



The Orbis Pictus (Illustrated)

John Amos Comenius

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When it is remembered that this work is not only an educational classic of prime importance, but that it was the first picture-book ever made for children and was for a century the most popular text-book in Europe, and yet has been for many years unattainable on account of its rarity, the wonder is, not that it is reproduced now but that it has not been reproduced before. But the difficulty has been to find a satisfactory copy. Many as have been the editions, few copies have been preserved. It was a book children were fond of and wore out in turning the leaves over and over to see the pictures. Then as the old copper-plates became indistinct they were replaced by wood-engravings, of coarse execution, and often of changed treatment. Von Raumer complains that the edition of 1755 substitutes for the original cut of the Soul, (No. 43, as here given,) a picture of an eye, and in a table the figures I. I. II. I. I. II., and adds that it is difficult to recognize in this an expressive psychological symbol, and to explain it. In an edition I have, published in Vienna in 1779, this cut is omitted altogether, and indeed there are but 82 in place of the 157 found in earlier editions, the following, as numbered in this edition, being omitted:

1, the alphabet, 2, 36, 43, 45, 66, 68, 75, 76, 78–80, 87, 88, 92–122, 124, 126, 128, 130–141.

On the other hand, the Vienna edition contains a curious additional cut. It gives No. 4, the Heaven, practically as in this edition, but puts another cut under it in which the earth is revolving about the sun; and after the statement of Comenius, “*Coelum rotatur, et ambit terram, in medio stantem*” interpolates: “*prout veteres crediderunt; recentiores enim defendunt motum terrae circa solem*” [as the ancients used to think; for later authorities hold that the motion of the earth is about the sun.]

Two specimen pages from another edition are inserted in Payne’s *Compayré’s History of Education* (between pp. 126, 127). The cut is the representative of No. 103 in this edition, but those who compare them will see not only how much coarser is the execution of the wood-cut Prof. Payne has copied, but what liberties have been taken with the design. The only change in the Latin text, however, is from *Designat Figuras rerum* in the original, to *Figuram rerum designat*.

In this edition the cuts are unusually clear copies of the copper-plates of the first edition of 1658, from which we have also taken the Latin text. The text for the English translation is from the English edition of 1727, in which for the first time the English words were so arranged as to stand opposite their Latin equivalents.

The cuts have been reproduced with great care by the photographic process. I thought best not to permit them to be retouched, preferring occasional indistinctness to modern tampering with the originals that would make them less authentic.

The English text is unchanged from that of the 1727 edition, except in rare instances where substitutions have been made for single words not now permissible. The typography suggests rather than imitates the quaintness of the original, and the paper was carefully selected to produce so far as practicable the impression of the old hand-presses.

In short my aim has been to put within the reach of teachers at a moderate price a satisfactory reproduction of this important book; and if the sale of the *Orbis Pictus* seems to warrant it, I hope subsequently to print as a companion volume the *Vestibulum and Janua* of the same author, of which I have choice copies.

C. W. Bardeen.

Syracuse, Sept. 28, 1887.

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