

The Conception of the World in Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales

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Abstract:

The present study aims to highlight some themes, directions and ethical aspects revealed by Andersen's fairy tales, the conception of the world, our existence and its meaning. Andersen is a romantic who sees childhood as a pure, but fleeting and sometimes tragic age. Some critics spoke of metaphysical themes and his desire to draw the ideal of humanity but they also offer us a pretext for analysis and meditation.

Keywords: Life, Themes, Motives, Morality, Andersen's fairy tales

Children's literature addresses topics from all areas of knowledge, of experience and subjective or objective human reality, synthesized from different perspectives, on certain general dominants (childhood, adolescence, nature and living things, time, history, family, school, love, magic) and particular (based on classical values such as modesty, generosity, justice, humanity, freedom, knowledge, courage, diligence, pride, stupidity, greed, generosity, work, wickedness, but also destiny, time, fear, abandonment, hunger, social indifference or religion). Especially in the modern period, the themes and the motives have diversified, addressing less comfortable or common issues, such as physical or moral violence, psychological – humiliation, discrimination, threats, hatred, jealousy, death, war, terrorism, racism, feminism or drugs.

In the following, we will approach the work of one of the legendary authors of children's literature: Hans Christian Andersen. This year, on April 2, we celebrate 216 years since his birth. After a life full of deprivation, humiliation and suffering, the writer received full gratitude towards the end of his life, and today his fairy tales are known and valued worldwide. His birthday is celebrated as International Children's Book Day. In addition to his work as a novelist, poet and playwright, Andersen also worked as a storyteller who, together with Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, Hauff or Creangă, brought him the literary consecration of the fairy tale. From the first edition of his fairy tales, Andersen stated:

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as a child, my greatest joy was to listen to stories, some of which have remained as vivid in my memory today, others have faded, and others I completely forgot them (...) the fairy tale is the widest field, it extends from Antiquity to the multicolored illustrations of the legend, it encompasses popular literature and literary works” (preface to the 1835 edition).

The fairy tale is a plea for eternal human values, goodness and beauty, addressing to all the ages, and, by repeating elements of compositional structure, through the linearity of the characters, it becomes an exceptional literary material accessible to young children. The fairy tale – wrote G. Călinescu – “is a work of literary creation with a special genesis, a reflection of life in fabulous ways... According to its own procedures of composition and poetic presentation, the fairy tale is a vast genre, far surpassing the novel, being mythology, epic, science, moral observation, etc.” (Călinescu, 1965: 9). “Each people processes the existing themes in the fairy tale according to the geographical environment to which it belongs, the cultural tradition and the social life” (Banța, 2014: 11).

Andersen’s creation is composed, on the one hand, of stories that capitalize on folkloric elements (such as *The tinder box*, *The Princess and the Pea*, *Little Claus and Big Claus*, *The Emperor’s New Clothes*, *The Swineherd*, *What the old man does is always right*) and represents the beginning of his creation, and, on the other hand, his own creations (*Little Mermaid*, *Swans*, *The Daisy* etc.). Florica Bodiștean emphasizes that Andersen “is not interested in the fidelity to the popular text, which can be seen, for example, in Brothers Grimm’s collection”, but in “the humanization of the characters’ features (...) and the constant adoption of the child’s perspective on his world values”. (Bodiștean, 2007: 210).

As a child, Andersen came into contact with the popular imagination and you can see this sensitivity to popular tradition, which integrates elements, mentalities or isolated details. Unlike the other storytellers in the world, Andersen does not take the fairy tale as such, his style is alive, full of movement and imagination. The folklorist Claude Gaignebet emphasizes, in Andersen’s case, this originality, his flavor and uniqueness of the stories. The originality of Andersen’s fairy tales lies in the use of spoken language, in the combination of the imaginary with the universal taken from popular legends. His works are singular also through their action, through the presentation of ordinary life. In a fairy tale, through the voice of a heroine, the author says: “In reality, in fact, the most charming fairy tales appear”. Andersen accurately endowed inanimate objects with human features, while opening to his reader an unknown, mysterious and immeasurable world,

awakening “good feelings” in flowers and trees, in the silver coin and the street lamp.

