

God Prefers “Fools”

■ Zhu Lan



Continuing his quest to explore and analyse universe and life, Dr Kazuo Murakami, Japan's most renowned biological scientist who gave insight into the “Code of Life”, has recently published his new attention-catching book – “God Prefers Fools”.

There are too many smart people in society who are shrewd, opportunistic and calculative. They seek to be among the elite and to achieve personal and social standing.

Dr Murakami has a vastly different way of thinking. These “successful” people, in the normal sense, might be seen as brilliant and intelligent in the eyes of the world but they are often confined by their own success. These so-called “winners” of the race of life generally have a very high opinion of themselves and often become arrogant, consciously or unconsciously.

They tend to think of their every achievement as a result of their own efforts. In the process, they fail to really open up their minds to see the truth of life and to surpass their own limitations. They are also unable to face the unknown with an open mind. They fall short in their abilities to handle setbacks. Whether in good or bad times, there seems to be a vague sense of hurry, shallowness and disorientation amidst the stark display of brilliance and intelligence.

What about those of us who heap praise and honour on these talents? Living in a modern civilized society, we similarly face the dilemma of “material prosperity and spiritual emptiness”. There are many questions that we are unable to find answers to, much trauma which remains unhealed, and many lost sheep that are unable to find their shepherd.

The food situation in Japan is an example. Only 40% - less than half - of the population are self-sufficient, yet the food is wasted and discarded by people on a daily basis in uncountable quantities! Yet, why is it that such a “smart crowd” and “intelligent society” that are money-savvy could only calculate daily accounts and not be versed in or understand the great survival plan that is inter-connected?

Whether at home or away, from time to time, you will see some people - ordinary and yet hard to come by - who are

relaxed and not restless. They do not fight with or seize from others. They are serene and full of warmth. They always maintain their own rhythm, their own way of thinking and their smiles. They do not parrot others and are not concerned about gaining and losing. Not only do they not join the race for fame and wealth, they even hope to realise their wish to “give, give and give again”. Their thoughts, words and behaviour seem almost inexplicable to the general people in modern society. For this reason, they are often labelled as bizarre “fools”!

Who exactly does the universe want? These “smart people” who are so admired by our society or the altruistic “fools” who swim against the currents and remain unconcerned about winning and losing?

Since young, Dr Murakami often heard his grandmother talk about “two banks” - the bank in heaven and the one on earth. She said that the banks on earth might go



bankrupt, but definitely not those in heaven; so the most ideal place to keep your pocket money or “yàsuìqián” (red packet with money placed under pillow by parents on Chinese New Year’s eve) would naturally be with the banks in heaven.

At that time, the young and ignorant Murakami was often dissatisfied with what his grandmother said. He thought of reminding his grandmother to consider their piggy bank on earth while putting her savings in heaven’s banks. Not just his grandmother but his mother too would often give away things from their home to more needy people even though they themselves were living on a shoestring budget.

His grandmother and mother often sang the same tune, continually “brainwashing” the children that it would truly be the greatest blessings for themselves if they could spend the money in their wallets on others first, as these “money” would be transformed into “merit”.

Subconsciously, this “altruism theory” that seemed silly and bizarre to him in his childhood was imprinted on his “genes”. He had continuously donated 10% of his salary when he taught at the university after completing his doctorate studies. Subsequently, almost all fees from his speaking engagements and royalties were donated to various charities. He donated the entire sum of his pension from university to the “Heart and Gene Institute” to facilitate more research and benefit more people.

Dr Murakami does not see the opportunities encountered and achievements made in his nearly fifty years of research as incidental. And he certainly does not believe that these results are solely from his own efforts nor is he arrogant about it. On the contrary, he often tells himself with joy that this has to be the interests remitted from the bank in heaven upon maturity of his deposits!

Even from his area of research, Dr Murakami believes that “altruism” is already inscribed in our genes (DNA). If we could have clarity of self, submerge our self-centredness and perceive the truth, we would definitely appreciate the unspeakable joy and satisfaction derived from benefitting others. From giving up our seat in the subway to sacrificing ourselves in a disaster, all of these would make us feel joy and fulfilment. In fact, this is everyone’s desire, as having an altruistic heart is innate to all.

Competition and confrontation might give us a momentous thrill of success and victory. It is, however, not only extremely brief but also a distorted illusion. If someone immerses in such fantasy and illusions that are contrary to heaven’s will, how could he possibly experience real lasting happiness and joy?

Apple founder Steve Jobs, whose life journey was full of twists and turns, once delivered a touching speech at Stanford University where he shared profound understanding and cognition of life with three segments of his own life as examples. The ordinary bits and pieces that unfold along life’s journey would fall into place to

become incredible clues of life in the future. As long as you believe, as long as you follow courageously, as long as you make appropriate choices, one day, many years later, when you look back on the past, you will come to a sudden realisation and be immensely thankful that you had followed your heart.

Certain unspeakably intolerable failures and setbacks, suffered along the way, could actually be incredible gifts. As you unwrap the layers of packaging, you will see the magic of life and the smile of the universe. However, it is only when your heart is not distracted and when you stand by your true self that this surprise and perfection could pay you a visit.

