

Chapter 12

A Farewell to the “Sick Man of East Asia”: The Irony, Deconstruction, and Reshaping of the Metaphor

Susan Sontag revealed how a disease could be turned into a metaphor in social evolution, from merely a disease of the body to moral judgment or even political oppression. In her article “AIDS and its Metaphors” written in 1989, she offers a plan to do away with the metaphor: “With this illness, one that elicits so much guilt and shame, the effort to detach it from these meanings, these metaphors, seems particularly liberating, even consoling. But the metaphors cannot be distanced just by abstaining from them. They have to be exposed, criticized, belabored, used up” (Songtag 2003). In Sontag’s terms, “metaphor” mainly refers to the symbolic social oppression of the diseases. For example, cancer is a metaphor for the defect of the sick person in personality. While diseases were a biological phenomenon, the “metaphor” was a social one. What I would like to demonstrate here was none other than the related “political metaphor” started by the “anti-germ warfare.”

12.1 The Irony of the Metaphor¹

12.1.1 “The Sick Men of East Asia” Defeated the World Police

Instigated and supported by the United States, Syngman Rhee (Yi Seungman) launched an armed attack on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in June 1950. It was not long before the United States, with its 15 vassal countries and their armed forces, under the banner of the United Nations, engaged in the war. The

¹The word “irony” was derived from ancient Greece as a rhetorical art. By the first half of the nineteenth century, it had been developed by the German romantic literary theorists into a principle of creating literary work. In New Criticism of the twentieth century, irony was developed further in T. S. Eliot, Ivor Armstrong Richards, William Empson, and others’ works. Cleanth Brooks gave an elaborate definition to the term “irony”: The obvious warping of a statement by its context we characterize as “ironical.” In the general sense, the dominant trait of irony is that “what is stated is not what is referred to,” i.e., the actual content of a statement is in conflict with its literal meaning.

United States had the intention to involve China in the war after crushing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in one movement.

From the very beginning of the war, the Chinese people and the Chinese government maintained to resort to peaceful methods when solving the Korea problem and that warnings be given to the United States about withdrawing the armed forces from Taiwan, stopping the aggression against North Korea, and solving the problem of Korea and the Far East peacefully. However, the United States ignored these warnings. In the early winter of 1950, the American aggressors crossed the 38th parallel and attacked the areas around Yalu River and Tumen River as well as the airspace of Northeast China. Many a Chinese were killed in bomb attacks and property was ruined. As the national security was seriously threatened, the Chinese People's Volunteer Army entered Korea on October 19, 1950, and began the great war of "aiding Korea and defending the homeland."

This was a war between two parties with disparity of strength in many aspects.

Economy: While half of the world's population was involved in World War II, causing 100 million deaths or injuries, the United States somewhat benefitted from the war. It quickly grew into the largest industrial power in the world. At that time, the US industrial output value accounted for more than half of the total capitalist world industrial output value. US steel production reached 87.72 million tons in 1950; wheat production accounted for more than 30 % of production of the capitalist countries; the industrial and agricultural output value reached 150.7 billion US dollars. In 1949, the US gold reserves were valued at more than 24.7 billion USD, accounting for 70 % of the total gold reserves of the entire capitalist world. In the aggression against Korea, the direct expenses of the war of the United States reached more than 20 billion USD. War material destined for North Korea totaled 73 million tons (Peng Dehuai 1953). In comparison, the nascent PRC from the ruins of wars did not even completely liberate all its territory. Successive wars not only crippled China's modern industry but also damaged its primitive agriculture. In 1950, New China's industrial and agricultural output value was only 57.4 billion yuan, less than a fractional amount of that of the United States if converted into US dollars.

Armed Forces: One third of the US Army, one fifth of its Air Force, and most of its Navy were assembled in the war in Korea, in addition to the troops of the 15 vassal countries (Peng Dehuai 1953). By contrast, the People's Liberation Army was still trying to eradicate the remnant Kuomintang forces in the southwest and northwest of China. Only those 600,000 border guards in Northeast China could be mobilized, but some of the forces must be reserved to protect the Northeast industrial base.

