

The Little Prince -- The Lost Chapter

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The Little Prince – The Lost Chapter

Cover Page Footnote

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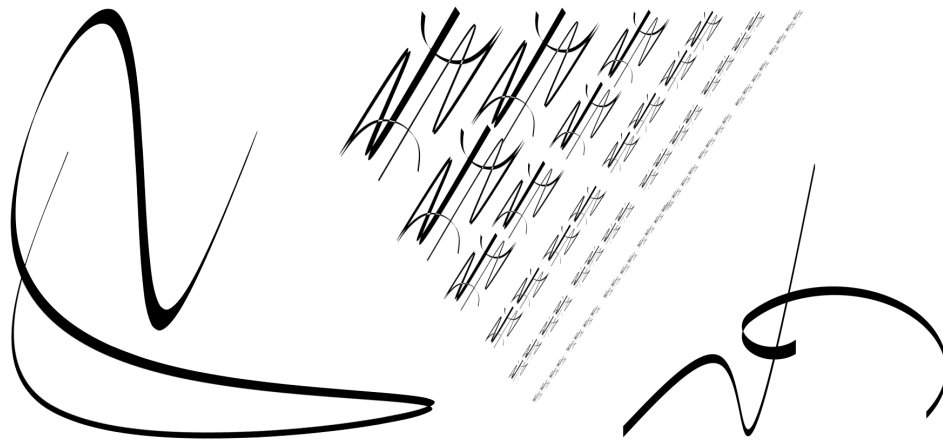
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Synopsis

A “lost chapter” from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s *Le Petite Prince* about the Little Prince visiting a mathematician, written in French in the style of the original work, is presented along with several translations.

Keywords: scientific creativity, mathematical invention, mathematical discovery.



“The Mathematician and the Little Prince” by Igor Podlubny
(computer-generated and human-interpreted).

*“The moving power of mathematical invention
is not reasoning but imagination.”*

Augustus De Morgan

Le chapitre perdu 12a

La planète suivante était celle d’un mathématicien. Il avait une table, toutes recouvertes de papiers avec des symboles mathématiques. Et en général, toute sa planète était couverte de tels papiers.

“Bonjour,” dit le Petit Prince.

“Ne me dérange pas, je suis occupé!” – le mathématicien n’a même pas levé les yeux des journaux.

“Qu’est-ce que tu fais?”

“Je fais de la science. Je fais des découvertes. Je découvre de nouvelles formules.”

“Et comment les découvres-tu?”, demanda le Petit Prince.

“Je prends les formules connues et j’en déduis de nouvelles,” répondit le mathématicien.

“Mais alors ces formules n’apportent pas de nouvelles découvertes”, dit le Petit Prince.

“Mais les formules sont nouvelles!” s’exclama le mathématicien avec irritation.

Et le Petit Prince pensait : “Comme il est étrange! Aucune découverte ne peut être déduite de ce qui est déjà connu, une découverte ne peut être faite que par l’imagination. Comme le découverte d’un éléphant à l’intérieur d’un serpent boa.”

*“The moving power of mathematical invention
is not reasoning but imagination.”*

Augustus De Morgan

The lost chapter 12a

The next planet was a mathematician’s. He had one table, all covered with papers with some mathematical symbols. And in general his entire planet was covered with such papers.

“Good day,” said the Little Prince.

“Do not distract me, I’m busy!” – the mathematician did not even look up from the papers.

“What are you doing?”

“I am doing science. I make discoveries. I discover new formulas.”

“And how do you discover them?”, asked the Little Prince.

“I take the known formulas and deduce from them new ones,” answered the mathematician.

“But then these formulas do not bring any new discoveries,” said the Little Prince.

“But the formulas are new!” the mathematician exclaimed irritably.

And the Little Prince thought: “How strange he is! No discovery can be deduced from what is already known, a discovery can be done only by imagination. Like discovering an elephant in a boa constrictor.”

*“The moving power of mathematical invention
is not reasoning but imagination.”*

Augustus De Morgan

El capítulo perdido 12a

El siguiente planeta estaba habitado por un matemático. Tenía una mesa toda cubierta de papeles con algunos símbolos matemáticos. Y en general todo el planeta estaba cubierto de papeles como aquellos.

“Buenos días”, dijo el Principito.

“¡No me distraigas, estoy ocupado!”. El matemático ni siquiera levantó la cabeza de los papeles.

“¿Qué estas haciendo?”

“Estoy haciendo ciencia. Hago descubrimientos. Descubro nuevas fórmulas.”

“¿Y cómo las descubres?”, preguntó el Principito.

