*Commencement address delivered by Jim Carrey*

*Maharishi University of Management (2014)*

BEVAN: Please welcome to speak to us, the funniest man on earth: a performer of legendary comic genius, a children’s book author of profound depth, an individual of enormous compassion, who is doing so much to make our world a better place. The great Jim Carrey.

 JIM: Thank you. What are you sittin’ down for? I was gonna milk that for a while. You guys can stretch that out in post, right? Make that longer in the edit? Thank you, Bevan, thank you, all, Jai Guru Dev.

I brought one of my paintings to show you today.

I hope you guys are going to be able to see it ok. It’s not one of my bigger pieces. So you might want to move down front. Get a good look at it.

Faculty, parents, friends, dignified guests, graduating class of 2014, and all the dead baseball players coming out of the corn to be with us today – after the harvest there’s no place for them to hide! Fields are empty. There’s no cover there.

 I’m here to plant a seed to day. A seed that will inspire you to move forward in life with enthusiastic hearts and a clear sense of wholeness. The question is, will that seed have a chance to take root? Or will I be sued by Monsanto, and forced to use their seed? Which may not be totally ayurvedic.

Excuse me if I seem a little bit low energy tonight, today, whatever this is. I slept with my head to the north last night.

Oh, oh man, oh man, you know how that is, right, kids? Yeah. Woke up right in the middle of pitta, could not get back to sleep until vata rolled around! Crazy.

But I didn’t freak out, you know. I used that time to eat a large meal. Connect with someone special on Tinder.

Because life doesn’t happen to you, it happens for you. How do I know this? I don’t. But I’m making sound, and that’s the important thing. That’s what I’m here to do. Sometimes I think that’s the only thing that’s important really. You know? Is just, letting each other know we’re here. Reminding each other that we’re part of a larger self.

I used to think Jim Carrey is all that I was. Just a flickering light. A dancing shadow. The great Nothing, masquerading as something you can name. Seeking shelter in caves and foxholes, dug out hastily. An archer, searching for his target in a mirror. Wounded only by my own arrows. Begging to be enslaved, pleading for my chains. Blinded by longing, and tripping over paradise.

You didn’t think I could be serious, did ya? I don’t think you understand who you’re dealing with! I have no limits.  I cannot be contained because I’m the container.You can’t contain the container, man. You can’t contain the container.

I used to believe that who I was, ended at the edge of my skin. That I had been given this little vehicle called a body, from which to experience creation, although I could have asked for a sportier model. It was, after all, a loaner, and would have to be returned. Then I learned that everything outside the vehicle was part of me too. And now I drive a convertible.

Yeah, man. Top down, wind in my hair. Whoo!

I am elated, and truly, truly, truly excited to be present and fully connected to you at this important moment in your journey. I hope you’re ready to open the roof? And take it all in? Ok, four more years, then. They’re obviously not ready. Need some more K.

I want to thank the trustees, the administrators, the faculty of MUM, for creating an institution worthy of Maharishi’s ideals of education. A place that teaches knowledge and experience, the knowledge and experience necessary to be productive in life, as well as enabling the students through transcendental meditation, an ancient Vedic knowledge, to slack off twice a day, for an hour and a half.  Don’t think you’re foolin’ me.

But I guess it has some benefits. It does allow you to separate who you truly are and what’s real from the stories that run through your head. You have given them the ability to walk behind the mind’s elaborate set decoration and see that there’s a huge difference between a dog that is going to eat you in your mind, and an actual dog that is going to eat you. That may sound like no big deal, but many never learn that distinction. And they spend a great deal of their lives living in fight or flight response.

I’d like to acknowledge all of you wonderful parents.

 Way to go. What a fantastic job you’ve done. For your tireless dedication, your love, your support, and most of all, for the attention that you pay to your children. I have a saying: Beware the unloved. Because they will eventually hurt themselves. Or me. But when I look at this group here, you know, I feel really safe. I do. I’m just going to say it, my room is not locked. My room is not locked.

No doubt some of you will turn out to be crooks.  But white collar stuff, you know, Wall Street, that type of thing, you know. Crimes committed by people with self-esteem. Stuff parents can still be proud of. In a weird way. And to the graduating class of 2017 – minus 3, you didn’t let me finish: congratulations. Yes, give yourselves a round of applause, please.

You are the vanguard of knowledge and consciousness. A new wave in a vast ocean of possibilities. On the other side of that door there’s a world starving for new ideas, new leadership. I’ve been out there for 30 years. She’s a wildcat! Oh, she’ll rub up against your leg and purr until you pick her up and start pettin’ her and then out of nowhere she’ll SWAT you in the face. It can be rough out there. But that’s ok. Because there’s soft serve ice-cream.

With sprinkles. I guess that’s what I’m really trying to say here today. Sometimes it’s ok to eat your feelings.

