**A meaningful life**

**有意义的人生**

**1 The death of an angel of animal rights activism does not rate with that of a drugged-out rock star. So when Henry Spira died of cancer in September 1998, his death passed without notice, apart from a brief obituary in The New York Times. Yet Henry Spira's life tells us something important, not only about the modern animal movement, but about the possibility of an individual making a difference in the modern world.**

**一位动物权利保护运动的天使的去世还比不上一个沉溺于毒品的摇滚明星的死亡。所以，亨利·斯皮拉在1998年9月因癌症去世的消息根本没有引起公众的注意，只是《纽约时报》上刊登了一则简短的讣告。但是亨利·斯皮拉的一生让我们懂得了一些重要的东西，不仅关于现代动物权益保护运动，而且还有一个人改变现代社会的可能性。**

**2 I first met Henry when he turned up at an adult education seminar I was giving at New York University. I offered a course on "Animal Liberation" that attracted about 20 students. One student was an unusual specimen, outside the regular aesthetic of an "animal person. His clothes were untidy, and his hair uncombed. His language was so blunt and earthy that at times I thought I was listening to an assassin from a violent mob. Yet, I couldn't help feeling intrigued with his direct way of speaking and his solemn, secular oath to help animals in need.**

**第一次见到亨利，是我在纽约大学教一个成人教育研修班时他前来听课。我开设了一门关于“动物解放”的课程，吸引了大约20名学生。其中一名学生很另类，完全和通常意义上“动物权利保护者”的形象背道而驰。他的衣着邋遢，头发也未曾梳理。他说话非常直率并且粗俗，有时我甚至认为，我好像是在听一个暴力团伙的杀手在讲话。但是，我情不自禁地被他那种直截了当的说话方式，还有他那庄重的、不是出于宗教目的要帮助处于困境中的动物的誓言吸引住了。**

**3 I left New York soon after that, but one day got a call from Henry. He talked with me about his work. I knew that for over a century, the animal rights movement had been putting out graphic brochures, leaflets, and audio propaganda, alerting people to the dreadful experiments on animals. But in all that time, the number of animals used in experiments had risen from a small batch of a few hundred to more than 30 million. No activist had managed to stop a single experiment or improve the lives of animals living in tiny, constricted enclosures. Henry changed that. One of his earliest campaigns permanently closed down a laboratory conducting experiments with toxic vapor on about 60 rabbits.**

**在那之后，我很快就离开了纽约。但是有一天，我接到了亨利的电话。他和我聊起了他的工作。我知道，一个多世纪以来，动物权益运动的倡导者一直通过散发带图画的手册、传单以及音频宣传材料，来引起公众对那些可怕的动物实验的关注。但与此同时，用于实验的动物数量从原来区区几百骤增到三千多万。没有哪位活动家曾成功阻止过一项实验或改善了蜗居在狭小困笼中的动物的生活。亨利却改变了这一切。他早期的运动之一就是使一间用毒蒸汽在大约60只兔子身上做实验的实验室被永久关闭。**

**4 Following that success, Henry rapidly moved on to bigger targets. He laid siege to Revlon over their use of rabbits to test cosmetics for potential eye damage, and exerted enough pressure to persuade them to put $750,000 into the search for alternatives. Having seen the boycott that Revlon had narrowly averted and being afraid of incurring similar wrath, Avon, Bristol-Myers and other major cosmetics corporations soon followed suit. Though it took 10 years for the research to achieve results, it was largely Henry's public and judicious watchdog efforts that brought so many cosmetics corporations to where they now truthfully state their products are not tested on animals.**

**取得上述成功之后，亨利马上转向更大的目标。他谴责露华浓公司用兔子检测化妆品对眼睛可能造成的伤害。他还给露华浓施加了强大的压力，说服其投入75万美元进行研究，以寻找替代方法。雅芳、百时美及其他大型化妆品公司看到露华浓险些遭到抵制，担心自己也会招致同样的愤怒，所以很快也都纷纷效仿。虽然他们的研究历经10年才取得成果，但是正是亨利所作出的这种公开而又明智的监督，才使得这么多化妆品公司现在可以如实地说，他们的产品没有在动物身上进行实验。**

