

*My Destination | Der Aufbruch (1920)*

*Franz Kafka*

I gave orders for my horse to be brought from the stable. The servant did not understand me. I myself went into the stable, saddled my horse and mounted. In the distance I heard a trumpet blast. I asked him what this meant. He knew nothing and had heard nothing. At the gate he stopped me, asking: "Where are you riding to, sir?"

"I don't know," I said, "Only away-from-here, only away-from-here. Always now away-from-here, only by doing so can I reach my destination."

"So you know your destination?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered, "didn't I say so? Away-From-Here, that is my destination."

"You have no provisions with you," he said.

"I don't need any," I said, "The journey is so long that I must die of hunger if I don't find any along the way. No provisions can save me. It is luckily a truly immense journey."

Ich befahl mein Pferd aus dem Stall zu holen. Der Diener verstand mich nicht. Ich ging selbst in den Stall, sattelte mein Pferd und bestieg es. In der Ferne hörte ich eine Trompete blasen, ich fragte ihn, was das bedeutete. Er wusste nichts und hatte nichts gehört. Beim Tore hielt er mich auf und fragte: »Wohin reitet der Herr?« »Ich weiß es nicht«, sagte ich, »nur weg von hier, nur weg von hier. Immerfort weg von hier, nur so kann ich mein Ziel erreichen.« »Du kennst also dein Ziel«, fragte er. »Ja«, antwortete ich, »ich sagte es doch: ›Weg-von-hier‹ – das ist mein Ziel.« »Du hast keinen Eßvorrat mit«, sagte er. »Ich brauche keinen«, sagte ich, »die Reise ist so lang, daß ich verhungern muß, wenn ich auf dem Weg nichts bekomme. Kein Eßvorrat kann mich retten. Es ist ja zum Glück eine wahrhaft ungeheure Reise.«

*Der Grüne Heinrich / The Green Henry (1855)*

*Gottfried Keller*

Heinrich Lee walked with rapid steps to the post office and a few minutes later, was sitting on the heavy-rolling wagon, riding over the bridge and next to the river through the valley, his enthusiastic eyes looking expectantly at the open field. For some half of onlookers, this strange young man, still with a primrose in his cap, must have had an air of something inspiring, but for the other half he likely would have seemed ridiculous. While appearing sensitive and clever, he was somehow odd and clumsy at the same time. Who he actually was and what he wanted—that is something we must experience and live through along with him. That it was impossible for anyone to truly know in this moment grieved his mother enough already.

Als Heinrich Lee mit schnellen Schritten nach dem Posthause hinlief und einige Minuten darauf, oben auf dem schwerfälligen Wagen sitzend, über die Brücke und neben dem Flusse das enge Tal entlangfuhr, mit begeisterten Augen das offene Land erwartend, die Primel noch auf seiner Mütze da konnte dieser sonderbare Bursche für die Hälfte der Zuschauer etwas vorteilhaft Anregendes, aber gewiß auch für die andere Hälfte etwas ungemein Lächerliches haben. Feingefühlig und klug sah er darein, jedoch sein Äußeres war zugleich seltsam und unbeholfen. Was er eigentlich war und wollte, das müssen wir mit ihm selbst zuerst erfahren und erleben; daß man es in jenem Augenblick nicht recht wissen konnte, machte seiner Mutter genugsamen Kummer.

### *Emile, or On Education (1762)*

*Jean-Jacques Rousseau*

I do not consider our ridiculous colleges [Footnote: There are teachers dear to me in many schools and especially in the University of Paris, men for whom I have a great respect, men whom I believe to be quite capable of instructing young people, if they were not compelled to follow the established custom. I exhort one of them to publish the scheme of reform which he has thought out. Perhaps people would at length seek to cure the evil if they realised that there was a remedy.] as public institutes, nor do I include under this head a fashionable education, for this education facing two ways at once achieves nothing. It is only fit to turn out hypocrites, always professing to live for others, while thinking of themselves alone. These professions, however, deceive no one, for

every one has his share in them; they are so much labour wasted.

Our inner conflicts are caused by these contradictions. Drawn this way by nature and that way by man, compelled to yield to both forces, we make a compromise and reach neither goal. We go through life, struggling and hesitating, and die before we have found peace, useless alike to ourselves and to others.

There remains the education of the home or of nature; but how will a man live with others if he is educated for himself alone? If the twofold aims could be resolved into one by removing the man's self-contradictions, one great obstacle to his happiness would be gone. To judge of this you must see the man full-grown; you must have noted his inclinations, watched his progress, followed his steps; in a word you must really know a natural man. When you have read this work, I think you will have made some progress in this inquiry.