Military Equipment: The United States boasted atomic bombs and other weapons of mass destruction, the world's greatest number of advanced combat aircrafts, and the world's largest battle fleet. Eighteen aircraft carriers were under construction at the end of World War II, and the number and the gross tonnage of them accounted for 80 % of the world's total. Every infantry division was equipped with more than 140 tanks and 330 seventy-mm-diameter canons; the firepower of the US Army was also at the top of the world. Almost all the most advanced weapons (except atomic bombs) were employed in the Korean War. The US superiority in navy and air force

was maintained all the time. In contrast, China did not have any tanks or air force of its own. Air defense weapons were very few. On the other hand, the whole Volunteer Army were only equipped with 190 seventy-mm-diameter guns. Basically, this army was still the so-called millet plus rifles – even the rifles were composed of those of different periods and different types. Thanks to the support from the Soviet Union, and from all the Chinese people in their donation campaign, an Air Force was created and firepower was strengthened. The enemy's superior state was not fundamentally changed, nevertheless.

Command: The US commander in chief changed three times during the war: Douglas MacArthur (dismissed because of his defeats in the battles), Matthew Bunker Ridgway (notorious for launching the germ warfare), and Mark Clark (who signed the Armistice Agreement). Actually, they had all been prominent commanders who withstood the test of World War II and gained unrivalled first-hand experience. The United Nations forces under their command in the Korean War had employed a variety of tactics, such as the blitzkrieg, taking advantage of the weaknesses (in Operation Chromite), “Strangling Battle” that paralyzed China's transportation line, and the inhumane germ warfare.

The United States and people all over the world were dumbfounded with the result of the war between the “Sick Men of East Asia” and the world police: After signing the Armistice Agreement, the United States had to admit that the Korean War was “the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy.”

Former US Secretary of Defense Marshall once said, “The myth has been punctured. The United States is not such a great power as it has been imagined” (Peng Dehuai 1953). Indeed, the myth had been exploded; seemingly powerful countries are sometimes like a “paper tiger,” a phrase used once by Mao Zedong meaning someone or something outwardly powerful or dangerous but inwardly weak or ineffectual. Then, how about the “Sick Men of East Asia”? Were they still sick beyond cure and doomed to a hopeless fate?

Peng Dehuai said, “Long gone are the days when the Western invaders could occupy a country if only they could shoot a couple of cannons on the oriental sea” (Peng Dehuai 1953). Historical evidence convincingly suggested that the sick men were not always sick. When the awakened sick men were organized and had a stronger will, they would become strong enough to defeat a powerful enemy and to rewrite the history of the “Sick Man of East Asia.”

12.1.2 Controller of Communicable Diseases? “Manufacturer” of Communicable Diseases?

On February 24, 1953, *The People's Daily* published an editorial entitled “To Fight Against the Imperialist U.S.'s Plan for Germ Warfare,” in which the confession of a captured Chief of Staff of the First Air Force Alliance of the US Marine Corps Air, Colonel Frank H. Schwable, and an ordnance officer, Major Bligh, was published.

The confession confirmed that "the Master Plan of the germ warfare in Korea was ordered by the Meeting of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff in October 1951." This plan was sent to the Far East commander in chief (General Ridgway) to "start the germ warfare in Korea." "Various kinds of military weapons, carriers, and various kinds of aircrafts" were to be experimented "in every area possible or a combination of areas" and "under extremely hot or cold weather." "Depending on the results and the situation in Korea, the field trials might be extended to be a part of formal war operation." The plan was transferred from Ridgway to the US Fifth Air Force via the US Far East Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Wiranto and was implemented on a large scale on a trial basis in November 1951. The First Air Force Alliance participated in this experimental mission and in the formal operational task of "building a Trans-Korean contaminated zone" in May 1952.

