

Professor Lord Anthony Giddens

Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa*

Citation

Born to a very humble family, Prof Lord Anthony Giddens was the first member of his family to enter university. He got his first degree in Sociology and Psychology from University of Hull, and then went on to get his Master's degree from The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and a PhD from King's College, University of Cambridge.

A world authority in sociology, Prof Lord Giddens is not only a highly influential modern social theorist but also a polymath. He started his academic career at the University of Leicester and subsequently the University of Cambridge. From 1997 to 2003, he became the Director of the highly prestigious LSE. Under his leadership, LSE's reputation as a world-leading university was greatly strengthened. He now remains as Emeritus Professor in the Department of Sociology there. Besides, he is named as a Lifetime Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. He was also a cofounder of Polity Press, one of the world's most reputable publishers in sociology and social theory. On top of his academic roles, he continues to devote his time and energy on public service and has served on the boards and committees of various public organisations, including the Institute of Public Policy Research.

Prof Lord Giddens is the author or editor of over 40 books, which have been translated into over 40 different languages. His famous Sociology textbook has sold over one million copies and he is regarded as one of the most widely cited sociologists of our age. As a cutting-edge scholar and researcher, Prof Lord Giddens has written with an interdisciplinary approach on a wide range of subjects and a number of far-reaching theoretical models, including theoretical and methodological re-examinations of the role of sociology, social structures and "Structuration Theory", modernity, the relationship between the self and society, and globalisation, as well as politics. Among his masterpieces, "Structuration Theory" and his analysis of modernity are widely recognised as among the most profound theoretical contributions to the social sciences. His work has attracted many followers and indeed numerous books and articles have been written under his influence. As a major political thinker, Prof Lord Giddens served as former Prime Minister Tony Blair's adviser. His beyond-left-and-right "Third Way" politics not only became Blair's guiding political doctrine but also made a profound impact internationally. He took part in the original Blair-Clinton dialogues from 1997. He was awarded a peerage as Baron Giddens in 2004, and currently sits in the House of Lords. Over the years, honorary degrees have been bestowed upon him by over 15 universities around the globe. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Science, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Russian Academy of Science. He was also awarded the Prince of Asturias Award from Spain (also known as the "Spanish Nobel Prize") in 2002.

Despite a hectic schedule, Prof Lord Giddens enjoys his multiple engagements very much and remains contented. "I have spent my life as an academic and it has suited me perfectly. You don't make much money, but compared to other jobs you have so much more freedom. Your writings can be read across the world and you are part of an international community of scholars. In a world often driven by commerce and the scramble to make money it is good to have pause to reflect — as well as influence practical and political policy, which I have tried to do." Prof Lord Giddens' political advice has indeed been sought and adopted by political leaders from Europe, the US, Asia, Latin America and Australia.

Prof Lord Giddens considers modernity a juggernaut, a massive force with an unsteerable path and accelerating speed, riding roughshod over everything. While he believes that the advancement of the Internet, robotics and supercomputers will transform both education and work profoundly, he also holds the hopeful view that universities will retain their role no matter how transformed they might become in the future – a great relief for present and future academics who desperately want job security. When invited to give our graduates and guests today some advice on how to live with this juggernaut of modernity facing increased pace and scope of change, he replied:

"This is one of the most dynamic periods of history, with huge changes sweeping across the world. We are far more interconnected today than any previous generation ever was, so many of the changes are truly global. Don't just take education for granted—look at it creatively and learn to adapt to change. Be open, be innovative, but above all have cosmopolitan outlook! And make sure you have a sense of humour."

Prof Lord Giddens also shares with us his fundamental principle:

"Winston Churchill, the great British leader, has a maxim that guided his life—it was 'Never, ever give up'. I recommend it to you. Talent is important but perseverance and drive count for more."

Mr Chairman, in recognition of his distinguished contributions to the sociology profession and to the global community, may I invite you to confer upon Prof Lord Anthony Giddens, in absentia, the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa*.

English citation written and delivered by Professor Wei Xiangdong