

Sun Myung Moon, Spiritual Virtuoso

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April 27, 2020



Reverend Sun Myung Moon was born one hundred years ago in 1920. He was certainly the most global leader to come from Korea.

During his life, he built a universal movement, which gained worldwide attention in a very short period. Most observers were puzzled to see that a religious leader could conduct activities in strategic sectors so quickly and efficiently. Reverend Moon often claimed to be a very versatile person and that he had fought to achieve his mission with an extreme sense of urgency.

This versatility and velocity make him a model of a spiritual virtuoso, a concept first coined by German sociologist Max Weber.

First of all, what is virtuosity?

Having outstanding musical technique in the mastery of one or several instruments is called virtuosity. The virtuoso can play complex compositions with dexterity, velocity and mastery.



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Bach, Mozart and Beethoven were geniuses in composition as well as virtuoso instrumentalists. When a genius composes profound music and plays it in a virtuosic manner, the audience receives this as sublime beauty.

In classical music, virtuosity is enhanced by live performances in concerts. With the strong communion and support from the conductor and public, the virtuoso may look possessed, as if in a trance.

A devout believer may be disturbed by the Weberian concept of spiritual virtuosity. Virtuosity belongs to the world of the arts, and it procures sensual pleasure and aesthetic stimulation, whereas spirituality aims at elevating and

purifying the soul. Moreover, even in the world of the arts, virtuosity is sometimes looked down upon as being vain, self-aggrandizing and narcissistic.

1. Virtue, virtuosity and the ideal person

Yet, as the etymology indicates, virtuosity and virtue stem from the same root, and originally go together. Both words derive from the Latin *vir*, meaning man. The Italian adjective *virtuoso* appeared at the time of the Reformation and Renaissance, both of which were quests for the ideal man. The virtuoso is a man of exceptional quality, or virtue, an accomplished man. Virtue can be seen as the internal, *sungsang* aspect, and virtuosity as the external, *hyungsang* aspect of the man that Adam should have become, i.e., the Tree of Life. Surely, God wanted to bequeath His virtuosity to men and women equally. Men and women express their virtuosity differently, but that is beyond the scope of this essay.

In the later stages of the Renaissance, the virtuoso was portrayed as a person gifted in several disciplines, one who could balance science and conscience, knowledge and wisdom.

2. Michelangelo, who painted the creation of Adam and Christ's return

Michelangelo was the first Western artist whose biography was published while he was still living. Actually, he inspired two biographers. One of them, Giorgio Vasari, stated that his work transcended that of any artist living or dead, and was "supreme in not one art alone but in all three."

Because his virtuosity seemed to flow directly from the Creator, Michelangelo was called *Il Divino* ("the divine one"). Struck by his total dedication to his art and the depth of his works, Italians praised his *terribilità* — his ability to instill a sense of awe in his work. Even today, Michelangelo is often seen as the greatest artist of all time. A Unificationist hypothesis for this is that Michelangelo was chosen by God to see, reveal, and paint both the Creation of Adam (the Alpha) and the Second Coming (the Omega). It is Michelangelo's grandiose visions of God's relationship with Adam and God's relationship with the Lord of Second Coming that makes his virtuosity unique. This may explain why Unificationist literature

(textbooks, flyers, posters, PowerPoints, etc.) repeatedly make use of Michelangelo's work.

3. **Michelangelo's Second Coming looks like a conductor**

Moreover, Michelangelo's artistic virtuosity announces and prophesies the amazing virtuosity of the Lord of the Second Coming. He understood that the third Adam will perfectly unite virtue and virtuosity.

When we observe attentively his representation of the Christ of the Last Judgment, something is really striking: with the position of his arms and hands, his Lord almost looks like a conductor about to guide a symphony orchestra.



A detail from Michelangelo's "The Last Judgment" (1536-41) in the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City.

4. **Original virtuosity and direct dominion**

In light of Unificationism, original virtuosity seems deeply connected to what the Principle calls direct dominion. It thus covers the three blessings. When the original nature fully blooms by going through the three stages of indirect dominion, it is manifested in the original, Adamic culture of heart. Thus, man displays the virtuosity of a divine character (Heart, Logos and Creativity). With the rise of modern secularization, virtuosity tended to be connected strictly to technical mastery in general, and more specifically in music.

