



Interpreting Fairy Tales

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Today we will work with the principles with which we can interpret fairy tales, sagas, and in a larger context, mythology. I will explain what should live in the soul of the person who tells the tales—what he should know. First, we must realize that we need to know a lot more than we actually tell the children. Secondly, the ways of explaining the tales must be brought out of our understanding of anthroposophical wisdom.

Perhaps the first fairy tale may be told like this:

Something happened once. Yes, where did it happen? Well, we can also ask where did it not happen? Once upon a time there lived a tailor apprentice. He had only one groschen in his wallet but it was enough to drive him to undertake a journey. He became hungry and the groschen could buy him only a bowl of milk soup. As the milk soup was placed before him, a swarm of flies flew into the soup. When he emptied the bowl it was completely covered. With his hand the apprentice hit the flies in the bowl a couple of times and counted how many he smashed. It was one hundred. On the waiter's little slate he wrote: "With one stroke he smashed one hundred!"

He hung the slate around his neck and walked on. Then he passed a King's castle. At that very moment the King looked down from the walls and saw someone walking by with something written on the little blackboard. The King sent his servant down to see what was written there. The servant went below and on the board was written: "With one stroke he smashed one hundred!"

This he told the King. "Stop!" yelled the King, "there is someone I can use." The King sent people down to get the apprentice and bring him into the castle. "I can use you!" proclaimed the King, "Would you like to enter my service?"

"Yes," answered the boy. "I would very much like to enter your service when you give me a good salary that I will tell you later."

“Yes,” said the King. “I will pay you well when you deliver on your promises. Therefore you shall eat and drink well, as long as you like. Then you must do me a favor that compares to your strength. In my land every year a whole troupe of bears enters and does tremendous damage. They are so strong that no human being can kill them. You will surely be able to kill them if you keep the promise written on your board.”

The apprentice answered, “Of course I will, but before the bears come I will eat and drink as much as I like.” He said to himself, *If I cannot smash the bears and they eat me, at least I have eaten and drunk well for awhile.*

As the time came for the bears to reappear, the boy prepared himself. He went into the kitchen and set up a table. On the table were many things bears like to eat and drink, especially honey. He left the door open. He lay down to wait. When the bears walked in they ate and drank until they could not move but lay on the floor. The apprentice hit each one on the head and took care of them.

When the King saw this, he asked, “What did you do?”

And the boy answered, “I let the bears run over the door step and then hit them on the head!”

The King was very gullible and said, “As you have done such a wonderful thing, can you do me an ever greater favor? Every year powerful giants enter our land. No one can kill them or kick them out. Perhaps you are able?”

The tailor apprentice replied, “Yes I will, if you give me your daughter for my bride when I succeed.” It was very important for the King to get rid of the giants so he agreed and the boy prepared himself.

When the time came for the giants to appear, the boy took all kinds of things that giants like to eat and drink and walked towards them in the woods. Along the way he also collected a piece of cheese and a skylark. When he arrived where the giants rested, one of them proclaimed, “We are back and ready to fight the strongest people you have. No one has ever beaten us!”

“Very well, then I will fight you,” replied the apprentice boy.

One giant commented, “You will be badly beaten.”

The boy answered, “Show me your strength. Show me what you can do!”

The giant grabbed a stone and squeezed it between his fingers. He took his bow and an arrow and shot the arrow in the air so it did not come down to earth for a long time. “You wanted to see my strength! If you will challenge me, you’d better bring something new.”

The boy picked up a small stone and covered it with the cheese, and as he pressed it with his fingers, the cheese squirted out. He told the giants, “I can press water out of stones and you cannot!” That made a huge impression on the giants. He could do something they could not.

The tailor apprentice took up the bow and arrow, and as he loosed the arrow, he slipped the skylark free without the giants noticing it. The skylark never came

back. He told the giants, “Your arrow came back to the earth. Mine was shot so high that it will never return!”

The giants were puzzled: Here was someone stronger than they were, and so they asked him to join them. The boy agreed to be their comrade. He was small but a good addition to their group. They became friends and the boy stayed with them for a while. But it was scary for the giants to have someone stronger in their company and one night, while the boy lay almost asleep on his bed, he heard the giants planning to kill him.

Then he made precautions. He prepared a huge meal with the things he had brought along. The giants ate and drank until they fainted, but they were still ready to kill him. The boy took the intestines of a pig and filled them with blood, tied them around his head, and lay in bed. The giant who was chosen to kill him stuck a hole in the intestine and the blood flowed. This pleased the giants, for now they thought they were rid of the boy, and they lay down to sleep. Immediately the tailor apprentice stood up and killed each one of the sleeping giants.

