

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXTERNALIZATION

FANTASY FIGURES AND EVENTS

A young child's mind contains a rapidly expanding collection of often ill-assorted and only partially integrated impressions: some correctly seen aspects of reality, but many more elements completely dominated by fantasy. Fantasy fills the huge gaps in a child's understanding which are due to the immaturity of his thinking and his lack of pertinent information. Other distortions are the consequence of inner pressures which lead to misinterpretations of the child's perceptions.

The normal child begins his fantasizing with some more or less correctly observed segment of reality, which may evoke such strong needs or anxieties in him that he gets carried away by them. Things often become so muddled in his mind that he is not able to sort them out at all. But some orderliness is necessary for the child to return to reality not weakened or defeated, but strengthened by this excursion into his fantasies.

Fairy tales, proceeding as the child's mind does, help the child by showing how a higher clarity can and does emerge from all this fantasy. These tales, like the child in his own imagining, usually start out in a quite realistic way: a mother telling her daughter to go all by herself to visit grandmother ("Little Red Riding Hood"); the troubles a poor couple are having feeding their children ("Hansel and Gretel"); a fisherman not catching any fish in his net ("The Fisherman and the Jinny"). That is, the story begins with a real but somewhat problematic situation.

A child presented with perplexing everyday problems and events is stimulated by his schooling to understand the how and why of such situations, and to seek solutions. But since his rationality has as yet poor control over his unconscious, the child's imagination runs away with him under the pressure of his emotions and unsolved conflicts. A child's barely emerging ability to reason is soon overwhelmed by anxieties, hopes, fears, desires, loves, and hates—which become woven into whatever the child began thinking about.

The fairy story, although it may begin with the child's psychological state of mind—such as feelings of rejection when compared to siblings, like Cinderella's—never starts with his physical reality. No child has to sit among the ashes, like Cinderella, or is deliberately deserted in a dense wood, like Hansel and Gretel, because a physical similarity would be too scary to the child, and "hit too close to home for comfort" when giving comfort is one of the purposes of fairy tales.

The child who is familiar with fairy tales understands that these speak to him in the language of symbols and not that of everyday reality. The fairy tale conveys from its inception, throughout its plot, and by its ending that what we are told about are not tangible facts or real persons and places. As for the child himself, real events become important through the symbolic meaning he attaches to them, or which he finds in them.

"Once upon a time," "In a certain country," "A thousand years ago, or longer," "At a time when animals still talked," "Once in an old castle in the midst of a large and dense forest"—such beginnings suggest that what follows does not pertain to the here and now that we know. This deliberate vagueness in the beginnings of fairy tales symbolizes that we are leaving the concrete world of ordinary reality. The old castles, dark caves, locked rooms one is forbidden to enter, impenetrable woods all suggest that something normally hidden will be revealed, while the "long ago" implies that we are going to learn about the most archaic events.

The Brothers Grimm could not have begun their collection of fairy tales with a more telling sentence than the one which introduces their first story, "The Frog King." It starts, "In olden times when wishing still helped, there lived a king whose daughters were all beautiful, but the youngest was so beautiful that the sun itself, which has seen so much, was astonished whenever it shone in her face." This beginning locates the story in a unique fairy-tale time: the archaic period when we all believed that our wishes could, if not move mountains, change our fate; and when in our animistic view of the world, the sun took notice of us and reacted to events. The unearthly beauty of the child, the effectiveness of wishing, and the sun's astonishment signify the absolute uniqueness of this event. Those are the coordinates which place the story not in time or place of external reality, but in a state of mind—that of the young in spirit. Being placed there, the fairy tale can cultivate this spirit better than any other form of literature.

Soon events occur which show that normal logic and causation are suspended, as is true for our unconscious processes, where the most

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ancient and most unique and startling events occur. The content of the unconscious is both most hidden and most familiar, darkest and most compelling; and it creates the fiercest anxiety as well as the greatest hope. It is not bound by a specific time or location or a logical sequence of events, as defined by our rationality. Without our awareness, the unconscious takes us back to the oldest times of our lives. The strange, most ancient, most distant, and at the same time most familiar locations which a fairy tale speaks about suggest a voyage into the interior of our mind, into the realms of unawareness and the unconscious.

