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## Crisis and Spiritual Transformation

危机与精神转变

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Crises bear a great potential for risks and opportunities. The ongoing pandemic and the eruption of wars indicate first of all the risk that all that we cherish may perish and swiftly disappear in a few moments. On the other hand, crises afford us a great chance to wake up and embark on a spiritual journey. During the so-called Ignatian Year which stretched from May 2021 through July 2022 Jesuits and their partners in mission tried to explore how the gun loving Basque gentleman named Inigo got transformed into a Saint whose name referred to an early Christian martyr—"Ignatius"--who, according to his own testimony, longed to be devoured by wild beasts in his burning desire to become united with the Crucified Jesus Christ. How is it possible that a narcissistic ego may gradually be turned into an oblation poured out for the salvation of the world?

The transformation is not only focused on a personal level but also on an institutional level: Ignatius burned to share his experience with others and through this amazing change in his own heart he ultimately instigated a profound reform within the larger society and the church.

A fascinating aspect of exploring spiritual transformations evolves out of dialogues between Asian and Western philosophies. The German ethicist Friedo Ricken sent me his unpublished manuscript to elicit a Chinese response. Ricken argues that John Rawls refers in his *Theory of Justice* explicitly to Kant. "Each person," from the perspective of the *Theory of Justice* of John Rawls (1971), "has an invulnerability which results from Justice which can never be removed in the name of the benefit of the entire society." Rawls' *Theory of Justice* is a turning point in the discussion of moral philosophy under two aspects: the rejection of Utilitarianism and a reconnection to the Kantian tradition as well as in a turn away from metaethical discussion towards a focus on sub-

stantive questions of morals. The key concept of the Categorical Imperative is a process through which concrete duties of the law and of virtue are reconstructed philosophically. The Categorical Imperative is not constructed by itself; rather it is an explanation of our daily moral experience. Conscience has a fundament that is "mirrored" in the concept of the Categorical Imperative. The perfect fulfillment of the duties of mutual love and respect leads to an ideal way of human community: friendship. "Friendship (viewed in its perfection) is the union of two persons through the same love and respect". Perfect friendship is just an idea but she is a practically necessary idea, and to strive to friendship, as Kant argued, is "a duty required by reason (6:469,17-28)".

If friendship is the perfect fulfillment of duties of virtue towards each other, then we are required to strive towards friendship. Through the fulfillment of duty each person becomes worthy of happiness; at the same time friendship contributes to the happiness of life. The fact that perfect friendship is "just" an idea is explained by Ricken, following Kant, in this way: if a friend fulfills his duty of love towards his friend, then the friend may regard it as indicating a lack of respect. "From the moral point of view it is of course a duty that may reveal to the other his flaws; this is done for the best and is therefore a duty of love. The friend however may perceive a lack of respect which he expected from the other (6:470,21-24)." However if someone accepts from the other a benefit, he may then perhaps count on equality in love, but not necessarily in respect, because he perceives himself as a notch below in being dutiful and thus unable to link mutually to each other" (6:471, 6-10). Kant distinguishes moral friendship from perfect friendship. Moral friendship is "the complete trust of two persons in mutual transparency of their secret judgments

and sentiments, insofar moral friendship exists in mutual respect (6:471,27-29).” Moral friendship is exclusively a matter of mutual respect; it is not a matter of participation in the aims and the happiness of the other. A person desires to open herself to another, and at the same time she fears the abuse.

seems most relevant in a context where very often there is not only a lack of reciprocity of duties and obligations but also a descent into cronyism and corruption.