Now fear is going to be a player in your life. But you get to decide how much. You can spend your whole life imagining ghosts, worrying about the pathway to the future, but all there will ever be is what’s happening here, in the decisions we make in this moment, which are based in either love or fear. So many of us choose our path out of fear disguised as practicality. What we really want seems impossibly out of reach and ridiculous to expect, so we never dare to ask the universe for it. I’m saying, I’m the proof that you can ask the universe for it. Please. And if it doesn’t happen for you right away it’s only because the universe is so busy fulfilling my order. Party size!

My father could have been a great comedian, but he didn’t believe that that was possible for him. And so he made a conservative choice. Instead, he got a safe job as an accountant, and when I was 12 years old, he was let go from that safe job, and our family had to do whatever we could to survive. I learned many great lessons from my father. Not the least of which was that you can fail at what you don’t want, so you might as well take a chance on doing what you love.

It’s not the only thing he taught me, though. You know, I watched the effect of my father’s love and humour and how it altered the world around me, and I thought, ‘That’s something to do. That’s something worth my time.’ It wasn’t long before I started acting up, you know, people would come over to the house and they’d be greeted by a 7 year old throwing himself down a large flight of stairs. They would say, ‘What happened?’ and I would say, ‘I don’t know, let’s check the replay.’ I’d go back to the top of the stairs and come back down in slow motion.

It was a very strange household. My father used to brag that I wasn’t a ham, I was the whole pig.

And he treated my talent as if it was his second chance. When I was about 28, after a decade as a professional comedian, I realised one night in LA that the purpose of my life had always been to free people from concern. Just like my dad. And when I realised this, I dubbed my new devotion the Church of Freedom From Concern. The Church of FFC. And I dedicated myself to that ministry. What’s yours? How will you serve the world? What do they need that your talent can provide? That’s all you have to figure out. As someone who’s done what you’re about to go and do, I can tell you from experience, the effect you have on others is the most valuable currency there is.

Because everything you gain in life will rot and fall apart, and all that will be left of you is what was in your heart.  My choosing to free people from concern got me to the top of the mountain. Look where I am. Look what I get to do. Everywhere I go – I’m going to get emotional, because when I tap into this it really is extraordinary to me. – I did something that made people present their best selves to me wherever I go.

I am at the top of the mountain, and I was, and the only one I hadn’t freed was myself. And that’s when my search for identity deepened. I wondered who I’d be without my fame. Who would I be if I said things that people didn’t want to hear? Or if I defied their expectations of me? What if I showed up to the party without my Mardi Gras bat mask and refused to flash my breasts for a handful of beads?

I’ll give you a moment to wipe that image out of your mind.

But you guys are so ahead of the game. You already know who you are. And that peace, that peace that we’re after, lies somewhere beyond personality. Beyond the perception of others, beyond invention and disguise. Even beyond effort itself. You can join the game, fight the wars, play with form all you want, but to find real peace, you have to let the armour go. Your need for acceptance can make you invisible in this world. Don’t let anything stand in the way of the light that shines through this form. Risk being seen in all of your glory.

It’s not big enough.

This painting is big for a reason. It’s called High Visibility.

It’s about picking up the light and daring to be seen. Here’s the tricky part. Everyone is attracted to the light. The party host up at the top, who thinks unconsciousness is bliss and is always offering to drink from the bottles that empty you. Misery, below her, despises the light, can’t stand when you’re doing well. Wishes you nothing but the worst. The queen of diamonds, under him, needs a king to build her house of cards. And the hollow one down the bottom there, will cling to your leg, and say, ‘Please don’t leave me behind, for I have abandoned myself.’ Even those who are closest to you, and most in love with you, the people you love most in the world, will find clarity confronting at times.

This painting took me thousands of hours to complete. And when I was finished, – thank you, thousands of hours, I’ll never get ‘em back – I’ll never get them back. I worked on this for so long, I was weeks and weeks like a madman, alone, on a scaffolding, and when I was finished, one of my friends said, ‘This‘d be a cool blacklight painting.’ So I started over.

Whooo! Welcome to Burning Man. Some pretty crazy characters up there, but better up there than in here.
You know. Painting is one of the ways  – thank you. Painting is one of the ways I free myself from concern. A way to stop the world through total mental, spiritual and physical involvement. But even with that, comes a feeling of divine dissatisfaction. Because ultimately we’re not the avatars we create. We’re not the pictures on the film stock. We’re the light that shines through. All else is just smoke and mirrors, distracting, but not truly compelling. I’ve often said that I wished people could realise all their dreams and wealth and fame, so that they could see that it’s not where you’re going to find your sense of completion. Like many of you, I was concerned about going out into the world and doing something bigger than myself. Until someone smarter than myself, made me realise that there is nothing bigger than myself.

My soul is not contained within the limits of my body, my body is contained within the limitlessness of my soul. One unified field. One unified field of nothing, dancing, for no particular reason, except maybe to comfort and entertain itself.  As that shift happens in you, you won’t be feeling the world, you’ll be felt by it, you’ll be embraced by it.