**5 From decades spent working on the side of the weak and oppressed, Henry became efficient at masterminding campaigns. His victory over Revlon didn't require wealth, legislators, or the help of big governments. He learned how to build public awareness campaigns, how to shape malpractice lawsuits to successfully sue large companies and how to build committed groups of supporters for the cause.**

**经过几十年为弱势及受压迫群体所做的抗争，亨利变得非常善于策划各种活动。他在与露华浓的抗衡中获胜，靠的不是财富、立法者或庞大的政府的帮助。他学会了如何发起能够唤醒公众意识的活动，如何开展渎职诉讼以便成功起诉大公司，以及如何为这一事业建立忠实的支持者团队。**

**6 We often assume that society has become too big and too bureaucratic for individuals to make a difference. How could one individual, however humane and passionate, possibly bring about change in the face of powerful global corporations, ministerial indifference and complicated parliamentary rules?**

**我们经常认为社会已经变得太大、太官僚，从而个体不可能改变它。在面对强大的跨国公司、冷漠的执政部门和众多复杂的议会规则时，单单一个人，不管他多么具有人道主义，多么富有激情，又如何能促成改变呢？**

**7 Henry's life was dedicated to the cause of preventing suffering of innocent, helpless animals, especially those used in research. He didn't stand on the sidelines or try to get revenge for the suffering he observed. Henry was practical. He acted. He appealed to the public and created publicity kits to help common people become activists.**

**亨利的一生都致力于阻止无辜又无助的动物遭受痛苦，尤其是那些被用于研究的动物。他没有袖手旁观，也没有试图为他所看到的苦难复仇。亨利是个很实际的人。他采取了行动。他向公众呼吁，并做了各种成套的宣传材料来帮助普通人成为积极的参与者。**

**8 On April 21, 1996, I sent Henry a fax telling him I was thinking about writing a book to chronicle his life and work. I asked whether I could stay with him for a few days in June to talk about it.**

**1996年4月21日，我给亨利发了一份传真，告诉他我正在考虑写一本记录其生平和事业的书。我问他我是否可以6月份过去和他待几天，以讨论这一事宜。**

**9 Henry called that evening. He said he'd really like me to write the book, but he wasn't sure he was still going to be around in late June. He explained that he'd been diagnosed with cancer, and asked whether I could come earlier.**

**当天晚上亨利就给我打了电话。他说他很愿意由我来写这本书，但是他不确定自己6月下旬是否还会活在世上。他解释说他已经被确诊得了癌症，所以问我能不能早点来。**

**10 I was in New York six days later. Henry had lost a lot of weight, and lacked the energy I was used to seeing in him. His life expectancy was a matter of months. Death seemed to be stalking him.**

**6天后我就到了纽约。亨利瘦了很多，而且也没有了我以前在他身上看到的精力。他的生命只剩几个月了。死亡似乎正在向他逼近。**

**11 The most remarkable thing about Henry, though, was the total absence of any sign of depression. Life had been good, he said, refusing to hear my sympathy and condolences. He said he'd done what he wanted to do and enjoyed it a lot. Why should he be depressed?**

**尽管如此，亨利最了不起的一点就是，你根本看不到他有一丝一毫的沮丧。他说他一直过得很好，因而拒绝听我说同情和安慰的话。他说，他做了自己想做的事，而且很享受所做的一切，为什么要感到沮丧呢？**

**12 Henry's life did not terminate in the time his doctors predicted. For the next two years he kept working, helping develop the material I needed for the book, through interviews and questionnaires. When I began writing, I never thought Henry would see a completed draft, but he lived to see the book on sale in a New York bookstore. Then, within a week, wearing his favorite striped pajamas, he died.**

