

# Florentin Smarandache

**(1954 - ) "Poet, playwright, novelist, writer of prose, tales for children, translator from many languages, experimental painter, philosopher, physicist, mathematician" whose life under the contradictions of Romanian Stalinism made him a paradoxist.**

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Florentin Smarandache was born December 10, 1954, the only child of a peasant couple in Balcesti, Valcea, Romania. He graduated in mathematics from the university at Craiova in 1979, and, after a short time of working as a software engineer, became first a mathematics teacher and later a professor in Romania and in Morocco. However, it was not long before Smarandache, like many educated Romanians, found himself drawing attention from Nicolae Ceausescu's totalitarian regime. Matters came to a head in 1986, when he was refused permission to attend the International Congress of Mathematicians at the University of California, Berkeley. Smarandache then published a letter in the Notices of the American Mathematical Society (AMS), highlighting that his problem was shared by many scientists around the world; they were not free to travel to further their careers or meet with other members of the international scientific community. Smarandache became a dissident and went on hunger strike, which did produce a reaction from the government - Smarandache lost his job. For the next two years, he was unable to get work in Romania, and barely scraped a living giving private tuition to students. He was no longer able to publish in Romania, so attempted to get his papers to the outside world through the French School in Bucharest or even requesting tourists to smuggle them. Many were discovered by the secret police.

Smarandache realized that he had little choice but to flee Romania. In 1988, after burying a metal box containing many of his papers near a peach tree in his parents' vineyard, he escaped to the political refugee camps in Turkey, leaving behind his seven year old son Mihai, and his wife who was then pregnant with their second child. He found work in Turkey in the construction industry, scavenging, and as a house painter among others, until finally emigrating to the United States of America in March 1990, where he was finally reunited with his family two years later, seeing his second son Silviu for the first time at two and a half years old. He initially began working in the US as a software engineer for Honeywell, followed by an adjunct professorship at a community college which led to him becoming an assistant professor at the University of New Mexico on the Gallup campus in 1997. He was promoted to Associate Professor of Mathematics in 2003.

*America, nation of every contradiction,  
mother of the stateless, deserters, the misfits  
forever exiles in themselves.*

## Florentin Smarandache, Arizona, 1990. From *Florentin Smarandache: In Seven Languages*<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Smarandache has a reputation as one of the most prolific authors, not only in his chosen field of mathematics, but also in the world of theoretical physics. It is perhaps more surprising though to see he is also known for literature and art. He is fluent in Romanian, English, and French, and his publications have appeared in journals all over the world. No matter the topic, Florentin Smarandache's work has an identity of its own, unconventional and often confrontational, but always with a common thread - unusually gifted with lateral thinking and blessed with a love of the paradox. He has appeared in the Guinness Book of World Records, after publishing *twenty* books in the year 2000. The Smarandache Notions Journal constantly seeks articles from diverse authors considering any of the wide range of subjects he has studied.

And that metal box under the peach tree? Smarandache was able to return after the Ceausescu regime was overthrown, and recover it, although the papers in it constituted a mere fraction of his work while in Romania, much of which has been lost forever.

## Mathematics

Smarandache's name can be found attached to many concepts in mathematics. He investigated a function in 1990 which has since come to bear his name, although it had been studied by authors such as Édouard Lucas over a century before. The Smarandache function  $\mu(n)$  considers the smallest number  $m$  for which  $n$  divides  $m$  factorial. However, there are many other number sequences that bear his name, or are considered "Smarandache-like". Many of these sequences are constructional, produced by simple definitions but seem to lack existing mathematical tools for analysis. An example is the blastoff number sequence (more correctly called the "reversed Smarandache concatenated numbers")

1, 21, 321, 4321, 54321, . . . . 10987654321, 1110987654321, . . .

which, though easy to describe, is notoriously difficult to analyse (because the individual decimal representations of numbers have different numbers of digits, there appears to be no formula). Sequences like this are fertile ground for researchers and recreational mathematics alike. Many of these concepts are well within the grasp of enthusiastic amateurs, who can often find their number theory work published in the *Smarandache Notions Journal*.

Geometry (or even anti-geometry) is also an area studied extensively by Smarandache and his peers. Smarandache commented on the parallel axiom of Euclidean geometry, and concluded just as many authors have that the parallel postulate could be replaced to give non-Euclidean geometry. However, Smarandache continued further, and allowed replacement of any, or even all, of the axioms, even with complete opposites. Every possible choice of axioms produces a framework for theorem proving.

Logic and set theory have also been studied by Dr. Smarandache, where his concept of neutrosophy allows analysis of concepts such as fuzzy logic. Instead of restricting membership of a set to a "true" or "false", or measurement of a probability to be some number between 0 and 1, Smarandache includes a notion of indeterminacy, and builds a complete theory on top of this.

