



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI TORINO

Laurea Honoris Causa

MARGARET JOAN GELLER

Fisica e cosmologa

SALUTO del PROF. ATTILIO FERRARI
Presidente del Planetario Infini.TO

Aula Magna Rettorato
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Magnifico Rettore
Colleagues of the University
Ladies and Gentlemen
Doctor Margaret Geller

It is a privilege and pleasure for me to share with you some of my scientific and outreach experiences with Doctor Margaret Geller who is today honored with the Degree in Physics of the University of Torino.

I met Dr. Geller for the first time at the Institute of Astronomy in Cambridge, England, where she was a brilliant post-doc after her Ph.D in Princeton. In a typical English summer, between summer spells and scattered showers, we could share some free time enjoying Argentinian barbecues in the park of the Institute of Astronomy. Of course we talked about science, extragalactic jets and her pioneering ideas for mapping the universe at large scale.

Later we met in the other Cambridge, in Massachusetts, at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. There Dr. Geller has produced the most impressive contributions in cosmology publishing the very first map of the large structure of the universe.

In many years of work she has formed a large number of very successful researchers raising their interest and enthusiasm on the most advanced and daring cosmological problems. In fact I had her advice and help in launching a program in cosmology here in Torino, a contribution for which our University is today very grateful.

However I am here to welcome and praise Dr. Geller on behalf of the Museum of Astronomy and Space Infini.to founded ten years ago by the University together with the National Institute of Astrophysics and local Institutions. When I started the process of creating Infini.to I had two inspirational models: the Adler Museum of Chicago as a science communication center in close collaboration with the University and Dr. Geller as the unparalleled example on how to transmit astronomy and cosmology to the public in a competent, clear, elegant and also entertaining style.

With her gift of speech Dr. Geller has given hundreds of inspiring public talks for large audiences around the world and is included in US National Public Radio's list of *The Best Commencement Speeches, Ever*.

She looks at science communication as one of the most important task for scientists to open the eyes of young people to the world of science. She said once: *Science is driven not only by the curiosity of those who explore today but also by their confidence that others like you [the next generations] will succeed where they have failed.*

Dr. Geller has also produced several movies for public education. Her 8-minute video *Where the Galaxies Are* in 1989 was the first graphic voyage through the observed universe and was awarded important prizes. A later 40-minute movie, *So Many Galaxies...So Little Time*, contains more sophisticated prize-winning graphics and was on display at the Washington National Air and Space Museum.

(A few scenes of this movie are being run on the screen.)

In times when science are by some people considered a luxury, the task of convincing lawmakers and laymen of its social and cultural importance is crucial. Dr. Geller has made clear in many occasions the idea that the support of education in schools, universities and museums is necessary for our future. She said in an intense speech: *Our store of imagination and wonder for the future is in our children. But ..., one third of our children will spend at least a year in poverty before the age of 16. This situation is ... typical [in many] industrialized nations. With this unconscionable choice of priorities we are wasting our greatest resource for the future of all creative disciplines.*

I gather that, in addition to her scientific inspiration, this is a most significant message brought here today by Dr. Geller, a mission that our University and Infini.to will persist to fulfill following her example.