Literary criticism has seen in Andersen’s fairy tales more some sketches or stories, “in which reality – present through frequent forays into his own biography - is intertwined with the fantastic generated by a fruitful imagination, stimulated in turn by a high humanitarian spirit, a strong feeling of solidarity with the poor” (Popa, 1965: 23). In some fairy tales, we find aspects of the author’s biography. According to the researchers, the story *The Ugly Duckling* reflects Andersen’s feelings of alienation, the author himself acknowledging this reflection of his own life. As a boy, he was teased for his look and strong voice, which often made him feel isolated, and later wrote a story about a boy named Hans, whom he laughed at as a child. Like the ugly duckling, Andersen became a “swan” only later in life – a world-renowned cult writer with high-ranking friends.

There is also evidence that Andersen placed his characters in desperate and hopeless situations to reflect his own personal traumas, which included growing up in poverty, losing his father, and the need to work in a factory at the age of 11 for maintaining his mother. The literary critic Paul Binding said that the long-running appeal of his stories, however, goes beyond their authenticity. “It’s true, some of Andersen’s most famous stories – *The Ugly Duckling*, *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, even *The Little Mermaid* – are dramatizations or sublimations of their own dilemmas, but they wouldn’t impress us if they didn’t overwhelm the staff - in language, in observation and in details and in a complicated but discreet structure - to remain alone as perfectly crafted artifacts of universal appeal”, wrote Binding for *The Guardian*.

The reality of his life with all its aspects – exaggerated susceptibility, shyness, fits of mysticism, the need for love, loneliness – all these are found in literary creation, in fairy tale characters such as *She was good for nothing*, *What Old Johanne told*, *Holger Danske*, *The red shoes*, *The Little Match Girl*, *The lovers*, *The little Mermaid*, *Under the willow tree* and *The Nightingale*.

We are often asked how we can form the foundations or principles of **the conception of the world** for preschoolers or schoolchildren. First of all, through fairy tales, folk or literary, through the deep wisdom that it reveals. Compared to some works from children’s literature, which intend to amuse or inform, the fairy tale manages to stimulate, nurture, develop the child’s personality, to facilitate access to the deep meaning of existence. In Andersen’s fairy tales we can meet, as in life, great people, simple and honest people, rich and poor, happy and miserable, satisfied and eternally dissatisfied, but also biblical heroes, characters from the Koran, characters from the

myths of ancient Egypt, or Tristan and Isolde and many others. The values that the heroes aspire to are the Truth, the Goodness and the Beauty, elements on which the spiritual life is based.

Even if they do not depict the specific conditions of life in a modern society, because they were conceived long before, fairy tales “talk about the inner life of a human being and about solutions to get out of delicate situations, solutions valid in any society (...) the child will learn to relate to these specific conditions, provided that internal resources allow it” – says Bruno Bettelheim (1976: 9). The psychologist analyzes, in his study, the emotional, symbolic and therapeutic importance of the Brothers Grimm stories. Starting from his ideas, we can notice a series of similar aspects in reading some fairy tales by H.Chr.Andersen.

The conception of the world, the permanent admiration for Good and Beautiful, is especially visible in the tale *The stone of a wise man*, impressive for its rich content in symbols and wisdom. The descriptions of the Tree of the Sun and the castle are loaded with symbolic elements. In an attempt to retell the fairy tale, we notice that we always omit something. Each row is full of deep meaning. The fairy tale begins with the description of the Sun Tree, at the top of which rises a crystal castle. From its windows a panorama opens in all four corners of the world, and in the walls

Here the whole world was reflected on the walls. One could see everything that happened, so there was no need to read newspapers; there were no newspapers here, anyway. Everything could be seen in living pictures, if one wanted to or was able to see it all; for too much is too much, even for the wisest man. And the wisest of all men lived here.