The fairy tale, from its mundane and simple beginning, launches into fantastic events. But however big the detours—unlike the child's untutored mind, or a dream—the process of the story does not get lost. Having taken the child on a trip into a wondrous world, at its end the tale returns the child to reality, in a most reassuring manner. This teaches the child what he needs most to know at this stage of his development: that permitting one's fantasy to take hold of oneself for a while is not detrimental, provided one does not remain permanently caught up in it. At the story's end the hero returns to reality—a happy reality, but one devoid of magic.

As we awake refreshed from our dreams, better able to meet the tasks of reality, so the fairy story ends with the hero returning, or being returned, to the real world, much better able to master life. Recent dream research has shown that a person deprived of dreaming, even though not deprived of sleep, is nevertheless impaired in his ability to manage reality; he becomes emotionally disturbed because of being unable to work out in dreams the unconscious problems that beset him.²⁴ Maybe someday we will be able to demonstrate the same fact experimentally for fairy tales: that children are much worse off when deprived of what these stories can offer, because the stories help the child work through unconscious pressures in fantasy.

If the dreams of children were as complex as those of normal, intelligent adults, where the latent content is much elaborated, then the child's need for fairy tales would not be so great. On the other hand, if an adult was not exposed as a child to fairy tales, his dreams may be less rich in content and meaning and thus serve him less well in restoring the ability to master life.

The child, so much more insecure than an adult, needs assurance that his need to engage in fantasy, or his inability to stop doing so, is not a deficiency. By telling fairy tales to his child, a parent gives the child an important demonstration that he or she considers the child's

inner experiences as embodied in fairy tales worthwhile, legitimate, in some fashion even "real." This gives the child the feeling that since his inner experiences have been accepted by the parent as real and important, he—by implication—is real and important. Such a child will feel later in life like Chesterton, who wrote: "My first and last philosophy, that which I believe in with unbroken certainty, I learnt in the nursery. . . . The things I believed most in then, the things I believe most now, are the things called fairy tales." The philosophy which Chesterton and any child can derive from fairy tales is "that life is not only a pleasure but a kind of eccentric privilege." It is a view of life very different from that which "true-to-reality" stories convey, but one more apt to sustain one undaunted when meeting the hardships of life.

In the chapter of Chesterton's *Orthodoxy* from which these quotations come, titled "The Ethics of Elfland," he stresses the morality inherent in fairy tales: "There is the chivalrous lesson of 'Jack the Giant Killer,' that giants should be killed because they are gigantic. It is a manly mutiny against pride as such. . . . There is the lesson of 'Cinderella,' which is the same as that of the Magnificat—*exaltavit humiles* (He lifted up the humble). There is the great lesson of 'Beauty and the Beast,' that a thing must be loved *before* it is loveable. . . . I am concerned with a certain way of looking at life, which was created in me by fairy tales." When he says that fairy tales are "entirely reasonable things," Chesterton is speaking of them as experiences, as mirrors of inner experience, not of reality; and it is as such that the child understands them.²⁵

After the age of approximately five—the age when fairy tales become truly meaningful—no normal child takes these stories as true to external reality. The little girl wishes to imagine she is a princess living in a castle and spins elaborate fantasies that she is, but when her mother calls her to dinner, she knows she is not. And while a grove in a park may be experienced at times as a deep, dark forest full of hidden secrets, the child knows what it really is, just as a little girl knows her doll is not really her baby, much as she calls it that and treats it as such.

Stories which stay closer to reality by starting in a child's living room or backyard, instead of in a poor woodcutter's hut hard by a great forest; and which have people in them very much like the child's parents, not starving woodcutters or kings and queens; but which mix these realistic elements with wish-fulfilling and fantastic devices, are apt to confuse the child as to what is real and what is not. Such stories,

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failing to be in accord with the child's inner reality, faithful though they may be to external reality, widen the gap between the child's inner and outer experience. They also separate him from his parents, because the child comes to feel that he and they live in different spiritual worlds; as closely as they may dwell in "real" space, emotionally they seem to live temporarily on different continents. It makes for a discontinuity between the generations, painful for both parent and child.

If a child is told only stories "true to reality" (which means false to important parts of his inner reality), then he may conclude that much of his inner reality is unacceptable to his parents. Many a child thus estranges himself from his inner life, and this depletes him. As a consequence he may later, as an adolescent no longer under the emotional sway of his parents, come to hate the rational world and escape entirely into a fantasy world, as if to make up for what was lost in childhood. At an older age, on occasion this could imply a severe break with reality, with all the dangerous consequences for the individual and society. Or, less seriously, the person may continue this encapsulation of his inner self all through his life and never feel fully satisfied in the world because, alienated from the unconscious processes, he cannot use them to enrich his life in reality. Life is then neither "a pleasure" nor "a kind of eccentric privilege." With such separation, whatever happens in reality fails to offer appropriate satisfaction of unconscious needs. The result is that the person always feels life to be incomplete.

