

## **The Little Prince: A Gylanic Boy looking for Partnership**

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### **A vision of the essential**

It is widely known that *The Little Prince* is a blonde young boy coming from a mysterious asteroid named B612. The short novel, by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, was firstly published in 1943 in English and French and that prince is still the hero of a best-selling book, translated in more than 70 languages and celebrating its 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The adventures narrated in the novel concern “the essential”, the spiritual core force of human individuals, but at the same time the prince’s storytelling and the pilot’s narrating become, in the end, a message about a self-educating conscience and about the invisible and forgotten *partnership* reflected in human relationships.

In the novel, the prince’s adventures are narrated by the pilot-writer who met him in the Sahara Desert, where he crashed with his airplane. The encounter between the pilot and the prince is narrated as a sudden vision, so impressive that the author decides later to validate his experience by integrating in each chapter some drawings. In this way, the whole story-telling acquires a deeper sense of authenticity. Indeed, pictures engage a wider sensorial perception, images can support a direct and subjective impression of what is verbally described. This is confirmed in the first chapter of the novel, where the Pilot-writer of the story ironically affirms to have given up his “wonderful career as a painter” suggesting that in the process of growing up adults prefer the rationality of the scientific and technical way of thinking, rather than trusting their creative and intuitive visions. However, in the whole narration pictures are continually there, in front of the reader’s eyes, to stimulate imagination, to offer a wider perception and understanding of the plot and the characters; eventually, they support a closer, poetic, connection between the narrator and the reader.

As an example, in the effort to draw a sheep, which he admits not being able to, the Pilot manages to draw a box letting the prince imagine the sheep inside and comments: “That is his box. The sheep you want is inside [...] I saw the face of my young judge light up” (Saint-Exupéry 2021: 11). Thanks to this sketch, the pilot-narrator is able to fulfil the prince’s desire: it is an immediate and effective connection letting the prince be able to receive a response from a stranger, living on Earth.

The author is thus telling the reader to “look inside”, to find a subjective perception, using the imagination and the creative skills, because the prince is akin to that language. Moreover, that is an essential theme of the novel, supporting the core message of the prince’s adventure, explained also by the words of the Fox, which concern the ability to look with the eyes of the heart, in order to get to the *essential*, looking beyond appearances and according to one’s own perspective/subjectivity.

In this way, the novel starts with an invitation to have a different perspective, a visual one, to the story narrated in the XXVII chapters, because the way in which a story is interpreted can influence the message and the shared values. In this case, *The Little Prince* has been used both for educational purposes and mediatic entertainment. However, I believe that its core message about love and friendship is in reality strictly connected with the search for a “partnership” (Eisler 1988).

### **A gylanic boy coming from the stars**

The prince is the most important character of the novel and he is a very wise young boy, dressed like an aviator, with a waving yellow scarf, holding a spade pointed downwards. During his trip through the galaxy, he will never use that spade and he will never show a violent or aggressive approach to people. On the contrary, his friendly behaviour is concisely described with a few simple words. During the exploration of the six planets in order to find “some occupation or to educate himself” (Saint-Exupéry 2021: pag. 34), he demonstrates a wise curiosity, a focused will and a strong motivation:

‘But what does ephemeral mean?’ repeated the little prince, who had never in his whole life given up on a question once he had asked it. [...] It was his first impulse of regret. But he took heart again. [...] And the little prince went away, thinking of his flower (Saint-Exupéry 2021: 55).

Furthermore, talking with the bizarre characters doing their alienating job, the prince expects a practical mutual perspective on things from them and reacts with an empathic attitude. When he finds himself embarrassed, he generally smiles and talks to himself, going away. Even if he fails to find a friend, he is conscious of those distorted behaviours of the grown-ups: he finds “odd” the Conceited man, while he defines the lonely King as “strange” and the Lightman as “extraordinary”. Particularly, while visiting the 5<sup>th</sup> planet, inhabited by the Businessman, who is blindly administrating the purchasing of all the stars in the universe, the prince asks him if his work is, like he would have expected, of any “mutual” benefit. Since there is no answer, he goes away concluding that: “Grown-ups are decidedly altogether extraordinary” (Saint-Exupéry 2021: 47).

