Mental Logic: Two Poems

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I am currently completing a dual Computer Science and English degree. In the process of completing this double major I have taken a lot of both literature and mathematics classes. I often come across the idea that people can only be good at one of these two topics, not both. This mistaken theory ignores the commonalities shared by and essential to both disciplines, such as the creativity involved in problem solving or the logic necessary to construct both proofs and essays. In exploration of the intersection between mathematics and the humanities, we can not only create innovative mathematical solutions but logically inspired literary works. Keeping this exploration in mind, I created this collection of poems.

“Mental logic” is comprised of two poems that aim to intertwine mathematical themes with that of creative struggle. By coupling these themes of mathematical innovation and mental health exploration together, I aim to challenge readers to analyze their way of thinking through a mathematical lens. Thus, the purpose of these poems is to give readers the ability to see the ubiquity of mathematics and logic in their mental state.

The first poem in this pairing is titled “-ematics” and is a literary work that was created while solving mathematics problems posed in the University of Rochester Mathematics Olympiad. The poem itself takes the themes of probability and algebra from the Olympiad to frame a discussion of perceived social standards. The coupling of these themes exposes the implications of social standards through a vastly different angle than is usually considered. Creating a more logically driven definition of normality, an idea constructed on patterns and trends in social behavior, exposes the logical fallacy of holding the fluid human condition to such a standard. Gaining this understanding, one no longer has to subject themselves to the mental harm that comes from trying to find logical equivalence where none exists.
“Finite Speculation”, the second poem in the pairing, was formed while studying discrete mathematics for an exam. While studying different logical rules I began to consider how these rules applied to different elements of life. Ultimately, I decided, all elements of life are comprised of logic or the lack thereof. This idea began to plague my thoughts until I decided to experiment with it. I composed this poem to be an analysis of mental illness through this lens of life being based solely on logic or non-logic to test my idea. Because I was using this mathematical theme of logic, I felt that this poem should also take the form of a proof to be as true to the source analysis as possible. This poetic proof set out to prove the statement that there exists some subset of individuals within this world that are not ignorant to the implications of mental illness on a given individual’s life. After completing the proof, I realized that my idea was flawed. Even in falsehood, elements of life proved to be logical and therefore life became an element of solely different kinds of logic.

This pairing of poems, using different styles in reflections of different elements of math, have the same central goal: to create an analysis of emotional wellbeing through the lens of mathematics and logic.

–ASHLEY DELVENTO, Southbury, Connecticut, USA
Bring in that moment
    but an ounce of
deliverance from that which
the laws of reality
have not yet quantified.

Bring in that moment
    but a mote of
linear explanations of
exponential failures as if
traversing this timeframe was
anything but fruitless.

Bring in that moment
    but a word spoken of
the mental capacity of
some for whom numbers exist in
the same plain of reality as emotional
analysis and strife.

And then bring in that moment
    but a passing mark
for which some have revised
estimates of their demise whilst
others seemed to have
lengthened with just the
sheer accomplishment of a
newly developed logic.
Finite speculation

Prove to me the cardinality of the set
Composed of the illiterates and blind.
Those not without sight nor scrutiny,
But those without understanding.

Proof:
Individual elements of the set arbitrarily exist
Within the construct of my mind,
Echoing chemical undesirables laced between letters
As the words trail from my mouth with micro-depressions.

Trace them back to the universal set
Of kamikaze cells of cancerous infestation
Trapped in the confides of the definition of my skin
And the definition of a bystander.

For every infinite set mapping between mind and matter
Exists a bijection between truth and falsehood,
Creating a balance between imaginary improvements
And real downfalls and discrepancies in my existence.

Therefore, there exists some individual
Whom maps to me through functional societal norms,
Out of guilt or true automized nurture,
Who inverses these words to benefaction.