Meanwhile, The Chinese People's Committee for World Peace held "Exhibitions of Crimes Committed in the Germ Warfare of the U.S. Government" in Beijing, Vienna, Berlin, etc. Evidence collected by various parties of the US germ warfare in flagrant defiance of the Geneva Convention (note: in 1925, the Geneva Protocol or the "Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare" was signed by various countries in Geneva) was publicly displayed (Fang Shishan 1953).

On February 24, 1953, Mark Clark, the general commander in the invasion of Korea, published a declaration, in which it was admitted that Schwable and Bligh were the US Air Force personnel, that they made the confessions, but it was supposed that the confessions were "fake,"² extorted by the China side through "torture" (Li Siguang 1953). Any facts of the "germ warfare" were emphatically denied. Subsequently, those Air Force prisoners of war were forced to make an affidavit to the United Nations General Assembly, and the so-called proposal relating to China's "atrocities" (Li Siguang 1953) was brought forward to the United Nations, together with countries such as the UK, France, Australia, and Turkey, the intention being to deny crimes committed in the germ warfare categorically.

In this regard, the Chinese government refuted that there were other captured prisoners of war, other than Schwable and Bligh, who had confessed: a Lieutenant Inuk and a Lieutenant Quinn of the Third Bomber Team of the US Air Force and a Lieutenant O'Neal and a Lieutenant Knits of the eighteenth Fighter-Bomber Brigade. From the confessions made by the six men from the US Air Force, one could clearly see every step of the germ warfare from planning to implementation. On the other hand, North Korea and China's lenient policies for prisoners could be detected from the confessions made by the prisoners of war of the US Air Force, from talks of those prisoners of war who had been repatriated, from the reports made by the British and American journalists, or even from US Army Minister Stevens and the British Army Minister. It could be safely concluded that those confessions were none other than "blame of consciousness" rather than a result of

²"The confessions made by the POWs of the U.S. senior military officers are very conclusive evidence – what Clark shamelessly denied can not hide the fact of the U.S. germ warfare," *People's Daily*, February 28, 1953.

“torture.” Just as Schwable exclaimed, “morally, it is an irreparable crime”; “from the standpoint of dignity and loyalty, it is shameful.”

The United States crimes committed in waging germ warfare could be confirmed by evidence from many other aspects. After investigating in Northeast China and North Korea, scientists of the International Scientific Commission collected a body of evidence (physical specimens including insects, bacteria, and other clinical evidence) for the Investigation of the Pacts Concerning Bacterial Warfare in Korea and China. A conclusion had been drawn that the United States had organized a large-scale, disguised germ warfare. Dr. Joseph Needham, who was a member of the Royal Society of Biologists and the International Scientific Commission, published an open letter saying that the truth of the germ warfare “was by no means determined by what the air force personnel confessed, nor was it determined by what they had denied in the new and different circumstances” (Li Siguang 1953). Dr. Samuel B. Pessoa (Brazil), also a member of the International Scientific Commission and who participated in the investigation, wrote after his visit to “Exhibitions of Crimes Committed in the Germ Warfare of the U.S. Government”: “Although it appeals to the broad mass of the population, the exposure process of all the facts is highly scientific; it is in no way exaggerated; it is with the aim to explain the truth, or to explain the real situation. What I lament on is that such good techniques of the exhibition should be used to expose such dirty evil deeds.”³ The bloody crimes of the United States committed in the germ warfare, as well as other crimes such as the ill-treatment of the prisoners of war and the massacre of civilians, were also exposed after the investigation by some impartial bodies such as Investigation Group of Crimes of the Germ Warfare Made by the Imperialist United States, Investigation Group of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, and the International Democratic Women’s Federation.

