

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

In the name of our Foundation Vision 97, I welcome you and thank you for coming. With your permission, I would like to say a few words – or a few sentences – concerning three themes. The first theme – our Foundation. The second theme – the Award that is being granted. The third theme – the laureate.

Our Foundation is involved in many things; it has its educational, social, and other projects. One of its cultural projects has been, for example, the reconstruction, maintenance, and ongoing use of this temple. However, the Foundation also tries – in the spirit of its name - to orient itself in the direction of what in a certain way points to the future, what is – I would say – farsighted, what transcends the horizon of momentary attractive opportunities, but may not be appreciated and validated until some years pass. What is in a certain way visionary and pioneering. And the Award that our Foundation grants every year at this time is in full consonance with this mission.

This prize is awarded to personalities, thinkers, who emerged from the paradigm of modern, contemporary, rational science, but who, in some way transcended its traditional boundaries, who paid attention to previously unknown, not anticipated, hard to explain connections between phenomena that they themselves saw, found, and explored within the field of science. It is a prize that aims to give validation to those who have transcended their own original profession.

It is a risky endeavor, because it usually has two groups of opponents. Perhaps not directly opponents, but two groups of dangerous people. One group consists of the hard scientific traditionalists, who are unable to imagine that modern science could transcend its own boundaries and traditional paradigms; they engage in a great determined fight against that which eludes their grasp. It is interesting that

their fight undertaken in the name of rationality often reaches fanatic proportions; they tend to have a peculiar obsessive gleam in their eyes.

The other group that is dangerous, even though probably less, consists of a wide range of madmen, sectarians, and members of various strange fringe groups wanting to attach themselves, by their little claws, to this kind of scientific exploration, so that they could test and validate their various, more or less interesting, delusions.

And now, in conclusion, a few words about today's laureate. I have always, all my life, thought that once something has happened, it cannot un-happen, that the entire history of the cosmos, of our solar system, of the Earth, and of humanity, are by some means recorded. That existence itself has some kind of memory. I had no inkling where this memory resides, what it is based on, and if it actually exists. I did not know anything about it, but something kept telling me that something of this kind exists.

Obviously I thought, as do all others, who have a similar feeling, that everything flows into this memory of existence only in one direction. And the body of work of professor Grof has all of a sudden shown me that, here and there, something is able to return, by a special pathway, from this memory, back to our time and place, into our consciousness. To our great surprise, we all of a sudden experience, identify with, or for a moment see something that happened many years ago, in remote places, and what we absolutely could not have previously known by any ordinary means. However, it is often possible to verify that it actually had happened.

This is by no means the only thing that professor Grof teaches and researches. Nevertheless, for me personally, this - let us say - almost metaphysical

dimension of his teaching speaks to me and continues to captivate me. I keep thinking about it, fully convinced that I am not a madman, who just believes in a delusion.

Thank you.

The original Czech version of president Havel's speech can be downloaded in MP3 form from the website www.astrosfera.cz