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A TALE INTERPRETED: "THE THREE FEATHERS"

We can now proceed to the more practical problems of interpretation. For didactic reasons I have taken for interpretation a very simple Grimms' fairy tale, not with the idea of making it fascinating or interesting, but simply to show you the method of interpretation. I will try to show you how to proceed and how you get at the meaning of such a story. It is called "The Three Feathers."[22]

There was once a king who had three sons. Two were intelligent, but the third did not talk much and was stupid and was called Dummling. The king was old and weak and thought about his death and did not know which of his sons should inherit the kingdom. So he told them to go out into the world, and the one who brought him the most beautiful carpet would be king when he died. To prevent any quarreling he went outside the castle, blew three feathers into the air, and said, "As they fly, so you must go." One feather went toward the east, the other to the west, and the third just a little way straight ahead, where it fell to the ground. So one brother went to the right, the other to the left, and they laughed at Dummling, who had to stay where the third feather had fallen.

Dummling sat down and was very sad, but then suddenly he noticed that there was a trapdoor beside the feather. He lifted it up, found steps descending, and went down into the earth. There

he came to another door, at which he knocked, and from the inside he heard:

Virgin, green and small,
Shrivel leg,
Shrivel leg's dog,
Shrivel back and forth.
Let's see who is outside.

The door opened and Dummling saw an enormous fat toad sitting there, surrounded by a circle of little toads. The fat toad asked him what he wanted, and he answered that he would like to have the finest and most beautiful carpet. The toad called a young toad, saying:

Virgin, green and small,
Shrivel leg,
Shrivel leg's dog,
Shrivel back and forth.
Bring me the big box.

The young toad fetched the big box, which the big toad opened, and from it she gave Dummling a beautiful carpet, a carpet so beautiful and so delicate that it could never have been woven on earth. He thanked her for it and climbed up again.

The two other brothers thought their youngest brother too silly ever to be able to find anything, so they bought some coarse linen stuff which the first shepherd woman they met was wearing around her body and took it home to the king. At the same time Dummling came home with his beautiful carpet, and when the king saw it he said, "By rights the kingdom should go to the youngest." But the other two gave their father no peace, saying that it was impossible to give Dummling the kingdom because he was so stupid, and they asked for another competition.

So the king said that the one who could bring the most beautiful ring should have the kingdom. Again he performed the same ritual with the three feathers. Again the two eldest went to the east and to the west, and for Dummling the feather went straight ahead and fell down by the door in the ground. Again he went down to the fat toad and told her that he wanted the most beautiful ring. She again had the big box fetched and from it gave him a ring which gleamed with precious stones and was so beautiful that no goldsmith on earth could have made it. The other two again laughed about Dummling who wanted to hunt for a gold ring, and they went to no trouble but knocked the nails out of an old cartwheel and brought that to the king. When Dummling showed his gold ring, the king again said that the kingdom belonged to him. But the two elder brothers tormented the king until he set a third competition and said that the one who brought home the most beautiful wife should have the kingdom. He blew the three feathers again, and they fell as before.

Dummling went to the fat toad and said that he had to take home the most beautiful woman. "Oh," said the toad, "the most beautiful woman is not at hand just now, but you shall have her." She gave him a hollowed-out carrot to which six mice were harnessed, and Dummling said sadly, "What shall I do with that?" The toad answered that he should take one of her little toads and put it into the carriage. He took one at random out of the circle and put it in the yellow carriage. It had scarcely sat down before it was transformed into a beautiful girl, the carrot into a coach, and the six mice into six horses. He kissed the girl and drove away with the horses and brought her to the king. His brothers, who had not taken any trouble to look for a beautiful woman, came back with the first two peasant women they met. When the king saw them he said, "The kingdom goes to the youngest after my death." But the two brothers again deafened the king with their cries, saying

that they couldn't permit that, and requested that the one whose wife could jump through a ring which hung in the middle of the room should have the preference. They thought that the peasant women would be able to do that because they would be strong but that the delicate girl would jump to her death. The old king agreed, and the two peasant women jumped through the ring, but they were so awkward that they fell and broke their thick arms and legs. Thereupon the beautiful girl whom Dummling had brought sprang as lightly as a deer through the ring. So no further objection was possible. Dummling got the crown and ruled in wisdom for a long time.

