

Ioan-Iovitz Popescu at his 80th anniversary

There are three kinds of scientists. The first kind, after finishing the university career, usually checks up the science and keeps it in his mind only as a nice reminiscence of his youth. The second kind are those that cannot get rid of research and in spite of their high age want to solve old or even new problems, because they are not satisfied or because they are driven by an internal impulse. And the third kind consists of those very rare odd persons who are able in high age even to change the scientific discipline because they cannot quench their craving for plunging in other unknown worlds. To this third, very rare group belongs Ioan-Iovitz Popescu who for five years has been turning upside-down a second scientific discipline, namely linguistics.

Sometimes it is chance, sometimes a wish to make something that differs from our education, sometimes it is the indefatigable longing for research and discovery that drives us. With I.-I. Popescu, most probably all three are united in one person. Within five years, his list of publications – which is not yet finished because a number of projects is still open – attained a volume worth of being called a life-work of a professional linguist! His work is not restricted to data but lies in the domain of measurement and modelling. He does not try to call in direct analogies concerning physical entities, he merely uses his beloved mathematical models, renders linguistic phenomena measurable – a good custom that should be recommended to all linguists – and sets up models of their behaviour. This aspects is very suspicious to the majority of linguists because according to them “language means to speak and not to measure!”, forgetting the fact that linguistics is a science, not teaching of grammatical rules.

I.-I. Popescu revolutionized text science; each of his ideas is worth of being followed in a separate project and of being tested on all languages. It is not only the most secure but the only possible way to a theory, *i.e.* to a system of interrelated hypotheses some of which are laws, all of which can be derived from an axiomatic system and were positively corroborated in many languages. All over the world new individual works appear referring to I.-I. Popescu. One of his (English) books is presently being translated into Czech.

If one can say this all about an eighty years old scientist, then one should rather keep silent, since no words are sufficient to describe this eighth world prodigy. There are many persons engaged in two disciplines but surely only one who in the age of seventy five jumps into a quite new one, enriches it within five years in indescribable way, and with eighty he does not even think about retirement.

And to this person, Ioan-Iovitz Popescu, physicist and linguist, we all wish a long healthy life, iron perseverance and indefatigable production of new ideas.

Gabriel Altmann