Under the spell of accuracy– Life and work of Loránd Eötvös
Commemorative Exhibition by The University Library and Archives of ELTE
Budapest, November 23, 2019

Opening speech

Dear Mr. Rector, Dear Organizers and Guests,

Foreign guests, arrived together with me to the opening ceremony of the exhibition organized by The University Library and Archives of ELTE with the title *In the Magic of Accuracy*, had already been greeted by our Rector and we have just seen the exhibition together with them. Allow me, "under the spell of the exhibition", to situate what we have seen among the events of the Roland Eötvös Commemorative Year and mention the names of our guests again.

Kathryn Whaler, President of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG) and Alik Ismail-Zadeh, Secretary of the International Science Council (ISC, the successor organization of ICSU), which unites all science unions, co-chaired before yesterday (20 November) the "Eötvös 100" Special Session of the World Science Forum. Had it not been for a date clash with today's WSF, Sierd Cloetingh, President of Academia Europaea, would have come here, too. On the evening of November 20, we all attended the official opening of the WSF, where, as can be known from the media coverage, President of Hungary János Áder's speech began with Roland Eötvös and ended with Roland Eötvös. And if anybody of you went to the Palace of the Academy before yesterday, or are going to go there tonight, you could see an interesting "son et lumière" projection on its facade, featuring a portrait of Roland Eötvös with the logo of the Eötvös Commemorative Year. Thanks to the UNESCO Hungarian National Committee, news of the Eötvös 100 events held during the WSF week has also reached the official website of UNESCO. So does this exhibition.

Edith Strobl is the director of the Library in Toblach, South Tirol. Schluderbach, where Roland Eötvös spent 42 summers climbing, belongs to this village. Eötvös made there a lot of stereoscopic photos: in the mountains, on his climbings together with mountain guides and his daughters, and on Toblach and Cortina d'Ampezzo. Re-discovered these historical documents, Mrs. Strobl, in cooperation with the mayor of the village and others, organized a successful Eötvös photo exhibition this summer, which was reported by RAI television news in German and Italian languages. The pictures by Eötvös (from South Tyrol, from Budapest and from its geophysical field measurements) can be seen at this exhibition, too.

Our fourth guest, Mr. Henk Kubbinga, is preparing a comprehensive publication on Roland Eötvös for the European Physical Society. If we are also striving to determine accurately the beginning of the current commemorative year, we must set the start date to October 12, 2018, when the European Physical Society inaugurated an information board commemorating the Eötvös experiment in front of Building D of ELTE building blocks in Múzeum körút.

All four are in a special situation because they have already received the Roland Eötvös Memorial Album, which is awaiting its official release on Tuesday (November 26).

This exhibition is a worthy part of the closing event series of the Eötvös Memorial Year. It presents Eötvös's versatility in an original way. I feel that its creators have been able to bring here the eye-opening atmosphere at regional (Sopron, Balatonfüred, Nyíregyháza, Debrecen, etc.) and cross-border (Gbely, Banska Stiavnica, Novi Sad and Cluj) events, international conferences (Vienna, London, Montreal, Budapest, Tihany). They are aware of Eötvös's significance today in modern gravity physics: Eötvös is the stove, and everyone, no matter what the gravity-related theory, must start from there. For earth scientists – geodesists, geophysicists and geologists –- living and working in the Carpathian Basin and the surrounding area, Eötvös is a source of common pride and also a cohesive force. The third result of the commemorative year is that the Eötvös oeuvre has been made available to the future on an unprecedented scale. Roland Eötvös even has got his profile in the Hungarian National Scientific Bibliography (MTMT) as if he was still alive and active.

This current exhibition is a continuation of our common efforts: it has the germs of a future image-forming Eötvös Exhibition. Designed by young people and designed for young people. In *"Under the spell of accuracy"* accuracy is not an end in itself, but an essential means of scientific knowledge about the physical reality. In *"Under the spell of the exhibition"* I quote Sándor Mikola on the importance of measurements by Eötvös made with unrivaled accuracy. *"Baron Eötvös Loránd's truths of providing gravity and surface tension will, in thousands of years, accept and appreciate staying as they are today, but there is still a mass appeal and the smallest amount of material if they are formulated to be completely"*. (The individuality of the scientist Roland Eötvös, 1929). Theories come and go, but an accurate experimental result is eternal. The actress Marilyn Monroe had also something to say about the difference between changing theories and eternal fact. As I heard at the Novi Sad Commission of the Serbian Academy of Sciences, Pjotr Kapica (another scientist from a noble family, a Nobel Prize laureate) once even quoted her: *„I always say a kiss on the hand might feel very good, but a diamond tiara lasts forever"* (movie Gentlemen prefer blondes).

According to some media gurus, gravity is "visually not spectacular". We are grateful to the creators of the exhibition and to the host institution, to the Eötvös Loránd University for making the work of Eötvös spectacular.

László Szarka
Chair, Eötvös 100 Coordination Team

Prof. István Groma of ELTE is pictured here passionately explaining gravity. He is being listened to (from rigth to left) by Alik Ismail-Zadeh (ISC Secretary), Henk Kubbinga (EPS), Kathryn Whaler (IUGG President), Imre Bárd designer (Axon Hillock), and Edith Strobl (Director of the Library in Toblach, South Tyrol)