You will probably recognize in this simple classical story an accumulation of well-known motifs. Bolte and Polivka say that this fairy tale was found by the Grimms in 1819 in Zwehrn, Germany, and that there is also another German version, from the region of Hesse, which has slight variations.[23] I don't wish to repeat the whole story, but in this other version, instead of a carpet it is linen, and when Dummling goes down into the earth he does not find toads but a beautiful girl who is weaving linen, so there is not quite the same problem. She also gives him a carpet and only turns into a frog when she comes up to the surface of the earth, which means that under the ground she appears to him as a beautiful woman, but as soon as she comes to join him on the earth she turns into a frog. When the frog arrives at the king's court in the carriage, it cries out, "Kiss me and *versenk dich.*" *Versenken* really intimates meditation, so it would mean "sink down into yourself in meditation"—which seems a very strange expression for a frog in a fairy tale. It repeats this three times, so Dummling takes the frog and jumps into the water with it, for he has understood *versenken* as meaning that he should submerge himself in the water, which is also a meaning of the word. The moment he kisses it and jumps into the water, it turns back into a beautiful woman.

There are other Hessian variations where the three feathers are replaced by three apples which are rolled in different directions, and there is a French variation where the only change is that the toad is replaced by a white cat. I will not repeat all the possibilities but will mention a few of the more frequent ones. Often the motif of the feathers is replaced by arrows which the father shoots in three directions. And then the bride is either a toad, a frog, a white cat, an ape, a lizard, a puppet, a rat, a stocking, or a hopping nightcap—not even living objects—and sometimes a turtle.

At the end of all these variations—among which the Russian are the most interesting—there is a short annotation explaining that the motif of blowing a feather to indicate the direction the sons should take was a general medieval custom in many countries. If people did not know where to go, if they were lost at a crossroads or had no special plan, they would take a feather, blow on it, and walk in whichever direction the wind took it. That was a very common kind of oracle by which you could be guided. There are many medieval stories referring to this and even folklore expressions such as "I shall go where the feather blows." In northern countries and in certain Russian and Italian versions, instead of feathers and arrows or rolling apples, there are spheres or balls.

We will begin with the first few sentences. Our exposition runs: There was a king who had three sons. Two were intelligent, the third stupid, and the old king did not know to whom he should give his kingdom. That shows the opening psychological situation. The last sentence sets the problem, which is who should have the kingdom.

The opening situation of the king and his three sons is exceedingly frequent. The Grimm collection alone, which is merely a fraction of all exciting possibilities, has at least fifty or sixty such stories that start off with the king and his three sons. That is not the normal family, for there is neither mother nor sister, and the initial

setup of people is purely masculine. The female element, which you expect in a complete family, is not represented. The main action is concerned with the finding of the right female, upon which depends the inheritance of the kingdom. One further point is that the hero does not perform any masculine deeds. He is not a hero in the proper sense of the word. He is helped all the time by the feminine element, which solves the whole problem for him and performs all the necessary deeds such as weaving the carpet and jumping through the ring. The story ends with a marriage—a balanced union of the male and female elements. So the general structure seems to point to a problem in which there is a dominating male attitude, a situation which lacks the feminine element, and the story tells us how the missing feminine is brought up and restored.

We have first to take the symbolism of the king. An expanded study of the king in alchemy is to be found in the section headed "Rex and Regina" in Jung's *Mysterium Coniunctionis.*[24] Jung brings in much other material, but I shall now only briefly condense what he says about the king.

In primitive societies the king or the chief of the tribe generally has magical qualities; he has mana. Certain chiefs, for instance, are so sacred that they may not touch the earth and are always carried by their people. In other tribes the vessels that the king has used for eating and drinking are thrown away and nobody may touch them; they are taboo. Some chiefs and kings are never seen because of a similar taboo; if you were to look at the king's face, you would die. Of certain chiefs it is said that their voices thunder and their eyes emanate lightning. In many primitive societies, the prosperity of the whole country depends on the health and state of mind of the king, and if he becomes impotent or ill, he has to be killed and replaced by another king whose health and potency guarantee the fertility of the women and cattle as well as the prosperity of the

whole tribe. Frazer mentions instances in which it is not customary to wait until the king becomes impotent or sick but instead he is killed at the end of a certain period—say, after five, ten, or fifteen years—with the same idea in mind: namely, that he is worn out periodically and must be replaced. In certain tribes the idea prevails that this means not really killing the king, who embodies a kind of protective or ancestral spirit for the tribe, but simply a change of location: the old house is pulled down so that the spirit can move into a new one and continue to reign in that. It is believed to be always the same sacred, totemistic spirit that rules, and the killing of the king provides it with a better physical vessel.

