

# Book Review: The Abundance of Less 书评: 简朴的广度

2018-02-06 Erin Humphrey 绿色倡议

## **Book Review: The Abundance of Less**

**Erin Humphrey**

**The Abundance of Less: Lessons in Simple Living from Rural Japan**

**By Andy Couturier**

**North Atlantic Books (2017), 405 pages**

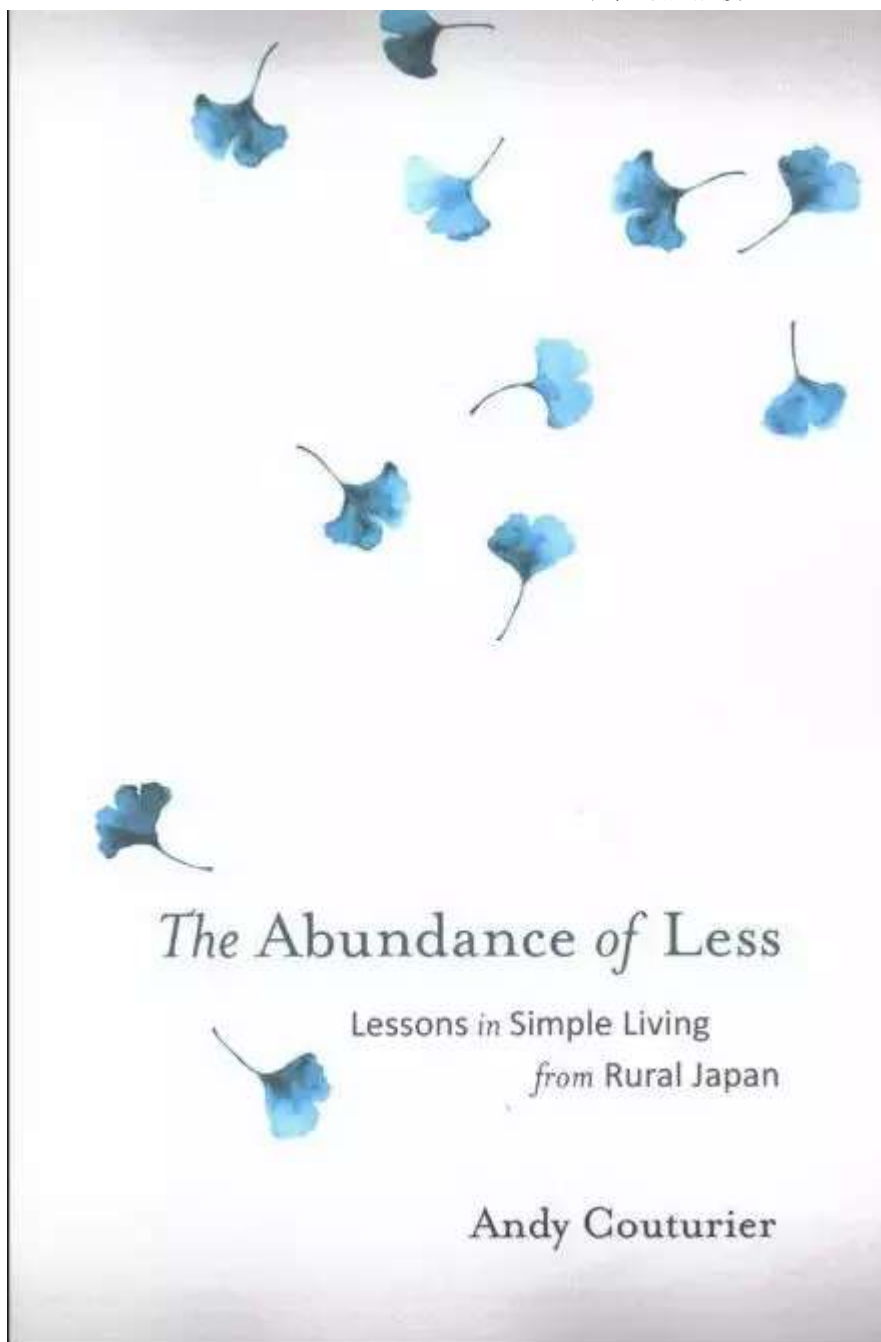
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《简朴的广度: 日本乡村生活的平凡面目下流淌的智慧》

