

Praise

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Abstract

This paper studies driving fascination of praise in its shape, its range, its risks, its electricity, and its various impacts.

Keywords

All Over, Joy, Together, Silent, Pain

1. Introduction

Few can compare to the driving fascination of praise. Praise lifts us up out of daily humdrum miseries. Its language is ubiquitous. Its sublimity is electric. Praise gathers all into joys ecstatic, and enmity is nowhere as praise cleanses away lowly dross, and dirty plebeians vanish. Praise chants us all into the elites. In praise we are all elites in the beauty of Mother Nature, birthing, nourishing, without ceasing. Meanwhile, autumn trees are happily shedding their colorful leaves enthralling us all.

2. The Meanings of Praise

Autumn branches almost bare in the warm silent sun gently sway. We are astounded at beauty sprinkled all over. “But, No”, we suddenly realize. The situation is the other way around. It is not beauty coming to branches but branches casually swaying all-dipped in the deep milieu of beauty all over. We sigh and we shout, and such elation is praise elated elevating us—in Mother Nature alive that is sheer Beauty. Praise is primal music of Mother Nature. Praise is part and parcel of beauty all around to hug us all.

The tilting sun shines aloud the crisp music as colorful leaves tremble forth the songs of praise. All over the universe, there resound the various and invincible sounds of the music of praise. Nobody can stop such music of praise. No one would even want to stay its joyful noise. Praise fills us inside, and things around *are* simply the sounds of praise. Joy fills the praise all over. Praise and its shape,

its range, its risks, its electricity, and its various impacts must be studied. We simply cannot help it. Praise is too much joy and too enthralling to stop staring at.

3. Praises All around

In praise, what it means disappears. Ecstatic adoration melts hushed all the elated shouts in glories of heavenly glow. Gratitude overwhelms all around with glorious shouts of praise. In all this praise, even kids come in and just say, “I wov you, Mom”, and they do not even know what it is or even remember what they say soon later. Still, *that* kid-mumble is praise natural and spontaneous, and quite decisive.

The kids just stare at Mom, and then quietly go away, as they send Mom into paradise all so overwhelming and ecstatic. With these spontaneous kids so decisive, everyone is in joy in praise all over. Why, what, and how, and even when and where, are melted away, nowhere now—in praise. Praise is the milieu of everything where everything moves and has their being, absolutely hilarious, ineffable and ecstatic.

Praise shouts music to turn everything jumping kid-alive. While in praise, only the person praised is starkly present, in whom no person praising can be found. In the storm of chorus of praise, no one is here praising. Praising so insanely noisy rules the whole world, as if in a dream—all in joys out of this world simply admiring the heroines and the heroes we adore, all of us! Praise is the insane world of joy, joy, and joy of sheer music all around! Everything is forgotten except for the music of joys of admiration, resounding forever, world without end.

We human beings have been astir with praises, in a subtle way and in not so subtle a way, since the world began. Racism as glory of collective egoism has been singing “Heil, Hitler!” KKK with Trump, and dreams of Malcolm X and M. L. King. Violence promoted by the violent NRA is so popular as for NRA to easily own half of the Congress. People simply love all these racism and violence, as they clutch their favorite “right to bear arms.” Their right is their sweet constitutional approval of the right to kill with their constitutional arms!

Rifles then delightfully fight against rifles at school classrooms and on the street corners anywhere. There is no question but that racism and the right to kill would soon easily and inevitably join into mass massacres in periodic rhythm of the great USA! Its history is now tragic bloodbath in which the parents desperately try to hide their beloved children. Noisy praises continue to rise on collective racism—collectivism is correct!—and its violent legal enforcement. All this is legal in our nation, you know.

Ugly Leviathan our dear nation has been always embracing all of us its beloved people! “We the people” in its Constitution are its part and parcel. Of course, this animal so almighty is set up for the wealthy to exploit the poor. Those poor people who would die for such great “nation” are eulogized as so

virtuous and so loyal. These loyal soldiers are praised to the sky, for they would die to “protect” us—the wealthy?—from invasion of “foreign nations”! The nation is the ultimate region! We keep shouting, “Our country, right or wrong!” We never realize that such shining Golden Calf is just an ugly Leviathan of killing machine of *its* loyal people!

