

Mythology and Esoteric Truths

Part 2

SLEEP, FORGETFULNESS, AND BLINDNESS IN MYTHOLOGY

WHEN WE ARE IN the All-conscious state we are in contact with God and know everything there is to know about Cosmic Laws, the purpose of life on earth, our own past lifetimes on earth, etc. However, when we enter the self-conscious state, we tend to forget much of our previous knowledge. Also, in the self-conscious state we cannot see very far in the time direction. These limitations are represented in various ways in mythology.

In *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* (Grimm Fairy Tales), most princes could not discover where the princesses danced at night because just before bedtime they were given wine with a sleeping potion in it, so they slept the night through. The soldier avoided the wine, and thus discovered that the princesses danced in an underground world at night. This earned him the hand in marriage of one of the princesses. This myth is showing that more goes on at night time (when the physical body is asleep) than most people remember.

In *The Lady and the Lion* (Grimm Fairy Tales), a girl married a lion who turned into a prince. However, the prince got separated from his wife because a ray of light fell upon him (which was not supposed to happen). The wife went on a long search for her husband. When she eventually found him he had forgotten all about her and was about to be married to a princess. The wife bought her way into his bed chamber for three nights, but because he had been given a sleeping potion, she



A James Speiro adaptation of Arthur Rackham's illustration for Grimm's *The Lady and the Lion*. Dover Pub. Co.

could not wake him. However, on the third night that she was in the sleeping chamber he had not taken the sleeping potion and thus he heard her story and remembered his promises to her and returned to live with her. Note that the lion-turned-prince (self-consciousness) was separated from his wife (All-consciousness) by both sleep and forgetfulness, but the reunification still was managed in the end.

In *The Raven* (Grimm Fairy Tales), a princess is under a spell which put her in the form of a raven (the All-consciousness is separated from the rest of the world by the raven skin). A prince (self-consciousness) wanted to help free her from the spell, and he was warned not to eat or drink anything and to wait for her behind the house. However, he drank a tiny sip of wine and that was enough to put him to sleep when the raven came for him. This happened three days in a row. This shows that when the All-consciousness is active (as in sleep or after death of the physical body), the self-consciousness

sleeps. As the story progresses, the prince goes through many more trials and does eventually break the spell on the princess and marry her. So eventually the self-consciousness and All-consciousness are able to function together.

In *The Girl Who Met the Witch of the Woods* (from Sweden, in *Midsummer Magic*, compiled by Ellin Greene), a girl was waylaid by the Witch of the Woods. The witch held the girl under the water of a stream until she forgot all her previous life and thought that the witch was her caretaker. However, she retained her feelings about what was good and bad, and when the witch tried to get her to kidnap a baby, she resisted. This led to her eventual escape from the witch and return home.

In *The King's Son* (Idries Shah, *Tales of the Dervishes*), a prince (self-consciousness) went on a journey to a far country in order to obtain a jewel (All-consciousness) guarded by a fearsome monster (the Dweller on the Threshold). When in the far country, the air and food of the country caused him to forget that he was a prince and that he was to obtain the jewel (as many people on earth have forgotten where they came from and why they are here). But one day a message came to him through the air which re-awoke him to his mission, and he went on to obtain the jewel and return home.

Sometimes the hero in search of his mystic bride will temporarily forget his search and maybe even court and take on another bride. But usually in the end he finds his true bride. In *Sweetheart Roland* (Grimm Fairy Tales), Sweetheart Roland (self-consciousness) saves a maiden (All-consciousness) from a wicked witch, and Roland and the maiden agree to marry. However, when Sweetheart Roland goes home to get permission from his father, he becomes subject to the wiles of another woman and forgets his true sweetheart. But just before he weds the false bride, he hears his true sweetheart sing and this reawakens him to his promises to his original sweetheart. He then marries his true sweetheart. This story shows that humans sometimes get sidetracked from the Truth, and for a time follow some falsehood, but eventually the return to the Truth.

The lack of time vision of the self-consciousness is often symbolically represented by a character wandering through a forest, where one cannot see



Illustration for Grimm's *Hansel and Gretel* by Arthur Rackham. Dover Publications, Inc.

very far and could run into almost anything (such as a witch's cottage or castle) without much warning. To add to the image, the wandering in the forest is often at night time, which restricts the vision even farther. The two children in *Hansel and Gretel* (a Grimm Fairy Tale) were lost in a forest and eventually ran into a witch's gingerbread cottage. Jorinda and Jorindel (in a Grimm Fairy Tale) ran into a witch's castle while wandering in a forest. Snow-White (in a Grimm Fairy Tale) ran into the Dwarf's house while she was wandering in the woods.

WISHING IN MYTHOLOGY

In mythology, wishes are taken seriously. Some wishes (wise or foolish) are immediately fulfilled, others may take longer. But the important point is that because wishes may be fulfilled, we need to be careful what we wish for.

