



Teaching Fairy Stories

with Dr. Junius Johnson

Lesson 2: Why Teach Fairy Stories?

Outline:

Key reason to teach fairy stories

- C.S. Lewis believed that the element of the fantastic could be a way for catching readers off guard, or “sneaking past the watchful dragons that guard the pathways to proper feelings of devotion to God.”

Fairy stories are useful for the end of classical education, Christian or not.

- Fairy stories have the power to generalize while remaining concrete (Lewis).
 - These stories are able to be funnels. A big idea can be shown forth. Can't any story do that?
 - What does the fantastic make possible?
 - Fairy stories are especially well-suited for the concretization of spiritual truths (not theological alone).
 - Spiritual truths are instantiated in our world and countless other worlds.
- Fairy stories can present whole classes of experiences (Lewis).
- Fairy stories are able to dispense with irrelevancies (Lewis).
 - We don't need to know the geography of the wood.
 - All we need to know is that he is going to go into that wood and strange things will happen there because that is what happens in woods.
- The fairy story can give us new experiences that we haven't had before, adding to life and not just witnessing it (Lewis).
 - Fairy stories can be a way of living life, not simply commenting on life.
 - By means of literature, we grow wiser because it is not just a commentary but things that you've in no way experienced in your life.
- Our souls do not just have a realistic side to them.
 - Education is character formation, so we also have to be concerned with students' hearts.
- Three recommendations:
 - Nothing is more fruitful and memorable than falling in love with a story.
 - Children are hardwired to love the fantastical. All humans are wired in this way, however, by growing up we train ourselves to disregard our own heart's desire.
 - The world is a magical place.



- For too long, education has been about disenchanting the world and demythologizing it.
- Classical education is a response to this pushing back to an enchanted cosmos.
- G.K. Chesterton wrote the following.
 - A tree grows fruit because it is a magic tree,
Water runs downhill because it is bewitched,
The sun shines because it is bewitched.
- If our world is magical, then fairy is not touching on something different?
 - The fairy worlds have a connection, the other worlds are continuous to ours. What joins other worlds to ours is that we share the fantastical.
 - Fairy stories are not wishful thinking or escapist, they turn the world on its head only to give us a better sense of what the world really is.
 - If we are so twisted that we are seeing the world upside down, then it will require an inversion of the world to see it rightly.
- The sense of wonder will only thrive if it is fed wonder.