

2017 芝加哥大学毕业演讲

2024 年 2 月 5 日

English

0.1

I was so honored to be invited to be the inaugural Class Day Speaker. But obviously since I'm a graduate of the University of Chicago, I couldn't just accept the invitation I had to overanalyze it.

My first thought was that since this is Chicago it couldn't just be class day; maybe it was class conflict day with special appearances by Marx and Engels and Race, Class and Gender day with Betty Friedan T-Shirts.

Then I began wondering why the University of Chicago class is asking me of all people to be a speaker at this big event. I remembered the major addresses of my own time here and how intellectually rigorous they were.

I remembered that Freshman year a noted philosopher gave an uplifting Aims of Education Address called "Death, Despair, Desolation and the Futility of Human Existence."

Then senior year at commencement our speaker was a noted biologist. I found myself tremendously inspired by his uplifting talk, "The Sixteen Qualities of Nucleic Acid."

Eventually I realized that I am being invited because Chicago is trying to be like a normal school with a celebrity commencement speaker. But of course they couldn't go for a big time celebrity right off the bat. Chicago is a place where you lose your virginity slowly.

For the first class day speaker, they wanted someone on TV, but only on PBS. Then, after everybody is acclimated to the outside speaker thing,

they could go ahead and invite someone big.

That's when the truth came to me. I am University of Chicago's gateway drug to Stephen Colbert. You, the class of 2017 will have to suffer through me so that future classes can enjoy Matt Damon. That's what I call living for something larger than self.

When I realized what was going on, I confess I was tempted to do what you millennials are always doing. I decided I would feel triggered and unsafe and lead a campaign to get myself disinvited. All the historical traumas of being a lower-middle range celebrity came down on me and I retreated to my safe space, which is under the bar at Jimmy's.

But since none of you did your generational duty and got me blocked from this gig, I've decided to go ahead.

Since Chicago is new to this game I should note that there are certain traditions involved in these kinds of occasions.

At occasions like this major universities ask a person who has achieved a fantastic career success to give you a speech telling you that career success is not important.

At occasions like this major universities often ask billionaires to give speeches telling you how much you can learn from failure. From this you can take away the lesson that failure seems really great if you happen to be Steve Jobs or J.K. Rowling.

Then we speakers are supposed to give you a few minutes of completely garbage advice: Listen to your inner voice. Be true to yourself. Follow your passion. Your future is limitless.

First, my generation gives you a mountain of debt; then we give you career-derailing guidelines that will prevent you from ever paying it off.

That's why when I'm asked to speak at these things I always try to tell graduates is that since you haven't graduated from college before you may not know the etiquette. When you get your degree, it's always nice to tip President Zimmer 10 or 20 bucks just to show he did a good job. It's also nice to slip the class day speaker a few bills—maybe two or three thousand. Five thousand for the economy majors.

On these occasions I also always try to inspire students by telling them

about the glittering possibilities in front of them. Within just a few short years many you will be sleeping on your parent's couches while working for a completely dysfunctional NGO. Others of you will have soul crushing jobs as corporate consultants, working on power points presentations past midnight at the Topeka Comfort Inn.

I'm here to help you navigate these exciting possibilities. I'm here to help you take advantage of the skills you learned at the University of Chicago. You learned how to dominate classroom discussion after having done none of the reading. You learned how to stare at professors with looks of complete rapt attention even though secretly you were completely asleep.

I'm here to urge (you to) lives of public service, working on Capitol Hill for congressmen, while bringing the nation's top leaders coffee and sexual tension. I'm here to urge you to serve the world's poorest people in ways that will look really good on your resume, like organizing an anti-malarial bed net drives while rocking Jimmy Choos at Goldman Sachs. I'm here because, as someone who now teaches at Yale, you should have some sense of what it would have been like if you'd been accepted there.

But ultimately, I'm not here to give you some standard speech. This is Chicago. This is the only time in my life that I will get to address the graduating class at my own school, at the place that formed me down to my bones.

I confess I didn't enjoy every day I spent here. I majored in History and Celibacy. I learned how to walk through campus while awkwardly averting my eyes from anybody I might know. But like all of you, I was changed fundamentally in this place.

The older I get the more I become aware of how it shaped me. I'm 34 years out of college and I feel more influenced by the University of Chicago today than I did on the day I graduated.

So today I'd really like to talk to you about two things: The things Chicago gave me, which I've carried through life, and the things Chicago failed to give me, which I had to learn on my own.

0.2

When I think back on my time here I remember certain moments of great intensity. There was one very odd moment during my first year when I was reading a book called *The Death of Tragedy* by Nietzsche in a carol on the A level of the Regenstein.

I don't know what it was: the driving semi insane power of Nietzsche thought, the overwrought and intoxicating nature of his prose, but somehow while reading that book reality seemed to slip its bounds. I lost all sense of where I was or who I was or how time was passing or whether it was passing at all. Hours flew by and I was just buried inside that book.

I was not so much reading it; I was immersed in the torrent of its prose and the fury of its ideas. I was just a sort of dissolved, lifted out of myself, transported, subsumed, and some sort of trance or a state of awed reverence or under a spell cast by a semi crazy long dead mind.

There I was in a shabby carol on the basement level of the ugliest building on God's green earth, and I was experiencing something close to transcendence. And when I awoke from that state I looked around startled and blinking, shocked to be re-entering the 20th century, and real life.

I never really became a Nietzsche fan, but it was exciting to know that the ideas of some dead genius, could transport me and give me a glimmer of a higher realm. There were other intensities during my time here. There was intense arguing with all my friends about bullshit subjects at the dining hall hour upon hour. There were intense pseudointellectual debates with graduate students at Jimmys; There was the intensity of serious movie going at Doc Films; and most of all there was a certain intensity in class.

