Right people, right time

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"Sometimes you meet the right person. It's just the wrong time."

Probably every hopeless romantic knows this quote intimately. It is a cliché, but it also speaks the truth about the nature of events. Sometimes, things fall into place too nicely to refuse the intervention of fate. In reality, the same sentimentality can be applied to virtually everything. A skillful footballer whose career was ruptured by injuries. A talented actor who has too many bad projects.

Alternatively, as Vũ Trọng Phụng, a well-known Vietnamese writer, once said:

"Nếu mỗi ngày tôi có một miếng bít tết để ăn thì đâu có phải chết non như thế này." [1]

(Literally: *Had I had a beefsteak every day, I would not have perished this early*).

Eventually, that feeling of longing for perfection only makes people forlorn. Fate, or *Duyên* in Vietnamese, is there when you do not need it. Relying on fate does not mean that you can wait until the opportunity appears in front of you. There are series of decisions that you have to make to prepare yourself for that moment.

The 9/11 in 2001 [2], the SARS pandemic in 2002-2004 [3], or even the global financial crisis in 2008, had happened before I cared to understand anything. In a way, they only

existed in a parallel world that I could only peek into. The memories that I have about these events are the collective memory of the world. I know nothing.

On the contrary, my mentor and his wife survived the events. My mentor traveled through Hong Kong during the SARS pandemic, while his wife's career was in the airline industry. In 2001, she knew the fear that had eaten the airline industry from the inside. Then the SARS pandemic made the world shaken again. My mentor went through the Chek Lap Kok Airport in 2003. Who could have known the emptiness better than him? After that, he had become an established economist when the financial crisis hit Vietnam in 2008. A critical period of Vietnam's economic history was recorded [4].

When I heard their stories directly from them, suddenly, the collective memory became more personal. It felt closer to the heart. I knew these people, and they had been through some of the most terrible events in the 21st century. Now, it is the COVID-19 pandemic [5].

Why are they the right people at the right time?

The world before 2010 was not the same as we know now. We were not connected 24/7. Air travel, especially internationally, was a luxury that needed careful planning and resources. Thus, the impacts of these events did not reach everyone equally. My mentor and his wife were fortunate, or unfortunate, to be at the epicenter. And thankfully, they came out unscathed. Their intimate knowledge of the events can be passed on to the next generations. It is also fortunate that they are storytellers, and even more, a researcher. Thus, the stories are not lost in translation, but they were epitomized and crystalized into systematic knowledge [4].

Currently, the modern collective memory of the world has become flatter [6]. We experience the same events, in the same way and speed, like everyone else on the planet Earth. Thanks to technological advancement. However, it does not mean that we are all the right people at the right time.

The opportunity becomes harder to see. Only by understanding our mindsponge mechanism [7,8] and capitalizing on our creativity can we unlock hidden secrets of our time [9].

After all, through the constant process of creativity, people can turn their knowledge and resources, and even serendipitous moments, into an advantage [10]. In *Breath of the Wild*, the in-game physics and other mechanisms allow the players to have the same experience. However, only the skillful players can create new tricks and show us the unexpected features of the game [11,12].

Similarly, when the world is flatter, more people can access the same resources. However, only people with the right tools and mindsets can tap into their creative capacity to achieve greater results.

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