

SKETCH OF A PROGRAMME¹

by Alexandre GROTHENDIECK

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

¹This 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 $\overline{\mathbb{Q}}$ over \mathbb{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. —
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. —