In those days it was pure Great Books for the first two years, and our professors didn't just teach them, they proselytized them. Some of the old German refugees from World War II were still around then, and they held the belief, with a religious fervor, that the magic keys to the kingdom were in these books. The mysteries of life and how to live well were there for the seizing for those who read well and thought deeply.

There was a legendary professor named Karl Weintraub teaching Western Civ then. Years later, when he was nearing death he wrote to my

classmate Carol Quillen about his experience teaching these books.

Teaching Western Civ, Weintraub wrote, "seems to confront me all too often with moments when I feel like screaming suddenly: 'Oh, God, my dear student, why CANNOT you see that this matter is a real, real matter, often a matter of the very being, for the person, for the historical men and women you are looking at —or are supposed to be looking at!'"

I hear the student's answers and statements that sound like mere words, mere verbal formulations to me, but that do not have the sense of pain or joy or accomplishment or worry about them that they ought to have if they were TRULY informed by the live problems and situations of the human beings back there for whom these matters were real.

The way these disembodied words come forth can make me cry, and the failure of the speaker to probe for the open wounds and such behind the text makes me increasingly furious. "If I do not come to feel any of the love which Pericles feels for his city, how can I understand the Funeral Oration? If I cannot fathom anything of the power of the drive derived from thinking that he has a special mission, what can I understand of Socrates? ...

How can one grasp anything about the problem of the Galatian community without sensing in one's bones the problem of worrying about God's acceptance? "Sometimes when I have spent an hour or more, pouring all my enthusiasm and sensitivities into an effort to tell these stories in the fullness in which I see and experience them, I feel drained and exhausted. I think it works on the student, but I do not really know."

It is a tragedy of teaching that sometimes the professors pour more into the class than the students are able to receive. But in truth that intense teaching is more like planting. Those teachers like Weintraub were inserting seeds that would burst forth years or decades later when the realities of adult life called them forth. I hated Edmund Burke when I read him here but years later he exploded in my mind and has become one of the great guides of my life. I was blandly indifferent to Augustine when I encountered him, it was only later that I understood the power of his loves and his wrestling with his own soul, and the need to be careful about what you love, because you become what you love.

Chicago gave me glimpses of the mountain ranges of human existences. It gave me a set of longings, higher longings than any I had had. In the first place, I longed to know how to see. Seeing reality seems like a straightforward thing. You just look out and see the world. But anybody who is around politics or many other arenas knows how many people see the world with a distorting mirror, how many see only what they want to see, or what they can see by the filtering light of their depression, fear, insecurity or narcissism.

Sometimes I think the whole disaster of the Trump presidency is because of a breakdown of intellectual virtue. A break down in America's ability to face evidence clearly, to pay due respect to the concrete contours of reality. These intellectual virtues may seem elitist, but once a country tolerates dishonesty, incuriosity and intellectual laziness, then everything else falls apart.

John Ruskin once wrote, "The more I think of it I find this conclusion more impressed upon me—that the greatest thing a human soul ever does is to see something, and tell what is saw in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see." At Chicago, I encountered so many writers who could see so purely and carefully –Shakespeare, Hume, Socrates and George Eliot, George Orwell and Hannah Arendt. I met so many professors and students who could weigh evidence and who didn't tolerate intellectual shabbiness. It aroused in me a desire to have that virtue—the ability to see clearly and face unpleasant facts.

0.3

Then there was the second yearning which is the yearning to be wise. I really couldn't tell you then what wisdom consists of, and I still can't give you a concrete definition. But we all know wisdom when we see it. There is a deep humanity, gentleness, and stability to a wise person. That person can perceive, with love and generosity, the foibles of another heart. That person can grasp the nub of any situation, see around corners and has developed an intuitive awareness of what will go together and what will

never go together.

That wisdom, I imagine, comes from paying deep and loving attention to the people around you. It comes from many hours of solitary reflection. It comes from reading of the greats. It comes from getting out of your own century, thinking outside of your assumptions and embarking on a great lifelong journey toward understanding. That sort of humane wisdom was admired here. We wouldn't have told each other this, because it would be too pretentious, but all those bullshit dinner table conversations and bar stool conversations about the great ideas were attempts to put together the building blocks of that kind of wisdom. They were attempts to put ourselves together so we could be of use. They were attempts to imitate penetrating insight of Hume, the smile of Voltaire, and the gentle guidance of a dozen professors whose names you may know or may not know, some living Nathan Tarcov, Josef Stern; some of my old professors who are now dead.

0.4

Third, Chicago gave me a yearning for ideals. It is sometimes said that we humans seek happiness. We seek the fulfillment of our desires. But of course that's not true. Peace and happiness is great for a while but after a bit it gets boring. "What our human emotions seem to require," William James once wrote, "is the sight of struggle going on. The moment the fruits are being merely eaten things become ignoble. Sweat and effort, human nature strained to the uttermost and on the rack, yet getting through it alive, and then turning back on its success to pursue another more rare and arduous journey—this is the sort of thing that inspires us."

James summed it up pretty well. Human existence is the same eternal thing: Some man or woman's pains in pursuit of some exalted ideal.

I recently saw the movie "Hidden Figures," about some African American women who served the cause of space exploration and racial justice. Those women weren't exactly happy in that movie, in the story told by the movie, but there was a spiritual intensity serving their two great ideals. That's what we want in all of our lives. Intense struggling for the good.

If nothing else, Chicago presented us with high ideals in profusion: the patriotism of Pericles, the commitment of Fermi, the American dream of Alexander Hamilton. I surely wasn't smart enough to come up with my own philosophy or set my own ideals. But I could try on different ideals passed down to us from our betters, and I could see which ones seemed to fit, and I could join that parade.

