

**ZMATH 2015a.00113**

**Schreiber, Alfred**

**The disappointed cognition. Paramathematical object lessons. (Die enttäuschte Erkenntnis. Paramathematische Denkzettel.)**

EAGLE 68. EAGLE-Essay. Leipzig: Edition am Gutenbergplatz Leipzig (EAGLE) (ISBN 978-3-937219-68-4/pbk). 211 p. (2013).

This is a collection of 36 contributions to a column of the ‘Mitteilungen der Deutschen Mathematikervereinigung’. In the introduction, the author explains ‘paramathematics’ to mean a discourse that is usually put aside in mathematics, which is to be taken in a very broad sense, including, but not restricted to ‘questioning common skew perspectives on mathematics, exaggeration in its self-perception or self-portrayal, false estimations of its educational potential or its epistemological range’. What follows is a number of brief (typically 3–5 pages) reflections connecting mathematics with e.g. history, art, sociology, architecture, literature, music, computer science, philosophy, pedagogics and didactics and commenting on various approaches to and views of mathematics. These reflections are written in a casual, lively style and in general quite entertaining. It is not often that a discussion of the quadratic formula makes you laugh out loudly, but Chapter 7 achieved just that for me. According to the blurb, the author takes an ‘undisciplined’ perspective, which describes the merits of this book as well as its downside. One might object to the way in which potentially controversial claims are put forward in a rather nonchalant style without explanation or justification; e.g. the claim that it harms logic to regard Kant’s transcendental logic as a part of it or that Cantor’s paradise is a ‘numinous area’ that ‘turned out to be an uninhabitable utopia’; at some points, the lively style almost borders on the pretentious. All in all, one gets an amusing, nicely flowing and creative reading experience with numerous hints to e.g. books, artists and thoughts that might be worthy of being considered further – possibly in a more ‘disciplined’ way. The book is written in German.

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