After he turned 17, Steve started asking himself each day: "If today were the last day of my life, would I do what I am about to do today?" He used the inevitable destination of life to constantly remind, evaluate and reflect - to correct his life path and remember the purpose of his real self so as not to waste life that is extremely hard to come by.

At the end of his speech, he quoted the farewell message of the final issue of "The Whole Earth Catalogue": Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish! (Always thirst for knowledge instead of becoming complacent. Be determined and diligent rather than speculating). These words were not only advice gifted to those outstanding Stanford graduates but they were also the source of blessing and hope in his own life.

If we do not allow ourselves to be limited and stereotyped by conventional wisdom and intelligence, if we do not focus on worldly reputation and if we do not forget our hearts' real desire, even if we have to continually stand by choices that others deem "foolish", we will be able to discover the real and incomparable intelligence and courage that will fulfil us, realise our lives and complete our journeys.

A monk named Ryōkan, during Japan's Edo period, was crossing a river in a boat when the boatman deliberately and mischievously rocked it from side to side, causing Ryōkan to lose his balance and fall into



the water. He pulled Ryokan back onto the boat only after ridiculing and laughing at him struggling in the water. Most people, being made fun of like this, would have quarrelled or fought once they were on board. But Ryōkan didn't even blame and actually thanked the boatman sincerely for saving his life. Putting aside his own humiliation, Ryōkan's first thought was to forgive and absolve the boatman of his rude ignorance. Ryokan would definitely have been labelled a "fool" by others but what magnanimity he displayed - demonstrating the compassion of the universe.

Dr Murakami's friend, Dr Toshio Ogoshi runs a private school in Kobe, Japan, known as Rebirth Academy Shiyujuku. This is a very unique school where the students have "school refusal" syndrome which is one of the increasingly serious social problems in Japan. In 35 years, this academy accepted over 6000 students.

At Rebirth Academy, the focus is not on academic growth and breakthrough. Instead, it seeks to heal the trauma of every student led there by destiny and to cultivate in them a healthy mind and body to live independently despite not having gone through the school system.

Dr Murakami was often invited to speak at Rebirth Academy. Every time he was there, he saw the students' cheerfulness and politeness, their laughter and tranquillity and he would feel deeply touched and emotional. Every student had "school refusal" syndrome and suffered from anxiety and depression, bore unbearable pain and some were even suicidal or had attempted suicide.

It is not difficult to imagine that a student who leaves the academy healed would be filled with endless gratitude for the academy and Dr Toshio Ogoshi. He, however, expresses his heartfelt thanks to the students, as he feels that it is every student and employee there who have allowed him to lead a fulfilling and happy life.

Dr Ogoshi might have started out with the intention of helping these "broken souls" to heal. But in the process he began to feel that he was the one who was being truly healed. What is even more incredible is that, in his daily work, his own personal troubles were magically resolved as he worked day and night thinking about how to better help the students and employees and found no time to attend to personal problems.

Dr Toshio Ogoshi shared with Dr Murakami what he learnt over the long years of experience and how he was deeply moved: "When you shoulder the burden for others, your worries will disappear. When you make profit for others, you are the one who really benefit from it. When you keep giving, what you receive is beyond your imagination."

Three Nobel Peace Prize laureates attended the autumn 2006 International Peace Conference held in Hiroshima, Japan, Dr Murakami was the conference chairman and had the opportunity to listen to great life teachings up close. Whether it is the bishop from South Africa, or the Northern Ireland peace activist, the messages everyone gave are the incredibly meaningful reminders to forgive and thank those who did not treat you well and to transcend your accustomed attitude for vengeance.

Moreover, practise tolerance to benefit others and be thankful for the opportunities to hone your practice - such amazing tolerance and broadmindedness as well as clear wisdom and courage. When will this modern society, filled with disputes and unbearable trauma, comprehend the life lessons and be determined to change course?

As a biochemist, Dr Murakami's research career has spanned half a century. But even now, whenever he sees the wonderful mysterious essence of double helical DNA, he still feels deep admiration and is extremely moved. This amazing "crystal of life" is not just unique to humans but is also present in all life forms.

The difference in genetic factor between human and gorilla is only 1.2% and the similarity between rice and human is 40%. If this obviously close relation between lives is so hard to imagine and accept, then how can life's blueprint which is beyond human intellect be realized and demonstrated? We have undertaken 38 million years of earth journey. The blueprints and codes

shared by all forms of lives are interconnected. The bits and pieces of the universe are interdependent and indispensable.

When we come to this world, we hold a transient individual life force of the universe. When we leave this world, we have again returned to the life of the universe as a whole. We may reappear as a wisp of breeze, dust on a palm, a piece of wood or a leaf of grass.

In our current transitory life in this three-dimensional space, all the more we need to learn and remember the "rules of the game" of the universe - let go of gains and losses, adjust our focus from ourselves to others, do not put ourselves before others and place priority in benefitting others.

With courage and wisdom, we dedicate every day to understanding others and helping others to attain happiness. As soon as possible, we want to connect with the thinking and lessons of the "fool" and return to the fold. And to reconnect to universal love and our true self. May we realise the long awaited compassion, wisdom and healing.

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