

On being educated

// Chancellor // members of the University // fellow graduands and guests...

Upon being offered the opportunity to // speak on behalf of this cohort of graduands // my first thought was to reflect on previous such speeches. // I was of course looking for a sense of what was to be */ expected of such a speech. // the generic conventions // The speeches I looked at were / each / quite distinct // but a common theme of gratitude and appreciation were evident in all, // as well as some account of what it means to study // and to graduate. ///

As a graduand // and I suppose therefore as an / 'educated */ person', // I would like to think aloud about this word 'education': // in its Latin derivation meaning to 'bring up, // to rear', // but with a related meaning of to 'bring out'. ///

These are two / related but / distinct meanings: // to 'bring up' suggests to me the road to maturity, // to adulthood, // the initiation into a culture; // to 'bring out' suggests to cultivate some essential */ nature of the // */ person. ///

But what does it mean to / our generation to be */ 'educated'? // Immediately / I think of the social distinction between study or knowledge for its 'own sake', // and study as training for a particular career // - knowledge to be applied; // and this distinction aligns closely with the concepts of specialization in a particular field // as (commonly) opposed to the idea of a */ 'general' education // without any predetermined career */ goal. ///

These are not mere concepts. // Important decisions affecting us all as graduates, // and perhaps as future, / postgraduate students or / staff are made around these considerations: //1 which courses are judged to be useful, //3 to the wider community, //1 to universities, //1 to the students themselves in their lives and their careers, //5 to posterity //

Of course education can be both personally and practically relevant //4 In the process of being */ 'educated' I have // not only found a means of / intellectual and / spiritual / sustenance for me */ personally, // but also a */ practical means of / living, // in a way that suits my nature and abilities: // a contribution that / I can make within and / to / society. //1 My father – // who recommended Macquarie to me many years ago // after he had visited here // - once told me that if one can find something to do that really suits one's particular abilities, // regardless of what that is, // it will always make a contribution to society // and will pay one's way. /// He was right in both his suggestions. ///

It has always seemed to me // that the process of studying and learning // is one that should be found as much */ outside as // inside the walls of teaching institutions. /// My own education began around the family kitchen table. // One becomes educated // that is // in the company of others: // of family // those of like-minded interests and character, // of friends, // mentors, // and society at large, with its artists, writers, scientists etc ///

But the process of being educated within the / formal */ institutional context // has been

for me */ crucial. /// I rebelled against it for a long time. // I craved intellectual freedom.
// I suppose I took to extremes the view of education as an entirely individual and
individuating process. // But there is something that can be found within a university that
is not / readily / accessible outside. ///

//5 This / something is a */ community, of // personal contact with */ people. /// I still
remember the first lectures I attended here, // and the experience I had, // and have always
had since, // of being inspired, // challenged // encouraged. // At first I had thought of
university as an abstract entity, // in my imagination really consisting of walls and rooms,
// with open spaces in between. // But over time I have come to see that it is, more than
anything, // the actual */ people that have // made the experience of being educated here
such an enjoyable and */ enriching one: // the scholars, // the lecturers and tutors, // the /
administrative */ support staff // within my department // and in the wider university
structure, // the librarians, // counselors, // the Mentors, // and my senior and junior
colleagues and my peers, // my friends ///

There are / people / on this */ stage // here / today // whose dedication to the / highest /
principles of / scholarly */ activity and community // have helped make it / possible for /
me to / stand here */ today. ///

On behalf of the graduands here today I would like to thank our families and friends, our
individual social networks, the wider social community which wisely supports,
encourages and appreciates tertiary study; and the society of students and staff here at
Macquarie for providing the nurturing context within which so much of meaning has
come to pass in all our lives. /// As members of the Macquarie Alumni community, may
we all pass on to the */ next generation the same level of // encouragement, / support and
respect for scholarship and academic endeavour // which we have enjoyed. /// For above
all, // education is a */ gift // which, like / all gifts, as the ancient Greeks / continue to */
remind us, brings / with it a */ burden: // education means the acquisition of a */
responsibility, // to pass */ on what has been // given to */ us. //

Thank you.