

九十二學年度 外國語文學系 (所) 甲 組碩士班研究生招生考試

科目 英文 科號 4804 共 3 頁 第 1 頁*請在試卷【答案卷】內作答

Part I

Read the following essay by Gwynne Dyer and answer the questions as directed.

Why do babies die? Why do people starve to death in famines? Why is the universe so cruel, taking some people's lives away before they even had a chance to enjoy life, while others have long, happy lives and die peacefully in bed?

Religious people call it "problem of evil." If God is all-powerful, why does he allow such horror and pain in his universe? A god who deliberately allowed Auschwitz and the killing fields of Cambodia to happen would not deserve our love, or even our respect—and if he couldn't prevent them, then he isn't all-powerful.

Cardinal Basil Hume, an English clergyman, was recently asked why God permitted such things by a journalist as they both stood in the middle of an Ethiopian refugee camp. Hume had the honesty to answer that he had "no idea." More sophisticated men of religion, whether Christian, Muslim or Jewish, might give longer answers that sounded plausible—but they are all answers that go round in circles.

If you don't believe in God, of course, then there is no philosophical problem. The universe is impersonal, human beings are on their own, and terrible things happen to them for the same reason they happen to fruit flies: no reason at all, except blind chance. But even non-believers often wish the universe were a kinder, more forgiving environment. And the answer is: it can't be.

It is an answer that applies equally to a universe created by a loving God and to a Godless universe which doesn't care about people at all. Any universe which could conceivably be a habitat for human beings must be one in which events have predictable consequences—even if those consequences include terrible tragedies for human beings.

Imagine, for a moment, a universe in which tragedies didn't happen. When the engines of a jet airliner fail on takeoff, it does not crash at the end of the runway and burn 150 people to death. Instead, it just wafts gently to the ground, because God loved the passengers and chose to save them.

But if that were all that happened when aircraft engines failed, there would be no need for aircraft maintenance. Indeed, there would be no need for engines, or even wings—and people could safely step off the edge of cliffs and walk on air. The law of gravity would be suspended whenever it endangered human lives.

So would all the other laws of nature. Whenever children's lives were at risk from disease, biochemistry would change its rules to save them. If an earthquake were going to kill thousands of people, continental drift would simply have to stop: so much for geology. And if someone tried to kill somebody else, the gun wouldn't work, or the bullet wouldn't fly straight, or it would turn into a marshmallow before it struck the victim.

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In such a universe, there could be no science or technology, because there would be no fixed natural laws on which we could base them. The strength of steel and the temperature of boiling water would vary depending on whether human lives were threatened by a given value. There could not even be logic, since the same causes would not invariably have the same effects. It would be an entirely magical universe.

It is all a package, and quite indivisible. Either you have a magical Garden of Eden where non-human creatures closely resembling angels, with no hard choices to make and no penalties to pay, browse idly on lotus leaves. Or else you get the remorselessly logical universe we live in, where actions have consequences and you pay dearly for your own mistakes (and those of others).

I know there is little consolation in all this for those who have had to watch helplessly while their child died, or for the millions whose loves and hopes lie 40 years buried with the last world war. It is a cruel universe, and knowing why does not make it less cruel. But even God could not have made it any different if he wanted it to be an appropriate home for human beings.

It's cold comfort, but maybe there is some consolation to be had in the fact that we're extremely fortunate to have been able to visit the universe even briefly. At the instant of your conception and mine, a million other potential men and women lost their only chance to see the place at all.

1. Summarize the main ideas of Dyer's essay in about 200 words. (15%)
2. In paragraph 3, we are told that Cardinal Basil Hume, an English clergyman, said he had no idea why God permitted terrible things to happen. In a well-supported essay, write your own answer to the journalist's question. (35%)

Part II

Translate the following passage from English into Chinese: (20%)

Diaspora, as a trans-national process of cultural trans(re)lation, is a socio-cultural practice that thrives on a process of constant re-signification of the established assumptions and meanings of identity. Diasporans, in the process of crossing and re-crossing borders of space, time, race, culture, language, history and politics, translate and transform a static historical identity into a dynamic trans-cultural entity. Although the notion of national identity is by no means outdated, there are new pressures nevertheless being put on the re-definition of trans-national and trans-cultural identities exerted by the processes of rapid globalization in many fields of human activities. In this context, the study of identity in Asian Canadian diasporic literature must go beyond the quasi-geographical boundary into new dynamic systems of politics, economics and culture, which are no longer "co-existent with the borders of nation-states."

The transfer of peoples and cultures from all over the world to Canada has generated an

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intricate transnationality and cultural globality, which are based upon the tension of overlaps of different national cultures. In a sense, the crossing of a geopolitical border is the least important aspect of diasporic experience in view of the long process of adjusting to a new society. Despite their shared diasporic heritage, Asian diasporans in Canada exhibit differing attitudes towards their diasporic experience: some favor mutual assimilation and acculturation, while others advocate cultural distinctness and separateness.

Part III

Write a critical discussion, in your opinion and your own words, on the issues of "flexible citizenship," "pure race," and "transculturalism" after reading the passage in Part II. Do not copy directly from the passage (300 words in length). (30%)