

Paper No. 9

2003

The New-Old Cycle Paradigm and Twentieth Century Chinese Radicalism

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Link to published article: http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~lewi/pub_work_info.html

Citation

Xiao, Xiaosui. *The New-Old Cycle Paradigm and Twentieth Century Chinese Radicalism*. Hong Kong: David C. Lam Institute for East-West Studies, 2003. LEWI Working Paper Series no 9.

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林思齊東西學術交流研究所
David C. Lam Institute for East-West Studies (LEWI)

Working Paper Series 研究報告系列

Paper Number: 09
February 2003

**The New-Old Cycle Paradigm and Twentieth Century
Chinese Radicalism**

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The New-Old cycle Paradigm and the Twentieth Century Chinese Radicalism

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Abstract

This essay explores a profound but overlooked question: How can metaphors help transcend an influential metaphorical paradigm while themselves having a bias towards it? Based on the selected works of Li Dazhao, a great pioneer in the Chinese New Cultural Movement of the 1910s, this analysis focuses on how Li, while arguing for radical political-social change through the metaphor of the life cycle, found freedom from the influence of the traditional Yin-Yang cycle paradigm, which had led earlier Chinese to see all life cyclic processes in the light of harmonious interactions. This study contributes to our understanding of the sophisticated roles metaphors play in our lives. It also helps to explain the rhetorical origins of contemporary Chinese radicalism.

Key words:

Metaphoric Criticism, Metaphoric Paradigm, Life-cycle Metaphor, The Rhetoric of Radicalism, Chinese Rhetoric

This study explores the question: How can metaphors help to transcend an influential metaphorical paradigm while themselves being restricted by this paradigm? The so-called metaphoric paradigm here refers to a general and dominant form of metaphorical expression of any certain phenomenon. In many cases, the reconstruction of a metaphoric paradigm is a key to bringing about a fundamental change in perception. But the reconstruction itself must be a complex process of metaphorical construction. The more a metaphor is properly used and the more widely it comes to be accepted, the greater chance it has to become a new paradigmatic metaphor. We, however, know very little about this process of metaphorical construction.

The China of the 1910s, then in transition from a traditional to a modern state, provides an excellent case study of this metaphorical construction. Following Sun Yat-sen's Republican

Revolution in 1911, an emerging radical group of Chinese intellectuals launched the ten-year-long New Cultural Movement in 1915. The movement called on the nation to cast off its old self and take on a completely new cultural life.¹ So that others would avoid misunderstanding this proposed radical change as a kind of mild renewal from the perspective of the Yin-Yang cycle, the advocates of this new movement first needed to replace the Yin-Yang cycle paradigm with another that supported their radical call for China's "rebirth."

Li Dazhao (1888-1927) was among the first in that radical group of Chinese intellectuals to attempt this paradigmatic shift. This study focuses on his four influential political essays published successively between August 15 to October 1, 1916. In these four short essays--"The Mission of The Morning Bell: Creating a Young China" (hereafter "Morning Bell"), "Youth," "Striving for the Birth of a New Life"(hereafter "New Life"), and "In Commemoration of National Day"(hereafter "National Day")--Li successfully introduced a new and radical metaphoric view of the life cycle in which the world was no longer seen in the light of a harmonious process of Yin-Yang interaction, but rather as engaged in a constant struggle for eradicating the old and fostering the new.² This essay argues that Li's success was due to his skill in using a series of metaphors from "youth," "rebirth," to "struggle" in a proper sequence that gradually brought to light the most vigorous aspects of a life process that the mainstream of Chinese culture had tended to ignore.

The four essays chosen are important not only because they succeeded in changing an established metaphoric paradigm, but also because they had a profound impact on the radical movements of Li's day and after. Li's most important article, "Youth," which appeared in the New Youth (1916/1984c), the mouthpiece of the New Cultural Movement, was among the most notable and influential works ever published in this radical magazine. The metaphors Li used

intensively in these essays, such as “youth,” “rebirth,” and “struggle,” were later developed by Chinese communists into the key watchwords of the Chinese communist revolution. With the emergence of the New Cultural Movement, there was an increasingly strong tendency in China to view struggle and revolution as the key to all cosmic and social development. Li’s essays represented the early development of this tendency, and “Chinese radicalism” in this paper refers to this tendency.³

Li himself was among the leading figures of the New Cultural Movement. He was also the first important Chinese intellectual to voice his support for the Russian October Revolution. In 1921, five years after he published his four essays, he became one of the two principle founders of the Chinese Communist party (the other was Chen Duxiu). During these transitional years Li was a professor of history and the chief librarian at Beijing University where the future leader Mao Tse-tung was once his young assistant at the university library. If Meisner (1967, p. xii) is right that “Li is the link just preceding Mao Tse-tung” in the unbroken chain of transition from a generation of cultural radicals to a generation of young communists in China, then these four essays represent the links in his own chain of intellectual development just before he became a communist.⁴

On the whole, the study of how these four essays deconstructed the traditional Yin-Yang cycle paradigm to promote fundamental changes is significant for both metaphoric studies and Chinese rhetorical studies. It shows how metaphors can help transcend a dominant metaphoric paradigm. Thus, it helps us to understand the extremely complicated roles metaphors play in our lives. As a study of the Chinese use of metaphor in particular, it introduces us to a new and interesting world of metaphors. It also helps explain the development of the rhetoric of Chinese radicalism in the twentieth century.

This study now proceeds with a section explaining the Chinese life-cycle metaphors, the Yin-Yang cycle paradigm and its role in the nineteenth century Chinese reform movements. The second section examines in depth how Li skillfully used metaphors such as “youth,” “rebirth,” and “struggle” to transcend the Yin-Yang cycle paradigm and to gain access to his revolutionary view of the life cycle. The concluding section consists of a discussion of the implications of this case for metaphorical criticism and a further exploration of the far-reaching effects of Li’s metaphorical view of the life cycle on the subsequent development of Chinese radicalism.

The Yin-Yang Cycle Paradigm and Its Role in the Nineteen Century Reform Movements

Traditional Chinese perceived the universe as an ever-moving and ever-circulating life current. Laozi said: “Being great, it is further described as receding; receding, it is described as far away; being far away, it is described as turning back” (trans. 1963, p. 82). According to Huizi: “The moment the sun reaches the meridian, it is setting; the moment something is born, it is dying” (quoted in Zhuangzi, 1970, p. 432). For Zhuangzi: “Things come into existence suddenly, like rushing steeds. Every movement is a change, every moment a shifting” (1970, p. 198). All these well-known sayings express no simple view of historicism, but an extremely dynamic and vigorous view of the universe. Seen from this view, everything is ever changing and will turn into its opposite when reaching its extreme. Further, all cosmic changes are due to the original motive power for the generation and regeneration of life. According to the Confucian classic known as the Book of Changes (trans. 1967, p. 328), “The great virtue of Heaven and Earth is production and reproduction.” The drive for production is thus the source of all life and variations in the universe.

