



Mindful leaders shape new destinies for humanity. Like ballet dancers, their transcendence results from a struggle that shapes their personality and virtuosity.

VISION

EYES WIDE OPEN INTO THE FUTURE

Mr Li and Nobel laureate Mo Yan spoke of the mental strength needed in an uncertain world.

Shantou University may be a relatively young university, but it has classic touches which those at older schools would recognise. At his annual address to the graduating class, Mr Li Ka-shing spoke of the joy of “strolling along the glowing golden flowers” and listening to the “chimes from the bell tower”. But his eye is firmly fixed on the future of the graduating students.

At almost 90 years old, he could feel the enthusiasm of the students and claimed that if he could only “bottle the positive energy [in the graduation ceremony hall]” it would last him another 90 years. Graduation day is replete with enthusiasm, but he warned about the challenges that lay ahead and the emotional and moral perils that could lead to “wilful blindness”.

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Mr Li Ka-shing



“Like swallows weathering through storms.”

Professor Mo Yan
Nobel laureate

EYES WIDE OPEN

Professor Mo Yan, the only Chinese national to have won the Nobel Prize for Literature, joined Mr Li and the assembled graduates. Professor Mo, in his words, encouraged the graduates “to be daring enough to encounter challenges, like swallows weathering through storms, and fear nothing no matter how mammoth the difficulties”.

Mr Li warned the freshly minted graduates against discouragement that could lead to the vision they now have becoming clouded. He asked them to be mindful of their obligation to “carry forward progress and development as exemplified in Confucius’s Analects”, and warned them of the fog that could descend if they were not aware.

He spoke of a wilful blindness that seems to strike many, describing those who turn “possibles into impossibles” as unthinking and as unfeeling. He said they would struggle to find their way in a world with challenges that come faster and faster. Echoing common complaints cited in popular media, he encouraged the young people gathered not to ape common tropes about being “crushed into conformity” or “straightjacketed inside culture”.

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Instead, Mr Li exhorted students to “strive to give a meaningful account of why they do exist”. He acknowledges this may be difficult “in the oncoming AI age”, and offered some guidance on how students should prepare for the next step in civilisation’s evolution.

Students will “need to have the mindset of a deep thinker, the skill set of a speed understander, [and] to be able to synthesise all facts, data and intelligence that capture your imagination into something new and to effect change”.

This mode of thinking will not be possible just by choosing it, however. Selecting this way of acting is the first step, wherein people become the “conscious agents that raise the achievable standard for everybody else and the mindful leaders that could shape new destiny”.

The next step, one that may consume a lifetime, is a process of “endless correction after correction”. Those who thrive in the future must “struggle against fatigue and pain to achieve masterful perfection”.

That struggle will provide the will to bring “structure and discipline” to their lives. Only then can they have this co-exist with “free-thinking creativity”. That is when students could truly come alive. Only then can they be “affective and driven”, allowing them to “leap into the future with generosity and gratitude, with confidence and imagination”.

He closed his inspiring comments by encouraging the students to “Live your life to its truest, in duty, in dignity and aspire to a world of openness and change.” □



Chairman Li Ka-shing and Professor Mo Yan (top, in orange) took aim at modern existential angst to bolster realistic optimism and a can-do spirit in the graduates of Shantou University.