



Mathematics and the Real World: The Remarkable Role of Evolution in the Making of Mathematics

Zvi Artstein

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In this accessible and illuminating study of how the science of mathematics developed, a veteran math researcher and educator looks at the ways in which our evolutionary makeup is both a help and a hindrance to the study of math.

Artstein chronicles the discovery of important mathematical connections between mathematics and the real world from ancient times to the present. The author then describes some of the contemporary applications of mathematics—in probability theory, in the study of human behavior, and in combination with computers, which give mathematics unprecedented power.

The author concludes with an insightful discussion of why mathematics, for most people, is so frustrating. He argues that the rigorous logical structure of math goes against the grain of our predisposed ways of thinking as shaped by evolution, presumably because the talent needed to cope with logical mathematics gave the human race as a whole no evolutionary advantage. With this in mind, he offers ways to overcome these innate impediments in the teaching of math.

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