



Lin Yutang - The Importance Of Living

By *Lin Yutang*

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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. Many of the earliest books, particularly those dating back to the 1900s and before, are now extremely scarce and increasingly expensive. We are republishing these classic works in affordable, high quality, modern editions, using the original text and artwork.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Is it *really* a philosophy book if it has a section entitled "The Importance of Loafing"? Harvard scholar, Taoist, and modernist Lin Yutang wrote *The Importance of Living* to express his highly subjective, personal feelings after years of studying ancient Chinese texts, and created a wonderfully slow-going yet radiantly clear guide to the simple life. Taking walks, drinking tea, long talks with friends are all important to Lin, whose stories and retellings of Taoist classics meander away from his points, find new ones, and remind us to enjoy the life that's all around us without needless worry.

Lin's prose is gentle, like the conversation of a favorite lazy uncle who is more at home sipping lemonade on the back porch than gulping lattes between meetings. The sincerity of his humility is surprising to a reader used to postmodern writers who seem to pride themselves on their self-abasement. Though Lin deliberately avoided fame and notoriety, correctly observing that it only leads to troubles, one can only hope that his wisdom, timelier than ever, finds a wider audience among today's too-busy-to-breathe global culture. His philosophy, more practical and enjoyable than the usual Western writings on the subject, reminds us all of the vital importance of simply living. --Rob Lightner

About the Author

LIN YUTANG was born in 1895 to a mission family and became one of the best-known Chinese scholars and writers.

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