

APICULTURE AND THE EVOLUTION OF BEES



by

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“... the facts now show that whenever Man tries to manipulate these natural forces, matters deteriorate and don't improve.

He does not immediately make things worse but creates obstacles for Nature, even when acting in the best possible way. Man can still remove some obstacles and thereby facilitate something in Nature. This he does remarkably, for example, in apiculture using new hives that are better equipped instead of the old skeps, and so forth.

Here we come to the period of artificial beekeeping. Do not think that I agree, even apart from a scientific-spiritual point of view, that artificial beekeeping is without merit, because it makes things a lot easier; but this is a forced marriage and for a colony of bees, for a generation of bees, long-term injury will result.

In about fifty to eighty years, when certain forces that presently act organically in the hive are mechanised, things will be carried out mechanically.

*That intimate affinity between Queen and swarm that happens when a queen develops regularly is hard to create when we are dealing with a bought queen ...
In time these statements will make more sense...*

Rudolf Steiner Apiculture course - 1923

APICULTURE AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE BEE

Introduction

For many beekeepers apiculture is considered the “poetic art” of agriculture and husbandry. Working with bees is not just a matter of technique and efficiency. Often in a developing relationship with bees *something* is born within us that is not so easy to find in our other tasks.

I do not consider myself a professional beekeeper, but a person who encountered the world of bees in the late 1980's and began to breed and study them, motivated by the thought that bees are extremely important for maintaining balance in Nature.

But when we talk about beekeeping today we are inevitably obliged to speak about *varroa* – the little mite that is destroying our colonies. In Trieste, my home city, we were among the first in Italy to struggle with the problem of varroa and we started to ask about this disease even in the 80s. This issue remains today, so that now we are on a course leading from the past right into the future.

Initially we shall refer to the basis of a conscious beekeeping and then try to support the bee through this tragic moment of its history, identifying both the right roads to take and the more or less illogical offspring of the chemical approach.

Knowledge is the daughter of two sources, and it is more necessary than ever to draw upon both of these sources to really enter the world of the bee. The first is the study of perception, the unrestrained observation of the phenomenon. The other is a way of thinking that can be connected to those observations to be able to extract the drops of truth collectively known as the “laws of nature.”

To draw these two paths together we will, as always in our work, be drawing

upon the indications given by Rudolf Steiner¹. By considering the spiritual aspects of the bee we hope to be able to understand “who is” the bee. We will study the bee on the basis of its behaviour, habits and morphology as we perceive it and from the published observations of experts.

Therefore, we will follow what is reported in beekeeping texts, and we will also refer to the indications that Dr Steiner gave in his course on bees, in the early 1920's².

We must first make an introduction for those who do not know the way we work, so we will briefly summarise some basic concepts.

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¹ Rudolf Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy, was born in Austria in 1861. In addition to thirty written philosophical and anthroposophical works, there are texts of most of his 6000 lectures on the most diverse branches of knowledge. The influence that he gave to art, medicine, science, education and agriculture led to their increasing popularity around the world. He died in 1925 in Dornach (Switzerland), where his Goetheanum is a center of artistic and scientific activities based on anthroposophy.

² See “The Bee” by Rudolf Steiner (Anthroposophical ed.)

1. UNDERSTANDING THE BEE

Our solar system, the Earth, plants, animals, and humans were created at different times, according to a precise plan of evolution. Let's look all the main phases.

1.1 The evolution of the planet Earth

Rudolf Steiner in his book “Occult Science”³ (as in many other texts) talks about the evolution of our planet Earth through four phases.

EVOLUTION-ARY PHASE	PRESENT PLANET (remnant of the evolutionary phase)	GESTURE (specific)	QUALITY (that is manifested)	ELEMENT AND ETHER (that manifested)
OLD SATURN	SATURN	SACRIFICE	TIME	FIRE/WARMTH
OLD SUN	JUPITER	GIFT	SPACE	AIR/LIGHT
OLD MOON	MARS	REFUSAL	MOVEMENT	WATER/ALCHEMICAL
EARTH	EARTH	DEATH	FORM	EARTH/LIFE
FIELD OF LIFE MANIFESTED				NATURE
FIELD OF OBSTRUCTIVE FORCES TOWARDS LIFE				SUB-NATURE

Old Saturn

The first stage of development begins with **warmth**: our whole solar system was a single **huge ball of heat** whose diameter was about that of the orbit of the planet Saturn. This phase is called “**old Saturn**” and the planet that currently “echos” this phase is the present Saturn. The Warmth ether⁴ is the life force that

³See “Occult Science” by Rudolf Steiner (Anthroposophical ed.).

⁴For those who wish to deepen their study of the ethers we recommend Ernst Marti's book, “The Etheric” or “The Forces of Life and Death that interweave Nature” by the Author.

enables birth and the renewal of Life.

During this initial stage some higher beings, which in christian terminology are called “Thrones”, donated will-substance of warmth (not physical) - of which the warmth of willpower is a memory - and that became the impetus which initiated the evolution of our planetary system.

Everything starts from warmth, every manifestation of life begins with the warmth of fire, enthusiasm, the “sacrifice” of these beings. The active force was the power of sacrifice, the offering of the self. Evolution and Time began simultaneously. This thought - even if only mentioned here - will be fundamental to our present study.

