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The Psychology of a Musical Prodigy

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NOTE

It will perhaps interest many people if I here give an account of Erwin's feats of draughtsmanship, which may well serve as an argument for the fact that he may not be considered as predeveloped as regards all the

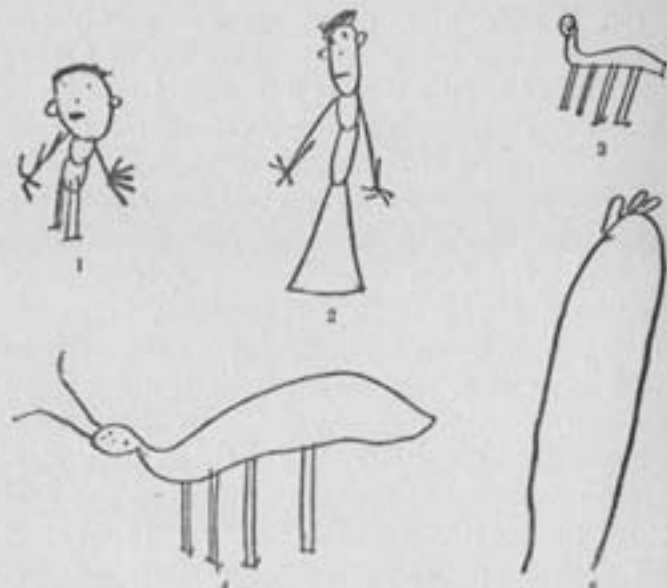


PLATE I.—Drawings made in 1910. Spontaneous Drawings.

utterances of the infantile soul. Indeed it seems as though his achievements in this respect remained below those of less gifted children.¹ In particular, the pictures drawn in 1913 seem to prove this (see

¹ Compare: E. Barnes, "A Study on Children's Drawings," *Pedagogical Seminary*, 1893; H. T. Lukens, "A Study on Children's Drawings in the Early Years," *Ped. Seminary*, 1896; S. Levinstein, *Kinderzeichnungen bis zum 14. Lebensjahr*, Leipzig, 1905.

Plate IV). It is also both instructive and amusing to put the drawings and the compositions side by side and observe the enormous contrast!

On Plate I, I show first, five spontaneous drawings of his. The subjects depicted were: 1, a man; 2, a woman; 3, a dog; 4, a cow; 5, a tree. The drawings in Plate II were copies from drawings. These were:

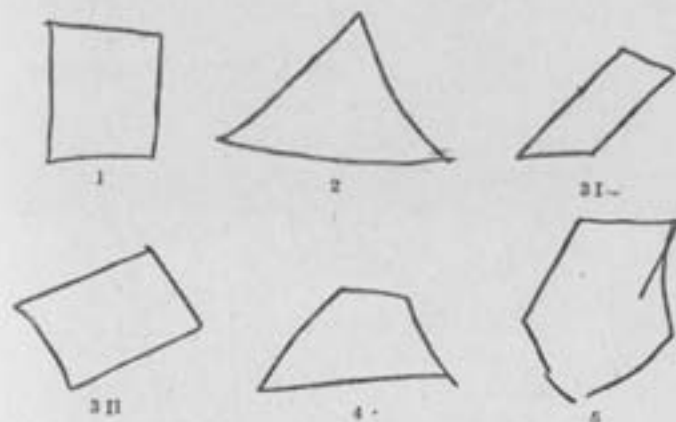


PLATE II.—Copies from Drawings.

1, a square; 2, a triangle; 3, a rhombus; 4, a trapezium; 5, a hexagon. Plate III contains drawings made from *models*. The following objects were given: 1, a table; 2, a chair; 3, a cube; 4, a cylinder of cardboard. Finally Plate IV gives an idea of Erwin's draughtsmanship some years later. Figure 1 is said to be a striking portrait; 2, a silk hat; 3, a table; and 4, a cube, drawn from models. The drawings in the first three Plates were made when he was eight years old, those of the fourth Plate when he was eleven.

