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The Understanding and Application of
the Concept of Identity

by

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Over the past year since the basic unanimity reached among the majority of comrades concerning the question of "identity of thinking and being", China's philosophers have gone a step further and discussed a series of questions like "the identity of erroneous thinking and being", "whether there is identity in the state of qualitative change", "the relationship between struggle and identity", "the motive power behind development of things", "the struggle and identity of idealism and materialism", etc. It will be seen that the focal point of the question still lies in the understanding and application of the law for unity of opposites, particularly the understanding and application of the concept of identity of contradictions. Herein lie many divergencies of opinion.

There is nothing strange in such controversies arising from the theory of identity of contradictions. Nothing in the concept of dialectics has ever been so frequently distorted and misunderstood as "identity". I therefore wish to express my views, from the angle of methodology, on the question of understanding and applying the concept of identity.

1. Inter-dependence

All scientific concepts, categories, laws and principles are reflections in our mind of the objective reality. This reflection is brought about by abstraction of knowledge. One characteristic of philosophical concept and principle consists in the extreme degree of their universality and generalization. Marxist philosophy is not a direct generalization of the particular experience in life but a summing-up of the experience of mankind in production struggle and class struggle. Moreover, this highest summing-up is achieved by generalizing all the results of natural science and social science. That is why F. Engels rated philosophy as an "ideology reaching high up to the sky."

It is precisely because of this that in applying the philosophical concept and principle for explaining a certain concrete problem we must make concrete and analysis. Facts are always far more complicated than principles, and phenomena are always much richer than laws. While observing Marxist-Leninist formulas we may not rigidly apply these formulas but must pay attention to the thousand and one experiences of the same law in reality and flexibly apply the formulas.

As we know, identity means, among other things, inter-dependence of both aspects of a contradiction. This appears to be very simple but actually is not simple. Let me cite an example to explain this. In an article a writer advances this theory: if Marxist philosophy and Hegelianism are regarded as two opposites in a unified body, then it may be said that "without Marxist philosophy there would have been no Hegelianism or without Hegelianism there would have been no Marxist philosophy." ("The Question of Identity of Idealism and Materialism" by I-fu Fang-t'ung published in Kuang-ming Jih-pao of January 13.) How could such a theory that is devoid of common sense be advanced? Probably the writer reasons this way: according to the law for unity of opposites, the two aspects of a contradiction are inter-dependent and there cannot be one without the other; now that Hegelianism and Marxist philosophy are two antagonistic aspects, not only would there have been no Marxist philosophy without Hegelianism but also there would have been no Hegelianism without Marxist philosophy.

This is to proceed from theory instead of facts and to make facts suit the theory instead of the other way round.

Of course, at the first sight the theory here is in conflict with fact: according to theory, the two aspects of a contradiction are inter-dependent; according to fact, Hegelianism is not dependent upon Marxist philosophy for Hegelianism had existed before Marxist philosophy came into being. What is to be done? Fact cannot be revised. But there is nothing wrong with the theory. The trouble is that concrete contradiction is not analyzed in a concrete way and that "the concrete positions of various aspects of a contradiction and the contradictory and concrete inter-relations" are not understood. ("On Contradiction") The relation between Marxist philosophy and Hegelianism is one of critical inheritance and scientific transformation. Marxist philosophy is the side that criticizes, inherits and transforms Hegelianism. Hegelianism is the side that is criticized, inherited and transformed. Such are the concrete positions of both aspects and their concrete relations in a contradiction. Thus, here the meaning of inter-dependence of both aspects of a contradiction is merely this: without a critic, there will be no side that is criticized; without an inheritor, there can be no side that is inherited; without the side that transforms, there will be no side that is transformed. But by no means can it be said that without Marxist philosophy there would have been no Hegelianism. Hegelianism is the object of actual critique and inheritance and of scientific transformation and is inseparable from Marxist philosophy; as Hegelian philosophy and the thought of idealist dialectics that came into being in Germany in the 18th and 19th centuries, Hegelianism was not conditioned by Marxist philosophy. (Of course, the genesis of Hegelianism had its own conditions.) Thus, the error lies not in the theory (inter-dependence of opposites) itself but in its mechanical application by the writer.

The above example is of course a striking one, but this phenomenon of "mechanical application" is not an isolated one. It is a simplified understanding of "inter-dependence". One who bases himself on such simplified understanding may apply the theory of identity of contradictions as he pleases but is very like to throw away this theory. As soon as it occurs to him that one aspect of a contradiction does not seem to depend on the other aspect, he will deny the identity of the two. It will be remembered that in our discussion of the question of "identity of thinking and being", one reason cited by those comrades who deny the identity of thinking and being is that "being is primary and thinking

secondary." In their opinion, recognition of the identity of thinking and being signifies not only a recognition that thinking is dependent on being and there can be no thinking without being but also a recognition that being is dependent on thinking and without thinking there can be no being. If so, can a dividing line be drawn against the "theory of coordination of principles"? They lose sight of the complex relations between thinking and being. They fail to see that while, generally speaking, being is not dependent on thinking, being, as an object of knowledge and transformation, is conditional upon the emergence of intelligent man and, apart from man's purposeful activities, the "second nature" imprinted with man's intelligence and will cannot be explained. The crux of the matter lies in concrete analysis of concrete circumstances under the guidance of the general principles of Marxism and in respect for facts while not abandoning the general principles of Marxism.

