

# PSYCHODYNAMIC ASPECTS OF THE FAIRYTALE THE LITTLE PRINCE BY ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

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## Abstract

*The present work aims to address the literary genre of fairy tales on the basis of their psychological and educational value aimed at satisfying the psychological-emotional and cognitive-ethical aspects. The objectives will be to present the conscious and unconscious aspects of the characters and to reveal the creative abilities that fairy tales contain: what are the main characteristics and their psychological value. The fairy tale represents an important point both in the field of imagination and creativity and you know in the didactic one. It is important to give the younger generations the opportunity to develop creative thinking, to test themselves with different types of intelligence, to get dirty with the experience of the world in which one lives, to get excited, to be empathetic. The method used will be the psychological analysis of the characters; in particular we will focus on the reading and analysis of the fairy tale "The Little Prince" by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, a sublime tale, full of meanings, which through its images has fascinated entire generations and which aims to transmit the true meaning of life: contact with the other. The psychodynamic aspects of the fairy tale will be externalized through the possibility of knowing oneself thus allowing a constant development of the recipient's creativity and imagination. In conclusion, fairy tales represent the key for the child to enter the world of fantasy, creativity and objective reality, without getting confused with his affective-emotional balance and with his future possibilities of socialization and logical understanding.*

**Keywords:** Child, psychodynamic aspects, Creativity, Fairy tale.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*"All the grown-ups were small, but few of them remember it"*

This work aims to address the literary genre of fairy tales on the basis of their psychological and educational value aimed at satisfying the psychological-emotional and cognitive-ethical aspects. The fairy tale has always represented a fundamental point both in the field of imagination and creativity and in the didactic one. It can be said that the fairy tale is a magical adventure with a happy ending designed to satisfy, on the one hand, the "psychological-emotional" aspects of the child such as wonder and trepidation, and on the other "cognitive-ethical" ones such as curiosity for places, events and behaviors. It is important to allow the younger generations to develop creative thinking, to test themselves with different types of intelligence, to get dirty with the experience of the world in which they live, to get excited and to be empathetic. In particular, we will focus on the reading and analysis of the fairy tale "The Little Prince" by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, a sublime tale, rich in meanings, which through its images has fascinated entire generations and which aims to transmit the true meaning of life or contact with others. During this research, attention will be paid to the psychological value that the tale of the Little Prince has on children, but also on adults through the psychological analysis of the characters. [1]

*"The Little Prince is a fairy tale suitable for any age group, with multiple aspects and nuances to be grasped, as it shows us an alternative way of living childhood without contamination and social stereotypes, It teaches us to use a" bifocal "aspect , that is a change of perspective to understand the spontaneity and fantasy of childhood, thus experiencing the pleasure of observing not so much with the eyes as with the heart. " (Mariangela Schicchi)*

Gadamer said "whoever wants to understand a text must be ready to let himself be told by it", and the Little Prince incredibly, after 74 years, continues to tell a lot to several generations, consecrating itself as a timeless book and as a relevant pedagogical tool .

*"Each fairy tale is a magical mirror that reflects certain aspects of our inner world, and the steps necessary for our evolution from immaturity to maturity. For us who immerse ourselves in what the fairy tale has to communicate, it becomes a deep and calm pool which at first seems to reflect only our image; but behind it we soon discover the inner storms of our soul, its depth, and the ways to find our inner peace and with the world, as a reward for our struggles. " (Bruno Bettelheim)*

## 2. TARGETS

This work aims to examine the fairy tale "The Little Prince" by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry as it manages to contain some of the most significant and recurrent themes to be grasped in order to transmit the values of life such as love, friendship and mutual help that manifests itself through contact with each other. We subsequently arrive at an accurate and careful description and analysis of the characters from the psychological point of view, highlighting some of the most incisive and important traits.

The specific objectives of the research are:

1. Identify and analyze the creative aspect and the psychological impact that the fairy tale has on the child and adult.
2. Know and examine the significant traits of the various characters that follow one another within the fairy tale.
3. Recognize and examine the most relevant and recurring themes and elements in the fairy tale.
4. Study and analyses the psychological aspects of the Little Prince within his travels between the various planets and the relationships he establishes on each planet.
5. Identify the relational and communicative aspect that is developed within the fairy tale and how it evolves in the psychological aspect of the readers. [2]

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The investigation we conducted took place through the reading of the fairy tale of the Little Prince and the psychological analysis of the characters, so as to be able to arouse and stimulate in children, starting from kindergarten, a positive attitude towards reading and books, to stimulate their curiosity towards reading that they can already experience firsthand as reading images. The fairy tale can thus become the means to deal with the most varied themes, even the most delicate ones, with children and to make them come into contact with certain values that they want to transmit. [12] The Little Prince, in particular, allows us to deal with the theme of taking care of others, the responsibility that derives from it, but also themes such as loneliness and death, all in a very delicate and fairytale way. [10]

Psychological analysis follows the lines indicated by the Psychology of Art and Literature, a discipline whose founder in Italy can be considered Professor Antonio Fusco; it studies the psychological motivations that led the author to the creation and realization of a work, in this case the fairy tale, and to the situations and symbolic elements present in a verbal text such as the fairy tale. [15] (Tomassoni, 2020).

