ONASSIS INTERNATIONAL PRIZES

Speech of
Dimitris Nanopoulos Academician, Distinguished Professor
of Physics - Mitchell/Heep
Chair in High Energy Physics, Texas A&M University

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Your Excellency (Mr. President)

I accept the International Onassis Prize with great joy and emotion. I consider it a special honor to be included on the list of laureates of this prestigious award, as they are all shining beacons on the international firmament, especially in this year when we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Foundation's founder, probably the best known Greek in the world, Aristotelis Onassis, as well as 30 constructive years of the "Alexandros Onassis" Public Benefit Foundation.

I wish to thank the President, Mr. Antonis Papadimitriou, the Board of Trustees and the International Prize Committee of the Onassis Foundation for their confidence in me. I also wish to thank all my co-workers during the 35 years of my research activity with whom we have built together a new school. Allow me a personal reference to my wife, Myrto, who has helped and supported me for so many years so much that maybe even she does not realize. I thank her from my heart for all these beautiful years.

This prize has been awarded to me for my contribution to natural science. I consider myself very lucky for two reasons: my immense passion for physics and the amazing conjecture of events that made me live in a period that could be described as revolutionary because of the changes it has brought to people's scientific conscience. For the first time in the history of mankind, relying on experimental data, we are able to answer the major questions that have tormented man since his appearance. The answers may not always be to our liking, but science does not submit to dictates, prejudices and dogmas. The scientist should have the courage to call things by their name. The great biologist Jacques Monot, whose work "Chance and Necessity" has influenced my generation so much, said: "The scientist should be modest and moderate as a man, but not in the analysis of his scientific findings".

I wish that all these discoveries may lead to a new man who will look straight at the world without fear, a man, to quote Albert Camus, "reconciled with the irrationality of his existence".

Thank you very much.