



UNESCO MEDAL MARKS CENTENARY OF BIRTH OF NIELS BOHR

Unesco has issued a medal to celebrate the centenary of the birth of the Danish scientist Niels Bohr, one of the most outstanding physicists of the 20th century. Bohr, who was born in Copenhagen and went to the University there, later went on to Manchester University, where he developed the 'Bohr theory' explaining the stability of atomic structures and absorption-emission of electromagnetic radiation by atoms. As a result of this and subsequent work, Bohr became one of those who laid the bases of contemporary quantum mechanics.

The Unesco medal is struck in gold, silver and bronze by the Hôtel de la Monnaie, the Paris mint. The Swedish artist Siv Holme-Muse, describes her design for the medal as follows:

"Niels Bohr was made a knight of the Danish Order of the Elephant in 1947. He expressed the wish that the coat of arms devised on that occasion should show the Chinese yin-yang symbol and the motto 'Contraria sunt complementia'. On the obverse of my maquette, the yin-yang symbol is faintly visible through the profiles of Niels Bohr shown in relief. The reverse bears a graphic representation of the first four stationary orbits of a hydrogen atom, with lines indicating transitions between the different orbits. In contrasting straight lines with circles, I also wanted again to stress the importance of complementarity". The formula which is engraved above the scientist's signature is the one most frequently associated with the work of Niels Bohr.

Information regarding the Niels Bohr medal may be obtained from the Philatelic and Numismatic Programme, Unesco, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.

NIELS BOHR

Together with Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr held a leading place within the small group of scientists who in the early 20th century revolutionized the scientific world picture. His discoveries in the field of nuclear physics and his theory of complementary are among the fundamental elements of modern physics, chemistry and biology. For that reason alone, the centenary of his birth, 7 October 1985, will be celebrated the world over.

However, Niels Bohr's work was also characterized by a distinctly humanist philosophy. He emphasized that the scientist is morally responsible for the development he is instrumental in initiating. From 1922, when he was awarded the Nobel Prize, to the beginning of the Second World War, Niels Bohr was the central figure in theoretical physics. The Institute of Theoretical Physics of the University of Copenhagen, known also as the Niels Bohr Institute, became an international sanctuary for scientists. There they could forget national and ideological antagonisms and join in the pursuit of a deeper understanding of nature.

Niels Bohr was keenly aware that the discoveries of the nuclear physicists could be used in war. He tried, therefore, at meetings with Roosevelt and Churchill during the Second World War - and later in an open letter to the United Nations - to win support for his ideas of a more open and trustful world.

THE FILM:

The story of Niels Bohr's life is thus also the story of some of the most significant ideas and events of the 20th century. On the basis of film scenes of historic events, documents, and interviews with key persons who cooperated with Niels Bohr, this story has now been reproduced in a film, which, incidentally, contains shots from Cambridge, Manchester, Göttingen, Brussels, Princeton, Los Alamos and Copenhagen. It is a one hour documentary colour film, directed and produced in 1985 by the Danish film director Ole John for the Danish Government Film Office and with the support of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Danish Ministry of Education and the Danish Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

For information on showing of the film on TV or in cinemas and on licensing terms write to: The Danish Government Film Office, Vestergade 27, DK-1456 Copenhagen K, Denmark. The Film Office also undertakes to make arrangement for participation of the film in international film festivals and film weeks. Versions of the film are available in Danish and English.