In the social order where each has his own place a man must be educated for it. If such a one leave his own station he is fit for nothing else. His education is only useful when fate agrees with his parents' choice; if not, education harms the scholar, if only by the prejudices it has created. In Egypt, where the son was compelled to adopt his father's calling, education had at least a settled aim; where social grades remain fixed, but the men who form them are constantly changing, no one knows whether he is not harming his son by educating him for his own class.

What must be done to train this exceptional man! We can do much, but the chief thing is to prevent anything being done. To sail against the wind we merely follow one tack and another; to keep our position in a stormy sea we must cast anchor. Beware, young pilot, lest your boat slip its cable or drag its anchor before you know it.

In the natural order men are all equal and their common calling is that of manhood, so that a well-educated man cannot fail to do well in that calling and those related to it. It matters little to me whether my pupil is intended for the army, the church, or the law. Before his parents chose a calling for him nature called him to be a man. Life is the trade I would teach him. When he leaves me, I grant you, he will be neither a magistrate, a soldier, nor a priest; he will be a man. All that becomes a man he will learn as quickly as another. In vain will fate change his station, he will always be in his right place. "Occupavi te, fortuna, atque cepi; omnes-que aditus tuos interclusi, ut ad me aspirare non posses." The real object of our study is

man and his environment. To my mind those of us who can best endure the good and evil of life are the best educated; hence it follows that true education consists less in precept than in practice. We begin to learn when we begin to live; our education begins with ourselves, our first teacher is our nurse. The ancients used the word "Education" in a different sense, it meant "Nurture." "Educat obstetrix," says Varro. "Educat nutrix, instituit paedagogus, docet magister." Thus, education, discipline, and instruction are three things as different in their purpose as the dame, the usher, and the teacher. But these distinctions are undesirable and the child should only follow one guide.

We must therefore look at the general rather than the particular, and consider our scholar as man in the abstract, man exposed to all the changes and chances of mortal life. If men were born attached to the soil of our country, if one season lasted all the year round, if every man's fortune were so firmly grasped that he could never lose it, then the established method of education would have certain advantages; the child brought up to his own calling would never leave it, he could never have to face the difficulties of any other condition. But when we consider the fleeting nature of human affairs, the restless and

uneasy spirit of our times, when every generation overturns the work of its predecessor, can we conceive a more senseless plan than to educate a child as if he would never leave his room, as if he would always have his servants about him? If the wretched creature takes a single step up or down he is lost. This is not teaching him to bear pain; it is training him to feel it.

People think only of preserving their child's life; this is not enough, he must be taught to preserve his own life when he is a man, to bear the buffets of fortune, to brave wealth and poverty, to live at need among the snows of Iceland or on the scorching rocks of Malta. In vain you guard against death; he must needs die; and even if you do not kill him with your precautions, they are mistaken. Teach him to live rather than to avoid death: life is not breath, but action, the use of our senses, our mind, our faculties, every part of ourselves which makes us conscious of our being. Life consists less in length of days than in the keen sense of living. A man maybe buried at a hundred and may never have lived at all. He would have fared better had he died young.

[.....]

The only habit the child should be allowed to contract is that of having no habits; let him be carried on either arm, let him be accustomed to offer either hand, to use one or other indifferently; let him not want to eat, sleep, or do anything at fixed hours, nor be unable to be left alone by day or night. Prepare the way for his control of his liberty and the use of his strength by leaving his body its natural habit, by making him capable of lasting self-control, of doing all that he wills when his will is formed.

*Wayfinding from Afar?*

*Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë (1847)

“I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will.”

*Watching the moon from Thornfield:*

“I watched her come, watched with the strangest anticipation; as though some word of doom were to be written on her disk. She broke forth as never moon yet burst from cloud: a hand first penetrated the sable folds and waved them away; then, not a moon, but a white human form shone in the azure, inclining a glorious brow earthward. It gazed and gazed on me. It spoke to my spirit: immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart—

‘My daughter, flee temptation!’

‘Mother, I will.’ (358)

*Madame Bovary*, Gustave Flaubert (1856)

*After the wedding:*

She thought, sometimes, that, after all, this was the happiest time of her life—the honeymoon, as people called it. To taste the full sweetness of it, it would have been necessary doubtless to fly to those lands with sonorous names where the days after marriage are full of laziness most suave. In post chaises behind blue silken curtains to ride slowly up steep road, listening to the song of the postilion re-echoed by the mountains, along with the bells of goats and the muffled sound of a waterfall; at sunset on the shores of gulfs to breathe in the perfume of lemon trees; then in the evening on the villa-terraces above, hand in hand to look at the stars, making plans for the future. It seemed to her that certain places on earth must bring happiness, as a plant peculiar to the soil, and that cannot thrive elsewhere. [...]

Perhaps she would have liked to confide all these things to someone. But how to express an undefinable uneasiness, variable as the clouds, unstable as the winds?

Words failed her—the opportunity, the courage.