



运气对成功有多重要

题目：What role does luck play in your life?

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Hello, everybody. I'm honored to be here to talk to you, and what I'm going to talk about today is luck and justice and the relation between them.

大家好。我非常荣幸能跟大家 进行这次谈话。我今天要谈论的主题是 幸运和公正， 还有两者之间的联系。

Some years ago, a former student of mine called me to talk about his daughter. It turns out his daughter was a high school senior, was seriously interested in applying to Swarthmore, where I taught, and he wanted to get my sense of whether she would get in. Swarthmore is an **extremely** hard school to get into. So I said, "Well, tell me about her." And he told me about her, what her grades were like, her board scores, her **extracurricular activities**. And she just sounded like a superstar, wonderful, wonderful kid. So I said, "She sounds **fabulous**. She sounds like just the kind of student that Swarthmore would love to have." And so he said, "Well, does that mean that she'll get in?"

若干年前， 我曾经的一个学生给我打来电话， 聊起了他的女儿。他的女儿是一名高三学生， 她对于申请我所任教的 斯沃斯莫尔学院很感兴趣， 所以他想要从我这里了解 他的女儿是否能进入这所学院。因为斯沃斯莫尔学院 是一所非常难进的学校。所以我说：“好啊， 那简单介绍一下她的情况吧。”于是他跟我说了 他女儿的一些情况， 比如她的成绩如何， 标化考试成绩如何， 还有她的课外活动。她听起来就像一个超级明星， 一个非常、非常优秀的孩子。所以我说：“听起来她很好， 她就像是斯沃斯莫尔学院 非常想要的那一类学生。”接下来他说：“那就意味着 她可以进入这所学院吗？”

extremely
adv.极其地

extracurricular
activity
课外活动

fabulous
adj.难以置信的

And I said, "No. There just aren't enough spots in the Swarthmore class for everybody who's good. There aren't enough spots at Harvard or Yale or Princeton or Stanford. There aren't enough spots at Google or Amazon or Apple. There aren't enough spots at the TED Conference. There are an awful lot of good people, and some of them are not going to make it." So he said, "Well, what are we supposed to do?" And I said, "That's a very good question."

“我说：“不是。即使申请的人都很优秀，斯沃斯莫尔学院也没有足够的名额给他们。就像哈佛大学、耶鲁大学、普林斯顿大学或是斯坦福大学录取的名额有限，在谷歌或亚马逊或苹果公司的工作岗位有限，TED会议的参会名额也很有限。这个世界上有太多太多优秀的人了，所以一些人肯定无法得偿所愿。”于是他问：“那我们该怎么办呢？”我答道：“这是个很好的问题。”

What are we supposed to do? And I know what colleges and universities have done. In the interest of fairness, what they've done is they've kept **ratcheting** up the standards because it doesn't seem fair to admit **less qualified people** and reject better qualified people, so you just keep raising the standards higher and higher until they're high enough that you can admit only the number of students that you can fit.

我们该怎么办呢？我很清楚很多大学和学院为此所做出的努力。为了公平，大学一直在提高录取要求，因为录取不够资质的人而拒绝更优秀的人是不公平的。所以对申请者的标准会越来越高，直到这个标准足够高，只有一定数量的学生才符合标准。

And this violates a lot of people's sense of what **justice and fairness** is. People in American society have different opinions about what it means to say that some sort of process is just, but I think there's one thing that pretty much everyone agrees on, that in a just system, a fair system, people get what they deserve.

但这却违反了大多数人对于正义和公平的理解。对于某种过程是公正的意义，美国人民有不同的理解，但我认为有一个观念是差不多人人都会同意的，那就是在一个正义和公平的体制下，人们会得到他们应得的。

ratcheting

n.棘轮效应

justice and

fairness

公平和正义

And what I was telling my former student is that when it comes to college **admissions**, it just isn't true that people get what they deserve. Some people get what they deserve, and some people don't, and that's just the way it is.

就像我对我的这名学生所说的一样，当人们面对大学入学申请时，人们并不一定会美梦成真。的确有一些人会得偿所愿，但另一些人则不会，现实往往就是这样。

When you ratchet up requirements as colleges have done, what you do is you create a **crazy competition** among high school kids, because it's not adequate to be good, it's not adequate to be good enough, you have to be better than everybody else who is also applying. And what this has done, or what this has contributed to, is a kind of epidemic of anxiety and depression that is just crushing our teenagers. We are **wrecking** a generation with this kind of competition.

