An Interview with Professor Gao Mingle about Linguistics, Translation and Life

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Abstract: Professor Gao Mingle stands as a towering figure in the realms of language, education, art, and poetry—a true polymath whose life radiates intellectual brilliance and artistic grace. This interview delves into the depths of his pedagogical vision, scholarly inquiries, and personal passions, vividly illuminating his profound mastery and unwavering devotion across diverse domains: from the intricate science of linguistic exploration to the noble art of nurturing minds, from the elegant strokes of calligraphic expression to the lyrical beauty of poetic creation. Together, these threads weave a luminous tapestry of a life lived at the confluence of wisdom, creativity, and soulful reflection—an enduring portrait of harmony between mind and spirit.

Keywords: Gao Mingle; linguist; educator; multidimensional life; the sublime fusion of academia and art

Xu Yunqiu: Professor Gao, your early research mainly focused on linguistics, especially syntax, and your postdoctoral research at Harvard University was also in syntax. The syntax you study falls into the formalist category. When it comes to the nature of language, the formalist holds vastly different views from the functionalist. Some functionalist scholars even reject the formalist school entirely, arguing that its approach to understanding and analyzing language is fundamentally flawed. What is your take on this?

Gao Mingle: Yes, I developed an interest in syntax quite early on. My master's thesis, completed in 1988, focused on *transformational-generative grammar*. Later, when I pursued my doctoral studies, my research area was theoretical linguistics, specifically formal syntax. During my postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard University, I worked on the *Minimalist Program*—a framework that still falls under the umbrella of formal syntax. A major event in my research in formal syntax was the 8th International Conference on Generative Grammar in 2010, which was held at Beijing Language and Culture University. My postdoctoral advisor, C-T James Huang, and I invited Professor Noam Chomsky to serve as the keynote speaker for the conference. The interactions with him deepened my understanding and insight into linguistics.

Linguistics is the scientific study of human language, concerning itself with describing and explaining the nature of human language. Fundamental questions that linguistics tries to address include what is universal to language, how language can vary, and how human beings come to know languages. These views are widely accepted by the linguists, though there do exist different schools regarding how language should be studied and understood. The functionalist and generativist are the major ones. The former proposes that language is fundamentally a tool for communication, and its structures are best analyzed and understood with reference to the functions they carry out. It means that functional theory of grammar tends to pay attention to the way language is actually used, and not just to the formal relations between linguistic elements. The latter assumes that language is a hypothesized innate module or "universal grammar" in human brain that guides children when they learn languages and constrains what sentences are considered grammatical in any language. Proponents of this view do not necessarily consider that language evolved for communication in particular.

I believe the two groups are compatible—they merely differ in the questions they focus on. In fact, every entity has both form and function, just as every coin has two sides. It should be pointed out that formal syntax, represented by generative grammar, focuses more on the physiological mechanisms of language and tends to explain linguistic competence. By contrast, the functionalist concerns itself with the actual manifestations of language and tends to describe the rules of language use. Neither theory is inherently superior or inferior, nor right or wrong.

Xu Yunqiu: Given that neither of the two schools is superior or inferior, right or wrong, why then does the functionalism have more adherents than the formalism in China?

Gao Mingle: A good question! As we know, the study of modern syntax started with Noam Chomsky's phrase structure theory which assumes that a small set of rules abstracted from a linguistic data is able to derive whole grammatically possible sentences of the language. By repeatedly applying the rules, the speaker can produce any grammatical sentence, or a string of words in correct order. It is the knowledge of these rules or language competence that is the object of the generative linguist's attention, not the actual sentences he produces.

This set of phrase structure rules is relatively well manifested in configurational languages like English. English has a fixed word order, complete sentence components, a mandatory subject, and a relatively stable structure. Such languages are particularly suitable for analysis in terms of phrase structure rules. Chinese is typologically different from English. Chinese, on the other hand, is a topic-prominent language which has a rather flexible structure; important syntactic components such as subjects and objects can often be omitted. It requires comprehensive analysis based on context and lexical semantic features in addition to syntactic structure. The formalist advocates syntactic autonomy, meaning that syntax is independent of semantics and pragmatics. In contrast, the functionalist does not exclude semantics and pragmatics, making it more suitable for Chinese analysis. Additionally, I guess utilitarianism may also play a role. We study linguistics aiming to find rules from actual linguistic phenomena, and then apply these rules to guide language use and learning.

