

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

The aesopic fable and the education of the young children
with special reference to the ages from four to six

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

in the University of Hull

by

Angela Yannicopoulou, BA, BEd, MEd

October 1992



IMAGING SERVICES NORTH

Boston Spa, Wetherby
West Yorkshire, LS23 7BQ
www.bl.uk

BEST COPY AVAILABLE.

VARIABLE PRINT QUALITY

To my father

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my deep gratitude to Professor V. A. McClelland for his close supervision, invaluable advice, able guidance and constant encouragement and moral support.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Moore for his great help with the data gathering and analysis of this research. Dr. Moore's constructive criticism and acute recommendations saved this manuscript for some of its gravest errors.

I sincerely thank the teachers and the pupils of the kindergartens and primary schools both in England and Greece for their kindness in assisting me in any possible way in the completion of the empirical part of this work.

I am also grateful to my family for their constant help in every regard during the course of my work. I also would like to thank all my friends for their cheerful company throughout my studies.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: CHILDREN'S APPROACH TO THE AESOPIC FABLE AS A LITERARY PRODUCT	18
1.1 The literary style of the aesopic fables	18
1.2 Kinds of the aesopic fables	23
1.2.1 'Genuine' fables	24
1.2.2 Aetiological fables	25
1.2.3 Debates between two rivals	27
1.2.4 Amusing narrations	28
1.2.5 Stories about gods	30
1.2.6 Fairy stories	31
1.2.7 Historical anecdotes	32
1.2.8 Pun on words	33
1.3 Kindergarten children's conception of stories	33
1.4 Kindergarten children's ideas about the origins of stories	37
1.5 Kindergarten children's intellectual abilities of understanding	41
1.6 Kindergarten children's understanding and remembering of stories	45
1.7 Kindergarten children's preferences of stories	57
1.8 Kindergarten children's appreciation of humour	65
1.9 The goals of the current research	69
CHAPTER TWO: CHILDREN'S RESPONSE TO THE MORALITY OF THE FABLES	72
2.1 The morality of the aesopic fables	72
2.2 Moral development of children	77
2.2.1 Developmental schemata	78
2.2.2 Kindergarten children's intent or outcome based moral evaluations	84
2.2.3 Kindergarten children's conceptions of moral and conventional rules	91
2.3 Kindergarten children's conception of punishment	92
2.4 Kindergarten children's evaluation of characters	98
2.5 Fables' morality and kindergarten children	104
2.6 The goals of the current research	113
CHAPTER THREE: CHILDREN'S REACTIONS TO THE CHARACTERS OF THE AESOPIC FABLES	115
3.1 The characters of the aesopic fables	115

3.2	Animals in fables	118
3.3	Animals in literature	122
3.4	Children's attitudes towards animal characters	128
3.5	Animals' conventional character in literature	135
3.6	Children's conception of conventional animal characters	139
3.7	Kindergarten children's conception of god	142
3.8	The goals of the current research	144

CHAPTER FOUR: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF FABLES ON CHILDREN 147

4.1	Harsh aspects of life and fables	147
4.2	Violence in children's literature	149
4.3	Happy endings to children's stories	159
4.4	Children's conception of death	163
4.5	Identification in children's stories	170
4.6	The goals of the current research	177

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH PLAN AND PROCEDURE 180

5.1	Kindergarten children (Four-to-six-year-old)	180
5.1.1	The goals	181
5.1.2	The material	184
5.1.2a	Fables	184
5.1.2b	Questions	190
5.1.3	The method	192
5.1.4	The sample	199
5.1.5	The procedure	201
5.2	Fifth and sixth graders (Ten-to-twelve-year-old)	204
5.2.1	The goals	204
5.2.2	The material	205
5.2.2a	Fables	205
5.2.2b	Questions	206
5.2.3	The method	207
5.2.4	The sample	208
5.2.5	The procedure	209

CHAPTER SIX: THE RESEARCH'S RESULTS ON CHILDREN'S APPROACH TO THE AESOPIC FABLE AS A LITERARY PRODUCT 211

6.1	The current research	211
6.2	Methodology	216
6.3	Results	216
6.3.1	Kindergarten children's ideas as to the truth of the stories	217
6.3.1a	The truth of the stories	217
6.3.1b	The origins of the stories	219
6.3.2	Kindergarten children's reaction to the magical elements in fables	224

6.3.2a The fictional element	224
6.3.2b The golden eggs	226
6.3.3 Kindergarten children's familiarity with fables	227
6.3.4 Kindergarten children's preferences among fables	229
6.3.4a Negative judgments	231
6.3.4b Positive judgments	232
6.3.5 Kindergarten children's appreciation of fables' humour	240
6.3.5a Kindergarten children's answers in regard to the humourous nature of the related fables	240
6.3.5b Kindergarten children's responses to the humo rous nature of the related fables	242
6.3.5c Kindergarten children's conception of humour	245
6.3.5d Kindergarten children's attitudes towards the humourous fables	247
6.3.6 Kindergarten children's recollection of fables	248
6.3.6a The level of recollection	248
6.3.6b Recalling of the fables' last sentence	251
6.3.6c The specific nature of kindergarten children's wrong answers	253
6.3.7 Kindergarten children's understanding of fables	261
6.3.7a The level of understanding	262
6.3.7b Understanding of fables' last sentence	265
6.3.7c Kindergarten children's ways of thinking as they were exhibited during the question/answering process regarding their understanding of fables	269

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE RESEARCH'S RESULTS ON CHILDREN'S REACTION TO THE MORAL ISSUES OF FABLES 282

7.1 The current research	282
7.2 Methodology	285
7.3 Results	285
7.3.1 Kindergarten children's evaluation of fables' agents	286
7.3.1a The variety of characterizations	286
7.3.1b Consensus on the agents' character	288
7.3.1c The ground of the judgments	294
7.3.1d Criteria in evaluating the story agents	297
7.3.2 Kindergarten children's dispensation of justice	307
7.3.2a Justification of kindergartners' verdicts	308
7.3.2a _(i) Explanation of condemning verdicts	309
7.3.2a _(ii) Explanation of non guilty verdicts	313
7.3.2b The basis for the explanation	316
7.3.2c Kinds of punishment	319
7.3.2d The effectiveness of the punishment	325

7.3.3 Kindergarten children's evaluations of actions	326
7.3.4 Kindergarten children's conceptions of killing and lying	331
7.3.4a Killing	331
7.3.4b Lying	333

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE RESEARCH'S RESULTS ON CHILDREN'S DETECTION OF FABLES' CONCEALED MORAL IDEA 335

8.1 The current research	335
8.2 Methodology	337
8.3 Results	338
8.3.1 Kindergarten children (Four-to-six-year-old)	338
8.3.1a General moral	338
8.3.1b Application to children's own lives	351
8.3.1c Interpretation of the attached epimythium	358
8.3.1c(i) Different kinds of interpretations of the epimythium	361
8.3.1d Different ways of presenting the moral	367
8.3.1d(i) Last sentence	367
8.3.1d(ii) Promythium/Epimythium	368
8.3.1d(iii) The three alternatives	369
8.3.1e Different kinds of the aesopic fables	370
8.3.1e(i) Unsuitability for moral teaching	371
8.3.2 Fifth and sixth graders (Ten-to-twelve-year-old)	372
8.3.2a General moral	373

CHAPTER NINE: THE RESEARCH'S RESULTS ON CHILDREN'S REACTIONS TO THE ANIMAL PROTAGONISTS OF FABLES 383

9.1 The current investigation	383
9.2 Methodology	385
9.3 Results	385
9.3.1 Kindergarten children (Four-to-six-year-old)	386
9.3.1a Animals' conventional character	386
9.3.1a(i) Assignment of a conventional character	387
9.3.1a(ii) Reasoning behind the negative characterizations	396
9.3.1a(iii) Reasoning of the good characterizations	400
9.3.1b Kindergarten children's preferences of story characters	406
9.3.1c Kindergarten children's personification	407
9.3.1d Kindergarten children's ideas on animals' position in the food chain	410
9.3.1e Kindergarten children's conception of god	416
9.3.2 Fifth and sixth graders (Ten-to-twelve-year-old)	419

CHAPTER TEN: THE RESEARCH'S RESULTS ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF FABLES ON CHILDREN 425

10.1 The current research	425
---------------------------	-----

10.2 Methodology	429
10.3 Results	429
10.3.1 Children's fears and stories	429
10.3.1a The aesopic stories	430
10.3.1b Frighening themes in children's stories	431
10.3.2 Fables' endings	433
10.3.2a Recalling of the endings	434
10.3.2b Three ending alternatives	438
10.3.2c Addition of an ending	440
10.3.2d Appreciation of the stories' endings	442
10.3.3 Kindergarten children's conception of death	443
10.3.3a The place of the dead person	444
10.3.3b The actions of the dead person	449
10.3.3c The thoughts of the dead person	450
10.3.4 Kindergarten children's identification with the story agents	454
10.3.4a Criteria of identification	455
10.3.4b Identification with the dead hero	460
CONCLUSIONS	463
REFERENCES	489
APPENDIX ONE	
APPENDIX TWO	
APPENDIX THREE	

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Sample. Four to six-year-old	201
----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER SIX

6.1 Four to six-year-old children's familiarity with fables	228
6.2 Four to six-year-old children's preferences of fables	230
6.3 Four to six-year-old children's favourite elements of fables	239
6.4 Four to six-year-old children's level of recollection of fables	249
6.5 Four to six-year-old children's recollection of the last sentence of the fables	251
6.6 Four to six-year-old children's level of understanding of fables	262
6.7 Four to six-year-old children's understanding of the last sentence of fables	266
6.8 Four to six-year-old children's views of the winner of the `rabbit' fable as they viewed it from different viewpoints	281

CHAPTER SEVEN

7.1 Four to six-year-old children's justifications of their characterizations of the animal characters of fables. All Groups	294
7.2 Four to six-year-old children's criteria of characterization for the animal characters of fables. All Groups	298
7.3 Four to six-year old children's criteria for condemning of the story characters of fables	310

7.4 Four to six-year-old children's criteria for their non-guilty verdicts on the story characters of fables	314
7.5 Four to six-year-old children's grounds of their guilty or non-guilty verdicts on the characters of fables	317
7.6 Four to six-year-old children's suggestions of punishment for the guilty characters of fables	324
7.7 Four to six-year-old children's responses on the probability of repetition of the offence after punishment	325
7.8 Four to six-year-old children's responses on the lack of punishment and the possibility of repeating the same offence	326

CHAPTER EIGHT

8.1 Four to six-year-old children's detection of the general moral of fables. All Groups	339
8.2 Four to six-year-old children's detection of the applications of the moral of fables to their lives. All Groups	355
8.3 Four to six-year-old children's detection of the correct moral of fables in three tasks; general moral, its application, and the interpretation of the epimythium	359
8.4 Four to six-year-old children's No Responses to three questions; general moral, its application and the interpretation of the epimythium	360
8.5 Four to six-year-old children's interpretations of the explicitly expressed moral of fables	362
8.6 Ten to twelve-year-old children's detection of the general moral of fables	375

CHAPTER NINE

9.1 Four to six-year-old children's ideas on the animal conventions in literature	388
9.2 Four to six-year-old children's evaluations of the animals' bad character	397

9.3 Four to six-year-old children's evaluations of animals' good character	401
9.4 Ten to twelve-year-old children's ideas on the animal conventions in literature	420
9.5 Ten to twelve-year-old children's correct and incorrect responses on animal conventions in literature	421
9.6 Four to six-year-old children's correct and incorrect responses on animals' conventions in literature	421

CHAPTER TEN

10.1 Four to six-year-old children's recollection of the ending of fables	434
10.2 Four to six-year-old children's responses on the location of the dead hero	445
10.3 Four to six-year-old children's responses on the actions of the dead hero	448
10.4 Four to six-year-old children's responses on the thoughts of the dead hero	451
10.5 Four to six-year-old children's criteria for their identification with the fable heroes	457
10.6 Four to six-year-old children's responses on their identification with the dead hero	460

APPENDIX THREE

A.1 Four to six-year-old children's range of characterizations of the animal characters of fables. First Group	31
A.2 Four to six-year-old children's range of characterizations of the animal characters of fables. Second group	32
A.3 Four to six-year-old children's range of characterizations of the animal characters of fables. Third group	32
A.4 Four to six-year-old children's range of characterizations of the animal characters of fables. Fourth Group	33

A.5 Four to six-year-old children's range of characterizations of the animal characters of fables. Fifth Group	33
A.6 Four to six-year-old children's justifications of their characterizations of the animal characters of fables. First Group	34
A.7 Four to six-year-old children's justifications of their characterizations of the animal characters of fables. Second group	35
A.8 Four to six-year-old children's justifications of their characterizations of the animal characters of fables. Third group	35
A.9 Four to six-year-old children's justifications of their characterizations of the animal characters of fables. Fourth Group	36
A.10 Four to six-year-old children's justifications of their characterizations of the animal characters of fables. Fifth Group	36
A.11 Four to six-year-old children's criteria of evaluation of the animal characters of fables. First Group	37
A.12 Four to six-year-old children's criteria of evaluation of the animal characters of fables. Second group	38
A.13 Four to six-year-old children's criteria of evaluation of the animal characters of fables. Third group	38
A.14 Four to six-year-old children's criteria of evaluation of the animal characters of fables. Fourth Group	39
A.15 Four to six-year-old children's criteria of evaluation of the animal characters of fables. Fifth Group	39
A.16 Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the general moral of fables. First Group	40
A.17 Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the general moral of fables. Second Group	41
A.18 Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the general moral of fables. Third Group	42

A.19 Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the general moral of fables. Fourth Group	43
A.20 Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the general moral of fables. Fifth Group	44
A.21 Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the application of the moral of fables to their own lives. First Group	45
A.22 Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the application of the moral of fables to their own lives. Second Group	46
A.23 Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the application of the moral of fables to their own lives. Third Group	47
A.24 Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the application of the moral of fables to their own lives. Fourth Group	48
A.25 Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the application of the moral of fables to their own lives. Fifth Group	49

INTRODUCTION

The English word `fable` derived from the French and carrying almost the same meaning as the Latin term `fabula` and the Greek `myth`, although it at first meant `utterance`, very soon it gained the meaning of a fictitious story in general. Thus, when later the term was confined only to a specific kind of literature, with distinctive characteristics, the confusion that accompanied this restriction was great. Fable was confused with kindred genres and the misused term `fable` applied to nearly every narrative. Indicative are Thomas Noel's (1975) words: `Loosely used, it (fable) also suggests the fairy tale, the fabliau, the animal epic, or any narrative form that employs non-human characters or results in a moral lesson` (p. 1). In this case, the term fable is expanded to include the kindred genres of fairy tales, beast epics and fabliaux.

Even in antiquity, when - according to some scholars¹- the fable first came into being, or was first extensively cultivated, and gained considerable popularity - according to some others² who deny its Greek origins - the same lack of a distinct term for this new kind of literature is also

¹. e.g. Handford, S. A. (Ed), Fables of Aesop, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974).

². e.g. Perry, B. E., `Fable`, Studium Generale, 1959, 12, pp. 17-37.

observed. The earliest Greek word we know for fable is `aenos`, which occurs in Hesiod (Op. 202), twice in Archilochus (frg. 86, 89), and in Callimachus (frg. 93). The term more commonly applied to the genre in classical times was `logos`, which appears in Phaedo 60d, or Pax 129 and in many other texts. Another term current in Greece was `the mythoi of Aesop` which is found in Plato, (Phaedo 61b), while Avian in his Preface refers to fables as `aesopic redicula`.

The Romans also lacked a suitable word for fable and the Latin term `fabula`, which passed into French and yielded the English word `fable` was extremely broad and could include any type of oral or written composition.

Due to the wide range of meanings the term fable includes, the formulation of a single definition for the genre has proved extremely demanding. In addition, another factor which obstructs the understanding of the term is the vast variety of narratives found in ancient and medieval collections which, although they are very different in kind, are accommodated within the single term `fable`.

But in spite of the difficulties inherent in defining the genre, many attempts have been made. The rhetorician Theon (Prog., 3), for example, suggests a simple and succinct definition underlining both its imaginary and moralizing nature. According to him, fable is conceived as `a fictitious story picturing a truth`, thus underlining the double character of the genre. The definition put forward by

Theon leads to the conception of fable as an expanding metaphor, in which the untrue and fictitious co-exist on a par with the morally true and undeniable, while the genre serves the double purpose of moral edification and ethical improvement.

Another mention of the allegorical nature of the genre is found in Joseph Jacobs' (1970; first publication 1889) definition of fable. Jacobs considers it as 'a short humorous allegorical tale, in which animals act in such a way as to illustrate a simple moral truth or inculcate a wise maxim' (p. 204). The combination of amusement and instruction aims at the transmission of the bitterest truths. Listeners, while they are enjoying the charming story, are also exposed to the harsh aspects of life. Moral preaching, which would otherwise be unwelcome, veiled by a seductive fiction, reaches its audience which, unable to resist, accepts with the same eagerness the pleasant story and the difficult truth.

Men of modest mental ability are helped by fable to comprehend moral truths which would be hard to understand in an absolute form. Uneducated persons find in fables a set of rules which helps them solve practical moral problems, and attain advice on everyday matters of social interaction. High ethical issues are not discussed in fables, and man is informed on moral principles without contending with absolute values. In short, fable gives man the theoretical equipment he needs to confront ethical problems without

entangling him in interminable philosophical discussion for which he lacks the necessary academic background.

According to Cullinan (1981), 'The fable is a brief didactic comment on the nature of human life presented in dramatic action to make the idea memorable. One factor that distinguishes the fable from other traditional literature forms is that it illustrates a moral, which is stated explicitly at the end' (p. 185). In Cullinan's definition the distinctive characteristic of the genre remains its moral kernel, which lies hidden in fiction and is also repeated in a more clear and unambiguous way at the end of the narration in the form of epimythium.

Fable is constructed to get across a message concerning harsh aspects of society and to help men carry on their lives. The moral is always placed in the context of a little narration, and in many cases is restated epigrammatically at the end of the story. 'Fables are stories, usually about animals, that teach a lesson, often summarised in an one-line moral at the end of the tale' (Glazer & Williams, 1979, p. 194).

According to Perry (1959), moral tone is not the only basic characteristic of fable, but heavy emphasis is put on the tense of the narration, which is the past tense exclusively. The occasional existence of the present tense in dialogues does not contradict it because it is used only to quote some important parts of a conversation which happened sometime in the past. Perry's argument concerning

the tense of the narration emphasizes the fact that the material of fable has happened once in the past, and does not consist of generalities that can take place at any time under certain circumstances. For this reason, Perry proceeds to deny the term fable to many stories that relate common incidents in animal life that can be observed at any time in nature. 'The ape's kids', for example, is one of those stories which blurs the borders between fable, simile, and proverb, and, although it is found in fable collections, the story is not a genuine claimant to the term.

But apart from the past tense of narration, the indirect way of conveying a message and the existence of two levels, a literal-mundane and a figurative-ethical one, are considered by Perry (1959) essential characteristics of fable.

Although a definite definition has not been reached, in summing up the main points of what constitutes a fable we may say that fable is an overtly fictitious story that is concerned with an action or a series of actions, alleged to have happened on one occasion in the past, and in which animals and other characters are employed in order to point to a moral implicitly.

For more than twenty-five centuries fable has addressed a wide range of people, holding listeners under its spell and enriching their converse of daily life. Fables have been read over and over again, and their popularity has not yet

faded away. In their route throughout the centuries they gained many forms, mirroring every time the society in which they functioned. Thus, the fable became an extremely capricious genre and the definition of its nature notably difficult. Beginning with its origins and the identity of Aesop - the person who lent the genre its name and claims, according to the legend, its fatherhood - and proceeding to its literary style and the purposes the genre served throughout the ages, and ending with the audience fable has been addressed to, everything is obscure and indecisive. Greece, Asia Minor, and India are some of the places which dispute the paternity of the genre, while Aesop fights against the rumours that would make him an imaginary figure.

Authors try to put their personal touch in the fables they invented, while the oral tradition would give them all the anonymity of folkloric literary production. Prose boasts that fable is composed obeying its rules of writing, while the best practitioners of the genre created their masterpieces in verse. Although at first adults composed the larger solid reading public of fable, soon after children seized on it and made the aesopic stories their own classic. `It had been Everyman's and now was Everychild's` (Darton, 1982, p. 23). Fable was brought into court to defend, used in the Parliament to persuade, and it found a place in church to edify. In school fable helped in the teaching of language along with the moral edification,

and in the press it was employed to criticize the arbitrariness of political authorities.

Although the aesopic fables were constructed to be addressed only to adults, since their deeper implications require a sophisticated approach, very soon they captured the interest of children, who acknowledged them as their own literature. Before fables became the monopoly of children, they were recounted and read mainly by adults and it has been only very recently that prevailing attitudes have relegated fables to children's literature.

Perez & Parker (1985) attributed fables' popularity to the fact that 'they have wisdom, charm and universal truths that are just as relevant today as they were centuries ago' (p. 59). According to them, some of the genre's qualities which ~~su~~ to young readers are the stories' brevity, which enables them to enjoy a whole story at one sitting, their simplicity, which makes them readable . . . from those who have not entirely mastered reading, and the animal characters of the stories, which are appealing to all ages.

The distinction between adults and children's literature is an arbitrary one, since young readers often enjoy books originally created for elder ages. Although Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver's Travels, for example, were written for adults, they had such a grip on children as to become purloined by them. In earlier eras especially the gap between the two kinds of literature was very narrow, since adult fiction was less sophisticated than it is today. Books

for adults were easily understood by much younger readers, and their exposure to adults' literature was not premature and resulted in genuine pleasure. Certain literary genres, like fairy tales, fables, or works of some authors, had the power to satisfy an audience of all ages and to blur the boundaries between the two. Even today it is, however, impossible to build protective walls between material meant for children and that addressed to adults, since children are exposed to all forms of art through the mass media, commercial outlets, and institution of socialization.

As works originally addressed to adults became children's classics, some other books are opened to the charge of being children's books for grown ups. In spite of the fact that Alice in Wonderland and The Little Prince were made up for children and still keep their place on the child's bookshelf, they are mainly read by adults who enjoy them at a deep philosophical level. Books for children can easily be adults' books and as a writer confesses: 'we all should simply be artists and just write books and stop pretending that there is such a thing as being able to sit down and write a book for a child: it is quite impossible. One simply writes books' (Sendak, edited by Meek et al. 1977, p. 256).

Although adults and children can enjoy the same reading material, the way they approach it makes all the difference. Myths, legends, fables may affect adults and children differently. This feature adds to their lasting richness,

without invalidating them from be read by either of the age groups. Lewis (edited by Haviland, 1973) contributes to this argument, asserting: "I now enjoy Tolstoi and Jane Austen and Trollope as well as fairy tales and I call that growth: if I had had to lose the fairy tales in order to acquire the novelists, I would not say that I had grown but only that I had changed. A tree grows because it adds rings; a train doesn't grow by leaving one station behind and puffing onto the next" (p. 234).

Not only regarding their audience, but also concerning their use and purpose, fables do not follow a linear route. When fables first came into being, and for a long period afterwards, they were treated as rhetoric rather than poetry. Many philosophers and rhetoricians stressed the importance of the genre as a successful means of persuasion and gave useful advice in order to make it more effective. Aristotle, for example, deals with it in Rhetoric (II, 20), and all three rhetoricians devote whole chapters of their Progymnasmata to fable in an attempt to prove it as one of the most suitable means for attacking one's opponents and influencing his audience.

In addition, the first compilers of fable collections completed their works so that speakers could find raw material to reinforce their points within the context of their oration. They were helped in the quest of a suitable fable by the addition of promythium, which functioned as a heading-index that facilitated the search. Fable certified

itself as a proper instrument of persuasion and as Shell (1972) explains: `The fable is well suited to being used as a rhetorical device. It fixes itself through its brevity and wit in the mind of the hearer much more easily than a long complex argument` (p. 86).

But when children purloined the genre, the aesopic fables left the courts and very soon they found their way into schools. At first, they were used to teach foreign languages, either Greek or Latin, but due to the fact that they embody universal truths in brief, striking form, given in the style of a riddle, they formed highly intellectual exercises appropriate to the education of child. Educators, like Quintilian in the Institutio Oratoria (I, 9, 1), or philosophers such as John Locke, regarded fables as suitable reading material for children, and fables found their way into the school curricula of nearly every country in Europe.

Because fables are inherently a convenient vehicle for any kind of teaching, they were even used in churches for moral edification. `The characteristics which rendered the fable so attractive to the preacher were its simplicity and interest. Holding the attention of the most illiterate peasant, they impressed upon his mind in memorable form precepts of prudence which might serve to guide him when more lofty instruction would pass by unheeded` (Smith, 1912, p. 250).

In spite of the wide variety of purposes fable served - e.g. defending in courts, preaching in churches, satire in

political battles - its employment as an educational means seems the most suitable one. Even at an early stage of the fable's development, ancient authors extolled its importance and stressed its significance as a vehicle of edification. Fables were placed in the school curricula and young pupils acquired their reading and writing skills from fable texts.

But even before children went to school they knew aesopic fables, as they were the common material mothers used for story telling. In the Life of Apollonius (V, XV) the author confesses: 'And as for myself, O Menippus, my mother taught me a story about the wisdom of Aesop when I was a mere child'.

Many writers of ancient Greece were not only in favour of mothers' practice of telling aesopic tales to their young ones, but they were also accumulating reasons for supporting their tendency. According to Plato, fables should be told to children and, though they sound untrue, they have a true kernel. 'We begin by telling children fables, and the fable is, taken as a whole, false, but there is truth in it also. And we make use of fables with children before gymnastics' (Plato, Republic, II, XVII).

Philostratus, also, thinks that aesopic stories, employing animated things and humanized animals, introduce children to the confusing real world of adults. 'For he (Aesop) checks greed and rebukes insolence and deceit, and in all this some animal is his mouthpiece - a lion or a fox or a horse, and, by Zeus, even the tortoise is not dumb -

that through them children may learn the business of life` (Philostratus, Imagines, I, 3).

The fact that aesopic fables were very popular with ancient Greeks and were considered the literary property of every educated man is obvious for the great number of references to the name of Aesop made by Aristophanes in his plays (e.g. Vesps 1182, 1446; Pax 129; Lys. 695). Failure to recognize an aesopic story was, according to Aristophanes, a clear indication of lack of education. In one of his comedies, the hero rebukes his partner: `You are definitely ignorant and dim and you haven't explored even Aesop` (Birds, 472).

Not only Greece but also Rome made extensive use of the genre, while later fables started appearing in increasing numbers in school texts all over Europe. As far as England is concerned, Gopen, in the introduction of the edition of Henryson's (1987) fable collection, notes: `The Aesopic fable may well have made its way to England with St. Augustine, since fables always appear as teaching devices in primary education; but our first traces of them date from the Norman invasion in the Eleventh Century` (p. 6).

In Germany a bilingual text, German and Latin, printed by Steinhöwel, presented more than 160 fables both in verse and prose, and was the direct ancestor of the Caxton edition in England. In Netherlands, from the first centuries after the discovery of printing, Dutch children could enjoy, along with brief works of piety and little primers, the aesopic

tales and Reynard the Fox (Thwaite, 1972, p. 266). In Sweden, young Swedes from as early as 1603 had their own Aesop, taken from Germany, while very soon native fabulists tried their talents and produced the first original fables in Swedish (Thwaite, 1972, p. 272).

Very soon the aesopic fables travelled all around the world and as Provenzo (1976) notes: 'Other than the Bible, and possibly Ovid's Metamorphoses, no other book in the West has been more widely and frequently published. Unlike either the Bible or the Metamorphoses, however, the Fables are not primarily limited to the Western historical tradition, but also are to be found in a wide range of world cultures' (p. 2).

In the eighteenth century the Enlightenment philosopher John Locke (edited by Adamson, 1922), recommends strongly the aesopic fables, along with Reynard the Fox, as suitable books for children. 'To this purpose I think Aesop's Fables the best, which being stories apt to delight and entertain a child, may yet afford useful reflections to a grown man; and if his memory retains them all his life after, he will not repent to find them there, amongst his manly thoughts and serious business' (p. 119). And continuing a little further: 'It will, besides other advantages, add encouragement and delight to his reading, when he finds there is some use and pleasure in it, which in the ordinary method, I think, learners do not find till late and so take books only for

fashionable amusements, of impertinent troubles, good for nothing` (p. 120).

In disagreement with these figures is Rousseau, whose defamation of fable is fully developed in Emile (1948; first publication 1762). The poems of La Fontaine are denounced as creations of the adult world, which the child is unable to understand. So many questions arise in a fable, and the teacher's expectation of the pupil, in supposing that he can extract the moral principal, is indubitably unreasonable. For the philosopher, children are misled by fable: `Men may be taught by fables; children require the naked truth` (p. 77). This kind of literature is definitely improper for children, as both its context and its poetical form are insurmountable obstacles for their comprehension. Poems are better remembered but harder perceived.

Rousseau proceeds in his censure of fable with an in depth analysis of the story `The Fox and the Crow`, which he relates to an hypothetical class in a step-by-step teaching process. The problems which the students are confronted with start with the personification of the animals and the polished poetical language, pass through acquaintance with the vice of lying - the story undertakes to introduce innocent children to the adult world of cruelty and misery - and concludes with an ill-designed moral, which no child below the age of ten is capable of understanding.

However, apart from children's inability to come to grips with ethical dilemmas they have not experienced, the

question of the adult's responsibility regarding the teaching material comes once again into fore. 'Should we teach a six-year-old child that there are people who flatter and lie for the sake of gain?' (p. 79). Can the teacher also be sure that the child, when he squeezes the moral out of the story, ends up with the same desirable epimythium, the one that the fabulist sealed into the narration? Rousseau maintains that children almost always apply to fables morals absolutely conflicting with those that the author had in mind when he contrived the story. The above mentioned fable, for example, teaches young pupils 'how to make another drop his cheese rather than how to keep their own' (p. 79). The story of 'The Ant and the Grasshopper', teaches cruelty, and that of 'The Lion and the Fox', what a nice thing injustice is. And the French educator concludes his argument: 'Let us make a bargain, Mr. de la Fontaine. For my own part, I undertake to love you, and to learn from your fables, for I hope I shall not mistake their meaning. As to my pupil, permit me to prevent him studying any one of them till you have convinced me that it is good for him to learn things three-fourths of which are unintelligible to him, and until you can convince me that in those fables he can understand he will never reverse the order and imitate the villain instead of taking warning from his dupe' (p. 80).

In spite of Rousseau's opinion, fables have entered into the lives of children and become one of their popular

classics. But although they were used in education for many centuries and, to a certain extent, still are, their suitability for children has not been tested with experimental methods. Even when fables are treated as a children's book, appropriate for reading outside school, their contribution to the moral development of children is overstressed, though no longitudinal research of the influence of the aesopic tales on the construction of the children's morality has been undertaken. In addition, fables are considered as satisfying audiences of all ages, and have been in the curricula of a wide variety of age groups, starting from nursery school and extending even to universities and colleges, where they were taught in rhetoric, literature, education and similar fields. Educators, philosophers and other thinkers have expressed their recommendation or denouncement of the particular genre, justifying their opinions only by ideological criteria or observations based on everyday situations. It was only very recently that researches created experimental situations where some of children's responses towards fables could be measured and evaluated.

The goal of this research is to investigate the kindergarten children's reactions towards the aesopic fables. It will expand a little on the remembering and understanding of the stories, the liking or disliking of the specific stylistic characteristics of the fables, and the children's ability to comprehend and extract the hidden

moral of the narrations. The investigation will embrace the opinions expressed by kindergarten children regarding the agents of the fables and their actions, as well as the young readers' conceptions of the attribution of justice. The fables' leverage at a psychological level will also be discussed. A sketchy analysis of the children's reception of the different kinds of aesopic fables, and their preferences regarding the agents of the stories will, additionally, be included in this study.

CHAPTER ONE

CHILDREN'S APPROACH TO THE AESOPIC FABLE AS A LITERARY

PRODUCT

1.1 THE LITERARY STYLE OF THE AESOPIC FABLES

The style of the aesopic tales is not uniform but varies from story to story. Fables, as we know them today, are found in a large variety of collections, composed by different fabulists, who differ from one another in time, place, language, idiosyncrasy and intention. All the stories created by a known author, together with those that are the work of unnamed fabulists passed on orally from one generation to another and were later attributed to Aesop, cannot be expected to form a unique literary style. The differences between fables are so broad that it is impossible to describe their style in a manner applicable to all of them.

Although the genre of fable consists of a heterogeneous group and evinces wide ranging differences between stories, we are justified in speaking about specific rules that govern fable narration. The preference of fable narrative for the concrete is beyond any doubt. In spite of the fact

that all fables convey through the context of a tangible and visible story an abstract truth, no theoretical or symbolic notions are referred to in the narrative.

The story of the aesopic fable is simple and coherent. Its plot is clearly defined with an apparent beginning, middle, and end. The narration is remarkable for its economy of expression and can be considered to be a miniature drama, with climax and culmination. The action counts for more than its implications, and aesopic fables `like Moliere's comedies and Racine's tragedies, have definite form: form is the structure of an action` (Guiton, 1961, p. 126). The sentence structure of fable narrative is paratactical and, like the links in a chain, its every phase tends to have equal value and is absolutely undetachable from the whole.

Regardless of the thorny question of the origins of the genre, whether it should be traced back to a named individual, or incorporated into the stream of an oral tradition, fable bears all the characteristics of folk tales, including its devotion to a well knitted plot. Like the orally transmitted narratives, in which `the essence of the story is the plot line, not the style` (Heeks, 1981, p. 130), fable gives more weight to the context than to the form. The aesopic tale follows the folktale formula, according to which stories `begin quickly. Characters are uncomplicated. Plots move swiftly along well-trod paths, and all questions are answered before the story ends` (Glazer & Williams, 1979, p. 202).

The dominance of action in the aesopic fable is also evident from the dominant position of the verb in the sentence. Verbs are normally active and form the kernel of the phrase. The absence of the verb `be` is very significant, revealing the tendency of the genre to favour action rather than characterization. The fox is never artful nor crafty, but it plays tricks and deceives other animals. According to Havelock (1978), the focus on action rather than contemplation is a characteristic common to all kinds of oral literature, which is `unfriendly to what we might call an "is" statement` (p. 42). However, as Leeson (1977) points out `Action too determines character. The words motives and motion have the same root` (pp. 59-60).

Bower (1978) includes fables in the category of simple stories, along with nursery tales, folktales, myths, TV westerns and police detective stories. All the above have a relatively plain structure, begin with the presentation of a setting and a cast of characters, and undertake to present and solve a problem. The lack of a complex structure, the economy of expression, and the scarcity of perplexing episodes, makes the reading easy to follow.

Fables do not favour description and the introduction of the protagonists, the backdrop - a generally subtle setting - and the framework of the story usually appear only in the opening episode of the tale. Illustration of the characters is not the main task of the composer of the fable; it is through the depiction of actions that

information about their agents is provided. They are one dimensional, moulded into stereotyped models, and exhibit conventional traits. The heroes of the stories are superficial creations, deprived of any psychological depth and inner life.

The fabulist's aim is to illustrate through a concrete story an abstract moral truth. In order to serve his goal he devotes a great deal of effort to make the narration memorable. The limited length of the tale, the neat plot, the direct story line, the absence of description, the presence of animal agents, and the delineation of flat characters are some of the devices employed to convey the intended meaning. Moreover, the action is depicted as an adversarial relationship between two parties, the 'goodies' and the 'baddies', and the chaotic world of reality is neatly divided into two. The dominating formula of good versus bad that governs the narration of the fable does not permit any evolution of the characters, secures the simplicity of the story, and rarely slows down the action with psychoanalytic speculations.

Although fable consists of an expanded metaphor, and the superficial concrete story conveys an inner ethical idea, it does not make any use of figurative language, such as similes and metaphors. The personification of animals, plants and inanimate objects, which are employed as the protagonists of the tales, is the only use of figurativeness in fables' concrete stories.

Fables are related in indirect speech, and their preferred tense of narration, with few exceptions, is the past tense. Only in a few cases does indirect narration of the actions and conversations of the agents give way to a dialogue in direct speech, in order that the protagonists may gain the opportunity of speaking for themselves. Often only the last speaker has the chance to be quoted and lend his exact words as an ending to the story, in an attempt to make a greater impression and be easily memorized, since this last sentence contains the essence of the fable's hidden morality.

The purpose of the fable is two-fold the genre is equally committed to moral edification and entertainment. Thus, fable is not valued only for its aptness to convey a moral idea, but also for its ability to amuse the reader. The creation of a pleasant atmosphere, however, contributes in leading the reader to form a positive attitude towards the suggested morality of the fable. To this end the use of humorous episodes and dialogues offers great assistance. The fabulist makes great effort to create humorous situations and thus to capture the attention of his audience.

Settings are nearly always absent from fables and thus it is more accurate to talk about backdrops, which are relatively unimportant hints of settings, and totally lacking symbolical nuance, such as forest for danger and sea for adventure. The story usually takes place in the forest, because this is the natural habitat of its animal agents,

and devotes more attention to depicting the action than to elaborating the scenery. In addition, the fabulist avoids choosing a specific time and place for the action of the story in order to cultivate the notion of universality that is essential to the narrative's moral purpose.

1.2 KINDS OF THE AESOPIC FABLES

Grouping aesopic fables into different kinds is a very difficult and ambitious enterprise, since the vast majority of fables contains elements ascribable to more than one type. It is very difficult, for example, to differentiate the kind of fables labelled by Perry (1965) as 'animal stories exhibiting the cleverness or the stupidity of this or that animal', from fables that employ animal agents as their chief protagonists. Similarly, the boundaries between fables conceived as amusing stories or mere jests and all the others are blurred and ill-defined, because every aesopic tale serves the double goal of instruction and entertainment.

Examining the whole mass of the fables present in ancient, medieval and modern collections we can categorize fables into eight different groups. Apart from those stories we label as genuine fables and that bear all the fundamental features of the genre, there are also aetiological stories, debates between two rivals, amusing narrations, stories

invented merely to illustrate a witty sentence, myths about the gods, fairy stories, historical anecdotes, and puns.

Apart from all those fables which can be accommodated into any of the previously mentioned categories, there are a number of short stories that are unique, having no place in any other category, yet are too few to form a new one. Although they found their way into the compilations of fables due to their strongly moralizing intent, all of them violate the very essence of the term `fable`. Narrations such as `The farmer's quarrelsome sons`, `Hercules and Athena`, `The cat who invited the birds to dinner` cannot be included in any of the following categories.

1.2.1 `GENUINE` FABLES

In this category belong all those tales found in fable collections that are in accordance with the definition of the genre. They relate fictitious actions, carried out mainly by animals, and point to a moral truth that communicates worldly wisdom to their audience.

Genuine fables are normally composed in indirect speech; maybe included to enliven the tale a few lines of dialogue. Very often the last sentence of a `genuine fable` will be uttered by the principal actor in direct speech, expressing the moral idea of the fable in a general way. When the narration ends with an epigrammatic last sentence,

the attached epimythium merely repeats the moral in a more broad and abstract way.

The fables that conclude with a final sentence, stated in direct speech, that is then followed by an epimythium with a totally different meaning than the narrative's final phrase, are very few. The story of `The man and his disagreeable wife`, for example, finishes with the husband's words towards his wife `Well, my dear, if you are distasteful to these men who drive their herds out early in the morning and come back late in the evening, what are you to expect from people with whom you spend the whole day?`. The epimythium, in sharp contrast and rather unsuccessfully, points out `So, frequently one can judge great matters from small, obscure matters from those that are obvious`.

1.2.2 AETIOLOGICAL FABLES

The main purpose of aetiological fables is the explanation of a physical or psychological trait, or a peculiar situation. All these stories yield a moral that clarifies the origins and justifies historically the cause of the events they describe.

The distinctive characteristic of aetiological fables is the manner by which they transmit their inner truth. They express their basic moral idea in a very obvious and



tangible way, and thus the fable's inner truth is more clearly illuminated than in any other type of fable.

According to Perry (1965) 'Aetiological myths, of which many are included among the so-called fables of Aesop, are, as a type, ill-suited for picturing a truth metaphorically, because they lead up to an explicit statement of how and why this or that reality came into being' (p. xxvi).

A large number of aetiological fables represent the gods, especially Zeus, as the authority figure of the narrative and some of them are situated at the beginnings of mankind, when gods created men and beasts and endowed them with their essential qualities.

Some of the topics that aetiological fables account for include men's kind disposition towards the swallow, which they avoid eating and permit near their houses ('The swallow and the birds'), the craftsman's inclination towards falsehood ('Hermes and the craftsmen'), the short ears of camels ('Zeus and camel'), and the unceasing work of the ant ('The ant').

Along with the explanation of certain events, aetiological stories suggest acceptable kinds of behaviour and convey ethical truths. This fact probably led the compilers of fables to include them in their collections. Giving much weight to the moralizing elements of aetiological stories, and bearing in mind that the fable collections had as their main purpose the accumulation of

raw material useful to speakers and teachers, fable collectors incorporated them into their works.

1.2.3 DEBATES BETWEEN TWO RIVALS

Another group of aesopic stories is formed by those narratives that relate the dialogue between two actors who make every possible effort to praise themselves and belittle their opponents.

The speakers may be animals, plants, natural forces, or even gods, who proclaim the excellence of their abilities and endeavour to prove their own superiority.

Not every fable that narrates an argument between two or sometimes more actors can be labelled a debate between two rivals. The aesopic story of `The rose and the amaranth`, for example, although it relates a dialogue between two plants, differs from all other stories belonging to this category in following exactly the reverse process; each character pays compliments to the other for qualities he himself lacks.

Some of the narratives in the `debate` category of fable present the speakers' arguments exclusively, while others not only relate their conversation but proceed to actually prove their words. The story of `Zeus and Apollo`, for example, describes not only the debate of the two gods but also the actions that reinforce their points.

The topics that give rise to the disputes differ from story to story and range from power (e.g. `The North Wind and the Sun`) and beauty (e.g. `The fox and the ape`) to intelligence (e.g. `The fox and the leopard`) and importance (e.g. `The belly and the feet`).

Although debates between two rivals might not convey a moral idea metaphorically, they gained the approval of fable editors and readers through a simple literary style and subtle, humorous dialogue.

1.2.4 AMUSING NARRATIONS

The twofold purpose of fable, instruction and entertainment, misled some compilers into inserting into their collections narratives that are merely amusing. Such stories are told for their own sake, with little if any concern for conveying a moral idea.

A large number of amusing stories incorporated into the fable collections do not call for an epimythium, and when a moral is added to them it is plainly perfunctory and ill-suited. For the story of `The belly and the feet`, for example, the epimythium `So it is with armies, too. Great numbers would mean nothing if the generals did not exercise good judgment` that follows it, is obviously farfetched and unsuitable.

On the contrary, there are some amusing tales that, although they were created not to fulfil any instructive purpose, justify perfectly the existence of the epimythium attached to them. The tale of `The grandma and the doctor`, for example, in spite of the fact that it was invented only to entertain its readers, is apt to be used as an admonition against greediness and illegal profit.

Witty remarks can be considered a subcategory of amusing stories, since in those tales a little narration is used only to give rise to a clever remark, uttered by the final speaker. The story highlights the description of a situation in which the concluding witty sentence will be pronounced and make sense. The narration involves two actors but only one of them speaks, while the other remains silent.

Such concluding remarks bear an internal value and can stand on their own. The short tale gives rise to it, but in time it acquires proverbial qualities and gains currency without the support of the preceding narration. The fable of the `The lion and the fox`, for example, relates the argument between the two animals concerning their fertility and concludes with the lion's witty comment `One, but lion`, which survives and circulates to the present day without reference to the story from which it originated.

Although the purpose of the witty remarks is not moralizing, they found their way into fable collections due to their acidic criticism of the wrongdoer's behaviour and their strong satirical bent.

In regard to the amusing narrations in general, the reason of their incorporation into the fable collections is to be sought in the double function of the genre as a vehicle both of instruction and entertainment. However, it is very dangerous and extremely difficult to draw a dividing line between genuine fables and amusing narrations, since elements of edification and enjoyment are present in both literary categories; the difference lies in the balance between those two elements.

1.2.5 STORIES ABOUT GODS

A small number of narrations which crept into fable collections and are falsely labelled as fables are more truly characterized as mere stories about the gods. The narration of `Zeus, Prometheus, Athena and Momus`, for example, which is included as number 100 in Aesopica collection, relates a series of events concerning the gods mentioned in its title.

The stories about gods do not require an epimythium but, since they are disguised as fables, are followed by ill-suited and unpredictable morals. Their position in fable collections is not justified in the least, since they do not depict an ethical idea metaphorically. Their connection with religion, which, in its turn, is strongly associated with morality, is responsible for their inclusion.

1.2.6 FAIRY STORIES

Some other narrations incorporated into fable collections show remarkable similarities to fairy tales, and under the cloak of a fable the imaginary world of Never-land is presented. Magical elements (like the golden eggs of the well known hen, in 'The hen that laid the golden eggs') weird transformations (the cat is changed into a woman and then comes back to her previous animal form, in 'The cat and Aphrodite') bizarre wishes granted by supernatural beings (the cat prayed to Aphrodite and was granted her metamorphosis into a charming young lady, according to the previously mentioned narration) unexpected turns of fortune (as in the case of the man who discovered a pit full of gold, in 'The Cyclops') the presence of legendary beings (like Cyclops, in the homonymous narration) are described in those stories that make unsuccessful claims to the term 'fable'.

In fables, animals, though they are endowed with the power of speech and reasoning, behave in a plausible manner, suited to their nature. Apart from talking in a human like manner, they perform their ordinary deeds, live in their own environment, confront their natural problems and generally they do not violate the rules of their existence.

In contrast, in those fairy-tale-like fables men and animals step out of their everyday character, put an end to their trivial activities and seek excitement in bizarre

situations. Distinctive motifs found in folktales (Thomson, 1955) are also present in these stories, creating a bizarre and fabulous atmosphere.

Stories in the category of fairy tale are followed by an epimythium, which translates the inner truth of the story from its magical language into a pedestrian but more tangible vernacular. Perhaps the strong morality inherent in fairy tales led to the inclusion of those stories in the fable collections.

1.2.7 HISTORICAL ANECDOTES

Even narrations about the fabulist Aesop, the rhetorician Demades, and the cynic philosopher Diogenes were unjustifiably ascribed the term fable.

The main protagonist of those stories is a well known historical person, who by certain words or acts reveals his own superiority and gives lessons to his opponents. The narrations have a humorous effect, and the whole tale is meant to provoke the laughter of its audience.

Such historical anecdotes were included in fable collections in order to capture the attention of the reader with its humour and to predispose him in favour of the whole compilation.

1.2.8 PUN ON WORDS

Those stories that aim at amusing the reader with a witty language game or pun obviously lack any aspiration to edify.

The tale of `The boy and his mum`, for example, was constructed only to amuse, with its clever play on the word `gut` and its double meaning. The mum's dissimulation that she misses it, gives rise to her clever remarks and creates a merry disposition in the reader.

For these stories the addition of an epimythium is rather abortive and far fetched. Only their place in a collection of fables can perhaps explain the attachment of a moral to a light and amiable story.

1.3 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S CONCEPTION OF STORIES

Children's conception of stories is revealed by the way they understand stories as readers and by the manner in which they structure them when they are asked to build one.

During the process of approaching literal works the reader, as Warlow (edited by Meek et al., 1977) notes, does not stand alone with the text but brings to it his past experience of life and literature. The literary background of the reader includes his familiarity with the author's style, the language and conventions of fictional narratives,

which provide him with an already formed idea for his expectations, while his life background has taught him how characters behave and feel in various situations.

A similar opinion was expressed by Rumelhart (1977), who, after experimenting with ten graduate students, concluded that `Stories are expected to be distorted during comprehension and or reconstruction to fit into existing schemata. Thus new semantic elements are expected to be added and old ones deleted to make the story fit the available schemata` (p. 298). Kintsch (1977) echoes the same idea and asserts that every reader `approaches the story with a certain schema, that is, a set of expectations about the structure of the story` (p. 40).

Crago & Crago (1983) experimented with their own child, Anna, in order to obtain a clear idea of how children conceive stories. `Anna conceived of story in terms of characters acting: description is rare and confined to a handful of conventional adjectives` (p. 140). Soon after they note: `Anna's practise is closer to that of traditional folktale than to the style of most contemporary fiction for young children` (p. 140).

Educators express their opinion concerning the stories that children must be provided with in order to understand what they read. Glazer (1986), for example, states: `Children from two to five can follow simple plots, and are beginning to develop a sense of story. It is a good time to share books that have clear plots` (p. 22), while `children

from five to eight are able to follow more complex stories that may have subplots` (p. 22).

