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PHYSICIST AND COSMOLOGIST MARCELO GLEISER

AWARDED TEMPLETON PRIZE AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

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And that, to me, is something that should be celebrated every day.*

Theoretical physicist and cosmologist Marcelo Gleiser was awarded the 2019 [Templeton Prize](#) at a ceremony Wednesday evening, May 29, at The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium in New York City.

"There is something very special about this planet, and there is something very special about us, because we are the creatures that are able to understand, or try to understand, our origins," Professor Gleiser said in his Templeton Prize address at the ceremony. "We are self-aware molecular machines capable of wonder and awe. And that, to me, is something that should be celebrated every day."

Gleiser, 60, is the Appleton Professor of Natural Philosophy and a professor of physics and astronomy at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. He was announced as the 2019 Templeton Prize Laureate on March 19 by the John Templeton Foundation, based in West Conshohocken, Pennsylvania. A native of Brazil, Gleiser is the first Latin American to be awarded the Templeton Prize.

"We need to unite as a species so that we have a future," said Gleiser. "We have to leave the world for the future generations a better place that we found. That, to me, is the moral imperative of our time."

Marcelo Gleiser is a leading proponent of the view that science, philosophy, and spirituality are complementary expressions of humanity's need to embrace mystery and the unknown. He has earned international acclaim through his books, essays, blogs, TV documentaries, and conferences that present science as a spiritual quest to understand the origins of the universe and of life on Earth.

"Even in the face of the enduring unknown, Marcelo displays an undeniable joy of exploration," said Heather Templeton Dill, president of the John Templeton Foundation. "He has found a way to create a constructive engagement between the sciences and the humanities, and to propose a unifying vision rooted in an appreciation for humankind's uniqueness in the cosmos."

Speakers at the ceremony included Pulitzer-Prize winning novelist and essayist Marilynne Robinson, the author of *Housekeeping*, *Gilead*, *Home*, and *Lila*.

“Marcelo Gleiser very agreeably calls himself a ‘natural philosopher,’ a term used by scientists to describe themselves before the great schism,” said Dr. Robinson. “He proposes and demonstrates a reintegration of primal joy and attentiveness into science as it is practiced now, to acknowledge the old fascination, itself unaccountable, that has made humankind a race of profound inquirers.”

Dartmouth President Philip J. Hanlon also addressed the ceremony audience, and the Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra performed compositions by Mahler, Villa-Lobos, and Mozart. “Mahler speaks to my heart and spirit, Villa-Lobos to my Brazilian roots, and Mozart to the precision and mystery of the cosmic harmony,” noted Professor Gleiser.

Gleiser is a prominent voice among scientists, past and present, who reject the notion that science alone can lead to ultimate truths about the nature of reality. Instead, in his parallel career as a public intellectual, he reveals the historical, philosophical, and cultural links between science, the humanities, and spirituality, and argues for a complementary approach to knowledge, especially on questions where science cannot provide a final answer.

He often describes science as an “engagement with the mysterious,” inseparable from humanity’s relationship with the natural world. Gleiser’s writings propose that modern science has brought humankind back to the metaphorical center of creation – his doctrine of “humancentrism” -- by revealing the improbable uniqueness of our planet, and the exceptional rarity of humans as intelligent beings capable of understanding the importance of being alive. This inversion of Copernicanism, he argues, prompts the need for a new cosmic morality where the sacredness of life is extended to the planet and all living beings.

The Templeton Prize, valued at 1.1 million British pounds (about \$1.4 million), is one of the world's largest annual individual awards and honors a person who has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life’s spiritual dimension, whether through insight, discovery, or practical works.

Established in 1972 by the late global investor and philanthropist Sir John Templeton, the Prize is a cornerstone of the Foundation’s international efforts to serve as a philanthropic catalyst for discoveries relating to the deepest and most perplexing questions facing humankind. The Foundation supports research on subjects ranging from complexity, evolution, and emergence to creativity, forgiveness, and free will.

He joins a group of 48 Prize recipients including Mother Teresa, who received the inaugural award in 1973, the Dalai Lama (2012), and Archbishop Desmond Tutu (2013). Last year’s Templeton Prize was awarded to His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan for his efforts to promote peace-affirming Islam and to seek religious harmony within Islam and between Islam and other religions. Scientists who are previous Prize Laureates include Martin Rees (2011), John Barrow (2006), Charles Townes (2005), George Ellis (2004), Freeman Dyson (2000), and Paul Davies (1995).