They say that life here is about the life of the mind, but that is an injustice. The mind and the soul are not so easily separated. These yearnings that I have described transplanted me here—to see the world clearly, to be wise, to pursue ideals—these weren't really the yearnings of the mind. They were yearnings from deeper, from the part of us that can only be called the soul.

We don't talk about this much in our secular culture, but there is a part of us that doesn't care about Facebook likes, or annual income or even how popular you are. This is the part of us that yearns for permanent things, for beauty, truth, justice, transcendence and home. This is the part of us that is morally valuable, that each of us worthy of dignity and respect. The poet Rilke had an education like ours. He wrote, "I am learning to see. I don't know why it is, but everything penetrates more deeply into me and does not stop at the place where until now it always used to finish. I have an inner self of which I was ignorant. Everything goes thither now. What happens there I do not know."

I'll never be as deep as Rilke, but I was deeper when I left Chicago than when I arrived. More important, I graduated from the University of Chicago with a little sense of my soul and its yearnings.

There was a lot of longing going on then. And there still a lot that goes on today. Two Saturdays ago my wife Anne and I got together with the philosophy professor Candace Vogler in Cobb Hall and led a seminar under the sponsorship of the Hyde Park Institute. It was a beautiful spring day and we all spent it inside, talking about character and spiritual growth, about Aquinas and Beethoven and Victor Frankl. We took a lunch break and set to going out to enjoy the sun. Some of the students had their sandwiches inside and had an internal debate among themselves about the

immateriality of the soul. Only in Chicago. And I saw that day this place is still wonderfully itself. I felt some of that old intensity of purpose.

There is still the same honest and unironic hunger for wisdom. There is still the willingness to put your ideas out there and argue and listen. There is still that ardent searching for truth and the willingness to be silly in pursuit of it.

Chicago gives you a taste for mountaineering, for climbing up toward the summits of human existence.

Afterwards, you're never quite content living in the flatlands, living solely in the stuff that gets written about on twitter, or even in the newspapers or talked about on reality TV. Many years ago a man named Robert Maynard Hutchins bet this institutions future on one proposition: that if you put the big ideas in front of a bunch of 20-year-olds you can change their life forever. I can tell you, it worked for me. It completely worked for me.

And this change that happens in those of us who went here is a very practical change.

0.5

We have a Telos Crisis in this country. Many people do not have a clear sense of their goals and their own purpose. They don't know what they are shooting for, or what fundamental convictions should guide their behavior. They've been trained in hyper-specialized research universities that tell them how to do things but don't ask them to think about why they should do them; that don't give them a forum to ask the questions, What is my own best life? What am I called to do? Why am I here?

From college they enter the world we all live in, which is a busy world. The flow of a thousand emails, the tasks of setting up a career and family. These things distract from the great questions of purpose and meaning.

I find that many people haven't even been given a moral vocabulary to help think these things through.

They haven't been surrounded with a functioning moral ecology and a set of ideal to guide and orient them.

And this produces a great emotional fragility. Our friend Nietzsche said that he who has a why to live for can endure any how. But if you don't know what your purpose is then the first failure or setback can totally throw you into crisis and total collapse.

I see this among my former students, and I see it over and over again in people in their mid-twenties. The young person without a conscious purpose graduates and hopes by piling success upon success he can fill the void within. He becomes what the writer Matias Dalsgaard calls: The Insecure Overachiever: "Such a person, " Dalsgaard writes, "must have no stable or solid foundation to build upon, and yet nonetheless tries to build his way out of his problem. It is an impossible situation. You can't compensate for having a foundation made of quicksand by building a new story on top of it. But this person takes no notice and hopes that the problem down in the foundations won't be found out if only the construction work keeps going."

But of course the reckoning always comes. It produces the crisis, the depression, the sadness. David Foster Wallace noticed it back in 1996: "It's more like a stomach level sadness," He wrote, "I see it in myself and my friends in different ways. It manifests itself in a kind of lostness.

"This is a generation that has an inheritance of absolutely nothing as far as meaningful moral values goes," He wrote, "You can see the fruits of the Telos Crisis in the rising suicide rates, the rising drug addiction rates. You can see the social distrust. You can see the isolation and the lives of people who are adrift.

The fact that you went to Chicago means you'll always have an orientation that is slightly different than the mainstream culture, slightly countercultural. You'll have a harder time being shallow. You may not know your life's purpose or your calling, but you know that that mountain world exists and you can explore it, and that the answers can be found up there in the Museum of Beautiful Things, and that knowledge itself will be a source of great comfort and stability.

Life at the university of Chicago is not always filled with day to day happiness. But it gives you glimpses of cosmic happiness, glimpses of understanding the long story all involved in. And if you have cosmic joy, because

you know this story is ultimately about something meaningful, holy and good, you can bear the day to day miseries a lot better. So that is the good side of what I got here and what I hope you got here. Let me finish by speaking very briefly about what the University of Chicago did not give to me, and where it failed me.

0.6

Now here I speak provisionally, because I'm going to start talking about the school as it was in the 1980s, and a lot of the problems may have been fixed by now.

It is traditional for alumni to say that the college was better in their own day. As both an alum and a trustee I can tell you that's nonsense here I'm here to tell you that Chicago is way better now than it was when I was here, and way better than it has ever been.

But in my era, and maybe today, Chicago did not prepare its students for intimacy. As I've grown older I've come to see that the capacity for intimacy is one of the more crucial talents for a fulfilling life.

That's because the primary challenges of life are not knowledge challenges, they are motivational challenges. It's not only knowing what is good, but being completely and passionately devoted and loving what is good.

It's about passionately loving your spouse and family in a way that brings out their loveliness. It's about loving your vocation with fierce dedication. It's about loving your community with a serving heart. It's about loving your philosophy or your God with a humble fervor.

