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## The Catastrophes and Human Beings

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Through the analysis of the interactive trend between catastrophes and humankind each other, this serialized article 4 interprets the deeper meaning of catastrophes from a new viewpoint.

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# The Catastrophes and Human Beings

(No. 4 of the Series of Reflections on Economics Law and Ethic Culture Caused by World Financial Crisis) (2009/2010)

Yu Tian

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## I. INTENSIFIED CATASTROPHES WITH HUMAN BEINGS

It is honourable that human-the most intelligent life of all creatures on the earth, but it is regrettable that not only human cannot control the planet who lives on, also conduct the wars, economic crisis, even trash that man made in feebleness. When human step by step goes to the opposite direction of the universe rules for surviving, faces to the strikes from the intensified catastrophes.

There are social disasters and natural disasters the two types in catastrophes that human is facing. Usually all social disasters are made by man own, humanbeings are beset mostly by financial or economic crisis, as well as scientific and technological disaster at present. The former, such as financial crisis, overproduction, unemployment, economic depression etc, which has entangled the whole world for more than six years; the latter, such as sudden blackout, the enormous impact of electronic systems breakdown, cyber crime, environmental pollution, accidents in nuclear applications, and so on; another type is natural disasters, suchlike earthquake, tsunami, hurricane, flood, drought, snowstorm, volcanic eruptions, rainstorm, heat wave, mudslid, and plague, etc. From all kinds of disasters, hereunder we mainly focus on the scientific disasters, and some major natural disasters which is caused by human economic activities,

### a) Scientific Disasters

Some people believe that modern science and technology are able to save humanity, save the modern industrial civilization, lead human to manage an intelligentized globe. However, the reality makes man's

nerves tighter and tighter by the intensified science catastrophes.

On May 6, 2010, 42 points at 2:00 pm, the U.S. Dow Jones index had a "free fall" suddenly and goes down nearly 1,000 points in less than 5 minutes, many stocks were down to nearly 100%, one fund actually in a blink fell from 59 dollars to 9 cents.

Following extensive investigations, the experts tended to believe that the "systemic flaws" of wall street securities trading system were the culprit who caused the stock market crash, the "electronic control" instead of the human brain was in charge of the stocks in a wink. It was too dependent on computer systems trade modes, coupled with the U.S. stock market flooded with a wide variety of financial derivatives and leverage systems, once some unexpected events or errors appeared, the computer system would probably expand them numerous times, passed to all the stock trading seats in an instant, and act on the stock index to cause the market crash. In fact, it was not the first time due to a computer program problems that caused the stock market crash.

In 1990, The American AT & T telephone company, the PBX software appeared a small design fault, which resulted in whole American telephone service interruption for almost nine hours, meantime the phone service was almost held by AT & T, this "network heart attack" made the entire United States equivalently regress into the "telegraph era" in moment.

Similar events because of computer systems out of control caused some major accidents, successionaly staged around the world in recent years. Boston University physicist Eugene Stanley's a new study published in "Nature" magazine lately said, the interconnection network is becoming increasingly fragile, and is likely to breed some major fault. Power grids, water systems, transportation systems, computer networks, hospitals, financial systems, and so on. All above are connected to each other in some way, which will make their vulnerabilities clump. Wired Magazine even said, in its website, the network could be the biggest failure in the history.

Anders Powell said, a professor of media studies, Stockholm University Sweden, in an interview with Global Times, that the nowadays world almost had "brittle bone disease", like the Icelandic volcanic ash made European airline industry so disgraced; the Greek debt crisis brought about the global market almost

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crash. Nobody can find a good resource to solve the problem up to now, and reliance on the network is one of the culprits to result in "brittle bone disease" (2010).

Imagining one day a powerful computer virus which whole globe could not deal with came up, there was nowhere in the world to be not in chaos? Computer networks have become ubiquitous, go hand in hand with the human society, also so-called "network heart attack" even worse than viruses, because viruses could be remedied, but such a "heart attack" problem, which could be fatal, and nobody knows when it breaks out, and without any "specific remedy ways".

For the relationship between human beings and computers, there is a pessimistic perspective with the Westworld, that the Internet will eventually become the enemy of mankind. Many American movies depict a black future, one day the Internet will go beyond the ruling of mankind; human beings will be enslaved and driven like lambs. Although this concern is just a myth, when all the world increasingly relies on modern science, the human society is running to more and more convenient and efficient, at the same time, the uncontrollable risks are also running to higher and higher in all aspects.

