

GRADUATION SPEECH

Good afternoon everyone,

My name is Marta, I am a PhD Student at Pompeu Fabra University and a former master student of Barcelona Graduate School of Economics. Let me first thank BGSE for having invited me to this beautiful occasion, and congratulate this amazing cohort for having made it till graduation, and in the most successful way. Among you, I have incredible friends and future colleagues, and also my very first brilliant class as a teaching assistant. Some common and popular wisdom says that you never forget your first love, but I am sure it applies equally to the first students you teach Macroeconomics, which is an additional reason for being glad and grateful to have met you and shared 10 months of this challenging journey with you. In the few and brief words that I want to address to you in this special day I will abstain from being sentimental, and try to avoid all the nerdish jokes that economists always seem to love so much. I want to underline what I believe are the most crucial lessons you will carry with you in life. This is why I really want to start with facts and stress it again: you made it. For most of you it was the first experience away from home, away from your country, from the comfort of your family and beloved friends. Maybe it was even the first time you crossed oceans and continents, the first time you lived alone or with some wild housemates, the first time you studied in a foreign language and the first time you realized there is not a single food in the world that is as garlic-based as the Catalan one. I am sure all these new adventures have shaped the way you see yourself today as students, workers and most importantly, citizens. And I can say I am sure about it because I have experienced this whole package last year, and I went through the entire universe of emotions that have characterized your master here in Barcelona. Like you, I have asked myself many times what I was doing here. From September till June, every time I was trying to understand a difficult lecture or to solve an impossible problem set with my friends, I found myself questioning my choice, my limits, and my motivation. In a world that seems to always tell us to be sure, to blindly believe you are right, to fear nothing, I remember feeling small and thinking that it was most certainly my mistake. However, after the 2 years I have spent here by now, I have come to realize that this constant process of having questions and doubts is what marks the difference being arrogant and superficial from being thoughtful and rational women and men. Not heroes, not perfect, just rational women and men. It is not by turning away the eyes from difficulties that you advance in life, but it is instead by acknowledging the problem and finding a consistent and viable solution. So let me point out

the first big lesson I believe this year at BGSE has taught you: it is more than OK, I would even say, it is essential to have a problem to solve. Without hard times, without challenges, no one progresses as a person and no advances can be made by the society as a whole. You can, and, in fact, you should feel lost sometimes, and accept that you cannot always succeed, that you might fail. Whenever you will face a tough situation in your future life, you should remember these 10 months of struggle and pressure. Remember how you felt and how you pulled together your brain, your personality and the help of your friends and colleagues to finally find a solution. Remember that almost never you had a perfectly correct answer, but, after all, you had always gained a better and sounder understanding of the problem.

I mentioned the words "friends" and "colleagues" not by chance, because here comes my second thought about your experience here at BGSE. With two hundred students coming from all over the globe, this school puts you in contact with a fair sample of people from different cultures, genders, religions, socio-political backgrounds. And it teaches you that differences are salient features of any positive and well-functioning environment. Through the variety of opinions and approaches to work and to life in general, one can learn from the experiences of the others and better complement their own views and ideas. In a society that constantly tells us to not recognize and to not respect differences, I wish you to be the people who will strongly defend heterogeneity as the key ingredient to progress and to share this planet in a healthy way. I invite you to be determined and persistent, and I wish you to have an open-minded and scientific attitude, to critically evaluate reality, to use your incredible intelligence to avoid falling in the tramps of hate and resentment. I encourage you to listen to every opinion, even the ones you do not agree with, in the constant attempt to establish what is the best, not what is the easiest for you and for the society we participate in.

Some centuries ago, an Italian poet named Dante Alighieri wrote the following sentence in a passage of the Divine Comedy: "Consider well the seed that gave you birth: You were not made to live as brutes, But to follow virtue and knowledge". These are my last words to you, BGSE students. Completing a master here was the goal and the reason you set out for this physical, educational, and personal journey. Now that your time here is over, it's the time that you take another step along the path of your lives. I hope they will be tortuous and interesting, because curious and clever human beings like you have a taste for adventures. I hope they will be enlightened by logic and rationality, and full of people you love, you value and you can learn with. Knowing what you are able to do and what we can do together, I wish you all the best for the years to come. Thank you and congrats!