

Graduate Commencement speech: Hiba Krisht

President Dorman, esteemed faculty, fellow graduates,

I speak to you from a small experience that rides upon a wave. I have been at AUB for seven years. I learned here, I worked here, and I have taught and still teach here. It is here that I have gathered together the will to need, the need to learn, and united it in the smallest of moments, the most persistent of strains. I am one of those awkward people who has switched disciplines: as an undergraduate I was in English literature, where the struggle was to interpret and lend value and meaning to art. As a graduate student in philosophy my struggle has been to tend increasingly towards rigor and an understanding of the types of thinking that may highlight the valuable and the worthless, the lovely and the strange, the meaningful and the nihilistic, in epistemology, society, art, the world. I say struggle because there has been nothing easy about getting to this point, despite the clear importance of the work I do, that we all do. We all have our personal hang-ups and obstacles; we are chased all over the place by life and circumstance, and eventually, if we are lucky, we can find those moments of ease, and rest, and quietude, which we can make to be moments of work, of tallying up another bit to add to the bits that will make our whole. With this struggle comes the struggle for integrity, for refinement, for a will to do good work. There has been nothing about my stay at AUB that has left a deep mark if not this. When I look back to these years I will see myself most clearly as standing a line apart from my own mind, watching myself work at a problem in the corner of the philosophy library, on a bench in startling sunlight outside the Green Oval.

I would like to speak about a process of becoming. I would imagine we here are mostly very young, and essentially diverse in our wants, in our needs, in our loves, in our joys, in our pains. What being graduates multiple times will speak to is that we are in fact only in the midst of a common struggle. Whatever our various disciplines are: we might be scientists, or lovers of the arts, or engineers—we might be striving to fix people's bodies or to fix people's hearts or to fix the objects that make people's lives livable. Whatever our medium of delving into life may be, we can only

find ourselves both at the brink of something arduous and in the inextricable midst of a process that we are carried upon and that we carry on. Because as young people who have decided to sink ourselves into a search for knowledge and a struggle to ward off ignorance, we have essentially put off any whole commitment we could have given to another sort of life, which, even if it is wrought from struggle, still perhaps lacks the element of self-awareness that accompanies a continued striving towards the expansion of mind, an appreciation of the small moments of quiet scribbling in the library at night, of tired discovery, of waxing and waning motivation, and in the end, a desire to do good work.

Throughout my years at AUB, I have done work that is not good, and that has gotten better. I have leaned into the lento of my work, have been marked by its rhythm and its sublimity and refinement, and have allowed it to carry me even as I struggled to ride its tide. This has been the most startling realization of my choice to continue to learn: that there is both a rush and a flow to being an academic, and that in order to be taken by it, you must have a will to its object. What is it you want to do, or want to know? Will you go about doing that thing, and learning that thing, within the proper planes of integrity? Will you look around yourself, at this small, vast, beautiful, overflowing, empty campus, and give yourself those moments of care for what it is you do? Do you want to do good work?

Thank you.