Allow me to thank you for your presence at this event and to express my joy of recalling, with the due emotion and respect, our Acad. Elie Carafoli’s personality, our Professor.

I would like to begin with a confession: choosing the title of my exposure "Elie Carafoli – the man, the teacher and the scientist". I thought I could address the three aspects of the title in succession and succeed so much like a three-stage rocket.

Well, it was not like that! The Professor’s personality - I find it easier to say "professor" – can not be divided into subdomains.

Since the man reveals oneself under countless forms arising always recalled by significant circumstances, but also by imponderable gleams of fleeting ideas or images.

We could express this both ways: the man Elie Carafoli was a great teacher and a great scientist, but also: the teacher and scientist Elie Carafoli was a great man, a great personality. In fact, we must just pay attention to see how he reveals himself to us over time, what is the fact which makes him remain vivid in our memories. Was it indeed in the first place the flight profile with rounded leading edge? Or the wind tunnel in the Polytechnic University courtyard of Polizu? Or maybe the book “Wing Theory in Supersonic Flow” published by Pergamon Press?

I see him over time as I feel and understand him: with his severity which was full of good will, with his mind always active, with his sense of humor and - why not - with some awkwardness that actually brought him closer to us. The teacher knew how to attract the young: his authority was characterized by flexibility and by the respect of the young man’s freedom of choice, leaving him time to think, and to decide for himself.

If, as time passes, some disagreements arose between the professor and the former student who has meanwhile reached maturity, researcher or teacher in his turn, and the latter considered himself able to judge his master, as some a part of the magister would turn against himself, I think he mustn’t abandon his belief of youthfulness. For it is the
purest, most unprejudiced, and finally closest to the truth. Separation of Goethe, as philosophers say, when you were a disciple of Goethe, could mean separation from what you had more unselfish, more generous.

Thank God for protecting me from such a separation. But I know a case where someone has set oneself apart from the professor even criticizing him in the field of his specialty. A year or two after, the former student came back, asking the professor to get him back in the IMA. Well, the Professor got him back. I’m asking now over years: who got him back, the Professor or the Man Elie Carafoli?

Professor Elie Carafoli was a gentle man, he could respect his collaborators’ feelings, and not least those related to family. I remember once, giving signs of flu I decided to treat it by complet „ecologic” means.

I took the train up to Targoviste, then I walked about 10 km. over hills and valleys. Among other things, I passed by Dealu Monastery which is situated near the military college where Elie Carafoli had studied as a pupil. As I arrived home to my parents’ place, I grabbed a spade and started digging the garden. Meanwhile, my father stuck off a cock, and mother prepared a delicious noodles soup and a steak in her very own way. After such a meal and a sleep without a break I got rid of the flu, although it is said that the flu virus resists at least three days. Perhaps it was a virus of the city, that doesn’t survive in the country!

Meanwhile, the professor looked for me - he was keeping us pretty well under control! - and I noticed he was a little upset. But when I told him I was in the contry at my parent’ place, his anger was gone immediately, making room for a smile and some questions about the health and the condition of my folks.

When his daughter, Eliana, was born, the professor was very happy, we enjoyed finding that there was something else that could lead the professor to heaven, except planes. Once, I saw an envelope on the table on which the professor had noted in his handwriting: “For Miss Eliana, privately” (the last word was underlined). Eliana was little more than 1 years old and the professor’s handwriting was not even easy to read!

On examination, the professor was kind, aware that the subject matter was difficult, nobody could pass without minimum knowledge, but the teacher was trying to help those who "strove". He never thought to put someone in difficulty.

Once, seeing that a student couldn’t handle a problem, as assistant, I put a good word, telling the professor that the man was working in aviation. The student which was naturally irritable, interpreted my whispers as an intervention to be „dropped”, and expressed his dissatisfaction in this respect to the professor. The teacher reacted strongly, saying out loud, to be heard by all those present: - „Pay attention, please! I break off the exam, to announce that my assistant wanted to help him and your mate committed an injustice!” The examinee understood and apologised. Eventually he got a 5.
The professor was a teamworker. He was tactful and appreciated everyone's effort, he was encouraging and due consideration. As a result, all of his team were in good relations of friendship. It must be said that in most cases, the ideas and initiatives belonged to him. But he particularly appreciated his collaborators’ ideas, and he managed to redefine these ideas into a more clear expression. He had, as they say 'intuition' and felt which of the new proposals are likely to succeed.

To check the originality of ideas he asked the author the following question: “Tell me, how comes that a thousand Americans and a thousand Russians working in the area failed to discover this before you?”

A proof that the magister treated us equally is the fact that the most those of close age took their doctorate in reasonable time differences. Also, he supported us to go to study abroad in the years when this was difficult. Even more, he helped also our spouses to join us.

The teacher was a man with a sense of economy, but not stingy. I heard him once saying very outraged to the secretary: „Imagin, one hundred lei for a trifle!” He had a specific way of saying one hundred lei! However, while on retirement, he refused to receive money on contracts on which we work together, so as „not to say that I got the contracts for me”.

It was a dignified and responsible man who cared of his reputation, gained through work and exceptional merit. He told us the story of Ceausescu, who wanted the Socialist Republic of Romania to build supersonic combat aircraft in just 3 years. “Comrade President- replied the teacher-the French-made the Mirage aircraft in the 11-12 years, and they had more experience. We, with a proper help could make it, let say, in minimum 8 years”. N. Ceausescu became angry. There followed hard years for the professor, but his reputation remained intact. Others came and pledged: an airplane was made but not in 3 years and not a supersonic one.

As we know, the professor died in his office at his desk. Now, over the years, it certainly seems to me a sad event, however, it was a dignified and beautiful death. But we see him alive, leaving and returning, returning and leaving ..., because when we commemorate him we don’t have to speak about death but about life.

For what is life?
A secret combination
Of either dark and bright,
A planet hurried station
On human to stars flight.