Overshadowed by the long-term hegemonic discourse of colonialism, the backward countries had not only become the exploited and the plundered but also been oppressed by various political metaphors such as the “Sick Man of East Asia.” In the metaphorical politics, the colonial countries and the developing countries were often accused of, and blamed for, being the sources of a variety of diseases, communicable diseases particularly, thus falling into both a moral and political dilemma. As revealed by Guenter B. Risse, the socially marginalized groups, minorities, and the poor are often accused of being the culprit during outbreaks of diseases. In Europe, Jews were regarded as the creators of the Black Death. In New York, Irish people there were considered responsible for the outbreak of cholera. In Brooklyn, the Italians were seen as a source of poliomyelitis.⁴ In such cases, the colonial countries would assume the role of a guardian to prevent the spread of the diseases and play the role of the “benevolent” and even the “savior” through dispatching missionary doctors.

³“Many foreign visitors protested against the American government after a visit to the Exhibition of the Crimes of the American Government in Launching a Germ Warfare, and visitors have reached 28,000,” *People’s Daily*, September 23, 1952.

⁴Guenter B. Risse (1988), and cited in Zhang Daqing (2006).

The irrefutable evidence of germ warfare launched by the United States reveals another perspective of history: The controller of communicable diseases can also be the initiator of communicable diseases. The historical process confirmed this perspective: The major diseases popular in the modern world (smallpox, syphilis, pulmonary diseases encompassing tuberculosis, pneumonia, and SARS) originated in Europe. It was with the footsteps of the colonizers, and sometimes as the earliest forms of chemical and biological weapons, that these diseases were spread to the colonial areas. It was from the diseases brought by European settlers that the great majority of Indians in North and South America died (Diamond 2000).

12.1.3 The “Uncivilized” Side of the “Civilized World”

A return to the humane world was said to have begun since the Renaissance and the Enlightenment in Western societies. The rise of rationalism directly contributed to the development of modern science and led to powerful scientism, as well as something closely related to it – the technological revolution and the Industrial Revolution. In line with rationalism, humanism triggered cultural reform and institutional reform, with the Western democracy being one of the solid achievements.

When guns and fleets of the Western countries easily forced open the door to the colonies, conquer in thought also began, forming the distinct dichotomy between the traditional and the modern, the advanced and the backward, the civilized and the barbarian. An image of the “civilized world” began to take shape and strengthened in the long colonization process.

This positive image was, however, tarnished by the launching of the germ warfare of the United States and by its sophistry.

After investigation, the International Women’s Federation published “A Report of the International Women’s Investigation Group on the Atrocities Made by the U.S. and the Rhee Armies.” In the report, brute facts were established, such as the US Army cold-bloodedly killed Korean residents. In areas that had temporarily been occupied by the US Army and Syngman Rhee’s army, hundreds of thousands of civilian inhabitants, young and old alike, were tortured, burned, killed, or buried alive. The atrociousness had exceeded what the Nazis and Adolf Hitler had made when they occupied Europe (Li Siguang 1953). A Canterbury Dean Johnson, invited to China, said after he learned the news that the United States had launched germ warfare, “A country, under the name of Christianity, is shameful, connected with this matter.” A representative from El Salvador, Dias, wrote after a visit to the exhibition, “This exhibition exposed, most conclusively, the way of the U.S. armed forces in launching germ warfare. The U.S. government, high command of the army, and scientists have committed heinous crimes against humanity and no punishment of any kind is sufficient to ease the anger caused by such crimes.” A Costa Rican deputy, Sanz, wrote at the Peace Conference of Asian and the Pacific Regions, “What I saw here was evidence and documents demonstrating the employment of

bacteriological weapons by a self-styled civilized country. We must stop it, and expose it in every possible way.”⁵

A stark historical fact was gradually ascertained in these accusations and angry words: the construction process of the “civilized world” was built in a very “uncivilized” manner. Examples were many: the Enclosure Movement in Britain where “sheep eat people,” “Reign of Terror” of the French Jacobins, the genocide waged against the Native Americans in the Westward Movement, etc.

