no man can reach the bottom of this night

Incidentally, Bolyai's father, Farkas (or Wolfgang) Bolyai, a close friend of the great Gauss, invested much effort in trying to prove Euclid's fifth postulate. In a letter to his son János, he tried to dissuade him from hinking about such matters:

You must not attempt this approach to parallels. I know this way to its very end. I have traversed this bottomless night, which extinguished all light and joy of my life. I entreat you, leave the science of parallels alone. . . . I thought I would sacrifice myself for the sake of the truth. I was ready to become a martyr who would remove the flaw from geometry and return it purified to mankind. I accomplished monstrous, enormous labors; my creations are far better than those of others and yet I have not achieved complete satisfaction. For here it is true that si paullum a summo discessit, vergit ad imum. I turned back when I saw that no man can reach the bottom of this night. I turned back unconsoled, pitying myself and all mankind. . . . I have traveled past all reefs of this infernal Dead Sea and have always come back with broken mast and torn sail. The ruin of my disposition and my fall date back to this time. I thoughtlessly risked my life and happiness—aut Caesar aut nihil.

But later, when convinced his son really "had something", he urged im to publish it, anticipating correctly the simultaneity which is so freuent in scientific discovery:

When the time is ripe for certain things, these things appear in different

Newer Older

31st March 2025

against the theft of your soul

19th February 2025

Cold baths

sonia turcotte © 2022-2025

RSS feed

Made with Montaigne and by anton