We can say, therefore, that the king or chief incorporates a divine principle on which the entire welfare—psychic and physical—of the nation depends. He represents the divine principle in its visible form; he is its incarnation or embodiment, its dwelling place. In his body lives the totem spirit of the tribe. He therefore has many characteristics that would incline us to look at him as a symbol of the Self, because the Self, according to our definition, is the center of the self-regulating system of the psyche, on which the welfare of the individual depends. (Our own kings often held the sphere of the earth-ball, with the cross on it if the king was a Christian, and they carried a number of other symbols which we know from various mythological setups represent the Self.)

In many tribes there is a split between medicine man and king or chief—that is, between spiritual and worldly power—and the same thing happened in our civilization in the terrible fight between *sacerdotium* and *imperium* (church and state) in the Middle Ages. Both these powers claimed to be visible, incarnate symbols of the divine principle for their subjects—or, one could say, symbols of the unobservable archetype of the Self.

In all countries and in alchemical symbolism, which you can read about in Jung's book, you see this dominating idea that the

aging king is unsatisfactory in some way. In primitive tribes, when he is impotent, the harem whispers that around and the tribe silently decides to kill him. Or he may be unsatisfactory in other ways: he may be too old to perform certain tasks any longer, or his time is over—he has reigned his ten or fifteen years. Then comes the inevitable idea of the king's sacrificial death.

In more advanced civilizations, as, for instance, in the Old Kingdom of Egypt, the practice was replaced by a ritual of renewal, a symbolic death and resurrection of the king, as was performed in the Sed festival. In other countries there was a so-called carnival king. Some criminal who had been condemned to death was allowed to live for three days as a king. He was clothed as a king, had all the insignia, was taken out of prison, and could order whatever he liked. He could have all the women he wanted, all the good dinners he liked, and everything else, and after three days he was executed. There are other rituals where the process of killing is carried out on a puppet which is "killed" instead of the king. Behind these different traditions we see the same motif—that of the necessity for the king to be renewed through death and rebirth.

If you apply that to our hypothesis that the king is a symbol of the Self, you have to ask: why does a symbol of the Self age? Do we know any psychological factors that correspond to this fact? If you study the comparative history of religions, you will note the tendency for any religious ritual or dogma that has become conscious to wear out after a time, to lose its original emotional impact and become a dead formula. Although it also acquires the positive qualities of consciousness, such as continuity, it loses the irrational contact with the flow of life and tends to become mechanical. This is true not only of religious doctrines and political systems but for everything else as well, because when something has long been conscious, the wine goes out of the bottle. It becomes a dead world. Therefore, if our conscious life is to avoid petrifaction, there

is a necessity for constant renewal by contact with the flow of psychic events in the unconscious, and the king, being the dominant and most central symbol in the contents of the collective unconscious, is naturally subject to this need to an even greater extent.

You can therefore say that the symbol of the Self is especially exposed to this general difficulty of needing the constant renewal of understanding and contact, that it is especially threatened by the possibility of becoming a dead formula—a system and doctrine emptied of its meaning and therefore purely an outer form. In that sense we can say that the aging king represents a dominant content of collective consciousness and underlies all the political and religious doctrines of a social group. In the East, for many layers of the population, this content appeared as the Buddha, and with us, until now, it was Christ, who actually has the title King of Kings.

In our story the king apparently has no wife, or, if he has one, she does not appear. What would the queen represent? If we take the king as representing a central and dominant symbolic content of collective consciousness, then the queen would be its accompanying feminine element—the emotions, feelings, the irrational attachments to this dominant content. It can be said that in every civilization there is a *Weltanschauung* with a central God-image which dominates that civilization, and with that goes a certain habit or style of life, a feeling style, and that Eros style in society influences how people relate to one another. The feeling tone of this collectivity would be the queen who accompanies the king; for instance, in the Middle Ages the Gothic idea of Christ would be incarnate in the king of that time, while the representations of Eros—to be found in the poems of the Troubadours—would be manifested in the Virgin Mary, who is the Queen of Heaven related to the King—Christ. She set the pattern for feminine behavior, the pattern for the man's anima as well as for women. In Catholic

countries women still naturally tend to adapt to that pattern, and men try to educate their anima to fit into this style of erotic behavior and this style of relationship.