Applebee (1973), studying children's own stories, observes that the majority of the stories composed by two-year-old children show no causal structure. At the most, they show some links but there is no increase in the proportion of fully structured stories. This proportion begins to rise at four and becomes completely dominant by five, demonstrating the tendency of older children to use causality as one way of building their narrations.

In a later work, Applebee (1978) suggests a schema describing the organization and complexity of children's stories. The first stage is called **Heaps** and is characterized by children's tendency to say everything that comes to their mind without any coherence. Then they offer **Sequences**, linking elements on the basis of one shared attribute. In **Primitive Narratives**, the next division, things are grouped together in order to form a set. **Unfocused chains** are those stories that join incidents in pairs. After that children proceed to a **Focused Chain**, where events are dependent on a central person or incident and the associations between them are concrete. The most advanced level is that of **Narratives**, which represents adult standards.

Maranda & Maranda (1970) point out four levels through which children proceed in their development of story plots: one power overwhelms another and there is no attempt at

response; the minor power attempts a response but fails; the minor power nullifies the original threat; and not only the threat is nullified, but the original circumstances are substantially transformed (e.g. the hero kills the dragon and marries the princess as well). Older children tell higher-level stories, while younger ones are confined to lower-level narrations.

Sutton-Smith (1981) has collected stories related by children and, after examining all of them, concluded that, when children are given the opportunity, they are inveterate tale tellers, and the tales they tell have considerable similarity to traditional folktales. They are not the same as folk tales, but they share major common elements with them` (p. 1).

Applebee (1973), analyzing the data collected by Pitcher & Prelinger (1963), showed that the first formal elements that children of 2-5-years acquire from stories are the formal openings and the consistent past tense, while they find it more difficult to incorporate in their narrations formal endings and other conventional story elements.

Ames (1966), after collecting and examining the stories of young children, came to the conclusion that even from the age of two children retell stories of 50 to 70 words; these retellings are characterized by jerky style, violent incidents, rapid changes in theme, and leaps in the primitive story line. At three-and-a-half children are more

cooperative and their stories, especially boys' narrations, are transferred to remote lands and crammed with violence. At the age of four children find it more difficult to construct a story since they become conscious as to what a story is. But only when they reach the age of five do children have real troubles telling genuine stories preferring to repeat well-known ones.

Some educators determined that the basis of children's understanding of stories is the level of the language employed, and thus a `literature with a controlled vocabulary` came into being. At the same time, much opposition was raised and many writers (e.g. Chambers, 1971; Aiken, 1982) spoke against literature with a controlled vocabulary. The controlled-vocabulary sought to make children's readings easier by the employment of a restricted vocabulary. Opposition to this approach was based on the very nature of literature, which never serves strict utilitarian purposes, and cannot justify its name without making a free and extensive use of language.

1.4 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S IDEAS ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF STORIES

The conception of the actual origins of stories is linked to belief in tales' truth. The topic has attracted the attention of many investigators who have viewed it from

various standpoints. Aiken (1982), for example, treats the issue of the truthfulness of the story at a more philosophical level, and stresses authors' responsibilities towards it. 'The difference between life and a story is that life is flat and goes on and on, whereas a story has a shape, which resists alteration; take out one piece and it pulls the whole structure lopsided; it has a frame, a climax; you listen in confidence because you know that something is going to happen, it will all work out in the end. So the writer must ensure that something does happen' (pp. 40-41).

Other educators and psychologists are more concerned with the way children conceive of the truth and origins of stories than with the authors' attitudes towards them. According to Applebee (1978), 'For the very young children the world of stories is part of the world in which they live; its events are as important and meaningful to them as anything else that happens. The separation of these worlds when they are finally confronted with the distinction between fact and fantasy is often relatively distressing; for a while, at least, a story is accepted only if the child thinks it is true. Slightly older children, once they have reconciled themselves to the distinction between fact and fantasy, continue to view stories from a single perspective: the events in a story remain made-up correlatives of events in the world' (p. 132).

According to results obtained by the same researcher children of six are not so dismissive concerning the truth of the stories. 73% of the children that participated in the research remain uncertain whether the story character and events are real. They tend to think of the fictional world as a simple inversion of the real one, rather than as imaginary and non-existent.

In a previous work Applebee (1973), working with young children, draws the conclusion that a story is regarded rather as something that happened in the past, than as a fictional creation. Due to its factual character, it is unchangeable and, even if we do not like it, there is no way to change it. A story is conceived by children as a unique set and as a young child puts it `you can't rub out the words` (p. 116). Only after the age of nine, do children acquire a more sophisticated notion about the construction of stories and accept the fact that they are men's intellectual products.

It is not yet clear, since adequate research has not been done on this field, when children start to ask for the first time about the truth of the stories. White's (1954) experience with her daughter places such inquiries at the age of five. `Carol is now beginning to ask about "true" and "not true" stories. This is a new development. Up till now everything has been accepted as "real" ` (p. 188).

It is known to all parents who have been confronted with children's puzzling questions about the truth of a

related story, how difficult is to find an answer that neither prolongs illusions nor destroys the dreamy atmosphere of tales. In regard to this subject, Shedlock (1951) advises them to answer such questions by stressing the relative nature of truth. Something that is possible in one situation is not probable in another and what happens in a story is true for the fictional world but not for everyday life. Cinderella's pumpkin car is acceptable in her own town, among her own people, but if we drag it out of its whimsical atmosphere into our city, it loses its proper context.

Another suggestion made by the same thinker is that emphasis be placed on the inner truth of the story, and not on its fictional surface. In the fairy tale of Jack and Beanstalk, for example, Shedlock (1951) finds the rapid growth of the stalk and the fight with the giant false if compared with literal fact, `but is it not a higher truth that the spirit of courage and high adventure leads us straight out of the commonplace and often sordid facts of life?` (p. 138).

A similar opinion is hold by Crago & Crago (1983), who solved this problem as follows: `If Anna asked where ogres lived, for example, our standard answer was "only in books". This phrasing, which we can now see to have been an attempt to preserve the possibility of a separate fictional reality, could well have helped Anna to treat the world of books as such a reality` (p. 201). And soon after they state: `It was

the inner consistency of the book world, rather than the consistency between book world and everyday world, that functioned as the precursor of her first grappling with the fantasy/reality distinction` (p. 201).

1.5 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S INTELLECTUAL ABILITIES OF UNDERSTANDING

In order to illuminate more clearly the way kindergartners grasp the hidden meaning and significance of events, we should bear in mind that they are, according to piagetian analyses, at the stage of preoperational thought, and exhibit some common characteristics in their way of thinking. A brief presentation of the preoperational child's way of thinking will facilitate a better understanding of his approach to stories and fables.

A very important element of children's thought is syncretism, which can be defined as the ability to connect everything with everything. In kindergartners' way of thinking accidental association takes the place of logical or causal connection and so things which are thought of together are assumed to belong together or to bear a cause-and-effect relationship to each other.

Piaget (1959) defines it thus: `Syncretism, which is the negation of analysis, calls forth this effort by which

every new perception is connected somehow or other with what immediately precedes it` (p. 147).

Another principle that marks children's thought is the tendency of centering, that refers to the child's tendency to focus his attention on one detail of an event, which leads to an inability to shift his sight to all the aspects of a situation.

Preoperational children's egocentrism is also observed and described by Piaget, and is defined as the way of thinking according to which the individual can interpret the thoughts and acts of another person only through his own experience. Egocentrism pertains to speech and thinking that is directed by individual needs or concerns.

The preoperational child's reasoning, instead of proceeding from the particular to the general (inductive), or from a general to the particular (deductive), proceeds from the particular to particular (traductive). A casual element is connected in the most absurd way with another striking detail so that statements such as `My dad's car runs faster than yours because it is red` (m., 54), are common among preschoolers.

When children are asked to explain an issue, even if they have not comprehended it, they are ready to attempt an explanation. Although their speech is inadequate and the coherence of their discourse lax, they are quite happy with their explanations. Piaget (1959) attributes this to the preschoolers' belief that the listeners grasp everything

because, according to their notions, they almost know beforehand all that should be known. They `are perpetually under the impression that people can read their thoughts, and in extreme cases, can steal their thoughts away` (p. 101). Somewhat later the Swiss pedagogue notes: `It is obviously owing to this mentality that children do not take the trouble to express themselves clearly, do not even take the trouble to talk, convinced as they are that the other person knows as much or more than they do, and that he will immediately understand what is the matter` (pp. 101-102).

According to Piaget (1959) the child tends to give a justification at all costs. `This logical or pre-logical law has a deep significance, for it is probably owing to its existence that the idea of chance is absent from the mentality of the child` (p. 145). `When a child is asked the reason for something, and does not know, he will always and at any cost invent an answer, thus testifying to this particular desire to establish connections between the most heterogeneous objects` (p. 145-146).

In addition, Piaget (1959) notes that: `For the child, there is no "why" that does not admit of an answer. A child can always say: "I don't know" in order to get rid of you; it is only very late (between 11 and 12) that he will say: "One cannot know" `(p. 148). `We can therefore conclude that the desire for justification at any price is a universal law of verbal intelligence in the child, and that this law itself is derived from the syncretic nature of childish

reasoning. The fact that for the syncretic point of view everything is related, everything is connected to everything else, everything is perceived through a network of general schemas built up of imagery, of analogies of detail and of contingent circumstances, makes it quite natural that the idea of the accidental or the arbitrary should not exist for the syncretistic mentality, and that consequently a reason should be found for everything` (p. 150).

Piaget locates the commerce of genuine understanding between children at the age of seven or eight.

The intellectual abilities of kindergartners are still limited so they can not handle very complicated information or an abundance of it. As Ault (1977), also, emphasizes: `When more information than the child can handle is provided, at best it is ignored and, at worst, completely distorted` (p. 164).

When children reason, they do not hesitate to make use of other events that help them to come to a conclusion. They may observe, comprehend and explain a phenomenon with already existing mental schemata, and very often put the new experience in the procrustean bed of already acquired intellectual forms, thus forcing an assimilation of it to their previous knowledge.

Children's special way of thinking is apparent in every aspect of their activity, and the characteristics of the preoperational stage are obvious in all their words and actions. Piaget (1959) attempts a comparison of children's

thinking and drawing and observes common elements in both sectors. He is talking about an intellectual realism in both sections and states: "if he believes the sun to be alive, he will see it walking about in the sky; if he believes it to be inanimate, he will see it always motionless, etc. In a word, the child observes and thinks as he draws: his thought is realistic, but intellectually so" (p. 183).

Another intellectual property of children is their tendency to glimpse expediency and fictionality in every function of the world. Nothing stands alone, and everything is linked with other objects in an unbreakable unity. As Piaget (1959) maintains, "children even in the cases that they are not able to find an explanation for an event, never respond with the sentence "by chance". At this stage, therefore, the idea of the fortuitous does not exist; causality presupposes a "maker", God, the parents, etc., and the questions refer to the intentions which he may have had" (pp. 177-178).

1.6 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING AND REMEMBERING OF STORIES

Children's remembering and understanding of stories are examined together because they are very closely linked to each other, since memory is always assisted by the comprehension of the context of the text. If the narration

is unfamiliar or in a scrambled order, it is extremely hard both to comprehend and to recall.

Many researchers have expressed their ideas about the comprehension of literary texts. Among them is Bower (1978), who supports the notion that the reader, in order to understand a story, should explain for himself why the hero acts as he does, at every step, in order to achieve his goal. Actions and events that are not on the main goal-directed sequence of the story will soon be forgotten. Also, 'the motive or the plan of a character provides a strong framework for interpreting and organizing the events in which he or she participates' (p. 229) and our current beliefs about the hero can influence the way we understand the story. In addition, whether the reader identifies or not with the character influences his inferential judgements positively or negatively respectively.

Piaget (1959), in regard to children's understanding of stories, notes that children younger than seven-or-eight-year-old 'find it far more difficult to distinguish between romancing and a faithful rendering. When the child has forgotten something or understood it imperfectly, he fills in the gap by inventing in all good faith' (p. 126).

Some scholars developed an intellectual schema, called 'story grammar' in order to explain children's understanding of stories. This approach analyses the story into its structural elements and arranges them in a line, according both to their importance in the narrative and the ability of

the reader to comprehend and remember them. The story grammars - the plural is used since many different such grammars have now been propounded - employed simple stories, whether created by the researcher or modified aesopic tales. Rumelhart (1975), for example, who defines story as setting and episode, experimented with the aesopic fable `The man and the serpent`, in spite of the fact that this particular fable, like many other samples of the genre, violates Rumelhart's very definition of the story since there is no setting. The introduction of the story characters is completed in the title, while the narrative starts straight away with an episode.

Stein & Glenn (edited by Freedle, 1979) have also attempted to analyze stories according to the story grammar schema, which, in its simplest form, is constructed by seven steps. Every story starts with the `setting`, which lays the background information and sets the stage for the `episode`. The episode starts with the `initiating event`, which leads to an `internal response` and motivates an `internal plan`, which will be externalized as an `attempt`. This brings about a `direct consequence`, which, in its turn, ends with the `reaction`¹.

¹. In order to elaborate the schema put forward by Stein and Glenn (1979) more clearly, a diagrammatic example they suggest will be quoted.

Melvin, The Skinny Mouse

Setting: Once upon a time, there was a skinny little mouse named Melvin who lived in a big red barn.

Stein (1979) admits that the categories are not all of equal importance and writes: `The internal response and reaction categories would be omitted from the text sequence without causing significant decreases in recall when compared to recall of expected story sequences` (p. 283).

In addition, Stein and Glenn (edited by Freedle, 1979) maintain that very few statements in the stories were recalled exactly as presented in the original story. The most common transformations were verb substitutions and `the three types of information which were deleted most frequently were adverbs, adjectives, and prepositional phrases` (p. 93). The time organization of the story is a significant factor facilitating the successful recalling of it. `If the temporal organization within an episode in any given story corresponds to the structure represented in the

Initiating Event: One day, Melvin found a box of rice crisps underneath a stack of hay. Then he saw a small hole in the side of the box.

Internal Response: Melvin knew how good the cereal tasted and wanted to eat just a little bit of the cereal.

Internal Plan: He decided to get some sugar first so that he could sweeten his cereal.

Attempt: Then Melvin slipped through the hole in the box and quickly filled his cereal bowl.

Direct Consequence: Soon Melvin had eaten every bit of the rice crisps and had become very fat.

Reaction: Melvin knew he had eaten too much and felt very sad.

grammar, subjects should have little difficulty organizing the information and maintaining the original temporal sequence` (p. 115).

The above schema is the simplest one and, as Stein (1979) herself acknowledges, a story can be repeated by only one episode or it may be a multiple episode story. In the second category any two of the episodes can be connected by one of the three relationships: and, then and cause.

Rumelhart (1977) offering the structure diagram of the `Countryman and the serpent` observes that one episode gives rise to another, which leads in turn to a third, thus yielding a series of embedded episodes in which each episode serves as either the initiation or the outcome of another.

In regard to children's comprehension of stories, Stein & Garfin (1977) attribute their difficulties in remembering, as in understanding, to the unfamiliarity of the content of the stories. If the narration is unfamiliar, young children cannot make the same set of causal inferences linking the story events and are thus deprived of the means of better remembering and comprehending the story.

In contrast with the difficulties which stories that are complex and full of peculiarities impose, even kindergartners can acquire a more or less sophisticated conception of simple narrations. According to Kintsch (1977), who studied children's understanding and recalling of stories with four-year-old subjects, even from this age children have attained the ability to organize pictures into

a story. Preschool children infer to propositions that presuppose the construction of a story and, when they recall it, irrelevant and spurious descriptions drop out and the relevant story material is retrieved.

Poulsen et al. (1979), studied children's comprehension and memory of stories with four and six-year-olds. He used four picture stories consisting of fifteen to eighteen pictures each and, without the aid of a text, presented them to the subjects in either a logical or scrambled order. The data analysis reinforced previous results, and showed that even four-year-olds interpreted the pictures in the correct order as a story text, while only the older subjects were able to discover stories under both conditions, whether the elements were presented in logical or scrambled order. They interposed thoughts and emotions to the characters, made their own inferences, and used all the narrative conventions in order to make the illogical series of pictures sound like a story. On the other hand, when four-year-old subjects were presented with the pictures in the illogical order, they simply labeled them. All these trends were confirmed when the subjects were asked to recall information of the stories.

Although Piaget (1959) found that poorly organized stories were poorly recalled by children of six and eight years of age, Stein (edited by Madeja, 1978), working with the story grammar, contradicted his data and supported that even preschoolers have very little difficulty to recall

stories if the sequence of the events is arranged in the expected temporal order. In addition, Stein herself attributes the inconsistency of Piaget's results with her own to `differences in story complexity, in terms of both the syntactic structure of individual sentences and of the relationships that occurred among the sentences` (p. 237).

Criticism of Stein's story-grammar, which can also apply to other such grammars, has been made by many researchers. Among them, Gardner (edited by Madeja, 1978) underlines five points that abolish the very idea of forming a story grammar. First, one simple grammar by its nature cannot include the whole mass of different works included in the umbrella term `story`. Second, the stories used in the researches were not real stories; `the material used in story research is typically deficient from the point of view of aesthetics` (pp. 252-253). Third, the whole study is based on the artificial condition of a single telling and hearing, which may serve experimental purposes, but is far from the real life conditions. Fourth, story grammar concentrates on comprehension, but the experience of literature goes beyond that and covers not only what is understood, but also what is not grasped. Finally, the story grammars take no account of the emotional affect of the audience; the fact that it is hard to measure does not give licence to ignore it.

Black & Wilensky (1979) condemned the story grammars for the same reasons as Gardener (1978) and, moreover,

because `the syntactic classes they presuppose cannot be defined independently of the syntactic relationship between the sentences` (p. 225). All these deficiencies lead them to conclude that story grammars are not promising models for understanding and remembering stories.

Another criticism of the story grammar theories concerning fables in particular originates from Dortman (1988), who transfers the story of `The turtle and the Rabbit` on the story grammar pattern as:

`A tortoise and a hare lived in the woods (Setting). One day the hare challenged the tortoise to a race (Initiating Event). The tortoise plodded along at his usual slow pace, while the hare, sure of his swift speed, took a nap (Reaction). Eventually the tortoise passed the sleeping hare and won the race (Outcome)` (pp. 11-12).

After looking at the tale constructed according to the story grammar theory Dortman (1988) observes: `It is clear from this example that the goal-based representation produced by the grammar bears little resemblance to the moral or point of the fable, "Don't be over-confident". In fact, there is no mention of over-confidence in the summarized version of the text` (p. 12).

Children when they are asked to recall a story do not remember every aspect of it with the same accuracy. Many thinkers have been dealing with the construction of a sequence of those elements of the story that children

recall. Thorndyke (1977), for example, set an experiment with 64 undergraduate students and concluded that, of the requisite components of all stories, more than **setting** (which establishes the time), **theme** (which is the general focus), **plot** (which includes a number of episodes each of which relates the attempts to achieve the goal or a subgoal and the outcomes of these attempts), and **resolution** (the statement of the final result of the story with respect to the theme), **structure and content** (which play role of connecting the discourse) are more easily remembered.

In addition, Brown (1975), in a series of four studies with kindergarten and second grade students, examined recognition, reconstruction and recall in narrative sequences. She concluded that all subjects were better at retaining logical narrations than arbitrary ones, while kindergartners have problems with the maintenance of the correct order during retelling, but not reconstructing and recognizing it.

Regarding memory, Applebee (1973) states that children remember better those parts of stories that are most important according to their own criteria. The young child is concerned with the action because to him the story remains largely a pattern of events, while adolescents do not restrict their interest only to the narration of events but proceed to the analysis and explanation of them.

When kindergarten children are asked to recall stories they turn to a juxtaposition of events linking them with the

recurring `then` or `and`. They do not even bother to linger introducing things and persons, since they believe that the listener knows whatever they know. For the same reason, gaps in the narrative are not unusual and, according to Spencer (edited by Jones et al., 1971), `young children spend longer on the initial details then rush to the end; the older ones begin to spread the load` (p. 144).

In an experiment carried out by Schmidt et al. (1983), children from five to ten-years-old, after being presented with simple stories, were then questioned about inference information. The results showed that the kindergartners were concentrated on isolated details in the stories, failing to integrate relevant facts, while the older children exhibited exactly the reverse pattern.

Another study of this kind was carried out by Paris et al. (1976), where the relationship between comprehension of implied information and children's memory of stories' meaning was examined. The data collected showed that young children often fail `to produce appropriate strategies for remembering and they do not attempt spontaneously to interrelate information in the stories, draw potential inferences, elaborate relationships to the same degree as older children and adults` (p. 667). In addition, young children do not comprehend contextual inferences in prose easily, and a positive relationship exists between the comprehension of inferences and memory for prose.

Thompson et al. (1985) studied story comprehension and the ability to answer inferential questions with four and seven-year-old children. The questions were logical (that included the why and the how of the story), constrained (information relevant to that presented in the story, but not given in the text), unconstrained (elaborative inferences that require extra story knowledge) and factual (concerning information illustrated in the story in a direct way). The results showed that all those categories were developed through the age span they studied, and that younger children were more successful than the older ones with the unconstrained questions.

Omanson et al. (1978) studied the inferential comprehension and recall of stories with groups of five and eight-year-old children. The data revealed that inferential comprehension may be independent of surface recall of the text and that inference probes are better measures of comprehension than free recall measurements. Differences in the protagonists' level of motivation elicited quantitative and qualitative diverse answers. The effect was obviously accelerated when the motivation of the actor was negative. In addition, the older group made more inferential propositions than the younger one.

According to an experiment carried out by Flapan (1968), six-to-twelve-year-old girls were studied for their understanding of social interaction. Flapan showed them filmed episodes of everyday events and interviewed them. The

research revealed that older children often mentioned the feelings and thoughts of adults, and were more likely to answer questions about the feelings and intentions of adults, than were the younger subjects, who usually reacted with the phrase `I don't know`. Also `the six-year-olds described the characters more often as just reacting with feelings, while the older children described them as more actively thinking and planning their actions and as having goals in mind` (p. 55).

When kindergarten children listen to stories, they cannot be expected to understand and remember everything they hear. `At early ages children were exposed to stories and legends, but paid little attention to the meaning of these stories and legends. Around the age of 10 they were encouraged to listen to the stories for more meaning` (Hirst et al., 1988, p. 4). According to the above mentioned view, it is not very realistic to expect children understanding fables or other traditional stories at the tender age of kindergarten.

A similar belief about children's understanding of stories was held by Pellegrini & Galda (1982). They experimented with 108 kindergarten, first and second grade subjects, and came to the conclusion that it is not until the age of eight that children are mentally mature enough not only to recall a story completely but also to answer questions on many aspects of it. Kindergartners and first graders are far from successful in both tasks, but they can

be helped to improve their comprehension by engagement in fantasy play.

1.7 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S PREFERENCES OF STORIES

Although Hazard (1947) did not devote any time to advise grown ups how to choose books that children would like, or to define the criteria of a good literary text good, he dealt with the topic of children's preference only in order to inform parents that, despite their attempts to select meaningful literature, there is no way to persuade their young sons and daughters to read a story that they do not find interesting. `Just as they use to turn away from the watch when its tick-tick no longer interested them, so they turn with an air of disgust from the book offered to them` (p. 47). Not only does he not hide his admiration for their practice, but he also confesses `To tell the truth, I admire them. We always hesitate, we men, to throw a book in the wastebasket because it bores us... But the children are ruthless` (p. 48).

If that is the case, and children cannot be persuaded to read books that they do not like, knowledge of their actual preferences in literature gains considerable importance and merits investigation. As Favat (1977) points out, the research on children's reading interests may be descriptive, i. e. what their preferences are, and also

analytic, i. e. why children are interested in those particular kinds of literature. The following paragraphs attempt an exposition of both.

Cather (1935), dealing with the qualities of stories that appeal to children, underlines the importance of action. In this regard fable stands on advantageous ground, since the first action occurs as soon as the story begins without any introduction or background details. Thus, children's attention is secured and their interest maintained.

According to the same researcher, the consistency and continuity of the plot line is another element which has been appreciated by children. The plot must hold the story together in order to become impressionable, and special care must be devoted to the ending. `After the climax is reached the oral story should descend rapidly to a close. Many of the best oral stories end in the climax, and those that do not, add but a sentence or two or a paragraph at most to round the completion` (p. 82).

The importance of action in children's stories is stressed by many critics of literature (e.g. Huck, 1979) who maintain that children prefer a tale that is full of movement rather than description and introspection. The appreciation for action continues to older ages, and even primary school students appreciate action in their stories.

Children not only approve the depiction of action in their literature, but they are also eager to reach the

culmination of the story. White (1954), who describes the reading attitudes of her daughter Carol when she was very young, observes that the little girl, even from the age of two, turned the pages impatiently in order to get to the climax as soon as possible. Likewise adult readers may skip the pages of a detective story in order to reach the conclusion and find out what happened at the end.

Cullinan (1981) is another educator who attempts to outline the kindergartners' preferences in stories. According to her observations, preschoolers do not favour long monologues, but enjoy rapid movement from one action to another. They find it extremely demanding to follow complex or convoluted plots. They appreciate neither flashbacks nor subplots, and are bored by lengthy descriptions. On the other hand, they want to know the time in which the narration is set and ask for a well-defined ending.

Not everyone agrees with the above mentioned opinion and Hildick (1974), for example, denies that children look for action in books. `Quite contrary to the general dogma, children's literature is full of examples of meandering, of dwelling on incident very often at the expense of the main action` (p. 40).

When Baker & Greene (1977) listed the characteristics of a good story they included the presence of a single theme, clearly defined, and a well-developed plot. In regard to children, they asserted that readers between three-to-five-year-old, respond to rhythm and repetition, and prefer

simple plots in which familiar things are integrated with unexpected situations, short dialogues, and action that quickly leads to a climax and a happy ending. On the other hand, children of six-to-eight-year-old have a peak interest in traditional stories and fairy tales.

Havens & Andrus (1930), after studying the literary preferences of kindergarten children, came to the conclusion that `The firmly grounded idea that children like fairy tales because of the fairy element, religious stories because of the moral side, and poetry just because of the rhythm, was somewhat changed` (p. 410). Kindergartners, as their results showed, in all stories prefer known objects and events, and are obviously moved by references to simple and realistic elements in their literature.

A search carried out by Thorndyke (1977) who asked children to rate stories regarding to their meaningfulness lead to the same conclusion. Children applied the criterion of `familiarity of the characters and actions, and to the similarity of consistency of the narrative with incidents they knew or had read about previously` (p. 104).

In addition, the invaluable experience of Shedlock (1951) leads her to make the same suggestions, and she asserts that any group of children, irrespective of age, will be intrigued by stories describing the conditions to which they are accustomed. `The reason for this is obvious: the child, having limited experience, can only be reached by this experience, until his imagination is awakened and he is

enabled to grasp through this faculty what he has not actually passed through` (p. 66).

Another element that children of a very wide age span enjoy in their literature is a humorous touch. Purves & Beach (1972) assert: `The findings do suggest that primary students perceive their reading, for the most part, as entertainment - the more successful the action plot in gripping their attention or making them laugh the more they like it` (p. 78).

Pickard (1961) who studied the preferences of children in comics, using as sample 328 primary school children in five London schools, came to the conclusion that pupils describe their favourite readings as `exciting` and then `funny` (p. 131). On the other hand, when they were asked to accumulate the elements they disliked most, their listing started with killings and murders, 75 subjects, ghosts and dead men rising from the grave, 43, crime, gangsters and shooting, 32, horrid faces and ugly men, 14, monsters, 12, skeletons, 11 and 5 or 6 children pointed to each of the following topics, torture, space, love, horror and mysteries.

Applebee (edited by Meek et al., 1977) suggests that the appreciation or disapproval of a story is determined by the double criterion of aesthetic pleasure and ethical disposition. He quotes a conversation he had with a six-year-old girl regarding her most disliked stories. She claimed to dislike The seven wolves the most `Because they

are bad`. According to the same researcher, the above criterion can be expanded to include, apart from stylish and moral elements, casual qualities that seem to attract children's interest. So stories become popular because the main protagonist does something that children dream of or find extremely appealing. The same girl referred to Peter Pan as her favourite tale `Because he can fly` (p. 53).

Dwelling on the evaluation of stories by children, Applebee (1973) classifies children's reactions towards them at stages corresponding to the piagetian cognitive categories. The egocentric child justifies his preferences either on undifferentiated grounds, e.g. `Because it is nice` (p. 234), or because of striking but perhaps not significant events. The child who belongs to the concrete operational stage explains his behaviour by putting forward subjective responses, like the dullness of the text, objective responses, e.g. `I hate rain stories` (p. 237), or a mixture of those two, e.g. `It is hard to understand and boring` (p. 238). More advanced reasoning is elicited by children belonging to the formal operational stage and are analytic responses that make use of aesthetic criteria and generalized statements, such as `I learned from it` (p. 241).

Protherough (1983) suggests the formulation of another schema of development for children's evaluations of stories. It is divided into three levels, with more than one stage each. These levels start from judgements that `simply

convert personal responses into a generalized assertion` (p. 7), pass through responses that `concentrate on the relationship between reader and book` (p. 8), and end with more advanced evaluations based on `an attempt to find apparently objective reasons for the evaluation` (p. 9).

The stages included in every level are: unqualified assertion, e.g. `because it was good`, mention of an appreciated or an approved type of story, e.g. `I enjoy it because it was funny`, and description of the theme or the plot, e.g. `because it was about fishing`, are the developmental steps that belong to the first division. The second one consists of the specification of a particular effect on the reader, e.g. `because it made me tense and excited`, and a personal reaction to the rightness of the story, e.g. `because it seemed right`. The most sophisticated responses form the third level and are judgements of credibility, `because it explains a possible situation in a child's life and home life`, and attempts at technical estimates, e.g. `The character were too extreme, all good or all evil`.

Talking about children's taste in literature, we should refer to different preferences regarding their ages, since older children develop a subtler literary taste and do not enjoy the same material as younger ones. As Freidson (1953) points out, older children reject particular types of stories which they used to favour as `baby things`, because they are implausible, unconvincing, unrealistic and boring.

In order to explain the change of literary preferences during children's development, he has coined the term 'adult discount', which is connected with the ability to predict what is going to happen next in the story. As soon as children are able to anticipate successfully the evolution of the narration, they are no longer moved and excited by it and are led, deterministically, to disapproval of it.

Children do not enjoy trivial stories and are more willing to accept something they cannot understand than a story that they can predict in every detail. Thus, they find much pleasure in nonsense and limericks are included among their favourite poems. In The Quarterly Review (1844) as it is reprinted by Haviland (1973) in Children and Literature, the writer of the article asserts that even adults appreciate literary texts that they cannot grasp intellectually 'but with children, who only live in anticipation, this is more conspicuously the case; in point of fact they delight most in what they do not comprehend' (p. 10).

In regard to poems children seem to like clear plots, nonsense, humourous incidents and well known situation. They do not appreciate sentimentality, long descriptions, didacticism and an overuse of figurative language, while the length of the poems is an irrelevant factor (Purves & Beach 1972).

In their story listening, children are very conservative regarding the telling of their stories and all

parents have experienced children's insistence on an identical narration whenever a known story comes into fore. Only when they grow older and become accustomed to the pattern of a genre will they accept divergence it from the real or habitual story line, either making fun of the original form or introducing their own innovations into the already mastered genre.

1.8 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S APPRECIATION OF HUMOUR

Humour appeals to every person but the kind of humour one appreciates is determined by a great number of factors, included age, personality, nationality, and ethical status.

According to Kappas (1967) humour can be divided into ten different categories; exaggeration, incongruity, surprise, slapstick (which depends on boisterous and zany physical activity), absurd (which obviously lacks reason, e.g. nonsense), human predicaments (which also includes the humour of superiority), ridicule (the teasing of others, that can be negative or playful), defiance (which consists of violation of rules, expression of forbidden ideas, rejection of authorities), violence (release of hostility through violent words), and verbal humour (which attempts to manipulate language in order to elicit humorous effects).

Infants laugh mostly with action humour, like tickling and bodily contact, while in three-year-olds just the

mention of the words `laughed` or `made faces` can provoke laughter (Crago & Crago, 1983). They also continue to laugh at bodily functions, like hiccups and burps, but also they find great humour in describing impossible or unlikely activities. Ames (1966) quotes the phrase `Boat climbed a rock`, which children of three years find funny (p. 366). According to the same researcher, one of the chief channels through which children enjoy humour is silly language, like `choo choo`, `floo floo`, `boo boo` and the like. Later on, they appreciate silly rhymes, such as `The girl shook when she took and look`, and afterwards they appreciate the whimsicality of sheer nonsense, e.g. `The ham took the queen. The queen took the elephant`.

Kindergarten children still laugh at their own motor activities, physical posturing and play. They also delight in slapstick humour and whatever breaks the usual order of the world. Humorous predicaments, even cruel ones, and those that put others into an awkward position, are regarded by preschoolers as funny.

Because children by this age understand the normality of life, everything that attacks it, make them smile. They understand and enjoy exaggeration and simple games with language, such as tongue twisters, delight them. Of all the above mentioned forms of humour, what kindergartners relish the most is slapstick humour. As for primitives the sight of someone slipping and falling on a banana peel or treading into a puddle can induce convulsions of laughter.

As children grow, although they may still share certain forms of amusement with kindergartners, they tend to move away from jokes involving motion and slapstick and seem to enjoy more verbal humour. They start to interest themselves in moron jokes, puns, riddles and comparable forms of humour. Taboo topics, like the first sexual questions, find expression through in a joking manner. Practical jokes are not rare at this age, and joking insults are a common place among children at this age.

As children approach adolescence, their humour becomes much finer in form and content. At this stage the vast individual differences, also evident among adults, are apparently formed, and humour starts to become a weapon for social or personal criticism. Verbal wit is highly esteemed and the appreciation of satire is also well established.

Humour is relevant to the cognitive development of the individual and some forms of humour correlate positively or negatively with it. Among the researchers who have investigated this topic (e.g. Zigler et al., 1967; Klein, 1985), is McGhee (1971). His study has shown that the comprehension of humour based on incongruity is positively related to the degree of acquisition of concrete operational thinking.

Tamashiro (1979) presents a diagram that depicts the stages of cognitive development and the types of humour children appreciate. For the sensimotor intelligence, activities linked with body are regarded as highly

humorous. For the preoperational child, laughter is provoked by body functions, clawing, slapstick humour, nonsense expressions. At the concrete operational stage, children establishing and defending their ego boundaries enjoy practical jokes, insults, and hostile humour, while, on the other hand, those seeking social acceptance turn towards conventional jokes, like riddles, word plays, moron jokes, and racial-ethnic humour. When individuals complete their development and reach the formal operational stage, they cherish original, good-natured humour, wit, and social satire.

Another study performed by McGhee (1974) investigated the relationship between moral development and appreciation of humour. He found that `heteronomous subjects tended to view intentional-high-damage stories as funnier because of the greater amount of damage, while autonomous subjects chose unintentional-low-damage as funnier because of the accidental nature of the damaging outcomes depicted` (pp. 520-521). Also, although heteronomous children disassociated humour from morality, autonomous subjects regarded the immoral conduct as incompatible with humour responses and avoided laughing. Thus, while `the heteronomous child is able to respond freely to the humor of an event without regard to its naughtiness or moral unacceptability, the morally mature autonomous child is likely to have the humor of the even diminished (if not completely lost) if it is

perceived as being the result of a morally unacceptable set of behaviors` (p. 524).

1.9 THE GOALS OF THE CURRENT RESEARCH

Although previous research has revealed children's conception of stories in general, none of them has dealt with kindergartners' reception of the aesopic stories in particular. This study aims at fulfilling the gap in the existing bibliography and is concerned with four-to-six-old children's approach to fables as literary works.

One of the issues studied in this investigation was the preschoolers' familiarity with the aesopic tales. In spite of the fact that aesopic fables are regarded as very popular among children, and collections of aesopic stories have taken their place in school libraries, the degree of kindergartners' familiarity with them has not been investigated.

In addition, adults' notions about kindergartners' preferences in literature are based more on supposition than on scientific investigation. Since Applebee (1973) and Protherough (1983) had already suggested developmental schemata concerning children's evaluations of their literature, this research, putting aside any attempt at formulating any developmental tendencies, aims only at the revealing of children's general disposition towards stories

and the detection of the specific elements that led to their evaluating judgements.

Kindergartners' conception of humour has been constantly under investigation for at least the last fifty years. The current research aims at studying children's reception of fables which adults suppose to be funny. Do four-to-six-year-old children appreciate the hilarious aspects of aesopic tales, and are they able to grasp the humorous nature of them?

Since fables are a genre of literature, children's perception of stories illuminates their understanding of fables. Although children's notions of the origins of the stories have already been investigated, the current research attempts to test those conclusions and deals with the same topic of kindergartners' ideas on the origins and truth of tales.

Although it was not the purpose of this study to fully investigate children's perceptions of magic or to study their attitudes towards extraordinary and fabulous situations, because fables sometimes include make-believe episodes, kindergartners' reception of them was considered of some interest.

Most of the studies that have investigated children's recalling and understanding of stories used fables as their material because of their simple and unsophisticated character. But they have not concentrated on this type of literature in particular, and their results are applicable

to all stories. In contrast, this study treats fable as a distinct type of literature that differs from all other narratives in many respects, the comprehension and recollection of which demands certain intellectual equipment.

This research was concerned not only with the degree of success of kindergartners' understanding and recalling of fables, but also with the particular nature of their wrong answers, and the possibility of formulating some trends in children's thoughts. Moreover, children's understanding of certain point of fables determines their ability to approach the stories' hidden morality. Thus, the understanding and recalling of the epigrammatic last sentence of the fables, wherever it exists, was given special care and was considered of fundamental significance for the truth the tales convey.

CHAPTER TWO

CHILDREN'S RESPONSE TO THE MORALITY OF THE FABLES

2.1 THE MORALITY OF THE AESOPIC FABLES

The ethics presented by the fables are not always acceptable to the modern moral code. These stories, that were told to adults by adults in a distant age, depict a reality where using wits against brute force was the only means of survival. Morality changes throughout the ages, and notions that were dominant in previous eras do not retain the same hold on people's minds. According to Niblett's (1963) example: `In the eighteenth century it was good men, not only bad, who saw that nothing was wrong in owning slaves or hanging a sheepstealer` (p. 14).

Fables lack morality of a high ethical order and are more properly seen as vehicles for obtaining social harmony than as conduits for conveying timeless moral principles of absolute value. The morality conveyed by the aesopic tales is justified by its direct effect on the lives of men, who are given advice useful in solving their conflicts.

Fables point to a truth which is both simple and uncontroversial; ambiguous or sophisticated ethical matters are outside of the stories' scope. The genre's stylistic

peculiarities and the audience it addresses to do not leave any margin for intensive philosophical speculation and argument. A fable reminds us of an issue rather than teaching it from the beginning. It aims at drawing attention to well-known and important subjects, which the reader should be reminded of and conform his life to. The values embedded in fables are so essential to the functioning of society that no room is left for argument. Lessons in social behaviour are made visible and objective and placed in the context of a little narration, they are easily accommodated in the memory.

The level of morality of the aesopic fables can also be explained by the genre's origins and evolution throughout the ages. Fable came into being in preliterate cultures where acceptable human behaviour was encapsulated in the form of simple memorable stories or other literary devices. Worldly wisdom, preserved in the linguistic formulae, was intended to provide men with basic behavioural patterns which would help them to carry on their lives harmoniously. Thus, fables express commonly held attitudes, emphasize proper social interaction, and give advice on the competitive instincts of human existence. The fable's character is undisputably practical and as Needler (1982) remarks: 'One might then say that the ancient tragedy applies philosophical wisdom to the metaphysical struggle for existence, and the antique fable applies popular wisdom to the physical struggle for existence' (p. xxiii).

Fable is often accused of being dominated by vice rather than by virtue (Owen, 1984). It is true, however, that the genre does not idealize, but views the world in terms of a power structure, focusing on the defence of the weak against the threats of the strong. Fable does not examine the ethical value of the actions it portrays but provides men with means of protection against the perpetrators of evil. Its world is populated by wicked creatures, who, despite their vicious character, can win over weak and innocent beings.

In contrast, Lord (1989), in the preface of his edition of Aesop's Fables, disagrees with Owen (1984), maintaining that 'opposing forces can be found in them: good and evil, wise and foolish, weak and strong. What we get out of them is, of course, our own choice. We can learn, for instance, how to avoid being oppressed by others, as well as how to get ahead in the world by barging our way through life, trampling on anyone who happens to be in the way' (p. xiii).

Nojgaard (1984), on the other hand, in his article 'La moralisation de la fable: d'Esopé a Romulus' objects strongly to the suggestion that fables are immoral and regards the genre as neither moral nor immoral but as simply amoral. He also thinks that the prevalence of evil is only superficial and that although vice seems almighty and very often exerts an utilitarian superiority, it is in actual fact defeated. Many fables, that appear at first sight to

advocate the rights of the more powerful, in reality affirm the undoubtable superiority of virtue.

The fable of the lamb and the wolf, for example, in spite of the fact that it concludes with the tangible victory of the wolf, who eats the lamb, at a deeper level declares the mental and moral superiority of the lamb as well as the wolf's respect for the principle of justice. What besides the recognition of the absolute value of justice underlies the wolf's persistence to find a plausible excuse for its action? If the wolf had not realized the importance of justice he would have eaten the lamb without wishing to disguise his murder as a just punishment. The beast's action proves the dignity that the aesopic victimizers show towards virtue, even though their own life and behaviour is governed by Necessity.

Aesop neither intended to give a definition of virtue as do the Greek philosophers who dealt with the subject in a systematic and methodical way, nor to cite a useful enumeration of the virtues, but instead tried to communicate empirical knowledge about the handling of everyday problems. In sharp contrast to the philosophers, who seek to build an ethical system without logical contradictions, the fabulist living in the real world with all its contradictions, is not characterized by an absolute consistency in word and action, and modifies his beliefs in response to different circumstances.

The ethics of fables do not recognize the existence of any single rule of conduct, but rather of many equivalent canons which regulate living. Just as with many proverbs, many fables seem to contradict one another, and often one story refutes a point made in another. For example although the fable of `The boy and the crow` propounds the human inability to circumvent one's destiny, the aesopic tale of `Man's years` affirms the possibility of an intelligent man's changing his fate. Similarly, in `The ass and the gardener` slavery appears as an eternal torture, whereas the story of `The onager and the ass` represents independence and freedom as the more dangerous and thus less preferable alternative.

Fables are an apt vehicle to present reflecting cultural values to their readers. Although in most fables the central moral idea is easily detectable, there are some cases where the same story can be interpreted in various different ways. The aesopic narration of `The fox with the swollen belly`, for example, according to its attached epimythium shows that `Time overcomes difficulties`; but is also perfectly apt at exposing the destructive effects of imprudence or at attacking greed.

In addition, the fable's predominant idea applies at more than one level, and tends to guide the behaviour not only of individuals but also among larger social groups. The story of two travellers and the bear, for example, presents

a criterion of friendship which may be pertinent not only to persons but also to cities and countries.

In the fable collections some issues seem to be more popular than others, with the result that many aspects of life are not paid any attention, while other ideas are referred to over and over again. The aesopic tales ignore essential values such as piety and patriotism, whereas ethical ideas like friendship or greed appear and reappear in many fables.

Even in cases where the genre uses theological subjects it deals with them in terms of human society and ends by underlining a moral that has nothing to do with religion (e.g. the story of `Zeus, Prometheus, Athena, and Momus`). In a similar way, the genre keeps silent as far as one's duties towards his country are concerned. A very limited number of fables depict social actions such as war, treachery, or alliance, but they always interpret such actions at a personal level, without a social dimension (e.g. `The coward and the crows`).

2.2 MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN

The child at every moment of his life is exposed to the society in which he lives and has to learn the rules which aim at the reduction of conflict between its members and lead to the general welfare. According to Baumrid (1978):

`Morality in humans replaces the rule of instinct in other cultures, facilitating the survival and growth of the individual and the species. The motive to be moral comes from the same source as human's other motives - the drive to survive and flourish. Wisdom refines and educates narrow self-interest; self-interest becomes enlightened as the individual is socialized` (p. 146).

2.2.1 DEVELOPMENTAL SCHEMATA

Piaget (1932), after having carried out experiments with six-and-eight-year-old children, describes two broad stages in their moral development, which are indicated by several salient characteristics of children's moral thought. First comes the heteronomous stage, which is characterized by egocentrism and moral realism, while the autonomous stage is defined by autonomy, reciprocity, and cooperation.

According to Piaget (1932), morality is viewed by the child as moral realism, which possesses three basic characteristics. First, duty is mainly heteronomous, the good is whatever agrees with the demands of authoritative persons and rules are regarded as sacred and unteachable. Children's relations with adults are based on compulsion and unilateral respect for the unquestionable authority of the grown up. Therefore the chief moral value for children is obedience. As Piaget (1932) himself puts it: `Just as the

mystic can no longer dissociate his own wishes from the will of his God, so the little child cannot differentiate between the impulses of his personal fancy and the rules imposed on him from above` (p. 49). In addition, young children are very conservative as far as rules are concerned, they dislike any innovation, and never question their validity.

Second, their actions are in accordance with a precise interpretation of the law, the letter of which gains greater importance than its spirit. Third, a child up to the age of eight evaluates actions, not according to their motives, but taking into account their material consequences. This kind of objective responsibility, although it is inevitable at this early stage of development, is reinforced by adult practise.

Young children believe that types of behaviour and men are either totally right or totally wrong, and that everyone else has exactly the same view as themselves. At this level children begin to think morally, but the morality is conceived in a very concrete form.

Piaget's moral realism was summarized as what is good is what is in obedience to adults' rules, the letter of the law must be followed, and acknowledgment of an objective responsibility. According to the same educator this moral realism is due partly to the nature of the child, partly to the way in which it is treated by adults.

At the second stage of children's moral development, which starts when they reach their eighth year, they realize

the conventional nature of rules and laws. They no longer believe in rules as sacred and of divine origin, but regard them the products of social agreement and mutual consent. Rules now seem to be social creations, which are worthy of respect because their function is to safeguard society. Punishment fits the situation, and intentions gain supremacy over material consequences. In addition, children, being able to adopt the perspective of others, realize the relative character of law and comprehend diverse views of right and wrong among individuals and cultures.

The transmission from heteronomous to autonomous morality is fostered by the cognitive maturation of the individual and his social interaction with siblings. Cognitive development enables children take into account the perspectives of others, while peer interaction permits them to experience more democratic and reciprocal social relations.

Kohlberg, on the other hand, found no evidence to support Piaget's thesis that heteronomy derives from unilateral respect and autonomy from mutual esteem. Thus, after rejecting Piaget's dichotomy as simplistic, Kohlberg regarded moral developments as a long-term process that proceeds from the repatterning of experience.

According to Kohlberg (1984), moral development passes through six stages, and although it is possible for an individual not to complete it, as long as he continues to move upward he has to follow this stepwise fashion. Kohlberg

identifies six distinctive stages of development which operate on three broad levels, and defines moral development in terms of movement through the stages, while moral education is conceived in terms of stimulating such movement.

The first level is called pre-conventional. At this stage the individual interprets the concepts of good and bad in terms of the hedonistic consequences of action (punishment, reward, exchange of favours) or the physical power held by those who impose the rules and the regulations. The fear of punishment, unquestionable reference to the validity of rules, the evaluation of actions in relation to their physical consequences, and the strong trust in an underlying moral order supported by punishment, are the characteristics of this level.

At the second level, known as conventional, moral content or value is largely culture-bound and focuses on rational consideration of social utility. This level involves shifting one's social perspective from the concrete interests of individuals to the interests or standards of one's group or society. The child now realizes that some types of behaviour pay off, and that the approval of a social group is more important than an immediate material reward. As Kohlberg (1973) notes 'anything from "honesty" to "courage in battle" can be the central value' (p. 142).

The following level is based on post-conventional principles laying the emphasis on abstract freely-chosen

ethical values, as exemplified by figures like Socrates, Lincoln and Luther. They do not necessarily advocate what is called law and order, nor do they appreciate all legislation uncritically. At the first stage of the last level, the individual conforms with the law in order to maintain general respect for it and judges it in terms of the general welfare. At the ultimate point of moral development actions are performed only to avoid self-condemnation and morality is defined by individual principles of justice.

Kohlberg's theory does not claim that every stage must be present in every society, and Kohlberg himself predicts that individuals from economically developed societies, being faced with more complex social and moral issues, are more likely to reach more advanced stages of moral judgment than persons from agricultural or primitive societies.

Both Piaget and Kohlberg proposed a scheme of moral development, progressing through stages, that entails the differentiation of morality from convention. At lower stages convention is the basic characteristic of morality, while at higher levels morality is freed from convention and becomes more personal and less profitable.

