Weaving Moral Fibers in a Corrupt World:
Liang Qichao and the Evolving Lexicon for Civic Virtue
in 20th Century China

by

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Class of 2015

A thesis submitted to the
faculty of Wesleyan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Departmental Honors from the College of Social Studies
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Preface

Before coming to the United States at the age of 18, I had never lived anywhere but Ningbo, my hometown. My family was simple. My mother worked in a state-run enterprise and my father served in a local court. My parents both work for the government, but they are the most anti-government and anti-Party persons I had ever seen.

My father had been following foreign television channels through an illegally installed satellite TV since I was in primary school. He has shaped my knowledge about the tragedy of Great Leap Forward of the 1950s, the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident. These topics still remain a public taboo today in China. “Brutal,” as my father put it: “As long as the Communist Party is still ruling China, our country has no future.”

To my generation, people born in the 1990s, the widespread political fanaticism that defined the period of Cultural Revolution and the patriotic liberalism that inspired the students of the 1980s seems extremely distant. Communist Party leaders have learned their lesson during the Tiananmen protests. They have kept politics out of our lives while channeling our energies toward other state-sanctioned pursuits, primarily economic advancement.

Fighting against the Party-approved facts of modern Chinese history, I tried to piece together the historical trauma of the twentieth century through underground books, foreign reports and conversations with my parents. Yet the more facts and anecdotes I gathered, the more those crowds and massacres seemed unreal, like tragic scenes from an old foreign film. My only vivid image about the Cultural Revolution, however, is my grandfather’s intermittent and obscure narratives about his “reeducation” experience:
“I separated from your grandma and was sent to the village of Lanxi to do farm labor work... “They confiscated my biology paper for publication because I was not interested in taking the required Marxism courses...”

Further details about my grandfather’s feelings and memories of that time were never expressed. Trauma itself was silenced.

Every time I thought about how my mother had worshiped the red bible of Chairman Mao’s words, how my father was almost frightened to death when he accidentally smashed a glass icon of Mao Zedong, I resented taking history and politics courses at school. I resented that I had to memorize lines about the Party’s great achievements in order to pass political science exams.

“America is the best place for you. You don’t want to waste your time and talent here as I did.” My father always said this to me.

During my sophomore year of high school in China, I decided to attend college in America, pursuing my lifetime dream of becoming a “cosmopolitan citizen” and a democracy advocate. Nobody else except my family supported me. I only had six months to prepare for my college application, including SAT, TOEFL essays and more. It was a lonely and uneasy journey, and yet I was full of hope and expectation.

My college application essay detailed my grandfather’s suffering during the Cultural Revolution. It presented my own effort to break away from the Party-defined structure of historical narratives. This is what has led me to Wesleyan University. Unlike many Chinese international students in the U.S. who choose to major in economics, finance and business fields, I chose the College of Social Studies. My sophomore year was dominated by intense coursework in European political philosophy, social theory, history and economic thought. CSS broadened
my vision concerning the origins of the state and of democracy. As the volume of knowledge increased, however, I found my inner world increasingly empty. Critical thinking, the golden core of liberal arts education, left me as a hollow relativist.

I began to sympathize with authoritarian China. By learning how democracy originated in Western Europe and America, I started to accept why China was not, and had never been, a democracy. To my surprise, my appreciation of the liberal spirit, fostered back in the days when I was reading censored writings about the Great Leap Forward, did not grow stronger in Wesleyan’s classrooms. Instead, it transformed into something else.

I did not figure out what that “something else” was until I had several key conversations with Professor Vera Schwarcz about the 1989 Tiananmen Square protest. She described the student protestors as “sounding like the Red Guards.” I had never perceived any association between the “brave, democracy-loving” students in 1989 and the “vicious and brutal” radicals of 1966. I began to realize that mass killing during the Revolution were not simply a vertical top-down phenomenon, but a horizontal mutual destruction initiated by the students at the time. The 1989 incident was in many ways an echo to the Cultural Revolution, as students of 1989 began accusing moderate others of being “anti-revolutionary cowards” for wanting to go back to class.

For the first time, I began to focus on the role of individuals, not systems, in the shaping of political culture. Social science courses, which I had enjoyed during the first two years at Wesleyan, paled in significance to these new questions.
I was also a little tired of Wesleyan’s hyper liberal culture. I wanted to study more China-related courses and, to go to a place where nobody knew me. I ended up at Harvard University in the fall of 2013. There, I took a course in Chinese history with Professor Peter Bol, who introduced me to the history of political thought. Never before had I expected to revisit works of Confucius, Mencius and Laozi with an American scholar. Previously I regarded them as pedantic and inimical to Chinese modernity. The reexamination of pre-Qing Chinese intellectual history at Harvard triggered my interest in finding inspirations for democracy in China’s own past.

As the course approached the Republican period (1911-1949), I read an English translation of Liang Qichao’s essay “The Concept of Nation.” This short piece was stapled in the course packet together with other essays by modern thinkers including Kang Youwei, Feng Guifen, Sun Yat-sen, Li Dazhao and Chiang Kai-shek. The author’s name appeared at the end of the article, so I did not know who the author was until I finished the whole packet. Among all these essays, “The Concept of Nation” impressed me the most. The awkward English translation could not mask the essay’s linguistic rhythms, intellectual insight and appealing power. I flipped to the end and found the author to be Liang Qichao. Suddenly I felt that my mind echoed Liang’s own dilemmas. I finally heard a voice that I had been seeking for thinking about a new China.

At the same time, I was drawn into the subject of intellectual history, because it addressed the interplay of the individual mind within the forces of historical events and the power of sociopolitical institutions. As a result, modern Chinese intellectual history became particularly fascinating. While at Harvard, my knowledge about intellectual history itself, its purpose, its methodology and
analytical themes, was still limited. Nevertheless, Yu Wen, a history Ph.D candidate (who was my tutor for Dr. Bol’s course), cleared up some key issues for me. She explained: “It is crucial that when you study a particular intellectual, you always bear in mind the specific questions he was trying to answer at that time. Think with him.” This principle seemed straightforward, but it was actually easy to drift away from those central questions. During the summer of 2014, when I began full time research for this thesis, I found that I could not help “judging” Liang’s political theories with a CSS mindset. At that time, Professor Schwarcz reminded me: “Look at Liang Qichao’s changing language. Explore its tones and subtle emotions.”

I used to regard “tones” and “emotions” as superficial and unreliable indications of the author’s thinking process. But I quickly realized I had been wrong. Emotions are not the same as gut feelings or momentary passion. They are grounded in an author’s personality, his visions of himself and his sensitivity to surroundings. A thinking process is a reasoning process hardwired with emotions. My conversations with historian Tang Xiaobing in the fall of 2014 led me to the examination of generational differences in the quest for freedom from the 1890s to 1920s. Tang suggested that this 30-year period produced a dramatic change in the intellectuals’ mentality, worldviews, self-awareness and self-expression. He inspired me to expand the historical scope of this project from 1890s all the way to today.

“Another” China

Pursuing research on Liang Qichao in Taiwan was essentially a journey in the quest for Liang’s language. Taiwan has preserved the usage of traditional Chinese. In Taipei, I found that scholars carry out comprehensive research on
modern Chinese history free of government censorship. During my time at the Academia Sinica, I was struck by the volume and depth of resources, publications and academic conferences on modern intellectual history. In the archives, I found details of Liang’s letter to the government of the Republic of China sent from Paris when he served as the Minister of Finance. I had never expected that such a socially active philosopher and journalist would also serve as the Minister of Finance! This finding expanded my vision of Liang Qichao, whose expertise ranged more widely than I imagined.

Looking back to mainland China, I saw an intellectual terrain that is impoverished. I realized that before asking the question of whether China could become a democracy, I needed to ask: Is the language of democracy even conceivable in the People’s Republic? Is the current lexicon sufficient to build a democratic China? The issue of language became even more compelling during the entire research process. One day I came across a work by Perry Link entitled An Anatomy of Chinese: Rhythm, Metaphor, Politics. In this book, Link had dissected the structure of the Chinese Communist Party political propaganda and its slogans. Reading his analysis of the Party language and comparing it to the lexicon in Liang Qichao’s writings, I realized how the Chinese language has become deprived of subtlety, depth and aesthetic values.

During my research at Academia Sinica, professor Pan Kuang-che suggested that I should do some close readings of Liang’s essays in New Citizens and translate some passages by myself. Through the process of translation, the subtlety of Liang’s lexicon became even more apparent. Distinguishing between similar English translations for the Chinese word “daode,” such as “morality” and
“virtue” and “ethics,” helped me to understand better Liang’s views about civic virtue.

In Taipei, I also discovered new details about my own family history. My grandmother’s sister had gone to Taipei with her Kuomingtang general husband. Her daughter, my father’s cousin, Aunt Lu, told me about the bitter time during the late 1950s: “Everyone here departed with their families. We could only depend on each other.” Aunt Lu and her best friends grew up together in the same village in Keelung on the outskirts of Taipei. Families that had settled in that village came from different parts of mainland, yet they took care of each other and cooked meals for each other families.

“Bitter?” I could not help but think back to the starving peasants on the Chinese mainland who had eaten grass, tree bark and even their own children during the Great Leap Forward. The idea of communal responsibility, a key notion proposed by Liang Qichao, had been practiced in Keelung village. Yet it was truly beyond imagination for individuals living in severe destitution on mainland.

A Piece of Metal Floor

In Taipei, I was also touched by a little glimpse of Taiwanese democracy. It was shown to me by Aunt Lu’s husband, Uncle Chou. Uncle Chou walked me through SOGO shopping mall, the largest department store in Taipei. He did not to take me shopping, but led me to the intersection between SOGO mall metro station and the door to the SOGO mall. The intersection is about 5-meter wide and is marked by a piece of metal floor. When the metro station was built, there was no connection between the exit of the station and the entrance of the mall. This is because the railroad construction company and SOGO corporation could not agree
on which party should pay to create for this 5-meter junction. They appealed to
the government and it took many years to settle the dispute. “The solution should
have been easy.” My uncle said, “In Hong Kong, cases like this were solved by
the government’s compensation to the railroad construction company. But here in
Taipei, because we are a democracy, things take longer to settle down.”

Democracy has become a natural part of life in Taiwan. The individual’s
sense of responsibility to the community is strong in Taipei. On the subway, I saw
that nobody would take handicap seats even during rush hour. I found bits of
Liang Qichao’s *New Citizens* being realized in Taiwan. And I wondered, how can
we make democracy also part of people’s life on the mainland?

Studying Liang Qichao thus turned into a journey that excavated more and
more questions. With Liang, I had to go beyond my past convictions and
preconceptions. I had to seek for the historical truth which is an elusive subject. In
this process, the words of Joseph Levenson became more and more useful:

> Recognition of the historical relativity of one’s own standard is not
> the same as abdication of standards. The historian’s task, his
> golden opportunity, is to make what seems not valuable,
> invaluable…

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Acknowledgments

This thesis would not have come to fruition without following people:

My parents who gave me unconditional love and care. My gratitude cannot be spelled in just a few words. They changed my life the day on which they supported my decision to go abroad.

I am deeply indebted to my thesis advisor, Professor Vera Schwartz, my most respected professor, historian, woman and human being. My conversations with her at Wesleyan have been inspiring, stimulating and life-changing. Without her constant encouragement, guidance and suggestions, I could not have been able to carry this thesis far. She showed me the value of digging deeply into the muck of the unsayable and the unexplored. Working with her has made me a better thinker, writer, and being.

I am also grateful to Professor Richard Elphick, who was my CSS history tutor for two years. He introduced me to the complexities of historical consciousness and to the moral calling of the historian.

I am also indebted to Professor Peter Bol and Yu Wen. Their course at Harvard launched this project in the first place. They introduced me to the field of intellectual history.

Professor Stephen Angle provided me with useful sources about Liang Qichao and answered my questions about the philosophy of citizenship when this project started. Professor Donald Moon also suggested key sources on civic society and education.

I am grateful to the Davenport Committee that funded my field research in Taipei and enabled this project to become a reality. In addition, I want to thank Professor Pan Kuang-che and Professor Yang Chen-te from Academia Sinica. They helped push my research to a next meaningful stage. Uncle Chou and Aunt Lu, who hosted me in Taipei and told me many thought-provoking stories.

Ding Yi had been my precious friend and bibliography assistant. I am also grateful to my intellectual companion during four years at Wesleyan. Our countless midnight chats about philosophy and life enriched me. I am thankful to Chloe Holden, Chen Fanying and Rain Xie who had proofread my thesis.

Finally, nobody compares to you, my dearest grandfather, Ni Zhirong. You accompanied me in every stage of my life, raising me up, teaching me calligraphy, uncovering wounds of historical trauma, and more. Your reserved, unyielding and gentle love made me think of Liang Qichao in the light of my time with you. Your loving, caring and knowledgeable soul will always be a torchlight in my life.

Note on Romanization, Translations and Italics:

In keeping with current academic convention, this thesis uses the Hanyu Pinyin system for the Romanization of Chinese words and names. Exceptions were made for figures such as Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek who are better known according to older Romanization systems. When I have quoted directly from a source, Romanizations were maintained according to the source material. Unless otherwise indicated, I translated all passages from Chinese. When I mentioned phrases that have clear English translations, such as names of publications and political organizations, I wrote the English translations in text with their Pinyin and Chinese characters in brackets. When I discussed Chinese terms that do not find accurate translations, I wrote the Pinyin in text with their Chinese characters and literal translations in brackets. When I cited sources in Chinese, I used simplified characters for post-1949 texts. In other cases, I used traditional Chinese characters. Since this thesis attempts to reanimate Liang Qichao’s voice for a contemporary audience, I have italicized all quotations from works by Liang Qichao. As a concluding thought experiment, I produced a hypothetical letter that Liang would have written to the student protestors of the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident. This letter also appears in italics in the final chapter.
Introduction

A Voice From Wordless Silence

欲維新中國，當先維新我民
The first step to renew China is to renew our people.

—Liang Qichao “Statement of Purpose” 本報告白
First Issue of New Citizens Journal, 1903
On October 5th, 1928, Liang Qichao lay on his sick bed. These were to be his last months. At that time, he was writing the biography of a Song Dynasty poet, Xin Jiaxuan (1140-1207). Two days later, he became too ill to even hold a pen. He was then hospitalized. His kidney failure had resulted in complications and infections of his digestion system. He died on January 19th, 1929 at the age of 56. In Chinese medical theory, kidneys are regarded as the origin of life force. They are also the place where nutrients are stored and physiological functions take root. Liang’s kidney failure was supposedly the result of a prolonged irregular lifestyle. He always worked late into the night and slept just a few hours everyday. According to Chinese medical theory, Liang’s tight schedule had exhausted his kidneys and could no longer generate energy or boost the metabolism for hard work. This was thought to cause his death. In 1949, however, it was revealed that he died of a surgery incident.¹

Liang had written over 14 million characters during his entire career. The last phrase he wrote was about the poet Xin Jiaxuan: “Those who died for a public cause still live on even today (shu wei gong si, lin lin you sheng).”² Sheng (生) was the last character Liang wrote down. Sheng has two connotations translated as “life” and “to live.” This duality captures the tension between life as a given experience and life as an ongoing process. It was this tension that dominated Liang’s intellectual growth as a thinker. Liang, who lived

¹ According to Renmin (People), the official mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party, the truth of Liang Qichao’s death was revealed in 1949 that he had died due to surgical complications associated with the removal of the healthy kidney (instead of the sick one). For details please refer to “Liang Qichao Siwang Zhenxiang (The Truth of Liang Qichao’s death),” People, November 1, 2010, http://history.people.com.cn/BIG5/198307/13097165.html (accessed March 13, 2015).
² Liang Qichao, “Xin Jiaxuan Nianpu (Biography of Xin Jiaxuan),” 1928, in Zhang Pinxing, Shen Peng, Fan Zeng, Li Yi, Wu Weichun eds., Liang Qichao Quanji (A Full Collection of Liang Qichao’s Writings) (Beijing, 1999), 5188.
his entire life in an age of transitions, had to grasp the meaning of thought while not being consumed by the historical context that framed his reflections.

The word *sheng* also carries the connotation of vigor, which characterized the very starting point of Liang’s intellectual voyage. This vigor may be seen in the image on the title page of this introduction. “The Awakening Lion” was published in the 1903 issue of *New Citizens Journal (Xinmin Congbao 新民叢報)*. The lion represented the state of England taking on the entire world with a leap and a mighty roar. Using this utopian lion as a portrait of a future China reflected the underlying hope embedded in the crisis that China was going through. Against the current assumption that China was “old” and in decay (China was often referred to as the Sick Man of Asia in the late nineteenth century), this image shows a young China full of vitality, strength, and a willingness to innovate.

*New Citizens Journal*, established in 1902, was the most widely read publication during Liang Qichao’s life. The journal covered many different topics, including politics, religion, law, economics, business, geography and current and international affairs. In the journal, Liang had coined many Chinese synonyms for new theories and expressions. The journal helped to shape public opinion in China. Its readership was estimated to be 200,000.³

The most popular piece published in the Journal was *New Citizens (Xinmin Shuo 新民說)*, a collection of serialized essays on political concepts about nationhood, society, liberty and civic virtue. Liang had touched upon virtually the entire realm of Western political thought and paved the way for China’s political modernization. He proposed a pioneering agenda for China’s political modernization: the cultivation of new citizens.

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A Chinese Democracy

In 2003, at the 130th anniversary of Liang Qichao’s birth, Xinhua News, the official press agency of China, proclaimed that “Liang’s dream of new citizens is becoming true in the People’s Republic.”4 Xinhua reaffirmed China’s great economic achievements over the past decades as the “basis of cultivating civic virtue.”5 While acknowledging that economic reforms are indispensable for the construction of a civil society, the article emphasized that “political and legal reforms remain a long-term agenda.”6 Between the lines was an implicit rejection of any discussion about the imminent democratization of China.

In January 2014, Xu Zhiyong, a civil rights lawyer and cofounder of Open Constitution Initiative, was sentenced to four years imprisonment for gathering crowds supposedly to disrupt public order in China. Through his New Citizens’ movement, Xu had called for every Chinese to act and behave truly as a “citizen” of the country. In the wake of this arrest, it seems difficult to imagine how a democracy can ever emerge in China when free speech is inhibited and civil rights supporters are imprisoned.7

The vague yet explosive concept of New Citizens, first coined by Liang Qichao, had been annihilated by Communist autocracy. Yet it continues to challenge the century-long effort of modernizing China’s political and social

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5 Translation of “国民素质的培养涉及政治、思想文化、理念和道德方面，但它的根基在经济。” From Ibid.
6 Translation of “中国的民主、法制、道德、文化建设是一个逐步推动的过程，全民素质的真正提高还需时日。” From Ibid.
7 This concept also captures the dilemma of cultivating civic virtue in authoritarian China today, which goes beyond external oppression from the Party. In the illiberal context, perception of liberty could be just as frantic and disturbing as the abuse of autocratic power. For example, an American journalist took a photo of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protest showing that angered protesters burned a soldier alive and hung his body on the street. What was startling about the picture was that passers-by looked completely indifferent.
A historian Tang Xiaobing had pointed out: “The meaning of modern Chinese history and its revelation offered by Liang, may still be an ongoing interpretive process.”

In the Swirl of History

Liang Qichao was born in 1873 in the midst of the Self-Strengthening Movement. He received home schooling from his parents and grandfather before the age of ten. He studied Chinese history and classical literatures beginning at the age of five, which his parents and grandfather taught him using bedtime stories. When he was nine, he was able to “write a-thousand-word essays.” In 1884, he undertook the arduous task of studying for the traditional imperial examinations and passed the second level provincial test in 1889.

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8 Tang Xiaobing, Global space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: the Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao (Stanford, 1996), 10.
9 Modern Chinese history began with the First Opium War (1839-42). Since 1839, China has experienced a profound clash with the West. From 1842 to 1901, there were around 18 unequal treaties imposed on China by the British Empire, France, Portugal, Japan, Russia, United States and other European powers. China was required to pay indemnity, open trade ports and cede territories (for instance, Hong Kong and Taiwan). A series of military defeats and territorial concessions forced the Qing court to learn from Western military and technology in order to defend the dynasty. In 1861, the Qing initiated a Self-Strengthening Movement in order to adopt Western firearms, technology and scientific knowledge and to train technical and diplomatic personnel. Commerce, industry, and agriculture also received increasing attention. The development of profit-oriented industries such as shipping, railways, mining, and telegraphy were launched as new ventures for the Chinese government. For details about the Self-strengthening Movement, see chapter three from Orville Schell and John Delury, Wealth and Power: China’s Long March to the Twenty-first Century (New York, 2013).
10 Shortened translation of “我為童子時，未有學校也。我初認字，則我母教我。直至十歲，皆受於我祖父，我父。” From Ding Wenjiang and Zhao Fengtian eds., Liang Qichao Nianpu Changbian (The Grand Annals of Liang Qichao) (Shanghai, 2009), 11.
11 Shortened translation of “四五歲就王父及母膝下授《四子書》、《詩經》，夜則就睡王父榻，日與言古豪傑哲人嘉言懿行，而尤喜舉亡宋亡明國難之事，津津樂道之。”From Ibid., 10.
12 Translation of “九歲能綴千言。”From Ibid., 10.
13 “When I was twelve, I began to apply to schools to study for the exam.” Translation of “十二歲應試學院…日治帖括…十月，再試廣東新會。” From Ibid., 12.
Liang’s early years were marked by overwhelming social and political changes, as can be seen from his Western dress in the photograph above. This highly reflective young man was exposed to and inspired by both Chinese and Western learning. Growing up in the far southern coastal province of Guangdong, he studied under multiple scholars at different schools. In 1891, he formally settled at a newly opened school in Guangzhou, known as the “Grass Hut Amid A Myriad of Trees” (Wanmu Caotang 萬木草堂). Wanmu Caotang was established by Kang Youwei (康有為 1858-1927), a noted Chinese scholar and political thinker of the late Qing dynasty. Kang Youwei lectured on Chinese history, foreign affairs and Western political thought in Wanmu Caotang between 1891 and 1893, and explored ways of dealing with China’s backwardness. Liang was an active participant in these classes.

14 “When I was nineteen, Mr. Kang started to give lectures at Wanmu Caotang. I began to study with him along with other classmates.” Translation of “余年十九，南海先生始講學廣東省城長興里之萬木草堂…余與諸同學日札記其講義。” From Ibid., 17.

15 Shortened translation of “於長興里講學…講中外之故，救中國之法…來學多志士。” From Ibid., 18.

Fifteen years older than Liang, Kang had been involved in political affairs for many years. In 1883, Kang initiated the Anti-Foot Binding Society in Guangdong (康有為在廣東發起組織不裹足會), advocating women’s rights. (Foot binding was the custom of applying painfully tight binding to the feet of young girls to prevent further growth. It was seen as a symbol of beauty in Chinese culture). In 1888, Kang petitioned to the current Emperor Guangxu for the first time to advocate...
In August 1894, the first Sino-Japanese war broke out. China lost the war in April 1895 and signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki. According to the treaty, China had to cede Taiwan to Japan and compensate Japan 8600 tons of silver. Five days after the signing, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao led many civil examination candidates to petition to the emperor against the treaty and advocated for the modernization of the Qing imperial army and the implementation of comprehensive political reforms. This petition was considered the first modern political movement in China. It was, however, unsuccessful in persuading the Qing government to start reforms. This failed petition taught Liang Qichao a lesson that “words of negligible individuals were trivial” and that he must “study extensively and exhaust the fields of history and geography” in order to produce ideas that could carry practical applicability and conceptual depth.\(^{16}\)

Learning from this failure, prominent leaders in the movement, such as Liang Qichao, Kang Youwei and Tan Sitong, channeled their energies into political journalism. They advocated for the reform from the ground up. This paved the way for the 1898 Hundred Days Reform. In June 1898, the ruling emperor Guangxu enacted the reform agenda proposed by Liang, Kang and Tan. The plan was aborted, however, 104 days later. Conservatives at the Court cracked down and executed six reformers, including Tan Sitong, for the crime of treason. Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei fled to Japan.

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\(^{16}\) Shortened translation of “六月日本戰事起，惋憤時局，時有所吐露，人微言輕，莫之聞也。顧益讀書，治算學、地理、歷史等。” From Ibid., 22.
The Spinning Needle

During this period, while in Japan, Liang Qichao read and wrote about European history, American history, Western political theories and Buddhism. Influenced by Japanese nationalist writings, Liang Qichao devoted himself to the effort of defining “citizens” (guomin 国民). He diagnosed a fundamental problem with the Chinese society: “Family ethic is well developed, but ethics regarding society and state are impoverished.” Liang was not content to graft Western political models onto a Chinese core, as had been advocated by earlier Self-Strengthening Movement reformers. He wanted a fresh start. Defining and implementing new concepts of “citizen” and “nationalism” would become a lifelong enterprise for Liang Qichao.

From the 1890s to 1911 (when Republic of China was founded), the intellectual terrain in China was divided between “Constitutionalists” represented by the Protect the Emperor Society (Baohuanghui 保皇會) and “Republicans” represented by the Revive China Society (Xingzhonghui 興中會). Revive China Society, founded in 1894, joined forces with other anti-monarchal societies in Tokyo and turned into the Chinese United League (Tongmenghui 同盟會) in 1905. Tongmenghui then merged with other pro-revolution parties to become the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang 國民黨) in 1912.

17 Liang Qichao said in his diary in 1899 that “I must do whatever I can to import European thought and spirit for the next generation.” Translation of “吾將竭力輸入歐洲之精神思想，以供來者詩料可乎。” from Ibid., 124.

18 Translation of “唯於家族倫理稍為完整，至社會國家倫理不備滋多。” From Liang Qichao, Xinmin Shuo (New Citizens), 1903, in Quanji, 664.

19 Meanwhile, Liang Qichao had also been an active political leader committed to China’s political modernization. Protect the Emperor Society was founded by Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei in 1899 in Victoria, Canada. Liang was in charge of raising funds from overseas Chinese communities for constitutional reforms. Republican revolutionaries, primarily led by Sun Yat-sen, were also active in rallying public support in Japan.
It was the Republican revolutionaries who had championed the competition between various organizations. By 1911, young military officers had overthrown of the Qing dynasty and founded of Republic of China. Sun Yat-sen was named the first president of the “republic,” a position which he held for a short time. The political sphere during the Republican era, however, remained chaotic. In 1915, Yuan Shikai tried to crown himself emperor. After that, China’s leadership was split into pro- and anti- Yuan factions, thus causing the collapse of the Republic. When Yuan died in 1916, China entered a prolonged warlord period.

Since 1911, constitutional monarchy had become an increasingly irrelevant topic. Liang Qichao, nonetheless, maintained his commitment to political engagement. He merged his renamed Democratic Party with other small parties to form the new Progressive Party in 1913. He also served in the cabinet and wished to expand constitutional democracy within the republic. Liang was appointed as the Minister of Finance in 1917, but left after a few months, because he was not able to turn the current president into a responsible statesman.

In 1919, the same year in which Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* became a best-seller in Europe, Liang Qichao was an observer at Paris Peace Conference. From Paris, he wrote home that Europeans “are like travelers in the desert and have lost their direction…they are in utter despair…they once had great dream about the omnipotence of science. Now their talk is filled with its bankruptcy.”

In Beijing, cultural radicals and students dismissed the warnings of Liang Qichao. Caught in the midst of May Fourth Movement, they believed that it

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was the absence of science and democracy that had caused the weakness and backwardness of China.21

The larger historical context that framed the May Fourth Movement was the New Culture Movement that lasted from the mid 1910s to the 1920s. The New Culture Movement intellectuals had called for a new Chinese culture based on global and Western standards. They vehemently criticized traditional culture (especially Confucian ethics) for being oppressive.22

The 1898 Generation

The 1919 youths believed that they had shattered China’s despondency. In fact, however, they were the beneficiaries of “a prolonged assault on traditional politics and culture that had begun in the late nineteenth century.”23 The generation before the May Fourth student demonstrators had already challenged the assumptions of the Confucian imperial system. These predecessors of the May Fourth intellectuals had been shaped with equal decisiveness by the hopes invested and then lost in the events of 1898. This generation may be called the 1898 generation.24 Liang Qichao, Sun Yat-sen and Tan Sitong were part of this cohort.

21 After 1919 when the Chinese government failed to retrieve ceded territory at the Paris Peace Conference in January 1919, politics became even more chaotic. The Treaty of Versailles had transferred German concessions in Shandong to Japan, not back to China. Although the warlord government refused to sign the Treaty, it was still passed at the Conference. This event sparked the May Fourth Movement in Beijing. Frustrated with the diplomatic failure and political corruption at large, over three thousand students gathered in Tiananmen Square on May 4, 1919. They shouted “Give Us Back Shandong!” and “Refuse to Sign the Peace Treaty!” For details of the May Fourth Movement, see: ibid., 15.
22 The movement also promoted vernacular literature because classical Chinese was viewed as a crippling legacy of feudalism. Lu Xun, a popular vernacular novelist, described the traditional lexicon as a “crabbed and archaic language” that was “divorced from the mass of the people.” In defying remnants of old culture, the New Culture generation started to deconstruct the 2000-year-long political and moral norms of Confucianism. They rushed forward to take part in the birth of a new nation. For details of Lu Xun’s critique of calligraphy, see: Richard Curt Kraus, Brushes With Power: Modern Politics and the Chinese Art of Calligraphy (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991), 55.
24 According to the sociologist Karl Mannheim, the problem of generations is one of the indispensable guides to an understanding of the structure of social and intellectual movements. It
The 1898 generation was born between the 1860s and the 1870s. In their twenties, they had witnessed the fiasco of the Sino-Japanese War. This defeat motivated them to think beyond materialistic interpretation of Western modernization voiced by earlier conservative reform-minded officials. This materialistic interpretation can be seen in the Qing official Feng Guifen’s argument raised in the 1840s that: “We have only one thing to learn from the barbarians, and that is the strong ships and effective guns.”

When the opportunity to influence imperial policies arose in 1898, many invested their hopes in the reform-minded emperor Guangxu. With his support, they thought that they might be able to constitutionalize China’s political system and grant some enfranchisement to the people. The reforms, however, not only failed to save China from above, but also killed six key advocates of constitutionalism. The 1898 generation was burdened with the disappointment and the failure of the Hundred Days Reform and they were also traumatized by the memory of bloodshed that followed.

In the aftermath of violent crackdown, many intellectuals of the 1898 generation went to study in Japan in their late twenties or early thirties. Carrying the legacy of 1898, they would begin to study Western political thought through the lens of Meiji Japan. They became the generator of the fever of Japanese culture at the turn of twentieth century. Before 1895, there were only 12 works

could also help obtaining a more exact understanding of the accelerated pace of intellectual change characteristic of Liang’s time. To do so, it is crucial to clarify the specific interrelations of the individuals comprising a single generation unit. For details of the concept of generations, see: Karl Mannheim, “The Sociological Problem of Generations,” published online in 2009, http://mediaspace.newmuseum.org/vijpressmaterials/PDFS/ARTICLES_ABOUT_THE_GENERATION/01_The_Sociological_Problem.pdf (accessed February 24, 2015).


26 Some members of the 1898 generation: Qiu Jin (秋瑾 1875-1907), a Chinese revolutionary, feminist and writer, grew up in the southeast coastal province Zhejiang. In the 1890s, she became a
of Japanese literature translated into Chinese, nine of which were translated by the Japanese authors. This figure quickly jumped to 900 between 1896 and 1911.\textsuperscript{27} From 1898 to 1903, 48 titles were published in the forms of books or articles presenting Western political thinkers like Rousseau, Montesquieu, John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer to a Chinese audience.\textsuperscript{28}

The 1898 generation had started out with the hope for a constitutional reform in 1898, but under the influence of Sun Yat-sen, many intellectuals eventually bent their political will toward revolution. The events of 1919, however, revealed that China’s path to modernity was full of troubling questions more than

\textsuperscript{27} For details please see: Philip Huang, \textit{Liang Ch’i-ch’ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism} (Seattle and London, 1972), 77.

\textsuperscript{28} The data cited is from Shen Sung-chiao and Chien Y.S. Sechin, “Turning Slaves into Citizens: Discourses of Guomin and the Construction of Chinese National Identity in Late Qing Period,” in Chien Y.S. Sechin and John Fitzgerald, eds., \textit{The Dignity of Nations} (Hong Kong, 2006), 52. The 1898 generation was also split between constitutionalism and republicanism. They rallied around the leadership of constitutionalists such as Kang Youwei and revolutionaries such as Sun Yat-sen. As (probably) the most senior member of the 1898 generation, Kang’s approach to the reform was more old fashioned. He emphasized the need to petition (qingyuan 請願) authorities. Historically, qingyuan was often practiced among politically conscious literati. They often petitioned to the emperor or local governors to point out policy failure, sufferings of the masses and potential changes that could be prescribed. By contrast, Sun Yat-sen, eight years younger than Kang, believed in revolutions. Growing up in Guangdong and receiving his education in Honolulu and Hong Kong, Sun was exposed to new ideas since adolescence. When he went to college in Hong Kong in 1888, he already developed the idea of overthrowing the Qing. The year after he established Revive China Society, Sun led the first Guangzhou uprising in 1895. Sun’s early political career was the stepping stone for constructing his revolutionary identity. Although Kang Youwei was born in 1858, I still consider him as a member and a pioneer of the 1898 generation. He had involved in propagating reform ideas as early as 1888, which paved the way for the 1898 reform, not to mention that he was the primary leader of the 1898 reform. He was also one of the first intellectuals who pinpointed the importance of learning from Meiji Japan in 1895 before the fever of Japan took place.
satisfying answers. Standing in this multi-generational search for a modern China, how would Liang Qichao define the arduous task of cultivating New Citizens?

Why Liang Qichao?

Liang Qichao was a special member of the 1898 generation. He shared the common traits of generation and yet went beyond its characteristics. First, unlike Sun Yat-sen and other members of the Chinese cohort in Japan, Liang had never received any formal training in Western history, politics or economics at a Western or Japanese institution. His educational experience was based on mentorship with specific individuals. His knowledge of Western thought was largely self-taught. His understanding of Chinese modernity, as a result, was more humanistic. He was more concerned with renewing individuals within the old system rather than renewing the political systems.

As the last reformer to escape the executions of the 1898, Liang was the most traumatized. Nevertheless, he did not become an anti-Qing radical. He was burdened with disappointment and political failure but was not filled with suspicion regarding his constitutionalist ideals. Unlike the revolutionaries, who gave voice to fierce anti-Qing sentiments, Liang did not turn to radical methods to realize his political agenda simply because less violent methods had failed to work. According to the historian of China, Gloria Davies, Liang Qichao did not “lead” a political movement like Kang Youwei and Sun Yat-sen. Although a prominent

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29 At the age of 13, Liang became the student of Mr. Lu in Guangzhou. A year later, he began to study under Mr. Chen in Foshan. In 1887, he went on to receive teaching from Mr. Shi. Liang’s political ideals and intellectual agenda had often been developed through interpersonal relationships. One example is Huang Zunxian (黃遵憲 1848-1905), a famous Qing official, scholar and writer. Under the influence of Huang, Liang became aware of the important role of vernacular language in propagating political concepts in public. Most of Liang’s teachers became his friends and colleagues. For details about Liang’s early education, see: Nianpu, 12-15.
activist, Liang was mainly interested in “writing about and publicizing the cause of reform.”

Furthermore, although Liang was always viewed as a constitutionalist and a protégé of Kang Youwei’s, he actually appreciated the meaning of a revolution. In fact, he thought that a revolution might be conducive to the construction of a civilized society in which public-minded citizens had the ability to exercise civic virtue. He never consciously circumscribed himself to one side or separated himself from the other side. During this age of transitions, there were many voices among the intelligentsia regarding what constituted social progress and how to advance political modernization. Liang Qichao had been part of the first generation to probe the sources of China’s lethargy.

What made Liang stand in a continuum with both earlier and later generations was the fact that he was not compelled to either defend or reject the tradition, or to prioritize Western learning over Chinese traditional culture. He was one of the few who was able to articulate a coherent proposal for a new Chinese worldview in *New Citizens*. The comprehensiveness of his agenda bridged the hopes for a new polity raised by the generation of 1898 and the quest for a new culture purported by the generation of 1919. Liang’s comprehensive


31 According to Gloria Davies, Sun Yat-sen’s ambition of overthrowing the Manchu dynasty to found a modern republic and Kang Youwei’s insistence on constitutional monarchy were matters of expediency rather than of principle for Liang. In the year or so that Liang lived in Japan from late 1898 onwards, editing and writing for the Tokyo-based *Qingyi Bao* (Upright Discussions), a newspaper established on 23 December 1898 two months after his arrival, Liang Qichao began to drift even further from Kang Youwei in both his activities and the ideas he espoused. The crucial six-month stay in Australia from 1900 to 1901 offered Liang Qichao the opportunity of working closely with Sun towards promoting the revolutionist cause. When Liang founded *New Citizens Journal* in 1902, he began advocate radical views about revolutions. For details see: ibid., 68-72.

32 Generations before and after 1898 had involved in social and political inquiries of a Chinese modernity. For example, Yan Fu (1854-1921), a Chinese scholar and translator, first translated works of Adam Smith, Thomas Huxley, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill into Chinese and contributed greatly to the learning of the West.
view remains historically relevant for an exploration of the possibility of democracy in China. For me, Liang Qichao became both a means and an end. This thesis enabled me to deepen a conversation about the issues of democracy and civic virtue.

**Moral Self-Realization**

Liang Qichao had spent 14 years in Japan, on the forefront of the East-West intellectual encounter. According to historian Hiroko Wilock, Liang’s views of nationalism and civic virtue were influenced by the Japanese enlightenment writer Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) and his notion of *jitsugaku* (pragmatic learning). By embracing *jitsugaku*, Liang was able to examine the relationship between individuals and state, and to develop his appreciation of “moral self-realization” in terms of “self-reliance, self-respect and the spirit of independence.” These concepts became important elements in Liang’s definition of civic virtue and social morality. Over time, they became building blocks for the independence of nation.

Liang Qichao’s conception of civic virtue resembles that of John Locke in that it includes “self-denial, liberality, justice, courage, civility, industry, and truthfulness.” Liang, however, had different views about the relationship between public and private. According to Peter Berkowitz, Locke had believed that the specific virtues upon which the public good depended were learned in private life. In other words, it is virtue in the private sphere that gives rise to the possibility of public good. Liang, instead, thought that the notion of “public” and “public good” did not come after the cultivation of private life. He did not stress a

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sequential order for which of the two had to be advanced first.