Money is the almighty tool of the almighty Leviathan-nation. Money runs all politics. Pour money in, and policies are approved of. It is as simple and powerful as that. Money, power, and politics join to run the government, to run it all, whatever “it” means, government or nation or power. Does it matter, though? They are all the same anyway. And so, the economy keeps booming in systematic exploitation of the poor, whose groans sing the sweet song of “economic progress” that makes the Leviathan-nation happily progressing, and we have no end in sight of it. All nation resounds in shouts of praises mixed with groans of the exploited.

All this while, Mother’s Day persists since we were born into history. After all, bereft of mother, no one can exist—nation or no-nation, money or no money. Meanwhile, nurses and their aids are quietly doing their rounds meticulously serving intimate needs of the poorest of the poor. They are so trying, anyway, often succeeding only rarely, hampered by lack of resources, of funds, and of adequate management.

Still, these caring people stubbornly try. They are unsung heroines without a mumble of praise to them. “Caring” literally means “suffering” with suffering people, whoever they are. The dictionaries quietly say so ([Oxford University Press, 2001](#)). But no one is willing to *praise* such painful caring. No monument is built. No “Nurse’s Day” so lowly has been set up. They are so beautiful in their messy services so hidden, as Leviathan-nations are so shiny an ugly killer ostensibly displayed all over the world. Loud praises gather around the ugly beauty of the nation. Calm silent caring gathers neither moss nor praise, but all this is so beautiful and so heart-moving—and that without a stir. Meals on wheels so inexpensive that anyone can afford is making daily rounds in silence. And the list goes on.

Now we are confronted with a stunning panorama of admirable good deeds, describable here in three disasters. Good deeds are often praised to death, in vanity, in duplicity, and in execution. It is not just difficult to perform good deeds. It is also quite dangerous, even lethal, to perform good deeds. We must be careful and be diffident and prudential in performing them. Perhaps evil deeds are easier to perform than good ones.

The first disaster is *vanity* of good deeds. Somehow, people’s miseries attract Mother Teresa into concerted activities against them. In 1950, Teresa founded the Missionaries of Charity, now with over 4500 sisters in 133 countries in 2012. The congregation manages homes for HIV/AIDS terminal patients, those sick with leprosy and tuberculosis, plus soup kitchens, dispensaries, counseling, schools, and orphanages. This list shows Teresa’s comprehensive attacks on

popular miseries. We are sure they are continuing vigorously even today.

Amazingly, however, diseases and poverty are vigorously proliferating today as ever, precisely in those identical places. It seems to even look as if their good deeds provide fodder to worsen popular miseries. “Human fodder is given not by good deeds but by social mismanagement. Stem-cell therapy is on its way to conquering death.” Still, good deeds of Teresa and many others have failed to stop eruptions of social mismanagements, Neo-Nazis, and KKKs.

“Do you have any *actual* proof that ‘good deeds’ are futile?” Well, it is simple. So many centuries of so many good deeds would have dramatically wiped out all ills of miseries from the face of the earth even before today. The fact that miseries are still vigorously booming all over now convincingly demonstrates how useless and futile good deeds are, without denying how “good” and praiseworthy good deeds are. Still, “good and praiseworthy” are cheap comfort for good deeds being so ineffective all through all these ages.

Let us put the situation in an exaggerated way. In all, the more good deeds we see appearing, the worse ills seem to proliferate! One foot of good deed seems to incite one mile of ills and miseries. O, vanity of all vanities, Mother Teresa’s good deeds are all in vain! Good deeds are all vanity, and even seem to worsen those precise miseries they try to stamp out. And so, the first disaster of good deeds is that they are all useless and futile. All good deeds are sadly in vain. “Do you mean to say that everyone dies, so living is futile, so quit living?” Now, saying “futile” is not saying “quit it”. Later, we will consider how to do good deeds, to wit, in stealth, because good deeds are praiseworthy, however ineffective they may be.

The second disaster of good deeds ascends to the sacred beyond-all to even crack it into pieces. Astonishingly, the New Testament reports a merciless exposé of the holiest clique, the sacrosanct Pharisees who proudly claim themselves as the separatists. For instance, Matthew 23 emits death stench of their sepulcher alive, white-washed and absolutely foul. The stench comes from those Pharisees themselves, whose *inside* is cracked up in shameful duplicity religious, ethical, and social. Its description is ugly.

Ostentatiously touting one’s good deed turns the one so proud into pharisaic duplicity, to ruin self-integrity of everyone involved. Such self-ruining happens unawares, to result even in proud condemnation to death of the open-armed welcome of repentant evil-doers now coming home to divine love. Self-ruining of these proud Pharisees proudly spreads to ruining even the sacred divinity of total love almighty.

