictions. The fundamental contradictions of society are those between production relations and productive forces and between the superstructure and the economic base. If there is only unity and no contradiction between production relations and productive forces and between the superstructure and the economic base, thereby merging them by "combining two into one," human society not only will be unable to develop, but also unable to exist.

Do contradictions still exist in socialist society? Some people verbally accept materialistic dialectics but actually do not understand it in full. Or, it may be said, they do not implement it to the very end. In their view, there used to be contradictions and struggles in slave society, feudal society and capitalist society, but socialist society differs from the former forms of society. In the present society there is only consistency without contradictions between production relations and productive forces and between the superstructure and the economic base. Socialist society is a society of "harmony and consistency." Perhaps, in the language of the theorists of "combining two into one," the opposite aspects of all things in socialist society are cases of "combining two into one."

This viewpoint is incorrect. The experience our country has gained since its founding shows that not only are there contradictions and struggles in socialist society but these contradictions and struggles sometimes stand out in sharp relief. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said: "The basic contradictions in socialist society are still those between production relations and productive forces and between the superstructure and the economic base." ("On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," Selected Readings from Mao Tse-tung's Works, Edition A, Vol. II, p. 455) Our socialist production relations and the superstructure have now been established. They are in keeping with the development of productive forces and the economic base. But they are still far from perfect. Old things, especially those in the superstructure, still exercise quite a big influence. All this is in contradiction to the development of productive forces and the economic base. Naturally, these contradictions of socialist society are fundamentally different in character from old society's contradictions between production relations and productive forces and between the superstructure and the economic base. For instance, in capitalist society the contradictions between production relations and productive forces cannot be resolved by the capitalist system itself and can only be resolved by socialist revolution. In socialist society such contradictions can continuously be resolved through the socialist system itself. That is to say, the contradictions between production relations and productive forces and between the superstructure and the economic base in socialist society are distinguishable from the basic contradictions of the former forms of society. But this is a question of differentiating the contradictions and not one of whether contradictions exist or not.

In a class society the contradictions between production relations and productive forces and those between the superstructure and the economic base present themselves as contradictions between opposing classes. Since the dissolution of primitive communes, the struggle between the exploiting class and the exploited class has run through the whole history of mankind. Living in the same society and struggling against one another were the slave owner and the slave, the landlord and the farm slave, and the property owner and the proletarian. This struggle between one class and another provided the very motive power for the development of class society.

Is there any more class struggle in socialist society? Yes, there is. "The struggle in the socialist countries between the road of socialism and the road of capitalism - between the forces of capitalism attempting a comeback and the forces opposing it - is unavoidable. ("On Khrushchev's Phoney Communism and Its Historical Lessons for the World," by the editorial departments of Jen-min Jih-pao and Hung-ch'i, Jen-min Jih-pao, July 14, 1964) Socialist society is not what is called a society whose "politics is consistent with its spirit" or one whose opposite aspects can be "combined into one." In it there still exist classes and class struggle. This class struggle is complex, tortuous, undulating and sometimes even very violent. In the face of it we cannot be the least bit lethargic.

Is it true that on the arrival of the communist society there will emerge a united society without struggle, one of "combining two into one"? No, it is not true. Although communist society will have no classes or class struggle, there will still remain contradictions between the advanced and the backward and between the new and the old. Communist society will still be a society of dividing one into two.

The Cognitional Motion of Mankind Is Case of Dividing
One into Two and Not One of "Combining
Two into One"

The cognitional motion of mankind is also a case of dividing one into two and not "combining two into one."

The source of human knowledge is social practice. Social practice consists in activities to transform nature and effect social reforms. Knowledge is the reflection of the subject vis-a-vis the object. It is an activity in thinking. Man's knowledge constantly lags behind practical activities. Its reflection of the objective world is not absolutely satisfactory. All this shows that contradictions exist between knowledge and practice. But the two also constitute a unity. Practice is the foundation and source of knowledge. It is also the objective standard by which to examine whether one's

knowledge is correct or not. "...Human knowledge cannot be separated the least bit from practice." (Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. I, People's Publishing House, 2nd edition, p. 273) Knowledge, when acquired, in turn plays a big role in guiding the activities of practice. Under given conditions it even plays the principal and decisive role. "When, as Lenin put it, 'Without a revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement,' the creation and advocacy of the revolutionary theory plays the principal and decisive role. When a certain job (this applies to any job) is to be done but there is as yet no directive, method, plan or policy defining how to do it, the directive, method, plan or policy is the principal and decisive factor." (Ibid., p. 314)

However, according to the theorists of "combining two into one," knowledge and practice constitute a whole without opposing or repelling each other. In this way, it will inevitably lead either to negating the role of theory and falling into empiricism which believes in practice being the same as theory, or to negating the role of practice and falling into dogmatism which believes in theory being the same as practice. Perhaps, it may "combine" the above two views "into one" to dish out a mixture of empiricism and dogmatism.

