Personal Statement- Natural Sciences
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During my short life, I have always been driven by curiosity and creativity. Throughout the years, I learnt to converge my thirst for knowledge into enhancing my problem-solving skills, and into learning the answers to many questions that had perplexed me along the years. Already at an early age, I was exposed to many of the Natural Sciences, be it through my botanist father, my enchantment towards stargazing, or the numerous Calouste Gulbenkian chemistry workshops I completed as a youngster. What is the origin of the Universe? Are we alone? Countless times I have asked these questions and many others of similar nature. My craving for a deeper understanding of the world around us is my driving force towards the Natural Sciences. Aside from its philosophical assets, the technological and revolutionary implications of Science are also of great importance to me. The Sciences hold the key to many of today's, and tomorrow's, problems: disease, energy demands, and pollution, to name a few. My ultimate goal in life is to be a part of the fast-growing and dynamic scientific community of today.

I have been part of many scientific projects and activities in recent years, all of which have intensified my interest for Natural Sciences. I participated in the EcoForum conference from 2005 to 2007, as a delegate and a chair. This consisted of a conference with various international schools in which many environmental issues would be addressed, and students would attempt to solve via research and debates on resolutions. In early 2008, I completed some volunteer work in the Lisbon Zoo, where we would be entrusted with caring for the animals and provide visitors with researched information on each species. One of the most important activities I participated in was the Astronomy internship in the Porto Planetarium in 2007. This consisted of a week of sharpening students' astrophysical, chemical, and mathematical skills. Theoretical presentations and research were performed during the day, while practical and more 'hands-on' approaches were used in the afternoon.

My strong mathematical skills have also always aided my scientific learning. I participated in the ISMTF 2008 Math Competition, received a school's bronze award for mathematical aptitude, and have provided math tutoring for younger students from 2006 to 2007. More recently I have been completing my own astronomy research with my Celestron NexStar 6^{SE} telescope, and I have been carrying out work in the field of Astrophotography. Evidently, I possess a natural inclination towards the physical sciences, and my trip to INETI in 2008, a research laboratory in Portugal, proved to be the catalyst towards my decision to turn towards the Natural Sciences. Independent reading, mainly academic books such as 'Introduction to Astrobiology' and 'Cosmos', has extended my knowledge. Also, magazines such as Scientific American, and Podcasts such as NASA have kept me up-to-date with current scientific concerns.

Nevertheless, many other activities in my life have helped me develop skills that will be useful for a career in science. I have had art lessons for over 8 years, and have played piano for even longer. Additionally I had singing, dance, and guitar lessons along the years; these creative outlets have improved my imaginative skills, which are essential for a scientist. Furthermore, I practice over 5 sports, ranging from tennis to surfing. I have been a basketball captain, and currently captain the volleyball team. In my penultimate school year, I participated in over 7 sports tournaments representing the school. Being an athlete has helped me develop a sense of adventure, teamwork, competitiveness, and most importantly, determination. I am determined to make a difference in the world, and being highly multi-faceted and flexible, I believe the broad curriculum of the Natural Sciences course offers me plenty of choices, opportunities, and preparation for a prosperous career in science.

G. P. M. Stucky de Quay
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