A fulfilled life is moving from open options to sweet compulsions. It's about saying no to a thousand things so you can say a few big yeses to the things you are deeply bound to. It's about loving things so much that you're willing to chain yourself down to them. The things you chain yourself to are the things that set you free.

And it's not only loving Platonically. It's actually and intimately living out the day to day realities of your fierce love. It's intimately sharing the same bathroom or getting up every day and writing on the same damn laptop.

It's about mastering all the phases of intimacy: being open to the first enticing glance. Having the energy to really learn about those people, like those people on a first date who learn how much they have in common with each other and treat these things as amazing miracles: "You don't like foigras? Neither do I! We should get married!"

It's about having the courage to engage in the reciprocal cycle of ever greater vulnerability. It's about enduring faithfully when there is some crisis and you're not sure you believe in this relationship, this career or this institution. It's about forgiveness for the betrayals committed against you and asking forgiveness when you have let down your friends or your profession or your spouse. When you make an intimate connection—to a spouse, a friend, a profession or a community or faith—you are as Leon Wieseltier puts it, "consenting to be truly known, which is an ominous prospect." And so one needs the skills of intimacy to live well in such close proximity. One needs the skills of intimacy to achieve the kind of fusion that leads to real joy—when a couple become one loving entity, when you and your vocation have merged into a single identity, when your love for your God or your philosophy is a complete surrender.

What I'm describing here are emotional arts. They are not natural but have to be acquired by repeated vulnerability, commitment and experience.

0.7

When I was here at Chicago, we students by and large did not excel at intimacy. We were artful dodgers, with a superb ability to slip out of situations at moments when deep heart to heart connection might come. We were in the business at age 20 or 21 of trying to make a good impression, so of course we weren't going to show the unattractive sides of ourselves, which is an absolute prerequisite of intimacy.

We were busy with our work and our books and student activities, and we told ourselves, idiotically, that we didn't have time for deep relationships. We too often approached each other shrouded in what Candace Vogler calls an "edifice of thought." When confronted with uncertainty or a difficulty, we tended to revert to our strengths, which were our IQs and our thinking and

talking skills. We sought to be masters of our life, rather than surrendering to emotions which are so much out of our control.

And the university didn't help. The atmosphere at Chicago then was emotionally avoidant from the top down. Too much of life was defined by what could be discussed in the classroom, and everything else just fell by the wayside. There wasn't enough dancing and drinking or any of the other activities that make diffidence possible. There wasn't enough joint physical activity.

Too much emphasis was put on scholarship and professionalism, and those things were defined by a pose of detachment, specialization, critical thinking, aloofness and a mythical belief in cool reasoning.

Too much time was spent studying, which is solitary activity. Too much of student life was oriented around the Reg, and not because couples were fooling around in the stacks.

I left Chicago better at reading books than at reading people.

I did not have the eyes to see the beauty in people who were so open hearted that they had nothing particularly interesting to say. I didn't know how to handle the deepest and scariest intimacies.

I'm hoping I'm a little better. I've had some graduate tutors in this.

Life will offer you a diminishing number of opportunities to show how smart you are. It will offer an infinite number of occasions that require kindness, mercy, grace, sensitivity, sympathy, generosity and love. Life will require that you widen your repertoire of emotions, that you throw yourself headlong into other people. That you take the curriculum of intimacy. If you haven't mastered it yet, I ask you to turn to this task intentionally now.

So I'm asking one final thing of you members of the Class of 2017. Tomorrow you will graduate. And that is a great accomplishment. But before you do, I hope that tonight you will do one thing to cap your education. Go to the Regenstein with a special friend in your life. Find the spot deep in the stacks where Nietzsche's "The Death of Tragedy" is found. But don't open the book.

Take off some of your clothes and fool around.

Thank you and God bless you.

中文

0.8

很荣幸能受邀来开放日作毕业典礼演讲。但我是芝加哥大学毕业的，我不能简单地接受邀请，我还要过度分析一下这次邀请。

我首先想到的是，既然这是芝大，所以这肯定不是简单的开放日；也许这应该是阶级斗争开放日，有打扮成马克思和恩格斯的人出没，或者有穿着贝蒂·弗里德曼的 T-恤，庆祝种族、阶级、性别自由的学生。

然后我又开始想，为什么芝大偏偏请我来这个重要的场合当致辞嘉宾。我还记得我上学那时候的致辞嘉宾，他们个个严谨治学、富有洞见。

我记得新生入学年，一位有名的哲学家发表了振奋人心的《教育宗旨》演讲，题为：“死亡、绝望、孤独以及人类存在的虚无”。

然后到了高年级的毕业典礼上，致辞嘉宾是位知名的生物学家。我发觉自己被他激情四射的演讲深深打动：《核酸的十六个特性》。

最终我意识到，我之所以受邀，是因为芝大想努力地表现出，它是所“正常”的学校，有名人来作毕业典礼致辞嘉宾。当然，校方不能一下子就请一个大牌的明星。毕竟，在芝加哥就连失去自己的第一次都要很晚才实现。

因此，选开放日致辞嘉宾时，他们希望是在电视能看到的人，但是仅限 PBS 电台。当所有人都习惯了致辞嘉宾来自外界时，校方就可以请点大人物了。

我就是这么领悟到了玄机。我呢，是芝大请来的“入门级”的扣扣熊（注：美国知名脱口秀主持人 Stephen Colbert，被粉丝称为扣叔，扣扣熊等，以毒辣幽默的评论而为人称道。诱导性毒品可以是酒精、大麻等等，被认为是毒品的入门级。）。你们 2017 级的新生呢，要先过我这一关，然后才能在将来享受马特·达蒙（注：美国著名演员，代表组作《谍影重重》、《拯救大兵瑞恩》、《火星救援》等）。我管这叫做为了更大的目标而活着。

