

Speech at Vallet Scholarship Award Ceremony 2014

by Le Thi Oanh – Principal of Hanoi – Amsterdam High School for the Gifted

Professor Nguyen Thi Nghia, Deputy Minister of Ministry of Education and Training,
Professor Odon Vallet, Professor Nguyen Van Hieu, Professor Tran Thanh Van and Professor Le Kim Ngoc,
Delegates and distinguished guests,
Teachers and parents,
Our beloved students,

Today, the Vallet Scholarship Award Ceremony 2014 is held by the *Rencontres du Vietnam* Organization in the fascinating spirit of a new school year. On behalf of all teachers and students, Hanoi – Amsterdam High School for the Gifted is honored to mark the opening of this ceremony.

I would like to warmly welcome all governmental officials, distinguished guests, professors, parents, students and wish you all the best. Congratulations to 470 gifted students from 58 schools in the North on being granted this noble reward. It will be incomplete if we do not know about the origin and the meaning of this lofty Vallet Scholarship.

In 1993, as for the offer of Professor Nguyen Van Hieu - the former director of Viet Nam Science Institute, Professor Tran Thanh Van - a physicist working in France, repatriated and held *Rencontres du Vietnam* for the first time. The meeting attracted hundreds of famous physicists around the world including the Nobelist - Professor J. Steinberger, and two young Vietnamese physicists who were living abroad - Dr. Dam Thanh Son and Dr. Nguyen Trong Hien. These two Vietnamese physicists later became famous worldwide.

From 1995 to 2014, *Rencontres du Vietnam* (from the second to the tenth) was held in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city. A number of scholars awarded the Nobel Prize such as N. Ramsey J. Friedman J. Cronin from the U.S., G. Charpak from France, K. Klitzing from Germany did join the meetings. In 2013, *Rencontres du Vietnam* VIII took place in Quy Nhon, where the Science and Education Organization had just finished building the International Center of Interdisciplinary Science Education (*ICISE*) on the area of 20 hectares along the typical Vietnamese beach. Professor Ngo Bao Chau, awarded Field Prize; General Director of European Organization for Nuclear Research; Professor M. Mayor, awarded Shaw Prize and Eastern Nobel Prize, Professor Nguyen Van Hieu, Professor Trinh Xuan Thuan, Professor Dam Thanh Son, Professor Nguyen Trong Hien... also came to work at the center. In this year's ceremony, we are honored to welcome Professor Francois Englert, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2013. Let's give a big applause to welcome his presence.

Rencontres du Vietnam Organization has awarded a number of scholarships to gifted students, pupils and young researchers in Vietnam. Moved and fired by the noble meaning of this act, professor Odon Vallet has voluntarily joined the scholarship program within the scope of *Rencontres du Vietnam* 's activities. This year is the 14th time Odon Vallet scholarships have been awarded in Vietnam in increasing number: from 800 scholarships in 2001, the number has risen to 1860 in 2005 and 2250 in 2014 at the estimated value of 20 billion VND. The total value of the scholarships from 2001 to 2012 is 80 billion VND. In 2013, there were totally 2188 scholarships with 1645 scholarships awarded to pupils and 543 scholarships awarded to college students and excellent researchers. Each grant in

2013 had a rise in value of 11 million VND (for college students and researchers) and 7.5 million VND (for high school students). That is the honorable scholarship named Vallet.

Odon Vallet is the current representative of the Vallet family. Odon Vallet has earned a degree of Doctor of Science in Law and is a teacher of the history of religions in the famous Sorbonne University. He is also a writer addressing the religious conflicts in the Middle East and South Asia.

Odon Vallet's father, Mr. Jean Vallet used to live in poverty when he was young. He would walk his way to his bucolic school in the morning and shepherd in the chilly grass field or the rocky mountainside of Bourgogne. Jean later traveled to Paris, working simultaneously to study in high school, then in the university. Thanks to his tenacity and intelligence, Jean got a doctoral degree of Law. He is nominated as the CEO and Chairman of a prestige international insurance company. At his dying moment, Jean Vallet left a legacy of 100 million Euro to his son and advised him: "Odon, please be devoted to the poor! There are plenty of capable people with kind hearts hiding in that wretched group."