It could be said that the prince is a star explorer looking for a planet where people are willing to accept a mutual relation of friendship. He is respectful, friendly and caring, completely different from the super-human hero, the fighter or the armed soldier, evoking a masculine and patriarchal father. In this respect, in the novel the archetypal figure of the male dominator appears in chapter XXI, where it is illustrated and described as a fox hunter, having the physical traits of the notorious European dictators of the 1930s. On the contrary, the journey of the prince acquires a universal and authentic meaning once it is related to the search for that peculiar human beings’ function of love and empathy: those mammal species attributes that social and ethology scientists have also found in other animal species, as Eisler reports in *Tomorrow’s Children* (2016).

The little prince’s heroic enterprise is the search for a way to love in a more empowering way, based more on protection and care, rather than on control or on sterile, smart devotion; then, once he has learned the secret of the Fox, he will be able to share and demonstrate the spiritual force of his love. His quest, his psychological traits and attitudes belong more to a female hero rather than a male one. Moreover, in his life experience as a young boy, the prince seems not to be conditioned by the gender role stereotypes: living on asteroid B612 he has learnt a sort of gylanic education and he is self-consciously looking for its actualisation. However, during the exploration of the six asteroids, before landing on planet Earth, he will only meet alienated people, doing nonsense jobs where there is no reciprocity, no mutual development or social empowerment. By moving away from those

planets, it is as if the prince realises and keeps at a distance some aspects of modern civilisation which are the causes for grown-ups to be alienated from their human nature, living as automated beings.

According to the evolutionary model of gylanic societies, in human history there seems to be no partnership represented in those six characters: they are not self-aware and are unable to connect and to speak with the prince. They show the utmost care in doing their job or behaving according to a vicious “canvas” but they are considered by the prince to be meaningless, without any human sense or a real gain.

The little prince has developed his partnership intelligence living on his tiny little planet, which is described in the first chapters of the novel. He lives on the asteroid B612 with other living creatures: three volcanoes, some fast-growing baobabs and his beloved Rose. In this imaginary planet there is no hierarchy but a natural and balanced cohabitation of living creatures; however, there is the risk that some baobabs may grow and the worms, if not taken care of, might endanger the precarious life balance of the tiny rose. The prince is depicted performing carefully his daily routine as a well-educated boy: “‘It’s a question of discipline’ the little prince informed me later on. ‘When you finish washing and dressing each morning, you must carefully wash and dress your planet. [...] It is a very tedious work, but it is very easy’” (Saint-Exupéry 2021: 20).

From the beginning of the story, the prince shows a form of responsibility towards the natural environment of his tiny planet, which is not a Paradise since there are risks and dangers to manage and to care about. Moreover, the prince’s behaviours, thoughts and acts demonstrate that he loves his planet. This is a basic, necessary skill content of the partnership education curriculum, described by Eisler in *Tomorrow’s Children*.

Another important feature of the prince’s psychological profile is the fact that he is conscious of having a problem with his Rose. That is the reason why he decides to leave her, because if he perceives first a strong devotion, a great love, he soon realises that there is a “missing partnership” between them. Indeed, he is obsessed by her needs, he feels oppressed by the Rose’s naughtiness and vanity. So, he decides to move away from her, to keep her at distance in order to find a solution, a change because he “was too young to know how to love her!”.

The prince becomes aware that something is not working in his relationship with the Rose. It is as if the union between mind, body and spirit of both lovers had been violated and something should be restored. As Eisler suggests in *The Power of the Partnership*: the first and most powerful partnership is the partnership with ourselves (Eisler 2018: 46). Thus, the prince’s wisdom lies in the recognition that he needs something new, a change in order to re-establish his inner self-coherence, amongst his mind, his heart and his body.

Besides being a male character, the prince does not have the “masculine” features of the silver prince or the bravery of a conqueror or an explorer. He seems to have the abilities that Eisler considers to be fundamental in *the partnership education core*: he is careful, he loves his planet, his life and Nature. He could be described as a *gylanic boy*. Even if he is dressed like an aviator, the prince is portrayed as a poetic and romantic character: he adores sunsets, he has always a tender smile, he likes talking and drawing. Furthermore, he is fragile but not weak, he knows himself, his actions are not driven by fear or anxiety. On the contrary he is ready to live his adventure, the “adventure of changing”. His personal power is based upon the need to be happy rather than the need to gain pleasure and satisfaction. The care for oneself, for others and for Nature, as Eisler argues in *Tomorrow’s Children* is the “care for life”, the third group of intersectional contents, concerning the life skills and competencies included in the *partnership educational curriculum* (Eisler 2016: 73). That is the reason why *The Little Prince* tells the story of the growing up of a gylanic boy, who looks for a new way to love.