作者: **AndyCouturier** 选自北大西洋系列丛书, 总计405页。

Andy Couturier's book, "The Abundance of Less" holds a prominent place in my permaculture library. A revised version of his 2011 publication, "A Different Kind of Luxury", this book still maintains the same curious intimacy and timeless quality of the original volume, while providing the readers with updated photographs and stories of each of the ten people profiled in the original. The hand drawn maps and sketches and the intimacy of the photographs gave me the feeling I was opening an old tome, a carefully assembled journal kept for many years. Snug right up next to Aldo Leopold's "A Sand County Almanac" and E.F. Schumacher's "Small is Beautiful", this book holds its own as a mainstay of spiritual and practical insight for that dark nights of "will we ever get there?" despair over the current global human situation.



AndyCouturier 的著作，《简朴的广度》在我个人的朴门学著作收藏中一直享有极高的地位。该书2011年的修订版《另一种奢华》（A Different Kind of Luxury），不仅保留着原有内容的珍贵价值，那股吸引人的魅力也如当初一般，经久不散，同时他还对原版书中记录的10个人的故事和照片也进行了更新。看着那些手绘的地图和速写，以及那些迷人的照片，不禁让我感觉我正在打开一本古老的书籍，一本尘封已久，精心编撰的旅行日志。

这本书在书架上，安然的倚靠在Aldo Leopold 的《沙县志》和E.F. Schumacher 的《小者，美也》旁边。在无数漆黑深邃的夜里，总有一个声音在轻声低语：“我们真的能做到吗？”，它犹如一个绝望的幽灵，徘徊在当今世界人类形势之上。而这本书却带着来自灵魂深处的呐喊和对现实的洞察，巍然屹立在这绝望的阴云之中。

Barely escaping the slightly guilty and overwhelmingly curious feeling I was actually reading someone's diary, I devoured Couturier's book in just under a day. Despite the author's request in the Introduction to digest each story slowly, ruminating over the chapters to get a sense of this "slowed down life", I found myself gorging on the realness and sincerity of this book. Here were ten accounts of real people living satisfying, affordable lives in a sustainable relationship with nature. In this updated version, Couturier gives us fresh perspectives of how these individuals have understood and coped with the aftermath of the nuclear disaster in Fukushima in March 2011. In a moving and inspiring new afterward he also draws clear connections for what the people profiled in the book have to teach us living in the West. This is a true feast for the reader searching for actual evidence of regenerative living amidst an eco-haze of green-washed capitalism.



怀揣着一丝对窥探的内疚和对他人日记强烈的好奇心，我全身心的投入到了书中的世界中。仅仅花了一天，我就读完了这本书。尽管作者在简介中要求读者慢慢的品读消化每一个故事，每一个章节，并进而感受到这种“慢生活”的节奏，我却沉浸在其中，无孔不入的感受着书中饱含的真实和真诚。书中记载了10个人的真实故事，他们都过着一种和大自然形成可持续关系的生活，令人满意，又力所能及。在最新的版本中，Couturier又给我们带来了一些新鲜的观点，是关于这些人如何理解并解决2011年3月福岛核电站泄漏造成的后果。令人振奋和感动的是，他接下来找到了书中记载的这些人的生活和我们关系，并指出他们的生活，对于我们这些居住在西方的人来说，能有什么样的教育意义。对于那些处在“表面环保”的资本主义环境下，渴望新生活存在真实证据的人来说，这也无疑是一场盛宴。

Interspersed with insightful and vivid anecdotes describing the homes, interview settings and relationships with the author, every chapter reveals a narrative of each person's history, philosophy, spiritual beliefs and current way of life. Couturier gives a lucid voice to these ten Japanese lives, representative of not only modern Japanese counter-culture, but more broadly of an emerging global response in both hemispheres to the multi-tasking material madness of mainstream consumer culture.

As each story unfolds he probes with humility, gentility, and sensitivity into each individual's thoughts on the very fundamentals of human life: time, money, work, art, music, food and family. But this is no change-out-your-light bulb kind of pseudo Eco-spiritual fluff. Couturier has crafted a philosophical opus, an essential read for the everyday person seeking an authentic, sustainable and creative life.