Life-cycle Metaphors

In China, natural and social phenomena such as the interchange of day and night, the alteration of the seasons, the rise and fall of a kingdom, and the like, are frequently used as metaphors for the ever-moving and ever-circulating process of life. Being special and magical, life-cycle metaphors are rife with paradoxes. They signify both the finitude and the infinitude of life. The spring-autumn cycle metaphor, for instance, means something everlasting when used for a cosmic process. But when applied to the life cycle of a particular person or object, it refers to a pitifully short journey with its definite beginning and end.

Life-cycle metaphors are also paradoxical in that they can be used at once to express the ideas of both constancy and change. Chinese moralists like Liang Qichao, for example, stated that “the universal principles of morality are like the sun and the moon passing through the sky and rivers flowing across the land--they have never been changed since the world was born” (1902-04/1959, p. 15). But meanwhile, the same sun-moon cycle metaphor also points to the constant change of the universe. The classical Chinese word for change, yi, is itself a symbol for the sun-moon cycle. It is composed of two parts, with its upper part “ri” meaning the sun, and its lower part “yue” meaning the moon. When used to express the idea of change, life cycle metaphors serve to provide not only vivid examples, but cosmic sanctions as well. For this reason, life-cycle metaphors have been frequently used in Chinese reform movements.

It is due to these dual functions that life-cycle metaphors are able to play a major role in Chinese moral and spiritual discourse. On the one hand, they offer a poignant metaphorical language for the discussion of the meaning of life in this world. For the Confucian, life must be an active process of production and reproduction. Life is beautiful like flowers in the spring, and

substantial like fruit in the autumn. However, one will not enjoy the beauty of life nor taste its sweet fruit unless one makes a great effort. Life in this world is short, so one should try to accomplish as much as possible. In China, as a matter of fact, a very effective way to wake people to their finite existence and to urge them to take on a positive and active way of life has been to make them aware of the hasty passing of day and night.

But on the other hand, life-cycle metaphors themselves are probably the most appropriate language for discussion of immortality in China. For the Chinese, there is no better way of demonstrating “an eternal life” than using examples such as the sun-moon alteration and the spring-autumn cycle. There is no better way to show people the “great virtue” of Heaven than by referring them to the ceaseless cosmic process of “production and reproduction of life.” Thus, the perfect meaning of life has to be found in one’s glorification of and dedication to this great production and reproduction. This is what the Confucian classic The Doctrine of the Mean means by “assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth”(trans. 1971, p. 416).

The Yin-Yang Cycle Paradigm

There were basically two classes of metaphorical (or analogous) expressions of a life cycle in traditional China.⁵ One class compared a life cycle to the rotation of two complementary forces, like the sun and the moon succeeding each other, or the alteration of summer and winter. The other analogized a life cycle to the periodic change of a force, such as the rise and fall of the tide, the withering and rejuvenation of a plant, or the metabolism of the body. The first class of metaphors found its general expression in the “Yin-Yang cycle” (yi yin yiyang), the second class in the “rise-fall cycle” (yisheng yishuai). The “Yin-Yang cycle”(or Yin-Yang rotation) was the more general and dominant form of expression in traditional China. The Chinese believed that all life cycles originated from the interaction of two ultimate cosmic forces of life, namely Yin and

Yang. Even life and death manifest nothing but the meeting and departing of these two forces (e.g., Zhuangzi, trans. 1970, p. 250). For this reason, the “Yin-Yang cycle” became a metaphoric paradigm for the life cycle. As noted earlier, the Yin-Yang cycle was a paradigmatic form of the life-cycle metaphor in traditional China. The Yin-Yang cycle metaphor with its stereotypic expressions, such as “the Yin fades, and the Yang grows” (Yinxiao Yangzhang), “the Yin prospers, and the Yang declines” (Yinsheng Yang shuai), might originally evolve from the sun-moon cycle metaphor. The ancient Chinese believed that the sun was the source of Yang, and the moon the source of Yin (e.g., “Jingtong”). The worship of the sun and the moon by the ancestors of the Chinese people explains why Yin and Yang became a pair of mysterious and omnipresent symbols in China (Sima, 1994, pp. 72 -92). For the Chinese, Yin represents a half-world of things and qualities such as the moon, the earth, femininity, inactivity, and softness, while Yang refers to the other half including the sun, the heavens, masculinity, activity, hardness, and so on. The Yin-Yang cycle metaphor thus becomes a meta-metaphor, while all other specific life-cycle metaphors form its concrete expressions.

In Chinese philosophies, Yin and Yang are conceived of as the two fundamental forces of life. Their interactive responses to each other are the beginning of all concrete forms of the life cycle. As the Daoist Zhuangzi (1970, p. 250) put it, “the two mingle, penetrate, come together, harmonize, and all things are born therefrom.” Since neither one of the two can function alone to bring things into existence, Yin and Yang have to maintain a harmonious and complementary relationship. Disasters and turmoil will arise if Yin and Yang are out of proper equilibrium. It was believed that earthquakes occurred because Yin and Yang were so suppressed that they could not come out in the way expected (“Zhouyu,” p. 77). According to traditional Chinese medical theories, if some of the main and collateral channels in the body are blocked and so cause the

dysfunction of blood and vital energy circulation, the body will lose its Yin-Yang balance. All kinds of illness will then arise (“Tiaojing”).

The Nineteenth Century Chinese Reform Movements

The Qing Empire (1644 -1911) suffered from all kinds of disasters and illnesses throughout the nineteenth century. Serious crimes of corruption and peasant rebellions took place one after another. China’s repeated defeat by the West and Japan after the First Opium War in 1839-1842 pushed the Empire further to the verge of collapse. At such a period of crisis, when “fashionable contemporary forms of symbolic cultural identity are swept away,” it is not surprising that the patriotic Chinese turned to the archetypal metaphors of their culture for the bases of their reactions (Osborn, 1967). During the nineteenth century the Chinese spokespersons of reform still adhered to the old metaphoric paradigm. They compared the Qing Empire to a very sick body with its Yin and Yang unbalanced and its main and collateral channels obstructed. As Zhang Mu put it: “She looks fine with her five sense organs and her four limbs, but her joints are stiff, and she can hardly move” (quoted in Li, 1992, p. 60).

