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# Gooney Ducks and Naked Physicists

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Part XXXV  
Glunk in the Trunk?

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**April 2018**

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Abstract: An allegory of modern science.

*Part XXXV*

(quirky space music)...*I was born on a sleepy little celestial orbit. As a child, my father (who was a Glink salesman, with territories on Venus, Jupiter, and other surrounding asteroids) used to take me on long weekend trips...Oh, what fun! Just Dad and I, shooting through the silent red nights. Cutting through the canals with the spray making gigantic pink rainbows.*

(Ahh, those were the days. Now, all you see are those billboards with that crazy slogan: "Get Drunk as a Skunk on Glunk!" Call me sentimental, but Glink is still my drink!)

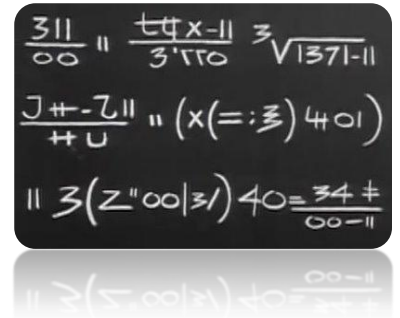
What an image: "My Favorite Martian" whizzing through the cosmos with a nine-pack of Glink in the trunk, happily singing, "*All the girls on the moon look lovely in June.*"

Yessiree, I'll always fondly remember sitting in the glow of the "tube", sharing a plate of Mom's brownies with my friends, watching the old sci-fi shows. But that was then.

What about the future? I once read somewhere, "The future cannot be predicted but it can be invented." So what kind of future do I want to invent?

More important: how do I invent the future I imagine?

Hmm...Maybe it's like a formula for a sci-fi story. To imagine a Martian, and imagine what a Martian might imagine, I'd have to imagine a Martian's math. Instead of, "How much wood can a woodchuck chuck?" I'd ask, "How many Glinks can a Martian drink, if a Martian could drink Glink?" And what would math on Mars look like? How would they solve the problems of the universe? How would they calculate the unknown "x"?



Frankly, I can't imagine a future without math. Why is the earth the third rock from the sun? Why is it round and not square? Why on earth would a Martian drink a nine-pack of Glink? I don't have the answers for these unanswered questions of sci-fi and science.

But amid all the uncertainty, I do know one thing for sure and certain: I think mathematically.

So if I wanna invent a new future, do I have to invent a new math? Why not? Maybe by inventing a new way of looking at reality, I can reinvent reality, itself! In Switzerland, they've dug a tunnel and stretched out a cyclotron trying to alter time and space. But man, all I've got is a rusty shovel in the back of my pickup. My contribution to science? What can I do? Maybe if I create a new math I can create a new future. There ya go! And with a new math, maybe I can answer all the questions, solve all the problems of the universe!

Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird...it's a plane...No, it's that math-o-man superhero again!

But hold on: If I create a New Math, what do I do with the Old Math?

Yeah, Mr. Bradbury (my fellow “sci-fi guy”):

*What if you had an acre of junk in your backyard? Would you be tempted to weld it all together and take a journey to the moon?*

Now there’s a mathematical metaphor! Picture it! There I am, me and my faithful junk-yard dog Einie. I don my hard hat, fire up the front-end loader, and pile up all the math, from all civilizations throughout history into one big scrap heap—a mountain of math.

What a pile! Like it says in Wikipedia: *Mathematics has been a human activity from as far back as written records exist. The research required to solve mathematical problems can take years or even centuries of sustained inquiry.*

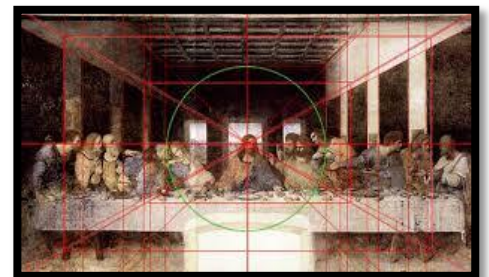
Centuries of inquiry? Mighty Methuselah! I’ll have to check my calendar! But now that I have it all in one huge heap... looks more like one ginormous problem! Aha! Forest for the trees? Eureka! That’s it! Maybe all the problems of math are just *one* big problem! And all the mathematicians throughout the ages have been working on the same problem as me—trying to find a way to express and understand natural math! How ’bout that!



But did the pile just get bigger and profounder? Raphael painted a picture of the history of all philosophy and science encompassed in a perspective of mathematics. Da Vinci painted God at the center, and math the connection between God and man.

Holy math renaissance! There’s more to this math stuff than I thought! Arithmetic, geometry, pyramids, planets orbiting the sun, the Fibonacci numbers of petals on a daisy (she loves me, she loves me not), the double spirals of a sunflower...that’s only the half of it!

Get the whole picture? See how the other half lives? I wanna take the next step: reverse the perspective of the camera obscura and see the fantastic, unexplored math within!



So, writin’ a New Math ain’t so hard after all! I’ve already created my first equation/problem: How do I add the math of the future to the math of the past? How do I paint the natural math of the mind onto the scientific canvas? Oooh...there’s a challenge and a half!