Viewing from the other side, people use the development of modern science and technology to engage fraudulences, cyber prostitutions, cyber crime, hackers, even cyber warfare, cyber espionages among countries, and so on all these malignant incidents also have been plaguing daily life of communities. Tracing the root of these evils, it is still for pursuing of economic interests. The sophisticated degree of these new varied kinky science crimes is so high, not only is it hard to prevent also even worse is to accelerate the corruption of social morality and cultural spirit. All the moral disasters are tormenting and punishing human beings which are bred by corruptions. However, the more unfortunate fact is that people have fallen in this state which is inured with insensitive and merited feeling to face all the unusual evils so that more and more people join them and urge a stormy sea much stormier. Such as U.S. financial giant Goldman Sachs was so avid for profits that colluded others together to push their clients to fall in the well-designed trap and suffering huge losses; Using network technologies to steal legitimate proprietor's hi-tech and commercial secrets; For the money or benefits employing internet marketers to do malicious actions bribing or using online media to swear black is white for misleading the public for realizing the lucrative conspiracies for some prerogative individuals or interest groups, etc. All above can be looked as the secondary induced disasters of sciences calamities. (2010)(2013)(2013)

In short, the disasters that caused by sciences has been shadows with human wherever and whenever.

#### b) *Human economic activities cause natural disasters*

Austrian scientists participated a research project which shows, the climate change and human activities greatly lift the occurrence rate of natural disasters in Alps. The study pointed out that widespread glaciers melting in the Alps in recent years, sustained high temperatures, floods and other natural disasters, can hardly absolve human activities from the blame, including the massive construction projects, such as building ski fields, tourist holiday resorts and residence areas, in order that people take their vacations and settle down there.(2010)

Humankind built dams for impoundment and hydropower to meet their own electricity demand, caused the mass of damages to the natural environment and ecological balance. Three Gorges Project of China, is the typical example. Meanwhile, Chinese and foreign scientists warned, that the project not only threatened those residents who remain in the reservoir area, but could result in a mountain landslide because of the rise of land pressure surrounding the dam, the aquatic disease spread and the biodiversity drying up sharply, also one of the greatest fears is that the dam may trigger severe earthquakes.

Three Gorges Reservoir sits right on the two major faults: Jiuwanxi and Zigui - Badong. Fan Xiao, a geologist at the Bureau of Geological Exploration and Exploitation of Mineral Resources in Sichuan province of China, regards as the reservoir water level fluctuates-engineers partially drain the reservoir in summer to accommodate flood waters and raise it again at the end of flood season to generate power-and the abrupt change in water pressure further disturbs the land. He said, "it can cause fault activity to intensify and induce earthquakes." In a study published in the Chinese journal Tropical Geography in 2003, scholars at Guangzhou's South China Normal University predicted that such tinkering with the water level could trigger activity in 283 landslide-prone areas. For chasing the economic benefits and "vanity project", their words fell on deaf ears.

Scientists' early warnings came true just a month later, when around 700 million cubic feet (20 million cubic meters) of rock slid into the Qinggan River, just two miles (three kilometers) from where it flows into the Yangtze, spawning 65-foot (20-meter) waves that claimed the lives of 14 people. Despite the devastating results, the corporation three years later (in September 2006) raised the water level further-to 512 feet (156 meters). Since then, the area has experienced a series of problems, including dozens of landslides along one 20-mile (32-kilometer) stretch of riverbank. This past November, the ground gave out near the entrance to a railway tunnel in Badong County, near a tributary to the Three Gorges reservoir; 4,000 cubic yards (3,050 cubic meters) of earth and rock tumbled onto a highway. The landslide buried a bus, killing at least 30 people.

Hundreds of mountain landslides never stopped, even are expanding by now. (2008).

Many scientists believe this link between temblors and dams-called reservoir-induced seismicity-may have been what happened at California's Oroville Dam, in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. The largest earthen dam was constructed on an active fault line in the 1950s and filled in 1968, in which the water supply restored to full its capacity the area appeared an unusual series of earthquakes. U.S. Geological Survey seismologists subsequently found a strong link between the quakes and the refilling of the reservoir.

Earthquakes have also been connected to past hydropower projects in China, horrifically where dams are often located in densely populated and seismically active river basins. Engineers in China blame dams for at least 19 earthquakes over the past five decades, ranging from small tremors to one near Guangdong province's Xinfengjiang Dam in 1962 that registered magnitude 6.1 on the Richter scale-severe enough to topple houses. Surveys show that the Three Gorges region may be next. Chinese Academy of Engineering scholar Li Wangping reports on the CTGPC's Web site that the area registered 822 tremors in the seven months after the September 2006 reservoir-level increase. So far, none have been severe enough to cause serious damage. But it doesn't mean the severe quakes appear impossibly hereafter.