In *The Seven Ravens* (Grimm Fairy Tales), the seven sons of a king were sent to get water to baptize their baby sister, but they dropped the pitcher in the water and so did not return. The king became

impatient and wished that the boys would turn into ravens, which immediately happened.

In *The Fairies' Two Gifts* (Grimm Fairy Tales), a fairy was kindly lodged by a poor couple and as a reward the fairy granted them three wishes. Thus the couple was granted that they would have health and strength throughout their life, would have their simple daily wants provided and would have a new house. When a rich man, who had originally refused lodging to the fairy, found out what she had granted to the poor couple, he rode after the fairy on his horse and apologized for his treatment of her and asked if he could have three wishes also, which she granted. For some time he could not think of what he wanted to wish for. On the way home his horse was misbehaving and without thinking what he was doing he wished the horse's neck was broken. This happened immediately. Carrying the saddle on his back, he became jealous of his wife sitting comfortably at home and the wish arose in his mind that she were sitting on the saddle and not able to get off. This also happened immediately. Then, of course, he had to use his last wish to get her off the saddle.

In *The Pink* (Grimm Fairy Tales), a prince has the power of wishing when he is born. Anything he wishes for he gets immediately. The prince represents the self-consciousness. The prince's power of wishing represents the ability of all who have self-consciousness to attain what they wish to attain. In the story the wishes are fulfilled immediately; in real life time is required for wishes to come to fruition. The story condenses time in order to make the point clearer and more dramatic. In real life, we can attain anything if we seek it long enough and hard enough—provided it is not contrary to cosmic law. As Christ said, "Seek and you shall find." In *The Pink*, a jealous cook steals the prince from his parents by the power of wishing. Attainment of wishes may bring problems which take a while to straighten out.

OBTAINING HELP IN MYTHOLOGY

In myths, sometimes there is a poor but beautiful girl who is abused by a wicked stepmother, stepsisters, or others. She may not have enough to eat, or may have been assigned an impossible task



Arthur Rackham illustration for Grimm's Fairy Tale *The Water of Life*

to do, or may need a dress to wear to a ball. Sometimes there is a prince who has set out on a quest but does not know where to go or how to overcome the monsters that he will meet. In both cases, they are in need of help. In myths, help always comes at the right time to those who need and deserve it. Sometimes the one given help need only to cry pitifully and the help comes. In other stories, the person does some kind deed (like sharing bread, giving alms, or giving lodging) to the one who later helps them.

In *The Frog Prince* (Grimm Fairy Tales), the princess cried bitterly when she lost her golden ball in the well, and a frog appeared and got the ball for her. In *Rumpelstiltskin* (Grimm Fairy Tales), the miller's daughter wept when she was given a room full of straw which she must spin into gold, or else lose her life. Then a little man appeared on the scene and (in return for a reward) spun it for her.

In *The White Snake* (Grimm Fairy Tale), a man who had learned to understand the talk of animals heard them tell of their problems and helped a fish,

some ants, and some baby birds. Later, when he had to do some difficult tasks in order to obtain the hand of the princess in marriage, the animals helped him retrieve a ring from a sea, pick up ten sacks of millet seeds strewn in grass in one day, and obtain an apple from the Tree of Life.

In *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* (Grimm Fairy Tales), a soldier on his way to the king's palace met an old woman who told him what he needed to do in order to determine where the princesses danced at night.

Sometimes help comes in different forms. In *Jorinda and Joringel* (Grimm Fairy Tales), Joringel dreamed what he needed to do to save Jorinda from the spell the witch had cast over her, transforming her into a bird. In Wagner's *Ring of the Niebelung*, Siegfried was led by a bird (which symbolizes intuition) to the place where Brunhilde (Truth) was sleeping, encircled by a ring of fire.

MYSTICAL POWERS IN MYTHOLOGY

Myths present some idea of the extended powers which it is possible for humans to achieve. Some mythical heroes acquire the means of traveling quickly or instantaneously wherever they wish, or the means of curing all ills, or the power to bring the dead to life again, or the means of becoming invisible, or the ability to understand the communication of animals, or obtaining sources of wealth or food which will never get used up, or of acquiring all wisdom.

Being able to travel quickly is symbolical of the mobility of the spirit when it can function separately from the body. The ability to cure illness is achieved when one learns to speak the creative word. The spirit separated from the physical body is invisible to those who cannot see at the spiritual level. The ability to understand the communication of animals is possible to one who can directly see the desires and thoughts of the animals. Sources of wealth or food which never get used up may be symbolical of the advanced being who can tap in on the cosmic sources of energy which are always present in unlimited amounts. The spirit which can travel everywhere instantaneously and even can travel forward or backward in time can, of course, know anything it wishes simply by going where it

needs to in order to find out.

In *The King of the Golden Mountain* (Grimm Fairy Tales), a young man went through the trials necessary to break the spell which kept a princess encased in a snake's body, and then married the princess. So that he could visit his father, the princess gave her husband a wishing ring which would take him instantaneously wherever he wished to be.

