

# A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE HISTORY AND BASIC PRINCIPLES OF DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM (Second of Two Installments)

Having traced the roots and historical development of dialectical materialism in the first installment of this work, let us now briefly summarize dialectical materialism's basic principles.

Dialectical materialism is both a world outlook and a method of analysis. The dialectical materialist world outlook holds "...that the material world exists outside of our thoughts, that the brain is the organ of thought, that our thoughts are products of reflections of the material world in our brain." <sup>1/</sup> This is also the view of the other major variety of materialism, mechanistic materialism. Despite sharing this and other common views, the two major varieties of materialism fundamentally disagree about the mode of motion of matter and the basis of change. To understand these disagreements it is necessary to familiarize ourselves with the method of analysis associated with mechanistic materialism (metaphysics) and the method of analysis associated with dialectical materialism (dialectics).

#### IV. METAPHYSICS

Metaphysics is an abstract way of thinking in which things are thought of in abstraction from their conditions of existence and in abstraction from their change and development. Thus, metaphysics "...thinks of things 1) in separation from one another, ignoring their interconnections and 2) as fixed and frozen, ignoring their change and development." <sup>2/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> People's Democracy Vol.1, No.3 p.10

<sup>2/</sup> Maurice Cornforth Materialism And The Dialectical Method (International Publishers, New York, 1971) p.58

Metaphysics has three basic characteristics: 1) The Principle of Immobility and Identity; 2) The Permanent Isolation of Things; and 3) The Mutual Exclusion of Opposites, The Impossibility of Contradiction.

1) The Principle of Immobility and Identity: According to this principle, things change place (i.e., move in the mechanical sense) but do not experience internal motion, meaning the essence of everything remains the same. This holds true, claim metaphysicians, whether we speak of the world, nature, society or the human species. Thus, the credo of metaphysics is "there is nothing new under the sun", which means that ever since God or some other external force created the world, no change has occurred and that everything in the world has remained (and will continue to remain) immobile and identical.

What is the result when the above concepts are applied to nature?

Nature, in the view of metaphysics, is a complex of permanently stable things. Of course, metaphysicians don't assert that the earth is immobile, but readily acknowledge the earth's movement around the sun. However, they characterize this movement as merely mechanical motion.

"But things are not so simple. The revolution of the earth around the sun is certainly a mechanical movement, but while turning, the earth can undergo (other) influences, becoming colder, for example. Hence, there is not only a displacement, but also other changes which occur." <sup>3/</sup>

In other words, if the earth moved only in the mechanical manner claimed by metaphysicians, the earth would change place, but the earth itself would never change. But that the earth undergoes continuous change--and that these changes constitute the earth's history--is an objective, scientifically-proven fact. "Hence, we see that to concede motion, only to make it a purely mechanical motion, is a metaphysical point of view, for this motion is without history." <sup>4/</sup>

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<sup>3/</sup> Georges Politzer Elementary Principles of Philosophy  
(International Publishers, New York, 1976) p.77

<sup>4/</sup> Ibid., p.77

This link between mechanical motion and metaphysics is also clearly revealed in the metaphysical concept of society.

For example, in the U.S., it is a widely known fact--recognized by dialecticians and metaphysicians alike--that competitive capitalism was superceded by monopoly capitalism immediately prior to the turn of the 20th century. While they recognize the mechanical aspect of this transformation (i.e., that monopoly capitalism arose out of and superceded competitive capitalism), metaphysicians completely ignore the transformation's internal aspect (i.e., that the capitalist class divided into two and, therefore, that the principal contradiction in U.S. society changed from that between the working class and the entire capitalist class to that between the masses of the people and the monopoly capitalists). As a result, our metaphysicians completely muddle the questions of primary importance for the U.S. revolutionary movement: Who are our friends? Who are our enemies?

To sum up. The metaphysical concept of nature and society clearly reveal the link between mechanistic materialism and metaphysics. And because of that link, mechanistic materialism is often (and correctly) referred to as metaphysical materialism.

2) The Permanent Isolation of Things: Metaphysics holds that each thing in the world is an independent entity with its own fixed nature and properties. Metaphysics thus considers each thing in isolation from all other things, rather than considering all things in their interconnection to one another. According to metaphysics, this isolation of things is a permanent, never-changing circumstance.

