



Alain de Botton

英汉对照插图本

# 写给无神论者

Religion for Atheists

〔英〕阿兰·德波顿 著 梅俊杰 译

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## Alain de Botton

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## 写给无神论者

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For Bertha von Büren

献给贝尔塔·冯·比伦

## 译 序

梅俊杰

阿兰·德波顿先生的这本书,如果直译的话,书名应作《宗教之于无神论者:一名非信仰者关于宗教用途的指南》。可见,这是一本由无神论者写给无神论者、旨在借鉴宗教智慧的书,不是一本为宗教辩护的书,更不是一本传教的书。

与我等无神论者一样,作者并不相信上帝的存在,也不认同宗教中的超自然内容。但不同之处在于,作者愿意更加通达地看待宗教,能够透过其超自然体系,鉴别并吸收其中所包含的诸多有益要素,希图借此丰富世俗生活,促进个人的身心健康和社会的和谐友爱。

随着人类从中世纪迈入近现代,科技节节昌明,理性日益高扬,各路宗教遭遇到前所未有的信仰危机。尼采的一句“上帝已死”标志着宗教主导地位的土崩瓦解和世俗化洪流的滚滚而来,也让众多无神论者扬眉吐气、豪情万丈。目

前这个超现代的大众消费时代似乎证明着人类掌握自身命运后的不凡成就。

然而,在德波顿看来,光鲜的物质外表之下,人性并无本质的改变,个体心灵的救赎仍然是个严重问题,人类群体生活所面临的挑战也依然如故。你可以宣告“上帝已死”,但你依然需要此前借助上帝而维系的伦理道德,也依然需要原来经由宗教而获得的心灵慰藉。可现代社会恰恰拙于满足这些需求,早已显露出令人遗憾的种种弊端。

相对而言,宗教作为人类经验的深厚积淀,形成了巍巍可观的理念和做法,大可补过于物质至上的当今社会生活。德波顿以为,人们尽可以抛弃宗教的基本教义,却实在不应该放弃宗教涉及群处、悲悯、慈善、教化、艺术、建筑等等方面的真知灼见和公序良俗,更何况其中不少要素原本就采自世俗生活。

对于书中的更多内容,这里不必赘述,本书开篇的“智慧无关教义”以及末尾的“结论”已有精当的概括。我只想强调一点,即作者抬举宗教,甚至有时不免将之理想化,绝不是要否定现代世界科学理性的基本框架,只是认为在此框架下,理应从宗教这一人类的共有遗产中善加采撷,从而矫治现代社会之偏狭,补救其心灵护理之贫乏。

将本书译介到中国来谅必是件有意义的善事。作为在现代化道路上全力追赶乃至无暇他顾的民族,作为世上最为庞大的无神论者群体,我们无疑更需要以平和客观的态

度来了解宗教并从中汲取营养。在道德精进、心灵抚慰、人际和谐、扶危济困这样的层面,各种宗教都提供着现成的启示,这是众所周知的事实。

进而言之,国家的价值观坐标和发展轨道也可从宗教中得到支撑。如果说自由、民主、科学、富强是当今中国无可争议的追求,我一直认为尚须辅之以更加丰富且宜人的内容。简言之,我们实应追求复合型目标:自由—和合、民主—良治、科学—人道、富强—正义,如此两相兼顾方能做到平衡协调、基石宏大从而行之久远。而宗教显然也是这些新增目标价值观的重要思想源泉和促进手段。

诚然,像天底下一切功业一样,对宗教有益内容的体察与采纳要靠慧根和悟性,同时也有赖于对宗教的悉心学习和研究。就此而言,我们或许面临着先天不足、后天失调的窘迫处境。所幸者,取长补短的条件已今非昔比。德波顿这位大众哲人匠心独具、富有启迪的论述当能让我们获益良多。

我本人通过翻译全书已感到受益匪浅,至少从此会增加一个理性观察宗教的视角甚或增添一分宗教情怀。还好,当上海译文出版社衷雅琴女士约我承译此书时,我没有照例推辞,特此向她致谢。自然,我也要感谢家人张旦红、梅新枝,她们作为本书译稿最早的读者,协助完善了译文。

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# I

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智慧无关教义  
*Wisdom without Doctrine*

1.

The most boring and unproductive question one can ask of any religion is whether or not it is *true* – in terms of being handed down from heaven to the sound of trumpets and supernaturally governed by prophets and celestial beings.

To save time, and at the risk of losing readers painfully early on in this project, let us bluntly state that of course no religions are true in any God-given sense. This is a book for people who are unable to believe in miracles, spirits or tales of burning shrubbery, and have no deep interest in the exploits of unusual men and women like the thirteenth-century saint Agnes of Montepulciano, who was said to be able to levitate two feet off the ground while praying and to bring children back from the dead – and who, at the end of her life (supposedly), ascended to heaven from southern Tuscany on the back of an angel.

2.

Attempting to prove the non-existence of God can be an entertaining activity for atheists. Tough-minded critics of religion have found much pleasure in laying bare the idiocy of believers in remorseless detail, finishing only when they felt they had shown up their enemies as thorough-going simpletons or maniacs.