书中的每一个章节对每个人与作者的关系，各自的家庭和见面的地点都有详细的描述，无不反映出每个人独特的身世，生活哲学，精神信仰以及现有的生活方式。Couturier也少不了在书中穿插各种意义深远和新鲜有趣的奇闻轶事。这10个日本人的生活不仅代表了当今日本“反主流文化”长远来看更是全世界对于当今主流消费文化带来的多方面物质主义疯狂所逐渐传达的迫切响应。当叙述每一个故事时，Couturier都会谦逊、柔和、敏感地从生活最根本的东西来玩味每个人对如金钱，时间，工作，艺术，音乐，食物，以及家庭的看法，从而探查他们具有的精神品质，不过这可不是什么“换灯泡”式的“伪生态精神”行为。Couturier通过这种方式撰写了这部哲学必修书，给那些想要追求本真、可持续和创意生活的人。

Through intriguing chapter titles choice, Couturier introduces the interviewees by communicating a respect for the true complexity and diversity of each person. The reader meets Wakako Oe, organic farming mentor, puppet carver, intuitive painter, botanic sculptor and calligrapher. The author also introduces us to San Oizumi, potter, anti-nuclear organizer, anarchist, community educator, and father. Each story has inherent appeal purely based on the unique methods each per-

son uses to create their home and provide for their material needs in rural Japan. We learn how Osamu Nakamura collects his own firewood, stacks it with artistic care and lives and cooks by the heat of the traditional Japanese irori hearth. We discover how Koichi Yamashita grows all his own rice, wheat, millet and vegetables with hand tools and a wooden water wheel. We follow Gufu Watanabe through his forest garden of rare edible herbs and trees as he gathers ingredients for dinner along the way. However, the real juice of this book comes from the startling new perspectives and values infused throughout each person's lived story: "Don't spend. Do. Not. Spend." "Convenience just speeds you up." "Satisfaction is happiness." "Going over here, going over there. Tiring! Better to just laze around the house." These are certainly not the axioms I was spoon-fed growing up in the States!



形式各异，新颖有趣的标题选择，无不传达着Couturier对于受访者各自生活的复杂性和多样性的尊敬。读者们会遇见WakakoOe一位有机农场导师，木偶雕刻师，直观性画家，植物雕塑家和书法家。同时，也会邂逅SanOizumi，一名陶艺师，反核组织者，无政府主义者，社区导师以及一位父亲。在远离城市的这块日本郊区的土地上，每一个人在建立家庭和满足物质需求上都有独特的方式，而这种纯粹足以令人心驰神往。我们会从书中了解OsamuNakamura是如何亲手收集柴火，并富有艺术感地将它们堆积起来。我们也会读到，他又是如何利用传统的日本石炉来加以生存和烹饪。我们同样也会学习KoichiYamashita是如何利用手工具和木质水车播种和收货大米，小麦，小米和蔬菜的。我们也会跟随着Gufu Watanabe 的脚步，漫步于他的“森林花园”之中，一个珍稀药材树木繁盛的宝地，沿途他还能顺便收集晚饭的材料。

然而本书真正的精华所在，是渗透到故事中每个人的生活的新观点和新价值：“勿急勿躁勿消耗”“便利乃是急躁之源”“知足常乐”“碌碌忙忙，心力交瘁。不如淡然处之，偷得浮生半日闲。”听上去好累呀！这可绝不是我从小被灌输的格言戒律！

Many of these folks present an organic understanding of their own relationship to and values regarding the natural world (an understanding which many westerners are only now discovering through

the modern permaculture and sustainability movements). This book left me intensely curious as to the diversity of living examples of resilient modern life that Japanese communities and individuals may provide to the rest of the world. As a nation with a living memory of both urban and rural sustainable culture (Edo Period Tokyo was a fully regenerative and sustainable city of over one million people), Japan may offer the most relevant examples of how overdeveloped nations can begin post-industrial, post-carbon renewal. Certainly, Couturier's work moves us in a new direction and is not just a call to revert to some traditional ideal. As Astuko Watanabe, one of the interviewees asserts, "I am not a traditional person. I am just a woman living a simple life in the mountains. That's all."



