

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Edward Witten

Thank you, and thanks as well to the World Cultural Council for this wonderful award.

I am greatly honored to be recognized in this way. I know I owe my good fortune in large part to the many who have helped me along the way. Here I think of my teachers, and especially my professors in graduate school, and also the many colleagues from whom I have learned over the years. As well I must thank my family, and especially my parents, for encouraging my interest in science when I was young, and my wife and colleague Chiara, who has provided so much support and encouragement.

I have had the luck to work in an area of physics and mathematics that has been very fertile during my career. Certainly there was luck involved, since when I was young I had only a hazy idea about the choices I was making. What I have been able to achieve has depended on the vitality of the field that I have worked in, and this has depended on the insights and contributions of my colleagues and contemporaries and of our predecessors all the way back to the beginning of the modern scientific

enterprise.

For one who has the passion for science and mathematics, to be able to work in those fields professionally is a dream come true — the best life that one can imagine. And the opportunities are still there for today's young people. When I talk to students, I like to say that the continents have been explored, but in science and mathematics there are still wide open horizons for discoveries.

Many events that seem important today, and even events that actually are important in our lives today, will not necessarily seem so important a couple of centuries from now. But advances in science, mathematics, and technology are enduring.

Let me conclude by wishing peace, prosperity, and freedom to our Latvian hosts and to friends and neighbors all around the world.

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