Though this exercise has its satisfactions, the real issue is not whether God exists or not, but where to take the argument once one decides that he evidently doesn't. The premise of this book is that it must be possible to remain a committed atheist and nevertheless find religions sporadically useful, interesting

## 1

关于任何宗教,人们提出的最无聊、最徒劳的问题当数,它是不是真的。这里所谓真,指的是宗教自茫茫上苍下凡到尘世俗界,由先知和天神以超自然的方式司管着。

为节省时间,也冒着开卷便流失读者这一痛苦风险,容我直言相告:按照上苍钦赐这样的定义,当然没有一个宗教是真的。本书便为无神论者而作。这些无神论者无法膜拜奇迹异能、神仙圣灵,不会听信灌木树丛烧而不毁的故事,对于非凡男女的超凡业绩也缺乏浓厚兴趣。那些非凡男女例如 13 世纪蒙特普尔恰诺的圣女阿格尼斯,据说她在祷告时能够双脚离地悬空两英尺,还能让孩童起死回生,又说她在凡俗生命结束时,由天使背着从托斯卡纳南部升了天。

## 2

对无神论者而言,试图证明上帝并不存在会是件欣喜愉快之事。宗教的铁杆批评者们非常乐于把信教者的愚蠢低能一点一滴、毫不留情地暴露在光天化日下,不把敌手彻底笨蛋、十足疯子这样的面目揭露个够,他们是不会善罢甘休的。

如此作为固然令人酣畅淋漓,然而,真正的问题却不是上帝存在与否,而是一旦你确定上帝显然并不存在,又该如何自处呢?本书的出发点是,一个人必定可以继续做一个坚定的无神论者,但也可以发现,宗教时不时还是有用的、有趣味的、有抚慰心的;也还可以好奇地思考一下,或许能从

and consoling – and be curious as to the possibilities of importing certain of their ideas and practices into the secular realm.

One can be left cold by the doctrines of the Christian Trinity and the Buddhist Eightfold Path and yet at the same time be interested in the ways in which religions deliver sermons, promote morality, engender a spirit of community, make use of art and architecture, inspire travels, train minds and encourage gratitude at the beauty of spring. In a world beset by fundamentalists of both believing and secular varieties, it must be possible to balance a rejection of religious faith with a selective reverence for religious rituals and concepts.

It is when we stop believing that religions have been handed down from above or else that they are entirely daft that matters become more interesting. We can then recognize that we invented religions to serve two central needs which continue to this day and which secular society has not been able to solve with any particular skill: first, the need to live together in communities in harmony, despite our deeply rooted selfish and violent impulses. And second, the need to cope with terrifying degrees of pain which arise from our vulnerability to professional failure, to troubled relationships, to the death of loved ones and to our decay and demise. God may be dead, but the urgent issues which impelled us to make him up still stir and demand resolutions which do not go away when we have been nudged to perceive some scientific inaccuracies in the tale of the seven loaves and fishes.

The error of modern atheism has been to overlook how many aspects of the faiths remain relevant even after their central

宗教中汲取某些观念和做法,用以丰富世俗生活。

一个人可以对基督教的“三位一体”学说和佛教的“八正道”理论无动于衷,但同时也可以对宗教的某些方法生发兴趣,毕竟这些宗教在布道讲经、精进道德、营造团体精神、利用艺术和建筑、唤起信众远行求法、锤炼思想启发智慧、激发人们感恩春天之美等等方面,都是各有其道的。这个世界已经饱受种种信教的和不信教的偏执者的困扰,在这片天地中,一定可以在完全拒斥宗教信仰与选择性地崇敬宗教仪式和理念之间保持某种平衡。

正是当我们不再相信宗教系由上苍钦赐下达,也不再以为宗教愚不可及,事情才会变得兴味盎然。我们然后便可认识到,世人发明宗教实出于两个核心需求,这两个需求绵延不绝,世俗社会如今也还无法特别有效地加以应对。其一,尽管人类怀有根深蒂固的私心杂念和暴力冲动,但我们终究需要在社会群体中和谐地生活在一起;其二,我们需要应对令人生畏的各种人生苦痛,不管是职场上受挫失意,人际关系麻烦连连,还是痛失至爱亲朋,或者垂垂老矣行将就木,人类太容易遭灾受难了。上帝或许已死,然而,曾经促使我们祭起上帝的那些迫切问题依然困扰着我们,仍在要求我们拿出求解方案。哪怕经人提示后我们知道,耶稣拿五个饼两条鱼让众人饱餐的故事在科学上并不准确,但那些需要解决的问题还是挥之不去。

现代无神论的错误就在于它未能看到,即使在宗教的

tenets have been dismissed. Once we cease to feel that we must either prostrate ourselves before them or denigrate them, we are free to discover religions as repositories of a myriad ingenious concepts with which we can try to assuage a few of the most persistent and unattended ills of secular life.

3.