2. Mutual Transformation

Another meaning of identity is mutual transformation of the two aspects of a contradiction. This mutual transformation is diverse in form and character. At times, the main positions are transformed. At others, the character is transformed. As still others, both the main positions and the character are transformed. But at present we find this interpretation of identity: the transformation of both sides of a contradiction is merely a transformation of positions; it is "sophistry" to suggest that one side of a contradiction can be transformed into the other in character:

"It is not dialectics but sophistry to understand mutual transformation of opposites in things as transformation of side A into side B and side B into side A, with its ideological root in metaphysics. Such an understanding will not only exclude the possibility of any development of things and lead to a circulation theory but will confuse the character of both aspects of a contradiction and arrive at the wrong conclusion that both aspects of a contradiction have their common character." ("The Struggle and Transformation of Materialism and Idealism" by Tang Yi-chieh - Ch'ao-hsueh Yen-chiu, 1st issue of 1961)

This is not a peculiar view held by a certain person, because such a thesis has also appeared in articles written by other comrades. This cannot but be regarded as a fundamental question. Qualitative change is one of the basic concepts of dialects. And so-called qualitative change refers precisely to the transformation of the character of a thing into the opposite and its change into another thing. To deny this is to deny the whole of dialectics. The transformation of one aspect of a contradiction into another aspect is a widespread phenomenon that can be observed everywhere in real life. Examples in classic writings are too numerous to cite. "On Contradiction" says: "The land-owning landlord class is transformed into a class deprived of its land, while the peasants, once deprived of their land, transform themselves into small holders of land. The haves and have-nots, gains and losses, are inter-connected because of certain conditions; there is identity between the two sides. Under socialism, the system of the peasants' private ownership will in turn be transformed into public ownership of socialist agriculture..... Between private property and public property there is a bridge leading from the one to the other, which in philosophy is called identity, or mutual transformation, or inter-permeation." Is not the transformation of landless peasants into small holders of land or the transformation of private ownership into public ownership a qualitative transformation of one aspect of contradiction into the other aspect? Further, we all know that under given conditions truth may be transformed into error, bad things into good things, failure into success, poverty into affluence, death into life, war into peace Do we have to go on citing examples? What we want to add is this: all the transformations mentioned above may take place in an opposite direction.

As a matter of fact, transformation of position and transformation of character cannot be divided in every case. The proletariat is transformed from the non-principal aspect into the principal aspect of a contradiction and the bourgeoisie is transformed from the principal aspect to non-principal aspect of a contradiction: this is a transformation of position but, on the other hand, the transformation of the proletariat from the ruled class into the ruling class and the transformation of the bourgeoisie from the ruling class into the ruled class cannot but be regarded as a transformation of character. Having seized political power and exercising control, through the State, all the socialist means of production, the proletariat is no longer a proletariat in the old sense of capitalism - those who have nothing at all.

To deny transformation of character is not dialectics but precisely a metaphysical conception of development: development as a decrease or increase in quantity or as a displacement in space, which was criticized in Chapter I of "On Contradiction".

These comrades maintain that recognition of identity will "confuse the character of both aspects of contradiction." This exposes a knot in their thought. They always hold that recognition of the inter-permeation and mutual transformation will lead to a reconciliation of contradiction and will blur the principled boundary between both aspects. They seem to think that, if a line of demarcation is to be drawn against idealism, any of its common connections with materialism cannot be recognized and that recognition of the identity of idealism and materialism signifies an impossibility of firm struggle against idealism. To tell the truth, this is still metaphysical thinking: there is no antagonism where there is identity, and no identity where there is antagonism. We might furnish another proof: A comrade who sees no common thing that can be borrowed between idealism and materialism maintains in the same article that subjective idealism and objective idealism are not opposites and that their mutual transformation is a "transformation of non-opposites". ("The Struggle and Identity of Materialism and Idealism" by Chu Yen-che published in Kuang-ming Jih-pao of February 3, 1961) This is an example of using the antagonism between idealism and materialism for denying their identity and using the identity of subjective idealism and objective idealism for obliterating their antagonism.

Let us see to what an error denial of the identity of idealism and materialism will lead us. In the above article the writer asserts that it is wrong to understand inter-dependence as mutual inheritance and to think that there is a thing in common that can be borrowed between subjective idealism and objective idealism.

The writer intends to refute eclecticism but does so from the standpoint of mechanicalism. In doing so he sinks into another extreme. So long as we assume a really objective attitude toward facts in the history of philosophy, we cannot deny that between idealism and materialism there may be common objects of study, common problems and common materials. For instance, none can evade the fundamental question of philosophy. Some idealists subjectively want to evade this question but actually still have to answer this question one way or the other. It is precisely because of contrary answers to the fundamental question of philosophy that a tit-for-tat acute struggle takes place between idealism and materialism. Otherwise, if you say one thing and I say another, there will be no cause for any struggle. That idealists and materialists critically draw on certain things in the system of each other is also a thing commonly witnessed in the history of philosophy. Of course, idealism and materialism cannot inherit the fundamental viewpoint from each other but many ideological materials can be borrowed, absorbed and inherited from each other under given conditions. Philosophy has a class character but also bears an inheritable character. Marxist philosophy critically inherits German classic philosophy. Engels said: "We Germany socialists take pride not only in inheriting from Saint Simon, Fourier

and Owen but also in inheriting from Kant, Fichte and Hegel." This inheritance is fundamentally different from the reconciliation of two antagonistic systems - materialism and idealism. Inasmuch as mutual inheritance is a fact, how can it be explained if not by the identity of contradiction?

Will, then, recognition of mutual transformation of both aspects of a contradiction "confuse the character of both aspects of contradiction" and "lead to a circulation theory"?