In the most secret chamber of that castle lay earth’s greatest treasure – the Book of Truth. Page after page, the Wise Man had read it through. Every man may read in this book, but only parts of it; to many and eye the letters seem to fade, so that the words cannot even be spelled; on some pages the writing is so pale that they seem like blank leaves. But the wiser a man becomes, the more he can read; and the wisest men read the most.¹

But the last pages of the Book of Truth – Life After Death – remained for the wise white pages, and in order to read them, he had to find the „philosopher’s stone”.

¹For all the translations of the fairy tales, https://andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/index_e.html, accessed on the 25th of march 2021.

The wise man had five children: four sons and a daughter, beautiful, gentle and smart, but blind. The father spoke to the children about *the good*,

the true, and the beautiful, and explained that these three clung together in the world, and that under the pressure they endured they hardened into a precious stone, purer than the water of a diamond - a splendid jewel of value to God Himself, whose brightness outshone all things; this was called the "Stone of the Wise Man". (...) He told them that, just as man could gain knowledge of the existence of God by seeking it, so was it within the power of man to gain proof that such a jewel as the "Stone of the Wise Man" existed. This explanation would have been beyond the understanding of other children, but these children could grasp it, and in time other children, too, will learn to understand its meaning.

The sons go out into the world one by one to find the stone of the wise man, but fail as a result of their own weaknesses and the devil's interference and they risk losing themselves. Then the daughter goes in search of the stone, but first of all, she took the fork and spun a thread

thinner than the spider's web; human eyes could not distinguish the separate threads in it, so fine were they. She had moistened it with her tears, and it was as strong as a rope. She arose; her decision was made - the dream must become a reality.

It was still night, and her father was sleeping. She pressed a kiss on his hand, and then, taking her distaff, fastened the end of the thread to her father's castle. But for this, in her blindness she would never have been able to find her way home; she must hold fast to that thread and trust neither to herself nor to others. From the Tree of the Sun she broke off four leaves; these she would entrust to the winds to bring to her brothers as letters of greeting in case she should not meet them out there in the wide world.

The girl finally finds the stone and returns home to her father:

Even to the house of my father, she repeated. "Yes, the place of the jewel is on this earth, and I shall bring with me more than the promise of it. I can feel its glow; in my closed hand it swells larger and larger. Every grain of truth, however fine it was, which the wind whirled toward me, I caught up and treasured; I let penetrate into it the fragrance of the beautiful, of which there is so much in the world, even for the blind. To the first I added the sound of the beating heart, doing good. I bring only dust with me, but still it is the dust of the jewel we sought, and it is in ample quantity. I have my whole hand full of it!" Then she stretched forth her hand toward her father. She was home.

She had traveled there with the swiftness of thoughts in flight, having never let go of the invisible thread leading to home.

The hope for a better world, without lies and injustice, in which man, freed from all that is bad and ugly, to always be good and merciful and to fully enjoy every day and every hour of life, is the basis many of Andersen's fairy tales. His fairy tales address various themes and motives, some with social or moral implications, loaded with symbols of the most diverse (kindness, cleverness, modesty, intelligence, courage or immortality, real life or beyond death), some researchers have even debated aspects of the reception of some of the fairy tales by children, wondering if Andersen is necessarily an author for children or also for adults. The fairy tales sometimes hide subtle meanings and significances. Through his works, he conveys explicit and implicit meanings, addressing the human personality, which also touches the "immature" mind of a child, and the sophisticated mind of an adult.