In his *Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx seemed to have pointed out a more desirable attitude as to the complex interweaving of the “civilized” and the “uncivilized”: He affirmed that the development of capitalism had created unprecedented social productive forces, the results of which even exceeded the sum of any previous era. On the other hand, the actual process of capitalism was ruthlessly criticized: “Sweating blood and filth with every pore from head to toe.”

That the weak and the sick men could actually defeat the strong world police, that the controller of communicable diseases should become the real source of the communicable diseases, and that the self-proclaimed civilized world was really permeated with filthy, uncivilized behavior were so astonishing that when history unveiled to its real image and shatter illusions surrounding it, an irony took the place of the metaphor of the “Sick Men of East Asia” constructed on the basis of hygiene. In this dramatically ironic process, the deconstructive process of the metaphor of “the sick men” also began.

12.2 Deconstruction and Reshaping of the Metaphor

12.2.1 Construction of the Metaphor of “the Sick Man of East Asia”

In Foucault’s thorough analysis of the modern medical system, the complex underlying mechanism of the construction of metaphors such as the “Sick Man of East Asia” was presented. Far from being merely a process of “medical progress,” the modern system of Western medicine was also a social process in which the technology for social organization and social control continuously improved and intensified. The medical system virtually became the origin of the “modern political system.” In defining what is “healthy” and what is “unhealthy,” what is hygienic and what is unhygienic, modern medicine also implies political or moral judgments of being “sinful” or “decadent.” More importantly, Foucault believed that the modern medical system, which originated from state behavior, such as controlling the spread of epidemics, was also an “aggressive system” full of “war mentality.” In etiology,

⁵“Many foreign visitors protested against the American government after a visit to the Exhibition of the Crimes of the American Government in Launching a Germ Warfare, and visitors have reached 28,000,” *People’s Daily*, September 23, 1952.

all diseases come from the infection of bacteria (microorganisms), to practice medicine is to fight with microbes, and to be a doctor is to be a warrior. Diseases cannot be wiped out without a social system of well-organized, combative doctor-police. That is why the practice of the Western colonial countries or imperialistic countries was discovered to have a close connection with modern hygiene when they were rebuilding the world order. Apartheid was necessary because the colonized people were thought to be the sources of communicable diseases in addition to being cheap labor resources. The metaphor of the “Sick Man of East Asia” implied physical and moral denigration to the oppressed state and its people; in addition, the world police system is to prevent, control, and eradicate what was, in their eyes, the physical diseases as well as the social “diseases” – resistance, revolts, rebels, etc.⁶

12.2.2 The Reinforcement and Acceptance of the Metaphor of the “Sick Man of East Asia”

The creation and proposal of the metaphor of the “Sick Man of East Asia” alone did not mean, in reality, that they could be turned into a dominant and oppressive force. Only when the target of the discourse had accepted and internalized the metaphor as it was found to be supported by social facts could the realistic force of the metaphor be brought out into full play.

During this process, violence plays a vital role. Violence had become the premise and the basic properties in the rise of the nation-states. Through the writings of famous thinkers and theorists in modern times, we can discover that almost without exception, they would emphasize this feature of the state: Hobbes described the state directly as a potentially violent “Leviathan”; Karl Marx argued that the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class at the hands of another; Max Weber articulated his celebrated definition of the state as a human community that “successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a given territory.” Giddens even considers “military industrialization” the defining moment from the traditional country to the modern nation-state. Organized violence of the state not only became a space construction instrument dividing the borders and establishing boundaries but also played a crucial role in the process of colonization when the original pattern of world trade drastically changed, a new world order and market order were created, and the advantageous position of the Western countries was assured. The premodern agrarian countries were defenseless when confronted with such organized, monopolized, and industrialized state violence. The fiasco of combating the Western countries undermined the sense of superiority and confidence these agricultural countries originally enjoyed. More often than not, they felt hopeless and shameful in being forced to cede their territory and pay indemnities. The frequent attacks of feelings of hopelessness and shamefulness would suppress

⁶Han Yuhai: “Biopolitics—Capitalism and Diseases,” Contemporary Cultural Studies website, <http://www.cul-studies.com>

their original resistance awareness and let them accept the status quo. Thus, they internalized the metaphor of the “Sick Man of East Asia.”