## **The lesson of the fox**

The Fox is a central character in the prince's adventure and in the core meaning of the novel. Indeed, he holds an important message concerning the use of the heart as an "apparatus" to get to the essential. He appears while the prince is exploring planet Earth looking for other human beings, and crying for the first time. Precisely, this is the moment when he needs to be healed and comforted by a "medicine". The Fox is illustrated with long ears, which recall a fennec, the Sahara Desert tiny fox, but also evoke the image of Anubi and the ceremony of the feather, by which the Egyptian god reanimated the soul of the dead; additionally, foxes are animals that dig and live in underground burrows. In this novel, the Fox becomes the ambassador of mother nature, teaching the prince a more empowering way to love. According to the Fox what is essential for the prince to learn is:

First: the act of taming, which means "to create ties", and make daily life as bright as if it is "filled with sunlight", chasing away sadness and loneliness. Once friends or lovers share an experience, they become gradually members of a unit, they are able to recollect and evoke their connection because they know each other more and more. The prince realises that what he had spontaneously learnt on his planet, is now a force ready to be acknowledged as an empowering mutual force and not only as pleasure or desire. And Nature is there to reflect the "radiance" of that loving connection:

And besides, look over there! You see the fields of corn? Well, I don't eat bread. Corn is of no use to me. Corn fields remind me of nothing. Which is sad. On the other hand, your hair is the colour of gold. [...] The corn which is golden, will remind me of you. And I shall come to love the sound of the wind in the field of corn (Saint-Exupéry 2021: 68).

Second: the importance of rituals, which are unconditional, peculiar rules accepted and shared by lovers (or else friends), that have the power to evoke feelings, to nurture relationships over lifetime, by establishing or arranging a sacred space and a sacred time where both partners can meet: "What is a ritual?" said the little prince. 'Something else that is frequently neglected', said the fox. 'It's what makes one day different from the other days, one hour different from the other hours'" (Saint-Exupéry 2021: 71).

Rituals bring happiness for both partners, as they are at the basis of shared information, a virtual connection which will bring self-confidence: "For instance if you come at four in the afternoon, when three o'clock strikes, I shall begin to feel happy" (Saint-Exupéry 2021: 70).

Third: the process of taming and rituals are described as real actions performed by the fox and the prince in order to provide "care", to get to know each other, with patience, respect and a few words. It is a behaviour which engenders the uniqueness and the importance of all the loving actions between partners, which allow the prince to understand the essential nature of his feeling towards his rose: "You can only see things clearly with your heart. What is essential is invisible to the eye" (Saint-Exupéry 2021: 72).

The prince repeats the fox's sentence, as a sort of verbal seal, accepting the responsibility for the creature he has tamed, which will be forever "unique" for him, something exclusively eternal and a constantly renovating memory. Finally, by considering the emptiness of thousand roses in the desert, he concludes that:

You are nothing like my rose. [...] As yet you are nothing at all. Nobody has tamed you, and you have tamed nobody. You are as my fox used to be. He was just a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But I made him my friend, and now he is unique in the world (Saint-Exupéry 2021: 71).

The prince will never doubt about his love. He feels now strong and empowered by it, because instead of using his rational mind, focusing on individual pleasure or sterile devotion, he was taught

by the fox how to re-collect his care for the rose. Additionally, thanks to the process of taming and to rituals, he sees his feeling reflected in the beauty of nature, or the light of the sun. It is as if the whole world holds a potential confirmation of the presence of love, visible to the eyes of the lover and thus “permeating” the whole Universe.

After the teaching of the fox and after having understood the fragile nature of his feeling, the prince has learnt how to self-empower himself without limiting the power of others. Thus, he will have the opportunity to actualise his lesson by befriending the pilot: they are both searching for water in the desert in order to survive and they both wish to get back to their familiar, private, dimension of life.

The maturity and transformation of the prince is at last shortly narrated in chapter XXVI, when he makes arrangements with the snake regarding the end of his earthly experience. The snake has the poison to allow him go back to his asteroid. It represents death, the conclusion of what it is suggested to be the annual life cycle of the prince’s exploration. In fact, in the final chapter and in the epilogue, it is visually confirmed that the prince might be back again on a specific spot of the African desert, under the light of a golden star.