当我意识到我为什么受邀时，我其实差点儿没忍住做了你们千禧年一代爱做的事。我得觉得自己受到高能预警，没有安全感，要发起一场运动，抵制这次自己的受邀。之前作为一名中低端名人的种种伤痛记忆都向我袭来，我退回了自己的安全区，就是吉米酒吧那里。（注：千禧年一代指在 1981-2000 年出生的人）

但既然你们没有履行你们这一代的义务，像之前那样抵制致辞嘉宾，我决定继续说下去。

既然芝加哥大学对于“正常”的毕业致辞还不熟悉，我需要指出在这种场合下一般有的传统元素。

像今天这个场合，知名大学会请一位功成名就知名人士来给你们致辞，告诉你们，成功并不重要。

像今天这样，知名大学常常会邀请亿万富翁来致辞，告诉你们能从失败中学到什么。从这种讲话中将领略到失败是多么了不起的事情，当然，你得恰好是乔布斯或者 J.K. 罗琳才行。

然后我们这种嘉宾就该有模有样得给你们一些烂大街的建议：遵从你的心声呀，做真实的自己呀。追逐自己的激情呀，你的未来无限可能呀之类的。

事实上，我们这一代人让你欠下一屁股债（即美国国债），然后给你一些绝对会搞砸事业的建议，让你以后连债务都还不清。

正因如此，轮到我讲这些的时候，我总是试着向毕业生传达，由于你们之前没有经历过大学毕业这事，可能就不知道这里面的套路。当你接过毕业证书时，最好打赏校长齐默 10 到 20 美元，等于是为他的工作点个赞。当然最好也能给开放日致辞嘉宾塞些钱——塞个两三千美元什么的。经济系的就给五千吧。

在这种场合，我通常会试着鼓励一下学子，告诉他们未来一些闪光般的机遇。过不了几年，你们中就会有不少人躺在父母的沙发上呼呼大睡，平时也就是去些办不下去的非政府组织里打打酱油。还有一些会被企业咨询一类的工作磨掉心智，天天为了 PPT 在 Topeka Comfort Inn 熬到半夜。（注：Topeka Comfort Inn 是那种几十美金一晚的廉价旅店，名字里面带“舒适”，略讽刺）

我今天来就是给你们说说该怎么应对这类鸡冻人心的未来。我过来是帮你利用好你在芝大学到的技能。你学会了在不做任何阅读的情况下，依然在课堂讨论中称霸一方。你学会了假装全神贯注地盯着台上的教授，实际上你早已昏昏欲睡。

你们要尽早从政为民，去国会山给众议员工作，给政界高层人物端个咖啡、带来性焦虑。（注：讽刺办公室性骚扰以及指控性骚扰带来的冲突）去帮助那些穷困潦倒之人，让自己的简历看起来漂亮。比如组织个反疟疾蚊帐推广运动什么的，同时自己拎着吉米·周的包包在高盛晃悠。我今天来是因为，由于我现在在耶鲁教书，所以你应该能大概知道如果你去那儿的话，你感受到的氛围是怎样的。

但话说回来，我来这儿不是为了熬一锅程式化的鸡汤。这里是芝加哥。

这是我人生中唯一一次能给我的母校毕业生致辞的机会。芝大给我打上了深深的烙印。

说实话，我当时并非每天都很开心。我主修历史也主修禁欲。我学会了如何在穿过校园的同时又假装没看到任何一个我可能认识的人。但和你们一样，芝大彻底改变了我。

随着年岁的增长，我越发体会到芝大对我的影响。我毕业都 34 年了，可我感觉如今芝大对我的影响甚至比我毕业时还明显。

所以今天我想给你们讲两点：芝大教给我让我受用至今的东西，以及它没有教给我从而我必须自己学习的东西。

0.9

回想我在芝大念书的时候，我记得有那么几次，我受到了头晕目眩的冲击。我大一时有一次就很奇怪，我在读一本书，书名是《悲剧的死亡》，尼采写的，在芝大雷根斯坦图书馆 A 层。

我也说不上怎么回事。尼采思想的那种近乎癫狂的驱动力，还有他那仿佛魔力一般能引起情绪起伏的散文。总之，读那本书的时候，虚实之间的界限模糊了。我全然分不清我在哪儿，我是谁，感受不到时间的流逝，觉得时间完全静止。几个小时过去了，我仿佛钻到那本书里。

我感觉自己不是在读它，而是被裹在那散文的激流中，猛烈的思想冲刷着我。感觉自己仿佛在溶解，灵魂出了窍，前往别处，被吸收了。朦朦胧胧的，敬仰之情油然而生，好似被一位早就死了的半疯之人施了魔咒。

当时在地下室，在那栋世界上最丑的楼里，我体验了一把超验的感觉。当我回过神的时候，我懵懵地看着四周，挤弄着眼睛，不敢相信还能回到 20 世纪，回到现实。

我从未成为尼采真正的粉丝，但振奋人心的是，我知道这些逝去的天才依然能带我一把，去领略一下那更高的殿堂。我在芝大还体会过其他张力十足的时刻。我和朋友们激烈地争论过一些乱七八糟的话题，在食堂里唧唧呱呱几个小时。我和毕业生们装作知识分子一样在吉米酒吧那里争论过。这种时刻还出现在 Doc 影院放映着严肃电影时。当然，最激烈的还得算在课堂上。

那时候，头两年都是存粹地读一些伟大的书籍。而我们的那些教授们不仅仅是教这些书，而是在试图让学生皈依。老师中有一些德国的难民，二战中幸存后依然活着，他们怀着宗教般的热烈，相信通往极乐世界的魔法钥匙

就在这些书中。生命的神秘以及美好生活的神性，就在这些书里，等着那些热爱阅读、思考深邃的人来发现。

当时有位堪称传奇的教授，叫卡尔·温特莱布（注：美国历史学家，自1954年起在芝大任教，同时指导社会理论、文化历史等人文学科方面的研究）教西方文明史。好多年后，他快去世之前，写信给我的同学卡罗·奎林，讲述他教这些书的体验：

