I am very pleased and grateful to accept the Tang prize for sinology; and I would like to thank my nominees, the selection committee, and the Tang Prize Foundation under Jesse Chern. I would also like to thank the Foundation for their remarkable arrangements in organizing this ceremony. I also should express my gratitude to Professor Wang Dewei for his introduction and will now have to work twice as hard to live up to it.

The award is for lifetime achievement; and most of us, I believe, still feel very much in the middle of doing what we do. We might best look on this as a glorious and welcome interruption, after which we go back and finish half a dozen tasks underway, and then get on to the next thing we have in mind. The award makes one realize how much of one’s life is bound up in what we do.

The award is, in effect, a gift to a field, not because it inspires competition among individuals, but because every other year a
committee will receive nominations from the field from everywhere in the world and take stock of what is being done. It is a way to rise above our more prochial concerns and think broadly about what we do.

Of course, “Chinese Studies” became “Chinese studies” only in modern times. Before that it was simply “studies.” Broadly conceived it is a very old field that has always had to continuously renew itself in order for the culture to stay vital. What we think of as “knowledge” is not so stable as we imagine, and old certainties have so often collapsed facing new premises. We can act only for our own time. The past is always “under construction,” as we try to link it to new ages and new audiences.