As a matter of fact, linguistic theory is a niche discipline. No country needs a large number of linguistic researchers, especially in the field of formal syntax. The cycle of theoretical updates in this area is short—when new theories emerge, old ones become obsolete. It suffices to have a small number of linguistic talents engaging in this endeavor. Nevertheless, the discipline of Foreign Linguistics and Applied Linguistics in China has an enormous student population. The curriculum of this discipline places a particularly strong emphasis on theoretical linguistics courses, while neglecting the cultivation of students' practical language proficiency. In my opinion, talent training should be geared to the needs of the job market. Cultivating application-oriented language talents, particularly translation professionals, represents the path forward for this discipline. China's Ministry of Education has also recognized this issue: it has launched Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) and Doctor of Translation and Interpreting (DTI) programs, and at the same time, reduced the enrollment quota for academic graduate students.

Xu Yunqiu: I very much agree with your view that we should prioritize cultivating students' practical language skills rather than merely indoctrinating them with linguistic theories. I can now understand why, as a doctoral supervisor, you shifted your research focus from linguistics to translation. Besides teaching, you have also done a lot of work in translation. Could you tell us when you started paying attention to the translation and dissemination of Chinese calligraphy?

Gao Mingle: I developed a passion for translation during my university years and translated

over one million words of literary works, including novels, literary criticism, and poetry. At that time, I felt that translation was helpful for learning English. Another reason is that I enjoyed writing when I was in middle school; translation and writing have similarities—writing is a form of creation, and translation is re-creation. Every time I finished translating a work, I would feel a sense of accomplishment. Through translation, I indeed build up my vocabulary and amazingly improved my English reading comprehension, and at the same time, honed my Chinese writing skills. My translated works were published one after another later on; it was purely an unexpected success! Later, when I taught at the university, my main courses were in linguistics, including formal syntax and the interface between lexicon and syntax, but translation always remained as a hobby.

I began to seriously consider translation studies as my research direction in 2014. At that time, Beijing Language and Culture University had many doctoral supervisors in linguistics but lacked those in translation studies. The Dean of the Graduate School suggested that I switch from linguistics to translation, believing that my practical experience in translation would be valuable. Although I was a bit reluctant to leave linguistics, translation was also a field I loved, so I made the switch. Since then, I have started thinking about the disciplinary construction of translation, which includes interdisciplinary studies between translation and communication, the interaction between artificial intelligence and translation, and strategies for cultural export, all of which fall within the scope of my research. The second-level discipline I proposed, Translation for International Communication (established outside the Ministry of Education's standard catalogue), was approved by the Ministry of Education.

I started focusing on the international dissemination of Chinese calligraphy in 2016, when I presided over and completed a National Social Science Fund project—Translation of Chinese Academic Works into Foreign Languages—which involved translating a book introducing the history of Chinese calligraphy into English. Through translating this book, I understood the development of Chinese calligraphy, grasped why it is a unique art form, improved my ability to appreciate its aesthetics, and also took up practicing calligraphy myself. When you discover something good, you want to share it, and that led me to think about its international dissemination.

Over the past century, China has translated a vast amount of foreign texts into Chinese, covering literature, philosophy, politics, economics, science, and other fields. This has played a very important role in China's modernization drive. However, foreign countries do not know much about China. For the mutual learning of civilizations, we also need to let the world understand China. This has led to a shift from "translating the world" to "translating China."

So, what best represents the spiritual essence of Chinese culture? I believe it is calligraphy. Calligraphy is simply language writing, and language is the carrier of culture. The extensive and profound nature of Chinese culture is embodied in individual pictographic characters, which have been passed down from generation to generation, sustaining Chinese civilization for five thousand years and keeping it vibrant. Calligraphy records the context of historical evolution; different eras produced different styles of writing, such as the Oracle Bone Script of the Shang Dynasty, Seal Script of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, Clerical Script of the Qin Dynasty, and later Running Script, Cursive Script, and Regular Script. Different scripts can transport us back to those eras. The carriers of calligraphy have also changed, evolving from oracle bones to metal and stone, then to wood and bamboo slips, silk, and finally to paper. Beyond its utility, as time changed, calligraphy evolved into a unique art form.

Xu Yunqiu: Professor Gao, traditionally we regard painting as art, which is embodied in its aesthetic value and not intended for practical utility. However, writing is a means of

conveying and recording information, which possesses utility. How do you consider calligraphy to be art?

