

The Importance of Living

生活的艺术

林语堂 著

越裔汉◎译

一本跨越时代、
在东西方享有最高盛誉的性灵之作！



国学大师、文化巨匠林语堂
旅美专事创作第一书

《吾国与吾民》姊妹篇

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陕西师范大学出版社



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自 序 /007

PREFACE

第一章 醒 觉

Chapter One The Awakening

一 人生之研究 /014

I. APPROACH TO LIFE

二 一个准科学公式 /018

II. A PSEUDOSCIENTIFIC FORMULA

三 以放浪者为理想的人 /030

III. THE SCAMP AS IDEAL

第二章 关于人类的观念

Chapter Two Views of Mankind

一 基督徒、希腊人、中国人 /036

I. CHRISTIAN, GREEK AND CHINESE

二 与尘世结不解缘 /047

II. EARTHBOUND

三 一个生物学的观念 /050

III. A BIOLOGICAL VIEW

四 诗样的人生 /056

IV. HUMAN LIFE A POEM

第三章 我们的动物性遗产

Chapter Three Our Animal Heritage

一 猴子的故事 /060

I. THE MONKEY EPIC

二 猴子般的形象 /065

II. IN THE IMAGE OF THE MONKEY

三 论不免一死 /068

III. ON BEING MORTAL

四 论肚子 /075

IV. ON HAVING A STOMACH

五 论强壮的肌肉 /087

V. ON HAVING STRONG MUSCLES

六 论灵心 /094

VI. ON HAVING A MIND

第四章 论近人情

Chapter Four On Being Human

一 论人类的尊严 /108

I. ON HUMAN DIGNITY

二 近乎戏弄的好奇：人类文明的勃兴 /110

II. ON PLAYFUL CURIOSITY: THE RISE OF HUMAN CIVILIZATION

三 论梦想 /118

III. ON DREAMS

四 论幽默感 /124

IV. ON THE SENSE OF HUMOR

五 论任性与不可捉摸 /132

V. ON BEING WAYWARD AND INCALCULABLE

六 个人主义 /138

VI. THE DOCTRINE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

第五章 谁最会享受人生

Chapter Five Who Can Best Enjoy Life

一 发现自己：庄子 /148

I. FIND THYSELF: CHUANGTSE

二 情智勇：孟子 /153

II. PASSION, WISDOM AND COURAGE: MENCIUS

三 玩世、愚钝、潜隐：老子 /163

III. CYNICISM, FOLLY AND CAMOUFLAGE: LAOTSE

四 “中庸哲学”：子思 /173

IV. "PHILOSOPHY OF HALF-AND-HALF": TSESSE

五 爱好人生者：陶渊明 /179

V. A LOVER OF LIFE: T'AO YÜANMING

第六章 生命的享受

Chapter Six The Feast of Life

一 快乐问题 /188

I. THE PROBLEM OF HAPPINESS

二 人类的快乐属于感觉 /194

II. HUMAN HAPPINESS IS SENSUOUS

三 金圣叹之不亦快哉三十三则 /201

III. CHIN'S THIRTY-THREE HAPPY MOMENTS

四 对唯物主义的误解 /209

IV. MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF MATERIALISM

五 心灵的欢乐怎样 /214

V. HOW ABOUT MENTAL PLEASURES

第七章 悠闲的重要

Chapter Seven The Importance of Loafing

一 人类是唯一在工作的动物 /222

I. MAN THE ONLY WORKING ANIMAL

二 中国的悠闲理论 /228

II. THE CHINESE THEORY OF LEISURE

三 悠闲生活的崇尚 /233

III. THE CULT OF THE IDLE LIFE

四 尘世是唯一的天堂 /239

IV. THIS EARTH THE ONLY HEAVEN

五 运气是什么 /245

V. WHAT IS LUCK

六 美国三大恶习 /248

VI. THREE AMERICAN VICES

第八章 家庭之乐

Chapter Eight The Enjoyment of the Home

一 趋近生物观念 /256

I. ON GETTING BIOLOGICAL