Not yet full filling the highest water level in the dam, a rare geologic hazard occurred, which is the severe earthquake magnitude 8.0 on the Richter scale in Wenchuan region of Sichuan, on May 12, 2008. Its cruel consequences shocked all of the world. It was more tragical that this earthquake occurred shortly in the five years, on the same seismic belt, once again broke out in the earthquake 7.0 magnitude in Ya'an region of Sichuan on April 20, 2013.

According to the CHINA BUSINESS NEWS reported on April 22, in the evening of April 20, the geologist Fan Xiao analysis with the interviewer, said this quake had been expected. He thinks, seeing from the period of the Lushan earthquake, it shall be a huge aftershock, rearrangement of stresses in the crust, after the large-magnitude earthquake in Wenchuan. Fan Xiao stressed that the region of strong earthquake activity in western China, including the Longmen Shan and Xianshuihe fault belts, in recent years, large scale hydropower construction in full swing, from now to the next ten years, in these regions, the reservoir groups are going into an intensive period of impounding water. Since reservoirs induce earthquakes, it shall be a very dangerous period. (2013)

The geologist, Hengduan Shan Research Association chief scientist Yangyong also told the reporter: strong earthquakes broke out in the same fault

belt repeatedly, and in a short span of five years, which is beyond a common routine, which indicate accumulated stresses exist in the Longmen Shan fault belt after the Wenchuan earthquake, and he believes that in the epicenter radius of 100 km, large and small reservoirs and hydropower stations over 100, impounding and releasing water frequently, certainly impact geological activities in this region.

Corresponding to the above views, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) geophysicist, Thomas Parsons accurately calculated and predicted the Ya'an earthquake five years ago. He said: "aligned along the western Sichuan basin in China. After such a large-magnitude earthquake, rearrangement of stresses in the crust commonly leads to subsequent damaging earthquakes." (2008) (2013).

There is an irrefutable fact, Which was demonstrated by the latest research results of the world geologists, which is wherever there are reservoir constructions where is more earthquake-prone, wherever the hydropower projects larger where geologic hazards stronger, who attempts to defeat and remake nature for attaining the selfish who shall be retaliated by the nature; as well as ecological equilibrium has the global interrelationship, that is the action of remaking the nature will encumber the whole world. This viewpoint has become the consensus of the people around the world today. (1980)

From the 80s of last century to now, various world-wide economic and environmental development organizations utter their all kinds of warnings sustainedly, such as the forest area is disappearing at the speed of an annual of shrinking 17 million hectares, thousands of species are going extinct, non-renewable resources are drying up day by day, the desertification is impacting the surviving of 850 million people, about 200 million people are lacking water in the world, the earth natural ecosystems have lost the balance, and so on. These organizations and mass scientists have tried saving the planet to heal the humanity, but in the past 30 years, in all the indexes to measure the health of the planet, we only succeeded in converting one index' deterioration, that is to decrease manufacturing and producing of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which make the void in ozone layer, all the other key indexes trend is still moving in worse. (2013) [1].

Since industrial civilization history has developed for 200 years, it is also the history of the modern economic crisis and the science disaster, the history of world wars and terrorists attack, the history of the earth natural environment destroyed, the history of the secondary natural disasters-prone for the environmental destruction, meanwhile the most serious and frightening, as well the most neglected by human, is the history of human moral sentiments and cultural spirit degenerated.

## II. THE REAL MEANING OF THE CATASTROPHES FOR HUMAN BEINGS

The real meaning of the catastrophe is that it is both the burier of human beings supreme rule of short-term self-interests (SRSS), and the midwife of human beings' new values, consciousness and ideologies.

Actually, many scientists and social elites have recognized that it shall lead to what consequence it is, when human beings are driven by the SRSS, use science and technology, recklessly chase economic interests, and head to degeneration step by step. They have taken all kinds of ways to strongly appeal their governments, and the international community, as well practice their own advocacy. The international community and environmental organizations, and the new energy industries are established by their sparkplugging and the support of some governments. Unfortunately, since the back of the last century there is no real achievement yet. (2010)

The human beings' souls have been rotting in greediness, how do they escape from catastrophes striking? Some elites have seen the root of the problem: human beings have to alter the values, "only the changing of mankind consciousness can save the planet." [2][3][4]

Then, what power can make the whole humankind change their current values, consciousness and ideologies (VCI) of SRSS completely, really step into a energu revolution, create a new sustaining economic and social systems?

The answer from the history of mankind society is "catastrophes".

The catastrophes had ever hastened two revolutions of VCI delivery in the history of Europe.

