



VNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA

**Speech of the rector of
the University of Valencia
M. Vicenta Mestre at the
investiture ceremony as
Doctor “Honoris Causa”
of prof. Dr. Barry Clark
Barish**

València, 31 May 2022

Today, in this emblematic space, the Main Hall of the University of Valencia, we celebrate the Solemn Act of Investiture as Doctor 'Honoris Causa' of Professor Barry Clark Barish.

An outstanding scientist, esteemed by various universities, recognised by numerous scientific societies, honoured with the Prince of Asturias Award and distinguished with the prestigious Nobel Prize.

The numerous and relevant merits that Professor Barry Barish brings together have been highlighted in the magnificent tribute given by Professor Juan Fuster, institutional delegate of the Spanish National Research Council and former director of the Institute of Corpuscular Physics.

Thank you very much Dr. Fuster for your work, essential to our solemn ceremony, as is the participation of the accompanying committee, formed by doctors Santiago Noguera, José Antonio Font, Berta Rius and Marcel Vos, as well as the sponsors in this act, a responsibility accepted by doctors Juan Fuster and Núria Rius.

Ladies and gentlemen, today, the University of Valencia has invested a prestigious researcher as doctor 'honoris causa'. And it has done so with the upmost solemnity established by our ceremony, in the most emblematic space in the noblest of our buildings.

Thus, this Main Hall, opened in the seventeenth century, is recorded in history and has been defined by the scholar Joan Baptista de Valda as the greatest university room of its time.

An 'academic theatre' that received the main scientific debates, the most outstanding academic presentations, as well as the theatrical performances of classical works that allowed the oral transmission of knowledge and also of the classical arts.

The founding of our University, which saw its founding Constitutions published on 30 April 1499, took place in this spirit.

In this founding document, the ambition of progress of this land and its people was made clear, writing, and I quote literally, 'that in all parts of the world there are Valencians, those who are preferred among all others for their good reason and disposition of soul and spirit'.

This disposition of mind and spirit is found here, too, in all the people, in all of us who every day make the University of Valencia possible.

Among them, researchers who carry out their activity at the highest level, with almost 2,500 ISI or SCOPUS articles published in the first quartile annually and participation in almost 4,000 scientific conferences a year, in which the results of more than 4,000 research projects and research agreements and contracts approaching 80 million euros annually are presented.

Highly productive scientific activity that, according to rankings such as Taiwan, Scimago, Nature and URAP, places us among the top 200 universities in the world, a position consistent with the one we hold in the Shanghai ranking, where we are among the best 201 to 300 universities in the world.

We are one of the top 100 universities in Europe according to the main international rankings, which ranks us among the top 5 universities in Spain, and the first of the Valencian universities, accumulating 42% of the publications of the Valencian public university system and more than 54% of the citations, positioning us as the second university in Spain in terms of citations for Teaching and Research Staff.

I would like to emphasise that, according to these rankings, the University of Valencia, in the area of physics, is between the first and third positions in Spain and between the 41st and 140th place in the world for citations.

A prominent position which demonstrates the important work carried out in the area of physics by our researchers.

In this regard, it is worth remembering the origins, and allow me to point out that research on atomic nuclei and elementary particles began in Spain in 1950, from the research carried out in Valencia by Joaquín Catalá de Alemany.

This was the beginning of a project that would lead to the creation of the Institute of Corpuscular Physics (IFIC) and that, based on the collaboration agreement between the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) and the University of Valencia in 1983, would open a new stage for the IFIC as a joint research centre between the University and the CSIC.

This is also the time to acknowledge the collaboration between the University of Valencia and the CSIC, and the results obtained by the joint research centres, as is the case of the IFIC, recognised

as a ‘Severo Ochoa’ Centre of Excellence in 2015.

I would also like to thank all the researchers of the University of Valencia and especially those who devote your scientific activity to the field of Physics, a field that is represented today, in its international activity, in this act of investiture as Honoris Causa of a prestigious scientist.