5. **Why is spiritual virtuosity a characteristic of the Messiah?**

The Messiah declares himself to the world by displaying an eruptive spirituality that aims at winning the maximum number of souls to God in the shortest possible time.

The Messiah lives with an urgent, irrepressible sense of mission. He unveils the passion of God that we change our lives immediately. This is done in a whirlpool of completely new concepts, new emotions, new ways. This prompts the Messiah to release the original virtuosity that God intended to bequeath to Adam as Lord of the entire Creation.

Born to *be* whole, destined to *love* all, the Messiah is bound to *do* everything, and do it well.

6. **Aspects of Sun Myung Moon's virtuosity**

Rev. Moon openly talked about his virtuosity. As a young man, he trained to speak faster than any other person, and developed the velocity of speech. In Hungnam prison, he was the best laborer in the death camp. He often claimed to be a master of Chinese calligraphy. On the ocean, he determined to beat records of catching the biggest tunas. He invented new types of boats.

He also determined to be the fastest matchmaker in all history and to match the largest number of couples. He advocated multifaceted virtuosity:

Other Americans only tackle one profession at a time, but we do five or six things at the same time. I want to do everything to the fullest degree. I have created training for husbands and wives here in the Unification Church, and the first qualification to be considered the most capable candidate is the ability to do ten different things simultaneously. God made me into a very versatile man, not a single-minded man who can do only one thing.

7. **The Heavenly Tribal Messiah victor as a virtuoso**

To become a Heavenly Tribal Messiah, one should inherit messianic virtuosity. We are thus asked to declare our self, to commit our self absolutely, and to see this task as our lifetime mission. Many have experienced Tribal Messiahship as a highly transformative experience. It transforms the ordinary believer into an extraordinary evangelist. Rev. Moon wanted to create a school of messiahship producing global leaders with a multifaceted virtuosity. With True Mother's (Mrs. Hak Ja Han) strong emphasis on Tribal Messiahship, the completion of 430 couples and registration at the Cheonbowon, many HTM victors recently emerged. A HTM victor is something akin to a Unificationist virtuoso.

8. **Jesus Christ, archetype of spiritual virtuosity**

Robert Boyle wrote on the *Christian Virtuoso* (1690) and Max Weber offered insights about spiritual virtuosity. But they did not attempt to understand the Messiah as the archetype of spiritual virtuosity.

More than any other spiritual master, Jesus seemingly captured small circles as well as large crowds by his exceptional spiritual virtuosity. Jesus behaved as a genius who would convey the deepest and most universal spiritual truths with utmost simplicity, velocity and universality. He was so gifted to reveal God's truth that traditional Christology concluded that only the Creator was able to speak and act like Jesus did.

Jesus was often confronted with questions from people. Those questions could be pure and candid, desperate, challenging, cynical, inimical, and hostile. Often, Jesus gave very quick answers, which were full of spiritual fire and able to shake people's souls. He never prepared speeches, but spoke from the depth of his heart.

9. **Athens and Jerusalem as schools of virtuosity**

Antiquity had already produced many outstanding speakers, both in Athens and Jerusalem. The rules of eloquence had been codified and academies of fine speech produced dozens of great orators. In Athens, intellectual virtuosity was to be accompanied by elegant phrasing and beautiful imagery so that the truth would be thrilling and highly emotional. Moreover, theater was of paramount importance to the Greeks. The Greek tragedy brought the spectator to a trance-like state, or catharsis.

Eloquence was all the more important because the spoken word was ephemeral. Speech was uttered just once, and could not be recorded. There was no amplification of the voice and the actors had to speak loudly, yet distinctly, without losing control. A speaker needed to be strong and powerful so that his whole body would amplify the discourse of the tongue.

Jerusalem also produced major prophets. Several books of the Bible are masterpieces of literature. It has been suggested that only Shakespeare could occasionally match the divine inspiration found in the Song of Songs, the Psalms and Proverbs, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, to mention only some of the most famous books of the Old Testament.