Now I’m always at the beginning. I have a reset button, and I ride that button constantly. Once that button is functioning in your life there’s no story that the mind can create that will be as compelling. The imagination is always manufacturing scenarios, both good and bad, and the ego tries to keep you trapped in the multiplex of the mind.  Our eyes are not viewers, they’re also projectors that are running a second story over the picture that we see in front of us all the time. Fear is writing that script and the working title is: ‘I’ll never be enough.’

Now you’re going to look at a person like me and say, ‘How could we ever hope to reach those kind of heights, Jim? How can we make a painting that’s too big for our home? How do you fly so high without a special breathing apparatus?’ This is the voice of the ego. And if you listen to it there will always be someone who is doing better than you. No matter what you gain, ego will not let you rest. It will tell you that you cannot stop until you have left an indelible mark on the earth. Until you’ve achieved immortality. How tricky is this ego, that it would tempt us with the promise of something we already possess?  So, I just want you to relax. You know? That’s my job. Relax, and dream up a good life. I had a substitute teacher from Ireland in the second grade. Who told my class during morning prayer that when she wants something, anything at all, she prays for it, and promises something in return and she always gets what she wants. I’m sitting in the back of the classroom, you know, and thinking, well my family can’t afford a bike, you know, so I went home and I prayed for one. And I promised that I would recite the rosary every night in exchange. Broke it. Broke that promise. But two weeks later, I got home from school to find a brand new mustang bike with a banana seat and Easy Rider handle bars. Yeah.  From fool to cool. My family informed me that I had won the bike in a raffle that a friend of mine had entered my name in without my knowledge, any knowledge whatsoever. So that type of thing has been happening to me ever since. As far as I can tell it’s just about letting the universe know what you want, and working toward it, while letting go of how it comes to pass. Your job is not to figure out how it’s going to happen for you, but to open the door in your head, and when the door opens in real life, just walk through it. And don’t worry if you miss your cue, because there’s always doors opening. They keep opening.
And when I say life doesn’t happen to you, it happens for you, I really don’t know if that’s true.
 I’m just making a conscious choice to perceive challenges as something beneficial so that I can deal with them in the most productive way. You’ll come up with your own style, that’s part of the fun.
Oh, and why not take a chance on faith, as well.
Take a chance on faith. Not religion, but faith. Not hope, but faith. I don’t believe in hope, hope is a beggar. Hope walks through the fire, and faith leaps over it.
You are ready and able to do beautiful things in this world. And after you walk through those doors today, you will only ever have two choices: love or fear. Choose love. And don’t ever let fear turn you against your playful heart.
Thank you so much. Jai Guru Dev. I’m so honoured. I love you.
Wow. Thank you again, so much, Bevan, and MUM. Everybody. I’m overwhelmed. I’m astounded at this honour, truly. And when I heard about this incredible thing that was about to happen, I was so blown away, and I thought it’s a good thing that, you know, that they’re giving this to someone who has conquered their ego. Cuz if you give this to the wrong guy man, you’ll throw the whole thing out of whack.
I’d like to thank consciousness.  You trickster! I’d like to thank consciousness for finding another way to entertain and amuse itself. And that’s all I can say. All I feel right now is that I’m looking and I’m with and I’m connected to a large body of people who’ve been treated really well and who mean to treat the world the same and uh, really truly seem full and open and alive. And I can’t tell you how wonderful it is to be in the same room with that feeling. You know. I live for it. So. I’m so happy. To be here.
Oop. Popcorn’s ready. The popcorn’s ready. Who wants some? Who wants some popcorn? Let’s do some. Let’s party. Huh? C’mon Fairfield! Is it legal to dance here yet? Let’s do it! Thank you so much. I love you all. So much.
1) The Buddha lay down with his head to the north when he was ready to die. It is not traditionally seen as good for the body to sleep with the head in that direction.
2) Pitta and Vata are doshas, ayurvdedic concepts similar to the ‘humours’ of early western medicine. Pitta is the fire element, a metaphor for all processes including digestion. Vata is about movement and air. Different times of day use different elements for their purposes. Pitta is strong at midday and midnight. It is used for digestion at midday, which makes that the best time to eat. At night it is used to finish off the digestive process as a kind of daily detox, and also relates to how the brain uses dreaming. It is active and creative. It is best to be asleep before 10pm, when Pitta kicks in, or that processing can keep you awake. The temptation is to eat more, so the digestive fire cannot do the detox; and the intellect, another kind of processing, can become too lively to allow sleep, until 2, when Vata kicks in.
3) One of Maharishi’s most important contributions was that the Vedas (and other manifestations of language) were about the effect of the sound on the environment rather than their intellectual meaning. Carrey is giving us another example of that.
4) I am not totally sure of this one, but the difference between the sounds A and K are sometimes used as an example of the difference between infinity and the point; ie, the unbounded field of awareness and the practical manifestation of daily life.