He went to the King and told him that he had killed the giants one after the other. The King kept his word and gave the boy his daughter for his bride.

The tailor apprentice held a wedding. The King was amazed at the boy’s strength, but neither the king nor his daughter knew who the traveling boy truly was. Was he a tailor apprentice or a king’s son? Back then they did not know. If they have not learned yet, then they still do not know today.

That is the first fairy tale for us to observe. Next to it we want to place another. For when you tell fairy tales, no matter which country or people they come from, there is always a wealth of mental images pulsating through them. We have met the giants who were overcome by cleverness. Take a giant step through the millennia and think into the Odysseus saga about Odysseus and the giant Polyphemus. And we will place another fairy tale next to the first one.

Something happened once. Yes, where did it happen? Well, where did it not happen? There was a King who was so loved by his people that he often heard them wish him a wife who was as good and noble as he. It was hard for him to find anyone he could believe in, someone who would be the proper wife for him. But he had a very wise, old friend, a poor forester who lived simply and peacefully in the woods.

The forester could have easily become rich, for the King would have loved to give him everything. But the forester wanted to remain poor and keep his wisdom. The King went to his friend and asked for advice. The forester gave the King a rosemary branch and told him, “Keep this and the girl to whom it bows [consider the divining rod motif] is the girl you shall marry!”

On the next day the King invited many young girls to his court. He placed many pearls on a table and wrote each name of the girls with the pearls. He told them that the one for whom the rosemary bows would be his bride. The others could keep their pearls. He walked around with his rosemary branch but it did not move and it bowed to none of them. The girls received their pearls and were asked to leave.

On the second day the same procedure was repeated but with no success. The same was true on the third day. That night the King slept and heard something at his window. It turned out to be a golden bird that said to him, "You do not know this but you have twice provided me a huge service. I want to do you a favor. When you awake in the morning stand up, take up your rosemary branch and follow me. I will bring you to a place where you will find a horse. The horse will have a silver arrow stuck in its body. You must pull the arrow out of the horse. Then the horse can take you to your new bride!"

The very next morning the King followed the golden bird. The bird led him to the horse that was very weak and sick and complained, "A witch shot the arrow into my body." The King pulled out the arrow and that moment the weak, dying animal was turned into a wonderfully powerful horse. The King mounted the horse with his rosemary branch and commanded the horse forward. With the golden bird flying before them, the King rode the magical horse.

They finally arrived at a glass castle. *Brrm. Brrrrrrm. Brummmmmmmmm.* Loud noises met them outside. When they entered the castle, the King, the rosemary branch and the golden bird saw the king of the castle covered in glass. In his stomach was a terribly strong bee. This was the source of the noise outside. The bumblebee tried to bore its way out of the Glass King's stomach.

The King asked the Glass King what was happening. "Well," replied the Glass King, "look at the sofa where my Queen sits in a rose-colored silk gown and the secret you will immediately discover. For the spider web from the thorn bush that is woven around the Queen is torn, and soon it will rip apart. When there is no web left, when it is totally gone, the evil spider will spin a new web around my Queen while I remain here spellbound and frozen in glass. We will remain here for hundreds of years until the spell is broken."

This was all true. The evil spider appeared and wrapped up the Queen with his evil web. As the spider was busy spinning its web, the magical horse tried to kill the spider. It tried to step on the spider, and in that moment the bee broke through the glass surrounding the Glass King's stomach and tried to help the spider. But the magic horse killed them both. In that very moment the Glass King was transformed to a human King, the thorn bush was turned into a pretty serving girl, and the Queen was freed from the spider web. The Glass King explained what had happened.

As he was king, an evil witch who lived in the forest surrounding his kingdom persecuted him. The witch wanted him to marry her daughter. Yet he had found his wife at the nearby magic castle. The witch swore revenge. She turned the King into glass and his daughter into a bumblebee that bore into his stomach. The Queen was tormented by the witch who turned herself into an evil spider and spun a web around her victim. The servant girl was turned into a thorn bush, and the horse that had picked her up was shot with a silver arrow by the evil witch. But now everything was fine. The magic horse was freed and all of the people.