The intellectual model in moral development, as developed by Piaget and Kohlberg, has been strongly criticized for many defects. According to Kay (1970) it is impossible to speak about ethics in terms of logic because morality is as cognitive as it is emotional. Also, their theories do not acknowledge any inconsistency in the

individual's notions and conduct, although it is evident that a person displays different degrees of moral maturity in different situations. Finally, the intellectual model emphasizes a continuous and uninterrupted development towards maturity, and so does not explain the existence of the observed `period of moral decline, or at least a period of arrested moral growth in early adolescence` (p. 234).

Graham (1972) adds to the criticism of the intellectual model, and especially of Piaget's theory by underlining the theory's ignorance of the importance of modeling. Piaget disregards the observed fact that children like to imitate the behaviour of adults or of peers whom they respect, and that through this process they learn patterns of behaviour in ethical matters. In addition, Piaget exhausts all his argument in the formulation of two stages, heteronomy and autonomy, ignoring totally the level of anomy that precedes them. He also confines his interest to a limited age span and by not going beyond the age of twelve, fails to come across the fully-developed autonomous morality. Finally, as Graham (1972) puts it, `Piaget did not give sufficient attention to individual differences or to sex, social class or cultural differences` (p. 204).

Although Freud did not attempt to form a developmental schema of morality, his ideas are just hinted here because of his influence on our century. Freudian thought in regard to the moral development talks about the existence of a super-ego that collaborates in the formation of conscience,

and is responsible for the internalizing of externally imposed commands. Peters (1960), criticizing Freud, finds that the weakest point of the Freudian principle is the absence of a `positive theory in Freud of the conditions under which this desirable development towards rationality tends to take place` (p. 256).

2.2.2 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S INTENT OR OUTCOME BASED MORAL EVALUATIONS

A distinction that individuals should make in regard to moral evaluations is that between intentional and accidental actions. They must also distinguish between intent judgments and evaluations based on action-outcome.

The research on this topic is rich, and many educators and psychologists have dealt with the issue. King (1971) carried out an experiment with preschoolers and third graders, showing that children's ability to distinguish intentional from accidental actions showed a marked change in the age span studied. Preschoolers' social judgments do not depend on recognition of others' intentions, since they are unable to differentiate deliberate actions from accidental ones. Older children acquire the skills to recognize both types of behaviour and to base their social judgments on them.

King's findings confirmed Piaget's (1932) conclusion that children confined to a heteronomous morality place more emphasis on the material consequences of an action than its motives. Because Piaget (1932) maintains that children at the egocentric stage regard rules as sacred and unquestionable, in the attribution of justice they do not take into consideration the intentions of the transgressor but assign a punishment analogous to the magnitude of the negative consequences he caused.

Gutkin (1972) proposes a developmental scheme of four stages for the evolution of moral intentionality. At the first step, intentions do not appear at all; at the second the child believes that intentions have some relevance in the assessment of moral worth, but they do not gain supremacy over material outcomes. At a third stage, the child still believes in the relevance of damage factors, but biases his judgments heavily toward intentions; at the final level the intentions alone count in making moral judgments.

The results of Ninomiya (1987) are very similar. After examining kindergartners, and first and third grade children in regard to the criteria for making judgments of kindness, he suggests a developmental sequence that starts from totally irrelevant intentions, passes through the phase in which intentions are relevant but benefits are more important, to a third stage in which intentions have still more importance but at which benefits retain some

importance, and conclude with intentions alone being relevant.

Costanzo et al. (1973), after examining five to eleven-year-old children, reached the conclusions that when the outcomes are bad, older children rely more on information regarding intentions and younger ones on information about consequences. When outcomes are positive there is little difference between the age groups. Trying to explain the results, the authors describe two different ways in which children themselves deal with those two conditions, positive or negative outcomes, or two different fashions parents follow, praising child's intention in the case of positive outcomes, and focusing on the damage with regard to negative consequences.

According to Imanoglu (1975), who also studied children from five to eleven-years-old, although the young subjects do not take into account the intentions of the actors when they evaluate actions, they give weight to them when they judge characters. But those results cannot be interpreted as a solid indication of children's consistent usage of intentions, because for both five and seven-year-olds the story agents were regarded as equally good when the outcome was good, regardless of the motives of their actions.

Different results were obtained by Nummedal et al. (1976) after studying children from six to eleven-year-old. They showed that, at least for the younger subjects, six to seven-year-olds, judgments were influenced by the order of

the presentation of the intentions and of the outcome in a story. Thus, when the intention of an action was portrayed before its outcome they made consequence-based judgments, while when an outcome was depicted before an intention, they gave intent-based verdicts.

Nummedal et al. (1976) explain the results: `The difference between these children seems to lie, not in their basic competence vis-a-vis intent, but rather in their ability to consider and thereby integrate two or more pieces of information and arrive at a judgment. The relative salience of information affects the extent to which the performance of younger and older children reflects their competence` (p. 476).

Farnill's (1974) research with kindergartners, first and third graders narrows the gap between younger and older children by showing that, in moral judgments, even preschoolers used intent information in a systematic way, and that, while intention increases in significance with age as a determinant of moral evaluations, material consequences nevertheless never lose their importance at any age level.

Berndt et al. (1975), after examining the development of children's understanding of motives and intentionality, and the use of those concepts as criteria for moral judgments came up with the surprising result that `the effect of motives on evaluations appears to be as great for preschool children as for fifth graders` (p. 910).

This is also the opinion of Grueneich (1982), who attacks the piagetian notion of a shift from a consequence-only to an intention-only stage and argues instead for a developmental trend towards increasing integration of both intention and consequence information into judgments. This bears similarities to what happens in areas other than morality and `indicates that younger children are more likely than older children to use single - as opposed to multidimensional rules in these areas of judgments` (p. 893).

Moran et al. (1983), on the other hand, who experimented with three to four-year-olds, observed a developmental tendency in regard to the negative or positive nature of the outcome. These findings suggest that three-year-old children did not make all consequence-based judgments but appeared to focus on any negative aspect of the story, whether outcome or intention. In contrast, four-year-olds conformed to the traditional Piagetian theory only when property damage was involved. Like Grueneich (1982), but for different reasons, Moran et al. (1983) conclude: `Thus the developmental sequence of this trend has been brought into question. The data taken as a whole suggest that the unidimensional framework of Piaget in describing the consequence-to-intention transition may be too simplistic` (p. 178).

A year later, Moran et al. (1984) studied the reactions of a of larger age span sample, four-to-eleven-year-olds

plus 24 undergraduates, in order to investigate the effects of recency and specific story content on the development of moral reasoning. Findings confirmed that, in general younger subjects judge on the basis of consequence, whereas older children utilized intention; but when the stories include intentional injury to persons, even the young ones take intention into account. The authors interpret the results by suggesting that preschoolers respond primarily to the negative aspects of the story, whether outcome or motives.

Darley et al. (1978) show that children as young as first graders can recognize and use information concerning the intentions that prompt specific actions. Embarking on explaining their findings, they start from the piagetian notion that children are most concerned to avoid punishment. The material negative consequences of an action are, of course, considered crucial since they initiate the judicial procedure between child and adult. Something that nearly happens is totally deprived of significance for children. Similarly the extent of the damage is paramount as they determine the severity of the punishment they are going to receive. But very soon they learn that the intentions behind harm-doing are very important in determining punishment. They also learn that even some badly-intended actions, if they can be justified as accidents can pass unpunished. Thus, even for young children, intentions gain importance for mere practical reasons. According to the study these

learning processes have occurred to a much higher level than is commonly assumed in 5-and-6-year-old children` (p. 73).

In concluding this discussion of the continuing argument regarding the significance of intentions relative to consequences for different age groups, it is worth recalling Grueneich's (1982) principle for research of this subject. First, he conceives of the dichotomy between intentions and consequences as arbitrary, since moral evaluations made in everyday life take into account more variables than those two alone. As an example, he refers to the non-causal but responsible action of someone who gives a gun to a criminal, which obviously cannot be accommodated within the polar relation intent/outcome.

Second, apart from the physical outcomes that influence a judgement there are social aftermaths concerning the reaction of the victim/beneficiary, or the future attitude of the victimizer/benefactor or the response of an authority figure, that are also taken into account during the characterization of a man or action.

Third, the information presented in the stories during the experiment influences the results of the study. Well-formed narrations provide more complex information, and the subjects consider more elements before making their own evaluations. The factors of remembering and understanding of the stories, which were not controlled in previous researches, were also proved as influencing the subjects' judgments.

2.2.3 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S CONCEPTIONS OF MORAL AND CONVENTIONAL RULES

Nucci & Turiel (1978) support strongly the idea that 'social convention and morality constitute two distinct conceptual domains and the respective courses of development can be analyzed independently of each other' (p. 406). In an experiment with preschoolers in California the findings demonstrated that even children of this age are able to distinguish between social convention and morality and all the subjects were more likely to object to moral transgressions than to violations of the school's social conventions. The research showed that even very young children have an intuitive appreciation of the difference between moral rules which prevent people from acting aggressively against one another and the conventional social rules that maintain smooth social interaction through dress codes, manners, and other social routine.

Smetana (1981) examined preschoolers' (2.6 to 4.9-years of age) conceptions of moral and conventional rules and showed that older children were more likely than younger ones to regard moral transgression as universally wrong, but all children were more equivocal in their judgments about the relative character of conventional events.

Nucci (1984) after summarizing all the studies carried out by researchers on the topic of conventional regularities and moral laws concludes that moral transgressions are

viewed as wrong regardless environment, while conventional actions are wrong only under specific conditions. Moral laws are universally valid, whereas conventions remain culturally relative and alterable. Moreover, individuals react to the social aspects of conventions, but focus on intrinsic features of moral events. They also regard moral transgressions as more serious than the violations of conventions and finally 'presocial moral acts are viewed as better or more positive than adherence to conventions' (p. 55).

2.3 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S CONCEPTION OF PUNISHMENT

According to Piaget (1932), the child who still belongs to the heteronomous stage of moral development views justice as a way of escaping punishment and gaining approval. Children very often do not think they have committed a moral offence until they are caught, and the importance of their misdeeds is defined by parental disapproval. But when their naughty behaviour is discovered and negatively evaluated by adults, punishment must be administered in order to restore the disturbed ethical order of the world. The most severe punishment is thought the most just by the young children, who do not select a penalty analogous to the offence; - their criterion is what hurts more. Furthermore, they maintain that the more cruelly punished a kind of

misbehaviour is the more unlikely it is to be repeated by the transgressor. Therefore they prefer corporal punishment to verbal admonition. This attitude does not reveal cruelty but puts a considerable amount of emphasis on the necessity of punishment for the survival of mankind and the endurance of the ethical order of the universe.

In addition young children believe in an `immanent justice`, which is immediately imposed upon the offender soon after the ethical crime is committed. Up to the age of eight they conceive of the existence of an automatic punishment which emanates from things themselves, and is equally valid to human beings, animals, plants and non-living world. Children associate the physical and biological laws of the universe, the commands of society and the regulations of their own lives in an unbreakable unity, and think of them as belonging to the same type and function entirely independently of men, circumstances or intentions. For them, just as violations of natural laws bring immediate punishment to those who commit them, so moral offences require expiation. They believe that punishment follows automatically on the heels of disobedience or wrongdoing. Justice is not complete until the wrongdoing is atoned for and the act reversed. The fact that children are less severe with themselves than with others does not call into question the significant role of punishment in their conception of morality, but reveals the human tendency to take more

account of the intention behind one's own actions, but to judge the misbehaviour of others by its consequences.

In contrast, older children pass from an expiatory to a punishment by reciprocity and prefer penalties that are logically related to the offence taking into account both the motives and the consequences of the misbehaviour.

According to Kohlberg (1964), for the man who remains in the 'pre-conventional' stage of moral development the fear of punishment is the most dominant factor characterizing his moral behaviour. Young children advocate severe and painful penalties, whereas older children favour milder punishments leading to the restoration of the disturbed ethical order and the reform of the culprit's behaviour. For younger children an act is considered bad just because it is most likely to elicit some kind of punishment, while older ones judge its seriousness by taking into account the size of the law's violation.

For Kohlberg (1964) the young child of the pre-conventional stage associates strongly disobedience with punishment and always imagines the latter out of proportion with the offence. He takes the role of the authoritative adult, and expects the big adult to impose a great punishment. So the penalty does not fit the seriousness of the mistake but rather the importance of the judging adult, whom the child tries to copy when it makes evaluations. Also, the child of this level thinks only in terms of physical problems and physical solutions. If an offence is

committed it calls for immediate punishment, and when it is given the problem is automatically resolved.

However, later studies (Buchanan et al., 1973; Costanzo et al., 1973) have shown that even children as young as seven-year-old, under special circumstances, are able to distinguish between accidental harm and intentional damage, and to modify the suggested punishments in accordance with this distinction.

Children can also distinguish between intentional and accidental offence. This difference is based on the foreseeability of the wrongdoing that is regarded as a general principle of negligence law which holds responsible a person for not avoiding causing harm that was reasonably foreseeable.

In the study of Zanna et al. (1981) six and seven-year old subjects were presented with vignettes of property damage and were asked about the punishment the actors deserved. One case portrayed three young girls who opened the kitchen door and broke their mothers' expensive china. The first child did not know anything about the china being behind the door (accidental offence), the second was told but had forgotten (foreseeable harm), while the last one broke it on purpose (intentional damage). The results indicate that older children regarded the protagonist who caused intentional damage as meriting more punishment than the one who only could have foreseen the wrongdoing who, in

his turn, was hold more responsible than the one who committed the offence accidentally.

Zillmann et al. (1975) divided children's conception of justice into two development stages of expiatory retribution (four-year-olds) and equitable retribution (seven and eight-year-old subjects). After measuring their opinions by means of facial displays, structured interviews and ratings, the results showed that children at the stage of expiatory retribution appreciated more severe kind of punishment, while the older ones clearly preferred equitable retaliation. For the latter, penalties too mild or too severe were seen to impair appreciation significantly, whereas when the depicted retaliatory actions against transgressors were sanctioned by them as adequate and just, they approved it.

The authors interpreted this finding as an affirmation of Piaget's schema of moral development, according to which for the stage of expiatory retribution the significance of an offence depends on the severity of the outcome, whereas older children favour just but not severe punishments.

Rybash et al. (1979), after studying the role of affect in kindergarten, first and second grade children's attribution of intentionality and dispensation of punishment, obtained the result that, although subjects of all levels were equally capable of employing effective cues for determining intentionality versus non-intentionality, in regard to punishment kindergartners were not capable of

employing affecting cues to dispense it. The researchers explain this fact by calling our attention to external and internal reasons. The parental pattern, in which negative feedback follows a bad outcome regardless of the motives of the wrongdoer, must be responsible for preschoolers' inability to include incentives to the attribution of justice. Also, since the decision on a penalty is a more complex process and highly intellectual demanding procedure than making a simple judgment of intentionality, the difference between the reckoning involved in those two tasks is easily understood.

Darley et al. (1982) echo the same idea, which holds the parents' practice responsible for their children's notions about justice, and support the notion that parental discipline is a significant component of the child's education about punishment. 'The vase that almost got broken looks the same. Only the vase that did get broken attracts parent's judicial attention. Children learn to pay attention to the consequences of their acts because they see that it is mainly actions with harmful consequences that lead to punishment' (p. 519).

In spite of the fact that children seem to favour severe punishments, even in their own case, this type of punishment does not bring about desirable results in future behaviour. According to Sieber (edited by Windmillér et al., 1980), 'the ineffectiveness of the severe style is due to the fact that the child lacks the framework for reasoning

about his or her own behaviour` (p. 146). In addition, when punishment is severe it generates hostility in the child, and thus leads to more aggression. The punitive parent is a model of pugnacity.

Another movement in psychology is the well-known school of behaviourism. In regard to punishment behaviourists rely on their schema of stimulus-response, which lays the emphasis on the results and pays no attention to the reasons which lead to this or that kind of behaviour. The reinforcement can be positive or negative, encouraging or discouraging respectively a certain type of behaviour. However, concerning punishment, behaviourism tends to form unbreakable associations between desirable-behaviour/ reward and unpalatable-conduct/punishment.

2.4 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S EVALUATION OF CHARACTERS

Asking children to evaluate characters makes one confront the fact that young pupils treat concepts as absolute rather than relative. Children tend to use general evaluative terms like good, bad, nice or mean. Kagan (1971) points out that when a `four-year-old, for example, learns the concept "dark" he regards it as descriptive of an absolute class of colors - black and other dark hues. The phrase "dark yellow" make no sense to him, for dark signifies dark colors, not relative darkness` (p. 91).

Kindergarten children cannot differentiate nuances of good or bad behaviour, and tend to express general evaluations of characters. An experiment carried out by Peevers et al. (1973) proved that when children of that age judge a person, they not only do not distinguish between qualities of the same nature, like ethical values, but are unable to recognize a person as an ethical being. They describe his character in terms that fail to differentiate him from his environment or his possessions, and they avoid mentioning categories such as personality traits, abilities, or interests.

Children never hesitate to pass an absolute judgement on the people and animals of the stories. And many times they justify them by altering the spirit or the facts of the narration, or using information derived from their knowledge or fantasy. At this point young readers seem to agree with the practice followed by the fabulists and the makers of folk tales in general. For both children and folk literature a man is brave or not, kind or cruel, beautiful or ugly, good or bad. Mediocrities do not people fables, and considerations of the characters' personalities are unfamiliar to both aesopic stories and young children. Kindergarten pupils are ready to judge the character of a story person, to exaggerate his qualities to the greatest degree, and to recall incidents of the stories, or beyond them in order to defend their opinions.

Buchan, (edited by Haviland, 1973), in order to stress the superiority of traditional fiction over the modern, which involves descriptions of people who are neither good nor bad, notes: `I have read novels by able men and women in which the characters could not get started to do anything because of the meshes of analytic psychology with which their feet were clogged. Pages of tortuous analysis had to be waded through before the hero could kiss his wife or eat his breakfast` (p. 225).

Although the widespread notion is that children, even if they do not find in their books characters that are absolutely good or bad, due to their inability to conceive of a quality in terms of degree, interpret them as those, some scholars, like Aiken (1982), argue about the depiction of personalities in children's literature. She claims that `it is a great mistake to make a good character too good, particularly if he is your hero. A hero or heroine who is perfect all through can be nothing but a dead bore and offers no possibility of development (since, in a children's book, it is undesirable for the main character to deteriorate and go bad)` (p. 56).

Another characteristic of folk literature, in contrast with modern fiction, is that evil is not faceless but underlines its presence in a concrete form. Evil has imposed its sovereignty and gets the part that belongs to it. It is respected by the story at least to the same degree that good is honoured, and so the clash between those two forces gains

the significance of an irresolute struggle. `The battle is always between black and white, right and wrong and there is no room for the gray or the in-between` (Egoff, 1981, p. 92).

In folk literature the characters are plainly drawn and their personality is mostly formulated by their role in the narration. As Cook (1976) points out, those characteristics receive children's great appreciation. `They expect a story to be a good yarn, in which the action is swift and the characters are clearly and simply defined. And legends and fairy tales are just like that. Playground games show that children like catastrophes and exhibitions of speed and power, and a clear differentiation between cowboys, cops and spacemen who are good, and Indians, robbers and space monsters who are bad` (p. 7).

A similar idea is expressed by Hannabuss (1987) who, dealing with fairy tales, asserts: `Characterization is by role (e.g. the evil witch, the pure princess, the brave hero, the wily fox), a set of typologies which fits well such simplistic moral structures in literature and storytelling` (p. 52).

Arbuthnot (1947) spots the difference between fairy tales and fables in the way they present their characters. `In a fable, there would be a silly hen, impersonal as X, and the story worked out as logically and unemotionally as an equation` (p. 231). In fairy tales, on the other hand, `while people are strongly typed as "good" or "bad" with no

subtle distinctions between, they are also individualized` (p. 231), and children seem to like that.

Children favour moral blacks and moral whites and cannot grasp the evaluations that stand between them. Since characters are perceived as simply good or bad, all their actions are viewed from this perspective and are evaluated in accordance with the good/bad label.

Psychology speaks of the `halo effect`, which is the tendency to rate individuals either too high or too low on the basis of one outstanding trait, or according to their characteristics in another area. Presumably there is a social function or usefulness to such a predilection, in that it offers the individual a convenient, noncontradictory manner of relating to the objects of his world.

Heider (1958) does not refer to the halo effect, but instead coins the term `balance principle`, which is the belief that good people do bad things by accident, while bad characters do bad things on purpose.

On the other hand, Piaget attributes children's general evaluations to the process of intellectual development, and maintains that centration is a distinguishing characteristic of children in the preoperational stage of development. The preoperational child tends to focus on one dimension of an object or situation, failing to take other dimensions into account. Consequently, he has difficulty appreciating the relations between two dimensions and handling situations that require both of them be dealt with simultaneously. The

older concrete operational child, on the other hand, is capable of decentration. He can focus on several dimensions of a situation or problem at the same time, and can see relations among dimensions.

Kindergartners' inability to understand the ethical value of ambiguous or morally equivocal actions is demonstrated in dealing with literature as well as in everyday life. Paley (1981), describing her experience as a teacher for preschoolers, observes that her young pupils very often had to ask her about the moral significance of their deeds. `Bad and good depended on the adult response. If the schoolteacher used a hickory stick, it meant that the children were bad; the stick made them good. An angry parent denoted a naughty child. To the adult, the cause of the punishment was obvious, but the child saw only the stick and judged himself accordingly` (p. 55).

Paley's (1981) results were also confirmed by the experimental work of Rotenberg (1980), who presented kindergarten, second and fourth grade children with stories that depicted actors who intentionally caused harm. The research showed that second and fourth graders could judge actors who intentionally caused harm as mean, and could predict that such actors were more likely to exhibit aggressive and destructive behaviour in the future. On the contrary, kindergartners although they took into consideration the intentionality of the characters' actions

in their personality judgments, failed to predict their behaviour in the expected fashion.

Rotenberg (1980) says: `These results suggest that the attribution of intentionality produces dispositional inferences for older, but not for younger, children. Such age differences may indicate that younger children do not, in general, attribute dispositions to others. Instead, young children's attributions may be limited to specific characteristics that do not have long-term behavioral implications for the actors` (p. 284).

2.5 FABLES' MORALITY AND KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

Common opinion considers moral instruction the paramount pedagogical obligation, and expects literature to serve it. A firm underlying moral was expected for every literary work that was didactically oriented. Fable especially, didactic by definition, was regarded as promoting ethical edification and fulfilling the requirement of moral instruction more neatly and naturally than any other genre. A narrative was thought to fall short of being a fable if its literary aspect did not culminate in propagation of an ethical idea.

According to Arbuthnot (1947), `Fables are brief narratives which attempt to make abstract ideas of good or bad, wise or foolish behavior concrete and striking enough

to be understood and remembered. Whether the characters are crows or men, they remain coldly impersonal and engage in a single significant act which teaches a moral lesson` (p. 252).

Whether children can understand the implications of the aesopic stories, and if, through repetition and experience, they gradually absorb the moral values the fables convey remains to be investigated. The debate about whether and how virtue can be taught is a long-standing one in the history of ethics, and goes back to Socrates and the platonic dialogues.

Lewis (1969) underlines the significance of the stories in children's moral development, since young readers `are influenced by the expression of approval or disapproval addressed to others in their hearing; and, no less, by attitudes expressed about the conduct of people not actually present. And this is where stories heard, read, pictured, play their part; influences all the more powerful precisely because the child is not directly addressed` (pp. 36-37).

Previous experience is presented to children through literature, and books help them to learn the world. Winnicott (1963) cites the example of a father who refused to let his daughter read any fairy story because he wanted his child to have only `a personal personality` (p. 106). He obviously did not realize that `the poor child was being asked to start again with the building up of the ideas and

the artistic achievements of the centuries. This scheme did not work` (p. 106).

The employment of aesopic tales as a means of moral instruction of children has been widely used. Indicative is a list entitled as `Stories to develop or stamp out certain traits and instincts' cited in the book of Cather (1935), where stories are viewed as promoting various ethical ideas. Among others the aesopic fable of the fox that lost its tail and the dog and his shadow are included to portray deceit and greed respectively. The story of the lion and the mouse shows children what kindness means, while the dog in the manger provides a shining example of malice.

Children's ability to detect the hidden moral of the aesopic fables is connected with the degree of comprehension they can attain of the relationships presented in the narration. If students of a certain age are unable to grasp the meaning of specific moral ideas or cannot see the motives behind the actions or fail to read between the lines, they are certain to misunderstand the fable and miss its chief moral point. For this reason the works of the researchers who detect children's attitudes and understanding potentialities in regard to minor aspects of fable comprehension make an invaluable contribution to the study of children's grasp of fable.

Miller (1985), who carried out an experiment with preschoolers in order to determine their reasoning about the causes of human behaviour, used a version of the aesopic

fable of the rabbit and the turtle. Young subjects were presented with the variable 'He is trying hard to win the race' versus 'He is a fast runner' and thus a physical cause was compared with a psychological one. The study concluded that preschoolers predict the effects of several types of behaviour, considering always the external physical factors as more effective and powerful than internal psychological ones.

Johnson et al. (1987), although they did not mention fables, investigated children's ability to recognize moral conduct in stories and use it as a criterion for grouping them. The results indicated that fifth and third graders tended to base their similarity groupings on those rules, while the kindergarten children, despite their demonstrated ability to recognize exemplars of each of the rules, tended to focus on the actions and concrete elements in the stories.

Both the experiments of Miller (1985) and Johnson et al. (1987) revealed kindergartners' tendency to remain on the surface of a story, mainly concentrating on the concrete, literal level and giving more importance to physical and external factors than to the ethical and psychological ones. Other researchers dealt directly with children's reception of fables and the genres' significance in the promotion of various aspects of children's development. Fisher (1979), for example, studied the efficiency of fables in developing concepts of morality in

mentally handicapped youths. With subjects varying among themselves in mental and chronological age, intelligence, and sex, the research attempted to determine the effect of those four variables on the correct interpretation of the morals of eight aesopic fables.

The results indicated that mental age and intelligence were related positively to the handicapped youths' performance, while chronological age was not a significant variable. Sex differences favoured males, who gave significantly more correct responses than females. In regard to the moral ideas depicted by the fables, truth ('The boy who cried wolf') and honesty ('The young thief and his mother') were best understood, and the values of prudence ('The belly and its members') and foresight ('The milkmaid and her pail') were the most difficult. The moral ideas of gratitude ('The lion and the mouse'), cooperation ('The four oxen and the lion'), perseverance ('The fox and the grapes') and resolution ('The tortoise and the hare') were standing between those two extremes, obtaining only mediocre scoring. In addition, the nature, human or animal, of the aesopic protagonists had no relation to the improvement of understanding.

Fisher (1979), discussing the results of the experiment, notes 'The values of truth and honesty were best understood probably because lying and stealing are rather common childhood misdemeanours and emphasis is given to correction of such behaviors during the developmental

period, both in the home and in the school. The virtues of prudence and foresight were least comprehended. They are abstract concepts which develop slowly, if at all, among mentally handicapped individuals and are, in fact, determiners of intellectual competency in the eyes of the law` (p. 10).

The same researcher suggests that the result of her study showed that `some mildly retarded youths and children at primary school levels can indeed learn moral concepts from Aesop's fables` (p. 11).

Pillar (1983) investigated the three aesopic fables `The shepherd boy and the wolf`, `The fox and the goat` and `The lion and the mouse` in terms of the principles of justice that distinguish them. The sample consisted of second, fourth and sixth graders, who responded to oral questions about the moral dilemmas depicted in the fables.

The results of this research indicated a clear developmental pattern across the grades consonant with the moral development theory as it was formulated by Piaget and modified by Kohlberg. According to Pillar (1983), although fable as a traditional kind of literature, is an apt form to elicit judgments about responsibility, criteria for determining whether an action is ethically justified or not, the nature of some obligations, and different ways of handling wrongdoers, it is not appropriate for every age group. As he notes: `The findings of this research question the appropriateness of using fables with children as young

as those in second grade. The abstractions of wisdom and folly, or good and evil, personified in the short narratives are elusive to young minds which respond in only the most concrete terms. The flat, stereotypic characters are used symbolically, which is often difficult for young children to understand` (p. 45).

In dealing with fables young children, though they are very willing to express opinions on ethical matters, tend to comprehend them on a superficial level projecting their own egocentrism and crude moral notions onto them. Older children show a better understanding and proceed to a higher level of comprehension, and are capable of grasping what another person thinks and feels.

Dortman (1988), dealing with the comprehension of the fables' moral teaching, proposed a model for understanding these. Subjects for this study were children from the second to the sixth grade, as well as adults. Different kinds of aesopic tales were used, ranging from canonical genuine fables (e.g. `The rabbit and the turtle`) to immoral narrations (e.g. `The wolf and the lamb`). Constructions with no moral lesson were also included.

While Dortman (1988) had constructed no point fables in order to test the moral significance of the genre, contrary to her expectations, even adult readers forced morals out of such stories. They made up themselves the cause that they regarded as giving rise to the event described in the story that was disguised as fable, and in their epimythia they

expressed their condemnation of that morally insignificant action, such as taking a walk.

In regard to the immoral fables, which do not make a moral point but describe a nefarious situation, subjects produced epimythia in accordance with the notion of a just world. This notion can be conceived as 'a system of moral justice in which people who perform good deeds are rewarded, and wrongdoers are punished' (p. 23). In the domain of the fable, the just world belief elicited answers in accordance with what is ethically correct but these epimythia were absolutely opposed to the actual meaning of the narrations.

Dortman (1988), attempting to explain the great percentage of just world interpretations of immoral fables (e.g. 'The wolf and the lamb'), attributes it to the reader's observation of a deep gap between what is generally acceptable and what is proposed by the specific aesopic tale. Since he is unable to explain it in any other way regards it as irony. In her own words: 'By accepting the basic premise of an ironic response, namely, that the literal meaning of the text is not the interpretation intended by the author, the just world reader is able to construct a response that is consistent with his or her morality, and to attribute the anomalous nature of the fable content to the author's intentional use of a rhetorical strategy' (p. 45).

According to the same researcher, epimythia mirroring the actual point of an immoral fable are a more

sophisticated response than those based on the just world belief. The explanation for this lies in the fact that the ability to construct a moral point in accordance with the reader's own ideas about ethical correctness is confined to the reader himself, while an epimythium reflecting the narrative's actual point represents and integrates multiple beliefs, including those of the reader, the author, and what is stated in the text.

The model for understanding the point of the aesopic fables that Dortman (1988) suggests is constructed in four different stages. Apart from anomalous responses, which were all the uninterpretable or the irrelevant replies, the most primitive category consisted of the event summaries, where the morals repeat the content of a particular narration. Next comes the group of responses labeled as overgeneralization, very general statements applied to a great number of stories (e.g. 'Don't be bad') or undergeneralization, points reproducing parts of the concrete narration and failing to generate a more universal level (e.g. 'The hare loses the race taking a nap'). A concrete point refers to a concrete action or an agent (e.g. 'The hare shouldn't be so sure that he can win the race') and forms the third category. The fourth and final moral category the abstract points includes all the statements which are identical to or close approximations of the epimythia of the fables as indicated by the fable collections.

The sequence of the proposed stages of understanding fables is consistent with the cognitive developmental scheme suggested by Piaget; children proceed from concrete to more abstract moral points. An interesting category is undergeneralizations which indicate that although children understand the importance of the existence of a moral point for every story of this genre, they found serious difficulties identifying an action at the appropriate level of generality.

Dortman (1988) puts forward two reasons to explain why children younger than fourth graders produce event summaries or event-level descriptions or undergeneralized statements. First, `their cognitive limitations on skills governing the ability to form abstractions` (p. 93), and second the possibility that `some children have not acquired the genre-specific knowledge that fable points are assertions based on morally significant actions` (p. 93).

2.6 THE GOALS OF THE CURRENT RESEARCH

Although much research has been done, the question that remains is: since the reader's personality shapes his interpretation of stories, how can moral truth can be communicate through literature? Can fables convey anything besides a group of individually tailored meanings, a hopeless relativity?

The research here undertaken seeks to fill a gap in the existed literature regarding kindergartners' attitudes towards aesopic fables. Although some studies have aimed at revealing children's reception of fables and the influence the genre exerted on their moral development, none of them has dealt with preschoolers, though fables are incorporated within their school curriculum.

Teachers, as well as parents, tell children a great number of aesopic fables, and one of the main reasons for doing so is their belief that those short stories may provide young pupils with a body of useful advice that they will recall in their adult life and thus behave accordingly.

Bearing in mind the results of previous studies, it would not be surprising if preschoolers prove unable to approach fable at a deep abstract and moral level. The current research, using 18 different fables, and a sample of 113 children, starts with the hypothesis that kindergartners are not in a position to approach fable at an abstract level and, being confined to a literal understanding of the story, they do not grasp the moral truth of the narrative. Therefore, being unaware of the ethical message of the fable, children are not morally instructed by it, and do not recall it as a useful canon of behaviour.

CHAPTER THREE

CHILDREN'S REACTIONS TO THE CHARACTERS OF THE AESOPIC FABLES

3.1 THE CHARACTERS OF THE AESOPIC FABLES

The aesopic stories employ a broad range of characters, starting from gods and natural elements, passing through human beings and animals, and even extending the device of personification to plants and inanimate objects. Although every living or non-living thing and creature of the world could be used as a feature in the aesopic fable, the characters are usually animals which, although they act according to their natural instincts, at the same time talk and act like humans. The aesopic world is populated with animals who walk and behave like people, and their dominance is so clear that the genre came to be known as `beast fable`.

Aesopic fable was not the only kind of literature which employed animals in order to convey ethical lessons, as Laurence (1957) notes: `Autobiography, documentary, fantasy, folklore, allegory, all may use animals as their theme and at one time or other most children read and enjoy all those animals, dressed or undressed, are yet still in essence the animals themselves` (p. 294).

Animal fiction embraces a wide range of different types of narratives extending from merely entertaining stories to satirical allegories and moral sermons which are based on the perception of similarities between human and non human beings. According to The Universal Spectator (1761): `If we examine, impartially, ourselves, and the Creatures that are about us, we shall find, that there is more Difference between Man to Man, than between Men and some Sorts of Brutes; and that upon a Comparison, there is little Cause to value ourselves, at the mighty Rate we do` (p. 185).

The fabulist, even when he presents human beings does not delineate them as well rounded personalities, but, exaggerating one of their personal characteristics, never bestows on them more than one trait. Thus, they are not real men and women but, obeying a poetic reality, are converted into flat and conventional story characters.

The same unchangeable laws govern the whole universe, and the fabulist narrows not only the gap between animals and human beings but also puts them at the same level compared with the gods. Camels and men have the same right to go and speak to a god and ask him for a favour. According to Dover (1974): `The difference between human nature and divine nature was conceived as greater than that between humans and animals in so far as gods were immortal and capable of action at a distance, but on the moral and emotional plane it was smaller` (p. 75).

In the related fable of `The camel and Zeus`, the god was presented not as the creator of the universe, or as a mere character stripped off his divine qualities, but as the highest guard of the world's ethical order. But the fabulist's picture is not consistent throughout the whole collection. Zeus, as he is depicted in many fables, does not make any serious claim to omniscience, power or rightness in his judgement. In the fable of `The eagle and the bag`, for example, Zeus is unable to help the eagle, although he tries. The only plausible reason for this might be the fact that the eagle had to be punished, because it had committed a sacrilege, and, although the god, aware of the offence, wanted to protect the bird, such an intervention would not have been fair. But even if someone can find an excuse for Zeus' inability to help the eagle against the beetle, in the case of the jackdaw, Zeus was deprived of any basic insight, and furthermore could not understand the jackdaw's tricks in the story `The jackdaw and the birds`, although all the irrational creatures became aware of them.

Not only Zeus, but many other gods are also presented in the whole mass of the aesopic stories. The fables make us aware of their hierarchy; Zeus is the unquestionable master of minor deities and gives orders to some of them, as to Mother Earth and Hermes. Hermes symbolizes the human intelligence in both its normal form, as the patron of literature, and its distorted one, as the supreme deceiver. Both versions recur in many fables. Apart from Zeus and

Hermes, Apollo, Aphrodite, Demeter, Hera, Athena and Plutos are mentioned. The place of the gods in fables is easily explicable if we remember the crucial role that religion played in every aspect of Greek civilization.

3.2 ANIMALS IN FABLES

In the aesopic tales distinctions, such as between alive and non-alive, talking and non-talking, animal and man, are blurred in an entertaining and instructive way. At the same time that animals speak and act like human beings, they also scurry about and behave like animals. Fables are not constructed to depict their true nature, but to present, through their intercourse, a moral reality, which is certainly different from what really happens in the jungle. `The animals are made to act and speak in accordance with some intended lesson, and have characters, created afterward, are, for purposes of the teacher, disguised as animals; very little of the animal appears, but very much of the lesson` (Scudder, edited by Haviland, 1973, p. 54).

In fables animals are depicted as being made of the same stuff as men and inhabiting a human-like society. As Jan (1973) notes, `in these fables animals are simply pretexts enabling the writer to show human predicaments and an excuse for unrestrained censure and satire` (p. 81). Animals stand more for abstract moral qualities than actual

personalities. Slyness and cunningness are personified in the fox, nobility in the lion, timidity in the lamb, obstinate stupidity in the ass, and greed and savagery in the wolf. When people speak today of the ungrateful viper, they may not consciously associate it with the old story; nevertheless, Aesop's contribution to the establishment of a conventional character of the snake is indisputable. In this regard Smith (1912) stresses the strong aesopic influence on the vernacular and maintains: "It is highly probable, not to press the matter further, that current slang has unwittingly made itself a debtor to Aesop, also, and "to be the Goat" is to be no other than the poor Grey-Beard that booted the Fox out of the Wall, but stuck there himself" (p. 554).

Animal society, as it is depicted in fables, is constructed like a human hierarchy. As Needler (1991) points out, fable, unlike larger literary genres, does not create a new order of the world but follows that already existing in human society. Thus, Marie de France, for example, illustrates in her fables the feudal social structure of her time. The social pyramid portrayed by the aesopic fables has at its top, with the authority of a king or a sovereign monarch, the lion. The social scale of birds, on the other hand, has allotted its highest rank to the eagle, while there is no clear-cut difference regarding the novelty and the distribution of power between marine creatures. We can assert the existence of three parallel social establishments, at the top of which carnivorous animals,

birds, and large fish stand, while the whole mass of herbivorous animals, melodious birds, and small fish are located at the bottom, powerless and defenceless. Animals have created not only a social system but also enter into legal relationships to make it function, such as selecting a king, or convening an assembly, or punishing the wrongdoers.

Although fable has endowed animals with language and human intelligence, its fidelity to the credible is obvious. Animals speak and act in a manner in accordance with their natures. Dodsley (1965; first publication 1764) enumerates and criticizes strongly those fables which violate natural laws, like the one dealing with the peculiar appetite of fox for grapes, or the hen that laid the golden eggs. That `would show a luxuriant fancy, but very little judgment` (p. lxvi). Similarly, Fabre (1937) devotes the first chapter of his book Social Life in the Insect World in discussing the inappropriateness of a grasshopper protagonist - it does not live in winter and is not capable of eating grain - in the fable `The ant and the grasshopper`.

In regard to the fable Dodsley condemned, `The fox and the grapes`, many fabulists tried in retelling the story to conceal the apparent inconsistency and redefine the fox's appetite. However, some authors have maintained that it might be possible for a fox to eat grapes. Anderson (1795), for example, reports the observations of a traveller that, in Palestine, grape growers regard foxes, as a major source of mischief to their grapevines. L' Estrange (1692), on the

other hand, convinced of the impossibility of the hypothesis, begins his version of the fable with the sentence: `There was a time when a Fox would have ventured as far for a bunch of grapes as for a shoulder of mutton, and it was a Fox of those days, and that palate, that ...`. Similarly, Croxall (1724) explains away the controversy in his Application: `This Scene being laid in a foreign Country, where either the Appetites of Foxes or the Texture of Grapes may differ from those which are peculiar to these Islands, it makes the Fact not improbable`.

Smith (1912, pp. 29-32), does not seem to agree with the above mentioned fabulists, and thinks that the lack of credibility at the literal level of the fable's narration is characteristic of the genre, because it leads the reader into seeking a figurative interpretation of the story. Even in fables which seem plausible, like that of the dog and his shadow, it is questionable whether the same course of events would have happened, if the agents were real. It is doubtful whether a real dog would have acted like its fabulous counterpart, since dogs trust more their smell than their sight.

An entire universe is presented in fables, where men, animals, and gods are interacting in the most plausible way. In fables, animals, humans and inanimate objects communicate as equals, in accordance with a poetic reality, and their behaviour is limited only by the roles they play in each story. Animals act in a quite natural way when they meet

people, ask favours from them, and answer their questions. Thus, the ontological categories of the world are blurred as the fabulist recreates the universe without any distinction between human beings, animals, plants, and inanimate objects.

3.3 ANIMALS IN LITERATURE

Stories about animals are among the most primitive fictions of the human race, and an intrinsic part of folklore in every place of the world. The way animals were treated, in literature as in people's everyday speech, continue to change throughout the ages. According to Blount (1974) the depiction of animals in literary works progressed from awe and fear, through amusement, guilt and objective interest, to a final stage reflecting a nostalgia for close communication with Nature. Animals are feared and awed in folk and fairy tales, while they become a device of amusement in fables and, mainly, in beast epics. Guilt is shown towards them in those texts that aim at encouraging kind behaviour towards animals, whereas the objective interest in animal's real lives is reversed for science rather than real literature. Nostalgia towards animals is connected with the philosophical movement of `theriophily`, which tends to regard animals as creatures standing at a level higher than that of men.

Boas (1933) explains the theoretical base of `theriophily`, the glorification of animals, as follows: `the beast - like savages - are more "natural" than men, and hence man's superior` (p. 3). The notion of animal's supremacy dates back to Pliny (Natural History, VII, 1), who states that Nature, standing as a stepmother to man and a mother to animals, endows the latter better than the former. Although `theriophily` as a philosophical tendency does not rest on a firm ideological foundation, and is not accepted by the vast majority of people, it has, however, crept into everyday talk and practice. When a man wants to stress that his own qualities surpass those normally possessed by a human being, he refers to animals. Thus, a person is as industrious as an ant, as strong as a lion, as innocent as a lamb, as pure as a pigeon, and as sociable as a bee. Moreover, if he seeks to develop his abilities, he has to observe how the swallow builds its nest, how the spider spins its web, and how the nightingale sings. Even when animals exemplify a defect, e.g. cruelty in regard to panthers, gluttony in the case of pigs, stubbornness for mules, their superiority over men lies in the fact that they suffer only from one weakness, while man may possess many vices.

`Theriophily' has had many antagonists. The foremost antitheriophilist was Descartes (1948; first publication 1637), who maintained that animals stand far lower than

human beings and can only be compared with machines, although better than any machine devised by man.

The representation of animals in literature has changed considerably throughout the ages; different factors are stressed in different ages. Thus, the categorizations suggested by different scholars are many in number and different in style. Robin (1936), for example, has divided animals' representation in stories into three types: first, 'the description of their (real or supposed) form and habit' (p. 13), which is an attempt, more or less successful, at scientific inquiry and was, until the sixteenth century, the only way of knowing animals. The second group includes humanized animals, which provide conventional characters, for oral literature, and are mainly used as a vehicle for moral edification. In the third category the beasts function 'as sources of simile or metaphor to illustrate the phase of human life and experience' (p. 13).

Arbuthnot (1947), on the other hand, suggests a different classification of the animal stories. The first division, labelled as 'talking beasts - ourselves in fur' includes those stories which employ animals that behave like human beings. These tales are completely unscientific and very popular even today. Into the second group, 'animals as animals but talking', fall all those stories which relate scientific facts, but, endowing animals with the faculty of speech, enable them to narrate them from their standpoint. The third type of animal story, 'animals as animals

objectively reported`, is told strictly from observation, with scrupulous fidelity to modern knowledge of a species.

Another classification of animal fiction is suggested by Egoff (1981) who states: `Stories of talking animals have two forms: the didactic beast tales, direct descendents of Aesop, exemplified by John Donovan's Family, and the more imaginative and poetic works which are closer to the mainstream of fantasy and may be termed animal fantasy, such as Randall Jarell's The Bat Poet` (p. 83). She explains the animals' appearance in literature as based on the double symbolization of them. Animals, on the one hand, are regarded as totally credible and familiar to men, since they recall a remote romantic time when humans communicated with them in a very intimate way. But, on the other hand, they are also alien to men, because, since human and non-human beings lack a common language, a real understanding is absolutely impossible.

Frye (1963) distinguishes two tendencies in the treatment of animals in literature; one refers to domesticated animals and small birds and conveys the archetype of pastoral images, while the other relating to beasts and birds of prey, symbolizes the dangers of life. In the depiction of the vegetable world, scenes of gardens and peaceful groves convey ideals of harmony and beauty, whereas in its tragic vision the forest may recall consternation, wildness and savagery.

Hadzopoulou-Caravia (1986) attempts an explanation of beast literature on mainly anthropological grounds. According to her: `in pagan society the attribution of human qualities to animals or even to inanimate nature was more than just fantasy. It was a vehicle by which man in the early stages of every civilization, and also in the early stages of individual existence, could understand the world around him while moderating his egocentrism` (p. 167).

Animal agents have a long history in literature, and their presentation not only differs according to the ideological and philosophical significance they acquire, but also in regard to the type of literature they act in. Tolkien (1964) excludes beast fables from the term `fairy tale` because, while the latter expresses men's desire to hold communion with other living things, fable presents human beings in disguise and aims at instruction. Sale (1978) asserts that in fairy tales the animal is usually enchanted and behaves beautifully, because `the spell under which it has fallen cannot enchant the beauty of its spirit or the sweetness of its manners` (p. 78). In contrast, `beast fables tend to be worldly, slightly cynical in observation and in their conclusion that human beings are closer to chickens and pigs than they are to angels, or closer than they would like to admit` (p. 79).

Animals have become the protagonists of some adult fiction, but more often of literature addressed to children. Thwaite (1972) in her history of children's literature,

underlines the sequence in which animals found their place into children's books. 'The domestic animals, the friends of man, make an appearance in their own character in books for children long before wild and untamed creatures' (p. 180). She also points to the scarcity of accurate depiction of animals and to the didactic moralizing of those works until the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century, according to the same literary historian, a new direction encouraging kindness towards animals developed. This continued until the days of Kipling's Jungle Books, when realism and fiction were blended in a new way.

Animals appear in all ethnic literatures throughout the world, although the treatment and those animal preferred vary from country to country. As Huck (1979) informs us 'Fish are often found in English, Scandinavia, German, and South Sea stories. Tales of bears, wolves, and the firebird are found in Russian folklore. Goats and blackbirds often appear in Italian tales. Spiders, rabbits, tortoises, crocodiles, monkeys, lions, and tigers are very much a part of African tales; while rabbits, badgers, monkeys, and even bees are represented in Japanese stories' (p. 162).

Although the employment of animals as protagonists in fictitious works has been considered a suitable convention for moral teaching in nearly all literature, and the literary tradition was replete with a wide variety of non-human creatures, Renaissance writers showed very little interest in following this pattern. This new spirit of

didactic art can be explained as the consequence of the humanistic philosophy of the era and its emphasis on reason rather than instinct.

3.4 CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS ANIMAL CHARACTERS

An overview of children's literature suggests that stories that employ animals as their protagonists have generally been considered more appropriate for boys than for girls. Kuethe (1966), for example, found that 'in a sample of 600 books written for children it was found that stories about a boy and an animal far outnumbered stories about a girl and an animal. The only animal with which girls were associated more often than boys was the cat' (p. 433).

It seems that children are really touched by animals wherever they meet them, whether in their environment or in their stories. Although Armstrong (1954), after showing children pictures of animals and human beings found that human pictures evoke more verbal responses which go beyond pure description, other studies come to the opposite conclusion. Applebee (1973), for example, refers to an investigation detecting children's preferences among stories which deal with people and animals showing a clear preference for animal stories. He explains it as 'The effect of substituting animals for human characters seems to remove

the stories to a realm in which their implications will be less threatening` (p. 183).

Another study that comes to the same conclusion is that of Freidson (1953) who interviewing kindergarten children in order to determine their favourite kinds of drama, found that the largest percentage of kindergarten children preferred westerns and humorous stories that have animal or puppet characters in them.

A study completed by Pitcher and Prelinger (1963) concerned the animal agents as they are illustrated in stories constructed by children. They stress the differences between the preferences of boys and girls. Girls more often choose to tell a story about a small domestic animal, which portrayed with affection and depicted as possessing human qualities. Even when wild animals are referred to in such stories they have a rather friendly disposition. Boys, on the ^{other} hand, give preference to stories about wild animals which are ready to devour, kill, and bite.

