HIGH POINTS IN THE HISTORY OF VALUE DISTRIBUTION THEORY OF SEVERAL COMPLEX VARIABLES

Wilhelm Stoll

Inaugural Lecture

Timothy O'Meara and Frank Castellino thank your for your kind introduction. I am deeply moved by your words and by the appointment to the chair. Foremost I thank the donors Vincent J. Duncan and Annamarie Micus Duncan for their generosity. My colleagues and I are most grateful for this recognition of our work by the donors and the administration of the University.

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues, speakers and participants! This inaugural address opens the *Symposium on Value Distribution Theory in Several Complex Variables* sponsored by the University of Notre Dame. Welcome to all of you. An inaugural address, an Antrittsvorlesung, so late in life seems to be out of place and perhaps should be called an Abschiedsvorlesung. Yet, hopefully, this is premature and I can be around a few more years. Taking the hint, I will look backwards and recall some of the high points in the development of the theory. Time permits only a few topics.

Looking backwards, out of the mist of time there emerges not an abstract theory but the lively memory of those who taught me mathematics: Siegfried Kerridge, Wilhelm Germann, Wilhelm Schweizer and later at the University Hellmuth Kneser, Konrad Knopp, Erich Kamke, G. G. Lorentz and Max Müller. Also there appear those who inspired me but who were not directly my teachers: Heinz Hopf, Hermann Weyl, Rolf Nevanlinna and one who is right here with us: Shiing-shen Chern, we all welcome you. Thirty years ago you recruited me for Notre Dame. You supported the growth of this department in many ways. Your work on value distribution in several

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This research was supported in part by the National Science Foundation Grant DMS-87-02144.