The King asked the Glass King where he could find a wife who was good for him. He was shown the path to the nearby magical castle. The golden bird flew ahead and when they arrived, it found a lily. The rosemary branch approached the lily and bowed before the beautiful flower. In this moment a beautiful girl arose from the lily that was enchanted, for the Queen of the nearby castle was her sister. Now all of the evil deeds were resolved. The King took her home, where they held a wedding and lived in extraordinary happiness for themselves and their people. They lived a very long time. No one knows for sure. If they have not disappeared or died, then they must still be alive.

Now we have another fairy tale with another motif. The first mistake we need to overcome when looking into real fairy tales or sagas is the misunderstanding that they are merely fantastical stories from local folklore. That is never the case. The origin of fairy tales lies in very ancient times, in times before mankind developed rational culture but possessed a very high-quality clairvoyance, the remains of a more ancient, original clairvoyance. Those people who retained such clairvoyance experienced states of mind that moved between asleep and awake. When these people were in a state of mind somewhere between sleep and awakened consciousness, they experienced the spiritual world in multiple forms. It was nothing like a dream of today. Dreams today are pretty chaotic for most people but not for everyone. In ancient times, people with clairvoyance experienced something very regular, so regular that the experiences were similar and typical for different folk.

What took place for the people in such transitional states of mind between sleep and being awake? When people are in their physical bodies they experience the world with their physical organs. Behind them is the spiritual world. In the ancient clairvoyant states of mind, it was as if a veil were removed from the people and the lower spiritual world became visible. Whatever took place in the spiritual world stood in relationship to the inner life of human beings. It was just as it was in the physical world: You could not see the colors with your ears or hear the tones with your eyes. What is outside relates to what is inside. The outer

senses are silent in such transitional states of mind, but what is in the inner soul life becomes active. When the outer senses are silent, the inner senses come alive.

We have three parts of the soul: the sentient or feeling soul, the rational soul and the consciousness soul. Just as eyes and ears have different relationships to the outer world, these three parts of the human soul have different relationships to the outer world.

(Here we pause to read Rudolf Steiner's definitions of these parts of the soul from his book, *Theosophy*, 1904.)

1. The "sentient soul or feeling soul" is part of the human soul being. To these sentients or feelings connect the feelings of lust, non-lust, the drives or desires, the instincts, and the passions. All of these have the same character of individual life as the feelings. Like the feelings they are dependent on the physical body. As is the case with the body, the feeling soul interacts with thinking and with the spirit. Thinking uses this part of the soul when the person builds thoughts about his feelings.

2. Through the feeling soul, the human being is related to animals. We notice that animals also have feelings, desires, instincts, and passions. But the animal follows these immediately. The animal will not weave independent thoughts into the immediate experience. This is also true, to some extent, of less developed human beings. The pure feeling soul is therefore different from the developed, higher part of the soul which thinking serves. The part of the soul that uses thinking is called the "rational soul." The rational soul transcends the feeling soul.

3. As far as the human being allows independent truth and goodness to live in his inner life, he raises himself above the feeling soul. The eternal spirit shines within. An eternal light is lit. So long as the human soul lives in this light, it partakes in the eternal. The soul unites the eternal with its own being. What the soul carries within as truth and goodness is eternal in it. That which enlightens in the eternal in the human soul is called the "consciousness soul." With the idea of consciousness we can speak of the lower soul regions. The daily feelings are the objects of our consciousness. In this way the animals also have consciousness. The core of human consciousness, the soul within the soul, is considered the "consciousness soul." The rational soul is still caught in the feelings, desires and instincts, etc. Everyone knows what he feels is true. The truth remains after it has been removed from the aftertaste of the sympathy and antipathy within the feelings. The truth is true, even when all of the personal feelings are against it. The part of the soul in which these truths live is called the consciousness soul.

In that way people in such clairvoyant, transitional states of mind may observe according to which part of their soul is directed to a certain part of the spiritual world. For example, if the feeling soul observes a certain spiritual area, then the human being sees the spiritual beings that are closely related to forces of nature to the elements of nature. He does not see the mirror of these natural forces, but he sees what lives in the mirror of the natural forces of wind and water and in other processes. The person using his feeling soul sees the beings that express themselves in natural forces. Within these experiences he lives in a time before human beings used their rational soul or their consciousness soul.

The human is then placed in a setting as he observed in ancient times without his rational soul or his consciousness soul. But in ancient times he was closely related to the forces of nature. He was part of them. He was a being with a physical body, an etheric body, an astral body and a feeling soul.

