

Dr Gerald L CHAN

Citation

The Renaissance Man has been deemed to be extinct in these 21st-century days of information deluge and specialization. If anyone were to give us comfort that such men still exist, it would surely be our distinguished guest today, Dr Gerald Chan. Hailed from Hong Kong originally and trained as a scientist, Dr Chan has left his marks both in academia and in business. He co-founded the Morningside Group, a diversified investment group engaged in private equity and venture capital investments, and is a Director of the publicly listed Hong Kong property giant Hang Lung Group, a company founded by his late father Mr T H Chan.

A lifelong scholar and an astute observer of the world, Dr Chan has an intellectual breadth and depth that is rarely seen. His writings span across science, the humanities, public policy and business. A limited sampling of the speeches he gave earlier this year suffices to give a glimpse of his wide-ranging interests. With clarity of thought and gracefulness of prose, his speeches traversed from the history of the concept of progress to the history of science, from distilling general features of how life function at the molecular level to affirming the importance of the humanities, from expounding on the place of university research in today's society to advocating for public private partnerships for alleviating global disease burdens.

The start-up world has greatly benefited from Dr Chan's work. Morningside's investments extend from innovative biotechnology – Dr Chan's own field of study and research – to ecommerce and mobile technologies, a notable investment of the latter being the founding investment in the Chinese smartphone company Xiaomi. A quote from Dr Chan on the Morningside website crystalizes his vision, "Venture capital is about taking risks for the creation of a better future." By staying true to this guiding principle, he has steered Morningside into investments that achieved both financial success and social impact. In biotechnology, Dr Chan has consistently been at the forefront of innovation, developing such novel technologies as oncolytic virus for treating cancer, new chemistry for making polysaccharide vaccines, mitochondrial medicine, the gut microbiota as an avenue for therapeutic intervention, and novel treatments for dementia. Working with academic scientists, he has guided the translation of many research projects from the laboratory to the clinic. His work is marked by an attention to both superior therapeutic outcome and lower healthcare cost.

Dr Chan was a pioneer in building the biotechnology sector in Mainland China. Long before it became mainstream to invest in biotech companies in China, Morningside was the backer of many of the first generation biotech companies

in China. In 2013, *Nature* magazine recognized Morningside as the top venture investor behind innovative life science companies in China. Many Chinese scientists and biotech entrepreneurs benefited from Dr Chan's support and guidance.

Dr Chan holds BS and MS degrees in Engineering from the University of California, Los Angeles, a Master of Science degree in Medical Radiological Physics, and a Doctor of Science degree in Radiation Biology from Harvard University. Notwithstanding his business activities, he continues to participate in academic research and continues to publish in scientific journals. The breadth of biomedical fields in which Dr Chan has contributed truly qualifies him as a polymath even within life science. He holds an honorary fellowship at Wolfson College of Oxford University and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Science degree from the University of Glasgow.

In recognition of the need for future scientists to be engaged with science early in their lives, Dr Chan has been a tireless advocate for the popularization of science to young people. He personally mentored many science students in addition to regularly lecturing at a number of universities including HKUST. He has been an advocate for the building of technology-based industries in Hong Kong as a means of providing career opportunities for Hong Kong's science graduates. Other ways that he has supported science education include supporting summer schools of science, establishing post-doctoral fellowships and chair professorships and funding faculty research.

In 2014, the Morningside Foundation gave a US\$350 million unrestricted gift to the Harvard School of Public Health which was renamed the Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health. The gift drew attention to the field of public health and its enormous impact on human health at the population level. It was the largest single gift hitherto given to Harvard University.

Dr Chan's service to universities and learned societies includes serving on the Global Advisory Council of the International Society for Stem Cell Research, the International Board of Governors of the New York Academy of Sciences, the Global Advisory Council of Harvard University, and the Overseers Committee of Morningside College, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Dr Chan is a scholar, an innovator, a successful investor, a thoughtful philanthropist, and above all, a man committed to the larger good of society. He practices science for the furtherance of knowledge and he conjoins business with science for the furtherance of the welfare of his fellow men.

Mr Council Chairman, on behalf of the Council of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, it is my great honor to present to you, Dr Gerald L Chan, for the award of Doctor of Business Administration *honoris causa*.