Instead, Liang Qichao viewed the existence of the public sphere as a force of social gravity. People hardly thought of gravity as shaping who they were because it was so omnipresent. They often overlooked the social gravity that acted much like physical gravity did. In *New Citizens*, Liang had addressed the existence of the public (i.e. the nation) and the importance of realizing that social gravity had the power to bind together the life of citizens. What individuals needed to do was to activate an inner moral fiber for the reception of public good in order to improve the impoverished ethics regarding state and society.

In *New Citizens*, Liang had tried to elucidate the notion of *gong* (公 public) and *gongde* (公德 public morality or public ethics). According to the work of Professor Stephen Angle, Liang Qichao had identified *gongde* as “a complex of group-oriented values that needed to be injected into his people’s moral consciousness if China was to survive and its people to flourish.” To understand the notions of *gong* and *gongde*, it is crucial to examine Liang’s conceptions of *qun* (群 group) and *guo* (國 nationhood). Liang’s defense of the concept of nation is not entirely a Hobbesian rationalization for sovereign. Liang, not only pinpointed the necessity of building a state, but also appealed to the public to love

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36 Angle points out that the group which Liang considers most important is “the nationality (minzu 民族) along with its political embodiment, the state (guo國).” Liang believed that the Chinese people should come to realize the important role of state in shaping individual life, because without the state, individuals would have no place to exercise their own abilities. The state, according to Liang, gave its citizens security and peace and protected them from unstrained competition caused by unrestrainable desires. Only by forming a group could individuals achieve mutual benefit and mutual aid.
the nation and therefore become patriotic. He argued in *New Citizens* that, “it is beneficial to suppress your private will to love the nation.”

According to Angle, when Liang Qichao discussed “groups,” the responsibilities involved were always “between individuals within the groups” and “never between an individual and the group.” Nonetheless, as this thesis is going to demonstrate, Liang’s emphasis on the responsibilities between an individual and the group was amply manifested in his notion of “loving the nation.” It is the awareness of responsibility to the public that strengthened mutual responsibilities between individuals. Under this condition, individuals move from their private will to the benefit of general will.

Eamonn Callan, a philosopher of education, identifies the key elements of public life as a constellation of “attitudes, habits, and abilities that people acquire as they grow up.” These include “a willingness to share one’s own answer with others and to heed the many opposing answers; an active commitment to the good of the polity.” Using Callan’s paradigm, this thesis examines Liang Qichao’s career in journalism, political engagement and education efforts. At the same time, I aim to show how Liang’s entire personal life had revolved around the goal of expanding channels for participation in public life. His career, in fact, exemplifies the responsibilities between the individual and the public (i.e. the nation)

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39 In Liang’s discussion of Rousseau’s doctrines, Liang says that general benefit is the object of the “general will (gongyi 公意) and is unchanging. He adds that people do not always desire the general benefit: they often follow their individual wills (siyi 私意) and desire only selfish benefit. For details please refer to Ibid., 70.
41 Ibid., 2.
Weaving Moral Fibers

The key focus in my discussion of Liang’s evolving lexicon for citizenship concerns the interplay between emotion and reason in his writings. At the turn of the twentieth century, external changes in the political, social and cultural spheres led to changing languages and evolving lexicons. Liang Qichao’s essays mirrored this reality. *New Citizens* among all of Liang’s writings, is contextually and conceptually rich because it reflects the interaction between an old political mindset and new concepts for public ethics. The dilemmas of cultivating civic virtue in turbulent historical condition became apparent in Liang Qichao’s personal struggle to define Chinese nationalism and civic virtue. All of these issues are embedded in the words themselves.

Learning Japanese and studying Japanese literature were not an entirely gratifying experience for Liang. They were completed in such a haste that accuracy of understanding and translation became nearly impossible. This difficulty was also reflected in the work of Yan Fu and that of many other Chinese intellectuals who had tried to seek inspiration in foreign literatures. For Liang Qichao, there was not much time to dig into existing studies of modernization. The urgency of awakening the Chinese public and cultivating new citizens was

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42 In Western philosophical context, “virtue” refers to thought or behavior guided by high moral standards. “Virtues” are attitudes, dispositions, or character traits that enable us to be and to act in ways that allow full development of humanities. Honesty, courage, compassion, fidelity, integrity, and self-control are all examples of virtues. “Ethics” represent the philosophical examination of what constitutes right and wrong or good and bad behavior. “Morality” is defined by the function of applying ethical principles (such as moral behavior). While acknowledging the distinctions among these three concepts, this thesis used “virtue,” “morality” as well as “ethics” frequently. This is because the intellectual landscape that conditioned Liang’s evolving thought was characterized by the tension between civic virtue and Confucian ethics. It is difficult to draw a line between virtue and ethics. The Chinese word for morality, *daode*, emphasizes the path (*dao*, the way) to attaining virtue (*de*). The title of this thesis uses “moral fibers,” instead of “ethical” or “virtuous” fibers. This suggests that Liang’s contribution to the construction of civic society lies not simply in his definition of “civic virtue,” but also in his search for the path to virtue.
overwhelming. In addition, unlike Yan Fu, Liang did not regard depth of understanding as an indispensible ingredient for public enlightenment.

Besides the pressure of a unique historical context, the tension between emotion (qing 情) and reason (li 理) also affected greatly Liang’s writings. For instance, his turbulent feelings towards China and the traditional Chinese culture played a key role in justifying nationalism. His concerns and worries about China’s future heightened the importance of developing a firm concept of nation and love for the nation (patriotism). Nevertheless, Liang’s voice was always shadowed by classical references that appealed to the readers and were used to illustrate novel principles.

Intense consciousness and cognition did not block Liang’s stream of thought. They propelled it forward. For his readers, the blending of emotion and reason in Liang’s language strengthened his argument. This is because reading Chinese is a different experience from reading English. Reading English, as some scholars have shown, is a reasoning process in which judgment and critique of the argument depend upon logic. Reading Chinese, however, is different. As the early twentieth century philosopher Chang Tung-sun argued: “Chinese thought is not based upon the law of identity.” The absence of the law of identification and the lack of a specific subject in Chinese language lead to a particular way of reading Chinese texts. I call this “wu (悟).” The “subject” is not meant to be illustrated

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44 I would like to name the verb for “read” in the context of reading Chinese as wu (悟). This word does not actually have an English translation. The character 悟 is composed of the stroke for heart “忄” and the character of 吾 (wu, self). Wu encompasses all activities that have to be completed with your heart: thinking, reflecting, learning, feeling, empathizing, etc. The lack of subjectivity in Chinese language actually enables readers to play with subjectivity of understanding. Without the law of identification in constructing an argument in Chinese, the “self” of the readers is flowing around or above the text, but hardly merged into text, allowing much room for imagination and
in the language. Rather, it is embedded in reader’s own emotional encounter with the material. In the process of reading Liang’s *New Citizens*, digesting the meanings of civic virtue should be viewed as the work of the heart, not just the reception of an argument.

The final aspect of Liang Qichao’s language explored in this thesis centers upon vernacularization. This was part of the larger project of popularizing concepts of nation through political fiction (a popular but unrefined form of literature). For this project, Liang had to give up his familiar way of self-expression in classical Chinese, and adopt new ways of writing. Living in this time of turbulent change, literary expression could produce awkward and confused forms of writing that were neither vernacular nor classical (*ban wen bu bai* 半文不白). Liang’s writings, however, were genuinely vernacular and gracefully classical. He did not sacrifice the aesthetic and conceptual depth of classical characters for the sake of simplifying literary styles. He contributed significantly to the vernacularization of modern Chinese language, but not to the vernacularization of Chinese values.

**Politics of Language**

J. G. A. Pocock, a historian of political thought, stressed that it is important to “move away from emphasizing the ‘history of thought’” and favored emphasizing “the ‘history of speech’ or the ‘history of discourse.’” It is not enough to understand what ideas are being proposed, but also what allows them to be expressed in a particular lexicon.

Tracing linguistic vestiges for the context of the enunciation of a concept reflections. This way of writing, which was used by Liang Qichao, empowered his words not just to speak to the readers, but talk with them.

allows us to understand more than merely ideas. It enables us to vivify “the system of implicit assumptions” and personal feelings “built into the very exercise of political practice.”

Political languages often consist of “conceptors” (concepts of concepts). Tracing linguistic vestiges thus helps to identify conceptors in Liang Qichao’s works and to answer the question of how conceptual change was produced through Liang’s intellectual discourse.

In order to look into the relationship between lexicons and political ideas, thinking and feeling, this thesis builds upon Elisabeth Kaske’s work in The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895-1919 as well as David Strand’s An Unfinished Republic, Leading By Word and Deed in Modern China.

Details about Liang’s life, writings and social networks are referenced in thesis from the 1999 version of Liang Qichao Quanji (A Full Collection of Liang Qichao’s Writings) as well as the 2009 version of Liang Qichao Nianpu Changbian (The Grand Annals of Liang Qichao). In reconstructing Liang Qichao’s thought process, I was also helped by the work of Taiwanese scholar Zhang Pengyuan in his Zhishi Fenzi yu Jindai Zhongguo de Xiandaihua (Intellectuals and China’s Modernization).

**Tangled Up In Dreams…or Nightmares?**

Liang’s writings in New Citizens had a far-reaching influence. Mao Zedong read Liang Qichao’s work in 1910 and learned the importance of civic virtue in modernizing the nation. Mao once told American journalist Edgar Snow that “I used to read Liang Qichao’s New Citizens Journal over and over again.

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47 Ibid.
until I could recite it. I admired Liang Qichao. Nevertheless, he took a different approach. For Mao, living out the life of “new citizens” preceded contemplating civic virtues. Cultivating political consciousness became an experiential rather than intellectual discourse.

Guided by this principle, Mao founded his own New Citizens Society (Xinmin Xuehui 新民學會) in 1918. The society was a close-knit organization dedicated to building new personalities through communal life. The mission of the society was as follows: “Members of the institute constitute the cells of this organic life body. All of us will live a new life together.” In Mao Zedong’s eyes, Liang’s new citizen ideal was too elitist and too narrow. According to Mao’s political language, individuals don’t have to learn about civic virtue to become virtuous, they are inherently virtuous. After 1949 and the founding of People’s Republic of China, the notion of citizens became increasingly synonymous with “the people.” Min (公民 citizens) was then often combined with ren (人 humans) to refer to citizens (renmin 人民 people), meaning that anyone could be a citizen. Over time, as the thesis shows, citizens were turned into atomistic particles of an autocratic collectivity.

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50 Mao’s efforts to fill the gap between political thinking and political action became increasingly anti-virtue and violent. Without an awareness of public good, the individual’s participation in public life was largely driven by selfish sentiments and desires. For instance, during the Cultural Revolution, Mao’s call to revolutionize the traditional culture led young people to start mass killings of their professors in the name of breaking the hierarchy between teachers and students. Handing over the power of defining public moral good to the people ended up destroying public moral by itself.
The dessication of virtue in the People’s Republic is manifested in the shrinking of linguistic expression. One symptom of this oversimplification of political language was the creation of a checklist for civic virtues to be memorized by the general public. The diminishing of virtue also led to the dessication of artistic expression. Painter Pan Tianshou (潘天壽 1897-1971), for example, was executed during the Cultural Revolution because of his painting “Red Lotus.” In the painting, Pan used a lot of black color to depict the muck above which he towered a verdant red blossom. Given that red color represented the Party and Chairman Mao, Pan’s use of blackness was seen as a sign of anti-Party and anti-Mao attitudes.51

During the past several decades, linguistic and artistic expressions were turned into ideological weapons for clamping down public opinions that go against the Party’s agenda. Loving the Party has become synonymous with loving China.

**Clouds and Threads**

In mainland China, Liang Qichao has been portrayed as patriotic (and yet frustrated) historical figure. He is always mentioned together with his constitutionalist teacher Kang Youwei and thus is regarded as a constitutional conservative. Yet this mainstream narrative of Liang’s life barely touches upon his transformational experience in Japan, which had exposed him to a definition of nationalism far beyond the debate between constitutionalism and republicanism. By emphasizing Liang Qichao’s role in the overthrow of Qing court, the Party has

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51 Pan Tianshou painted “Red Lotus” in 1963, at a time when the Maoist regime was recovering from the painful extremism of the Great Leap Forward. In this work, Pan managed to capture both the darkness of soil that had seeded the death of millions of starving peasants as well as the fragile beauty that can emerge from troubled roots. For details, see: Vera Schwarcz, *Colors of Veracity: A Quest For Truth in China and Beyond* (Honolulu, 2014), 70.
boxed Liang into a narrow paradigm of China’s modernization. In the Party’s narrative, it does not matter whether if a particular individual was a constitutionalist or a republican. They were all “losers” in the history. Under the brush of Communist authorities, Liang Qichao, Kang Youwei, Sun Yat-sen are all blended into one monotonous color that only serves to highlight the progressive redness of the Chinese Communist Party. A major high school history syllabus states the following:

Liang Qichao did not want to overthrow the monarch. He believed that the emperor’s power should be reserved before political rights are granted to the public, because the public had not yet acquired the basic political knowledge and consciousness. Therefore, Liang is a compromising and wavering figure because he still retained illusion about the monarchy system.\(^\text{52}\)

This thesis interrogates such Party-approved historical narratives that always paint historical characters in sharp colors.

In mainland Chinese scholarship, Liang Qichao is a crucial research subject. There are many biographies about him. For instance Xie Xizhang’s new book *Liang Qichao Zhuan (The Biography of Liang Qichao)*, portrays Liang as a man of wisdom and conscience with little reference to the issue of language and lexicon that shaped his evolving historical views. This thesis, by contrast, is not a mere hagiography of Liang Qichao.

Liang Qichao is often brought back and given a voice that suits the need of public narratives. Liang is often referenced for his critique China’s “corrupt” feudal past. A thesis by Guo Qian endeavors to remind the Chinese public of how

\(^{52}\) Translation of “梁启超不主张废除君主制, 而是在保留君权前提下给予人民一定的参政权利, 其理由是“民智未开”。说明他对封建统治者还抱有幻想（妥协性、软弱性）。” From http://wenku.baidu.com/view/e80c2309a6c30c2259019e1f.html (accessed January 24, 2015).
feudal rulers deprived commoners of political rights and hindered the cultivation of political consciousness.  

And yet, what makes Liang’s words relevant in the contemporary context is not the fact that they criticize the authoritarian nature of absolute monarchy. Rather, what is most important in the argument of this thesis is how his writings enlightened the public and made the society aware of civic rights. Liang should not be reduced to a critic of political affairs, or a pedantic intellectual preaching to the public about self-cultivation. Rather, as this thesis shows, he can be envisioned as a mentoring voice whose tender and enlightening words can illuminate the mind of every Chinese.

In the Western and Taiwanese scholarship, Liang Qichao is also a crucial figure in modern Chinese history. The most important works I have consulted for these perspectives are: Joseph Levenson’s *Liang Ch'i-Ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China*, Phillip Huang’s *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism*, and Chang Hao’s *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China*. These books capture important elements in Liang’s political thinking and examine its significance from authors’ individual perspective. They all, however, do not dwell upon the analytical concerns of this thesis.

Philip Huang’s book is a thorough examination of the evolution of Liang’s political thought. He traces the impact of Japanese political theories and Western

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theories on Liang in the early twentieth century. Most of the time, Huang represents Liang’s political views through the lens of liberalism. For example, he elaborates the particular kind of nationalism and liberty that Liang envisioned by writing, “liberty, according to Liang, is a universal principle, a necessary condition of life and is applicable everywhere.”\textsuperscript{54, 55}

Huang notices that Liang’s volume of writing decreased after 1903 and that he did not regain his productivity until after 1917 when he finally withdrew from the political arena to give his full attention to scholarship. Huang argues that between 1903 and 1917, Liang increasingly sees himself as a statesman. That’s why he concludes that “enlightened despotism” dominated Liang’s thinking from that period. For instance, Huang quotes Liang’s writing that “The more I have studied political problems during this past year, the more convinced I am that there can be no hope for China’s future unless I return to take the reins of government.”\textsuperscript{56} In fact, Huang’s criticism of various inconsistencies in Liang’s thought mistakes action for thinking and confuses literary expression with reflections. No matter that he was engaged in journalism, politics or education, Liang aimed to create a social discourse that would educate the public. As my thesis argues, service in politics in from 1911 to 1917 had been demeaning for Liang. Worried words about political chaos cannot be interpreted as proof of his anti-liberal thought.

\textsuperscript{54} Philip Huang, \textit{Liang Ch’i-ch’ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism} (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1972), 69.

\textsuperscript{55} Huang emphasizes that Liang was still “more concerned with the welfare of Chinese society and of the Chinese nation than with the interests of individuals per se.” He calls this idea “enlightened despotism” and notes that “Liang could not help but be concerned first and foremost with the sovereignty and survival of the Chinese nation.” Huang contrasts this limited liberalism with John Mill’s theory of liberty. By doing this, Huang portrays the concepts of nation and of individuality as two opposing ideas, while neglecting the possible homogeneity of “nation” and “individuals” in the consciousness of Liang Qichao. For details, see Ibid., 72-83.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 100.
Joseph Levenson calls Liang Qichao “a brilliant scholar, journalist, and political figure who contributed heavily to modern Chinese history and helped unwittingly to reveal its meaning.”\textsuperscript{57} According to Levenson, Liang had showed that newspapers and magazines could serve as an effective medium for the communication political ideas. Levenson deploys many methodologies including psychology and philosophy to decode historical significance of this influential figure.\textsuperscript{58} Levenson believes that Liang was able to differentiate the transient from the permanent aspects of the traditional Chinese culture. Nevertheless, according to Levenson, Liang condensed his emotions in disjointed words which resulted in inconsistencies. Levenson attributes this phenomenon to the particular historical context in which life at its deepest levels becomes a series of unresolved conundrums:

Intellectual history is made by tension between an idea as thought at a particular time and place, by a particular person, who derives it from what he can see in the objective world around him, and the idea in a hypothetically abstract, logical state. Since every man lives in history, every idea thought by men must be colored by this particularity, kept by time from the white nirvana of absolute logical coherency.\textsuperscript{59}

Levenson places great emphasis on the impact of historical condition on Liang’s thought: the influence of the Western ideology, military forces and economic power. He suggests that Liang’s emotional and intellectual activities were largely a reaction to Western impact upon China. Through examining Liang’s language and his evolving lexicon, this thesis aims to extend Levenson’s argument about

\textsuperscript{57} Joseph Levenson, Preface in \textit{Liang Ch‘i-Ch’ao and the Mind of Modern China} (Los Angeles, 1970).

\textsuperscript{58} Levenson is perceptive in pointing out the tension between feelings and reasons, which is also an analytical theme in my thesis. Levenson argues that Liang was not dealing with static concepts reflected in logical propositions. Instead, he was dealing with a reality in flux, in which case intuitive apprehension becomes a guiding light.

\textsuperscript{59} Levenson, \textit{Liang Ch‘i-Ch‘ao and the Mind of Modern China}, 153.
the tension between historical force and inner reflections in Liang Qichao’s thought.

Taiwanese historian Chang Hao, wrote *Liang Ch'i-Ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China* in order to challenge the tyranny of “Levensonism” in Western scholarship about Liang Qichao. Chang Hao emphasizes the awareness of the inner variety of the Chinese tradition, which is necessary to understand China’s response to the West. According to Chang, it is mainly a particular set of concerns and problems inherited from Confucian tradition that colored Chinese intellectuals’ response to the Western impact in the late Qing. As he put it succinctly: “We cannot appreciate these considerations unless we begin with the inner dimension of Confucian tradition.”60 Chang does not define Liang’s concern with civic virtue theory in terms of Western theories of individualism or liberalism. Unlike Phillip Huang, Chang does not challenge the coexistence of liberal and despotic elements in Liang’s thought. Instead, Chang engages in a tradition-based analysis of *New Citizens*. According to this author, Confucian ethics played a crucial part in the formulation of Liang’s New Citizens.

Chang Hao’s portrait of Liang Qichao as a man of traditional sensitivity, though it challenges Levenson’s emphasis on Sino-West encounter, has its own problems. Chang positions himself in a defensive traditionalism stance in which “sino” remains to be defined. Chang’s book focuses on the period between 1890 and 1907. During these eighteen years period, Liang’s views and perspectives on tradition and modernity had changed rapidly. His opinions about the relationship between emperor and the masses departed from Kang Youwei’s model due to the

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Japanese influence.\textsuperscript{61} Chang Hao, however, does not fully address the role of Japanese literature upon Western theories that affected Liang’s worldviews.

Liang was not simply defending tradition in the times of modernity. This would have made him traditionalistic rather than traditional. Liang’s reinterpretation of Confucianism, traditional ethics and classical literature was not simply a reassertion or defense of tradition. Liang saw values elsewhere but remained emotionally tied to his tradition and his history. Liang’s changing ideas represented a continuous adjustment of the changing outer perceptions.

None of the three authors discussed about the issue of language and an evolving lexicon that links emotions and concepts. When an actuality is not understood its name is brought forward; when its name is not understood it is illustrated; when the illustration is not understood it is explained. Translated modernity posed many linguistic and conceptual challenges, which were woven into the powerful \textit{and} powerless language at a time of vehement social and intellectual transformation. At the height of social and political changes, the nucleus of thinking and feelings lies in words that the language cannot bear. Nevertheless, we could trace the process of reflection through bearable words. Therefore, studying Liang’s political thought requires a thorough exploration of his subtle language. Liang was highly skilled with metaphors, which conveyed his reasoning and feelings at the time of writing.

\textit{Rereading Liang Qichao}

My command of simplified Chinese, classical Chinese and English helped to penetrate Liang’s complex writings. Liang’s perception of nationalism and

\textsuperscript{61} According to Ding Wenjiang, “in 1899, Liang began to read about “national interests and civil rights” and “destructionism,” which showed changes in his thinking and views.” Translation of “先生讀《國權與民權》《破壞主義》，均可見他思想和見解轉變情形。” From Nianpu, 127.
civic virtue was built upon his language background—excellent classical Chinese, fluent vernacular Chinese but limited English. Liang Qichao’s learning and working experiences resemble my own experiences at Wesleyan. Thus I was able to put myself into his mental framework.

Furthermore, with the simplified Chinese lexicon that is my native language, I read Liang’s essays in classical Chinese and wrote about them in English. This whole process also deepened my understanding of the multi-layered complexity of Liang Qichao’s thought and how an impoverished and depthless language like that of the Chinese mainland cages one’s thinking.

Towards the end of my research process, I became fascinated by Xu Gang’s new book *The Youth’s China Dream: Rereading Liang Qichao* (少年中國夢 再讀梁啓超). I realized that I am not alone in this journey of recovering Liang’s voice for a Chinese public. In the form of historical fiction, Xu had vivified and dramatized Liang at different stages of his life: an ambitious and hardworking student, a knowledgeable and charismatic journalist, a patriotic and virtuous civil servant. I am personally touched by Xu Gang’s effort to enliven Liang’s voice. Xu helped me realize again that one cannot penetrate another’s thought unless in some measure it becomes one’s own thought.

Xu and I both view Liang Qichao as a torchbearer who disperses the dark clouds hovering over the hearts and minds of our countrymen. As an implicit rejection of President Xi Jinping’s Chinese Dream propaganda, the title of this Xu’s book, “youths’ China dream,” reveals a great deal. Dreams of China’s future need not be subject to state interpretation. They reflect our own hopes for China’s past, present and future.
Xu Gang vivifies Liang Qichao as a patriotic role model for contemporary readers. The agenda of this thesis goes beyond that. Xu’s Liang Qichao interrogates the present on a moral grounds. As the Party uses people’s desire for material satisfaction in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution and decides what historical truths may be written and published, Xu Gang’s novel reflects an appreciation of public ethics that has been lost. This thesis, by contrast, aims to explore and expose this amnesia through Liang’s own writings in New Citizens.

I hope that the strength that had empowered Liang Qichao, Xu Gang and myself to raise critical questions about the future China, may have an impact upon a materialism-driven public today. If the moral fibers of a very corrupt world could grow a bit stronger, all of us might be enriched, and ready to become genuine New Citizens. As Liang put it:

吾所謂新民者，以獨立精神立於大地也。62

*New Citizens are those who would be able to establish themselves with independent spirit.*

In the dark times, however, when the sword of corrupt power slashes moral fibers, the challenge of establishing oneself can be extremely difficult. The first step to become independent may be to escape prosecution by such powers. The strength to escape is more than just a product of courage. It represents the force of moral will.

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Chapter One

Since I Have Found A Way To Escape

I cried for a man
a man of will
who sacrificed his life for his motherland,
many more followed his path.

Yet I bow my head,
face fierce mountains
lying ahead of me
on my way to the East.

—Liang Qichao “Leaving China” 去國行 1898
On the night of September 22, 1898, Liang Qichao met the young and ardent reformer Tan Sitong (譚嗣同 1865-1898) in the Japanese embassy in Beijing. Liang had no idea that this was to be their last meeting. Neither did he expect that six days later, Tan would be beheaded by the Qing court.

The image above is an illustration of a beheading at Caishikou Execution Grounds right outside of the Forbidden City in Beijing. This was the place where Tan Sitong was beheaded on September 28, 1898 at the age of 33.

“Since I have found the way to escape, why not go with me?” Liang tried to persuade Tan.1 Tan replied, “Reforms in all nations started with bloodshed. Until today, no one has died for reforms in China. That is why we have achieved no progress for our nation! Now, the chance has come. Let the bloodshed for progress start with me!”

**Carrying The Cause**

The event that led to Tan Sitong’s execution was the Hundred Days Reform (June 11- September 21, 1898). It lasted only for 103 days and was eventually cracked down upon by the Qing conservatives. Tan Sitong and Liang Qichao, who initiated this reform in the first place, were on the Qing list for the crime of treason.

Liang managed to find shelter at the Japanese embassy in Beijing with the help of his friend, Japanese diplomat Hayashi Gonsuke (林樺助 1860-1939), who was serving as secretary there. Hayashi assisted Liang to escape to exile in Japan by secretly helping him board a Japanese military naval vessel. Tan Sitong, eight years

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1 Translation of “既然東渡，兄為何不作逃亡之伴呢。” from Xu Gang, *Shaonian Zhongguo Meng: Zai Du Liang Qichao (The Youths China Dream: Rereading Liang Qichao)* (Beijing, 2011), 75.
2 Translation of “各國變法，無不從流血而成。今中國未聞有因而流血者，此國之所以不昌也。有之，請自嗣同始! ” from Liang Qichao, “Tan Sitong Zhuan (On Tan Sitong),” in *Quanji*, 233.
older than Liang, had committed himself to advocating the reform earlier on. He took a more radical path to awaken the public through self-sacrifice. While Tan stayed, Liang set off for Tokyo.

Mythologizing witnesses reported that when the executioner cut off Tan’s head, the blood burst out as high as three meters, a sign of extreme indignation.³ Did this brutal and unjust execution trigger any public discontent? In the Qing Dynasty, Caishikou was the major execution ground where people who committed severe crimes were beheaded in public. After the execution, the bodies would be removed and the blood would be covered by sand. Afterwards, grocery vendors would resume their business and serve customers on the same site. Caishikou literally means grocery market gate.

Even today, Caishikou is still a prosperous business center in Beijing.⁴ Many five-star hotels are nearby. Tan Sitong's former residence, now a museum, is just 500 meters away from the former execution site.

Throughout modern history, every corner of Beijing could be said to have a fragrance of prosperity as well as of the scent of bloody violence. People have been used to

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³ For details about the consequence of the late Qing reform, see: Wuxu Reform (Wuxu Bianfa) Volume 4, compiled by Zhongguo Jindaishi Ziliao (Shanghai, 2006), 66-67.
⁴ Image below from Baidu.
counting cash on dead bodies, just like those grocery vendors and buyers did over a hundred years ago. Who can still hear Tan’s cries of “Let the bloodshed for progress start with me!”?

The public indifference to execution became a focal concern for the Chinese novelist and literary critic, Lu Xun (鲁迅 1881-1936), who remarked upon “the passivity of the onlookers.” In the preface of his short story collection Nahan (Outcry), Lu Xun recalled an unforgettable experience in Japan when he was studying Western medicines there. Once he was watching a movie about the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). The Japanese medical students were roused into a patriotic frenzy by scenes of the war. One scene showed a Chinese prisoner about to be executed in Manchuria by a Japanese soldier and the caption described this man as a Russian spy. Lu Xun recounted that the lack of responsiveness to sacrifice shown in the expression on the faces of the Chinese bystanders troubled him deeply.

Could reforms save China from this collective passivity? Tan Sitong was gone, and the answer was left for Liang Qichao to figure out. Death, for men of courage, was not a difficult choice. For the living Liang Qichao, carrying on the cause after Tan’s death, however, proved to be challenging. On September 28, 1898, on the ship to Japan, Liang knew that their country’s tragedy was greater than this hurried parting.

In 1899, a lexicon for “nationhood (guo 国)” began to emerge in Liang Qichao’s writing. In one the first essays about guo entitled “Worrying About the Nation and Loving the Nation,” Liang wrote: “Worry makes one indignant. Love
"pushes one forward." When he began to outline the concept of guo, it was tangled in the dilemma of loving the nation and worrying about the nation. This dilemma was manifested in the contrasting paths taken by Tan Sitong and Liang in the fall of 1898. Because Tan Sitong had invested his efforts in the reform movement much longer than had Liang, Tan’s worry about the nation’s misery overshadowed his love of the country. Liang Qichao in 1898, however, had transformed his concern with China’s future into the determination to find way out for the nation. It was this manner of escape that would lead him to find the spirit of independence.

**Black Smoke and Sinking Ships**

Independence of spirit was a goal for Liang to seek in exile, but it was beyond the imagination for the millions of Chinese that he had left behind. Downtrodden have become numb from constant oppression. According to Jonathan Spence, Hegel described the Chinese people in this way: “The burden which presses them to the ground, seems to them to be their inevitable destiny: and it appears nothing terrible to them to sell themselves as slaves, and to eat the bitter bread of slavery.”

To envisage this numbing predicament, it is helpful to look more deeply at photograph depicting Chinese coolie laborers and foreign businessmen in a factory in 1875.

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5 Translation of “憂國之言，使人作憤激之氣，愛國之言，使人厲進取之心。” From Liang Qichao, “Youguo yu Aiguo (Worrying About the Nation and Loving the Nation),” 1899, in Quanjí, 358.
6 Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York, 1990), 136.
7 Goodrich, L. Carrington, and Nigel Cameron, *The Face of China As Seen by Photographers & Travelers, 1860-1912* (New York, 1978), 35.
In the image, the foreigners’ eyesight was directed to the photographer, their bodies repose with ease. The coolies, by contrast have a scattered gaze, some were facing other directions and were completely disengaged, as if they were distracted by something else. Others, although gazing at the photographer, looked restrained, somnolent and hollow.

The Marxist theory of imperialism and exploitation might well explain the socioeconomic forces that brought about this particular exploiter-exploited relationship. Nevertheless, it did not explain this inner disorientation. Why and how did the destiny of eating the bitter bread of slavery become “inevitable” the Chinese? In the early nineteenth century, opium flooded into China. Smoking opium quickly became a widely adopted social habit. Jonathan Spence traces a number of motives for using opium: sexual (it was regarded as an aphrodisiac), recreational and psychological (relief from stress), intellectual (students believed it helped them in examinations) and social (“greater social ease”), etc.8 9

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8 Jonathan Spence, “Opium Smoking in Ch’ing China,” in Fredric Wakeman, Jr., and Carolyn Grant, eds., Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975), 143-73.
Two opium wars broke out starting in 1839. The British fought all the way to from Pearl River to Shanghai unobstructed, and they won both wars. As a result, China ceded Hong Kong and other coastal treaty ports and paid tons of silver in indemnity payments. Some awareness of the importance in strengthening national military force first dawned on the Qing court. This awareness is epitomized by the quote: “We have only one thing to learn from the barbarians, and that is the strong ships and effective guns.” The Qing official Feng Guifen (馮桂芬 1809-1874) addressed this view to the court in the early 1840s. The court then began to build a more modern navy, military force as well as industries. It also launched a program to send students overseas to learn western technology and improve the domestic education system. The Self-strengthening Movement was underway.

9 The taking of opium derivatives has the effect of “slowing down and blurring the world around one,” “making time stretch and fade” and “shifting complex or painful realities to an infinite distance.” The habit grew rapidly during late Qing along with a burst in population growth. From late 17th century to the end of 18th century, the population of China more than doubled. From 1779 to 1850, there was another 56% increase, bringing the total population to 430 million. It was possible that population growth increased social stresses. In this case, smoking opium immediately became an outlet for releasing boredom and pressure. By late nineteenth century, many eunuchs, women, coolie laborers and peasants became addicted to opium. As a result, the Chinese became more and more somnolent. In Liang Qichao’s word, China at that time was “gloomy and tumultuous (yinyu buning 陰鬱不寧).” Facing this problem, the Qing court tried to act off the immoral opium trade with the British because it was poisonous and injured China. In 1839, the Qing Commissioner Lin Zexu confiscated opium from the British traders and local smokers and burned it in the bay area of Humen, Canton. The black smoke hovered around the coast for six days-- it did not awake the Chinese but it did anger the British. For historical facts about opium trade, see: Jonathan D. Spence, The Search for Modern China (New York, 1990), 131. “Qing China’s Internal Crisis: Land Shortage, Famine, Rural Poverty.” Asia For Educators [http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1750_demographic.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1750_demographic.htm) (accessed January 28, 2015). J. Lewis Shuck, Portfolio Chinensis: A Collection of Authentic Chinese State Papers (Washington, 1840), 129.

For Liang’s reaction about opium, see: Liang Qichao, “Qingdai Xueshu Bianqian yu Zhengzhi de Yingxiang,” 1924, in Quanji, 4439.

The year 1895 turned into a nightmare. China lost the Sino-Japan war, ceded Taiwan and paid millions of silver to the Japanese. The Beiyang Fleet, the major imperial navy built during the Self-strengthening Movement, was destroyed. What was unbearable was not the defeat itself, but the fact that after China had been building its military, learning western technology, advancing the education system for over thirty years (1861-1895). Now, it lay crushed, and not by the powerful west but by its tiny neighboring country, Japan.  

The following satirical map created in from 1900 to 1904 by revolutionary Tse Tsan-tai showed how Western powers carved up China like a melon during the late nineteenth century. The title of the map read “The Current Situation.” The words on the two sides warned readers that the situation had become so dreadful that “you would be aware of it by simply looking at this map.” The Chinese phrase “一目了然 (yi mu liao ran)” means “it is so obvious to you that you can grasp it in one glance.”

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For me, this looked a bit different the first time I came across it. In high school, I glimpsed this map in a history exam. The national flags were taken out and I was asked to identify which animal represented which Western power. I always confused the English tiger with the French toad. For a 16-year-old back in 2009, the intense concern with the fate of a broken China that had haunted the late Qing intellectual terrain felt distant. For the public in 1898, it was also distant, not chronologically, but psychologically.

**Poisonous Worms**

For the public, it was not the concern with the country’s future, but the fear of the foreigners, that was the first public emotion to awaken. Ordinary Chinese felt more fear than worry. Fear was a source of outrage and physical confrontation. It served the need for self-protection and led to call for the destruction of the foreigners. Xenophobia became pervasive in the Chinese society by the end of the nineteenth century.
In 1870, rumors spread throughout China concerning Catholic Church activities. Because Catholic nuns had been active in bringing children into their orphanages, sometimes with the inducement of payment to foster families or orphanages which led illicit child-brokers to engage in kidnapping. Residents in the city of Tianjin believed that missionaries removed the eyes of unwitting Chinese for medical uses.

One possible explanation of this xenophobic tradition was a kind of spatial mysticism. The architectural design of a Catholic church was sealed up. Unlike Confucian temples, whose gates were widely open to the outsiders, churches were usually closed to the outside during worship time. The Chinese were not comfortable with this kind of public setting and they quickly started to picture and imagine what was going on in the church. Even though foreign missionaries and Chinese locals lived shared living community, this physical cohabitation still failed to cancel out psychological impact of spatial mysticism in which spatial distances and mysteriousness resulted in psychological disturbances.

When people feel unsure about something, they tend to mystify and demonize it. This is what happened to the Chinese public’s attitude towards foreigners. Foreigners, always referred to as “people coming from overseas (yangren 洋人 ocean people),” were a kind of strange and formidable creature to the Chinese. They were seen as fearful, detestable, and powerful. The image below was an 1839 Chinese sketch of a British sailor, characterized in the shape of a puffing monster with black fur.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{13}\) The image is from Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 131.
In Chinese fairy tale tradition, invisible but evil supernatural creatures were often characterized in the form of weird and ugly animals, like the one above. In the article “Worrying About the Nation and Loving the Nation,” Liang Qichao noted that for the Chinese, the Europeans were just like “poisonous serpent and worms.”

Ugly as it was, this creature signified a tendency of equating ethno-cultural differences with biological differences among species. This emerging awareness of “otherness” and embedded hostility against “otherness,” as was dramatized in this foreign monster picture, demonstrated a primitive sense of national identity. Jean-Pierre Cabestan calls this amalgam of xenophobic sentiments and ethno-cultural awareness “primitive nationalism.” Even today, my high school history teacher often commented in class that “foreigners are bad stuff.”

In June 1870, an angry anti-Catholic crowd gathered outside the Cathedral and smashed windows. The French Consul and his assistant, M. Simon, were murdered by the rioters and their bodies dumped in the river. A number of Catholic institutions and foreign buildings, including the Tianjin Cathedral and four British and American churches, were burned down. Two French Consular officials, two Lazarist priests, and approximately 40 Chinese Christians were killed.

14 Translation of “視歐人如蛇蝎” from Liang Qichao, “Youguo yu Aiguo (Worrying About the Nation and Loving the Nation),” 1899, in Quanji, 358.

**The Anxious Literati**

Literati, unlike the general public, saw themselves as men of will, responsible for social progress. Liang Qichao had referred to them as “gentle men (junzi 君子)” who “hold the outer world with broad mind (Social-Commitment).”16 Traditionally, literati were largely comprised of scholar-bureaucrats.17 Schooled in calligraphy and Confucian texts, they became civil servants after being appointed by the emperor of China to perform day-to-day governance. Since the sixth century, these officials mostly came from the scholar-gentry who had earned academic degrees by passing the merit-based imperial examinations.

