

The toast proposed by Andrzej Pelczar

Professor Siciak,

First of all I would like to fulfil my official mission. Authorized by Professor Bolesław Szafirski, President of the Polish Mathematical Society, who has unfortunately been unable to come here, I would like to congratulate you on behalf of the Society and say simply: thank you for everything you have done for Polish mathematics. Please, allow me to say the same on behalf of the General Council of Higher Education: thank you for everything you have done for mathematical education, and for higher education in Poland in general.

Let me add to this my very personal and very unofficial congratulations and wishes. Before that I would like to deliver a very short “scientific” introduction.

Mathematicians, while trying to describe any real situation, build up some models. When choosing models we have to think about a suitable mathematical theory in which such a model could be embedded. Sometimes the models proposed have to be improved, extended or corrected. There are well known examples: the model of Copernicus who assumed that the planets move along circles was corrected by Kepler who showed that in fact they move along ellipses. Einstein extended the classical physics and geometry by introducing his relativity theory. Let me recall here that an essential part of this theory is—in folklore terms—the “relativity of time”; I wish to underline this point, since it will be important later on.

Celebrating your beautiful jubilee, dear Professor Siciak, we feel the necessity of improving a mathematical model (of “counting the time”). I am talking about the formal reason of the jubilee. I have read that it was the n th birthday, where n was apparently stated to be 70. This is completely wrong. Please look at Professor Siciak. Maybe we could accept the n to be 58, maybe 59, but of course not 70! How can one explain this contradiction? The model applied here is incorrect; it has to be modified. We should use a suitable part of the relativity theory and apply the “relativity of time”, which can explain the real effects.

To conclude, my wishes are as follows: dear Józek, keep everything as it is now; you must act according to the model coming from Einstein's relativity theory! With this new (and now proper) interpretation of this jubilee, we wish you all the best for the years to follow; after—say—twenty years we will be ready to celebrate your “true 70th birthday” according to the model proposed above.

All the best to you, Józek.