

Dr Anthony Francis Neoh, QC, SC, JP

Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa*

Address

Chairman of the Council, President, Distinguished Members of the University Faculties, Distinguished Guests, Students and Graduates of Lingnan University,

I have been given the singular honour of giving this address on behalf of the Honorary Graduates today. First of all, we would like to thank the University for bestowing this great honour upon us. We are proud to be graduates of Lingnan University and will cherish this honour for the rest of our lives.

Each of us have taken different paths in life. That our different paths have today been conjoined on this occasion is in one sense a manifestation of our common karma, but in another, perhaps far more important sense, is the University's recognition of the set of common values, which all four of us have stood for and pursued in the course of our journey in life.

Each of us have relentlessly pursued knowledge and each of us have tried to use our knowledge for the betterment of society. The values we have stood for completely coincide and resonate with the motto of Lingnan University: Education for Service!

Embedded within this motto is the University's Mission to become a leading Asian liberal arts university with international recognition, distinguished by outstanding teaching, learning, scholarship and community engagement. The University has last year attained this distinction by being named by *Forbes* Magazine as one of the top ten liberal arts colleges in Asia, a distinction it shares with The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and some of the top universities of Asia, such as Tokyo University and Waseda University of Japan and Yonsei University of South Korea.

While celebrating this important milestone, I would ask you to ponder for a while, the history of the liberal arts university. As the Western Roman Empire dissolved in the Fifth Century AD, the learning and scholarship of old became submerged in its ruins, propelling Europe into the Dark Ages for the next few hundred years. But fortunately for the human race, this ancient learning was not only preserved in the Islamic centers of learning but was carefully nurtured. At this time, Arabian cities were important hubs of the Silk Road, and so Islamic Centers of Learning absorbed the culture, learning and technologies of India and China. Scholars from Europe, including religious leaders, one of whom was Pope Sylvester II (before he became Pope), hearing of the accomplishments of the Islamic Centers of Learning, flocked to study there, and brought back to Europe the philosophy, science, mathematics, medicine and law of ancient Greece and Rome, together with the learning of India and China, giving birth to the European Renaissance and the Humanist Movement. So that this newfound knowledge might be disseminated, there sprung within Europe over a hundred years, a large number of institutions of advanced learning, named "universitas", in whose image, the modern day liberal arts university was created. Humanist Scholars espoused the idea of the "Education of the Whole Person", namely, that a person cannot be considered educated unless he is well versed in the ancient learning of the Greeks and the Romans, including philosophy, mathematics, science, medicine, music and law, and is capable of applying what they have learned of the arts and sciences of India and China to the social and economic situation of their communities. Among the applications from the East, we can see the paper making technology from China, Hindu-Arabic numerals, the Abacus, Algebra and Astronomy. With the invention of typographic printing, the Humanist Scholars of the European Renaissance re-wrote, in the language of the day, Latin,

a new Compendium of Knowledge, which formed the foundations of the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution and the industrial revolution. To borrow a phrase from Isaac Newton, the fact that we could see further today stems from the fact that we could stand on the shoulders of the giants of the Humanist Movement. The central question, which all Humanists asked of themselves was, in the language of the day: ***Quam sit humanite vivendum*** (How can I live a life where I can use my knowledge to advance humanity). This question implies that "knowledge" and "service" are inseparable.

This was the same question posed by the founder of our country, Dr Sun Yat-sen, when he visited Lingnan University in Guangzhou and spoke to then students on 21 December 1923. At the time of his speech, China was very weak and internally divided by warlords and externally threatened by foreign powers. He reminded the students of Lingnan University then of the same Humanist duty of all educated people to use their education and knowledge to make their society better:

"My commendation to you all is that you must resolve, and resolve resolutely, concentrating on one thing, to help our country grow strong. Let that be your quest and it is the earnest hope that I place upon you!"

