SKETCH OF A PROGRAMME[1]
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1. Preface. — As the present situation makes the prospect of teaching at the research level at the University seem more and more illusory, I have resolved to apply for admission to the CNRS, in order to devote my energy to the development of projects and perspectives for which it is becoming clear that no student (nor even, it seems, any mathematical colleague) will be found to develop them in my stead.

In the role of the document "Titles and Articles", one can find after this text the complete reproduction of a sketch, by themes, of what I considered to be my principal mathematical contributions at the time of writing that report, in 1972. It also contains a list of articles published at that date. I ceased all publication of scientific articles in 1970. In the following lines, I propose to give a view of at least some of the principal themes of my mathematical reflections since then. These reflections materialised over the years in the form of two voluminous boxes of handwritten notes, doubtless difficult to decipher for anyone but myself, and which, after several successive stages of settling, are perhaps waiting for their moment to be written up together at least in a temporary fashion, for the benefit of the mathematical community. The term "written up" is somewhat incorrect here, since in fact it is much more a question of developing the ideas and the multiple visions begun during these last twelve years, to make them more precise and deeper, with all the unexpected rebounds which constantly accompany this kind of work – a work of discovery, thus, and not of

[1]This text has been transcribed by Mateo Carmona
`https://agrothendieck.github.io/`

compilation of piously accumulated notes. And in writing the "Mathematical Reflections", begun since February 1983, I do intend throughout its pages to clearly reveal the process of thought, which feels and discovers, often blindly in the shadows, with sudden flashes of light when some tenacious false or simply inadequate image is finally shown for what it is, and things which seemed all crooked fall into place, with that mutual harmony which is their own.

In any case, the following sketch of some themes of reflection from the last ten or twelve years will also serve as a sketch of my programme of work for the coming years, which I intend to devote to the development of these themes, or at least some of them. It is intended on the one hand for my colleagues of the National Committee whose job it is to decide the fate of my application, and on the other hand for some other colleagues, former students, friends, in the possibility that some of the ideas sketched here might interest one of them.

2. A game of "Lego-Teichmüller" and the Galois group $\overline{\mathrm{Q}}$ over Q. —

3. Number fields associated to a child's drawing. —

4. Regular polyhedra over finite fields. —

5. Denunciation of so-called "general" topology, and heuristic reflections towards a so-called "tame" topology. —

6. "Differentiable theories" (à la Nash) and "tame theories". —

7. Pursuing Stacks. — Since the month of March last year, so nearly a year ago, the greater part of my energy has been devoted to a work of reflection on the *foundations of non-commutative (co)homological algebra*, or what is the same, after all, of *homotopical algebra*. These reflections have taken the concrete form of a voluminous stack of typed notes, destined to form the first volume (now being finished) of a work in two volumes to be published by Hermann, under the overall title *"Pursuing Stacks"*. I now foresee (after successive extensions of the initial project) that the manuscript of the whole of the two volumes, which I hope to finish definitively in the course of this year, will be about 1500 typed pages in length. These two volumes are moreover for me the first in a vaster series, under the overall title *"Mathematical Reflections"*, in which I intend to develop some of the themes sketched in the present report.

Since I am speaking here of work which is actually now being written up and is even almost finished, the first volume of which will doubtless appear this year and will contain a detailed introduction, it is undoubtedly less interesting for me to develop this theme of reflection here, and I will content myself

with speaking of it only very briefly. This work seems to me to be somewhat marginal with respect to the themes I sketched before, and does not (it seems to me) represent a real renewal of viewpoint or approach with respect to my interests and my mathematical vision of before 1970. If I suddenly resolved to do it, it is almost out of desperation, for nearly twenty years have gone by since certain visibly fundamental questions, which were ripe to be thoroughly investigated, without anyone seeing them or taking the trouble to fathom them. Still today, the basic structures which occur in the homotopical point of view in topology are not understood, and to my knowledge, after the work of Verdier, Giraud and Illusie on this theme (which are so many beginnings still waiting for continuations...) there has been no effort in this direction. I should probably make an exception for the axiomatisation work done by Quillen on the notion of a category of models, at the end of the sixties, and taken up in various forms by various authors. At that time, and still now, this work seduced me and taught me a great deal, even while going in quite a different direction from the one which was and still is close to my heart. Certainly, it introduces derived categories in various non-commutative contexts, but without entering into the question of the essential internal structures of such a category, also left open in the commutative case by Verdier, and after him by Illusie. Similarly, the question of putting one's finger on the natural "coefficients" for a non-commutative cohomological formalism, beyond the stacks (which should be called 1-stacks) studied in the book by Giraud, remained open – or rather, the rich and precise intuitions concerning it, taken from the numerous examples coming in particular from algebraic geometry, are still waiting for a precise and supple language to give them form.

I returned to certain aspects of these foundational questions in 1975, on the occasion (I seem to remember) of a correspondence with Larry Breen (two letters from this correspondence will be reproduced as an appendix to Chap. I of volume 1, "History of Models", of Pursuing Stacks). At that moment the intuition appeared that ∞-groupoids should constitute particularly adequate models for homotopy types, the n-groupoids corresponding to *truncated* homotopy types (with $\pi_i = 0$ pour $i > n$). This same intuition, via very different routes, was discovered by Ronnie Brown and some of his students in Bangor, but using a rather restrictive notion of ∞-groupoid (which, among the 1-connected homotopy types, model only products of Eilenberg-

Mac Lane spaces). Stimulated by a rather haphazard correspondence with Ronnie Brown, I finally began this reflection, starting with an attempt to define a wider notion of ∞-groupoid (later rebaptised stack in ∞-groupoids or simply "stack", the implication being: over the 1-point topos), and which, from one thing to another, led me to Pursuing Stacks. The volume "History of Models" is actually a completely unintended digression with respect to the initial project (the famous stacks being temporarily forgotten, and supposed to reappear only around page 1000...).

This work is not completely isolated with respect to my more recent interests. For example, my reflection on the modular multiplicities $\widehat{M}_{g,\nu}$ and their stratified structure renewed the reflection on a theorem of van Kampen in dimension > 1 (also one of the preferred themes of the group in Bangor), and perhaps also contributed to preparing the ground for the more important work of the following year. This also links up from time to time with a reflection dating from the same year 1975 (or the following year) on a "De Rham complex with divided powers", which was the subject of my last public lecture, at the IHES in 1976; I lent the manuscript of it to I don't remember whom after the talk, and it is now lost. It was at the moment of this reflection that the intuition of a "schematisation" of homotopy types germinated, and seven years later I am trying to make it precise in a (particularly hypothetical) chapter of the History of Models.

The work of reflection undertaken in Pursuing Stacks is a little like a debt which I am paying towards a scientific past where, for about fifteen years (from 1955 to 1970), the development of cohomological tools was the constant Leitmotiv in my foundational work on algebraic geometry. If in this renewal of my interest in this theme, it has taken on unexpected dimensions, it is however not out of pity for a past, but because of the numerous unexpected phenomena which ceaselessly appear and unceremoniously shatter the previously laid plans and projects – rather like in the thousand and one nights, where one awaits with bated breath through twenty other tales the final end of the first.

8. Digressions on 2-dimensional geometry. — Up to now I have spoken very little of the more down-to-earth reflections on two-dimensional topological geometry

9. Assessment of a teaching activity. —

10. Epilogue. —