Historically, literati-officials were emperor-sanctioned speakers about social problems. They reported to the emperor and the royal family. The emperor, the “son of the heaven,” was seen as a representative of a heavenly-gifted power. Influenced by this notion, literati saw non-Chinese people as uncivilized and requiring the teaching of China. Words to describe the non-Chinese peoples and lands, such as shengfan (生番 raw savage, referring to tribal peoples not yet aware of Chinese civilization) jiufu (九服 nine obedient tribes), shufang (殊方 abnormal places), and sihuang (四荒 bleak surroundings), implied that foreign societies had barbarous, subordinate, abnormal, and barren characteristics.18 19

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17 Translation of “士大夫”
In 1895, however, the political credibility of orthodoxy of Confucian emperor-official hierarchy unraveled. Over the course of multiple military fiascos and signing of unequal treaties, the Qing court showed its incapability of dealing China’s crises. Liang once had criticized inadequacy of Qing’s earlier reforms and a remaining sense of Sino-centric arrogance among the elites. He had argued: “The so-called Western learning at the time only touched upon astronomy, geography and military forces. Scholar-bureaucrats still disdained real Western values.” This common devaluation of Western values reflected a lingering nostalgia of the past imperial glory and a rejection of crude reality of power struggle with Western military force.

Manchu Prince Chun (醇親王 1840-1891), the father of the current Guangxu emperor (1871-1908), witnessed the destruction of the Summer Palace in Beijing in October 1860 by a joint expedition of British and French troops. The traumatized landscape of nineteenth-century Beijing anguished Prince Chun. He chose to come back again and again to the ruined princely gardens that had surrounded the old Summer Palace. This arc of return forced him to rethink of the fate of the Qing dynasty and about an enduring loss.

19 The Chinese assumption of superiority, which was its persistence and its strength, came from its linkage with Confucian values. The attempt to maintain the orthodoxy of Chinese values can be seen when looking at the late Qing intellectuals’ view of modernization. For example, the Self-Strengthening Movement, which lasted from 1861 to 1895, was guided by the notion of “Chinese learning for foundation and Western learning for practical use (zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong 中學為體，西學為用).” This practical learning covered western military, technology and education systems. However, officials’ attitudes towards foreign political system and ideology remained skeptical. For details about the Chinese assumption of superiority, see: Benjamin I. Schwartz, “The Chinese Perception of World Order: Past and Present”, in John King Fairbank ed., The Chinese World Order (Cambridge U.S., 1968), 276.

20 Translation of “當時所謂西學者，除測算天文，測繪地圖外，便是製造大炮…一般士夫大對於西學觀念依然極端輕蔑和排斥。” From From Liang Qichao, “Qingdai Xueshu Bianqian yu Zhengzhi Yingxiang (Intellectual History of Qing Dynasty and Its Political Impact),” 1924, in Quanji, 4440.
Believing that “memory is a way to generate inner spaciousness when outer places become subject to destruction and ruination,” Prince Chun, the commander of the newly established Qing navy, used military funds to construct a new Summer Palace. The following image shows a marble replica of the Emperor Dowager Cixi’s paddle steamer that sits today in the Summer Palace gardens.

![Image of Summer Palace](image_url)

Prince Chun’s well-intentioned decision to build a new the Summer Palace actually heightened the royal family’s wastefulness and frivolity in the eyes of the public.

For Liang Qichao, it was difficult to empathize with such “nostalgic” actions. Growing up in the coastal province Guangdong, Liang had been exposed to unorthodox views early on and become a coastal intellectual. Unlike the royal family and literati-officials from the northern plateau, Liang was not restrained by the nostalgia of the past imperial glory.

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23 According to Richard Worsman, “The Spanish, Dutch, Italian, and British established trade in the Pacific, including China, during the 16th century. After the Opium War, coastal ports were open for foreign trade in the 1840s. Many European traders were settled in coastal regions of China.” These coastal regions had been exposed to foreign activities and ideologies for many decades before 1898. For details and the image below see: Richard Worsman, “ Tradition, Modernity and the Confucian Revival: An Introduction and Literature Review of New Confucian Activism,” History Honor Paper, Connecticut College, 2012, [http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1018&amp;context=histhp](http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1018&amp;context=histhp) (accessed March 13, 2015).
In 1890, Liang Qichao set out for Beijing to take degree examinations but failed due to his unorthodox views on current affairs. Liang’s deep concern with the political corruption and the future of the nation brought him to Kang Youwei (康有為 1858-1927), a prominent political thinker and reformer at the time. Kang introduced to him the concept of constitutional monarchy.

Born in 1873, Liang had lived through tremendous social disturbances. He had known national sorrow from youth. How would Liang Qichao react to the current situation? This photo below showed a young Liang Qichao in the 1890s. At that time, he was still wearing a queue and dressed in a traditional robe. He was studying Confucian ethics during discipleship to multiple Confucian scholars.
Although he had a traditional appearance, Liang Qichao was already graced with the idealism and vigor that defined his later explorations of knowledge. His idealism about political affairs expelled him from the imperial examinations. He, however, had learned something important on his way back home.

**Planting The Seeds**

When Liang stopped halfway in Shanghai, he picked up a book called *World Geography (Yinghuan Zhilue 瀛寰志略)*. Liang recalled: “This was the first time that I got to know there were five continents in the world. I loved it. I started to read translations of Western literatures.”24 After going back to Guangdong, Liang began to study foreign affairs under Kang Youwei and became formally Kang’s disciple.

In 1895, witnessing the ineffectiveness of feudal political system that had resulted in the defeat of the Sino-Japan war, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao drafted a list of pleas for reforms to the ruling Emperor Guangxu. This movement was known as Gongche Shangshu Movement (Public Vehicle Petition). The 37-year-old Kang Youwei began to petition to the emperor for political change. He addressed his concern in the letter to the ruling Emperor Guangxu in 1895 that: “I beg your Majesty to take the Meiji Reform of Japan as the model for our reform.”25

The 20-year-old Guangxu was still controlled by the conservative Emperor’s Dowager Cixi (慈禧太后 1835-1908). He did not have substantial power over policy making. In 1898, Liang Qichao had recounted from Japan the unequal relationship

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between Guangxu and Cixi: “The executive power of the emperor existed in name only. Cixi controlled every aspect of administration and appointment of officials.”

Evidently, the movement had not been actualized. With Kang Youwei’s failed petition in mind, Liang began to map his ideas onto a journalistic canvas. He joined the editorial board of a new Shanghai paper called *Chinese Progress* (*Shiwu Bao* 時務報) in 1896. Though his first forays into journalism were short lived, he began to sense that a dynamic popular press was key to national rejuvenation.

Together with his teacher Kang Youwei, Liang also tried to inform the public about domestic and foreign political affairs and to spread views about reforms in the *Hunan Journal* (*Xiangbao* 湘報), a progressive publication founded in March 1898. Tan Sitong was on its editorial board.

As Liang and Kang put together their ideas for institutional and ideological changes, their views attracted Tan Sitong. They decided to petition these ideas to the Emperor Guangxu. Key elements of the proposal included replacing absolute monarchy with a constitutional monarchy, building a modern education system, focusing on history and political affairs and introducing technical subjects, as well as industrializing China’s economy in manufacturing, commerce, railway systems.

The proposal was initially accepted by the Emperor Guangxu as an experiment. With Kang Youwei’s advice, Guangxu began enacting sweeping reforms in mid June 1898. On July 3, 1898, Guangxu invited Kang and Liang Qichao to the palace to further discuss the details of the proposal. The 23-year-old Emperor

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26 Translation of “皇上雖有親裁大政之名，而無其實。一切用人行政皆出系後之手。” From Liang Qichao, “Wuxu Zhengbian Ji (Wuxu Reform),” 1898, in Quanji, 208.
consciously kept himself away from more conservative officials who had led the Self-Strengthening Movement of the 1870s.

At the palace, Liang met Guangxu and presented his ideas in order to push the reform to the next stage. The two young men were very close in age and shared a mutual interest in reforms, but they could not communicate due to Liang’s heavily accented Mandarin (Liang’s first language was Cantonese). The conversation went unproductive and “the emperor was quite upset.”27 The difficulty of communication between Liang and Guangxu reflected the linguistic barrier between the Manchu elite and ordinary intellectuals that had existed for centuries in imperial China.28

Opposition to the reform was intense among the conservative ruling elite. The Empress Dowager Cixi condemned the reform as too radical. Fearing a loss of their grip on power, Cixi and the conservatives quelled Guangxu’s independent streak after only 102 days, before any real reforms could take root. Six major reformers, including Tan Sitong, were executed.

Cixi was a powerful and charismatic woman who controlled the Qing government for 47 years. Many sources paint Cixi as a veritable Wicked Witch of the East. Liang Qichao depicted Cixi as the main controlling and abusive culprit in his memoir of Hundred Days Reform:

Our emperor had been abused by Cixi since childhood. Meals served to the emperor were often bad and smelled rank. Cixi did not allow replacement because she wanted him to stick to the virtue of “thrift.”

27 Translation of “因梁氏不習京語，口音差池，彼此不能達意，景皇不快而罷。” From Nianpu, 83.
28 This unproductive conversation motivated Liang to learn Mandarin. Liang also came to realize the importance of shattering linguistic barriers of both verbal and written communication in order to facilitate the spread of ideas among Chinese citizens. This realization paved the way for his political agenda of vernacularizing Chinese language and creating popular press in order to propagate political ideals later on. For Liang, writing became more important than speaking.
Every time the emperor met officials to discuss policies, Cixi sent her eunuchs to tap the conversations.29

These depictions digressed far from the intended meaning of her posthumous title Cixi. Ci 慈 means affable and xi 禧 means blessings. Did she bring blessings to her country, or did she merely look affable as in the image30 below?

Whenever I have been angry, or worried over anything, by dressing up as the Goddess of Mercy it helps me to calm myself, and so play the part I represent.31 Cixi once explained.

Cixi never let circumstances fall out of her control. After the execution of six reformers, Guangxu was put under house arrest until his death. Cixi ultimately regained control with support from conservatives who had opposed the reforms. She stayed in power until her death in 1908. Guangxu’s predicament after the reform was

29 Translation of “皇上每日三膳，半已腐臭…皇上每食多不能飽，西後已儉德責之…稍不如意，常加鞭撻…皇上每召見群臣，西後必遣內監在屏風後竊聽之。皇上戰戰兢兢如坐針氈也。” From Liang Qichao, “Wuxu Zhengbian Ji (Wuxu Reform),” 1898, in Quanji, 209.
the main reason that Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao had held on to the agenda of constitutional monarchy.

In July 1899, Kang and Liang founded the Protect the Emperor Society (Baohuanghui 保皇會), believing that only by freeing the emperor from Cixi’s persecution could they begin to enact a constitutional polity.

**The Sinking Rock**

The crackdown that followed the Hundred Days Reform, however, quickly erased away traces of constitutionalism. This well-intentioned but poorly implemented effort to modernize many aspects of Chinese society nearly caused a civil war. Following the Hundred Day’s Reforms, peasants in the north of China began to adhere to a rising political, mystical and martial arts movement known as the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901). Slogans of “support the Qing, destroy the foreigners” promoted by the Rebellion overshadowed calls in favor of crafting a constitution and self-strengthening. The members of the Boxer Rebellion believed that foreign aggression, not internal problems, was the cause of the national crisis.

The growing movement began to threaten local foreigners. When foreign diplomats in China threatened to intervene, Cixi fatefully sided with the Boxers. The xenophobic movement finally ran amok, terrorizing Beijing and forcing Cixi to flee the capital. Foreign troops had to march through Beijing to help quell a Chinese uprising. The result was another unequal treaty, the Boxer Protocol, demanding a massive indemnity in 450 million taels of silver from the Qing government.\(^{32}\) Liang

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\(^{32}\) This amount of silver was equivalent to US $335 billion. A large portion of the reparations paid to the United States was diverted to pay for the education of Chinese students in U.S. universities under the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program. When the first of these students returned to China they
Qichao, looking back in 1924, had commented on the Boxer Rebellion that: “The rebels humiliated China. They started the uprising in the name of ‘renewing China’—what an absurd slogan!” Bloodshed in the execution of the six reformers was a double-edged sword: it rallied reform-minded individuals to carry on the cause, but the scope of violence could also destroy the very cause itself. Yan Fu (嚴復 1854-1921), a famous scholar and translator of Western thought at the time, vividly captured the chaotic social situation at this of transitions in China. As he put it: “All under the heaven is a cage.” The power of the “cage” is visible in the following symbolic portrait of the reformers.

The one grabbing his chest, I believe, was Tan Sitong. Tan’s feeling might be well explained in a poem composed by the famous Chinese poet Qu Yuan (屈原 343

undertook the teaching of subsequent students; from this institute was born Tsinghua University in Beijing, where Liang Qichao served as a lecturer and sinology researcher in his later life.

33 Translation of “義和團事件丟盡中國的醜。變法維新這面大旗，從義和團頭目手中重新豎起來了，滑稽得可笑” From Liang Qichao, “Qingdai Xueshu Bianqian yu Zhengzi Yingxiang (Intellectual History of Qing Dynasty and Its Political Impact),” 1924, in Quanji, 4442.

34 Translation of “牢籠天下” from Yan Fu, “Lun Shibian Zhi Ji (At The Moment Of Change),” Zhibao, 1895.

In Qu’s most read poem “Encountering Sorrow (離騷),” he wrote, “death lingering on my body, my will remains still.”

Like Tan Sitong, Qu Yuan had been a scholar who was unappreciated by the ruler, although he considered himself helpful in solving social problems. After learning of the capture of his country’s capital, Qu Yuan had waded into the Miluo River to commit ritual suicide as a form protest against the corruption of that his times.

For Tan Sitong, it was the desperate cries of his countrymen that led him to defy Cixi. Tan’s death symbolized the political failure of Qing Dynasty’s reformation from within and also triggered severe moral repercussions. In an article published in the Zilin Weekly in November 1898, Tan Sitong was highly praised as follows:

What China needed was the blood of the youth. From these six Wuxu reformers who died for a righteous cause, we could see that political vigor among youth was energetic—we should feel reassured.

Ninety-one years later in the spring of 1989, Chinese students also shouted in Tiananmen Square: “If bloodshed can waken the public, I am prepared to bleed till I die.” The ongoing willingness for self-sacrifice among the youth signaled a courageous but also dangerous mindset. This mindset regarded social betterment as an unavoidably bloody path.

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35 Translation of “阽余身而危死兮, 覽余初其猶未悔。”
36 Translation of “中國所需要的是青年的血液, 而我們在康有為和他的死義的諸同僚的例子中, 看到這種旺盛的精神是充沛的, 我們引以為慰。" from “Busheng Wanxi (What A Pity),” Zilin Xibao (Zilin Weekly), November 7, 1898, in Wuxu Reform (Wuxu Bianfa) Volume 3, compiled by Zhongguo Jindaishi Ziliao (Shanghai, 2006), 520.
This active embrace of death ultimately became an invisible cage that trapped the heart and mind of Tan Sitong and many other death-seeking literati. Self-imposed sacrifice, in my view, became a barrier to the formation of a sober inner landscape in the midst of external chaos. Liang Qichao, by contrast, developed a new paradigm as he traveled to Japan. I envision that on September 28, 1898, facing the sea toward Japan, Liang Qichao was both anxious and hopeful. Although the memory of the failed Hundred Days Reform still haunted him, it also pushed him to march eastward toward the light. For Liang, Japan was a familiar but a much more advanced nation of than China. He was excited to learn from the Meiji Japan’s path of modernization.

26 years old, having observed the death of friends and parting with family for the first time, Liang Qichao was flung into a mixture of loneliness and hopefulness. Gradually drifting away from his teacher Kang Youwei, he would become a perceptive and articulate witness of political changes and disasters in the following decades.

Freeing himself from old ruins, Liang Qichao would sketch the contours of a new China from the island of Japan. For Liang, it was all about seeing light in the darkness, framing the ravages he had witnessed with tangible shapes and gracing calamity with hope. Since he had found a way to escape, he expected to come back renewed. In a poem written at that time, he expressed himself as follows:

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38 Liang Qichao, “Qu Guo Xing (Leaving China),” 1898, in Zhang Pinxing, Shen Peng, Fan Zeng, Li Yi, Wu Weichun, eds., Liang Qichao Quanji (A Full Collection of Liang Qichao’s Writings) (Beijing, 1999), 5415.

In the poem, Liang described that “Japan has shared similar culture and civilization with us. The light of Meiji Reform has spread the East, making Japan a rising star as bright as the Western powers.” The original verse of the poem, “東方古稱君子國，種族文教咸我同。爾來明治新政耀大地，駕歐凌美氣薈龍。”
Awaiting the spring to come back
garnished in the gentle east wind

Liang had wished that this spring wind would eventually refresh the decaying land of China. When such breezes wafted across somnolent individuals there, they would be awakened from lengthy nightmares. To hasten that awakening, Liang had to start crafting his voice afresh in a new intellectual landscape in Japan.
Chapter Two

Dry Chicken Meat Would Suffice

To feed those who eat chaff every day, dry chicken meat would suffice.

--Liang Qichao “Why We Should Learn Japanese” 論學日本文之益 1899
Published in 1908, the anniversary issue of Shenzhou Ribao 神舟日 commemorated its achievements with an image\(^1\) entitled “Awakening from a Prolonged Dream (da meng xian jue 大夢先覺).” The man with the curled body symbolizes the ordinary “citizen (guomin 國民).” To his left is a predatory-looking foreigner (hu shi dan dan 虎視眈眈 looking as fierce as a tiger). On the far right stands a Qing official dressed in government robes with an indifferent onlooker’s expression (xiu shou pang guan 袖手旁觀 folded arms and standing aside).

The most interesting figure in the picture is the man who is holding the writer’s brush next to the citizen. According to the description, he is “crying out loud (da sheng ji hu 大聲疾呼)” to the citizen and patting gently on his back. His brush, named “publications (bao 報),” is pointed against the Qing official. It is worth noting that the writer, who weeps like the citizen and is sitting on the ground, seems to share his political disenfranchisement. Nevertheless, unlike the citizen, he has raised his head and chest upward to make himself heard. This crying man vividly captures Liang Qichao’s experience in Japan. There, Liang relentlessly composed and published articles about nationalism and civic virtue. As a writer in exile, Liang envisioned using his brush for the public good as to


The denser and faster communications during the 19th and 20th centuries have resulted in a large-scale homogenization of the world’s modern languages around a core of globalized concepts with their modern order and hierarchy. In this journal, Wagner investigates the migration of metaphors and their visualized forms across languages and cultures. He focuses on the metaphor of “China asleep/China awakened.” This metaphor became common parlance during the 19th century and has remained in the global metaphorical canon to this day. He addresses the dynamics of this highly asymmetrical translingual and transcultural migration, the cultural brokers involved, and the contact zones where the exchanges take place.
help straighten the bended back of helpless Chinese and to create a spiritual backbone for the pathetic public.

Understanding the meaning of citizenship and civic virtue while the meaning of “nation” was still a vague concept was a difficult undertaking. Nevertheless, anchoring his heart and mind in the values of nationalism and civic virtue, Liang would find inner satisfaction and reassurance. This motivated him to work hard for a new re-conceptualization of the ideas of citizenship.

Liang worked strenuously when he first settled in Japan. He would not rest until 3 in the morning. On August 22, 1902, Huang Zunxian (黃遵憲 1848-1905), a Qing scholar-official, who had been Liang Qichao’s mentor, wrote a worried letter to Liang:

You should not go to bed too late because it is not good for your body. I understand that you always have visitors coming at night whom you have to answer, and you always study late after the meetings. Try to have visitors come by on Saturdays, reply letters on Fridays, take a rest on Sundays, and write essays and study on the rest four days. I hope you could stick to the schedule I set for you.²

Living in Yokohama, Japan, Liang Qichao read and wrote day and night and actively expanded his social network among Japanese and Chinese scholars, students and politicians. Japan opened a new way of life for him. Each new body of literature became a stepping stone in the process of self-exploration as well as a tool for historical judgment.

To Quench A Parched Throat

On Liang’s way to Japan, the captain handed Liang a political novel *The Adventure of Political Exiles*(佳人之奇遇). The novel depicts two anxious

intellectuals, one from Japan, the other from Ming Dynasty China. They travel to Philadelphia and bump into each other at the Liberty Hall. Sharing a common concern with the future of their countries, the two intellectuals try to initiate a movement for political rights at home.

Intrigued by the plot, “Liang Qichao began to translate the novel on his way to Japan.” This spontaneous reading experience marked the starting point of his career as translator. The first work of fiction to capture a thinker’s attention may not always be the most intellectually stimulating. In Liang’s case, *The Adventure of Political Exile* vivified his living situation and addressed directly and indirectly the issues that concerned him urgently.

In a similar vein, my own first transformative encounter in a Western college was with Hannah Arendt’s *The Origin of Totalitarianism*. I was fascinated by Arendt’s powerful account of the nature of a totalitarian regime and I was able to relate it directly to the Maoist era that my parents had suffered from. For Liang, *The Adventure of Political Exiles* also mirrored his own predicament and elucidated political aspirations.

By 1906, there were over 10,000 Chinese students in Japan. This small island became a most logical training area for the majority of future reformers and revolutionaries. Japan was closer to home and costs here were considerably less than elsewhere in Europe or the United States. The problem of cultural adjustment was much less acute. In addition, Japan represented the type of synthesis between tradition and modernity that might be a paradigm for China. The fever for

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3 Translation of “先生隨閱隨譯，翻譯之始，即在艦中也。”from Ding Wenjiang and Zhao Fengtian’s commentary in *Nianpu*, 102.
Japanese culture, therefore, started during late nineteenth century. This intense interest brought about a flood of translations.

Political aspirations channeled through the endeavor of translation have characterized the Chinese intellectual landscape from the turn of the twentieth century onward. Before 1895, there were only 12 categories of Japanese literature translated into Chinese, nine of which were translated by Japanese authors themselves. This figure quickly jumped to 900 between 1896 and 1911. From 1898 to 1903, 48 titles were published in the forms of books or articles presenting Western political thinkers like Rousseau, Montesquieu, John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer to a Chinese audiences.

Concurrent with the increase in the Chinese translation of Japanese literatures there was also increasing usage of the “sleep” metaphor for China’s peoples in Chinese language articles. The following table was compiled based on the information contained in the Database for the Study of Modern Chinese Thought and Literature (1830-1930). Between 1897 and 1910, the use of sleep metaphor soared.

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5 For details please refer to Philip Huang, *Liang Ch’i-ch’ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism* (Seattle and London,1972), 77.
6 Shen Sung-chiao and Chien Y.S. Sechin, “Turning Slaves into Citizens: Discourses of Guomin and the Construction of Chinese National Identity in Late Qing Period,” in Chien Y.S. Sechin and John Fitzgerald, eds., *The Dignity of Nations* (Hong Kong, 2006), 52. Contributors of this book argue that everyday struggles for dignity and equality in the states of East Asia provide much of the impetus driving East Asian nationalism. In the case of modern China, Liang Qichao’s *New Citizens* served as the backbone of constructing national dignity. The emotional impetus that aimed to turn slaves into citizens constituted the basis of Chinese nationalism under Liang’s brush.
7 Rudolf G. Wagner, “China ‘Asleep’ and ‘Awakening’.”
Translations provided a bridge between domestic audience and foreign ideas. Reading forced individuals to realize that they had been trapped in a state of unconsciousness. Therefore, a sense of urgency of “waking up” the public along with a burst of interest in Japanese literatures dominated late nineteenth century China. Liang Qichao played a key role in facilitating this translation effort. When Liang started to learn Japanese, he found it handy to read Japanese Kanji in the Chinese way. Because Kanji carries strokes similar to Chinese characters, readers can roughly figure out the meaning of the Japanese text by likening the characters to Chinese words.

Liang explored the regularity of this association in his Reading Japanese in Chinese Way (和文漢讀法), a booklet that he completed virtually “overnight.”\(^8\) This booklet later was augmented as a comprehensive manual for learning Japanese by many other Chinese students studying in Japan. These students had used Liang’s original version of the booklet to learn Japanese and began adding their own “inspiration” to the booklet.

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\(^8\) Translation of “以孝高本深通中國文法者，而今又已能日文，當可融會兩者求得捷徑，因相研索，訂有若干通例，……因著有《和文漢讀法》行世。” From Ding Wenjiang and Zhao Fengtian’s commentary in Nianpu, 108.
Misunderstanding was common in translations. For example, the Japanese word for “concept (gai nian 概念)” was read as “rough thought (dagai xiangnian 大概想念),” simply by creating two separate words associated with two characters gai 概 and nian 想念. Similarly, “ideas (guan nian 觀念)” was interpreted as “thoughts formulated as a result of observation (guan er xiangnian 觀而想念  observe and then think).” The process of misunderstanding was in itself a creative work, and it revealed the intellectual outlook of translators at that time. “Concept” understood as “rough thought” implied that systematic learning of Western concepts was a difficult undertaking.

As rough as it was, translation gave original works fresh meaning. In an analysis of works by Wenda Gu, a language artist, David Cateforis wrote, “Only through misunderstanding can we create something new.”

10 Chen Liwei, “Tong Wen Tong Zhong.”
According to Cateforis, Wu employs a process of “Complex Chinese-English Translation” to create new “post-Tang” poems in Chinese and English out of the Tang originals and their English translations. The two poems provide a new angle for examining the relationship between phonological and semantic meanings.

According to Alex Murphy, translation always implies “an unstable balance between the power one culture can exert over another.” In translating Japanese into Chinese, new concepts were often encapsulated in an old lexicon in which the power of Chinese culture remained firmly embedded. The Chinese language was not only a means for translation, but functioned as a unique vessel for the conceptualization of new ideas.

**Water Drops In A Foreign Sea**

During Liang’s exile in Japan, translation was not regarded as a dynamic writing act conditioned by political, ideological, aesthetic, and literary considerations. Instead, translation was viewed as a tool that could fulfill a translator’s political goal. Liang’s goal in translating Western modernity through the lens of Meiji Japan was to find a corrective to the failed Hundred Day’s Reform and to dissect the flesh and blood of constitutionalism. In doing that,

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12 Alex Murphy, “Traveling Sages: Translation and Reform in Japan and China in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Studies On Asia*, 1 (2010), 33.

13 Translational writing reached climax during the early twentieth century. According to Michael Gibbs Hill, by 1910 China was well integrated into the world literary market. Translation rapidly changed the ground on which intellectuals in China made their way in the world. One journal printed in Japan, *New Translation World*, showed that translation had come to be an essential part of the work of the intellectual. This translation endeavor was not restricted only to Liang’s generation. This effort was pioneered by the late Qing imperial scholars and carried through the 1898 generation onward.

Some examples of intellectuals translating foreign literatures for a Chinese audience: Lin Shu (林紓 1852-1924) was a famous imperial official, writer and translator. Lin began his translation career with Alexandre Dumas’s *La Dame aux Camélia*, a French novel that he translated in 1899 with the help of his friend Wang Shouchang who had studied in France. Lin took a position at the Translation Institute of the Imperial Academy in 1903 and his translations of Western literatures began to grow quickly since then.
Liang was trying to implement the proposals put forth as early as 1896: “If the nation wishes to strengthen itself, then translation of Western books must form the basis for this.”

In Japan, Liang realized that constitutionalism had many different aspects during the Meiji reforms. He was struck “how thoroughly the Japanese had learned politics, economics, the study of wisdom (the Japanese call it philosophy) and the study of groupings (the Japanese name it sociology).” All of these, according to Liang, were key to “enlighten our Chinese people.”

Ironically, on December 4, 2014, the word “constitutionalism” joined the list of most-censored words in China.

Among many new political concepts, Liang found a most intriguing idea in the concept of “society (shehui 社會),” which he called “group (qun 群).” As the word shehui had a completely different meaning in Chinese classical

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Jin Tianhe (金天翮 1874-1947) wrote the first full-length writing on women’s right The Women’s Bell. She referred to mixed sources, such as the Russian anarchist Vera Zasulich, US abolitionists Harriet Beecher Stowe, and works such as Rudolf Von Jhering’s Struggle for Law, Johann Kaspar Bluntschli’s Theory of the State and Nicolas Camille Flammarion’s La fin du monde.

Li Dazhao (李大釗 1889-1927), one of the early founders of the Chinese Communist Party, was the first Chinese intellectual to translate Marx’s The Communist Manifesto.

Guo Moruo (郭沫若 1892-1978), a well-known leftist intellectual of modern China, translated many German and Japanese works, such as Goeth’s Die Leiden des jungen Werthers in 1922, a Japanese Marxist, Kawakami Hajime’s work Social Organization and Social Revolution in 1924. Guo aimed at achieving the individual moral and spiritual inner transcendence through self-cultivation, combining the Confucian transcendental concept with the Marxist elements of self-determination.


Chen Xiaoming, From the May Fourth Movement to Communist Revolution (New York, 2007), 9.

14 Translation of “國家欲自強，以多譯西書為本。” From Liang Qichao, “Xixue Shumu Bi (A Booklist of Western Learning).” 1896, in Quanji, 82.

15 Translation of “日本於政治學，資生學（即理財學，日本謂之經濟學）、智學（日本謂之哲學）、群學（日本謂之社會學）等，皆開民智強國基之急務也。” From Liang Qichao, “Lun Xue Ribenwen Zhi Yi (Why We Should Learn Japanese).” 1899, in Quanji, 325.

16 Ibid.

literature,\textsuperscript{18} Liang used the word *qun* to draw a cognitive canvas for “society.” In doing that, Liang assigned a new ethical value to *qun*. He said that “*those who are able to form communities are virtuous.*”\textsuperscript{19} He also assigned a social Darwinist connotation to *qun*. He contended that “*those who are able to group themselves and form communities can eliminate those who do not; those who have such abilities are stronger and can annex the weaker.*”\textsuperscript{20} When I first encountered this sentence, it read as: “A more organized mob is able to defeat a less organized one.” Nevertheless, from Liang’s further elaborations on *qun*, I realized that what he meant by “the ability to group themselves” was an ability to form inner cohesion, to achieve a high level of interdependency and to respect individual initiative and reflection. Therefore, communities with a higher level of organic solidarity were superior to others.

The word *qun*, however, by itself does not entail this message. *Qun* literally means masses. *Qun* and “society” were not exactly the same. *Qun* is given, society is constructed. *Qun* is civil society, society is civilized society. Nevertheless, Liang articulated the organic solidarity of society by using a fragment from the old lexicon, *qun*.

Liang’s interest in the concept of *qun* was sparked by Yan Fu 嚴復(1854-1921), a well-known scholar and translator. Yan was famous for his introduction of Social Darwinism and translations of works by Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill. Yan had argued that “*Qun* is what people are naturally born into.


\textsuperscript{19} Translation of “能群焉謂之君。” From Liang Qichao, “Shuo Qun (Discussing Grouping),” in *Quanji*, 93.

\textsuperscript{20} Translation of “有能群者必有不能群者，有群之力甚大者必有群之力甚輕者；則不能群者必為能群者所摧壊，力輕者必為力大者所兼並。” From Ibid., 93.
Shehui are special: they are communities that have rules.” In Yan’s view, Liang only addressed what was conceivable about society rather than its contractual essence.

Liang Qichao and Yan Fu’s contrasting interpretations of qun resulted from their disparate understanding of the original Western texts. Liang Qichao thought that the Japanese literatures conceptualizing Western studies would suffice as China’s intellectual nutrition. He believed that intellectuals did not have to learn English to scrutinize original texts. By contrast, Yan Fu emphasized a thorough examination of original Western literatures as a prerequisite to introducing them to the public.

Although Yan Fu emphasized analytical examination of primary texts, he did not devote himself simply to accuracy. A text, in Yan Fu’s view, should serve the author’s political goal. Yan sometimes imposed his own reading upon a text. This tendency was exemplified in his Tian Yan Lun 天演論, the translation of

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21 Translation of “群也者，人道所不能外也。群有數等，社會者，有法之群也。” From Yan Fu, “Qunxue Yiyian (On Qun),” 1903, in Yan Fu Ji (A Collection of Yan Fu’s essays), Wang Shi, ed., (Beijing, 1986), 125.

22 Yan Fu thought that Liang’s interpretation of Western concepts, including “society”, was superficial: “Liang Qichao composed many careless essays in a short time, he seemed to enjoy public attention for doing that. （嚴復批評梁啟超文章草率，太多太快，有嘩眾取寵之嫌）” For details, see: Xu Gang, Shaonian Zhongguo Meng: Zai Du Liang Qichao (The Youths China Dream: Rereading Liang Qichao) (Beijing, 2011), 98.

The tension between a pundit (Yan Fu) and a popularizer (Liang Qichao) can also be seen in today’s China. On February 28, a well-known journalist Chai Jing released a documentary on air pollution. A former CCTV reporter, Chai quitted this promising job and began to explore independent journalism. She invested one million RMB (170 thousands U.S. dollars) in this air pollution project and took one year to investigate many aspects of the issue. In the documentary, she revealed legal flaws in existing environmental laws in China. She criticized the Ministry of Environmental Protection for its failure in law enforcement. She also pointed to the industrial monopoly in oil and natural gas that had prevented upgrade of industrial structure and exploration of clean energy. She cited precedents of pollution control in London, Japan and Los Angeles and appealed to the public that every citizen should feel responsible to save energy and report any conduct that violates environmental laws. This documentary went viral on the internet, generating 100 million views in 24 hours. Many appraised Chai’s “moral consciousness” and social responsibility, but many “specialists of environmental science” criticized that the data she cited was outdated and her argument was unconvincing. Some “patriotic nationalists” even believed that she humiliated China’s national image by comparing China’s environmental status to that of developed countries.
Thomas Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics*. Huxley himself was not optimistic about evolution being a driving force capable of refining moral ethics. He was concerned with the inner moral crisis within Western civilization. Yan Fu, by contrast, did not believe that moral ethics were to evolution. He had argued that:

We have to read Huxley with a critical mind. Moral sympathy occurred after natural selection took place: it did not exist from the beginning. Those who had moral sympathy would have been wiped out through the process of natural selection. Therefore, morality does not have a role to play in the concept of evolution.23

Yan believed that human beings are not much different from animals because they seek self-preservation, security and self-interest. In the state of nature, humans did not possess moral faculties. Morality and ethics were formulated after natural selection was finished. Therefore, Yan deleted the part on ethics in order to make *Tian Yan Lun* a cohesive argument about natural selection. The title of the book, *Tian Yan Lun*, which literally means the heavenly principle of evolution, did not mention anything about ethics either. Yan’s selective translation of *Evolution and Ethics* demonstrated a highly subjective reading of the text.

Despite such insufficient understanding and subjective interpretations of Western concepts, the translator-intellectuals worked strenuously to seek satisfying drops of water in a sea of foreign ideas. These they tried to present in the familiar frame of classical Chinese language that the educated public might understand.

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23 Translation of “赫胥黎保群之論，可謂辨矣。善相感通者是，然則善相感通之德，乃天擇以後之事，非其始之即如是也。其始豈無不善相感通者？經物競之烈，亡矣，不可見矣。赫胥黎執其末以齊其本，此言群理所以不若斯賓塞氏之密也。” From Yan Fu, *Tian Yan Lun (Evolution)*, 1898, in *Yan Fu Ji*, 1345.
I Never Enjoyed the Classical Writing Style

Writing styles often reveal the author’s disposition. Yan Fu, a scholastic intellectual, proposed one important principle of translating foreign literatures: elegance (雅). When Yan Fu was translating a foreign concept, he tended to mimic the language of the Six Dynasties (220-589 A.D.) because it was “comprehensible and elegant.”24 Yan practiced this writing style while translating Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*.

Liang complained about Yan Fu’s translation, “few people could understand your translation, only those who grew up reading classical literatures could decode the complex sentence structure.”25 Novelist Lu Xun once also criticized that the principle of elegance canceled out the expressiveness and faithfulness of the translation effort.26 Yan responded that “my purpose in translating Western literatures was to serve educated literati well versed in classical Chinese.”27 Therefore, Yan Fu believed that his elegant translations awaited elegant minds.

Although Yan Fu insisted on his principle of elegance, his writing style did not elicit as much appreciation from the public as Liang Qichao’s writings. Liang captured the essence of *ya* without following the formality of *ya*. He explained:

> I never enjoyed the classical writing style. When I was young, I was taught Han and Wei Jin writing fashions. Now, I am able to free my composition from classical boundaries. My writing is

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25 Translation of “其文章務淵雅，刻意模彷先秦文體，非多讀古書之人，一翻殆難索解。” From Yan Fu, “Yu Liang Rengong Shu (Letter to Liang Qichao),” 1902, in *Yan Fu Ji*, 516.


27 Translation of “吾譯正以待中國多讀古書之人。” From Yan Fu, “Yu Liang Rengong Shu (Letter to Liang Qichao),” 1902, in *Yan Fu Ji*, 516.
simple and smooth. Sometimes I add popular idioms, mix them with foreign grammar... I am not bound by any rules. Scholars liked my writing and they imitated it. They called it “New Literary Style.”

More effective than Liang’s creative writing style was his pragmatic philosophy of translation. For Liang Qichao, the purpose of translation was to serve the public rather than to display literary artistry by the translator. Unlike Yan Fu, Liang always took into consideration factors such as context and audience before he finally used a foreign term. He was sensitive to the target audience and refined accordingly his goal in using alien concepts.

For example, when translating “economy,” Liang Qichao’s personal choice, the one with which he felt most comfortable, was the term shengji (生計 livelihood). Nevertheless, at that time, the term jingji (經濟) had already claimed substantial adherents. If he wished to continue his dialogue with Chinese society, Liang had no choice but to use the term jingji even though “he was personally opposed to it.”

Liang’s flexibility and sensitivity to public taste gained him a wide readership. As a result, Shiwu Bao (Current Affairs), founded by Liang, was the most popular journal after 1895.