Gao Mingle: Not all works of art lack utility; certain functional objects can also be works of art. For instance, regarding the furniture, appliances, and automobiles we produce, while their utility is the primary consideration, their aesthetic value is also a factor when we are making a purchase. This demonstrates the significance of the existence of industrial art design. Chinese calligraphy is one of China's defining traditional arts and a major subject of East Asian artistic studies. Since each Chinese character possesses a distinct form, the study of the evolution of the written form has long been the focus of historical inquiry. The form of a character is imbued with aesthetic functions, and art historians have studied the development of these forms and the diversity of their written styles.

Additionally, Chinese calligraphy allows us a glimpse into the minds of the ancestors of the modern Chinese. By experiencing the contrasting aesthetics of passive and active elements (yinyang) through the juxtaposition of hard and soft and the delineation of form with black on white, we are able to see reciprocal transformations as philosophical and religious schools of thought evolved alongside calligraphy throughout Chinese history. With an understanding of how Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism influenced calligraphers, we more fully appreciate the continuity and advancement of the traditional art within the context of Chinese customs.

Furthermore, Chinese calligraphy is known for an emphasis on artistic technique. Going hand in hand with Chinese character forms and the historical evolution of writing practices, calligraphy has developed a history of script evolution. The diversity of writing styles has given rise to distinct stylistic traditions and schools. While emphasizing technical discipline, calligraphy maintains a relatively stable system that is nevertheless highly inclusive of variation. The richness of brushwork and stroke forms continuously draws calligraphy into a vivid world of expressive vitality. Let me put the other way. Although a well-established system of conventions exists, the art has a high tolerance for variation. The abundance of the possibilities of brushstrokes has allowed the art to continuously enter vivid realms of expression. Through the application of varying force, calligraphy allows a calligrapher to vividly express his emotions and thoughts through ink tones that shift between light and dark, and lines of diverse forms—sometimes solemn and composed, sometimes free and unrestrained. Can you really say that calligraphy is not art?

Xu Yunqiu: Sure, Chinese calligraphy is definitely a form of art. It should be classified as a form of expressive art. Professor Gao, could you tell us more about the book *A History of Chinese Calligraphy*?

Gao Mingle: *A History of Chinese Calligraphy* was written by Professor Zhu Tianshu, who is widely known as a knowledgeable Chinese calligrapher and seal engraver. The English translation is titled as *The Art of Chinese Calligraphy* which is a redacted form of the original text. The book presents an overview of the historical origins of the art of Chinese calligraphy, evolution of various scripts, and adaption of individual styles. While introducing important calligraphic works, artists, styles, and schools, this work outlines the major trends in the history and development of Chinese calligraphy. From this book, we are able to understand the basic process of how the art was transmitted over millennia and how the appeal of the art accrued cultural value and expanded through innovation.

The Art of Chinese Calligraphy, the 10-chapter English version, is to provide international readers with a coherent framework for understanding Chinese calligraphy and Chinese culture and history as well. It begins with a broad overview of the art's historical development, and then moves on to representative works and calligraphers, cultural

environments in which they emerged, and major stylistic schools, gradually guiding readers into issues of technique, aesthetics, and intellectual tradition. Structurally, the volume consists of ten chapters and is supplemented with a pinyin-Chinese character index, which facilitates cross-linguistic lookup and terminological reference for readers without a background in Chinese.

Chapter One, *Pictography and Ornamentation*, traces early forms of writing through pictographic features and ornamental functions, using examples such as oracle bone inscriptions and bronze script to explore the aesthetic relationship among writing, carving, and decoration.

Chapter Two, *A Unified Standard*, focuses on the establishment of script and writing standards, it shows how unification and normalization propelled script types and writing mechanisms toward maturity.

Chapter Three, *The Elegance of the Wei and Jin*, centers on the cultural ethos of the Wei and Jin periods and discusses how literati aesthetics, calligraphic spirit, and the development of running and cursive scripts together shaped an enduring paradigm of elegance.

Chapter Four, *Southern Splendor, Northern Excellence*, contrasts southern and northern styles to show how regional contexts shaped aesthetic temperament, while also tracing both stylistic divergence and mutual influence through key figures and representative works.

