

**JOHN D. HADJIDEMETRIOU:
A PERSONAL LIFE-LONG EXPERIENCE WITH JOHN**

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Thank you, Harry,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues, Dear John,

It is a lucky coincidence that I belong to the oldest generation of colleagues in our Astronomy Department here in the University of Thessaloniki, which generation is just younger than John. Since I am the oldest member of this generation, I have been kindly asked by the organizers of this meeting to say a few words for John from our common life in the Astronomy Department, the Faculty of Physics, and, more generally, the University of Thessaloniki. It is really a pleasure, and a privilege for me to say, on behalf of my colleagues, a few words for John, I thank the organizers for asking me to do so, and I do it with great satisfaction, indeed! And I shall do it in a way revealing our common experiences and parallel lives and careers in our University and Department.

John is a graduate of the Faculty of Mathematics of the University of Thessaloniki. He received his Ph.D. Degree from Manchester by the time I started my undergraduate studies in the Faculty of Physics here. Then, under the supervision and guidance of our teacher and supervisor, George Contopoulos, John became an Assistant at the Astronomy Department here and then, soon, as a Ph.D. holder, already, he became a Dozent in Astronomy, and these happened by the time I completed my undergraduate studies in Physics. Finally, he was elected Full Professor in Theoretical Mechanics at the Department of Theoretical Mechanics of our Faculty of Physics by the time I became an Assistant at the Astronomy Department under George Contopoulos. Since then and up to date, we were and are together at the Faculty of Physics and the Department of Astronomy for almost forty years, a whole life span, indeed. But, at a more personal level, it was not only this.

As many of you remember, by 1975, George Contopoulos, our teacher and supervisor in Thessaloniki, as I said, moved to the University of Athens. Since then, I remember that John, continuously and uninterruptedly, was either the Chairman or, occasionally only, a member of the committees for my promotion in the Faculty of

Physics, with all the well-known obligations implied by this for him. And, in fact, we are not talking about one or two committees only. It can be considered as an unlucky coincidence, but, according to the legal regulations, I had to pass all the levels of academic hierarchy *twice*, namely, all the academic hierarchy before and all the academic hierarchy after the establishment of the official law of the 80's, which changed the way of functioning of the Universities in Greece. Now, I see that, during about fifteen whole years, participating in these committees has been quite a job for John, and this job was done really perfectly, as this characterizes always John. Therefore, I gladly grasp the present opportunity to thank John openly and warmly for his time, effort, and emotion spent for and offered to my case.

It is remarkable that, beyond any personal aspects, John, although a graduate of mathematics, had an intense and deep feeling of physics. This, along with the fact that, by the time John was elected Full Professor here, a lot of physicists, both professors and students, joined the Faculty of Physics, largely contributed to a change of the content and attitude of Astronomy and astronomical research in our University, towards more astrophysical problems. Our earlier Professor of Astronomy, George Contopoulos, along with his colleagues, inspired to us the love of and respect to science and particularly to Astronomy and, also, established the mathematical basis and tools of Astronomy, and not only in Greece. The later Professors of Astronomy, and John, revealed to their students and the public the physical-astrophysical nature of the Universe, and it is exactly this aspect of research and teaching that, in my opinion, John contributed largely to.

John has been a teacher of mine (for a rather small period of time, indeed, like George Bozis), but, mainly, he has been a very productive collaborator at all levels, scientific, teaching, administrative, and social. John is an excellent teacher and many of us have the experience of John's ability to do quite successful and informing lectures and seminars. John has been continuously teaching and offering to students, during all of his career, at both the undergraduate and post-graduate levels, and both here and abroad, always accompanying his very well prepared lectures with very good books. That's why John, as a teacher, was always respected by his students and colleagues. Concerning the good teacher John, I wish to present a particular and objective opinion and experience of mine. For many years, I led the committee of our Faculty of Physics, responsible for the expression of the opinion of our students for their teachers, on teaching matters only, of course, and I had access to the results of the procedure. So, I can now certify that, John belonged to only the very few ones, for which the outcome of this procedure was always the best.