### a) *The first great revolution of values, consciousness and ideologies (VCI) in the West*

This revolution has a symbol with Constantine the Great issued the Edict of Milan in 393 AD, the Christianity became the belief which can be believed free from suffering religious persecution. Since then the old VCI, "people-oriented" in ancient hellenism and Roman culture was destroyed very soon. The christian culture and the VCI of "gods-supreme" not only became the mainstream, but staged the dominant religion in western world subsequently. The process of destroying the old VCI lasted hundreds of years, meanwhile if there were no the fatal power of major plagues, volcanic eruptions, wars and civil disturbances etc, the christian culture and VCI challenged the powerfull legitimate VCI of people-oriented, obtained the final victory impossibility. Jesus was living to preach only for over 3 years, approximately murdered in 30 AD, by 393 AD, Christianity attained the same legal status with other

beliefs, before and after lasted for more than 300 years. In 79 AD of this period, the most prosperous city Pompeii in the Roman Empire, after several earthquakes this city disappeared with the Vesuvius volcano eruption in 18 hours. 165-180 AD "Anthony plague "and" Ciprian plague in about 15 years resulted in the population sharply reduced about 40% in the territory of the Roman Empire. 541 AD the Rome was stricken once again by "Justinian plague", the death number of the population reached to 25 million, even over half in the main city. In addition to these natural calamities, even more it suffered from the disasters of continual wars and civil strife in the same period. Wars and domestic turmoils were also the catalytic and bulking agegent of great plagues, all these led to a great loss of population and property, left land uncultivated, productivity retrogressing, severe inflation and deflation were concurrent together the mass had nothing to rely on for surviving. Liberal and rational humanistic values of the Roman Empire had hopelessly gradually corrupted in cold-blooded selfishness, unrestrained extravagantness and carnality hedonism, since the peak period of great material wealth prosperity and the triumphant conquerors reveled in their glory, the corrupt VCI were attacked with the continued huge catastrophes, completely lost the foundation for its existence. During this period, many Roman were rushing out of old belief and VCI, even many of whom were Roman nobles, went into the Christian faith, all of these eventually induced the first great revolution of VCI in the West, and destroyed the powerful and extremely aggressive Empire which just like the sun at high noon, swept across Europe, Asia, Africa, and sustained more than ten centuries. (2013)(2005).

The VCI revolution smashed the worship of many compatible gods of ancient Greece and Rome, and the carnality hedonism after the people-oriented values corrupted. Establishing the authority status of monotheism of Christian faith in God and the Holy See, staging soteriology of salvation through good works and the ultramontaniam in the history of middle ages. The values of soteriology of Christian let them give the hands of rescue with love of humankind and unselfishness to the people during the well as without fear of sacrifice. They attended patients whom had epidemic disease in hospitals, were volunteers to hold the funeral for the dead strangers, adopted orphans whom no one would take care, provided accommodation for the helpless wandering peasants and veterans in cities, more over looked for a way of survival for them, and so on. All people were obliged for Christians, felt the warmth of the human, gained the feeling of home, which were not able to be done by the Romans in corrupted people-oriented values. Just about the Christian values delivered the positive energy that made the Christians number keep rising during the persecuted period, the direct pushing hands of rising were successional catastrophes. Without

the striking of catastrophes, no the collapse of economic foundation which was relied on by old VCI, without the terrestrial miseries from catastrophes, no chance to highlight Jesus Christ and his disciples to do good works with their strong cohesive power and lofty moral even donating the lives.

Catastrophes made the new VCI of Christian vulnerable groups from the long-term brutal persecution took over Europe, even all the West.

Well-known American historian Will Durant said, There was not any drama to be greater than this one in the history of mankind, the few Christians suffered oppression and contempt from a succession of emperors, indomitably endured all the trials, silently increased the number of their group, while the local people fell in confusion, they established internal order, against the force by words, faced atrocity with expecting, finally defeated the most powerful empire in the history. Caesar encountered Christ in the colosseum, the final victory belongs to Christ. (2013)(2009) [5] [6] [7].

This is the first great revolution of the Western VCI in mankind history.

*b) The second great revolution of values, consciousness and ideologies (VCI) in the West*

The second VCI revolution rose in the Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment. From the superficial phenomenon, these three movements made the second VCI revolution win the final victory in the history of Europe, however, the fundamental strength which smashed the VCI of the soteriology of salvation through good works and the superiority of Papal authority, was still powerful catastrophes not the movements.