Two remarkable reform and Westernization movements--the Self-strengthening Movement (or Foreign-affair Movement) aiming at learning the methods of wealth and power from the West, and the Reform Movement which strove to introduce Western ideas—emerged respectively in the 1860s and 1890s. For the self-strengtheners, China suffered principally from internal obstruction. With its parts being insensitive to each other, the body as a whole failed to respond effectively to the outside world. Various self-strengthening proposals put forward in the second half of the nineteenth century thus had a common goal in “re-interconnecting [the nation] with new social modes of practice” (Zhang, 1898/1980, p.14433). The self-strengthening

persuaders suggested, for instance, developing civil commerce to enrich the people. The real aim of this practice was to establish “a long-term relationship between the government and the people” (Luo, 1959, p. 179). Some farsighted self-strengtheners even recommended adoption of a Western constitutional monarchy, for “communication within the parliament can serve to combine the monarch and the people into one body, and to channel the ruling and the ruled into one mind” (Zheng, 1982, p. 234). Other suggested practices, such as opening new schools, running newspapers, and constructing railways, also aimed to restore the Yin-Yang relationships within the body of China.

For the leading figures of the ensuing Reform Movement in 1890s, however, the “problem” of the Chinese people lay fundamentally in their mind. The Chinese had, from the very beginning, been confined to the Confucian ethical codes featured prominently by the so-called Three Cardinal Guides (ruler guides subject, father guides son, and husband guides wife) and Five Constant Virtues (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, knowledge, and sincerity). As a result, they said, the Chinese mentality did not develop properly and fully. While one aspect (Yin) was excessive, the other aspect (Yang) was deficient.⁶ The reformers of the 1890s suggested that one could make up this deficiency by taking in the Yang elements from the West that emphasized the kinds of human experiences neglected by Chinese culture, such as the ideas of struggle, power, freedom, autonomy, progression, and so forth (see especially Yan, 1898/1986; Liang, 1902-04/1959). For Liang Qichao, an eloquent spokesman for Western ideas, the fusion of Eastern and Western minds would breed a new and great generation of people, “just as the meeting of the cold water from the two Poles and the hot water from the equator gives rise to a new current; and the interaction between the cool air from an ice-field and the warm air from the ground generates new air” (1901/1936, p. 51).

From this it can be seen that these two generations of reformist persuaders were still very much preoccupied by the Yin-Yang cycle paradigm. This is understandable though, for the two generations still believed that the core of their culture was universally true and hence should be passed down from generation to generation.

China underwent dramatic changes in the early twentieth century. The Republican Revolution led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in 1911 successfully overthrew two thousand years of autocratic monarchy. Nevertheless, monarchy was so deeply rooted in the people's mind that it staged a quick comeback in four years. China's deteriorating situation did not come to an end as a result, and was even thrown back into a new round of civil wars among the warlords.

The New Youth journal came into being in 1915. It gathered together the most radical and open-minded Chinese intellectuals at that time. Men like Chen Duxiu, Hu Shi, Lu Xun, and Li Dazhao made a fierce attack on Confucianism and other forms of traditional thought for their support of autocratic monarchy. According to Chen Duxiu, founder of the periodical: "Since we take Western thought as right, we have to think of Confucianism as wrong ... There is no way to reconcile these two mutually exclusive systems of thought, so we have to make a choice between them" (1993, p. 281). The culturally iconoclastic voice of the New Youth aroused the first radical and modern wave of intellectual and cultural reform in China, namely, the New Cultural Movement (1915-1925).⁷

To carry the New Cultural Movement forward to a greater stage, the radical intellectuals had to convince the public that the intellectual and cultural changes they proposed were justifiable. What they suggested was simply to follow the *Dao* of Heaven. It would be greatly helpful, of course, to find metaphors and examples of these suggested radical changes from the "courses of Heaven." To do this, however, the speakers must also be able to find their way out of

the influence of the Yin-Yang cycle paradigm, which had led people to see all cyclic processes in the light of harmonious interactions.

One possible way out was to draw attention to the downplayed rise-fall cycle and to see it as a true process of Heaven. This was what Li Dazhao and his open-minded associates tried to do. But their goal went far beyond that. They tried to highlight the cruel and confrontational aspects of this life cycle so as to make it an essential demonstration of the need for revolutionary struggle rather than harmony.

The ideas of struggle and revolution were not alien to the people of Li's time. In the Reform Movement of the 1890s, the Chinese Darwinist Yan Fu had already introduced to China the idea of struggle for existence (1898/1986). For him, struggle for existence helped facilitate the process of heavenly evolution. However, it was considered crucial only when a species encountered serious threats to its survival from outside forces, as in the situation China faced at the time. Yan's patriotic cohort Tan Sitong (1899-1901/1984) also called for "breaking free of all toils," a call that later resounded in the 1911 Republican Revolution. Yet in Tan's world, only when a social organism was so internally and seriously blocked that it could no longer be cured under any normal treatment, should the radical means of revolution be introduced to remove the obstacles. Up to Li's time, the radical idea of struggle was still foreign to the view of life cycle. Li and other pioneers of the New Cultural Movements were surely aware that the idea of revolutionary struggle could not come to replace the traditional idea of Yin-Yang harmony unless it was accepted as the cosmic way of life creation rather than a contingent act.

This is not at all an easy matter. What Li and his associates tried to replace was exactly what had been considered by the Chinese as eternally unchangeable like "the sun and moon passing through the sky." The replacement, however, was possible. An important characteristic of

a life cycle is “change.” Certain phases of a life cycle—for example childhood and youth—feature aspects such as energy, vigor, courage and challenge. Traditional Chinese, under the influence of Confucianism, tend to agree that life is an active and creative process. If a speaker can take advantage of those characteristics and make use of active and creative metaphors, it is possible for him/her to turn the originally non-radical view of the life cycle into a radical one.

“Youth,” “Rebirth” and “Struggle”

To facilitate such a radical change in the view of the life cycle, Li made three smaller and easily acceptable turns in his four essays. He first drew attention to a vision of “youth,” then to one of “rebirth,” and finally to one of “struggle” between the new and the old. He applied three sets of metaphors to effect these shifts. By using his first set of metaphors, that is, the “youth” metaphors such as “spring” and “dawn,” Li described the life process in terms of a highly dynamic and energetic process of youth. Then, through the “rebirth” metaphors such as “renewal” and “rejuvenation,” he further approached youth as the uninterrupted cycle of birth and rebirth. Finally, by means of the “struggle” metaphors such as “fight” and “destruction,” Li came to depict a youth process in the sense of an unceasing course of struggle.

“Youth”

Li started with the familiar cycle of the seasons. The beginning lines of “Youth,” the most important of the four essays, opened up a fresh outlook with a scene of nature’s resurrection in the spring:

The sun of the spring rises. The eastern wind comes and dispels the coolness. From Japan I look at my motherland. The gloomy and desperate scenery is superseded by a fresh and brilliant view. Snowy days depart while all kinds of flowers bloom. (1984c, p. 194)

Li then proceeded to discuss the duties of young people, their relationships with the universe, and the meaning of life. His discussion did not fundamentally deviate from the traditional view on the same subjects, however he did make important adjustments in the use of language. One key adjustment was to replace “life” with a relatively uncommon word, “youth” (qingchun). For instance, Li no longer said “the life of the universe,” but “the youth of the universe.” “An eternal life” then became “an eternal youth.” Yin and Yang, rise and fall, life and death, and so forth were now a process of youth (p. 196). Further, everyone should “enjoy the delicious flavor of youth, appreciate the blessings of youth, and keep on forever the life of youth” (p. 194). Here, Li made his first shift, the shift from a general view of the life cycle to a dynamic view of the youth cycle. Youth represents only a phase of the life cycle, though a very vigorous and energetic one. The shift in perspective was acceptable, however, by applying a kind of metaphor, that is, metonymy, which used a part as a symbol for the whole.