The 1898 generation tried to open up new doors for thinking through foreign languages, only to have them shut by the Communist Party a century later. In 2013, China’s education reforms removed English language testing from the national college entrance examinations to make way for more mathematics and

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28 Translation of “啟超素不喜桐城派古文，幼年為文，學晚漢，魏晉，頗為矜練。至是自解放，務為平易暢達，時雜以俚語韻語，及外國語法，縱筆所至，不為檢束，學者競效之，號新文體。” From Lai Guanglin, Liang Qichao Yu Jin Dai Bao Ye (Liang Qichao and Modern Newspaper Publishing) (Taipei, 1968), 112.
29 Jing means “manage,” “govern,” Ji means “aid,” “benefit.”
Chinese language testing. Putting myself into Yan Fu and Liang Qichao’s situation, I was disheartened by this change in policy. After all, it is the ability to read foreign languages that made it possible for Liang, Yan Fu and myself to expand the parameters of our thinking and our visions about the world.

Dislocated Literati

In order to better grasp the dilemmas of intellectuals living through overwhelming political transitions, it is helpful to think about Japanese intellectuals of the Meiji period (1868-1912). They had experienced the changes from the waning decades of bakufu government to the Meiji government. Most of them had even held official positions in the bakufu government, although hardly any of them had agreed with its closed door policy. Many of them, despite difficulties, voiced their opinions and pointed out the necessity of learning from the West.32

For Chinese intellectuals living between tradition and modernity, the most urgent challenge was how to define their role in a virtually nonexistent system of intellectual advancement, once the imperial examination system had lost its popularity. To whom could they voice their ideas? Who could sanction their intellectual status? This was probably not a problem for Yan Fu. Although Yan never participated in imperial examinations, he did manage to find a place for his ideas within the imperial system. As one of the first Chinese scholars to study abroad, attending Greenwich Naval College in 1879, he brought back to China a conviction that his country’s only salvation lay in learning how to compete in the new global scramble for power. An ardent supporter of Social Darwinism, Yan Fu

naturally aligned with active reformer-officials during the Self-Strengthening Movement. After returning to China from England, he was able to obtain a teaching position at the Fujian Arsenal Academy and then Beiyang Naval Officers’ School (a state-run institute) in 1880. In 1891, he was granted an official title *houxuandao*, which enabled him to serve in high positions in the field of education.

Twenty years younger than Yan Fu, Liang Qichao never climbed high on the ladder of literati hierarchy. He failed the imperial examinations twice. He was vilified as a traitor and was hunted down by the Qing court after the 1898 reform. Yet three years earlier, Liang did exactly what Yan had done: read foreign affairs and searched for pragmatic solutions to China’s problems. By 1898, Liang had become a “student activist” while Yan was already an established, officially credible figure in political and educational spheres. Unlike Yan Fu with his many honored titles, Liang Qichao was never a court-sanctioned public intellectual.

In spite of that, during early twentieth century, Liang gained more adherents and popularity than Yan Fu. Yan never left China after 1880, but the 25-year-old Liang, at his height of intellectual curiosity, vigor and inquisitiveness, went to Japan and lived there for 14 years. From Japan, he went on to visit America, Europe and Australia. Liang became the eyes of the public to explore the world.
Liang Qichao (left) and Yan Fu (right)

No longer wearing a queue, Liang looked refreshed and visionary in his Western suit, while Yan Fu had retained the seriousness of a scholarly official.

For Liang, life in Japan provided solitary pleasures and relief from domestic chaos. It was the opportunity to rethink his role in developing China’s path to modernity. His eyes had scanned foreign lands and ultimately locked firmly upon China. In Japan, Liang Qichao devoted himself to the effort of defining the concept of “citizens (guomin 国民).” He was not content to graft Western paradigms onto a Chinese core, as was advocated by earlier reformers. Neither did he restrain himself to the Social Darwinism model of competition like Yan Fu. Liang wanted a fresh start.

The concept of “citizens” was both straightforward and complex, both easily-distorted and hard-to-practice, and it would become a life-long enterprise that Liang himself committed to. Understanding the meaning of citizenship when even the meaning of “nation” was still a vague concept was challenging and confusing. Nevertheless, anchoring his heart and mind in a commitment to

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nationalism and civic virtue, Liang would find inner satisfaction and reassurance, and much public support from China. He was no longer a dislocated thinker.

No More Capable Than Birds

Liang Qichao’s epoch-making essays New Citizens (Xinmin Shuo 新民說) were the podium for new reflections. In New Citizens, Liang advocated new concepts that included civic virtues, rights, liberty, self-rule and progress. The most interesting piece that demonstrated the tension between the old mindset and new values was the section on “The Concept of Nation (Lun Guojia Sixiang 論國家思想).”

In “The Concept of Nation,” Liang appealed to the public to become aware of the existence of a collective identity that was distinct from individuality and family bonds:

What does it mean that our nation must exist when we perceive ourselves as individuals? Human beings are better than other forms of life precisely because we can form communities. If one lives alone on land, he is no more capable than birds that can fly, or beasts that can run fast. Without communities, human beings would soon perish from the earth.  

Think about nation as your home and family: even if you are so destitute that you own nothing but an empty house, you still don’t want others to claim ownership of it.

The existence of nation, for Liang, resembled the force of physical gravity. People hardly thought of gravity as shaping who we were because it was so omnipresent. They often overlooked the fact that social gravity acted much like physical gravity did. Not until in New Citizens did the Liang address the existence of the nation as a social force that bound together the lives of discrete individuals.

34 Translation of “所謂對於一身而知有國家者何也？人之所以貴於他物者，以其能群耳。使以一身孑然孤立於大地，則飛不如禽，走不如獸，人類翦滅亦既久矣！” From Liang Qichao, Xinmin Shuo (New Citizens), 1903, in Quanji, 663.
35 Translation of “譬之家，雖復室如懸磬，亦未有顧他人入此室處者。” From Ibid., 663.
Liang’s articulation of nationhood was colored by the traditional Confucian concept of “all under Heaven (tianxia 天下).” According to this worldview, the Son of Heaven represented all mankind and he served as a moral intermediary between human society and the unseen forces of Nature. All the surrounding tribes and peoples should naturally recognize this central fulcrum. The Chinese theory of the nation was linked to that of a universal empire. The emperor of China was not the ruler of a state/nation, but of “all under Heaven.” For this “all under Heaven,” individuals need to sacrifice their self-interests and even their lives.

The theme of “sacrificing for all under Heaven” prevails in contemporary China. The movie Hero (Yingxiong 英雄) released in 2002 portrays the story of assassination attempt against the King of Qin (China’s very first emperor). When the assassin’s sword comes close to the King’s throat, he decides to give up, because he is persuaded that the king of Qin was a capable ruler, an embodiment of “all under Heaven.” This realization also leads to an understanding personal will had no place in the face of the grand wellbeing of all men under Heaven.36

Liang refrained from using “all under heaven” when he described the modern nation. Yet his tone revealed a tendency to link the impact of the nation on individual behavior to that of “all under heaven.” He wrote, “In order to love your nation, it is fine to suppress the interests of your own, of your family and of your tribute. The love toward one’s nation is at the heart of private love and the

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highest level of universal love.” Liang had in effect reconfigured the concept of “all under Heaven” into “nation.”

The reason for this reconfiguration can be explained by a particular dilemma that Liang faced. By the end of nineteenth century, Chinese intellectuals painfully realized that China did not speak for and did not represent “all under Heaven.” The emperor of China could no longer expect the rulers of foreign states to interact with China in away that showed their subordination to this universal ruler. The basis on which individuals could reflect on their lives in relation to “all under Heaven” had collapsed. There was no “all the Heaven” that Chinese could refer to.

*Tianxia* was no longer a noble and sacred entity governed by rituals and ethics. It turned out to be bloody, cruel and governed by natural selection. The residual sentimentality toward “all under Heaven” was then transmitted to nation (*guo* 国). When the fate of nation was at stake, talking about individual interests appeared superficial. If the nation collapsed, the integrity of individuals in turn became groundless as well. The concept of nation, thus, depended upon previous assumption about all under the heaven. Liang then created a new vocabulary for nation: *guo*. This new and evolving lexicon came to penetrate the realm of all his thoughts.

On the one hand, Liang had endeavored to illustrate a new concept with old and familiar analogies in order to make it understandable to the public. On the other hand, old family ethics prevented the acceptance of the concept of nation and citizenship. Liang was aware that family ethics, although conducive to the perception of a nation, were not quite compatible with civic virtue. He pointed out

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37 Translation of “殺其一身、一家、一鄉族之私以愛一國可也。國也者，私愛之本位，而博愛之極點也。” From Liang Qichao, *Xinmin Shuo (New Citizens)*, 1903, in Quanji, 664.
that in traditional China, “family ethic is well developed, but ethics regarding society and state are impoverished.”

According to Yang Xiao, a contemporary scholar, Liang Qichao had proposed two new forms of ethical relationships: “the relationship among private persons in general, including strangers and private persons of different countries, governed by civil law” and “the relationship between the state and its citizens, governed by the constitution.” Yang claims that “Liang did not believe that the concept of rights should apply in the realm of intimate human relations.”

According to Yang’s argument, the concept of nation that Liang had envisioned should be seen as an independent concept. The relationship between citizens and state should not be confused with other traditional forms of loyalty. Yet the way in which Liang himself illustrated the concept of nation does not fully reflect this subtlety.

**Never Loosen Our Bonds**

This discrepancy between thought and its linguistic and conceptual expression, therefore, reflects a particular tension between emotion and rationality that is unique to Chinese language. The reason why Liang Qichao was not able to (or did not choose to) fully flesh out his thinking in writing may be explained by the dominant role of emotion in the construction of an argument in Chinese.

Logic follows emotion: when you feel the word, this is when you begin to understand it. Accounts of the emotions reveal what is essential to the self and its boundaries. Alterations in the pattern mark shifts in conceptions of the self as well. Expressions of emotion are implicitly demonstrated in writings and they

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38 Translation of “唯於家族倫理稍為完整，至社會國家倫理不備滋多。” From Ibid., 664.
40 Ibid., 28.
ultimately guide the readers to digest the information. This process is called “yi qing xiao li 以情曉理 (use emotive language to display reasons).

A range of early Chinese texts describe a set of six qing, a term that some scholars translation as “feelings” or “emotions,” and others take as “essential nature” or “the genuine.”

Classical literatures described that love, hate, pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy all arise from qing. The ancient Confucian scholar Xunzi identified the emotions as inborn, genuine and natural. The Book of Rites described them as inborn, “without learning.” The genuineness of emotions that mirrors inner activities was believed to be the basis of the portrayal of truth.

Liang Qichao’s New Citizens Journal (Xinmin Congbao 新民叢報), the journal that serialized the New Citizens essays, gained an estimated readership of 200,000. What made Liang Qichao’s New Citizens a widely read collage were precisely his powerful and articulate narratives that reflected not just the persuasiveness of his “argument” but also the sincerity of “emotion.” While both were accomplished writers, Yan Fu had stuck to “ya (elegance),” while Liang valued “qing (emotions).”

The famous philosopher Hu Shi (胡適 1891-1962) once commented that “Liang’s writing is always soaked with emotive effects.” Indeed, Liang employed language chosen for its shock effect and its ability to draw readers’ attention. He was able to move and stir readers, to appeal to their passions as well

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42 Ibid., 317.
as minds.\textsuperscript{45} Liang’s language in “The Concept of Nation” was laced with anguish as well as a hopeful tone regarding the future of China. The following excerpt exemplifies this combination of emotions:

\begin{quote}
The emergence of a nation is inescapable. It results from our naturally inadequate capacity and the necessity to draw together, help, strengthen and benefit each other. If we want to perpetuate this collective effort, never loosen our bonds, waste our reciprocity, miss the time to help or end mutual benefit, we must become aware of the existence of a larger entity that unites us together. We have to keep that in mind whenever we speak, act or make decisions. This is the spirit of universal love.\textsuperscript{46}
\end{quote}

An emotive element was embedded in the conclusion: “The emergence of a nation is inescapable.” The word “inescapable” (\textit{bu de yi 不得已}) shows that the emergence of the state was predestined. It is a necessary step that all peoples must take in order to become better human beings. It is also an essential way to save China from national crises. The word “inescapable” entails a mixture of desperation, exhilaration and a sense of exigency. The empty interjection “\textit{ye 也},” which carries no semantic meaning, is also an emotive word.\textsuperscript{47} It sounds like a sigh that showed the complexity of the writer’s feelings.

Many Western explanations for the emergence of the state demonstrate a rational formula in which various political and economic forces bring forth an outcome in the form of a social contract. For Liang Qichao, the truth of nationalism and the veracity of love toward one’s nation was already embedded in


\textsuperscript{46} Translation of “\textit{國家之立，由於不得已也。即人人自知僅恃一身之不可，而別求彼我相團結、相援助、相救助、相利益之道也。而欲使其團結永不散，補救永不虧，救助永不誤，利益永不窮；則必人人焉知吾一身之上，更有大而要者存。每發一言，出一言，治一事，必常注意於其所謂一身以上者。此兼愛主義也。}” From Liang Qichao, “\textit{Xinmin Shuo (New Citizens)},” 1903, in \textit{Quanji}, 664.

the quest itself. Composing a justification for truth was less important than creating a flow of emotion that would lead to its manifestation. Emotions that coursed through the words created a many layered inner landscape. They flew outwardly to Liang’s readers and resonated with many intellectuals at the time. Words that spoke to one’s heart were much more compelling than words that argued with the brain.

The emotive impact is manifested also in Liang Qichao’s translations. A common method used the transliteration of English into Chinese was to create new meanings. This method springs from the common transliteration of Western words into Mandarin through the use of characters whose pronunciation resembles the sounds of the foreign language. Because Mandarin is rich in homophones, there are numerous possibilities for transliterating the same Western word through entirely different characters. For example, Liang Qichao translated “inspiration” into “yan shi pi li chun 煙士披里純,” which was a string of nonsensical words selected for their sound. This is how Liang describes “inspiration:”

Inspiration bursts when emotions and feelings reach a climax. At that moment, all the men of will, men of fidelity, men of loyalty, religionists, artists, adventurers rise up and pursue their grand goals. They would startle the universe and move the gods. That is the power of inspiration.48

According to Liang, “inspiration” had so many components: desire and reason, passion and loyalty, perseverance and explosiveness. The depth of the word made itself untranslatable in Chinese. When the name could not be formulated, it was illustrated. In Liang’s illustration of “inspiration,” it sounds like a magical beast present in human nature that can be wakened at any moment to

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48 Translation of “發于思想感情最高潮之一剎那頃，而千古之英雄豪杰、孝子烈婦、忠臣義士，以至熱心之宗教家、美術家、探險家，所以能為驚天地泣鬼神之事業，皆起于此一剎那頃，為此“煙士披里純”之所鼓動。” From Liang Qichao, “Yan Shi Pi Li Chun (Inspiration),” in Quanji, 375.
serve great purposes. After Liang’s time, the Mandarin translation for inspiration became *ling gan* (靈感), meaning feelings that touch the soul.

**Logic Follows the Trend of Culture**

Scholars have trouble defining Liang Qichao’s ideas as liberalism or communitarianism. Philip C. Huang characterized Liang’s conflicting ideas regarding the relationship between individual and state as “enlightened despotism.” On the one hand, Liang seemed to agree that “liberty is a universal principle, a necessary condition of life and is applicable everyone.” On the other hand, he was deeply concerned about the sovereignty and the survival of the Chinese nation. Japanese scholars also found it difficult to trace Liang Qichao’s evolving thought because “Liang often depended on his impressions from reading” and his work “carried no footnotes.”

This confusion in defining Liang’s thoughts may result from an interesting characteristic of Chinese language. The traditional type of subject-predicate proposition is absent in Chinese logic. “Logic follows the trend of culture.” Western scholars often mistake their logic for the universal logic of mankind. A Chinese sentence usually does not have a subject, and therefore, the Chinese system of logic is not based upon the law of identity. A Chinese term may be explained or indicated by association with another term similar in sound. This is inconceivable in Western logic. For example, Liang Qichao illustrated the relationship between loving the court and loving the nation by using terms similar in sound. “Loving the court as a result of loving the nation resembles loving the

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50 Ibid., 69.
Crow (烏 wu) and house (屋 wu) have the same pronunciation. This similar sound entails transmissibility of one’s emotions toward these two separate entities, which can be detected if read out. The justification of loving the court as a result of loving the nation was, therefore, felt and heard by Liang’s readers, instead of explained.

In “The Concept of Nation,” Liang Qichao never declared a theory of nationhood based on the law of identification. He illustrated the emergence of the state by describing the terrible situation when one did not live in a nation. He distinguished government from the state by putting the relationship in the context of corporation. Liang emphasized the importance of loving one’s nation by appealing to readers the love of family. Liang did not achieve these goals by directly identifying what constitutes a nation.

The absence of the law of identification and the lack of subject in Chinese language lead to a particular way to reading Chinese texts. The “subject” is not meant to be illustrated in the language. Rather, it is embedded in readers’ own understanding. In working on this thesis, reading Chinese was a different experience from reading English. When reading English texts, I tended to approach the language with an analytical mind, judging and critiquing the argument according to logic. When reading Chinese, I do not rely as heavily on analytical thinking. The verb to “read” in the context depends greatly upon wu (悟). This word does not actually have an English translation. The character 悟 is composed of the stroke for heart “冖” and the character of 吾 (wu, self). Imagine

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any activity that has to be done with your heart: thinking, reflecting, learning, feeling, empathizing, etc. They potentially all lead to the act of wu.

This lack of explicit subjectivity in the classical Chinese language enables readers to play with a variety of understandings. Without the law of identification in constructing an argument in Chinese, the “self” of the readers is flowing around or above the text, but is hardly merged into text. This allows room for imagination and reflections. Liang Qichao’s way of writing was empowered by words that did not just to speak to the readers. They talk with them.

Philosopher Chang Tung-sun, a younger contemporary of Liang Qichao, argued that “Chinese thought is not based upon the law of identity.”54 As a result, the Chinese writers may have a better grasp of the limitation of language in addressing human thoughts. The process of illustrating a concept cannot be completed in crafting a written text. Much remains to be accomplished in the process of digestion by the readers.

For me, reading Liang Qichao was an experience in following a flow of emotions and will. Will (zhi 志) may be defined as a spontaneous flowing of emotion, unmediated by artistry or calculation. Zhi was valuable because “it was concerned with something inexpressible.”55 Only placing the self into language can one follow the writer’s zhi. Translated modernity thus posed many linguistic and conceptual challenges. New concepts were woven into a powerful and powerless language at the times of vehement social and intellectual transformation. At the height of those social and political changes, the nucleus of thought and emotions lies in words that the language cannot bear. Nevertheless, we can trace

the process of reasoning for Liang Qichao and his contemporaries through newly fashioned words:

新民雲者，非新者一人，而新之者又一人也，則在吾民之各自新而已。56

There is no such person as “new citizen.” Neither is there such person to create new citizens. The concept of new citizens is all about self-renewal.

For readers who could barely understand the concept of nation, what meaning did the New Citizens carry? More than quenching parched throats, Liang Qichao’s writings managed to moisturize barren inner landscapes. The backbone of helpless citizens had to be created through the work of the heart, not just the voice. This was not an easy undertaking. One had to transform the heart from a mere apparatus for the enjoyment of selfish desires into an obedient tool for the reception of virtue.

56 Liang Qichao, Xinmin Shuo (New Citizens), 1903, in Quanjí, 664.
Chapter Three

In Dark Times, I Receive the Gift of Setbacks

吾知之，吾甚敬之，且特別思之。
I’ve known her well, I respect her and I’m always thinking about her.

-- Liang Qichao “Letter to Huixian” 與蕙仙書 May 24, 1900
In the winter of 1899, Liang Qichao met Miss He Huizhen, a young teacher at a local elementary school in Honolulu. In the midst of their conversation, she voiced her political opinion, “China’s undeveloped female education is the most important cause of China’s backwardness.”\(^1\) Liang was impressed by her ideas about gender equality. He declared: “women’s equal rights have arrived in Honolulu, and two hundred million women of China must bow their heads to Miss He.”\(^2\) During the next six months in America, Miss He acted as Liang’s translator and intermediary at various social functions. Before Liang left America, Miss He asked: “Mr. Liang, I admire you very much. If this is our last time together, I wish I could have your photo.”\(^3\) Requesting a photo was considered a highly personal request, hinting at the possibility of a romantic relationship. Liang could tell that this was the intended message. Moved and touched, he agreed. In return, Miss He made two delicate hand fans and sent them to Liang.

Liang Qichao himself described Miss He as an extraordinary figure: “Her gleaming eyes like sparks of lightning, her ready words resembling torrents of waterfall.”\(^4\) He talked about his inner struggle with this romantic affair in a letter to his wife Li Huixian, “The more I thought about her, the more I admired and loved her. I couldn’t even sleep. My deer heart always jumped up and down every

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1. Translation of “中國女學不興為第一病源。整頓小學之法以教練兒童。” From Nianpu, 163.
2. The original verse of the poem is “二萬萬人齊下拜，女權先到火奴奴。” From Liang Qichao, “Jishi Ershisi Shou (Twenty-four Lines of Journey in America),” 1900, in Quanjia, 5419.
3. Translation of “我萬分敬愛梁先生，今生或不能相遇，願期諸來生，但得先生賜以小像，即遂心願。” From Liang Qichao, “Yu Huixian Shu (Letter to Huixian),” 1900, in Nianpu, 165.
4. The original verse of the poem is “目如流電口如河。” From Liang Qichao, “Jishi Ershishi Shou (Twenty-four Lines of Journey in America),” 1900, in ibid., 5419.
5. The metaphor of deer implies the shyness of a trembling heart. This metaphor is suggestive of the budding, beautiful and yet vacillating nature of Liang’s affection towards Miss He.
time she approached me.” Li, in return, suggested that Liang could marry Miss He as his concubine. Liang, however, turned down this generous-spirited offer.

The primary purpose for Liang Qichao to travel to Hawaii was to seek support from the overseas Chinese community for the reform movement. Dedicated to constructing a civic *qun* through a new kind of political practice, he did not want the delicate civic project to be entangled in erotic affairs. Materializing a civic *qun* through political practices was a tough enough task. Even though Liang’s ideal of citizenship had assumed the existence of an integrated political community, the perceived disparity between different social classes was overwhelming.

The image on the cover page dates roughly to 1865 and represents a merchant’s family. By contrast, the following image, taken around 1875, portrays a peasant’s family.

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6 Translation of “益思念蕙珍，由敬重之心，生出愛戀之念來，幾於不能自持…夜不能寐，心頭小鹿，忽上忽落。” From Liang Qichao, “Yu Huixian Shu (Letter to Huixian),” 1900, in *Nianpu*, 164.
7 Liang said, “The fate of China is at stake. How can I drift into romantic affairs?亡國在即…吾獨何心，尚嘯嘯作兒女語耶。” From Ibid., 165.
The two images show the contrasting situation of the two very different classes. It is difficult to conceive of a qun binding two such disparate families. What kind of public consciousness would possibly bond these people together?

Liang was hoping to find the answer in America. Having witnessed workings of a republican polity and having interacted with American politicians and local communities, he expected to find ways to practice citizenship in China. He was grateful to have Miss He accompany him. Yet he could not promise his marriage for her. He tried to adhere to the principle of gender equality and to become a New Citizen himself. He confessed, “I am striving toward a monogamous society. I can’t go against my own agenda.”

Red Sleeves

Turning from the public podium to the private chamber, one couplet in Liang’s poem is particularly revealing. In this fragment, Liang Qichao is commemorating his time with Miss He, he writes as follows: “Heaven must not be envious of such an extraordinary and passionate comradeship. Red-sleeves add incense to the burner; we continue our translation face-to-face.”

In Liang’s poem, the embodiment of the red-sleeve is repositioned from hanging around in the background of the hard-working scholar to facing him as they work together in the task of translation. Miss He’s helping hand added more than incense. Since Liang at the time knew limited English, Miss He Huizhen’s help was indispensable.

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9 Translation of “吾嘗與同志創立一夫一妻世界會，今義不可背。” From Ibid., 163.
10 The original verse of the poem is “奇情艷福天難妒，紅袖添香對譯書” From Liang Qichao, “Jishi Ershisi Shou (Twenty-four Lines of Journey in America),” 1900, in Quanji, 5419.
11 For details of Liang and He’s encounter please refer to Hu Ying, Tales of Translation: Composing the New Woman in China, 1899-1918 (Stanford, 2000), 198.
Yet Liang’s self-reflective conscience cooled down as the incense filled romance turned it into a memorable friendship. His concession to conscience sprang from his attitude toward the relationship between gong (public 公) and si (private 私).

A common translation of si in English is “private.” In contemporary Western scholarship, the distinction between public sphere and a politicized “private” domain constitutes the basis of a modern political society. According to Peter Berkowitz, John Locke’s definition of private exemplifies this notion:

> Legitimate government is based on the consent of the governed, it has as its aim in the public good, which Locke defines as the protection of life, liberty and possessions. It is not government’s job to promote human excellence or save souls. The specific virtues on which the public good depends on are learned in private life, but a private life that imposes formidable demands on parents and children...virtues such as self-denial, liberality, justice, courage, civility, industry, and truthfulness are necessary to public life and acquired by a moral education taking place in the family...which presupposes stable and prosperous families, parents with a generous endowment of moral virtue.12

For Locke, it is the virtue of the private sphere that gives rise to the possibility of public good. Private, or si, however, sounds quite un-virtuous in Chinese. Si is superficial, uncelebrated, and therefore it is not meant to be shown to the public. Si should remain in the sphere of si, and it cannot serve as the basis for the construction of public life. It does not mean that si is ugly, evil or should be governed under an absolute sovereign, as Thomas Hobbes would suggest. Si is simply a trivial and depthless aspect of human nature. What is important is not to weed out this trivial and depthless si in our mind, but to become aware that there is always a grander, deeper and more meaningful aspect of self.

Other possible English translations for *si*, such as “personal” or “self interest,” do not fully capture the essence of *si*. Therefore, my translation of Liang’s claim in “The Concept of Nation” that “it is fine to suppress your own interests (*si*) to love the nation”\textsuperscript{13} is not entirely accurate. Reading the translation alone, one could easily misinterpret this claim as a patriotic propaganda and it could be easily utilized by an authoritarian regime to manipulate its people.

Nevertheless, the essence of “suppress one’s *si*,” if read in Chinese, connotes the effort within the individual’s heart. To become “free of *si*” is not to eliminate the self and certainly not to transform it into a marginalized fraction of a giant collectivity. Instead, it connotes a “self-less” version of the *self*.

Liang Qichao’s view of a selfless version of the self was not solely a reiteration of the Confucian sense of self-cultivation. Confucius’ notion of self-cultivation had intended to turn a morally conscious man into a morally blameless sage, and only the sages could become political rulers. For Liang, to become selfless was to acquire the perceptibility of “goodness” for oneself. It is not simply an instrumental ethic that can be re-appropriated to serve political purpose.

What did *si ai* (私愛 personal love) mean for Liang? The *si* part of his love affair with Miss He became groundless in the face of the effort to pursue a more meaningful calling as a thinker, a writer in wretched China. Liang’s *si ai* toward Miss He Huizhen, as he looked back, became an insignificant kind of love.

The essayist and translator Zhou Zuoren (周作人 1885-1967) wrote a key comment on love in the following words: “One has to strive to love like the gardener. One must devote considerable energy in order to cultivate good

\textsuperscript{13} Translation of “殺其一身之私以愛一國可也。” From Liang Qichao, “Lun Guojia Sixiang (The Concept of Nation),” Xinmin Shuo (New Citizens).
flowers.” This is also an appropriate description of Liang’s attitude towards love. Love should be enduring and righteous. Liang never divorced his wife, even when he became a high-profile and high-achieving public figure who could have attracted a more worthy woman.

Liang, after all, was still a man of his time. He indeed had a second wife, Wang Guiquan. When Liang married his first wife Li Huixian in 1891, Wang came along with Li as her servant. Li gave birth to her first son in 1901, but she and her son were not in good health. Li was worried that she could not give birth to more children and expand Liang’s family lineage for him. Therefore, Li hoped that Liang could marry Wang, a “smart and hardworking” young girl. Wang was then sent to Japan to marry Liang in 1903. Wang and Liang had six children, but Liang refrained from mentioning Wang on any public occasion. One of the remaining photographs of Liang’s family below did not include Wang.

Liang’s eldest daughter (Liang Sishun), Liang Qichao, Liang’s eldest son (Liang Sicheng) and Li Huixian, in Japan

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Although Liang was often betrayed as a loving and caring father, the picture shows that he was also the patriarchal center of his family. This might explain why Liang Qichao agreed to marry Wang Guiquan, but refused to do so when it came to He Huizhen. Liang’s intention to marry Wang, unlike his feelings toward He Huizhen, was not filled with *si ai*. Having many children was a sign of family prosperity in Chinese tradition. Liang and his wife Li Huixian shared this responsibility. Caught in between traditional family ethics and modern gender equality, Liang struggled to embrace both. Nonetheless, the process of containing his *si ai* toward Miss He for a grand public ideal made Liang more than just a man of his times.

**By Giving Up Something**

Under the influence of Japanese practical learning, Liang Qichao developed a more mature understanding of the political aspect of *si*. Liang was convinced that the effect of the syncretic Japanese *jitsugaku* (*實學* shixue, practical learning), enhanced by the Western utilitarian values, had laid the foundations for the success of modernization in Japan.

Liang’s definition of the virtue of the New Citizens resembled that of the Japanese enlightenment thinker, Fukuzawa Yukichi (福澤諭吉 1835-1901). Fukuzawa’s notion of *jitsugaku* has been defined by a modern Japanese scholar, Minamoto Ryoen, as a political-economic *jitsugaku*. This concept connotes a more internal expression and is related to moral self-realization. In its external expression, this concept refers to governing the country without external attachments. For Fukuzawa, in order to attain true practical learning, one must
achieve *genko icchi*, unity of words and action—a notion originally developed by the Chinese Neo-Confucian philosopher Wang Yangming (王陽明 1472-1529).\(^{16}\)

The virtue of self-reliance, self-respect and the spirit of independence were the key elements of Fukuzawa’s *jitsugaku*. These also became the most important elements of Liang Qichao’s New Citizen virtue. Nevertheless, Liang’s appreciation of *jitsugaku* was not solely driven by utilitarian motives.

For Liang Qichao, *jitsugaku* did not simply refer to an “intellectual virtue” that governed his thought and guided his practical judgment. More importantly, this appreciation of *jitsugaku* was influenced by Liang’s interest in *jitsugaku* on personal grounds. Thus, *jitsugaku* turned into a moral virtue that “governs feelings as well as actions.”\(^{17}\) Moral virtue, according to Peter Berkowitz, is “a fixed disposition or character trait acquired through habituation” and it involves “choice performed in accordance with right reason.”\(^{18}\) Liang developed a kind of love towards the moral virtue of *jitsugaku* and incorporated this love into the ideals of New Citizenship more broadly conceived.

In light of this affection, we can better understand Liang’s critique of self oriented love. *Si ai* was deemed to prohibit the growth of moral virtue. Although *si* was the basis of self-awareness and self-consciousness (and therefore was the prerequisite for self-reliance and self-respect), only by maturing beyond self could one elevate the spiritual self. Creating civic virtue thus became a process of empowering a public oriented spirit.

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\(^{16}\) Liang Qichao’s generation, the generation of 1898, was caught up with the fever of Japan, especially of its modernization path. Japanese intellectuals, however, was equally infatuated with Chinese Neo-Confucianism during the Edo period (1603-1868), which laid the foundation for the Meiji Reform. Neo-Confucian philosopher Wang Yangming was introduced to Japan in the Edo period. Interestingly, Liang Qichao was actually relearning the essence of Wang Yangming’s philosophy through the lens of Japan.

\(^{17}\) Peter Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, 10.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 10.
According to historian Hiroko Wilock, Liang’s appreciation of *jitsugaku* was also manifested in his views about religion.\(^9\) Liang Qichao regarded religion as motivational and energy-generating force beneficial for social progress. In Liang’s later life, he was particularly drawn to Buddhism for its motivational power. He believed that Buddhism was conducive to the cultivations of wisdom, personal will and the emotions. Among these three cultivations, the cultivation of personal will, clearly illustrated, is Liang’s concept of *si* as seen from a religious perspective:

*The cultivation of personal will implies the outgrowth from Atman (the obsession with self). This requires us to develop self-abnegation and therefore we never become enslaved by our ego. Buddha says humans perceive reality on the basis of self-existence, think and act in accordance with the illusion of self-existence, and eventually become enslaved by it. To overcome this illusion, we must overcome our arbitrary wills and selfish desires.*

*In Buddhism, overcoming self-will does not mean to passively terminate all physical and mental activities and become an ascetic. Mencius says, “by giving up something one can actually achieve something.” Agama Sutra says, “desire can be overcome by desire.” Guided by this superior desire, we could become cultivated and empowered.*\(^{20}\)

In the statement that “by giving up something (*buwei*) one can actually achieve something (*youwei*),” Mencius had implied that it is important to keep oneself away from the things that prevented one from achieving lofty goals. In ancient China, this connoted wrongdoings motivated by selfish desires. Liang, by contrast, was particularly concerned with *buwei,* the conscious restraint of the

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\(^{20}\) Translation of the passage “意志修養有消極積極兩方面, 消極方面, 主要再破除我執, 制御意志。佛以為眾生五明業種, 皆由對於我的執著而生, 事事以我這個假我為本位, 一切活動, 都成了假我的奴隸。我們至少要當得起自己的家, 全力克服這種盲目意志。佛家所謂制御意志者, 並非制止身心活動。孟子說：人有不為也，然後可以有為。阿難說：以欲制欲。佛有一絕對無限的大欲在前, 應以為目標, 教人努力往前募進。其所注重者, 實在積極的磨練激勵之一途。” From Liang Qichao, “Fotuo Shidai ji Yuanshi Fojiao Gangyao (Basic Principles of Buddhism),” 1925, in *Quanjji*, 3751.
self.\textsuperscript{21} In light of this understanding, we now learn that Liang Qichao did not view religion as simply a religious commitment. For him, it became a kind of moral belief that empowered one to free oneself from selfishness, from \textit{si} (in Buddhist term, Atman). Buddhism’s cultivation of personal will highlighted the narrowness of personal emotions and thinking associated with the elusory self. Cultivating personal will could expand the vision of personhood in a way that was compatible with Liang’s vision of selflessness.

Whether learning from \textit{jitsugaku} or Buddhism, Liang always approached a new concept with a practical purpose in the construction of various elements needed for a civic \textit{qun}. He always went beyond the mere act of borrowing. Liang Qichao aimed to internalize other ideas with a morally conscious mind.

**Street Gossips and Small Talk**

Delineating Liang’s actions and words on \textit{si} paved the way for concretizing Liang’s vision of \textit{gong} (公, public). Liang’s appreciation of practical learning had led him to explore methods of constructing a public-minded \textit{qun}. One important method was promoting pre-existing forms of popular reading materials, specifically fictions.

“Small talks (\textit{xiaoshuo} 小説)” is the Chinese expression for “fiction.” This term first appeared in the second century classic, \textit{Hanshu}, in which it is defined as “street gossips and small talks.”\textsuperscript{22} Liang Qichao wanted to build upon the popular nature of \textit{xiaoshuo} in order to spread political concepts. According to literary scholar Perry Link, Liang believed that “a strong connection exists between fiction, the public ethic, and national strength” and that “political fictions

\textsuperscript{21} Liang’s teacher, Kang Youwei, by contrast, giving himself the name \textit{youwei}, focused on the proactive pursuit of one’s goals.

\textsuperscript{22} Translation of “街談巷語，道聽途說之所造也。”
caused modern political ideas to spread among all the people, binding them together for unified action.”

Liang was convinced that upon the basis of “new fiction” all else might be accomplished: new citizenship, new morality, new religion, new government, new customs, new art and the formation of a new personal character.

In fact, Liang Qichao’s promotion of political novels constituted the modern version of an ancient concept: “literature to convey the Way (wen yi zai dao 文以載道),” which had been first developed by the Chinese philosopher Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073) in the Song Dynasty. This concept carries much literary and philosophical weight because of the complexity embedded in the meanings of wen and dao. Wen (文) in the context of wen yi zai dao means literary composition, yet it can also connote the act of writing as well as the characters of the language itself. Wen also connotes civil (as opposed to military) writings. Dao is even more complex and profound. It could mean the way, the method, or the principle. Daoism, an ancient school of philosophical thought, was named solely after the character dao.

Wen yi zai dao suggests that literature, or the act of writing, or even the characters themselves, constitutes a way, a path, to the author’s purpose in

24 The role of literature in Chinese society varied with historical contexts. During Zhou Dynasty (1045-255 BC), major literatures focused on basic philosophical and religious thought, including Confucianism. During Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), classical language was standardized and literature writing was supervised under strict laws for social order. During Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), scientific and historical texts began to emerge, and writing paper was invented. Tang Dynasty (618-907) witnessed early woodblock printing and booming poetry. Song Dynasty (906-1279) literatures diversified, such as travel literature, Neo-Confucian classics. The term wen yi zai dao was coined by Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhou Dunyi at that time. It was not until the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) that novels appeared, and they continued to thrive during Qing era (1644-1911).
creating literature. Writing itself can also elaborate and amplify the nuances of thinking for the author himself. Therefore, it was also a path for an author to find meaning and expression. This became the distinctive path to which Liang had devoted his life.

![Portrait of Liang Qichao at the age of 54](image)

This is a portrait of Liang Qichao at the age of 54. Holding the brush, wearing a traditional hat, Liang had maintained the wholeness and the thoughtful demeanor of a writer. Composing literatures day and night, he laid the foundation for creating a social discourse to convey the dao. Wen yi zai dao sometimes is translated into “literature to convey the truth.” This is not exactly accurate, because dao does not equate with truth. Rather, it suggests a path, a method, to find truth. For Liang, dao was a way to seek truth through the tireless reflection of the brush.

Liang Qichao regarded fiction as a form of literature that could help to propagate political consciousness. At the same time, he both accepted and rejected the moral implications of fiction. On the one hand, literary works facilitated public understanding of new political virtue and new political concepts. On the

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other hand, consuming fictions were too convenient. This form of literature could easily remain mere entertainment.

Liang’s interest in using literature as a channel to convey political ideals also resulted from the growing popularity of fiction during late Qing. According to historian Tang Xiaobing, a late nineteenth century growth in fictional production signaled “the active engineering of an epistemic restructuring” and “a multifarious, often conflictual reality that the new fiction would have to encounter and represent.”

The overwhelming volume of fiction writing from this period showed a historical need for “novelistic narration” and more importantly for “a new narratable knowledge.” In order to make knowledge narratable, it was crucial to practice the appropriate form of writing in understandable language. Literary works were able to fulfill both these goals. Liang was trying to catch up with the increasing popularity of fiction and the increasing need for a new form of narration that could be used for his political agenda.