## Physics

It seems a logical progression then that, along with his work on indeterminates in mathematics, Smarandache has studied the uncertain subject of quantum mechanics. In particular, Smarandache is associated with four quantum paradoxes that follow when applying the Sorites paradox at the particle

level:

- **Invisibility.** That a collection of invisible particles is at some time visible.
- **Uncertainty.** That small particles, governed by the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, can be assembled into large matter, that is deterministic.
- **Instability.** That stable matter is formed from unstable particles.
- **Short Living.** That long-living matter is made up of short-living elementary particles.

Considerably more controversy is attracted to Florentin Smarandache however by his promotion of the hypothesis that there is no speed limit in the Universe. Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity had followed from the assumption that the speed of light were constant, and that nothing could be accelerated beyond it, furthermore, no effect of an action could propagate at superluminal velocities. However, certain effects such as quantum entanglement seem to allow such transmission of information, apparently faster than light. Many authors have tried to unify the predictions of relativity with the phenomenon of quantum non-locality, while authors such as Smarandache suggest there is no reason they have to, and quantum effects may be independent or even contradictory to those predicted by relativity. Smarandache has experienced some difficulties getting papers that challenge relativity into print, to the point where he has claimed the existence of an *international mafia in science*<sup>3</sup> that defends relativity much like classical mechanics before it.

*Friend, what is the speed of light?  
I don't know neither the speed of the light,  
nor the speed of the darkness.*

**Florentin Smarandache, *Vreme de Saga (Time for Jokes)*<sup>4</sup>**

## Literature

It is often unusual to find a scientist that also attains considerable critical acclaim as a poet or playwright, but Florentin Smarandache has achieved precisely that. In 1980, he founded the Paradoxism movement with several other young Romanian writers. Much like Dadaism (and fellow Romanian Tristan Tzara), the Paradoxism movement aimed for "non-literature" through surrealism and through every possible self-contradiction in language, such as the oxymoron and, of course, the paradox. Among other things, the work symbolizes the contradictions of the system that published it, which claimed freedom while the Romanian people were certainly under oppression. It certainly did not hurt that the regime could not claim the abstract nature of the works contained anything political. Smarandache himself received literary prizes in Romania in 1981 and 1982, and his work received international attention in the 1990s, culminating in a nomination for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1999.

Smarandache's poetry is typically short and simple on the surface, often a one liner but occasionally using other familiar structures such as the haiku to great effect. The paradoxism is present both at the small level and the entire level of the work, and manages to incorporate a great deal of food for thought. Furthermore, Smarandache's poetry crosses cultural boundaries very well (after all, a paradox remains a paradox, no matter the language), and has been translated into several languages aside from the Romanian, French, and English that the author writes in. Most notable translations have included Esperanto, and, particularly in the light of important world events, Arabic.

Smarandache has also written for theatre as well, where, in a paradoxical twist that he himself no doubt respects, some of his work that may confuse adults is very appealing for children. His trilogy *Trickster's Famous Deeds* manages to combine Romanian folklore, contemporary situations, and science fiction, and

is targeted at children of primary school or elementary school ages. At the other extreme, Smarandache has penned some avant-garde plays that experiment with the medium. In *An Upside-Down World*, the individual scenes are written to be rearranged into any of billions of possible permutations, each yielding a different story. *The Country of The Animals* includes no dialogue, and was awarded at the International Theatrical Festival of Casablanca in 1995.

## Art, or is it?

Florentin Smarandache has also applied his paradoxist outlook to the art world as well. He made a somewhat tongue-in-cheek observation that schools of modern art such as Neo-Dada could make claims that "anything could be art", and therefore Smarandache came up with Outer-Art, pushing this to its logical extreme with the manifesto of making art *as ugly as possible, as wrong as possible, or as bad as possible... and, generally speaking, as impossible as possible!*<sup>5</sup> to such an extent that *the modern art experts would interpret as... extraordinary(!)*<sup>5</sup>.

His Outer-Art experiments have, understandably, produced quite a wide range of responses. The moderator of the "goodart" eGroup was incited to incinerate the first album of Outer-Art by the group's members, something which Smarandache claims to be *twice proud for!*<sup>5</sup>. Others, meanwhile, may study it and see, much like Smarandache's poetry, there is more than meets the eye. He has certainly achieved his paradox - someone who specifically claims no artistic skills, with the aim of producing the worst art possible, has his art works on display in *The Florentin Smarandache Papers* special collections at Arizona State University, the state university in Austin, Texas, in his native Romania in the national archives and literary museum, and the Musee de Bergerac in France.

## Conclusion

Probably the best summary of Florentin Smarandache comes from the man himself, in his own words. These seem to sum up the paradoxical nature of his work, but as with all his poetry, there is more to them than meets the eye.

*Look for solutions from problems.  
Look for problems from solutions.*

**Florentin Smarandache, *Cantece de Mahala (Suburban Songs)***<sup>6</sup>

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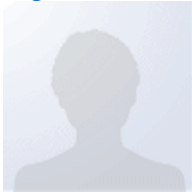
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[Raj Bhakta](#)

**Quite an unheard intellectual he is...**

Wow....he shares some of my personal views about the determinism from the quantum to the relativistic

Those are some considerable contributions he has made.

Nice biography...

-Raj

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