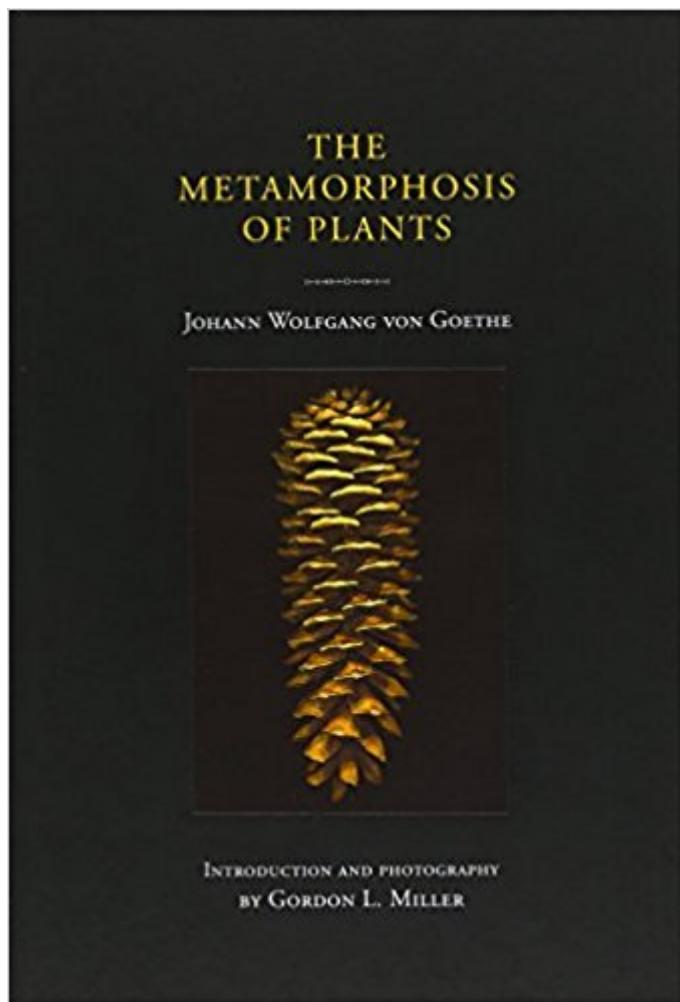


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The Metamorphosis Of Plants (MIT Press)



Synopsis

The Metamorphosis of Plants, published in 1790, was Goethe's first major attempt to describe what he called in a letter to a friend "the truth about the how of the organism." Inspired by the diversity of flora he found on a journey to Italy, Goethe sought a unity of form in diverse structures. He came to see in the leaf the germ of a plant's metamorphosis--"the true Proteus who can hide or reveal himself in all vegetal forms" -- from the root and stem leaves to the calyx and corolla, to pistil and stamens. With this short book -- 123 numbered paragraphs, in the manner of the great botanist Linnaeus -- Goethe aimed to tell the story of botanical forms in process, to present, in effect, a motion picture of the metamorphosis of plants. This MIT Press edition of The Metamorphosis of Plants illustrates Goethe's text (in an English translation by Douglas Miller) with a series of stunning and starkly beautiful color photographs as well as numerous line drawings. It is the most completely and colorfully illustrated edition of Goethe's book ever published. It demonstrates vividly Goethe's ideas of transformation and interdependence, as well as the systematic use of imagination in scientific research -- which influenced thinkers ranging from Darwin to Thoreau and has much to teach us today about our relationship with nature.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Goethe would be delighted with this edition of The Metamorphosis of Plants. It does what he hoped would eventually become possible and provides pictures situated in the text of all the plants to which he refers, so that we can see for ourselves the specific points to which he is drawing our attention.

Reading it, I felt that here at last is the complete book, compared to which all previous publications of it seem like only a skeleton. Thanks to Gordon Miller's wonderful photography and careful selection of images, as well as his perceptive introduction, we can now all appreciate the extraordinary nature of Goethe's achievement. We can only be astonished at the detailed and painstaking observational work, together with the overall vision of the idea of metamorphosis, which biology today recognizes as the truth of the plant. This welcome edition makes Goethe's work more widely available than ever before, both for those who have not yet had the opportunity to read it, and for those who have read it, to read it again as if for the first time. (Henri Bortoft, author of *The Wholeness of Nature and Goethe's Scientific Consciousness*)

Gordon L. Miller teaches in the History Department and is Director of the interdisciplinary Environmental Studies Program at Seattle University.

I have a hard cover copy of this book, even in the age of pdf and kindle. It is the kind of book that you want to own - it is elegant, well bound, and filled with dazzling displays of art. Goethe goes inside of the plant from seed to death and makes us feel the process as if we were the Kantian "Noumena" or thing-in-itself, in this case, the vegetative life-process. As a gardener, my experience is truly uplifted into the sublime as I feel this process, and assume that Goethe was basically saying what all tillers of the soil, even back to Hesiod, felt when witnessing the recurring cycles of vegetation. I only wish I had been taught science this way instead of the drab, Linnaeus-inspired taxonomy as an endless series of lists of Latin names. The Goethean way is the true way to experience nature: magically, yet without priestcraft and superstition. Scientific, yet sublime.

First of all, this is an exceptionally beautiful book: compact in size, but neatly designed and illustrated with many photographs of flowers and plant parts that are printed with stunning clarity and color. The text is scientific but accessible, and because it is broken into short paragraphs, it never seems heavy. Goethe's idea is simple enough: he traces the morphological sequence from the first sprouts to the stem, leaves, flowers, fruit and seed of the next cycle, showing that the same formal principle is carried forth through each stage of the plant's development. Miller's introduction is succinct and illuminating. He also took the photographs and selected the other illustrations, including sketches by Goethe himself. The result is a scholarly treatment that anybody with an interest in plants can enjoy.

According to the publication review, there are pictures. Nothing. I feel gyped. Granted, \$5 is a fancy cup of coffee, but I purchased because there were mention of pictures.

This is a beautiful, rich publication of a classic work. The addition of the photos to illustrate the points Goethe is making is very helpful.

Beautiful, and arrived quickly- thanks !

One of my favorite books of all time. And now, with brilliant photography. Goethe would be proud.

Goethe was not only a brilliant writer; he was probably one of the most original men of his time. Those of you who had read Werther or Faust will now know, because of this book, another of the not-so-well facets of Goethe, which was his passion for science. In this book, which is part of a reflection he had while travelling through Italy (trying to find, among other things, love) and while looking at some flowers in an Italian garden, he had the brilliant idea that a flower is a modified leaf. This becomes part of one of his most interesting ideas about development, which is the evolution of the forms, or the idea that forms are essential to understand plant and animal development. Some of these ideas, which modern plant science has recently demonstrated, are reflected in this book, which was a much needed and serious translation from his original German assay. It is also accompanied by very descriptive and beautiful images representing those flowers he mentions in his book and is also edited in an old style which makes it very appealing. I would say it is a book that is a pleasure to read and to keep!

great book

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