

【汉英珍藏本】
世界名家精品英汉对照系列·第一辑



流传千年的至理名言 启迪人生的睿智哲理

世界上最流行的哲理小品

The Most Popular Philosophical Essays in The World

本书编委会 编译

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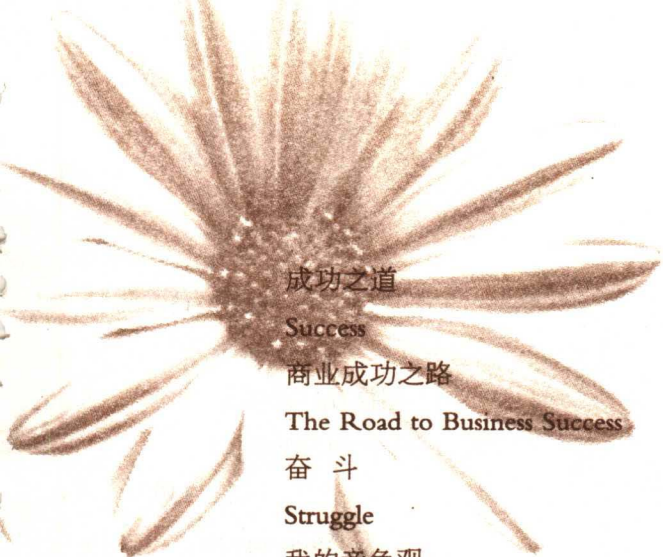
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生活的艺术

The Art Of Living

生活的艺术是懂得适时取舍。

生活本身就是一个不平衡的矛盾体：

它劝诫我们对生活赋予的诸多恩赐要好好珍惜，

而这一切最终又将化为乌有。

古犹太教士说过，“人是握拳而来，

撒手而归。”

The art of living is to know when to hold fast and when to let go.

For life is a paradox:

It enjoins us to cling to its many gifts
even while it ordains their eventual relinquishment.

The rabbis of old put it thisway,

"A man comes to this world with his fist clenched,
but when he dies, his hand is open."

第

一

卷

年轻人的 四种选择

★佚名

毕业前夕，斯坦福大学毕业班的班长——吉姆·宾斯寄给我一封信，他说自己对未来忧心忡忡。他在信上说道：“我们这一代人抱着不信任的态度来看待成人的世界，这种怀疑胜过以往任何一代人……而且越来越倾向于完全拒绝那个世界。”

他的话显然代表了许多同龄人的观点。在过去几年当中，不论是在大学校园内，还是在校园外，我都听到不少年轻人论及同样的话题——对成人世界的慌惧与忐忑不安。大体说来，他们的态度可以归纳如下：世界完全是乱糟糟的一团，充满了偏袒、困苦和战争，对此应负责任的想必应该是那些当家作主的成年人；如果他们无力做得更好，又凭什么来教训我们这一代？我们根本不用他们的谆谆教导。

至少从他们的观点来看我认为这些结论是合乎情理的。但是对即将踏入社会门槛的这一代人来说，问题的关键并不在于我们的社会是不完美的（对此我们也有同样看法），而是如何应对这样一个社会。尽管社会到处都有荆棘和不合理，但它毕竟是我们所共同拥有的唯一的世界。那么，选择一个什么样的策略来应对这个唯一的社会，是刚步入成年期的年轻人不得不作出的第一个决定，而且这往往也是他们一生中至关重要的一步。通过研究，我发现只有以下四种选择：

一、逃避现实

这是一种最古老的权宜之计。在任何地方、任何年龄，也不管他是否



服用幻觉剂,这种方法都能适用。这是那些认为这个世界太残酷、太繁杂因而令人忍无可忍的人所选择的一贯计谋。从定义上讲,这是一种寄生虫式的生活方式。在这种生活方式下生活着的人,以这种或那种方式,一味地向这个自己蔑视并拒绝承担任何责任的社会去索取,而不付出一丝一毫。我们中的一些人对此不免深感到厌倦——认为这是一种不体面的生活方式。但是对于那些精神萎靡不振,既缺乏精力又缺少自尊的人来说,这是可忍受的唯一选择。

二、隐居

这一谋略自古有之。从有了人类文明以来,就有些人试图逃避文明世界,希望找到一种更为简朴、田园风味更浓烈、更为恬静的生活方式。他们与那些逃避社会现实者有所不同,他们并非寄生者。他们愿意自食其力并为社会作出一定的贡献,只是他们厌恶文明世界里的生存环境,也就是丑陋不堪与紧张压抑的大都市。