There is a qualitative boundary between different things and between two sides of a thing. But this boundary is not rigid and unchangeable. Engels once said: "Dialectics knows of no absolute and fixed boundary." ("Dialectics of Nature"). According to Lenin, dialectics is precisely intended to study "why one's mind should not regard these opposites as lifeless and fixed things but as lively, conditional, changeable and mutually transformable things." ("Philosophical Notes"). To obliterate the boundary between opposites is sophistry but to regard this boundary as lifeless is metaphysics. To recognize this boundary and the qualitative distinction between the antagonistic aspects and to recognize their mutual dependence, mutual permeation, mutual transition and mutual transformation - such is Marxist dialectics.

How can "mutual transformation" lead to "circulation"? Obviously this is due to this misinterpretation: Inasmuch as it is "mutual transformation", side A will certainly be transformed into side B, side B will be transformed into side A, and again side A will be transformed into side B and side B will be transformed into side B If it is interpreted this way, then mutual transformation is indeed like what Comrade T'ang Yi-chieh says: "The opposites will forever transform themselves" and cannot escape from the cycle of "circulation"!

We are advocates of the theory of development and not the theory of circulation. We recognize that things are developing in a forward direction and not in a circle. But the development recognized by us is not a straight-line development but a wave-like progress and a spiral rise. For example, "struggle, failure, more struggle, more failure and still more struggle until victory" is the logic of the revolutionary people. Before winning the ultimate victory, partial victory and partial failure always alternate with each other but things do not "forever move within a circle". Although things repeat themselves sometimes, the strength of revolution on the whole is getting greater and the strength of counter-revolution on the whole is getting weaker. This prepares conditions for an ultimate decisive victory.

The capitalist society and the socialist society are antagonistic things but the socialist society is a transformation of the capitalist society. Will a socialist society then be transformed once again into a capitalist society? No. But under special conditions there is a possibility of capitalist comeback. The question lies in the conditions. When the era of "Great Harmony" arrives in the future, there will be no possibility of capitalist comeback because there will be no condition for capitalist comeback. Does this mean that "mutual transformation" is wrong? The trouble does not lie in the theory but in our failure to make a concrete analysis. "On Contradiction" repeatedly stresses that identity of contradiction is relative and mutual transformation is conditional. If we forget this point, how can we say the theory of mutual transformation is wrong?

3. Concrete Identity

Inasmuch as the categories and concepts in philosophy have their high degree of universality and generalization, they cannot but be distinguished from concepts in everyday life and concepts of various sciences though the distinction does not do away with the connections between them. The same term is

applied in a narrow sense in everyday life and other branches of science but often acquires a broader meaning in philosophy. For instance, so-called "motion" in dynamics refers to movement in space and change of position, but if it is understood in such a narrow sense in philosophy it would mean a mechanical viewpoint. Motion as understood in dialectics refers to all changes in the universe, including the development of society and the process of thinking. Comrades who make an elementary study of philosophy often ask this question: Water heated becomes steam but its chemical composition remains unchanged - H_2O . Why is it said that quantitative change gives rise to qualitative change? They do not understand that when water is changed into steam its chemical property is not changed but its physical property is changed. The philosophical concept of "quality" may not be understood as a chemical property. The philosophical concepts of "motion" and "quality" are a summing-up of the concepts of various special forms of motion and special quality in the domain of various sciences. It is sometimes very important to make this distinction. As we know, Machists, taking advantage of new successes in natural science, once cried, "Matter has disappeared!" What has happened? What has disappeared is not matter itself but the old narrow concept of matter in natural science.

A narrow and simple understanding of "contradiction", the basic category of dialectics, and non-recognition of its rich contents and thousand and one forms will also cause one to deviate from dialectics and head toward metaphysics. As we know, this was the error made by the Deborinists who were criticized in the Soviet Union in the thirties. The Deborinists held that at a certain stage of development and between certain stages there may be only difference but no contradiction. They maintained that contradiction did not appear at the beginning of the process but would only appear at a certain stage of development. In this way, they denied the universality of contradiction. "This school does not understand that every difference in the world already contains a contradiction, that difference is contradiction. There has been contradiction between labor and capital ever since they came into being - only at first it was not so intensified. There is a difference between the workers and the peasants even under the social conditions of the Soviet Union, and the difference between them is a contradiction but this contradiction will not become intensified into antagonism and will not assume the form of class struggle..... This is a question of difference in the character of contradictions, not a matter of the presence or absence of contradiction." ("On Contradiction").

Non-recognition of the diversified expressions of contradictions will also lead to another error, i.e., to regard a special form of struggle as a universal form of struggle that must be adopted at all times and under any conditions. This is the error made by the "left" dogmatists who identify struggle of contradictions with antagonism and who do not know that "antagonism is only a form but not the only form of all struggles of contradictions and that this formula may not be applied everywhere." ("On Contradiction"). In form this viewpoint is contrary to the viewpoint that denies the universality of contradiction. So far as the epistemological root is concerned, both of them sever the general from the particular and universality from particularity of contradictions, and are metaphysics.

"Identity" is a very broad concept with rich contents. Under difficult conditions, classic works used such terms as "identity", "unity", "coincidence", "interpermeation", "interpenetration", "interdependence (or interdependence for existence)", "interconnection" or "cooperation" to express this concept. Comrade Mao Tse-tung in his "On Contradiction" collected together these different terms and pointed out that they all referred to "identity". Why are so many terms used to express this concept? It is only intended to demonstrate the rich contents of the concept of identity and prevent one from understanding it in a narrow sense. Meanwhile, we are enabled in different cases to choose the most appropriate terms to express the meaning more exactly. Not to analyze the different concrete contents of this concept in relation to concrete problems means not to understand the particularity of contradictions.