二 独身主义——文明的畸形产物 /262

II. CELIBACY A FREAK OF CIVILIZATION

三 性的吸引 /272

III. ON SEX APPEAL

四 中国式的家庭理想 /280

IV. THE CHINESE FAMILY IDEAL

五 乐享余年 /291

V. ON GROWING OLD GRACEFULLY

第九章 生活的享受

Chapter Nine The Enjoyment of Living

一 安卧眠床 /304

I. ON LYING IN BED

二 坐在椅中 /311

II. ON SITTING IN CHAIRS

三 谈话 /317

III. ON CONVERSATION

四 茶和交友 /331

IV. ON TEA AND FRIENDSHIP

五 淡巴菇和香 /343

V. ON SMOKE AND INCENSE

六 酒令 /354

VI. ON DRINK AND WINE GAMES

七 食品和药物 /365

VII. ON FOOD AND MEDICINE

八 几件奇特的西俗 /377

VIII. SOME CURIOUS WESTERN CUSTOMS

九 西装的不合人性 /382

IX. THE INHUMANITY OF WESTERN DRESS

十 房屋和内部布置 /390

X. ON HOUSE AND INTERIORS

第十章 享受大自然

Chapter Ten The Enjoyment of Nature

一 乐园已经丧失了吗 /404

I. PARADISE LOST?

二 论宏大 /411

II. ON BIGNESS

三 两个中国女子 /415

III. TWO CHINESE LADIES

四 论石与树 /426

IV. ON ROCKS AND TREES

五 论花和折枝花 /439

V. ON FLOWERS AND FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS

六 袁中郎的瓶花 /448

VI. THE "VASE FLOWERS" OF YÜAN ZHONGLANG

七 张潮的警句 /455

VII. THE EPIGRAMS OF ZHANG CH'AO

第十一章 旅行的享受

Chapter Eleven The Enjoyment of Travel

一 论游览 /474

I. ON GOING ABOUT AND SEEING THINGS

二 冥寥子游 /486

II. "THE TRAVELS OF MINGLIAOTSE"

第十二章 文化的享受

Chapter Twelve The Enjoyment of Culture

一 智识上的鉴别力 /512

I. GOOD TASTE IN KNOWLEDGE

二 以艺术为游戏和个性 /518

II. ART AS PLAY AND PERSONALITY

三 读书的艺术 /531

III. THE ART OF READING

四 写作的艺术 /543

IV. THE ART OF WRITING

第十三章 与上帝的关系

Chapter Thirteen Relationship to God

一 宗教的恢复 /560

I. THE RESTORATION OF RELIGION

二 我为什么是一个异教徒 /566

II. WHY I AM A PAGAN

第十四章 思想的艺术

Chapter Fourteen The Art of Thinking

一 合于人情的思想之必要 /582

I. THE NEED OF HUMANIZED THINKING

二 回向常识 /591

II. THE RETURN TO COMMON SENSE

三 近情 /598

III. BE REASONABLE

自序 | Preface

本书是一种私人的供状，供认我自己的思想和生活所得的经验。我不想发表客观意见，也不想创立不朽真理。我实在瞧不起自许的客观哲学；我只想表现我个人的观点。我本想题这书的名字为“抒情哲学”，用抒情一词说明这里面所讲的是一些私人的观念。但是这个书名似乎太美，我不敢用，我恐怕目标定得太高，即难于满足读者的期望，况且我的主旨是实事求是的散文，所以用现在的书名较易维持水准，且较自然。让我和草木为友，和土壤相亲，我便已觉得心意满足。我的灵魂很舒服地在泥土里蠕动，觉得很快乐。当一个人悠闲陶醉于土地上时，他的心灵似乎那么轻松，好像是在天堂一般。事实上，他那六尺之躯，何尝离开土壤一寸一分呢？

我颇想用柏拉图的对话方式写这本书。把偶然想到的话说出来，把日常生活中有意义的琐事安插进去，这将是多么自由容易的方式。可是不知什么缘故，我并不如此做。或者是因我恐怕这种文体现在不很流行，没有人喜欢读，而一个作家总是希望自己的作品有人阅读。我所说的对话，它的形式并不是像报纸上的谈话或问答，或分成许多段落的评论；我的意思是指真真有趣的、冗长的、闲逸的谈论，一说就是几页，中间富于迂回曲折，后来在料不到的地方，突然一转，仍旧回到原来的论点，好像一个人因为要使伙伴惊奇，特意翻过一道篱笆回家去一般。我多么喜欢翻篱笆抄小路回家啊！至少会使我的同伴感觉我对于回家的道路和四周的乡野是熟识的……可是我总不敢如此做。