The tale of the Little Prince tells of an aviator who finds himself in the desert and meets this bizarre blond child who begins to pester him with questions. At the center of the story is the Pilot-Little Prince couple, symbolizing adulthood and childhood, that is, the meeting between the two: an adult man imbued with frenzy, figures, deadlines and delved into the things of the world who no longer stops to observe the flow of life, nor to marvel at the gifts that existence offers him. Through the Little Prince, the aviator will bring back that pure soul that he too had as a child, but that time and events have eradicated. The world of social relations is not only explained through the relationship between the Little Prince and the pilot, but also through that of the child with the fox and the child with his rose. Friendship and attachment bonding are explained by the fox through the importance of commitment and dedication to one's friends. It does not want to be a lesson, but a stimulation that leads to an awakening of the sensitive spirit that is inside every man, put to sleep by a frenetic, messy, selfish and often inauthentic world.



Today, for man in the process of building his own identity, it is very difficult to get away from the appearances of a society that seems perfect and it is precisely here that the little prince, who arrived on our Earth similar to a Collodian talking cricket, provides us with a sort of push, an introspective to look at the world with the innocence of children, not yet corrupted by prejudices, expectations and interests. The different characters he meets during his journey on various planets, in fact, represent the metaphor of the man who, growing up, has lost the ability to live in harmony with the spirit as children do the adult man is trapped in materialism, ambiguity and inauthentic relationships. now a victim of his vanity, greed and mental laziness. [4]

The Little Prince it can be considered a training tool for the reconquest of ethical and moral values; it is necessary to repossess ourselves of our “being in the world in relation to other material bodies” by simply perceiving the other from us, as Merleau Ponty said. And it is precisely for this reason that the Little Prince has been used since primary school for creative reading workshops, for extra-curricular projects, for emotional and social development and to enhance - respecting the diversity of cognitive styles, intelligences, inclinations and cultural identities of belonging - all the structural dimensions that characterize man.

The Little Prince is an excellent food for thought also for continuous training, as it allows to activate communicating spaces in which to build shared languages. It shows the importance of cultivating the inner child who lives in each of us, dormant and asleep by the ambiguity of society, and allows the emergence of Brunerian narrative thought, important for making sense of what surrounds us, for sharing values. promoting social belonging and developing of intrinsic motivation. In fact, reflecting on the profound meaning of life, tuning in to the child inside us, helps to activate processes of sense making (production of meaning) of our daily actions, to recover - in a society where relationships with children are also precarious. [3] If the Little Prince, today, is inserted by many Italian university chairs - from those of the human sciences, to the humanities as an educational program and the subject of courses, workshops and seminars, it is precisely for the various pedagogical, philosophical, psychological, sociological facets that this work offers students in training. In fact, the most famous work of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry opens the mind and heart to reflections on the meaning of life and spirit, on values, on the meaning of love, of friendship, of creating true and authentic bonds, in you count on being yourself without wanting to seem anything else. Furthermore, caring for the other and being for others, made so intense by the simplicity and beauty of this story, are indisputable pillars of psychology. [5]

#### 4. ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERS OF THE LITTLE PRINCE

The Little Prince, a small book with delicate tones, with a light appearance, with naive colors like those of the author's watercolors that accompany it; seems to be more than a classic: over time it has risen to become a legend capable of exercising universal magnetic attraction. It represents a point of cohesion between the thoughts, feelings and frailties of the adult and the creativity, attitude and innocence of the child; taking up a bit the Freudian theory of art that deals not only with the work itself but also with deep conflicts, neuroses, unconscious motivations understood as forces and

impulses that characterize the content of the work and that led it to narrate them.[14] (Mastandrea, 2021).

The different characters that the blond child, in love with his rose, meets on his journey, are the metaphor of various types of men: as men grow up, they lose their sensitivity and the harmony of the spirit of childhood. They become prisoners of social pressures, materialism, greed, vanity, competition. No wonder, imbued with mental laziness, they float around the world accumulating numbers and quantities and, acting, for their own benefit. Throughout his journey through the various planets, the little blond boy meets some characters who can be associated with the following traits:

- **The King** represents the desire for power through the exercise of authority, the constant desire to control every little person and every little event; it is the representation of the need of men to have the illusion of power and control, without which some personalities feel fragile and exposed to danger;
- **The vain man** who represents narcissism, the appearance that comes before the substance, the need to be constantly praised, has the illusion of filling the emptiness that he feels inside with words of admiration that aim their safety on the 'to appear and to show oneself';
- **The drunkard** who can be compared to the one who gives in to the vices that annihilate the authentic being of everyone, overwhelming himself; he thus represents the vicious circle of the fragility of the human being, trying to mask them instead of accepting them. The attempt to learn to manage them triggers a vicious circle that amplifies and highlights them, making fragility even more evident;
- **The merchant of thirst pills** which is seen as the symbol of the inability to attribute value to time, the haste and frenzy that pushes man to accumulate; it represents our daily race against time and the inability to enjoy the small daily pleasures, then pushed to seek extreme pleasures to escape from the accumulated frustrations;
- **The snake**, symbol of death, in the fairy tale plays a positive role, that is, it represents the beginning of a journey, explaining how sometimes what seems evil serves to do good, how the pain of separation from an affection can actually allow us to have new experiences. It is then associated with catharsis, which leaves room for the pilot's considerations;