Nicolae Manolescu sees Andersen's stories "bitter and ruthless", and *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* "Andersen's most ruthless story". The critic notices in Andersen a taste for tragic and absurd, and the chance occupies a central place. The Danish writer is "obsessed with two reasons: the aggression against a candid and unarmed human being (like, by the way, most of Andersen's favorite heroes) – the soldier, *Thumbelina*, the ugly duckling, Hans and Gretchen or the little mermaid". Following the narrative thread of the stories, Nicolae Manolescu emphasizes the event that "suddenly takes them out of the familiar space *in the world*: and what a world! At every step a danger lurks. They live in insecurity and fear. The bullets of the hunters rain around the poor duck. A rat holds the path of the soldier. An icy princess steals Hans from home with his sleigh. The fragility of the "heroes" also results from the contrast of their nature with that of the aggressors. These are evil, selfish or downright hideous beings" (Manolescu, 2006: 99-102).

"At some point, Andersen's heroes begin to imagine that they live a nightmare: their travels, their adventures, their destiny are a nightmare - which usually culminates in a kidnapping. This is the second reason for Andersen's literature: the reason for the sequestration". The world is a trap in which the heroes are thrown, they hit by means of a false benefactor: the grandmother, the frog, the snow princess, the mouse. Kidnapped, confiscated, the heroes enter places that seem to have no way out. The fear has hallucinatory and grotesque forms. The lair of the rat, the house of the grandmother, the castle of the Snow Princess or of the emperor who wants to listen to the nightingale represent real "camps", fields, concentration universes.

The little mermaid is not constrained by anyone, but she arrives in such a place, out of love for the prince. He is the “agent of evil”. This closed space, found in Andersen’s world, is best seen in *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*.

N. Manolescu sees in Andersen a “lonely and fearful man, haunted by obsessions like the ones he blames on his heroes, a misanthrope who sees rude bourgeois everywhere, a romantic nature terrified by the traps of practical existence”. (Manolescu, 2011: 99-102)

Andersen examines and convincingly illustrates the spiritual strength of fragile, limp, delicate little girls – like Gerda of the *Snow Queen*, Eliza of the *Swans*, whose heroism and selfless sacrifice overshadow even the actions of powerful heroes, for their souls are pierced by a great love and selflessness who seduces the hearts of millions of children. The fairy tale contributes to the development of fantasy, of artistic taste, to the formation and strengthening of confidence in the triumph of good” (Banța, 2014: 9).

What is important is that his fairy tales, even the saddest or most tragic, address important and real themes, which possess the amazing quality of giving hope and healing the soul. These works have a peculiarity not found in other works for children – the real representations acquire an exceptionally poetic character, they are touching and influential. The heroes find a way in life, they find value in a chaotic world. The children find themselves, in a humanity, somewhere between their ideals, their fantasies about life or what life should be like and the reality of their situation – disappointment and suffering.

In his study, *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and importance of Fairy Tales* (1976), the psychologist Bruno Bettelheim analyzes some stories for children in terms of Freudian psychoanalysis, stating that fairy tales help children overcome existential stalemate, emphasizing that “one-dimensional information feeds the mind one-dimensional, and the real world does not it is exclusively bright” (Bruno Bettelheim, 1976: 13). “Without such fantasies, the child fails to get to know his monster better and is not offered any suggestions on how he can gain control of it. As a result, the child remains helpless in his worst anxieties – especially if he were told fairy tales that give shape and body to these anxieties and also show him ways to overcome these monsters”.

Thus, the message of the fairy tale, says the psychologist, is that the fight against major obstacles in life is inevitable as an intrinsic part of human existence – but if we do not get scared, and face all the difficult and unexpected problems, often undeserved, we will manage to master them, and in the end, to emerge victorious” (Bruno Bettelheim, 1976: 14).

Andersen speaks so poetically about **purity of soul, the best defense against evil**, in *The wild Swans*. Usually, in the human being there are the most different qualities. In *Anne Lisbeth* he is very profound:

So, in a single instant, can the consciousness of the sin that has been committed in thoughts, words, and actions of our past life, be unfolded to us. When once the conscience is awakened, it springs up in the heart spontaneously, and God awakens the conscience when we least expect it. Then we can find no excuse for ourselves; the deed is there and bears witness against us. The thoughts seem to become words, and to sound far out into the world. We are horrified at the thought of what we have carried within us, and at the consciousness that we have not overcome the evil which has its origin in thoughtlessness and pride. The heart conceals within itself the vices as well as the virtues, and they grow in the shallowest ground.