He could act as the lower forces of nature act today. In roaring windstorms he could bring down trees. He could control weather, clouds and rain. In his ancient clairvoyance the powerful beings appeared, that were somewhat like himself at an earlier stage when mankind had not yet removed the forces of nature from their beings. The shapes that appeared were representations of their human shape, they appeared as people with gigantic powers. Those were the “giants”! In such clairvoyant, transitional states of mind, they saw giants as real figures that represented human beings with gigantic powers. But giants are stupid. They appear from a time in which they could not use their rational soul. They are strong and stupid.

Now let us look at what the rational soul can view when it is in such a transitional state of mind. It can see how everything is formed according to certain wisdom, not through brute power as with the giants. When the human being is living in the rational soul, he observes beings and forms that bring wisdom into play. While the giants appear as males, the forms of the rational soul appear as female beings. They are the “wise women” that form everything. In this form the human being sees his own form, for he does not yet have a consciousness soul. He feels: What I see in these wise, female beings is deeply connected to me. Therefore we often hear in fairy tales the “sister-motif” when these female beings appear.

And when the human being lives in his consciousness soul he experiences something in his soul that he can grasp very intimately. When his state of mind is somewhere beyond the normal, physical observations, he says to himself: What I see there is something that is contained in my daily observations in the rational soul, but when I see it by day, it is just the opposite. When the person is in the transitional state of mind and remembers his daily impressions, they appear as the opposite of what he felt when he remembers during his daily consciousness how the transitional state of mind appeared. They are scampering forms in his

astral system. When he remembers his daily impressions, they appear as fine, ethereal forms presented in stiff shapes behind normal reality. Therefore the daily objects appear as though enchanted in their being. Wherever forms appear that are enchanted, in plants or anywhere else, it takes place because the human being experiences the content of a wise being behind the physical appearance and he remembers: By day that is merely a plant, and it is separate from my rational soul so I may not reach it in my daily consciousness. When the human feels this strangeness between the daily objects and those objects behind them, for example the lily, and the being behind it, the form that is related to the rational soul, then he wants to unite his rational soul with that being. It is like a marriage, a growing together of a day-form with a night-form.

The consciousness soul appeared in human beings at a time when he had distanced himself from natural forces. He could no longer observe the secrets of the being. That is far, far away from the consciousness soul. Smartness is the key ability of the consciousness soul but this part of the soul is far away from strength, from great power. With the consciousness soul we observe the spiritual beings that have remained at the level of the human being when he had the first sheaths of his Self or I. The human being sees these beings but they are weak and not capable of much. And when a human being views the spiritual beings that are related to his own being, he observes them as “dwarves.”

The kingdom that lies beyond our sensory observations in daily life is filled with forms, as I have expressed. And when the human being is smart in his daily life, when he does not look dryly and unimaginatively at life but awakens to the spiritual realities, especially in the transitional states of mind, then the following can happen to him.

Imagine that a levelheaded person observes how smart some people are. He sees how they have overcome the raw forces that otherwise rage in human beings. This person says to himself: What actually takes place in life, where cleverness overcomes the raw forces, is due to powers beyond the physical world. They create in us an awareness of how our intelligence overcomes raw forces that we had inside ourselves as we were at the level of the giants. The happenings in his inner life appear as mirror images of outer realities in the world that have receded, but remain in the spiritual world.

In the spiritual world the battles between those beings that are weaker in bodies and stronger in their spiritual power are mirrored. Whenever the raw forces are overcome or a giant appears in a fairy tale, this is the basis for the observation in a transitional state of mind. The human being is trying to become more enlightened about himself. The spiritual world is no longer visible but he says: I can enlighten myself when I am in transitional states of mind. Then I am wise and cleverness has overcome the raw forces. The battle is won! And the powers appear that are in the spiritual world that correspond to our cleverness

and smartness. They appear, act and enlighten human beings about what takes place in the spiritual world.

The human being says: What I have seen and spoken happened once. But in truth it happens continually in the spiritual world beyond the physical, sensory world where we live. The occurrences are not here nor there but wherever someone is able to observe them. Therefore the fairy tales must always begin:

Something happened once. Yes, where did it happen? Well, where did it not happen? That is the correct beginning to a fairy tale. And every fairy tale must end with: I once saw that; and if those happenings (in the spiritual world) have not ended, then they live on today. When you tell fairy tales, you create the right feeling if you begin and end in this way.