Along with the two main characters who symbolize adulthood and childhood, we find the Rose and the Fox. The interaction between the Rose and the Little Prince is an excellent example of attachment. In psychology, attachment is a necessary condition for relational dynamics, which contributes to the formation of a specific bond between two people. Bowlby was the first to explain the attachment theory; in this case, the Little Prince relationship evolves into a deeper feeling that implies mutual need. The fox, on the other hand, will teach the Little Prince about friendship and relational reciprocity. [7]

*"I am for you only a fox equal to a hundred thousand foxes. But if you take me, we will need each other. You will be unique in the world for me, and I will be unique in the world for you "*

With these words, the fox wants to teach the little prince the value of friendship, which for the fox means being tamed while for the Little Prince it means taking care of his rose. What differentiates one person from the other is the relationship we build with the latter by dedicating time and attention to them, by committing ourselves to getting to know them in their strengths and frailties. Being tamed for the fox means creating a mutual affiliation where one will then need the other, creating a bond. This fairy tale also explains very well the meaning of Bowlby's book "A secure base" where he states that the attachment develops as an interaction between a child and his parents and one of the most fascinating aspects of mankind is precisely that of creating unique bonds.

*"Attachment and dependence, although no longer evident in the same way as in young children, remain active throughout the life cycle"*

The relationship that is created between the fox and the little prince helps the latter to clarify his relationship with the rose, understanding that the rose is no longer special because it is unique in its kind, but because he loves it and a bond has been created between them. Every person important to us is so as a result of the relationship we have built with them, of the time we have invested in cultivating and creating a relationship with them. [8]

*"It is not clear that with the heart, the essential is invisible to the eye"*

It is not what we see of people that makes them special in our eyes, but what we feel for them, a feeling that is imperceptible to the human eye but strong enough to affect our life. In fact, the little prince was responsible for the rose and for its life, so much so that it was very important to him, but it was also the reason why sometimes "he wanted to forget it, but at that moment he remembered that he was all for the rose and occupied again. "[9]

Our initial need when we are born is that of security, a reason for which we are immediately predisposed to creating bonds. Our need for security can help us to better understand the pain and suffering related to the sense of loss emerging also in adults when abandoned. Within the fairy tale, the Little Prince shows that he has a "secure base" to feel free to go and explore the world and then come back: like the child who cries and despairs when he is left in kindergarten, but then begins to play and happily welcomes his mother when she goes to pick him up. In fact, to develop attachment you have to experience loss in small doses: the distance from the squad has allowed the protagonist to understand its importance and to give value to their bond. [11]

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the work is to awaken the sleeping soul of the child that is in every adult; lead to an awakening of the sensitive spirit set aside, in favor of a selfish society. One of the first lessons is the recovery of values such as wonder and simplicity, which have drifted away in a stale and appearing society. The development of creative thinking, empathy, acceptance of the different, the desire to tune in with the child who is inside each individual, the importance of the things that are felt, not those that can be seen. The knowledge of a person who goes through the emotions they feel and not from the quantification of what one possesses. A great little lesson comes from this passage of the work:

*“Grownups love figures. When you tell them about a new friend, they never care about the essentials. They never ask themselves, “What is the tone of his voice? What are his favorite games? Does he collect butterflies? ” But they ask you: “How old is he? How many brothers? How much does it weight? How much does your father earn? ” Then they only think they know him. ”*

Not only Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, already in ancient times the soul of the puer, was praised as pure and liliac. Just think of a scene from Plato's Phaedo, where Cebes, thinking of the death of Socrates, ordered to drink hemlock, to cry. The philosopher reproaches him, but all the same, he apologizes by saying that it is not he who is crying but the part of him as a child of him inside him. [13]

In conclusion, we can argue that thanks to the continuous and tireless practice of comparing experience and observation with our limited imagination we can arrive at the most unexpected discoveries, those that challenge our common sense. The best known that appears in Saint-Exupéry's book is a banal man's hat, which is seen by the Little Prince as a snake that has just



swallowed an elephant. Only a child can see what is "invisible to the eye". There would be no scientific research, there would be no discoveries without this childish desire to know and see more and more of what appears to us. The Little Prince is the dialogue between an adult and a child, within which both face a process of growth and knowledge and come out enriched; the author speaks to the hearts of adults, who in today's world seem to care about nothing but their own personal gain. The tale of the Little Prince shows us that often a rational mind without curiosity or a child's creativity combined with his sense of awe and wonder, is not enough to be able to face the outside world. And it is precisely for this reason that the Little Prince in his journey to return to his beloved rose represents the incurable desire for knowledge.

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