



大学人文精神读本
丛书主编 蔡龙权

李志强 刘 晋 编著

人文名篇选读

Selected Readings by Men of Letters

上海科学技术出版社

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The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.

The unexamined life is not worth living.

Wonder is the beginning of wisdom.

To find yourself, think for yourself.

The only good is knowledge and the only evil is ignorance.

I cannot teach anybody anything. I can only make them think.

Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.

If you don't get what you want, you suffer; if you get what you don't want, you suffer; even when you get exactly what you want, you still suffer because you can't hold on to it forever. Your mind is your predicament. It wants to be free of change. Free of pain, free of the obligations of life and death. But change is law and no amount of pretending will alter that reality.

—Socrates

Then ever since, there have been people of thoughts and men of letters, to name just a few, Confucius, Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Kant, Hegel, Freud, Keynes, and Einstein. They came in our unrelenting pursuit of a truer understanding of Nature, Self and the relation in between; they left behind an incredible legacy of a real apprehension of Nature, Self and the relation more than in between. It is not uncertain now that it is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.

We must, however, acknowledge as it seems to me, that a man with all his noble qualities...still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin.

——Charles Darwin

Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change.

——Stephen Hawking

Preface

Throughout the long history of human development, it has been deemed that the unexamined life is not worth living and therefore should be redeemed at the expense of elapsed time. This redemption is deemed for some in solemn contemplation of a better life, notwithstanding for others often an outlet for nostalgic reminiscence of the fast past and an awkward excuse to shove off the furious future. This trio in thinking matches in one conjunctural note – life.

Making sense of life should be bifocal in the name of performing the absolute binary reasoning. In a biological world, life can be mortal or immortal, and in a sociological world, life can be ordinary or extraordinary. The problem comes how life would be biologically like in a sociological world or sociologically like in a biological world. The kernel within this problem is the directional adaptation between the two – the biological making of life and the sociological making of life. And the core within the kernel is change, which is especially true in the tunnel of time.

Then ever since, there have been people of thoughts and men of letters, to name just a few, Confucius, Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Kant, Hegel, Freud, Keynes, and Einstein. They came in an unrelenting pursuit of a truer understanding of Nature, Self and the relation in between; they left behind an incredible legacy of a real apprehension of Nature, Self and the relation more than in between. It is not uncertain now that it is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.

And then we would no longer feel hesitating to accept that the only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing. This paradox exposes the truth of an infinite learning kept in good terms with a definite learning which relates itself to a study commonly timed and termed in schooling. And then the truth extends the learning beyond the classrooms and the school gates into somewhere of an indefinite stretch that demands a wider knowledge. And then reading of others' experienced reflections over life, be it far earlier or most recently, foreign or domestic, societal or personal, cutting or ingratiating, becomes a must when it is ruthlessly taken for granted that one's life is shorter than the list of things in one's desires, wants and needs.

This kind of reading intends for a mentalistic change of roles or identities. It is tentatively supposed that one reads for the first time as an outsider, and that for the second reading one has to read himself in as if he was just the person in just the context undergoing just the thing. It appears far-fetched and absurd, but it is in this absurd world that one has to culture what is glorified as intelligence, the ability to adapt to change.

This view of life is not new from me. It is in itself an adaptation of the views of people of thoughts and men of letters, namely Socrates, Charles Darwin, and Stephen Hawking. When their writings are not yet taken into this version of reading and when their thoughts are regarded by me to be noteworthy, I concocted my lines of thinking out of theirs. There is a preface to this preface. Look for it, please.

Dr. Cai Longquan

June 12, 2010

Shanghai

Introduction

This book mainly aims to provide an overview of the representatives of Humanism in Western culture. According to the definition in *Encarta Dictionary*, the meaning of “Humanism” falls into three categories:

1. Belief in a human-based morality: a system of thought that is based on the values, characteristics, and behavior that are believed to be best in human beings, rather than on any supernatural authority;
2. Concern for people: a concern with the needs, well-being, and interests of people;
3. or Humanism Renaissance cultural movement: the secular cultural and intellectual movement of the Renaissance that spread throughout Europe as a result of the rediscovery of the arts and philosophy of the ancient Greeks and Romans.

Broadly speaking, “Humanism” refers to the holistic attitude emphasizing the goodness and worth of individual. A basic premise of Humanism is that people are rational beings who possess within themselves the capacity for truth and goodness.