“Cojo las fórmulas conocidas y a partir de ellas deduzco otras nuevas”, contestó el matemático.

“Pero entonces esas fórmulas no aportan ningún descubrimiento nuevo”, dijo el Principito.

“¡Pero las fórmulas son nuevas!”, exclamó el matemático irritado.

Y el Principito pensó: “¡Qué extraño es! Nada nuevo se puede deducir de lo que ya es conocido; solo se puede hacer un descubrimiento utilizando la imaginación. Como descubrir un elefante en el interior de una boa.”

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Потерянная глава 12а

На следующей планете жил математик. У него был один стол, весь покрытый бумагами с какими-то математическими знаками. И вообще вся его планета была покрыта такими же бумагами.

– Добрый день, – сказал Маленький Принц.

– Не отвлекай меня, я занят! – математик даже не оторвался от бумаг.

– А чем вы занимаетесь?

– Я занимаюсь наукой. Я делаю открытия. Я открываю новые формулы.

– А как именно вы их открываете? – спросил Маленький Принц.

– Беру известные формулы и вывожу из них новые, – ответил математик.

– Но ведь тогда эти формулы не приносят никаких новых открытий, – сказал Маленький Принц.

– Но ведь формулы-то новые! – воскликнул математик.

И Маленький Принц подумал: «Какой он странный. Никакое открытие нельзя вывести из того, что уже известно. Открытие можно сделать только при помощи воображения. Как открытие слона в удаве.»

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Stratená kapitola 12a

Na ďalšej planéte žil matematik. Mal tam len jeden stôl, celý pokrytý papiermi s akýmisi matematickými znakmi. A vôbec celá jeho planéta bola zasypaná takými papiermi.

— Dobrý deň,— povedal Malý Princ.

— Nevyrušuj ma, ja pracujem! — matematik ani nedvihol hlavu od papierov.

— A čo robíte?

— Robím vedu. Robím objavy. Objavujem nové vzorce.

— A ako ich objavujete? — opýtal sa Malý Princ.

— Beriem známe vzorce a z nich odvádzam nové, — odvetil matematik.

— Ale veď potom tie vzorce neprinášajú žiadne nové objavy! — povedal Malý Princ.

— No veď vzorce sú predsa nové! — rozčúlene vykrikol matematik.

A Malý Princ si pomyslel: „Aký je on čudný. Žiadny objav nie je možné len tak odvodiť z toho, čo už poznáme. Objav sa dá urobiť iba pomocou predstavivosti. Ako objav slona vo veľhadovi kráľovskom.“

Appendix: The story behind the story

Augustus De Morgan is known, first of all, for the *De Morgan's laws*, that we use in many fields, such as set theory, mathematical logic, computer science, etc., and also for formalizing one of the standard methods of rigorous proof — the method of mathematical induction. Knowing this, we have to pay attention to what he wrote in the obituary of Sir William Rowan Hamilton [1]:

Hamilton himself often said, “I *live* by mathematics, but I *am* a poet.” Such an aphorism may surprise our readers, but they should remember that the moving power of the mathematical *invention* is not reasoning, but imagination.

Indeed, René Descartes could not invent the idea of a coordinate system by derivations; William Hamilton could not derive the idea of quaternions from the real and complex numbers; Benoit Mandelbrot could not derive the notion of fractals from the classical geometry; Paul Dirac could not derive his delta function from the classical functions — they each needed that inspirational spark, the imagination. And there are many other examples of the role of imagination in making mathematical discoveries and inventions.

The role of imagination is also important in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*. Seeing an elephant in a boa constrictor or a sheep in a box is about something that cannot be seen by eyes — or, in other words, cannot be deduced by standard procedures or derivations.

Very recently, in May 2021, the correspondence between Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and his wife Consuelo has been published [2], which coincided with the 75th anniversary of the publication of *The Little Prince* in France (it was first published in the USA in 1943 in French and in English, and then in Paris in 1946). This correspondence provides additional material for better understanding of this masterpiece, which has more layers than one initially assumes, and it is obvious that Antoine de Saint-Exupéry put a lot of himself in *The Little Prince*; this is reflected in the very last sentence of the presented “lost chapter”.

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- [1] Augustus De Morgan. “Sir W. R. Hamilton”. *Gentleman’s Magazine, New Series*, Volume 1 (January–June 1866), pages 128–134. Available at <https://archive.org/details/gentlemansmagazi220hatt>, last accessed on July 26, 2021.
- [2] Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and Consuelo de Saint-Exupéry, *Correspondance: 1930-1944* (in French), Gallimard, 2021.