Since contradictions are different in a thousand and one ways, their struggle and identity are of course different for different contradictions. Nor is that all. Even in the process of development of the same contradiction the forms of expression for struggle and identity are changeable. "On Contradiction" says: "To understand each of the aspects of a contradiction is to understand the definite position each aspect occupies, the concrete forms in which it comes into the relation of mutual dependence and contradiction with its opposite, and the concrete means by which it struggles with its opposite when the two are mutually dependent yet contradictory as well as the time when the mutual dependence breaks up. The study of these problems is a matter of the utmost importance. Lenin was expressing this very idea when he said that the most essential thing in Marxism, the living soul of Marxism, is to concretely analyze concrete conditions."

Like the struggle of contradiction which assumes different concrete forms (such as antagonistic and non-antagonistic forms), the identity of contradiction has different concrete forms. Because of this, in applying the concept "identity" to special courses of study and various concrete problems we must take special care to analyze the concrete identity of both aspects of a contradiction. The so-called "concrete identity", in my opinion, may be understood from three angles. First, "concrete identity" is antagonistic to "formal identity" (or abstract identity). "Concrete identity" refers to an identity including difference and antagonism. Second, "concrete identity" is relative to "imagined identity". It refers to an identity of changes in objective reality and not the puerile and fancied identity in one's mind. Third, "concrete identity" may be regarded as antagonistic to identity in general. It refers to different forms of identity expressed by different special contradictions. In the words of "On Contradiction", it refers to the relations of interconnection, interdependence, and mutual transformation, which one aspect of a contradiction develops with the other aspect "in a concrete form" under special conditions. It may also be called a "particularity of contradiction in its interconnections."

There is a perplexing question in the present controversy. Quoting what is said in "On Contradiction" - the state of qualitative change is a "decomposition of entity", "unity of opposites is conditional, transitory and relative" - some comrades express the opinion that there is only struggle and no identity when a qualitative change takes place. Other comrades, quoting "there is struggle in identity" from "On Contradiction", hold that without identity there is no struggle and consequently identity is not transitory. Each side has its basis but it seems that each gets hold of only one aspect of the matter.

The concept of "identity" refers, generally speaking, to all the organic connections between two aspects. That is to say, as long as both the antagonistic aspects are "interconnected", they have an identity. But over concrete objects and problems, "identity" sometimes also refers to certain special relations between the antagonistic aspects. In such relations, the quality of things is at a stage of relative stability and, although a struggle still exists between the antagonistic aspects excluding each other, it is not so conspicuous and the stability of quality is not yet disturbed for the time being. This state is described by "On Contradiction" with a series of terms - unity, solidarity, amalgamation, harmony, balance, stalemate, deadlock, rest, stability, equilibrium, coagulation, attraction, etc. Probably controversies in most cases arise from the fact that they do not understand that "identity" may have such different meanings. To explain this, we might as well cite two examples.

Dwelling on the contradiction between production and consumption, Comrade Mao Tse-tung pointed out in his "On Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People":

"For instance, a constant process of readjustment through state planning is needed to deal with the contradiction between production and the needs of society, which will of course long remain with us. Every year our country draws up an economic plan in an effort to establish a proper ratio between accumulation and consumption and achieve a balance between production and the needs of society. By 'balance' we mean a temporary, relative unity of opposites. By the end of each year, such a balance, taken as a whole, is upset by the struggle of opposites, the unity achieved undergoes a change, balance becomes imbalance, unity becomes disunity, and once again it is necessary to work out a balance and unity for the next year. This is the superior quality of our planned economy. As a matter of fact, this balance and unity is partially upset every month and every quarter, and partial readjustments are called for. Sometimes, because our arrangements do not correspond to objective reality, contradictions arise and the balance is upset: this is what we call making a mistake. Contradictions arise continually and are continually resolved: this is the dialectical law of the development of things."

Here, Comrade Mao Tse-tung points out that sometimes there is a "disunity" between production and consumption. "Disunity" means "non-identity"..

Karl Marx once dwelt on the contradiction between production and consumption too. In the "Preface to Critique of Political Economy", he gives a detailed exposition of the "identity of production and consumption" and points out that without production there is no consumption and, without consumption, there is no production and that the two condition and depends upon each other but production is the base. Obviously, in a society production and consumption are always interconnected and cannot be separated. In other words, as two essential links in the economic life, they have forever an identity.

On the face of it, the two theories seem to be contradictory to each other but a careful look will show that the unity of production and consumption as expounded by Karl Marx refers to their universal connections in the economic life as a whole. As to the temporary unity of production and consumption mentioned by Comrade Mao Tse-tung, it refers not to their general connections but to the establishment of a certain relation - balance - between them. As the points of emphasis are different and as what are referred by the term "unity" are different, these two theories are not in conflict with each other.

Further, let us look at the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. When the bourgeoisie and the proletariat form a united front, we may regard this united front as an entity. This union is conditional. Criticism and struggle still exist in the union in the same way as struggle exists in identity. But when the united front is broken, we cannot say that there is no identity between the two. The bourgeoisie and the proletariat may not exist in a united front but still cannot but exist side by side in a society. They no longer have relations of two allied classes in a united front but still they cannot but have relations between two classes in the same society. Criticizing those comrades who advocated that language has a class character, Stalin said: "These comrades identify the antithesis of bourgeois interests and proletarian interests and the fierce class struggle between them with a complete split of society and with severance of all connections between two antagonistic classes." Stalin pointed out: "It is certainly wrong to think that when fierce class struggle exists in a society it seems that the society is split into various classes which have absolutely no economic connections with one another. On the contrary, as long as bourgeoisie exists, the property owners and those without property have a thousand and one economic ties between them." ("Marxism and the Linguistic Problem").