Imagine that someone searched for a bride as the King does in the second fairy tale. He is searching for a being that is represented in the human world as exactly as possible. It is the archetype of the human being that may be found in the spiritual world. It may be found in the wise activities of the forces that may be perceived through the rational soul. In our daily life these beings may not be found. Therefore he must subject the outer human being to the more intimate human being. In the physical world the human being is subject to error. He must allow the deeper forces to prevail when he wants to discover something of this nature. He can do this, even today, when he is in the transitional state of mind and places himself in relation to those prevailing forces. However, the people that carry such forces live in hiding where they will not be distracted by the major activities in the world. Therefore the King must go to his friend, the hermit who lives simply in poverty, but knows the secret of the forces that connect human beings to the spiritual world. Only his friend can give him the rosemary branch.

In the daily, outer world the King may not find something that must be decided by his archetypal pictures in the spiritual world. Therefore he dreams at first that a golden bird comes to him. He remains in the dreamlike, but awakened state of mind. And there he feels his way into the spiritual world where everything takes place in the fairy tale I told. Eventually he meets the forces that oppose human dignity and purity from which he learns the possibility for pure joy in human beings, joy that is still available today. Once again these forces do not appear from the physical world but are available when the rational soul is directed with inner soul forces to the spiritual world. This appears in the image of the magic horse. The horse we see in the physical world is merely a mirror image of the spiritual reality that lies behind it. The destructive soul forces in the physical world that are embodied in the physical world have driven the arrow into the body of the horse. However; in the moment when these forces are driven out, when the magic horse is liberated, the forces become active that allow the King to judge so he not only perceives in the outer world but also can find what is truly right for him. With his normal rationality he could look in the physical

world for the wife who is suited for him but he would not see her. He would not understand the forces that prevent him from finding her and his previous conditions would continue.

The conditions he is looking for are there but they are not available in the physical world where everything appears changed. Within the physical world we do not have the forces in their true reality. But in the enchanted Glass King appears the true personality who can guide him to where he should look for his wife. Through the opposing forces in the physical world, the Glass King has just been transformed. He is caught in the outer, worldly conditions. This also changed him inwardly. Human beings have realities in their karma that are not right. The king has a reality that disturbs him—the bumblebee in his stomach.

The images or pictures in the tale display the truth that lies beneath the surface. In the whole situation we imagine how the forces that can find the spiritual reality beyond the physical world become active in the King. When his soul forces are engaged and he directs them properly, then the King finds what is hidden for him in the physical world: his wife.

This was possible because he came in contact with the hermit who could show him the way to engage deeper forces within. In this way a person may be guided to the forces that at first appear as untrue in the physical world but that he needs if he shall perceive and understand the truth. We see how outer situations influence us but that other states of consciousness are also available that create true perception.

Every fairy tale may be interpreted in this way, but they must be interpreted out of the entire spiritual reality behind the world of fairy tales. Everything we find in fairy tales, even the most minute details, may be interpreted. For example, the secretive connection between the observable forces and the secretive forces in daily life can become visible when you look inwardly. These are wonderfully symbolized in the meeting between the rosemary branch and the lily. Within the lily rest very fine, higher spiritual forces, but they must be touched by the rosemary branch. Only then will they appear.

The established belief in the world of fairy tales entails that we are surrounded by an enchanted spiritual reality and the human being reaches truth when he disenchant the enchanted spiritual world. In as far as the fairy tales are collected from the words of the local people, we have the remains of an ancient picture viewed in the astral world, but some details may be changed. Then the interpreter can easily make the mistake of interpreting the added details, especially in a spiritual direction. Yet in a real interpretation of a fairy tale you must return to the original form and understand it.

We can ask ourselves whether the human being had the same form as he has today at the time when his experiences in the transformed state of mind took place. No, he did not. The human being has gone through changes in his form

until he has developed the form he now has. The human being had to remove the giant forces from his form. He had to overcome those forces and create finer forces in order to reach the level of the rational soul and the consciousness soul. There are beings that remained on the level where raw forces remained. Wherever the human being sees something as bad, something that must be overcome on the astral plane, it appears as a “dragon” or as similar things that are nothing more than grotesque, untransformed forms that the human being removed from his being and left behind in the spiritual world.

To end the lecture I would like to share a tale that you can work on further. It has multiple motifs that are played out when the human being enters into a relationship with the spiritual world. The motifs appear united within himself. And when you put everything we just interpreted into this complicated fairy tale, the paths will appear by themselves. This fairy tale is a synthesis, a summary of the most varied forces that play into each other.