The fairy tale *The ugly Duckling* confirms that man brings all his important qualities with him. Everything I have accumulated is in the “egg”:

But what did he see in the clear stream below? His own image; no longer a dark, gray bird, ugly and disagreeable to look at, but a graceful and beautiful swan. To be born in a duck’s nest, in a farmyard, is of no consequence to a bird, if it is hatched from a swan’s egg. He now felt glad at having suffered sorrow and trouble, because it enabled him to enjoy so much better all the pleasure and happiness around him; for the great swans swam round the new-comer, and stroked his neck with their beaks, as a welcome.

Thumbelina was interpreted differently, seen as an adventure story, with a passive character, a victim of circumstances or as a story of the runaway bride, an allegory to arranged marriages, either a fable about the fidelity of love or a story that dramatizes the sufferings of one who is different and becomes the object of ridicule. Other critics have seen a moral story which speaks about the problems and the obstacles of life.

Thumbelina shows us the evolution of human being: *Here’s a grain of barley for you, but it isn’t at all the sort of barley that farmers grow in their fields or that the chickens get to eat. Put it in a flower pot and you’ll see what you shall see.*

In many fairy tales, he talks about the importance **and power of thoughts**. Thus, *The Great Sea Serpent* is the fruit of human thoughts. In the tale *The Hood of the Old Bachelor*, the author shows us that things are loaded with the emanations and thoughts of the owner and “you can not wash them with any soap”.

In the *Hebrew*, it asserts itself to all people, regardless of religion, before God. And in *The Rose Elf* the fact that we are surrounded by many unseen beings from whom we can hide nothing. Or, as the narrator says, *beneath every leaf, no matter how insignificant, is someone who can expose an iniquity*. About the true art that defeats the destroyers, about the fact that the form can be destroyed, but the idea that animates the work does not perish is told in *The Most Incredible Thing* (1870), and in the fairy tale *What the whole family said* (1870) – *Life is the most wonderful of stories!*

But how poetic are the thoughts of gratitude described in the fairy tale *Ole the Tower-Keeper* (1859)

“In the world it’s always going up and down; and now I can’t go up any higher!” So said Ole the tower-keeper. “Most people have to try both the ups and the downs; and, rightly considered, we all get to be watchmen at last, and look down upon life from a height”.

“The thanks are often speechless, but they are not lost for all that. I think these thanks are caught up, and the sunbeams bring the silent, hidden thankfulness over the head of the benefactor; and if it be a whole people that has been expressing its gratitude through a long lapse of time, the thankfulness appears as a nosegay of flowers, and at length falls in the form of a shooting star over the good man’s grave (...) It is a great and pleasant thought to know that a shooting star falls upon our graves”.

Andersen talks about souls in *The Little Mermaid*:

“Human beings, on the contrary, have a soul which lives forever, long after their bodies have turned to clay. It rises through thin air, up to the shining stars. Just as we rise through the water to see the lands on earth, so men rise up to beautiful places unknown, which we shall never see”.

“Why weren’t we given an immortal soul?” the little mermaid sadly asked. “I would gladly give up my three hundred years if I could be a human being only for a day, and later share in that heavenly realm”.

“You must not think about that”, said the old lady. “We fare much more happily and are much better off than the folk up there”.

“Then I must also die and float as foam upon the sea, not hearing the music of the waves, and seeing neither the beautiful flowers nor the red sun! Can’t I do anything at all to win an immortal soul?”