As rituals are means of making blessed time and sacred spaces, of renovating love, they are also sad ceremonies of separation. The disappearing of the prince is not an adventurous finale. His death is a sort of last breathing out before sleep, as a flower that closes his petals at dusk. It is a sort of natural ending, representing once again that the prince as a grown-up child following the rhythms of the Divine Mother, coming to Earth to learn an important lesson.

By acquiring the ability of self-regulation, actualising empathy and giving sense to rituals, human beings can restore and empower their *partnership* with themselves and with others, engaging humanity in the discovery of what “essential love” is. In the end the Little Prince shows to both children and grown-ups an example of interconnection and interdependence, which are the foundations of “care connection”, a human behaviour coming not only from a spiritual source but based on a biological basis (Eisler 2011).

### **A gylanic boy as a source of creativity**

As a character, the Little Prince is an example of the good, educated and empathic boy, travelling through the galaxies in order to find a real friendship and a mutual love. Considering the structure of the novel, the simple plot, the animal characters (helping the hero in a very peculiar way), the imaginary planets inhabited by the bizarre citizens (each living as captive “in their own world”), the prince’s quest acquires a more deep and broader meaning.

The author-pilot, Antoine de Saint Exupéry, has ironically arranged the story-telling by creating two levels of meaning. The first narrative strategy, used expressively by the narrator-pilot, is the integration of his handmade drawings. Indeed, in each chapter the story is supported by one or more pictures, so as to invite young readers and grown-ups to use explicitly their imagination and a more personal interpretation of the “fictional” worlds explored by the prince. Consequently, there is an intention to make the storytelling authentic, in the effort to provide a clearer idea of what is a “real understanding”:

Whenever I came across one who seemed to me at all clear-headed, I would try showing my drawing Number One, which I always kept by me. I wanted to find out if this was somebody with a real understanding. [...] I would place myself on their level (Saint-Exupéry 2021: 7).

Pictures play an important role in this novel as they are not only a structural element to entertain children and readers, but they have the function of modulating the voice of the narration.

Considering also the words of the Fox, the drawings are an invitation to look not only with the eyes (a mere cognitive process) but also to find a vision in terms of feelings, scenery, intentions and behaviours. This personal, creative and wide looking is a process that allows to get to the essential, which means looking at our “inner” perceptions and questioning our spiritual core.

This is a creative, subjective and inclusive vision of the creative process. It is precisely suggested in the epilogue of the story, through a simple childish drawing which ironically depicts the exact place in which the prince might re-appear. The “prepared” scenery is a confirmation that the adventure in the desert, which both the pilot and the prince have experienced in a very interconnected and mutual relationship, is repeatable. It is the vision of a landscape that becomes a real scene, a place where human beings become not only observers but protagonists together with the natural elements. In this context, Nature becomes “the Chalice” which hosts and supports the experience of recollection, creation and formation. Thus, the Prince could be read as a reflection of the narrator-pilot: even if they are strangers, they share the same common creative power. They get to know each other, they share stories and secrets, they hope to find water in the desert. They are both in search of their inner force (the divine source), a solution to all problems, looking through the “eyes” of the heart. What the pilot is narrating is a mutual friendship. The autobiographical clues and references described in the prince’s adventure in the galaxy, and also on planet Earth, reveal an act of creative mirroring of the author-pilot meditation on his divine child, which is a sort of hidden treasure, like water in the desert.

The second clue used by the author to modulate the novel and the adventurous journey of the prince, is the apologetic dedication with which the author decided to publish the book. The author apologises himself for having dedicated the book to an adult and then amends by suggesting that the book is dedicated: “To Léon Werth, when he was a little child”. Just a few words before, he explains that every “grown-up has started off as a child” and “only a few of them remember”. This is the peculiar framework in which the adventure of the prince acquires its symbolic meaning of inner journey towards the divine source. In this way, the pilot learns to trust his heart, his feelings, his imagination rather than committing himself totally to rational thinking, social conditioning or business working.

The prince is the divine child of the man-pilot: a spiritual partnership force, where his Love is rooted (his beloved is in fact a flower) and from where his self-awareness, empathy and responsibility radiate like a sun. The prince is the soul of the pilot because there is a child inside everyone. Ultimately, his book is for those who have forgotten that for each wound there is a gift, lying hidden in the soul: the power of taking care of oneself, then of others and of Nature. Thus, it could be argued that the soul carries its own medicine, a unique creative power, waiting to be discovered.

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