



The 'Stupidity' of $\sqrt{2}$

Silvanos Chirume^{1*}

¹Senior Lecturer, BSc Hon Maths and Statistics, Zimbabwe Open University, Midlands Regional Campus, Gweru

*Corresponding Author

Silvanos Chirume

Senior Lecturer, BSc Hon Maths and Statistics, Zimbabwe Open University, Midlands Regional Campus, Gweru

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Abstract: This poem is deemed suitable for mathematics students and teachers, lecturers and teacher educators of either college or university undergraduate levels. The poem is intended to encourage teaching and learning of mathematics (e.g., number theory and proofs) and this could be achieved more effectively through humour (which 'warms' the classroom environment and reduces fear and anxiety), historical anecdotes, research (to discover new knowledge and verify given points as true or false), innovation, and application. The poem can be recited, acted or dramatised or transformed into a video to be shared amongst the learners. Modern learning theories advocate for learning mathematics in a variety of ways and integrating it with other subjects, and through this poem, student motivation, self assessment and a thorough grasp of the subject matter are envisaged more through action (researching, performing and recitation) rather than only through listening. Thus, the poem contributes to the body of knowledge on constructivist and integrated learning.

Keywords: The poem, Stupidity, $\sqrt{2}$, Modern learning.

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The Poem

There is a number called $\sqrt{2}$
It doesn't behave like other 'good' numbers
You cannot express it in the form $\frac{p}{q}$
Where p and q are relatively prime whole numbers
and q is not zero
Because it is a 'stupid' number

It led to the death by drowning of a certain great person
Who had discovered its absurdity
It shows the foolishness of mathematicians themselves
Fighting for this small unthinkable number
And killing one another for it

I wonder why God created $\sqrt{2}$
That could be used as a vehicle for killing other people
I wonder why man discovered such a stupid number
To be used for baffling us

For Babylonians were baffled by it
And Pythagoreans too were baffled by it
And I am still being baffled by it

Because although it is easy to prove the absurdity of $\sqrt{2}$
All you have to do is contradict yourself
And become as irrational as itself
Because it was even more silly to think of its practical usefulness
Until someone in Germany by sheer luck
Proposed that the stupid number could be useful
Only to make some paper sizes become common today

Oh, why not think of Euler's elegant numbers i, 1, e, π and 0
Which fit perfectly and beautifully in the equation $e^{\pi i} + 1 = 0$
Than to think of an incorrigible $\sqrt{2}$

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Which is related to π , i and some trigonometrical functions

Although in a way I would not consider beautiful

Because I here again declare

That $\sqrt{2}$ is stupid and fearful

Just as its mother Mathematics is 'fearful'

Which some bunch of 'freezing' students

Would believe that it has illogical and dreadful processes

Some which could result in $\sqrt{2}$ repeating the numbers 0 to 9 in an unthinkable way

To give us things silly and unthinkable like

$\sqrt{2}$ =

1.414213562373095048801688724209698078569

67187537694807317667973799...

Oh, would you then not agree with me

That $\sqrt{2}$ is stupid?

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