**亨利的生命并没有像医生预言的那么快终止。在接下来的两年里，他一直坚持工作，通过采访和问卷调查的方式，帮助我准备写书需要的材料。在我开始动笔的时候，我从来没想到亨利能看到完整的初稿，但是他一直活到亲眼看到书在纽约的书店出售。然后，不到一个星期，他就去世了，当时身上穿着他最喜欢的条纹睡衣。**

**13 One essential mark of living well is to be satisfied with one's accomplishments when taking a retrospective look at life, and to be able to accept death and face infinity calmly. Henry's life seemed to lack many of the things that most of us take for granted as essential to a good life. He never married, or had a long-term, live-in relationship. He had no children or successors. He never went to concerts, to the theater, or to fine restaurants. He didn't bring antibiotics to the needy or vaccinate the poor. He was never called a hero like the caped crusaders of our comic books. There is no fancy stone for him at the cemetery after his death. He just cared for the weakest creatures in his society. What gave Henry Spira's life depth and purpose? What did he — and others — find meaningful in the way he lived his life?**

**一个人活得好的一个根本标志就是，在他回首自己人生的时候，他对自己的成就感到满意，而且能够冷静地接受死亡、面对永恒。亨利的人生似乎缺少了我们大多数人想当然地认为美好人生所必须具备的很多东西。他一生未婚，也从未经历过长期的恋爱同居关系；他没有孩子或别的继承人；他从来不去音乐会、剧院或高级饭店；他也没有给生活艰难者带去抗生素或是给贫困者接种疫苗。他从来没有像我们的漫画书中那些披着斗篷的社会改革家那样被称为英雄。他死后墓地上也没有什么精致的墓碑。他只是关心社会中脆弱的生灵。是什么让亨利·斯皮拉的生活富有深度、目标明确呢？在他的这种生活中，他，以及其他人，又发现了什么有意义的东西呢？﻿**

**A turning point of my life**

**我人生的转折点**

**1 I wasn't yet 30 years old and was working as a firefighter in New York City, in a firehouse completely swamped with calls. In the rare moments when we weren't busy, I would make calls on our cordless phone handset or rush to our office to read Captain Gray's subscription of the Sunday New York Times. Late one afternoon when I finally read the Book Review section, my blood began to boil. An article stated a thesis I took to be an offensive insult: William Butler Yeats, the Nobel Prize-winning light of the Irish Literary Renaissance, had risen above his Irishness and was now a universal poet. I grew indignant suddenly, and a deep-seated passion within me was activated.**

**我那时还不到30岁，是纽约市的一名消防员，我工作的消防站总是不断有求助电话进来。偶尔在我们不忙的时候，我会打打无绳电话，或是到办公室，看看格雷队长订的《纽约时报》周日版。一天下午晚些时候，当我最后读到书评栏时，我开始血液沸腾。一篇文章提出了一个在我看来带有侮辱性的观点：它说诺贝尔奖获得者威廉·巴特勒·叶芝，即点亮爱尔兰文学复兴之光的人，已经超越了其爱尔兰身份，是一名世界性的诗人。我突然感到愤怒，内心深处一种激情也被激发起来。**

**2 There were few things I was more proud of than my Irish heritage. My ancestors were Catholic Irish farmers, fishermen and blue-collar workers, all of whom were patrons of literature. From the time my family came ashore on Ellis Island and faced the threat of being deported, we have fought discrimination against Irish immigrants. Ever since I first picked up a book of his poems, Yeats had been my favorite writer. He wrote his poetry in close adherence to his Irish sensibilities. His life was, in essence, a tribute to his homeland. So, it was offensive to think Irishness, no matter if it was psychological, social or literary, was something to rise above. I felt like my heritage was a defendant at a tribunal, and I had no choice but to protect it and denounce such an outdated prejudice.**