Professor Barish, thank you very much for your kind words. It’s a pleasure to welcome you to our University. The University of Valencia is now, and in the future, your university.

This is the university that is honoured to welcome you as one of its members.

A public, modern university, with state-of-the-art facilities, but aware of its past, its vocation for public service, and the responsibility to cultivate knowledge to contribute to the progress of science, the development of society and the improvement of people’s quality of life.

This is also a good time to remember that, over the University of Valencia’s more than five hundred and twenty years of history, our institution has become the gateway to the world’s leading scientific advances and theories, thus allowing the advancement and progress of science and society.

It is worth remembering that the introduction of Darwin’s ideas in Spain came about from the University of Valencia.

Also, as the University has been at the forefront of the fight against pandemics throughout history, from the most recent cholera outbreaks in the nineteenth century, the current COVID-19 pandemic, and, from the very origins of the University of Valencia, our first professor of herbs, Lluís Alcanyís, published his work 'Regiment preservatiu i curatiu de la pestilència' (Preservative and curative regiment of pestilence) and Joan Baptista Peset, who fought against viruses and bacteria.

It should also be remembered that our people, university students, have often suffered intolerance, the fight against the progress of science and the advancement of society.

Thus, Lluís Alcanyís himself died burned at the stake of the Inquisition in 1506. Over time, professors were removed from their positions in times of political change, the greatest example being the Francoist repression that purged the University of Valencia, including the execution of its rector, Professor Joan Baptista Peset.

However, despite these obstacles, the University has contributed to increasing the cultural level of our society over time, serving to train skilled workers, but above all, citizens committed to the values of democracy, equality, inclusion and sustainability.

In short, it became, as the university stage was for Professor Barish: 'a transformative stage' for people.

Because public universities, in Spain, and particularly the University of Valencia, have been the driving force for change.

Thus, it has contributed to the participation of women in the labour market, it has contributed to the participation of the daughters and sons of the working classes, as Dr. Barish has pointed out in his speech, in order to provide a good academic education.

Trying to generate an offer that responds to the needs of the productive fabric, to people's requirements, and to meeting the needs of public administrations and social organisations and movements, including those of the social economy.

However, beyond the transfer of knowledge and applications for innovation, beyond the formation of human capital, the role of the public university is also to create social capital.

Because the University, throughout history, and particularly the University of Valencia, has served to answer the questions that have been asked by humanity.

Thus, in his lectio, Professor Barish reminded us of Galileo Galilei and his curious observation of the stars.

And, I am sure that you will all allow me to remember our University's professor of astronomy, Jeroni Muñoz, who observed in Valencia, in 1572, a supernova known today as Tycho's Supernova, and published a book on this observation for King Philip II, with many of his observations still valid and used today.

I refer to this great figure in our scientific history to link him with the fabulous lectio in which Dr. Barish has shown his knowledge

and, at the same time, his pedagogical ability, returning to Sir Isaac Newton's Principia and reaching Einstein's theory.

Ladies and gentlemen, Dr. Barry Clark Barish is a prominent scientist who has contributed to the progress of science in numerous lines of research, as highlighted in this act, and especially in the discovery of gravitational waves, work to which he has dedicated more than twenty years of his life, developing methods for the detection of these waves with the passion required by science.

With the dedication required to devote oneself to scientific vocation and knowledge.

Science without borders, in this vision, this University was created at the time when a new world was discovered, the American continent, and at a time of openness to the Renaissance.

Today, as yesterday, with the same passion as the first researchers, we claim a commitment to science and knowledge. For research without borders, and because the best understanding of the world also leads us to combat intolerance and violence, to live together in peace and harmony, which has always been the goal of a community united by science and knowledge, which is the university community.

Sharing this wish with all of you, as also expressed by Dr. Barry Barish, our new 'honoris causa' to whom I reiterate my welcome to our community, to our University, I thank you for your presence and support in this important academic event.

Thank you.