A glaring example of this is the view of the overwhelming majority of U.S. Anti-Revisionists that electoral politics and armed struggle are independent entities having absolutely nothing to do with each other. Electoral politics, assert metaphysicians, belongs to the realm of reformist politics, whereas armed struggle belongs to the realm of revolutionary politics. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. Electoral politics and armed struggle are interconnected, not separate. Both are aspects of revolutionary politics and each must be employed in a manner consistent with the prevailing conditions of a given period.

3) The Mutual Exclusion of Opposites, The Impossibility of Contradiction: As a result of considering things to be permanently isolated from one another, metaphysics holds that opposites mutually exclude each other or, to put it another way, that two opposite things cannot exist at the same time.

"To the metaphysician, things and their mental images, ideas, are isolated, to be considered one after the other apart from each other, rigid, fixed objects of investigation given once for all. He thinks in absolutely discontinuous antithesis....For him a thing either exists, or it does not exist; it is equally impossible for a thing to be itself and at the same time something else. Positive and negative absolutely exclude one another; cause and effect stand in equally rigid antithesis one to the other." 5/

This posing of opposite things in rigid antithesis to each other has come to be known as the metaphysical "either-or". Since the metaphysical "either-or" has the effect of negating the simultaneous existence of two opposites, contradiction between two opposites is thus rendered impossible.

And so, as a result of considering electoral politics and armed struggle to be permanently isolated from each other, our metaphysicians hold that electoral politics and armed struggle mutually exclude each other, that is, that the two forms of struggle cannot be employed at the same time. "Either electoral politics (which falls within the realm of reformist politics and is something we don't want any part of anyway) or armed struggle, you must choose between the two," cry our metaphysicians. But by so posing electoral politics and armed struggle in rigid antithesis to each other, our metaphysicians negate the simultaneous use of the two forms of struggle and thereby eliminate the possibility of resolving the contradiction between them (i.e., of determining which is primary and which is secondary, and what the particular role of each is, during a given period).

## V. DIALECTICS

In differentiating dialectics from metaphysics, the essential point to keep in mind is that metaphysics implies immobility, whereas dialectics implies motion. "Motion is the mode of existence of matter. Never anywhere has there been matter without motion, nor can there be." 6/ Motion and change exist in everything. This is the basis of dialectics.

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5/ Frederick Engels Anti-Duhring (International Publishers, New York, 1970) pp.27-28

6/ Ibid., p.68 (Engels' emphasis)

Dialectics consists of four basic laws: 1) Everything moves and changes, nothing stays where it is or remains what it is (The Law of Motion); 2) The world is a complex of processes; everything within these processes is connected and influences everything else (The Law of Interconnection and Interrelation); 3) Everything changes primarily (though not solely) as a result of internal contradictions (The Law of Contradiction); and 4) Quantitative changes eventually result in a Qualitative leap (The Law of the Transformation of Quantity into Quality).

- 1) The Law of Motion: Everything moves and changes, nothing stays where it is or remains what it is.

As previously noted, seeing things from a dialectical viewpoint means seeing them from the point of view of motion and change. For dialectics, then, "...nothing is final, absolute, sacred. It reveals the transitory character of everything and in everything; nothing can endure before it except the uninterrupted process of becoming and of passing away, of endless ascendancy from the lower to the higher." <sup>7/</sup> Thus, "...to consider things from the dialectical point of view means to consider them to be provisional, having a history in the past and about to have a history in the future; having a beginning and going to have an end." <sup>8/</sup>

And so, for example, like everything else in the world, the present economic and political order in the U.S. is provisional. It had a history in the past and is about to have a history in the future; it had a beginning and is going to have an end. However, as a result of more than two hundred years of bourgeois propaganda, it is a widely held belief among the American people that the present economic and political order in the U.S., though imperfect and in need of minor improvement, is the best of all possible worlds and will last forever. Overcoming this lie is one of the most important ideological tasks confronting the American revolutionary movement. For until the American people recognize the possibility and, in fact, the inevitability of a more equitable, more democratic order arising in the U.S., the transformation to such an order will not occur.

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<sup>7/</sup> Frederick Engels Ludwig Feuerbach And The End Of Classical German Philosophy (Progress Publishers, Moscow) p.16

<sup>8/</sup> Politzer Op. Cit., p.94 .

- 2) The Law of Interconnection and Interrelation: The world is a complex of processes; everything within these processes is connected and influences everything else.