Such ubiquitous self-ruining is performed by the horrendous group-think in the proud “holiness club”! Worst of all, such darkest sin of holy Pharisees’ pride is perpetrated self-*unawares*! This second disaster starts at self-crack in duplicity to crack up the almighty heavenly love. And so, the second disaster of good deeds is its terrible harvest of inner crack, self-duplicity.

The third disaster of good deeds is brutal *executions* of some performers of

good deeds by their beloved society, precisely because of their illustrious contributions to their beloved society. Boethius in the West is one such example. On the eve of his execution, he had to write the world's longest-lasting bestseller, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (Howatson, 1991). After these centuries, it is sadly still available, for sale today from Harvard University Press among others.

Li Ssu in China is another tragic example. Li Ssu's tremendous social contributions to his society were "awarded" by precisely *his* own society with his waist-severing with his son, total destructions of his families and relatives through nine levels, and confiscation of all his properties (Shi, 2008). His tragedies may have been "rewarded" by him killing his classmate Han Fei, but this is a different story. We are so sad at reading such reciprocal killing out of envy, ensued with indiscretion of not hiding good deeds. History silently reports such tragedies—to caution us in silence. His contributions were awarded with his complete disappearance from the face of the earth. In short, the third disaster is execution for good deeds performed. In all, then, beware of *how* good deeds are performed! Things good are more difficult to achieve than evil deeds to wipe out things good.

Mother Teresa is so fortunate as to be immune from exposé of the Pharisees and executions of Boethius and Li Ssu. In any case, we notice that one feature that pervades the foul holy Pharisees is their self-congratulation, as the New Testament tells us. We would not be surprised if Teresa, Boethius, and Li Ssu are all also typified by a touch of such self-praise in self-congratulation. This is the yeast of their disasters, and can clue us into resolution of disasters above described.

There is a thin but critical line between calm self-confidence and silent self-pride, on one hand, and elated self-praise and noisy self-congratulation, on the other. All of lethal disasters above may well have come from self-congratulation. Self-congratulation comes to one easily because oneself-full judged by oneself-full is obviously and always oneself-full, perfect and without defect. Wow, I am perfect! So says self-congratulation.

And so, self-congratulation turns self-blind, being blinded by one's own self. Such voluntary blindness is dangerous while dangerously unawares. It is I myself preventing me from others to intrude to criticize and judge me with objectivity. This is a lethal risk. It is a reverse case of the invincibility of criticism. Criticism cannot be criticized without joining criticism. Likewise, lack of criticism goes everywhere where matters are totally right infallible, as a matter of course, being self-blinded.

This is the blind leading the blind to fall into the fatal pit, and here the blind is one's own self, to guarantee the fall of the self, lethal and disastrous. The Pharisees self-congratulate to fall in the realm-pit of the Beyond. Self-displayers self-congratulate to fall in the social realm-pit. Both falls are disastrous. But the fall in the Beyond is disastrous unawares while the fall socially is fatal. Both falls kill equally, and they are equally devastating, the one as the other.

Therefore, all of us are in need of the outside objective critique of the other. This other can be the awesome Beyond for the proud Pharisees. This other can also be the society silently staring at us, as we are contributors to the society. And we often play both roles of the sacred people and of social contributors. The others in both realms are silent and watchful, relentless and lethal, constantly. We tend to be unaware of the other watching us. And usually it is too late to become aware of being watched over, for then *that* is the time of execution.

Self-congratulation is self-reflective, while spontaneous self-display is not self-aware. One differs from the other. It is best not to ostentatiously display oneself. Instead, we must always perform assiduity in silence in stealth, without fanfare of self-congratulation, as Mother Teresa did. Never be self-satisfied, much less complacently complimenting oneself. Keep performing good deeds in silence in modest stealth.

Never advertise one's good deeds. Displaying good deeds to rub it into the eye of the public simply displays "treasure" in public to ask for trouble, of invasion by fatal violence. Prudence to hide in modesty must go with performing good deeds. "Doing good, near no name, (as) doing ill, near no cane," cautions ancient Taoist Chuang Tzu 3/2. "Name" is fame praised; it is as lethal as the "cane" of punishment. Good deeds must avoid the cane of any name whatever.

Very few praises are shown in the public newspapers. Instead, evil deeds are frequently advertised loud and clear with their painful punishments. Good deeds are motherly routine and fatherly hushed. People just support one another in stealthy silence, as if nothing is the matter. And indeed nothing is really the matter with good neighborliness. No single eyebrow is raised. Kids are plying outside as usual. Everyone is smiling as they do daily routine business. Good deeds are quiet.