当那些大学抬高录取标准时，就会创造一种面对高中学生的 疯狂的竞争机制，因为成为优秀的学生还不够，成为足够优秀的学生也不够，你必须比其他所有申请者都要优秀。这种竞争所带来的，或者说它所导致的，是一种焦虑和抑郁的泛滥，而这些正在摧毁我们的青少年。这种竞争机制正在摧毁我们下一代的身心健康。

As I was thinking about this, it occurred to me there's a way to fix this problem. And here's what we could do: when people apply to college, we **distinguish** between the applicants who are good enough to be successful and the ones who aren't, and we reject the ones who aren't good enough to be successful, and then we take all of the others, and we put their names in a hat, and we just pick them out at random and admit them.

在我思考这个问题时，我想到了一种解决的方法。我们可以尝试这样做：当人们申请大学时，我们可以将足够优秀、值得取得成功的学生与不够优秀的学生进行区分，我们拒绝那些不够优秀的学生，接下来我们将所有其他学生放到一个候选池中，从中随机选择并录取他们。

admission
n. 准许进入

crazy competition
疯狂竞争机制

wrecking
n. 失事

distinguish
v. 辨别

In other words, we do college admissions by lottery, and maybe we do job offers at tech companies by lottery, and -- perish the thought -- maybe we even make decisions about who gets invited to talk at TED by lottery.

换句话说，我们通过类似彩票的方式来进行入学筛选，或许科技公司也可以通过这种彩票方式来雇佣人员，甚至，或许我们可以用彩票的方式来决定被邀请到 TED 演讲的人选。

Now, don't **misunderstand** me, a lottery like this is not going to eliminate the injustice. There will still be plenty of people who don't get what they deserve. But at least it's honest. It reveals the **injustice** for what it is instead of pretending otherwise, and it punctures the incredible pressure balloon that our high school kids are now living under.

请不要误解我的观点，这种彩票的方式并不会消灭不公平，仍然会有很多人得不到他们应得的。但至少这个过程是透明的。它能够揭露不公平本身，而不是去伪装公平，同时也戳破了悬在我们的高中生头顶的压力气球。

So why is it that this perfectly **reasonable proposal**, if I do say so myself, doesn't get any serious discussion? I think I know why. I think it's that we hate the idea that really important things in life might happen by luck or by chance, that really important things in our lives are not under our control. I hate that idea. It's not surprising that people hate that idea, but it simply is the way things are.

那么为什么这个看似完美的合理提议——至少我认为很合理，——却没有人对其进行认真的讨论？我想我知道原因。我想是因为，我们都讨厌这个主意，那就是生活中真正重要的事是通过运气来随机决定的，这些事情并不在我们的控制范围内。我个人就很讨厌这个主意，如果其他人也讨厌这个主意，我一点也不惊讶，但事情原本就是这样。

misunderstand

v. 误解

injustice

n. 不公平

reasonable

proposal

合理提议

First of all, college admissions already is a **lottery**. It's just that the admissions officers pretend that it isn't. So let's be honest about it.

lottery
n.彩票

首先，大学录取系统本身已经相当于买彩票了。只是录取委员会在假装这不是靠运气。不如我们都坦诚一些吧。

acknowledge
v.承认

And second, I think if we appreciated that it was a lottery, it would also get us to **acknowledge** the importance of good fortune in almost every one of our lives.

其次，我认为如果我们都能意识到这靠的是运气，也能帮我们认识到好运对于我们每一个人的重要性。

Take me. Almost all the most significant events in my life have occurred, to a large degree, as a result of good luck. When I was in seventh grade, my family left New York and went to Westchester County. Right at the beginning of school, I met a lovely young girl who became my friend, then she became my best friend, then she became my girlfriend and then she became my wife. Happily, she's been my wife now for 52 years. I had very little to do with this. This was a **lucky accident**.

lucky
accident
幸运的巧合

拿我自己来举例。几乎每一件在我身上发生的重大事情，在很大程度上来说，都是好运气带来的。当我在七年级时，我的家庭离开了纽约搬去了威彻斯特县。就在刚开学时，我遇见了一个可爱的女生，我们成为了朋友，随后她成为了我最好的朋友，然后她成为了我的女朋友，最后又成为了我的妻子。令人开心的是，她现在还是我的妻子，我们在一起52年了。对此，我并没做什么，这只是一个幸运的巧合。

semester
n.学期

I went off to college, and in my first **semester**, I signed up for a class in introduction to **psychology**.

psychology
n.心理学

我上了大学，在第一学期，我报了一门心理学入门的课程。

I didn't even know what psychology was, but it fit into my schedule and it met requirements, so I took it. And by luck, the class was taught by a superstar introductory psychology teacher, a legend. Because of that, I became a psychology major.

psychology
major

心理学专业

那时的我甚至不知道 心理学是什么，但这门课程适合我的日程安排，也满足了我的学位要求，所以我就选了这门课。然后非常幸运的，这门课程是由一名教授 心理学入门课程的传奇老师授课。正因为如此，我成为了一名心理学专业的学生。

