

The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

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THE SCIENCE OF IMAGINATION

Dear Friends:



Major General Ethan Allen Hitchcock was a learned Christian gentleman whose beliefs were considerably influenced by the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. One of his specialties was the interpretation of ancient and medieval fables, fairy tales and old English legends. He may have been attracted to this subject by thoughtful reading of Lord Bacon's "WISDOM OF THE ANCIENTS," but he expanded his researches to include Dante's "VITA NUOVA", and the vast compendium of moral fiction, the GESTA ROMANORUM." He later turned his attention to the "ARABIAN NIGHTS ENTERTAINMENT," and concluded that these tales revealed deep mystical insight. General Hitchcock then published a small volume under the title "THE RED BOOK OF APPIN," the best edition of which appeared in 1866. His purpose was to provide a working formula which could be applied to both sacred and profane literature. He was not so much concerned with such moralisms as represented by Bunyan in his classic, "THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS," and found richer material in the works of the Brothers Grimm, which he consulted frequently.

Although the General was not an orientalist, he found many fairy tales to be mandalas in story form and this approach he also used in his studies of alchemy and the hermetic art. Exploration of obscure meanings not only fascinated him, but impelled a systematic study of those faculties of the human mind especially appealing to mystical contemplation. He decided that disciplined imagination was a useful instrument in every field of learning, and was equally applicable to the labors of the theologian, the philosopher and the scientist. If imagination is left untutored and does not receive the benefits of solid scholarship, it may lead to self-delusion or involvement in extravagant fantasies. Like a crossword puzzle is most easily solved by a substantial vocabulary, so the mysteries of the spirit require a background of general knowledge enriched by contemplation.

Broadly speaking, many fairy tales belong to the cycle of "The Perilous Journey." The hero, or heroine, as the case may be, is beset with obstacles, and the victim of conspiracies. In the end virtue triumphs, not by a victory of good over evil alone, but of wisdom over ignorance. The story under consideration must first be read carefully, with the hope that it will bring to the surface of the mind dim but useful hints. Significant fairy tales are likely to begin with the familiar worlds "once upon a time." This does not always imply a remote era, but suggests a pattern equally significant in all generations. The leading character



in a story is actually the reader of the moment, for it describes aspects of his own daily life. The handsome prince is the son of the Great King, and is the spark of divinity in ourselves. The beautiful princess is the soul who must ultimately be united with the spirit in the hermetic marriage. This explains how such tales have their ending, when the prince and the princess marry and live happily ever after. No earthly romance can endure forever, but the marriage of the soul and the spirit is indissoluble, and eternal.

It is possible that a number of fairy tales were derived from miracle plays, and it is noted that the GESTA ROMANORUM was the work of monks seeking ingenious ways of instructing the laity. Each story has its own pattern, but there is a glossary of basic terms and thoughts which recur in the literature of many different nations. One theme unfolds the love of a poor young man for a princess whose station in life is so far above him that his suit is hopeless. This impoverished youth is "Everyman," who has not attained to the riches of the spirit. He must therefore go in quest of the wealth that is not of this world, as in the case of Aladdin and his wonderful lamp, and Ali Baba and the forty thieves. Man has three mothers--the spiritual parent who gives him immortal life, the earthly parent who gives him mortal existence (mother Nature) and the wicked stepmother (the perversions of human society). There is always an adversary--sometimes represented as a cruel stepmother, as in the tale of Cinderella, or the old witch who is the troublemaker in Hansel and Gretel. Occasionally, we have an ogre--a giant--or a dragon. These personalize worldliness, which is forever conspiring against the life of virtue. The good fairy and the bad fairy are Nature in her benevolent or malevolent aspects. The world tries to lure the hero from the path of self-improvement. It is the 'tempter' who will promise all the treasures of the earth if man will betray his own soul. This is the 'Faust' theme.

Youth, starting out, is a victim of the very society to which he belongs. He is educated away from integrity, and is promised the "Cities of the Plains," if he will bow down and acknowledge corruption to be his master. Siegfried slays the dragon who guards the treasure of material wealth, which already has upon it the curse of the Nibelung. Often at the critical moment, help comes in the form of the sage, a wise animal, or a fairy godmother, and this is where the mystery of imagination comes into focus. Integrity is sustained largely from devotion to sacred writings, noble examples, and evidence revealed through the wondrous workings of Nature. The virtues that the truthseeker seeks to cultivate are revealed and verified to those who can read between the lines of commonplace occurrences. As General Hitchcock writes, "There are those who believe that the imagination is a great creative power in the soul; which, in itself, 'is vague and unstable;' and that it is the duty of the artist 'to regulate and to fix it, and at last to exalt it into visible presence.' When thus disciplined, it is supposed that the imagination may 'body forth the forms of things unknown, and give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name.'"