Now, all this tiny survey of praises shows how fragile and fickle "praises" are. We can of course evaluate each shout of praise as it occurs, but our evaluations themselves are fickle, changing as the situations change, and we can do nothing about such changes in praises and in their evaluations. Whirlwinds of brute facts boom all around as they wish. They are king driving out Zeus of regularity of all sorts. Praises are booming continually in the whirling storms of actual facts.

All our praises are so fickle. Freud's pan-sex interpretation of psychic complexes is still being laughed at today. In our laughter we forget Freud's epoch-making initiation of psychology. All this while, the Wright Brothers adventuring to flying in the sky was once laughed at—"If we are meant to fly, we would have been equipped with wings." Now, our laughter turns into "friendly skies" safe and punctual. In these skies, we all forget our ridicules in former days. Shame on us!

Besides, we wonder how much power our evaluations have, whatever they are, to make a dent in the situation, and how much dent our evaluations themselves would receive. All chatters on the sideline of events—praises and their evaluations—are mere fury and sound of shouts at the winds of actuality, signifying

nothing at all. All our evaluations merely clutter the wastebasket.

Praises on their part are a powerful wave waxing and waning, often flooding the situation to incur serious damages. Positive effects of praises, if any, are silently gulped up into the “trends of the times”, showing up on the crest of the brute factual flow. We never see any traces of “praises” we have conferred on the happening, by fact or by our “heroines” and “heroes” known and unsung. We ourselves do our best to ride on the crest of the wave brute and ubiquitous.

Now, let us turn around. We must mention a strange case of Socrates with which we do not know how to deal. His case is Jekyll and Hyde in one person in one death. On one hand, Socrates claimed in the Dialogue of *Crito* that his death fulfills his public claim to obey the Athenian verdict. This fulfillment is justified for two reasons. First, his dear Athenian society is his mother who gave him birth and raised him up, and now she wants him to die, and so it is proper that he obeys his mother and die. Secondly, he now cannot live to betray his own public agreement to the verdict to die. His self-betrayal would destroy his integrity. So his death is justified.

On the other hand, however, Socrates did know that the verdict was unjustly given on account of disappointment at missing Socrates in tears begging for life. He did know that the verdict was unjust as he alluded to the later judgment of history, to conclude his *Apology*. And he must also know that it is unjust to obey an unjust verdict. But his decision to die and obey the unjust verdict shows that he failed to disobey an unjust verdict. Therefore, his death was unjustified.

In all, then, Socrates was both praiseworthy and anti-praiseworthy, both admirable and repulsive. His death was just and yet unjust, proper and also improper. He is a correct Jekyll and an incorrect Hyde in one person and in his one identical death. With one stroke of his death, he strikes himself out as a split personality, and so we cannot shout, for we can neither praise him nor condemn him. He is such a “strange case” indeed. There could not have been too many oddly split cases of such sort in world history anywhere.

4. Praise Silent

Praise just *comes* over all by itself. Once we are embraced in praising, we ourselves are changed all over, all unawares. Praise is the sun we are forbidden to look *at* but feeling its warmth all around in our bones. We feel praise inside as we praise things outside, as we feel the sun in us up there. Praise is Mother Nature shining her sunshine to show things as they are, and silently snow-falling to moisten all things around to nourish them up alive. Praise is motherly silent, to enlighten and to moisten—to enliven.

Praise enlivens all things in its sunshine and in its snow-falling—all in silence to nourish to feel inaudibly all around. The sun we are forbidden to stare at brightens all things it shines without discrimination to allow them to show themselves, as they are silently moistened alive by inaudible snow wafting down as if nothing is the matter. Praise naturally seeps out of our heart of hearts, irre-

pressibly, spontaneously, at each passing moment of the casual day. We praise always this natural way, often quite unawares! As we live on unawares, so we praise our living quite spontaneously.

Praise comes over in this tacitly way without saying a thing, as dear mother hugs and feeds her dearest baby without a word. Mother Nature in our praise silently shines, moistens, and nourishes whatever baby-exists all over, extending to those hills far beyond and to those faint birds chirping silence in the clouds neither bright nor dark. Those tiny birds are invisible as our praises are inaudible, but they are deeply and clearly felt in our bones of bones. Praise is heartfelt unawares, as we are alive unawares.