Campbell (1972) explains children's interest in animal story agents as resulting from an enthusiasm in real animals at a certain stage of their development, which he fails to define. `Furthermore, nearly all children, including the most bookish, seem to go through a phase in which they become passionately interested in some kind of animal, real or imaginary, and at this stage they should obviously be offered books that relate to their enthusiasm` (p. 107).

Although children seem to favour animal protagonists, there are some writers who dispute their significance and fascination for young readers. Biersdorf et al. (1953), for example, carried out an experiment which showed that there is no significant difference between the productivity of data collected from stories told by children in response to animal pictures and from stories told by children in response to human pictures which utilize the same scene and situation` (p. 458). Although in the above study children are examined as creators of stories and not as readers of them, the enchantment that animal tales are supposed to hold was not indicated by their reactions to the process of dealing with the story material.

Apart from the issue of liking or disliking, a topic that catches the attention of educators and literary critics is the appropriateness of non human protagonists in children's books. Parr (1982) defends animals' presence in the children's books especially when they personify the negative aspects of life. `Socially disapproved behavior by human characters apparently arouses more anxiety than such behavior by animal characters` (p. 371).

Jacobs (1970; first edition 1889) suggests that animals are the most suitable agents for fables, and fables are the most suitable kind of literature for young children, because `The life of animals as observed by man, or at least by early man, is seemingly one monotonous round of greed, cruelty, revenge, and self-seeking, brightened only by

parental joys. It is accordingly with those vices and this virtue that the Fable chiefly deals. All that is meant by culture - knowledge, beauty, love, consideration for others - is beyond its range. Since the adaptation of the fable to the childish and childlike minds` (p. 208).

Fisher (1979) holds the same opinion as Jacobs, and states: `The anthromorphic treatment of animals is a source of entertainment even in today's sophisticated world. Children are accustomed to a world of comic strips and animated cartoons in which beasts and men speak a common language` (p. 3).

Children show a natural affinity towards animals and `it is clear that animal stories, of whatever kind, fill a need in the child reader for something dependent upon him in a life where he is dependent upon adults` (Marshall, 1982, p. 63). Like their young readers, animals are generally at the mercy of adult humans, a fact which encourages children's identification with non-human protagonists.

Although all children seem to enjoy stories with animal protagonists, adults do not always approve of them. As Trease (1970, p. 45) informs us, Alice, the well known children's classic, was banned in China. The censor reasons his decision with the following wording: `Bears, lions, and other beasts cannot use a human language, and to attribute to them such power is an insult to the human race. Any child reading such books must inevitably regard animals and human beings on the same level, and this would be disastrous`.

Not only political authorities, but also educators have objected to the presentation of animals in children's books as rational creatures. Knox (1788), for example, notes: `the reasoning and conversation of irrational animals raise them to a level with the human species; and if children are to respect reason and speech as most excellent gifts, they will, in their imaginations, honour the cock, the wolf, and the fox, as much as man, or else degrade man to the rank of the cock, the wolf, and the fox` (pp. 438-439).

Arbuthnot (1947), dealing with the aesopic fables, considers them inappropriate for young children. His argument focuses on the way characters are depicted in fable. None of them is a whole personality, has a family, or any life apart from the single incident the fable undertakes to relate. The one-dimensional animal is an impersonal, unemotional exemplification of virtue or folly. Arbuthnot, in order to clarify his point, describes also the procedure a fabulist follows to build a story and create a personality. First, he selects the motto he wants to exemplify and the animal, which will carry on the story line and be the leading character. This has to be an impersonal creature, which will find its place in the cold equation of the story's structure: Character with one distinct trait + one episode = epimythium. If we suppose that the narration concerns a Proud Rabbit, according to morality of the fable, it deserves a tumble for his vice. `No one will care about his misfortune either, because you give Proud Rabbit no

family to grieve for him, no personality of any complexity. He isn't a family man, kind to his wife and children, with just one slight weakness, his pride` (p. 257).

Another attack on the use of animal characters in stories is directed at the distorted image of the world this kind of literature puts forward. `The child disguises itself - but the disguise is an illusion which must be discarded - he must give up the animal world and the baby world as well and see himself for what he is: a child, naked and exposed in a universe of real men and children, not of dream figures, toys, puppets and animals` (Jan, 1973, p. 89).

Another issue suggested for investigation by educators and psychologists is children's attitudes towards the personified agents of their books. Is that intellectual trick translated by them as a true phenomenon or as a clever device?

The device of personification is very common in literature, because, as Frye (1971) puts it, what we meet in literature is neither real nor unreal. `The poet's job is not to tell you what happened, but what happens: not what did take place, but the kind of things that always take place` (p. 63).

Psychologists of the intellectual stature of Piaget dealt with the topic of animism in children's thinking. Animism can be considered the attribution of life to non-living things. Piaget (1929) distinguishes four different stages, starting from the ascription of life to any creature

or object indiscriminately, continuing to a more narrow view of life assigned only to those things which move, and then to a third level where life is credited only to those which move by themselves, and concludes at the most sophisticated level that life is reserved only for animals, plants, and human beings.

Writing about children's treatment of animism in response to the fable of the rabbit and the turtle, Christenberry et al. (1979) attempt to distinguish the real from the unreal and assert: Children "are probably not convinced that human-like thoughts are unlikely in the natural realm of animals such as rabbits and tortoises. The actions of the animals in this particular fable are appropriate while the thoughts attributed to them are improbable" (p. 3).

"There are no such things as giants, fairies, talking crows, or tin soldiers; and no child, with an ounce of brains, ever in sober reality believes that the fox talked to the crane about the scarcity of provisions and invited her to supper on gravy-soup in shallow dishes, or that the crane returned the compliment by asking master Reynard to eat minced-meat out of a long jar with a narrow neck. But he reads the story, and in his own way quietly draws the lesson; he sees that knavery met with its match, and that cunning was snared in a pit of his own digging" (Johns, 1867, pp. 60-61).

3.5 ANIMALS' CONVENTIONAL CHARACTER IN LITERATURE

In contrast to the beast epic and other kinds of beast literature, the characters of the aesopic fables are nameless and are referred to only by the name of their species. Thus, they stand more readily for abstract human traits, and lack complicated personalities. Although it is an oversimplification to believe that all wolves have only one nature, when men have as many different characters as bodies, many critics, like Leyburn (1956), maintain that the endowment of a single characteristic to the animal agent serves the edifying goal of the story.

Even from ancient times the conventional character of animal natures was stressed. Nicolaus the Sophist (Progymnasmata, pp. 453-4), for example, underlines the symphony of the animal protagonists of fables with their true natures. Lambs are innocent, wolves cruel, foxes artful, and monkeys like to imitate human behaviour. In addition, it is not appropriate for a fabulist to depict actions irreconcilable with their characters. Lambs cannot chat with wolves and a mouse cannot try to become the king of the animals.

The character of the aesopic animals may differ in different fables. Wray (1950) cites the example of the aesopic mouse, asserting: 'For example, in the three fables in which the mouse is a character, he does not trouble to endow the mouse with a consistency of character; he does not

explain in terms of character, why the mouse who is brought forth by the mountain should be the same mouse who rescues the lion. In other words, the mouse is not such a consistent character as Reynard the Fox in the beast epic` (26).

According to Daly (1961) the characteristics of the animals depicted by fable are not permanently fixed. Recalling the example of the fox, he states: `The fox may show some signs of being sly like his medieval counterpart Reynard or his more modern descendant Brier Fox, as in the fable of The Fox and the Leopard (12), but he is so far from being consistently clever. He appears as a very prototype of stupidity, combined with gluttony, in the fable of The Fox with the Swollen Belly (24)` (p. 19).

In ancient, medieval and modern literature the fox appears as cunning, crafty and selfish creature and, in most cases, manages to cheat other animals and gain profit from its scheming. The fox entered literature as the archetypal deceiver and remains in literature as in everyday speech the incarnation of cunningness. In the aesopic fable the fox appears as a resourceful animal that uses its craftiness for its own benefit, whether to exploit the innocence of other animals, or to save its own skin when in danger. Whenever the fox debates with someone it manages to prove its own superiority and in many fables in which it is not the main protagonist, it appears at the end to utter a scoffing remark. Although the fox is cunning and witty in most fables, it has not been entirely stereotyped, and there are

stories in which fox is unable to deceive, becomes the victim of others, acts rather foolishly, or stands for another quality rather than craftiness (e.g. 1, for weakness; 24, for greed).

The lion is stereotyped as the most powerful and ferocious beast, and holds the place of a king in the animal world. Its proud appearance and its gaze, most probably save the animal from having minor vices attributed to it.

The aesopic fable reflects a stereotyped conception of the wolf, which is either an entirely wicked or an absolutely obtuse creature, one which even an ass can ridicule. Only two fables, in which the wolves managed to deceive sheep and dogs for their own profit, contrast with this picture.

Traditionally, the wolf is endowed with two controversial conventional characteristics. On one hand, it represents the dull and slow-witted animal, `which may eat sheep but not shepherd boys` (Arnold, 1986, p. 101) and crops up as a ferocious beast in fairy tales (e.g. Red Riding Hood); it is the standard symbol of evil and was a synonymous with sexuality in early Christian teaching. On the other hand, the animal was adored as a totem by the North America Indians and Eskimos (Zimen, 1981) and symbolized motherliness in the legend of Romulus and Remus.

Guiton (1961), observes that the stereotyped characters of the fox and wolf in literature are based on their appearance: `It is his neat and rapid footwork that stamp

him (the fox) as of social intrigue. The wolf, because of his heavier frame and solemn, doglike face, must assume the necessary role of court pedant and universal fall guy` (p. 88).

The lamb has acquired a conventionally stereotyped character and is always the defenceless victim of carnivorous beasts, preoccupied with protecting itself from many dangers.

The cat evinces a mild version of the fox's artfulness, while the ass is the stereotyped model of long-suffering. The poor animal always represents the victim, the stubborn or the slow-witted.

The conventional character of animals does not coincide perfectly with their real nature. This is well shown in the case of the mouse, which Aesop presents as resourceful and brave. Colwell (1957), admitting that children are very fond of mice and like them appearing in their books, explains their preference as: `The truth is, of course, that we do not associate with the mice in story books either the real mice we see in house or field` (p. 180).

The conventional character of each animal varies throughout the world, and the traits attributed to animals are different in different civilizations. The fox, for example, which personifies the cunning in European thought, is replaced by the jackal in the Indian literature, while in China it symbolizes the inauspicious or evil and is

regarding α the ghost of the dead and having the power to become a human being (Scott, 1980).

Huck (1979) cites a list of the animal personification of the trickster in the folklore of different cultures. In European folk tales it is usually a wolf or a fox; in Japan it is a badger or a hare; Indonesia has Kantjil, a tiny mouse deer; and Africa has three well-known tricksters, Anansi the spider, Zomo the rabbit, and Ijapa, the tortoise; while the coyote and the raven play this role in American-Indian tales` (p. 172).

In addition, the main heroes in the Jewish animal fables are the lion and the serpent; and sometimes human beings are also involved. In contrast, the fox is not an important character in any Jewish narration.

3.6 CHILDREN'S CONCEPTION OF CONVENTIONAL ANIMAL CHARACTERS

The manner in which children understand the literary conventions of animals was investigated by Applebee (1978). His results are that at six, 41% of the children he interviewed had firmly developed expectations about the roles of at least half of the characters of their literature; and by nine, this percentage has risen to 86%. He also affirmed that they had developed more rapidly consistent expectations for the fantasy characters than for those which exist also in reality. Applebee attempts the

following explanation: 'a lion in a story and a lion in a zoo will build up conflicting expectations, whereas fairies and witches, restricted to the domain of fantasy, are able to build up a single, clear system of expectations more easily' (p. 51).

In a previous work, Applebee (1973), dealing with the same issue, underlined the importance of comprehension of the conventional story characters to the understanding and appreciation of literature. He examined both cases in which expectations derive when such conventions are used directly (as in the case of the witch and the fairy, who are juxtaposed as villain and hero), or when they are used in a more subtle way (like the cowardly lion in *The Wizard of Oz*, that are explicable only if the audience shares the notions that lions in stories are expected to be brave).

There is no reason to expect kindergarten children to know the conventional characteristics of animals. Abrams et al. (1977) have demonstrated a progression in children's reactions to animal characters from the ages of four and five, when they generally perceived animals as monsters and were overwhelmed with fear, to a later stage (ages ten-to-eleven), at which the central character permanently overcomes the threat and ends up stronger than at the beginning of the story.

It is not, however, absolutely inexplicable why young children cannot isolate those conventional qualities of the animals and endow them with a stereotyped character. Even in

their books, animals change their profile quite often and their presentation has ranged from a mythical approach to a biological exactness, depriving them of a unique personality. In this regard, Hurlimann (1968) states: `In the past owls and lions have been regarded as sinister as well as dangerous beasts; in recent years they have both been reformed into fashionable and sympathetic picture-book heroes` (p. 70).

Another factor that limits children's understanding of the conventional character of the animals is the gap that sometimes exists between its stereotyped use in everyday speech, real life, and in literature. The example of the pig is striking. As Arnold (1988) observes: `No domestic animal has been more widely used as a metaphor expressing opprobrium than the pig. In common parlance it stands for greed, gluttony, dirt, squalor, and selfishness, but any observant pig farmer will testify that this is a gross misrepresentation, and children's writers, to their credit, have avoided the stereotype. A brief survey of publishers' catalogues which I undertook showed the pig high in popularity as a character in children's books` (p. 80). Not only is the frequency of the pig's occurrence in children's literature overwhelming, but even its presentation in the stories has nothing to do with the repugnant animal of everyday conversation.

Nearly the same is the case of the bear, which furnishes the obnoxious paradigm of cruelty, stoutness,

indiscretion, and lack of finesse in acts and words. On the contrary, children's books give preference to the teddy-bear version, which has no relation to the repulsive bear of common speech.

3.7 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

It is of some interest to know how children, when confronted with a story about gods or God, perceive the divinity. The experimental studies in this field are rather few, and a small number of researchers have asked children to express their views on such spiritual and hard to comprehend matters.

Pitts (1979) collected over 600 pictures of God, from six to nine-year-old children in response to the title 'What does God look like'. He received illustrations of the child's brother, his dad, of an old man with a cane, the sun, an angel or of a fluffy cloud. Paintings about 'Where does God live' consisted pictures of heavens, big mountains, the child's heart or the whole universe.

Goldman (1964) saw children's religious thinking as following the same intellectual stages suggested by Piaget. The child at the preoperational stage thinks transductively and, shuttling unsystematically from one aspect of the problem to the other, is absorbed in inessential details. Dealing with a question, he seizes only upon its

idiosyncratic and peripheral aspects. Regarding divinity, he conceives of God by using the human analogies of a father and has assumptions about the way He looks, the garments He wears, and the place He lives. These anthropomorphic presumptions extend until nearly the age of eleven, although it is not clear that adults altogether abandon them. In regard to other theological dogmas, kindergarten children explain many of them by giving weight to one or another detail, while primary school children are bent on transforming any abstract theory into concrete experience.

In Goldman's (1964) own words: 'For the Infant child, God is to be feared as an unpredictable and touchy powerful adult, who is to be treated with caution as one treats some adults with caution. God has physical attributes combined with magical powers. This deity can harm, cast spells, punish and generally "pay back" for what he considers as bad behaviour. There is no moral judgment present other than the fact that what God disapproves of is wrong. Children of this age appear to understand the deity at this level of thought, but alongside this must be set the view expressed by most of them that God is a friend' (p. 126).

According to Miller (1989), among the first thoughts children have about God is the apparent contradiction between God's omnipotence and ultimate kindness and the disasters that he 'allows' to happen at a personal or interpersonal level. Although in real-life children are confronted with such moral dilemmas, and one mission of

religious education is to explain away this apparent incongruity, in story conditions kindergarten children seem to install gods in the specific environment of the tale and to venerate the conventions that it sets.

3.8 THE GOALS OF THE CURRENT RESEARCH

Although there is an outstanding bibliography of works dealing with children's reactions towards animal agents in books, all of them are confined only to two aspects; first, young readers' preferences regarding the nature of the story heroes, and second, the appropriateness of the very fact of presenting non-human beings as rational creatures.

The experimental researches on the topic are astonishing few and only concern children's preferences among animal characters. On the other hand, the suitability of beasts' endowment with human qualities has become the subject of theoretical debate rather than of experimental work.

The current research aims at filling the gap in the existing bibliography by investigating children's attitudes towards animal agents, not only concerning readers' preferences, but also in regard to their understanding of animals' conventional character in literature, kindergartners' ideas on non-humans' personification in

literature, and their conceptions of spiritual actors when they are interwoven in the evolution of the plot.

Because a number of different genres, including fables, presuppose the correct comprehension of the symbolical and stereotyped character of the stories' protagonists, experimental work which aims at detecting children's understanding of those conventions takes an importance. If kindergartners are unable to grasp the established stereotype of the fox, which remains the synonym of cunningness both literature and everyday speech, then it must be expected that they are likely to miss the point of the stories based on that characteristic.

Due to the importance of the topic this research was expanded to incorporate not only kindergartners but also ten to twelve-year-old children, in order to examine the differences between the two age groups and the process of acquisition of the ability to acknowledge animal symbolism in literature.

In order to illuminate kindergartners' reactions towards fables, their attitudes toward the issue of animals' personification in literature was also considered important. Thus, this research in regard to the animal protagonists of the narrations centered not only on their stereotyped character but also on four to six-year-old children's ideas of the animals' human-like qualities, in fictional as well as in real conditions.

In spite of the fact that kindergartners' conception of God has been the topic of a great number of investigations, young children's views towards divine personages when they interact with animals and human beings as the story-plot develops has not yet been studied, and was one of the subjects embraced by this research.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF FABLES ON CHILDREN

4.1 HARSH ASPECTS OF LIFE AND FABLES

Fables addressed primarily to adults, are full of cruel events and portray an accurate picture of life, in which the strong and the big overcome the weak and the just. Seamy aspects of life, transferred into the non-human domain and disguised under a thin cloak of animals' actions, provide men with information on the difficulties they may confront and suggest ways of coping with them.

Tough episodes are also delineated in fables and many stories end with killing and devouring of virtuous characters. Death in fables is presented as an inevitable natural fact and as a part of life's cycle. For the aesopic tales life and death are not two distinct situations, but are viewed as a perpetual renewal, an uninterrupted process of continuity and fusion.

Fables are not stories describing episodes of real life but, because they depict reality, they do not always end with a happy ending. They do not maintain a consistent attitude regarding the triumph of weak creatures over powerful and strong ones, so that some of them conclude by

showing the superiority of vulnerable animals over aggressive ones, whereas in others the former become the innocent victims of the latter.

When the aesopic tales deal with issues that can be considered violent, they only refer to such topics and never describe them in a detailed way. Death, devouring, and wounding are merely referred to by the fabulist, who never elaborates on the way they happen, or the physical or psychological pain they cause.

As a literary kind, fable was created to evoke all the harsh aspects of life, since its audience was grown up men who had to confront such realities in their own environment. In addition, the ultimate purpose of the genre was not to entertain its audience but, through the narration of simple incidents of animals' life, to provide them with tangible lessons for living. Fable does not inform its readers on highly sophisticated ethical matters, but attempts to assist them to carry on their lives as smoothly as possible. Since the genre was invented to serve such instructional purposes, the delineation of some violent events was necessary in order that its goals be reached.

However, the setting of fables, that were located in the jungle and the forest, contributed to the inclusion of some brutal events to the narrations. Devouring, wounding and chasing are the everyday reality of the jungle and a story describing episodes occurring in that place cannot ignore them.

Although fables at first glance seem likely to frighten young children, the remote time and place where the story is set, the dehumanized characters, and the mere allusion to cruel events as opposed to detailed description of them, make them less frightening for children. Publishers' modern practice of modifying them into 'a bit of toothless Aesop' (Coldthwaite, edited by Egoff et al., 1980, p. 394) is gratuitous.

4.2 VIOLENCE IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Adults consider certain subjects bearing on life's hard realities as unsuitable for children, and believe that it is their responsibility to protect young readers from them. Parents select children's books that conceal every frightening and gloomy aspect of life, and try instead to provide their children with a fake and sunny image of life. Thus, children's books which obey the demands of their clients, who are generally not the children themselves but the parents who select and pay for them, have been constructed so as to remind one of Walsh's (1975) description: 'I imagine the perfectly achieved children's book as something like a soap-bubble; all you can see is a surface - a lovely rainbow thing to attract the youngest onlooker - but the whole is shaped and sustained by the

pressure of adult emotion, present but invisible, like the air within the bubble` (pp. 212-213).

Although children are protected in books against the cruel events of life, like death and divorce, they are left entirely helpless in their real lives. According to Klein (1977), it is at least ironical that adults put so much effort into purging bitter events from children's books while they cannot dispel them from their lives. `These things just happen, and the child, the adolescent adjusts, copes because there is no alternative` (p. 82).

Various reasons are put forward to defend the inclusion of realism in books. Stress is put on the impossibility of hiding evil from children in a world of mass media, and the fact that wretched disillusionment is in store for them if they read only of good things is also emphasised.

Literature creates an aesthetic sense in the reader, and if the presentation of the harsh aspects of life, is not useful, it is at least interesting. As Harding (edited by Meek et al., 1977) observes: `In all these simpler forms of onlooking we are familiar with the fact that the unhappy chances of life are at least as interesting as the happy ones. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the same thing when we come to fiction and drama` (p. 63). In the same edition of essays on children's literature (edited by Meek et al., 1977), Lewis responds: `Danger, of course, there must be: how else do you keep a story going?` (p. 77).

In their support comes Jung (1970) who maintains that the cinema and detective stories 'make it possible to experience without danger all the excitement, passion and desirousness which must be repressed in the humanitarian ordering of life' (p. 67).

Good and evil are intermingled in life, and by separating one from the other, dangerously false views and expectations are created in children.

Totally different is the opinion of Bacon (edited by Meek et al., 1977) who thinks that, in spite of the fact that there are drunken mothers and run-away fathers, the mission of books is not to depict such situations but to give to children and adolescents the behavioural models they need.

A similar opinion is expressed by Jordan (1973) who considers young people the defenceless victims of realism in books and life, and advocates the communication of all those real and nice facts that make life more beautiful and sunny. 'I think it is our most serious business to insist upon the support, invention, discovery, or development of good news as real news about reality. The good news will report and instigate activity: swift, dense, widespread, immediate, far-reaching activity in the name of a new realism where victims will have become actors enabled to struggle, intelligently, for radical, life-saving change' (p. 145).

However, the overprotection of children against harsh aspects of life is a relatively new phenomenon since before

the nineteenth century poverty, disease and death were some of the hazards commonly presented in children's fiction.

As an example of unjustified cruelty that children's books depicted in previous ages Townsend (1974) cites an extract of the dominant primer in colonial America, the New England Primer, in which the young reader could read:

`Xerxes the Great did die,
and so must you and I` (p. 22),

lines that, of course, were changed in later editions.

A children's story makes children respond emotionally, and some of those narrations give rise to feelings of fear and anxiety. But as Hannabuss (1981) stresses, there are two different types of fear induced by children's books. The first kind is the sick type of fear, which terrifies the young reader and leaves him in a defenceless panic. The second type, on the other hand, permits the child to develop a degree of power over the feeling and acknowledge that fear and evil are very common situations shared among the members of the human race. According to Hannabuss (1981) fear in children's books remains a very delicate matter, and `depends wholly on the way the fear is presented, on the style and tone used by the author, and on the author's ability to reach out sympathetically to the child and his needs at that moment` (p. 198).

In addition, Tucker (edited by Haviland, 1973) stressing the same point, maintains that the difference between the two types of fear corresponds to `the difference

between a story containing a ghost and a ghost story. One mentions fears, the other aggrandises them` (p. 108).

Since it is not the topic but the way that it is communicated to the audience, the author's aesthetic and artistic abilities have paramount significance. Different ways of presenting violence have different results for their readers. Moore (1962) admits that monsters may frighten children, but fairy tales, in sharp contrast, never have those effects on them because they `mirror in artistic, enjoyable and emotionally satisfying terms the thoughts already latent in a child's mind` (p. 255). For that reason the author denies the view that holds the Brothers Grimm responsible for the two destructive world wars. According to this notion, `German people, soaked from infancy in the Grimm brothers' bloodthirsty stories, were conditioned by them into the brutality and cruelty which they displayed in two world wars` (p. 251).

Huck (1979) dealing with folklore literature states: `Cruel deeds occur very quickly with no sense of pain and no details of the action. No blood drips from the Ravens' sister's hand when she cuts off a finger; not an "ouch" escapes her lips. The wolf is cut open so the six kids can escape, and the mother goat sews the stones into his stomach without any suggestion that the wolf is being hurt. Children accept these stories as they are - symbolic interpretation of life in an imaginary land of another time` (p. 169).

Moreover, Storr (1976) provides authors with a set of three canons that reduce the frightening effects of events presented in a children's story, and asks them to follow her advice when they deal with the delineation of cruel aspects of life in books addressed to young readers. Depriving heroes of their real dimensions and portraying them as absolutely good or bad is one of them. This simple rule manages to establish a safe distance between what is real and can consequently be confronted by children in real-life conditions and what is destined to be confined only to books. The remoteness of reality can also be achieved by representing the characters of a story in a de-humanized form. Forces of evil, that normally create feelings of fear and anxiety, can be impersonally depicted as forces of nature or enemies of society. A third option is the humorous treatment of the villain, which results in making him less horrid and menacing.

A similar idea is also held by Wofenstein (1954), who thinks: `The extremity of the act also tends to make it unreal: By exaggeration, the violent or dangerous is transformed into the comically improbable` (p. 37).

The golden rule of remote time and place is also supported by Cook (1976) who states: `Children are frightened of giants or dogs with eyes like mill-wheels as long as they feel that what happens in a story might literally happens to them. Usually, at about five, six or seven, they come to realize with sudden and complete clarity

that what happened hundreds of years ago, and what happens in Never-Never-Land, are equally different from what happens at home` (p. 40).

It seems obvious that cruel events depicted in children's books maybe do not disturb young readers at all if they have a steady and deep loving relationship with their family members. However, their needs of safety and security can be served during story-telling by other means such as the relating of familiar stories in exactly the same words as in previous narrations or readings. And as Tucker (1981) notes `This early need for the safe and predictable can explain why small children sometimes disappoint ambitious parents by appearing to prefer writing that is full of cliches` (p. 97).

What frightens children differs from individual to individual, and is not easily understood by adults. So, children seem to enjoy stories that a parent would have thought of as frightening, and like books that adults might consider as traumatic. As Crago & Crago (1983) confess, through all the years they read to their little daughter Anna, they had never been able to predict the books she would regard as threatening and frightening.

McCreesh (edited by Meek et al., 1977), attempts an explanation of adults' inability to foresee what kind of books would trouble children and asserts: `From the evidence, it appears that some children under the age of twelve are restricted in their awareness of most of the

consequences of a tragic event. They are unable, at these ages, to grasp the full social or emotional outcome of a tragic event. This suggests that "horror" to them is something quite different from that of an adult. They are insensitive to horrific situations by the very quality of their thinking` (p. 115).

Children, in contrast with what common sense may hold, are neither often nor easily scared by situations described in their books. Even when they respond in a very emotional way their reactions do not necessarily mean that they are horrified or dislike the story. As Williams (1971) informs parents: `Don't assume, however, that tears are always a sign of fear and a signal that you have picked the wrong story. They may be only a sign of the child's intense emotional response, and he may insist that he likes the story` (p. 45).

However, children themselves when they construct their own stories embodied in them a great amount of violence and fear. According to research carried out by Pitcher et al. (1963), children from two to five-years-old made up stories full of harsh events. Even `among the twos, the theme is largely concerned with violation of body intactness: over and again some part of the body is broken or severed` (p. 184). At three and four the theme of hurt and misfortune is expressed as falling and damaging of objects and persons, sickness and visits to doctors, while at five calamities involve cars and planes crashes, accidents, storms, fires

and wars. At every age disasters appear with both greater frequency and severity in boys' than in girls' stories.

A few years later Ames (1966), examining stories told by three to five-year-old children, noted: 'The chief themes of stories at all ages and for both sexes were themes dealing with some sort of violent accident. Next in order of occurrence were some kind or friendly theme, themes of aggression, those dealing with food and eating, and some kind of harm to people. Harm to objects, harm to animals, and death of somebody or something came next in frequency' (p. 391). According to the same research the high point for violence was found in the stories of four-year-old children. In regard to sex differences, the narrations made up by boys included much more aggression than those constructed by girls.

The sex differences in regard to the amount of violent events in stories invented by children were also underlined by Sutton-Smith (1975), who studied children from five to ten-years-old. Boys' stories were more aggressive than those constructed by girls, and contained a greater number of villainous and evil characters. Sutton-Smith considers children's stories as 'their first attempts to deal with powerlessness, to deal with escaping from being overwhelmed, to deal with the courage needed to overcome the enemy, and the courage required to be a hero oneself and do battle against all the terrors. As we have seen, girls and boys may take different paths in their solution of these dilemmas,

but the conflicts themselves seem irrevocable` (p. 95). According to the author's observation, violence and conflicts in children's stories should be viewed as essential for their socialization and must be regarded as a weapon with which they try to fight their own weakness and flaws.

Recent research carried out by Libby et al. (1989) studied story-endings contributed to unfinished narratives supplied by three to five-year-old children. They showed that boys were concerned with coping with aggressive drives, while girls revealed more caring and loving tendencies. `While both sexes tell stories that involve mastery and hostility, the most aggressive forms of these activities lie in the realm of male fantasies` (p. 302).

The current tendency of children's literature is the presentation of an emotional realism that comforts children by admitting that they are not the only ones who feel negative emotions such as anger, jealousy and fear. The notion that readers can be helped to deal with their problems through books gave rise to `bibliotherapy`. Bibliotherapy proposes that young readers, through their identification with story characters and situations that are very similar to their own, are helped to handle the difficulties they meet in life.

Bibliotherapy, which must be viewed as a process of dynamic interaction between literature and the reader's personality, takes place with the assistance of a teacher or

a psychologist with whom the child discusses, evaluates and transfers the solutions presented in the book to his own situation. Another kind of the same practice is the `Preventive Bibliotherapy`; according to which the harsh aspects of life are mirrored in children's books that are given to their readers before they meet those problems in actual life. In that way, the reader gains a first impression of the seriousness of the situation and learns some hints for dealing with it, before he actually embarks on confronting that hard experience.

4.3 HAPPY ENDINGS TO CHILDREN'S STORIES

Although educators agree about the question of the elements that compose the happy ending of a story, children do not seem to share their consensus and respond diversely when questioned on the issue. As Applebee (1973) asserts, a child's own interpretation of the story will determine the ending's happy or unhappy tone. According to him, a six-year-old student is very likely to consider the ending of a fairy tale that concludes with the triumph of the good and the severe punishment of the bad character as unhappy if he focused on the villain's situation. They tend `to seize upon one or another detail in answering such questions, rather than considering the shape of the story as a whole` (p. 313). On the contrary, by the age of nine children can

undoubtedly distinguish between happy and sad endings, and show a clear preference for narratives in which everyone lives happily ever after.

Stories that conclude with the overall victory of the main good hero and the absolute downfall of the evil character are considered as being happily ended, in spite of the fact that the punishment of the villain is always cruel and merciless. Many educators and psychologists have expressed their views on children's reception of those stories and the psychological effects of them. According to Johns (1867) 'if wrong and injustice triumph in a story to the very end, children are wretched; not at the mere deaths, miseries, or murders, but at punishment falling on the wrong head. Their moral sense is injured' (p. 62).

Happy endings in literature has been viewed as the reassuring procedure that enables children to trust life and believe in the unlimited power of good. According to Cass (1967), children do not feel hurt when the wrongdoers are severely punished and justice has been done. 'In stories when the villain is unmasked, they expect and demand that a terrible fate shall befall him and believe whole-heartedly in "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" '(p. 20).

As Storr (1986) notes: 'Of course the child does not understand intellectually what he gains from a good, meaningful folk story; but I believe that he does appreciate the lesson it gives that you do not have to be huge or powerful to get what you want' (p. 66).

In addition, Bettelheim (1976), in an attempt to defend fairy tales, asserts that children not only are not scared by the cruel kinds of punishment that take place in folk literature but `the more severely those bad ones are dealt with, the more secure the child feels` (p. 141).

The rule of a happy ending in the stories of the past was considered so important and was followed with such great devotion that Egoff (1981) notes that `the most obvious and profound change between contemporary writing and its predecessors comes in the ultimate fate of the young protagonists` (p. 34). The books of the past showed an unshakable belief in the happy hereafter, whereas in modern fiction its place was taken by the continuation of the protagonists' struggle.

Children, in those cases that they construct their own stories, very often let them end with calamities and the catastrophe for the main hero. Thus, although in many fairy tales the happy event of a marriage between prince and princess brings the story to an end, for some children the completion of the tale coincides with the extinction of the chief hero, who creates the episodes and makes the plot run. When children of kindergarten age were given open-ended stories to complete (Pitcher et al., 1963) many times they saved the protagonist until, tiring of him, they wanted to get rid of him; his death was a very convenient solution.

On the other hand, Aiken (1982) maintains that children younger than thirteen or fourteen-year-old are not ready for tragic, gloomy or simply ambiguous endings and maintains that they should be offered only happy ones. Stretching a little more her syllogism, she considers every ending as not appreciable by children. She states that the ideal story ending simply does not exist because the young audience is always opposed to any type of it. `Children often wish to deny the end of a story if they can. They feel bereaved, or even frightened, by the thought that a favourite story has come to a stop. A story to them is like a friend, a live entity` (p. 52). Thereafter, happy ending is viewed by Aiken as the only compensation given to children in order to balance the grief they feel at the end of an enjoyable story.

A practice disapproved of by many educators (e.g. Shedlock, 1951) is that of watering down children's stories, in order to provide them with an ill-fitting happy ending. As Shedlock (1951) puts it: `There is no modern method which has always seemed to me much to be condemned, and that is the habit of changing the end of a story, for fear of alarming the child` (p. 83). This tendency sprang from a misconception about children's protection, and results in destroying the actual message and aesthetic charm of the modified stories.

4.4 CHILDREN'S CONCEPTION OF DEATH

Death is forever a taboo topic, and is talked of in low tones among adults who feel that it is their responsibility to protect children against this harsh aspect of life. As Gordon & Klass (1979) observe, two factors deepen the gap between children and death in modern eras: 'The first is the increasing distance of the immediate experience of death from everyday life. The second is the increasing distance of the child from the adult world. Taken together these trends have radically changed how a child can respond to death' (p. 5).

In spite of the fact that life and death are considered by most people as two absolutely unambiguous and entirely opposed phenomena, even in common speech the boundaries between those two issues are blurred and ill-defined. Anthony (1940) cites the example of parents who very often express their affection towards their children by using words or actions strongly associated with death. The pretence of being a ferocious animal ready to devour the defenceless child and the threatening statement 'I'll eat you' that accompanies it, supports the idea that devouring and death 'is usually taken as a sign of amorous rather than hostile intention. In simple, infantile states of mind, eating killing and loving mingle inextricably' (pp. 149-150).

The preschool child cannot distinguish adequately between life and death, and he tends to treat them as the opposite sides of the same coin and not as two absolutely distinct and antithetical situations. The child that still belongs to the pre-operational level thinks of dead persons as being in earth, or more often in heaven eating, drinking and chatting exactly as they did when they were alive.

Nagy (1948), investigating how children of three to ten-year-old conceive death, concluded by suggesting three developmental stages for the acquisition of the concept. At the first stage, death is not considered as definite, and has been associated either with sleep or a different way of living. Although for those children `To die means the same as living on, under changed circumstances` (p. 11), death remains a painful and traumatic situation. In Nagy's words: `This, however, does not mean that the children have no disagreeable sentiments in relation to death, because for them the most painful thing about death is just the separation itself` (p. 11). Another characteristic of the same stage is death's conception as a gradual and temporary thing.

Attempting to explain the reasons that lead children at this stage to formulate these conceptions of death Nagy (1948) notes: `The child knows itself as a living being. In his egocentric way he imagines the outside world after his own fashion, so in the outside world he also imagines everything, lifeless things and dead people alike, as

living. Living and lifeless things are not yet distinguished. He extends the animism to death too` (p. 27).

At the second stage, which is reached approximately between the ages of five to nine, death is viewed as a man and the child, although it accepts the existence of death, still cannot grasp its definitiveness.

It is not until he moves to the third stage that he realizes that death means the cessation of corporeal activities, and that it applies to all living creatures without exception.

A similar developmental schema of the concept of death in three stages is also suggested by Kane (1979). She studied 122 children from three to twelve-years with regard to ten components of the concept (realization, separation, immobility, irrevocability, causality, dysfunctionality, universality, insensitivity). A new conclusion reached by that research was the highly significant role the experience played in the formulation of the concept especially for three to six-year-old children.

A slightly different pattern of development is the schema proposed by Melear (1973), that consists of four stages. At the first step a relative ignorance of the meaning of death is observed and death is frequently equated with accident or illness. When the child moves to the second step of concept development he views death as a temporary state and thinks that the dead can be restored to life. At the third stage, death is final, but the dead functions

biologically, whereas only at the final level death is grasped as final, with the cessation of all biological functioning.

Another study of children's comprehension of death was carried out by Speece et al. (1984). They studied children from five to twelve-year-old, focusing on three components, irreversibility, nonfunctionality and the universality of death. Their research proved that subjects achieved an understanding of all three components between five and seven-years old, which coincided with their transition from preoperational to concrete operational thought. A modal age of acquisition of all the components was seven-years old, but it was strongly influenced by children's own experiences with death and what they were told about the topic.

According to the above cited research, young children do not view death as an irreversible fact but think of it as both temporary and reversible. Death is conceived as a long-lasting sleep from which you wake up, or a trip from which you come back. Some others see death as similar to being sick, and so a visit to hospital or an injection may be required in order that the dead person may come back to life.

The attitude towards death of children who have not experienced a loved one's death is healthy and normal. For them the most frightening idea is not death but separation from the mothering person and being deprived of their love.

In regard to the second factor of nonfunctionality, children who belong to the preoperational level of thought believe that dead creatures have nearly the same capabilities as living persons, but to a lesser degree. Death is viewed as a slightly differentiated life.

Concerning the conception of death's universality, before the age of seven children seem to assume that certain actions can make people escape from death, or that specific persons do not die. They also are able to grasp others' death long before they will understand that one day they are going to die.

Koocher (1973) examined children from six to fifteen-years old in regard to a number of questions concerning death. The first question, 'When will you die?' evoked guesses ranging from seven to three hundred years from the present, while, when asked about the causes of death children's reactions range from highly sophisticated to merely magical ones. Most of the subjects denied the possibility of bringing a dead person back to life, and in answer to the question 'What will happen when you die?' references to funerals, heavenly judgment, aspects of sleeping, cremation, and reincarnation were made.

A striking detail in children's conception of death was revealed by a research carried out by White et al. (1978), who examined subjects from kindergarten age through fourth grade. Subjects of all ages, and especially the younger ones, seemed to attribute death to moral causes and

considered it a form of punishment for wrongdoers. So, the authors conclude their article with the incitement: 'Adults may need to assure children forced to deal with death that death results from physical and not "psychological" causes' (p. 310).

Orbach et al. (1985) studied the perception of death in boys and girls from six to eleven-year-olds and concluded that the death concept of humans is easier to comprehend for all children than the concept of animal death. For this reason the comprehension of animal death is acquired chronologically later than that of death in humans. They explained their findings by calling attention to two facts; first, animals, in contrast with the generalized notion of humanity, are used as objects of identification by young children, and second, most children have experienced the death of a pet and not the death of a close adult. Thus, children become more sensitive and resist longer comprehending the meaning of death regarding animals than concerning human beings.

Moreover, the same research showed that: 'It can be concluded, then, that in some children distortions in the concept of death reflect a lack of knowledge, while in others they reflect a defensive process' (p. 462).

Although the concept of animal death was shown to be more difficult to grasp than that of human's death, in a previous study Orbach et al. (1983), examining suicidal and normal children's attitudes towards life and death,

suggested as a device for minimizing the anxiety aroused by the topic of death, the use of stories with animal protagonists every time the chief hero was described as dying. It was considering better for a child to face up to death through animal stories, since the whole topic is bound at some time to come up in his own life.

Tucker (edited by Haviland, 1973) seems to share the same idea and notes that death as a theme is not often depicted in children's literature but occurs frequently in nursery rhymes. In those literary works `death is usually met in terms of animals, and with an emphasis on acceptance rather than on morbid grief` (p. 261).

Children's questions about death are often treated with embarrassed silence, and adults' behaviour on the issue may be held responsible for their misconceptions about death. Formanek (1974) attributes children's misconceptions of the phenomenon to parents' usual practice of immediately replacing a dead pet and to euphemistic expressions which describe death as sleeping or passing away.

Moreover, Ordal (1983-1984), evaluating children's books that deal with the topic of death, suggests that in order to `help the child make this transition from magical views of laws and gain an intellectual understanding of death, we need to give him or her concrete experiences and facts about death` (p. 252). Books can help a child to learn about the issue through the observation of the death of a

plant, an animal and then that of a person, preferably an old one.

In addition, Ordal (1983-1984) objects to all the euphemistic expressions about death often used in books with the pretext that death might frighten or confuse young readers. She asserts that the phrase `Grandma went on a trip` used instead of the realistic one `Grandma died` may result in a fear of trips. She prefers the sentence `it died` to the expression `it went to heaven` for a buried turtle pet, and maintains that the latter might assist children to form a clear idea about death.

4.5 IDENTIFICATION IN CHILDREN'S STORIES

The role of identification in literature in experiencing new situations and gaining a considerable amount of knowledge through this process has been heavily stressed by many authors. Frye (1971), stretching the benefits of identification to the limits, regards gods as the `products of an impulse to identify human and natural worlds; that they're really metaphors, and become purely metaphors, part of the language of poetry, as soon as they cease to be beliefs, or even sooner` (p. 39).

The significance of children's identification with behavioural models has been emphasized either it occurs in life, or in stories. Behaviorism, Piaget's cognitive theory,

and Freudianism have underlined the importance of simple imitation and identification in the child's development and socialization.

Children, through their readings and identification with the characters of the story, experience indirectly many different situations. Although people consider reading 'a pastime that decorates the idle margins of the serious business of living' (Chambers, 1984, p. 25), children do not seem to share such an idea. So when they are embarking on the reading of a story they are fully absorbed by the plot and participate emotionally in the evolution of it. Aiken (edited by Haviland, 1973) notes that for children, 'when they are involved, reading isn't just a relaxation for them, something to be done after work. It's a real activity. (Children, after all, don't differentiate between work and non-work)' (p. 153). They are engaged through literature in a wide range of human experience that they would be unable to live otherwise, and identifying with the characters of the story they organize their knowledge, sift their attitudes, and become informed about the consequences of specific actions. The depth of their participation in the fictional process and the undeniable advantages they gain from it is decisively defined by their identification with the story agents. Thus, identification is an event that merits consideration and speculation.

The role of identification in literature has been thoroughly studied by Jauss (1974), who defines five

different types of it. `Associative` identification is met only in life and plays its role in the formation of groups, where the person develops his own identity and, adopting the attitudes of others, exercises himself in modes of communication. `Admiring` is the second kind of identification, which refers to the aesthetic disposition towards a model that stands as an exquisite ideal. `Sympathetic` identification takes place when the reader is confronted `with the new norm of an imperfect, more nearly everyday hero in whom the spectator or reader can recognize the possible range of his own actions, and can thus be provided with practical insight by way of moral identification` (p. 307). `Cathartic` is the identification described by Aristotle, in which the reader through his identification with the adversities of the suffering hero obtains, by tragic emotional upheaval or a comic release, an inner liberation. Last comes the `ironic` identification that takes place when the reader identifies himself with norm breaking and ridiculous models, like Don Quixote, that otherwise he would repudiate.

Identification with the story protagonists is important to the enjoyment of literature and so Glazer (1979) attributes children's appreciation of folktales, both fairy tales and fables, to the aptness of their characters to be identifiable. Young readers prefer stories in which they can `step easily into the roles of the characters, and find comfort there` (p. 213).

Arbuthnot (1947) agrees that children can identify with the animal protagonists of fables just because they think and act ~~a~~ in^a human way. Stories that present animals which behave like animals are inconceivable to young readers who belong to the egocentric stage and are unable to view reality from another's standpoint. `It is harder for a young reader to identify himself with a rabbit than identify himself with Peter Rabbit, who thinks and talks much as the child does` (p. 427).

Similarly, Christenberry et al. (1979) consider that children's identification with the animal actors of fables is made easier by the fact that they think and act in human-like situations. Animal characters operate on a level that is always psychologically identifiable to the reader, because it is entirely realistic in spite of the possibly fantastic situations described in the tale.

In the same study the authors make a guess about which characters the children are going to identify with. Recalling the fable of `The rabbit and the turtle`, they observe: `As he hears the fable the child may worry about the hare as he arrogantly procrastinates while the steady, plodding tortoise plugs along. Then, because he identifies with the less likely victor, he cheers for the ultimately rejoices with the tortoise as he wins the "impossible" race through his own steady efforts. Children seem to be close to animals, especially pets to whom they talk and from whom they usually receive an instant response` (p. 3).

Bettelheim (1976), on the other hand, in his attempt to prove the superiority of fairy tales to fables, deals with the issue of identification with the actors of the aesopic stories. Taking the story of `The ant and the grasshopper` as an example, he underlines the difficulty of the child in identifying with either of its two protagonists. Only `a hypocritical prig can identify with the nasty ant` (p. 43), which does not show any compassion for the suffering grasshopper, while an identification with the latter leaves no hope for the child. The grasshopper, beholden to the principle of pleasure, has to die, as if it were a crime to enjoy life when the conditions permit it.

Another criticism of fables comes from the French educator and philosopher Rousseau (1948; first publication 1762) who, when condemning the reading of fables by young children, along with all the other defects that he attributes to the genre, refers to the identification of the child with the wrong characters. To validate his point he cites the example of the fables of `The fox and the crow` and of `The ant and the Grasshopper`, stating: `In the above fable children laugh at the crow, but they all love the fox. In the next fable you expect them to follow the example of the grasshopper. Not so, they will choose the ant. They do not care to abase themselves, they will always choose the principal part - this is the choice of self-love, a very natural choice. But what a dreadful lesson for children! There could be no monster more detestable than a harsh and

avaricious child, who realized what he was asked to give and what he refused. The ant does more; she teaches him not merely to refuse but to revile` (p. 80).

According to Rousseau (1948; first publication 1762), when a fable is about a cruel lion the child will identify himself with the lion, and so will learn that he must take the lions' share. If in another fable the lion is overtaken by a gnat, the child will choose the gnat because it is the most interesting personage, and he will be taught how to sting to death those that are too strong to be attacked openly and fairly.

Even in those cases that the child has identified himself with the dying hero, and thus experiences the protagonist's and consequently his own fictional death, he is not really hurt. As Jauss (1974) observes, he learns that the main character is always the reader, who remains alive even after the disappearance of the hero and the writer. `The reader identifying himself with the hero derives happiness from his self-reproduction` (p. 286).

Children's identification with a story character is not accidental but, as research has shown, certain rules regulate their preferences. Boyd & Mandler (1955), for example, have shown that in stimulus stories socially approved behaviour elicits more projections of the self.

Children, according to Barrett et al. (1966), identify with the principal character while, the depiction of

realistic and familiar settings facilitates their identification with the story protagonists.

Jose et al. (1984) experimented with seven to eleven-year-old children, and found that the similarity of the story character with the hero of the story was the major basis for identification. They also reached the conclusion that overall liking of story was found to be caused by identification with the story character, suspense, and liking of outcome, showing that each of the three major components of the story makes an independent contribution to the final evaluation of the story` (p. 920).

The importance of identification in comprehending a story is underlined by Bower (1978), who claims that `to understand is to identify plans` (p. 213). The results of the research revealed that `when a reader identifies with a given character, he steps inside that character's head and sees things through his eyes` (p. 227). When a reader identifies himself with the hero of a story he tends to see him sympathetically, excusing him for all his minor defects of personality. He is viewed as innocent and right, and his misfortunes are attributed to the evil plans of vicious creatures.

Another result, obtained by the same research, is the fact that the story hero the reader selects to identify himself with is the main character, or the one he regards as the chief personage of the story. Another factor that influences the selection of the character with which readers

choose to identify is the similarity of the character's personality with their own. As Bower puts it: "in reading stories having character displaying clear emotions, readers will tend to identify primarily with that character who is feeling the same as they are. Happy readers identify with happy characters, and sad readers with sad characters - all other things equal" (p. 230).

