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Eulogy for Raymond

On July 8th 2011, four years ago, almost to the day, we were celebrating Raymond. A great number of his friends and colleagues from France, Europe and the United States gathered in Annecy to express their attachment, their affection, and, let us say the word, their admiration. Recognized by all as a very great physicist, Raymond was also an example of generosity and tolerance. Since that “Special day for Raymond” as we called the fest, his health began to decline. Those who were close to him then came to recognize his exceptional strength of character, his stoicism and his humanism. No complaint ever, but rather, until these last days, always an enthusiasm that he wanted to share for either an idea, a computation or a work of art. On the evening of that special 8 July 2011, I had wished, in my speech, to highlight the outstanding scientist but I sensed, from the look on his face, that he reacted with some irritation. I then mentioned his humanism, to which I heard him whisper: “Ah! I prefer that!” Is it possible to separate the man from the physicist? I would answer that, for me, Raymond was first of all a man in love with humanity. In addition, he was gifted for the so-called theoretical sciences, mathematics, physics; he also had a passion for the arts, music, drawing, and of course literature, as will have been noted by those who had the privilege to visit his collection of old books. I remember of course my first contacts with Raymond, at the beginning of the seventies in Marseilles. I must confess that I was rather scared by him. He used to come to us, young fellows in the lab, asking about our work in progress. His questions were insistent, and I guess that I was not the only one to fear these sessions which, at the beginning, appeared to me to be real examinations. But, in fact, his only goal was to help us. And for that, he offered us something very precious in life: more than his science, he was offering us his time. I keep in mind a particular picture. You were pushing the door of his office after knocking. Raymond was naturally absorbed in his work, he raised his head, saw you, dropped his pen and looked at you as if he was waiting for you: he was all yours. You could ask him your question, he had all the time for you. Of course, you were in for some discussions which sometimes looked to you off topic, but his mind was working faster than average and we could not follow all the overlaps which were done in his head. And, in general, he used to bring you a clarification, otherwise the solution. As my old friend Georges Girardi used to jokingly say: “Raymond, we believe that he is brilliant of course. But he is even more than that”. I would like also to mention the words of Serge Lazzarini: “I was the last student of Raymond. But who has not been, at one time or another, a student of Raymond? There was always something to learn from him”.

Raymond left his mark in each laboratory which had the chance to include him among his members: Saclay, Marseilles, Annecy, CERN. In Annecy, his continued support for developing

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theoretical physics has been vital and the leadership he provided in the first years of the laboratory were obviously fundamental. His scientific authority was essential for us, and his vision of science an example to follow – or at least to try to follow. Indeed, for Raymond, in the same way mathematics and physics were of equal importance – may be because he was able to walk without getting lost on these vast spaces – there were no small and great ideas: there was what was correct, coherent and in addition elegant. Integrity and tolerance were the guiding principles of his thinking, in both his scientific work and in his life. Integrity to himself first, requirement for truth. Tolerance towards scientific ideas and mainly for men. Raymond leaves us an important scientific legacy, he also bequeaths a magnificent model of humanity. The full and intense life Raymond led was alongside Marie-Françoise and his children Olivier and Thierry. I would like to express all my admiration for Marie-Françoise: one cannot be the wife of such a man without having exceptional qualities. Her discretion reflects the one of Raymond, and her continuing support has without doubt been instrumental in the success of many projects. Allow me to conclude with this short message from Ivan Todorov: “It is for us to keep and perpetuate Raymond’s memory”.

Paul Sorba

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