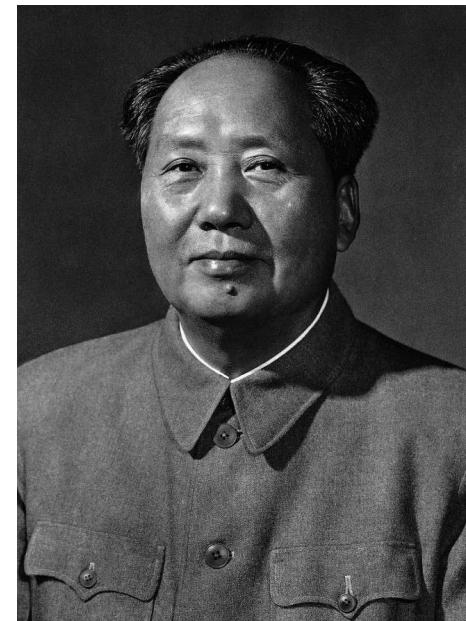


defeated, but they are bound to triumph sooner or later.

Man's knowledge makes another leap through the test of practice. This leap is more important than the previous one. For it is this leap alone that can prove the correctness or incorrectness of the first leap in cognition, i.e., of the ideas, theories, policies, plans, or measures formulated in the course of reflecting the objective external world. There is no other way of testing truth. Furthermore, the one and only purpose of the proletariat in knowing the world is to change it. Often, correct knowledge can be arrived at only after many repetitions of the process leading from matter to consciousness and then back to matter, that is, leading from practice to knowledge and then back to practice.

Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge, the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge. Among our comrades there are many who do not yet understand this theory of knowledge. When asked the sources of their ideas, opinions, policies, methods, plans and conclusions, eloquent speeches and long articles, they consider the questions strange and cannot answer it. Nor do they comprehend that matter can be transformed into consciousness and consciousness into matter, although such leaps are phenomena of everyday life. It is therefore necessary

to educate our comrades in the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge, so that they can orientate their thinking correctly, become good at investigation and study and at summing up experience, overcome difficulties, commit fewer mistakes, do their work better, and struggle hard so as to build China into a great and powerful socialist country and help the broad masses of the oppressed and exploited throughout the world in fulfillment of our great internationalist duty.



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## Notes from Prairie Fire Publishing

Mao Zedong's "Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?" offers a method for exploring the Marxist theory of knowledge, emphasizing the critical role of correct social practice in the development of correct ideas. Correct work is essential for those committed to understanding and applying dialectical materialism in the struggle against capitalist and imperialist systems, and in service of building the revolutionary proletariat. Mao asserts that correct ideas do not emerge spontaneously or innately but are forged through the molten crucible of social practice, encompassing the struggle for production, class struggle, and scientific experimentation.

The text underscores the transformative power of correct ideas once they are embraced by the masses, turning into a material force capable of moving mountains and reshaping society. This transformation is not merely theoretical but a clarion call for collective action, urging activists and theorists to combine and engage deeply with the material conditions of their time. The dialectical process of cognition, moving from perceptual to rational knowledge and back to practice, is central to this transformation. It is through this iterative scientific process that ideas are tested and refined, proving their

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organs — the organs of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. At first, knowledge is perceptual. The leap to conceptual knowledge, i.e., to ideas, occurs when sufficient perceptual knowledge is accumulated. This is one process in cognition. It is the first stage in the whole process of cognition, the stage leading from objective matter to subjective consciousness, from existence to ideas. Whether or not one's consciousness or ideas (including theories, policies, plans, or measures) do correctly reflect the laws of the objective external world is not yet proved at this stage, in which it is not yet possible to ascertain whether they are correct or not.

Then comes the second stage in the process of cognition, the stage leading from consciousness back to matter, from ideas back to existence, in which the knowledge gained in the first stage is applied in social practice to ascertain whether the theories, policies, plans, or measures meet with the anticipated success. Generally speaking, those that succeed are correct and those that fail are incorrect, and this is especially true of Man's struggle with Nature. In social struggle, the forces representing the advanced class sometimes suffer defeat not because their ideas are incorrect, but because, in the balance of forces engaged in struggle, they are not as powerful for the time being as the forces of reaction; they are therefore temporarily

*This is an excerpt written by Mao Zedong in 1963. It contains a brief summary of the Marxist theory of knowledge, specifically how knowledge develops from the perceptual stage to the rational stage. This leap occurs through continuous application of humanity's knowledge, gained through social practice, in order to transform reality, and in turn, social practice transforms humanity's knowledge.*

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Where do correct ideas come from? Do they drop from the skies? No. Are they innate in the mind? No. They come from social practice, and from it alone; they come from three kinds of social practice, the struggle for production, the class struggle, and scientific experiment. It is Man's social being that determines his thinking. Once the correct ideas characteristic of the advanced class are grasped by the masses, these ideas turn into a material force which changes society, and changes the world.