So you see the close connection between the king and the queen, the Logos principle dominating a certain civilization and collective attitude, and the Eros style accompanying it in a specific form. That the queen is lacking means that the latter aspect has been lost and therefore the king is sterile. Without the queen he can have no more children. We must assume, therefore, that the story has to do with the problem of a dominant collective attitude in which the principle of Eros—of relatedness to the unconscious, to the irrational, the feminine—has been lost. This must refer to a situation where collective consciousness has become petrified and has stiffened into doctrines and formulas.

Now this king has three sons, so there is the problem of four males, three of whom are adapted in the way they should be while the fourth is below the mark. Naturally, people who know Jungian psychology will jump to the conclusion that those are obviously the four functions of consciousness: the king being the dominant or main function and the two elder sons being the auxiliary functions, while Dummling would be of course the fourth, inferior function. This is right, but only with a grain of salt because Jung's theory of the four functions refers to an individual. In fairy tales we do not have the inner story of one individual and therefore cannot look at it from this angle. We have, rather, to amplify the motif of the male quaternio first and there we find—in past history, for instance—motifs such as the four sons of Horus, the four Evangelists, and other quaternios, surrounding a main symbol of the Self.

These quaternios to be found in the comparative history of religion and in mythology cannot, to my mind, be interpreted as the four functions as they appear in an individual. They represent a more basic pattern of consciousness, from which the four-func-

tional pattern of consciousness is derived. If we know how to diagnose a type and have a number of people before us, we can say that this man is a thinking type and his inferior feeling probably makes such and such trouble. Thus you can say that certain aspects of the setup are typical, while others are more individual. So it can be said that the problem of the four functions always appears in an individual in a certain setup, but that there are general basic trends underneath. Finally, if you want to puzzle, you say: why on earth does human consciousness tend always to develop four functions in each person? And there you can reply that it seems to be an inborn disposition of the human being to build up a four-functional conscious system. If you do not influence a child, he or she will automatically develop one conscious function, and if you analyze that person at the age of thirty or forty, you will find this four-functional structure. The underlying general disposition is mirrored in the many quaternarian symbols in mythology, such as the four winds, the four directions of the compass, and also these four royal figures in our fairy tale.

To be accurate you would therefore say that the king does not represent the main function but is the archetypal basis of that function in the sense that he is that psychological factor which builds up the main functions in all people. Now you will say that I am contradicting myself, for first I said that the old king was the dominant of collective consciousness and now I say that he symbolizes that disposition which builds up main functions. How does that link up? Is that a contradiction? This seems to be a second interpretation, but if you reflect on how a main function builds up, then you will see that it builds up in the first half of human life and generally serves collective adaptation. If a child is good at playing with practical things, his father will say that he will be an engineer later, and the child is encouraged, and at school he will be very good in those fields and very bad in others; so he will be proud of

what he can do well and will do that most, because there is a natural tendency to do always what one can do well and to neglect the other side. This one-sidedness slowly builds up the main function, which is that function with which one adapts to collective requirements. Hence the dominant of collective consciousness also constellates in the individual the main function.

Take again the medieval man, for whom the dominant of the Self is the figure of Christ. If he has the disposition to become a thinking type, he will meditate with his thinking about the essence of Christ; if his inborn tendency is to become a feeling type, he will be moved by the prayers he hears and will not think about the symbol of Christ but will relate to him with his main function, feeling. That, therefore, is how the king represents the dominating symbolic content of a collective-conscious situation, and will also be connected with the main function in all people.

Now the other sons would therefore logically have to be interpreted along the same lines: that is, the two sons who are intelligent and clever would represent the typical basis for building up the two auxiliary functions in a human being, and Dummling would represent the basis of building up the inferior function. But Dummling is not only this; he is also the hero, and the whole story is concerned with what happens to him. We must therefore discuss briefly what the hero means in a mythological story, because if you read many psychological interpretations of myths, you will soon see that there is a constant shift between interpreting the hero as a symbol of the Self and as a symbol of the ego. Even the same interpreters contradict themselves within the same text. They begin as if the hero were an ego, then shift to his being the Self.

Before we discuss this problem, we have to be clear as to what we mean by ego. The ego is the central complex of the field of consciousness of the personality. But then, naturally, all other people have an ego too, so you can see that if we speak of *the* ego, that

is already an abstraction, for we mean by that the "I" of all the people we know. If we repeat such a sentence as "The ego resists the unconscious," then we make a general observation, something which applies on an average ego, stripped of all more subjective and unique qualities.