In Chinese people’s reflections upon a weak and declining China, and in their futile actions, the implications of the metaphor of the “Sick Man of East Asia” were further broadened and more widely accepted. The repeated defeat and failure, and the growing sense of the nation experiencing a crisis especially, forced the Chinese people to exert themselves to find ways to save the country. “Westernization Movement,” the “Reform Movement of 1898,” the “New Deal of Autonomy,” and “New Culture Movement” were all evidence of a continuous self-denial process focusing first on some particular objects, then on the institutions, and then on culture. In this series of self-denial, “to resort to the other places” or “to resort to novel ideas in a foreign land” became the final or the most practical choice. However, the choice was first and foremost based on the premise of self-negation. The “sick men” was turned from a metaphor to a self-portrait of and a realistic oppressive discourse to the Chinese people of the time. Of course, it also meant space and possibility for resistance to the “oppression.”

The social fact of sickness reinforced the shaping of the metaphor of the “Sick Man of East Asia.” Since the Han Dynasty, the civil and the military had been separated and the civilians and the officers did not have anything to do with each other. This situation was aggravated in the Song Dynasty. “When it is established that the emphasis is on the civil side, the military side has faded, and the atmosphere is sort of soft. Two millenniums of corruption are deep in the brain of the civilians” (Liang Qichao 1999). Opium importation, the flooding of opium after the Opium War, especially, consumed not only China’s financial resources but also the nationals themselves. In addition, in the frenzied plunder and exploitation of the Western countries, coupled with the influx of Western industrial products, the country’s economy rapidly slumped and the people’s living standards were dramatically lowered, and the infirmity due to malnutrition had become chronic. Different from the traditional relatively static agrarian society, there tended to be more interactions among people who were involved in modern industry and commerce, which was conducive to the spread of diseases. Thus, scenery of a “sick country” consisting of “sick people” emerged.

12.2.3 The Dissolution and the Reshaping of the “Sick Man” Metaphor

The successful attempt to “clean” the country by banning prostitution and drugs after the founding of New China not only highlighted the characteristics of the nascent state as being “clean” but also brought about multiple perspectives: If the social ills and crimes that had lasted for thousands of years could be extirpated in a relatively short time in the resolute attempts of a new regime and the “patients” that had long been victimized could “turn from a ghost to a human” with the care and reconstructive attempts of the state, then what gave rise to so many sick persons in

the first place? Why hadn't they stepped onto the highroad to health earlier? Who should be responsible for the overall "sickness" of the state? Besides internal inspection, the external reasons were also uncovered and questioned.

The new state attributed the internal and the historical reasons to the "old exploitative system," which was entirely consistent with William McNeill's theory of the "microparasite" and "macroparasite." In McNeill's mind, the relationship between the ruler and the ruled in human history is macroparasitic, while the relationship between the human body and the pathogenic microorganisms is microparasitic (McNeill 1988). The existence of the "parasites" not only produces such social ills as prostitution or drugs but also weakens the effective unity of the grassroots society during the national crisis. The bottomless pit of double "parasites" made the grassroots society miserable. Perhaps this could be cited as a reason why Mao Zedong felt so exhilarated that he spent a sleepless night when learning the news that schistosomiasis was eradicated in Yujiang.

The outbreak of the War in North Korea, the launching of the germ warfare in particular, revealed a more complex parasitic mode.

