

PREFACE

We present the volume of invited papers in honor of Jerzy Plebański, the world renowned relativist whose works were focused on the complex solutions (complex *heavens* and *hyperheavens*) in General Relativity (GR), though they also embraced many other areas, including the group and algebraic techniques of quantum theories. The variety of Jerzy Plebański interests, to some extent, is reflected by the contents of this volume which include the papers on gravity quantization, strings, branes, supersymmetry, ideas of the deformation quantization and lesser known results on the continuous Baker–Campbell–Hausdorff problem.

The volume is divided into three parts: (1) the introduction contains the historical data, the scientific curriculum of Jerzy Plebański, photographic materials, his list of publications and voices of colleagues, (2) the principal part contains the invited papers (we adopted the alphabetical order), (3) the informal part contains Plebański paintings and banquet addresses at the Symposium in honor of his 75th anniversary. When this work was finished, Jerzy, unfortunately, was no longer with us. Yet, we changed almost nothing of the Symposium materials; the introduction, the preliminary addresses and the informal part are the same, including the joyful banquet poem of N.V. Mitskievich!

When collecting data about Plebański's life, we have noticed that they repel the pattern of a formal curriculum. They rather paint a dramatic story of never-ending struggles, unexpected achievements but also blind efforts, heroic fights for almost negligible reasons. We hesitated whether to include them, but we finally did. We think, we owe this to the exceptional figure of Jerzy, to some of his collaborators who might be interested in his prehistory, perhaps also to the little friendly spirits of *Lares* and *Penates* in the place where we work; certainly, to the future generations of our students. The example of an intense personal effort may be more inspiring than the largest list of published results. (After all, it would be unfair to reduce the conflictive life of some artists, like e.g. Niccolò Paganini to a boring hagiography of a pure success with the list of the “greatest hits”.) The dramatic life of Jerzy was no less intense and conflictive though in a different dimension. So, there must be something about his frustrated struggles and unfulfilled dreams...

We are grateful to all Conference participants for the essential comments and for a unique collection of papers, which will probably conserve a long term importance. Thanks are to Anna Plebańska, Piotr Kielanowski and Zygmunt Ajduk for historical photographs from 1950–1962. To Alejandra Ramírez, Piotr Kielanowski, Marcin Skulimowski, Sebastian Formański, and Jordi Sod Hoffs for helpful remarks and technical assistance. The support of the CONACyT Grants Nos. 32427-E, 40888-F, and 41993-F is gladly acknowledged.

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