We now have to look at the symbol of the hero in myths. What does he usually do? He is very often a savior: he saves his country and his people from dragons, witches, and evil spells. In many stories he is the finder of the hidden treasure. He frees his tribe and leads them out of all sorts of dangers. He reconnects his people with the gods and with life, or he renews the life principle. It is he who goes on the night-sea journey, and when he comes out of the belly of the whale, with him generally come all those who were swallowed before him. Sometimes he is likely to be overly self-confident and in certain myths destructive. Then the gods, or some enemy powers, decide to destroy him. In many hero myths he is also the innocent victim of evil powers. Then there is the hero-trickster figure, who plays good and bad tricks and who not only frees his people but at the same time gets them into difficulties; he helps certain people and destroys others by mistake or by thoughtlessness, so he is half a devil and half a savior, and again he is either destroyed, reformed, or transformed at the end of the story.

Thus among the hero figures there is a great variety: the Dummling type; the trickster type; the strong man type; the innocent, beautiful youth type; the sorcerer type; the one who performs his deeds by magic, or by power and courage. We know from the investigations of child psychology that in the first twenty years of life, to take a broad estimate, the main tendency of the unconscious itself goes into building up a strong ego complex, and most of the early difficulties in youth result from disturbances of this process by negative parental influence or through some traumatic or other

hindrance. In cases such as Michael Fordham has described in his publications, the ego complex is not capable of building itself up. But there are natural processes in the psyche of the child that we can watch, for they are mirrored in dreams, in which you can see how the ego builds up. One way, which one sees frequently, is in the ideal of the model hero. Papa often fills this role, as do tram conductors, policemen, elder brothers, or big boys in the class above at school, who receive the child's transference. In secret daydreams the child imagines that that is what he would like to become. The fantasies of many little boys are of wearing a red cap and waving the trains on and off, of being the chief, the big boss, the king, and the chief of police. These model figures are projections produced by the unconscious; they either appear immediately in the dreams of young people or are projected onto outer figures, and they catch the fantasy of the child and influence his ego buildup. Every mother knows that. For instance, if you take a little boy to the dentist, then you say, 'Well, you are the chief of police, so you can't cry when a tooth is pulled out!' That strengthens his ego so that he will force back his tears. That method is constantly employed in education; it is a trick. If a boy admires Albert in the next class and behaves badly, you say, "Albert wouldn't do that," and the boy at once pulls up his socks.

Those are typical psychological processes showing how in a young person the ego complex, the center of the field of consciousness, is slowly formed. If you look more closely at these processes, you will see from dreams that they stem from the Self and that it is the Self which builds up the ego. A graphic representation would show first the unknown psychic totality of a human being—thought of as a sphere, not a circle—and then in the upper part of the sphere could be the field of consciousness; anything within this field is conscious to me. The center is the ego complex. What is not connected through some thread of association with my ego

complex is unconscious to me. Before this field of consciousness exists, the self-regulating center (the Self is regarded as the totality and the regulating center of the whole personality, and it seems to be present from the very beginning of life) builds up the ego complex through certain emotional and other processes. If you study the symbolism of the ego complex and of the Self, you will see that the ego has the same structures and is to a great extent a mirror image of this center. We know the representations of the Self in mandala construction, for instance; the ego has the same fourfold subdivision. The center of the Self slowly builds up the ego complex, which then mirrors its original center and which, as we all know, often succumbs to the illusion of being that center. Most people who are not analyzed naturally believe—because of their emotional conviction that "I am I"—that "I" am the whole thing; and even that illusion comes from the ego's having been formed from the total center. But in childhood there is the tragedy of separation; there is, for instance, the typical event of being thrown out of Paradise, of having one's first shock of incompleteness and discovering that something perfect has been forever lost. Such tragedies mirror the moment when the ego begins to become an entity apart from the Self. Then the ego is established as a self-existing factor, and the intuitive connection with the center is partly lost.

Now the ego, as far as we can see, functions properly only when it achieves a certain adaptation to the whole psyche, which means that it functions best if a certain plasticity is kept—in other words, when the ego is not petrified and therefore can, through dreams, moods, and so on, still be influenced by the Self so as to adapt to the whole psychological system. It looks to us as though the ego were meant by nature not to be a ruler of the whole psychological setup, but to be an instrument, which functions best if it still obeys the basic instinctual urges of the totality and does not resist them.