这些受访者对于人和自然的关系和自然世界价值的认识非常到位。（而许多西方人，还在通过现代朴门学和可持续发展理论，不断在前进道路上摸索。）

这本书给我很大的启迪，日本社会和个人实例的多样性，在现代社会体现的韧性，能为世界带来什么，这激发了我的好奇心。日本城郊的可持续文化由来已久（早在日本江户时代，东京就已经是一个拥有着100万人口的可持续发展城市），他们就如何进入后工业时代，后碳可再生时代，给发达国家做了很好的先例。诚然，Couturier的理论将我们带进了一个新方向，并非止于对人们回归到传统的理想化社会的呼吁。正如受访者Astuko Watanabe所言：“我并不是一个遵循传统的人。我只是个居于山间的普通妇女。就是这样。”

I wonder how the "extreme" living conditions of many of the people featured in this book might present an unattainable or even undesirable example of sustainable life for many Japanese and Ameri-

can readers. The remote rural settings and lack of modern “amenities” in the houses of those interviewed for this book may cause some sustainability-curious readers to write off these people as radical back-to-the-landers. Although some people featured, like Atsuko Watanabe, are actively involved in their local community, more examples of people living in community may have helped the author create a larger and more complete picture of simple and sustainable living options in Japan. Hopefully, readers will look deeper to the insightful ways in which Couturier connects the choices of these individuals to larger patterns and values, which any aspiring “think global, act local” citizen can adopt.



Yet however intense and possibly unachievable these examples may seem to some readers, they deliver an empowering example of our ability, or even our responsibility, to reclaim two of the most important aspects of our own humanity: time and simplicity. Even I, the committed permaculture designer, organic farmer and sustainability educator, was shaken by the almost alarming directness of the questions raised in this book. Self-sufficient farmer, batik fabric artist, mother and author/illustrator Asha Amemiya asks, “First, you have to think, does it involve money or not? Then you look at whether it is natural or not. That and whether it causes suffering and pain to others... or not.” With an unapologetic precision, these kind of questions cut directly through to the core of the spiritual-cultural dissatisfaction of the modern grind and bring us back to daily commitment to taking it slow and simple.

Couturier has opened a portal for English-language readers (and hopefully Japanese readers too, as the translation is now finished) to look openly at the lives of ten people living an authentic experiment with what it really means to be human. At the most fundamental level, this book explores the human relationship with the idea of “satisfaction” and our experience with “enough”. These seemingly radical ways of life and points of view are not just a fringe response to the modern rush and grind. They are a clear path laid out for all of us to follow. When we live with less, we can reclaim the time we need to respect and creatively reuse the abundant resources all around us. Feeling overwhelmed? Feeling tired? Feeling busy? This book reminds us we are in control. We are the ones responsible for reclaiming the real luxuries of time, nature and simplicity. In fact, a life lived in the abundance of less may be the very thing, the only thing, which leads us to the luxury we have all been seeking. Just how that unfolds is up to you.



书里受访者采取可持续生态生活方式的背景是很极端的情况，我不知道以这样的方式提倡可持续生活方式是不是会让美国和其他日本读者望而生畏。偏远的乡村地带和缺乏现代化“便利设施”的环境，可能会使一些过激读者给他们贴上了“返祖者”的标签，哪怕这些读者对可持续生活心怀热忱。尽管书中提及的一些重要人物，像是AstukoWatanabe，活跃于自己的社区，但可能有更多类似的人帮助作者找到灵感勾画出一张更大，更完整的日本可持续生活蓝图。我希望每一个读者都能用心去体会Couturier在书中的做法，他并不是随随便便地挑出书中这些人物，而是将这些人物与更高层次的模范和价值联系到了一起。这也是“放眼世界，两脚踏地”的公民所能接受的。对于某些读者来说，无论这些例子看上去是多么的紧凑、难以企及，它仍然向我们展示了我们的能力，甚至是责任，帮助我们回归人性中最重要的时间和朴素。就连我，一名坚定的朴门学设计师，有机作物的农耕者和可持续理论教育者，面对书中一针见血的警告和提问，我都倍感震惊，心神动摇。一位农民，蜡染织物艺术家，作家/插画家以及一位母亲Asha-Amemiya，曾说过：“做一件事情之前，首先，你需要思考。这是否和钱有关？然后再看是否环保？继而问自己这是否又会给他人带来悲伤和苦难？”这些问题令人吃惊地精准，直直切入现代人焦躁的核心：放缓脚步，悠然处事。

December 2, 2017