When a child is not overwhelmed by his internal mental processes and he is well taken care of in all important respects, then he is able to manage life in his age-appropriate manner. During such times he can solve the problems that arise. But watching young children on a playground, for example, shows how limited these periods are.

Once the child's inner pressures take over—which happens frequently—the only way he can hope to get some hold over these is to externalize them. But the problem is how to do so without letting the externalizations get the better of him. Sorting out the various facets of his outer experience is a very hard job for a child; and unless he gets help, it becomes impossible, once the outer experiences get muddled up with his inner experiences. On his own, the child is not yet able to order and make sense of his internal processes. Fairy tales offer figures onto which the child can externalize what goes on in his mind, in controllable ways. Fairy tales show the child how he can embody his destructive wishes in one figure, gain desired satisfactions from

another, identify with a third, have ideal attachments with a fourth, and so on, as his needs of the moment require.

When all the child's wishful thinking gets embodied in a good fairy; all his destructive wishes in an evil witch; all his fears in a voracious wolf; all the demands of his conscience in a wise man encountered on an adventure; all his jealous anger in some animal that pecks out the eyes of his archrivals—then the child can finally begin to sort out his contradictory tendencies. Once this starts, the child will be less and less engulfed by unmanageable chaos.

TRANSFORMATIONS

THE FANTASY OF THE WICKED STEPMOTHER

There is a right time for certain growth experiences, and childhood is the time to learn bridging the immense gap between inner experiences and the real world. Fairy tales may seem senseless, fantastic, scary, and totally unbelievable to the adult who was deprived of fairy-story fantasy in his own childhood, or has repressed these memories. An adult who has not achieved a satisfactory integration of the two worlds of reality and imagination is put off by such tales. But an adult who in his own life is able to integrate rational order with the illogic of his unconscious will be responsive to the manner in which fairy tales help the child with this integration. To the child, and to the adult who, like Socrates, knows that there is still a child in the wisest of us, fairy tales reveal truths about mankind and oneself.

In "Little Red Riding Hood" the kindly grandmother undergoes a sudden replacement by the rapacious wolf which threatens to destroy the child. How silly a transformation when viewed objectively, and how frightening—we might think the transformation unnecessarily scary, contrary to all possible reality. But when viewed in terms of a child's ways of experiencing, is it really any more scary than the sudden transformation of his own kindly grandma into a figure who threatens his very sense of self when she humiliates him for a pants-wetting accident? To the child, Grandma is no longer the same person she was just a moment before; she has become an ogre. How can someone who was so very kind, who brought presents and was more

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Unable to see any congruence between the different manifestations, the child truly experiences Grandma as two separate entities—the loving and the threatening. She is indeed Grandma *and* the wolf. By dividing her up, so to speak, the child can preserve his image of the good grandmother. If she changes into a wolf—well, that's certainly scary, but he need not compromise his vision of Grandma's benevolence. And in any case, as the story tells him, the wolf is a passing manifestation—Grandma will return triumphant.

Similarly, although Mother is most often the all-giving protector, she can change into the cruel stepmother if she is so evil as to deny the youngster something he wants.

Far from being a device used only by fairy tales, such a splitting up of one person into two to keep the good image uncontaminated occurs to many children as a solution to a relationship too difficult to manage or comprehend. With this device all contradictions are suddenly solved, as they were for a college student who remembered an incident that occurred when she was not yet five years old.

One day in a supermarket this girl's mother suddenly became very angry with her; and the girl felt utterly devastated that her mother could act this way toward her. On the walk home, her mother continued to scold her angrily, telling her she was no good. The girl became convinced that this vicious person only *looked* like her mother and, although pretending to be her, was actually an evil Martian, a look-alike impostor, who had taken away her mother and assumed her appearance. From then on, the girl assumed on many different occasions that this Martian had abducted the mother and taken her place to torture the child as the real mother would never have done.

