

March 8, 1970

Dear Harish-Chandra,

I just called up about the train schedules. There is a train arriving in Princeton at 7:10. This means I should arrive at your house at 7:30, just a little later than planned.

I am sorry I couldn't take up your suggestion to talk about something else. Unfortunately any idea I have had this winter has led nowhere. I will try however to give a *little* more insight into $GL(2)$ than is provided by the formal development of the notes. If you think that it is a waste of time for me to talk for five hours perhaps the character of the invitation could be changed. (To be specific: fewer talks, smaller honorarium). It doesn't matter to me. I'm really coming down just to see you and Godement and one or two people at the university. In any case, if you want, we can talk about these things when I arrive. I apologize for burdening you with these minor questions when you have more than enough problems of your own.

I thought over what you said about yourself on the telephone. It occurs to me that this might have been in any case the time for a change in your mathematical life. After all, the Plancherel formula, your original goal, has been found. Beyond this the harmonic analysis on a reductive groups has been clarified to such an extent that the remaining problems can perhaps be safely left to others. They will certainly have to use your ideas. Even in the non-archimedean case many of the things which have to be done are clear even if it is not always clear how to do them.

In any case you have constructed a whole domain of mathematics out of almost nothing. Now you can leave it alone to grow by itself and, as I believe you intended long ago, turn to something else such as algebraic geometry. It is an old subject with many difficult problems, some local and some global, which seems to me (although I don't really understand it) to be desperately in need of fundamentally new ideas. If you started to think about it you would, besides deriving the well-known benefits of a change, be forced to slow down for at first you would probably have no ideas at all.

You will I hope forgive my making suggestions which may seem to you to be entirely unsuitable. However I remember the help a few remarks of yours were to me when I was despairing. (Of course the causes of my despair were not very substantial.)

Again, I look forward to seeing you.

Yours,

Bob Langlands

Compiled on November 12, 2024.