

Esteemed Doctor Juho Heiska, honorary doctors, jubilee doctors, newly conferred doctors, dear guests,

My warmest congratulations! Not just to the esteemed doctor Juho Heiska, but all of you doctors. You ALL did extremely well – you indeed finished your theses. Having finished one myself, I know that it is quite an accomplishment indeed. Although I must admit the graphics in my thesis were not really much to talk about – but the flow charts and two-by-twos, my dear audience, they have been used as a model for multiple generations of PhD students. My PhD was namely in management.

The PhD is indeed a journey – or maybe even more than one.

First, it is a journey of discovery – as Juho pointed out so well, discovery of the many ways one can be wrong, be confused, not quite know what to do and where to go. But it is also a wonderful journey – as you said, of growing, learning and evolving... And sometimes some of us “tutkijarenttus” make some small scientific contributions, too.

Second, it is also a journey full of uncertainty. Not just in the self-doubt and imposter syndrome type of way, that we all recognize in ourselves. Yes, even the provost.

But you know what: that uncertainty is an essential – necessary – part of discovery. We are, after all, seeking to create something new, something that has not been discovered yet. If there were no uncertainty along the way, the end result would not be called a PhD thesis, it would be called a project report!

And this ability to live with uncertainty – even embrace it – might just be one of the most important learnings of the whole PhD journey. As recent world events have reminded us, no one knows what the future

will bring. If anything, the last few years have been defined by uncertainty. Plans have been made, plans have fallen apart – and probably more than once.

Perhaps the process of doing a PhD was not so dissimilar.

One of the reasons we work on a wide-spectrum of research here at Aalto is because we don't know which finding will prove crucial ten, twenty, thirty years down the road. I am really sorry, we do not give you a sword – but you can be sure that the skills and the cutting-edge knowledge you have gained here at Aalto will be part of the way forward.

When we get that yearly reminder in our phones – the one we've all just set for the 17th of June – to reflect back on our own achievements, let's also think about what the world looked like a year ago. Let's consider what we didn't know then and what seemed hard, or even impossible. Let's remember that, while we each can tackle parts of the puzzle, we are more than just the sum of our parts: we are stronger together.

Juho - best of luck to you in Vaasa, it is great place. I know because I come from there. And best of luck to all of you, my dearest Doctors. Together we'll teach the rest of the world that "tutkijarenttus", "freaky-scientists" are the best one can get!

We are so proud of you and wish you the best of success in the next phase of your lives. Kippis – skål – cheers to you!

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