Contrary to metaphysics, which sees the world as a complex of immobile, unconnected things, dialectics sees the world as a complex of processes, within which interconnected things are constantly coming into being, arising and developing, and disintegrating and dying away. Moreover, because they are interconnected, the things within these processes are constantly influencing one another.

The metaphysical separation of things, which has its roots in the old scientific method of investigating things in their immobility and isolation, is still the dominant mode of thought in contemporary American society.

For example, we constantly hear of the "separation" of church and state, though both institutions are integral parts of the superstructure arising out of U.S. monopoly capitalism's economic base. Far from being in any way "separate", in other words, bourgeois political institutions and organized religion work hand in hand to maintain the rule of U.S. monopoly capitalism.

We also hear about the need "to keep politics out of science", "to keep politics out of education", "to keep politics out of culture", "to keep politics out of sports", etc. Of course, the need to keep politics out of the above and other fields is invariably put forward by the U.S. monopoly capitalists and their various representatives, who, in fact, cynically use the above fields to maintain the political status quo.

In truth, politics is intimately related to all the above fields. Whose interests the discoveries of science serve, what the form and content of education and culture are and whose interests both serve, what the role of sports is and whose interests it serves, etc. are all political questions. Hence, in the U.S., only a political revolution that transfers political power from the monopoly capitalists to the people can provide the basis for science, education, culture and sports all ceasing to serve the interests of the monopoly capitalists and beginning to serve the interests of the people.

- 3) The Law of Contradiction: Everything changes primarily (though not solely) as a result of internal contradictions.

"As opposed to the metaphysical world outlook, the world outlook of materialist dialectics holds that in order to understand the development of a

thing we should study it internally and in its relations with other things; in other words, the development of things should be seen as their internal and necessary self-movement, while each thing in its movement is inter-related and interacts on the things around it. The fundamental cause of the development of a thing is not external but internal; it lies in the contradictoriness within the thing." <sup>9/</sup>

However, though they are the "fundamental" cause of a thing's development, internal contradictions are not the only causes.

"Contradictoriness within a thing is the fundamental cause of its development, while its interrelations and interactions with other things are secondary causes." <sup>10/</sup>

Though secondary, in other words, external causes must nevertheless be taken into account. Remembering this allows one to avoid the subjective, metaphysical errors of completely ignoring external causes on the one hand and assigning them too much importance on the other.

#### a) The Movement of Opposites

Let us now turn to the law of contradiction's principal feature--namely, the movement of opposites in different things.

The movement of opposites has two aspects: 1) The interpenetration of opposites; and 2) The unity and struggle of opposites.

The Interpenetration of Opposites: Simply put, this means that things consist not only of themselves but of their opposites. Examples are innumerable: life and death, hot and cold, hard and soft, high and low, love and hate, war and peace, right and wrong, etc. In these cases, "...as in everything, an interpenetration of opposites exists, i.e., each thing contains at the same time itself and its opposite." <sup>11/</sup> Indeed, each thing

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<sup>9/</sup> Mao Tsetung "On Contradiction" Four Essays On Philosophy (Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1968) p.26

<sup>10/</sup> Ibid., p.26

<sup>11/</sup> Politzer Op. Cit., p.113

couldn't exist were it not for the existence of its opposite.

The Unity and Struggle of Opposites: The unity of opposites "...is the recognition (discovery) of the contradictory, mutually exclusive, opposite tendencies in all phenomena and processes of nature (including mind and society)." 12/

In other words, "...no contradictory aspect can exist in isolation. Without its opposite aspect, each loses the condition for its existence....Without life, there would be no death; without death, there would be no life. Without 'above', there would be no 'below'; without 'below', there would be no 'above'. Without misfortune, there would be no good fortune; without good fortune, there would be no misfortune. Without facility, there would be no difficulty; without difficulty, there would be no facility. Without landlords, there would be no tenant-peasants; without tenant-peasants, there would be no landlords. Without the bourgeoisie, there would be no proletariat; without the proletariat, there would be no bourgeoisie. Without imperialist oppression of nations, there would be no colonies or semi-colonies; without colonies or semi-colonies, there would be no imperialist oppression of nations." 13/

And so it is with all opposites. However, it is not enough to say that each of the contradictory aspects within a thing is the condition for the other's existence.