Praise comes over as our dear baby whom we hug tight for our dear life. Praise is our dear life. Our baby-praise is our gratitude—all mothers care for her dearest babies in sheer gratitude—to elate us to please us immensely, as all mothers care for their own babies in grateful moments each time mothers care so much as to tire them out. Mothers are born to care in gratitude. No mother complains of her grateful caring. None of us praises in gratitude as we complain. Gratitude in praising never mixes with complaining of whatever sort.

Gratitude implies praise as praise deepens gratitude. Both praise and gratitude nourish and fulfill us all over. And we turn all wordless in our joy of living. Praise shouts silently in me baby-alive, steeped in satisfaction of each passing moment. Here is a little boy. He is not even “above average”. He is simply a consistent C-student at third grade in primary school. And he is perfectly happy whenever I see him, enjoying himself to the hilt at each passing moment of his day. I keep praising him from the bottom of my heart. He is my sage and my teacher absolutely sublime. I am so grateful as I praise him.

I now want to share what this boy gives me constantly, in my praise of him to spread my gratitude, without saying a thing. All this while, silent praise seeps into me, into deep silence so grateful. We smile at one another without knowing we are smiling. Money cannot buy such happy praise. Praise is free gift of sheer joy, and joy is precisely what money wants to buy but cannot. But actually, we always live for praise, we live to praise and we live praise, and praise is priceless. And so, no money can buy praise.

Actually, however, anyone can have praise and do praising. Princes and paupers, all bad guys and good, are welcomed to praise, and then the lifeworld is found naturally shifted to warm sunshine and cleansing snowfall of joy in grateful praise. All this while, we realize that we are continually hugging our precious babies—of praise in gratitude. Joy, praise, and gratitude hug one another to laugh with one another. Nothing is happier in all this. We cannot request praise. We cannot strive to praise. But we can grab praise as praise comes over us all by itself, invading us willy-nilly to change all of us all around into joy. This joy happens *whenever* we praise in gratitude.

Don't you believe in all this? Just praise any things you have around. And then stare and watch as you wait. You will find *yourself* changed by your praise, as your praise changes all things around you. Praise is shouts and praise is silence.

Noisily and silently, praise constantly fills up all things around to elate you, to nourish you, and thereby fulfills you. Try to praise things, and you will be surprised to find all things in sheer joys, and you yourself will be grateful in surprises all around. Praise is our surprising joy—in gratitude. You cannot escape all this. You don't even want to "escape" such joy of praises, all so surprising so enthralling.

Here and now while we praise, shady loneliness and sinister violence will disappear in the casual sunshine and clean snowfall that are our dearest babies we keep hugging so tightly for our dear life. And praise is our dear life, isn't it? Praise is natural and priceless, and so no money can buy, as no money can buy life, as life is natural and priceless. As we are rid of praise, our life shrinks dead into a sad zombie that just keeps moving vainly, breathless and dead. Lack of praise is surprisingly deadly indeed.

Praise invades us without warning, as joy shines the sun on us in snowflakes without announcing it. No prior preparation can be made for the sudden coming of joy in praise. No do we need prior scheming toward it, either. Praise invades us into praising, exactly as our dearest babies joyously command our unconditional caring so meticulous, day in and night out. All this while, we lug our precious babies of praise, as praise lugs us ourselves around any time anywhere. Just follow praising irrepressible. Never ask a single query.

5. Praise in Pain

Cynicism laughs here. "Praise in pain? You are silly." We can then laugh back at it, for putting the pain-cart before the praise-horse. Pain turns significant as a challenge, only in the praise-context. This is because without judgment of praising, pain is but a dream totally temporary, brute and otiose. After all, pain left alone is just a brute fact in sound and fury, signifying nothing, without praise in term of which to show pain itself as "tragic".

In fact, we should never forget. Praise is strong as pain-death and more ferocious than pain-hell. Pain stuns us into praising Freud who accomplishes so stunningly much, while in mouth cancer so painful and in depression so unbearable. All such pain urged him to quit and die. He did not! In this way, all life-tragedies serve to challenge us to deepen our days—if we dare to so choose—to enhance praiseworthy deeds. This is *bravery* however small, for every tiny step *forward* counts here.

We brave the daunting downpour of pain-cataract, and then we will find that pain amazingly bears us up from below us, literally sup-porting us to swim upstream in sheer pain. *That* was what actually happened to Sigmund Freud. At each moment when pain physical or mental comes, and both often come at once, he would pick up his pen, and pain goes away, while pain paradoxically eggs him on to write more, and more, as relentlessly as pain is itself relentless.