In addition, when the reader is asked to recall events of the narrative he tends to recall more facts about the character with whom he identifies than any other hero of the literary work.

4.6 THE GOALS OF THE CURRENT RESEARCH

Since the aesopic tales contain a great deal of frightening details, like depictions of devouring or the threat of killing, it was believed that the psychological effects of those cruel events on kindergartners should also be investigated in this study. Is it the case that those fables that relate the murder of an innocent animal by a big and brutal one make children of that tender age feel unsafe and anxious?

A great difference between fables and fairy tales is the universal existence of happy endings in the latter, while the former lacks them. Because fables present real situations, without any attempt at beautifying them, they

very often end with the innocent and kind hero perishing, and the triumph of the villain. Some other aesopic tales conclude with acts of devouring, killing or suffering. Kindergartners' attitudes towards the topic of the fables' endings were considered a worthy subject for investigation, since the issue of happy or unhappy endings in regard not only to fables but also to other kinds of children's literature has not been examined very closely in the past.

Although children's attitudes towards death has been the topic of several studies, kindergartners' notions of death in regard to fables had never been investigated.

In previous studies children were either asked to respond to a questionnaire exclusively on the topic of death (a questionnaire constructed by the investigator and given to them), or they were encouraged to finish open-ended stories, which were not the products of literature but made up exclusively for experimental reasons. Sometimes they were also interviewed about stories invented by the researchers which, because they were constructed only to reveal children's notions on death, probably lacked aesthetic merit.

In this study, on the contrary, real aesthetic stories were used with the children, and young subjects were called to respond not to artificial situations but to experimental conditions very similar to their normal story-telling activities.

In addition, the whole topic of children's understanding and emotional attitude towards death was just one part of a major study that aimed at describing and analyzing their total attitudes towards the genre of fable, and included as many aspects of their reactions towards this kind of literature as possible.

Since a wide variety of criteria supposed to govern the identification of the reader with the character of a story has been suggested by previous researches, the same topic came again to the fore in the current research. In regard to the fables and concerning only kindergartners, the criteria of identification were once again under speculation.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH PLAN AND PROCEDURE

The research concerning the comprehension of fables by children was divided into two main parts - one concerning kindergarten children, and the second dealing with the understanding of fables by fifth and sixth graders. The latter age group was included in the study in order that their answers be compared with the results gained by the younger subjects. A more analytical depiction of the research plan follows.

5.1 KINDERGARTNER CHILDREN (FOUR-TO-SIX-YEAR-OLD)

So the sample of the study, as well as the goals, the material, the method and the procedure of the research was different for the two age groups. Young subjects were interviewed concerning every aspect of fables and were given more time and attention.

5.1.1 THE GOALS

The whole experiment was designed to detect kindergarten children's reactions to fables at a moral, cognitive, and psychological level.

According to the construction of the interview, which was nearly the same for every fable, the following questions were raised.

1. Children's liking or disliking of the specific fable, as well as the reasoning justifying their preference. (P)¹.
2. Children's degree of familiarity with the specific story. (F).
3. Children's ability to extract the moral point of the story. More specifically:

3a. Children's competence to differentiate those stories which really point to a moral lesson from those that are not capable of doing so.

3b. Children's ease or difficulty in detecting the hidden abstract truth in five different conditions;

(i). Where the last sentence of the story (which always expresses in a epigrammatic manner the ethical point of the fable) is present.

(ii). Where the epimythium (statement that follows the narration) is attached.

¹. The letter in parenthesis is different for every goal and reappears in appendix two, in order to associate the questions used in the investigation of the specific issue with its corresponding goal.

(iii). Where the promythium (utterance proceeding the tale) is appended.

(iv). Where three moral alternatives, one correct and two distractors, are added.

(v). Where the story alone is presented, without the addition of anything else. (M).

3c. Children's ability to interpret the fables' epimythia wherever they are added.

3d. Children's detection of epimythium in five different kinds of aesopic fables.

4. Children's ability to apply the hidden moral to their specific environment. (Ap).

5. Children's ability to remember the fables.

5a. The basic story line of the tale.

5b. The abstract last sentence. (R).

6. Children's ability to realize the motives of the actions and the logical and psychological background involved in the story and the development of the plot. (U).

7. Children's evaluation of the characters acting in the story. (Ch).

8. Children's evaluation of specific actions conducted by the protagonists of the story as they pursue their goals. The kind of behaviour that reveals children's attitudes towards the hidden ethical principle of the narration was only questioned. (Ac).

9. Children's perception of justice.

9a. The attribution of justice as they feel that it should be done.

9b. The reasoning behind their selection.

9c. The kind of punishment that they suggest in order to reestablish the disturbed moral order of the story world.

9d. Their beliefs regarding the retributive or corrective role of the punishment. (J).

10. Children's identification with a specific protagonist of the story; the factors (interest of the person, his moral status, safety of his position) that lead them to identify with one of the story agents. (I).

11. Children's reaction to the presentation of the harsh aspects of life depicted in the aesopic stories, such as deaths of innocent animals and descriptions of devouring. (Fr).

12. Children's perception of death. Their ability or inability to realize the irreversibility of the phenomenon, and their conception of the bodily functions of the dead person. (D).

13. Children's attitudes towards the endings of the fables, that most of the time are far from being happy. (E).

14. Children's disposition towards the humour of fable and humour in general. (H).

15. Children's beliefs regarding the origins of the stories, as well as their truth or falsehood. (O).

16. Children's approach to the magical elements of fables. (Ma).

17. Children's reactions regarding the nature (e.g. animals, men, gods) of the story protagonists.

17a. Their preferences.

17b. Their views on the personification of the animals in their literature.

17c. Their comprehension of the stereotyped conventions of the animals in literature.

17d. Their reactions to the divine protagonists of the stories. (Ag).

5.1.2 THE MATERIAL

The material used with each age-group was different, but on the whole, it was constructed by fables and a series of questions. Two kinds of material were used in the experiment with kindergarten children, and are included in the first and second appendices; fables (appendix one) and questions (appendix two).

5.1.2a FABLES

Five groups of different fables were related to the kindergarten children, who, after listening to the stories, had to answer a series of questions similar for every children's group. Although the genre is sufficiently

capacious to admit two varieties, the short, blunt aesopian and the charming poetical one, the experiment was confined to the prose version, which is considered more suitable for young children. Only one fable was presented in verse, in order that its reception be compared with the reactions to prose stories. The stories were simplified versions, based on Perry's collection Aesopica (Perry, 1952), very close to the original text, and had not been watered down and reduced to colourless narratives in accordance modern theories of what is suitable for children.

a. First group. Same hidden idea (friendship), different ways of moral's presentation.
`The deer and the lion`. Last sentence.
`The fox and the woodcutter`. Promythium.
`The bear and the two travellers`. Epimythium.
`The donkey, the fox and the lion`. Nothing.
`The cock, the dog and the fox`. Three alternatives.
b. Second group. Same hidden idea (greed), different kinds of aesopic fables.
`The hen that laid the golden eggs`. Fairy tale.
`The dog and the bone`. Typical, genuine fable.
`The camel and Zeus`. Aetiological tale.
`The doctor and the grandma`. Amusing narration.
`The mum and the boy`. Pun on words.
c. Third group. Different nature of behavioural models.
`The lion and the mouse`. Two positive models.
`The Sun and the North Wind`. Negative and positive models.

<p>‘The ant and the grasshopper’. Two negative behavioural models.</p>
<p>d. Fourth group. Different style.</p>
<p>‘The boy who cried wolf’. Verse.</p>
<p>‘The rabbit and the turtle’. Prose.</p>
<p>‘The crow and the fox’. Prose.</p>
<p>e. Fifth group. Unsuitability for moral teaching.</p>
<p>‘The wolf and the lamb’. Description of an immoral situation.</p>
<p>‘The pigeon and the fox’. No point.</p>

The first group of fables seeks to discover the children’s degree of ease or difficulty in extracting the moral lesson of the fable, in connection with five different ways of presenting it. The first aesopic story ends with the main protagonist, who expresses the narrative’s moral in his last sentence. The second story was preceded by a promythium, while the third one was followed by the attached epimythium. The fourth narrative did not invoke the help of any epigrammatic expression of its latent truth, either within or beyond the narration of the story. After the recounting of all those tales, in a random order, the children were asked exactly the same question of discovering the concealed message of the fable. On the other hand, after the telling of the fifth fable, which did not express its moral openly in any way, the children were not required to fish for its ethical meaning, but were given three

alternative morals, one correct and two distractors, to choose from.

In order to equate all the fables regarding the difficulty of grasping the moral idea, and, because it was impossible ^{for} the same fable to be used in every case, the five stories were selected to express the same idea of friendship, which is thought to be a relatively accessible concept, even for kindergarten pupils. In spite of the fact that friendship can be considered as an extremely high and therefore intellectually demanding ethical idea, the crude morality depicted in fables ignores its spiritual implications and, looking to its material advantages, places friendship on a low ethical base. Children's conception of friendship, which is based on vicinity and external characteristics, and is viewed as a pleasant pastime, is not far from what fables illustrate.

In the second group, the fables were also chosen to reflect one idea, in that case greed, another simple notion, even for very young children. Every one of the stories ended with the attachment of a clearly and explicitly stated epimythium. The five stories differ from one another regarding to the category of the fable they belong in. `The hen that laid the golden eggs` is a fairy tale, while the `The dog and the bone` is a typical example of a genuine fable. `The camel and Zeus` bears all the typical characteristics of an aetiological tale that explains the remote origins of current events, and `The grandma and the

doctor` belongs among those amusing narrations that are told for instructive reasons only if they happen to be included in a fable collection. The last fable of the second group, `The mother and the boy`, is based on a witty pun playing with the two meanings of the word `guts`. Is there any difference between any kind of aesopic tale and the reactions it raises to children? Do they prefer or understand better any type of the above mentioned five categories, and do some of those tales present inherent difficulties that deter understanding?

In the third group belong three fables presenting three different moral ideas, which are those of personal value, persuasion, and work. All of them are more advanced than the previous ones, and therefore less understandable by young children, because they are strongly connected with social-relations issues that children are not yet fully aware of. But the hidden meanings of all fables operate at the same level, and are equal as far as their innate difficulties of understanding are concerned. The major difference between these stories is the nature, positive or negative, of the behavioural models they present. `The lion and the mouse` demonstrate two acceptable paradigms of action. Both the protagonists of the fable act in the right manner. This is not the case for `The Sun and the North Wind`, where the Sun stands for propagating a respectable type of behaviour, while the North Wind presents a negative example. In contrast, the animal agents of `The grasshopper and the ant`

are not to be praised and their conduct is not to be emulated. Do children react differently towards a fable if the spirit of it is the desirable one, where everyone acts as he should, or do they prefer to read about what is just, where the bad one gets punished and good rewarded, or do they enjoy more a pessimistic picture of life, where everyone acts in a selfish manner?

The criteria that influenced the selection of the fables which make up the fourth group had nothing to do with the context, but only with the stylistic peculiarities of the genre. In this group also the level of the morality conveyed is remarkably advanced, as the complicated ideas of lie, over-confidence and flattery are required for understanding of the plot. The two fables of `The turtle and the rabbit` and that of `The fox and the crow` are presented in prose, whereas the aesopic story of `The boy who cried wolf` is related in verse. The differences in the understanding and evaluation of the two different types of retelling of the fables were measured.

The fifth group includes only two fables, which are remarkable for the message they convey or pretend to transmit. The story of `The wolf and the lamb` is notable because it not only concludes with an unhappy ending but pronounces an immoral issue. Thus, the children are open to two options: either to state a moral in the form of a dry description of a harsh immoral situation, something that should not, but unfortunately always happens, or to distort

the meaning of the story and utter an ethical statement in accordance with the just world vision, something that should happen, but did not take place in the specific fable. The second fable `The fox and the pigeon` is constructed by the researcher, built on the same pattern of `The fox and the crow`, but altered in few crucial points so as to make the story unsuitable to stress any ethical idea, even for those who seek to impose. Children, when they are confronted with a fable, the type of story that always ends with an admonition, consider the discovery of the moral as their task, and, in the event that they cannot find any, they attribute the lack of an epimythium to their inability to think of something, and not to qualities inherent to the story. For this reason, the artificial last `fable`, was given to them in order to detect the genuineness of the whole process of extracting a moral. Do children come naturally to the discovery of a meaning when they listen or read a fable, or are they forced to find it when the adult authority asks for it? If this were the case, children would attach morals to the last fable, with the same frequency that they do for all the others.

5.1.2b QUESTIONS

In addition to fables, a series of questions were addressed to children in order to clarify their reactions to

them. The specific issues investigated in this study are mentioned in the part of the chapter labeled `The Goals`. The questions were selected to serve the aims of the study, and so they correspond to them. In order to enable the reader to understand the link between goals and questions, the same mark (a letter in parenthesis) appears in the text where the targets are presented, and in appendix two where the questions are placed.

Parallel and standard forms of question were used for all the stories. Questions common in every fable, like the one concerning the liking or disliking of it, or that of conveying morality and its application to children, were expressed in exactly the same words in all the fables. Others, such as questions about the characterization of the story agents, were stereotyped for every story, and the only part that changed from one to the other was that regarding the names of the protagonists. In addition, issues that appear only in a limited number of stories, were stated in exactly the same manner every time. Moreover, wherever two different responses, positive or negative, were elicited by children and a following question depended on them, two standard types of questions were constructed in a parallel way (e.g. If yes, If no).

If we bear in mind the three types of questioning-answering strategies, as they are defined by Raphael (1982), the questions employed in this research belong to all three categories: `right there`, when the answer is solid in the

text, `think and search`, when the reply is again in the story but requires information from more than one sentence, and `on my own`, when the answer is based on the passage but does not appear in it. Children were confronted with all the above types of questions, and another one that required the expression of their own views, regardless of the narrated story.

In selection of the questions special care was devoted to avoid common pitfalls. Children were asked, more than once, about similar issues, so they were given the chance to clarify fully their views without being misunderstood. Rhetorical, complex and leading questions were absolutely excluded, and none of them was constructed in a negative form, as children are still young to deal with them. All the questions were expressed in a concrete, simple and understandable way.

5.1.3 THE METHOD

The data were collected in Greece in 1990 from January to May of the same year. All the children that participated in the research, were interviewed by the same female researcher, who, due to her Greek nationality and language chose to complete the experiment in her mother land. Thus the research was saved from the introduction of another indifferent variable, the response of children to a

foreigner. Moreover, when young children are interviewed, they tend to make many different comments on various matters that are not always relevant to what they are asked, giving, at the same time, a great amount of unnecessary information, which can be better interpreted by those who share the cultural environment and the general conditions under which they live. Famous television programs, favourite books, and family conditions are constantly referred to, so as to make their responses incomprehensible to those who do not understand the specific society. In addition, the difficulties of young children in communication and the abundance of neologisms they often use, due to their insufficient knowledge of the language, make research in a foreign language difficult and unreliable. All children of that age, in every country of the world, belong, according to Piaget, to the same developmental stage of the preoperational thought and are marked by egocentrism, syncretism and irreversible logic. Thus, results obtained to a specific country can also be applied to other children of the same age regardless their origin.

In order to reduce the possibility of the kindergarten subjects' adverse reaction to an unknown person, the experimenter served as an aide with non-authoritative status in every class participated in the study, for approximately two weeks preceding the presentation of the experimental conditions. In addition, the researcher tried to establish

good rapport with the children, in order to minimize the risk of deception, whether conscious or unconscious.

With the younger children the only way available for collecting data was the individual interview. Interview was regarded the only method for gathering data from kindergarten subjects, because children of that age lack the ability to read and write and very often they `say` more with their eyes and gestures than with their words. Although body language was not written down and therefore not measured, it provided the experimenter with an invaluable aide for a better understanding of the children's views. Interview also permits the addressing of a number of prompt questions aiming at helping the children to overcome their shyness and to clarify their beliefs. Besides, the experimenter, through eye contact with the children, checked their concentration through the story-telling and thus minimized the chances of an innocent, or very rarely, intentional deception during the phase of questioning.

Fables were told to the young subjects by the same female researcher, in exactly the same way, with the same pace and intonation. The story-telling was carried out by the researcher herself because it was regarded as preferable to children's listening to a tape recorded tale, since the absolute similarity of the retelling was watched over and guaranteed. In addition, because we agree that, `If story telling is more demanding on the performer, reading aloud is more demanding on the listener` (Chambers, 1984, p. 141),

the method of story telling was given preference, in order to facilitate young children to understand the stories without making excessive effort. Moreover, through that method, the researcher could, at any time, check their reactions and secure their attention. She also could interject a brief sentence when they seemed to be distracted by something else.

During the story-telling all known techniques for obtaining better results were adapted (Baker & Greene, 1977; Heeks, 1981; and Shedlock, 1951). Rhetorical questions were not asked, pictures were not shown, and, as far as all the important canons were concerned, like perfect knowledge of the story, the pleasant voice, natural gestures and the creation of a magical atmosphere, the researcher did her best to meet acceptable standards.

After the relating of each story, the children were asked to answer a series of questions. According to Lewis (1969) 'To be asked questions after one has listened is something that hardly happens in everyday life outside the school. When children look at television or listen to radio, it is they who ask the questions' (p. 99). But although that technique has been denounced as a teaching practice, it has been proved as a proper vehicle for investigation. Graesser et al. (1981), in a paper dealing with methods suitable for detecting children's attitudes towards narrations, state that the results of their study confirm that: 'the question-answering procedure is a fruitful method of exposing the

possible inferences that are generated when stories are comprehended` (p. 20).

Young children, in order to be assisted in gaining a better understanding of the fables, were showed the masks of the protagonists while the story was told to them. During the recounting of the aesopic story the experimenter put in front of her face the mask of the agent that was talking or acting at that specific moment. Later, when children were questioned about many aspects of fables, they were asked to point to the mask of the relevant character, in order to determine that they really had talked about that particular agent and that the reference to him was not a slip of the tongue. During the story telling the differences between the various actors were indicated , apart from the use of masks, with the analogous raising or dropping of the story-teller's voice. No other aids were employed in the narration of the stories, in an attempt to exclude the involvement of nonverbal variables in the understanding and evaluation of the fables.

The researcher, in order to motivate the young subjects to listen to all the fables of the same group, used a little ploy. The first time that they joined the experiment - because some of them needed more than one session to go through the entire number of fables - the children were provided with a blank card divided in as many parts as the number of the fables of the group plus one. The name of the child was written on the first division, and every time a

fable was related and discussed, the child `gained` one sticker. He had to collect all the stickers in order to `win` the card and take it home with him. Through this innocent trick no child dropped out before accomplishing the entire experiment.

In an attempt to familiarize children with the concept of a moral, warming up stories were constructed and given, in a fixed order, to all the young subjects before the story-telling. The number of them varied for every child, according to his ability to conceive the idea of a moral, but they never exceeded four nor were fewer than two for every young subject.

The young children were also instructed in the use of two rating scales representing two different types of measurement. The first one consisted of a series of three, one-coloured, various-sized circles, arranged in a line of descent, which corresponded to three different degrees labeled as `a lot`, `just o.k`, and `very little`. The second scale involved five three-sized, two-coloured circles, set in a bimodal shape representing a form similar to that of the letter V, where the two modes were occupied by the two large different-coloured circles, the sides by the respective medium-sized circles, and the lower point by the smallest circle. That scale represented the goodness of the protagonists on its purple side and their wickedness, on the black side, and coincided, starting from the big purple circle, with the five different answers `very good`, `good`,

`good and bad`, `bad`, `very bad`. Children were trained to use correctly the gradations of the two scales, and at the beginning of the test session, they were familiarized with each point on the rating scales. Then they were given two practice stories to prove their understanding. The introduction of those scales was considered necessary to the study in order to rely on an additional nonverbal element when the young subjects revealed their opinions.

In an investigation of this type, involving a lengthy interview and a large sample, re-test reliability would not only be difficult, but would also be of doubtful value, due to the factor of practice. The reliability of the whole process was ensured by techniques used in the study, such as the researcher's eye contact with all the interviewed children, the identical questions asked in two or three different ways at various times, the establishment of a good rapport between the experimenter and the sample, and the employment of nonverbal factors in order to ensure a better understanding of the children's thoughts.

To obtain an estimate of reliability in coding the accuracy of children's answers a second observer independently coded responses for approximately one-third of the sample. The correlation of the two was 91,7%.

5.1.4 THE SAMPLE

The investigation is confined to a narrow age group, ranging between the ages from four to six. The children of that age attend kindergarten and are involved in school activities for four hours every day. The age-span of the subjects is extremely limited, since, based on the Piagetian model of cognitive development, children proceed to the next stage of concrete and later formal operational thought very soon, compared with the time they remain in all the other stages. Children of that age group exhibit a similar way of thinking, which differs remarkably from that at older ones.

The study is restricted to five equivalent groups of young children. All the subjects study in public schools in Chaidari, a suburb of Athens, and belong to the middle social and economic class. They belong to a white, urban society and 32% of their parents hold university or college degrees, while all of them have completed the compulsory nine-years of schooling. Nearly half of their mothers, 43%, work full-time outside the home and 39% of their fathers are self-employed or own small businesses, while the remaining 61% work in the public or private sector. All of them are monolingual, speak the Greek language, and belong to the Greek Orthodox Christian Church.

The method for sampling was the cluster one, as whole classes of schools participated in the experiment, each of them forming a separate group. The schools were chosen so as

to meet criteria of similarity between each other and to bear the above mentioned characteristics of the specific population. Then the particular classes were sampled randomly. All the pupils from the chosen class were involved in the study, except a very small number of young ones who refused strongly and repeatedly to cooperate (in a total of 115 kindergarten children only 2 did not join in). This fact resulted in the formulation of five unequal groups of young children. Within all five groups the numbers of girls and boys are uneven and thus the total number of male and female subjects is also unequal.

Analytically, the first group includes 22 subjects, 12 male and 8 female, ranging from 50 to 68 months-old. Their mean age is 61.8 months-old. The subjects of the second group are 29 children, 16 male and 13 female, with ages from 49 to 71 months. Their mean age is 62.2 months-old. The third group consists of 23 children, 10 male and 13 female, from 48 to 69 months-old. Their mean age is 61.1 months-old. 19 children, 11 male and 8 female, starting from 48 up to 69 months-old and with mean age 60.7 months-old, make up the fourth group. The fifth group is composed of 20 pupils, 8 male and 12 female, and lies within a span of 49 to 70 months of age, while their mean age is 62.3 months-old. Totally, 113 kindergarten children, 59 male and 54 female, aging from 48 to 71 months-old and with mean age 61.6 months-old, partook in the research.

Table 5.1

Sample. Four-to-six-year-old.

Groups	Subjects	Males	Females	Age range	Mean age
First	22	12	8	50-68	61.8
Second	29	16	13	49-71	62.2
Third	23	10	13	48-69	61.1
Fourth	19	11	8	48-69	60.7
Fifth	20	8	12	49-70	62.3
	113	59	54	48-71	61.6

The age of the children will constantly be given in months and not in years, for the sake of precision. The noted age is that at the exact time of the interview. For that reason, children born at the same time, appear as having different ages.

5.1.5 THE PROCEDURE

The data gathering process required five months, and started two weeks after the Christmas holidays in order to allow the students to relax after their vacation and to feel again familiar with the school environment. Because most (87%) of the kindergarten children had not had previous experience of attending a kindergarten, a nursery or a day care school, the experiment was set four months after the beginning of the school year, so that the young pupils had the time to adapt to the new situation.

The young subjects were tested individually, by the same researcher, in a small room attached to their classroom. After a brief conversation aimed at making the child feel at ease with the assigned experimental conditions, familiarizing him with the tape recorder, the directions and the reward card, and securing his cooperation, the first fable was recounted.

The aesopic stories were presented, in random order, in exactly the same manner. Only when the child seemed ready to withdraw his attention, the experimenter introduced into the narration at that point the phrase `and then x` (x represents the child's name). That was proved enough to retrieve him back to the story. In the rare cases that this was not possible, the child was asked if he wanted to continue at another time.

After the telling of each story, the child was asked to complete the same task of answering the questions on the specific story as well as some general ones (appendix two). The series of questions was presented in an unchanged order, and the process of asking was the same for every child. The experimenter was careful to standardize the pace and intonation of them. The researcher let the children express their views on all subjects and encouraged them with prompted questions only if they hesitated. After every answer the children were praised, regardless of the correctness of their reply. Care was taken only to continue the interview as long as the child seemed interested and

involved. At the first sign of fatigue or boredom, completion of the discussion was left for another session.

All the interviews were tape-recorded, using a portable cassette recorder, and then were transcribed. Total time for completing an interview was approximately 70 minutes, but this varied considerably from pupil to pupil. The investigator was friendly but neutral, encouraging and praising effort throughout.

The first story of the group was always introduced with the following words: `Those are some stories and I am going to relate them to you. You may have heard some of them before, but listen carefully just the same, so that you can talk about them with me. Here is the first story. I hope you will enjoy it`. After the completion of every story, the child was addressed with the next wording: `Now I am going to ask you some questions and, please, tell me just what you think. There are no wrong or right answers. Just tell me what you really think`. Every new fable was announced like this: `You did very well with the previous story and got your first (or whatever) sticker. Do you feel ready to carry on to the next story right now or do you prefer to come again another time?` If the child agreed to go on, the next tale was presented; otherwise the child was allowed a break for some minutes, or the inquiry was resumed in another session.

5.2 FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADERS (TEN-TO-TWELVE-YEAR-OLD)

The research was not confined only to kindergarten children but also included a group of children between the ages of ten to twelve-years-old. Their answers were gathered in order to be compared with those of the younger subjects. Thus, the goals of the research, the material, the method, and the procedure were slightly different than those of the kindergarten children.

5.2.1 THE GOALS

The older children were questioned only for the purpose of comparison with the young ones and so only basic aspects of the investigation brought to bear. More analytically:

1. Detection of the hidden moral point in seven fables. (M).
2. Comprehension of the conventions of the flat, stereotyped animal characters of the stories. (Ag).

The fishing of the concealed morality of the fable was thought as a very important topic for the comprehension of the genre, and thus older subjects were asked to complete this task. In addition, the assignment was not so simple or trivial and thus the children were saved for feeling bored or underestimated.

Their understanding of the character conventions in literature was also considered significant for defining the

differences in the perception of literature by the two age groups.

5.2.2 THE MATERIAL

The material of the research, even for the fifth and sixth grade children, also consisted of two units; the fables (see appendix one) and the questions (see appendix two).

5.2.2a FABLES

A group of fables was designed to be given to the older children, in order their answers be compared with those of the preschoolers.

Fables. Suitability and unsuitability for conveying a moral idea and various behavioural models.
`The fox and the woodcutter`. Two negatives models.
`The dog and the bone`. One negative model.
`The Sun and the North Wind`. One negative, one positive model.
`The bear and the two travellers`. One negative, one positive model.
`The lion and the mouse`. Two positive models.
`The wolf and the lamb`. Description of an immoral situation.
`The pigeon and the fox`. No point.

Fables from the five groups given to kindergarten subjects were selected, with special care devoted to the nature of the behavioural morals they conveyed. `The fox and the woodcutter` presents two negative examples; `The dog and the bone` depicts also a negative picture of behaviour, but is exerted by only one person; `The Sun and the North Wind` illustrates one positive and one negative prototype; the same is the case with `The two travellers and the bear`; `The lion and the mouse` demonstrates only positive paradigms; `The wolf and the lamb` is an immoral fable, whereas that of `The fox and the pigeon`, since it is a tale without a point, is falsely labelled as a fable.

The stories were presented to both age groups in exactly the same words and thus the older pupils found no difficulty in understanding them.

5.2.2b QUESTIONS

Fifth and sixth graders were compared with the young ones only regarding the development of the ability to find the hidden truth of the stories, and the understanding of animal conventions (see appendix two).

The questions that coincided with those addressed to the kindergarten children were expressed in exactly the same way in both age groups. Thus, the vocabulary was entirely

understandable by the fifth and sixth graders and no further explanations were necessary.

All other questions addressed to kindergarten children were omitted from the part of the investigation regarding the older ones, since a limited pilot study showed that they were too simple for fifth and sixth graders. You cannot ask, for example, a pupil of this age 'Where we take the meat from?' because all, without any exception, can give the right answer.

5.2.3 THE METHOD

Since fifth and sixth graders have mastered the skills of reading and writing, they did not require a time consuming interview in order to reveal their views, but were capable of working with a questionnaire. Questionnaires save time and labour, providing, at the same time, the possibility of going back again to a previous question or to the instructions, in case that this is thought necessary.

Although older children were familiar with the genre, through their own readings, before the beginning of the experiment, a brief discussion of it took place, involving an attempt at defining the words 'fable' and 'moral' and providing some examples of already known aesopic stories. After the practice session the experimental booklets were distributed. The experimenter, also, stressed particularly

the fact that the questions were not a test for getting high marks and also that `there was no right or wrong answer`, but that their answers were a great help to her and she would be grateful for their cooperation.

Two booklets were distributed to the fifth and sixth graders. In the first one the seven fables were typed in a fixed order (see appendix one), while the second contained the questions and an appropriate blank space for answers (see appendix two). The questionnaires were allotted to each class by the same female researcher and the time allowed for their completion was approximately 40 minutes.

5.2.4 THE SAMPLE

The inclusion in the study of a small group of older children, should not be viewed in isolation. Their responses were used as a standard for comparison with the answers of the younger ones, in order to clarify more fully the reactions of the latter.

The group of fifth and sixth graders was composed of students from two different classes and numerates 55 subjects, 21 male and 34 female, with ages from 120 to 144 months-old, and with mean age 133 months-old. The fifth and sixth graders formed a group of 55 pupils. The method of sampling was in this case the cluster method.

Children at that age belong, according to the piagetian schema, to the concrete operational stage, and bear similar characteristics of thinking.

All the subjects study in public schools in a suburb of Athens, Chaidari, are white, monolingual, Greek Christian Orthodox and belong to the middle class. Their parents have the following occupations: civil servants, 16% of the fathers and 9% of the mothers, officials in the private sector, 43% of the fathers and 27% of the mothers, self employed, 41% of the fathers and 13% of the mothers, while 51% of their mothers are housewives.

The two age groups, kindergarten children and fifth and sixth graders, were equated in every aspect except that of age. The social class, language, religious, race, city and the method of sampling were common in both groups.

5.2.5 THE PROCEDURE

The older children were all given questionnaires on one day. The researcher visited their classes on the same day of the experiment and, after asking for their cooperation and explaining to them that this was not a test, and that there was no correct or wrong answer, reminded them of the nature of fable and its moral tag and encouraged the pupils to mention as many titles of aesopic stories as they could think of. After a brief discussion on fables and their

morals, she distributed to them the questionnaires and stayed in their classroom until the last questionnaire was completed. In both classes the teachers were asked to leave the classroom for the entire time the experiment lasted, so the children could feel better that this was not a usual school activity and that they were not going to be evaluated. After completing the questionnaires they were warmly thanked for their help.

CHAPTER SIX

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH: CHILDREN'S APPROACH TO THE AESOPIC

FABLE AS A LITERARY PRODUCT

6.1 THE CURRENT RESEARCH

Children's appreciation of fables as literary works was investigated only with regard to the kindergarten subjects. Due to their simple context and vocabulary, fables are easily remembered and comprehended by fifth and sixth-graders. For that reason subjects of that age were not examined on those aspects of their understanding.

During the course of the current study, children after listening to each story, were asked to say whether they had heard the story before, or whether it was the first time that they came across it. Those who already knew the fables were asked a second question, concerning the degree of their familiarity with the aesopic tale (see appendix two, mark F).

Children were also interviewed about their literary preferences regarding fables and, after the recounting of every story, they were encouraged to express their liking or disliking of specific narratives.

Children expressed their preferences regarding 18 different fables and the procedure was the same for all of them. The subjects were asked to state if they had enjoyed the tale or not, to show on a rating scale the degree of their liking or dislike and to refer to the elements that, according to their personal judgement, contributed most in the formulation of their positive or negative evaluation (see appendix two, mark P).

Kindergartners' notions about the factual or imaginary character of literature were investigated and thus the topic of the stories' origins was brought into question. Preschoolers were questioned about the truth or falsehood of the stories in general. Those children who affirmed the truth nature of the narrations were asked to define the place and time the stories occurred, while for those subjects who maintained the fictional character of the stories, the detection of their true origins was the next task asked of them (see appendix two, mark O).

In regard to the story 'The hen that laid the golden eggs' the 29 kindergartners who listened to it were questioned in order to investigate their reactions to the magical character of the tale. The illusory and unrealistic fact of the golden eggs was isolated and studied in an attempt to define children's perception of such events (see appendix two, questions marked as Ma).

The 29 four-to-six-year-old children were first asked to point to the fact described in the story they considered

as unrealistic and impossible in real life circumstances. The real-world conditions were purposely stressed to children, since nobody is going to find anything incredible and bizarre within the fairy tale framework. For those children who asserted that nothing sounded weird to them, or referred to episodes different than that of the golden eggs, a second question, about the possibility of the existence of those eggs, was addressed to them.

Children's attitude towards humour as it appears in fables, and as it occurs in general in their lives, was within the scope of this study. Throughout the story telling procedure children were constantly watched by the researcher in order to note any signal of mirth elicited by the narration. If any laugh or smile was observed, children were not questioned to explain it, but the specific point of the story, along with the nature of their response, was written down. Children who regarded fables as funny were asked about the specific elements of the story that made it hilarious, while the whole sample was interviewed about the kind of stories they normally regard as humorous (see appendix two, questions with the mark H).

Another aspect of humour that was within the breadth of this study was the attitude of children towards two different kinds of stories regarding by grown ups as humorous. The amusing story of the `The doctor and the grandma`, where humour is elicited by a witty remark, and the `The mum and the child`, in which laughter is provok

by a pun, were related to kindergartners and their reactions were carefully observed.

It is worth noting that the study of humour is an extremely difficult one, due to the absolutely delicate nature of the phenomenon, which tends to evaporate as soon as the situation becomes more technical and less spontaneous, as normally happens in experimental conditions.

Another aspect of fables that was considered very interesting was children's ability to recall all or parts of the related fables. Children were asked to answer simple questions that aimed at the investigation of their ability to remember plain facts of the stories (see appendix two, group of questions marked with R). The number of the questions addressed to them differed from story to story, and was defined by the particular character of every narration. Thus, if the story consisted of more than one episode the questions were inevitably more. Special care was devoted in order to obtain the same format of questioning among the different fables.

Children's answers to the recall questions were classified at three levels, according to the degree of success in remembering. High, moderate and low marks were obtained by children for every question they answered and their final score was calculated by applying the two thirds criterion.

Another topic of great interest was the ability of the young subjects to recall the last sentence of the fables in

those cases in which the comments of one protagonist were expressed in direct speech. The fable which concludes with the words of the last speaker, manifests within its last sentence the basic moral idea of the story in an abstract and general way. For those fables the epimythium that follows the narration consists of a repetition of the last sentence in a slightly more epigrammatic manner. Thus, the children's ability to recall with accuracy and to comprehend the meaning of the concluding comment of the fable was regarded as a hint for revealing their comprehension of the hidden moral of the fable.

Since the remembering and recalling of a story is strongly connected with understanding, all the kindergarten subjects, apart from being asked to recall information placed within the narration, were also questioned on topics requiring a deeper understanding of the facts recounted in the fable. This inquiry concentrated on children's comprehension of the motives of the actions, the realization of their consequences, and the implications elicited of specific events (see appendix two, questions marked with U).

The understanding of the actual meaning of the last sentence of the story was also considered important for the discovery of the inner moral truth of the fables, and wherever the specific character of the aesopic tale permitted it, children's mental grasp of the epigrammatic ending statement was included in the investigation.

When children did not give the correct answers to the recalling and understanding questions, they responded with various comments which reflected the way they think and the stage of their cognitive development. Thus, it was considered particularly appropriate to include in the presentation of the results all the different kinds of those wrong answers.

The study does not purpose to evaluate children according to their answers, but only to observe the different routes kindergartners follow, in order to solve similar cognitive problems.

6.2 METHODOLOGY

As was explained in chapter five, kindergartner children were listening to 18 aesopic fables and then they were interviewed in order to reveal their ideas on fables as literary products. For further details on the methodology, the material, and the sample of the current research, see chapter five.

6.3 RESULTS

Preschoolers' reactions to fables as literary products were investigated in regard to the aspects of familiarity, preference, humour, remembering and understanding.

In this part of the investigation percentages will not appear, due to the great numbers of the responses and the limited interest of them. Kind is more important than size. The range of the responses is more meaningful than the frequencies, the means and the averages. More analytically the results obtained by this research are as follows:

6.3.1 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S IDEAS AS TO THE TRUTH OF THE STORIES

In order to study children's conceptions about the truth of fables and their reactions towards the magical elements of the aesopic stories, their views on the origins of stories in general were also included in the research.

6.3.1a THE TRUTH OF THE STORIES

Kindergartners' thoughts on the truth of stories were investigated in a sample of 74 young subjects. The results obtained are the following:

The stories are true: A number of 15 out of 74 children asserted that the things narrated in every story were true and they had happened in reality.

When they were asked to specify the place and the time that they occurred in, they pointed to a remote past and to a distant area.

The 15 children that considered stories as describing real facts gave, amazingly, only two different answers to the time question; `In the very old times` or `Long ago`. Some of them gave more details in order to define the remoteness of the time, such as `when mum was still at school` (m., 54), or `when I was a baby and I couldn't speak` (f., 49).

A little more variation is observed regarding the precision of the place in which they took place; 7 pointed to the village, 4 to the forest, while the remaining 5 responded with the phrase `far away from here`.

Those kindergartners that accepted the true kernel of the stories showed a clear tendency to consider everything that happens in a tale as obviously important that cannot take place in familiar situations characterized by routine repetition. In addition, a period of time between the occurrence of the significant event, that is honoured to become a tale, and the present time, must intervene before it can become incorporated within a story. Maybe this fact can be explained, either by the pessimistic assumption that our time is far from being magical, or by the recognition of the necessity of a time period that will determine the importance of those events that are destined to live for ever in tales.

Some stories are true, whereas some others are not: Only 2 out of 74 children belong to this category. These 2 children were unwilling to answer any other question and kept saying that they did not remember or could not decide which tales were true or false.

The stories are not true: The vast majority of the kindergartners questioned about the true or false nature of the stories simply asserted the second option. Some 57 out of 75 subjects affirmed the fictional character of tales. 56 of them responded with a single `no`, while one said: `No, they are not true. Only the Christmas story is true` (m., 64).

One young boy elaborated further saying: `Tales are not true. They are ...dreams. In tales you have everything, hens that lay golden eggs, houses made of chocolate, but in reality never` (m., 58).

6.3.1b THE ORIGINS OF THE STORIES

Of the 57 children that accepted the imaginary character of the tales a second question about the way they came into being was asked. Their answers, presented in an ascent line, from primitive to more advanced, are as follows:

No explanation: Some 8 children out of 57 either did not respond to the question or replied with the phrase `I don't know`.

Absurd explanations: Another 2 children offered very obscure answers which surprised the researcher with their fantasy. `The man who sells stories. He finds them under the ground in the bottom of the sea and they are like square stones and after that, they become books` (f., 57). `The story-teller. They grow in the fields and he goes there and picks them up and gives them to schools` (f., 49).

Explanations of a circular type focused on the commercial element: Only 2 children attributed the origin of the stories to the shops that sell them. When further questioning was employed in order to make them say more, they gave circular responses. `From the bookshop. -Were they anywhere before the bookshop?. -In another bookshop ...` (m., 54). The other child invited a whole fleet of lorries referred every time to `another lorry` (m., 61).

Those children, obviously, treated stories as a consumer good and, ignoring their cultural value, viewed them from a marketing dimension.

Mechanistic explanations: A number of 11 out of 57 children concentrated more on the object `book`, rather than the context of it. These subjects were more interested in

the production of the book and less concerned with the creation of the story. Thus, references to factories, machines and workers are frequent in their answers. `The shopkeeper has a machine and makes them. He finds them like spaghetti and makes them into shapes and then the machine goes pap, pap, pap and puts the letters onto a nice paper` (f., 59), the presentation of the printing process is evident in this case; `Workers make them with their hands just like toys` (m., 71); `The factory makes them from paper, paintings and letters` (m., 69).

The children who offered mechanistic explanations classified books in the same group as all the other consumer goods that need the raw material and the interference of the technology in order to reach the market. The story was viewed within the system of production and consuming and that process was explained.

Specialists' job explanations: Another 7 children out of 57 acknowledged that it is impossible for a machine to produce anything without the attention and direction of man. Those children attributed the creation of the stories to specialists, `the men whose job is to write books` and declared ignorance about anything concerning that job.

`The men who write books. It is their job and they know to do it` (m., 57); `The owner of the bookshop writes them. I don't know how. It's his job not mine` (f., 68); `Some

teachers just like you, not our teacher. You know how to do it. Why do you ask me?` (f., 65).

Traditional explanations: Stories were considered for 7 out of 57 children as the distillation of traditional wisdom which passes from one generation to the other. The people that were responsible, according to kindergartners, for the continuity of the tradition were those who were naturally associated with the story telling activities; namely teachers, parents, grandmas and old books.

Some of the children's responses after omitting the interviewer's prompt questions are: `From mum and dad. And they learned them from their teachers. And they learned from their teachers. From their teachers` (m., 66); `From the teachers. And the teachers from a book. A teacher wrote that book. From another old old book` (f., 68); `From the story tellers. And the storytellers from their grandmas. And the grandmas from their own grandmas when they were little girls` (m., 71).

Forms and images from their own experiences (e.g. teachers and parents), as well as conventional stereotypes (e.g. story tellers and grandmas) were put forward by those children who considered stories as literary inheritance.

Correct explanations: A very large number of kindergartners pointed to the right origin of stories and located their creation in people's minds, stressing thus the

imaginary character of fiction and exhibited, in contrast with previous research¹ and their young age, an extremely acute judgement.

More than half the children did not define a special category of people who were more appropriate or adept than others at undertaking the task of constructing stories, but seemed to think that everyone was able to fabricate a tale. Another category of them confined the talent of inventing a tale to those who `sell them` (m., 63), or `know how to write` (m., 66), or `whose job it is to think in their minds and then write stories` (m., 53) or `whose job it is to tell them. They think of them in their minds and then they tell them` (m., 53).

Some subjects expressed clearly the notion that they too were capable of composing a story. `In our minds` (f., 69) or `In my mind I can make one if I like` (f., 67) are some answers indicative of children's idea about the origin of stories.

In spite of the fact that even young children can make up a story, stories relate matters of outstanding importance, and as one to a young pupil put it `men think of something good and they like it and then they write it` (m., 63).

¹. see above p. 39.

6.3.2 KINDERGARTNER CHILDREN'S REACTIONS TO THE MAGIC ELEMENTS IN FABLES

A number of 29 kindergartners who listened to the fable of 'The hen that laid the golden eggs' were asked to point to the weird and impossible element of the story. To those children that did not refer to the unlikely nature of the golden eggs a second question about the existence of those eggs was also addressed.

6.3.2a THE FICTIONAL ELEMENT

No response: The vast majority of the kindergartners, 11 out of 29, preferred not to answer and in spite of the investigator's prompt questions, they insisted on not responding.

Nothing: Another 3 children asserted that nothing sounded weird or unearthly to them and every episode or character was perfectly transferrable to real life conditions.

The slaughter of the hen: The unexpectedly high number of 10 kindergartners found that in the 'hen' fable²,

². The fables, for reasons of space and time, are referred to by the name of the first protagonist as it appears in its title.

was the killing of the bird, the morally condemned outcome of the story, was the impossible element of the narrative. Those children interpreted existence in ethical terms, and converted existential events into moral ones. Since killing was a repulsive and appalling action, it was also considered an inconceivable and impossible event.

Thus, 11 children asserted that it never happens that a man kills a hen in real life, and that this action takes place only in tales, where unthinkable things can occur. Some subjects explain their choice with phrases such as: `Nobody kills a hen, because we love her` (m., 56); `Villagers don't really kill hens because this is a bad thing to do` (f., 65); or `You can't kill a hen in real life, because then the hens run away and don't stay there for a man to kill them` (f., 65).

The possession of a hen: One young subject spotted the impossible element of the tale in the possession of the hen. `The thing that never happens in real life is to have a hen. Nobody has a hen. You can have only a dog or a cat but not a hen` (f., 55).

This young girl living in a flat in the big city views country life as so remote that she considers it impossible.

The golden eggs: Only 4 out of 29 children, when they were asked to point to the outlandish and incredible episode in the `hen` story, referred to the golden eggs.

`All the hens, both good and bad, never lay golden eggs. They lay only white` (f., 67). `The hens don't lay golden eggs. I don't know about this one. Maybe this wasn't a real hen. Maybe she was a robot-hen. Robot-hens can do everything but real hens cannot. Golden eggs? Never!!` (m., 69).

6.3.2b THE GOLDEN EGGS

No response: Only 3 children did not respond when they were asked to answer if they believed that golden eggs could exist in real life.

They exist: `Yes` was the answer for 4 children who considered them as real. Two of them stressed the fact that although they exist they are relatively rare, either because they are confined to a special kind of hens or to certain days. `Only the hens who live in the South Pole lay golden eggs, and we can't find them` (f., 63); `We can eat golden eggs just like white ones but they are not very usual. Only on Easter day hens lay them` (f., 64).

They do not exist: Although only 4 kindergartners pointed to the golden eggs when they were questioned as to the impossible elements of the story, their number climbed

to 18 when the investigator asked them if such eggs could be met with in real life.

This difference in numbers reveals that, apart from the fact that the first task was more demanding than the second, morally unjust behaviour gained more importance for children who view the world from its ethical and not a realistic prospective, preferring to comment on the moral fact although they knew that it was not the only peculiar one in that fable.

6.3.3 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S FAMILIARITY WITH FABLES

Data are presented in Table 6.1.

There is no evidence to make us suspect that children gave misleading answers about their familiarity with fables. The story of `The pigeon and the fox`, which was the investigator's own creation, was not identified by even one single child as already known. In addition, other less popular fables which are not usually included in children's collections of fables were mentioned by few subjects as familiar.

When children asserted that they knew a fable, then they always replied that they `remembered it very well`. On the grade scale that they were shown they never pointed to any other degree than the greatest one. Again, children's

liking for bipolar classifications and extreme judgements was demonstrated.

Table 6.1

Four to six-year-old children's familiarity with fables.

Fables	Yes	No	Total
Deer	4	18	22
Fox	4	18	22
Bear	1	21	22
Donkey	-	22	22
Cock	10	12	22
Hen	10	19	29
Dog	7	12	29
Camel	3	26	29
Doctor	1	28	29
Mum	-	29	29
Lion	4	19	23
Sun	1	22	23
Ant	5	18	23
Boy	3	16	19
Rabbit	6	13	19
Crow	4	15	19
Wolf	1	19	20
Pigeon	-	20	20
Total	64	357	421

The aesopic fables proved to be rather unfamiliar to kindergarten children, and in a total of 421 questions, asking for their knowledge of 18 different fables, only 64 answers admitted a familiarity with the story, while the remaining 357 declared that they had not heard that before.

The most popular fables were those of `The dog, the cock, and the fox`, `The hen that laid the golden eggs`, `The dog and the bone`, and `The rabbit and the turtle`.

The fables that not even one child had heard of, apart from the artificial one of `The pigeon and the fox`, were those of `The mum and the boy`, and `The donkey, the fox and the lion`.

6.3.4 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S PREFERENCES AMONG FABLES

Data are presented in Table 6.2.

The total amount of responses obtained by kindergarten children in regard to the question of liking or dislike of certain fables were 421 remarks, elicited from 113 children, who evaluated 18 different aesopic fables.

It merits consideration that only 5 of the comments were negative compared with 406 positive ones, while in another 10 cases the subjects refused to respond.

Although children were prompted to make use of the rating scale in order to indicate to what degree they enjoyed the stories, none of them pointed to any other grade than the highest one.

The unanimous reaction of the kindergartners concerning their strong appreciation of the stories, as well as their persistence in manifesting the greatest enjoyment, are worth contemplation. Perhaps children's appreciation of being shown so much of time and attention in order to be offered the pleasure of a good story, or the prospect of a sticker for every story they listened to, or maybe the school

Table 6.2

Four to six-year-old children's preferences of fables.

