# Egyptians are one day going to fly

Richard Bach

They could have done it, the Carthaginians. Or the Etruscans, or the Egyptians. Four thousand years ago, five thousand years ago, they could have flown.

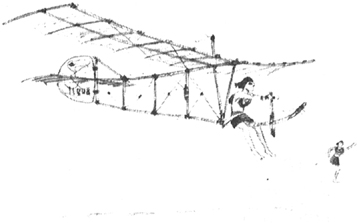
If you and I were living then, knowing what we know, we could have built an all-wood airframe—cedar, bamboo for spars and ribs, fastened together with dowel pins, glued with casein glue, lashed with thongs, covered with paper or light fabric, painted with root starch. Braided cords for control cables, wood-and-leather hinges, the whole affair light and wide-winged. We wouldn’t have needed any metal at all, not even wire, and we could get along as well without rubber or plexiglass.

We might have built the first one swiftly, crude but strong, launched on rails down a hillside into the wind, turning at once into the ridge lift to fly for an hour. Cautious forays, maybe, to hunt thermals.

Then we would have gone back to the shop, having proved it possible, and alone or with Pharaoh’s skilled technicians we could have advanced from glider to sailplane to fleets of sailplanes. Learning the principles, the men around us would have discovered flight, would have helped the art in their own way, and before too many years we’d be soaring twenty thousand feet high, flying two hundred miles cross-country, and farther.

Meanwhile, for fun, we’d start to work on metals and fuels and engines.

It was possible, all those years ago, it could have been done. But it wasn’t. Nobody applied the principles of flight because nobody understood them and nobody understood them because nobody believed flight was possible for human beings.



But no matter what people believed or didn’t believe, the principles were there. A cambered airfoil in moving air produces lift, whether the air moves today, a thousand years from now, or ten thousand years ago. The principle doesn’t care. It knows itself, and is always true.

It’s us, it’s all mankind that cares, that stands to gain all kinds of freedom from the knowing. Believe that some good thing is possible, find the principle that makes it so, put the principle into practice, and voilà! Freedom!

Time means nothing. Time is just the way we measure the gaps between not knowing something and knowing it, or not doing something and doing it. The little Pitts Special biplane, built now in garages and basements around the world, would have been proof of miraculous God-power a century ago. This century there are scores of Pitts Specials in the air, and nobody considers their flight supernatural. (Except those of us to whom a double vertical snap roll followed by an outside square loop to a lomcevak have been supernatural right from the start.)

For more of us than care to admit, I’ll bet, the ideal of flight lies beyond even a Pitts Special. Some of us just might nourish a secret thought that the very best kind of flying would be to get rid of the airplane altogether, to find a principle, somehow, that would turn us loose all alone in the sky. The skydivers, who have come closest to the secret, also come right straight down, which doesn’t quite qualify as flying.

With the mechanical things, the lifting platforms, the rocket belts, the dream is gone—without the tin you’re dead, run out of fuel and down you go.

I propose that one day we find a way to fly without airplanes. I propose that right now a principle exists that makes this not only possible, but simple. There are those who say that now and then through history it’s already been done. I don’t know about that, but I think that the answer lies in somehow harnessing the power that put the whole unseen universe together, that power of which the law of aerodynamics is only an expression in a way that we can see with our eyes, measure with our dials, and touch with the clumsy crude iron of our flying machines.

If the answer to harnessing this power lies beyond machinery, then it must lie within our thought. The researchers in extrasensory perception and telekinesis, as well as those who practice philosophies suggesting man as an unlimited idea of primal power, are on an interesting path. Maybe there are people flying all over laboratories this moment. I refuse to say it’s impossible, though for the moment it would look supernatural. In just the same way that our first glider would have looked scary-weird to the Egyptians standing all heavy and small in the valley.

For the time being, while we work on the problem, the old rough fabric-steel substitute called “airplane” will have to stand between us and the air. But sooner or later—I can’t help but believe it—all us Egyptians are somehow going to fly.