Liang Qichao had started to experiment with writing political novels in 1902. In this year, he published his first political fiction *The Future of New China* (*Xin Zhongguo Weilai Ji* 新中國未來記). *The Future of New China* was set in the year of 2062 and envisioned a successful constitutional reform that launched a democratic system. The novel portrayed a rising debate between constitutional monarchy and republicanism that would take place around 1962. One character named Huang Keqiang advocated for a constitutional monarchy. Li Qubing, a republican, fought back with a strong support for a French-style revolution for

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Ibid., 12.
China. The bulk of the novel was devoted to detailed conversations and debates between Huang and Li.29

The novel was an experiment. Liang Qichao wrote only five chapters and did not finish it. As he struggled through various chapters, he tried to convey to the audience some important messages embedded in the “small talk” form of story. By portraying details of practicing public affairs and political debates, Liang meant to signal an important message: that “citizens of a constitutional polity must become well informed about politics and experienced with participating in politics before they could truly enjoy the benefits of constitutionalism.”30 By conveying the dao of public awareness in the political fiction, Liang tried to infuse readers with a sense of political consciousness. The dao, defined by public consciousness, should come before the revelation of truth, i.e. constitutionalism.

According Susan Daruvala, wen yi zai dao historically held sway during times of strong government in China.31 This was probably because literature was elegantly produced and formatted during stable times and the public had the leisure time to consume lengthy stories. This was hardly achievable during political disturbances. Perhaps that was why Liang Qichao’s experiments with political fictions were not successful.

29 In reality, the year of 1962 was a crucial transition between the Great Leap Forward (1958-61) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). In 1962, there had been a debate between conservative reformers represented by premier Zhou Enlai and radical revolutionaries led by Mao Zedong. After the tragic Great Leap Forward policy resulted in millions of unnatural deaths in China from 1958 to 1961, Zhou argued in favor of a pragmatic economic reform to recover national economy. He wanted to abandon the radical communist agricultural policy. Mao, by contrast, insisted that communist ideology could not be compromised. Since the ideology had failed in the economic sphere, Mao hoped to rebuild its influence in the cultural sphere, which led to the Cultural Revolution.

30 Translation of “練習政務，凡立憲國民，皆當有政治上之知識及閱歷，始可以享立憲之實益。” From Liang Qichao, Xin Zhongguo Weilai Ji (The Story of The Future of New China), 1902, in Quanjji, 5614.

Daruvala also points out that during times of turmoil, another writing mindset had prevailed: literature that expressed aim or intention (shi yan zhi 詩言志 poetry for the expression of the will). Shi yan zhi favored creativity and improvisation. Going beyond wen yi zai dao, Liang also pioneered a new form of writing in the spirit of shi yan zhi. His aim became to speak to the public through journalism.

**Grass Hut Amid A Myriad of Trees**

Even though the top-ranking Chinese elites traditionally despised journalism as an inferior line of work, Liang Qichao firmly believed in the potential of an enlightened press and admired the variety, richness, and social influence of Western press.

In a famous 1896 editorial, “On the Benefit of the Press in National Affairs,” Liang had envisioned a press that would enhance solidarity between “above and below” and make both the people and the government better informed about what today’s political scientists would call “modernization” projects: commerce, technology, foreign affairs, and state affairs. To actualize these goals, the role of the press was to translate world news, report government activities, analyze foreign relations, and publish important works on political science and the arts:

The Press should translate and publish essays about current world affairs, thus enabling readers to know about the rise and fall of the great powers. The press should document new local policies in each province and explain to the readers their goals and benefits. By enabling public discussions about politics through journalism,

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we would have a more open-minded social climate, a refreshing social structure, booming communities and emerging talents.\textsuperscript{33} According to media historian Yu Haiqing, the Chinese journalists viewed themselves as enlightenment and as an intermediate layer between the ignorant masses waiting to be educated and conservative political elites.\textsuperscript{34}

Liang Qichao expanded this traditional notion of journalism. He saw the press as performing two major functions: communicating ideas to the public as well as mobilizing public opinion in order to influence government. He argued that editors should function as the representatives, leaders, and galvanizers of a newly defined Chinese public. Although his sense of this public obligation echoed Confucian exhortations concerning the role of the noble man, this new mode of popular representation differed from tradition in several important ways. Most importantly, “the journalists did not only speak for the people but to the people.”\textsuperscript{35} This marked a departure from the traditional literati practice of communicating almost exclusively with their equals or superiors.

By contrast, Liang Qichao endeavored to construct a middle realm, using print media, to connect past and present notions of society and politics and also between foreign and indigenous ideals and concepts. Over time he became one of China’s most effective cultural brokers and mediators.

Expanding this public sphere was essential for the construction of Liang’s notion of civic \textit{qun}. In eighteenth century France, Paris too had been a center of

expanded social discourse. Middle class growth and increasing literacy had caused citizens to read more widely and to discuss ideas and events in new social venues such as coffeehouses. Many Parisians read a wide variety of pamphlets and newspapers, while even more listened to public readings and discussions about news in cafes and other places.\textsuperscript{36} Given the popularity of the private press and the expansion of public engagement in political affairs, the outburst of the French Revolution was not accidental.

In Chinese politics, the written word has always been more important than what was spoken. There had been elite consensus that “the written and later printed word must serve the interests of the Confucian state by instructing and uplifting society” and “the state had always played a much more central role in print culture than was true in Europe.”\textsuperscript{37} In today’s China, we still observe the state’s use of the printed word for propaganda and censorship of the printed word when it suits the purpose of the Communist Party. In this regard, the emergence of an independent popular press under the influence of Liang Qichao represents a revolutionary effort in the construction of a Chinese public in early twentieth century. And it remains meaningful for twenty-first century discussions of a free press in the P.R.C.

Liang had envisioned journalism as a vocation motivated by the intellectuals’ idealism, conscience, and assumed moral virtues. Journalism was supposed to serve a social cause: a journalist should engage in disseminating knowledge and producing a social discourse to educate the public, act as a

\textsuperscript{36} For details about the role of press in the French Revolution see: Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, Andrew Evans, William Bruce Wheeler and Julius Ruff, \textit{Discovering the Western Past, Volume II: Since 1500} (Stamford, 2014), 109.

spokesperson for social conscience, and serve as an ultimate arbitrator of truth and justice in society at large.\textsuperscript{38}

In Liang Qichao’s view, it was crucial for a journalist to be able to shed new light upon events and to make evaluative comments on current affairs.\textsuperscript{39} During his journalistic career, Liang had created and served with four major publications. The first publication that Liang initiated in 1895 was \textit{World Affairs} (\textit{Wanguo Gongbao} 萬國公報). In this journal, he had advocated for educational and political reforms to improve China’s backwardness. In 1896, he became the editor of \textit{Current Affairs} (\textit{Shiwu Bao} 時務報). In 1898, he established \textit{Upright Discussions} (\textit{Qingyi Bao} 清議報) in Japan, criticizing absolute monarchy and propagating individual rights. In 1903, he started the \textit{New Citizens Journal} (\textit{Xinmin Congbao} 新民叢報) in which he published his \textit{New Citizens} series.

I believe that Liang’s efforts in journalism can be detected earlier than the establishment of \textit{World Affairs} in 1895. The prototype of the popular press had in fact been launched in a library pulled together at the “Grass Hut amid a Myriad of Trees (万木草堂).” This was a modern educational institution established in Guangdong Province in 1891 by Kang Youwei. When Liang was still a disciple of Kang in 1891, he compiled the first “library” by pooling together more than 7000

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According to the author Padioleau, the editor of The French newspaper, \textit{Le Monde}, described its journalistic approach in 1978: “It isn’t enough to inform—one also has to do the groundwork to get ahead of events, to find ways to shed new light, to give voice to the voiceless.” In contrast, the Washington Post focused on “breaking” new information, providing new “insight” (though not making evaluative comments), and constructing “vivid narratives.” While avoiding explicit commentary in the news pages, the American approach was more active in shaping the news into coherent, compelling “stories.” Liang was actually doing both evaluative commentary and vivid narratives.
books owned by the students. This collection grew to 10000 volumes shortly afterwards, as translated works on Western learning were added to the shelves. Members who contributed books to this library were entitled to borrowing rights.

The first library established by Liang marks the transition from traditional book repositories to modern libraries.\textsuperscript{40} For thousands of years, libraries in China had functioned as personally owned book repositories. The majority of book collectors believed that “book collections were private property” and “should not be shared with the public.”\textsuperscript{41}

Today, the classroom in the “Grass Hut amid a Myriad of Trees” is open to the public to commemorate Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao’s reform efforts.

The photograph above\textsuperscript{42} captures a public lecture on filial piety, a core value of Confucianism. Sometimes, the classroom is also used for patriotic education. For example, lectures about modern Chinese history and the Western invasion of China are delivered according to Confucian ethics and also according to the guidance of the Communist Party. Over a century ago, this classroom opened up

\textsuperscript{40} Joan Judge, “Public Opinion and the New Politics of Contestation in the Late Qing, 1904-1911,” 74.


the path to Western learning for Kang Youwei and his students. Today, it has lapsed into a state’s mechanism for the injection of monolithic historical narratives.

By linking Liang’s early experience with library construction to his lifelong engagement with journalism, I seek to show that the primary mission of a journalist is to become the “eyes” and “ears” of the public. A social and political conscience was a long held essential value among knowledgeable elites. Hu Shi had argued that the prerequisite to become a full being was to cultivate “individual’s ability to acquire knowledge.” My work on Liang Qichao by contrast shows that the ability to observe different aspects of reality is probably the most important step for the growth of political consciousness.

A Horse’s Fart

While Liang was a successful writer, his political career was a rougher journey. Progress in the realm of politics may seem easily accomplished by drafting a constitution and establishing a parliament. Participating in political activities has often been a criterion for a better way for people to rule themselves. Such participation was difficult for Chinese in the early twentieth century. For them, politics was a confusing horizon, a muddled land where dangers and opportunities coexisted.

Two major political organizations during late Qing era were Baohuanghui (Protect the Emperor Society 保皇會) and Tongmenghui (Chinese United League 同盟會). The Baohuanghui was formed in Victoria, Canada in 1899 by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao. They insisted that drafting a constitution would cure

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most of China’s ills. By contrast, the Tongmenghui created in Tokyo in 1905 through the unification of Sun Yat-sen’s Xingzhonghui (Revive China Society 興中會), the Guangfuhui (Restoration Society 光復會) was a revolutionary project. The Tongmenghui proposed a more radical agenda than the Baohuanghui. Its aim was to expel the Manchu ruling elite and to revive China by establishing a Republic that would distribute land equally among the people.44

Although China’s political sphere seemed polarized among constitutional reformers and republican revolutionaries, Liang Qichao hesitated to settle upon a fixed political position. Because of his anti-confrontational disposition, Liang was more of a critical political figure than an ardent advocate of constitutional monarchy or a firm opponent of republican revolutionaries. He was a man who defied categories. In a letter written to Sun Yat-sen in 1899, Liang Qichao confessed his political ideals as follows: “The only hope that I have been keeping in my heart all these years is that our nation could become independent. I am flexible in terms of how to accomplish this—I am ready to, with all my heart, help anyone who could save our people.”45 Dedicated to transforming his compatriots from slaves into citizens, Liang was more concerned with saving individuals from political unconsciousness rather than with partisan struggles among different political organizations.

Zhong Gongyu (钟工宇), an early member of Xingzhonghui, (and also one of Sun Yat-sen’s closest friends), recalled of Liang Qichao’s visit to Honolulu in early 1900 as follows:

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44 Translation of 豈除殞改，復興中華，創立民國，平均地權
45 Translation of “弟數年來，至今未嘗稍變，惟務求國之獨立而已。若其方略，則隨時變通。但可以救我國民者，則傾心助之，初無成心。” From Liang Qichao, “Yu Sun Yat-sen Shu (Letters to Sun Yat-sen).” 1899, in Nianpu, 119.
Everyone wanted to meet this famous reformer. I too called and fell under the spell of the man. We collected subscriptions to send to the main bodies in Macao and Hong Kong. In all, I must have sent $30,000 of our currency. Liang himself was in great demand as a speaker. His intimate, behind-the-scene sketches of political intrigue and corruption in Peking, his picture of the pitiful Emperor Guangxu imprisoned in a small pavilion in the South Lake within the Forbidden City, and his outline of the reforms that would be necessary to make China a modern country; these and other talks kept our enthusiasm at white-heat. Many persons gave Liang money for his personal use.  

Liang successfully raised funds for *Baohuanghui* and even managed to gain sympathy among the republicans. This angered Sun Yet-sen, who thought that Liang was gaining support in the name of revolutionary agenda. Sun had criticized Liang by suggesting that he had “leveraged popular support for the revolutions to fund *Baohuanghui*, intending to trap us Chinese in the hands of the corrupt Manchu monarch. He is so vicious. Liang’s balancing act between constitutionalism and republicanism also irritated his teacher, Kang Youwei, who was an ardent and loyal supporter of constitutional monarchy. Kang said, “Although you [Liang] never openly attacked my ideas, you actually attacked me a lot.”

During the period between 1899 and 1903, Liang had wavered between constitutionalism and republicanism. In Japan, however, he was no longer “the” disciple who had followed Kang Youwei’s teaching. At the forefront of republican activities, Liang had witnessed first hand the progress that

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revolutionaries had achieved. At the same time, an appreciation of revolution began to trickle into Liang’s political thinking. He began to see destructive actions as a dynamic force that may lead to constructive progress. At the same time, Liang was still bound to traditional ethics of loyalty and respect to his master. He hesitated to openly separate himself from Kang Youwei.

At the height of partisan competition, it was common to draw lines in order to flag one’s political stance. Liang’s flexibility in picking a stance made him different from other young intellectuals. He intended to devote himself to civic movements rather than partisan alliances. With his anti-confrontational disposition, Liang resembled the character of a Confucian noble man: The gentleman comes together [with other gentlemen] without forming cliques (君子群而不黨).

A man of noble character, however, could be denounced as a distant and pompous. In October 1907, Liang delivered a speech to the Chinese exile community in Tokyo. Liang spoke for about two hours to a thousand students, about four hundred of whom were members of the Revolutionary Alliance. They had arrived armed with walking sticks and intended to turn Liang’s reform meeting into a revolutionary event. Near the end of Liang’s address about twenty of the revolutionaries rushed on podium. One of the leaders started shouting that

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51 Stephen Angle’s translation of “君子群而不黨。” one of principles to become a noble man in The Analects of Confucius, from his work Concepts in Context, 64.
Liang was a “horse’s fart.” Liang Qichao tried in vain to quiet the crowd with his “sage-like appearance and his non-stop oratory.” At this event, Liang managed to be articulate and thoughtful. These traits had made him a popular public speaker, journalist and political thinker. He was, however, not as successful in politics. Neither tactical nor ambitious, Liang Qichao held high office without succeeding as a politician.

**We Share A Nation-loving Heart**

I believe that the tension between constitutionalists and republicans has been overemphasized over time. During peaceful times, political polarizations tended to deepen. During China’s many crises, common ground often outweighed tactical differences. Kang and Liang’s constitutional petitions had aimed to get the emperor to agree to share some of his decision-making power with foreign educated civil servants and local officials. They had not yet argued for the extension of the right of political participation to commoners. For Kang and Liang in 1895, the issue was primarily representation. For radical elitists by contrast, commoners had to voice their own interests directly. Despite this difference, both factions had based their ideas in an ancient Chinese principle: “minben (人民 as the root),” by “recasting these principles away from narrowly Confucian perspectives.”

The extent of common ground between reformers and radicals depended on the scope of the perception of the “people.” After living in Japan, Liang Qichao’s attitude toward the “commoners” had changed. He had to rely on the

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52 A horse fart in Chinese idiom refers to someone who likes speaking empty, lofty words to make himself welcomed and look sophisticated.
53 Donald J. Munro, *A Chinese Ethics for the New Century: The Chien Mu Lectures in History and Culture, and Other Essays on Science and Confucian Ethics* (Hong Kong, 2005), 46.
moral, political and financial support of overseas Chinese merchants during the years of his political exile. This led to a progressive change in Liang’s attitude toward merchants. Back in 1896, although he had become convinced of the importance of commerce and industry, he had described merchants in general as “subversive, manipulative and monopolistic.” This attitude towards merchants displayed a Confucian prejudice that would have made it difficult for Liang to “accept them as his social equals.”

By 1903, this scorn for the monopolistic tendencies of merchants had turned into “admiration” and he even encouraged them to “combine their efforts with the Chinese government to form large monopolies.”

Liang Qichao’s political views were more flexible than Kang Youwei’s. After being exposed to Western learning, Liang always felt that he was “endlessly exploring the inexhaustible sea of knowledge.” Kang, by contrast, was confident that he had already completed his own system of knowledge by the age of 30 and there would be no further need for changes. Although Liang had drifted away from Kang’s influence, he always stressed the importance of finding common ground. This was more important than differences in views. In 1902, he wrote to his mentor as follows: “I understand that Master was indebted to the Emperor [his acceptance of the 1898 Reform agenda] and would never want to betray him. Although students began to appreciate the value of a political revolution, we shared a nation-loving heart with Master. Master does not have to prohibit

56 Ibid., 75.
57 Translation of “自覺其學未成, 且愛其不成, 數十年在徬徨求索中。” From Liang Qichao, Qingdai Xueshu Gailun (Intellectual History of the Qing Dynasty), 1920, in Quanji, 4428.
that.” Emphasizing common ideals was a strategy to avoid polarization of the public. Historically, however, anti-confrontational activists such as Liang Qichao faced many a dilemma in practical politics. Because of their wavering and ambiguous attitude, they were often misinterpreted and misunderstood.

Another example of a similarly misunderstood reformer was the senior official Zhang Zhidong (張之洞 1837-1909). Zhang was known for his advocacy of “Chinese learning as essence and Western learning as means toward maintaining that essence.” Neither a considered “radical” reformer like Liang Qichao nor a “stubborn” conservative like Emperor’s Dowager Cixi, Zhang had tried to modernize China in a slowly and stable fashion. In doing that, he combined the reformists’ concern of renewing China and conservatives’ concern with social stability. Zhang’s ti (essence)-yong (function) dichotomy in the interpretation of the relationship between Chinese learning and Western learning was often seen to imply a “rejection of change in the Confucian sociopolitical order.” Reformers like Kang and Liang were suspicious of this essence/function model. They viewed Zhang as an apologist for absolute monarchy.

In Zhang Zhidong’s mind, however, Western learning included a broad range of studies. Zhang himself had stressed the importance of “Western politics.” Western learning need not be limited to practical fields, such as technology and military, but should encompass history and political sciences. In addition, Zhang regarded both Chinese and Western learning as equally important.

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59 Translation of “先生受皇上厚恩，誓不肯齒及一字，固屬仁至義盡，至門弟子等心先生之心，以愛國同歸而殊途，一致而百慮，似亦不必禁之矣。” From Liang Qichao, “Yu Fuzi Daren Shu (Letters to Kang Youwei),” April 1902, in Quanji, 5937.
60 Tze-ki Hon, “Zhang Zhidong’s Proposal for Reform: Reading of the Quanxue Pian,” in Rebecca E. Karl and Peter Zarrow, eds., Rethinking the 1898 Reform Period: Political and Cultural Change in Late Qing China (Harvard University Asia Center, 2002), 80.
61 Translation of “西藝非要，西政為要。”
subjects for students to master. His statement that “the old learning is the ti and the new learning is the yong” was not intended to privilege Chinese learning over Western learning, but to indicate that students should master Chinese learning before beginning to study Western learning.” Therefore, the ti-yong model represents not so much a judgment about cultural values but rather a temporal sequence in the process of reform.

Anti-confrontational intellectuals always aimed to bridge differences in political views and to create a middle ground for cooperation. Despite their efforts, turbulence in the political sphere became more and more overwhelming and disorienting. This left limited space for deliberate action. This reality did not change even after Republic of China was founded in 1911. It only became worse.

**Barbarian Times**

After Sun Yat-sen’s party managed to take power in the Revolution of 1911, China’s political realm became dominated by political struggles. One victim of these struggles was Song Jiaoren (宋教仁 1882-1913), former president of Kuomintang (KMT). Song had led his party to victory in China’s first democratic elections and then was assassinated in 1913:

In 1912, the Revolutionary Alliance led by Sun Yat-sen and Huang Xing absorbed four small parties and founded the National People’s Party (Kuomintang). Song Jiaoren had drafted the new constitution, and he became the leader of the party and appealed to the gentry and merchants by moderating policies and deleting socialism and equality of the sexes. About forty million men over 21 years of age with property worth $500 or who paid at least $2 in taxes with an elementary school certificate were eligible to vote. The Kuomintang was the most organized party, and they won 269 of the 596 seats in the House and 123 of the 274 Senate seats.62

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During Song’s travels through China in 1912, he had openly and vehemently expressed the need to limit the power of president Yuan Shikai. The results of the 1913 elections indicated a clear victory for the KMT, and briefly it appeared that Song would be in a position to exercise a dominant role in selecting the prime minister and cabinet. This party proceeded to push for the election of a future president in a proper parliamentary setting. While traveling with a group of colleagues to the Parliament in Beijing, Song Jiaoren was shot twice at close range by a lone gunman at a Shanghai railway station on March 20, 1913. He died two days later in the hospital.

Liang Qichao was disheartened to hear the news. He criticized the assassination as a barbarian action. This incident was a serious blow to his New Citizen ideal. Novelist Lu Xun was also engaged enough to give up his position as civil servant. Political activities supply arbitrary rules and annoying solicitations rather than the truth and authenticity that Lu Xun was looking for. Among public intellectuals, there was a common grudge about politics as a path to advance public life. China’s political world was a muddled place. Contrary to journalistic ideals, through which Liang had opened up the public realm for conversations, participation in politics remained a narrow, demeaning and oppressive activity.

In November 1915, “the National People’s Representative Assembly of 1,993 people voted unanimously to approve Yuan Shikai, the current president, as emperor.” This triggered a series of military uprisings nation wide:

63 Translation of “決鬥與暗殺, 皆野蠻時代所豎稱為壯烈之舉。” From Liang Qichao, “Ansha Zhi Zui E (The Evil of Assasination),” 1913, in Quanji, 2582.
64 David Strand, An Unfinished Republic, Leading By Word and Deed in Modern China (Berkeley, 2011), 60.
On December 23 1915, the Yunnan military leader Cai E gave Yuan two days to cancel his monarchist plan. Two days later Yunnan declared independence, and 10,000 soldiers began marching. Guizhou declared independence on December 27, and Yuan postponed his enthronement. Cai E invaded Sichuan in January, and two leading generals declined to go after his National Protection Army. Guangxi declared independence that month, and another anti-monarchist army formed in Shandong. On March 20 Feng Guozhang and others demanded that Yuan cancel the monarchy, and he did so two days later. Nonetheless Guangdong and Zhejiang declared independence in March. Kang Youwei advised Yuan to resign and leave the country. Shaanxi, Sichuan, and Hunan announced their independence in May.65

The republican polity built after the Revolution of 1911 was a paper democracy. It eventually dissolved between competing warlords. The period between 1911 and 1916 was particularly dark. When participation in politics had not been possible before 1911, Liang tried to create a Chinese public and to establish a foundation for a constitutional polity. After 1911, participating in politics turned out to be even more demeaning and painful.

Contrasting Liang’s previous dedication to journalistic and fictional writing, Philip Huang notices that Liang’s volume of writing decreased after 1903 and he did not regain his productivity until after 1917 when he finally withdrew from the political arena. In 1917, Liang requested to resign his position as Minister of Finance. He wrote to the current president Duan Qirui, “Qichao was nobody but a common literatus. Constrained in 20-year partisan struggle, I exhausted all my energy. I sincerely request to terminate my duty in office.”66

The confession that “Qichao was nobody just a common literatus (yi jie shu sheng 一介书生)” is quite striking. The measure word “jie 介” implies the

66 The original letter of resignation says “啓超一介書生, 二十年黨錮。功雖迂于牖國,志實切于挽時。屬際艱虞,重承鞭策,使膺計部,重備閣僚,奉職以來,精誠殫耗,乃竭拘墟之見,未窮應物之方,時變環乘,贊襄無狀。現在總理業經辭職,自應連帶引辭,為此具呈,懇請即日准予免去本職。” in Nianpu, 367.
diminishing and negligible nature of the noun that follows. *Shu sheng* connotes individuals who can only read books. Liang Qichao self-identified as *yi jie shu sheng* after all these years of commitment to politics. He had swallowed much unspoken anguish in the chaotic political arena with these four characters.

Another tone can be glimpsed in Liang’s letter addressed to his daughter in 1916. There one could sense the strength of moral fibers in a corrupt world. Here we find distressed and yet uplifting tones. As a father, he wrote:

吾近來心境之佳，乃無倫比，每日約以三四時見客治事，以三四時著述，終日孜孜，而無勞倦，斯亦憂患之賜也。

*I keep my writing habit. I continue to discuss politics with visitors. Hard work doesn’t inflict tiredness—it makes me stronger. I think that is the gift of setbacks.*

Becoming independent of the burning social reality constituted the real challenge of weaving moral fibers into a corrupt world. Cooling down a trembling heart became the first step in acquiring such independence. Although darkness might continue to shadow the next generation of reformers, Liang had hoped that they could face it with more calm. Witnessing darkness from youth, the next generation would develop a more radical vision of life, of society and of their own role. Facing the new youth, Liang’s blessings might not be limited to encouraging words. They contained some warnings as well.

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Chapter Four

Putting Out Fire With Fire

破壞既終不可免, 早一日則受一日之福, 遲一日則重一日之害。 遲破壞者，其破壞不得不益甚，而所保全者彌寡。

If destruction is unavoidable, it is better to have it early than later. If we destroy it too late, we have much less left.

-- Liang Qichao “On Progress” 論進步 1902
On August 14, 1926, Liang Qichao’s student Xu Zhimo (徐志摩 1897-1931) got married to actor Lu Xiaoman. Liang was invited to deliver a speech as the chief witness at the wedding ceremony. His speech shocked everyone at the wedding:

Xu Zhimo, you are fickle and flamboyant—that’s why you achieved nothing in scholarship. You are also disloyal and untrustworthy—you divorced your ex-wife and sons to marry Lu! You two both ditched your ex-husband and ex-wife for personal pleasure. Marriage is a serious decision. You cannot treat it carelessly and embarrass your parents and friends. Anyways, I wish this would be the last time you two get married! This is my blessing!¹

Xu Zhimo was a romantic poet in modern China known for his promotion of modern Chinese poetry. But he was better known for his controversial romantic affairs with Zhang Youyi, Lin Huiyin and Lu Xiaoman. In 1915, Xu had married Zhang Youyi, the sister of Liang’s politician friend Zhang Junmai. This was an arranged marriage and went against Xu’s belief in free love. Even after Zhang Youyi gave birth to two sons, Xu would not accept her.

When Xu went to London, he fell in love with Lin Huiyin (林徽因 1904-1955), the daughter of diplomat Lin Changmin. Xu proceeded to divorce Zhang in March 1922. He wrote a large number of poems to pursue his relationship with Lin, despite the fact that Lin was already betrothed to Liang Qichao’s son, Liang Sicheng. Rejected by Lin, Xu developed a crush on Lu Xiaoman two years later. Lu was the wife of Xu’s friend Wang Geng. Like Xu, Lu also felt trapped in a

loveless arranged marriage with her current husband. As Xu and Lu pursued their love at the time, their parents and friends grew scornful of their behavior.

Lu divorced her husband in 1925. As shown in the image\(^2\) on the right below, she married Xu Zhimo the next year in 1926.\(^3\) Before their wedding ceremony, Xu had begged his teacher Liang Qichao to be the chief witness. Though quite irritated by Xu’s self-indulgence, Liang agreed.

The story of another couple, Liang Sicheng and Lin Huiyin portrayed in the photograph on the left\(^4\), provides a meaningful contrast. Unlike Xu Zhimo, Liang Qichao’s son Liang Sicheng (梁思成 1901-1972) had a prolonged friendship with Lin Huiyin many years before they got married in 1928. Lin’s father was Liang Qichao’s friend, and they had planned this marriage for their children earlier on. With the blessings of both fathers, the couple went to the United States together for college in 1924 and then on to graduate school. During

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\(^2\) Image from Wikipedia 
http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%BE%90%E5%BF%97%E6%91%A9#/media/File:Zhimo.jpg (accessed February 22, 2015).

\(^3\) Xu Zhimo’s father did not approve his second marriage. It was Hu Shi, one of the New Culture Movement leaders, that persuaded Xu’s family to approve it.

\(^4\) Image from “Minguo Cainu Lin Huiyin (A Talented Woman in Republic of China, Lin Huiyin),” Sina, 
their time abroad, they took care of each other. Both studied architecture, then went back to China to work in the field together.

In fact, Lin Huiyin and Liang Sicheng were often characterized as lovers, colleagues as well as soul mates. The image on the title page of this chapter was taken in the 1930s. It shows Liang and Lin working together in the field research on Chinese ancient architectural remains. The couple’s personal story was always a matter of public interest because it symbolized an ideal romantic relationship.

Xu Zhimo represented a contrasting personality to that of Liang Sicheng. Liang was shy and reserved, but Xu was on the opposite. Xu was flamboyant, socially active and full of romantic inspiration. He believed that “real and free love must be obtained through struggle.”5 His fight for “free” love was unreserved and willful, as can be seen in his expression in the following image.6

Xu Zhimo’s romantic exuberance, however, led him mistake sentimentality for true feeling, just as he “mistook” the pursuit of pleasure for true love.

Xu Zhimo and Liang Sicheng also had different views and opinions about the arts. Xu was one of the founders of the New Art Movement in the early 1920s.

6 Image from Wikipedia [http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%BE%90%E5%BF%97%E6%91%A9#/media/File:Xu_Zhimo.jpg](http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%BE%90%E5%BF%97%E6%91%A9#/media/File:Xu_Zhimo.jpg) (accessed February 22, 2015).
He discovered his passion for literature and poetry while he was studying in King’s College in England. He used poetry as a way of expressing his romantic attachments. While Xu was infatuated with Lin Huiyin, he wrote a poem entitled “A Snowflake’s Happiness” to express his yearning for free love:

Quietly, my buoyant body floats,
Landing on her with gentle care,
Sensing her love and passion
Fading, fading, fading
I fade into the warmth of her heart.  

In the 1920s, Xu Zhimo established Xinyue (Crescent Moon) society to promote new forms poetry and paintings and successfully adapted Western romantic forms into modern Chinese poetry. He rejected the idea that beauty was synonymous with realism. For him, beauty was to be found in the form itself.

Liang Sicheng was quite different. Liang’s appreciation of beauty was based on a comprehensive historical and cultural consciousness. In Liang Sicheng’s own masterpiece *History of Chinese Architecture* (*Yingzao Fashi* 營造法式), he showed his “awareness of the global geographical space and historical time,” and his “advocacy of a renewal of an ancient tradition.”

Liang Sicheng’s beliefs were inextricably linked to a wider intellectual framework that was articulated in the prolific and influential writings of his father. Liang Sicheng, unlike Xu Zhimo, did not dwell on delicate forms of writing for self-expression. Influenced by Liang Qichao’s simple and clear literary style, Liang Sicheng

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7 Original verse of the poem is “那時我憑藉我的身輕，盈盈的，沾住了她的衣襟，貼近她柔波似的心胸。消溶，消溶，消溶，溶入了她柔波似的心胸。” From Xu Zhimo, “Xuehua de Kuaile (A Snowflake’s Happiness),” *Xiandai Pinglun*, 6 (January 1925).


9 Ibid., 43.
relied on terse words both in English and in Chinese. He went on to emphasize logic and simplicity in his *History of Chinese Architecture*.

Xu Zhimo and Liang Sicheng had diverging intellectual paths. Xu Zhimo initially went to Clark University in Massachusetts to study history. Shortly afterwards, he transferred to Columbia University to study economics and politics in 1919. Finding the States intolerable, he left for King’s College in Cambridge, England in 1921, where he fell in love with English poetry. Unlike Xu Zhimo, who traveled a turbulent intellectual path, Liang Sicheng decided to pursue architecture before college and stayed in that field for the rest of his life. There was much less inner turmoil inside Liang Sicheng—probably due to Liang Qichao’s emphasis on self-cultivation as a way to avoid fickle-mindedness and an impetuous temperament.

In 1928, Liang Sicheng graduated from University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture and was offered a position both at Tsinghua University and Northeastern University in China. Liang Qichao suggested that he should go to Northeastern, despite the fact that Tsinghua was more reputable. Liang Qichao warned his son that “Tsinghua is too comfortable and gives you little room for self-improvement.”\(^\text{10}\) Liang Sicheng followed his father’s advice and built the very first department of architectural studies in China. Later in 1937, Liang embarked upon the tough journey of measuring and documenting Chinese ancient architectural remains. Over the course of ten years, Liang and his wife Lin Huiyin traveled across 15 provinces, over 200 towns, measuring and photographing over 2000 ancient temples, bridges and towers from seven dynasties. Liang’s interest in

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\(^{10}\) Translation of “清華太舒服，會使人懶於進取。” From Zhang Pengyuan, “Liang Qichao he Ta de Ernu Men (Liang Qichao and His Children),” in *Zhishi Fenzi yu Jindai Zhongguo de Xiandaihua (Intellectuals and China’s Modernization)* (Nanchang, 2002), 151.
crafting a visible past through the lens of architecture inevitably placed him against the trend of searching for “new” forms of culture and arts that had been pioneered by Xu Zhimo.

I Don’t Stand Against Current Attitudes, But…

The difference between Liang Sicheng and Xu Zhimo was in large measure due to Liang Qichao and how he actualized his role as a father. Liang Sicheng shared many characteristics with his father: his advocacy of the renewal of an ancient tradition (not simply promotion of tradition) and his reserved yet enduring passion for every aspect of personal and professional life. While Liang Sicheng carried the moral legacy of his father, Xu Zhimo represented a new generation whose attitudes toward freedom departed from that of Liang Qichao.

Given that Xu was already married and Lin was the fiancée of Liang Sicheng, Xu’s flirting with Lin at the time was considered dramatically modern and constituted a blow to his teacher Liang Qichao. The elder Liang wrote a letter to Xu in January 1923:

Jummai (Zhang Junmai: Xu Zhimo’s brother-in-law, Liang’s friend) told me of your doings and made me very upset. I thought that there had truly been basic incompatibilities between you and your wife (even if you don’t want to call her that, I shall continue to do so), I hadn’t wanted to pursue the matter further. But now I gather that since your return to China you have gone on writing to Lin and continue to sing her praises. Why? It is really incomprehensible.¹¹

Liang Qichao criticized Xu for causing pain to his wife, to his sons and to Zhang’s family. Liang knew only too well that: “All the young people today want to talk most about the greatness of love (and I don’t stand against current attitudes)...but love is something that comes to you, it is not something you can go out and get,

¹¹ Jonathan D. Spence, The Gate of Heavenly Peace, 18.
you can’t stay ‘I want such-and-such and expect to get such-and-such.’”

Unlike Xu, who believed that love was something that can be obtained through struggle, Liang wanted Xu to curb his emotions and avoid over-involvement in love.

Liang Qichao would certainly have empathized with a young man’s fascination with a talented and attractive young woman. At Xu’s age, Liang too had fallen in love with Miss He Huizhen. Although everyone at the time, including Liang’s wife, proposed a potential marriage between them, he had managed to curb his feelings and hold on to his higher principles.

Xu Zhimo’s belief that real love must be obtained through struggle reflected a significant change in Xu’s generation’s attitude toward personal freedom. Having witnessed the corrupt and chaotic birth of the Republic of China, Xu’s generation was ready to eradicate the restraining aspects of Chinese culture and tradition that they believed had prohibited meaningful political reforms and civic virtue at large. This hostility toward China’s traditions and a radical affirmation of personal freedom dominated the country’s social and cultural spheres during the 1920s. Liang Qichao, who had openly criticized Xu Zhimo’s love history, now faced a further challenge from the new youth invigorated by active rebellion.

**Lured By Freedom**

The tension between old and new, between disparate generational experiences with Chinese culture, grew more acute after the 1919 May Fourth Movement. The May Fourth generation had read Liang Qichao’s essays and they were exposed to new concepts of the nationhood. Yet the civic virtues of the nation were still virtually non-existent. The cabinet was controlled by President

12 Ibid., 18.
Duan Qirui and elections existed in name only. In 1919, public toleration of dysfunctional government had reached its limit. When the warlord government failed to retrieve ceded territory from Western powers at Paris Peace Conference, the public at home was reminded of humiliations suffered during the Qing era.

In 1919, a New Culture Movement had also reached its climax. Intellectuals began to realize that modernization was not only a political challenge. It turned out also to be a social and cultural one. Adherents of this movement rallied around the slogan of “Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science.” These two principles were suggested to guide not only political life, but also social and personal life. The youngest generation of iconoclasts demanded a wholesale deconstruction of old Chinese values.

Liang Qichao had actually been one of the first Chinese intellectuals to embrace the idea that China’s traditional value system might have to be torn down to make way for a new civic system. Liang had coined the term “destructivism,” or pohuai zhuyi (破壞性) in his New Citizens essay. Later this theme was echoed by more radical May Fourth writers such as Lu Xun. Nonetheless, Liang Qichao was never simply a destructive revolutionary. He was a constructive revolutionary. He was both supportive of and critical toward destruction. Although he acknowledged the inevitability of some destruction of traditional values, he never actively embraced destruction as such.