What is most characteristic in such drawings of children has been expressed by Katz in the following sentence: "The child does not reproduce what he

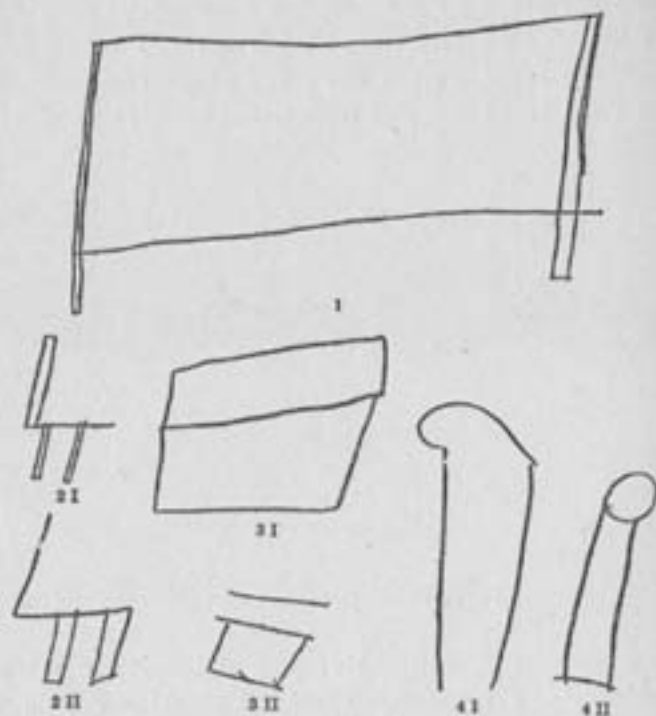


PLATE III.—Drawings after Models.

perceives, but rather what he knows about objects perceived." This peculiarity of infantile draughtsmanship, *viz.* that the child in his drawings illustrates his own knowledge about things, is already apparent in drawings of objects of two dimensions, and is seen still more clearly in drawings representing objects of three

dimensions. As good examples, the cow (Plate I), the table and the silk hat (Plate IV) may be quoted; also a house in which, as well as the house front, the cellars are portrayed (not reproduced), and the table (Plate III) which is drawn with two legs only, but in which, on the other hand, the objective proportions of the flat top are strongly accentuated, while the perspective is altogether neglected. In the drawings 3 and 4 of Plate III, a compromise was effected between the

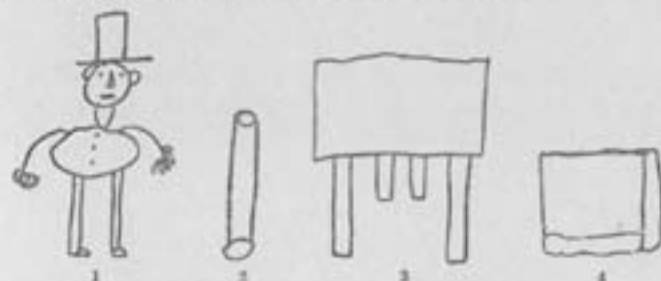


PLATE IV.—Drawings made in 1913.

child's knowledge of objects (i.e. of what he believes actually exists in the object) and what he saw directly. In the case of the cube I the objective proportions of the dimensions and the objective position of the lid were observed. In the case of cube II the perceptual content was exceeded to an even greater degree, for the upper plane is simply alluded to by a parallel line. In depicting the cylinder, the knowledge that the top is of circular form is expressed by a circle; the complex of actual perception, on the other hand, is expressed by the fact that Erwin has only drawn one circle and a sharply cut-off base line. The

Example 4.

VARIATIONS ON AN ORIGINAL THEME.
Composed at the age of 8. (11th August 1910.)

Theme.

musical notation for the Theme, measures 1-4. Treble and bass clefs, common time signature. Dynamics: *mf*.

musical notation for the Theme, measures 5-8. Treble and bass clefs, common time signature.

Var. I.

musical notation for Variation I, measures 1-4. Treble and bass clefs, common time signature. Dynamics: *mf*.

Var. II.

musical notation for Variation II, measures 1-4. Treble and bass clefs, common time signature.

musical notation for Variation II, measures 5-8. Treble and bass clefs, common time signature.

Var. III.

musical notation for Variation III, measures 1-4. Treble and bass clefs, common time signature. Dynamics: *f marcato*.

musical notation for Variation III, measures 5-8. Treble and bass clefs, common time signature.

Example 5.

SPRING SONG.

Composed at the age of 8. (November 1910.)

musical notation for Example 5, measures 1-4. Treble and bass clefs, common time signature.

musical notation for Example 5, measures 5-8. Treble and bass clefs, common time signature.

musical notation for Example 5, measures 9-12. Treble and bass clefs, common time signature.

musical notation for Example 5, measures 13-16. Treble and bass clefs, common time signature.

musical notation for Example 5, measures 17-20. Treble and bass clefs, common time signature.

Example 11.

PLAINTIVE SOUNDS.

Composed at the age of 11. (September 1913.)

p molto espressivo

tr

tr

sempre tenuto

Example 12.

ADAGIO FROM A DRAMATIC SONATA.

Composed at the age of 12. (April 1914.)

molto rit.

lento e mesto