Of course, this was not a simple metonymy. It enabled Li to describe a life (youth) process in more vigorous and energetic terms, for instance, in terms of a “swift and vertiginous current”(p. 196). Life was already pitifully short for traditional Chinese who had often talked about life in terms of “current” and “dream.” But youth was even shorter. Thus, in addition to applying the traditional “current” and “dream” metaphors, Li also spoke of life as “a flash” and “lightning”(p. 202). Furthermore, he also compared life to women’s “beauty” and men’s “black hair,” which the Chinese would think of as even more fleeting than life.

Talk about the transience of life gave justice to his ensuing call to commit to a more active and creative way of life. The Chinese should “cherish every moment.” “Beauty will never come back, so don't just sit and mourn over the transience of life” (p. 202). By using the example of a growing plant, Li suggested that youth was something earned rather than just given

by Heaven. Although Heaven provided it with genial sunshine and sweet dew, in order to “gain them,” the plant itself had to send out its roots and to stretch its branches and leaves (p. 202). To stay young, the plant must keep growing and accomplishing. The course of youth itself must be a ceaseless process of scaling to a higher state of life.

In the meantime, Li understood that he had to also make his readers accept the idea of “the eternal youth of the universe” before he could really come to replace a traditional view of the life cycle with his view of the youth cycle. To show that the short-lived youth could last forever as well, Li suggested seeing it as an everlasting process of cycles (p. 196). The “youth” metonymy was then extended so as to put pressure upon his readers to accept his parallels between the eternal cycle of life and the eternal cycle of youth (pp. 196-199). If life could be seen as everlasting from a cyclic point of view, why not youth? Just as the universe never ended, it was also evergreen. If one should devote oneself to the everlasting life of the universe according to the teachings of Chinese tradition, then it seems that one could also find a greater meaning of life in one’s devotion to the everlasting youth of the universe.

The readers of “Youth” now seemed to face a moral and spiritual choice. For the sake of finite youth, and even more for the sake of eternal youth, they must always remain active and fresh, and maintain the spirit of youth. This is, according to Li, “the spirit that restores youth and life, the spirit that moves mountains.” Only “with such a spirit one is able to enjoy the youth of the universe forever” (pp. 196-197).

“Rebirth”

The key metaphor of the second part of “Youth” is “rebirth.” By turning from “youth” to “rebirth,” a more vigorous and creative phrase of the life cycle, Li attempted a more radical

adjustment in perspective. In this part he spoke of youth as the continuous cycle of birth and rebirth. Li's rebirth metaphor raised two practical issues: the issue of China's "rebirth," and the issue of the "struggles" necessarily involved in the course of delivering a new China. The second issue is touched upon slightly in "Youth" but discussed intensively in Li's following three essays, and thus becomes the focus of the next part of this analysis. The following part explores how Li's "rebirth" metaphor served to provide a boost to his readers' morale to fight for the birth of a new China.

First, Li had to convince his readers that the "rebirth" of China was not only possible but could be expected soon. For this, he placed early twentieth century China at the very end of a life cycle. According to him, China, as a mighty nation in East Asia for more than four thousand and eight hundred years since the time of its first legendary ruler, had reached the "limit of its age" (p. 200). In fact, "its decline has already set in" after the splendid Zhou dynasty (c. 11th century-256 B.C.). "At present, all we can see is corpses, while the whole of its splendor is gone"(p. 200).

Li was here forecasting the inevitable death of China. His predecessors also saw that China was in jeopardy, but they saw hope for survival as well. In the eye of the Chinese Darwinians (Yan, 1986), despite the fact that China was such a "weak nation" on the brink of extinction, it still could fight to be strong. Tan Sitong (1984) conceived of China as seriously "ill" with all its important internal channels and circulation systems being obstructed. But such an "illness" could be cured through radical and fundamental "operations." What Li presented to his readers was the image of a critically old man lingering on with his last breath of life. Such an old image was usually weak and ill as well, but could be worse, for he had to fight desperately against not only his enemies and illness, but also the irresistible law of nature.

Yet China could be regenerated, as Li suggested with confidence by using a flower metaphor: “Old China is a fading flower; young China is a flower in bloom. Fading always precedes fresh flowering”(p. 201). The further China approached the end of a life cycle (the verge of death), the closer it came to the beginning of another cycle. Thus we can see the great and dual rhetorical capacities of a life-cycle metaphor: At the same time it serves to stimulate a sense of crisis, it opens a bright prospect. Confident in the re-flowering of China in the near future, Li re-defined the key questions with which the new generation of Chinese reformers should be concerned:

Our young people should pledge themselves to show the world not whether old China is going to live or die but that we are attentively cultivating a new China. Whether or not we can stand up in the world depends not on the survival of old China but on its resurrection as young China . . . Our problem is not one of national survival but of being born again and recovering the youth of our nation. (p. 200; see also 1984a, pp. 178, 181)

For more than half a century, the Chinese spokespersons of reform had focused on a single question: How can China survive? Now they seemed to have missed the point. As China had reached the “limit of its age,” how come could it not die? What these spokespersons seemed to have missed was the view that China could be born again. Despite the fact that the new topic of China’s “rebirth” was but another way of addressing the old issue, one then no longer had to speak of China’s problems in the shadows of such desperate topics as “death” and “extinction.”

Meanwhile, Li also located the West in a life cycle and thus challenged the myth of a never-falling great West. The West, too, had its life cycle; so too it must have its old age. To argue that many Western nations such as Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Belgium, and England were already on the wane, Li simply needed to mention their vigorous past. “But now their day has gone, their fame and glory have declined into mere empty shells. They thus are past travelers in the caravan of human civilization”(p. 199).

As Li located the Western nations in a life cycle, he brought them into a time race with the East. The subtlety of this time game was that no one in the game could hold its position permanently--the younger party and the older in the contest had to exchange their positions from time to time. Once the older party completes its life cycle and begins a new one, the originally younger party automatically becomes the older. From this perspective, it really did not matter that the Western nations were relatively young at the time when China and other Eastern nations such as Turkey and India were, according to Li, drawing so close to the turn of a new cycle. The West should lose the advantage of age soon.