Liang empathized with the May Fourth intellectuals because he himself had once been a student activist involved with radical reform in the late Qing. Yet he had witnessed the failed reforms. Therefore, he was keenly aware of the limitation and inadequacy of pursuing “new” ideas that lured one in the name of “freedom.” In Liang’s comments about the May Fourth Movement, one senses
his ambivalence: “I heard about the student movement from overseas. The students’ confidence in cultural reforms may be naïve but it is sincere. Students may overreact and they may have adopted radical means to reach their goals. Yet they are still young and it is understandable.”\textsuperscript{13}

The words \textit{yu} (愚 naïve or foolish) and \textit{cheng} (誠 honest or sincere) that Liang had used to describe the students’ passion were quite suggestive. Students’ love and passion for Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science, despite its purity, was in his view clumsy and underdeveloped. This passion, later scholars noted, was also amply manifest in the booming civic societies that sprung up to propagate new ideologies:

- The Anatomical and Anthropological Association of China: 1920 in Beijing
- The Geological Society of China: 1922 in Beijing
- The Société Astronomique de Chine: 1922 in Beijing
- Shanghai Chemical Society: 1922 in Shanghai
- The Chinese Chemical Industry Society: 1922 in Beijing
- The China Society of Science and the Arts: 1923 in Shanghai
- The Chinese Meteorological Society: 1924 in Qingdao
- Peking Natural History Society: 1925 in Beijing \textsuperscript{14}

Flourishing civic societies led to increasing public involvement in a critique of Chinese modernity. In 1923, Liang Qichao expressed his confidence in the gradual unfolding of this process in an essay entitled “The Fifty-Year Progression of China:”

\textit{In the last twenty years, changes in political sphere were astonishing, but the intellectual sphere remained as it used to be. We always thought that our political and legal systems were}

\textsuperscript{13} Translation of “學生運動過去之陳跡，啟超越在海外，靡悉其祥。要其出於愛國之愚誠，實天下所共見，至其舉措容或過當，此自血氣方剛之少年所不能免。” in Nianpu, 633.

backward and we tried to borrow Western models. However, nearly ten years after the Revolution, we achieved little. Changes in culture and society at large are a must, because we have to focus on renewal of the whole person. Since 1919, the intellectual sphere has seen many new ideas. Recently, many students have returned from abroad and brought back their knowledge. We have finally entered a new era.¹⁵

The most important message in this work was the “renewal of whole person.” Although the intellectual terrain was refreshed, its implication for the renewal of whole person remained unclear. In fact, Liang Qichao believed that “Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy,” as slogans, were inadequate for the realization of these vague ideals.

**Mr. Love and Mr. Beauty**

Liang Qichao believed that science was a useful tool, but there were many aspects of individual life that science could neither explain nor guide. In 1919, Liang expressed a fear that science, as a way of looking at the world, would mean that the “what we call the human spirit will become merely one manifestation of the movement of matter under the control of inevitable laws.”¹⁶ He believed that “problems involving reason must be solved by scientific method, but emotions and feelings cannot. Emotions and feelings have other representations—the most mysterious ones being ‘love’ and ‘beauty’.”¹⁷

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Liang’s critical view of science was influenced by his close friend, the philosopher Zhang Junmai (Carsun Chang 張君勱 1886-1969). Zhang had a solid grounding in Chinese tradition and wide exposure to foreign ideas. Equipped with the traditional Confucian degree of xiucai or “accomplished scholar,” Zhang went on to study at Waseda University in Japan in 1906 where he came under the influence of Liang Qichao’s views regarding constitutional monarchy. In 1918 he accompanied Liang on a tour of post-war Europe. Later Zhang went to Germany to study philosophy for a short time at Berlin University. While in Germany he came under the influence of Rudolf Eucken (1846–1926) and Henri Bergson (1859–1941).

Zhang Junmai’s view concerning philosophy of life had reinforced Liang’s understanding that science was inadequate in accounting for emotions and spirituality. Zhang had witnessed: “While science develops, the problem of philosophy of life cannot be solved by the efforts of science. We can only rely on humanity itself.”18 For him, philosophies of life had to be more diversified and therefore science was not applicable to them. He argued:

One’s philosophy of life is subjective, controlled by intuitiveness, proceeds from synthesizing power, follows free will and arises from the unity of personality. On the contrary, science is objective, controlled by logical method. It proceeds from an analytical method, follows the law of cause and effect and arises from the phenomenon of uniformity among objects.19

Not only refuting the omnipotence of science, Liang Qichao and Zhang Junmai went on to question the applicability of Western paths of democratization

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18 Kirk A. Denton, The Problematic of Self, 49.
to China. Liang had emphasized that “culture matters in democratization.”²⁰ For him, a democratic republic was higher than a constitutional monarchy, but it also required better citizens. The first task of democratization was to develop the minds of the citizens under a constitutional monarchy. Therefore, Confucianism was a prerequisite for civic education.²¹ Liang Qichao, who had some grounding in the tradition, believed that there was no conflict between Confucianism and democracy in actual political practice.

Zhang Junmai shared these views. He argued that culture is a spiritual entity that is created by the free contributions of its people. Zhang understood European modernity to be the result of a threefold historical process, which consisted of religious reform (zongjiao gaige), scientific development (kexue fazhan), and the emergence of democratic government (minzhu zhengzhi). He believed that the challenge for China lay not with importing European democracy, but rather with completing its own historical process of development in evolutionary terms specific to Chinese culture.²²

Liang Qichao and Zhang Junmai both opposed the wholesale rejection of Western culture. They argued that maintaining the inherent characteristics of the Chinese traditional culture provided the most effective foundation for broad absorption of Western culture and for the modernization of national culture.²³ Liang and Zhang’s emphasis on maintaining the characteristics of native culture sprang from their trip to Europe. In 1919, they had travelled together through

²¹ Ibid., 80.
dozens of big European cities, and visited places where important battles of the First World War had been fought. Here, Liang Qichao “observed first hand the destruction of the war” and “studied its political, social and economic aftermaths.”

This experience strengthened Liang’s belief that “our Chinese race is the most expansive and vigorous race on the earth.” Liang was confident that China would be rebuilt after the war and that it did not have to empty itself before importing great achievements from the West. He maintained his appreciation of Confucian philosophy, because it emphasized human life as “a combination of material and mental conditions and therefore it is most appropriate guidance of life.” China could allow its past glory to glow again.

Liang Qichao’s defense of and attachment to Chinese tradition had marginalized him in the May Fourth debates. In contrast to Liang’s darkening views of Western civilization in the wake of the carnage of WWI in Europe, students in China began to be more and more infatuated with Western ideologies.

**Stylistic Modernity**

Western countries, as Foucault and many others have shown, constructed “democratic” societies by denying membership to non-conforming outsiders. In China, similarly, the May Fourth new culture galvanized cultural exclusionism. It

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26 Translation of “儒家講求精神生活與物質生活之調和，於人生最為合理。儒家人生哲學足以傲世界各國而無愧色。孔子的人格無論何時何地，都可以做人類的模範。” From Liang Qichao, “Kongzi (Confucius),” in *Quanji*, 3152.

afforded a broader sphere of social and intellectual activism while narrowing the range of acceptable behaviors. Modernity thus became a conflicted paradigm. It would be enjoyed by some, like Xu Zhimo, but only through the marginalization of numerous others.

Standing opposed to Liang Qichao, the May Fourth generation viewed traditional ethics as fundamentally opposed to human nature. For instance, Fu Sinian (傅斯年 1896-1950), as a young intellectual, had thought that Confucian moral principles would alienate individuals from human nature. In Fu’s view, human nature was the determining factor and there was no need to remold humanity according to a Confucian-approved model. If evil and virtue coexisted in human nature, we should accept them altogether. Fu appreciated Western political values that did not suppress human nature. Instead, they helped humanity to thrive. 28

Another opponent of Liang Qichao was the philosopher Hu Shi. He had attended college at Cornell University and majored in philosophy. He went on to pursue a graduate degree in philosophy at Columbia University where he became a student of John Dewey. Hu Shi believed that a stable political environment could be achieved only after the social patterns and intellectual assumptions of the past had been swept away. Hu Shi’s chief concern was the introduction of new methods of research and modes of thought by means of which he hoped to liberate


Summary of “傅斯年將整個新文化運動事業看作是一種接近人性的努力。人不是已經確立的存在，而是要去達到的目標。傅斯年認為，中國的哲學家總是努力使人脫離人性，而西方人卻推動去接近人性。構成真正人性的東西，是最基本的情感和意緒。”
the Chinese mind from the coercion of traditional attitudes and values. Liang criticized Hu Shi’s attack on Chinese ancient philosophy. He viewed it as superficial and condescending to the public. He insisted that “slogans like ‘Down with Confucianism’ should be discarded.”

Tradition and modernity need not refer to fixed and mutually exclusive entities. As Benjamin Schwartz pointed out, these two terms are useful only as “a short-hand way of referring to vast inchoate and by no means internally integrated areas of human experience.” Liang Qichao’s defense of Confucian ethics can thus be seen as an effort to view tradition beyond static setting. Intellectuals needed to become responsible for renewing tradition. He had hoped that they would be able to live out the spirit of tradition in modern times.

Language of Politics And Politics of Language

For leaders of the New Culture Movement, no participation in any government was conceivable. Furthermore, they did not possess any means of influencing governments so constituted. Their only recourse was to public opinion, by which they set great store. One of the movement most vocal leaders was Chen Duxiu (1879-1942). Chen was a Chinese revolutionary socialist.

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32 The president of Peking University Cai Yuanpei established the Society for the Promotion of Virtue in June 1918 with the aim of supplementing the learners’ academic skills with a moral perspective of life. Membership in the society enabled the iconoclasts of the New Culture Movement gain experience in organizational life without being tainted by the practical politics of the warlord regimes. Armed with the righteousness and the skills that Cai’s society provided, the younger generation was able to redefine the meaning of public and politics. They believed that they were different from their predecessors (such as Liang Qichao) and were determined to make an unprecedented impact on Chinese society and thought. For details, see: Vera Schwarcz, The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986), 49-51.
educator and philosopher, who founded the publication *La Jeunesse (New Youth)* in 1915. This journal became the main forum for advocating the new vernacular literature (baihua 白話 plain language).

The fact that language became the target of New Culture Movement was not surprising. The language of Western-oriented ideologies, whether democracy or socialism, was not a language comprehensible to many Chinese. It could not be easily accommodated to the political and social conditions prevalent in China in the 1920s and 30s.

In order to propagate the ideals of science and democracy, New Culture Movement intellectuals’ first choice was not to infuse the public with the language of Western ideas, but to first break down traditional ways of expressing thought. To uproot the traditional mindset required eradicating cultural autonomy. They subjected traditional cultural forms (such as fiction and poetry) to an ideological overhaul. Vernacularization of language became a necessary first step in this project of iconoclasm. The establishment of *La Jeunesse* was often regarded as the start of vernacular language movement. In fact, the vernacular movement had started much earlier. One of the key initiators was actually Liang Qichao.

Influenced by his mentor, Huang Zunxian, Liang had developed his interest in the phonographic writing for the sake of civic education in late 1890s. When he started his journalism career in 1895, he had demanded the use of the “local patois” (liyu 俚語) to propagate reform ideas among the uneducated classes. Liang elucidated his support for vernacular language by quoting Huang Zunxian’s belief that: “If language and writing are separated literate people will
be few. If language and writing are unified literate people will be many.”

Under Liang and Huang’s effort, *Wuxi Vernacular Paper* (*Wuxi Baihuabao 無錫白話報*) was launched in August 1898.

What was the difference between Liang’s vernacular language and Chen Duxiu’s vernacular language? Liang had used the language of constitutional monarchy to bring people closer to the Qing Court and its reform program. In the 1890s and 1900s, vernacular language was a vessel for broader social communication. Although vernacularized, Liang’s language maintained its own subtlety and depth. During the New Culture Movement, vernacular language became a political instrument to rally the commoners’ culture against classical literature. It also involved vilifying long venerated East Asian aesthetic and linguistic traditions.

Liang’s appreciation of traditional Chinese aesthetics was manifested in the “mildness, the grace and restraint of his literary language.” Reading his essays, one can see how he had reconfigured the gentle tone of traditional Chinese literary aesthetics into political language. Liang would have rejected the standard May Fourth demand toward a steady linear progress in the vernacular.

Liang did not attempt to distance literary language from politics. At the same time, he did not endorse the overtly superficial approach of the New Culture intellectuals. In other words, Liang’s vernacular language aimed to bridge

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According to Daruvala, the famous writer Zhou Zuoren (the younger brother of Lu Xun, 1885-1967) had benefited from Liang’s vision of the compatibility between vernacular language and classical Chinese. “Zhou had never accepted the idea that the vernacular was opposed to dead classical language (as Lu Xun had suggested) or the class-based formula of Chen Duxiu that distinguished the old aristocratic literature and the new literature of the people.”
language and politics—it was a language of politics. Chen Duxiu’s vernacular language by contrast became a politics of language.

Although Liang Qichao promoted vernacularization of Chinese literature, he did not advocate the vernacularization of Chinese values. But for the New Culture intellectuals, the politics of language were focused upon politics. The political agenda of New Culture Movement emphasized deconstructing Chinese values through language.

**Manual for Cannibalism**

The most radical denunciation of Chinese values began with Lu Xun (魯迅 1881-1936) who once famously portrayed Confucian tradition as guided by cannibalistic principles. Before he became China’s foremost modern writer, he had buried himself in the study of ancient stone rubbings. But in 1916 a conversation with his friend, also the current La Jeunesse’s editor Qian Xuantong (錢玄同 1887-1939), changed his career:

Lu Xun: Imagine an iron house having not a single window and virtually indestructible with all its inmates sound asleep and about to die of suffocation. They would not feel the pain of death when asleep. If you raise a shout to awaken a few, making these unfortunate few suffer the agony of irrevocable death, do you really think you are doing them a good turn?

Qian Xuantong: Should they be able to wake up, we shall hope that they might be able to destroy this iron house!

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36 Qian Xuantong was a Chinese linguist and one of the leaders of the Doubting Antiquity School. He was also a communist.

37 Translation of “魯迅：假如一間鐵屋子，是絕無窗戶而萬難破毁的，裡面有許多熟睡的人們，不久都要悶死了，然而，是從昏睡人死滅，並不感到就死的悲哀。現在你大嚷起來，驚起了較為清醒的幾個人，使這不幸的少數者來受無可挽救的臨終的苦楚，你倒以為對得起他們麼？

錢玄同： 然而幾個人既然起來，你不能說決沒有毀壞這鐵屋的希望。” From Lu Xun, Preface of *Nahan (Outcry)*, in Wang Haibo, ed., *Lu Xun Quanji* Volume 1 (Beijing, 2005), 441.
After this pivotal encounter, Lu Xun agreed to leave rubbings and pick up his pen. He joined *La Jeunesse* and started a writing career aimed to break down the iron house. His critique of the Confucian ethics led him to portray the ordinary Chinese as hypocritical human beings.

In an essay entitled “Toward a Refutation of Malevolent Voices (破惡聲論),” Lu Xun aimed to tear down the hypocritical masks of Confucian literati. He noted that some men suggested that “one should think of oneself as a citizen of a particular nation” while some other men believed that one should “conceive of the individual as a member of the world community.”38 He criticized “advocates of the first position because they attempt to intimidate us with the prospect that China will perish if their ideas are not implemented forthwith, while proponents of the second camp may insinuate that failure to conform to their principles would be tantamount to a betrayal of civilization. But the common goal is the elimination of all human individuality.”39

Like Liang Qichao, Lu Xun had studied in Japan. He was exposed to the importance of fiction as a tool for political and social transformation. He was also aware of the role of vernacular language in communicating with the public. Liang and Lu both wanted to bridge the gap between thinking, writing and speaking. While Liang’s purpose was to bridge thinking and expression in order to refine self-consciousness of citizens, Lu Xun’s main goal was to create discursive individuals who would be able to convey radical ideas to others. He said that “the young must transform our country into a vocal China (yousheng de zhongguo 有

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39 Ibid., 46.
In doing that, Lu Xun had wanted to allow the silent ones to find their voice: “They must speak out boldly...giving voice to their sincere thoughts and feelings.”

Liang Qichao and Lu Xun both used political fictions to convey ideas to the public, but their approaches differed. For Liang, fiction writing laid out a path for citizens to acquire knowledge and absorb truth. It served the purpose of *wen yi zai dao* (literature to convey the Way). For Lu Xun, by contrast, fiction, and especially satirical essays and short stories became an effective instrument for the writer to point out social ills.

In the short story entitled “Medicine (藥)”, Lu Xun depicts two tragedies: the death of Xiao Shuan and the death of a revolutionary Xia Yu. Believing that human blood could cure diseases, Xiao Shuan’s father bought bread dipped with blood for Xiao Shuan, trying to cure his phthisis. The bread of course did not work and Xiao Shuan finally died. The father, however, had little idea that the blood came from Xia Yu, a patriotic revolutionary who believed that sacrificing her life in the revolution would bring social progress. The story depicted a deep alienation between those who were sleeping in the iron house and those who tried to break down the house itself.

What Lu Xun did in his writings for *La Jeunesse* was to de-politicize political affairs through cynicism and criticism. He viewed antiquity as a ghost that would constantly come and grab modern souls. So the writer must keep on beating back the monster. Cynicism regarding antiquity, modernity, politics and

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41 Ibid., 603.
culture also affected the personal domain. This, in turn, caused inner turbulence and confusion within self and within society at large.

**Modernity Haunted By History**

The painting below is a work of the Expressionist artist Edvard Munch, called “The Scream.” It was painted between 1893 and 1910. The figure shows an agonized expression against a landscape with a tumultuous orange sky. Munch himself described the origin of the painting as follows:

![The Scream painting by Edvard Munch](image)

I was walking along the road with two friends – the sun was setting – suddenly the sky turned blood red – I paused, feeling exhausted, and leaned on the fence – there was blood and tongues of fire above the blue-black fjord and the city – my friends walked on, and I stood there trembling with anxiety – and I sensed an infinite scream passing through nature.42

“The Scream” in my view may be viewed as a symbol for the anxiety of modern Chinese intellectuals during the 1910s and 20s. Facing a distorted horizon in

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political and social actions, they were moving slowly and strenuously toward modernity. They were trapped in a state of tiredness, horror and confusion.

Historian Tang Xiaobing argued that “China’s modernity was haunted by the nightmare of history from which the modern subjects desperately tried to awaken.” As a result of nightmarish past, modernity metamorphosed into a ghostly, even shameful, afterimage.

Lu Xun had treated these nightmares as a disease. His writings were like a needle, pointing sharply and deeply toward the inflammation on the patient’s skin. The treatment of social ill, like any other medical treatment, must come with some pain. Liang Qichao, by contrast, treated social ill as malnutrition. He was trying to absorb nutrition from foreign sources and from antiquity and went on to squeeze this nutrition over society as a whole.

While Liang held on to self-cultivation, a traditional virtue performed by literati, Lu Xun wanted to “tear off the fake and performative masks worn by men of letters” and tell who was really the petty men pretending to be gentlemen. Liang Qichao prescribed the molding of citizens according to traditional standards of human excellence. He had hoped that this kind of conservatism could be “consistent with the essentials of liberal democracy.”

May Fourth critics regarded Liang’s commitments as “a legacy of earlier, pre-liberal political thought that was repugnant to the true moral sources of free government.” Increasingly critical of tradition and burdened by modern anxiety, they became dissatisfied with the current situation. This, in turn, created an insatiable appetite for “newness.”

44 Ibid., 603.
46 Ibid., 4.
Spineless Enlightenment

In 1919, Liang Qichao had suggested that the exuberance of new ideas and diversity of viewpoints in intellectual landscape would be able to benefit the emancipation of thinking (sixiang jiefang 思想解放).

*If we only believe in and promote one school of thought, we would prohibit innovation and social progression. This is exactly the reason why our intellectual progression has been stagnant in the last thousand years.*

47 Yet the kind of intellectual emancipation that Liang had advocated in 1919 turned out to be a lot messier than he expected. Various new “isms” were introduced in order to specify paths to modernity and elements of virtue. The intellectual terrain became torn into fragments.

One example of this fragmentation was the career of Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培 1868-1940). A noted Chinese educator and former president of Peking University, Cai had established the Society for the Promotion of Virtue in June 1918 with the aim of supplementing the learners’ academic skills with a moral perspective of life. Burdened with the concern of educating the younger generation, he coined the concept of “complete personality education (wanquan renge jiaoyu 完全人格教育),” which was similar to Liang’s emphasis on “renewal of whole person.” Nevertheless, unlike Liang Qichao, who had tried to guide his own personal life with Buddhism, Cai wanted to “replace religion with aesthetic education” because “in modern society, explanations offered by religion appear pale and powerless,

47 Translation of “倘若拿一個人的思想作金科玉律, 範圍一世人心, 無論其人為今人、為古人、為凡人、為聖人, 無論他的思想好不好, 總是將別人的創造力抹殺, 將社會的進步勒令停止了⋯⋯我國千餘年來, 學術所以衰落, 進步所以停頓, 都是為此。” From Liang Qichao, “Sixiang Jiefang (Emancipation of Thinking),” in *Ouyou Xinying Lu (The Reflections on Journey to Europe)*, 1919-20, in *Quanji*, 2980.
therefore knowledge education bore no relationship to religion.”

Cai Yuanpi stressed that a modern person’s morality must be in keeping with modern society and there is no way its rules could have been predicted by sages thousands of years ago. Therefore, moral education was not connected to religion, but to aesthetic education, which was “free,” “progressive” and “universal.”

Specifying elements of moral education may not be conducive to the realization of civic virtue. According to the semantic context of Chinese philosophy, morality is a path to virtue, not a specification of virtue. The word daode (道德, often translated into morality) is composed of two characters: dao, which has a root meaning of “road” and an extended meaning of “way”, and de, whose basic meaning in early texts connotes a person’s dispositions to act, often in accord with idea norms. “Virtue” thus is merely an approximate translation.

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49 Cai explained that “Aesthetic education means using aesthetic theory in teaching, with the aim of cultivating the emotions...this is a concept of education that could find a sympathetic audience in all sages and all places.” Under the circumstance when many sought to save the nation by religion, Confucianism and the ever-growing force of parochial education, Cai Yuanpei put forth the call to “Substitute Aesthetic Education for Religion.” This was a very timely and progressive proposal. Cai Yuanpei thought that religion was only a product of uncivilized times. He believed that the primary religion had to include education, but this would not endure and would finally be replaced by philosophy. Theoretically, Cai has absorbed Kant’s dualism, transcendency and argued for universality of aesthetic feeling. Cai also adopted Schiller’s view of aesthetic education, and claimed that this was the cultural essence of Chinese tradition. For details, see: Chen Pingyuan, Touches of History an Entry into ‘May Fourth’ China, translated by Michel Hockx (Leiden, 2011), 180-183. And Xu Meijun, “Study of Cai Yuanpei’s ‘Substituting Aesthetic Education For Religion,’” Master’s Thesis, Zhejiang Normal University, 2009, http://www.dissertationtopic.net/doc/606815 (accessed February 16, 2015).

Philosopher Liang Shuming (梁漱溟 1893-1988) proposed another agenda for practicing civic virtue. He had believed that completion of inner knowledge requires action in the outer realm. His suggestions for immediate action are in two areas: politics— “the establishment of political and domestic stability” and education—“revival of the chiang-hsueh custom (講學 lecturing).” Regarding politics, Liang Shuming hoped “all would develop a spirit of struggle for their political rights” and “the first step toward political reform is that good people must have a fighting spirit. It is necessary to have a militant and decisive public opinion.” In terms of education, Liang Shuming acknowledged that “even though one is aware of one’s sickness, it is not easy to supervise oneself or to be able to discipline himself at all times of his own accord.” The only method is to become close with one’s teacher and to choose one’s friends from those who are “morally and intellectually superior.” From Liang Shuming and Cai Yuanpei’s arguments we can see that theorizing civic and moral virtue became a popular trend during the 1920s. This trend, however, actually narrowed perceptions of morality and went against Liang Qichao’s original motivation to diversify the intellectual terrain. For details, see: Guy S. Alitto, The Last Confucian: Liang Shuming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1979), 135-137.
The terms appeared as a pair, though not yet as a compound in late nineteenth century China. The term *daode* does not specify a moral objective. Rather, it is a road, a way and a process. Moral objectives, such as “benevolence (ren 仁)” and “righteousness (yi 義)” are latent in one’s original nature. Therefore, “*daode* is not so much about *de* as it is about *dao*. To attain *daode* means to model oneself on the good order in nature.”\(^{50}\) The process of attaining good nature in order to advance value of life is more important than specifying what this nature might be.

The relationship between cultivating civic virtue and naming the virtue itself also hints at a connection between belief and believing. The scholar of aesthetics Pan Zhichang (潘知常 1956-) points out that “Chinese intellectuals always confuse ‘believe in what’ with the belief itself. Belief itself manifests the value of human life whereas ‘believe in what’ is just a representation of and a means to advance that value.”\(^{51}\)

Liang Qichao’s ideal of the value of life was more like Kant’s attitude toward virtue. Kantian virtue connotes “genuine virtue,” and it carries a purity of motive in the performance of the moral law. Kant had refused to give the name of virtue to any qualities of mind and character that serve whatever ends human beings pursue.\(^{52}\)

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Kant moralizes virtue, making morality and virtue synonymous. Imperfect, finite, rational beings can make universal, objective and necessary moral laws effective in practice only through the exercise of virtue.\(^5^3\) Liang Qichao was similarly trying to bridge virtue and morality, while the May Fourth generation was caught up in dividing the two. In 1922, Liang had warned the new generation the danger of an omnipresent obsession with narrowing oneself into the particularity of new ideas:

現代物質生活之發展於畸形，其原因發於物界者固半，發於新界者亦半。所謂以水濟水，以火濟火，名之曰益多，是固雖百變其途，而世之不寧且滋甚也。\(^5^4\)

*Our material life has deteriorated because we are obsessed with inventing “new ideas.” Regardless of the variety of means we take to solve problems, our society is still chaotic and peaceless. It’s like giving water a flavor with mere water, putting out fire with fire.*

It was during the New Culture era that terms like Chinese learning (*Zhongxue*) versus Western Learning, tradition versus modernity were erected as opposed to each other. These concepts became politically charged and were used by conservatives and radicals as a dominant binary in the struggle for political modernity. These concepts were imagined to be mutually exclusive. For example, Chinese learning was assumed to represent the whole of classical learning and Western studies were deemed to represent science. Neither term was actually successful as a monolithic designation.

Destroying the old values paved the way for welcoming new ones. But as Liang understood so well, if destruction comes too late, both the old the new would eventually be sacrificed. The tension embedded in politically charged

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 132.
\(^{54}\) Liang Qichao, “Xianqin Zhengzhi Sixiang Shi (Intellectual History of Pre-Qin era),” 1922, in *Nianpu*, 627.
binaries worsened after the 1920s. What followed was a distorted trajectory of progress and an increasingly abnormal vision of modernity.
Chapter Five

Blind Fish in Underseas Caves

進步常常是畸形的。

*Progress is often abnormal.*

— Liang Qichao “Travel Impressions of Europe” 歐游心影錄 1920
In March 1926, Liang was diagnosed with kidney illness. Following the doctor’s advice, he underwent medical surgery at Peking Union Medical College Hospital (Xiehe Hospital) in April. Peking Union was a renowned general hospital founded in 1921 by the Rockefeller Foundation and was affiliated with Peking Union Medical College. In 1926, it was among the first hospitals in China to import Western medical techniques, including surgery. Liang’s operation was handled by a Chinese doctor who had graduated from Harvard Medical School. As one of the best hospitals in China at the time, it offered Liang the latest treatment. After Liang underwent the surgery, his health situation, however, deteriorated. He finally passed away in 1929. The striking fact about Liang’s operation that was revealed in 1949 was that Liang’s healthy kidney, instead of the diseased one, was mistakenly removed from his body.¹

The cause of this error was not known at the time, but Liang’s family and students were outraged by the hospital’s incompetence in dealing with Liang’s kidney illness. One of Liang’s students, Chen Xiyong, published an article in the *Morning Paper (Chenbao)* of May 1926. He appealed to the public suggesting that Western medicine was not reliable:

Earlier, physicians diagnosed a tumor in his right kidney and they suggested that the kidney should be removed. They cut open his abdomen but found nothing abnormal with the right kidney, but they still removed it. Nevertheless, Mr. Liang continued to urinate blood. They then explained that there was something wrong with his teeth, and they extracted seven teeth from his mouth! Blood still occurred in his urine. They said it was because of his diet. As a result, Mr. Liang was not given any solid food for several days. But his illness was still not cured. The doctors said, they couldn’t find

¹ This striking fact might be a forged story. The year of 1949 marked the height of anti-America campaign. In that year, Mao tried to eliminate American influence in China to consolidate the ruling status of the communist ideology, such as vilifying Western ideologies and techniques, and attacking American missionaries who had served as teachers and doctors in China. Liang’s death might be re-appropriated to serve that purpose. The true cause of Liang’s death remains murky. This conundrum reflects a larger challenge of uncovering true narratives of history under the Party’s control.
any other cause and perhaps urinating blood was just a minor illness. For this “minor illness” diagnosis, Mr. Liang lost a kidney, seven teeth, starved many days and spent much money! What is wrong with Xiehe?  

Chen’s article triggered further discontent with Xiehe hospital and suspicion towards Western medicine more generally. On May 29, 1926, Xu Zhimo also wrote in the *Morning Paper* that “I used to believe in Western medicine and Western hospitals, but recent news has called my beliefs into question.” Xu insisted that the hospital should “explain to the public what has happened.”

Surprisingly, on June 2, Liang himself defended Xiehe Hospital and tried to stop public criticism against Xiehe. He wrote in the *Morning Paper*:

> We can’t question the value of science just because our intellectual capacity is still limited. I hope that my illness will not be used as an excuse to attack our efforts in learning Western medicine.

Liang defended Xiehe Hospital because he could sense that the public might be carried away by this wave of criticism and thus drift away from the effort to learn about Western medical technologies. Liang did not to speak bitterly about his own circumstances unlike Chen and Xu. He suppressed his disappointment, because he

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2 Translation of “腹部剖開後，醫生們在右腎上並沒有發現腫物或何種毛病。但還是把右腎割下了！可是梁先生的尿血症並沒有好。他們忽然又發現毛病在牙內，因此一連拔去七個牙。可是尿血症仍沒有好。他們又說毛病在飲食。又把病人一連餓了好幾天。可是他的尿血症還是沒有好！醫生們於是說了，他們找不出原因來！他們又說了，這病是沒有什麼要緊的！為了這沒什麼要緊的病，割去了一個腰子，拔去了七個牙，餓得精疲力盡，肌瘦目陷，究竟是怎樣一回事？並且還得花好幾百塊錢！” From Chen Xiying, “Jinxin Yi Buru Wuyi (Believing Everything about Western Medicines is Worse than Not Having Western Medicines at All),” *Chenbao*, May 1926.

3 Translation of “我個人向來也是無條件信仰西洋醫學，崇拜外國醫院的，但新近接連聽著許多話不由我不開始疑問了。” From Xu Zhimo, “Wo Men Bing le Zemenben (What Should We Do If We Get Sick),” *Chenbao*, May 29, 1926.

4 Translation of “望協和當事人能給我們一個相當的解說。” From Ibid.

5 Translation of “我們不能因為現代人科學智識還幼稚，便根本懷疑到科學這樣東西。我盼望社會上，別要借我這回病為口實，生出一種反動的怪論，為中國醫學前途進步之障礙。” From Liang Qichao, “Wo de Bing yu Xiehe Yiyuan (My Illness and Xiehe Hospital),” *Chenbao*, June 2, 1926, in Yue Nan, *Chen Yingke yu Fu Sinian (Chen Yingke and Fu Sinian)* (Taipei, 2009), 123.
did not want this incident and consequent criticism of Xiehe Hospital to close the gradually opening eyes of the public to new knowledge.

If the public was still somnolent in the late nineteenth century, by the 1920s, it was slowly waking up. As the cartoon⁶ in the 1872 issue of *Puck Magazine⁷* illustrates, the implications of “waking up” for the future development of civil society were unclear. After so much effort at crafting citizenship, political consciousness could easily crumble under the influence of distrust and cynicism.

Liang Qichao who travelled around Europe in 1919 witnessed the post-war ravage first hand. He wrote home that “*the great dream about the omnipotence of science is now filled with its bankruptcy.*”⁸ Social progress, in Liang’s words, was not a linear trajectory and the outcome could be unexpected. In the case of modern China, cultivating public awareness required a lot of patience and sometimes tolerance of wrongdoings. Despite the fact that individuals’ intellectual capacity was still limited, Liang Qichao did not want intellectuals (especially his students) to use public sentiment for the advancement of a personal political agenda.

Since the 1930s, the public sphere has become even more chaotic. Public sentiments remain extremely flammable. The definition of nationhood and civic virtue, originally taking shape in Liang’s emotionally nuanced and ethically compelling eloquence, had become more and more rigid. The intellectuals’ moral beliefs have been submerged in a public calling for progress. This trend began with the emergence of socialist thought during the New Culture Movement.

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⁷ *Puck* was the first successful humor magazine in the United States of colorful cartoons, caricatures and political satire of the issues of the day. It was published from 1871 until 1918.
The Red Flag

Since Chen Duxiu founded *La Jeunesse* in 1915, it was accepted among New Culture intellectuals that vernacular language could smash the barrier between thinking and expression and that it would facilitate political mobilization. Desire for immediate action in a changing political environment paved the way for the importation of socialist thought into China. In 1918, Li Dazhao had begun to introduce socialism and Marxism in the following terms:

The dawn of freedom has arrived! See the world tomorrow; it assuredly will belong to the red flag! The revolution in Russia is but the first fallen leaf warning the world of the approach of autumn. Although the word Bolshevism was created by the Russians, the spirit it embodies can be regarded as that of a common awakening in the heart of each individual among mankind of the twentieth century.9

Li Dazhao claimed that “I believe that the most precious thing in the world is ‘now,’ and the easiest thing to lose is also ‘now’.”10 The obsession with acting at the present moment reflected a radical yearning for progress.

This yearning was highly nationalistic. According to historian Arif Dirlik, Chinese socialists believed that “the capitalist path that had accounted for European power versus a socialist path would not guarantee China development without the strains that capitalism had caused in European society.”11 Therefore, socialism was envisaged as the preferred path of development for a precapitalist society. For China, socialism was an instrumental ideology. It was a means to realize the “double task of state-building and economic development.”12

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The emergence of socialist thought in China intensified a highly materialistic interpretation of social and political reality. The communist ideology, with a promise of a strong state that could stand up to Western imperialism and capitalism, was able to grip the minds of radical intellectuals. In the eyes of these activists, such ideas explained how China was humiliated and established a chief battleground against the West. These new ideologies also promised rapid development. It was actually a nationalistic concern with “saving China” that motivated them, rather than a deep belief in the communist ideology.

Liang Qichao himself first came to appreciate the value of socialism because he imagined it to be a tool for creating social equality. For instance, he saw compatibility between socialism and Confucianism in saying that “the spirit of socialism was in inherent in Confucius’ injunction on even distribution and in Mencius’ private property theory and the ancient well-field system. These were rested on the same principle as modern socialism.” By using the word “inherent,” Liang wished to make new ideas appear embedded in the old values. Nevertheless, this appreciation turned into suspicion. Liang was concerned with the abuse of state power in economic production: “State participation in economy would lead to abuse and inefficiency, especially in the absence of talents.” In addition, he pointed out the necessity of adopting capitalist economic production in China because “China’s most urgent need was not distribution but production.”

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15 Ibid., 32.
Given his suspicion of socialism, Liang strongly opposed the idea of adopting communism in China. In 1925, Liang Qichao wrote a letter to the *Morning Paper* editor, warning the dangers of the socialism fever:

*The success of the 1917 Revolution was a success of the “communists,” but also the fiasco of “communism.” You thought that following the communists is following communism, no! You are just their minions. The communists who taught you communist belief are actually beliefless. Wake up! You naïve youth!*

From this warning, it was obvious that Liang was more concerned with “who” represented the “ism” and in what way rather than the “ism” itself. Nevertheless, it would take followers of Chinese communism over half a century to realize the danger of their own urge to power. But how did socialism become domesticated in China?

**Mass Education Speech Corps**

Mao Zedong (毛澤東 1893-1976) had read Liang Qichao’s *New Citizens* in 1910 and learned the importance of civic virtue in modernizing the nation. Mao recalled his first exposure to the idea of New Citizens during his early life as a student: “I admired Liang Qichao so much. I read his articles over and over again. I could almost recite them.”

As an ordinary young teenager who had never seen much of China or the world, Mao was thrilled, and most importantly, inspired by Liang.

Mao’s perspective on New Citizens, however, was different from that of Liang Qichao. For Mao, cultivating political consciousness was an experiential rather than intellectual discourse. Guided by this principle, Mao founded New

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16 Translation of “我老老實實告訴你，蘇俄現狀，只是“共產黨人”的大成功，卻是共產主義的大失敗。你跟他們走，自以為忠於主義，其實只是替黨人張牙舞爪當僕夫，和你腦子裡理想的主義相去不知幾萬里。教你信仰的人卻並沒有信仰。傻子，可愛的青年們，醒過來罷！” From Xu Gang, *Shaonian Zhongguo Meng*, 270.

Citizens Society (Xinmin Xuehui 新民學會) in 1918. The society was a close-knit organization dedicated to building new forms of communal life. The mission of the society was as follows: “Members of the association constitute the cells of an organic life body. All of us will live a new life together.”

Philosopher of education Eamonn Callan identifies key elements of “a shared way of public life” as a constellation of “attitudes, habits, and abilities that people acquire as they grow up.” These include “a willingness to share one’s own answer with others and to heed the many opposing answers as they might have; an active commitment to the good of the polity.” Mao’s New Citizens Association was meant to promote this kind of shared public life through the collective growth of public consciousness.

Mao also wanted to extend the scope of public life. In 1919, Mao took part in “Mass Education Speech Corps” which was to enrich the students’ knowledge about the working people. He sought to integrate urban youth with peasants and workers through a collective sharing of the labor experience. This was considered “the most important and effective way to reshape educated youth ideologically and morally.”

Mao was also trying to advance the idea of qun from a mere concept to a transformative action. For Mao, moral character was to be cultivated through

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20 Ibid., 2.
21 David Strand, An Unfinished Republic, Leading By Word and Deed in Modern China. (Berkeley, 2011), 53.
This goal of “Mass Education Speech Corps” sounds exactly like the slogan of the Cultural Revolution. In 1968, the Communist Party instituted the Down to the Countryside Movement, in which “Educated Youths” (zhishi qingnian or simply zhiqing) in urban areas were sent to live and work in agrarian areas to be re-educated by the peasantry and to better understand the role of manual agrarian labor in Chinese society.
self-imposed pressure, hardship and challenges. This was a more radical interpretation of self-independence than Liang’s perception of jitsugaku. With the emphasis on self-imposed hardships, this spirit of self-strengthening had been articulated at national level by Yan Fu’s Social Darwinism theory 25 years earlier. Now it was to be implemented at an individual level under Mao’s physical education agenda.