我并不是在创作。我所表现的观念早由许多中西思想家再三思虑过、表现过；我从东方所借来的真理在那边都已陈旧平常了。但它们总是我的观念，它们已经变成自我的一部分。它们所以能在我的生命里生根，是因为它们表现出一些我自己所创造出来的东西，当我第一次见到它们时，我即对它们出于本心的协调了。我喜欢那些思想，并不是因为表现那些思想的是什么伟大人物。老实说，我在读书和写作时都是抄小路走的。我所引用的作家有许多是不见经传的，有些也会使中国文学教授错愕不解。我引用的当中如果有出名人物，那也不过是我在直觉的认可下接受他们的观念，而并不是震于他们的大名。我有一种习

惯，最爱购买隐僻无闻的便宜书和断版书，看看是否可以从这些书里发现些什么。如果文学教授们知道了我的思想来源，他们一定会对这么一个俗物显得骇怪。但是在灰烬里拾到一颗小珍珠，是比在珠宝店橱窗内看见一粒大珍珠更为快活。

我的思想并不怎样深刻，读过的书也不怎样广博。一个人所读的书太多，便不辨孰是孰非了。我没有读过洛克(Locke, 十七世纪英国哲学家)、休姆(Hume, 十八世纪苏格兰哲学家)或勃克莱(Berkeley, 十七世纪爱尔兰哲学家)的著作，也没有读过大学的哲学课程。从专门技术上讲，我所应用的方法、所受的训练都是错误的，我并不读哲学而只直接拿人生当做课本，这种研究方法是不合惯例的。我的理论根据，大都是从下面所说这些人物方面而来：老妈子黄妈，她具有中国女教的一切良好思想；一个随口骂人的苏州船娘；一个上海的电车售票员；厨子的妻子；动物园中的一只小狮子；纽约中央公园里的一只松鼠；一个发过一句妙论的轮船上管事；一个在某报天文栏内写文章的记者（已亡故十多年了）；箱子里所收藏的新闻纸；以及任何一个不毁灭我们人生好奇意识的作家，或任何一个不毁灭他自己人生好奇意识的作家……诸如此类，不胜枚举。

我没有受过学院式的哲学训练，所以倒反而不怕写一本哲学书。观察一切也似乎比较清楚，比较便当，这在正统哲学家看来，不知是不是可算一种补偿。我知道一定有人会说我所用的字句太过于浅俗，说我写得太多容易了解，说我太不谨慎，说我在哲学的尊座前说话不低声下气，走路不步伐整齐，态度不惶恐战兢。现代哲学家所最缺乏的似乎是勇气。但我始终徘徊于哲学境界的外面。这倒给我勇气，使我可以根据自己的直觉下判断，思索出自己的观念，创立自己独特的见解，以一种孩子气的厚脸皮，在大庭广众之间把它们直供出来；并且确知在世界另一角落里必有和我同感的人，会表示默契。用这种方法树立观念的人，会常常在惊奇中发现另外一个作家也曾说过相同的话，或有过相同的感受，其差别只不过是它的表现方法有难易或雅俗之分而已。如此，他便有了一个古代作家替他做证人；他们在精神上成为永久的朋友。

所以我对于这些作家，尤其是对于我精神上的中国朋友，应该表示感谢。当我写这本书时，有一群和蔼可亲的天才和我合作；我希望我们互相亲热。在真正的意义上说来，这些灵魂是与我同在的，我们之间的精神上的相通，即我所认为是惟一真实的相通方式——两个时代不同的人有着同样的思想，具有着同样的感觉，彼此之间完全了解。我写这书的时候，他们藉着贡献和忠告，给我以特殊的帮助，第八世纪的白居易，第十一世纪的苏东坡，以及十六、十七

