

PYTHAGORAS AND THE MATH WARS

by Sébastien Cimpaye

March 2023, inspired by use the Numbers & Math in 12

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Writing is terrible. Since I began doing it and wanting to do it well, I've become a weirder and weirder person : withdrawn, honest, jealous of dead people's work, sad then happy then angry all for reasons having nothing whatsoever to do with life, tendency towards gluttony, wanting to turn to god (though never acting upon the urge (of course)). It's all probably a health hazard but I'm sticking with it ; too far down the rabbit hole now. My will to get to work and write stuff does not mean I always know how to. We were with Kristina, one day, practicing for 12 and she told us we had two minutes to write something on math or numbers. Though I wasn't able to finish my thoughts, I was surprised with what a person could come up with when not trying to write with style but truly to cram all their ideas on the page because of time pressure. I decided that I would make a play about math, specifically about Pythagoras and the math wars, writing only two minutes at a time and never changing what I had written earlier. I started doing this for a time desperately wanting to modify certain sections of the text but not permitting myself to do so until I managed to find a loophole. I could use my two minutes to write a completely new play on the same subject with a different approach and therefore keep writing without modifying prior work. This was cheating and led to no good. The result speaks for itself :

VERSION ONE :

PYTHAGORILLE

Scène 1

Un adolescent arborant une barbe en poil synthétique, portant une toge grec, des sandales, entre en scène.

Empathique : J'ai quinze ans et je suis mature.

(silence)

Empathique : J'ai quinze ans et je suis mature ! Lorsque confrontés à des situations qui leurs déplaisent, plusieurs se ferment, s'éteignent, perdent toute envie d'apprendre, toute curiosité ; préoccupé comme ils sont de leurs états. Dans ces mêmes situations je m'efforce à être heureux. Toujours, je m'intéresse aux choses qui m'emmerdent plus qu'aux choses qui m'inspirent. Au point où l'unique chose m'inspirant est cette passion pour celles qui m'emmerde. Je veux les comprendre ! Je veux tant me pencher sur leurs cas qu'elles en viennent à être attendries et à m'aimer. J'ai eu il y a trois mois quelques frustrations en lien avec le théorème de pythagore. Tout naturellement, j'ai entrepris de me déguiser en son héros éponyme, imiter ses comportements et ses manies, m'approprier ses idées de façon à ce que, le connaissant comme je me connais, je ne puisse faire autrement que de voir d'un bon œil ses réussites. Évidemment le fait de parvenir

TO BE CONTINUED...

VERSION TWO

PYTHAGLOIRE !

Scene 1

Pythagore entre en scène.

Pythagore : Finis les mathématiques ! Je me fais humoriste !

TO BE CONTINUED ...

Unable to decide between my two options, I was at an impasse of sorts and attempted in vain to forget about the project for a week. In our following class Kristina spoke to us about this art exhibition which I immediately took as a sign from the heavens. A deadline ! Exactly what I needed to be decisif and get work done. I actually made my first new decision about the piece the very night I told her I was writing a play of appropriate nature for the exhibition. Said decision was to write a completely new thing on the same subject so as not to have to decide between my two options. I had three weeks till the text was due and in those three weeks though I thought of the play

constantly, I wrote nothing. Home alone and mind numbed on cheese, a day before the dreaded release date, I rushed to my phone, resolved to present both options I had repudiated. Before officially sending them to Kristina, I couldn't resist adding an apologetic preamble to the duo. The whole thing went :

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VERSION TWO

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Scene 1

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Pythagore : Finis les mathématiques ! Je me fais humoriste !

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I meant my apology and my sending of the two ideas as a sort of joke. Admittedly a poor, sad one. For it to be effective or at least more interesting, there needed to be another layer. Maybe an outro or a conclusion ? Impossible to execute since to tell the story faithfully would mean to go through my learning of the art exhibition and my sending the text to kristina. The only way out was to explain the conundrum ie : the impossibility of adding to this bad joke. What better way to represent that then by employing the true but much disputed opposite of adding to the play's diegesis.

Repetition. This is what I attempted to do in the second version of the text I sent to Kristina. This one :

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