And so, because of pain, he wrote more, and more. And then he himself turned clearer and clearer. Pain refined him into clarity and abundance, and into

depths. All this happens only when we decide to perform praiseworthy deeds, no matter how small. We are here a dogged bravado Pollyanna totally “unrealistic”. Negative pain turns us into positive Pollyanna.

“This is a desperate measure.” Well, this claim of desperation assumes that Pollyanna-praise is chosen by defying unwillingness, that Pollyanna-praise is itself pain resented. This assumption is precisely the stance of cynicism at which we laughed a while ago. It is basically a defeatist attitude hiding itself behind “Be realistic!” It is a cowardly lifestyle.

In contrast, the praiseworthy stance precisely in pain is bravely if not joyfully and victoriously steeped in pain, not purposely but spontaneously. Such positive spontaneity is actually shown existing in sickly geniuses such as Freud explicated above and many others, such as the great Pascal in stomach cancer all his life and the lyrical pastoral poet Robert Frost so inspiring, who yet tried in pain to kill himself several times while alive. These sick geniuses are indomitable Pollyanna braving their searing pain to accomplish things with spontaneous vitality. Here is no desperation anywhere to be found.

Praiseworthy performance turns brute factual pain deeply significant, as martyrdom does. People brave pain for honor to win praise. See the last essay in the well-known *Ancient Literature par Excellence* 古文觀止. This essay praises some common unknown soldiers, honoring these soldiers who died under ugly tortures in loyalty to their lord (Wu & Wu, 2016). Here is an actual praise in actual pain. This incident is so impressive as to be listed to round up this entire collection.

Still, we must be on the alert. Pain, honor, and praise must tend to coalesce here at the very heights of the sublime, and nothing lower. Here honor is truly praiseworthy, and anything praiseworthy here is more honorable than silly short-sighted and silly short-ranged, so despicable. German Nazism and Japanese feudalism are sadly filled with low short-sighted loyalties for which people rush to kill themselves. Life is so sadly cheapened here.

6. Praise Pleases All

Hsün Tzu begins his book by encouraging learning, saying, “Blue came from indigo and is bluer than indigo.” The saying is nakedly parental, as my teacher is my parent. The parents are always all too ready to tout their dear children as *greater* than they are. In praising their children, the parents promote children to thereby tacitly promote themselves. Praise promotes all around, unawares or not.

Generally speaking, praising the other implicates comparison of praised person with praising one. Comparison tells of the praised person connecting with the praising one. This connection enables the praising person to partake of the glories of the praised person, however tacitly. In all this, praising person abnegates himself in this Yin act, so as thereby to Yang-enhance him praising with the praised person thus enhanced. Such a dialectic of the Yin enhancing the

Yang structures praise of others all around. This Yin-Yang dialectic of other-praise results in joys between praising person and praised one alike. Yin-Yang structurally, praise makes pan-joy.

Praise is a sort of “giving” of appreciation to the other person gifted. The giver satisfies her desire to give by giving joy (of other-appreciation) to the gifted other. In giving, the giver disappears in joy. Here solely the gifted person appears as appreciated, in whom the appreciating person is smiling. Giving arouses pleasant appreciation all around, praising and praised all over, and everyone is so happy together in all smiles.

Sartre cynically typifies giving as an imposition of the giver (Sartre, 1946). Still, even though this “imposition” can sometimes be a forcing of giver onto memories of the gifted person as Sartre claims, this “imposition” can more often be a natural sharing of loving joy, or a simple parental solicitude—all with no string attached. Giving can often be a blessing by self-lessening into all-enhancing.

All this is valid even though “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20: 35) may be overstated, as both are equally blessed in shared joys. Still, such blessing all around is *initiated* by giving, and so, in this sense, “giving” may be more blessed than receiving, for there would have been no joys all around without “giving” to initiate these joys. Initiation is always more blessed than enjoyment of its fruit.

Praiseworthy is precisely such conspicuous giving in joyous sharing. Praise is pleasing all around. Praise is the precise contrary to attacking the enemy hated. To think of it, however, the best attack of the enemy can be *praising* them to embrace them, so as to melt their enmity into friendship. And friendship with the enemy is the victory so complete as we seldom hear of it.

It requires no military scheming or lethal resources to praise the enemy, or even tactical dissimulation or cheat as the war-expert Sun Tzu demanded. For all such poverty of resources and tactics, however, persistent praise often spells a total victory that usual military campaign can never assure. The key to success here is *persistence* skillful and sensitive, and it takes time to learn such flexuous art of praise. Hsün Tzu is smiling here encouraging us to learn. This praise need not always be heartfelt, though such art of praise must always be consistent and persistent.