温特莱布写道：“教授西方文明史似乎经常把我推到想要尖叫的地步。”噢，天哪，这位同学，你怎么就不明白，这个问题真的，真的很重要，事关一个人之所是，这些你正在学习的历史人物，或者说你应该要去学习的历史人物。

我所听到的学生们的答案也好，陈述也好，只是纯粹的词句、空有语言的架子。没有他们该有的心痛、喜悦、成就感和担忧，如果他们打心底意识到这些人类所面对过的问题和境遇如何与生死休戚相关的话，就能真切地感受当时这些问题的重要。

这些学生们抽象的讨论，常常催我泪下。而谈论它的人要是没能去探寻这些历史伤痕以及文字背后之事的话，就会让我非常愤怒。”如果我未能体会到伯利克利（注：雅典黄金时期（希波战争至伯罗奔尼撒战争）具有重要影响的领导人。他在希波战争后的废墟中重建雅典，扶植文化艺术，现存的很多古希腊建筑都是在他的时代所建）对他所在之城的爱，我又怎能理解那篇《葬礼演说辞》？如果我没有去探究苏格拉底坚信自己身负特殊使命的精神之源，我又如何理解他呢？

如果一个人压根不担心上帝接不接受你这一问题，又怎么能理解加拉太人面临的处境呢？有时候，我花上一个多小时，拿出我全部的热情和细腻向学生全面地讲述我所体会到的一切，我感到自己被抽空了，精疲力竭。我觉得这对学生有用，但我并不确定。

教学的一个悲剧就是，有时候教授们在课堂上倾注的远多于学生能吸收的。但实际上，这种高强度的教学更像是在树人。像温特莱布这样的老师，是在播种，等到几年甚至几十年后，成年生活中的种种现实会浇灌这些种子，令其茁壮生长。我在芝大读埃德蒙·伯克时，我很反感他。但多年后，他又重回我的脑海，并成为了我生活中的一位重要向导。我初读奥古斯汀时，提不起什么兴致，直到后来我才理解了他那爱与灵魂挣扎之中蕴含的力量，明白了要谨慎得对待我之所爱，因为它会成为我之所是。

芝大让我领略了人类文明的崇山峻岭。它点燃了我内心的诸多渴望，我

从未有过的更高层次的渴望。首先，我渴望看见。看见现实似乎是再明显不过的一件事，只需要睁开眼，就能看到这个世界。但是关切政治讨论以及其他领域的人都清楚，有太多人带着扭曲的视角看世界，有太多人只想看到他们想看到的，或者，只能看到由他们压抑、恐惧、不安全或是自恋的滤镜处理过的世界。

有时候我觉得，特朗普当选总统的噩梦，正反映了求知美德崩坏的现实。美国人实事求是的能力崩坏了，没有给事实的清晰轮廓以足够尊重。这些求知的美德或许显得有些精英主义，但一旦一个国家开始容忍欺瞒、无知、懒于探索，那就必将礼崩乐坏。

约翰·拉斯金曾写到：“我越是深入地思考，我就越倾向于得出这个结论——人类所能做的最了不起之事就是，看到了什么，便如实地说出来。千百人口说不如一人思索，千万人思索不如一人见过。”在芝大，我邂逅许许多多目光澄澈又细腻的作家：莎士比亚、休谟、苏格拉底、乔治·艾略特、乔治·奥威尔还有汉娜·阿伦特。我见过许许多多注重实证、不容马虎求知的教授和学生。这让我也渴望具备此种品质——懂得观看之道，直面不快的现实。

0.10

第二种渴望，就是对智慧的渴望。我无法告诉你智慧由什么构成，也说不上智慧的准确定义。但我们见到智慧时，我们都会认出它来。根植于心的人性、风度和稳重就体现在智者的身上。他能透过爱与包容去审视别人的缺陷；他能直指任何问题的核心；环顾四野，便可洞见凝聚之力与不可强求之事。

在我看来，要具备这种智慧，我们需真情实意地关怀身边的人，需要时常在独处中自我反省，需要阅读伟大的作品；需要我们跳出所置身的时代，跳出自己现有的成见，动身踏上求取理解的终身之旅。芝大推崇这种闪耀人性光芒的智慧。我们用不着奔走相告，因为那样太过刻意。但我经历的那些食堂扯谈和酒吧论战，都是在尝试将这种智慧的零件组装在一起。我们试着塑造我们自己，从而成为有用之人。我们试着像休谟那样富有洞见，像伏尔泰那样微笑、像许许多多的教授那样诲尔谆谆，你们也许知道或不知道的名字，在世的有内森·塔可夫、约瑟夫·斯坦恩，还有的老教授，已别离人世。

0.11

第三，芝大给了我理想的渴望。有时候人们说，人生的目的在于寻求幸福。我们寻求自身欲望的满足。当然，这不是事实。平静和幸福只是短暂的美好，很快人们就开始无聊了。“人类情感似乎需要的是”，威廉·詹姆士曾写道：“能一直看到挣扎的景象。果实被吞下的那一刻，满足感就顿显卑劣。汗水与努力，人性承受极限之压，痛苦不堪，然而度过了这一劫，又拒绝享受成功，转而踏上更为人迹罕至的艰苦之旅——正是这种事情激励着我们。”

詹姆士总结得很好，人类的存在有着一个永恒的主题：每个人的痛苦铺就了追逐至高理想的路。

我最近看了电影《隐藏人物》，讲得是一些非裔的美国女性投身于太空探索和种族正义的事业。这些女性在电影中并不快乐，故事中看不出来她们的快乐。但是，有一股精神张力一直推着她们追逐这两个伟大的理想。那正是我们所有生命中想要的。对美好事物极力地争取。