This fantasy went on for a couple of years until, when seven, the girl became courageous enough to try to set traps for the Martian. When the Martian had once again taken Mother's place to engage in its nefarious practice of torturing her, the girl would cleverly put some question to the Martian about what had happened between the real mother and herself. To her amazement, the Martian knew all about it, which at first just confirmed the Martian's cunning to the girl. But after two or three such experiments the girl became doubtful; then she asked her mother about events which had taken place between the girl and the Martian. When it became obvious that her mother knew about these events, the fantasy of the Martian collapsed.

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Mother should be all good—never angry or rejecting—the girl had rearranged reality to provide herself with what she needed. When the girl grew older and more secure, her mother's anger or severe criticisms no longer seemed so utterly devastating. Since her own integration had become better established, the girl could dispense with the security-guaranteeing Martian fantasy and rework the double picture of the mother into one by testing the reality of her fantasy.

While all young children sometimes need to split the image of their parent into its benevolent and threatening aspects to feel fully sheltered by the first, most cannot do it as cleverly and consciously as this girl did. Most children cannot find their own solution to the impasse of Mother suddenly changing into "a look-alike impostor." Fairy tales, which contain good fairies who suddenly appear and help the child find happiness despite this "impostor" or "stepmother," permit the child not to be destroyed by this "impostor." Fairy tales indicate that, somewhere hidden, the good fairy godmother watches over the child's fate, ready to assert her power when critically needed. The fairy tale tells the child that "although there are witches, don't ever forget there are also the good fairies, who are much more powerful." The same tales assure that the ferocious giant can always be outwitted by the clever little man—somebody seemingly as powerless as the child feels himself to be. Quite likely it was some story about a child who cleverly outwits an evil spirit which gave this girl the courage to try to expose the Martian.

The universality of such fantasies is suggested by what, in psychoanalysis, is known as the pubertal child's "family romance."²⁶ These are fantasies or daydreams which the normal youngster partly recognizes as such, but nonetheless also partly believes. They center on the idea that one's parents are not really one's parents, but that one is the child of some exalted personage, and that, due to unfortunate circumstances, one has been reduced to living with these people, who *claim* to be one's parents. These daydreams take various forms: often only one parent is thought to be a false one—which parallels a frequent situation in fairy tales, where one parent is the real one, the other a step-parent. The child's hopeful expectation is that one day, by chance or design, the real parent will appear and the child will be elevated into his rightful exalted state and live happily ever after.

These fantasies are helpful; they permit the child to feel really angry at the Martian pretender or the "false parent" without guilt. Such fantasies typically begin to appear when guilt feelings are already a part of the child's personality make-up, and when being angry

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at a parent or, worse, despising him would bring with it unmanageable guilt. So the typical fairy-tale splitting of the mother into a good (usually dead) mother and an evil stepmother serves the child well. It is not only a means of preserving an internal all-good mother when the real mother is not all-good, but it also permits anger at this bad "stepmother" without endangering the goodwill of the true mother, who is viewed as a different person. Thus, the fairy tale suggests how the child may manage the contradictory feelings which would otherwise overwhelm him at this stage of his barely beginning ability to integrate contradictory emotions. The fantasy of the wicked stepmother not only preserves the good mother intact, it also prevents having to feel guilty about one's angry thoughts and wishes about her—a guilt which would seriously interfere with the good relation to Mother.

While the fantasy of the evil stepmother thus preserves the image of the good mother, the fairy tale also helps the child not to be devastated by experiencing his mother as evil. In much the same way that the Martian in the little girl's fantasy disappeared as soon as Mother was once again pleased with her little girl, so a benevolent spirit can counteract in a moment all the bad doings of an evil one. In the fairy-tale rescuer, the good qualities of Mother are as exaggerated as the bad ones were in the witch. But this is how the young child experiences the world: either as entirely blissful or as an unmitigated hell.

When he experiences the emotional need to do so, the child not only splits a parent into two figures, but he may also split himself into two people who, he wishes to believe, have nothing in common with each other. I have known young children who during the day are successfully dry but who wet their bed at night and, waking up, move with disgust to a corner and say with conviction, "Somebody's wet my bed." The child does not do this, as parents may think, to put the blame on somebody else, knowing all the while that it was he who urinated in the bed. The "somebody" who has done it is that part of himself with which he has by now parted company; this aspect of his personality has actually become a stranger to him. To insist that the child recognize that it *was* he who wet the bed is to try to impose prematurely the concept of the integrity of the human personality, and such insistence actually retards its development. In order to develop a secure feeling of his self, the child needs to constrict it for a time to only what is fully approved and desired by himself. After he has thus achieved a self of which he can be unambivalently proud, the

child can then slowly begin to accept the idea that it may also contain aspects of a more dubious nature.