Analysing the rich interaction on the level of art between Western and Chinese painting, Michelle Andersson highlights the friendship which

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In his response to Ricken, Gan Shaoping a prominent Human Rights Ethicist of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, highlights the theory of contract as a key component of Kant’s ethical analysis. What interests Gan most is the connection Ricken recognizes between Kant and contract ethics. In the context of normative ethics, the theory of contract, which regards contract as the starting point of moral argument, is undoubtedly an important theoretical framework. The ethics of contract theory understands morality as a rational design or wise contract made by human beings for the protection of interests and the satisfaction of needs. Such a contract highlights the equal status of the subject of action and respecting the other’s independent will. The theory of contract regards morality as cooperative behavior between actors for the mutual protection of interests, which enables a society to achieve maximum justice. But understanding morality as a contract between people for mutual protection of interests has also been criticised and questioned. It tends to underestimate the moral significance of altruism and caring for the weak. The insistence of contract ethics

developed in the Ming and Qing dynasties within the Forbidden City between the Emperors and various missionaries who were in close contact or even tutors for their households. The Jesuit brother Giuseppe Castiglione, as Andersson observes, certainly succeeded in depicting the Emperor’s concubine with an ethereal beauty similar to the Blessed Virgin or the forgiven sinner. The Belvedere became her home, and place of prayer upon her arrival. It was a grand three-storied structure with graceful Islamic attributes.

The piece by Claudia von Collani is a work in progress reporting a research project of the Macau Ricci Institute on the fascinating life of the German Jesuit Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1592-1666). The success of the missionary enterprise hinged indeed on the benevolence of the Emperor. Von Collani argues that Schall von Bell in fact reached the highest point of influence: as tutor of the Emperor – a position which no other missionary achieved before him – he not only had a decisive impact on his disciple and his family but through his good example he also hoped in some way influence the further course and development of the whole Middle Kingdom. In a

certain sense Schall von Bell prefigured the movement of European Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) with his strong command of the hard sciences such as mathematics, astronomy, and geometry, which in his thinking in no way contradicted the message of the Gospel.

In exploring the content of the Gospel we are naturally led to our fathers and mothers in faith: the people of Israel. Facing Israel's stubborn No, the Prophet Hosea allows us to witness God's historical practical response to this fact and the process of divine discernment in his heart. In Hosea, God's heart somehow undergoes a fundamental change, a "spiritual transformation", a "conversion" of a sort. The Prophet Hosea has this to say about YHWH: "My mind is turning over inside me. My emotions are agitated all together." (Hos 11:8, *Anchor Yale Bible*, Vol. 24). Truly, as Franz Gassner observes, in Hos 11:8 we "glimpse the agony in the mind of God as he searches for some way of evading the response to which he has committed himself in the covenant curses."

Edmund Ryden places this legacy in the context of an overview of Judaism's development, after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem (70 CE), which fatefully forced the separation of the Jewish synagogue and the Christian churches. Post-Biblical Judaism, no longer tied to the Temple in Jerusalem, is the product of a diaspora whose identity is secured through synagogues and the ongoing study of sacred texts, as preserved in the *Talmud*. Ryden's chapter on the *Talmud*, as Dennis McCann reads it, is especially effective in helping those unfamiliar with it to understand the logic of its presentation in texts and their use in preserving respect not only for Jewish law (*Halakah*) but also the narratives (*Haggadah*) that support Jewish identity. The *Talmud*, unfolding in the two traditions, the one Babylonian, the other Palestinian, is a distinctive response to the post-Bibli-

cal situation, in which Jews attempted to remain faithful to the covenants made by their ancestors with God, in the radically changed circumstances of a diaspora in Europe and elsewhere, in cultures shaped by religious movements perceived as essentially hostile, namely, Christianity and Islam. As a glance at any page of the *Talmud* might suggest, the point of this Scriptural tradition is to build a fence around the *Torah*, centred on the revelation that God made to Moses on Sinai, the basic covenant between God and Israel for the sake of the whole of humanity.

The drama of rooting the Gospel in the soil of a sometimes-hostile cultural environment is highlighted in my dialogue with Ayako Fukushima on the novel of Shusako Endo, *Silence*, and Martin Scorsese's cinematographic masterpiece of it. Along with other novels of Shusako Endo a major insight is that everyone is a coward. Based on his own human limitations Fukushima explains that the compassion of Endo for the apostatised missionaries and Japanese Christians came from his experiences during the war time. He wrote "people, who spent their youth during the war time like myself, know that people had to lie to themselves and deny their own values, dreams, and desires because of the social and political situation. It was the *fumi-e* in our time" (Endo, 2017a, p11). When Endo was young, he saw the Japanese people were forced to worship the emperor and die for him. They supported and participated in the Japanese invasions of other Asian countries. Endo struggled with Christianity which he described as "the cloth which does not fit me well." However, because of his love for his mother, who was a fervent Catholic, he did not dare to abandon his identity and faith as a Christian. He also struggled in his studies and career. He did not know what to do when he was young, so he failed to get into a university twice, where-

as his brother as a straight A student entered the University of Tokyo and became an elite official of the government. Endo struggled to be a good son and a good Christian and made serious efforts to remain faithful.