Went off to graduate school. I was finishing up. A friend of mine who taught at Swarthmore decided he didn't want to be a professor anymore, and so he quit to go to medical school. The job that he occupied opened up, I applied for it, I got it, the only job I've ever applied for. I spent 45 years teaching at Swarthmore, an institution that had an enormous impact on the shape that my career took.

enormous

adj.巨大的

我后来还去了研究生院。在研究生快毕业时，我的一个在斯沃斯莫尔学院任教的朋友决定不再当教授，所以他辞职并去了医学院。他的职位就空缺了，于是我就申请并得到了这个职位，这也是我唯一申请过的工作。我在斯沃斯莫尔学院任教了45年，这所机构对我职业生涯产生了巨大的影响。

And to just give one last example, I was giving a talk about some of my work in New York, and there was somebody in the audience who came up to me after my talk. He introduced himself. He said, "My name is Chris. Would you like to give a talk at TED?" And my response was, "What's TED?" Well, I mean, he told me, and TED then wasn't what it is now. But in the intervening years, the talks I've given at TED have been watched by more than 20 million people.

最后再举一个例子，我曾经在纽约发表过一些关于我个人研究的演讲，在演讲结束后，观众席中的一个人找到了我。他介绍了他自己。他说：“我叫克里斯。你愿意来TED做一个演讲吗？”而我的回答是：“TED是什么？”然后他向我解释了TED是什么，那时TED的知名度还远不像现在这样高。但在随后几年里，我在TED所发表的演讲已经被超过2000万人观看。

So the **conclusion** is, I'm a lucky man. I'm lucky about my marriage. I'm lucky about my education. I'm lucky about my career. And I'm lucky to have had a **platform** and a voice at something like TED.

所以结论就是，我是一个幸运的男人。我为自己的婚姻感到幸运。我为自己所接受的教育感到幸运。我为自己的职业生涯感到幸运。我也为有 TED 这样的平台，为能在此发声感到幸运。

Did I deserve the success I've had? Sure I deserve that success, just as you probably deserve your success. But lots of people also deserve successes like ours who haven't had it.

我值得我现在所拥有的成功吗？我当然值得获得这些成功，就像你或许也值得你所拥有的成功一样。但同时也有很多人本应获得像我们一样的成功，然而他们却与其失之交臂。

So do people get what they deserve? Is society just? Of course not. Working hard and playing by the rules is just no guarantee of anything. If we appreciate the inevitability of this kind of injustice and the **centrality** of good fortune, we might ask ourselves what **responsibilities** do we have to the people we are now celebrating as heroes in this time of the pandemic when a serious illness befalls their family to make sure that they remain whole and their lives aren't ruined by the cost of dealing with the illness? What do we owe people who struggle, work hard and are less lucky than we are?

所以，人们会得到他们应得的吗？这个社会是公平的吗？当然不是。努力工作，按照规则生活并不能保证任何事情。如果我们能意识到这种不可避免的不公平的存在，了解到好运所占有的重要地位，我们或许可以问自己，在这场疫情大肆传播的时候，我们对于被我们视作英雄的人们负有什么样的责任——当严重的疾病降临到他们的家庭时，我们能否保证他们的身心健康，他们的正常生活不会被高昂的医疗费用击垮吗？我们亏欠那些正在挣扎的人什么？我们亏欠努力工作却没有我们幸运的人什么？

conclusion

n. 结束；结尾

platform

n. 平台

centrality

n. 中心

responsibility

n. 责任

About a half century ago, the philosopher John Rawls wrote a book called "A Theory of Justice," and in that book, he introduced a concept that he called "the veil of ignorance." The question he posed was: If you didn't know what your position in society was going to be, what kind of a society would you want to create? And what he suggested is that when we don't know whether we're going to enter society at the top or at the bottom, what we want is a society that is pretty damn equal, so that even the unlucky will be able to live decent, meaningful and satisfying lives.

大约在半个世纪前，哲学家约翰·罗尔斯（John Rawls）写过一本书，名为《正义理论》。在那本书中，他引出了一个概念，并将其命名为“无知的面纱”。他提出的问题是：如果你不知道将来在社会中会处于什么样的地位，你会想要创造什么样的社会？他所建议的是：当我们不知道我们在社会上的地位会是在上层或是下层时，我们想要的是一个非常平等的社会，所以即使那些不幸的人也可以过着体面、有意义且美满的生活。

So bring this back, all of you lucky, successful people, to your communities, and do what you can to make sure that we honor and take care of people who are just as deserving of success as we are, but just not as lucky.

所以回归原题，在座的所有幸运、成功的各位，请力所能及的去确保我们能够尊重并关爱那些本应和我们一样成功的人，他们只是没我们那么幸运而已。

philosopher

n. 哲学家

meaningful

adj. 有意义的
的