It is obvious from this quotation that imagination is closely related with the mandala disciplines of India and Japan. These marvelous diagrams are truly forms of truths unknown which have been brought within human comprehension by the pictorial equivalents of sacred myths and legends. In the fairy tales, the path to enlightenment often leads through a dense forest, and the truthseeker finds himself lost or hopelessly confused. These dark and forbidding groves and fens are

false doctrines, and through them extend countless paths that lead to nowhere. Like the labyrinth of Crete, the Pilgrim must hold fast to the thread of Ariadne (his own conscience). Help may come to him from the songs of birds, which like angels, are the firstborn voices of inner sincerity. It will be remembered that birds warned Siegfried of impending danger, and water nymphs entreated him to return the cursed ring. Sleeping beauty is surrounded by a thicket (crown) of thorns, and Hansel and Gretel, lost in a forest, are tempted by an old witch to come to her gingerbread house in order that she might devour them. The mind, lost in the gloom of misdirection, can be lured to a life of self-gratification and physical indulgences, symbolized by the gingerbread. In another story a hunter follows a deer into the forest. In many nations of the world, the deer symbolizes truth, or essential wisdom. It appears in early Christian symbolism with a cross between its antlers, and in Shinto mythology it stands upon a cloud with the mirror of self-analysis on its back. In the legends of the troubadours, there is a magic garden or castle guarded by ferocious animals (the appetites), and those determined to reach the sanctuary must first tame these beasts. Here the meaning is simple.

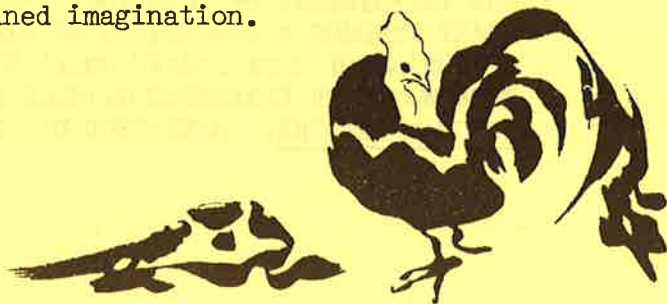
Low twelve (midnight) plays a large part in fairy lore. It is in the dark hours that ghosts and ghouls have special power. As St. John of the Cross tells us, each must pass through the "dark night of the soul." Darkness always symbolizes ignorance, which populates material existence with dismal and distorted shapes. Sunrise stands for the dawn of inner comprehension and is also a symbol of immortality. The cock is the herald of the dawn and is often used to imply vigilance. The last words of Socrates were: "I owe a cock to Aesculapius; discharge the debt." Peter three times denied his Lord before the cock crowed. In oriental symbolism the Sun is represented as a red disk with the cock in the center.

Through the use of creative imagination the various beings which occur in fairy tales are all parts of man's compound constitution. They especially "body forth" the aspects of his character and his struggle to escape from bondage to the sensory perceptions and false knowledge. The soul put to sleep by the witchcraft of the mortal appetites, never actually dies, but is aroused from slumber by the kiss of the prince. This is the kiss of Grace, often referred to in theological writings. All the old tales, if they be significant, deal with the mystery of regeneration. Even the old rhyme "With Adam's fall, he fell us all," is part of the wonderful symbolism. In some of his books, Bacon makes use of decorative devices, one of which consists of two capital letter "A's"--one light and the other dark. Humanity is Adam, whom Boehme shows as a fallen letter "A". He uses an upright "A" in a nimbus of light for the resurrected Adam, raised up by the Christ within. Hitchcock is convinced that the old fables and folk stories are the keys to the spiritual science of transmutation, by which the base elements of man's mortal nature are changed into spiritual gold. Thus is fashioned the golden wedding garment mentioned by St. Paul.

Here is a field which all serious students of philosophy and mysticism can explore with great benefit to themselves. It will bring into focus what is already known and lead the way to better understanding of things read and considered. This is the first Contributor's Bulletin of 1977, and we hope that it will enable you to interpret the problems of today with disciplined imagination.

Very sincerely yours,

Manly P. Hall



The following list of books is recommended reading. These books may be ordered from The Philosophical Research Society, Inc. (address on page one). Please add 35¢ for handling. California residents, include sales tax. Note: Prices are subject to change without notice.

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>AUTHOR</u>	<u>PRICE</u>
Born To Heal	Ruth Montgomery	\$ 6.95
Blavatsky & The Secret Doctrine	Max Heindel (p)	2.25
The Buddhist Tantras	Alex Wayman	12.50
Buddhism, An Outline of Its Teachings & Schools	Hans W. Schumann (p)	2.45
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