Probably the two examples mentioned above may show that the concept "identity" may be applied from different angles and have different concrete contents in different cases. Viewed from one another, there is no identity; viewed from another angle, there is identity. I think that when this point is cleared up it will be easier to take a clear view of such questions as "whether there is identity" which is now the subject of controversy.

This is so, for example, with the question of identity of such aspects of contradiction as thinking and being. When the identity of thinking and being is expounded from the angle of the theory that the world is knowable, it implies that thinking and being can be united on the basis of practice and that man is able to know the world correctly and transform the world successfully. Here "identity" acquires the meaning of "accord" and "agreement". When thinking correctly reflects being, thinking and being reach a transitory, relative unity. When thinking is in error, unity becomes disunity. Here "accord" and "agreement" are the concrete forms of identity. It is in this sense that we say: the unity (or identity) of thinking and being is conditional, transitory and relative. But can we say that when thinking is in error it has no connection whatsoever with being? Of course not. Erroneous thinking is also a reflection - thought a twisted, distorted and one-sided reflection. Its relation with being is still one between the reflector and the reflected. Religion, for instance, is a non-scientific and erroneous ideology but as a superstructure it is still interconnected with the economic base. A particular kind of economic base will produce a particular kind of superstructure, and a particular kind of superstructure will serve a particular kind of economic base. Such is the interconnection between the antagonistic aspects, and we cannot but regard such interconnection as an identity. Erroneous thinking has its objective cause and basis. For instance, idealism frequently accords with the interests of the reactionary ruling class; hence there is also an identity between the two, only an identity of a different kind.

Criticizing the opinions of the magazine Osvolozhdeniye [Liberation] of the bourgeois liberals, Lenin said in his "Two Tactics of Social-Democrats in Democratic Revolution" in 1905:

"The reader now has before him all the essential opinions of Osvolozhdeniye. It would, of course, be the greatest mistake to regard these opinions as correct in the sense that they correspond to the objective truth..... But it would be an even greater mistake to forget that in the final analysis these bourgeois-distorted opinions reflect the real interests of the bourgeoisie, which, as a class, undoubtedly understands correctly which trends in Social-Democracy are advantageous, close, akin and agreeable, and which trends are harmful, distant, alien and antipathetic to it."

This passage is intended to dissuade us from taking a simplified attitude toward erroneous thoughts. All erroneous thoughts are erroneous because they do not correspond to the objective reality. In this special and narrow sense, it may be said that erroneous thoughts have no identity with the objective being. But beyond this limit and in a broader and general sense, the erroneous thoughts still have identity with the objective reality. This is because erroneous thoughts do not drop from the sky, and all ideas and illusions, however absurd, can find their root and objective basis in the real world. Erroneous thoughts do not correspond to the object to be reflected but may correspond to the class interests of certain classes. This, too, is an identity thought of a different kind.

On this question, some comrades maintain that identity of thinking and being means merely a correct reflection of being by thinking and that all relations other than this are not identity. This is obviously to understand the identity of contradictions as an "accord". Some comrades, in order to

persist in the theory that there is no identity of thinking and being, simply do not identify this identity with the identity of contradictions. These comrades are still farther from the point. The argument that erroneous thinking and objective reality cannot constitute a contradiction can hardly hold water. Erroneous thinking is erroneous in a relative sense both in relation to correct thinking and in relation to the objective being. It is erroneous thinking precisely because it does not correspond to the objective being. And this also shows that erroneous thinking and being are also opposites. Since they are opposites, there is a relation of identity between them though this identity is essentially different from the identity of correct thinking and being.

Does this mean that erroneous thoughts cannot be distinguished from correct thoughts? I think it does not mean that. As contradictions are different, so are the struggle and identity of contradictions in each case. I have dwelt upon the multiple special forms and different concrete meanings of "identity". What I want to add here is only this: not only is identity different in degrees (as some comrades have correctly pointed out, "accord" is different in degrees) but different kinds of identity are different in character (e.g., "accord" and "adaptation").

As a principle of materialistic dialectics, the identity of thinking and being acquires very rich contents, and we ought to explore and explain it from all sides. It includes not only identity of knowledge and object but also identity of theory and practice, identity of historical things and logical things, and identity of superstructure and base, etc. As we know, thinking and being are the broadest thought-concepts. Hence, the concept of identity of thinking and being should be able to generalize the interconnections and interpenetrations between all mental phenomena and material phenomena. We may examine their identity in the sense of "accord" and "agreement" but we have no reason to limit the identity of thinking and being to this sense.

The contradictory aspects are contradictory because they are always antagonistic and united. Without an antagonistic identity or united antagonism, there is no contradiction. If all their connections are severed and if any identity between them is denied, then there is no struggle between them and there is no contradiction. "On Contradiction" says: "Under given conditions, contradictory things can be united and transformed into each other; without this condition, there is no contradiction, no co-existence and no transformation" (italics mine). "On Contradiction" says further: "All contradictory things are interconnected, and they not only co-exist in an entity under certain conditions, but also transform themselves into each other under certain conditions - this is the whole meaning of identity of contradictions." Please note that here Comrade Mao Tse-tung uses these words: "all contradictory things are interconnected" and does not say: "interconnected under certain conditions". This is because it is self-explanatory that having become a contradiction they are already interconnected under certain conditions. The "interconnection" mentioned here is a broad identity. This interconnection does not necessarily mean that "they co-exist in an entity" or have actually "transformed into each other". Further conditions have to be fulfilled. An entity is built sometimes and broken at others. And whether they exist in an entity or the entity is broken, the struggle of contradictions goes on. It is precisely because of this that identity is relative and transitory while struggle is absolute and constant.