Something happened once. Yes, where did it happen? Well, it could have happened everywhere. Where did it not happen? An old King lived. He had three sons and three daughters. As he began to die, the King said to his three sons: “Give the three daughters to the first people who stop by, so they do not remain unmarried. That is the first instruction that I want to give you. The second is that you should not go to a certain place, especially not in the night.” And he showed them the place underneath a poplar tree in the forest.

After the King died his sons tried to follow his instructions. The very first evening something yelled into the window that they should give it one of the King’s daughters. The brothers did so and threw their sister out of the window. On the second evening something yelled into the window that they should give it one of the King’s daughters. The brothers threw the second daughter out of the window. And on the third evening something yelled into the window that they should give it also one of the King’s daughters, and the brothers threw their third sister out of the window. Now they were all alone.

But the brothers became curious and wanted to know how to explain the poplar tree. One evening they went out, sat down below the poplar tree, made a bonfire and went to sleep. The eldest brother kept watch. As he walked back and forth carrying his sword, he saw something that started eating the bonfire. When he looked closer he saw a three-headed dragon. He started a fight with the dragon. The brother won the battle, buried the dragon, but did not tell his brothers what had happened. In the morning they all walked home.

The next evening they went out again. Once again they made a fire and lay down to sleep. This time the second brother should keep watch. Soon he saw something eating the fire, and when he came closer he saw a six-headed dragon. The second brother fought the six-headed dragon and won. After burying the

dragon he decided not to tell his brothers about the battle, and so the other brothers thought nothing had happened. That morning they returned to their house.

On the third evening they made another fire, and this time the youngest brother held watch. The others had just gone to sleep when he walked back and forth with his sword and saw something eating the fire. He looked closer but was hesitant and took his time to react. Then he began a sword fight with the nine-headed dragon. Just as he won the battle, the fire went out. He did not want to surprise his brothers so he walked into the woods to look for light. Between the branches he saw some light that he wanted to grab, but it was too little. He saw something fighting in the air and asked what it was. The fighting beings answered, "We are the sun and the sunrise. We are fighting for the day."

He took off his belt and bound the sun and the sunrise together so the day could not begin. He walked on to find light and fire. The boy arrived at a campfire where three giants were asleep. He helped himself to some fire but when he tried to step over one of the giants, some of the fire fell on the giant and he awoke. With one hand he grabbed the boy, lifted him up and said to the others, "Look at the mosquito I have caught!" The King's son was extremely unhappy, for the giants wanted to kill him. But before they killed him they wanted something and therefore they made an agreement. They wanted to have three King's daughters but a dog and a chicken made such a terrible noise that they could not get in. The King's son promised to help them; therefore they set him free.

They tied him to thin thread and let him walk off. They agreed that every time he pulled on the thread, one of the giants would come to him. He soon arrived at a stream which he could not cross. His brothers were still asleep. The boy pulled on the thread, a giant came along and threw a huge tree trunk across the river so he could travel on.

Later he arrived at the King's castle where his three sisters should have been. He entered and found one sister in her room. She lay on a copper bed and had a golden ring on her finger. He removed the golden ring from her hand, put it on his and walked on.

He entered the second room where the sister lay on a silver bed with a golden ring on her finger as well. He removed it and put it on his finger. The boy entered the third room where his third sister lay on a golden bed with a golden ring on her finger and as with the others he put her ring on his hand.

When he looked around the castle, he found an entrance with a very small opening. He pulled on the thread and a giant came. In that very moment when the giant put his head through the door, the boy cut it off with his sword. To the second and third giants he did the same. Now he had killed all three giants. After releasing the sun and the sunrise, he returned to his brothers. They looked at each

other and said, "Oh, that was a long night." They looked at their youngest brother but he told nothing of his adventures. They all walked home.

After a while all three boys wanted to get married. The third brother said he knew where three King's daughters lived and led them to the castle. The King's sons married all three daughters. The youngest married the most beautiful daughter who lay on the golden bed. He became the heir to his father-in-law and must therefore stay in the foreign land.

After a while he wanted to visit his homeland and take his wife with him, but the King warned him, "When you return to your homeland, you will lose your wife at the border and probably never see her again!"

Despite his warning they wanted to travel, so travel they did. To be more secure they took three giants along with them. As they crossed the border his wife was overcome by a secret power that carried her away. He returned to his father-in-law and asked him where and how he could find his wife. The King replied, "If there is any chance at all, you can only find her in the white land."