Old Sun

After this supersensible manifestation of heat a condensation occurred and this formed gas, air. We no longer just have warmth but also the Air element and the corresponding Light ether: the universe began to shine as the Cherubic beings donated Light from the outside to the Archangels (who were undergoing their “human” phase - which is to say that they were developing their self), which the Archangels received and reflected as light. The Light ether is the life force that allows the engendering of space through the process that governs growth. It gives “extension”.

In Anthroposophical and Rosicrucian terminology this epoch was called the “old Sun” because the universe from then on began to have light. This however has nothing to do with the present Sun. The planet that today delimits this sphere is Jupiter. To the previous “sacrifice” was added the quality of “gift”. As mentioned there was an exchange between the interior of this sphere of Air, and light from without. Therefore there was a mutual exchange, a reciprocal giving, a mutual assistance. In the first phase (old Saturn) there was a sacrifice of self, now there is a mutual exchange. Thinking of the world of bees, one can grasp an image of such a gift in regurgitation, in this strange feeding process in which the bees pass food to each other.

With the appearance and emergence of Space we now have two manifestations: time and space, sacrifice and the giving, Warmth and Light.

Old Moon

In the third evolutionary phase a further condensation occurred bringing about the liquid element - the element of Water. The element of Water and the Alchemical ether thus appear in evolution. By the term “Alchemy” we mean the etheric force that oversees the metabolic processes and all chemical and alchemical reactions. This ether maintains order and distinction in the relationship between the parts of a whole.

This third stage of development is called “old Moon” and the planet which today marks its sphere with its own orbit is Mars. This means that in this sphere, which we call old Moon, the planet Mars is its current marker in the Cosmos. This link between the old Moon and Mars is very important for the bee because it is linked to the pathogenic forces that occur when there is excessive watery forces or when the hive is placed too close to plants related to the Moon (fig, cherry, etc..) or Mars (oak, pear, etc.).

With the old Moon, we are no longer at the stage of sacrifice or gift, but in that of “refusal”. Some of the lunar beings (the luciferic beings) refused to align themselves with the evolution envisaged by the forces of good. Thus began the work of the “obstructive forces”, what is called “the principle of evil” and from this stage onwards these forces have been part of the evolution of our system.

The current phase of evolution: the Earth

The last condensation brings us to the current planet. Now we find the solid state of aggregation (matter as we know it), the ether of Life and, the aristotelian element of Earth which is expressed as the principle of Form.

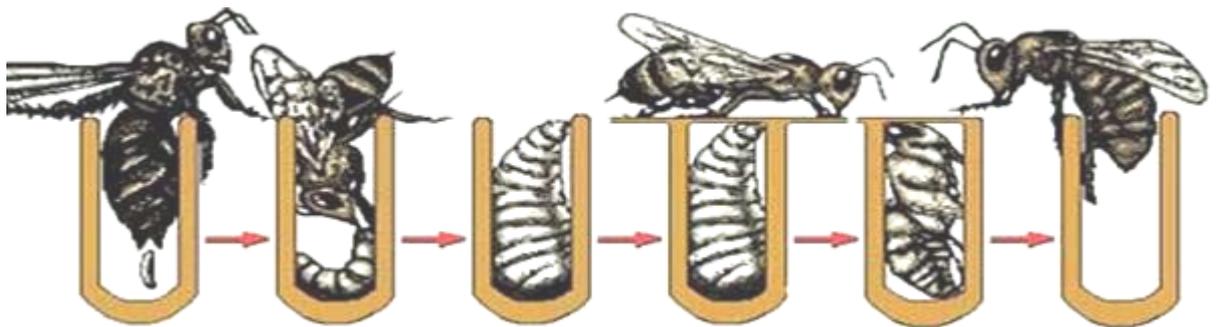
Starting from the element of Warmth (which is absolutely free and imponderable) we have arrived at Form where things are solid, locked and rigid. This occurs particularly in the square form. The square is the epitome of rigid Form. The circle is a dynamic image of the cosmos, of Warmth, because warmth radiates in concentric spheres. Evil (which began to act in the old Moon) became death on Earth. On Earth we are experiencing death, and when we die we will no longer have any of the original Warmth that enables life in us and thus we will be a rigid form as in “rigor mortis”. Throughout our lives we struggle against these extreme forces of Form that will stiffen and lock us up. The older we get the more the principle of Form is felt in us. The child is flexible, its bones are elastic.

Adults on the other hand, as they find out when for example they fall, are brittle and their bones break. The child is also fire, it is warmth. The old man is rigid and cold and seeks out physical warmth.

1.2 Evolution and the life of the bee

The four evolutionary phases of the bee

The bee, like every living thing, shows the four phases of the evolution of Earth during its development. They are: the egg phase (Earth phase), larva phase (old Moon), the pupa phase (old Sun) and the adult phase (old Saturn).



The queen deposits the egg in a hexagonal cell

After the closing the workers feed nurture the larva

The larva grows completely

A workers seals the cell

The larva transforms itself into a pupa

The adults bee leaves the cell

The four evolutionary phases of Egg - Larva - Pupa - Adult

In this process we can see the wonder of creation that manifests the only law that permeates every aspect of it: the law of love.

The bee between warmth and light

We can back up what we have said with evidence of the transitions from Fire/Warmth to Air/Light to Water/Alchemy to Earth/Form in the life of the bee.

In the social life of the bee, so inspired by selfless giving, we will find the aspect of Air/Light. Warmth, as a sacrifice, we find for example in the sacrifice of the workers' sexuality for her love of the hive. This corresponds with the role of the vestal virgins in the ancient world.

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