

It is with deepest pride and greatest pleasure that I welcome you to **to the inauguration and conferment ceremony of Jönköping Univeristy 2012.**

Fortyfive years ago, in the early fall of sixtyseven, a few weeks after I started school, our teacher showed us all into a room right next to our classroom. When I entered this room, I could hardly believe my eyes. Along one of the walls were three book shelves, each filled from floor to ceiling with books. I had never seen so many books before. A shiver went down my spine. A treasure trove, a gold mine! I dearly wanted to read all of them.

In that small school library I found what I needed to start a personal quest for knowledge on my own. This quest had no goals, but the journey itself was a worthwhile experience. It was like the beginning of an endless adventure.

In a book called just that, "An endless adventure", Professor Sven-Erik Liedman, writes about the nature of knowledge:

*"Furthermore, the whole traditional contradiction of theoretical and practical knowledge must be questioned. All knowledge is fundamentally practical. Only when this knowledge is fully embodied in the individual it becomes a true, fundamental skill and not just some superficial rote learning. Mathematics or farming, literary analysis or bookkeeping are all, in this sense, similar. The theoretical manuals may be thick or thin, but the person who must constantly refer to the manual does not command his or her field."*

Liedman uses the word manual in very general sense, including scientific papers and scholarly books. He does not say that manuals are worthless. Manuals are very practical tools. But they only contain information. Knowledge is something else, Knowledge is embodied in humans and cannot be separated from human activities.

Building an international university in Jönköping, combining high academic standards with profound real-world relevance, is is also kind of a quest for knowledge. With the advancement of society, the demands on higher education institutions have expanded. We are expected to generate new knowledge, provide the society with a well-educated work force and invent successful products, services and processes. Quality is equated with international recognition. Funding is competitive, and so is the recruitment of students and faculty.

One might then ask why a young university in Jönköping would cherish old traditions like this event tonight, with roots that can be traced all the way back to the Middle Ages? How does this mesh with the university's strive for renewal? For the ambition to lead change? For the capacity to contribute to the development of the region where we reside?

Time after time, I return to a quotation from Pirsig's book "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance".

*"The real University... has no specific location. It owns no property, pays no salaries and receives no material dues. The real University is a state of mind. It's a state of mind which is regenerated throughout the centuries by a body of people who traditionally carry the title of professor, but even that title is not part of the real University.*

*The real University is nothing less than the continuing body of reason itself."*

I like to think that our academic traditions aim to remind us about the real university. We will not be of any use in modern and future society without it. All knowledge, also the ability to reason, is fundamentally practical.

Research is in fact a specialized craft. It takes many years of hard work to become a skilled researcher. A PhD student is an apprentice under the guidance of a master. To learn is to do what you can not do. The doctors behind me have all taken their qualifying tests to pass from apprentice to craftsman.

The great masters of academia are appointed as professors. How does one become such a master? By continuing to do what you cannot do. By critically evaluating one's own work and that of others, by supervising doctoral students, by teaching, by making use of rational thought and reason in collaboration with external partners.

So let us celebrate the people.

New honorary doctors, you have made outstanding contributions to the university. Without your support and guidance, we would not be what we are today. Your contributions are highly valued.

New doctors, you have truly honoured our university and I am convinced that you will contribute to questioning old habits and breaking new ground. You have not only written a thesis with interesting results. You have also developed very useful skills.

New professors, you have been granted the master's title by the recognition of your peers. You have ability to act and think beyond the manuals. You will contribute substantially to advance the university.

You are the people who create and recreate the real university where all knowledge is fundamentally practical. I wish you all a continued quest for knowledge. Your success is the success of the university. This is an endless adventure.