Mao’s physical education program strived to “connect the individual body and the political body of the nation.” Mao’s solution to China’s problems was premised not on socio-structural change, but on “individual and personal transformation.”

In New Citizens Society, Mao and his colleagues intentionally hardened themselves through “Spartan methods such as living in the mountains on a minimum of food, sleeping in the open, bathing in cold streams in November and going shirtless and shoeless.” Mao had begun to pay particular attention to the everyday practice that could be revolutionized to produce larger social change by emphasizing collective study, strict discipline, and a sense of historical mission.

Mao was practical in treating democracy merely as a tool for social change. Historian Theresa Lee argues that “democracy can only work when it is embedded in an ethos that is observable in the daily lives of its citizens. Thus considered, citizenship is as much about the ‘manner of living’ as it is about rights.” According to John Dewey, “the art of democratic living lies in jointly

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22 Rebecca E. Karl, Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-century World: A Concise History (Durham, 2010), 12.
23 Cheng Yinghong, Creating the “New Man” from Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities (Honolulu, 2009), 53.
24 Ibid., 12.
undertaking to transform disorderly experiences into harmonious ones that allows every participant the opportunity to grow.”26 (This, however, did not actually happen in Mao’s China.)

Mao believed that imposing strict discipline and toughening themselves under harsh circumstances could prepare his youthful cohort for the historical mission of building a new China. Liang Qichao also stressed the role of personal cultivation in renewing China, yet the nature of this cultivation was different from that of Maoist training. Mao Zedong’s belief in democracy as a training was much more mechanical and rigid. The conceptual basis of citizenship shifted from Liang’s epistemic construction of democracy to Mao’s materialistic engineering of communism.

In 1910, as the image on the left shows,27 Mao Zedong was a student in Hunan Province No.4 Normal School. He was among the first students to cut his queue at school, demonstrating his anti-Qing sentiments. Revealing radical disposition at a young age, Mao would later become a core leader of the Chinese Communist Party. In 1936, under Mao’s leadership the Party completed a two-year-long military retreat, known as the Long March, to evade the pursuit of

Kuomintang army. The march reunited the Communist Party members in Shanxi Province, where the second photograph was taken. The Long March thus marked the beginning of Mao’s ascent to power.28

The reason for Mao’s elevated leadership status could be found in his radical approach to bridging the gap between the masses and the intellectuals. This approach would fundamentally transform China’s political and intellectual climate during the second half of twentieth century.

**Mass Line**

Mao chose rural areas as the testing ground for the construction of “new citizen” communities. He had observed a deep gap between “four hundred million left out of the discursive loop”29 (as Lu Xun put it) and the literate elites. In fact, since the 1920s, many students who had studied abroad came back to China, but they chose to start their careers in metropolitan areas such as Beijing and Shanghai. Development and construction of rural areas was “discarded.”30 In light of this trend, Mao’s mass-based strategy helped him to rally public support in rural areas. This tactic for consolidating power was known as “mass line,” since it prioritized the inculcation of new ideas among the masses in a way that transformed everyday life.

Throughout the early twentieth century, many publications, organizations and activities emerged aimed to promote the idea of a new citizen. These were largely spontaneous responses to a national crisis. These individuals

29 Cheng Yinghong, Creating the “New Man” from Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities (Honolulu, 2009), 57.
and groups, including Liang’s political organizations, were “loosely connected to each other under that peculiar circumstance, without a cogent ideological proposition or an effective organizational network.” When these circumstances began to change in the mid 1920s, Liang Qichao had already retreated from political scene. The question of creating a new man gradually changed from Liang’s proposal of reshaping the national character to the training communist cadres and fighters under the well-defined ideological guidelines imposed by a Leninist party.

Mao’s unconventional approach to breaking the barrier between the masses and the elites constituted a powerful force in the evolution of socialist thought. On the one hand, Mao’s strategy offered a testing ground for the training of cadres and it reinforced the sense of communist political identity. On the other hand, as this identity became more and more rigid with the establishment of Chinese Communist Party, it provided young intellectuals who were prone to leftist thought for Mao’s mass line strategy.

Liang, not having a radical vision of qun, only advocated his New Citizens agenda at a conceptual level. He was not able to exercise the idea of qun during his disheartening term as an official in the government of Republic of China. After resigning his position in the government in 1917, he started to teach in colleges. He became more interesting in talking with students than rallying political adherents. To put it in Charles Kadushin’s term, Liang was a

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31 Cheng Yinghong, *Creating the “New Man”*, 54.
32 In the essay “Lun Side (On Private Virtue),” Liang Qichao had defined the primary step in the process of renewing China was to refine national character. That is, to improve Chinese people’s “knowledge (zhì),” “morality (de)” an “strength (lì).” In Liang’s words, these three elements of national character were still vaguely defined. Mao Zedong, however, took “strength” as the most important constituent of national character. Therefore, Mao’s interpretation of civic virtue was highly physical and he adopted rigorous training to refine individual strength.
33 Cheng Yinghong, *Creating the “New Man,”* 54.
clerically-inclined intellectual while Mao was a revolutionary one. Clerical intellectuals tried to discover issues, solve problems and took upon themselves the mission of enlightenment, just like Christian missionaries. Clerically minded intellectuals regarded education as an enlightening process. Revolutionary intellectuals, such as Mao, viewed education as a training process. In order to train oneself to be a new citizen, one has to embrace “newness” in its most radical terms and to fight a war, sometimes a hypocritical war, against the past and tradition.

During an era characterized by rapid social and intellectual transformations, it was hard for intellectuals to maintain their influence over the public. Facing a burning demand for the building of national power, radical voices were more effective in gaining an audience and stimulating immediate actions. Although Liang Qichao in his later years was still popular among students, a thirst for “newness” gradually dimmed the light of his mild political and cultural presence.

Revolutionary intellectuals were more interested in instrumental value of the idea rather than the idea itself. Mao’s original purpose of founding New Citizens Society was to transform individuals. The end goal of this transformation pointed to a grand historical mission for the renewal of China. For Liang Qichao, individual responsibility served more than just as a stepping stone along this historical mission. This primary concern had been the achievement of self-reliance. But this essence of independent individuality, enmeshed with the quest for individual freedom and development, was overshadowed by a thirst for national power.

34 Charles Kadushin, Preface in *The American Intellectual Elite* (Boston, 1974).
This shift in the sense of individuality was brought about by compromising the intellectual integrity of leftist intelligentsia. French philosopher Julien Benda called it “The betrayal of the intellectuals (trahison des clercs).”\(^{35}\) Since the 1930s, intellectuals kept on swallowing their ethical values for the sake of the national or Party interests.\(^{36}\) Facing the tension between enlightenment and instrumental ethics, they embraced a public calling that gradually diminished their own conscience.

**You Are the Morning Sun**

Intoxication with this idealized public calling began with an infatuation with the youth. Mao delivered the following speech at a meeting with Chinese students and trainees in Moscow in 1952:

> The world is yours. You young people, full of vigor and vitality, are in the bloom of life, like the sun at eight or nine in the morning.

\(^{35}\) Julien Benda (1867-1956) argued in his book *La Trahison des Clercs* that European intellectuals in the 19th and 20th century had often lost the ability to reason dispassionately about political and military matters, instead becoming apologists for crass nationalism, warmongering and racism.

\(^{36}\) Some examples of intellectuals who compromised their intellectual integrity for national interests: the Kuomintang leader Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石 1887-1975) was once fascinated with German Nazi’s model of industrialization and militarization, and he intended to borrow this strategy to modernize China. Mao, although seeing fundamental incompatibility between Soviet Union’s communist revolution and China’s social reality (i.e., absence of proletariat class), adhered to Soviet Union. This is because Mao wanted to “counter U.S. power and its aid to the KMT” and to “build up their world credentials,” the Communists needed to strengthen its relationship with the Soviets. Mao also believed that a Stalinist state could quickly build up military and economic power and could “inspire fear throughout the world.”

Li Zehou (李澤厚 1930- ), a scholar of Marxist philosophy, proposed the idea of “Western learning as substance, Chinese learning as means” to challenge the Qing official Zhang Zhidong’s original concoction of “Chinese learning as substance and Western learning as means.” In order to box a theory of modernization from a Marxist angle, Li arrives at the radical conclusion that substance (*ti*) is the mode of production of society and the material condition of human life rather than a purely conceptual mode, political system, or the Confucian ethical hierarchy of three bonds and five relationships as Zhang Zhidong suggested. Modernization understood in this new context means revolutionizing the pre-modern, “feudal” mode of production and replacing it with commodity-oriented economic production. (体包括了物质生产和精神生产，社会本体是社会存在，社会存在是社会生产方式和日常生活。科学技术是社会本体存在的基石。)


For details about Li Zehou’s Marxist reinterpretation of “substance,” see: Li Zehou, *Zhongguo Xiandai Sixiangshi Lun* (Modern Chinese Intellectual History) (Tianjin, 2003), 331-333.

Our hope is placed on you. The world belongs to you. China's future belongs to you.37

When I was in primary school, I was told of this famous quote of Chairman Mao. During the 1990s, this line was a widely used propaganda slogan at schools that had served the double task of encouraging young students to work hard and reinforcing communist ideology for the youth.

In 1916, Chen Duxiu had written something similar to Mao Zedong. After establishing the journal La Jeunesse, Chen had appealed to the youth to acquire “new body and new personality” in order to strive for “the morality of the Noble.”38 Chen, however, also pointed out that “you have to have a new mindset, not merely young.”39 The distinction between new and young became increasingly vague. Infatuation with youth led to an immature mindset of progression—a new China must be built upon the negation of the past and must be led by the invigorated youth who were fit for new times.

The fundamental driving force of this infatuation with newness was an intensifying obsession with gaining national power. This, in turn, led to a superficial understanding of the relationship of the state to individuals, to its past and to the world. On the one hand, individuals became marginalized fractions of a giant state machine. Personal interests were secondary to state interest. An increasingly vehement war against tradition and against the capitalist West blurred distinctions between the object being criticized and the

39 Ibid.
mythology surrounding that object. What was traditional was denounced as backward, what was spiritual was denounced as superstitious. The conception of progress became more and more radical.

Communism could not have flourished in China if the intellectuals had not imposed self-criticism upon themselves and willingly internalized it. The spread of leftist thought reflected the intellectuals’ own grudge against their traditionally superior social status. In order to popularize “democracy,” they started to sanctify the wisdom of the “public” and handed over the power of executing justice to the masses.

The lexicon for “citizens” also changed from Liang Qichao to Mao Zedong. For Liang, the word “citizens” had implied that individuals would be transformed from mere subjects of dynasty to independent individuals within the larger nation. The word “citizens (min 民)” often appeared with “new (xin 新),” suggesting that the identity of citizens was not naturally given, but had to be earned after a process of self-renewal. During Mao’s state-building process, the word for citizens became “people (renmin 人民).” Ren means humans. As long as one is a human, one could become a citizen. The precondition for one to become a citizen changed from political and moral prerequisites to simply biological ones.

Obsession with the calling of the masses was also manifested in literature. The mission of the act of writing changed from wen yi zai dao during Liang’s time

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Liang Qichao was still careful to criticize the mythology surrounding science and not science itself. “I definitely do not acknowledge the bankruptcy of science. However, I do not acknowledge the omnipotence of science either.”
to serving as the writer of the people. Leftist literature, art and music, apart from being a tool for ideological solidarity, directly responded the needs of the times and the demands of the people. But for Liang Qichao, literature had served the purpose of conveying the way.

If we divide humans into six ideal types (as Elmo Rofer suggests): great thinkers, great disciples, great disseminators, letter disseminators, participating citizens and the politically inert, then Liang Qichao may be characterized as a great disseminator who had tried to create New Citizens as “participating citizens.” Mao, however, tried to mobilize the “politically inert” by simply attributing virtue to the masses.

This poster says, “Follow our great Chairman Mao and march ahead!” This was a popular slogan during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Known also as Calamity of Ten Years, this movement had redefined the conception of political chaos—a further advancement of Maoist orthodoxy that eventually led to a collapse of political institutions, social norms and cultural artifacts. All of these were replaced by lies, ignorance and greed. Mao Zedong used people as a blank slate and inscribed the narratives of his own authority upon the national mind.

Moralizing the political inert turned out to have a corrupting influence on the individual’s responsibility toward the common good. Liang had suggested that, “Individual sense of public good constitutes the basis of community.” Without an awareness of what constitutes genuine public good, individual participation in public life became, under Mao, largely driven by selfish sentiment and desires. For instance, in response to Mao’s calling to revolutionize the traditional cultural, students initiated mass killings of their professors. The excuse was to break the hierarchy between teachers and students. Mass killing during the 1960s exemplified a mutually destructive impulse among citizens (who had not been exposed to Liang’s ideas). Handing over the power to define public moral good to a few ended up destroying public moral itself, just as idealizing an idea ended up killing its own adherents.

In *New Citizens*, Liang Qichao had warned about the possibility of this mutual destruction. He argued that during turbulent times, people would become “brutal,” “mutually destructive,” “cunning,” “indifferent to others” and “opportunistic.” Mao Zedong’s radical state-building project in reality destroyed social solidarity, which is the basis for the construction of *qun* and the exercise of civic virtue. Mao’s rhetoric about the mass line had claimed that the ordinary people were not simply ignorant and powerless but also virtuous, because they were uncorrupted and unbiased. Intoxication with the language of the masses

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43 Translation summary of “當內亂時, 其民必生六種惡性：一曰僥幸性。才智之徒, 不務利群, 而惟思用陰賊之心術, 捕機會以自快一時位。二曰殘忍性。草薙禽獮之既久, 司空見慣, 而曾不足以動其心也。三曰傾軋性。彼此相閱, 各欲得而甘心, 杯酒戈矛, 頃刻倚伏也。此三者桀黠之民所含有性也。四曰狡偽性, 朝避猛虎, 夕避長蛇, 非營三窟, 不能自全也。五曰涼薄性。一身不自保, 何況戀妻子, 於至親者尚不暇愛, 而況能愛人, 故仁質研喪澌滅以至于盡也。六曰苟且性。知我如此, 不如無生, 暮不保朝, 偷以偷樂, 人人自危, 無復遠計, 驕至與野蠻人之不知將來者無以異也。From Liang Qichao, “Lun Side (On Private Morality),” in *Quanji*, 715-725.
gradually diminished the status of intellectuals, who were labeled as “particles of knowledge (zhishi fenzi 知识分子)” by leftists already in the 1930s.

This intoxication with the masses also dessicated the evolving vernacular. Liang had used language as a source of inspiration for social and political progress. After the 1940s, however, leftists used language as a tool for political propaganda. As a result, the political lexicon of the Maoist era wiped out inner complexity and the struggle regarding questions of individuality. This impact endures into the twenty-first century.

**Naked Language**

The use and abuse of simplified political language has affected each generation of Chinese born after 1949. All of us have entered the prison house of the Maoist lexicon. The new lexicon was formed at the same time as a new political reality was being created. In this process, an impoverished and heavily politicized way of life developed, and an equally impoverished and heavily politicized language developed to reflect it and to inscribe it in the public memory.44

For a long time, the two forms of Chinese, classical and modern, existed side by side and most educated people, like Liang Qichao, were versed in both and able to live in both thought-worlds. Today, classical Chinese is forgotten by the vast majority of the intelligentsia. With it has been forgotten a very large part of the Chinese intellectual and moral tradition. “A thought-world has disappeared in a linguistic world” and it also disappeared from our consciousness.45 In this flattened thought world, there is no place for inner questions about the

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individual’s relationship to the state in today’s China. As President Xi Jinping came to leadership in 2013, the Party strengthened its ideological control over the public. Intellectuals, who betrayed their integrity during the communist state-building era by prioritizing national interests over individual concerns, have now been turned into the mouthpiece of the Party.

On September 10, 2014, Chen Xiankui, an associate professor of Marxism study at Renmin University of China, published an article in the *Global Times*. Chen claimed that “loving the party and loving our nation are synonymous in China.” Chen’s definition of “patriotism” and “nationalism” flagged the authority’s determination to reinforce ideological control over public patriotism. I translated one excerpt of this article in order to illustrate the contrast with Liang Qichao’s *New Citizens*. Liang’s idea had been:

> Those who internalize the concept of nation generally love the court, but those who love the court do not necessarily appreciate the concept of nation. Only the court that is established through legitimate procedure can represent the nation. In this case, loving the court is loving the nation. If the court is not established through legitimate process, it betrays the nation. In this case, to replace the court is to love the nation.

Chen Xiankui, by contrast, had written:

> In contemporary China, loving the Party is synonymous with loving China. The Party represents the fundamental interest of the Chinese people. China’s special party system has proved to be effective in dealing with economic development, expanding democracy, perfecting legal system and defending national security. Chinese citizens ought to love the Party if they love China; whether or not you love the Party is the primary criterion of judging whether or not you love your country.

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46 Translation of “有國家思想者，亦常愛朝廷；而愛朝廷者，未必皆有國家思想。朝廷由正式而成立者，則朝廷為國家之代表，愛朝廷即所以愛國家也。朝廷不以正式而成立者，則朝廷為國家之蟊賊，正朝廷乃所以愛國家也。” From Liang Qichao, “Lun Guojia Sixiang (The Concept of Nation),” in *Xinmin Shuo in Quanji*, 663.

47 Translation of “在當代中國，愛黨與愛國本质上是完全一致的。中國共產黨是中華民族和中國人民利益的集中體現和杰出代表。這是愛國與愛黨完全一致的最為根本的理論基礎。中國特色的政黨制度，無論在發展經濟、擴大民主、完善法治，還是在改善民生、應對危
The above comparison shows how the lexicon for public ethics had become simplified over time. The value of nationalism in strengthening community boundaries and mutual benefit has been relegated to the function of the Party, which claims to represent the “people’s interests.” There is no longer an emphasis on the relationship between community members (biwo 彼我 each other). Instead, what is crucial is the representatives (daibiao 代表) and how the masses are being represented (bei daibiao 被代表). Only the concept of “interest” managed to cross the boundaries of time.

In Liang’s essay, his appreciation of and emphasis upon civic virtue and his moral conscience are implicitly embedded in the word “if.” In Chen’s article, one only senses a kind of fear in defense of a political machine that’s gradually losing functionality. Chen’s seemingly tough language is simultaneously an impoverished lexicon lacking intellectual honesty and intellectual depth. The Chinese Communist Party’s discourse is, in effect, anti-virtue. I was brought up in the context of this impoverished political lexicon and witnessed personally the hijacking of the language of virtue in communist China. As a primary school student, I was required to recite the list of “Ten Moral Principles of How to Become a Responsible Citizen.” Key words kept being repeated as “love China and the Chinese Communist Party”, “respect law and public good.”

1、热爱祖国，热爱人民，热爱中国共产党。Love the country, love the people, love CCP.
What has happened in my school and across China is that the language of civic virtue became colloquial and thoughtless. Although I did not even understand what “public good” stood for, I had to use this lexicon everyday. Mao’s legacy of political activism remains well visible in the empty words inscribed in our daily life.

**Dictatorship of Virtue**

The rights and liberties that many Western thinkers had deemed to be logically and historically prior to the constitutions that protected them, were for the Chinese reformers created simultaneously with the nation-state. Politics, instead of being the instrumental byproduct of securing liberty, began to diminish liberties since the 1940s. Ordinary people, who are insufficiently enlightened or

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virtuous, refused to accept restrictions on their own conduct as the collective interest required. At the same time, intoxication with the lexicon of the masses also led to a distaste for public rants about virtue liberty.

In this hijacked language of civic virtue, there are many other “checklists” created in similar fashion as that of “Ten Moral Principles.” These checklists used numbers and four-character phrases so that they were easy to be memorized, spread and even composed into lyrics. For example, “Eight Honors and Eight Shames (ba rong ba chi 八荣八耻),” promoted by former president Hu Jintao, signaled eight elements of “honored citizens in a socialist society” for people to emulate and eight elements of “shame” for people to avoid. The eight honors included “love the country,” “serve the people,” “love science,” “diligence,” “have a sense of social responsibility,” “honest” and “obey the law.” They are marked in white colors in the propaganda post below.

Eight shames, as shown in the image, were marked in grey. Former president Hu Jintao sitting on the left, was portrayed as the serious moral spokesperson of the Party.

The use of numbers in describing abstract objects was not entirely a modern phenomenon. In classical literature, poets had used numbers to dramatize
natural scenes as a way to express its beauty, such as the expression of “three thousand feet waterfalls.” While numbers were used to describe physical objects in classical literature, they became transformed into the anchors for political propaganda and checklists for “how to become a citizen.”

This impoverished way of expression, once naturalized in the colloquial lexicon, served as an aid to the indirect forgetting of the murderous nature of Communist “virtue” that led to the historical trauma of Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Objects of these memories were singled out to be consigned to oblivion. Expressions such as “the majority (qunzhong 群众),” and “politics (zhengzhi 政治),” once drenched in the blood of revolution, became an integral part of the grammar of nationalism and patriotism.

Bitter Love

What is the relationship between nationalism and patriotism? Bai Hua (白樺, 1930-), a Chinese intellectual and former dedicated CCP member, became a “rightist” from 1958 to 1976. During that time, he had been deprived of the opportunity to write anything. His conviction was reversed by Deng Xiaoping in 1979 and his play manuscript Bitter Love was firstly published in the same year.50

The movie based on Bai Hua’s work, Bitter Love, posed a disturbing question: You love your country, but does your country love you? Nationalism is a kind of bitter love. It was also a bitter love for Liang Qichao, yet it had a different taste for the Chinese intellectuals during Communist era. For Liang, it was bitter because the concept of nation was barely conceivable. For intellectuals

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in Communist China, to love the country meant that they had to endure humiliation and self-destruction. To show their love for the nation, they had to denounce and even debase self-interest.

The lexicon love has changed a great deal in the decades after the death of Liang Qichao. The traditional Chinese character of love 爱 has been simplified into 爱. The difference is that the 心 (heart) in the middle has been removed. This “heartless” character of love reflected the absence of subtlety and nuances in broader political lexicon. During the 1950s, the party demanded naked expressions of love. Comrades had to call their wives “ai ren (爱人, lover)” in public. This was a highly private and intimate way of calling one’s partner, which was unimaginable for most intellectuals of that time. Naked expression of love tore down the dignity of marital affection. Without this dignity, the love for the country, in turn, became celebrated in a distasteful way.

For example, the Party used Lei Feng to teach people to be socially responsible citizens. Lei Feng had been a soldier of the People’s Liberation Army of China. After his death, Lei was characterized as a selfless and modest person who was devoted to the Communist Party, to Chairman Mao, and to the people of China. In 1963, he became the subject of a nationwide posthumous propaganda campaign, “Follow the examples of Comrade Lei Feng.” In various stories of Lei Feng, he is shown as doing some small good deed on a daily basis, such as taking care of sick seniors. As the personification of altruism, Lei Feng was portrayed to be a moral character and the masses were encouraged to emulate his selflessness, modesty, and devotion to Mao. After Mao's death, Lei Feng remained a cultural

51 Teaching of virtue dictated public education, echoing traditional Confucian ethic of teaching by example. According to Confucian ethics, when one sees a worthy, one should think of equaling him. Cultivated persons have an obligation to serve models for others to emulate.
icon representing earnestness and service. The stories of Lei Feng were written in a theatrical lexicon. They were full of accounts of Lei's admiration for Mao Zedong, his selfless deeds, and his desire to foment the revolutionary spirit. Scholars generally believe that the stories were forged by Party propagandists.

As love and virtue became deprived of subtlety and dignity, they started to become vicious. Devotion to the nation became an erotic attachment to it even though it brought about pain. And yet the Party kept using the people’s affection for the nation to serve its own power and interests. During the Great Leap Forward, the Party abused the peasants’ respect and love for Mao and longing for a better life to make them believe that the agricultural production policies (which led to the great famine and millions of unnatural death) would work. Due to the use and abuse of the citizen’s love for the nation, the meaning of guo (nation, which has public connotation) quickly invaded the realm of jia (family, private sphere).

In more recent years, the tension between individuals and the state took on a new form with the slogan of a “Chinese Dream” coined by President Xi Jinping:

A Chinese Dream is essential the people’s dream. The important feature of this dream is that it recognizes our nation, people and individuals as a mutually bonded entity and it equate individual interest with national interests. With our Chinese Dream, we could rejuvenate the Chinese people and our civilization. 52

This Party propaganda appears to be conceptually depthless and superficial compared to Liang Qichao’s lexicon for “loving the nation:”

For details, please see: Donald J. Munro, A Chinese Ethics for the New Century: The Chien Mu Lectures in History and Culture, and Other Essays on Science and Confucian Ethics (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2005), 33.

Today intellectuals talk about reforms all the time. They always talk about all the new “stuff” but not about new “morality.” The whole intellectual landscape is still enslaved by the traditional dynamics. The intellectuals’ love for the nation, for the community, for truth, has not crystalized yet.

Liang Qichao had once likened Chinese people’s political capacity to the blindness of fish in undersea caves. As long as one’s mind is not blind, however, one might be able to have a clear vision one day.

Being a progressive thinker in times of turbulent change was frustrating and challenging. It is equally challenging to be truthful about liberal consciousness in the system of autocracy today. Only by anchoring one’s ethical landscape and the sincerity of one’s mind in a subtle lexicon can one avoid the drowning of individual conscience in the swirl of relentless materialism that characterizes contemporary China.

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Chapter Six

Frustration Is the Greatest Enemy of the Heart

I can’t say how bad the current situation is and whether this is going to change in the future. Is China going to fall? No. If we believe so, we lose our will. Wisdom and knowledge are necessary for renewing China, but moral conviction is indispensable.

– Liang Qichao’s Diary in 1922
On April 26, 1928, Liang Qichao wrote a letter to Liang Sicheng and Lin Huiyin. About to graduate from University of Pennsylvania, Liang Sicheng married Lin and planned to come back to China with her. Hearing the good news, Liang sent a letter to congratulate their recent marriage and to offer some suggestions to start their career.

_I wish that you two could respect and care about each other more than before. Love and caring are the basis for enduring family peace and pleasure._

_Sicheng, “The History of Chinese Architecture” is a great and important project, but a hard one too. Most old architectural structures have been destroyed by constant warfare. I suggest that you start your field research with Beijing._

This letter was written nine months before Liang passed away. Having retreated from the political scene, he spent most of his time with students and his children. Facing the wave of anti-tradition thought, Liang, already on his sick bed, still encouraged the young couple to retain their historical consciousness by carrying out work in the history of architecture.

_Architecture reflects concretely the impact of history upon the present. The tower in the image for this chapter is Tianfeng Tower as it appeared in 1865._

_The tower is an icon of the past in my hometown, Ningbo, a southeast coastal city. The tower was originally built in the year of 656 as a Buddhist temple. It had been destroyed many times during various military occupations during dynastic_
transitions as well as by inclement weather conditions. Yet, what truly buried the tower today is the force of cultural materialism.

Historically, Ningbo had been a center of domestic commercial activities. As a coastal city, it traces its primary role as a trade port back to 1843, when the city was signed to be a “treaty port” for foreign trade after China lost the First Opium War. It leaped forward economically due to the state-sanctioned (instead of foreign-imposed) 1978 economic reform. Since the 1980s, the city has prospered from foreign investment and export which has the government support. In 2010, total cargo throughput was 627 million tons. In 2013, Ningbo’s economy grew 9.26 percent to 712.89 billion yuan (US$115.12 billion), about three times the national average. As a result of economic prosperity, history has sunk into self-imposed materialistic modernity, just like the Tianfeng Tower has been drowned by the forest of skyscrapers below.

The tower had been burned down in 1130 after the Jin tribe invaded the city and took power from Han Chinese. In addition, the architecture was not sturdy enough to endure inclement weather conditions and had been rebuilt several times in 1144, 1330, 1412, 1559 and 1798. The most recent renovation was conducted in 1989. For details of the history of Tianfeng Tower, see: “Ningbo Dashiji (Key Events in the History of Ningbo),” Ningbo Wenhua, May 24, 2008, http://www.nbwh.gov.cn/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2147&Itemid=513 (accessed March 19, 2015).

Tianfeng Tower has been turned from an iconic building to an ornamental detail of the city. The history of Ningbo has been re-appropriated by the government to decorate political propaganda for the purpose of glorifying modern China, the Party reforms, GDP, employment, tourism, etc. In the aftermath of politically mandated amnesia, scrupulous recollection of historical memories has become ever more precious in China. Rereading Liang Qichao in the year of 2015 has encouraged me to cast some new light on a darkening intellectual terrain.

**Gentlemen**

A century before my encounter with Liang Qichao in 2014, the world was in turmoil. World War I broke out and China also faced internal chaos and increasing pressure from Western powers. On November 5, 1914, at Tsinghua University’s invitation, Liang Qichao delivered a speech for teachers and students.

Beijing in November was getting cold, Liang, wearing a suit and tie with a vest, leisurely walked up to the stage and with his Guangdong accent, began a speech entitled “Gentleman (junzi 君子).” He said:

*There is a broad meaning in the word gentleman. It is not easy to give a correct comment or the exact definition of what a “gentleman” is or what princely fashion one must possess to be called a “gentleman.”*

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6 Narratives of local history are selective. In order to attract foreign investment, for example, the government promoted the history of “Ningbo Clan.” Ningbo Clan was one of eight major business clans in China. The anecdote of Ningbo Clan contributed to the foreign-directed propaganda that Ningbonese have been proficient in business and trade for centuries. For details of Ningbo Clan please refer to Khoon Choy Lee, *Pioneers of Modern China: Understanding the Inscrutable Chinese* (Hackensack, 2005), 61. For details of government propaganda please refer to “Ningbo Bang: Promoting Ningbo’s Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation,” Ningbo Government, April 15, 2012, [http://english.ningbo.gov.cn/art/2012/4/15/art_421_544239.html](http://english.ningbo.gov.cn/art/2012/4/15/art_421_544239.html) (accessed February 23, 2015).

In these opening remarks, Liang used the two Hexagrams “Qian and Kun (Heaven and Earth)” from *Yi Jing (Book of Changes)* to explain his views of what a “Gentleman” is:

> Out of the 64 symbols (Gua) in Zhouyi, 53 mentioned and explored the notion and definition of an ideal “Gentleman.” By dividing the arrangements of the 64 symbols or hexagrams through the Qian and Kun Series, the Qian diagram stated that: As heaven maintains vigor through movements, a gentle man should constantly strive for self-perfection (Self-discipline). The Kun diagram stated that: As earth's condition is receptive devotion, a gentle man should hold the outer world with broad mind (Social-Commitment). These two conditions are the closest requirements for being a true gentleman.

In conclusion, Liang voiced his expectations and hopes for the students of Tsinghua:

> Tsinghua students need to be enriched by knowledge from both East and West, need to gather and take on the entire splendor and the magnificent, need to treat their teachers as their friends and need to consult and encourage one another. When you travel abroad for your study, you need to absorb the teachings of that new civilization, return to your homeland, improve your country and society and contribute politically. The characteristics of this so-called ‘Gentleman’ belong to everyone, even if you are not a Tsinghua student.

To make Tsinghua students better informed about knowledge from the East, Liang served as a mentor for Tsinghua’s Sinology studies from 1925 to 1927. He dedicated himself to lecturing and research at the Tsinghua Academy of Chinese Learning during last years of his life.

One hundred years later, in August 2014, Tsinghua’s President Chen Jining cited Liang’s speech from 1914 and appealed to the students to “follow the paradigm of the gentleman.”

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Tsinghua’s class of 2018, who dressed uniformly in red T-shirts in the photo below, would acquire the ability to “think independently and reason critically.”

Several months after Chen delivered this speech, he was appointed party chief of the Ministry of Environmental Protection in January 2015. It is common in China for a university president to work simultaneously for the government. In reality, the political influence of the Communist Party trickles down into every aspect of society, especially into the two fields to which Liang had devoted his entire life: education and journalism. “Independent thinking,” in this case, may be hard to realize.

**Two Darknesses**

During the May Fourth era, intellectuals already identified a cause for the lack of independent thinking among Chinese literati. They were incapable of scientific reasoning. In order to improve individuals’ intellectual capability, they emphasized the acquisition of scientific reasoning and the need to strengthen China through science and technology. In the 1980s, the Chinese Communist Party itself in the era of reform proposed a national strategy of “kejiao xingguo (科教兴国 invigorate China through science education).” As a result, pre-college

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9 Ibid.
education began to emphasize math, physics, chemistry and biology. Students now have to spend hours doing calculus and multiple choices exams at school. Quantitative measures of success have led to an infatuation with narrow intellectualism. Students care more about “right or wrong answers,” which can ultimately be converted into high test scores, instead of “true or false,” which would allow them to think critically and reflectively. The overemphasis on natural science discourages students from choosing the social sciences and humanities as their intended college majors or academic concentrations.

A critical and analytical mind, which may be conducive to a broad and reflective vision of China’s past and future, has been eroded by the swirl of relentless materialism and goal-oriented success seeking. Consequently, authorities have managed to suppress the younger generation’s intellectual curiosity in the fields of history, political science and humanities from which they might develop questions regarding ruling legitimacy of the CCP. The Party also extends its power to media and publications. Under the new leadership of Xi Jinping, campaigns against corruption and free speech have increased. When I

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10 According to Gao Yuan, “Education bears the role of training various specialized talents to sustain the development of science and technology... compared with other countries, especially the Western developed ones, science education in China has the advantage of large participation in both secondary and higher education. The emphasis has been placed on the teaching and learning of mathematics and other science subjects... but neglect of the cultivation of critical spirits. For details, see Gao Yuan, “An Emerging Giant of Science: Achievements and Challenges of STEM Education in China,” in Brigid Freeman, Simon Marginson and Russell Tytler eds., The Age of STEM: Educational Policy and Practice Across the World in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (New York, 2015), 155.

11 According to Council on Foreign Relations, China’s constitution affords its citizens freedom of speech and press, but the opacity of Chinese media regulations allows authorities to crack down on news stories by claiming that they expose state secrets and thus endanger the country. In April 2010, the Chinese government revised its existing Law on Guarding State Secrets to tighten control over information flows. The amendment strengthens requirements for Internet companies and telecommunications operators to cooperate with Chinese authorities in investigations into leaks of state secrets. But the definition of state secrets in China remains vague, facilitating censorship of any information that authorities deem harmful to their political or economic interests. Xu Beina, “Media Censorship in China,” Council on Foreign Relations, updated on September 25, 2014, http://www.cfr.org/china/media-censorship-china/p11515 (accessed March 19, 2015).
started literature research in May 2014, I found that China’s largest platform for sharing electronic books and academic journals, Xinlang Aiwen, had been blocked. In addition, many similar websites were temporarily closed for censorship. In December 2014, Gmail was completely blocked in China. The shutdown of Gmail significantly hampers the ability of China’s tech-savvy generation to communicate with the outside world. In fact, China is host to the world’s “most sophisticated internet censorship mechanism, known as the Great Firewall of China.”12 Party authorities have stepped up its disruption of foreign online services like Google over the past year to cut off from China the rest of the world.

After 30 years of economic progress, our country has regressed back to the dark times of late Qing in terms of the lack of diverse points of view. The new darkness of today’s China, however, is a different kind of darkness than the one that had enveloped Liang Qichao’s time. In Liang’s era, intellectuals had sought the light of new ideas that might lead them out of the Qing cave. Today, individuals barely stick their heads out of the Communist cage to look for alternative views. The speechless silence of today is quite different from the wordless silence of Liang’s time.

Below is a powerful reflection about enforced silence as voiced by a blogger on Sina Weibo:

In the 40s, we knew nothing, so we followed you for bread. In the 50s, we knew nothing, so we followed you for that imagined Utopia. In the 60s, we were immersed in superstition and cult because of “him”. In the 70s, we reached a crossroad—who did it wrong? You or us? In the 80s, we gradually woke up, only to find everything in ruins. In the 90s, we broke the chain, realizing that it

was you instead of poverty that blocked our view of the world. By 2000, we began to know everything, but you did not allow us to speak...\(^{13}\)

This lack of freedom of speech has ultimately harmed the ability of several generations in China to think independently.

**From Wisdom To Cynicism**

For Liang Qichao, the wisdom that allows one to think comes from the ability to observe facts. In 1925, Liang had written, “*those with wisdom can observe the world and peruse the causation of various phenomena.*”\(^{14}\) The Chinese word “*guan*” has two connotations: “observation” and “value”. The state imposed restrictions on “observation” affect the “value” that individuals derive from their inadequate observation of the world. Liang’s words remind us of the importance of maintaining a cool, observational stance in the face of the reality. Today, free speech has been suppressed, and people question how it is possible to even talk about New Citizens when individuals have been turned into mere subjects of an authoritarian state.

The real challenge, however, is the inability of appreciating truth in the aftermath of cultural materialism and a dessicated lexicon for politics. When the Party controls what “truths” can be written and printed, the value of scrupulous

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14 Translation of “智慧者，觀察世相，深通因緣。” From Liang Qichao, “Shuo Wuwo (On Selflessness),” 1925, in *Quanji*, 3751. The title of this essay, *wuwo* (無我 absence of self), comes from the Buddhist concept of Atman. The true self of an individual is beyond identification with phenomena. Liang tried to expand the vision of “self” through the lens of Buddhism. 
recollection becomes diminished for the younger generation. Growing up in the post-Tiananmen years, life was like a ride down on a smooth highway lined with beautiful scenery. Students studied hard and crammed for exams. On weekends, they roamed shopping malls to try on jeans and sneakers, or hit karaoke parlors, bellowing out Chinese and Western hits.

When shopping girls replaced the tank man in the cartoon above, the events of 1989 became enveloped by forgetfulness. Rousseau had written, “The state, set on fire by civil wars, is born again from its ashes and takes on anew, fresh from the jaws of death, the vigor of youth… but it cannot make itself free when the civic impulse has lost its vigor.” In the aftermath of 1989, consumerism has replaced civic virtue.

Driven by relentless materialism, the alternation between exertion and ennui has become a habit and, later, an attitude. Those who endure are rewarded by a series of concrete symbols of success: a college diploma, a prestigious job, a car and an apartment. The rules are simple, though the competition never gets

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easier. Therefore most Chinese look ahead, focusing on personal well-being, rather than the larger issues that bedevil the society.\textsuperscript{17}

For those who do care about larger social issues, the linguistic and conceptual framework with which they envision a better society has become increasingly vague. For example, many contend that China, in the midst of a crucial historical transition, needs many “Chinese Madisons” and “Chinese Hamiltons” to guide the country along the right track to constitutional development.”\textsuperscript{18} Is this lexicon of equality truly perceivable by Chinese citizens? Can we distinguish law from punishment, justice or karma? At the same time, a shared public sphere in which individuals could exchange views and ideas has been lost. Cynicism and antagonism prevail in public discussion of corruption and censorship. The intellectual landscape in the decades after the death of Liang Qichao has become divided and polarized.