"What is more important is their transformation into each other. That is to say, in given conditions, each of the contradictory aspects within a thing transforms itself into its opposite, changes its position to that of its opposite." 14/

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12/ V. I. Lenin Collected Works, Vol.38 "Philosophical Notebooks" (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972) pp.359-360 (Lenin's emphasis)

13/ Mao Tsetung "On Contradiction" Op. Cit., p.61

14/ Ibid., p.62



For example, as previously noted, the U.S. monopoly capitalist class and the masses of the American people are the contradictory aspects of the principal contradiction in U.S. society. Moreover, at the present time, the U.S. monopoly capitalists exercise rule over the American people. By means of people's democratic revolution, however, the American people, at one time the ruled, will be transformed into the ruler, while the monopoly capitalists, heretofore the ruler, will be transformed into the ruled. In other words, as a result of people's democratic revolution, the U.S. monopoly capitalists and the American people will each come to occupy the position formerly held by its opposite, that is, will be transformed into its opposite.

Thus, under no circumstances can the unity of opposites be construed to mean a harmonious, stable relationship, that is, a state of equilibrium. The truth of the matter is this: "The unity (coincidence, identity, equal action) of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute." <sup>15/</sup>

To more fully understand the above, it is necessary to keep in mind the two states of motion in all things and the different types of change that occur in each state.

"There are two states of motion in all things, that of relative rest and that of conspicuous change. Both are caused by the struggle between the two contradictory elements contained in a thing. When the thing is in the first state of motion, it is undergoing only quantitative and not qualitative change and consequently presents the outward appearance of being at rest. When the thing is in the second state of motion, the quantitative change of the first state has already reached a culminating point and gives rise to the dissolution of the thing as an entity and thereupon a qualitative change ensues, hence the appearance of a conspicuous change.... Things are constantly transforming themselves from the first into the second state of motion; the struggle of opposites goes on in both states but the contradiction is resolved through the

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<sup>15/</sup> Lenin Collected Works, Vol.38 Op. Cit., p.360

second state. That is why we say that the unity of opposites is conditional, temporary and relative, while the struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute." 16/

The unity, harmony, balance, stability, equilibrium, etc. that characterizes the first state of motion characterizes the current state of the contradiction between the U.S. monopoly capitalists and the American people. While the U.S. monopoly capitalists are united in their desire to maintain power, (only disagreeing on the means of doing so), the American people are very much divided along sexual, racial, national and religious lines, and are merely attempting to lighten the load of their oppression (i.e., struggling for reforms) rather than attempting to overthrow (or change position with) their oppressors (i.e., engaging in revolutionary struggle). The neutralization of these contradictions among the American people and the destruction of this relative unity, harmony, balance, stability, equilibrium, etc. between the American people and the U.S. monopoly capitalists (the key ideological tasks of the future revolutionary party) will signify a transformation from the first to the second state of motion. And it is during this second state of motion that qualitative change will take place--i.e., the transfer of political power into the hands of the American people and the subsequent revolutionary transformation of American society will occur.

#### b) Some Other Aspects of Contradiction

In addition to the movement of opposites in different things, three other aspects of the law of contradiction are of vital importance: 1) The Particularity of Contradiction; 2) The Principal Contradiction; and 3) The Principal Aspect of a Contradiction.

#### The Particularity of Contradiction:

"Contradiction is universal and absolute; it is present in the process of development of all things and permeates every process from beginning to end. This is the universality and absoluteness of contradiction.... Now let us discuss the particularity and

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16/ Mao Tsetung "On Contradiction" Op. Cit., p.67

relativity of contradiction....

Every form of motion contains within itself its own particular contradiction. This particular contradiction constitutes the particular essence which distinguishes one thing from another. It is the internal cause or, as it may be called, the basis for the immense variety of things in the world.

The sciences are differentiated precisely on the basis of the particular contradictions inherent in their respective objects of study. Thus the contradictions peculiar to a certain field of phenomena constitutes the object of study for a specific branch of science. For example, positive and negative numbers in mathematics; action and reaction in mechanics; positive and negative electricity in physics; dissociation and combination in chemistry; forces of production and relations of production, classes and class struggle, in social science; offence and defence (sic) in military science; idealism and materialism, the metaphysical outlook and the dialectical outlook in philosophy; and so on--all these are the objects of study of different branches of science precisely because each branch has its own particular contradiction and particular essence." 17/