The giving of praise to the enemy harvests the fundamental victory over enmity itself. This is total victory comprehensive and ubiquitous, for all enmity vanishes into friendship, and nothing is left to fight against. We all, enemy and no-enemy, simply rush to rejoice one with another. And, rejoicing together, we rebuild all spears into ploughshares and harness all horses into grinding the mill. Praising enemy harvests such wonder of victory total and absolute. “Loving enemy” is thus fulfilled concretely, sincerely, without sacrifice, and even effortlessly. We need not threaten the enemy or cheat the enemy as Sun Tzu wanted, much die for the enemy as Jesus bravely did for his enemies he so loved. Sun Tzu’s 孫子 well-known *Art of War* is so popular and ubiquitous as to need no quotation. But we must warn the reader that “art of war” is a sad mistranslation

contrary to the original intention of *Art of Soldiery* 兵法, which elucidates how to use soldiers to *win* over enemy total, alive, never to kill them at all. Now, here is a case we seldom notice.

7. Self-Praise

We usually praise other people, and we share their glories in pleasure. We seldom think of praising our own selves. We do not know why we do not. But actually I myself must desire to praise my own self, at least to myself. I am obligated to be proud of myself, and I must in fact *always* do so. After all, praise is joy all around, and such joy must spread all around, beginning at my own self. “Must”, “always”, and “all around” should come together to praise to please us all, beginning at my own self. Dark is at the foot of the lighthouse that is my own self, and must be lightened up with praise.

I simply must count my blessings pouring in on me from day to day without ceasing. Except for poor vision and high blood pressure, I have no cancer, no tumor, and no nothing. I am “healthy and wealthy” in no need of physical care or specific money. I must be proud in the Beyond who gave me birth and nourishes me daily without handicap. I shout silently at people, “Hey, look at me, a hundred feet tall! I am intelligent and sensitive, sensible and thoughtful.”

In all this, I am not aware of a single vigorous mid-octogenarian anywhere who in this year alone publishes a book and ten articles, as he writes 17 papers so far. I am proud, elated, and happy. I want to sing the maximum in the minimum in the simplest of clarity. I want to dig things down to their rock-bottom. “To the ground *Gründlichkeit*” is my constant push. As long as I am interested, I cannot allow what I do not know to remain unknown. I survive by leaving unknown so many things uninterested and unknown. “Compromise” is not in my dictionary.

I pursue comparative culture and comparative religion. Culture is the way we think, feel, and live. Religion is the ultimate Beyond of all things. Comparison is reciprocal critiques and inter-enrichment unlimited. I write books on China’s five *unique* contributions to the world. They are body thinking-mode, concrete thinking-mode, story thinking-mode, and music thinking-mode, all subsumed under time logic. All these above are my eternal passions that consume me thin and tired.

People who can see are actually blind to my high vigorous stature! Counting daily blessings such as these—there must be more!—induces me to praise myself at least to myself, while I keep gloating over the baby photos so tender so precious. I am continually invigorated into those kids jumping alive, taking in things in stride. “No problem is here!” I shout at myself with confidence, looking forward to each moment that arrives, constantly smiling and promising better days ahead.

While I keep reminding myself to praise myself somewhat as above, I am attended with irrepressible *gratitude*. I cannot help but be thankful to what is

beyond me behind me, ever supporting me tacitly without my knowing about it at all. After all, nothing comes from nothing. I will simply collapse into nothing without such power under me. Such power is ever invisible and intangible to me. Realizing all this turns me irresistibly grateful. It is such wordless gratitude that keeps me humble, enabled, and ennobled in my praise of myself in sheer joy of life.

Now, however, while I praise myself in elation, my humble gratitude taps me on the shoulder. I am made aware of my *defects* so many and so various. There is a thin line between holier-than-thou pride and self-humiliation, on one hand, and self-praise that invigorates oneself to share joys of self-integrity, on the other. The crucial turning from the former to the latter is gratitude, which soberly guides us into realism. Gratitude shows me in my sober real situation, as follows.

I am sharp, and a sharp knife breaks and chips so easily at a slightest touch. In all my high intelligence, I am quite brittle. I get hurt quite easily. I tend to be lonely for no understandable reason whatever. I tend to loosen up into scattered pieces all around, and I do not even know what they are, much less how to pick them up and arrange them into neat coherence of some intelligible sort.