Dr Sun Yat-sen was not only a great patriot, but a great visionary. He espoused the Three Principles for the People, so that our new country may become a modern nation. Broadly speaking, these principles represent the common aspiration then as now of the Chinese Peoples to be firstly, treated as equals by foreign powers, secondly, to enjoy rights protected by the Rule of Law guaranteed under a modern constitution, and thirdly, to enjoy a standard of living worthy of a modern nation. He worked tirelessly to argue our nation's cause with foreign powers and in 1924 produced the *Fundamentals of National Reconstruction*, which was a blue print for national reconstruction, in which he advocated the Rule of Law and the construction of a railway, road, canal and port system and an electricity grid which would build a modern nation, as known in the early 20th Century. He even proposed international development of infrastructure, giving us a tantalising glimpse of the revitalisation of the Old Silk Road, now envisaged in the One Belt One Road initiative. Unfortunately, because of wars, we could not see substantial realisation of our Founding Father's vision until after 1949, and it was not after the 1980s when reforms in the Mainland started, that real speed could be given to this task.

When you consider the basic figures constituting the economic development of Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong since the 1980s, you will see the following:

At the end of 1980:¹

The GDP of the Mainland was US\$305 billion, GDP per capita was US\$309.

The GDP of Taiwan was US\$50 billion, GDP per capita was US\$2,307.

The GDP of Hong Kong was US\$25 billion, GDP per capita was US\$10,000.

¹ <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2016/02/weodata/index.aspx>

At the end of 2015 (35 years later, and 35 years of Reform in the Mainland):

The GDP of the Mainland was US\$11,000 billion (having grown 36.6 times), GDP per capital was US\$8,140 (grown 26.3 times).

The GDP of Taiwan was US\$500 billion (grown 10 times), GDP per capita was US\$22,000 (grown 9.5 times).

The GDP of Hong Kong was US\$310 billion (grown 12.4 times), GDP per capital was US\$36,000 (grown 3.6 times).

Perhaps the most important reason that these three economies have been able to create such economic success is that all three economies have in the past 35 years invested heavily in education in order to create a Knowledge Society. In 1980, Hong Kong had only two publicly funded universities, now we have 9 (including Lingnan University). By latest available statistics, Hong Kong, with a population of 7 million, spent 3.3% of its GDP on education in 2014. In the same year, the Mainland, with 1.3 billion population, spent 4.15% of its GDP on education. Compared with the world's largest and most advanced economy, the United States, with a population of slightly over 300 million, spent 5.22% of its GDP on education in 2011.²

From the early 1980s, industrialists from Hong Kong and Taiwan have invested heavily in manufacturing facilities in the Mainland, improving manufacturing and management techniques, and improving productivity and quality assurance standards. "Made in China" is no longer a badge of poor quality as it was in the past, and some Chinese products, now stand among the best in the global market.

The Mainland is the main destination for investment from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Through investment and educational co-operation, Hong Kong and Taiwan continue to play an important role in bringing new knowledge and technology into the Mainland. The world's largest investment banks and pension funds establish their Asia headquarters in Hong Kong to carry out investment activities in the Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Hong Kong is the most important place for Mainland's external trade, capital funding, financial trade and entrepôt. Inarguably, the economies of the Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong are inextricably linked.

From rapid economic development has sprung a series of problems. The rich and poor divide has widened considerably, a whole series of environmental problems have blighted both the countryside and the cities, and productivity growth is showing diminishing returns. Since the global financial crisis, the world is a much more uncertain place. There are many challenges ahead. So that we might progress to the next stage of economic development, we must pull together. The peoples of Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Mainland are all part of the Chinese Peoples. The Chinese Peoples have trodden a path laden with tribulations in the last century, and there is no reason why we cannot meet the challenges of the future. By virtue of the Commendation of our Founding Father given to their predecessors, the students and alumni of Lingnan University have a historical duty to perform in this quest, using their knowledge to improve society, and thus, not only fulfilling their historical mission but the expectations of the Humanist Movement upon which the University's Motto was based: Education for Service!

² www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/country-profile.aspx?code=USA®ioncode=40500