The connotations of Humanism differ in different stages of Human history. Comparatively speaking, the Humanism in ancient Greek and Roman period refers to the period of ingenious thoughts from around the 6th century BC to the 3rd century BC, which was entitled “the Axial Period” of western culture by Karl T. Jaspers. Considering the prevalent influence of this period to western culture, this book takes it as the first part of introduction to Western Humanism. The so called “Humanism” was originally used to refer to the period of Renaissance, when a literary

and cultural movement spread through Western Europe between the 14th and the 16th century. This period was featured by people's emphasis on the value of Greek and Roman classics rather than Christianity. And this period is the second part of this book. Renaissance is not the entire story of Humanism. After Renaissance period, when western society stepped into the stage of industrial revolution, Humanism reflecting this newly impersonal society continued. Rationalism, with the development of science and industry, was also gradually developing. This period also witnessed many talented individuals with their insightful humanistic thoughts. This stage which is called "modern period" is between the 17th and the 20th century. The third part of this book introduces the Humanism in modern period. The fourth part of this book is about the Humanism from the 20th century to present, when western society developed new understanding of human being especially after two world wars. Last but not least, we shouldn't ignore the Humanism held in ancient Chinese Classics, which has been and is still having its profound influence on different cultures around the world. As the last part, also a special part of this book, several important figures in Chinese history and their works are introduced.

Of course, it is impossible for this book to include all important thoughts of Humanism in human history. However, it is hoped that this collection can at least sketch an outline of the development of Humanism and give some inspiration to readers who have any interest in it.

Contents

Preface

Introduction

Part I Ancient Greek and Roman Period 1

1. Plato / From *Republic* 2
2. Herodotus / From *The History of Herodotus* 8
3. Aristotle / From *Poetics* 13
4. Epicurus / From *Letter to Menoeceus* 19
5. Plotinus / From *On the Intellectual Beauty* 25
6. Dionysius Longinus / From *On the sublime* 30
7. Quintus Horatius Flaccus / From *Art of Poetry* 34
8. Saint Augustine / From *The City of God* 38

Part II Renaissance Period 43

9. Petrarch / From *To Marcus Tullius Cicero* 44
10. Leonardo Bruni / From *Panegyric to the City of Florence* 48
11. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola / From *Oration on the Dignity of Man* 53
12. Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus /
From *The Praise of Folly* 58
13. Niccolò Machiavelli / From *The Prince* 64
14. Sir Philip Sidney / From *The Poet: Compared and Contrasted
With Historian and Philosopher* 68

15. René Descartes / From *Principia Philosophiae* 72
16. Frances Bacon / From *Novum Organum* 77
17. Thomas Hobbes / From *Leviathan* 81
- Part III Modern Period 85
18. John Locke /
From *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 86
19. Baruch Spinoza / From *Ethics* 90
20. Gottfried Leibniz / From *A Philosopher's Creed* 94
21. Giambattista Vico / From *The New Science* 98
22. George Berkeley / From *Principals of Human Knowledge* 102
23. Baron de Montesquieu / From *The Spirit of Law* 107
24. David Hume / From *A Treatise of Human Nature* 112
25. Jean Jacques Rousseau /
From *The Social Contract (Book I)* 118
26. Adam Smith / From *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of
the Wealth of Nations (Book I)* 123
27. Immanuel Kant / From *Critique of Pure Reason* 129
28. Edmund Burke / From *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin
of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* 133
29. Thomas Paine / From *The Rights of Man* 139
30. Thomas Jefferson / From *Declaration of Independence* 143
31. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe / From *The Sorrows of Young
Werther* 146
32. Friedrich Schiller / From *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In
a Series of Letters* 150
33. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel /
From *The Science of Logic* 154
34. Ralph Waldo Emerson / From *History* 158
35. John Stuart Mill / From *On Liberty* 164