The Department of Astronomy and the Department of Theoretical Mechanics traditionally collaborated in their teaching duties of, generally, Astronomy and Mechanics. In a way, Mechanics, among others, was preparing the students to attend the lectures on Astronomy a little later. The standard rule was that this teaching collaboration was always successful and productive. If there should be a kind of some disturbance to this productive collaboration to remember, however, during only some initial stages of the teaching collaboration, and I recall this now as a joke rather than as a real problem, it was that John taught to his student, among others, say, central forces and all their results related to the motion of a test particle in the gravitational field of a central mass. But, when these same students came later to attend the Astronomy

lectures, they proved not to quickly recognize what we astronomers call Kepler's Laws for the motion of a planet in the gravitational field of the Sun! Obviously, this does not mean that the students did not have the appropriate knowledge, but it is simply indicative of the real fact that, in some cases, different teachers really use different languages to say the same things, something that, naturally, can cause retardation effects to parts of the audience. Nothing more and nothing less than this!

As for the details of our everyday life in the University, we generally shared the same philosophy, namely, usually John agreed with me and I agreed with him. It was quite seldom and accidental that, say so, "we found ourselves at different camps" having entirely different opinions, positions, and objectives. Of course, it is generally accepted, that if two people happen to agree absolutely on everything, then one of them is not necessary, and soon "must get out of the game". But, this was not the case with John, because, even in such circumstances, our differences, either strong or not, if any at all, remained always at the absolutely academic level, and these differences always remained in the occasional meeting room, never getting out of the meeting room, and almost immediately, they were forgotten, as it should happen, in any case. I strongly believe that this is the real meaning and content of what is called academic behavior of what should be called a really academic person, and this applies to John absolutely.

As other colleagues here will say more completely, John's main scientific and research contributions belong to the areas of the properties of the orbits, of the resonances, of the chaotic motions, and of extra-solar planetary systems. A wealth of publications in international refereed journals, of scientific meetings attended, of invited talks in many of them, of scientific collaborations with Greek and foreign Universities and Institutions, of meetings organized "In Honorem" for him, of many national and international research projects, of participation in national and international scientific unions, of various scientific activities, of various administrative positions in the University and outside, both in Greece and abroad, constitute John's impressive scientific achievements. And all these characterize John's excellent picture as a scientist and researcher, as an excellent teacher, as a noble collaborator and colleague, as an always calm but, at the same time, always determined personality, giving the right example to the younger researchers. These facts are of utmost importance in these difficult days we live, which days, unfortunately, are quite offensive to what is called academic spirit and behavior in our Universities and, also, which days are equally dangerous for the future of our university-level education. All these properties of John are recognized by all his colleagues, nationally and internationally, since long ago.

Even more recently, all these properties, contributions, achievements, and advantages of John have been recognized, in the most pronounced and official way, by his election as a Corresponding Member of the Academy of Athens in the Order of Astronomy. I am sure that our teacher and supervisor, Academician himself, Professor George Contopoulos will say more on this later. For the moment, as an outsider only of the Academy of Athens, whose opinion on the matters of the election, naturally, does not count at all, but who expresses a rather common and widespread feeling, I can express my strong support and satisfaction for this election of John. In a completely absolute way, I believe, and I wish to particularly emphasize it, that this

election belongs to the elections, for which George Contopoulos and the rest of the Academicians should and, surely, are proud, as we all are. John's academic life in the University was not without sad and really unfortunate moments and experiences. It is known, that, he always had very active young research collaborators, but it is also known that, unexpectedly and sadly, he had to mourn for the demise of three of his younger collaborators at the Department of Mechanics, and this is not usual or the normal case at all. The only remark I would like to make in this case is that, in totally unexpected events like these, John's behavior was, again, exemplary, characterized by maturity, seriousness, and dignity. In conclusion, I must say quite sincerely and with great satisfaction that, I consider myself as a very lucky person having shared so much of my University career with my colleague John. I do have only good memories from John. At the end, I wish to say to Athina, John's beloved wife, and all his family that they must be proud of their John, as we are proud of him.

Dear John, I wish to assure you that what I said about you tonight is the plain truth, the whole truth, and only the truth, with no exaggerations at all. You are really a very good colleague. We love you. As I said already, I am particularly happy that I happened to share with you such a long time of my career, full of useful interactions with you and full of the best possible memories from you. And I am sure that many others are of the same opinion. We all wish that you, in health, will continue your distinguished contributions to the academic community, and we all hope that, in the future, we shall have many more opportunities to continue these useful and pleasant interactions with you.

Dear Harry, once more I thank you and all the organizers of this honorary conference very much for kindly giving me the opportunity to express my sincere feelings about John's complete personality. Please, accept both my sincere congratulations for your perfectly organizing this conference, and the warm and sincere thanks of me and of Mrs. Spyrou for the warm hospitality in this beautiful place.

And all you, ladies, gentlemen, and colleagues, I thank you very much for your kind interest, attention, and patience!