What Li tried to foresee was not just the coming dusk of the West but also its misfortune in the future international contest. Such a misfortune was determined by “an inevitable law of nature” (p. 199):

It is clear from history that when a rising nation meets one in decline, the nation in decline will be defeated. When a vigorous young life meets a moribund life, the moribund life will be defeated. When young people meet old, the old people will be defeated. This is an inevitable law of nature. (p. 199)

Unfortunately, China of Li's date did not run away from such a law. Nations of the West, too, according to this law, would not be able to change their fate of being a loser when they grow old in the future.

Li's life-cycle metaphor led to a new and encouraging vision of international competition. Unlike a Darwinian one, the new vision focused more on who would play a vital role in the future international arena than on who was presently strong and fit. It paid special attention to those marginal nations located around the beginning and the end of a life cycle, that is, the extremely young and the extremely old which were usually considered weak for the time being. As Li implied (pp. 199-202), the extremely young nation had an unpredictably great potential for development, while the extremely old would be reborn soon. In contrast, the fully developed

nation was stepping into decline and decay. China of the early twentieth century needed such a view to relieve the Chinese of their shame of being weak and backward. It could also serve to motivate them to fight for what they anticipated would be a bright future.

Li knew well that a revived, young China would never come into being if its people did nothing but wait for it. To show that rebirth was the stage of an entire life cycle that demanded most critically the spirit of youth (“the spirit that restores youth and life, the spirit that moves mountains”), Li then applied the metaphor of seed. China was like a seed that needed “attentive cultivation” (p. 200). It also required “careful planting, tilling, nourishing, and watering” (p. 201). Death was inevitable, but rebirth was still contingent upon whether the Chinese could give full play to their talents and creativity. Here, Li left a space for the Darwinian idea of the struggle for existence. He hinted that the danger of national subjugation and extinction was still there. The chain of life would be broken at any time if the Chinese did not fight for their own existence. Heaven would give life only to those who really strove for it.

Li went further to realize the rhetorical potential of the life-cycle metaphor. He began by talking about “rebirth” as a matter of moral choice, that is, a matter of whether China should find its way back to the center of the world historical stage. Li reminded the Chinese of their “mandate of Heaven”: “Don’t forget we are Chinese. The name ‘China’ (Zhonghua) means center. As Chinese youth, you should not only be content with being the geographical center of the world, you should also strive to become the center of world history”(p. 200). The Chinese had long missed such a provocative Chinese-centric tone after the humiliation of the Opium Wars. Now its return seemed justified by the view of life cycle. In the following call, Li sounded as if he was already in the center of world history: “You, Chinese young people, should persist in fulfilling your moral duty, standing firm like a pillar of rock in mid-stream. Let’s have a fresh

start from today, throw off the whole past history of our world, and destroy it by fire”(p. 201). Underlying his call was an implicit claim that who else but we can take up such a lofty duty. Li was calling on not only the self-confidence of the Chinese people, but also their sense of a moral mission to mankind.

“Struggles”

Li moved on to make his last and most radical adjustment in perspective by showing that one must fight in order to have new life. He first directed his readers’ attention to certain tragic and destructive occurrences in the process of resurrection. For instance, a “gloomy and desperate” freeze came before a “fresh and brilliant” spring; the autumn wind swept away the withered leaves; the rushing flood wiped out the accumulated dust and dirt, and a natural fire burned off the old world (pp. 194-202). Such a destructive aspect of nature could never appear in a cosmic picture of Yin-Yang alternation.

Why must Heaven destroy old lives before it creates new ones? To answer this question, Li needed to deconstruct the conventional images of the elderly. In the Confucian tradition, age had often been seen as a sign of strength and wisdom. The care and nurture provided by the elderly to the young had been viewed as crucial to the continuity of the species. Li had to get rid of such a positive image. In “Youth,” Li compared the elderly to something outdated and worthless, something that needed to be replaced as a whole, such as fading flowers, withering leaves, branches, and bark (e.g., p. 201). By using these metaphors Li deprived the elderly of any chance of self-improvement or self-renewal.

But what most critically damaged the traditional parent-like image of the elderly was Li’s view of them as an obstacle to the growth of the young. In his second work “Morning Bell,” the

elderly was further compared to a kind of “stale and decayed blood” flowing inside the body of a pregnant mother, blood that was gradually damaging the life of the fetus (1984a, p. 178; see also 1984c, p. 205).⁸ To avoid offending his elderly readers, Li wrote a brief note specifying what he meant by “the elderly” (1984a, p. 182). The term was confined only to those decadents who were old spiritually rather than physically.

To enforce the idea that conflicts between the elderly and the young were inevitable, Li positioned them in striking contrast with each other (pp. 178-179). The elderly were “spiritually constrained by their past experiences and their life environments.” The young, on the other hand, were “completely open-minded.” Whereas the elderly tended to be “conservative,” the young were generally “progressive, vigorous, liberal-minded, innovative, intelligent, active, creative, and enterprising.” But unfortunately, “China [was] in the grip of the elderly.” The elderly thus became an obstacle to the progress of the young (p. 179). No matter how far Li went to exaggerate the discrepancies between the two generations, he did reveal some truth about the tension of his days between the thoughts of the new and the old generations.

It was on the ground of his extremely dynamic view of the youth cycle that Li was able to accuse the elderly of being conservative and even to condemn them to death morally and spiritually. Conservatives became intolerable, for they hampered not only the growth of a new life, but also the successive progression of the universe. It was on the same grounds that Li came to defend revolutionary struggle as a necessary means to destroy these reactionary and “evil” forces in human societies.

In “Morning Bell” and the other two short essays, “New Life” and “National Day,” Li spoke of revolutionary struggle as a justifiable means of defense. To protect a new life, “one should not hesitate to use a radical and exclusive measure”(p. 178). Further, he suggested seeing

this as a key to “the ceaseless rotation of the world” (1984b, p. 183). Li then came to justify violence in revolutionary struggles. He argued, through the metaphor of child delivery, that violence, bloodshed, and sacrifice were the “pains” one had to go through in the process of delivering a new life. New nations such as Germany and Hungary, for instance, were “born amidst the flames of war and a pool of blood.” In “giving birth” to the Republic of China, so many young Chinese revolutionaries already “shed their blood and even sacrificed their lives” (1984a, pp. 180-181; 1984b; 183; p. 1984c, 218-219).

Here, Li introduced the painful experiences of childbirth -- the occasional pain of pregnancy, the loss of blood in labor, and other sorts of pain—into the traditional view of the life cycle. All these painful experiences were, of course, not new to the Chinese people. Yet, in respect to the cosmic process of generation and regeneration of life, the Chinese had tended to overlook them. “The great virtue of Heaven and Earth is production and reproduction”(Book of Changes,1967, p. 328). This Heavenly process should be wonderful and joyful. Even in Yan Fu’s cruel vision of evolution, the happiness of life production, rather than its painfulness, was highlighted as a crucial cause of the fecundity of species (1986, p. 1340). Of course, Li had no intention of frightening those who would fight for the birth of a new China. He wanted to say that violence, bloodshed, and sacrifice were merely something one had to accept. But more importantly, childbirth was an extremely sacred and noble cause to fight for, so sacred and noble that it demanded genuine commitment and sacrifice. In his “National Day,” Li especially described with a religious tone the “holy blood” of those French, American, and Chinese revolutionaries who had died heroically for the birth of Republican Constitutionalism. It was so “solemn and glorious” that it “had irrigated and moistened” the garden of freedom (1984d, pp. 218 -219).