芝大至少给我们呈现了泉涌般高尚的理想：伯里克利的爱国情操，费密的专注，亚历山大·汉密尔顿的美国梦。我当然还没有智慧到可以发明一套属于我自己的哲学，或是创立属于我自己的理想，但我可以尝试这些贤者传递给我们的理想，看看我认同哪些，然后我参与到传承它的队伍中去。

他们认为，这儿的学院生活就是心智生活，但这话有失偏颇。心智和灵魂不是那么容易分开的。我刚刚讲过的这些渴望，想要看清这个世界，想要变得智慧，想要追求理想，这些不算是精神追求。他们源自更深层的地方，我们将其称之为灵魂。

我们在俗世中并不怎么谈论灵魂，但我们在一些时候也会不关心脸书上有没有人点赞，不关心年收入，甚至不在乎自己红不红。这中时候，我们就是在追求永恒之物。追求美、真理、正义、超验和家园。这正是我们身上道德价值的体现，是我们每个人应受尊重、享有尊严之所在。诗人里尔克曾有过类似的体会。他写道：我学着看见。我不知为何如此，但此刻，一切都向我深处渗透，一切都不再停留在它们之前停下的地方。我体内还有一个我，我不知道的我。一切都到了未知的领地，那里发生的事我并不知晓。

我无法像里尔克那样深刻，但我离开芝大时，我比来芝大时更深刻了。更重要的是，我从芝大毕业时，朦胧地感知到了我的灵魂和渴望。

那时我怀着诸多渴望，今天也是如此。两周前，我的太太和我还有哲学教授 Candace Vogler 在考伯大楼里主持了一场研讨会，由海德公园研究所

赞助。那是个明媚的春日，我们都在室内，谈论品格和精神成长，讨论阿奎奈（注：意大利神学家）、贝多芬、维克多·弗兰克尔（注：著名犹太裔心理学家，他是二战集中营幸存者）。我们中午吃午饭时，出去沐浴了一会阳光。有的学生在室内吃着三明治，他们内部进行了一场辩论，关于灵魂的非物质性。芝大独有的景象。那天我觉得，这里仍然是个神奇的地方，我感受到了那种旧时的强烈使命。

仍然可见的是那种诚肯端正的求知若渴，仍然可见的是人们愿意亮出观点，然后辩论和倾听。仍然可见的是求真的热情，以及不耻下问的精神。

芝大让你向往攀登高峰，朝着人类存在的顶峰不断攀登。

经此一役，你就再也不会满足于停留在平地上，再也不会满足于只是刷刷推特，甚至不会满足于看看报纸或是真人秀节目。多年前，一位名叫罗伯特·梅纳德·哈钦斯（注：美国教育家，曾任芝大校长）的人将芝大未来的希望押注于这一点：若能把伟大的理念摆在一帮 20 来岁的年轻人眼前，则会改变他们的一生。我可以告诉大家，这一理念在我身上是奏效的，芝大完全改变了我。

这种改变，对于那些求学于此的人，也是务实可见的改变。

0.12

目前在这个国家，我们正经历着关于终极意义的危机。许多人对自己的目标和目的没有清晰的认识。他们不知道他们在追逐什么，或者遵从什么样的根本信念行事。他们在各自细分的专业领域接受大学的科研训练，学校教他们怎么做事，却不教他们思考为何要做。大学也没有为他们提供发问的论坛，去问我应该如何生活？我的使命是什么？我为什么要来这里？

从大学里走出，他们就进入了真实的世界，一个忙忙碌碌的世界。成千上万的电邮要回，马不停蹄地规划事业、组建家庭。种种此般皆让人无法聚焦于关乎生命意义与目的的问题。

我看到很多人就连这些思考德性话题的词汇都不具备。

他们并没有处在一个良好的道德生态之中，也甚少接触那些能引导指点他们的理念。

这就造成了一种巨大的情感脆弱。我们的朋友尼采曾说过，若知为何而生，遂可纳受一切。但倘若你不知道自己的使命，那即使是第一次失败或挫折就能置你于危机之中，让你彻底崩溃。

在我教过的学生身上看到过这种缺失，二十几岁的年轻人身上也屡见

不鲜。没有明确目标的年轻人毕业了，指望用一次次堆砌成功来填补内心的空洞。他们成了 Matias Dalsgaard 所谓的“焦虑的佼佼者”。（注：Matias 是麦肯锡前雇员，指出在初入职场的年轻人身上特别明显地存在一种焦虑状态，后来他在书详述了这种焦虑状态的五个特点）Dalsgaard 写道：“这种人一定没有稳固的处事根基，但依然试图让自己从所遇的问题中解脱出来。这等于陷自己于不可能之境。你无法通过建造新的楼层，来弥补像流沙一般的地基。但这种人会继续无视这点，一心希望只要修建工作继续下去，地基的问题就不会被发现。”

但凡事终有报。危机感来临，压抑感和沮丧接踵而至。大卫·福斯特·华莱士（注：美国知名作家，其畅销巨著 *Infinite Jest* 被《时代》杂志列为 1923 年至 2005 年间最伟大的百部小说之一）在 1996 年注意到了这点，他写道：“这种悲伤深入直觉。我在自己身上、朋友身上都以不同的方式看见过。它表现出一种若有所失。”

“从意义性与道德观念方面来看，这是继承了虚无的一代人。终极意义危机的恶果体现在不断攀升的自杀率上，体现在不断增加的毒品成瘾上，你看到社会信任缺失，不少人过着离群索居，漂泊无依的生活。”