Macroparasitically, the Western countries had been the occupier in the colonial world order by virtue of its military power in modern times. Meanwhile, China had suffered continual defeats and the loss of sovereignty and dignity. Reduced to a semicolonial country, China was in an even more miserable situation than that of a colonial country. The exploitative means of the parasite countries included, among other things, the ceding of territory, financial exploitation, priorities the Western countries claimed, and unfair market competition in the coastal areas and in the inland areas alike. The multiple parasites and long-time extortion made the once-rich-and-beautiful exploited countries become ugly, weak, and sick. The state and its people were both sick. After the sick men awakened and began an organized resistance, however, the Western powers turned to violence (the War in North Korea) as a new parasitic means.

Microparasitically, the natural properties of pathogenic microorganisms were separated and more social, political, and even cultural significances were added. Metaphors such as the "Sick Man of East Asia," the "Yellow Peril," and others were used to denigrate the Chinese people politically, morally, and in many other ways. Next, diseases caused by microparasites, communicable diseases especially, were used as a means to extend the rights or benefits of the macroparasites (the plague in northeast China in Part I can be referred to in this regard). In addition, advanced medicine was imported to strengthen its advantageous and civilized position so that the sentiments of resistance or rebelling of the colonial people could be broken down in a secret and artful way. Furthermore, when the macroparasites went through a crisis in their survival, microparasite could be turned to as the last resort; "germ warfare" was invoked as a means to debilitate the combating force in the colonial area and to incur social panic.

In reality, standing in strong contrast to the irony, and with the disintegration of the sick man metaphor, the metaphor began to be effectively dissolved and a turnaround occurred when resistance by means of armed forces turned to ideological condemnation by means of exposure of the crimes committed by the United States

in bacterial warfare. While the Western society used modern hygiene to construct the metaphor of the “sick men” and to establish the colonial order, those “sick men,” who now had means of criticism at their hands, also used the knowledge framework for modern hygiene to create a basic narrative model and correspondent discourse system of the “virus or pathogens versus colonizers or aggressors.”⁷

In a time when a variety of discourses and thoughts of “modern,” “modernity,” “postmodern,” and even “post-postmodern” emerge, “farewell” seems to have become a popular and fashionable word in contemporary China: “a farewell to the tradition,” “a farewell to revolution,” “a farewell to ideology,” and “a farewell to the state.” However, can one so easily bid farewell?

The olden times of the “sick men” are fading, but history is still unraveling itself. At this moment, when we indulge in vivid imagination and visions of modernization or modernity, we seem to have forgotten the past, which is not very far-gone. However, if we could bid farewell to the sick man metaphor because of “weapons of the weak,”⁸ then how about modernization? When the modernization complex that has clung to the minds of Chinese people since the modern times, when sometimes it even becomes an oppressive discourse, in what way is its basic approach different from the construction of the metaphor of the “sick men”? When the irony in between (e.g., growth without development) presents itself continuously, do we possess the basic consciousness and ability to deconstruct it? Have we found the “weapons of the weak”? Maybe what follows will be useful and offer some food for meditation.

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⁷Yang Nianqun termed this turn “inversed imagination.” I think this turn is more than an “imagination”; it also evolved into realistic social action and achieved many instantaneous or far-reaching, social or political effects.

⁸In James C. Scott's terms, “weapons of the weak” is the daily resistant forms of the peasants such as being lazy, playing the fool, desertion, pretending to obey, theft, slander, arson, and sabotage. These forms need almost no prior coordination or planning. With their tacit understanding and informal networks, the peasants could help themselves without directly or symbolically fighting against the authority (Scott 1985). See Guo Yuhua, “‘The Weapon of the Weak’ and the ‘Hidden Text’—A Grass-root Perspective on the Peasants’ Revolt” in China's Sociology website <http://www.chinasociology.com/rzgd/rzgd046.htm>. What the author refers to is another kind of the “weapons of the weak.” In the colonial world order or the marginalized countries in Wallerstein's terms, some resistance means were used in order to get rid of the dominance of the “core countries” such as awakening, effective organization, and a strong will.

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