The King's son traveled far to find his wife. Yet he did not know the way to the white land. He came to a castle and decided to ask where was the path that led to the white land. As he entered the castle, he saw the wife of the castle sitting on her throne. When he saw her, he immediately knew she was one of his sisters, whom his brothers had thrown out of the window. He asked her where to look for his wife.

Something cried from another hall and a four-headed dragon appeared. The boy asked him where to look for his wife. The dragon said he did not know where the white land is but that possibly the animals may know. The animals were called in but none of them knew where the path to the white land could be found.

The King's son walked on and eventually came to a second castle. Here he found his second sister that his brothers had thrown out of the window. He asked for his wife, but no one knew where she was. They called in an eight-headed dragon and asked him where she may be. The dragon knew nothing of the white land, but perhaps the animals may know, so they called in all the animals, but none of them knew the way.

The King's son was forced to travel on. After a while he found a third castle. There he entered and found his third sister. He told her what he wanted but she answered very sadly. Her husband was called for and a twelve-headed dragon entered. They asked him how to find the white land. He said he did not know, but maybe the animals knew.

So all the animals were called in. Among them was a lame wolf. He spoke, "Once I entered a white land by mistake. It was strange, for now I am lame. I know the white land. Unfortunately, I know it! The King's son told the wolf that

he wanted to be led into the white land. But the wolf did not want to, not even if he were promised a shepherd's whole flock of lambs. Yet the wolf eventually agreed to lead him to the nearby mountain where they both stood and looked down into the white land. There the lame wolf left him on his own.

The King's son found a spring. He drank from it and felt wonderfully refreshed from the water. A woman approached him and he immediately recognized his stolen wife. She knew him too, stating, "You may not take me back. If you did, the magician who is now my husband would take me away on his magic horse that can fly through the air as fast as a thought!

The King's son asked, "Yes, then what should we do?"

And she replied, "There is one way, but we will need an even faster horse. Go to the old woman who lives on the border to this land. You must work for her as her servant. She will give you very difficult trials, but you must find a way to survive. As a reward you shall ask for the youngest colt and the saddle on the floor that is covered with chicken manure. Ask her for the bridle as well!"

With these instructions the King's son went forth. He came to a little brook. As he rested there he saw on the edge of the brook a fish lying on the ground. The fish begged him, "Take me and throw me back in the water. You will do a great deed!" He did so, and as he leaned down to pick it up, the fish gave him a whistle and said, "If you need anything take the whistle, blow in it and I will be at your service." He put the whistle in his pocket and placed the fish back in the brook.

After a short while he met an ant who was being followed by her enemy, the spider. He freed the ant, who gave him a second whistle that he could play anytime to call her to his service. He placed it in another pocket and walked on.

Soon he met a fox who had been wounded by a silver arrow in his body. The wolf challenged him, "If you pull the arrow out of my body and give me some sharp-pointed herbs for my wound, you will be helped when entering a dangerous experience." The King's son did so and the fox gave him a third whistle.

With three whistles in his pocket, the boy reached the border to the white land where the old woman lived. He told her he wanted to be her servant. She agreed to let him try, but told him that no one had succeeded with the terribly hard work she demanded. She took him out to the fields. There were ninety-nine people sleeping there. The oldest spoke, "Here are all the people who tried to be her servant but none of them has succeeded. You may try but if you are unsuccessful, you will be the one-hundredth!" He agreed to serve her for one year, but in this land one year was only three days.

On the first day the old woman cooked for him a "dream soup" and then she sent him out with three horses. He had drunk the "dream soup" and went to sleep immediately. When he awoke all three horses were gone. He remembered his whistles, pulled one out and blew into it. Nearby there was a well. Three goldfish swam to the surface. As he touched them they transformed into three horses. He

brought the horses the old woman. It was she who had transformed the horses into goldfish, and when she saw the horses, she cursed the boy and tossed herself from one side to another.

The next day the old woman cooked another “dream soup” and sent him off with the horses. Once again he fell asleep and when he awoke the horses were gone. He blew into the second whistle and immediately three golden ants appeared. As he touched them they were transformed into his three horses again. He led them back to the old woman. She went totally wild! She had enchanted them and now cursed them even more. But the King’s son was saved.

On the third day the old lady said to herself, “Now things have to be done even more cleverly!” She cooked another soup and sent him out with the horses. When he fell asleep from the dream soup, the horses were transformed into three eggs.