**很少有什么事情比我是爱尔兰后裔更让我感到骄傲的了。我的祖先是信仰天主教的爱尔兰人，他们做过农夫、渔民和蓝领工人，但是他们所有人都热爱文学。从我的家族登上埃利斯岛、面临被驱逐的威胁那一刻起，我们就一直在反抗对爱尔兰移民的歧视。自从我第一次拿起叶芝的诗集开始，他就一直是我最喜欢的作家。他创作的诗中有着深深的爱尔兰情怀。实际上，他的一生都在赞颂祖国。所以，不管是从心理的、社会的还是文学的角度，认为爱尔兰的身份是能够超越的，都是一种侮辱。我感觉自己继承的身份就像是成了法庭上的被告，我别无选择，只能保护它并谴责这样一种过时的偏见。**

**3 Vibrating with agitation, I grabbed a piece of clean paper, one that had the logo of the Fire Department of the City of New York across the top. I began a letter, trumpeting my indignation to the editor of the Sunday Book Review, describing Yeats as he was: a writer fundamentally Irish in all he did and wrote.**

**我焦躁不安，全身颤动，于是抓起了一张干净的纸，那张纸的顶部印有纽约市消防局的标志。我开始给《周日书评》栏目的编辑写信，表达我的愤怒。我把叶芝描述为他本来的样子，即无论从行为还是从作品来看，他都是地地道道的爱尔兰作家。**

**4 I don't know why I felt I had to defend the world's greatest poet (at least next to Homer and Shakespeare) from being "prosecuted", or to compose a defense of Irish writing. I just knew that I had to write that letter, in the same way a priest has to pray, or a musician has to play an instrument.**

**我不知道为什么我觉得自己必须捍卫这位世界上最伟大的诗人（至少是仅次于荷马和莎士比亚的诗人），使其免于被“起诉”，或者为什么我要撰文捍卫爱尔兰文学。我只知道我必须写那封信，就像牧师必须祷告，或者音乐家必须演奏乐器一样。**

**5 Until that point in my life I hadn't written much of value — a few poems and short stories. But, like a beginning artist who longs to see his work come to life, becoming an animated Disney film, I understood that the more one draws, or writes, the better the end result will become. Realistically, I approached writing like waxing a car, thoroughly and repeatedly. So I wrote often to improve my writing skills. I tentatively sent material to various magazines and reviews, but no one had ever been willing to publish me.**

**在那个时刻之前，我没有写过多少有价值的东西——只有几首诗和几篇短故事而已。但是就像是一名刚刚起步的艺术家渴望看到他的作品焕发生命，被拍成迪斯尼动画片一样，我明白一个人画得越多，或写得越多，最后他的作品就越好。所以，我采取了一种实际的策略，对待写作就像给汽车打蜡一样，我既细致认真又反复操练。我经常写，以提高自己的写作技能。我也试着把文稿寄给多家杂志社和书评专刊，但是没有人愿意发表我的作品。**

**6 So it was an unexpected delight when the Times published my commentary. I suppose the editor decided to publish it because he was first attracted by the official nature of my stationery, and then by the strangeness of an inner city firefighter's using refined language. I'd like to think, though, that the editor silently agreed with me.**

**所以，当《纽约时报》发表了我的评论，我欣喜若狂。我想编辑决定发表它，可能是因为他首先被我所用的信纸的正式性吸引了。其次，一名中心城区的消防员竟能使用文雅的语言或许也让他感到新奇。但是，我宁愿认为编辑默默地认同了我的观点。**

**7 I received about 20 sympathetic and congratulatory letters from professors that I tacked up by the superintendent's desk. These letters tickled me, making my heart flutter with the thought that I was not only a published writer but an opinion maker. I was suddenly dubbed as someone whose views mattered.**