你到芝大来，就意味着你一定会受到一种指引，它与主流文化略有不同，稍微逆流而行。肤浅地过活，反而变得不易。你可能并不知道生命的意义或是你的使命，但是你知道崇山峻岭就在那里等着你去探索，人生的诸多答案就在那座美好之物的博览馆里，知识会给你莫大的安慰，让你变得冷静沉稳。

在芝大的生活并非流淌着日常幸福。但它会让你瞥见更大我的幸福，瞥见人类漫长求索之旅的宏图。如果你体会到了这种大我的欢愉，因为你知道它最终关切的是生命的意义，神圣与美妙，那你自然能更好地承受日常的痛苦。这些就是芝大赐予我的美好，也是我期望大家也能从这儿获取的。最后我想简单说一下芝大没能教给我的东西，芝大辜负我的地方。

0.13

我得声明我说的这些都是陈年往事，因为我下面谈到的是芝大上世纪八十年代的情况。很多问题现在可能都不是问题了。

校友们大多会说旧时的校园有旧时的好。身为芝大的校友和校董之一，我觉得这种说法是无稽之谈。事实上，现在的芝大远远好过我求学时的芝大，也远远好过以往任何时候的芝大。

但我上学那会儿，可能今天依然如此，芝大并未教会学生如何建立亲密的人际关系。随着我年岁渐长，我开始意识到，构建亲密关系的能力是促成圆满人生的重要本领之一。

这是因为，人生面对的首要挑战不是知识的挑战，而是动力的挑战。人生在于不仅要知道何为益事，还要带着爱与热血全身心投入其中。

人生在于热烈地爱着你的配偶和家人，以至于焕发出他们内心的爱。人生在于坚定地热爱自己的事业，在于服务自己所爱的社区，在于以虔诚赤子之心爱着自己奉行的哲学或上帝。

圆满的人生是从开放式选择走向甜蜜献身的过程，是你千万次的拒绝只为去做几次你深深牵挂之事，是你愿意为把自己和所爱之事绑在一起。你虽把自己绑在它们身上，可它们却会给你自由。

这种爱不只是柏拉图式的理想之爱，而是将内心的热爱真正地融入到日常生活的点滴之中。与朋友们共享浴室，同起同睡，在共享的电脑上写写画画。

它在于把握亲密关系的每个阶段：对第一个媚眼回以示意。真正地花精力了解那些人，就像是第一次约会的人那样，发现彼此之间的有诸多的共同点，会认为这是惊人的巧合：“你不喜欢佛加格拉斯？我也是！不如我们结婚吧！”

它在于勇于直面循环往复的脆弱感。在于遭遇危机后依然坚守，即便自己不确定是否还相信份关系、这份事业或这个机构。在于宽恕对你的背叛，当你辜负朋友、工作失误或是伤了配偶的心时，能请求谅解。当你与配偶、朋友、职业、社区或信仰建立密切联系时，你就像里昂·维斯提耶所说，“愿意被他人真正地了解，虽然前路危机四伏。”所以人们需要学会建立亲密关系，实现相处之道。人们需要学会建立亲密关系，彼此相依，体悟人生真趣——一对夫妇要成为爱的化身，你和你的事业要合为一体，你应完全献身于自己所信奉的哲学或上帝。

我在这里谈的是情感的艺术，我们并非天生就懂得它，需要反复经历脆弱不堪、矢志不渝、人情历练后才能掌握它。

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我在芝大念书时，我们身为学生总体上都不太善于建立亲密关系。我们非常善于逃避，尤其是回避那些心有灵犀般羁绊或将到来的场合。我们当时正忙着在二十岁出头时一鸣惊人，自然不想展示自己平庸无奇的一面，可这

正是建立亲密关系的绝对前提。

我们忙着学业、看书、参加学生活动。我们自以为是地认为，我们才没空去建立什么交心的情感关系。我们几乎总是在靠近彼此时，裹着一层坎迪斯·沃格勒称之为“思维的虚假大厦”的东西。（注：芝大哲学教授，研究领域涉及伦理学，女性主义，社会政治哲学等等）当碰到不确定的情形或难关时，我们总爱借助于我们的强处，比如智商、思维能力、口才等。我们想成为自己生活的主宰者，而不是向我们几乎无法控制的情绪缴械投降。

芝大在这件事上没有帮上忙。彼时的芝大氛围，从上到下都透着一股逃避情感话题的感觉。学习生活的主题是课堂上能讨论什么，其他事情都会半途而废。没有什么舞会、酒会或是任何其他让大家袒露真我的活动。当时也没什么太多联合的体育赛事。

当时更多的是强调学术表现和职业素养，而这两样又主要表现为情感抽离、专业化、批判性思维、冷眼旁观以及对冷静推理的迷之执着。

大部分时间都花在了学习上，基本上都是独来独往。过多的学生生活围绕着图书馆，但原因不是因为情侣们在书架的掩护下谈情说爱。

我离开芝大时，读书的本事远胜读人。

我的眼睛看不到善良诚恳之人身上的美，因为我那时觉得他们没什么思想深度。我也不知道如何应对深刻却又让人生畏的亲密关系。

但愿我现在好一些了。观众席里有当时我的教学辅导。

随着我们不断长大，生活中可以证明自己有多聪明的机会变得越来越少。但生活中有无数个场合需要善良、仁慈、优雅、敏锐、同情、慷慨和爱。生活需要你拓宽自己情绪的全部曲目，需要你径直去和他人打交道，需要你上一学期的亲密关系课。如果你还未掌握它，我希望你现在就开始刻意准备吧。

我最后还有一个希望，2017 届的同学们。明日你们即将毕业，这当然可喜可贺。但在明天到来之前，我希望今晚你能做一件锦上添花之事。和一位对你意义非凡的人一同去图书馆。在书堆的深处找到那本尼采的《悲剧的死亡》。但是不要翻开它。

褪去几件衣裳，邂逅美好时光

谢谢，上帝保佑你们