Revolutionary struggles leading to bloodshed, therefore, were not as terrible as many Chinese would think. On the contrary, revolutionary struggle was the midwife of new lives. From this perspective, Li turned to criticize the Chinese youth, the hope of China, for their lack of courage to “fight a battle” with the old world (1984a, p. 179). They, instead, “are absorbed in some kind of abandoned graves and bound by their idols -- thus giving way to elderly people, who can then stride forward with their chins up to occupy all the pivotal positions in society” (p. 179).

With the view of revolutionary struggle as the midwife of lives, Li finally was able to present to the Chinese an infinitely bright future. What he promised the Chinese was not just a revived China, but also an ever-green nation (1984c, p. 201). To give birth to and maintain such a new China, however, the Chinese must prepare themselves for a long-term struggle against their old and conservative selves (1984a, p. 179; 1984c, p. 204). In the final sections of both “Youth” and “Morning Bell,” Li, like other Chinese proponents of *Dao*, called on the Chinese to seek the meaning of life in the eternity of the universe. Life was short for every individual. Instead of idling away one’s precious youth, why not give one’s every minute to the struggle for the eternal youth of one’s nation and of mankind? (1984a, p. 181; 1984c, p. 205).

Metaphoric Paradigm and Its Impact

Two questions are worth discussing after our analysis of the key metaphors in Li’s argument for a radical and revolutionary view of the life cycle: What can we learn about metaphor from Li’s case, and how did Li’s metaphors affect the growth of Chinese radicalism in the twentieth century?

Implications to Metaphorical Critics

Li's case can broaden our understanding of metaphor in two ways. First, it brings to light a particularly conservative aspect of metaphor that has been overlooked by many metaphoric analyses. Metaphors have their own paradigms, and they work on us in a profound way through their paradigms. As a matter of fact, the paradigmatic metaphors (e.g., the Yin-Yang cycle metaphors) are more influential than others of the same type (e.g., other life cycle metaphors). In addition, metaphors have their own "bias" due to the influence of their paradigms. Before Li, the outspoken reformer Liang Qichao would sound very radical when he talked about things like "the moral revolutionary" and "remolding the people" (1959, pp. 1-15). Yet due to his bias toward the paradigm of the Yin-Yang cycle, he only meant some bold "reforms." To metaphorical critics, what is more significant is not how a rhetor uses metaphors, but how s/he exploits or eliminates "bias" when using them.

But at the same time, this case also helps to reveal a particularly destructive aspect of the metaphorical process. This process can serve to change even the most culturally and socially secured stereotypes of our perception expressed in the forms of metaphorical paradigms. As Li's case has demonstrated, to use the relatively marginal to deconstruct the core of a metaphorical system step by step is an effective way of deconstructing an old paradigm. The strong Yin-Yang flavor of some Chinese life-cycle metaphors thus can be diluted bit by bit by using others with less Yin-Yang flavor (such as "youth," "rebirth," and "painful labor"). Every metaphorical paradigm (e.g., the Yin-Yang cycle paradigm) represents a particular system composed of certain kernel and certain marginal metaphors (e.g., the Yin-Yang type and the new-old type of metaphors). To deconstruct an old paradigm, one needs only to re-arrange the positions of the

kernel and the margins within an old system, and does not have to crush it as a whole from outside.

Li's case also shows how difficult it is to change a metaphoric paradigm. If Li simply used the metaphor "life is a process of struggle," he might never have been able to replace the Yin-Yang perspective with his. Before he could finally associate "life" with "revolutionary struggle," Li had to undertake three adjustments of views—first, setting his view of the life cycle within the dynamic frame of the youth cycle, then focusing on the even more dynamic stage of rebirth, and then zooming in to certain cruel and conflicting experiences in life delivery.

I do not imply that metaphors are omnipotent. If China in the early twentieth century had not revealed to a greater extent its own problems and did not feel the need for more fundamental reforms, then Li's metaphors such as "rebirth" and "struggle," no matter how skillfully used, might not have been able to draw as much attention as they did. The deteriorating situation helped highlight the importance of certain non-kernel metaphors. The "rebirth" metaphor, for example, had always been outside the very core of the traditional metaphorical system due to its radical tendency. So, when Liang Qichao first raised the issue of "young China" over a decade before Li's "Youth," he did not talk about China's "rebirth"(1900/1998). It was not until Li's date when all the "restoration," "self-strengthening," and "reform" plans appeared futile in solving China's worsening problem of survival, that "rebirth" came to be seen as a very significant metaphor to the Chinese.

Twentieth Century Chinese Radicalism

We can come to a better understanding of the role metaphors play in our life if we trace the profound impact of Li's essays. The four essays are significant not only because they

introduced a new and radical view of the life cycle, but also because they drew particular attention to a set of life-cycle metaphors such as “the new-old cycle,” “the young-aged cycle,” and “the life-death cycle,” which had to some degree been overlooked in the past. Li in fact used them to replace the Yin-Yang type of metaphors in his own metaphorical system. Given their radical tendencies, these metaphors are not simple extensions of the traditional rise-fall type of metaphors. They represent a new metaphoric paradigm, which can be named the “new-old cycle paradigm.”

Li was not the first to use the new-old type of metaphors. Before him, men like Liang Qichao and Chen Duxiu had made heavy use of the “youth” metaphor (e.g., Liang, 1900/1998; Chen, 1915/1993a; 1916/1993c). However, these people were concerned either with how to regain China’s vitality (such as Liang), or with how to maintain the youth’s vigor (such as Chen). Li integrated both concerns, which were indeed the two major concerns of his time, by viewing “youth,” “rebirth,” and “struggle” as the keys to both national salvation and the salvation of mankind. This explains why he could make these metaphors not only the core metaphors but also the resounding voices of his time and after.

The New-Old Cycle Paradigm

Whereas the Yin-Yang cycle paradigm sees all life cycles as a process of interaction between Yin and Yang, the new-old cycle paradigm views them as a process of struggle for destroying the old and establishing the new. The rise of the new-old cycle paradigm signifies an important strategic shift in the Chinese reform movement. The new paradigm contrasts itself with the old in many aspects.