For example, China’s leftists today express nostalgia for Mao’s time of strict discipline and lack of corruption. They want to revive old political methods to counter political corruption. The rightists, however, advocate for a liberal political system which would let competition drive away corruption. The two camps humiliate and vilify each other in order to advance their distinctive views. What has been lost is “a willingness to share one’s own answer with others” and

\textsuperscript{17} According to a survey conducted in 2013 by global research from Ipsos, a global research company, 71% of Chinese confirmed that they gauged their success by things they own. That is significantly higher than it was for every country included in the survey. The tendency to equate material goods with overall success (68% agree) seems to have surfaced from societal forces. Chinese were also the most likely to feel pressured to both be successful and make money. For details of the survey, see: Roberto A. Ferdman, “China May Actually be the Most Materialistic Country in the World,” \textit{Quartz}, December 16, 2013, \url{http://qz.com/158282/china-may-actually-be-the-most-materialistic-country-in-the-world/} (accessed March 17, 2015).

\textsuperscript{18} He Weifang, \textit{In the Name of Justice: Striving for the Rule of Law in China} (Washington D.C., 2012), xxvii.
to “heed the many opposing answers as they might have.” Individuals’ ability to “observe” has been manipulated by circumstances. In light of a pervasive indifference to public affairs, cynicism towards social problems and antagonism towards dissidents, it is hard to perceive what one’s role might be in a shared public life.

**How to Voice Liang’s Views**

If Liang Qichao had witnessed the 1989 Tiananmen incident, what would he have said to the students? How would he have envisioned the post-Tiananmen public life? To further this crucial thought experiment, I have drafted a hypothetical letter that Liang might have addressed to the students.

Dear 1989 students,

*I am disheartened at what the government has done to you, to your parents and teachers. The government is brutal and heartless in firing at armless civilians. I am heartbroken...not because I realize the authoritarian nature of the CCP, but because after over 100 years, our government is not that different from the Qing court...or even worse than the Qing.*

*However, I do want to emphasize a point, although it may sound pompous and too critical in light of what you have just experienced. I do want to put it forth, because it can be easily forgotten and discarded as we mourn over the death of the 1989 victims. And yet I am convinced that it would benefit the next generation.*

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According to Callan, any liberal democratic state must respect religious and cultural pluralism in its educational policies. To fail to do so would betray ideals of freedom and toleration fundamental to liberal democracy. Yet if such ideals are to flourish from one generation to the next, allegiance to the distinctive values of liberal democracy is a necessary educational end, whose pursuit will constrain pluralism. The problem of political education is therefore to ensure the continuity across generations of the constitutive ideals of liberal democracy, while remaining hospitable to a diversity of conduct and belief that sometimes threatens those very ideals. In the case of China, the lack of educational emphasis on critical thinking and the wide-spread censorship on speech might be a contributing factor of the absence of meaningful debate on public issues and of hospitality to different values.
in the long run as we build democracy from the bottom up. This is what I and my generation should have done, but failed to carry out. Now, I want it inscribed in your hearts and minds.

The crucial question is: Should we establish a new government first in order to cultivate new citizens, or vice versa? These two efforts are mutually causal. Today, we overemphasize the importance of a new government. We think that reforms within the government are the answer to a new China. I am glad to see that the new generation today has acquired the concept of human rights. Renewing the government, however, is not as difficult as renewing oneself. Renewing the self requires a new heart that is responsible and freedom-loving.

When self-renewal is complete, renewing China will naturally follow. This process of renewal is like the task of Sisyphus. Sometimes you may feel that you are rolling an immense boulder up a hill only to watch it roll back down. You have to be hard-willed and internally strong to face setbacks. And you should not worry about being punished for the slow pace of progress. Do not become obsessed with radical slogans for reforms. If you could truly grasp the essence of the relationship between self-renewal and the renewal of China, you might be able to hold on to your inner beliefs at all times.

Respect for individual rights presupposes more than just courage to die for an ideal. It requires endurance for the sake of freedom-loving virtues. These virtues are in danger of being destroyed by your bloody fights. The student demonstrations, I am sorry to say, have harmed the possibility of civic ethics to some extent.

I truly hope that your generation, you men and women of will, can refine your own character and will power. Learn voraciously from your peers, neighbors,
mentors, parents and strangers. Only after you cultivate yourself with civic virtue can you radiate it outward to the larger community. And that is the time for you to address bigger questions.

There are many things we need to improve to make China better: education, community engagement, social security, etc. But a strong, independent and tender inner world is the premise for achieving these goals. If you cannot become independent minded, freedom will be just another expression for slavery (給你自由你不獨立，仍是奴隸). Please be hopeful that dark clouds will eventually disperse. Wipe the tears and blood, and start to ink a new chapter of China’s progress, as well as of your own personal growth.

In this letter, I have pieced together bits and pieces of civic virtue from Liang Qichao’s writing to convey his anguished yet hopeful voice. Just as he remained uplifted after witnessing the bloodshed of 1898 and the assassination of Kuomintang leader Song Jiaoren in 1913, he would have carried on with the same attitude after the events of 1989. Liang would not have all the answers to post-1989 dilemmas. Today’s China needs a more complex understanding of virtue and morality—not necessarily as philosophy but as ethical practice. This understanding needs to be augmented in the Liang legacy.

On the Ashes of Homeland

After the fires of the Beijing Spring die down, however, hopes might be engulfed by an undercurrent of violence and antagonism. China has become a smokeless battle ground. When I was reading Liang Qichao’s New Citizens in March 2014, a terrorist attack took place in Kunming, China. A group of knife-wielding individuals, believed to be Uighurs, randomly stabbed and slashed passengers at the city’s railway station. Thirty-three died and one hundred and
forty others were injured. As the whole nation was grieving over the massacre, hate speech against the Uighur minority flooded the social media. Some Uighurs, although they felt ashamed for the incident, fought back and criticized Han people’s stereotypes. Overwhelmed by hate speech on the Internet, I came across an interesting comment on Weibo (China’s micro-blogging platform): “If we truly had civic awareness, we would not have tangled ourselves in the Han-Uighur conflict.”20 This comment suggests that civic awareness could transcend ethnic conflict. Yet historically, racialized nationalism was more effective in consolidating national identity.

It is often taught at school in China that the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party is superior because it established People’s Republic of China and led the country to “prosperity,” not the Kuomintang. The superiority of the Party was based on its profound understanding of the suffering of the Chinese people. It is said that it was the CCP that first identified an encompassing revolutionary objective that included anti-Manchuiusm, anti-feudalism, anti-imperialism and anti-bourgeois activism. All of these hostile sentiments towards other members of the society have been consolidated into an endless struggle. It was this hostility that strengthened the identity of a Chinese Communist, who could save China and bring a bright a future to its people.

Liang Qichao had limited interest in such a racial conception of the nation. Constructing a blood-based nationalism in his view would be irrelevant and self-destructive. He was concerned with constructing a culture-based nationalism. His view was supported by Zhang Junmai. Zhang had also argued that one could not find any racial unity in China. Since various non-Han peoples

20 Translation of “如果中国人真的有公民意识，就不会在民族问题上纠结不清。”
had ruled China and produced a mixed population. The blood of the Han ethnic majority was no longer “pure.”

To retain a sober awareness of one’s responsibility for the community in the context of racial hostility requires courage. To make civic awareness transcend ethnic conflict requires a steady consciousness. In one of the essays that addressed this challenge in New Citizens, Liang had written: “Never be circumscribed by circumstances.” Such courage would allow individuals to speak reflectively and critically when truth is appropriated by the Party’s political jargon. One must try to become an authentic person capable of confronting the lies of political propaganda.

We Complete Our Lives By Learning From Each Other

On January 13, 1923, Liang Qichao left his teaching career at Southeastern University in Nanjing. On that day, he delivered a valediction. In this speech, he said: “Many say that we face intellectual famine, but they are not aware of the danger of spiritual famine.” Liang believed that Buddhism was a great source of spiritual power. He tried to radiate this power outward to a younger generation through his educational efforts. In his later years, Liang Qichao devoted himself to education and “jiangxue 講學,” a traditional form of teaching and lecturing. His lectures at Tsinghua University were popular among students because Liang was not only knowledgeable and articulate but also morally eloquent and sincere:

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23 Translation of “國中青年界很習聞的一句話，就是知識饑荒，卻不曉得，還有一個頂要緊的精神饑荒。” From Liang Qichao’s last lecture at Southeastern University, China, 1923, from Nianpu, 630.
I seek to free myself from the captivity of the self, and thus free myself from trivial and meaningless worries. “Humane individuals are never restrained by inner anxiety.” This is my belief.24

Liang himself had found that Buddhism could set one free from selfness. He appreciated the value of Buddhism in becoming genuinely “humane (ren 仁)”

person.

Liang Qichao’s sincere character as a teacher gained him wide respect among students. These kinds of mentor relationships are not commonly found in today’s China. Conversations between students and teachers are dominated by examinations and scores. Teachers may have a good understanding of their students’ academic performance, but they rarely care to know their students’ personalities and characters. Liang’s particular affection for his students and his devotion to their overall wellbeing is illuminating for the people today as they rethink the meaning of education.

The high school Chinese teacher whom I most respected and benefited from during my pre-college education, said the following words to me:

Teaching is just like child-rearing. For us parent-teachers, we observe from our child-students everything that we can’t remember about our own youth and immaturity. For you students, you can learn from us how to think like an adult, which is something that has not yet come to you but will accompany you for the rest of your life. We complete our lives by learning from each other.

I always carry these words in my mind. Their message is also found in Liang Qichao’s words to his children and students. Sincerity is key in turning a teacher from a mere encyclopedia into a supportive mentor, and a spiritual partner. The Chinese idiom liang shi yi you (良師益友) best captures this image. It refers to an individual who is both a mentor, (who influences others through his intellectual

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24 Translation of “將來我的私心掃除，即將許多無謂的計較掃除，如此可以做到‘仁者不憂’的境界， 此即我的信仰。” From Ibid., 631.
and moral integrity) and a friend (who extends his help and support) in times of need.

**Ice Drinker**

In the process of working this thesis, I have come to treasure more and more Liang Qichao’s tranquil inner landscape. The pen-name that he chose for himself was “Ice Drinker” because, as he put it, “every morning, I receive the mandate [for action], every evening I drink the ice to cool down my inner anxiety.” During daytime, Liang was a politician, dealing with compelling public concerns. At night, he was writer, composing cool narratives about the burning reality in his study room. This coolness was the real force behind his effort to weave moral fibers into a corrupt world.

At the end of his 1926 letter to Liang Sicheng and Lin huiyin, Liang Qichao wrote:

> Frustration is the greatest enemy of the heart—we should never let it infringe upon our inner world.

These words have not exhausted their meaning for the Chinese today. In this new age of transition, Liang’s words empower each individual to become genuine a new citizen, not simply for the renewal of China, but for oneself as well.

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25 Translation of 難以言表, 無法接受。我內心的痛苦。
Conclusion

From Wordless Silence To Speechless Silence

過渡時代者，千古英雄之大舞台也。而吾所思所夢所禱祀者，不在轟轟獨秀之英雄，而在芸芸平等之英雄！

The age of transitions is a great arena for men of will. I think, I dream, I pray, not to see a hero who fiercely outshines all others. I would rather witness all of us become heroes for ourselves.

-- Liang Qichao “On the Age of Transitions” 過渡時代論 1901
In 1924, Liang Qichao sent a calligraphy scroll to his friend, the writer Bingxin. It was a poem written by a Qing poet, Gong Zizhen, after he had resigned his office in the court of Beijing. The first verse reads as follows: “My heart stays still when time brings great changes to the world around me.” The second verse praises, “Views of great mountains and seas were imprinted in my mind and in my dream.”

In this poem, Gong had lamented his miserable fate because he had been mistreated by the Court. The verses show his continuing concern about the community he used to serve. Liang cited these two verses of the poem in the calligraphy because they reflected his own feelings at the time.

Regardless of how external circumstances had changed, Liang Qichao asserted that, “moral conviction is indispensible.” Liang’s brush inked this calligraphy in order to smooth the tension between the voice of thinking words and the noise of the surrounding context in which the thinking took place. As these verses suggest, he stands in a continuum of morally eloquent witnesses to political turbulence.

Many activists during China’s revolution had presumed that calligraphy would be cast aside as an unwanted residue of feudalism. They had regarded elegant characters as an imperial legacy and “chains for oppressing common people.” The Red Guards who tore apart many calligraphy works during the Cultural Revolution were heirs to a history of contempt for classical arts.

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1 Bearing author’s emotion on natural scenes is a common technique in poetry writing. Although Gong left the Court, he lingered his memories on the “mountains and seas,” a sign of enduring care of the community he used to serve.
2 Translation of “道德信仰是断然不可少的。” From Liang Qichao’s diary in Nianpu, 731.
3 Richard Curt Kraus, Brushes With Power: Modern Politics and the Chinese Art of Calligraphy (Berkley and Los Angeles, 1991), 55.
But this harsh judgment was weakened in reality. My grandfather, for example, grew up in the age when China’s intellectual terrain transitioned from using traditional characters to simplified characters. As a self-taught calligrapher, he still chose to use traditional characters for calligraphy. “Simplified characters are lifeless,” he said. Men communicate their thoughts and feelings through writing. The art of calligraphy is the art of inward reflection. Simplification of the form of characters deprived self-expression of its dignity.

In the 1920s, Lu Xun had advocated for a “vocal China (yousheng de zhongguo 有聲的中國)” where everyone was able to express himself. He had argued that written language was too complicated for the masses to comprehend and it should be simplified and made accessible to the majority. Today, although China has much more to say in the world’s economic and political arena than it did fifty years ago, her voice is becoming increasingly hollow. Political propaganda has overshadowed the voice of thinking words.

Domestically, the political vocabulary of modernization revolves around either airy communist virtues (such as cultivate social responsibility and patriotic spirit) or narrow materialism (as reflected in Deng Xiaoping’s famous line “economic development is the iron rule”). This impoverishment of ethical vocabularies is also apparent in Chen Xiankui’s essay entitled “Loving the Party and Loving Our Nation Are the Same in China.” Externally, China’s “achievement” is filtered through the lens of the West: China is finally “certified” to have a significant role to play in the international arena with the second largest annual GDP in the world. Today’s China seems actually speechless, because state-sanctioned propaganda is expressed in a seemingly tough but depthless lexicon.
Thinking Words

Before this project, I had thought that the true voice of virtue came from rebellious individuals (like the 1989 demonstrators) who would want to break away from the linguistic and conceptual boundaries set up by the Communist Party. Why did I think that a thoughtful individual should be simultaneously rebellious? This was because my early exposure to modern Chinese history was an irritating and unpleasant experience.

When I first heard the term wen ge— the reference to the notorious Cultural Revolution in China (1966-76), I was about 10 years old. At the dinner table, my father, who had been tapping into foreign TV channels through his illegally set-up satellite TV, told me about this decade-long historical tragedy. At that time, none of my peers had heard of this term, none of my teachers ever mentioned the events of the 1960s. I had to learn from my father that many innocent professors and scholars, were killed, imprisoned or forced into exile by the Chinese Communist Party for their manifestation of “pro-capitalist” tendencies. I was shocked.

For my generation born in the 1990s, the widespread political fanaticism of the Maoist era was very unfamiliar. Like everyone else, I had been receiving patriotic education that emphasized the great achievements accomplished by the Communist Party and the Party-approved facts about history. After hearing the true story of the Cultural Revolution, I was disheartened. I began to resent authority, the Party and school’s patriotic education. I believed that the only way to find out historical truth was to excavate the hidden facts behind the rhetoric of politics. Like Liang Qichao and Hu Shi, I went abroad to find inspiration in a foreign land. After countless reading and writing nights at the College of Social
Studies, I deepened my intellectual thinking and expanded my own intellectual lexicon. Yet this did not enrich my inner landscape. It was in reading Liang Qichao’s *New Citizens* that I found the nourishing power of thinking words, and most importantly, of sincere emotions. Western social theory often categorized emotions as “passions,” something unhelpful to the exercise “pure reason.” Liang’s emotionally charged writings, by contrast, showed me the consolidation of reason and emotions as well as the power of a writer’s evocative words that lead to a more complete process of writing and reading. Sincerity, in Liang’s term, demonstrated one’s inner firmness and the strength to expand the scope of thinking and reflection in dark times.

Once you can let your voice out, you can speak; once you speak, you can sort out your thinking lexicon; once you expand the possibility of language, you start to reflect more deeply; once you start to think, you nourish your own mind and become more independent. Liang was able to go through this process. This is because unlike Chinese intellectuals today, Liang Qichao was able to experiment with refreshing his voice in Japan without being oppressed by the Qing. Liang’s lexicon was not hijacked by any single political authority. His challenge was to master a new language for ethics and politics in a relatively short time.

During this process, each element of Liang’s evolving lexicon became a stepping stone in the process of self-exploration and of historical judgment. As a great disseminator of both knowledge and civic consciousness, he gave voice to a darkness that was at once personal and public. As a result, Liang grew into a more independent thinker who could balance frustration with reality and hope for the future. He was able to address the urgency of rebuilding China as well as the necessity of self-cultivation. At the same time, Liang gradually expanded his
knowledge of and views about nationalism, society, Buddhism religion and education. They are treasures that have yet been explored nowadays. He, therefore, helped “unwittingly” reveal the meaning of modernity for Chinese today.4

Now, under the strict censorship of the Communist Party, the path that Liang took is no longer available. Liang once relied on an independent popular press to construct a vocal public. Today, the press is limited and individuals’ voices are silenced. Yet things are not as bad as they appear to be. Today, we are still able to retrace Liang’s steps and to utilize his living words. Thus, we can start to nourish the mind. I have found my voice through the voice of Liang Qichao, the voice of thought that can cast light upon speechless silence.

There is No Politics in China

Although the language of civic virtue and liberty has been hijacked by Party authorities, the yearning for freedom lies latent among the younger generation. People talked a lot about culture in the 1980s, but politics were the primary target. Everybody knew that the most pressing task was political transformation. People were concerned with politics in general and they read and thought about problems of “aesthetics, literature and ethics” in relation to social transformation.5 The most interesting problem for the Chinese from ancient times

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4 Joseph Levenson, Preface in Liang Chi-Ch’ao and the Mind of Modern China (Los Angeles, 1970). Levenson believed that Liang’s prison was a mind laced with necessary inconsistencies and incompatible ideas which he had to believe—not for their logical coherence but because of his person need. It is not particular ideas of Liang’s that help reveal the meaning of modernity. Rather, it is what wracked him both intellectually and mentally as he grew to be an eloquent witness of political disasters. This thesis is a search for news about how personality can change and develop, both wittingly and unwittingly, in an evolving cultural and social context. The unwitting aspect, in my eyes, has more powerful impact on Chinese today.

to the present has always been “how to be a gentle and noble person (junzi)” who could serve the betterment of “all under the Heaven (tianxia).”

The lexicon of nobility, however, is no longer noble. People’s expression of their yearning for freedom has been caged by the linguistic context of Communist China. A thought world has disappeared from a linguistic world and it has also disappeared from our consciousness. Liu Xiaobo, a Chinese literary critic and human rights activist who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010, recalled his experience during the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident as follows:

When the students confronted the government, the language they used was actually taught by the Party. Some student demonstrators stood out to conduct the crowds to ward off the soldiers who were sent to clear the streets. The slogans, words and songs that those students used were adopted from revolutionary films and literatures of the 1960s and 70s.

According to Liu Xiaobo, there was an interesting scene during the 1989 demonstration. The first group of troops called in to Beijing on May 20th hesitated to use force against “people,” because their name, “People’s Liberation Army,” indicated that it was morally wrong to fire at the very people they were supposed to protect. Therefore, facing no imminent physical threat, the student demonstrators tried to prove that they, rather than the Communist Party, were the real heirs of the May Fourth democratic spirit. The students began to sing the communist revolutionary songs. The soldiers, well versed in these songs, tried to sing them louder than the students in order to suppress their morale. The students, in response, started to shout even louder.

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6 Ibid.
8 Liu Xiaobo’s description of June Fourth from Ibid.
undergraduates attacked some graduate students who wanted to quit the protest and go back to school. These “cowards” were criticized as “anti-revolutionary”—a terrible echo of the Red Guards. The way in which students pursued democracy was not quite democratic.

Conceptualizing democracy in a Communist lexicon was just like “putting out fire with fire.” In the 1920s, young intellectuals swallowed many Western theories and came up with various solutions to modernize China. The intellectual terrain was filled with too many undigested ideologies. In 1989, the situation was similar. The political fervor and passionate celebration of democracy during the carnival of 1989 did not come from an empowering democratic spirit. Rather, it was the fight itself that mattered and the feeling of being “stuffed” with “democracy.”

Imagining democracy as food instead of an intellectual and ethical challenge prevented the students from truly savoring the full meaning of the ideal. Democracy, in this case, lapses into a mere slogan. Seventy years before the Tiananmen Square incident, Liang Qichao had already warned the young democracy activists during the May Fourth Movement as follows: “There is no politics in China. These so-called political movements are not about politics. They are simply about plotting for or against certain individuals. The so-called politics is the source of all evilness.”

In the aftermath of the economic boom, the problem facing China may not be the absence of democracy or universal suffrage. What is most striking is the
absence of a political will to engage in reflections about civic virtue. In China after 1989 there was a considerable collective indifference to public affairs. If individuals cannot identify with the collective as a whole and are unable to perceive the meaning of citizenship, a Rousseau-ian general will (*la volonté générale*) cannot emerge in the first place. The culture of materialism has magnified *si*, the selfness, the trivial and depthless aspect of human nature. This has prevented individuals from perceiving a grander, deeper and more meaningful connotation of the “self” for the construction of the general will. Therefore, we cannot even afford to discuss the nuts and bolts of a “Chinese democracy.”

The causes behind these problems are both personal and political. Certainly, state censorship of speech and press has increased. What is more problematic, however, is the lack of independent thinking and pervasive cynicism. As Eamoon Callan put so eloquently in his *Creating Citizens*: “The institutions of liberal democracy seem poised for collapse because the shared public morality that once enlivened them has vanished, and therefore, they survive only as pointless system of taboo.”¹¹ In China today, just as Liang feared, “*ethics regarding society and state are impoverished.*”¹²

**Intellectual Nourishment**

Many times in the thesis I mentioned “nourishment” of the public. The problem of intellectual malnutrition is not just due to the fact that the Party has poured polluting ideas into civic society. The public itself seems to have lost its appetite for curing this illness. The nutrition that Liang Qichao has to offer is

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more than just a treatment. It offers a new attitude toward the self upon which new discussions about society and nation are made possible.

Whether this conscious nourishment is carried out through politics, journalism or education, it is meant to foster articulate individuals with sophisticated views of the self, of the society and of the nation. In the past I had believed that Western ideas were a sufficient source of intellectual nourishment, just as those Chinese students who had travelled to Europe and America in the early twentieth century. When Liang Qichao was in Japan, he had pointed out to the Chinese intellectuals that learning Japanese was the door to new ideas. For Liang, nourishment had meant “refreshment” because individuals can thereby develop new perspectives upon a particular issue. This was especially meaningful for the Chinese who had known little about the world a century ago, as well as for Chinese living under monotonous political propaganda today.

When I had studied modern European social theories, I appreciated Western political thought and blamed Chinese tradition for disconnecting moral virtues from the creation of a democratic political state. This was very easy for me and many other like-minded Chinese intellectuals who are concerned with political reforms of China and follow an instrumentalist outlook. Mao, who had nationalized and idealized communism, was a typical example. Hu Shi, even though he advocated the examination of practical issues over relentless discussion of “isms,” was overly taken by “pragmaticism.” Liang Qichao, who was deeply engaged with constitutional monarchy during his early years, was no exception.

A New Path to Civic Virtue

Liang did not let this instrumental thinking constrain his intellectual horizons. As a constructive revolutionary, he was not drawn to the dichotomy of
old versus new. He kept revisiting constitutionalism, republicanism and later socialism in the course of his career as a political reformer. He stayed actively tuned to events and constantly reflected upon them as a journalist. He remained dedicated to the renewal of traditional culture in his role as a teacher. Starting with Liang, we observe the twentieth century intellectuals struggling to deal with conflicts between learning new knowledge quickly and holding onto core ethical value. Political ideals and strategies turned all too quickly into ideological weapons.

Liang Qichao managed to handle this challenge with flexibility even as he was criticized for being cunning and disloyal to his own political agenda. Liang’s flexibility actually allowed him to stay loyal to his own intellectual agenda while developing a new lexicon for civic virtue. Limited linguistic tools, insufficient knowledge of a subject and an unsupportive political environment did not deflect the stream of his morally eloquent words. The Communist Party laundered Liang’s image as a self-sacrificing patriotic figure to suit its own ruling agenda. The following description may be found at Liang Qichao Memorial Hall in Tianjin:

Liang Qichao is considered as the pioneer ideologist for the bourgeoisie in modern China as well as a political-campaign specialist and learned master. Being a great patriot, he devoted his whole life to groping for the self-governance and s prosperous road for China.13

In the yard of the Tianjin museum stands a towering sculpture of Liang Qichao.\textsuperscript{14} It stands high and uptight, echoing the iconography associated with Mao Zedong. This pose is consistent with the museum’s description of the loyal patriot. Liang, however, had not hoped to be looked upon as a hero who “outshines others (\textit{hong hong du li} 轟轟獨立).”\textsuperscript{15} During his entire life, he hoped that each and every one in the community would become a conscious citizen. He certainly did not regard himself as an “ideologist of the bourgeoisie.” He wanted to construct a community, a civilized \textit{qun}, without class antagonism.

Liang’s intellectual agenda is also alarming to today’s public intellectuals. Remaining loyal to one’s own evolving ethical lexicon meant never to suppress moral concerns for instrumental purposes. This is the very basis of being a responsible intellectual and citizen. If this could be achieved by Chinese intellectuals today, it would not be necessary to parrot the language of Chen Xiankui. Chen’s lexicon, unlike Liang Qichao’s, is full of defensive nationalism and class struggle, and is deprived of inner sincerity and intellectual depth.

The nourishment provided by Liang’s writings do not depend upon a particular idea or theory. Rather, these works nurture the ability to embrace

\textsuperscript{14} Image from Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Liang Qichao, “Guodu Shidai Lun (On The Age of Transitionas),” 1901, in \textit{Quanji} 464.
inwardness and self-consciousness. Nourishment, in this sense, requires more than adequate nutrition. It requires finding a purpose for the nourishment and the exercise of one’s own mind. If public morality (gongde 公德) and private virtue (side 私德), and freedom (ziyou 自由) and nationalism (guojiayishi 國家意識) were to be fully digested, these concepts would not become the reason to control, or to sacrifice, or to kill. Then, truth (zhen 真) would not have to submit to the principle of reason (li 理) as defined by the Party. As a result, the path to civic virtue (dao 道) would not be synonymous with official morality (de 德). In the end, there would be less confusion and futile fights over what is truth and what is morality. Balancing zhen and li, dao and de requires the inner reflectiveness of a cultivated outlook as embodied by Liang Qichao.

Writing this thesis has made me realize that I have been studying social theory all wrong. I’ve been focusing too much on the “theory” but not enough on “social.” As a result of these studies, I have seen “social” as the adjective but not as a noun. I realize now that what is important about social theory extends beyond an argument about how we should organize public institutions. It also concerns how social context itself interacts with its thinkers.

Concepts and context are not bound in a chain, like chemical reactions. Throughout the span of Liang’s life, he was committed to both social affairs and to conscious intellectual endeavor. We can envision him as walking between historical and ahistorical verities, between tradition and modernity, between light and darkness. What is fascinating about his intellectual legacy is not that he revealed one particular truth. Rather, it is the silhouette that his writings cast upon the meanings of “virtue.” This tension between the enunciation of virtue formed in a thinking soul and the explanation of virtue formed as a result of historical
context is his main contribution to my generation. To paint the landscapes of his evolving reflections has been a gratifying, inspiring, and difficult process. This process has helped reveal the “greys” among sharp colors painted by the Communist historical narratives of Liang Qichao.

**Mirrors of History**

Translating Liang Qichao’s thought into English has been especially challenging for me. Linguistically, conceptually and emotionally I had to struggle with very disparate lexicons. Liang wrote in a hybrid classical-vernacular style. He was known for his solid grasp of classical Chinese and literature, which added linguistic depth to his writings. Liang read voraciously and exposed himself to many different concepts, theories and ways of thinking. This exposure made his work conceptually rich. Liang’s love and caring for the nation and the public was consistent while his life experiences were especially turbulent. All this was untranslatable in the English words that were available to me. The fact that I share with Liang Qichao a deeply rooted concern with the future of China thankfully carried me through the challenging process of finding a new lexicon for civic virtue.

The hardest challenge in translating Liang comes down to the fact that I was examining an unswerving nationalist, who had inked his concern with his country’s future in thousands of words now haunted by Communist China’s patriotic slogans. When I discussed nationalism in this thesis, I felt almost like a spokesman for CCP. This feeling was most disheartening. Here, for the first time, I had to cope with the tension between state-led nationalism and popular nationalism in China. I wanted to separate my words from the Party line. Contemplating Liang’s nationalism with the language that I was brought up with
has been a great conceptual challenge. It will remain a challenge throughout my intellectual and personal life. Revisiting Liang Qichao, however, has helped to expand the political lexicon for virtue and has enriched my understanding of modern Chinese history. I came to understand more deeply Xu Gang’s notion that: “great men are the mirrors of history.”\textsuperscript{16}

The effort to break away from the Communist lexicon is an ongoing process. The undercurrents of freedom consciousness are explosive. We witnessed this in 1989, and more recently, among pro-democracy supporters of Hong Kong Umbrella Revolution who were arrested on the mainland in September 2014. In January 2015, after the massacre at Charlie Hebdo, China’s state news agency, Xinhua, ran a piece by its Paris bureau chief, who wrote that “unfettered and unprincipled satire, humiliation and free speech are not acceptable.”\textsuperscript{17} In China, when speech is censored, words go underground and turn into satire and ridicule. It is this lack of free communications and exchanges of ideas that leads to unclear thought. At this time of political and economic transition, ridicule and satire may be able to resist a bit the repressive regime. Yet the ability to engage in genuine adventurousness (\textit{maoxian xing} 冒險性) along with dogged endurance (\textit{rennai xing} 忍耐性) and an ethical core (\textit{de xing} 德性) constitute the real forces behind personal growth and social progress. For Liang, it was not important that we follow men with this great ability. What is crucial is that we \textit{acquire} this ability for ourselves.


Just as Xu Gang pointed out, Liang’s tender and emotive writing allowed the Chinese to find more confidence and reassurance, and most importantly, a fuller picture of the fate of their nation: “China has freed itself from poverty, but it has also suffered from moral degradation. Mr. Liang, you awakened the sick and somnolent nineteenth century China. You could also do this for China today.”

For Xu Gang, Liang Qichao was a role model for civilizing Chinese society. For me, Liang Qichao is a colorful canvas from which the Chinese today can draw hues of spiritual vigor.

**Striving Towards a Lovable Nation**

Before coming to the United States, I had thought patriotism was nothing but a Party sponsored lie, a state mechanism to control the public. Therefore, it was easy to view myself as anti-autocracy and liberal-minded. I supported democracy not because it seemed to be the universal value, but because a democratic society allows individuals to discuss, debate and deliberate what is the best way for organizing public life. Throughout this process, members of the society can be better informed about the issues that concern their communities. Therefore, there was no need to wait for one single savior or hero to lead the way. All community members would have a role to play in shaping public life.

Yet reading Liang Qichao has made it clear for me that democracy as a slogan is no longer important. Rather, reexamining concepts of patriotism with a lexicon freed from the Party’s control helped to envision a new path for a truly Chinese democracy. Apart from being a mere political slogan, patriotism in Liang Qichao’s term, has its unique truth value. I began this thesis pondering the

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18 Translation of “中國已經擺脫了貧困和落後，但也目睹土地於河流的衰敗，精神與文化的沈淪，任公，覺當時之世是你，覺今日之世亦是你。” From postface in Xu Gang, *Shaonian Zhongguo Meng*. 
question of how can I believe that a nation in the hands of an authoritarian party might one day become actually lovable. Now I realize that I have to care enough to make it so. Truths (about civic virtue) need not be defined by the deceptive words of the Party’s patriotic education. My aim, like that of Joseph Levenson, is to be truthful, even if the truth is out of reach,¹⁹ to seek the veracity of virtue with unvarnished eyes.

Liang’s writings are, in my view, much like Pan Tianshou’s muddy sprouts in his famous and much condemned painting “Red Lotus.”²⁰ They help to scrub off the mud surrounding the lexicon of civic virtue propagated in the People’s Republic. This thesis has enabled me to glimpse a bit more of its beauty as well as its boldness.

¹⁹ Joseph Levenson notes that “The historian’s task, his golden opportunity, is to make what seems not valuable, invaluable… Recognition of the historical relativity of one’s own standard is not the same as abdication of standards. The aim is to be truthful (to aim at truth) even if the truth cannot be known.” Cited in Vera Schwarcz, Colors of Veracity: A Quest For Truth in China and Beyond (Honolulu, 2014).

²⁰ This painting, “Red Lotus,” is a work of the Chinese painter Pan Tianshou (潘天壽 1897-1971). As is mentioned in the introduction, he was prosecuted during the Cultural Revolution for his use of blackness in the painting. For centuries before Pan, Buddhist practitioners as well as scholar-painters had probed the mysteries of beauty springing froth out of darkness, or purity rising above the confusing realities of social and political life. What Pan’s “Red Lotus” does is to show the enduring vivacity of hard-earned truth. For details see: ibid., 70.
Appendix I: Brief Chronology of the Life of Liang Qichao

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Liang Qichao was born in Xinhui, Guangdong</td>
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<tr>
<td>1873-1882</td>
<td>Liang received Confucian teaching from his grandfather and studied classical Confucian texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889-1890</td>
<td>Liang passed the second level provincial exams and was the youngest successful candidate at the time. But Liang failed his Jinshi degree national examinations in Beijing and never earned a higher degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Liang married his first wife Li Huixian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891-1893</td>
<td>Liang became Kang Youwei’s disciple. He studied foreign affair with him and became interested in constitutional monarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1895</td>
<td>After China lost the Sino-Japanese war and ceded Taiwan to Japan, Liang led the first political movement, Gongche Shangshu (Public Vehicle Petition), seeking reforms and expressing opposition to the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Liang became the editor of Current Affairs (Shiwu Bao)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>Liang led the short-lived Hundred Days Reform. He fled to Japan in September after the Qing Court began to prosecute the reformers. After settled in Japan, he founded the journal The China Discussion (Qingyi Bao), criticizing absolute monarchy and advocating civil rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Liang established a branch of Baohuanghui (Protect the Emperor Society) in Hawaii and traveled across America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-1901</td>
<td>Liang visited Australia on a six-month tour which aimed at raising support for a campaign to reform the Chinese empire in order to modernize China through adopting the best of Western technology, industry and government systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902-1905</td>
<td>Liang established New Citizens Journal (Xinmin Congbao) in Japan and popularized Western political concept, such as nationalism, citizenship and liberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Liang married his concubine Wang Guiquan in Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Liang traveled to America again to examine effectiveness of republican polity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Liang visited Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912-1917</td>
<td>Liang came back to China in 1912. He served in the cabinet and then as the Minister of Finance, hoping to build constitutionalism within the Republic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917-1926</td>
<td>Liang retreated from politics and devoted to education. He gave lectures at Tsinghua University and Southeastern University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Liang visited post-war Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Liang was diagnosed of kidney disease and went through a failed treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>On January 19, Liang died of kidney failure in Beijing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix II: Brief Modern China Chronology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year(s)</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1839-1842</td>
<td>First Opium War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861-1895</td>
<td>Self-strengthening Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894-1895</td>
<td>First Sino-Japanese War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>Hundred Days Reform (Wuxu Reform)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899-1901</td>
<td>Boxer Uprising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>The Qing court abolished the traditional Chinese examination system as part of the broad-ranging Xinzheng (New Administration) reforms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>On October 10, the Xinhai Revolution broke out. In December, Sun Yat-sen elected president by the Nanjing assembly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>On February 12, the last emperor of China abdicated. In exchange for supporting the revolution, Sun Yat-sen resigned presidency in favor of Yuan Shikai who was sworn in as president on March 10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914-1918</td>
<td>First World War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915-1916</td>
<td>Yuan Shikai restored monarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Governors of many provinces declared independence against Yuan’s restoration of monarchy. After Yuan died in June, China entered the warlord period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Chinese appeals for German concessions in Shandong to be returned to China are rejected at Paris Peace Conference. This provokes student demonstrations across China that will grow into what becomes known as the “May Fourth Movement.” The Chinese Delegation is the only peace conference participant that did not sign the Treaty of Versailles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915- mid 1920s</td>
<td>New Culture Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>The Chinese Communist Party founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-1928</td>
<td>Chiang Kai-shek leads the Nationalist armies on the Northern Expedition to reunite China by military force and ended the disunion of the warlord period during the early 1920s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Japan invaded and occupied Manchuria until end of WWII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-1945</td>
<td>Second Sino – Japanese War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-1949</td>
<td>Chinese Civil War between Nationalists and Communists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Mao Zedong proclaims the establishment of the People’s Republic of China on 1 October. The defeated Nationalists flee to Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-1961</td>
<td>The Great Leap Forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-1976</td>
<td>The Cultural Revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Economic reforms starts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix III: Chronologies of Key Political Thinkers in Modern China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Thinker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1809-1874</td>
<td>Feng Guifen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854-1921</td>
<td>Yan Fu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858-1927</td>
<td>Kang Youwei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865-1898</td>
<td>Tan Sitong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866-1925</td>
<td>Sun Yat-sen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871-1909</td>
<td>The Guangxu Emperor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873-1929</td>
<td>Liang Qichao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881-1936</td>
<td>Lu Xun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891-1962</td>
<td>Hu Shi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893-1976</td>
<td>Mao Zedong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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