As the parent in the fairy tale becomes separated into two figures, representative of the opposite feelings of loving and rejecting, so the child externalizes and projects onto a "somebody" all the bad things which are too scary to be recognized as part of oneself.

The fairy-tale literature does not fail to consider the problematic nature of sometimes seeing Mother as an evil stepmother; in its own way, the fairy tale warns against being swept away too far and too fast by angry feelings. A child easily gives in to his annoyance with a person dear to him, or to his impatience when kept waiting; he tends to harbor angry feelings, and to embark on furious wishes with little thought of the consequences should these come true. Many fairy tales depict the tragic outcome of such rash wishes, engaged in because one desires something too much or is unable to wait until things come about in their good time. Both mental states are typical for the child. Two stories of the Brothers Grimm may illustrate.

In "Hans, My Hedgehog" a man becomes angry when his great desire for having children is frustrated by his wife's inability to have any. Finally he gets carried away enough to exclaim, "I want a child, even if it should be a hedgehog." His wish is granted: his wife begets a child who is a hedgehog on top, while the lower part of his body is that of a boy.*

*The motif that parents who too impatiently desire to have children are punished by giving birth to strange mixtures of human and animal beings is an ancient one, and widely distributed. For example, it is the topic of a Turkish tale in which King Solomon effects the restitution of a child to full humanity. In these stories, if the parents treat the misdeveloped child well and with great patience, he is eventually restored as an attractive human being.

The psychological wisdom of these tales is remarkable: lack of control over emotions on the part of the parent creates a child who is a misfit. In fairy tales and dreams, physical malformation often stands for psychological misdevelopment. In these stories, the upper part of the body including the head is usually animal-like, while the lower part is of normal human form. This indicates that things are wrong with the head—that is, mind—of the child, and not his body. The stories also tell that the damage done to the child through negative feelings can be corrected, through the impact of positive emotions lavished on him, if the parents are sufficiently patient and consistent. The children of angry parents often behave like hedgehogs or porcupines: they seem all spines, so the image of the child that is part hedgehog is most appropriate.

These are also cautionary tales which warn: Do not conceive children in anger; do not receive them with anger and impatience on their arrival. But, like all good fairy

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In "The Seven Ravens" a newborn child so preoccupies a father's emotions that he turns his anger against his older children. He sends one of his seven sons to fetch baptismal water for the christening of the infant daughter, an errand on which his six brothers join him. The father, in his anger at being kept waiting, shouts, "I wish all the boys would turn into ravens"—which promptly happens.

If these fairy stories in which angry wishes come true ended there, they would be merely cautionary tales, warning us not to permit ourselves to be carried away by our negative emotions—something the child is unable to avoid. But the fairy tale knows better than to expect the impossible of the child, and to make him anxious about having angry wishes which he cannot help having. While the fairy tale realistically warns that being carried away by anger or impatience leads to trouble, it reassures that the consequences are only temporary ones, and that good will or deeds can undo all the harm done by bad wishing. Hans the Hedgehog helps a king lost in the forest to return safely home. The king promises to give Hans as a reward the first thing he encounters on his return home, which happens to be his only daughter. Despite Hans's appearance, the princess keeps her father's promise and marries Hans the Hedgehog. After the marriage, in the marital bed, Hans at last takes on a fully human form, and eventually he inherits the kingdom.* In "The Seven Ravens" the sister, who was the innocent cause of her brothers being turned into ravens, travels to the end of the world and makes a great sacrifice to undo the spell put on them. The ravens all regain their human form, and happiness is restored.

These stories tell that, despite the bad consequences which evil wishes have, with good will and effort things can be righted again. There are other tales which go much further and tell the child not to fear having such wishes because, although there are momentary consequences, nothing changes permanently; after all the wishing is done, things are exactly as they were before the wishing began. Such stories exist in many variations all over the globe.

In the Western world "The Three Wishes" is probably the best-known wish story. In the simplest form of this motif, a man or a woman is granted some wishes, usually three, by a stranger or an

tales, these stories also indicate the right remedies to undo the damage, and the prescription is in line with the best psychological insights of today.