Along with the contradiction in each form of motion, there are other kinds of contradiction that must be considered in the context of the particularity of contradiction. They are: the contradiction in each form of motion's various processes of development, the two aspects of the contradiction in each process, the contradiction at each stage of the process, and the two aspects of the contradiction at each stage. It is beyond the scope of this brief work to describe the particular features of these other kinds of contradiction. Suffice it to say "...in studying the particularity of any kind of contradiction...we must not be subjective and arbitrary but must analyze it concretely. Without concrete analysis there can be no knowledge of the particularity of any contradiction." 18/

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17/ Ibid., pp.35-36

18/ Ibid., p.47 (Our emphasis)

### The Principal Contradiction:

"There are many contradictions in the process of development of a complex thing, and one of them is necessarily the principal contradiction whose existence and development determine or influence the existence and development of the other contradictions....Therefore, in studying any complex process in which there are two or more contradictions, we must devote every effort to finding its principal contradiction. Once this principal contradiction is grasped, all problems can be readily solved." <sup>19/</sup>

For example, in the U.S., a monopoly capitalist country, there are numerous contradictions, including, those between the monopoly capitalist class and the masses of the people, between the monopoly and non-monopoly capitalists, between the monopoly capitalists and the middle class, between the non-monopoly capitalists and the middle class, between the middle class and the working class, between the working class and the monopoly capitalists, between the working class and the non-monopoly capitalists, between the various oppressed nationalities and the monopoly capitalists, etc. One of the above contradictions "...is necessarily the principal contradiction whose existence and development determine or influence the existence and development of the other contradictions." Which one? As previously noted, with the rise of monopoly capitalism in a particular country, the country's capitalist class divides into two--the monopoly sector becoming the principal enemy of all the people and the non-monopoly sector becoming a conditional, temporary ally of the people in their struggle against monopoly capitalism. In other words, contrary to popular opinion, which holds that the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is principal in both monopoly and non-monopoly capitalist countries, the principal contradiction in a monopoly capitalist country, and, therefore, in the U.S., is that between the monopoly capitalist class and the masses of the people. "Once this principal contradiction is grasped, all problems can be readily solved."

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<sup>19/</sup> Ibid., pp.51 & 53

### The Principal Aspect of a Contradiction:

"As we have said, one must not treat all the contradictions in a process as being equal but must distinguish between the principal and secondary contradictions, and pay special attention to grasping the principal one. But, in any given contradiction, whether principal or secondary, should the two contradictory aspects be treated as equal? Again, no. In any contradiction the development of the contradictory aspects is uneven....Of the two contradictory aspects, one must be principal and the other secondary. The principal aspect is the one playing the leading role in the contradiction. The nature of a thing is determined mainly by the principal aspect of a contradiction, the aspect which has gained the dominant position." 20/

For example, U.S. imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism are competing for world hegemony and, therefore, are aspects of a contradiction. Can the U.S. and the S.U. thus be regarded as equal? No! "Of the two contradictory aspects, one must be principal and the other secondary." Therefore, from the standpoint of theory alone, the view that the U.S. and the S.U. are equal--i.e., that to the same degree and same extent they oppress the countries, nations and peoples of the world--is clearly wrong.

It is also wrong from the standpoint of practice. That is, because it is a new and arising imperialist power, because it is economically weaker and therefore in more of a need of a re-division of the world, because it is a fascist dictatorship and thus more free to initiate war, and because it passes itself off as "socialist", thereby making penetration of numerous Third World countries that much easier, the Soviet Union is the principal aspect of the contradiction and is thus more of a danger to a majority of the world's countries, nations and peoples than is the U.S.

However, such a circumstance in no way justifies a united front with U.S. imperialism against Soviet social imperialism. For the difference between the degree of danger posed by the two superpowers is relative. That the two superpowers are both extremely dangerous is absolute. Thus, both superpowers must be absolutely opposed!

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20/ Ibid., p.54

4) The Law of the Transformation of Quantity into Quality: Quantitative changes eventually result in a Qualitative leap.

"All change has a quantitative aspect, that is, an aspect of mere increase or decrease which does not alter the nature of that which changes.

But quantitative change, increase or decrease, cannot go on indefinitely. At a certain point it always leads to a qualitative change; and at that critical point (or 'nodal point', as Hegel called it) the qualitative change takes place relatively suddenly, by a leap, as it were." 21/

For example, when a pot of water is placed over fire, the fact that the water keeps getting hotter and hotter is a quantitative change; but when, at a certain nodal point, the water begins to boil, this is a qualitative leap because the state of the water has changed.

