



Awakening the Moral Imagination through Fairy Tales and Stories

with Dr. Vigen Guroian

Lesson 2: On Fairy Tales and the Truth in Them

Outline:

What is the real value of fairy tales? Why we should introduce them to our children?

- Dickens and fairy tales: Dickens would agree that there are occasions when the reading should abbreviate or rephrase the printed text, especially for the smallest child. Dickens insists that is a matter of great importance. He objects to a spirit of innovation that alters for print the fairy tales in order to suit personal taste, popular opinion, or to make a buck.
- What Dickens condemned more than 150 years ago, continues today in the publishing and film industries. Disney is the most obvious example (of the last 40 years).
- Hold tightly to the narrative. Never subject the narrative to any a priori theory. Fairy tales speak first to the senses.
- Flannery O'Connor, "The whole story is the meaning, because it is an experience not an abstraction."
- *Stories are the most effective means of engendering a moral imagination that respects rules and obeys laws.*
- Children exercise their imagination so powerfully that they quite deliberately leave the ordinary presence entirely behind and enter into new worlds of make believe. (C.S. Lewis)
- Children live near to fairy land and enter into it through play.
- Children instinctively resist abstraction, they cling to the narrative.
- Any parent or teacher, who has read to children, has experienced the intensity at which children insist that when we try to explain a story that we retell (relive) the dramatic action. They insist on exercising their imagination.
- Fairy tales help us imagine how and to what purpose and effect morality belongs to our lives.
- G.K. Chesterton reminds us that their runs through the great fairy tales, "The idea that peace and happiness can only exist on some condition such as that honors to be upheld or truth to be told."
- Transformations are but signs of the moral truths that lie at the heart of the fairy tale.



- The magic of the fairy tale lies in its capacity to make us see (make us to imagine) that we are capable of committing the evil of the wicked witch and the good of the fairy godmother.
- The great fairy tales enable us to discern what the difference is between good and evil. Fairy tales exercise and build up the moral imagination and engender virtue.
- Chesterton: It only seems incredible to us, because we ourselves shall very soon be incredible. All ethics ought to be taught to a fairy tale tune (captivates and enchants the mind of children). Morality can be enjoyed because it puts us in fairy land, in a world at once of wonder and of war.