First, the Yin-Yang paradigm has no bias towards certain phases of a normal life cycle, while the new-old paradigm always lays particular stress on the rising phases such as rebirth and youth. From the perspective of the Yin-Yang cycle, neither Yin nor Yang is better than the other. Like fancy spring flowers and solid autumn fruits, each has something in which it excels. Since the Chinese have a long tradition of honoring the mature, however, they often appreciate the abundance and fruitfulness of autumn. For instance, the sixth century Confucian Yan Zhitui compared spiritual cultivation and social services to autumn fruits, and writing and speaking to spring flowers (1997, p. 182). In this comparison Yan apparently sided with autumn fruits because the Chinese tradition valued spiritual cultivation and social services over speaking and writing. From the perspective of the new-old cycle, however, things like “spring,” “dawn,” “morning dew,” “new tides,” “young sprout” are always more beautiful and brilliant than the others.

In addition, the relationship between Yin and Yang in the Yin-Yang cycle is a spatial rather than a temporal relationship. Like the sun and the moon, heaven and earth, and husband and wife, they represent two complementary parts of the world. But the relationships involved in the new-old cycle, such as the relationships between the new and the old, the young and the aged, life and death, are primarily temporal relationships.

Besides, the Yin-Yang paradigm emphasizes harmony, assuming that harmonious interaction between Yin and Yang is the key to the continuance of life cycles. The new-old cycle paradigm, on the other hand, stresses struggles, with the assumption that one cannot build the new without destroying the old.

As far as the new-old relationship is concerned, the Yin-Yang cycle paradigm favors the old, while the new-old cycle paradigm favors the new. From the Yin-Yang cycle perspective, the

young can grow and maintain their health only under the attentive care of the old. Viewed from the new-old cycle perspective, however, the current of life can make progress steadily because of the thriving vitality of the young themselves, as the waves behind drive on those before.

Despite such a momentous turn, the new-old cycle paradigm continues with much of the old spirit. It still maintains the spiritual and moral image of Heaven: Heaven is still the perfect and supreme guardian of life. In addition, it carries forward the most important assumptions of the old paradigm, especially the assumptions that life is ever circling, that life is an active and creative process, and that one can transcend one's finite cycle of life by identifying oneself with the whole universe of lives. From this perspective, the strategic turn does not make the new-old cycle paradigm appear to be something that is not Chinese at all.

Li's new-old cycle metaphors were accepted by many radical intellectuals of his time and after. Following the publications of "New Youth" and the other three essays, a large number of Chinese periodicals sprang up to champion new cultural movements, with names such as New Tides (1919, January), New Life (1919, August), New Society (1919, November), Dawn (1919, November), Young China (1919, July), Young World (1920, January) and Young Society (1919, December). The names reveal a keen sense of sacred mission to facilitate the "resurrection" of China (Committee, 1978).

The Russian Revolution

The new-old cycle paradigm has played an active role in the ensuing Chinese Marxist movement. One year after those four essays, the Russian October Revolution broke out. Chinese radicals quickly labeled it a "new tide" in human history. The use of this label showed their intention to bring the Revolution into line with what they believed to be the world life cycle. Li

was among the first group of Chinese to hail this Revolution with excitement. He called it the “dawn of a new world civilization” (1918/1984f, p. 575). For him, the Revolution was like a great flood about to “wash in a new era in history” (1919/1984h, p. 606). The old forces would “like withered leaves meeting a piercing autumn breeze consequently fall to the ground one by one” (1918/1984g, pp. 602-603). The Russian Revolution thus provided him the type of revolution he needed to fulfill his ideal of national “resurrection”—it successfully gave birth to a new state and quickly turned the most backward nation in Europe into the advance guard of modern civilization in challenge to the West.

Many young radicals at that time also approached the Revolution from this “new tide” perspective. A magazine widely circulating among the Beijing students, New Tide, for example, suggested that every important period of time was carried along by an irresistible tide, and that the tide of the twentieth century belonged to the Russian Revolution. Although the writer himself was suspicious of its suitability to China, he called on the Chinese youth to “hoist sail and go with the tide of the world” (Luo, 1919, January).

It is worth noting that Li and others were not yet Marxists at the time when they praised with enthusiasm the Russian Revolution. The Revolution was appealing then because it, as a “New Tide,” testified to Li’s beautiful prophesy: a new era in world history is coming. The Chinese now believed they heard the steps of spring coming to China from the “new tide” in Russia.⁹

The examples of Li and others show that the Chinese went through several phases in making their turn to the Russian Revolution. They first turned to the projected view of China’s “rebirth,” then to the worldview of “new tides,” and finally to the particular view of a “new tide” in Russia. It was their phased and orderly stretching of the same new-old cycle metaphor that

made this turn possible. From this perspective, the Chinese people's concern for the Russian Revolution originated from their general interest in the changes of the modern fate of their nation and the world.

The Chinese Communist Revolution

Under the influence of the Russian Revolution, China underwent a communist revolution at the end of 1910s. How Marxist concepts were brought into Chinese reformist and revolutionary discourse is an intriguing subject of study. The Chinese communists' heavy use of the new-old cycle metaphors provided an easy and meaningful access for the Marxist ideas to the Chinese context.

When Li and his patriotic fellows such as Chen Duxiu became the first generation of Chinese Marxists at the end of 1910s, they did not actually try to replace the youth with their new idol, the proletariat, or to replace the youth's revolution with the proletarian revolution. Instead, they saw the proletariat as truly representative of the spirit of youth. This was evident in the fact that when they later changed the direction of their New Youth and turned it into "the mouthpiece of the proletariat" in June 1923, they continued with the old name "New Youth" and with the old task of "overturning all kinds of old thought," which they believed had not yet been accomplished by the old New Youth (Editorial Board, 1923/1978, p. 389). The reasons for the change, according to the new editorial board, were that the proletariat were "very young" as compared with the other classes in China, that they were extremely "courageous and progressive," and that they assumed "the most antagonistic attitude towards the existing systems" (pp. 387-389).

For the Chinese communists, the world was still divided clearly by the young and the old. As the communist poet He Qifang wrote in 1941:

All decaying are dying!
All newborn are growing!
The decayed and the new-born
So clearly distinct from one another
Like day and night!
All brothers in China
Stand by the revolutionaries!" (1982, p. 154-155).

Although He Qifang's world appeared no different from the one Li described in 1916, it did take on a specific meaning. What he meant by the "new born" or "the revolutionaries" were now the growing forces of communism.