In *The Raven* (Grimm Fairy Tales), there was a prince who was trying to release a princess from being encased in a raven's body. When his original efforts failed, the princess was transported to a far away castle which stood on a mountain of glass. To help him in his travels, the princess gave him some bread and meat and wine which could never be used up. Later on in his journey he obtained a stick which made any door fly open which it touched, a cloak which made him invisible when he wore it, and a horse which could go anywhere, even up the mountain of glass. Using these, he was able eventually to reach the princess and release her from the raven spell and marry her.

In *The White Snake* (Grimm Fairy Tales), a man ate a piece of white snake, which gave him the power to understand the language of animals.

In *The Three Languages* (Grimm Fairy Tales), a youth studying with various masters learned in one year to understand what a dog says when it barks, in another year to understand the language of birds, and in another year to understand the croaking of frogs. The youth's father was much disappointed by what his son was learning, but in the end the youth learned from the animals what he needed to know to free a town of some enchanted dogs and to become Pope. In his job as Pope, although he could not read a word of Latin, two doves perched on his shoulders and whispered the words into his ears.

In Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*, a Grail Cup (symbolizing Truth), makes the wound in Amfortas' side bleed when he views it (the Truth makes us feel painful remorse for our sins) and inspires the other Grail Knights to deeds of valor. In the course of the story, Parsifal obtains a sacred spear which is able to heal anyone whom it touches.

In *The Water of Life* (Grimm Fairy Tales), a prince, in order to heal his father, went on a journey to

an enchanted castle where there was a fountain containing the Water of Life. The specific procedure he needed to follow to get into the castle was given him by a dwarf he met along the way. Also in the castle he found bread which would never be used up and a magic sword which would overcome enemies. We may note that at a higher level of interpretation, overcoming enemies does not involve killing other people, but rather involves conquering the rebellious forces within oneself.

THE MYTHOLOGICAL PICTURE OF EVOLUTION

The main outline of the picture of the evolutionary process which the forgoing myths symbolize may be summarized as follows: 1) At the present time, the self-consciousness is separated from the All-consciousness. The self-consciousness tends to fall asleep when the All-consciousness is present. The All-consciousness tends to go to sleep when the self-consciousness is present. 2) The goal of evolution is the unification of the self-consciousness and the All-consciousness, which may also be called the unification of the head and the heart. 3) This goal is achieved through cycles in which the spirit goes back and forth between the self-conscious and All-conscious states. 4) When humans have self-consciousness, they tend to forget the wisdom they had when they were in the All-conscious state. They then live in a spiritual darkness, and often don't know where they are going or how to get there. 5) Those who are kind and helpful to others will, themselves, find help when they need it. 6) People can be transformed. Regardless of how poorly they currently appear, they may end up as a prince or princess. 7) People can achieve what they wish to achieve, provided it is not contrary to Cosmic Law, and provided they work at it. 8) Along the path of evolution there are tests and trials which must be passed in order to proceed. The major trial of conquering the Dweller on the Threshold must be accomplished before the Mystic Marriage of the self with the All can occur. 9) People can attain extended powers, such as the ability to heal others, to travel instantaneously to other places, to be invisible, and to understand the language of animals. □

—Elsa Glover

MAX HEINDEL ON FAIRY TALES AND MYTHS

In this material world all the forms are stable and do not easily change. The Desire World is widely different in that respect. The fairy tales, like the metamorphosis of Cinderella's mice, etc., are actual facts in the Desire World, for the forms change at the will of the ensouled life with a lightning-like rapidity, which is very bewildering to one who enters that world as a neophyte.—*Rosicrucian Philosophy in Questions and Answers, Vol. 1, p. 247*

“It is an erroneous idea when we think that a myth is a figment of human fancy, having no foundation in fact. On the contrary, a myth is a casket containing at times the deepest and most precious jewels of spiritual truth, pearls of beauty so rare and ethereal that they cannot stand exposure to the material intellect. In order to shield them and at the same time allow them to work upon humanity for its spiritual upliftment, the Great Teachers who guide evolution, unseen but potent, give these spiritual truths to nascent humanity, encased in the picturesque symbolism of myths, so that they may work upon our feelings until such time as our dawning intellects shall have become sufficiently evolved and spiritualized so that we may both feel and know.

This is on the same principle that we give our children moral teachings by means of picture books and fairy tales, reserving the more direct teaching for later years.”—*Mysteries of the Great Operas, p. 53*

“[C]ontrary to the popularly accepted opinion, a myth is not a story made out of whole cloth, but is veiled truth, revealing in symbol great spiritual principles. These myths were given to infant humanity for the same reason that we give our children ethical teachings in nursery stories and picture books, which impress themselves upon the infant mind in a way intellectual teaching would be incapable of doing.”—*Rosicrucian Philosophy in Questions and Answers, Vol. 1, pp 42-43*