Imagine, for instance, that your instinct tells you to run away in a dangerous situation. (You do not require a very conscious ego to tell you that.) If a bull chases you, you do not need to consult your ego; you had better consult your legs, which know what to do. But if the ego functions *with* your legs, so that while running away from the bull you also look for a good hiding place or a fence to jump over, then the situation is perfect: your instincts and your ego function in accord with each other. If, on the other hand, you are a philosopher whose legs want to run away but who thinks: "Stop! I must first find out whether it is right to run away from a bull," then the ego blocks the instinctual urge; it has become autonomous and anti-instinctive and then becomes a destructive nuisance, such as we see in every neurotic individual. A neurosis could even be defined as an ego formation no longer in harmony with the whole personality, whereas when the ego functions in accordance with the larger totality, it reinforces itself and improves the innate cleverness of the basic instinctive arrangement.

Naturally sometimes the ego would also be useful in resisting instinct. Imagine, for instance, the North Arctic lemmings, which get an instinctual urge to make a migration into another country where they can start again with a new food supply. Driven by an instinctual urge, they collect together and then march on. If, by a piece of bad luck, they come to the sea or a river, they go into it and drown by the thousands. I am sure you know this story, which has always puzzled zoologists, for it shows the silly unadaptedness of some natural instincts. Konrad Lorenz once gave a lecture with many such examples; I remember one about a bird which, to please its mate in the mating season, produces an enormous red sack on his chest with which to enforce his mating song. This red sack is so heavy that he cannot fly, so his enemies gather and butcher that bird. So that is not a very good invention. A beautiful red tail or a red behind like a baboon's to please his wife would be much better

and would not prevent him from flying away. So you see, instinctual patterns are not only positive. If a lemming could ask itself what it was doing and reflect that it did not want to drown, and could go back, that would be very useful for it. So that is probably why nature has invented the ego as a new instrument for us; we are a new experiment of nature, for we have an additional instrument for regulating the instinctual urges. We do not live only on our patterns of behavior but have this strange addition known as the ego.

The ideal situation, as far as we can see, is when the ego, with a certain plasticity, obeys the central regulation of the psyche. But when it hardens and becomes autonomous, acting according to its own reasons, then there is often a neurotic constellation. This happens not only to individuals, but also collectively, which is why we speak of collective neuroses and psychoses. Whole groups of mankind can drift into that split situation and deviate from their basic instinctual patterns, and then disaster is close. That is why in hero stories there is nearly always an exposition of a terrible situation: the land is drying up because the toads block the water of life, or some dark enemy comes from the north and steals all the women and there is no fertility in the land. Whatever this terrible story is, the hero has the task of putting it right. The dragon may be demanding all the king's maidens to be sacrificed. Everyone in the country is already wearing black, and now the last princess has to be given to the dragon—then always the hero comes.

The hero, therefore, is the restorer of a healthy, conscious situation. He is the one ego that restores to healthy, normal functioning a situation in which all the egos of that tribe or nation are deviating from their instinctive, basic totality pattern. It can therefore be said that *the hero is an archetypal figure which presents a model of an ego functioning in accord with the Self.* Produced by the unconscious psyche, it is a *model* to be looked at, and it is demon-

strating a rightly functioning ego, an ego that functions in accordance with the requirements of the Self. That is why the hero seems, to a certain extent, to *be* the Self: because he serves as its instrument and completely expresses what the Self wants to have happen. In a way, therefore, he is also the Self, because he expresses or incarnates its healing tendencies. So the hero has this strange double character. From the feeling standpoint you can naively understand that. If you hear a hero myth, you identify with the hero and get infected by his mood. Let us say, for instance, that an Eskimo tribe is on the way to starvation. Caribou hunting has been bad, and primitives very easily give up and die from discouragement before it is physically or psychologically necessary. And then comes a storyteller and tells about a fellow who made contact with ghosts and by that saved his starving tribe, and so on. That puts them on their feet again, purely emotionally. The ego adopts a heroic, courageous, and hopeful attitude that saves the collective situation. That is why a hero story is a vital necessity in difficult life conditions. If you have your hero myth again, then you can live. It is something to live for. You are naturally encouraged by it.

When you tell fairy tales to children, they at once and naively identify and get all the feeling of the story. If you tell them about the poor little duck, all the children who have inferiority complexes hope that in the end they too will get a princess. That functions exactly as it should; it gives a model for living, an encouraging, vivifying model which reminds one unconsciously of all life's positive possibilities.