In *The Galoshes of Fortune*, he speaks about the „travel”:

Death is an electric shock to the heart, and the soul set free travels on electric wings. The sunlight takes eight minutes and some odd seconds to travel nearly one hundred million miles. On the wings of electricity, the soul can make the same journey in a few moments, and to a soul set free the heavenly bodies are as close together as the houses of friends

who live in the same town with us, or even in the same neighborhood. However, this electric shock strips us of our bodies forever, unless, like the watchman, we happen to be wearing the galoshes of Fortune.

The fairy tale *The bell* tells us:

The church bell hangs high, and looks far around, and sees the birds around it, and understands their language. The wind roars in upon it through windows and loopholes; and the wind knows everything, for he gets it from the air, which encircles all things, and the church bell understands his tongue, and rings it out into the world, 'Ding-dong! ding-dong!'

This theme is present, in another interpretation, in the fairy tales *The Stone of the Wise Man* and *The Garden of Paradise*. Finally, the prince, being at the castle, looks out the windows where in each window time has imprinted an unforgettable picture. Yes, everything that had ever happened in the world was alive and moving in the windows of the castle. The descriptions of the Garden of Heaven are associated with the legends of the Holy Land: the garden is in the depths of the earth, but in it reigns, as before, greatness, the sun shines as before, and the air is penetrated by an unusual freshness and aroma! Also there was the wonderfully beautiful island of Happiness in which Death does not enter! The road to it passes through the Himalayas, then through the cave reminiscent of the giant crypt (the road of death). The road there is very useful, in the garden there is the source of Wisdom. To stay in the garden you have to go through trials, experiences. The trace of the lost heaven is the morning star.

The one who does not pass through trials has the opportunity to enter the Garden, but Death promises him:

I will allow him to wander about the world for a while, to atone for his sin, and to give him time to become better. But I shall return when he least expects me. I shall lay him in a black coffin, place it on my head, and fly away with it beyond the stars. There also blooms a garden of paradise, and if he is good and pious he will be admitted; but if his thoughts are bad, and his heart is full of sin, he will sink with his coffin deeper than the garden of paradise has sunk. Once in every thousand years I shall go and fetch him, when he will either be condemned to sink still deeper, or be raised to a happier life in the world beyond the stars

In his works, Andersen deals with **the theme of death** in twenty-four fairy tales. One of the fairy tales is also called *On Judgment Day*:

The most solemn of all the days of our life is the day we die. It is judgment day, the great sacred day of transfiguration. Have you really

seriously given a fleeting thought to that grave and mighty last hour we shall spend on earth?

In this fairy tale, the author describes poetically this process:

There was once a man, a staunch upholder of truth, as he was called, to whom the word of his God was law, a zealous servant of his zealous God. With a stern but heavenly look, the Angel of Death stood at his bedside.

“The hour has come; you shall follow me!” said Death, and touched the man’s feet with ice-cold fingers, and his feet became like ice. Then Death touched his forehead, and lastly his heart, and when it burst, the soul was free to follow the Angel of Death.

But during those brief seconds while the icy touch shivered through feet and head and heart, there passed through the mind of the dying man, like great ocean waves, the recollection of all he had wrought and felt throughout his life. (...) In such a moment the terrified sinner shrinks into himself and has nothing to cling to, and he feels himself shrinking further into infinite emptiness. And at such times the devout soul bows its head to the Almighty and yields itself up to Him in childlike trust, praying, “Thy will be done with me!” (...) And the soul followed the Angel of Death, casting only one wistful glance back at the bed where, in its white shroud, lay the lifeless image of clay, still bearing the print of the soul’s individuality. And the soul followed the Angel of Death, casting only one wistful glance back at the bed where, in its white shroud, lay the lifeless image of clay, still bearing the print of the soul’s individuality.

Now they hovered through the air, now glided along the ground. Were they passing through a vast, decorated hall, or perchance a forest? It was hard to tell. Nature appeared formally set out for show, as in the stately, artificial, old French gardens, and through its strange, carefully arranged scenes there passed many men and women, all clad as if for a masquerade.

“Such is human life!” spoke the Angel of Death.