Fables	Like	Do not like	No Response	Subjects
Deer	20	1	1	22
Fox	21	1	-	22
Bear	20	1	1	22
Donkey	20	1	1	22
Cock	20	1	1	22
Hen	29	-	-	29
Dog	29	-	-	29
Camel	29	-	-	29
Doctor	29	-	-	29
Mum	29	-	-	29
Lion	22	-	1	23
Sun	23	-	-	23
Ant	22	-	1	23
Boy	17	-	2	19
Rabbit	18	-	1	19
Crow	19	-	-	19
Wolf	20	-	-	20
Pigeon	19	-	1	20
Total	406	5	10	421

environment, in which the whole procedure of the story telling was completed, led children to think of an affirmative judgement as polite, or correct, or as simply more advantageous.

6.3.4a NEGATIVE JUDGMENTS

The 5 negative comments were manifested by a single child for all the fables of the first category. He did not like the `deer` fable `Because the lion ate the deer and it went into its belly` (m., 68). He also disliked the `fox` fable `Because the woodcutter saved the fox` (m., 68). The reason offered for the dislike of the `bear` story was that `the bear put its muzzle into his ear` (m., 68), while for the `donkey` story the explanation was `because the lion ate the donkey` (m., 68). For the `cock` story no justification of the negative opinion was given.

From the above examples it becomes clear that the child who rejected the five aesopic fables based his criticism not on aesthetic criteria but on the morality reflected in the stories. The illustration of a lion that devoured an innocent deer, the representation of a cruel fox that was protected, and the depiction of a good-hearted donkey that became the victim of a repulsive conspiracy and was eaten up by a lion are transgressions of moral and not aesthetic rules.

The case of the `bear` story is slightly different, since, due to the child's inability to diagnose an ethical offence, he condemned it only because of the danger evoked by a wild bear approaching a defenceless human. Unfortunately, the child did not give any hint for the `cock` story.

6.3.4b POSITIVE JUDGMENTS

Data are presented in 6.3.

In a total of 421 responses a striking majority of 406 of them referred to their liking of the specific fables. When preschoolers were asked to assert what elements they enjoyed best they offered the following answers:

No response: Only a very limited number of 19 in a total of 406 answers did not point to a specific characteristic of the fable as their reason for liking it.

The whole story: A considerable number of responses belong to this category and 105 out of 406 answers were of that kind. 98 replies were very similar and referred to the entirety of the fable, using phrases such as `I liked everything` (f., 49) or `All that you said` (f., 65) or `The story` (m., 67), while the remaining 7 gave a summary of the relating fable, mentioned every detail they remembered of;

e.g. `I liked the pigeon with the cheese, and the fox wanted it and said to the pigeon nice things like "you are beautiful" and then the pigeon flew to another tree and then the cheese fell down and then the fox took it and said `pigeon you are stupid` (m., 70).

Even when children were asked to be more specific they did not isolate a single or a series of elements, but insisted on their appreciation of the whole story.

From the 18 children who gave a summary of the tale, it became also evident that they viewed each story as a string of facts and focused their attention on the articulation of those events.

Protagonists. The vast majority of children justified their judgments by referring to the characters of the fables. Maybe it reflects the fact that the researcher referred to the stories' titles which were composed by the mention of the tale's main actors (e.g. `The deer and the lion`). Also the appeal of animal characters to kindergarten children is another ostensible reasons for explaining the high percentage of answers referring to the protagonists.

182 responses out of 406 formed the somewhat motley category in which children held responsible the story agents for the appeal of the aesopic stories.

In most cases, children pointed to the good protagonists of the story. In the `wolf` fable, for example of a total of 10 children that focused on the agents of the

story, 8 of the them considered the lamb as the element that made them like the story, whereas only 2 found the wolf, although bad, as interesting. The infatuation of children with the good character of the story extended to those stories in which the kind person held a secondary and rather marginal role. Although the deer in the `camel` fable was mentioned only because of its antlers and its participation in the story was kept on the fringe of it, of a total of 9 children who liked the fable, 5 pointed to the deer. The case of the `boy` fable is similar, and 3 kindergartners liked the tale because of the presence of lambs, that played only the part of the catalyst in the evolution of the plot.

Fabulists and children do not seem to attribute a good personality to the same creatures. Although in the `bear` fable, for example, the creator of the story obviously considered contemptible the behaviour of the man who, indifferent to his friend's predicament, climbed the tree, children did not find any fault with him and evaluated his personality as very good. Thus, in that case, when subjects referred to him as the one who makes the story more enjoyable, they justified their preference on the basis of their liking for the good character.

Not only good persons had a hold on children, but they also seemed to enjoy the presence of interesting persons in their stories. The mum in the homonymous fable, the judges, or the police according to some kindergartners, in the

`doctor` story and the hunters in the `fox` tale, attracted the children's attention.

On the other hand, very few children referred to the bad persons of the fable, having also a clear idea about their blamable behaviour. In the `wolf` fable, 2 children pointed to the wolf, although they characterized it as bad, because they attributed to that animal the honour of making the story engrossing. `I liked it very much because of the wolf. -What for? -Because the wolf opened its mouth and ate the lamb up. -Did you like that? -Yes because it is funny if you pretend that you eat somebody` (f., 67).

Some other children gave a list of all the protagonists that took part in the fables. A little boy liked the `rabbit` fable because of `the rabbit and the turtle and all the other animals` (m., 59), while another one enjoyed the `Sun` story due to the presence of `the Sun and the North Wind and the man with the overcoat` (m., 69).

In a total of 182 justifications due to the presence of protagonists, 143 children explained their preferences by offering a circular comment about the nature of the actor, who was or was regarded as good; 32 mentioned all the different protagonists; and the remaining 7 thought that the villain made the story more lively and vivid.

Relatively insignificant but striking events. A number of 36 out of 406 comments referred to insignificant

but conspicuous details, ignoring other important incidents of the narration.

Although researchers, like Stein (1979) regard the initiating event as rather unimportant and more likely to escape children's attention, some of the kindergartners referred to it in order to justify their preferences. In the 'dog' fable, for example, 2 children explained 'Because the dog had the bone in its mouth' (f., 52), while for the 'ant' story a boy said 'I liked the fact that the grasshopper sang when it was good weather' (m., 54).

In spite of the fact that kindergartners prefer the narrations of actions to dialogues, the attention of a number of them was caught by the retelling of a conversation in direct speech. In the 'ant' fable one young pupil liked the story because 'the ant said: "go, go, go"' (m., 60). In the 'wolf' tale also, a kindergarten justified his preference with the words 'that the lamb said: "Mr. Wolf, I don't call your father bad names"' (m., 69).

Other secondary event that children seem to favour are those involving motion. 3 subjects focused their attention on the flight of the pigeon in the homonymous story; e.g. 'I liked very much that the pigeon flew to a high branch and it flew and flew' (f., 57). And in the 'rabbit' fable the running contest of the two protagonists was an element that pleased 2 of its listeners; 'I liked very much that the rabbit and turtle run all through the forest' (m., 68).

Ethically correct persons or events appear to be extremely popular with kindergarten children. Thus, children enjoyed the morally justified actions described in the stories. One child said of the `wolf` fable that she enjoyed the story because `The lamb said the truth (f., 54).

Although immoral actions were condemned, some of them made the narration lively and interesting. If we bear in mind the children's notions of the fictional character of the story, we can explain why children regard unethical events as exciting. The killing of the hen, the stealing of furniture from the grandma's house, the devouring of the deer, and the deceit of the crow were put forward as thrilling events.

Endings: Another 43 out of 406 answers referred to the way the stories end as a justification for their liking them. In some cases, children mentioned the dispensation of justice, that normally happens at the end of the story. When the disturbed ethical order of the world is restored again, kindergartners, full of satisfaction, expressed their approval. `I liked very much that the villager did not find any gold in the belly of the hen` (f., 59), for the `hen` story; `That the dog lost its bone` (f., 59), for the `dog` fable; `That the ant gave the grasshopper a lesson` (f., 70), for the `ant` story.

The happy endings of the stories were also appreciated. `I liked that the mouse freed the lion` (m., 56) was the

answer for the `lion` fable; or `that the Sun win because he is good and makes nice weather` (m., 70) for the `Sun` tale.

Humourous element: Only half of the fables were applauded because of their funny character, and a number of 21 out of 406 responses - a percentage of 5% - referred to the hilarious effects of them.

The `dog` fable was considered as funny by those children who understood that the dog was looking at its reflection in the water, and as soon as they realized it they burst out. When later on they were asked about the reasons for their preference some of them pointed to the humourous character of the fable.

Even cruel incidents described in the stories were received as funny by some kindergartners and the cutting of the camel's ears, for example, was put forward by a boy (m., 67) as comical. Also, the manner of story telling made children laugh in some cases. Some of them liked the story `because the mouse had a funny, squeaky voice` (f., 49) for the `lion` fable. Even the reference to a practical joke that the shepherd boy was playing to the villagers in the `boy` story, was suggested, even by those children who did not understand it, as the element that made them enjoy the fable.

Summing up, we are justified in saying that children, as at least this investigation shows, enjoy the process of listening to a story. When they judge a narration they use

Table 6.3

Four to six-year-old children's favourite elements of fables

Fables	Whole	Agents	Insignificant but striking events	Ending	Funny chara- cter	No answer	Responses
Deer	5	11	2	-	-	2	20
Fox	10	8	1	-	-	2	21
Bear	4	9	5	-	-	2	20
Donkey	3	12	-	4	1	-	20
Cock	4	7	1	5	-	3	20
Hen	5	18	2	4	-	-	29
Dog	12	9	2	3	3	-	29
Camel	11	9	2	6	1	-	29
Doctor	8	10	3	7	-	1	29
Mum	7	19	-	-	-	3	29
Lion	6	8	1	3	2	2	22
Sun	5	10	1	1	4	2	23
Ant	6	11	2	1	2	-	22
Boy	4	7	1	1	4	-	17
Rabbit	3	9	2	1	2	1	18
Crow	3	7	3	4	2	-	19
Wolf	5	10	3	1	-	1	20
Pigeon	4	8	5	2	-	-	19
Total	105	182	36	43	21	19	406

obviously moral criteria in examining the accordance of the story with the ethical code and apparently ignore the aesthetic aspect of the text. From the variety of different characteristics that a literary work may have, about 5% of kindergartners referred to its humour.

6.3.5 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S APPRECIATION OF FABLES' HUMOUR

Children were observed during the story telling in order that their reactions to the humorous nature of fables be recorded. They were also questioned on their idea of fun, in regard to the specific fables as in general.

6.3.5a KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S ANSWERS IN REGARD TO THE HUMOUROUS NATURE OF THE RELATED FABLES

Although all the 113 kindergarten subjects were asked after listening to every fable if they found it amusing, the number of positive answers was quite small. In a total of 421 responses, only 7 were positive, while the remaining 414 did not think of the aesopic stories as amusing. More analytically:

The `fox` fable was regarded as comical by one boy that explained his answer as: `Yes, it was very funny. The fox is

funny. I have seen it on telly. It runs hop hop. Very funny!' (m., 62).

A similar explanation given by another boy, who attributed the attraction of the `lion` story to the way a mouse he had once seen in his house runs.

Four children thought of the `dog` fable as funny, but they enjoyed very different things. Two children realized, contrary to what the dog thought, the illusionary nature of the bone in the river, and their superiority compared with the actor made the story humourous. Another one laughed because `The dog lost its bone in the end. It was a bad dog. Well done!` (f., 68). The just suffering of the dog satisfied the child, and although whatever is right is not necessarily comical, restoration of the disturbed moral order was very much appreciated by the kindergartners.

Another child considered the same story as funny `When the dog lost his bone. -What was funny with that? -He jumped into the water and made funny noises` (f., 63). No one made any noise during the story telling, neither was any mention made of it, but the preschooler was attracted by that specific element.

Another child was delighted with the `camel` fable because `Zeus cut^{off} the ears of the camel` (m., 58). Although the child considered it a just punishment for the camel, further questioning proved that he found the story laughable not because of the satisfaction that the vindication of

justice brought him, but because of the observation of the animal's predicament.

Summing up, of the few children who considered fables funny, 3 thought of them as humourous because of elements that were not referred to the stories, but the narration brought them to mind. In these 3 cases kindergartners laughed at action humour, while of the remaining 4 children, 2 exhibited a kind of superiority humour, 1 enjoyed the slapstick or banana skin humour and the last one regarded the affirmation of the ethical order of the world as comical.

6.3.5b KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO THE HUMOUROUS NATURE OF THE RELATED FABLES

Although some children did not find the fables funny when they were questioned about them, they responded with laughter or smiles during the narration of the fables. The responses of that kind were 39 and were based on the researcher's observation during the story telling.

The fable which elicited the most mirthful responses was the `dog` story, in response to which 12 children laughed or smiled when they listened to it.

The particular aspects of fables associated with those responses were the following:

Issues concerning the storytelling: A number of 20 responses out of 39 were linked to the story telling process. One child laughed when he heard about the fox in the `fox` fable, 8 when they heard the storyteller relating that the dog was falling into the water and lost its bone, 6 when they listened to the squeaky voice of the mouse in the `lion` fable, and another 2 gave a smile during the narration of the same story because of the way the mouse teared out the ropes. Another 3 subjects liked the `phoo phoo` of the North Wind in the `Sun` story.

Although the fables were not acted out but only recounted, with the assistance of the reteller's voice and the masks of the agents³, children found extremely funny those aspects of fables that were connected with motion. The jump into the water, the tearing of the ropes as well as facts relating to silly words, like `phoo phoo` for the North Wind, and unusual voices, such as that of the mouse inspired cheerful responses in the children.

Superiority humour: Only the fable of the dog and the bone elicited this type of response and 4 children realized something that the hero of the story was not able to grasp and laughed at it.

³. The exact text of the fables is presented in appendix one and details about the procedure of the story telling as well as the material of the research are included in the 4.4th chapter.

Story agents' predicaments: Only 7 children regarded as laughable the scene of the camel's misfortune, when the long ears were replaced by little funny ears.

The incident was connected with action but it concerned a cruel plight and not a neutral event.

Immoral action: Something that is cruel can also be funny, as the previous category has proved, and something that is immoral can also provoke laughter. The fox's trick, in the `Fox and the Crow`, was not an ethically justified one but 6 children smiled when they saw it succeeding in depriving the bird of its food. Another 2 found the boy's practical joke very smart and in the fable `The boy who cried wolf`, both of them commented on it favourably when the tale was over.

The discrepancy between children's hilarious responses during the story telling activity and their own judgements on the funny character of the fables in the interview process merits consideration. When they were asked about the humorous elements of a story they usually came out with descriptions of dispensation of justice and the reference to endings that revealed a compliance with the ethical law. On the other hand, when kindergartners were observed for mirthful responses through the story telling phase, only immoral scenes were regarded as funny. Maybe this discrepancy can be explained by children's inability, to a

certain degree, to distinguish just from humorous elements in the narratives.

6.3.5c KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S CONCEPTION OF HUMOUR

In regard to kindergartners' conception of humour in general, 74 subjects were asked to respond to the broad question of what is humorous. Their answers were classified as follows:

No response: Some 24 children did not respond to that question or gave very general answers like 'None' (m., 65), or 'All of them' (f., 54), or 'I can't remember now' (f., 67).

Slapstick or banana skin humour: Kindergartners obviously favoured this kind of humour, referring to it in 30 out of 74 responses. In many cases, they recalled incidents from real life, 'When a child trips on a rope and falls down, and he gets hurt a little' (m., 66), television programs, 'When the Pink Panther sits in a hole and falls in' (m., 65), and incidents that have become cliché, 'When they have big cakes and throw cakes in the other's face' (m., 64), while not a single response referred to slapstick humour as it was presented in literature.

Action humour: Only 2 children out of 74 pointed to actions that were considered by adults as vivid, lively, pleasant, but not humourous. The circus environment made kindergartners feel nice, and two incidents that occurred in it were regarded as funny. `When the lion jumps through wreathes` (m., 66) and `When the elephant goes up` (m., 64).

This type of humour could have also been classified as incongruity humour, since lions are not supposed to jump through wreathes, nor elephants to stand on their rear legs. But, according to the researcher's opinion, children, realizing the consistency of that kind of behaviour within the circus environment, referred to them not because they were thought inappropriate under the specific conditions, but because they are pleasant.

Incongruity humour: Another 16 children considered incongruity as having humourous effects, and pointed to incidents that violated natural rules, `When the lamb eats the wolf` (f., 69), presenting the reverse consequences from the expected ones, `When Tom chases Jerry and when he gets hold of him, he kisses him and hugs him` (m., 64), referring to exaggerations, `When there are some worms and they are very big and the men can go into them` (f., 66), and those depicting unsuitable behaviour, `When the bear carries her baby bear on her back and the baby beats her with her tail as she walks` (f., 60).

Taboo topics: Another 3 children considered prohibited issues comical. One girl referred to pregnancy, 'If I say I am pregnant and I shall have a baby' (f., 55), another boy to urine or penis, 'Only if you say something about wee and wily, then it is funny' (m., 66) and bursting out he related a dirty joke. The third child was amused by the mention of the action of farting, 'When the clown says "I fart", then he farts and we laugh' (m., 63).

Reference to laughter: Even if a mere reference to laughter is made, kindergartners tend to consider it funny. Two of the subjects explained it in their own words: 'When I see somebody laughing then I laugh. It is funny, isn't it?' (m., 58), and 'I laugh at funny stories. -Which stories are funny? -Those that have funny letters. -Which letters are funny? -If they say that they laugh and the other laughs and then I laugh' (f., 59).

Maybe the explanation of this kind of humour must be sought among the social aspects of the phenomenon, which is considered rather as a common activity shared with others than a lonely entertainment.

6.3.5d KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE HUMOROUS FABLES

In spite of the fact that 29 kindergartners were confronted with two different kinds of fables, amusing

narrations and puns, which normally provoke amused reactions in adults, none of them considered them as funny.

Children's lack of appreciation of this kind of humour can perhaps be attributed to the specific nature of it. Both kinds belong to verbal humour and kindergartners seem to prefer silly words or mimicked noises to witty remarks and puns. The reason that children do not revel in this kind of humour is most likely that they lack the mental abilities to grasp it.

6.3.6 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S RECOLLECTION OF FABLES

Kindergartners were rather successful in recalling stories. In this research, not only the level of recollection was considered interesting, but also children's wrong answers were regarded as worth recording and studying.

6.3.6a THE LEVEL OF RECOLLECTION

Data are presented in Table 6.4.

Kindergartners scored well at the task of recalling related fables. Applying the criterion of the two thirds, the majority of them, 255, achieved high marks, some of them moderate, 82, while nearly the same number, 84 scored only low mark.

Table 6.4

Four to six-year-old children's level of recollection of fables.

Fables	High	Moderate	Low	Total
Deer	14	-	8	22
Fox	11	4	7	22
Bear	13	2	7	22
Donkey	15	2	5	22
Cock	13	5	4	22
Hen	21	2	6	29
Dog	22	1	6	29
Camel	28	-	1	29
Doctor	19	2	8	29
Mum	21	7	1	29
Lion	15	4	4	23
Sun	10	6	7	23
Ant	18	3	2	23
Boy	9	3	7	19
Rabbit	16	-	3	19
Crow	3	13	3	19
Lamb	-	17	3	20
Pigeon	7	11	2	20
Total	255	82	84	421

If children managed to recall adequately the part of the story they were asked about their responses were scored as high. In the cases that they reproduced half the information presented in the text their replies were called moderate, while if they did not answer at all or said something totally irrelevant to the actual text, their reactions were labelled as low.

In regard to the 'crow' fable, for example, and in response to the question of 'What did the fox tell the crow?', a high marked answer was: 'Bird, you have very beautiful feathers and if you have a sweet voice you'll become the king of the forest' (f., 63). A moderate answer

given by a young subject was `Mr. Crow you are beautiful and you have nice feathers` (m., 64). Although this pupil managed to recall some of the information conveyed by the fable, he failed to refer to the bird's supposed nice voice and the fox's admonition to sing. Both those elements were key points of the animal's remarks, the most significant points in the evolution of the plot, and basic to understanding of the narration's hidden morality.

The answer `Crow, open your mouth for the cheese to fall` (f., 56) was scored as low since it was entirely different from what the fox was reported as telling the crow. It was constructed by the child herself under the influence of the following episode.

The fable of `The Wolf and the Lamb` was found to be most difficult, probably because its double-pattern construction and the domination of dialogue did not permit any child to score highly at it. Also, the aesopic story of `The Boy who Cried Wolf` was regarded as difficult, maybe because it was presented to them in verse and not in prose. Another difficult-to-remember fable was that of `The fox and the crow`, since as it will be shown later, this particular fable was shown to be extremely hard for kindergartners to comprehend.

6.3.6b RECALLING OF FABLES' LAST SENTENCE

Data are presented in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5

Four to six-year-old children's recollection of the last sentence of the fables.

Fables	High	Moderate	Low	Total
Deer	-	5	17	22
Fox	-	3	19	22
Bear	1	4	17	22
Doctor	5	3	21	29
Mum	7	3	19	29
Lion	1	-	22	23
Sun	-	2	21	23
Crow	1	-	18	19
Pigeon	1	4	15	20
Total	16	24	169	209

From a total of 209 answers concerning the recollection of the last sentence, only 16 replies were scored as high, another 24 as moderate, while the vast majority of them, 169, were considered as of very low standard.

Kindergartners exhibited great difficulties in recalling the epigrammatic general remarks of the last speaker, since they were more close to the abstract truth of the story than to the concrete narration.

When they were called to remember the last sentence, the young subjects employed a great number of different practices. Some of them focused on one word or a group of words that seemed meaningful to them and made their own

sentence using those words. `We are not friends` (f., 65), said one girl after listening to the `fox` fable, remembering that the epigrammatic sentence that the fox pronounced at the end said something about friendship. The leap from the concrete to the abstract was not accomplished in that case.

Other children invented their own sentences in accordance with the plot line or their own practice on similar occasions. Thus, when the contest between the Sun and the North Wind came to an end, the former was reputed to have uttered `I won! I did it!` (f., 69). The fox, also, when it got the crow's piece of cheese, supposedly said to the bird `Thanks, crow. Bye now` (f., 63).

In some other cases, children remembered the structure of the last sentence, but, due to their inability to recall the exact wording or to understand its meaning, invented their own conclusion, which was based on the same pattern as the real remark. The last sentence of the `bear` fable was an admonition, but for a kindergarten boy it took the form: `She told me not to go again to the forest with my friends because there is me, the bear` (m., 54).

From the analysis of those data it is obvious that kindergarten children had great difficulties in remembering and recalling the concluding epigrammatic sentence of the fable.

6.3.6c THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S WRONG ANSWERS

When children did not remember the information placed in the narration, they very rarely responded by admitting their ignorance. Most of the time they invented answers, taking into account their past experience of life, or their already formed conception of stories, or details of the narration that appeared later, or their general idea about the nature of the specific story.

In this part of the results section we attempt an analysis of all the incorrect answers. All of the replies presented here are scored as low or moderate. Some answers were obviously wrong, such as the ones that had sprung from preschoolers' knowledge of fairy tales, while others, like children's elaborations added to the precise recollection of an event, were based upon correct information.

Real life conditions: Many times children responded with an answer that was consistent with real life conditions but was not drawn from the information given in the story. Children with replies of that kind revealed in many cases an adequate knowledge of the most plausible situation in real life conditions but low recalling abilities.

When a young boy was asked to say what the dog saw in the water in the `dog` fable, he replied in the most natural way `A fish` (m., 63). Of course, if someone looks into a

river it is more probable that he would see a fish than a dog with a bone, but stories do not always describe the most plausible events.

Make believe world: Some children have already learned that stories do not narrate real and mundane things, but are more concerned with imaginary and magic conceptions. Thus, when they were asked to remember the details of the stories, they gave colourful and original answers based on their notions of the make-believe world of fairy tales.

When the deer, in the `deer` fable looked into the water it did not admire its legs. But a young girl did not like a realistic story, deprived of any sign of magic spell and whimsical event. So she decided to employ her own fantasy in order to make it conform to her own standard of weirdness: `The deer did not like that his legs become green. The lake was under spell from a witch and when the deer drank from its water, his legs became green` (f., 61).

In accordance with right-world notions: Although fables are constructed to transfer moral ideas and instruct human beings to pursue a better way of life without much conflict and strife, the image of the world portrayed in the stories is not always the fairest one. Fables do not describe what is best but what really happens, and how men can make their misfortunes less tortuous.

Young children, when they are asked to remember what was described in the story, sometimes distort the actual events in order to meet ethical standards. This is mostly the case when they are called on to recall what occurred in the end. If the weak and the good are unfairly devoured by the big and cruel, they tend to forget it and attached their own happy endings to the fables.

For the `wolf` fable 2 out of 20 children who were addressed the same question `What happened in the end?' replied `The wolf didn't eat the lamb. It went back home` (m., 58).

contrast with
In those fables that end with the tragedy of the good protagonist, the aesopic story of `The dog, the cock and the fox` that finishes with a suitable punishment of the bad fox was well remembered by nearly all the children questioned. Of the 22 subjects only one did not give any answer and another one stressed the fact the `The fox didn't eat the cock` (m., 54), that it was also absolutely correct. The remaining 20 children declared unanimously that the fox was devoured by the dog.

Inferential information in accordance with moral rules: Another kind of answers were elaborations on the correct replies, giving at the same time information that, although it was not incorporated in the narration, comprised inferential statements through which greater unity of

character was achieved. If someone was characterized by the children as evil, then all his actions were dreadful.

In the fable of `The fox and the crow`, the fox was the one who got the piece of cheese at the end, and some children felt extremely happy about this. When they were asked to remember where the crow found the cheese, 10 children answered in words such as `It took it from the fox` (f., 63), in spite of the fact that the story gave no such hint.

The difference between this category and the previous one is that in the former cases the children twisted the truth in order to make the story depict a moral situation, while in this case the actual events had been respected and only some inferential information was added.

Attempts of explanation: With those answers, children, although they revealed their ability to recall the exact piece of information they were asked for, due to their objection to the nature of that information added their own explanation of it, distorting the real facts of the narration.

A boy, when asked to point to the difference between the hen of the story and all other characters in the `hen` fable, refused to accept the imaginary rules of the fairy world. He said: `It is the same as the others. It laid white eggs and then the children painted them golden and the

villager was such a stupid fellow and thought that they were golden` (m., 71).

Elaboration of the events: Even when children could remember the recounted story with precision, they nevertheless elaborated the actual facts of the story.

When a child was asked what happened at the end of the `rabbit` fable, she said `The turtle won and the rabbit was ashamed and then the turtle took the prize and then they had a party, a fancy dress party, and the animals came with their wives and children and the rabbit was not invited` (f., 68).

In the `wolf` fable also, a girl made the lamb reply to the wolf's accusation of spoiling the river `I don't make the water dirty. I touch only my tongue. I am thirsty and I want to drink water and we have no tap at home. We do not have water at home to drink there with glasses. The tap has been broken. I came here` (f., 56).

Addition of tension: If the story was not as exciting and remarkable as children liked it to be, some of them undertook the task of making it more striking by adding some extra details or changing slightly the existing ones.

In the `wolf` fable, for example, the accusation of insulting the beast's father is not as serious as a charge of murder. Thus, the little girl transformed the accusation

and the defence into `You killed my father. I'll eat you` and `I didn't kill your father` (f., 63), respectively.

Also the refusal of the ant, in the homonymous fable, did not create the appropriate dramatic tension and a young girl endeavoured to correct the mistake, `And the ant took a stick and chased the grasshopper and when it reached it, the ant gave the grasshopper a good smack and the grasshopper cried and the ant didn't give him any food` (f., 59).

Scrambled order: When children were asked to recall a part of the related fable, they often rushed to the end or to a later detail.

For the `rabbit` fable a young boy, when he was addressed question about the initiated event, `What the rabbit and the turtle decided to do`, rushed to give a full summary of the story `The rabbit slept and the turtle won` (m., 69).

Especially in the case of the `wolf` fable children, due to the structure of the narration, that was based upon a double questioning/answering procedure, reversed the sequence of the dialogue and spoke first about the accusation regarding the father and then that of spoiling the water.

Changes due to their inability to grasp the meaning of the given information: This kind of answer was extremely

common regarding the parts of the fables that included verbal humour.

In the `doctor` fable, children did not appreciate the humorous element of the story, the witty remark of the grandma, which was constructed in order to amuse the readers. So when they were asked to recall it they offered sentences that were lacking any humorous aspects. `He took my money` (m., 59) or `He is a thief not a doctor` (f., 57) were some of their remarks.

Likewise in the `lion` story, when children were asked to remember the mouse's exact words after saving the lion's life, they found many difficulties and gave answers such as `I tore your nets` (m., 65).

With respect to symmetry: The construction of the stories and especially of fairy tales is based upon a symmetrical pattern. Everyone who receives a spell and is transformed into another creature at the beginning of the story must return to his previous nature before the tale ends. Also the events of the story, e.g. failures, should be repeated normally three times before something new happens. In addition, the behaviour of an agent is not independent from the conduct of the other protagonists, and every hero is connected with all the others in relations of opposition, good/bad, or supplement, king/servants.

When a boy who had heard the `ant` fable was asked what the grasshopper was doing during summer, he answered

correctly `It sang` (m., 53), and when later on he was questioned about the ant he, obviously influenced by the grasshopper's occupation, replied `It danced` (m., 53).

In the case of the `North Wind and the Sun`, a child after giving right information about the former's failure in his attempt, said of the Sun being persuaded by the replication of failure as it is observed in fairy tales `The Sun blew again with his mouth and nothing happened` (f., 64).

Overgeneralizations: Some children, when they did not remember exactly the answer they were asked to give, came out with very general replies and, although they were prompted to give more details, they refused. Those general answers were regarded as springing from the children's inability to remember what exactly happened, and thus they solve the problem by making extremely broad comments.

For the `lion` fable, for example, and in response to the question about the mouse's offence towards the lion at the beginning of the story, the child's reply was `Naughty things` (f., 53) and no further explanation was given.

Half answers: In this group of responses children did not move away from the details presented in the narration but they gave only part of the truth of it. In most cases they referred to those striking events which were connected with the action and the evolution of the plot, ignoring

those parts of the story, e.g. the last sentence, that were essential to the conveyance of the hidden moral ideas of the fables.

In the 'hen' fable for example, when children were asked about the ending of the story, a subject replied 'He killed the hen' (m., 69), which was absolutely true, but does not stress the fact that his mean expectations were not fulfilled and his greed was not satisfied. It would not astonish us if those particular children also failed to detect the hidden morality of the fable.

In addition, in the aesopic story of 'The crow and the fox', when the children were asked to recall the fox's flattering remarks to the bird, two children replied: 'You, crow, have nice feathers' (m., 49). The omission of the comments about his sweet voice is not only important to discovery of the hidden moral truth but also for understanding the story's development.

6.3.7 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING OF FABLES

Compared with the children's ability to remember and recall the incidents related in the stories, in comprehension of their full meaning and of the implications of those facts kindergartners were not equally successful. Children clearly failed to gain insight into the motives

behind the actions and to realize the consequences of the deeds of the protagonists.

6.3.7a THE LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING

Data are presented in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6

Four to six-year-old children's level of understanding of fables.

Fables	High	Moderate	Low	Total
Deer	5	1	16	22
Fox	-	12	10	22
Bear	1	4	17	22
Donkey	10	7	5	22
Cock	12	3	7	22
Hen	17	2	10	29
Dog	21	2	6	29
Camel	13	11	5	29
Doctor	6	16	7	29
Mum	5	17	7	29
Lion	1	11	11	23
Sun	2	10	11	23
Ant	2	15	6	23
Boy	7	-	12	19
Rabbit	7	2	10	19
Crow	7	3	9	19
Lamb	7	-	13	20
Pigeon	12	4	4	20
Total	135	120	166	421

Applying the criterion of the two thirds, children's answers were classified as high, moderate and low. Low understanding was, in general, the category to which the

most students belonged, 166 out of 421, while high and moderate comprehension appeared nearly at the same frequency, with 135 and 120 responses respectively.

Here are some examples of answers classified as high, moderate and low in regard to the `donkey` story and concerning the question `Why did the lion agree with the fox?`: A high marked response was `To eat the donkey and the fox` (f., 69); a moderate one was `To eat the donkey` (m., 63); while a low one was `The lion wanted the donkey in the trap because it kicks` (m., 55).

From the first group of fables, the aesopic tales of the `deer`, the `fox`, and the `bear` proved more difficult than the `donkey` and the `cock` stories. Although all of them were dealing with the topic of friendship, they put the emphasis on various aspects of it and created different intellectual demands on the children. The `deer`, the `bear` and the `donkey` fables presented the betrayal of friendship, a concept relatively demanding for children, since they view friendship as a transitory relationship based on mutual interest, which does not make any claims on virtues like unselfishness and altruism.

Thus, in the fable of the `bear`, the two men are friends even after the incidents `because they walk together` (m., 59), or `it is like that. Men remain friends with men and not with bears` (m., 66), or `because both of them are good. -Why? -Because the bear did not eat them` (f., 67).

The `deer` fable was also difficult for children. Its subject is in itself difficult to understand, and furthermore, apart from the structural figurativeness of the genre, additional symbolism is employed. Trustworthy and insincere friends are not personified by two distinct protagonists but by the members, legs and antlers, of the same body.

The `donkey` fable, on the other hand, is more comprehensible, since the motives for the fox's treachery were less concealed in its barefaced effort to harm the innocent donkey. The theme of this story is not only the friend who betrayed his companion, but also the bad character who wanted to ruin the good one. The division of the whole world into two distinct categories, `bad` and `good` ones, and the recognition of the contemptible actions of the former in order to harm the latter are the first ethical concepts children are likely to form.

The `cock` fable depicts the reverse situation, where friends help their partners in times of danger. The pattern, in this case, is the presence of two innocent good agents, one weak and one strong, against the villain. The well defined extreme good or bad characters and their polar relationship accord with moral notions are acquired very early by young children.

The inherent difficulties that originate from the inconsistency between words and actions were far too complicated for kindergartners, who explained every

incompatible action of the protagonists in the `fox` fable by concentrating every time on a different detail and being indifferent as to the existence of a unique framework within which all the actions could be explained.

The second group of fables presented the same idea of greed, a rather simple concept for kindergartners, and was found easy to understand. Only the understanding of the `doctor` and `mum` fables appeared to give rise to some difficulties due to the stories' debts to verbal humour that was not understood by the preschoolers.

Comprehension of the remaining eight fables was proved too arduous, due to the high moral ideas they represented. Only the story invented by the researcher of the pigeon and the fox showed evidence of a better understanding. Since it was a simple narration with a linear plot, operating only at a surface level, it was much easier to comprehend.

6.3.7b UNDERSTANDING OF FABLES' LAST SENTENCE

Data are presented in Table 6.7.

Children's inability to recall the last speaker's epigrammatic sentence may be linked with their difficulty to comprehend it. If we compare the numbers given in both tables, 6.5 and 6.7, we can ascertain a remarkable similarity between the data presented in them. Nearly the same number of responses, 16 for recollection, 20 for

comprehension, were scored as high; 24 and 19 respectively were regarded as moderate, while the vast majority of their performances in both tasks, 169 for remembering and 170 for understanding, were classified as low.

Table 6.7

Four to six-year-old children's understanding of the last sentence of fables

Fables	High	Moderate	Low	Total
Deer	2	1	19	22
Fox	-	4	18	22
Bear	2	3	17	22
Doctor	-	7	22	29
Mum	-	-	29	29
Lion	-	3	20	23
Sun	1	-	22	23
Crow	1	1	17	19
Pigeon	14	-	6	20
Total	20	19	170	209

The only exception was the case of the `pigeon` fable, the last statement of which kindergartners could comprehend easily, owing to its literal level of narration without any further implications.

The percentage of children, 102 out of 209 responses, who did not offer any explanation in regard to the last sentence was large compared with their responses to the other questions designed to investigate the degree of story understanding, only 46 out of 421 answers.

The majority of the young subjects failed to give a correct interpretation of the last sentence and sought

explanations in their previous knowledge of the world or in their own notions of the appropriate course of the dialogue or their evaluation of the particular story. Their answers were classified into the following categories:

In accordance with children's previous knowledge about the world: In this case, children concentrated on the nature of the speaker, and recalling the knowledge they had about him, put into his mouth a plausible remark, avoiding using any of the story information.

Thus, the last sentence of the Sun in the homonymous fable meant, according to a young child 'We need the Sun. If there is no sun the whole country will be ice-cubes' (f., 68).

In accordance with the evolution of the story: Children, due to their inability to make any sense of the last sentence, offered as its explanation a totally different one, that was, however, consistent with the nature and the expected evolution of the story.

So, the fox, when it got the crow's food, said 'Nice cheese!' (f., 49).

The difference between the answers that were in accordance with children's previous knowledge about the world and those in agreement with the evolution of the story is *placed* into the source children used in order to derive the information employed in their interpretations. The

former class refers to children's knowledge about the world as they know it, ignoring any data presented in the narration. Thus, explanations that violate the spirit of the story or interpretations inconsistent with the spirit of the fable were common. E.g. 'The fox cheated all the animals' (m., 56), for the 'fox' fable. In contrast, the other category is consistent with the information presented in the story, and although the subjects' interpretation is far from correct, it remains within the spirit of the narration.

In accordance with specific words of the statement: Some children were under the impression that, if they reproduced some of the words or phrases present in the text, they would have explained the sentence. Due to their inability to understand the whole statement, they were linked to specific elements of it, endowing them with their own literary elaborations.

For the concluding remark of the 'bear' story, for example, a child, having heard about some danger explained its meaning as 'The bear brings danger to men' (m., 67).

In accordance with the conception of the genre: Some preschoolers showed clear indications that they obtained a better understanding of the genre. The perception of the moral point of fable and the general character of the last sentence seemed to be clear to them and, although they did not how know to explain correctly the concluding remark,

they made their first serious attempts to adopt and reproduce a format fitting to the genre.

Even when they came out with totally irrelevant explanations, like `Animals should stay in the forest` (m., 69) for the `lion` story, the concept of fable as a genre conveying an exhortation or an admonition had been acquired.

Sometimes, children succeeded in putting forward more sophisticated and abstract explanations, like the one given for the same fable by another preschooler `It means that the man who does not believe another man will suffer. Like the lion that didn't believe the mouse that it would pay him back and got caught in the nets and suffered` (f., 69). Although the explanation of her own statement was rather idiosyncratic, this did not enfeeble the abstract and general character of it.

6.3.7c KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S WAYS OF THINKING AS THEY WERE EXHIBITED DURING THE QUESTION/ANSWERING PROCESS REGARDING THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF FABLES

When kindergartners responded to the questions concerning their understanding of questions, their wrong answers revealed the way they judged and comprehended persons and events. Young children were not strictly confined to the text, when they replied^{to} a question about the story, but they made extensive use of their own previous

experience. In addition, they met immense difficulties when they were confronted with stories that were built on an incongruity created by the existence of concealed motives among the protagonists.

It was extremely difficult for the investigator to be sure that children really meant what they said. Sometimes although their answers were regarded as correct, the preschoolers, in order to reach those conclusions, had followed, a very different course of thought than adults might. What appeared to be ^a correct response demonstrated by further questioning as having a peculiar and an absolutely absurd background.

From the expanded collection of examples, gathered by this investigation, one of the most outstanding ones is the response of a young boy to questions about the fable of the turtle and the rabbit. When he was asked why the turtle came first he replied `Because the turtle did not stop like the rabbit, but walked, walked, walked. And she was tired and she carried on until the end and then she had a rest` (m., 58). And before the investigator appreciated his answer, that stressed the continuous effort which brings about the best results, a few more questions changed the course of the explanation. `Turtles cannot sleep, because, you see, they have hard bodies, and they can't lie down just like that and take a nap. The hard body hurts them. They need proper beds and sheets and blankets. Only rabbits can sleep everywhere. His body is soft, just like a nice blanket and if he feels

tired he sleeps on the ground. Not like the turtle. She wanted to sleep but she had to go to her house and she didn't stop` (m., 58).

More analytically, children's wrong answers regarding understanding questions of the fables can be attributed to the following factors:

Previous life experience: When kindergartners were confronted with a question about a person or an event, they were not confined to the nature of the events as presented in the story, but were influenced by their previous knowledge and experience of similar circumstances. Although this is a common phenomenon and it appears also among adults, the peculiarity with kindergartners is that they were so preoccupied with their earlier opinions, that they ignored information presented in the text, and considered judgments that violated the fictitious conventions but fit into their previous intellectual schemata as acceptable and justifiable.

For the `donkey` fable, for example, the response to the question `Why did the lion agree with the fox?` was that `The lion wanted the donkey in the trap because it kicks` (f., 60). In spite of the fact that the donkey's offence in real life is kicking, according to the story this was the last thing the lion thought of before entering the agreement.

Concentrating every time on a different detail:

According to the subjects who exhibited this practice, a series of questions on their comprehension of the stories demanded an equal number of answers that do not necessarily obey the rules of coherence and consistency. Every question was answered independently, as preschoolers focused on the part of the text they considered the most proper one. When they were addressed the next question, they concentrated on another detail and gave an answer that was consistent with the specific detail, but might be at variance with their preceding explanation. Even when the discrepancy was pointed out, they did not seem to grasp it, as they treated every question separately on the basis of an inner consistency and not in regard to others.

An example will illuminate the argument more clearly. After the narration of the `fox` fable, one child was questioned why the woodcutter hid the fox. He answered `Because he wanted to save her` (m., 66). The very next question sought an explanation of why the woodcutter pointed at the hut . `Because he wanted the hunters to kill the fox` (m., 66), was the child's reply. The following question aimed at revealing to the child the contradiction in his own response; the child was asked why the fox did not thank the woodcutter. The young boy replied `Because she is very bad. She should have thanked him because he hid her` (m., 66). The child was satisfied with his answers, showed no signs of suspecting any abnormality with them, focusing every time on

another detail; the only reason for hiding someone that has been chased is to save him; if you reveal his hidden place it is because you want him to be caught and if someone saves your life you have, at least, to say thanks to him.

Every event was connected with its cause in a one-way relation, and the emphasis was laid only on the discovery of that single cause that gives rise to the event.

Whatever is known or understandable by the child is known to all the protagonists of the story: As soon as the preschooler realizes that a trick was played on one of the story agents, he assumes that all the other characters immediately know about it. In the child's imagination, the deceiver, all the secondary characters and even the victim of the fraud become aware of the deception at the very moment that the child-listener suspects it. But, in spite of the fact that even the potential victim knows what is going to happen, he does nothing to change the course of events, but, on the contrary, brings forward or accelerates the pace of his own misfortune.

In the fable of 'The rooster, the fox and the dog', for example, of those children, 11 in number, who realized that the cock asked the fox to call his friend in order to make her go nearer to the dog in order to be killed or disarmed by him, only 4 of them admitted that the fox did not know of the dog's presence. When the 7 children who thought that the fox knew the cock's plans were questioned further about the

fox's thoughts as it was approaching the foot of the tree, they answered in the most natural way `To give the message` (m., 66), or `To wake up the dog because the fox was bad` (f., 61), or `To smack the dog because she (the fox) is bad` (m., 64), or `She was afraid that the dog was going to eat her` (m., 63) or `She thought that the dog and the cock were not friends, and she could eat the cock` (f., 60).

Bearing in mind the consequence of the story: Due to the fact that at the time of the interview children already knew the plot of the story, many preschoolers replied bearing in mind the consequence of it, and also projecting their knowledge even on the characters of the story. So, because they knew - and if they know something everybody has exactly the same knowledge of it - that a specific action would give rise to a particular outcome, and since the relation between cause and effect is one-way, whoever attempted this particular action did it because he wanted to get the emanating result.

From this standpoint we can view some very odd replies children gave. At the `dog` tale, in respond to a question aiming at detecting the reasons that led the dog to jump into the water, a young girl said `He (the dog) wanted to lose his bone` (f., 56). But when she was asked if the dog wanted to lose his bone, she denied it. The first question was repeated again, but the answer remained the same.

Difficult concepts: When children were confronted with difficult concepts they were not able to understand them and gave very naive answers, making use of different ideas more understandable to them.

With respect to the fable of the `bear`, for example, they were too young to understand the ironic mood of the person who acted very selfishly in order to save his life from the beast. When children were questioned for the reasons that led him to ask about the secrets that the bear shared with the second traveller, none of them pointed to his mocking tone, but 14 of 22 children who agreed to answer mentioned his desire to learn, 9 subjects, the fact that he was on the tree and he could not hear, another 4, his inability to understand how bears can talk, while another 1 elaborated further and said `The bear put its muzzle into his ear and then he sneezed and the other heard something and thought that the bear said something, but animals don't speak` (f., 69).

Canons of children's own lives: Some children transferred their own moral experience into the fable world, in all the cases in which the story situations were unrelated to their everyday life conditions. When the events described in the story had little in common with the children's environment, preschoolers tended to stress their emphasis on the details which they like to share with the fictional world, ignoring all those ethical issues that were totally

absent or relatively insignificant to their own surroundings.

In the fable of the ant and the grasshopper, for example, the concepts of laziness and diligence were rather indifferent to young children, since they were more attached to leisure and entertainment than to work. So, when they were asked to explain the reasons that led the ant to refuse its help to the hungry and cold grasshopper, they ignored the topic of labour, which had no place in their own reality. 12 out of 23 children pointed to the significant detail of the ant's own reasoning statement in which it expressed its anger for being laughed at because of its hard work. Idleness did not catch kindergartners' attention, but the threat of being derided loomed before their eyes in the most menacing way. Another child transferred her own personal experience, identifying the grasshopper's error in its action of asking for a favour before introducing himself to the other person. 'The ant did not give food to the grasshopper, because he was not his friend. The grasshopper went to the house of the ant and did not say his name, nothing. He said only "give me your food". If you don't know the other's name you don't give' (f., 61).

Children's own experiences, their own environment and the canons that function in their own lives were employed in an attempt to explain ethical phenomena of the fables' world. Preschoolers did not approach stories with their minds 'tabula rasa', but brought with them their previous

knowledge about morality, with which they tried to explain and interpret the ethics of the fictional situations.

Preference to ethical explanations: Preschoolers extended morality to even ethically neutral phenomena. For them, the whole world was created and functions in order to obey a moral expediency and the cause of nearly all the facts was ethical. Even simple natural facts were explained by strictly ethical criteria, and the same rules were adapted by human and non human creatures similarly.

In regard to the `mum` fable, when children were asked to explain why the boy ate that large quantity of food, a young subject replied `Because his dad died. -What do you mean? -It is like this. The dad or the mum dies and then the child becomes a bad boy and does naughty things and when he grows up he becomes a thief` (m., 58).

An absolutely ethically indifferent event, that can be easily explained simply by referring to the natural law of hunger, became a major ethical subject.

Clear cut boundaries: According to some preschoolers, the world is structured upon a general pattern and the boundaries between the various elements that articulated it are apparent and conspicuous. Everyone and everything has its own place in life, and when some fables deal with clashes of roles, kindergartners solve the problem by suggesting a new categorization.

In the 'doctor' fable, for example, the doctor, despite having cured the grandma, which proved his medical abilities, stole all her belongings. Children, identifying doctors with a different status from that of thieves, are confronted with a problematic situation where the rigid boundaries of the world melt away and a new schema emerges in which people and jobs are confused and mixed up. The job of the doctor is to cure, while a thief has to steal. In regard to the above mentioned narration, some children put the world again in its right order either, by denying the fact that the doctor swindled, e.g. 'No, he didn't steal anything. He is a doctor. Someone else did it' (f., 65), or by stripping him of his healing abilities, e.g. 'He pretends he's a doctor. He is not a real doctor. He is disguised as a doctor and he is a thief' (f., 57).

Characters in isolation: In spite of the stress that centuries ago Aristotle placed on the social nature of human beings, kindergartners seemed to attack the philosopher's notion and continued to view characters in isolation. Even in the cases in which characters interacted with one another, they entered all their relationships or embarked on all their actions with a definitely defined personality, which lacked any development. The others' presence was entirely peripheral, and consists only of the background of life. Each of the protagonists of the stories, as children revealed to us, had acquired from the beginning of the

narration one dimensional character, which was exhibited at every moment, regardless of the existence of all the other protagonists.

In regard to the `lion` fable, when children were asked the reasons that forced the mouse to save the lion's life, one young boy replied `Because it was a good little mouse` (m., 55). The little creature was endowed with a clearly formed personality and behaved according to it, without being influenced by the lion's actions.

The first signs of transcendence of the egocentric characteristic: Although many elements in children's reasoning manifested the subjects' absorption in themselves and their own point of view, however, the first signs of their adopting another's person's perspective and the explanation of the world through his own eyes were also presented. In spite of the fact that children attributed their own understanding of a fraud to all the story characters and despite their tendency to express their interpretations of the facts by bearing in mind the evolution of the story, they also made their first attempts at understanding a position different from their own.