Knowledge develops from the struggle between correct things and wrong things. That is to say, cognitional activity is also a case of dividing one into two; it is the unity of correct knowledge and wrong knowledge as opposites.

Correct knowledge is man's realistic reflection of objective things. Wrong knowledge is man's distorted reflection of objective things. The two are totally different in essence. They cannot be mixed up through "combining two into one."

Correct knowledge and wrong knowledge are also linked with each other. Man's cognitional process does not rise in a straight line; nor is it correct from beginning to end. Lenin said: "Man's knowledge is not a straight line. (That is to say, it does not move along a straight line.) To an unlimited extent it resembles a string of circles, the curves of a spiral." (Collected Works of Lenin, Vol. XXXVIII, People's Publishing House, p. 411) Man's knowledge is a process from phenomena to essence, from individuality to universality and often from wrong to right. A knowledge of phenomena, individuality and even wrong is the road which must be trodden in order to attain correctness in knowledge. Without going through this process one is unlikely to be able to acquire correct knowledge suddenly.

Correct knowledge and wrong knowledge exist by comparison with each other and develop by struggle against each other. It is only through comparison and struggle with wrong knowledge that errors can be located and the correct truth revealed. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said: "What is correct always develops in the course of struggle with what is wrong. The true, the good and the beautiful always exist in comparison with the false, the evil and the ugly, and grow in struggle with the latter. As mankind in general rejects an untruth and accepts a truth, a new truth will begin struggling with new erroneous ideas. Such struggles will never end. This is the law of development of truth." ("On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People," Selected Readings from Mao Tse-tung's Works, Edition A, Vol. II, p. 478) For example, Marxism has grown in the course of struggle with the reactionary bourgeois ideas and various opportunist ideas. Materialism has grown in the course of struggle with idealism. So long as there is cognitional activity, there will be struggle between what is correct and what is wrong. When an erroneous knowledge is overcome, a correct knowledge will be established. Along with the development of activities in practice will emerge a struggle between correct knowledge and wrong knowledge. Thus, with this continuous development human knowledge will rise higher and higher and become better and better.

Under given conditions correct knowledge and wrong knowledge are mutually transformable. When correct knowledge is arbitrarily extended beyond the scope of its applicability, it will become wrong knowledge. Hence Lenin said: "... As long as an extra small step is taken, though in the same direction, a truth will become an error." (Collected Works of Lenin, Vol. XXXI, People's Publishing House, p. 85) Analyzing and criticizing what is wrong and summing up lessons from experience will enlighten people on rejecting what is wrong and knowing what is true. In this context, it may be said that an error can be transformed into a correct thing. It is also in this

context that Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said: "Errors are often the precursor of truth." (Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. III, People's Publishing House, 2nd edition, p. 803)

In different branches of science what is correct and what is wrong present themselves in different forms. For example, in philosophy there are the struggles between materialism and idealism and between dialectics and metaphysics. Materialism and idealism are a unity of opposites. So are dialectics and metaphysics. If there is only unity without struggle between materialism and idealism and between dialectics and metaphysics, and if either pair is merged together through "combining two into one," then philosophy will not develop.

Dividing One into Two and "Combining Two into One" Are Two Basically Opposite World Outlooks

What has been said above goes to show that in this world whatever the thing and whatever the time, it is always a case of dividing one into two. Dividing one into two is objective and universal. It is the source and motive power for the development of all things. The theory of dividing one into two is not the subjective conjecture of man but is the original dialectics of things. If the two opposite aspects of everything in the world are, as Comrade Yang Hsien-chen and others say, cases of "combining two into one," having only unity without struggle, it will be impossible to "constitute" mechanical motion, physical motion, chemical motion, vital motion, social motion or cognitional motion. Furthermore, it may lead to the cessation of all forms of motion.