Adhering to his father's wish, Odon Vallet did not spend any of the inherited money for himself, but lived a simple life, commuting by bus and subway to work. Settling down in a humble apartment near Luxembourg garden, he lives a life of science: introspective, not ostentatious like his contemporaries. He had donated all of the money left in his bank account to help intelligent students in France and Vietnam. Many poor students in the Cuu Long delta or in the mountainous Viet Bac and Tay Bac have received the Vallet Scholarship.

Every year, Professor Odon Vallet, Professor Tran Thanh Van and his wife, Professor Le Kim Ngoc come to Vietnam to present this scholarship to students in Ho Chi Minh City, Da Lat, Da Nang, Hue, Dong Hoi, Vinh and Hanoi. Students who live in Hai Phong, Nam Dinh, Yen Bai, Dien Bien, Cao Bang... receive their scholarships in Hanoi while those living in Dong Thap, Kien Giang, Vinh Long... earn theirs in Ho Chi Minh city.

This year, the Professors have made a cross-country trip to Ho Chi Minh City where they presented scholarship to students in the South at the Opera Theater. After that, they flew to Da Lat, Nha Trang; then to Da Nang, Hue, Dong Hoi and Vinh.

They have also managed to come to Hanoi and give the scholarship to students in the SOS village, undergraduates, graduates and young researchers at the Temple of Literature – the first university of Vietnam. Professor Odon Vallet has tried his best to spend time talking to the talented students of Hanoi-Amsterdam high school for the Gifted.

And today, August 25th, this Award Ceremony to talented students in the North region commences at the historical square - August Revolution, Grand Opera Theater in Hanoi. After their cross-country trip, the Professors will fly back to France to prepare for the anticipating new school year in Paris.

My fellow distinguished guests, teachers and students,

We sincerely appreciate the kind and noble act of Professor Tran Thanh Van, Professor Le Kim Ngoc and Professor Odon Vallet towards our students in Vietnam. We also greatly admire the Vietnamese intellects overseas. They are the representatives of our country and have shown much love and interest in our young generation.

We respect them not only for their transcendent talents, but also for their patriotism. They are a vivid example for our youngsters to follow. They have treasured clever minds and encouraged the young

generation greatly with valuable science materials and their kindness. By diversifying the activities of *Rencontres du Vietnam*, Professor Tran Thanh Van along with the other professors have built up a modern science community in Vietnam. Honoring these gestures, our presidents Tran Duc Luong and Nguyen Minh Triet have had a warm meeting with the physics representatives from foreign countries to Hanoi for *Rencontres du Vietnam*.

In 2013, with the presence of five Nobelists, the professors have greatly attributed to the growth and developments of our country. For all of his great contributions, Professor Tran Thanh Van is one of the first overseas Vietnamese to be selected and given the award “Vinh Danh Nuoc Viet” by the communist party of Vietnam. In 2008, Professor Tran Thanh Van and Professor Le Kim Ngoc were given merits for “contributing a lot to strengthening and developing the community, building socialism and protecting our nation.”

Dear beloved students,

Receiving the Vallet scholarship, you should be proud of your accomplishments while bearing in mind your duty of maintaining our trust and our pride in you. You are the country’s future owners who make it a prosperous one as our beloved President Ho Chi Minh had always desired.

You are the priceless intellectual resources of this country. Keep gaining knowledge, chasing your passion, your dreams to archive success and to understand the true value of scientific labor. Passion, will and strength will take you to happiness. Later in life, you will earn higher prices, but please forever remember this ceremony today. A lot of students sitting here today will go to different places around the globe to continue your intellectual journey. Please remember that Vietnam is where you were born and bred, that you are industrious Vietnamese pupils with high moral values, and that you have a rich and diverse cultural background. Please do not forget your beloved schools and teachers. Always keep in your heart the love of your parents and the encouragement of your friends. Thereby, you deserve this magnificent gift of the Vallet Scholarship, which is a motivation for your further success in the future.

On behalf of all teachers, parents and students, I would like to express our greatest gratitude to the *Rencontres du Vietnam* Organization, to Professor Tran Thanh Van, Professor Le Kim Ngoc and Professor Odon Vallet.

I would like to send my sincere gratitude towards the governmental officials, all the professors, teachers, parents and students. I hope that we will have a successful school year ahead.

Best Regards

Le Thi Oanh