As indicated above, the transformation of quantity into quality also applies to changes in society, for a series of quantitative changes (reforms) won in the first state of motion by a mass-based revolutionary party invariably has the effect of paving the way for a qualitative leap (revolution). Not surprisingly, however, revisionists adamantly deny that quantitative changes invariably result in a qualitative leap--i.e., that the reforms won by a revolutionary party pave the way for revolution. Revisionists instead assert that gradual, cumulative reforms will eventually result in the peaceful advent of socialism--an evolutionary process which will not require the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. In actuality, of course, the advent of socialism in the U.S., along with the prior advent of People's Democracy, will both be products of developmental processes involving quantitative changes (reforms) and culminating in a qualitative leap (a sudden transfer of power followed by a revolutionary transformation of society).

In summary, then, metaphysics holds that the world is a complex of things, that all things are eternally immobile, identical and separate, and that there is no such thing as contradiction. This is an incorrect view.

Contrary to metaphysics, dialectics holds that the world is a complex of processes, that all things within a given process

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21/ Cornforth Op. Cit., p.82

are constantly moving and changing, that all things within a given process are interconnected and thus constantly influencing one another, and that the basis for movement and change on the part of things is internal contradictions--i.e., the movement of opposites in things. Moreover, change is not always quantitative and gradual; on the contrary, gradual, quantitative changes invariably lead to a qualitative leap--i.e., the sudden emergence of a new quality. This is the only correct view of the world and of the manner in which things move and change.

## VI. DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM'S PHILOSOPHICAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS

As we saw in the first installment of this work, dialectical materialism was the culmination of previous historical developments, its emergence signifying a revolution in philosophy. Its emergence signified a revolution in philosophy because for the first time in human history there existed a world outlook that accurately reflected the world's materiality and mode of existence.

The following is a brief summation of dialectical materialism's philosophical principles:

"Dialectical materialism understands the world, not as a complex of ready-made things, but as a complex of processes, in which all things go through an uninterrupted change of coming into being and passing away.

Dialectical materialism considers that matter is always in motion, that motion is the mode of existence of matter, so that there can no more be matter without motion than motion without matter. Matter does not have to be impressed upon matter by some outside force, but above all it is necessary to look for the inner impulses of development, the self-motion, inherent in all processes.

Dialectical materialism understands the motion of matter as comprehending all changes and processes in the universe, from mere change of place right to thinking. It recognizes, therefore, the infinite diversity of the forms of motion of matter, the transformation of one form into another, the development of the forms of motion of matter from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher.

Dialectical materialism considers that, in the manifold processes taking place in the universe, things come into being, change and pass out of being, not as separate individual units, but in essential relation and interconnection, so that they cannot be understood each separately and by itself but only in their relation and interconnection....

Dialectical materialism considers the universe, not as static, not as unchanging, but as in continual process of development. It considers this development, not as a smooth, continuous and unbroken process, but as a process in which phases of gradual evolutionary change are interrupted by breaks in continuity, by the sudden leap from one state to another. And it seeks for the explanation, the driving force, of this universal movement, not in inventions of idealist fantasy, but within material processes themselves--in the inner contradictions, the opposite tendencies, which are in operation in every process of nature and society." 22/

However, the revolutionary effects of dialectical materialism long ago ceased being confined to the philosophical sphere. The reason for this is as simple as it is profound:

"Marxism is no longer a philosophy which expresses the world outlook of an exploiting class, of a minority, striving to impose its rule and its ideas upon the masses of the people, in order to keep them in subjection; but it is a philosophy which serves the common people in their struggle to throw off all exploitation and to build a classless society." 23/

Contrary to past philosophies, then, all of which expressed the outlook of a ruling minority and only sought to understand the world without changing it in any way, dialectical materialism is a popular philosophy which seeks to understand the world

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22/ Ibid., pp.47, 48 & 53

23/ Ibid., pp.14-15



in order to change it. In a word, "dialectical materialism is a theoretical weapon in the hands of the people for use in changing the world." 24/

In using this theoretical weapon, the people must remain forever mindful of one final principal:

"...Theory is based on practice and in turn serves practice. The truth of any knowledge or theory is determined not by subjective feelings, but by objective results in social practice. Only social practice can be the criterion of truth. The standpoint of practice is the primary and basic standpoint in the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge." 25/

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24/ Ibid., p.15

25/ Mao Tsetung "On Practice" Four Essays On Philosophy (Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1968) p.4