

DUBLIN INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

SCHOOL OF THEORETICAL PHYSICS

64-65 MERRION SQUARE, DUBLIN.

Dublin, 11th March

Dear Professor,

Before you leave for your country, I think I must explain to you my deep gratitude for what you have been for me during these years I spent in Dublin -

When I came here the first time - in October 1953, not yet 24 - I was really groping in the dark, both from the scientific and personal point of view, trying to find my way amidst a lot of difficulties. As far as physics is concerned, I think I was like a child at that time. I felt enthusiastic about the wonderful toys I was shown, I could perhaps work them, but I did not understand them, nor really know what they were for. I did not know that they were not much, but "real structures", to be looked upon and searched as sacred things, with a sense of holy curiosity; and that my job was really that of having my tiny, but real share in the opening of the great shrine of the world.

I cannot say this pure ideal is now the only one in my mind; it would not be even just. However, you presented it to me, and I ~~was~~ know at least how to pursue it and how to graft my study and my thoughts in the contemporary trend of science.

I learned from you a number of basic ideas in physics: in truth, the very backbone of it. I must also thank you for your concrete assistance in my work: I will always remember the painstaking care you had with me during the preparation of my first two papers.



Another essential thing, to which I am naturally disposed, and that I found here a most fertile till is the wish to a unitary attitude towards reality; very happily, because techniques and superficiality are great temptations indeed. That a physicist must not sever himself from the social and historical background of which he is just a part and a contributor; that physics is just one side of the human strife, which must not be separated from all the other sciences, and from philosophy and religion; these, and similar ideas have often been explained by you, and it was good for me.

After all this I said, if you allow me, is it too much to speak of scientific fatherhood? During the past months it occurred often to me that the Greek ideal of a symposium of truth-lovers around the wise master, like the one I learned from my Plato's readings in the secondary schools, sometimes is not so far away and literary as it would seem.

Last, but not least, I must mention to you my (and not only mine!) gratefulness for your constant and concrete interest in the future of my career and of my family. When our child will grow up, we will tell her ~~about~~ of the kind person that helped her so much, although he did not know her at all. You know how the tale goes: "there was once a very famous and wise man..."



Lastly, after this perhaps too long talk, a few minor things. I thank for the recommendation for the post at the "Politecnico"; it seems that your esteem of me is greater than mine! - I don't know how I will keep to your promises! - In the meanwhile, I came to know something which makes that post less valuable and desirable than I thought; thus, if I get the I. C. I. Fellowship, it is likely I take it - It may be that I'll try something else too (in England); I trust, if I am allowed, ~~as~~ in your eventual assistance. The dead line for the I. C. I. Fellowship is the end of April; I'll tell you any other decision of mine about this matter.

Yours sincerely

B. Betti