My high intelligence is attended with unintelligible pain hidden all over the nooks and corners of daily living. Strangely, then, I *am* intelligent and unintelligible—both at once. My strangeness shows that I am oddly unintelligible for all my high intelligence of which I am so proud, and for which I keep praising myself. Loneliness keeps creeping in. Fatigue mental and physical continues to bother me. I cannot make any head or tail about such strange pain. My odd defects are many and various, indeed.

What picks me up in all such odd miseries is my passion forward. I passionately desire to sing what I write and what I think. I want to sing what is around me and what feels inside me. I want to sing even my loneliness—I will try anyway. My whole daily living *must* be “music” in elegies and in elation. Such passion of mine *will* somehow—don’t ask me how, because I don’t know—pick me up from the unintelligible pit of my silly defects so decrepit so disheartening, and so demoralizing. Whenever these defects raise their ugly heads, I must sing them away! Sing! That singing is my salvation. Music alive is my savior.

“How do you sing?” A good question you raised, my friend. I must sing the music of my praise to myself. My self-praise gives me pride and proud joy of being 500 feet tall, towering over all the world’s geniuses, sickly and healthy. I must repeat! I now tower over all the world’s healthy and sickly geniuses! I can be—I must be—proud enough to praise myself. I must praise myself no matter what. This “no matter what” is the crucial clue to enable my singing and my joy of living—in glorious victories.

I must shout at myself continually, “Praise myself, my dearest me!” Self-praise is my confidence and my joy of absolute salvation from whatever—and I mean “whatever”!—defects I may happen to have. After all, who is perfect without defect? It is not “no defect” but *how* to deal with defects that decides the destiny of one’s life! Self-praise sings oneself, and self-singing makes for the decisive victo-

ry over whatever defects one happens to have. When dispiriting defects threatens to invade me, I must lift my heart and sing my self-praise proudly and joyously. And prideful joy will seep into all my tissues of life.

8. Praise Admiring, Joy Invigorating

Praise admires in joy. No one praises in sorrow. Such joy of praise is all-powerful. Admiration in joy enlivens and solidifies personal integrity of each of us. Loneliness vanishes in dew at dawn. Praise dawns on each of our days, all kid-alive. All kids simply love to admire anyone and praise anything. Praise makes kids out of each of us. Praise jumps us into kids impossibly alive. Such praise rejoices in us by bringing us together into joys jumping kid-alive.

Togetherness is king of all of us. All too naturally, such praise together in joys would have its inevitable spread far and wide to publicize. Public praise celebrates in shared joys. Shared celebration could even flow over beyond friendship, and flow even to invite our hated enemies, and then our enmity vanishes in our noises shouting joys together. Togetherness pours down on all of us as unstoppable cataract, and especially joys together shower on anyone who happens to be around nearby. Such joys together overwhelm the whole community and douse it into the brave new world of sheer elation, all thanks to praise spread out into celebration.

There cannot be any enemy among these celebrants, who are simply too much in joys to have enmity, which is now so foreign among them in shared joys of shouting celebration, communal and irrepressible. It is thus that celebration celebrates an absolute victory over *all* enmity, as it keeps spreading all over on and on. Public joy of celebration in shouting praises is simply invincible. No one can stop it. No one can even be willing to halt it, even for a moment.

Praise personal and spreading is shaped in a constant Yin-Yang dialectic so as to shape us ourselves into a community crisscrossing all around. Praise turns into our perdition when, and only when, praise touts itself against the communal celebration. Joining in joy enhances life. Touting self-praise *over* others kills itself. Defying public joys would face execution public and merciless. This is the inexorable law of life and death—of praise personal shared public. Praise so personal has no respect of persons, as praise either invigorates all of us or renders us perishing individually.

Now, a special sort of praise must be mentioned. It is about our beloved Mother Nature dearly respected. We admire Mother Nature more frequently than praising her, but we do variously issue many admiring odes to Mother Nature. Such praising odes put *us* ourselves at ease and inspire our eco-piety, to advance our meticulous eco-care in her total reverence. Such caring reverence is not our pious desire but unneeded hope. It is our own life-necessity. An explanation is in order.

9. Conclusion

We either thrive together with Mother Nature so lush and green, or else we pe-

rish one and all in the desert that is a devastated nature, due to our selfish and inconsiderate ravaging of nature around. We do hope and pray for her to thrive through us and with us, as we passionately and assiduously work to care for this fragile Mother Nature, to promote our admiring praises to Mother Nature smiling as she nourishes all of us who are her beloved children.

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