“Belt&Road Initiative,” renewing the old alliance between China and Pakistan. The case study offers insights into a difficult collaboration that, nevertheless, seems intent on achieving reciprocity and mutual learning, along with concrete economic

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A most moving tale of friendship in a Japanese military brothel is described by Roderick O’Brien. Each of the girls contributed something special to the relationship: for the main person in the story, Jan, it was her capacity to lead the others in prayer. Although only Jan and one other girl were Catholic (the others were from Protestant backgrounds) Jan’s familiarity with prayer, her knowledge of Scripture, and her willingness to lead enabled her to survive and help others in a time of extreme abuse and slavery. Snatched away from positions of colonial privilege, the girls became the poorest of the poor. Their possessions were few, and always under the control of the guards. Their own bodies were not their own, as they were abused by continual rape. The girls had nothing, and no future ahead of them. Yet it was precisely in this poverty that they found friendship. True friendship is not just for princes and philosophers: for the poorest of the poor, friendship can still be a rich experience, perhaps the only rich experience that they can have.

In contrast to the horrors of wartime exploitation, Dacy Wu describes a hands-on example of a successful collaboration between Chinese and Pakistanis within the context of the

benefits. The fascinating case study offers valuable lessons on how to better manage the cross-cultural integration for the Chinese employees working abroad in Pakistan and the local Balochistanis working with Chinese colleagues. The firm MCC has made a great effort in choosing candidates suitable for overseas work, providing background seminars on the cultures of Pakistan and China, training workshops focused on skills and safety, creating programs to strengthen people-to-people relationships among the employees of two countries, organizing festival events collaboratively to introduce all employees to the different cultures, thus anchoring the sustainability of the programs in a deepening mutual understanding.

Another research project of the Macau Ricci Institute has been undertaken by Sonja Xia who chose St. Gregory of Nyssa to help us understand the process of spiritual transformation. Gregory defines spiritual transformation as an apophatic awakening, i.e., the moment when a person becomes aware of the limitation of human intellectual capacity in the face of the transcendence and incomprehensibility of God. Gregory of Nyssa explains this clearly in his interpretation of Abraham’s journey to the Promised Land.

Like other Church Fathers of his time, Gregory used the allegorical approach to read the Bible. For Gregory, knowledge does not bring Abraham an understanding of God, but instead, it brings the awareness that God is beyond all that one has ever known.

Finally, a most inspiring exploration of the subtle transformation of the human soul is presented by Gregory Koay who gives us access to the work of the Victorian poet Gerald Manley Hopkins, who apparently led a most insignificant life as a teacher of Greek and Latin in different colleges in England and Ireland. “Those years and years by, of world without event” strongly resonate with the description of the famous Jesuit brother, St Alphonsus Rodriguez, who joined the Society of Jesus after the death of his wife. For decades the humble mission of Majorca Alfonso was to watch the door as a porter. The example of this simple Jesuit brother who just “watched the door” and attained sanctity reminded Hopkins of a priest saying: “a great part of life to the holiest of men consists in the well performance...of ordinary duties.”

Discovering in the apparently “daily nonsense” a privileged way to a profound holiness seems a most unusual final conclusion. However, as the French historians Braudel and Chaunu kept reminding us in their innovative historical research, it seems indeed that through daily events we start to genuinely understand the course not only of Medieval history. Along the same lines, we discover the decisive subtle and gradual transformation of the individual and institutional levels that may give us the chance to seize the present crises as a unique call to embark upon the faith journey with Abraham. Apparently insignificant roads are being transformed into decisive encounters with the truth.



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