First of all was the Black Death which shook the world history from 1347 - 1351, 25 million people died in the plague, the mortality rate reached to 30%. This plague made feudal manors be acutely short of labor force, ensuing the attachment relationship of colonus on lands, the ownership of feudal lords on lands were disintegrated. Facing death the idea of freedom and democracy, and human rights sprang up like mushrooms for desiring freedom and living. Meanwhile the Renaissance was just about strongly expressed the aspiration of freedom, health, and happy life, and the revolt from Papal authority suppressed freedom and humanity.

Another "flu" plague broke out again in 1556-1560, the mortality rate as high as 20%, this plague led to the Reformation movement in the history of Europe. Facing the threat of death, churches took no effective way to help people escape from death, but sold "indulgences" to make money everywhere, which caused the Reformation sweeping out whole Europe. In 1665 London burst in on the well-known Great Plague once more, several plagues made the population sharply reduce by a third again, in some places left only half. [8]

Next, people suffered another man-made disaster-wars and civil strife. The most representative of the war during this period, was the Crusades from 1096 to 1291, which was a train of wars under the permission of the Roman Catholic Pope, started and lasted nearly 200 years, toward eastern shores of the Mediterranean where were considered the heathen nations by feudal lords and knights in Western Europe. The scourge of wars and civil strife in Western Europe and the Mediterranean countries suffered heavy losses, not only hundreds of thousands of Crusaders died in the wars, but the people of the countries bordering the Mediterranean, including Jews, Eastern Christians and Muslims also died in large numbers in the wars and looting. Scrambling for the Holy Land Jerusalem again and again, both the Muslim countries and Christian countries paid a very heavy price. The Kingdom of Jerusalem was established in West Asia by the Western European knights of feudal aristocracy in the first Crusades, only maintained for 88 years. [9] [10] [11]

The wiping out of Plagues and wars made the feudal autocracy under the Pope totalitarian fell into crisis-ridden in the Middle Ages of Europe. At first the revolution of the VCI and social transition were almost impossible that from all the aspects of socio-economic, political, cultural, religious, scientific and technological etc, because of the swiping of the plagues and wars conditions changed rapidly, which built up a very good foundation for the Renaissance, the Reformation and even the Enlightenment, as well as hastened delivering those bright as the stars, dynamical literary writers, artists, ideologists, scientists in this period, brought up a variety of new ideas and new scientific world view, impacting and influencing fiercely on the old VCI. Catastrophes became both the burier of the old VCI, and the midwife of human beings' new VCI once again. Under the wiping out of superhuman strength of catastrophes, the European religious feudal autocracy went in smoke to ashes, new VCI of asserting freedom, democracy, equality and human rights overcame the old VCI of soteriology of salvation through good works and the ultramontanism, became the mainstream of VCI, and promoted scientific and technological developing rapidly, as well achieved the first industrial revolution. (2013) [12].

Obviously, the catastrophes impact of on the human VCI and civilization is fateful. It continuously directly hits out at the core elements of the earth civilization-human beings, it uses the most hardhearted way to take away lives of human beings, forces mankind to burst the overturning revolution in the deep heart core, and seek the new VCI to proceed without any hesitation.

Those points and actions which believe that future technological developments will lead to the fourth industrial revolution, the so called "energy revolution", and be able to save mankind; appeals to society and

wish to awaken mankind by a variety of way and efforts; establish and join Greenpeace, take action to protect the environment, and so on, which are the nice mankind wishes to get rid of the striking from the major disasters, but there will not be the true effectiveness of complete change.

In the globalized modern social environment, the strongest power which impels human awakening together, bursts extraordinary internal impetus together, and forming an unstoppable huge trend together, discarding thoroughly the old VCI together, is the catastrophes only. When the existing economic base is knocked down by the unremitting and frequent catastrophes, and bring about a sharp reduction in population, the old VCI, including some corrupted political system and state structure shall lose their living space. Only under the premise of the new VCI what the epoch of human society need, being able to gain the opportunity to stand on the historical stage, become true universal values and common consciousness of humankind. Once this new VCI win in the revolution, a new era of human society will come up, otherwise, people will continue to breed disasters for future catastrophes step-by-step, it shall be only a matter of time to outbreak catastrophes with modern human beings.

### III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Today, the financial crisis, recession, technological disaster, terrorism, hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, etc., all kinds of disaster are intensifying, but have not reached to the horrible extent as the former history we mentioned above to weed out human beings in huge number. Disasters seem to be playing a prelude with the proverbial "slow-boiling frog" to warn mankind.

Who can be sure that being able to find a shining path for surviving, not to be eliminated.

In next one of this series articles, we continue to analyse and seek the shining path for our future survive.

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### Notes

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