4. The Relationship Between Struggle and Identity

The question of relationship between struggle and identity is one of the most heated controversy. In my opinion, one may point out, with reference to the metaphysical viewpoint (which cuts identity and difference apart and cannot grasp unity in antithesis and antithesis in unity), the antagonistic and united relationship between "sameness" and "difference" and between identity and struggle.

But it should not be forgotten that the identity and struggle we have in mind always refer to the relationship of unity and struggle between two aspects of a contradiction, that "identity" and "struggle" are merely two abstract categories denoting the relationship, and that to get over-intoxicated with a logical inference of these two abstract categories will, instead of moving philosophy forward, only make one muddle-headed.

One of the proofs of this is that in this process of purely abstract inference, "identity" and "struggle" are unconsciously regarded not as attributes but as independent entities. For instance, we have heard this theory: "Unity enables the opposites to unite and become relatively steady and static things and excludes and negates absolute development of struggle. Struggle causes the opposites to separate from, exclude and negate each other, and excludes and negates the tendency toward relatively steady development of unity....." ("The Relationship Between Unity and Struggle" by Hsueh Ching - Hsin Chien-she, June issue of 1960). As a matter of fact, unity itself is an interconnection of opposites and struggle itself is mutual exclusion of opposites. By using to "enable" and to "cause" in the above article, unity and struggle are changed from two aspects of a contradiction into two independent entities: inter-connection itself is not yet a unity and is caused by unity; mutual exclusion itself is not yet a struggle and is impelled forward by struggle. If it is merely a question of speech defect due to carelessness, it is not to be much blamed. But if we look at the other theses in the article, we cannot regard it as an accidental error. As a matter of fact, Comrade Mao Tse-tung's exposition - "opposites in contradiction unite as well as struggle with each other, and thus impel all things to move and change" ("On Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People") is changed by certain comrades into "struggle and identity unite as well as struggle with each other, and thus impel all things to move and change." According to analysis by Marxist classic works, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat co-exist in the entity - capitalist society - struggling with each other, one striving to maintain the capitalist society and the other to overthrow the capitalist system. As a result of this struggle, ultimately the bourgeoisie will be defeated and the proletariat will be victorious while socialism will come into being and the old unity and the opposites forming this unity will give way to a new unity and opposites forming this unity. But certain comrades change the unity and struggle of the bourgeoisie and proletariat into unity and struggle of "identity" and "struggle". Hence it is only natural that it is only natural that it is not the bourgeoisie but the "identity" which obstructs development and it is not the proletariat who wants to overthrow the bourgeoisie but it is "struggle" which will triumph over "identity". Such is the result of substituting abstract categories for concrete analysis of the antithesis and unity of both aspects of a contradiction.

Because of this, these comrades violate this thesis even though they stress the indivisibility of struggle and identity. Actually, they take struggle and identity as two entities that can be separated.

To prove this point, we might as well as cite another example. Proceeding from the correct thesis that "the relationship between antithesis and unity is also a unity of opposites", Comrade Hsueh Ching makes this inference: unity and struggle are interdependent and, because of this, "struggle is also relative, seeing that struggle is inseparable from unity and without unity there is no struggle."

This inference accords with formal logic but not with dialectical logic. According to dialectical logic, there is an absolute thing in a relative thing, and, without the relative there is no absolute thing. But an absolute thing will not, because of this, become a thing that is not absolute. Absolute thing and relative thing are not things that are juxtaposed; the absolute dominates the relative. To regard "the absolute" as a thing existing by the side of "the relative" or outside "the relative" is an expression of ignorance of both "the

absolute" and "the relative". This is precisely how Comrade Hsueh Ching removes the absolute struggle from the relative identity and juxtaposes them. Thus, the "interdependence" he has in mind is such an interdependence as one between the enemy and ourselves and is not such an interdependence as one between the common character and individual character and between the general and the particular. There is a common character in individual character, but a common character will not, because of this, become one that is not common character. There is an absoluteness in relativity but an absolute thing will not, because of this, become a thing that is not absolute.

Of course, when we say struggle is absolute, the following point is not excluded: The concrete forms of struggle change along with the change of conditions. For example, both the formation of struggle of antagonistic contradictions and the formation of struggle of non-antagonistic conditions cannot be made absolute. Under certain conditions, antagonistic contradictions can be transformed into non-antagonistic contradictions and vice versa. This is a question of change in the form of struggle and not a question of existence or absence of struggle. The forms of struggle are conditional, so is the existence of struggle.

In a word, over academic questions we should be bold to put forward new questions and proceed with creative enquiries, but this work can only be based on a mass of data acquired through painstaking and long-term practice of studies. Concept itself is a reflex of the objective reality and is a thing derived from the objective being. Attempt to derive "new" theories from one-sided understanding of concepts without conducting painstaking, long-term study of a mass of factual data is easy but will never be successful.

A series of questions concerning "identity" are still under discussion. This discussion is very useful. Only when "identity" is thrashed out will one understand "struggle" and really understand the law for unity of opposites and wage a successful struggle against metaphysics and sophistry.

