

The Fox 18

Chapter 18: The Devil's Geometrical Drawing

Joseph knew that Cullen was quite skeptical about what he called "geometric drawing," and perhaps the true pioneer of "geometric drawing" was Montgri, who, being a child prodigy himself, was less doubtful about others of his age creating similar techniques.

In his previous life, Joseph had indeed studied geometric drawing. He believed that over hundreds of years of development, the geometric drawing of the future would certainly have seen more progress compared to what was known at this time. However, he had no idea how advanced Montgri's original geometric drawing had become. Joseph thought for a moment and realized that some of the techniques involving projection transformation were probably developed in the future. He carefully recalled them and began to explain.

The Duke of Orleans listened with great interest, and when Joseph temporarily paused, he turned to Montgri and asked, "Mr. Montgri, how does Joseph's method compare to yours?"

"It's quite similar," Montgri replied. After he finished, he glanced around and suddenly realized that his words might imply that Joseph didn't create the geometric drawing. He quickly added, "But there are some differences. For example, his approach to handling maps using projection transformations is very interesting, something I hadn't thought of before. Maps created this way are more practical. Mr. Bonaparte, though his principles are fundamentally similar to mine, his method is even more practical than mine. Mr. Bonaparte, you are truly a mathematical genius!"

Montgri's geometric drawing had always been a well-kept secret, so even the few others in the room who hadn't had much contact with it before were now less suspicious after hearing Montgri's words.

"Joseph, I never thought you were a mathematical genius. I think I heard you were still in secondary school the last time," the Duke of Charles suddenly struggled to remember which school Joseph attended.

"It's the School of Emperor Louis, Your Grace. Joseph and my nephew Armand are classmates," Lavasse added with a smile.

"Yes, that's right. I saw him with Armand the last time," the Duke of Charles said appreciatively, looking at Joseph. "To have young people like you emerging continuously is France's fortune. But to achieve such results and not receive the recognition you deserve, even living in poverty, that's unfair. I think we should compensate Joseph for this."

Condorcet nodded, "I believe Joseph's thesis is highly debatable, and he should at least win this competition and receive the 600 francs prize."

Because the Duke of Orleans mentioned compensation, not even Cullen and Montgri opposed it.

"That's too little," the Duke of Charles was not satisfied.

"Your Grace, you need not worry. Talent like this won't be buried," Condorcet said, "Once this thesis is published, and the experiment on the speed of light is completed, I think Joseph can secure a teaching position at the University of Paris, or even here. Joseph, I heard you're about to graduate. Interested? I can provide you with a letter of recommendation."

Before Joseph could reply, Montgri interjected, "Joseph has great talent in geometric drawing, but it's a closely guarded technique. If he goes to the University of Paris, he won't be able to conveniently research it. That would be a pity. The Paris Military Academy is looking for a teacher to instruct geometric drawing, and they've asked me for a recommendation. Why don't I and Mr. Laplace recommend him to the Paris Military Academy to teach mathematics? I think that's even better. I can also secure more funding for him, and he'll have a higher income compared to the University of Paris. Joseph, what do you think?"

In terms of reputation alone, the University of Paris was undoubtedly more prestigious. However, when it came to income, it was true, as Montgri said, that teaching at the Paris Military Academy would be more lucrative. Additionally, Joseph knew that a revolution was about to break out, and in a revolution, various factions jockeyed for power, with today's royalists hanging banners on lampposts and tomorrow's revolutionaries using the guillotine. Paris University was the center where all political currents converged, and going there might mean getting involved in uncontrollable political struggles for some reason. In comparison, the Paris Military Academy was much safer. Furthermore, entering the military system would prepare him for the future.

Thinking about all of this, Joseph said to Montgri, "Thank you very much for your recommendation, Mr. Condorcet. However, I'm more inclined to Mr. Montgri's suggestion. My father just passed away, and I have several younger brothers who need education. I'm in great need of money right now. Besides, my younger brother, Napoleon, is at the Paris Military Academy. He's a troublemaker, and I think I can keep a closer eye on him there."

Upon hearing this, everyone burst into laughter. The Duke of Charles even said, "It seems like all older brothers always think their younger brothers are troublemakers. I can imagine that for the younger brother, entering the classroom and finding that the teacher is his own older brother would be quite an experience..."

"Let's get back to the experiment on the speed of light," Laplace interrupted.

"Of course, let's continue..."

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Two days after this visit, Joseph received a letter from the French Academy of Sciences, informing him that his thesis had won the competition and awarded him 600 francs.

This prize money made Joseph's life considerably more comfortable. Two more days passed, and he received a letter from Montgri. In this thick letter, Montgri informed Joseph that the Academy of Sciences had completed the preparations for the speed of light experiment. They planned to conduct the experiment ten days later, on a moonless night, at a castle owned by the Duke of Orleans

At the end of the letter, Montgri told Joseph that he and Laplace had recommended him. They believed that in a few days, he would receive a letter from the Paris Military Academy. Once he graduated, he could report to the academy.

Joseph was elated upon receiving the letter, but unfortunately, Napoleon was not with him to share in his joy. However, the thought of appearing in uniform in Napoleon's classroom and challenging him with complex problems on the chalkboard made Joseph even happier. Just the thought brought joy.

In addition to this, with money in hand, Joseph immediately recalled the classic line from "Water Margin" by Lu Da: "The taste of meat is still in my mouth!" Joseph calculated that he could afford a good meal in a restaurant for just two francs. However, considering Napoleon was not around, he couldn't leave his younger brother behind to dine alone. So, he had to endure a bit longer since the weekend was just a few days away. By the weekend, he and Napoleon could enjoy a great meal together.

The only unfortunate part was that Joseph passed by several restaurants on his way to school, and by the standards of the time, they weren't too expensive. The delicious aroma of meat soup wafting from those restaurants was increasingly irresistible. Joseph tried to walk faster, but the scent seemed to transform into elastic ropes, pulling him back. He struggled to break free and finally arrived at school, nearly late for class for the first time in his life. Fortunately, the teacher, with his extremely poor eyesight, didn't notice him and allowed him to sneak into the classroom.

So, he managed to endure until the weekend. Typically, Napoleon would walk to Joseph's place after school to save money. Considering the distance, he should arrive around 5 PM, which would be the perfect time for a good meal. Joseph had already informed Father Jacques that he and Napoleon would go out for a meal together tonight, so nobody, including Father Jacques, would need to eat dry black bread today.

However, Napoleon arrived quite late, nearly around 7 PM, and by this time, all the restaurants on the street had already closed. This was not an era known for its vibrant nightlife. Father Jacques, who had been too hungry to wait, had already eaten half a piece of leftover dry bread with water.

"Why are you so late?" Joseph asked, trying to suppress his annoyance.

"Some guy invited me to dinner," Napoleon said.

"Damn, you actually had dinner?" Joseph, who was starving, was almost unable to contain his anger. "Wait a moment... someone actually invited you to dinner? I heard your popularity at school is quite low."

"I helped him with his math homework," Napoleon proudly said.

"But I'm starving," Joseph said, his hunger preventing him from even being interested in showing off his prize money to Napoleon.

"You're waiting for me to eat together?" Napoleon was surprised. "Isn't it just two pieces of black bread? Do you really need to wait?"

"Fine, you'll eat black bread tomorrow!" Joseph said through gritted teeth.