



## CELEBRATION OF THE 35th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES

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First of all, I would like to say that after my dear friend, Prof. Valery Petrosyan, Vice President of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, informed me of the event to be held to celebrate the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Academy, I would have been highly delighted to be there with you to demonstrate in person my heartfelt testimony for this important occasion.

But, as we know, motives related to the current international situation have prevailed. I would therefore like to express my closeness, even though at a distance, and to offer my greetings to my academic colleagues and to all those present, including my dear friend Valery Petrosyan with whom I have scientifically shared numerous meetings at the Universities of Moscow, Bologna and Rome. It is also my pleasure to extend warm greetings and best wishes on behalf of the Accademia delle Scienze dell'Istituto di Bologna and Prof. Ferruccio Trifirò, formerly the President of said Academy.

These greetings, which I feel are only right and proper, take me back to the year 2013 when I was nominated a Foreign Member of the Academy and the quote by Nathaniel Hawthorne with which I started my speech, "Happiness is like a butterfly".

Why that particular quote on that particular occasion and why mention it here today? Because on both occasions the "*motus animi atque corporis*", in other words, my external and interior involvement were particularly intense, and now, even though I am not physically present, I feel that the butterfly has alighted on me, as you have allowed me to be part of the Academy, for which I am exceedingly grateful.

And it is in this role that I would like to present some brief considerations that characterize my nomination and represent a synthesis of the fundamental aspects at the basis of the study and research conducted together with Prof. Valery Petrosyan, and my equally dear friend, Prof. Alexandre Lobodanov, head of the Faculty of Arts at Lomonosov Moscow State University. Our studies together highlighted the importance of the holistic value of heritage, underlining the fact that integrating art and science and creating a synergy between them is necessary to address and resolve the numerous and diversified problems relating to the protection and valorization of cultural heritage.

And in this regard, I would like to mention one of the greatest and most versatile geniuses in the history of humankind, an Italian artist with a multi-faceted personality: painter, architect, sculptor, writer, art theorist, scientist, engineer – I am referring to Leonardo da Vinci, who points out that: “Wisdom is the daughter of experience ... and experience never errs, only our judgements do”.

I would like to emphasize the key words: “wisdom”, “experience” and “judgement”, as it is experience and the consequent wisdom that in the end determine judgement.

It is this fundamental concept that is, moreover, at the basis of evaluating a work of art.

An emblematic representative and another equally brilliant personality is the Russian chemist who greatly contributed to science, as well as to Russian and international culture, in chemistry, physics, geology, art (mosaics), literature, poetry, geography, cartography and astronomy: Michail V. Lomonosov.

He states that: “With the help of science, the intellect penetrates the secrets of matter and points to where the truth lies. Science and experience are only instruments; they are merely a means for collecting matter for the intellect”.

Here too, I wish to emphasize the terms “intellect”, “science”, “truth”, “experience”, as they are just as essential in reaching any judgement.

What the two geniuses, Leonardo and Lomonosov, express, allows us to see how the scientist and the artist are able to coexist, without one ever prevailing over the other. Art and science are, therefore, two ways of narrating the history of the world: not two individuals in contrast with each other, but two different complementary ways of “reading reality”.

And as Lomonosov once more says: “Science is a clear recognition of the truth, pure enlightenment of the intellect, the enjoyment of life, distinction in youth, support in old age, a builder of cities, of legions, a fortress of success in misfortune, an adornment in happiness, an ever faithful and inseparable travel companion”.

So, in achieving this objective, I am certain that “happiness is like a butterfly”.

My sincerest thanks to everyone.

## Note

The 35th anniversary of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences falls in the same year as the 25th anniversary of the Journal “Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage”. It is therefore with this written text I have the pleasure to communicate this double anniversary in the next issue – n. 25 – of the Journal.