**我收到了大概20封来自大学教授的表达同感或祝贺的信。我把它们订在了主管的桌子旁边。这些信让我快乐，让我激动不已，因为我想到，我不仅作品得以发表，而且我还是个观点制造者。突然间，我被称为拥有重要观点的人。**

**8 Incidentally, I also received letters from True magazine and from The New Yorker, asking for interviews. It was the latter that ignited my career — the article titled "Fireman Smith" provided the impetus for a large publishing company to request a manuscript about my life.**

**出乎意料的是，我还收到了《真实》杂志和《纽约客》的来信，要求采访我。正是后者激发了我的事业——它刊登的题为《消防员史密斯》的文章使一家大型出版公司向我约稿，要我写一本关于自己人生的书。**

**9 I had always subscribed to the belief that the work of firefighters was a worthy subject for a book, but it had received incomprehensive coverage so far. I was bewildered at first with little confidence in my ability to write a whole book. So, I began little by little writing one module at a time. I soon had the basic skeleton and framework for my book. The book went on to sell two million copies and was translated into 12 languages. In the following years, I wrote three more best-sellers, and last year published an autobiography.**

**我一直认为消防员的工作是个值得一写的题材，但是到目前为止却很少被写过。起初我很困惑，对于自己是否有能力写一本完整的书没有多少信心。所以，我开始一点一点地写，一次写一部分。很快，我对整本书有了基本的结构和框架。这本书最终卖出200万册，并被译成12种语言。在接下来的几年中，我又写了3本畅销书，去年还出版了一本自传。**

**10 Being a writer had been far from my expectations; being crowned a best-selling author was almost unimaginable. How had it happened? I often found myself thinking about it, marveling at the inconsistency of my success and earlier failure. My thoughts always came back to the nucleus at the center of it all, that letter to The New York Times.**

**成为一名作家远远超出了我的预料。被冠以畅销书作者的称号更是几乎难以想象的。这一切都是如何发生的呢？我发现自己经常思考这个问题，惊叹于自己的成功和早期失败之间的反差。我的思绪总是会归结于其中最核心的部分——那封写给《纽约时报》的信。**

**11 The clearest explanation is that I had found a subject I felt so strongly about that the writing was a natural consequence of that passion. I felt the same kind of passion when I began writing about firefighters and, later, a serial story about my mother. Whatever the subjects, they are always meaningful and timely because they represent the great values of human life — decency, honesty and fairness — subjects that burn within me as I write.**

**最清楚的解释就是，我发现了一个让我有强烈感触的题材，因此，写作就成为这种激情很自然的结果了。在我写关于消防员以及后来写关于我母亲的系列故事时，我都怀有同样的激情。不管题材是什么，它们总是有意义并且合时宜的，因为它们代表了人类生活中伟大的价值观——得体、诚实和公正。在我写作时，这些题材在我心中炙热如火。**

**12 Over the years, all five of my children have come to me periodically with one dilemma or another. Should I go out for soccer or basketball? Should I take a job with this company or that one?**

**多年来，我的五个孩子会时不时地来问我一个又一个让他们进退两难的问题：我应该踢足球还是打篮球？我是到这家公司工作还是到那家？**

**13 My answer is always the same: Think about your feelings deep down in your bones. Measure the heat of the fire there, for that is the passion that will flow through every particle of your being. Always find that passion. And, if you lose it, retrieve it and start again. Your education and your experience will guide you toward making a right decision, but your passion will always enable you to make a difference in whatever you do.**

**我的回答一直是相同的：想想你骨子深处的情感。估量一下那些情感的热度，因为那就是流淌于你身体每一部分的激情。任何时候都要找到那种激情。如果你失去了它，就要重新搜寻到它，然后再重新开始。你接受的教育和你的经验会引导你作出正确的决定，但是你的激情总是会使你在做任何事情时都成就非凡。**

**14 That's what I learned the day I stood up for Ireland's greatest poet.**

**这就是那天我挺身而出为爱尔兰最伟大的诗人辩护时所学到的东西。**