两世纪那许多独出心裁的人物——浪漫潇洒，富于口才的屠赤水；嬉笑诙谐，独具心得的袁中郎；多口好奇，独特伟大的李卓吾；感觉敏锐，通晓世故的张潮；耽于逸乐的李笠翁；乐观风趣的老快乐主义者袁子才；谈笑风生，热情充溢的金圣叹——这些都是脱略形骸不拘小节的人，这些人因为胸蕴太多的独特见解，对事物具有太深的情感，因此不能得到正统派批评家的称许；这些人太好了，所以不能循规蹈矩，因为太有道德了，所以在儒家看来便是不“好”的。这些精选出来的同志人数不多，因此使我享受到更宝贵、更诚挚的快乐。这些人物也许有几个在本书内不曾述及，可是他们的精神确是同在这部著作里边的。我想他们在中国总有一天会占到重要的地位，那不过是时间问题而已……还有一些人物，虽然比较的晦暗无闻，但是他们恰当的言论也是我所欢迎的，因为他们将我的意见表示得那么好。我称他们为中国的爱弥尔（Amiel，瑞士作家，一八二一年至一八八一年）——他们说的话并不多，但说得总是那么近情，我佩服他们的晓事。此外更有中外古今的不朽哲人，他们好像是伟大人物的无名祖宗一般，在心灵感动的当儿，在不知不觉之间说出一些至理名言；最后还有一些更伟大的人物，我不当他们做我精神上的同志，而当他们是我的先生，他们那清朗的理解是那么入情入理，又那么超凡入圣，他们的智慧已成自然，因此表现出来很容易，丝毫不用费力。庄子和陶渊明就是这么一类人物，他们的精神简朴纯正，非渺小的人所能望其项背。在本书里，我有时加以相当声明，让他们直接对读者讲话；有时则竟代他们说话，虽然表面上好像是我自己的话一般。我和他们的友谊维持得越久，我的思想也就越受他们的影响，我在他们的熏陶下，我的思想就倾向于通俗不拘礼节，无从捉摸，无影无形的类型；正如做父亲的对施予良好的家教所产生的影响一样。我也想以一个现代人的立场说话，而不仅以中国人的立场说话为满足，我不想仅仅替古人做一个虔诚的移译者，而要把我自己所吸收到我现代脑筋里的东西表现出来。这种方法当然有缺点，但是从大体上说来，确能使这工作比较诚实一些。因此，一切取舍都是根据于我个人的见解。在这本书里我不想把一个诗人或哲学家的思想全盘托出来；假如想要根据本书里所举的少许例证去批判他们的全体，那是不可能的。所以当我结束这篇自序时，必须照例地说，本书如有优点的话，大部分应该归功于我的合作者，至于一切错误、缺点和不正确的见解，当由我自己完全负责。

我要向华尔虚先生和夫人（Mr. and Mrs. Walsh）致谢，第一，谢谢他们鼓励我写作本书的念头；第二，谢谢他们坦白有益的批评。我也得感谢韦特先

生 (Mr. Hugh Wade) 帮助我做本书的付印和校对工作, 感谢佩弗女士 (Miss Lillian Pepper) 代我完成书后的索引。

林语堂

作于纽约

THIS is a personal testimony, a testimony of my own experience of thought and life. It is not intended to be objective and makes no claim to establish eternal truths. In fact I rather despise claims to objectivity in philosophy; the point of view is the thing. I should have liked to call it "A Lyrical Philosophy," using the word "lyrical" in the sense of being a highly personal and individual outlook. But that would be too beautiful a name and I must forego it, for fear of aiming too high and leading the reader to expect too much, and because the main ingredient of my thought is matter-of-fact prose, a level easier to maintain because more natural. Very much contented am I to lie low, to cling to the soil, to be of kin to the sod. My soul squirms comfortably in the soil and sand and is happy. Sometimes when one is drunk with this earth, one's spirit seems so light that he thinks he is in heaven. But actually he seldom rises six feet above the ground.

I should have liked also to write the entire book in the form of a dialogue like Plato's. It is such a convenient form for personal, inadvertent disclosures, for bringing in the significant trivialities of our daily life, above all for idle rambling about the pastures of sweet, silent thought. But somehow I have not done so. I do not know why. A fear, perhaps, that this form of literature being so little in vogue today, no one probably would read it, and a writer after all wants to be read. And when I say dialogue, I do not mean answers and questions like newspaper interviews, or those leaders chopped up into short paragraphs; I mean really good, long, leisurely discourses extending several pages at a stretch, with many detours, and coming back to the original point of discussion by a short cut at the most unexpected spot, like a man returning home by climbing over a hedge, to the surprise of his walking companion. Oh, how I love to reach home by climbing over the back fence, and to travel on bypaths! At least my companion will grant that I am familiar with the way home and with the surrounding countryside... But I dare not.