In its path, the soul encounters obstacles, trials and various other incarnations. Some looked and behaved very strangely.

It seemed as if the figures tried to disguise themselves; those who flaunted the glories of velvet and gold were not always the noblest and the richest, neither were all those who wore the garb of poverty the most wretched and vulgar. A strange masquerade indeed! And most strange of all was to see how each one carefully concealed under his clothing something he would not have the others discover. Each was determined to learn his neighbor’s secret, and they tore at one another until here and there the heads of different animals were bared. One was that of a grinning ape, another the head of a goat, still others a clammy snake and a feeble fish.

In all was some token of the animal which is fast rooted in human nature, and which here was struggling and jumping to burst forth. And however closely a person might hold his garment over it to hide it, the others would never rest until they had torn aside the veil, and all kept crying out, "Look here! See! It is he! It is she!" and everyone mockingly laid bare his fellow's shame.

"Then what was the animal in me?" inquired the soul.

The Angel of Death silently pointed to a haughty form around whose head spread a bright glory of rays, with shining colors, but in whose heart could be seen lurking, half hidden, the feet of a peacock.

(...) they cried, "You who walk with Death, do you remember me?" All the evil thoughts and lusts that had lurked within the man from birth to death now called after him in forbidding tones, "Do you remember me?"

These were all the evil thoughts and deeds of the soul. The path of the soul was sprinkled with sharp stones from which he wounded his feet to the blood. Apparently, these were the impulsive, reckless, evil words spoken in life. "Each stone is some careless word you have spoken, which wounded your neighbor's heart far more deeply than these sharp flints that now hurt your feet."

"I never thought of that!" cried the soul.

And the souls reach at the gates of heaven:

I see it neither in your faith nor in your actions! "The teaching of Christ is forgiveness, love, and mercy!"

"Mercy!" The echo of this rang through infinite space, the gates of heaven opened, and the soul hovered toward the realms of eternal bliss.

But the flood of light that streamed forth from within was so dazzling, so penetrating, that the soul shrank back as from a double-edged sword. And the sound of music was so soft and touching that no mortal tongue could describe it. The soul trembled and prostrated itself lower and lower, and the celestial light cut through it until it felt, as it had never felt before, the weight of its own pride and cruelty and sin.

"Whatever good I have done in the world, I did because I could not do otherwise; but the evil that I did-that was of myself!"

The fairy tales ends with this words:

(...) And as this soul did, so shall we all, on our last day on earth, humbly tremble in the glorious sight of the Kingdom of Heaven. But the infinite love and mercy of our Heavenly Father will carry us through other spheres, so that, purified and strengthened, we may ascend into God's eternal light.

In the fairy tale *Ole-Luk-Oie* (1842), the character meets while sleeping his brother who embodies death, and in the fairy tale *The Child*

in the grave (1859), Andersen tells about life in the afterlife, claiming that our pain and tears shed after the dead man prevents him from passing into the other world, dragging him back to earth.

Not less instructive is the story-parable *The story of a mother*. The death abducted her child. To find out the way, the mother gives her eyes to the lake. Squeezing it to his chest, it begins to turn green and bloom. To enter the garden of death to save her child, she offers the old porter her beautiful black hair in exchange for white hair. But in the end of the story, the mother returns the child to the Death because she understands that this way she saves him from future misfortunes. Breaking her hands and falling to her knees before the Creator, mother asks for forgiveness. This is about the manifestation of prayer and the attitude and relationship towards others.

The galoshes of fortune (1838) talks about the prohibition of the earlier death. The fairy tale *The flax* tells us about **immortality** and the reality of miracles. It is the story of a blue flower brought from Ancient Egypt, whose light petals are like butterfly wings. The beautiful flower goes through a series of transformations.