I was brought up in a committedly atheistic household, as the son of two secular Jews who placed religious belief somewhere on a par with an attachment to Santa Claus. I recall my father reducing my sister to tears in an attempt to dislodge her modestly held notion that a reclusive god might dwell somewhere in the universe. She was eight years old at the time. If any members of their social circle were discovered to harbour clandestine religious sentiments, my parents would start to regard them with the sort of pity more commonly reserved for those diagnosed with a degenerative disease and could from then on never be persuaded to take them seriously again.

Though I was powerfully swayed by my parents' attitudes, in my mid-twenties I underwent a crisis of faithlessness. My feelings of doubt had their origins in listening to Bach's cantatas, were further developed in the presence of certain Bellini Madonnas and became overwhelming with an introduction to Zen architecture. However, it was not until my father had been dead for several years – and buried under a Hebrew headstone in a Jewish cemetery in Willesden, north-west London, because he had, intriguingly, omitted to make more secular arrangements – that I began to face up to the full scale of my

核心教义遭到摒弃之后，宗教的诸多内容仍然不失其有益的意义。一旦我们不再感到需要非此即彼地作出选择，即要么在宗教面前五体投地，要么对宗教进行诽谤诋毁，我们便能自由地发现，宗教实乃无数天才概念的宝库，借此或可纾缓世俗生活中某些最源远流长却又未予有效关注的病苦。

### 3

我自己生长在一个坚定的无神论家庭里，我的双亲是不信教的犹太人，在他们心目中，宗教信仰跟迷恋圣诞老人差不太多。我还记得父亲曾让我妹妹黯然落泪的场景。本来，妹妹心中还有个不算牢固的想法，觉得某一隐逸的神灵可能留居在宇宙某处，但父亲却力图打消她的这一想法，当时妹妹不过八岁。对我父母而言，假如发现社交圈内有人私下怀有宗教情绪，他们就会表现出深深的怜悯之情，仿佛对方已被诊断出患有严重疾病，而且，从此你就难以说服他们再正眼看待人家。

父母的态度强烈地支配着我，可是在二十五岁前后，我的无信仰世界却经历了一场危机。我的怀疑情绪萌发于早年聆听巴赫大合唱之时，此后当置身贝利尼的圣母画作前又有所发展，最后在涉猎禅宗建筑艺术时则变得一发不可收拾。然而，一直要到父亲去世后数年，我才开始直面自己心中的矛盾情绪，这种情绪抵触着自小就被灌输的那些世俗教条。顺便说一下，我父亲去世后葬在伦敦西北部

ambivalence regarding the doctrinaire principles with which I had been inculcated in childhood.

I never wavered in my certainty that God did not exist. I was simply liberated by the thought that there might be a way to engage with religion without having to subscribe to its supernatural content – a way, to put it in more abstract terms, to think about Fathers without upsetting my respectful memory of my own father. I recognized that my continuing resistance to theories of an afterlife or of heavenly residents was no justification for giving up on the music, buildings, prayers, rituals, feasts, shrines, pilgrimages, communal meals and illuminated manuscripts of the faiths.

Secular society has been unfairly impoverished by the loss of an array of practices and themes which atheists typically find it impossible to live with because they seem too closely associated with, to quote Nietzsche's useful phrase, 'the bad odours of religion'. We have grown frightened of the word *morality*. We bridle at the thought of hearing a sermon. We flee from the idea that art should be uplifting or have an ethical mission. We don't go on pilgrimages. We can't build temples. We have no mechanisms for expressing gratitude. The notion of reading a self-help book has become absurd to the high-minded. We resist mental exercises. Strangers rarely sing together. We are presented with an unpleasant choice between either committing to peculiar concepts about immaterial deities or letting go entirely of a host of consoling, subtle or just charming rituals for which we struggle to find equivalents in secular society.



威尔斯登的犹太公墓，上面立有一块希伯来墓碑，相当奇怪的是，他事先没有为自己作好更加世俗化的身后安排。

上帝并不存在，这一明确的信念我从来没有动摇过。我只不过是获得了思想的解放，觉得可能存在某种方法，既可以与宗教打交道，又可以不必接受其超自然内容。引申而言，这种方法就是既心向上帝圣父，又不至于因此妨碍对家父的敬重和追念。我意识到，自己对来世重生或者天国神仙一如既往地抵触，但这并不能证明我理当放弃各路宗教中的音乐、建筑、祷告、仪式、宴饮、圣地、朝拜、会餐、经卷。

世俗社会由于失去了一系列规程和主题而变得贫乏不堪，无神论者一般觉得无法与这些规程和主题生活在一起，总以为它们看起来跟尼采所谓“宗教的坏习气”密切相连。道德一词对我们来说已经变得风声鹤唳；想起聆听布道我们便会火冒三丈；对于那种认为艺术应当催人向上或教化育人的想法，我们唯恐避之不及；我们不再朝圣跪拜；我们已不能建造教堂庙宇；我们没有表达感恩的机制；对自视甚高者而言，读一本励志书的念头已变得荒诞不经；我们拒绝精神上的训练；陌生人很少在一起唱歌；我们面临着一个不愉快的选择，要么接纳有关无形神灵的奇异概念，要么完全放弃一整套抚慰心灵、微妙精巧或者干脆就是魅力无穷的仪式，须知，在世俗社会中，我们还很难找到足可媲美的东西呢。