Chapter Five, *The Canon of a Flourishing Age*, presents the consolidation of norms and exemplars, traces how the regular script tradition and the narrative of calligraphic history took shape.

Chapter Six, *Allure and Subtlety*, turns to refined aesthetic orientations associated with literati taste, highlighting how concepts such as subtlety, resonance, and stylistic refinement shaped both practice and critical discourse.

Chapter Seven, *The Elegance of Restored Antiquity*, focuses on trends of reviving antiquity and reconstructing tradition. It highlights the reinterpretation and creative remaking of ancient models rather than mere imitation.

Chapter Eight, *Defining Schools of Thought*, approaches calligraphy through lineages and conceptual divisions, this chapter discusses how differing stylistic positions and scholarly stances took shape through debate and practice.

Chapter Night, *The Rise of Epigraphy,* foregrounds how the rise of epigraphy and the study of stone inscriptions reshaped models of learning, aesthetic preferences, and theoretical discourse.

Chapter Ten, *Artistic Diversity*, the last chapter, addresses the diversification of calligraphy in the modern era and its interactions with other arts and media.

Taken together, the English book builds a narrative progression from panoramic overview to key historical nodes and finer details, serving both as a systematic introduction for international readers and as a replicable framework for presenting Chinese calligraphy to the world.

Xu Yunqiu: Understanding and appreciating Chinese calligraphy is far from being easy even for Chinese people, let alone foreigners who don't have much Chinese cultural backdrop. In your opinion, how can we enable the target readers to understand and appreciate Chinese calligraphy so as to achieve the goal of dissemination?

Gao Mingle: As mentioned earlier, the dissemination of Chinese calligraphy serves as a crucial showcase for foreigners to understand traditional Chinese culture, and a considerable number of relevant foreign language translations already exist. Common research on calligraphy translation mostly focuses on linguistic strategies. Its limitation lies in treating translation as a relatively isolated textual conversion, failing to sufficiently examine it within a complex, dynamic, multi-media, and multi-audience communication ecosystem. Conversely,

international communication often focuses more on macro-strategies or terminal effects. Therefore, we need to construct an integrated theoretical model of "Translation-Communication," establishing a translation paradigm centered on communication effects. This elevates translation from a technical issue of "how to translate" to a strategic communication issue of "why, for whom, and to what effect to translate."

To achieve this goal, we must break through the traditional paradigm that views translation primarily as a strategy of linguistic and textual conversion. Instead, we define translation practice as a form of cross-cultural communication. By introducing core communication theories, we can build a framework that integrates communication studies with translation studies. This involves correlating key concepts from communication studies with core theories from translation studies to construct an analytical system. This system should be capable of tracing the entire process, from the encoding of Chinese calligraphy discourse, the cross-linguistic reproduction of texts, to multi-modal and multi-channel dissemination, and finally to the decoding by international audiences.

In addition, the establishment of a Chinese Calligraphy Corpus is essential. Through the systematic organization and contextual analysis of Chinese calligraphy discourse and terminology, we can place calligraphy data within the broader context of Chinese history and culture, clarifying the nature and positioning of its communication practice. This addresses issues such as non-equivalent terminology, ambiguities in culture-loaded words, and inconsistencies in narrative styles. Through strategies like lexical selection, paraphrasing, and background supplementation, we can reconstruct and convey the cultural and aesthetic information carried by the source language of Chinese calligraphy in the target language. Based on large language models, we can conduct quantitative processing and qualitative research to initially evaluate cognition, attitudes, and communication effects among different audiences. Based on feedback regarding communication effects, and proceeding from the full chain of "translation production-text design-communication strategy-effect evaluation," we propose optimization strategies from the three aspects of audience orientation, composite narrative, and strategic communication, exploring possible paths for the transformation from "one-way translation" to "two-way construction."

With the rapid development of AI technology, the deep integration of translation and international communication is imperative. The identity and role of the translator are evolving toward that of a "cross-modal coordinator" and "multi-modal planner." How to utilize AI to disseminate Chinese calligraphy is also an important consideration.

Xu Yunqiu: As I understand, Calligraphy falls under the category of informative text. For an informative text, you just need to convey the message in any a way that the target readers can easily understand and accept. When it comes to the translation of expressive texts like poetry, should we adopt a foreignization translation strategy? I know you are also a poet. Would you please share with us your observation on Chinese classic poetry translation?