*This ending is typical for stories belonging to the animal-groom cycle, and will be discussed in connection with these stories (pp. 282 ff.).

animal as reward for some good deed. A man is given this favor in "The Three Wishes," but he thinks little of it. On his return home his wife presents him with his daily soup for dinner. "'Soup again, I wish I had pudding for a change,' says he, and promptly the pudding appears." The wife demands to know how this has happened, and he tells her about his adventure. Furious that he wasted one of his wishes on such a trifle, she exclaims, "I wish the pudding was on your head," a wish which is immediately fulfilled. "'That's two wishes gone! I wish the pudding was off my head,' says the man. And so the three wishes were gone."²⁷

Together, these tales warn the child of the possible undesirable consequences of rash wishing, and assure him at the same time that such wishing has little consequence, particularly if one is sincere in one's desire and efforts to undo the bad results. Maybe even more important is the fact that I cannot recall a single fairy tale in which a child's angry wishes have any consequence; only those of adults do. The implication is that adults are accountable for what they do in their anger or their silliness, but children are not. If children wish in a fairy tale, they desire only good things; and chance or a good spirit fulfills their desires, often beyond their fondest hopes.

It is as if the fairy tale, while admitting how human it is to get angry, expects only adults to have sufficient self-control not to let themselves get carried away, since their outlandishly angry wishes come true—but the tales stress the wonderful consequences for a child if he engages in *positive* wishing or thinking. Desolation does not induce the fairy-tale child to engage in vengeful wishing. The child wishes only for good things, even when he has ample reason to wish that bad things would happen to those who persecute him. Snow White harbors no angry wishes against the evil queen. Cinderella, who has good reason to wish that her stepsisters be punished for their misdeeds, instead wishes them to go to the grand ball.

Left alone for a few hours, a child can feel as cruelly abused as though he had suffered a lifetime of neglect and rejection. Then, suddenly, his existence turns into complete bliss as his mother appears in the doorway, smiling, maybe even bringing him some little present. What could be more magical than that? How could something so simple have the power to alter his life, unless there were magic involved?

Radical transformations in the nature of things are experienced by the child on all sides, although *we* do not share his perceptions. But consider the child's dealings with inanimate objects: some object—a shoelace or a toy—utterly frustrates the child, to the degree that he

Transformations

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A small child can control him—so much so that prevents this by giving him, and suggesting he grow out of it. Finding "The Spirit in the Bottle" by it ("Puss-in-Boots" Golden Goose," and other everyday events lead the child to trust that his he may not realize.

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feels himself a complete fool. Then in a moment, as if by magic, the object becomes obedient and does his bidding; from being the most dejected of humans, he becomes the happiest. Doesn't this prove the magic character of the object? Quite a few fairy tales relate how finding a magic object changes the hero's life; with its help, the fool turns out smarter than his previously preferred siblings. The child who feels himself doomed to be an ugly duckling need not despair; he will grow into a beautiful swan.

A small child can do little on his own, and this is disappointing to him—so much so that he may give up in despair. The fairy story prevents this by giving extraordinary dignity to the smallest achievement, and suggesting that the most wonderful consequences may grow out of it. Finding a jar or bottle (as in the Brothers Grimm's story "The Spirit in the Bottle"), befriending an animal or being befriended by it ("Puss-in-Boots"), sharing a piece of bread with a stranger ("The Golden Goose," another of the Brothers Grimm's stories)—such little everyday events lead to great things. So the fairy tale encourages the child to trust that his small real achievements are important, though he may not realize it at the moment.

The belief in such possibilities needs to be nurtured so that the child can accept his disillusionments without being utterly defeated; and beyond this, it can become a challenge to think with confidence about an existence beyond the parental home. The fairy tale's example provides assurance that the child will receive help in his endeavors in the outside world, and that eventual success will reward his sustained efforts. At the same time, the fairy tale stresses that these events happened once upon a time, in a far-distant land, and makes clear that it offers food for hope, not realistic accounts of what the world is like here and now.

The child intuitively comprehends that although these stories are *unreal*, they are not *untrue*; that while what these stories tell about does not happen in fact, it must happen as inner experience and personal development; that fairy tales depict in imaginary and symbolic form the essential steps in growing up and achieving an independent existence.

While fairy tales invariably point the way to a better future, they concentrate on the process of change, rather than describing the exact details of the bliss eventually to be gained. The stories start where the child is at the time, and suggest where he has to go—with emphasis on the process itself. Fairy tales can even show the child the way through that thorniest of thickets, the oedipal period.