36.	Lewis Henry Morgan / From <i>Ancient Society</i>	169
37.	Karl Heinrich Marx / From <i>Capital</i>	173
38.	Herbert Spencer / From <i>The Principles of Sociology</i>	176
39.	Matthew Arnold / From <i>The Function of Criticism at the Present Time</i>	180
40.	Leo Tolstoy / From <i>What Is Art?</i>	184
41.	William James / From <i>Pragmatism</i>	189
42.	Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche / From <i>Thus Spake Zarathustra</i>	194
43.	John Bates Clark / From <i>The Distribution of Wealth</i>	198
44.	Sir James George Frazer / From <i>The Golden Bough</i>	202
45.	Sigmund Freud / From <i>Civilization and its Discontents</i>	206
46.	Ferdinand de Saussure / From <i>Writings in General Linguistics</i>	212
47.	Franz Boas / From <i>The Mind of Primitive Man</i>	217
48.	Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl / From <i>Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology</i>	221
Part IV Contemporary Period		225
49.	John Dewey / From <i>On Democracy</i>	226
50.	George Santayana / From <i>The Sense of Beauty: Being an Outline of Aesthetic Theory</i>	229
51.	Hermann Ebbinghaus / From <i>Memory: A Contribution to Experimental Psychology</i>	233
52.	Bertrand Russell / From <i>A Free Man's Worship</i>	237
53.	Albert Einstein / From <i>Why Socialism?</i>	242
54.	Elton Mayo / From <i>The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization</i>	245
55.	John Maynard Keynes / From <i>The Economic Consequences of the Peace</i>	249

56. Bronisław Kasper Malinowski / From *Magic, Science, and Religion* 253
57. Georg Lukacs / From *History and Class Consciousness* 257
58. Martin Heidegger / From *Being and Time* 261
59. Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein / From *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 265
60. Robin George Collingwood / From *The Idea of History* 268
61. Hans-George Gadamer / From *Truth and Method* 272
62. Jean-Paul Charles Aymard Sartre /
From *Being and Nothingness* 276
63. Claude Levi-Strauss / From *The Savage Mind* 280
64. John Rawls / From *A Theory of Justice* 284
65. Abraham Harold Maslow /
From *A Theory of Human Motivation* 288
66. Michel Foucault / From *Archaeology of Knowledge* 292
67. Jean Piaget / From *The Child's Conception of the World* 297
68. Avram Noam Chomsky / From *Language and Mind* 300
69. George P. Lakoff & Mark L. Johnson / From *Philosophy in the Flesh* 304

Part V Ancient Chinese Period 309

70. Confucius / From *The Analects* 310
71. Laozi / From *Dao De Jing* 314
72. Mozi / From *Mozi* 317
73. Mencius / From *Mencius* 321

Part I

Ancient Greek and Roman Period

1. Plato



Plato (427BC – 347BC), one of the most prominent philosophers in Western philosophy.

Plato was instructed by the most distinguished teachers of his time in such subjects as grammar, music, and gymnastics. Plato attended courses of philosophy Socrates. Plato traveled in Italy, Sicily, Egypt and Cyrene. When he returned to Athens at the age of forty, he founded one of the earliest known organized schools in Western Civilization known as Academy. Plato's works take the form of collection of dialogues. Some dialogues have no narrator and some are narrated by Socrates. *Meno*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, *Crito*, *Euthyphro* fall into the first kind of dialogue and *Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Apology*, *Republic* the second. There is in western scholastic study a very popular term — "Platonism". It is coined by scholars to refer to the intellectual consequences of denying the reality of the material world. In several dialogues, Plato's Socrates inverts the common man's intuition about what is knowable and what is real, which is very similar with what is held of knowledge in Buddhism. In *Republic*, while most people take the objects of their senses to be real, Socrates says that it is not the truth. Plato's allegory of the cave in *Republic* is a famous analogy in which Socrates argues that the invisible world is the most intelligible and that the visible world is the least knowable, and the most obscure. Socrates says that people who take the sun-lit world of the senses to be good and real are living pitifully in a den of evil and ignorance. According to Socrates, physical objects and events are but "shadows" of their ideal or perfect forms.

From *Republic*

(Translated by Benjamin Jowett)

(Book VII) Socrates – Glaucon

And now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened: — Behold! Human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.

I see.

And do you see, I said, men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall? Some of them are talking, others silent.

You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.

Like ourselves, I replied; and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?

True, he said; how could they see anything but the shadows if they were never allowed to move their heads?

And of the objects which are being carried in like manner they would only see the shadows?

Yes, he said.

And if they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?

Very true.

And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?

No question, he replied.

To them, I said, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images.

That is certain.

And now look again, and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive some one saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision, — what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them, — will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?

Far truer.

And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take refuge in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?

True, he said.