The two opposite aspects of anything in the world cannot be a case of "combining two into one." Engels said: "Dialectics has proved from the results of our experience of nature so far that all polar opposites in general are determined by the mutual action of the two opposite poles on each other, that the separation and opposition of these poles exist only within their mutual connection and unity and, conversely, that their unity exists only in their separation and their mutual connection only in their opposition." (Engels: Dialectics of Nature, People's Publishing House, 1955 edition, p. 48) The theorists of "combining two into one" see only the connection and unity of the two opposite poles and not that "their unity exists only in their separation and their mutual connection only in their opposition." Thereupon they insist that the two aspects of a contradiction do not repel or oppose each other and can be merged together through "combining two into one." This is like insisting that the magnetic south pole and north pole can counterbalance each other. There is no factual basis for this whatsoever.

The antithesis between dividing one into two and "combining two into one" is not one "between the whole and the part," let alone a "different presentation" of the law of contradictions. Their antithesis is one between two world outlooks. The fundamental difference between dividing one into two and "combining two into one" lies not in admitting or negating the existence of opposite aspects within a thing but in whether or not the absolute character of the struggle between opposites should be admitted and whether or not the mutual convertibility of opposites under given conditions should be admitted. In a word, it is a question of whether or not to admit that internal contradictions constitute the motive power for the development of things.

In the view of the theorists of "combining two into one," there is neither struggle nor conversion between opposites, and the development of things precisely represents the "connection," "integration," and "unity" of opposites. According to materialistic dialectics, "...struggle is present within identity. Where there is no struggle, no identity is possible." (Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. I, People's Publishing House, 2nd edition, p. 321) Unity without struggle is rigid, mechanical unity, a merger of contradictions. What the theorists of "combining two into one" say is the development of things is precisely the mechanical combination of opposites. It is precisely a merger of two aspects of a contradiction. This amounts to saying that changes in the nature of things will never occur and that changes are only in the quantities of things. Further, the causes of these changes are found not within but without the things. Obviously this is not the viewpoint of materialistic dialectics.

Lenin said: "There are two basic viewpoints on development. One is the belief that development is deduction, addition or duplication. The other viewpoint is that development is the unity of opposites. According to the first viewpoint on motion, the power, source and motive of self-motion are neglected. (Perhaps the source has been moved outside - to places of deity and other bodies.) According to the second viewpoint, the principal emphasis is placed on knowing the source of 'self' - motion." (Collected Works of Lenin, Vol. XXXVIII, People's Publishing House, p. 408.) (Underlining is in the original text.) Comrade Mao Tse-tung, expounding this idea of Lenin's, has pointed out: "In the history of human knowledge there have always been two views concerning the law of development of the world; the metaphysical view and the dialectical view, which form two mutually opposed world outlooks." (Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. I, People's Publishing House, 2nd edition, p. 288) The theory of "combining two into one" advanced by Comrade Yang Hsien-chen and others obviously belongs to the metaphysical view of development for the reason that it does not recognize the absolute character of the struggle between opposites. Nor does it recognize that internal contradictions provide the motive power for the development of things. Also, it places the emphasis not on "knowing the source of 'self' - motion" but on the external mechanical "integration." If this theory is pursued to the end, it will inevitably lead to recognizing the existence of the "primary power of propulsion" and the existence of "deity," thus falling into the pit of mysticism.

Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said: "This law (i.e., the unity of opposites, dividing one into two - author) is now understood by a growing number of the people in our country. For many people, however, acceptance of this law is one thing, and its application in examining and handling problems is quite another." ("On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People," Selected Readings from Mao Tse-tung's Works, Edition A, Vol. II, p. 454) Why is it that many people are unable to "apply this law in the examination and handling of problems"? The reasons can be numerous but the most fundamental one is: Dividing one into two is the world outlook and methodology of the proletariat and is also the proletarian weapon for understanding and transforming the world. "Without the firm and pure stand and ideals of the proletariat it is impossible thoroughly to understand and really to grasp this Marxist-Leninist science." (Liu Shao-ch'i: How to Be a Good Communist, People's Publishing House, 1963 edition, p. 18) Only by firmly adhering to the proletarian stand can the revolutionary really grasp the viewpoint and method of dividing one into two, and apply this law in the examination and handling of problems.