

To Do and To Be
2017 Shantou University Commencement Ceremony
June 27, 2017
Speech by Mr. Li Ka-shing

Chairman Chen, Professor Mo, Council Members, Distinguished Guests, Faculty and Graduates,

Thank you, Thank you.

Every year I am so happy to be back - strolling along the glowing golden flowers beside the embankment, listening to your eager confident voices bubbling over the chimes from the bell tower - if only I could bottle the positive energy in this auditorium today, I am certain it will last me another 90 years.

Thank you for sharing this wonderful moment with me.

I will be 90 next year, time is like a river, young I have been, resolute as I am, I have also become old. Hardships make you grow up fast. More than ever, in this exponential era, you need to grow up fast and it will be particularly hard to grow and succeed if you are blind to opportunities and can't see the wood for the trees.

The wilful blind turn "possibles into impossibles", unthinking and unfeeling, they will probably be the first to be disqualified. If you want to be an exponential power surfer in the oncoming AI age, you need to have the mindset of a deep thinker, the skillset of a speed understander, to be able to synthesise all facts, data and intelligence that capture your imagination into something new and to effect change.

Ever ready with excuses and armed with a litany of justifications, the wilful blind focuses on a life of "to do" and to get. "I am so crushed into conformity", "I am hegemonized", "I am straightjacketed inside culture" and "the unbearable weight of expectations is suffocating". It is conceivable why the wilful blind all yearn to "win at the starting line", to be in a world of associated privileges but don't want the burden of carrying forward progress and development as exemplified in Confucius' Analects; the other way around, to be born into family wealth or being gifted is much preferred.

Well, this mindset might not get you very far. Our traditional wisdom taught us that destiny is the confluence of fate and luck - where one's own choice has material

influence over the future you envision, even if you have everything wilful blindness can lead you to nothing.

The clear winners in life strive to give a meaningful account of why they *do* exist. In face of complex, adaptive changes, their "to do" DNA is to marry a high degree of structure and discipline with free thinking creativity, this "frame of mind" that is open to insight, to revelation and to greater clarity.

The thrivers know that life is a skill based on discipline and practice precedes perfection.

Like a soloist preparing for a dance, standing before a mirror, endless correction after correction; they struggle against fatigue and pain to achieve masterful perfection for the transcendent "to be" moment on stage where the master reveals himself.

Today I took inspiration from those lines of WB Yeats: "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" and chose ballet as the backdrop. It is the personality and virtuosity of great dancers that separate the dancer from the dance. They are the conscious agents that raise the achievable standard for everybody else and the mindful leaders that could shape new destiny.

Last but not least, I want to share with you a beautiful response from a long serving faculty when I thank him for his dedication to STU, "conscience is the true teacher of life". The words of Wang Yang Ming is food for the soul.

My dear graduates, a mindful leader knows his limits but aspires to exceed them. I know each and everyone of you is ready to do and to be. Affective and driven, leap into the future with generosity and gratitude, with confidence and imagination. Live your life to its truest, in duty, in dignity and aspire a world of openness and change.

Today you are proud to be part of Shantou University. Tomorrow Shantou University will be proud to be part of you

Good luck. Congratulations again. Thank you so much.