解决这一问题的困难是它已不可能大规模实施。因为令人感到遗憾的是,我们这个地球上尚未开发的人类和未被玷污的自然景色已濒临绝灭,除了南北两极之外,其他地方已经没有可供开垦的地区了。只有少数富有的乡绅还能遁入乡村,去尽享安逸的田园生活。但总体来说,迁徙潮流是朝着相反的方向——由农村流向城市。

三、策划一场革命

这一策略总则是受到那些对民主进程单调的运作方式缺乏耐心,或者那些相信只有付诸武力才能改变基本社会制度的人的拥戴。它吸引着活跃而有理想的每一代年轻人,对他们来说,这种策略不仅浪漫,而且颇具吸引力。这种策略往往以某个潇洒的、有人格魅力的人物为其象征。这种策略简洁、彻底、具有更大的杀伤力。“既然这个社会已经败坏到了无可救药的程度,那就碾碎它,在它的废墟上重新建筑一个美好的世界。”

我有一些身为革命者的最好的朋友,而且其中一些人还生活得相当惬意。在这些人看来,虽然革命未能实现,他们仍然快活地策划他们的大屠杀,直至衰老。另有一些人年纪轻轻就命丧黄泉,或猝死于牢狱中,或惨死在街头巷战中。但是最悲惨的是那些取得革命成功的人们,他们目睹了自



己所建立的新的国家机构仍然像被推翻的国家机构那般冷酷无情、死气沉沉,他们一生都在极度失望之中度过。

当然,我并不是说革命一无所获。有些革命(如美国革命、法国革命)确实使情况有所好转。我只想说那些理想主义者的革命无论成功与否,注定只会让他们感到失望。因为即使以最乐观的看法,胜利的曙光永远无法照耀在他们梦想的、消除人类所有卑劣行径的美丽新世界上,相反,它只会照耀着那个人皆所知的、普普通通的、仍然需要杂货和污水处理的地方。一个革命的国家,无论被贴上了何种政治标签,都会由市场营销、卫生系统以及机构管理方面的专家来管理,而不是由推崇暴力的浪漫主义者来经营。

对于那些立志重改社会,但又想寻找一个比武装革命更为现实的方法的理想主义者们来说,还有另一种选择。

四、尝试逐渐改变世界,一次改一点

乍眼一看,这种途径不仅吸引力不够,相反,它既不具脱俗的魅力,又不能指望得到成效。它依靠说服和民主决策这两种工具进行变革,非旦不确定,而且还需要耐心,而这一点恰好是人们所一直缺乏的。它优点,也是唯一的优点在于有时它的确起点作用——在某个特定的时间点内,它提供了一个比任何其他可行的策略所能提供的、能更好地消除世上一些暴行的机会。

至少历史的证据好像证明了这一点。在我大学刚毕业时,我们那代人也发觉世界是如此糟杂。几乎各地的经济机器都已经崩溃,四分之一的美国人面临着失业,一场大战似乎一触即发。当时我作为大学报纸编辑,和今天的学生积极分子一样,对此表示过强烈抗议。

与此同时,我们那代人慢慢察觉,改造世界跟在亚平宁地区打仗颇像,你刚占领一座山,另一座山又横在面前。30年代的经济危机问题刚刚有所控制,而种族平等,保护城市的居住环境,应付不为人们所熟悉的、具有很大大隐蔽性的新形式的战争等等,这些在阔绰社会中前所未有的新问题迎面而来。然而,让人最懊恼的是,我们发现了人口爆炸的问题。突然摆在我们面前的事实是,在我们居住的这艘小小的宇宙飞船上,乘客的数量差不多每40年就要翻一番。只要地球上的人口以这种致命的速度继续增长,其



他一切问题的解决都是让人不可思议的。我们的城市将会变得越来越拥挤、越来越混乱,越来越多的自然景观被破坏,空气和水变得更污浊。所有人的生活质量也将会持续恶化。假设太多的人不得已而为不断减少的食物和生存空间而斗争的话,那么战争升级看来是在所难免的。

因而,吉姆·宾斯这一代人肩负着艰难无比的任务。但是在我看来,这并非无法完成的任务。以往的事实证明,如果他们采取以往处理问题的办法,从实际着手,一点一滴、坚持不懈、共同努力,问题必定能迎刃而解。



Four Choices for Young People

★ *Anonymous*

Shortly before his graduation, Jim Binns, president of the senior class at Stanford University, wrote me about some of his misgivings. "More than any other generation," he said, "our generation views the adult world with great skepticism... there is also an increased tendency to reject completely that world."

Apparently he speaks for a lot of his contemporaries. During the last few years, I have listened to scores of young people, in college and out, who were just as nervous about the grownup world. Roughly, their attitude might be summed up about like this: "The world is in pretty much of a mess, full of injustice, poverty, and war. The people responsible are, presumably, the adults who have been running things. If they can't do better than that, what have they got to teach our generation? That kind of lesson we can do without."