After some time, the linen was taken into the house, placed under the scissors, and cut and torn into pieces, and then pricked with needles. This certainly was not pleasant; but at last it was made into twelve garments of that kind which people do not like to name, and yet everybody should wear one. “See, now, then”, said the flax; “I have become something of importance. This was my destiny; it is quite a blessing. Now I shall be of some use in the world, as everyone ought to be; it is the only way to be happy. I am now divided into twelve pieces, and yet we are all one and the same in the whole dozen. It is most extraordinary good fortune”.

Years passed away, and at last the linen was so worn it could scarcely hold together. “It must end very soon”, said the pieces to each other; “we would gladly have held together a little longer, but it is useless to expect impossibilities”.

And at length they fell into rags and tatters, and thought it was all over with them, for they were torn to shreds, and steeped in water, and made into a pulp, and dried, and they knew not what besides, till all at once they found themselves beautiful white paper.

Paper becomes a book, “even hundreds of books” – reservoirs of wisdom and light. And even if they reach the fire, the ashes fatten the earth, giving birth again to billions of blue flowers. Everything resumes, everything has a beginning, marking the triumph of life. This fairy tale can explain to children that nothing remains without a trace in life and simply transforms.

The fairy tale *Peiter, Peter and Peer* show us the path that the soul crosses, incarnating on the early plane.

Have you ever gazed at the sky on a clear, starry night and watched the many shooting stars? It is as if the stars fall from and disappear into nowhere. Even the most learned persons can't explain what they don't know themselves; but one can explain this when he knows it. It is like a little Christmas-tree candle that falls from heaven and is blown out. It is a soul spark from our Lord that flies toward the earth, and when it reaches our thick, heavy air, it loses its brilliancy, becoming something that our eyes cannot see, something much finer than air itself; it is a little child from heaven, a little angel, but without wings, for it is to become a human child.

Then, softly it glides through the air, and the wind carries it into a flower, which may be an orchid, a dandelion, a rose, or a cowslip

And there, the child sits and rests, gains strength. Next, we read how the geese carry him on the round, large leaves of the water lilies and let him lie in the sun. The baby slides easily from the leaf into the water, falls asleep there and keeps growing, growing until it gets so big that a stork sees it, fishes it and brings it to a family *that has been longing for a sweet little child. But whether it becomes sweet or not depends on whether it has drunk pure clean water or has swallowed mud and duckweed the wrong way; that makes one so filthy!*

In essence, each of Andersen's fairy tales promotes moral, educational value, and confirms the victory of good and justice. Sometimes, however, it seems that some of Andersen's fairy tales are harsh, sad, and have an unhappy ending, but that opinion depends on how we look at them. The well-known fairy tale *The little mermaid*, for example, at first sight, has a sad ending. Seen from another perspective – the mermaid got the chance to become human. After three hundred years (at the end of the fairy tale, the possibility of reducing this term is mentioned), she is turning into a human, for karmic reasons, will meet the prince. And this will be another story, much happier.

The richness of Andersen's fairy tales is immense, offering symbolic suggestions on how the human being can relate to situations: some even extreme, such as death or eternal life, confronting the child with the fundamental dilemmas of human life, the good and the evil being ubiquitous; this duality triggers moral conflict and, consequently, the struggle to resolve it. Andersen's amoral fairy tales, which do not resort to the dichotomy of good and evil, in which the character's victory is achieved by cunning, do not build the character by choosing between good and evil, but give the child hope that even the weakest can succeed in life. B. Bettelheim emphasizes that, in this case, morality is not the

central theme, but rather “ensuring that for every individual there is an opportunity for success” (Bettelheim, 1976: 18).

These are some directions and ethical aspects revealed by Andersen’s fairy tales, the conception of the world, our existence and its meaning. His themes, important and real, which along with those about children’s fears, their impatience, their joys found in small things, are transmitting to them important things and solutions to the problems that trouble them, their experiences. Andersen is a romantic who sees childhood as a pure, but fleeting and sometimes tragic age. Some critics spoke of metaphysical themes and his desire to draw the ideal of humanity and also offer us a pretext for analysis and meditation.

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