Gao Mingle: Yes, you are right. The choice of translation strategy really depends on the type of text. The charm of literature and poetry lies in the sense of defamiliarization and infinite interpretability they bring to the reader. Poetry does not convey specific information, but rather aesthetic sentiment. Its literary style possesses strong individual characteristics. If we only preserve the knowledge and information within it while filtering out the obscure and ambiguous elements, then the aesthetic value of the poetry vanishes.

As a unique art of literature, Chinese classic poetry unfolds before the readers' eyes an engaging landscape with its particular ideographic characters, exquisite artistic conception and melodious cadences and rhythms. The uniqueness of the language, cultural implications and aesthetic value, however, poses an all but unsurmountable challenge to even the most

veteran English translators. Thus a perfect English reproduction of Chinese classic poetry has become the persistent pursuit of the translators.

Quite a few scholars believe that the metres and rhymes of Chinese classic poems unavoidably fetter the sufficient expression of the original artistic conception in English translation. Fu Lei, a fruitful translator, argued that *alike-in-spirit* was the ultimate goal for any a qualified piece of literary rendering. Mao Dun, a celebrated Chinese modern litterateur, supported Fu's view and proposed the notion of *romantic charm priority* to the effect that the soul and verve of a poem could only be retained at the cost of its metres and rhymes. Lin Yutang, an eminent bilingual wirter, is believed to have similar view with Fu and Mao. They all insisted that the original artistic conception as the spiritual essence of Chinese classic poems could not coexist with their metres and rhymes when they were translated into English.

Some other scholars represented by Xu Yuanchong, to the contrary, stress the role of the metres and rhymes in replaying the artistic elegance of Chinese classic poems. Xu assumed that the highest level of English translation should be featured with beauty in sound, form and sense, which is known as *three-beauty* principle. The *three-beauty* principle requires that the version for target readers possess the original acoustic effect that is actualized via the cadence and rhythm, retain as much as possible the original poetic form, and reveal the subtlety of poetic language that touches the readers. The integrity of sound, form and sense makes up the poetic essence of a verse. Interestingly, Xu's *three-beauty* happens to coincide with Ezra Pound's three notions of poetry: melopoeia, phanopoeia, and logopoeia.

I hold the same view with Xu on the indispensability of sound and form in a translated version of Chinese classic poem. I believe that felicitous resemblance in sound and form to the original does not negatively affect but crucially contributes to faithful transmission of the artistic conception. Xu suggested that a poem should be rendered into another language in poetic form by means of reserving the sound and form of the original, which is known as *integrity translation*. Being a practitioner and advocator as well of his integrity translation concept, Xu translated a large number of Chinese classic poems into English that have won great credit for him in the translation circles. His success is a strong evidence for the feasibility of his integrity philosophy.

Song poetry, as we know, is much more rigid and demanding than Tang poetry in form, metre and rhythm. Its various lengths of lines, regulated change of tones and rigorous rhymes all effectively help express the poet's individual temperaments, such as free and easy, gloomy and depressed, gentle and mild, bold and unrestrained, and graceful and elegant. This is why the advocators of *romantic charm priority* shrink back in their practice though they are well aware of the power of the sound and form.

As a key ingredient in Chinese classic poetry, the poetic imagery was frequently drawn upon by the ancient Chinese poets to depict their intellectual and emotional complex. The poets' preference for using images in their poems reasonably fits the sensory nature of Chinese language. Ever since Cang Jie's pioneering formation of ancient pictographic characters, the lexicon of Chinese language has been endowed with the feature of imagery that was aptly employed as a figurative device in Chinese classic poetry. The imagery not only bears a literary esthetic value but also manifests a unique poetic identity of Chinese language. The poetic images in Chinese classic poetry, most of which are culture-loaded and esthetically unique to the poem writer, should be fully reserved but by no means be replaced, distorted or even minimized to submit to the target culture. Xu knew it well and properly retained the poetic imagery in his translation.

Xu Yunqiu: Besides researching linguistics, doing translation, and working on the international dissemination of Chinese culture, what hobbies do you have in your spare time? Could you also share your views on life?

Gao Mingle: In my spare time, I usually practice calligraphy, write poetry, and I also enjoy recitation. Calligraphy is a very healthy activity; it requires the coordination and cooperation of the hands, eyes, and brain. The process of writing brings joy, focus, and relaxation—it is somewhat like a form of spiritual cultivation. It is said that master calligraphers tend to live long lives.