These conclusions strike me as reasonable, at least from their point of view. The relevant question for the arriving generation is not whether our society is imperfect (we can take that for granted), but how to deal with it. For all its harshness and irrationality, it is the only world we've got. Choosing a strategy to cope with it, then, is the first decision young adults have to make, and usually the most important decision of their lifetime. So far as I have been able to discover, there are only four basic alternatives:

I . Drop Out

This is one of the oldest expedients, and it can be practiced anywhere, at any age, and with or without the use of hallucinogens. It always



has been the strategy of choice for people who find the world too brutal or too complex to be endured. By definition, this way of life is parasitic. In one way or another, its practitioners batten on the society which they scorn and in which they refuse to take any responsibility. Some of us find this distasteful—an undignified kind of life. But for the poor in spirit, with low levels of both energy and pride, it may be the least intolerable choice available.

II. Flee

This strategy also has ancient antecedents. Ever since civilization began, certain individuals have tried to run away from it in hopes of finding a simpler, more pastoral, and more peaceful life. Unlike the dropouts, they are not parasites. They are willing to support themselves and to contribute something to the general community, but they simply don't like the environment of civilization; that is, the city, with all its ugliness and tension.

The trouble with this solution is that it no longer is practical on a large scale. Our planet, unfortunately, is running out of noble savages and unsullied landscapes; except for the polar regions, the frontiers are gone. A few gentleman farmers with plenty of money can still escape to the bucolic life—but in general the stream of migration is flowing the other way.

III. Plot a Revolution

This strategy is always popular among those who have no patience with the tedious workings of the democratic process or who believe that basic institutions can only be changed by force. It attracts some of the more active and idealistic young people of every generation. To them it offers a romantic appeal, usually symbolized by some dashing and charismatic figure. It has the even greater appeal of simplicity: "Since this society is hopelessly bad, let's smash it and build something better



on the ruins."

Some of my best friends have been revolutionists, and a few of them have led reasonably satisfying lives. These are the ones whose revolutions did not come off; they have been able to keep on cheerfully plotting their holocausts right into their senescence. Others died young, in prison or on the barricades. But the most unfortunate are those whose revolutions have succeeded. They lived, in bitter disillusionment, to see the establishment they had overthrown replaced by a new one, just as hard-faced and stuffy.

I am not, of course, suggesting that revolutions accomplish nothing. Some 'the American Revolution, the French Revolution' clearly do change things for the better. My point is merely that the idealists who make the revolution are bound to be disappointed in either case. For at best their victory never dawns on the shining new world they had dreamed of, cleansed of all human meanness. Instead it dawns on a familiar, workaday place, still in need of groceries and sewage disposal. The revolutionary state, under whatever political label, has to be run—not by violent romantics—but by experts in marketing, sanitary engineering, and the management of bureaucracies.

For the idealists who are determined to remake society, but who seek a more practical method than armed revolution, there remains one more alternative.

IV. Try to Change the World Gradually, One Clod at a Time

At first glance, this course is far from inviting. It lacks glamour. It promises no quick results. It depends on the exasperating and uncertain instruments of persuasion and democratic decision making. It demands patience, always in short supply. About all that can be said for it is that it sometimes works—that in this particular time and place it offers a better chance for remedying some of the world's outrages than any other



available strategy.

So at least the historical evidence seems to suggest. When I was graduating from college, my generation also found the world in a mess. The economic machinery had broken down almost everywhere: In this country nearly a quarter of the population was out of work. A major war seemed all too likely. As a college newspaper editor at that time, I protested against this just as vehemently as student activists are protesting today.

At the same time, my generation was discovering that reforming the world is a little like fighting a military campaign in the Apennines, as soon as you capture one mountain range, another one looms just ahead. As the big problems of the thirties were brought under some kind of rough control, new problems took their place — the unprecedented problems of an affluent society, of racial justice, of keeping our cities from becoming uninhabitable, of coping with war in unfamiliar guises. Most disturbing of all was our discovery of the population explosion. It dawned on us rather suddenly that the number of passengers on the small spaceship we inhabit is doubling about every forty years. So long as the earth's population keeps growing at this cancerous rate. All of the other problems appear virtually insoluble. Our cities will continue to become more crowded and noisome. The landscape will get more cluttered, the air and water even dirtier. The quality of life is likely to become steadily worse for everybody. And warfare on a rising scale seems inevitable if too many bodies have to struggle for ever-dwindling shares of food and living space.

So Jim Binns' generation has a formidable job on its hands. But not, I think, an insuperable one. On the evidence of the past, it can be handled in the same way that hard problems have been coped with before — piecemeal, pragmatically by the dogged efforts of many people.