10. **Jesus was to perfect Jacob's and Moses' virtuosity in his lifetime**

Jesus came from this tradition of prophetic eloquence. However, as the beloved son of God and Lord of the entire Creation, he displayed a spiritual virtuosity that was unprecedented. Even so, the four gospels offer an incomplete overview of what Jesus wanted to say, wanted to do, and wanted to be. Jesus' premature death prevented him from fulfilling the original purpose of Creation. The Divine Principle reveals that Jesus Christ was to show the model course to subjugate Satan in substance at the world level, inheriting Jacob's symbolic course (family and tribal level) and Moses' image course (national level).

Let's identify some unique components of Rev. Moon's virtuosity. In many ways, as the Third Adam, he is the encapsulation and perfection of Jacob's, Moses' and Jesus' virtuosity. This is the biblical component of his profile.

11. **Korean sources of Rev. Moon's virtuosity: *Shimjung*, *han* and *pansori***

Besides being the heir of biblical virtuosity, Rev. Moon is a typical Korean virtuoso. Here are some insights.

Korean dramas are now popular worldwide. This year we celebrate the centenary of a man who comes from this culture.

His movement was originally known as the “church of tears.” The ability to shed divine tears, to let God weep through the self, was the strongest indication that one had become a disciple of Sun Myung Moon. Tears exist in Judaism and Christianity, but Rev. Moon made those tears a cornerstone of his movement. Those tears are new and are part of the spiritual revelation brought by the master from Korea. Rev. Moon claims he was trained and coached by God to shed the deepest tears of all human history in order to atone for sin. This tradition does not come from the Bible. It is unique to Korean culture, with its specific notions of *shimjung* (heart, the irrepressible impulse to seek joy through loving an object) and *han* (a very deep resentment and pain that cannot be understood), and its unique art of storytelling called *pansori*.

Much of Rev. Moon’s spiritual virtuosity is challenging for Western minds. However, it can enrapture Asian hearts, especially in Korea. Rev. Moon studied all the virtuous characters of his country and of Korean culture, and was determined to surpass them all in filial piety, patriotism and sainthood. Moreover, he turned the Korean heritage into something universal. For instance, he often described himself as the man who has suffered the most from injustice. It is a typical theme of *pansori*. But his life course is narrated as the *pansori* of *pansoris* and transcends this art form. The theme is to vindicate the injustice done to God.

12. Korean sources of Rev. Moon’s virtuosity: *Jeongseong* and *pali-pali*

Jeongseong is the Korean word for diligence, hard work, sincerity, devotion, and pouring all of one’s soul and energy into some activity, with utmost concentration. For Chinese, Japanese and Koreans, to work is to work hard, for many hours, to truly exhaust oneself and arrive at the highest possible quality through sacrifice and dedication. This work ethic is something truly challenging for the Western world, even though this notion also exists (dexterity, mastery), but is given less emphasis.

Rev. Moon applied the notion of *jeongseong* to spiritual practices and discipline. He advocated that the Unificationist should be a very busy person, always focused on the mission, always trying to breakthrough. But this hard work should be based on *logos* and on heart. One has to feel and think very deeply in order to experience the living God while recreating the world.

Finally, he wanted to be the fastest man ever, the champion of velocity. In music, velocity is almost a symbol of virtuosity. The virtuoso plays at full speed in order to mesmerize the audience.

In his quest for velocity, Rev. Moon could benefit from the Korean cultural tradition of *pali-pali* (“hurry-up”). Koreans often claim they can be faster than the Chinese and Japanese in martial arts, calligraphy, archery, or table tennis. To be Korean is to be quick and fast. Rev. Moon always spoke so quickly, walked quickly, and decided everything quickly. He clearly stated we have to shorten the Providence, find the shortcut, and mobilize the spirit world. Non-Koreans cannot adjust easily and even average Koreans cannot follow such extreme speed.

After the passing of Rev. Moon in 2012, many feared that without his virtuosity, his movement would fade away. Just the opposite has taken place in the past eight years. His wife and disciples have proven that his spiritual virtuosity is a legacy which is bound to stay with us for a long time.

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