Writing poetry depends on my mood; I write when inspiration strikes, but unfortunately, that doesn't happen often, so I don't have many works. Once I have enough, I plan to publish a poetry collection—that is a dream of mine. Chinese classical poetry is particularly suited for recitation, which is why I love it. Through recitation, I can experience and feel the poet's sentiments and emotions, as if I am in dialogue with them; it is a very unique feeling.

Chinese classical poetry has largely shaped my view of life. Generally, there is a mood of sorrow and melancholy in Chinese classical poetry. In ancient times, poets were usually literati from wealthy backgrounds, so they were unlikely to be distressed by poverty. I have noticed that the character appearing most frequently in Chinese classical poetry is "chóu" (sorrow/anxiety). This character is very interesting; it is composed of "qiū" (autumn) and "xīn" (heart), meaning the "autumn of the heart." This character "chóu" can be seen as the keyword of Chinese classical poetry, the background color of ancient literati's understanding of life, and the helpless lament of the ancient Chinese facing the impermanence and transience of life. The Indian Sakyamuni was in a similar situation; he ultimately relieved his sorrows by founding Buddhism. Whether or not the afterlife spoken of in religion truly exists, as long as one believes in it, it becomes an anesthetic, numbing people to the pain and anxiety brought about by the brevity of life. The ancient Chinese did not believe in religion; they only believed in the teachings of sages like Confucius. Sages are human, not gods, and cannot solve the problem of life and death for the world.

Dream of the Red Chamber is a very great literary work, and people interpret its greatness from different perspectives. I believe the author intended to express a theme of life and death. For humanity, there is perhaps no greater theme than this. Cao Xueqin poured his heart and soul into crafting an exquisite vase, only to suddenly smash it to pieces. This intense contrast creates an extremely powerful sense of loss and disillusionment. The author wants to tell us that the more vivid and beautiful life is, the more fragile it is and the easier it is to shatter. Although humanity is powerless in the face of such fragile life, the beauty of life, though short, is meaningful. That is why Jia Baoyu transformed from an inanimate stone into a human to experience the world.

I am the same: I feel pessimistic about the brevity of life, but I also feel fortunate to have the opportunity to come into this world. We cannot change the length of our lives, but we can enrich and expand the space of our lives. Linguistics, translation, cultural dissemination, calligraphy, poetry, and recitation—these are all activities that fill my life and squeeze out sorrow. These activities serve my life, not the other way around. I would like to conclude this topic with a poem I wrote. Yes, the title is Dhyana:

I rest unhindered, an open valley, receptive, searching.
Eyes strain across this gorge, lips murmur softly.
Night's soothing mist cleanses my innermost being.
There Deity stands, alone, ever watching.

Xu Yunqiu: I really like this poem; it sounds quite mysterious and ethereal. Actually, I like your other poem "Bird's Eye View" even more. Can you still recite it from memory? And could you talk more about what this poem is trying to express?

Gao Mingle: Sure, let me give it a try. This is really a test of my memory! Bird's Eye View:

Gently falling

The echo of snow
Quietly awakens me.
Between the brown withered trees
Flows a shimmer of silver waves
With a streak of crimson.
A red-feathered bird
Builds its nest upon my eave
Its view is higher than my small window.

I wrote this poem while I was a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University. It was a morning in January 2007. I woke up and watched out of the window and saw it was snowing heavily. A little red bird was shuttling back and forth in the withered grove like a sprite. Nature and the bird merged into one. It reminded me of the literary theme of "nature and nurture." Humanity reveres nature yet remains isolated from it. There I was, doing research at Harvard University, one of the world's top institutions, receiving the "nurture" of knowledge, while a little bird was flying freely in nature, enjoying its beauty. I was watching the world from behind a small window in a room of civilization, while the bird was building its nest right on my eave above my windowsill; her view was higher and broader than mine. I began to wonder: What exactly has civilization brought us? Are we really smarter than that little bird?

Xu Yunqiu: Thank you for sharing, Professor Gao! Every day, we endure the pressures of work, study, and survival, pursuing so-called life goals, competing with each other, and caught in a rat race. Is this really the meaning of our lives? Your words have made me realize: Shouldn't we be like that little red bird, enjoying everything nature has given us freely and without a care? I hope to have the chance to talk to you again. Thank you! Goodbye!

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