There is a beautiful custom among Australian aborigines: when the rice does not grow well, the women go into the rice field and squat among the rice and tell it the myth of the origin of the rice. Then the rice knows again why it is there and grows like anything. That is probably a projection of our own situation; for with us it is

certainly true, for if we get those myths we think that now we know again what we are living for, and that changes our whole life-mood and can even sometimes change our physiological condition.

If you interpret the hero in this way, then you see why Dummling would be the hero. Since the king is the dominant of the collective conscious attitude which has lost contact with the flow of life, especially with the feminine, the Eros principle, Dummling represents the new conscious attitude which is capable of contacting the feminine, for he is the one who brings up the toad-princess. Characteristically, he is the one who is called stupid and seemingly unlucky. But if you look at his behavior more closely, you see that he is simply spontaneous and naive; he takes things as they are. For instance, the two other brothers cannot accept facts. Each time Dummling wins, they want another competition, saying that that one was not right. But Dummling always simply does the next thing. When he has to marry a frog—well, that is not very pleasant, but that's how it is. Obviously, it is that quality which is emphasized in our story.

We should always look at these stories as we do at the dreams of individuals and ask what conscious situation is compensated by such a myth. Then you clearly see that such a story compensates the conscious attitude of a society in which patriarchal schemes and oughts and shoulds dominate. It is ruled by rigid principles because of which the irrational, spontaneous adaptation to events is lost. It is typical that Dummling stories are statistically more frequent in the white man's society than in others, and it is obvious why that is so. We are the people who, by an overdevelopment of consciousness, have lost the flexibility of taking life as it is. That is why Dummling stories are especially valuable for us. We have also an overwhelming number of stories where the hero excels through just plain laziness; he simply sits on a stove and scratches himself, and then everything falls into his lap. These stories also compensate

for the collective attitude which puts too much emphasis on efficiency: then those lazy hero stories are told and retold with great delight—and with a healing meaning in them.

Now the king does not know to whom he should leave the kingdom. There he deviates from his probable former behavior, for he leaves it to fate to settle who shall inherit the kingdom. This is not the general behavior. It is frequent in the case of the old king, but it is not the only possible one. There are, for instance, other stories where the old king has information—a dream perhaps, or a prophecy about who is to be the next king—and he puts all his passion and strength and skill into destroying his possible successor. That is another type of story. An example would be Grimms' "The Devil with the Three Golden Hairs," but there are thousands of them. Sometimes at the beginning of the story the king gives his possible successors a chance, but if a successor who does not suit his plans is chosen, then he begins to resist.

There are neurotic people whose ego attitude has derived from their whole psychological nature yet who come into analysis without great resistances, for they just want to know "What next?" and if their dreams produce some new life, they take it and go on, with practically no resistance. With them the "succession of the king"—one ego attitude replaced by another—is relatively easy. But there are others who describe their symptoms and you look at their dreams, but if you even mildly suggest what the trouble might be, they jump at your throat and argue that it may be anything else, but it is certainly not *that. That* they *know* is all right, and they fight back forever. This is the type of ego formation which has already stiffened to such an extent that it absolutely refuses the possibility of a renewal. I often say to such people that they have the attitude of a person who goes to a doctor and asks the doctor please to cure him—but not to examine the urine because that is something private. A lot of people do this. They go into analysis but keep the

main information in their pockets because it is nobody's business to know about that. In all such variations of behavior you see the old king—which in an individual means the center of consciousness—resisting renewal.

Naturally, that is to be found in the collective situation as well. A whole society may first be violently antagonistic to some religious reform and afterward suddenly recognize it. To mention a classical example, twelve sentences written by Saint Thomas of Aquinas, the great pillar of the Catholic Church, were condemned by a Concilium in 1320. So you can see that through the collective prejudice of the time, something which is later recognized as not being inimical to the dominating attitude is at first resisted. That extends into political and religious persecution, newspaper pressure, and business persecution, and so on—all that is going on now and always will in social setups everywhere in the world. There is the phobia that something new is in itself terrifying. All that is typical behavior of the old king, and it can be stiffened into mistrust and real tragedy—or, as happens here, it need not become a tragedy. This story mirrors the possibility of a renewal occurring without any crisis or tragedy. It is a mild story, which is why it is not particularly interesting, but it has all the classical features we need.