In the arduous years of revolutionary struggles, the "youth," "rebirth," and "struggle" metaphors became a powerful language used by the Chinese communists to whip up a valiant fighting spirit. In the early 1930s, when the communist guerrilla army was fighting arduously for their survival in the small area of Jinggang Mountain, Mao Tse-tung suggested seeing the communist revolution as "a ship far out at sea whose mast-head can already be seen from the shore," as "the morning sun in the east whose shimmering rays are visible from a high mountain top," and as "a child about to be born moving restlessly in its mother's womb" (1930/1965a, p. 127). When the communist forces flourished in the 1940s, Mao claimed in Yanan, the headquarters of the Chinese communist revolution: "The communist ideological and social system alone is full of youth and vitality, sweeping the world with the momentum of an avalanche and the force of a thunderbolt"(1940/1965c, p. 361). Of course, the new-old cycle metaphors were not the only type of metaphors used by the communists in wartime. The Yin-Yang cycle type of metaphors also made their occasional appearances in the literature of the Communist Party (e.g., Mao, 1937/1965b). But whenever the communists had to prepare popular

opinion for promoting a high tide of revolutionary struggle, the new-old cycle metaphors become one of the most marked features of their metaphorical language.

The metaphors used by Li in the early twentieth century such as “youth,” “rebirth” and “struggle,” continued to play an important part in the communist campaigns that followed. They, in fact, constituted the most vigorous core of the Chinese communist discourse. The communists, of course, gave this symbolic language new interpretations. For them, “revolution” best made sense if understood as the kind of “working class revolution” led by the Chinese Communist Party. The “rebirth” of China would never take place before the “liberation” of the working people. It is through this metaphorical perspective that fundamental Marxist concepts such as class, capitalism, and socialism found their places in the Chinese reformist and revolutionary discourse.

A great contribution by Li and his followers to the development of Chinese radicalism was their helping to make “revolution” one of the most sacred and most magnificent symbols in twentieth century China. After being long excluded from the traditional Chinese view of the life cycle, the idea of revolutionary struggle now appeared as the most important link in the sacred chain of life. It seemed that only through revolutionary struggles could one gain access to youth, rebirth, and immortality. Revolution thus became the ideal way of life and even the *Dao* of Heaven. The new-old cycle metaphors enabled one to bring a will to violent revolution into perfect union with the passion of youth, with the wish for resurrection, and with the spiritual need for pursuing the ultimate goal of life. As a result, violent revolution was beautified and sanctified. To a certain extent, it was with this beautified and sanctified passion for revolution that the Chinese communists were able to defeat their strong rivals, the Guomindang, which surpassed them in terms of their military, political and economic strength.

However, it would be extremely dangerous if revolutionary violence were beautified and sanctified excessively. Perhaps Li never expected that after the Communist Party assumed power in 1949, they would continue to “take class struggles as the key link.”¹⁰ During the decade of Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Mao Tse-tung called on the Red Guards to carry forward the dauntless spirit of revolutionary struggle and to “sweep away all sorts of monsters and demons.”¹¹ As the Red Guard gave full play to their passion for revolution, the whole country fell into the disasters of violence and fear. The case of the Revolution illustrates how far a metaphorical paradigm can go to destroy a society when it is abused.

After Mao’s death in 1976, the Chinese Communist Party headed by Deng Xiaoping attempted to bring things back to order. It was not difficult for them to realize that a crucial source of China’s chaos had been class struggle. However, while they condemned class struggle, they have tried to keep their view of revolution intact. For them, the so-called Cultural Revolution “did not in fact constitute a revolution or social progress in any sense, nor could it possibly have done so.” It was rather “domestic turmoil” which was “initiated by a leader laboring under a misapprehension and capitalized on by counter-revolutionary cliques” (“Resolution,” 1981, pp. 21-22). In recent years some open-minded Chinese scholars have begun to attack the sacred idea of revolution itself and boldly suggest that China “say good-bye to revolution” (Li & Liu, 1996). But regrettably they have not been able to provide deep reflection on the philosophical and rhetorical origins of the twentieth century Chinese view of revolution. Taking into consideration the sophisticated intellectual and rhetorical contexts in which the early “Marxist” view of revolution was formed, the so-called “fundamental guiding principle of class struggle” can be seen as a particular and extreme way of expressing “the fundamental guiding principle of struggle against the old.”

Today while China is waving good-bye to its twentieth century tradition of revolutionary struggle, it has to reflect on its radical new-old cycle paradigm. Perhaps it is time to welcome back the Yin-Yang cycle paradigm. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, it appears that the Chinese reform movement has come again to a turning point in its cycle of development. If Chinese reformers do not want to simply return to the traditional view of the Yin-Yang cycle from the view of the new-old cycle, they may need to re-establish the “Yin-Yang” relationship between the two life cycle paradigms.

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Footnotes

- ¹ Besides the works discussed in this study, Chen Duxiu's short essay "1916" (1916/1993b) is most representative of this radical idea of "national rebirth" in the literature of the New Cultural Movement.
- ² Except for "Youth," the other three essays are very short. "New Life" and "National Day," total less than a thousand characters.
- ³ Both Chinese and Western scholars often cite Li's works, especially his "Youth," in their study of the early development of Chinese Radicalism (e.g., Zhang, 1998, pp. 70-72, 133-137, 205; Meisner, 1967, pp. 26-28, 49).
- ⁴ Li did not show serious interest in Marxism until he wrote "The Victory of Bolshevism" in 1918, two years after he wrote "Youth" and the other three essays. There is a recurrent theme that cut across his non-Marxist and early Marxist writings, that is his radical view of the life cycle.
- ⁵ In this essay, the term "metaphor" is used in a broad sense. It refers to any rhetorical device that enables us to see one thing as something else. Thus, it includes analogy, metonymy, and other metaphorical devices.
- ⁶ Liang Qichao was representative of this view. He characterized the Chinese as "frail, sick, feminine and melancholic" (1902-04/1959, p. 29).
- ⁷ For this movement, see Chow, 1960.
- ⁸ Based on the date of publication, "Youth" came out in September 1, 1966, half a month after "Morning Bell." But as Li implied in the first paragraph of his "Youth," it was written in the spring. As far as their contents are concerned, "Morning Bell" and the other two are more radical in nature than "Youth," and seem to have reflected his later developments of thought. For this reason, this essay regards "Morning Bell" and the other two as follow-up works to "Youth."
- ⁹ Even before the October Revolution, when the democratic February Revolution of 1917 overthrew the monarchy in Russia, Li responded in March. He stated: "Today the blood of the Russian people is washing away the dirt accumulated over the years in the Russian political world and indirectly providing the embryo for our own country's freedom . . . objectively speaking, the success of this revolution in Russia cannot avoid influencing the next revolution in China" (1984e, p. 364).
- ¹⁰ For Mao's theory of the persistence of class struggle in the stage of socialism, see Mao, 1974a, 1974b, 1977. For a stimulating discussion of the intellectual origins of this theory, see Meisner, 1999, pp. 291-311.
- ¹¹ On the instruction of Mao, the People's Daily issued an editorial "Sweep away all sorts of monsters and demons" in June 1, 1966. With a strong smell of gunpowder, this article actually declared the beginning of the Great Cultural Revolution ("Hengshao"). For a concrete and detailed discussion of the Red Guard Movement, see Rosen, 1982.

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