In the fable of the rabbit and the turtle, three successive questions aimed at revealing the children's ability to speculate about the same phenomenon from three different standpoints; the rabbit's, the turtle's and their own. `When the race started who thought the rabbit/the

turtle/you would be the winner? Why?` was the question in its three alternatives. In the event that the children were confined to egocentrism, they should have pointed at the same creature giving every time the same explanation. But the obtained results were different (see Table 6.8):

The turtle's point of view: Of the 19 children who were questioned 10 pointed to the turtle, 8 to the rabbit and 1 did not say anything. The 8 children who pointed to the rabbit were then asked about the reasons that persuaded the turtle to enter in a race though it thought that would end with its own defeat. Only 4 of them agreed to answer and gave explanations that could easily have been thought of by the turtle. `She thought of using a trick and win` (m., 64), or `The rabbit told her to have the race and she couldn't say no` (m., 67).

The rabbit's point of view: The percentages are totally different here, since the rabbit was convinced that it would win the race. So 16 children hold the opinion that the rabbit thought of himself as the winner of the contest, in comparison with only 3 that believed that the outcome would favour the turtle. Those 3 subjects who were influenced by the actual ending of the story did not give any explanation for the reasons that led the rabbit to enter into the race though ^{he} was sure that he would be beaten.

The children's own point of view: Of the 19 children who expressed their opinion on the probable winner of the race, 11 were influenced by the actual result of it and spoke about the turtle, while the remaining 8, giving preference to the animals' real abilities, bet on the rabbit.

Summing up the above mentioned results, children of that age showed clear evidence of moving beyond a sheer egocentrism into consideration of the others' viewpoint.

Table 6.8

Four to six-year-old children's views of the winner of the 'rabbit' fable as they viewed it from different viewpoints.

Viewpoints	Winner		
	Turtle	Rabbit	No response
Turtle's	10	8	1
Rabbit's	3	16	-
Child's	11	8	-

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE RESEARCH'S RESULTS ON CHILDREN'S REACTIONS TO THE MORAL

ISSUES OF FABLES

7.1 THE CURRENT RESEARCH

Kindergartners' perceptions of the story characters' morality as presented in the aesopic tales, were encompassed by this research. Children from four to six-year-old were asked to characterize 40 of the agents who took part in the 18 stories used.

All the kindergartners were asked to comment on the story agents' personality, to specify the degree to which they possessed the qualities children mentioned, and to justify their evaluations (see appendix two, questions marked with Ch). The aspects of the issue that were given more emphasis were children's consensus or not on the definition of the story agents' character, the criteria they employed, and the grounds on which they based their evaluations.

In addition, the third group of the aesopic stories, which was presented to 23 kindergarten subjects, was selected so as to satisfy the criteria of different behavioural models. The fable of 'The Sun and the North

Wind` referred to a negative versus a positive behavioural prototype, and the battle between those two which resulted in the triumph of the good character. That schema is both very common in children's literature and highly appreciated by them. The fable of `The lion and the mouse` introduced two affirmative types of behaviour, while `The ant and the grasshopper` displayed two wholly unfavourable examples.

Kindergartners' evaluations of the story characters concerning the fables of the third group were of particular interest, since it was hypothesized that subjects of that young age will seek to find good and evil personages and a conflict between them, even in those stories that did not describe such a relation.

Along with many other tasks kindergartners were also asked to give their evaluations of the main episode of the narration (see appendix two questions marked with Ac). In every aesopic tale a particular action was specific to the detection of the hidden moral of the fable. Thus its comprehension and right evaluation revealed the degree to which kindergartners grasped the main ethical idea of the fable. In regard to the `hen` fable, for example, the young subjects were asked whether it was fair for the villager not to find gold in the bird's belly. In those cases in which children did not speak about the man's uncontrolled greed and his unsatisfied avarice, but referred to some other reasons, the likelihood that they would point to the hidden

morality of the fables was not expected to be extremely high.

Children from four to six-years-old were interviewed in order to reveal their own conception of justice in regard to the events described in the aesopic tales (appendix two, questions marked with J). In all the 18 stories the kindergartners who participated in the research were encouraged to point to the offender. When children were asked to elaborate on the reasons that forced them to express their verdicts, their conception of justice was displayed more clearly.

In addition, kindergartners were invited to define the most suitable punishment for the guilty agent and to comment on the possibilities of repeating the same offence with two different outcomes; the punishment of the wrongdoer, or the waiving of his penalty.

In regard to the issue of the effectiveness of the punishment, all subjects were asked to express their opinion on it. The researcher selected, in every group of fables, one story about which to ask whether punishment would be likely to prevent the offender from repeating his misbehaviour. For those children who did not point to any culprit in the specific fable but declared that all the story agents were not guilty, another fable of the group was chosen about which the same question was posed. Thus, all 113 kindergartners were questioned on the effectiveness of

the punishment after the narration of only one fable, though it was not the same fable for all subjects.

Although kindergartners were not particularly questioned on their attitudes towards specific moral issues or their conceptions of certain ethical ideas, throughout the interview, when they expressed their notions about different aspects of fables, they unintentionally revealed their opinions on the ideas of killing and lying. Even though children's views on those notions were not within the scope of this investigation kindergartners' conceptions of killing and lying are presented in the results of this study.

7.2 METHODOLOGY

The method of the research has been described analytically in the fifth chapter; this part of the research is confined to four to six-year-old children.

7.3 RESULTS

The results obtained in this part of the research concerning kindergartners' evaluation of fables' agents and actions and their conception of justice are as follows:

7.3.1 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S EVALUATIONS OF FABLES' AGENTS

Kindergartners were encouraged to evaluate the personality of all the agents in all the aesopic tales they were listening to.

7.3.1a THE VARIETY OF CHARACTERIZATIONS

The data obtained are presented in Tables A.1 - A.5.

Although children were asked to express freely their opinions on the agents of the aesopic fables and had the opportunity to use any adjectives they could think of in order to describe the ethical disposition of a story protagonist, their replies were confined to a very limited range of responses. The characters of the fables were characterized either as good or bad, and in a total of 930 responses concerning the heroes' characters, only 2 subjects used characterizations different from the polar good/bad judgement.

In regard to the fable of `The donkey, the lion and the fox`, the fox was regarded by 2 children as cunning; `Very cunning. Because it cheats men out of their hens` (m., 64), and `Very cunning. Because it eats cocks` (m., 66). All the other children, 111, in regard to 18 fables and for 40 different story characters limited the span of their reactions into the good/bad evaluation.

In addition, every time that children expressed their judgements on the story agents' characters, they were also asked to define the degree to which the person in question had the specific quality. Their tendency to point to the highest grade was amazingly uniform and, since they had formed judgement of the agent's personality they endowed him with this characteristic in the higher rating. Not even one child moved away from the `very much` grade on the rating scale to another less absolute degree.

Not a single child characterized all characters of the fables as bad. By contrast, few children made favourable comments on the good nature of all the protagonists involved in the narratives. For the `Sun` story, for example, both the Sun and the North Wind were labelled as good-hearted `because the Sun makes heat and we feel warm and nice` (f., 63) and `the North Wind doesn't blow all the time very hard and we don't feel cold and it is nice if you have sweated` (f., 63).

Even in fables which involve a threat of killing, some young subjects had a sympathetic attitude towards all the animals who took part in the narration. Thus, the lion in the `deer` fable was conceived as very good `because all the animals are good because Lord made all of them good and they don't do anything to you if you don't disturb them -What the deer did to the lion? -Nothing but the lion thought that it was going to harm him with his antlers and chased him away

and when he caught it he said "go now" and the deer left' (m., 63).

7.3.1b CONSENSUS ON THE AGENTS' CHARACTER

Tables A.1 - A.5 will be helpful in determining children's consensus on the personality of the stories' heroes.

Although children agreed on the employment of only two adjectives, good and bad, in order to define the agents' personalities, and in spite of the fact that they also responded uniformly as far as the determination of its degree was concerned, they did not exhibit the same consensus in regard to the characterisation of a specific character as good or bad.

Of a total of 40 protagonists, only regarding 7 of them all the subjects agreed on the qualities of their personalities. The deer in the `deer` fable, the traveller that pretended he was dead in the `bear` fable, the cock in the `cock` fable, the wolf and the lamb in the homonymous story and the pigeon and the fox in another fable, were the only agents that elicited from all the subjects the same evaluation. In contrast, all other characters elicited various judgements. However, the major disagreement was over the attribution of a kind or evil nature to those story characters who exhibited in the story a kind of behaviour different from their usual one or that expected by children.

Children did not judge the conventional behaviour of the animals by sophisticated adult standards, but instead divided the whole world into two separate categories of good and bad, using as their only criterion animals' eating habits. Thus, all the creatures that live on grass belonged to the good ones, while carnivorous beasts were seen as bad characters. In those fables where wild, ferocious beings were presented as displaying a 'kind' type of behaviour or where 'innocent' creatures revealed their evil instincts, the young subjects' responses about the agents' personalities were confused.

The most striking examples are the cases of the lion that, in spite of its reputation for cruelty was kind to the mouse, and that of the ant, that, despite the children's expectations for compassionate actions derived from the insect's size and its inability to harm anybody, was extremely cruel to the grasshopper, which, although it was undoubtedly lazy, had obviously not committed any serious crime but had made everybody happy with its chirp.

Both fables were selected to present not the usual model of good versus bad, but two negative behavioural models in regard to the 'ant' narration, and two positive ones for the 'lion' tale.

As examination of the fable of 'The lion and the mouse' has shown, 14 out of 23 young subjects considered the lion as very bad in spite of the fact that it exhibited magnanimous and forgiving behaviour towards the mouse. Those

children explained their judgments either by relying on their already formed notions about the nature of the beast - e.g. `The lion is very bad because it eats children` (f., 63) - or recalling those parts of the story that fit into their declaration of its cruel character - e.g. `The lion is very bad because he wanted to kill the mouse and put it under his foot` (f., 48).

Also, in regard to the aesopic story `The ant and the grasshopper`, in which two unacceptable models of condemned behaviour were drawn, 19 out of 23 preschoolers conceived the narration as a bad versus good relationship. When the grasshopper was characterized as evil `because he was lazy` (m., 52) or `laughed at the ants` (m., 64), or even `because he was hungry from hunger` (f., 58), the ant was thought of as good `because it works all day` (m., 62). On the other hand, in the cases that the grasshopper was regarded as good and kind `because he doesn't eat children` (f., 49) or `because he did nothing. He was only lazy` (m., 69), the ant was considered as very bad since `it didn't give food to the grasshopper` (f., 63) or `it bites when we try to stroke it` (m., 62).

In other cases children seemed to disagree on the gravity of the committed offences or the implications of their actions. In regard to the hunters, for example, in the `fox` story, the hunters, who were secondary personages, were judged only on the basis of their main occupation of killing animals. So, they were considered as good by those

children who favoured the extinction of carnivorous beasts, whereas the subjects who put their emphasis on the repulsive action of killing regarded them as `very bad`.

The personality of the agents, according to young kindergartners, was judged not only by their inner qualities, but also by comparison with the misfortunes that occurred to them. If an agent committed actions that were considered not extremely serious wrongdoings, like jealousy or indolence, and suffered more distress than what was believed suitable for that kind of offense, then a divergence among children's evaluations was observed. There were those who focused on the misdemeanour and came out with judgments about a bad personality, and those who gave more weight to the very severe punishment and talked about a kind protagonist.

The camel in the `camel` story, for example, that only asked for antlers `because she wanted to admire her beauty. She didn't want to kill the men` (f., 56), and the grasshopper in the `ant` fable, which `did nothing. He was only lazy` (f., 69), were characterized as very good, while 16 evaluations of the camel and 9 of the grasshopper were unfavourable. Those two aesopic stories were the most outstanding examples of diversity, owing to the imbalance between the offence committed and the punishment received.

However, in some other cases, the preschoolers could not understand the gravity of the perpetrated offences. In regard to the boy who cried wolf, not many subjects

understood that the child at first lied in calling out `wolf`. But even among those children, who understood the story, most thought of it as a funny practical joke, and not as a serious moral transgression. Thus, for 8 out of 19 preschoolers, the boy was cleared of every charge and `very good`, while the remaining 11 gave more weight to his lies and thought of him as `very bad`.

But if we put aside the criteria children used in order to reach their evaluations and focus our attention only on their judgements, we will see that the majority of them came to assessments acceptable to grown ups. If adults had to divide the whole world of the aesopic tales into good characters and bad ones they would have given responses similar to those of the kindergartners. Only in the case of the traveller who climbed the tree their responses would have been totally different. Since preschoolers were unable to see the humble motives of the man's actions, they agreed that the traveller who climbed onto the tree was good.

More analytically, an extraordinarily high percentage of young children, 20 out of 22, considered the traveller who climbed into the tree in the `bear` fable `very good` because they focused on the effectiveness of his action `Because the bear didn't do anything to him` (m., 66), on the excitement of the action of climbing `Because he had fun climbing on the tree` (f., 62), his choice of not doing any harm to anybody, `Because he didn't want to kill the bear` (m., 54), his assumed help to his friend, `Because he

climbed on the tree and told his friend to pretend he was dead and the bear didn't eat them. -How do you know that he said to the other traveller to play dead? -Because they are friends. He told the other friend` (f., 60), or offered other explanations, either based on information mentioned in the text, or events invented by the children themselves.

When preschoolers had decided on the good or bad nature of the animals in question, then nothing could stop them from justifying all the actions of the good personage and condemning whatever the supposed bad ones were doing. In an amazingly unanimous similarity the 4 young subjects, who called the fox very good in the `crow` fable, when they were asked to recall the part of the story describing how the bird got the piece of cheese they answered `He took it from the fox` (m., 64; f., 63; f., 63; m., 62). After this, the fox was fully justified in getting it back even by means of flattery or deception.

In a similar manner, the kindergartner who thought of the boy who cried wolf as very good, although the boy realized the terrible joke he was playing on the villagers, laid the blame on them, explaining his judgments thus `The boy was a really good boy but he was scared alone in the mountains and wanted the men to come and keep him company. They were not right to leave a young boy alone there. And they were stupid as well because they didn't take the binoculars to see if there was any wolf that night but

stayed into the coffeehouse and gambled. What if the wolf had killed the boy himself?` (m., 63).

7.3.1c THE GROUND OF THE JUDGMENTS

Data are presented in Tables A.6 - A.10 and 7.1.

Children did not agree about the personal disposition of the protagonists of the aesopic tales, because they employed a wide variety of criteria, and also because they focused on different grounds. More analytically the grounds of their judgements were found to be:

Table 7.1

Four to six-year-old children's justifications of their characterizations of the animal characters of fables. All Groups.

Groups	Story	Previous Knowledge	No explanation	Total
1rst	146	121	41	308
2nd	206	65	19	290
3rd	81	50	7	138
4th	75	20	19	114
5th	50	28	2	80
Total	558	284	88	930

No explanation: Although nearly all the children stated options about the personality of the story characters, not all of them would explain their evaluations.

In 88 of 930 cases children did not expressed their judgements. These children were not persuaded to justify their opinions even after the investigator's repeated encouragements.

Story information: The vast majority of the children derived the information on which they based their judgments from the story text. They evaluated the characters in question bearing in mind their actions or motives as they were described in the narration.

On a total of 930 comments on the protagonists personalities, more than half, 558, focused on story information. The agents' actions, feelings, motives as they were depicted in the narration were referred to in order to justify the children's opinions.

Apart from those responses that were based entirely on the story material and referred to specific actors and actions as they were presented in the tale - e.g. 'The camel is very bad because she wanted antlers' (f., 59) - a number of justifications were expressed in a more general way. Despite their general tone those judgements were also based exclusively on story information; 'The grasshopper is very bad. Because grasshoppers chirp all day and they don't work' (f., 69). Although the whole species of the grasshoppers seems to be condemned, the ground on which this assumption rests is clearly the narration of 'The ant and the grasshopper'.

In addition, some other replies that blur the boundaries between information derived from the story text and that stemming from preschoolers' previous knowledge about the protagonists in question are those that follow exactly the reverse route from the already mentioned ones. In those answers children projected their former notions of the animals' usual behaviour onto the story circumstances.

For example, the jury in the 'doctor' fable was thought as 'very good. Because they put the thief-doctor into the prison' (f., 57). The child's perception of a just jury that always pronounces fair verdicts led her to evaluate them on the grounds of her anticipations and not on information presented in the story. However, the plot had stopped before reaching that event, and the child was very careful to make it appear as originating from the story itself. Although she went beyond the story, she never ignored the text.

Previous information: The tendency to evaluate a story agent using only previous knowledge about his moral disposition remains a thoroughly childish attitude and lacks any adults' justification.

Of a total of 930 responses 234 of them judged the protagonist's personality ignoring his behaviour as it was delineated in the narration. Thus, the fox in the 'crow' fable was considered very bad 'because she eats roosters' (m., 69), and the Sun in the homonymous aesopic tale

exhibited very good behaviour `because it stays in the sky where Christ is` (f., 59).

Very few children drew a clear distinction between story and real world. In regard to the fable of the lion and the mouse one young boy stated `Mice in houses are very bad because they make holes. In this story the mouse was very good because it told the lion the truth` (m., 62). Another girl said about the lion of the same fable `Lions are usually very bad, but this one here was friendly with the mouse and it is very good` (f., 56).

Another child, quite unexpectedly, stressed the difference between the literary stereotyped character of the fox, and its controversial personality as it was portrayed by the specific fable. In the `fox` aesopic tale, the young preschooler observed that `The fox is very bad in the stories but now she was very good because she is friends with the woodcutter` (m., 64).

7.3.1d CRITERIA IN EVALUATING THE STORY AGENTS

Data are presented in Tables A.11 - A.15 and 7.2.

Although children concluded with the expression of a very limited range of different characterizations and monotonously regarded every story protagonist as good or bad, they, however, made use of a great variety of different criteria in order to decide on their evaluating judgements.

Table 7.2

Four to six-year-old children's criteria of characterization
for the animal characters of fables. All Groups.

Groups	No expla- nation	General vague	Moral	Killing injury	Morally indif.	Others' behav.	Useful- ness	Total
1st	41	28	27	156	15	24	17	308
2nd	19	36	135	38	22	11	29	290
3rd	7	12	38	28	17	26	10	138
4th	19	3	35	6	39	8	4	114
5th	2	12	5	49	6	4	2	80
Total	88	91	240	277	99	73	62	930

Moreover, there were many cases in which two children, though they referred to exactly the same event, gave two absolutely opposed judgements. In the `mum` story, for example, a preschooler characterized the child as very bad `because he ate much` (f., 63), giving weight to the consequences of his action as the story describes them, while another one thought of him as very good `because he ate much` (m., 56) bearing in mind, as an explanatory question revealed, the parental advice to eat in order to grow up.

No explanation: The preschoolers who refused to give any explanation for their judgements were not many and, from a total of 930 characterisations, only 88 of them were without any justification.

General and vague criteria: Some preschoolers, though they tried to give an explanation of their evaluations, proceeded to vague reasoning or made very general statements, which in many cases were circular judgements or just a mere repetition of the good/bad evaluation.

A total number of 91 out of 930 explanations of the agents' behaviour was considered, according to the researcher, as having been obtained after the appliance of general or vague criteria.

In the interview after the relating of the `mum` fable a young child characterised the mum as very good, offering

the very ambiguous explanation `because the God made her to be a good mum` (m., 58), which did not illuminate the reasons that led him to utter the positive evaluation.

Some other children just repeated their judgments, offering a kind of circular comment. In the fable of the `Sun`, the North Wind was very bad `because he is very bad` (f., 57).

Other young subjects came out with very general explanations like `The man who climbed the tree is very good because all men are good` (f., 61).

Overgeneral explanations of children's judgements are regarded as being superimposed on children's evaluations by the kindergartners themselves, who, in order to satisfy the interviewer's request for a justification, said the first thing that crossed their minds, although they obviously did not feel the need of explanations for what they considered obvious.

Strictly moral criteria: In spite of the fact that adults' method of judging a person's moral behaviour is by the application of ethical criteria, children of kindergarten age did not seem to adhere to this approach. Only 240 out of 930 explanations could be considered strictly ethical.

Moreover, due to children's inability to grasp the morality conveyed by the fable, kindergartners very often

misunderstood its message and put the stress on ethical issues that were peripheral to the specific story.

Thus, in the fable of 'The ant and the grasshopper', for example, negative judgements of the grasshopper had nothing to do with its laziness but only with its mocking mood towards the ant. The grasshopper was very bad 'because it laughed at the ant in summer' (f., 57). A similar case is that of the camel, condemned not for its jealousy but 'because she didn't say "please" to Zeus' (m., 67).

Kindergartners had sometimes acquired a very peculiar conception of certain ethical ideas, and on that basis they expressed their evaluations. The North Wind, for example, was regarded as very bad because of its underestimation of its own abilities. According to a young subject, the North Wind was evil 'because he told lies that he was stronger' (m., 64). The rabbit in the homonymous fable has committed the same offence and 'He is very bad, because he thought that he would win and this was a lie' (m., 67).

Children evaluated a story character positively or negatively by taking into account not only his actions but also his feelings towards the others. If he happened to love a specific person or the entirety of living creatures, he was regarded as good and kind. In contrast, in the case that his hostile disposition towards another being was disclosed, the story agent was regarded as evil and unkind.

A child, commenting on the hen's personality in the homonymous fable, made his own inferential judgments of its

behaviour, and endowed the bird with a very good character 'because she (the hen) loved the villager and his child' (m., 63). In addition, the wolf of the homonymous story was considered as very bad because 'He doesn't love anybody' (f., 58).

The mention of the agent's affectionate or hostile feelings towards another creature as a criterion of moral behaviour was relatively common with kindergartners, and in a total of 240 issues to which moral criteria were applied, 39 of them referred not to actions but to moods.

The killing/injury or the reverse criterion: This criterion could have been included in the former group, where ethical reasons were employed in order to explain judgments of other persons, but due to its size and the importance it had acquired for children, it formed a separate category. According to the kindergartners, the protagonists' behaviour was judged by their eating habits. Herbivorous and small innocent animals which become the victims in both real life and stories were characterised as good characters, whereas the carnivorous beasts, which were compelled to live on smaller creatures, are regarded as evil and vicious ones.

Moreover, every story agent that contributed to the safety of any creature or helped it to escape from great danger was considered good. In the 'deer' fable, for example, the deer is characterised as very good for the

arbitrary reason that `if it sees a lion eat a man it runs and saves the man` (f., 60).

The only case in which the contribution to the welfare of a protagonist was regarded as a great crime was the assistance offered to a villain. Thus, the woodcutter of the `fox` fable was regarded as very bad `because he saved the fox that is very bad and eats all the hens` (f., 58).

Killing is always a condemnable action, according to kindergartners. But although murder of the innocent person constitutes the gravest sin, the execution of the villain was not only ethically justified but also morally necessary. So, the dog of the `cock` fable was very good `because he tore the fox into one thousand pieces` (m., 70).

Not only the actual killing but even the threat of slaying was regarded by the kindergartners as a grave offence. On this issue, preschoolers proved that they were able to judge not only by the results of a deed but also by the motives of the character. For a preschooler, for example, the fox in the `pigeon` fable was very bad `because she wanted to eat the pigeon` (m., 68) in spite of the fact that it failed to do so.

On the other hand, some children employing the killing/injury criterion jumped to conclusions based on their misconceptions about the animals' behaviour. Being misled by his own fantasies, in regard the fable of `The fox and the crow`, a boy thought of the bird as very bad `because it pinches and sucks our blood` (m., 58). On the

other hand, the same pigeon was regarded as very good
`because it eats only meat and not animals` (m., 58).

Apart from extermination serious injury of a person was mentioned by kindergartners as a similarly heinous crime. If the aggressive attempt of an animal was destined to end with major injuries or if the wrongdoer wanted to torture his victim, children condemned both actions by characterising the agents as `very bad`. The lion in the homonymous fable was regarded as very bad because `it likes to bite men` (m., 67).

Of a total of 930 responses 277 of them referred to killing/injury or the reverse criterion.

Morally indifferent characteristics or events:

Another group of children who tried to evaluate the protagonists' moral behaviour used ethically indifferent criteria. Thus, the way they looked, their occupations, misfortunes, intellectual abilities, or even their own possessions, were put forward in order to justify their evaluations.

A number of 99 out 930 explanations were based on morally indifferent criteria reflecting one of the most unsophisticated methods of judging ethical conduct.

In the `fox` fable, for example, the woodcutter was characterised as very good because of his occupation; `because he cuts trees` (f., 61). In the `bear` fable the beast was thought of being very bad `because it is big and

black` (m., 51), while in the `dog` fable the protagonist was considered very good because it happened to suffer from an adversity, `He is very good, because he is hungry` (m., 71). The same agent was also regarded as very bad because of its stupidity, `He is very bad, because he is stupid, because he did know that it was himself` (f., 70). In the `ant` story the ant was considered as very good `because it has food and a house` (f., 64), whereas the crow was also very good `because it says "kra kra" all day` (m., 48).

The pleasure that the story offered to children was considered by some of them an adequate reason to secure approval of the protagonists' character. According to a preschooler, the camel `was very good, because it was a nice funny story` (f., 62). The existence of a humourous element in the narration was highly appreciated by the children, and in 22 cases humour was employed as a criterion for determining the ethical character of a story agent.

Others' behaviour: Some other kindergartners, in 73 out of 930 comments, justified their moral evaluations not by referring to the actions of the protagonist in question, but by mentioning the behaviour of others towards him, either under story or real-life conditions.

Thus, the lion of `The lion and the mouse` story was very bad `because everyone is afraid of him` (f., 68), and the man who climbed into the tree in the `bear` fable had a very congenial personality `because the bear did not eat

him` (m., 66) or `because the other man should have done the same` (f., 61).

Usefulness to the others: In regard especially to animals, some children tended to judge their personalities by applying the criterion of their usefulness to human beings. Of course, the usefulness criterion was not applied merely with reference to information presented in the story, but it was in accord with preschoolers' knowledge about the species in question.

Only 62 out of 930 responses justified their evaluation of characters by defining their usefulness to mankind and especially to children.

According to them, if the animals were beneficial to human beings they were characterized as good, while in the reverse situation they were ascribed very derogatory comments. The same animal might even be evaluated in two opposite ways in accordance with the aspects of its social behaviour that children had stressed.

The dog in the homonymous fable, for example, was characterised as very good `because he guards the house` (m., 65), while another child thought of it as very bad `because it barks and doesn't let us sleep` (f., 54).

Sometimes the animal's good character was secured by its kind actions to other animals, which may be realistic, as in the pigeon's care for its babies (m., 65), or imaginary and based on children's inadequate knowledge of

those creatures. So, the mouse of the lion and the mouse fable is very good `because it travels around and gives food to all the other animals` (m., 68).

Even natural elements were judged on the basis of their own contribution to human welfare. The North Wind, for example, was characterised as very good `because when it's hot he comes and makes it less hot. And he is nice because he is the one who makes the kites fly. If there is no wind, you know, you can't fly a kite` (f., 68).

7.3.2 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S DISPENSATION OF JUSTICE

Children expressed their opinions in regard to the dispensation of justice on three aspects of the issue: pointing to the culprit, justifying their charges against him, and suggesting the most suitable punishment for him.

In the cases that kindergartners thought that there was a guilty person in the story, they did all not agree on his identity. Nearly all the protagonists referred to in the fables, and even persons that were not mentioned in the narrations but whose existence the preschoolers suspected, were thought by some subjects as being guilty of offences calling for punishment.

The deer in the `deer` fable, the mum in the homonymous amusing story and the lamb in the `wolf` aesopic tale were the only characters not blamed for anything. All the other

story agents were found, by at least one child, guilty of a variety of violations.

The example of the `hen` fable will clarify the point. In regard to this aesopic tale, the villager was pronounced guilty of slaughtering the hen, of stupidity in turning his back on the riches with which the hen provided him, and of the offences of stealing and avarice. The hen was also found guilty of laying poisonous or useless eggs, and of showing unjustifiable favour towards that villager, whom the bird wanted to make rich, but without providing any other with its products. Another child laid the blame on the thieves, who were not mentioned in the narration but were the ones `who broke every morning into the villager's hen house and painted the eggs golden. -What for? -To make fun of the villager. He was an idiot. -And how do you know that? -Because there are not golden eggs and who else breaks in the houses of the other men` (m., 63). In addition, verdicts that cleared all the protagonists of every charge were also pronounced.

7.3.2a JUSTIFICATION OF KINDERGARTNERS' VERDICTS

More than the discovery of the culprit, the explanation of his guilt was regarded by the investigator as the key issue for revealing children's concepts about justice. For

this reason children's responses to this topic are presented analytically.

7.3.2a(i) EXPLANATION OF CONDEMNING VERDICTS

Data are presented in Table 7.3.

Of a total of 421 judgements in regard to 18 fables, 113 children pronounced 295 statements in favour of agents' condemnation, while the remaining 126 considered them as innocent. The reasons they offered in order to explain the suggestion that a kind of punishment should be administered to the guilty agents were:

No explanation: Only in 40 of 295 cases children refused to explain their verdicts of condemnation, in spite of the investigator's attempts to elicit them.

General statements: Some other children justified their opinions on the issue of the story protagonists' punishment in a very vague way, offering extremely general statements. The explanations of that broad and global kind were 29 out of a total of 295 condemning verdicts.

Thus, in regard to the 'ant' fable the insect should be punished 'Because it is bad' (m., 64). Even after the investigator's prompt questions the child was not willing to give any more explanations.

Table 7.3

Four to six-year old children's criteria for condemning the characters of fables.

Fables	No expla- nation	General statem.	Killing	Moral criter.	Social convent.	Morally indiff.	Total
Deer	-	9	9	-	-	-	18
Fox	3	-	3	5	-	-	11
Bear	-	3	2	1	1	-	7
Donkey	4	5	12	-	-	-	21
Cock	3	6	10	-	-	-	19
Hen	2	-	11	3	-	6	22
Dog	6	2	1	11	-	2	22
Camel	4	2	9	2	-	1	18
Doctor	-	-	-	18	-	1	19
Mum	1	-	-	-	9	1	11
Lion	2	-	12	1	-	-	15
Sun	4	-	-	-	-	5	9
Ant	6	-	-	12	1	-	19
Boy	4	1	7	6	-	-	18
Rabbit	-	-	2	15	-	1	18
Crow	1	-	-	-	-	11	12
Wolf	-	-	15	3	-	-	18
Pigeon	-	1	2	15	-	-	18
Total	40	29	95	92	11	28	295

Murdering: The crime of murder committed by the accused was regarded by a large number of children as a cause of moral discordance and an adequate reason for punishment. Of the 295 condemning statements kindergartners made in this study, 95 of them were justified by referring to the crime of murder. According to preschoolers, the agent had to be severely punished because he had taken the life of somebody, regardless of the human or animal status of both the victim and the victimizer.

Not only the actual killing but even the threat of it was considered by preschoolers as a crime deserving to be severely punished. The bear in the homonymous fable, for example, was found guilty 'because she put her muzzle into the man's ear and he thought that she was going to eat him' (f., 67).

Breaches of the moral code: Although murder was regarded by children as the gravest crime and they always asked for a severe punishment of the killer, other moral offences were mentioned by kindergartners in an attempt to justify their condemnations. A total of 92 out of 295 condemning judgements were justified on the basis of moral violations.

Theft was usually mentioned by preschoolers as a serious kind of misbehaviour, and occurred not only among men but an extended version of it included human beings who stole animals' possessions. The villager in the 'hen' fable

was charged with swindling `because he took the hen's eggs. The hen should have kept her eggs and have gone to the market by herself. She was the one that should become rich because she was the one who laid them` (f., 68).

Telling lies was another kind of wrongdoing that young subjects referred to. Due to their absurd conception of lies, responses like `The North Wind should get punished because he told the lie that he was the stronger` (m., 67), were not rare.

Infringement of social conventions: Children sometimes convicted a person for ignoring conventional social rules, and very often they regarded nonconformist behaviour as deserving very severe punishment. Only 11 of 295 condemning verdicts were justified on breaches of the accepted social code.

In the `bear` fable, for example, the traveller who played dead was regarded as guilty `because he laid down in the dust and spoilt his clothes` (f., 50). For the young girl, the offence of betraying a friend was inconceivable, while the common parental prohibition against spoiling clean clothes gained the importance of a grave wrongdoing.

The importance of cleanliness in children's everyday life as stressed by their parents was also referred in answers concerning four other fables.

Morally indifferent events: Some other kindergartners, 28 out of 295 responses, based the protagonists' accusations on ethically indifferent events which would not have been brought forward by adults in order to justify a condemnatory judgement.

In the case of dog who lost its bone in the river, the animal was found guilty `because he was stupid and he didn't want the bigger bone` (f., 66). The turtle should also be punished due to its natural abilities; `she doesn't run fast` (m., 55).

7.3.2a(ii) EXPLANATION OF NON GUILTY VERDICTS

Data are presented in Table 7.4.

Even in the case that children concluded by declaring the innocence of all the story characters they justified their decisions by referring to the same criteria.

No explanation: The majority of the children, 69 responses out of 126, did not think that giving an explanation in the cases that the agents' behaviour was considered as proper and just and no punishment was regarded, was needed. It seemed evident and unambiguous that if someone was considered free from any charge there was no reason for his behaviour to be explained.

Table 7.4

Four to six-year-old children's criteria for their non-guilty verdicts on the characters of fables.

Fables	No explanation	General statement	No moral offence	No killing	Morally indiff.	Total
Deer	3	-	-	1	-	4
Fox	8	3	-	-	-	11
Bear	9	1	-	4	1	15
Donkey	2	-	-	-	-	2
Cock	2	1	-	-	-	3
Hen	7	-	-	-	-	7
Dog	4	-	2	-	3	7
Camel	3	3	-	1	4	11
Doctor	9	-	-	-	1	10
Mum	-	18	-	-	-	18
Lion	4	-	4	-	-	8
Sun	8	-	2	3	1	14
Ant	3	-	-	-	1	4
Boy	-	-	1	-	-	1
Rabbit	-	-	-	1	-	1
Crow	3	-	2	-	1	6
Wolf	2	-	-	-	-	2
Pigeon	2	-	-	-	-	2
Total	69	26	9	10	12	126

General statements: General positive sentences were expressed by kindergartners even in the cases that none of the story protagonists was thought of as guilty. Of a total of 126 answers 26 were of that broad character. The most common one was the phrase `because he did nothing` (m., 49) or `because he was very good` (f., 54).

No murder: Killing was regarded by preschoolers as the gravest crime and the absence of a murder was considered a reason for pronouncing a non guilty verdict. 10 out of 126 non-condemnatory decisions referred to the absence of a murder.

Sometimes the child had misconceived the information presented in the story and, distorting the actual facts described in the narration, created new situations in which no offence was committed. Thus, in response to the `deer` fable, for example, the lion was thought of as not guilty `because he didn't eat the deer` (f., 62).

No moral offence: Some young subjects found that either no crime was committed or, if a crime was perpetrated, the offence was not as serious as to demand any kind of punishment. Only 9 out of 126 responses referred to the absence of violations of the moral code.

In regard to the fable of the `dog` the main protagonist of the aesopic story was pronounced as not guilty `because the dog was only jealous. He was not bad`

(f., 69). When the same child was asked if jealousy was something good she replied `No, it isn't good; but he did nothing` (f., 69), implying that, although jealousy was regarded as an undesirable personality quality, at least in the case of the dog, it led the animal to lose its own things, but did not force it to do anything wrong to others.

Morally indifferent events: Even in the case that all the story protagonists were regarded as innocent, morally indifferent events or characteristics were mentioned by children in order to explain their verdicts. Of a total of 126 verdicts, 12 belong to this category.

Grandma's old age, for example, saved her from any punishment; `We can't punish anybody in this story. We can't punish the grandma because she is grandma. If she was the mum or the dad then the court could have punished her, but not now` (m., 51).

In addition, the role of the size of the offender in the attribution of justice was proved decisive. The ant in the homonymous story escaped every charge `because it is small` (m., 64).

7.3.2b THE BASIS FOR THE EXPLANATION

Data are presented in Table 7.5.

Children, when they were asked to justify their verdicts, offered a great number of different explanations,

which were based either on information presented in the story or on their previous knowledge about the agents in question. Three categories of different grounds were identified in regard to the children's justification of the guilty or not guilty decisions.

Table 7.5

Four to six-year-old children's grounds of their guilty or non-guilty verdicts on the characters of fables.

Fables	No specific	Story	General	Total
Deer	9	10	3	22
Fox	11	6	5	22
Bear	14	7	1	22
Donkey	2	12	8	22
Cock	10	11	1	22
Hen	7	22	-	29
Dog	4	23	2	29
Camel	9	15	5	29
Doctor	9	16	4	29
Mum	1	28	-	29
Lion	6	16	1	23
Sun	12	5	6	23
Ant	9	13	1	23
Boy	5	13	1	19
Rabbit	-	17	2	19
Crow	4	15	-	19
Wolf	2	17	1	20
Pigeon	2	16	2	20
Total	116	262	43	421

Not specific: For a large number of justifications, 116 out of 421, the investigator could not decide whether children's explanations rested on information introduced within the narration, or on knowledge already acquired by them.

Very general statements, for example, like that obtained in regard to the fable of 'The deer and the lion', where the latter was proposed as guilty because 'he was very bad' (f., 56), did not clarify the specific ground for the explanation.

Story information: The vast majority of the justifications of children's verdicts were based on the information provided in the story. 262 out of 421 statements revealed that the young subjects took into account the events depicted in the narration.

In the fable of 'The wolf and the lamb', for example, the wolf was found guilty 'because he told lies about his father' (m., 68).

General knowledge: Some children justified their verdicts not by referring to the events delineated in the story but by recalling their previous knowledge of the characters or the events of the narration. Thus, in some cases they came into conflict with information presented in the related story. A comparatively small number, 43 out of 421 responses, derived their contexts from the children's pre-conceptions of the world.

In the fable of 'The lion and the mouse', for example, the beast was thought as guilty 'because it eats children, lambs, mouses, cats, whatever' (f., 56), in spite of the

fact that the lion exhibited unusually magnanimous behaviour towards the mouse.

7.3.2c KINDS OF PUNISHMENT

Data are presented in Table 7.6.

In all cases in which the children's verdict was condemnatory, the subjects were asked to specify a kind of punishment suitable for the offence. In general, we can say that kindergartners were more interested in assigning the most severe penalty rather than pointing to a penalty appropriate to the offence. Thus, for the poor child that ate a great deal of food and had a stomachache, one suggestion was 'We should ask him to go into a deep ditch, and then put soil all over his body until we cover him up and then leave him there buried in the ground' (m., 66).

Analytically the suggested punishments were as follows:

No response: In 43 out of 295 cases, children did not recommend any suitable punishment for the agent of the stories they thought of as guilty.

Execution: Killing seemed to be the most favourite punishment suggested by kindergartners for all the different kinds of offences. In a total of 73 out of 295 cases,

children regarded execution as the most suitable penalty for a number of different wrongdoings.

Torture: Although torture is a very cruel action and provokes strong objection in the majority of adults, preschoolers referred to it as an acceptable kind of punishment even for very trivial faults. A total of 41 out of 295 suggestions described different kinds of torture as means of satisfying justice.

Torture was suggested for the fox in the `fox` fable because it failed to thank the woodcutter. `We should tie her with a rope and pull her teeth out and then put her on a fire and roast her and eat her` (f., 67).

Sometimes the torture ended with the death of the suffering person, but because children laid all the stress on the agony the offender was experiencing through his torture and not on the fact of killing alone, those responses were regarded by the investigator as belonging to the torture category and not to the execution one.

In the most cases the torture was bodily, but in response to the `hen` fable, the punishment suggested for the villager who was found guilty of murder was `We should take his wife away from him and give her to gypsies and then they will hang her from a tree and under the tree will be crocodiles with big mouths` (f., 68). The pain caused him by the loss of his beloved wife was regarded as a traumatic

experience for the villager and the appropriate psychological torture he had to undergo.

Some other suggestions were influenced by the children's acquaintance with literary works such as famous fairy tales. The wolf of the homonymous fable brought to kindergartners' minds his counterpart in the Seven Kids and the Wolf, and a child being obviously influenced by it after adding his personal touch suggested 'We should open his belly and stuff it with stones and then sew it again and ask the wolf to drink water from the river and then drown him' (m., 63).

Hanging, burying alive, mutilation and the action of plucking out someone's eyes were some other kinds of torture suggested by kindergartners, showing at the same time both unjustified cruelty and outstanding brutality.

Imprisonment: The high number of 72 prison sentences were pronounced by kindergartners, which echoed the most common adult practice.

Human beings and animals were indiscriminately put into prison, while in the case of the latter the prison was sometimes replaced by the zoo or detention at home. The bear of the homonymous fable, for example, was penalized 'To tie her up and then put her into the zoo' (f., 56), and the dog who lost its bone 'To keep him in the kennel and never let him go out again' (f., 57).

Common penalties of the school or home environment:

Some children missed the point that penalties were not only analogues to the offence, but also to the personality of the misdoer. So, common kinds of punishment preschoolers usually received in school and home environment were applied to grown ups and animals which were presented as living under totally different conditions from those described in the sentences pronounced by the subjects. A number of 34 out of 295 suggestions of suitable penalties belong to this category.

The lion, for example, in the `deer` fable, after being found guilty of the murder of the deer was sentenced as follows: `We should make him stand next to the wall with his face to the blackboard all day long` (m., 64). Maybe the usual practice of the child's teacher can explain his preference for this kind of punishment. The turtle, on the other hand, should be locked alone in the loo (f., 56), something that children may have undergone at home.

Not only their own common penalties but even the threats of punishment parents normally used on their children were regarded as suitable for the accused of the story. For the boy who ate too much, the sentence was `The doctor should come and give him an injection` (m., 53). Nearly every child has experienced a threat of this kind.

Others' responsibility: Another 24 responses confessed the kindergartners' incompetence to mete out justice and pointed to a person more suitable for this duty.

God, the jury, the court, the police, or the offenders' own parents were regarded by kindergartners as authorities more suited to dispense justice. `God will punish him. God will rain and destroy the lion with the thunder` (m., 66) answered a young pupil in regard to the `lion` fable. In regard to the `wolf` fable, the wolf would be punished by his father (m., 60), and no suggestion was made by the child.

Deprivation: Very few children, 4 out of 295 responses, and only in regard to the second group of fables which deal with the moral idea of greed, suggested that the culprit should be deprived of his possessions.

Thus, the punishment proposed for the dog that wanted along with its bone the food of the supposed other dog was that `Nobody should give him more bones. Never` (m., 71).

Reprimand: Another 4 responses considered the administration of a sharp reproof to the offender as the most suitable punishment, even for very grave crimes.

When the crow was found guilty of stealing, the punishment was `To tell him not to steal cheese again` (m., 49).

Table 7.6

Four to six-year-old children's suggestions of punishment for the guilty story characters of fables.

Fable	No re- sponse	Killing	Torture	Prison	Their pena- lties	Others' respon- sibility	Depri- vation	Verbal punish- ment	Total
Deer	2	8	2	3	2	1	-	-	18
Fox	1	7	1	2	-	-	-	-	11
Bear	1	3	2	-	-	1	-	-	7
Donkey	2	8	3	3	3	2	-	-	21
Cock	2	7	2	5	2	1	-	-	19
Hen	3	8	4	3	2	2	-	-	22
Dog	6	2	4	3	3	1	3	-	22
Camel	2	4	3	4	2	2	1	-	18
Doctor	1	4	4	9	1	-	-	-	19
Mum	3	1	1	-	4	1	-	1	11
Lion	3	-	3	5	3	1	-	-	15
Sun	6	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	9
Ant	2	5	4	3	3	2	-	-	19
Boy	3	4	2	3	4	2	-	-	18
Rabbit	2	2	1	10	-	2	-	1	18
Crow	2	-	2	3	2	2	-	1	12
Wolf	2	4	1	7	2	2	-	-	18
Pigeon	-	6	2	7	1	1	-	1	18
Total	43	73	41	72	34	24	4	4	295

7.3.2d THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PUNISHMENT

Data are presented in Tables 7.7 and 7.8.

Table 7.7

Four to six-year-old children's responses on the probability of repetition of the offence after punishment.

Groups	Yes	No	Total
1st	-	22	22
2nd	-	29	29
3rd	-	23	23
4th	-	19	19
5th	1	19	20
Total	1	112	113

Children were also questioned about the effectiveness of the punishment they suggested. After declaring the guilt of a story agent, the kindergartners were questioned whether the offender was likely to repeat the misdeed after being punished or not. Children's unanimity on this score was outstanding.

Nearly all the preschoolers, 112 out of 113, replied that the transgressor was not going to repeat the same offence he had committed in the narrative, in the case that he would have been punished, while all the kindergartners, 113 out of 113, admitted that the wrongdoer would inevitably perform the same kind of misbehaviour if he managed to escape punishment.

The children's trust in the effectiveness of punishment was independent of the nature of the offence committed or the kind of the penalty the offender had been subjected to. Only one child, in regard to the 'wolf' fable, maintained that the wolf would continue eating lambs, regardless of punishment 'because he likes their meat very much' (f., 64).

Table 7.8

Four to six-year-old children's responses on the lack of punishment and the possibility of repeating the same offence.

Groups	Yes	No	Total
1st	22	-	22
2nd	29	-	29
3rd	23	-	23
4th	19	-	19
5th	20	-	20
Total	113	0	113

7.3.3 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S EVALUATIONS OF ACTIONS

When children four to six-years-old were asked to evaluate the main actions of the story characters, they produced a variety of positive or negative judgments which they reached after employing the limited number of criteria which follows:

Actions were evaluated according to their aptness to resemble reality: Some kindergartners judged the actions

depicted in the stories without using moral criteria but on the basis of their fidelity to reality.

In the `hen` story, for example, when a preschooler was asked to decide if it was fair for the villager not to find any gold in the belly of the hen, ignoring the ethical dimensions of his action, greed and killing, and echoing its own conceptions of reality, he replied `It was not fair at all. Because all the hens have eggs in their bellies and then they lay them. And this one didn't have anything` (m., 69).

Actions were evaluated according to their aptness to produce a happy ending: Those kindergartners who favoured happy endings to stories evaluated the actions of the protagonists according to their tendency to contribute to such an outcome. Thus, when an event was just beneficial for the child's favourite agent it was also labeled as right. In regard to the `bear` story, for example, the traveller's climbing into the tree was regarded as right `Because the bear didn't put its muzzle into his ear and then he was saved` (f., 58). `All's well that ends well` seems to be the predominant criterion that applies in this case.

More striking is the reply of a kindergartner, who was asked to evaluate the rabbit's actions as they were depicted in the homonymous fable. `Yes, the rabbit was right that he went to sleep and then he didn't win and the turtle won. Poor thing! She is ever so slow and she never won any race

before and it was a pity! And now she won and she smiles and she is happy. And it is all right with the rabbit as well. Because he's strong and can win any race he wants` (m., 61). The rabbit's actions were viewed as appropriate not because of their motives or their direct effects on the animal but because they served a high moral purpose, which was the compensation of the turtle for the defects with which Nature endowed it.

Even for the story of `The camel and Zeus` and in response to the question of how right it was for the camel to ask for antlers, another young subject made the remark `It was all right. Because she lost her ears and this was very funny` (m., 53). The camel's condemnable motives were not taken into consideration and its actions were justified only by their suitability to give rise to an amiable narration.

Actions were viewed according to their consequences and not their motives: A very common tactic among preschoolers in evaluating the actions of story characters was speculation on the consequences they brought forth, and the comparison of them with their own sense of justice. If a protagonist's deed led to the restoration of the disturbed moral order of the narrative's world as the child conceived it, his actions were pronounced as fair, regardless of the motives behind them.

Thus, the child who regarded as just the lion's punishment in the homonymous fable condemned the mouse's effort to rescue it. `No, it was not right that the mouse tore the nets and set the lion free, because the lion is very bad and the hunters should have killed him` (m., 59).

Similarly, in regard to the `fox` fable, when a preschooler was asked to judge the man's action of pointing at the hut where the fox was hidden, she said `Yes, he was right to do so because the hunters didn't find her and they didn't kill her. Because it is not good to kill the animals. The fox didn't do anything bad to them` (f., 66).

Actions were viewed from a distorted perspective: In many cases kindergartners were not able to conceive the total implications of an action; what gave rise to it and what the whole range of its consequences might be. Thus, they proceeded to give very peculiar comments on a series of events that took place in the narrations.

Some of the evaluations that preschoolers made in regard to the behaviour of the grasshopper during the summer time were: `Yes, he was right to sing all day because he was happy` (f., 49); `No, it wasn't good because he bothered other people with his songs` (f., 48); `Yes, because songs are nice` (m., 58); `No, he wasn't right because maybe he would have fallen off the tree and killed himself` (m., 62). None of children made any reference to the insect's lack of

prudence or the laziness that resulted to its own death, but viewed its actions from an unexpected perspective.