We come next to the ritual of the three feathers. This general custom of the time is not very different from throwing a coin. Whenever consciousness cannot decide rationally, one can have recourse to such a chance event and take that as an indication. That the coin falls this way or the wind blows that way is a "just-so" story taken as a meaningful hint. This in itself is important because it is the first move toward giving up ego determination, one's own conscious reasoning. One could say that this old king proves to be not too bad because, though he will soon be dead and therefore has to be replaced by a successor, he is quite willing to leave it to the gods to decide who shall come next. It again fits the

whole setup of the story, which is not dramatic and which has not stiffened into a conflict.

To carry the symbolism further: in mythology, feathers generally represent something very similar to the bearer of the feathers—the bird. According to the principle of *pars pro toto* (the part stands for the whole), a magical form of thinking, the feather signifies the bird, and birds in general represent psychic entities of an intuitive and thinking character. For instance, the soul of the dead leaves the dying body in the form of a bird. There are medieval representations of this. In certain villages of Upper Wallis even today, in every house, in the parents' bedroom, there is a little window called the soul window, which is opened only when someone is dying, so that the soul can leave through it. The idea is that the soul, a fluttering being, goes out like a bird escaping from its cage. In *The Odyssey* Hermes gathers the souls of Ulysses' enemies, and they chatter like birds (the Greek word is *thrizein*) and follow him with wings like bats'. Also, in the underworld where Enkidu, the friend of Gilgamesh, goes, the dead sit around in the feather garments of birds. So birds, you could say, stand for a nearly bodiless entity, an inhabitant of the air, of the wind sphere, which has always been associated with breath and therefore with the human psyche. Therefore, especially in the stories of North and South American Indians, where it is used very often, one meets the idea that gluing feathers to an object means that it is psychically real. There is even a South American tribe which uses the word for feather as a suffix to describe something which only exists psychologically and not in outer reality. You can speak of a fox-feather, an arrow-feather, or a tree-feather, the word *feather* indicating that the fox or the arrow or the tree is not contained in physical reality but has to do with psychic reality. When North American Indians and certain Eskimo tribes send messengers inviting others to a religious festival, the messengers carry sticks with feathers on them,

the feathers making the bearer sacrosanct. Because they carry a spiritual message, such messengers may not be killed. By attaching feathers to himself, the primitive marks himself as a psychic and spiritual being.

Since the feather is very light, every breath of wind carries it. It is that which is very sensitive to what one could call invisible and imperceptible psychological spiritual currents. Wind, in most religious and mythological connections, represents spiritual power, which is why we use the word *inspiration*. In the Whitsun miracle the Holy Ghost filled the house like a wind; spirits make a kind of cold wind when they come, and the appearance of ghosts is generally accompanied by breathings or currents of wind. The word *spiritus* is connected with *spirare* (to breathe). In Genesis the *Ruach Elohim* (the Spirit of God) broods over the waters. Therefore you can say that an imperceptible wind whose direction you can only discover by blowing a feather would be a slight, barely noticeable, almost inconceivable psychic tendency—a final tendency in the current psychological flow of life.

That is what happens when someone comes into analysis and tells you all his troubles and you say, "Well, I am not more intelligent than you. I do not see through this, but let us look at what the dreams say." And then we look at them from a final angle; we look to see where the current in the dreams seems to point. According to the Jungian point of view, they are not only causal but also have a final aspect and we therefore look to see where the libido tends to go. We "throw a feather in the air" and look to see the direction it takes, and then say, "Let's go that way because there is a slight tendency in that direction."

That is what the king does; he makes himself completely flexible and consults the supernatural powers. One feather goes to the east, the other to the west, and Dummling's feather settles on the ground right away. According to some more witty variations, it

settles on a brown stone just in front of him, and then Dummling says: "Well, that means I can go nowhere"—and then finds a stair leading into the earth, which is in beautiful accord with his character. Very often we look God-knows-where for the solution of our problem and do not see that it is right in front of our noses. We are not humble enough to look downward but stick our noses up in the air. That is why Jung often told the beautiful story of a Jewish rabbi who was asked by his pupils why in the Bible there were so many instances of the apparition of God, whereas nowadays such things did not happen, and the rabbi replied, "Because nowadays nobody is humble enough to bend down low enough." But Dummling, because he is naive and unsophisticated, has a naive and unsophisticated attitude toward life. He is naturally led to what is right on the ground and right in front of his nose—and there it is. We know from the first sentence of the story that it is the feminine which is lacking, so naturally it is found in the earth and nowhere else. That belongs to the inner logic of the whole story.