In their social practice, men engage in various kinds of struggle and gain rich experience, both from their successes and from their failures. Countless phenomena of the objective external world are reflected in a Man's brain through his five sense

correctness through successful application in social practice.

Mao's insights highlight the necessity of continuous learning and adaptation, where knowledge is not static but evolves through repeated cycles of practice, reflection, and criticism / self-criticism. This approach is vital for building a resilient communist movement that is attuned to the political, economic, and cultural struggles of the proletariat. The emphasis on education and the dialectical relationship between matter and idea is crucial for fostering individual and collective advancement in the class struggle.

This work is indispensable for those seeking to build a great and powerful communist movement, fulfilling the internationalist duty to support the oppressed and exploited worldwide.

### **Suggested Reading:**

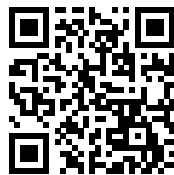
- *Anti-Dühring*, Engels (1877)
- *On Practice*, Mao (1937)
- *On Contradiction*, Mao (1937)



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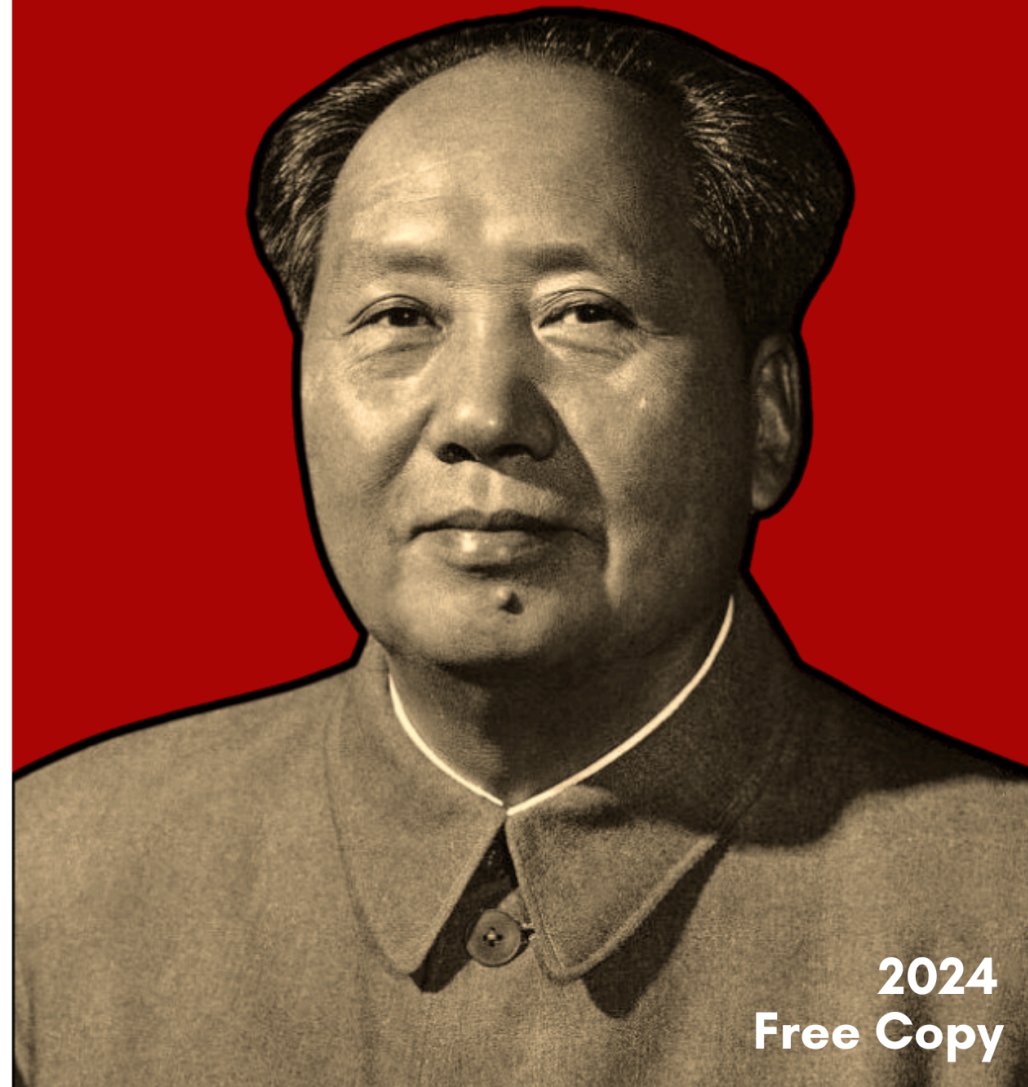
**Learn from Chairman Gonzalo,  
Unite Under Maoism!**



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# Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?

**Draft Decision of the Central Committee of the  
Chinese Communist Party on Certain Problems in  
Our Present Rural Work, 1963**



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