

Banquet Speech

Sir Bernard Katz' speech at the Nobel Banquet in Stockholm, December 10, 1970

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highnesses, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am much obliged to you for allowing me to say a few words in response to the toast. I find the honours which we have received today at the hands of Your Majesty, and the acclamation by a gathering of such distinction, so overwhelming that no words of mine could adequately express my feelings of gratitude.

If you will permit me, let me therefore be a little unorthodox and try at least to express my humble thanks to those distinguished colleagues of ours who every year devotedly and most unselfishly give of their time and spare no effort in preparing for this event, and who make what strikes me as a heavy sacrifice in the laborious and even tedious task of finding out all about us.

Any foreign guest who comes to your fine city to be presented with this award finds himself at a considerable disadvantage. In other situations he might hope that at some future date he would perhaps be able - to some extent - to reciprocate the kindness and hospitality which he has received. But we all know that the tradition and prestige of today's ceremony is so unique in the whole world, that no matter how hard we might try, we should never be able to repay, even in part, our debt of gratitude. But I must also say, and please forgive me if this is an expression of a more serious thought, that the very uniqueness of the great prestige which surrounds the Nobel Prize and the tremendous public attention which precedes and follows it, is apt inevitably to diminish the recognition due to those who have been our equal partners, but who have not had the good fortune of being singled out for this great occasion. I am speaking for myself - although I think most scientists are in a similar position - if I say that I must hand it to our highly esteemed though most unfortunately absent friend who was awarded the prize for literature, because - unlike myself - he can truly say that, what he has done, he has done entirely by himself! No collaborators for him! I apologize again: I must not let my sombre thoughts intrude upon what is a brilliant and festive occasion. And let me assure you, I am most grateful to be allowed to participate in this splendid week of your traditional festivities. In fact, I enjoy it enormously, and particularly because, even after all the honours that have been bestowed on us today, there is something great and even more sustaining that we may look forward to, namely when the fun and festivities are over, that we may try and return to our work. On this optimistic note, once again, my heartfelt thanks to you all!

From [*Les Prix Nobel en 1970*](#), Editor Wilhelm Odelberg, [Nobel Foundation], Stockholm, 1971

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