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CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

Strengthen Unceasingly the Party's Basic-Level Organizational Work in Finance and Trade Departments

by

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The finance and trade department is a component part of the national economy as a whole, the supply department of industrial and agricultural production, and a powerful assistant in organizing the economic life of the people. Not only does it take up the task of amassing funds for the state but also it undertakes the job of allocating and exchanging commodities between industry and agriculture, and between production and consumption. These tasks can all be fulfilled through the basic-level enterprise units of the finance and trade department. Hence further strengthening of the political viewpoint, the mass viewpoint and production viewpoint of the finance and trade department, as well as strengthening of the Party branch work and Party leadership over the basic-level enterprises of the finance and trade department is the main link in doing finance and trade work well.

Party branches in basic-level enterprises and units form the basis for the Party to exercise absolute leadership over enterprises and constitute the citadel for controlling enterprises. They are also the executors of Party policies. Only by doing well the Party's basic-level organizational work will it be possible to carry out correctly the Party's guidelines and policies, and guarantee the smooth fulfillment of various tasks of the finance and trade department.

As the basic-level enterprises of the finance and trade department have their special characteristics, the basic-level organizations of the Party must follow these special characteristics in starting and carrying out their work. These characteristics are: (1) Enterprises are scattered over wide areas and the scope of their operations is extensive. From cities to villages, from main streets, side streets, residential lanes to rural market places and the public dining rooms of production brigades, the working staff ranges from several hundred, several scores to at least one or two people. Operations include the handling of the means of production serving industry and agriculture as well as means of living serving consumption. (2) The huge army of employees of the finance and trade department are drawn from various quarters, including a number of bourgeois elements, small property owners, small traders and pedlars. As a part of the backbone force has been sent to the production front, newly recruited employees, being not very familiar with their jobs, have not been able to meet satisfactorily the needs of current programs. (3) As production is closely related to consumption, finance and trade work includes distribution and exchange which provide the medium between production and consumption. Apart from having close connections with industrial and agricultural production, it is also closely related with non-productive enterprises and business units. Doing or not doing well financial and trade work, therefore, has something to do with the expansion of production, the arrangement of livelihood and the construction enterprises of the State. (4) Since the finance and trade department is on the front of the struggle of the two roads and the struggle of two kinds of ideology, it supervises the distribution and exchange of commodities on the one hand and controls the circulation of commodity markets on the other. As the personnel of the finance and trade department are strong in policy and technical matters, occasionally they are liable to be exposed, in actual work, to the corrosion and influence of bourgeois ideas, and thus are inclined to harbor the simple, professional viewpoint and neglect politics. The struggle between the two roads and two kinds of ideology, therefore, is often manifested in the finance and trade department in a fairly obvious and penetrating manner. Hence, to strengthen unceasingly the Party's basic-level organizational work in the finance and trade department has become more important.

In view of the special characteristics of the basic-level enterprises of the finance and trade department, in what fields shall we strengthen the Party's basic-level organizational work in the finance and trade department? The following questions deserve our attention:

(1) Do well the work of politics and ideology and integrate it closely with economic work. In doing the work of politics and ideology, we must lay hold of the main ideological problems. When this is done correctly, the work of politics and ideology will then have the right target for solving problems. Some take the view that holding staff meetings, talking about problems and reasoning are all there is to it in doing the work of positions and ideology. Meetings, of course, are necessary, but failure to grasp the main ideological problems existing among the staff, marked results cannot be achieved. To do so, the self-education method of the masses should be adopted by organizing the staff into groups discussing problems in conjunction with the current situation, the actual problems met in the discharge of their duties, as well as the ideological realities of the masses, and by unfolding criticism and self-criticism coordinating politics and ideology with economic work. In other words, by starting

from existing realities and getting hold of living ideas, not only will it be possible to raise the ideological consciousness of the staff but also their political and professional levels. Any departure from the specific economic activity of the enterprise concerned will make the work of politics and ideology empty. Only by strengthening the work of politics and ideology will it be possible for the enterprise to carry out correctly the Party's policies and fulfill the task of economic work.

(2) Resolutely carry out the working methods of the Party emphasizing the mass line by promoting the democratic management system for enterprises in which employees participate in management, cadres in labor and the masses in supervision. This method combines that of relying on the staff from within and that of relying on the broad masses from without, and constitutes the specific adaptation and development of the Party's mass line in financial and trade work. Not only can it promote more effectively the activism and creativity of the staff but also financial and trade work can be put under the supervision of the masses and its fulfillment can be guaranteed. Practice over the past years proves that this democratic management system constitutes the fundamental method of socialist management of enterprises. By following persistently this system and making unceasing efforts to strengthen and further enhance this kind of management system, it will be possible to carry out correctly Party policies and serve both production and consumption in a better way.

(3) Be practical and insist on investigation and research. This is a prerequisite for doing well the work of the Party branch. To do well the work of the Party branch in enterprises, it is necessary to insist on investigations and research in two fields: One involves the investigation and research on the internal side of the enterprise in question. This is done by doing well the investigation and research on the staff, by getting to know thoroughly the political thinking of every staff member, his professional ability and family life, and by undertaking specific education regarding the specific thinking of the staff. Next, do well the investigation and research work in the management and operation of enterprises. Only by understanding clearly the management and operation of enterprises will it be possible to get hold of the main contradictions existing in the management and operation of enterprises and find the main solutions to the problem of resolving these contradictions. The process of undertaking investigation and research in the management and operation of enterprises is also the process of undertaking education on politics and ideology among the employees. Since the thinking of the staff is normally reflected to a very great extent in the activity involving the management and operation of enterprises, doing well the investigation and research in the management and operation of enterprises by getting hold of the main problems may give rise to the possibility of understanding the true ideological condition of the staff and do well the work of education on politics and ideology. The first step involves investigation and research in fields outside the scope of enterprises by conducting an investigation and research in the needs of the broad masses in production and consumption. The next step is to do well the investigation and research in the source of commodity supplies and the incomes of the masses. The third step concerns an investigation and research in the production situation. The needs of the people can be steadily satisfied if the Party branch in the basic-level enterprises makes earnest efforts in guiding employees to do well this task by conducting investigation and research regularly and consistently in the production of agricultural production materials, industrial goods for daily use and subsidiary food items in coordination with the economic activity of the enterprises, as well as by assisting and organizing production department in production efforts.