Then the old woman placed them under her buttocks and sat on them! When the King’s son awoke, the horses were gone. He blew into the third whistle and just imagine how clever things took place. The fox came by and said, “This time things are much more difficult, but we will figure it out. I will go to the henhouse and cause wild noise and chaos. The old lady will run out. While she runs, take the three eggs she is sitting on and they will be transformed the minute you touch them.”

So it came to pass. The fox entered the chicken coop, stirred up a ruckus, and when the old woman ran out, the King’s son touched the golden eggs one by one. When the old lady came back, all three horses were there again. She could do nothing more than ask the boy: “What do you want as a reward?” She thought he would want something very special. He asked for the colt that was born that morning and the saddle on the floor that was covered by chicken manure and the old bridle. He received all of these and went along his way.

The horse was very small. He had to carry it on his back. That evening the colt said, “Now you can sleep a bit. I will go to the well and drink some water.” In the morning the colt returned. On the second day the colt could run at tremendous speeds. And on the third day it carried the King’s son to the place where his wife was banished. He placed his wife on the colt (and this is the point that proves to anyone who understands these things the occult origin of fairy tales), and the King’s son asked, “How fast shall we fly through the air?”

And his wife answered, “With the speed of thought.”

Now when the magician who had imprisoned her saw they were escaping, he mounted his magic horse to hurry after them. The horse asked him, “How fast shall we fly through the air?”

And he answered, “With the speed of will or the speed of thinking!” And they rushed after them, getting nearer and nearer. When they were quite near, the horse told those who flew ahead to stop.

“I will stop only when you are quite close,” was the answer.

In that moment the magic horse reared, threw off the robber and joined the little colt. So the Queen was freed, the King’s son was able to go home with his wife, and they lived again in their own land.

And if what happened did not fade away, then they must still live on today.

This is a much more complicated fairy tale that contains multiple events. Let us allow this tale to live in us in order to let the events in this tale resound together. Then we can interpret it on our own. Whatever has been included from false traditions must be extracted. If you follow the principles I have explained today, you will find the golden thread: the dragon motif, the motif of three sisters, the banishment, the overcoming of dragon forces by the fires, the motif of cleverness, the motif of marriage between the rational soul and the outer world; then once again the unique motif of cleverness within the finer magical forces. Then there appears, in a strange fashion, nemesis, karma, in that the King’s son meets his sisters again: their higher sisterly nature that three brothers threw out the window, killing the dragons by the fires and so forth.

Such fairy tales are experiences from people within a folk who are in transformative, in-between states of mind. In the same way we have received the great mythologies of the gods from different peoples. Initiates have brought these mythologies to us from the higher and the lower spiritual worlds. The fairy tales relate to the great folk mythologies in the following way: The great folk mythologies can be interpreted when we base them upon the great, all-encompassing conditions of the cosmos.

The fairy tales are interpreted when based upon the secrets of a folk. Everything that appears in fairy tales is nothing other than different events and pictures of storytelling from the lower spiritual world. To a certain degree all people in primeval times had such experiences from the lower spiritual world. Then they happened more and more seldom. One person told another. Others received the tales and they were transported from one area to the next. They appeared in different languages so we notice common fairy tale treasures over the entire earth when we can peel away the experiences, they are based upon, from the lower spiritual world.

Any practical person who wanders upon the earth can find the final remains of atavistic clairvoyance. From time to time we meet someone who speaks about experiences he had in the lower spiritual worlds. Such a person, who wanders through the country, hears from others who have an understanding for the true reality of fairy tales. In this way the Brothers Grimm wrote down the German fairy tales. Others have collected their land’s fairy tales; most of whom were not clairvoyant, but collected tales from third, fourth, fifth hand and sometimes from tenth hand so the tales take on a multi-distorted form. Yet the fading light of

twilight is approaching when people had an intimate relationship to the spiritual world. More and more people return from this spiritual world. The atavistic clairvoyance will become more and more seldom. At least that can be considered healthy. And true clairvoyance will be more and more accessible for people as the result of spiritual development.

And concerning those who saw in primeval times, people in the future will be able to say, “Once upon a time ancient people spoke from their experiences in the lower spiritual worlds. Where was it? It can be everywhere.”

Today we seldom find someone who can speak out of the true source of fairy tales experiences. For most people who are inwardly trapped in the physical world, the tales died a long time ago. But from the fairy tale experiences we can say, “They happened once—and if they are not finished, then these fairy tale experiences are still alive today.”

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