I am not original. The ideas expressed here have been thought and expressed by many thinkers of the East and West over and over again; those I borrow from the East are hackneyed truths there. They are, nevertheless, my ideas; they have become a part of my being. If they have taken root in my being, it is because they express something original in me, and when I first encountered them, my heart gave an instinctive assent. I like them as ideas and not because the person who expressed them is of any account. In fact, I have traveled the bypaths in my reading as well

as in my writing. Many of the authors quoted are names obscure and may baffle a Chinese professor of literature. If some happen to be well-known, I accept their ideas only as they compel my intuitive approval and not because the authors are well-known. It is my habit to buy cheap editions of old, obscure books and see what I can discover there. If the professors of literature knew the sources of my ideas, they would be astounded at the Philistine. But there is a greater pleasure in picking up a small pearl in an ash-can than in looking at a large one in a jeweler's window.

I am not deep and not well-read. If one is too well-read, then one does not know right is right and wrong is wrong. I have not read Locke or Hume or Berkeley, and have not taken a college course in philosophy. Technically speaking, my method and my training are all wrong, because I do not read philosophy, but only read life at first hand. That is an unconventional way of studying philosophy-the incorrect way. Some of my sources are: Mrs. Huang, an amah in my family who has all the ideas that go into the breeding of a good woman in China; a Soochow boat-woman with her profuse use of expletives; a Shanghai street car conductor; my cook's wife; a lion cub in the zoo; a squirrel in Central Park in New York; a deck steward who made one good remark; that writer of a column on astronomy (dead for some ten years now); all news in boxes; and any writer who does not kill our sense of curiosity in life or who has not killed it in himself... how can I enumerate them all?

Thus deprived of academic training in philosophy, I am less scared to write a book about it. Everything seems clearer and simpler for it, if that is any compensation in the eyes of orthodox philosophy. I doubt it. I know there will be complaints that my words are not long enough, that I make things too easy to understand, and finally that I lack cautiousness, that I do not whisper low and trip with mincing steps in the sacred mansions of philosophy, looking properly scared as I ought to do. Courage seems to be the rarest of all virtues in a modern philosopher. But I have always wandered outside the precincts of philosophy and that gives me courage. There is a method of appealing to one's own intuitive judgment, of thinking out one's own ideas and forming one's own independent judgments, and confessing them in public with a childish impudence, and sure enough, some kindred souls in another corner of the world will agree with you. A person forming his ideas in this manner will often be astounded to discover how another writer said exactly the same things and felt exactly the same way, but perhaps expressed the ideas more easily and more gracefully. It is then that he discovers the ancient author and the ancient author bears him witness, and they become forever friends in spirit.

There is therefore the matter of my obligations to these authors, especially my Chinese friends in spirit. I have for my collaborators in writing this book a company of genial souls, who I hope like me as much as I like them. For in a very real sense, these spirits have been with me, in the only form of spiritual communion that I recognize as real-when two men separated by the ages think the same thoughts and sense the same feelings and each perfectly understands the other. In the preparation of this book, a few of my friends have been especially helpful with their contributions and advice:

