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THE NOBEL PRIZE



David J. Gross

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David J. Gross – Banquet speech

David J. Gross's speech at the Nobel Banquet, December 10, 2004



David J. Gross delivering his banquet speech.

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Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, Ladies and Gentlemen.

For more than 100 years the Nobel Foundation has handed out these generous

prizes and hosted these magnificent banquets. All of this made possible due to the generosity and vision of Alfred Nobel. But can it continue?

To continue having such splendid parties two things are required. First, an inexhaustible supply of money, but also, equally important, an inexhaustible supply of great scientific discoveries.

The first requirement seems to be guaranteed, since the Foundation spends only the interest and wisely invests the capital of Nobel's bequest.

The second requirement might appear harder to satisfy. As knowledge increases, could the pace of scientific discovery slow; as more and more problems are solved?

Fortunately Nature is as generous with its problems as Nobel with his fortune. The more we know, the more aware we are of what we know not. Indeed, the most important product of knowledge is ignorance.

The questions we ask today are more profound and more interesting than those asked years ago when I was a student. Many of those were answered. But back then we did not possess enough knowledge to be intelligently ignorant – and to ask the wonderful questions we ask today.

Some wonder whether some day we will arrive at a theory of everything, and run out of new problems to solve – much as the effort to explore the earth ran out of new continents to explore.

While this is conceivably possible, I am happy to report that there is no evidence that we are running out of our most important resource – ignorance.

How lucky for science.

How lucky for scientists.

And, how lucky for the Nobel Foundation.

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The Nobel Prize in Physics 2004

David J. Gross
H. David Politzer
Frank Wilczek

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Nobel Prizes 2018

This year 12 new laureates have been awarded for achievements that have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind.

Their work and discoveries range from cancer therapy and laser physics to developing proteins that can solve humankind's chemical problems. The work of the 2018 Nobel Laureates also included combating war crimes, as well as integrating innovation and climate with economic growth. Find out more.

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About the Nobel Prize organisation

The Nobel Foundation

Tasked with a mission to manage Alfred Nobel's fortune and has ultimate responsibility for fulfilling the intentions of Nobel's will.

The prize-awarding institutions

For more than a century, these academic institutions have worked independently to select Nobel Laureates in each prize category.

Nobel Prize outreach activities

Several outreach organisations and activities have been developed to inspire generations and disseminate knowledge about the Nobel Prize.

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