(4) Exert positive efforts and do a good job of the spare-time study efforts of the employees. Laying a firm hold on the spare-time study activity of the staff is an important means to enhance the political thinking, and policy

and professional, as well as the cultural levels and the staff. By doing so it will be possible to raise unceasingly the labor efficiency of the staff. The study efforts of the staff are mainly in the following three fields: (a) The study of political theories. This consists mainly of the study of Mao Tse-tung's works and his thought. New employees and those who are culturally less advanced, generally speaking, are required to study basic political knowledge. (b) The study of policy and professional work. This concerns the study of current Party guidelines and policies in conjunction with the professional work in the enterprises. This study effort is aimed at enabling every employee to adapt Party policies and guidelines to their work. In the study of policy matters, part of the new employees should also pay attention to the study of professional know-how and professional skills in order to enhance steadily the quality and quantity of their services. (c) As the study of culture serves as the basis of the study of political theories as well as policy and professional work, basic-level units should raise the cultural levels of the staff in a systematic and organized manner, and run properly spare-time schools for employees.

(5) Carry out correctly Party policies and fulfill tasks in earnest. As "policy and strategy is the life of the Party," the Party's policies and its various specific tasks are in accord. Correct implementation of Party policies provides the guarantee for the correct fulfillment of Party's tasks. The Party branch is the citadel for carrying out Party policies and guaranteeing the fulfillment of Party's tasks. Hence the Party branch in basic-level enterprises has to wage regularly an unrelenting struggle against remnant imperialist management ideas and styles, and combat resolutely all tendencies contradicting Party policies. The personnel of the Party branch, therefore, must first of all study in earnest the Party's guidelines and policies, as well as organize and guide the employees to study in earnest, conduct careful investigation and research in accordance with Party policies and principles and in coordination with the specific conditions of the enterprises, formulate practical purchase and marketing plans, savings and credit loan schemes, and try every means to support industrial and agricultural production so as to promote the expansion of production.

The key to meeting the demands mentioned above lies in the absolute leadership of the Party's basic-level organizations over enterprises, although further strengthening of such absolute leadership depends primarily on the strengthening of the leadership core of the Party branch. Practice proves that whenever the leadership core of the Party branch of the enterprise in question is strengthened and whenever politics is in command, it will be possible to unleash the production activism of the broad masses and get a total hold on the work. Hence, the ascertaining of results, and the strengthening of the leadership core are fraught with very important significance in the matter of strengthening the Party's basic-level organizational work. The next thing is to adhere firmly to the principles combining the Party's collective leadership and division of work and responsibilities, as well as strengthen the manager responsibility system under the leadership of Party committees. All vital problems arising from enterprises should be decided on after they are discussed by Party branches and committees. It is then necessary to set to motion labor unions, YOL organizations and the masses, and organize them for discussion until they achieve unified action and fulfill correctly the Party's tasks on the basis of unified thinking and understanding. The following important links should then be grasped: (a) Lay hold of plans. As the plans mapped out by enterprises constitute the Party's tasks, to guarantee the fulfillment of plans it will be necessary to carry out correctly Party policies so that all planned targets will conform to Party policies and existing realities before efforts are made to activate the staff and the masses to carry them out. (b) Lay hold of finance. Since finance serves as a barometer of whether or not enterprises are properly operated and managed and since finance reflects the results of the economic activities of enterprises, the Party branch should, at regular intervals, study the financial activities of enterprises, formulate a constructive system of

financial management, and give periodical reports to the staff on financial gains. (c) Lay hold of thinking. The Party branch should regularly study the main ideological inclinations of the staff at different stages, find out what things are to be promoted and what to be opposed, as well as foster the practice of planting banners in order to tap the activism and creativity of the broad masses of employees. (d) Grasp livelihood. This is done by making proper arrangements of the work and study periods of the staff so as to enable employees to have adequate rest after labor. Emphasis should also be placed on the importance of running properly the staff mess halls and organizing employees' participation in cultural and recreational activities. Attention should also be paid to the matter of fostering and propagating democratic working styles and adhering firmly to the Party principle of upholding the democratic concentration system. Propagation of democratic working styles is a fine tradition of the Party. In the course of carrying out the system of democratic centralism, it is important to implement the class line, rely on Party and YCL members, experienced shop assistants, experienced workers and poor peasants, employees coming from middle and lower peasant families, as well as set up staff representative meetings with these forces as the core, conduct well meetings of the members of supply and marketing cooperative societies in places where such societies have been set up, and introduce democratic management in enterprises. The management of enterprises has the obligation to report on work done to representative meetings at regular intervals, listen to criticisms, accept rational suggestions, and make positive efforts to improve work. Lastly, the organized life of the Party should be strengthened, while preparations should be made for holding meetings of Party branches and committees. Efforts should also be made to arrange systematically the substance of the organized life of the Party, and unfold criticism and self-criticism. The system of attending Party classes should also be firmly adhered to apart from making unceasing efforts to enhance the level of consciousness of Party members and strengthen their Party character.

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