Po Chüyi of the eighth century, Su Tungp'o of the eleventh, and that great company of original spirits of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—the romantic and voluble T'u Ch'ihshui, the playful, original Yüan Chunglang, the deep, magnificent Li Chowu, the sensitive and sophisticated Chang Ch'ao, the epicure Li Liweng, the happy and gay old hedonist Yüan Tssets'ai, and the bubbling, joking, effervescent Chin Shengt'an—unconventional souls all, men with too much independent judgment and too much feeling for things to be liked by the orthodox critics, men too good to be “moral” and too moral to be “good” for the Confucianists. The smallness of the select company has made the enjoyment of their presence all the more valued and sincere. Some of these may happen not to be quoted, but they are here with me in this book all the same. Their coming back to their own in China is only a matter of time... There have been others, names less well-known, but no less welcome for their apt remarks, because they express my sentiments so well. I call them my Chinese Amiels—people who don't talk much, but always talk sensibly, and I respect their good sense. There are others again who belong to the illustrious company of “Anons” of all countries and ages, who in an inspired moment said something wiser than they knew, like the unknown fathers of great men. Finally there are greater ones still, whom I look up to more as masters than as companions of the spirit, whose serenity of understanding is so human and yet so divine, and whose wisdom seems to have come entirely without effort because it has become completely natural. Such a one is Chuangtse, and such a one is T'ao Yüanming, whose simplicity of spirit is the despair of smaller men. I have sometimes let these souls speak directly to the reader, making proper acknowledgment, and at other times, I have spoken for them while I seem to be speaking for myself. The older my friendship with them, the more likely is my indebtedness to their ideas to be of the familiar, elusive and invisible type, like parental influence in a good family breeding. It is impossible to put one's finger on a definite point of resemblance. I have also chosen to speak as a modern, sharing the modern life, and not only as a Chinese; to give only what I have personally absorbed into my modern being, and not merely to act as a respectful translator of the ancients. Such a procedure has its drawbacks, but on the whole, one can do a more sincere job of it. The selections are therefore as highly personal as the rejections. No complete presentation of any one poet or philosopher is attempted here, and it is impossible to judge them through the evidences on these pages. I must therefore conclude by saying as usual that the merits of this book, if any, are largely due to the helpful suggestions of my collaborators, while for the inaccuracies, deficiencies and immaturities of judgment, I alone am responsible.

Again I owe my thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Richard J. Walsh, first, for suggesting the idea of the book, and secondly, for their useful and frank criticism. I must also thank Mr. Hugh Wade for cooperating on preparing the manuscript for the press and on the proofs, and Miss Lillian Peffer for making the Index.

Lin Yutang

New York City

第一章 醒 觉

Chapter One The Awakening

Chapter 1

人生之研究 | Approach to Life

在下面的文章里我不过是表现中国人的观点。我只表现一种中国最优越最聪慧的哲人们所见到而在他们的文字中发挥过的人生观和事物观。我知道这是一种闲适哲学，是在异于现今时代里的闲适生活中所产生的。我总觉得这种人生观是绝对真实的。人类心性既然相同，则在这个国家里能感动人的东西，自然也会感动别的国家的人类。我将要表现中国诗人和学者们的人生观，这种人生观是经过他们的常识和他们的诗意情绪而估定的。我想显示一些异教徒世界的美，显示一个明知此生有涯，但是短短的生命未始没有它的尊严的民族所看到的人生悲哀、美丽、恐惧和喜乐。

中国的哲学家是睁着一只眼做梦的人，是一个用爱和讥评心理来观察人生的人，是一个自私主义和仁爱的宽容心混合起来的人，是一个有时从梦中醒来，有时又睡了过去，在梦中比在醒时更觉得富有生气，因而在他清醒时的生活中也含着梦意的人。他把一只眼睁着，一只眼闭着，看透了他四周所发生的事物和他自己的徒劳，而不过仅仅保留着充分的现实感去走完人生应走的道路。因此，他并没有虚幻的憧憬，所以无所谓醒悟；他从来没有怀着过度的奢望，所以无所谓失望。他的精神就是如此得了解放。

观测了中国的文学和哲学之后，我得到一个结论：中国文化的最高理想人物，是一个对人生有一种建于明慧悟性上的达观者。这种达观产生宽宏的怀抱，能使人带着温和的讥评心理度过一生，丢开功名利禄，乐天知命地过生活。这种达观也产生了自由意识，放荡不羁的爱好，傲骨和漠然的态度。一个人有了这种自由的意识及淡漠的态度，才能深切热烈地享受快乐的人生。

我不用说我的哲学思想是否适用于西方人。我们要了解西方人的生活，就得用西方的眼光，用他们自己的性情，他们自己的物质观念，和他们自己的头脑去观察。无疑美国人能忍受中国人所不能忍受的事物，同样中国人也能忍受美国人所不能忍受的事物。我们生下来就不同样，这已有显著的区别。然而这也不过是比较的看法。我相信在美国的繁忙生活中，他们也一定有一种企望，