Actions were viewed as a combination of intention and consequences: Some kindergartners were able to see the motives of the actions as well as the consequences that sprang out of them simultaneously. So, their judgments managed to balance those two elements and to result in evaluations very close to adult standards.

In regard to the fable of the `cock`, for example, and in response to the question `Was the dog right to kill the fox?` one kindergartner replied `Yes, because she wanted to eat the cock and the cock does nothing and he was the dog's little friend and the dog wanted to save him` (m., 69), while another one answered `No. It would have been better if the dog had chosen another way to punish her, like to chase her away. Because the fox didn't eat the cock after all` (m., 64).

The crude morality of the fable which is distilled in the old saying `An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth` seems to apply in both examples, although of the two subjects one placed the emphasis more on the intention and the other more on the result.

7.3.4 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S CONCEPTIONS OF KILLING AND LYING

Human beings' sociability is disrupted by fighting and enhanced by sharing and caring, and it would be reasonable, therefore, to assume that there is some genetic basis for these human values, which are basic to the continuance of individual life and the life of the species.

Preschoolers' opinions concerning killing help to verify this, and show that even young children believe very strongly in the value of life.

Children aged four to six-years revealed their notions on killing and lying incidentally in the course of the interview, in spite of the fact that they were not asked specifically on those topics.

7.3.4a KILLING

Killing was judged as the most serious crime one could commit and was always condemned by preschoolers. The good or bad nature of the animals was constantly judged by their position in the food chain and their attitudes towards devouring. Thus, all the carnivorous creatures were regarded as very bad, in contrast with the herbivorous ones that were labelled as good and innocent.

No subject found any justification for an animal preying on another one and, in those cases that a scene of devouring was depicted in the narration, preschoolers expressed their strong objection and their deep repulsion and anger against the animal who committed it. The victimizers always left without any excuse, and the laws of

Nature were not referred to in order to explain carnivorous beasts' behaviour. Even a change of lion's diet in order to acquire vegetarian eating habits and become a kind-hearted and friendly animal was suggested by some preschoolers (e.g. 'It must eat soil and grass', f., 52).

On the other hand, killing was justified when the victim was identified as the villain of the story and its murder coincided with its just punishment. The fox in the 'cock' fable, for example, got what it deserved, since the dog's actions were not inspired by a blind cruelty but constituted assistance to its friend who was unjustly in serious trouble. It was also an administration of justice to a bad-natured fox who wanted to kill a defenceless and innocent creature.

In addition, when preschoolers were asked to suggest a punishment for the villain, they referred to the death penalty very often. Many times a final execution was preceded by a long course of corporal torture which was remarkably astonishing and cruel. Even small offences, like sleeping during a race, were regarded as the kind of

wrongdoing worthy of occurring a general outcry against the accused and bring about the death penalty.

Summing up, we can say that killing, in the eyes of preschoolers, is the gravest offense that a creature can commit, but at the same time it forms a common punishment and a means of correcting behaviour.

7.3.4b LYING

Another kind of common offences is lying, which kindergartners conceived in a very peculiar way. Although to adults a lie must combine an untrue statement with a bad intention, the young subjects labelled as lies simple misjudgments of one's own abilities or the inability to reach previously achieved standards.

Thus, the North Wind in the `Sun` fable should get punished `because he told lies that he was stronger` (m., 64), or the rabbit in the homonymous aesopic story was found guilty of lying `because he thought that he was going to win and he didn't` (m., 58).

In all the cases that a real or a supposed lie was detected, kindergartners suggested a severe punishment. So, in the tale of the boy who cried wolf `God will punish the boy because it's a bad thing to tell lies` (m., 63).

However, not only the one who made up the lie should suffer, but a penalty was also proposed for the person who

regarded a true statement as false. In the story of the `lion`, for example, the mouse was thought good because `it told the truth that it would save the lion` (m., 59), while the lion faced the death penalty `because he didn't believe that the mouse was telling him the truth` (f., 69).

When children commented on the moral status of an employed trick they were taking into account the purposes the specific plan served and they judged its morality according to those purposes. The flattery of the fox towards the crow in the `crow` fable or the fox's evil plans in the `donkey` tale were strongly criticized since they were directed against innocent creatures in order to make a profit out of them. On the contrary, the man's scheme in the `bear` fable to pretend to be dead in order to save his own life from a vicious beast was considered as morally right and ethically irreproachable.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE RESEARCH'S RESULTS ON CHILDREN'S DETECTION OF FABLES'

CONCEALED MORAL IDEA

8.1 THE CURRENT RESEARCH

Since fables have been used for thousands of years as part of school curricula mainly because they are believed to contribute to children's moral development, the issue of kindergartners' conception of the fables' hidden morality is of paramount importance and received special attention in this research.

Kindergartners were encouraged to detect the fables' concealed moral truth as well as its application to their own lives (appendix two, questions marked as M and Ap). All the subjects aged four to six-year-old faced tasks of both decoding the general moral of 18 different stories and of applying those lessons to their own environment.

For reasons of comparison, an additional sample of 55 fifth and sixth graders was also used. Children of ten to twelve years of age were asked how they conceived the morality conveyed by fables, and their answers were viewed as formulating a suggestion of the developmental tendencies children follow when they approach fables.

Since educators and authors argue about the necessity or the place that the explicit statement of the fables' moral should take, the research undertook to study the contribution of the stories' attached epimythium to the acceleration of kindergartners' comprehension of it. The five aesopic tales that made up the second group of the research material ended with the pronouncement of an epimythium, and kindergartners were asked to interpret it. If children were able to explain the moral more successfully in fables that conclude with an epimythium than in those which end without one, the significance of the epimythium in facilitating kindergartners' understanding of the fables' moral point would have been demonstrated.

Moreover, since an epimythium is not the only way of presenting explicitly the moral of a fable, the first group of aesopic fables used in this research was constructed so as to employ only one ethical idea, that of friendship, but using different ways of displaying it. The `deer` story ended with a sentence in direct speech that expressed in a rather abstract way the fable's hidden morality. The `fox` narration was preceded by a promythium, the `bear` story was followed by an epimythium, the tale of the `donkey` gave no particular clue to help children discover its moral, while in the fable of the `cock` kindergartners had to decide among three alternatives; the main idea of the story but at a concrete literal level, an overgeneralized statement, and finally the correct moral of the fable.

All five fables dealt with the concept of friendship, in order to minimize the variations due to different concepts. Twenty-two children of kindergarten age were interviewed after listening to those fables and their replies, once scored and classified, were very helpful in determining whether different ways of presenting fables' morals to children have contributed differently to the readers' understanding of it.

Due to the fact that aesopic collections do not include stories of a unique kind and style, five aesopic stories, which convey the same ethical idea of greed and mirror five different types of fables, were presented to another 29 kindergartners. `The hen who laid the golden eggs`, which resembles fairy tales in many aspects, `The dog and its bone`, an admittedly genuine fable, the aetiological narration of `The camel and Zeus`, the merely amusing story of `The grandma and the doctor`, and the story of `The mum and the child`, which is based on a language game, made up the fables of the second group in this research. Since the moral idea is the same in all five tales, the different degrees of the children's success at detecting it is attributed to differences among the different narratives.

8. 2 METHODOLOGY

The method of the research has been described analytically in the fifth chapter and need not be repeated here.

8.3 RESULTS

The results of the research are presented in two parts; the first concerns the kindergartners, while the second deals with the answers of the fifth and sixth graders.

8.3.1 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN (FOUR TO SIX-YEAR-OLD)

Kindergartners were asked to state the general moral of the fables as well as its application to their own lives. Both tasks proved very difficult for them, and few of the preschoolers gave an answer acceptable to adult standards.

8.3.1a GENERAL MORAL

Data are presented in Tables A.16 - A.20 and 8.1.

In 421 cases 113 kindergartners were encouraged to detect the concealed morality conveyed by 18 fables. Their responses can be categorized into six groups, presented in an ascending order of sophistication as follows:

No response: In 46 out of 421 cases kindergartners did not disclose their opinion on the fable's conveyed truth, in spite of the investigator's attempts to persuade them to.

Table 8.1

Four to six-year-old children's detection of the general moral of fables. All Groups.

Groups	No re- sponse	Unsuccessful moral	Centering	Concerning the story	Minor ideas	Correct	Total
1st	19	20	39	22	2	8	110
2nd	7	19	65	28	11	15	145
3rd	8	14	18	15	5	9	69
4th	10	4	13	19	7	4	57
5th	2	11	18	5	4	0	40
Total	46	68	153	89	29	36	421

The story 'The deer and the lion' as well as 'The lion and the mouse' proved to be highly complex, and many children did not suggest any moral. For the tale of 'The pigeon and the fox', which was constructed by the researcher so as to lack any profound moral, only one child did not suggest any moral, admitted that he could not find one. Thus, even the child who did not propose any moral was quite sure that there was one, and considered that it was because of his own inability that he could not state it.

Perhaps the very prospect of asking kindergartners to detect the abstract moral point of a story should be reconsidered, since developmental psychology maintains that they are unable to deal with abstract thought. Pressure from the adult authority that interviews the students and the children's own assumption that wherever there is a question there is also an answer, which is valid at least within the school environment, kindergartners tried to find a moral even in cases that there was none.

The quest for a moral and an unsuccessful attempt to reach it: A number of 68 out of 421 the preschoolers' responses were totally unacceptable by adults' standards. Kindergartners constructed epimythia by adding the word 'should' to a pragmatic and realistic statement, or just repeated exhortations they had previously heard, whether or not these fitted the story. Those children, being persuaded

that it was their duty to find the hidden morality of the story, in spite of the fact that they were unable to leap from the concreteness of the narrative to the abstractness of an ethical idea, proceeded to very primitive and unsophisticated attempts at detecting it.

Thus, an **episode** of the story - e.g. `The bear should put its muzzle into the man's ear when he pretends he's dead` (m., 64) - or its **ending** - e.g. `The dog should jump into the water` (m., 64) - became morals in disguise, while another set of children presented their deepest **wishes** as the story's hidden ethical demand. For the `Sun` fable, for example a proposed epimythium was `Children should play all day when the weather is good and when it is raining or snowing or it is windy` (m., 52).

Some other kindergartners grasped the fact that morals are addressed to human beings and aim at informing them on various aspects of their lives. They also realized that the epimythium of the fable is tightly connected to its plot line and that, through the example of animals, it conveys useful practical advice to men. But, in their attempt to pass from the animal domain to a world populated by human beings, they failed to convert the specific animal behaviour into one suitable for men. So, they **arbitrarily transferred** specific episodes that normally occur in the jungles to human cities, without refining those incidents that were totally unrelated to men.

Thus, the moral suggested for the `dog` fable was `We shouldn't take bones from other dogs` (m., 51). And so the construction of the sentence, as well as its context, implies both men's dog-like nature and a really very peculiar appetite for bones. According to another preschooler, and in regard to the `camel` fable, the proposed epimythium was `We shouldn't envy the antlers of the others and should not ask for antlers` (m., 63). As if the human species aspired to have horns and antlers.

In a very limited number of cases children's egocentric thought as well as their preoccupation with animism, led them to define animal's behaviour in human terms. Thus, the moral of the `pigeon` fable was `The fox shouldn't take the meat from the birds but must take some money out of her purse and go to the shops and buy some` (f., 70).

The hovering between the animal and the human worlds which is fundamental and structural to the genre of fable has resulted in creating many problems to kindergartners who, in their attempt to unite the two domains, ended up by constructing some very awkward and bizarre situations.

Some other children searching for a specific moral suitable to each fable, made **overgeneralized statements** which could fit pretty well to any story. Thus, by obtaining a handy sentence appropriate to every narration those preschoolers lessen their effort to the extent of merely repeating it every time that a moral was required. Those overgeneralized and undisputable epimythia consisted either

of the exhortation 'We should be good' (m., 58), or the admonition 'We shouldn't be bad' (m., 71), or a combination of those two.

Another sort of suggested morals were pieces of advice totally indifferent and **unconnected** to the story. They mirrored the incitements children normally hear from their parents or teachers. The obligation of obedience to their mothers - e.g. 'We should listen to our mum' (f., 50), for the 'camel' tale - was declared in the epimythium of nearly every fable. In 14 out of 24 totally unrelated morals obedience towards the child's mother was constantly recurring, while no other person was referred as deserving it. Another 5 children repeated the parental advice not to go out alone or to take things from strangers - e.g. 'Not to go out because someone will take us' (m., 55) for the 'donkey' fable - 3 more epimythia discouraged children from beating others - e.g. 'We should not beat the elders' (f., 63), for the 'Sun' tale - while another 2 focused on the story telling process and suggested that students' attention was required - e.g. 'We should listen to the stories' (f., 52).

Morals elicited after centering on minor episodes or the behaviour of specific agents: Kindergartners who, in 153 out of 421 responses, were unable to take into consideration the whole story in order to extract its moral point, focused on one striking detail, either an episode or a character,

and defined its proper course or its suitable behaviour accordingly. They were assisted at their task by their previous knowledge about a similar situation or the story character, as well as by information presented in the narrative. The distinctive characteristic of this type of moral is its narrowness. These morals were concentrated only on one particular event or person, without examining either the whole of the narrative or its significance for men. Children expressed comments on a particular event or story agent and did not urge human beings to correct their life attitudes.

Most commonly preschoolers announced in a form of a false epimythium their approval or disapproval of specific events taking place within the narration.

In regard to the `grandma` fable a commonly heard epimythium was `The doctor shouldn't have taken the things from the grandma` (f., 56). They remained at the concrete level of the narrative and expressed their comments in favour or against specific events.

Another type of moral that kindergartners suggested were statements that, although they had a false varnish of generality, in actual fact reflected approval or disapproval of the related episodes and were strictly confined to the concrete narration. The epimythium `We shouldn't sleep in a race` (m., 67) had obviously gone further than `The rabbit shouldn't have slept during the race` (f., 52), but was confined to one single episode viewed from a literal

perspective. The young child who asserted the inappropriateness of sleeping during a contest was absorbed only by this particular event, and had obviously ignored the perpetual effort of the turtle and the arrogant attitude of the rabbit.

In the same category falls the moral proposed by a preschooler for the `Sun` fable. `We shouldn't take off the clothes of others` (f., 48), which putting aside any other event of the narration, had concentrated onto the most eye-catching detail.

The most conspicuous event in a narration proved to be the scene of devouring and death. Kindergartners laid great emphasis on **suggestions about means of protection** that young children and small animals should take in order to avoid being innocent victims of the lion, fox, wolf or the bear. `All the children, deers and lambs should go onto high mountains and the lions and the wolves wouldn't find them` (f., 60) was a moral suggested for the `deer` fable.

Even ways to confront disturbances caused by not menacing animals, like hens or dogs, were also proposed. `We shouldn't go near the hens and then they won't bite us` (f., 62). A safe distance should also be kept from those who can threaten us in any way `We should stay away from those who blow` (f., 64) was another moral suggested for the `Sun` fable.

In other cases, the **proper behaviour** of the animals was also regarded as formulating the hidden moral of the fable.

The animal protagonists were told not to disturb humans: e.g. 'Donkeys shouldn't kick us' (f., 59) - avoid moral offenses - e.g. 'Dogs shouldn't take bones that they are not given and should not steal them' (f., 57) - carry on doing their own duties - e.g. 'Hens should lay their eggs' (f. 56) and most of all not to kill other creatures - e.g. 'Wolves shouldn't come at night and eat the lambs of the boys' (m., 62).

Another group of children undertook the ambitious task of defining the **proper attitude towards** some story agents. The appropriate behaviour they suggested varied according to the vicious or kind nature of the animal in question. When it concerned a creature that the child thought deserved to be killed, the epimythium was the suggestion for its own death, while in the opposite case, when the animal was the victim of the story, its protection against all its enemies was declared. 'We should kill all the foxes and the lions and the birds who come and pull our hair' (m., 64) was a moral for the 'fox' aesopic tale, while 'We should not kill mice because they are very helpful' (m., 58) was an epimythium for the 'lion' tale.

Statements concerning the story at a literal level, totally lacking any veneer of admonitory character: This category consists of comments on the actual discourse of the plot. The majority of them were expressed not in the form of a false epimythium - after adding the word 'should' in a

morally indifferent utterance -- but as an affirmative statement.

When children were unable to grasp the hidden morality of the fable, instead of creating very primitive epimythia, as in the two previously presented categories, they chose to give their judgments on the actual story. A number of 89 out of 421 responses were comments on the plot line of the story.

Some preschoolers put forward **evaluations of the main characters** of the narrative. So, `The lion is very bad because he did all those smart things` (m., 64) was a moral offered for the `donkey` fable. On exactly the same pattern another kindergartner said in regard to the `pigeon` story `The fox was really bad. She wanted to eat the pigeon` (m., 58).

Another set of subjects announced their **evaluations of particular episodes or events** that took place within the narration. `It was not good for the camel to ask for antlers because only deers have antlers and camels are not nice with them` (m., 66), or `The grandma was right to call the doctor because she had pain in her eyes` (f., 65). These epimythia do not sound like exhortations or admonitions, but rather reflect simple judgments on the concrete story at a literal level.

In some other cases the kindergartners felt that certain aspects of the story were not adequately explained, and so their morals consisted of **explanations** of events they

found obscure. `That means that the burglars painted the eggs golden to make fun of the villager. There are not golden eggs; all the eggs are white. The burglars always go into the houses of the other men at night and do naughty things. They did it to the villager` (m., 63). And another child, who realized the illusory nature of the reflected bone, did not miss the chance to show off her own superiority over the story agent and, exactly as she did in response to other questions, she repeated in regard to the moral task `The bone was its own. There was no other bone` (f., 68).

Children's actual interference in the natural course of the story evolution and their suggestions for a new turn of the plot was another practice followed by kindergartners in response to the task of finding the general moral of the fable. According to this fashion, preschoolers proceeded further than the narration to expose the culprit and demand his own punishment - e.g. `The lion deserves to be killed now` (f., 65) for the `donkey` fable - or to recommend another ending placed after the concluded sentence of the story - e.g. `And then the dog took again its bone from the other dog` (f., 68) - or simply to lead the hero out of his predicaments - e.g. `His mum phoned the doctor and the doctor came` (f., 63).

Minor idea: A total number of 29 out of 421 responses managed to grasp an ethical idea lying within the narration which, though it was not the one the fabulist meant to convey, remained one of the minor ethical notions communicated by the fable. Children who gave this kind of epimythia not only based their judgements on the whole story and not upon a small part of it, but also jumped from the animal domain to human world. If we bear in mind that fables can be subjected to a great number of different interpretations and that fable collections do not attach the same epimythium to the same fable, we can realize children's high performance when they point to an abstract idea conveyed by the narrative, even though not the most profound one.

Although the `bear` fable provides readers with a safe criterion of differentiating a true friend from a false one, a kindergartner interpreted the story as conveying a message of self protection `We should take care of ourselves and not expect others to do everything for us. Just like the one who pretended to be dead` (m., 64). Not relying on others but taking responsibilities towards life on ourselves could have been another point of this fable.

In addition, in regard to the `pigeon` tale, if there was any message it would have been `We shouldn't steal things that belong to others` (f., 51).

Minor ideas were expressed both in a rather abstract way, and in a concrete form. Another child reconstructed a

story parallel to that of `The fox and the crow`, and although he missed the point of flattery, he stressed the idea of deception and called on children to avoid it. `If we are somewhere and a stranger comes and tells us "Come down, let me give you a chocolate" and he has put drugs in the chocolate and if we eat it we'll die, we shouldn't take anything from him and say "No, thanks Sir" and stay there where we are` (m., 63).

Correct moral: A very small number of kindergarten subjects, only 36 out of 421 responses, were considered as suggesting a moral that could be judged as correct by adult standards. No correct moral was given for the `deer`, `donkey`, `mum`, `Sun`, `rabbit`, `crow`, `wolf` and `pigeon` tales, while the fables of the `ant` (6 out of 23 morals) and of `The boy who cried wolf` (4 out of 19 epimythia) had the highest rates of correct interpretations.

Sometimes the correct moral was reached rather idiosyncratically, as happened in the case of the `bear` fable, where the child maintained `Good friends help one another and don't let them to the bear to eat them. Just as the man who lied down helped the other who climbed onto the tree and the bear didn't do anything to him` (f., 67). Although the epimythium is expressed in a concrete form, the actual conception of it fits the correct interpretation, and the reference to the bear corresponds to any kind of peril.

The correct morals were expressed in an abstract and general form - e.g. 'We shouldn't tell lies' (m., 52) for the 'boy' tale - or in a very concrete way - e.g. 'The grasshopper should sing one day and the next day he must work and buy a house and food' (m., 52). Although the second child was confined to the story environment and did not stretch it in order to include human beings, he had, however, pointed precisely to the hidden truth of the story; that it is necessary to work in order to lead a comfortable life.

8.3.1b APPLICATION TO CHILDREN'S OWN LIVES

Data are presented in Tables A.21 - A.25 and 8.2.

The detection of the moral's application to children's own lives proved a much more difficult task for kindergartners than the discovery of the general moral of the fable. In every fable all the children scored lower in regard to the moral's application to their own circumstances than they did concerning its general statement. Regarding the detection of the general moral, in 46 out of 421 cases children were unable to state any. For the moral's application to children's lives, on the other hand, the number of subjects who refused to respond was nearly double, and in 90 out of 421 cases they did not answer. Even the correct replies for the general moral were only 36 out of

421, while for its application they dropped sharply to 18. In addition, the 29 responses that expressed a minor idea for the general epimythium were reduced to 19 for its application to children's lives.

It is striking that even preschoolers who managed to point to the correct general moral of the fable, when they were asked about its application to themselves, were absolutely puzzled and regressed to more crude and primitive types of answers. The young boy, for example, who stated for the `dog` fable the epimythium `We shouldn't be jealous of others` (m., 61), when he was asked about the story's message to children, maintained `Children shouldn't bother dogs because they'll bite them` (m., 61). Similarly, the girl who in regard to the `lion` story, expressed the moral `Even small creatures can save big ones` (f., 63), in the case of children came out with the entirely unrelated exhortation `Children should listen to their mums` (f., 63).

Only very few kindergartners were capable of shifting from the general statement to a more specific one which concerned children of their age. For the `ant` fable, for example, the general epimythium `We should work to have money to eat` (f., 69) was successfully transferred into the conditions of preschoolers' life as `Children should work in their schools and do all the things the teacher asks them and not to say they want to play all day` (f., 69).

The lower scoring of preschoolers in regard to the application of the moral to their own environment, compared

with the detection of it in general, can be attributed to the more complex nature of the former task in comparison with the latter. It is apparently a simpler task to point to a general message than to define its application to a particular situation, since the former does not presuppose the latter while the application though based on the general statement, goes further than it.

More analytically the kindergartners' responses to the application question were divided as follows:

No response: As has already been mentioned, due to the difficulty of the task for preschoolers, 90 out of 421 could not state the fable's significance for their life.

The quest for a moral and an unsuccessful attempt to reach it: A number of 156 out of 421 suggested epimythia were masqueraded as morals, while they were in actual fact preschoolers' own wishes totally unconnected with the narration - e.g. `Children should play and run` (m., 58) as an answer to the `rabbit` fable - or the definition of their own duties which, although they are important to them, were not hinted at by the story. Again the most popular one was the obedience owed to one's mother along with that owed to one's father and teachers, while to a lesser extent there were suggestions for paying attention to stories, means of protection against passing cars, warnings against quarreling

and a number of rules regulating sleeping, eating and cleaning habits. Thus, in regard to the `wolf` fable a kindergartner stated `Children should wash their hands, eat all their food, bring the ashtray to their dads when he asks for one and not to say "Not now; I'll bring it later", go to school and not to complain that it is early morning and they want to sleep more` (m., 66). Maybe the fable's setting, which locates the actors near the river, and the reference to the clear water, led the child to utter its first phrase about clean hands and then, carried away by his own thoughts, constructed a long list of all his duties.

Another set of children gave rise to an **unsuccessful transformation** of the animals' actions as they were depicted in the stories into their own environment. They suggested morals such as `Children shouldn't pretend that they are dead because the bear will put its muzzle into their ears` (f., 59) for the `bear` fable or `Children must cut their ears if they want to change them` (m., 59), in regard to the `camel` story.

In addition, as happened with the detection of the general moral, some kindergartners found refuge in **overgeneralized** statements, that they kept repeating for all the fables with which they met difficulties in order to define their application to their lives. Thus, the exhortation `Children should be good and do good things` (f., 67) was put forward for a number of different stories.

Table 8.2

Four to six-year-old children's detection of the applications of the moral of fables to their lives. All Groups.

Groups	No re- sponse	Unsuccessful moral	Centering	Concerning the story	Minor ideas	Correct	Total
1st	20	31	49	5	2	3	110
2nd	20	39	65	7	6	8	145
3rd	30	14	14	5	4	2	69
4th	15	15	12	5	5	5	57
5th	5	16	16	1	2	0	40
Total	90	115	156	23	19	18	421

Morals elicited after centering on minor episodes or the behaviour of specific agents: This practice proved to be the most popular one among kindergartners since 156 out of 421 responses were of that kind. Preschoolers expressed their **approval or disapproval of specific events** - e.g. 'You shouldn't cross bridges because maybe you'll fall into the water' (m., 66) for the 'dog' fable - defined the **proper kind of behaviour towards a story agent** - e.g. 'We shouldn't catch pigeons; only watch them from a distance' (m., 50) for the 'pigeon' story - or attracted by the striking episode of killing suggested **ways to avoid harming** - e.g. 'We should stay away from the grasshopper because he is a very big animal and he'll eat us' (m., 64) was a moral applied to children suggested by a preschooler who, apart from his failure to state the correct epimythium, exposed his own ignorance of the real nature of the grasshopper.

Statements concerning the story at a literal level, totally lacking any veneer of an admonitory character: A few responses, 23 out of 421, were considered as judgments on the course of the story or comments on the evolution of the narration. Their small number can be explained by the very nature of the task that aims at the definition of the children's influence by the fables' conveyed morality. But some children commented on the plot line of the story and gave epimythia which proposed a fairer administration of justice.

In the `donkey` fable, for example, the moral applied to children was `That is that all the daddies will come and kill the fox and the lion because the donkey was good` (m., 61).

Minor ideas: Although 26 out of 421 responses were characterized as expressing a minor ethical idea in regard to the question of the general moral, the figure plunged down to 19 in the case of its application to children's lives. Most of the 19 minor ideas were expressed in a highly abstract way, while a few had a concrete basis.

For the `grandma` fable, for example, a suggested application was `Children shouldn't steal` (m., 58), and for the aesopic tale of the `ant` the urge for charity was expressed as `Children should give food to those who are hungry` (f., 49).

Correct moral: In only 18 out 421 cases, concerning the fables of the `fox`, the `bear`, the `cock`, the `dog`, the `camel`, the `mum`, the `ant` and the `boy`, children gave an application of the moral regarded as correct by adults' standards. The story of `The boy who cried wolf`, 5 out of 19 correct responses, along with that of the `camel`, 4 out of 29 answers, were the two most successfully interpreted fables. A number of moral applications were reached in a peculiar manner. For the `dog` story, for example, it was said `We shall not ask for the things that

belong to others and should not be greedy. Just like the dog in the lake that took the bone of the other dog, and now it has two and the other has nothing. This is not fair` (f., 58). Until the moment that she justified her statement, the child looked as if she had understood the fable fairly well.

For the same fable, another girl pointed to its moral truth by inventing a parallel story, stressing a way ^{that} makes the tale applicable to children. `If a child is near the sea and he has a stake and then he sees his own stake in the water and jumps into the sea to take it and loses his stake, this is not good because he is greedy; and because he is greedy he lost all his dinner` (f., 68).

8.3.1c INTERPRETATION OF THE ATTACHED EPIMYTHIUM

For the 29 kindergartners who were asked to interpret the attached epimythium, its presence was not proved to be of any help. The preschoolers seemed to be really puzzled at the existence of a highly abstract sentence that concluded the fable, and in regard its interpretation they scored lower than at the tasks of detecting the general moral of the fable or its application to children. The results at the table 8.3 show the number of correct answers elicited by preschoolers in the three tasks of discovering the story's general moral, its applications to children's lives, and the interpretation of the attached epimythium.

Table 8.3

Four to six-year-old children's detection of the correct moral of fables in three tasks; general moral, its application, and the interpretation of the epimythium.

	Correct Moral		
	General	Application	Interpretation
Hen	2	-	2
Dog	6	3	1
Camel	6	4	5
Doctor	-	-	-
Mum	-	1	-
Total	14	8	8

The tasks of the detection of a moral applicable to their environment and the explanation of an attached abstract epimythium were showed as bearing nearly equal difficulty for kindergartners with 8 correct answers each, while the number was higher, 14 correct replies, regarding the comprehension of the hidden general moral of the fable.

The explanation of this phenomenon may lie in preschoolers' inability to grasp the meaning of an abstract sentence, which seems to confuse rather than facilitate their attempt to reach fables' hidden moral truths.

As soon as they were confronted with the epimythium they either concentrated on it or shifted to the fable; very rarely did they examine the concrete story and the explicit expression of its abstract truth at the same time.

The abstraction and the general tone of the epimythium put children off from the first moment they came across it. Because kindergartners considered it as alien to their own way of talking, they passed over it without making any

serious attempt to understand its meaning. In contrast, because preschoolers treat short tales as their own literary property, their objections to tasks connected to the story were few.

Table 8.4

Four to six-year-old children's No Responses to three questions; general moral, its application and the interpretation of the epimythium.

	No responses		
	General	Application	Interpretation
Hen	-	3	4
Dog	1	5	10
Camel	2	5	8
Doctor	3	6	15
Mum	1	1	15
Total	7	20	52

Table 8.4 supports the above mentioned speculation, as it shows the numbers of 'no responses' corresponding to each of the three tasks. Only 7 young students did not offer a general moral, while this number climbs to 20 for a moral applicable to children themselves, and soars to 52 when they were asked to interpret the epimythium. Although it was believed that the attachment of a statement expressing explicitly the fable's concealed morality just after the end of narration would have helped the reader in his attempt to grasp the ethical truth of the story, at least with kindergartners the research revealed exactly the reverse.

Preschoolers got confused after listening to a highly sophisticated statement and furthermore they demonstrated great difficulties in switching from the concrete story to the abstract distillation of its actual meaning.

8.3.1c₁ DIFFERENT KINDS OF INTERPRETATIONS OF THE EPIMYTHIUM

Data are presented in Table 8.5.

When kindergarten children attempted an explanation of the attached epimythium - 4 subjects did not respond to the `hen` fable, 10 to the `dog`, 8 to `camel`, 15 to `grandma` and 15 to `mum` - they contributed various types of different answers divided into the following categories:

Indifferent comments that made no sense: Only 4 out of 145 explanations were totally unrelated either to the epimythium or to the proceeding story, and constituted the children's idiosyncratic statements on personal matters of their lives. A girl, for example, in regard to the `dog` story's epimythium, put forward the explanation `If someone goes to Canada he cries like my aunt` (f., 63). Further questioning by the researcher did not make her reveal the reasons, if there were any, that led her to respond in such an obscure way to the question of explaining the moral. Maybe the references to losses and the thought of them reminded her of the case of her aunt, who was crying over

Table 8.5

Four to six-year-old children's interpretations of the explicitly expressed moral of fables.

Fables	No response	No sense	Centering on story	Centering on words	Previous moral	Correct	Total
Hen	4	1	17	3	2	2	29
Dog	10	2	9	6	1	1	29
Camel	8	1	8	3	4	5	29
Doctor	15	-	8	4	2	-	29
Mum	15	-	7	1	6	-	29
Total	52	4	49	17	15	8	145

her eminent departure and the `loss` of all her friends and relatives.

Centering on the story: The highest percentage of the children who tried to interpret the epimythia, 49 out of 145, did not make any attempt to explain it, but shifted to the concrete narration and gave replies concerning the recounted story.

Their responses consisted of **summaries** of the tale - e.g. `That means that the dog took the bone and then saw another one in the water and jumped into the river and lost his own` (f., 63) - **characterizations** of the main agents - e.g. `That is that the camel is very good` (m., 71) - suggestions of a kind of **behaviour** suitable for the protagonists - e.g. `The hen should lay only white eggs. Golden eggs are poisonous` (m., 65) - or defining our proper **attitude towards** the story agents - e.g. `That means that we should not kill hens. We must eat eggs` (f., 62) - and their **explanations** of episodes occurred in the story - e.g. `That thing means that the dog lost his bone because the other dog in the sea took it` (f., 49).

Kindergartners' common practice of ignoring totally the epimythium they had been asked to explain, and concentrating only on the much more comprehensible story that preceded it, manifests their inability to deal with ethical matters in an abstract and generalized way. Instead of thinking of the relation that the direct expression of the fable's morality

has with the story, they preferred to ignore it. So in the place of an interpretation preschoolers offered remarks on the context of the aesopic tale.

Centering on specific words or phrases of the

utterance: The attention of a number of young subjects, 17 out^{of} 145 remarks, was caught by words or phrases expressed in the epimythium. Those students, instead of dealing with the whole utterance and its connection with the story it concluded, were satisfied with elaborating on the striking elements of the epimythium.

For the `dog` fable the word `less` was regarded by a preschooler as the key issue requiring explanation and so he said `Less means less money and if we have less money we can't buy anything` (m., 64). In the fable of `grandma`, on the other hand, the phrase `he will be laughed at` struck a chord in another kindergartner, who listed a few occasions that somebody becomes the laughing stock of the others `That means that if you are fat or ill or have long nose or you are ugly or dirty or blind the others will laugh at you` (f., 59).

Kindergartners who focused their attention on specific words and phrases of the epimythium followed a different route from those who centered on the tale. But both types of responses failed to comprehend the correct meaning of the hidden morality of the fables, because the children were unable to see at the same time the figurative narration and

the direct expression of its meaning. Kindergartners failed to realize how the genre operates both at a literal and a figurative level, and they only viewed either the story or its explicitly expressed morality.

Repetition of previously suggested morals: Another group of preschoolers, when they were asked to interpret the attached epimythium, responded in 15 out of 145 cases with the repetition of the morals they had already expressed.

So, in regard to the `mum` fable and in spite of the fact that the attached epimythium did not make any reference to food, 6 kindergarten children concluded by declaring an urge towards or a resistance against eating, justifying their opinions in different ways and stressing either the disturbing effects of heavy meals or giving weight to its role in the development of the body, especially for children.

Children's responses that fell in the category of repetition of previously suggested morals do not form a unique group, but followed the categorization proposed for the `general morals` and their `application to children`.

Those kindergartners who chose to repeat their already expressed morals in exactly the same manner as they had previously, focused neither on the story nor on the epimythium but on the word `moral` that introduced the latter. Due to the fact that they had been asked to express the moral of the fable and its application to their lives,

when they came across the explicitly stated moral of the story, unable to comprehend its actual meaning, they restated their own version of the narration's concealed truth.

Correct interpretation: Only 8 responses in a total of 145 can be scored as correct revealing that a very limited number of kindergartners managed to understand the epimythium in a way acceptable to adult standards.

Their explanations, though correct, vary in kind, as the preschoolers applied the abstract truth of the epimythium to the **tangible situation of the narration** - e.g. 'It is like the villager who wanted more gold and lost the less, the eggs' (f., 66) for the 'hen' story - to the **conditions of their own lives** - e.g. 'That means not to ask for things that are not yours like the toys of another child. Because your mum will be mad at you and she won't buy you sweets and then you will have nothing' (m., 63), for the 'camel' story - or to the **specific circumstances confronted by adults** - e.g. 'Men who want much furniture for their wives and things like that get laughed at because the other men whom they had stolen from tell the jury their actions and everyone laughs at them' (f., 68), for the 'grandma' fable.

8.3.1d DIFFERENT WAYS OF PRESENTING THE MORAL

In order to find out which different ways of fables' presentation provide children with most chances to detect the hidden morality of the stories, different ways of introducing the morals were adopted.

8.3.1d_(i) LAST SENTENCE

Although the fable of 'The deer and the lion' concluded with an epigrammatic sentence that revealed the inner truth of the story, kindergartners did not seem to be assisted by it in their attempt to detect the hidden morality of the story. None of the 22 children was able to contrive an epimythium acceptable to adults, and they used all their imagination in responding to the task.

The fact that kindergartners were not helped by the last sentence of the story does not surprise us, since they scored very low at the tasks of recalling and understanding them. As this research has shown, only in 7.6% (16 out of 209 cases) regarding recalling and 9.6% (20 out of 209) concerning comprehension did preschoolers exhibit a high performance. It has become evident from the results already obtained that preschoolers, when they were confronted with a concluding epigrammatic statement expressed in a direct way and in an abstract tone, more often ignored it all together

or, in the worse case, counterfeited it in order to make it consistent with their personal conception of the story or with their previous experience.

8.3.1d_(ii) PROMYTHIUM/EPIMYTHIUM

Both statements, promythium, which introduces the fable, and epimythium, which concludes it, did not assist preschoolers in their attempt to grasp the concealed morality of the story. Only 1 out of 22 young subjects pointed to the correct idea for the `fox` aesopic tale, which started with a promythium, and slightly more kindergartners, 3 out of 22, reached the correct moral for the `bear` story, which concluded with an epimythium.

The same study has shown that when preschoolers came across a promythium or an epimythium, because they approached the concrete story only at a literal level, they were confused by its abstract and general tone. So they preferred not to respond at all in the task of interpreting it (52 out of 145 cases) or to express their personal opinions regardless of the statements in question. Only 8 out of 145 replies were scored as correct regarding the comprehension of the epimythium in five different fables. The percentage of correct answers was so low that it left no room for doubt that when a promythium or an epimythium

accompanies a story, kindergartners are not helped at grasping its inner morality.

It has also been proved by this study that even preschoolers who have succeeded in extracting the ethical truth of the fable were unable to interpret its explicitly stated epimythium. This can be easily explained if we remember all those cases that children hit on the inner truth of the story by employing only concrete means. In regard to the `bear` fable, for example, a young subject stated `The man on the tree didn't help the other man and the other man doesn't love him any more and he is not his friend any more. He doesn't like this kind of men` (f., 58). For this child the abstract tone of the epimythium was regarded as very complicated, and she preferred not to attempt to interpret it.

8.3.1d(iii) THE THREE ALTERNATIVES

In regard to the `cock` fable, preschoolers were asked to choose from three alternative proposed epimythia. First in their preferences came the one depicted the prevailing idea of the story at a concrete and literal level; 12 out of 22 children pointed to it; second, 4 out of 22, was the correct one, while the overgeneralized epimythium was chosen by only one out of the 22. One of the subjects did not respond to the task of identifying the moral whereas another

4 declared that they were dissatisfied by the suggested epimythia and stated their own moral.

As had been expected, general abstract statements expressing explicitly the inner moral idea of the stories either in the epimythium/promythium form, or in the manner of three alternatives, do not help kindergartners significantly in detecting it. A literal understanding of the tale exerts more influence on preschoolers' minds than any interpretation of the concrete story at an abstract level.

8.3.1e DIFFERENT KINDS OF THE AESOPIC FABLES

The same ethical ideas of greed and avarice remained at the kernel of the five aesopic tales that made the second group, each of them belonging to a different kind of fable. The results showed that the genuine fable of `The dog and its bone` and the aetiological one of `The camel and Zeus` had accumulated more correct answers, 6 out of 29, in regard to the detection of their morals than any other type of aesopic tales. In sharp contrast, the tale of `The mum and the child` built on a pun, totally inconceivable to kindergartners, was proved as the most difficult, and only one subject gave a correct answer. The amusing tale of `The grandma and the doctor`, which elicited only 1 correct response out of 22, and the fairy tale of `The hen that laid

the golden eggs`, with 2 out of 29 correct morals, were standing between the two extremes.

Although we cannot generalize the results and assert with confidence that what has happened in this case is applicable to all fables, kindergartners clearly exhibited the tendency of finding great difficulties in understanding tales that rely on a play on words or to come to grips with the inner moral truth of mere amusing narrations. On the contrary, the strongly determinate character of aetiological tales, which aim at explaining the origins of a situation and directly state the offence and its punishment, makes this type of fable a much simpler form for kindergartners. Since the ethical transgression is stated explicitly and the whole story is concentrated on the dreadful results it causes, preschoolers are given more chances to observe it and reach the hidden ethical truth of the story.

8.3.1e_(i) UNSUITABILITY FOR MORAL TEACHING

Concerning the fable of the `wolf`, none of the kindergartners succeeded in discovering the correct epimythium, which expresses what usually happens rather than what should be done. In response to this aesopic tale, the vast majority of the subjects defined in their morals the proper kind of behaviour that the victimizer should exhibit from now on, or expressed their indignation at the course

the events took during the narration. None of them stressed the fact that the carnivorous behaviour of some animals is an inevitable, though unfair, situation which reflects an unchangeable law of Nature, and if we extend the parallelism to the human domain, of human society as well.

As far as the story of the `pigeon` is concerned, only 1 out of 20 kindergartners did not propose any epimythium. The percentage of the no-responses to the tale is really low especially if we compare them with those of the `crow` story, 6 out of 19, and for the `Sun` fable, 11 out of 23.

Preschoolers, convinced that there is hidden truth in the narrative of the `pigeon`, because if there was not an answer they would not have been asked the question, and being under the decisive influence of the adult interviewer, embarked on tedious attempts to discover it. In regard to this tale, exactly as had happened with the fables of the `wolf`, most kindergarten subjects spoke about the bad intentions of the fox and criticized strongly its behaviour.

8.3.2 FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADERS (TEN TO TWELVE-YEAR-OLD)

Fifth and sixth graders were only asked to detect the general moral of the fables in order their efforts be compared with those of kindergarten children.

8.3.2a GENERAL MORAL

Data are presented at Table 8.6.

A total of 55 fifth and sixth graders were asked to detect the moral point of 7 fables and gave a total of 385 responses.

Although ten to twelve-year-old children were rather successful in detecting the moral of the fables, they found great difficulty in defining the moral point of the immoral fable of `The wolf and the lamb`, and most of them jumped to the conclusion that the aesopic fable lacks a hidden morality. On the other hand, only 13 out of 55 ten to twelve-year-old children denied that `The pigeon and the fox` tale conveyed a moral truth.

Concerning the `lamb` fable the results can be explained by children's tendency to think of moral terms only in regard to morally correct situations. They miss the point that whatever is unethical contains, nonetheless, a moral dimension, and that morality describes both morally wrong and morally right events. More specifically, the `lamb` fable, although it presents an immoral situation, has as much to say about morality as the reverse episode, that would have tipped the balance in favour of the good and the innocent. The fact that both types of events, ethical and unethical, are morally significant, was missed by the children.

On the other hand, the `pigeon` story, which had no moral point, was endowed with an epimythium by a great number of fifth and sixth graders, since its resemblance in structure and style with a genuine fable was outstanding. Ten to twelve-year-old children, being familiar with the essential characteristics of the genre of fable, search for a moral in every story that reminds them of it. Children's attempts to force a moral out of an amoral story disguised as fable did reveal the fact that they understand the genre and can recognize a fable when they come across it. Of course, sometimes they are deceived by some false forgeries of it, especially if they are presented to them under misleading conditions.

More analytically their replies were as follows:

No response: Children preferred not to give any response in 75 out of 385 cases. Although the artificially constructed fable of `The fox and the pigeon` was the only one that did not point to a hidden message, surprisingly enough only 13 out of 55 children came to that conclusion. On the other hand, 20 of them thought that the story of `The lamb and the wolf` which depicted an immoral situation where the bad and the unjust overcome the good and honest, did not convey any ethical truth.

After the `wolf` tale comes the `Sun` fable, with 19 no-responses, that can be attributed more to the advanced level of the moral idea it propounds than to the nature of

Tables 8.6

Ten to twelve-year-old children's detection of the general moral of fables.

	Fox	Sun	Lion	Pigeon	Bear	Dog	Wolf	Total
No response	5	19	3	13	7	8	20	75
Transmission	-	-	-	3	-	1	-	4
Evaluation ch.	-	1	1	11	1	3	4	21
Evaluation act.	2	5	1	2	2	3	3	18
Explanation	3	3	2	3	-	2	2	15
Retelling	10	10	6	5	5	8	12	56
Minor	27	14	8	18	10	5	8	90
Correct	8	3	34	-	30	25	6	106
Total	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	385

the narration or the number and nature of the protagonists. The easiest fable proved to be that of 'The lion and the mouse', for which only 3 subjects did not propose any moral.

The quest for the moral and an unsuccessful attempt to reach it: Only 4 out of 385 responses were labelled as moral in disguise. Fifth and sixth graders, in contrast with kindergartners, did not list many primitive types of epimythia. They never referred to an overgeneralized statement, a totally unconnected exhortation, or a totally descriptive statement under an ethical cloak. Only in 4 cases children made an awkward transformation from the animal domain of the story to the human world.

Thus, in regard to the 'pigeon' fable a subject stated 'No matter how scared you are, don't fly to a higher branch' (f., 144). It is not surprising that 3 out of 4 morals of this crude and unsophisticated type were given in response to the 'pigeon' fable, which puzzled the children as it created a gap between their expectations from the genre - it always leads to a moral point - and the singular nature of the story, which was made up only to contradict the very essence of this kind of literature.

If we compare the total number of responses categorized as entirely unsuccessful morals with the whole mass of the proposed epimythia, we easily reach the conclusion that those replies are the exceptional and not the regular means which fifth and sixth graders employ in their quest of the

hidden message of the fable. In sharp contrast to kindergartners, children of ten to twelve-years-old were not prone to masquerading any sentence as a moral, but were more keen on discovering the real ethical truth the narration conveyed, taking into account the concrete story and its abstract implications.

Statements concerning the story at a literal level, totally lacking any veneer of an admonitory character: The treatment of the epimythium as a vehicle suitable for transferring statements of literary criticism (e.g. evaluations of character and actions, explanations of complex episodes, summary of the story) reflects a complete misconception of the epimythium's function. This was the only type of unsuccessful attempt that fifth and sixth graders employed in order to comment on a fable in those cases they were unable to detect the concealed truth of the story.

In contrast with preschoolers, who disguised ethically indifferent statements as morals, older subjects were persuaded that the ethical point of the fable has to be extracted after taking into consideration the whole narration. In those cases in which they could not reach it, in order to avoid the pitfalls of forcing a moral out of a specific event or agent, they addressed the problematic situation by adding their own comments on the plot

evaluation of the narration. Fifth and sixth graders refrained from adding words of ethical obligation, such as `should`, `must` or `it is appropriate`, and, although they did not approach a correct moral, exhibited a clear sense of what an epimythium cannot be about. While preschoolers were really keen on producing a `must` statement which eventually bore only a remote relation to the actual point of the fable, fifth and sixth graders, by contrast, replied with an `is` sentence that remained confined to the literal and concrete level of the narration.

From 385 responses, 110 of them did not make any claim of being ethical exhortations or admonitions but expressed children's opinions on the concrete story. In 21 cases, children made their **evaluations of the story agents' personality** - e.g. `The wolf was very sneaky` (f., 137). In another 18 they commented on the **justness of specific actions** - e.g. `The fox behaved very badly to the woodcutter who saved her. He at least deserved to hear a "bye bye" from her` (f., 129). In another 56, fifth and sixth graders **retold parts of the story, gave a summary of it or proposed a title for the tale** - e.g. `The North Wind blew very hard but he didn't undress the man and then the Sun with his heat made him take off his coat and he was the strongest` (m., 142). In the remaining 15 epimythia, children **explained obscured events** - e.g. `It was the dog's own face in the water, there wasn't any other dog or bone there. This

is called reflection and everyone who studies physics knows about that` (f., 139).

Minor ideas: The percentage of the fifth and sixth graders who hit upon a minor idea of the story is quite high, and this group numbers 90 out of 385 responses. Although the detection of a minor idea is not as highly rated as the discovery of the fable's chief message, it must be considered extremely important, since the child who had spotted it certainly had mastered the skill of proceeding from a concrete narration to an abstract truth. The procedure is the correct one; the whole story is taken into account and a moral idea springs naturally out of a narration. But as the emphasis is shifted to another issue, the child comes out with an epimythium that, although it is not exactly what the fabulist had in mind when he invented the fable, could, however, have been, if the story had been placed in a different context.

In regard to the `fox` fable, for example, an epimythium proposed by one boy was `We should not trust anybody whom we don't know really well even when he is offering to help us. There must be a catch somewhere` (m., 123). That sounds pretty reasonable and, though it is not the most striking message, it can be a plausible one. Even among the composers of the fables there is no consensus on the moral point of the tale, and there are cases in which

even totally opposed epimythia have been attached to the story.

A similar case is that of the `lion` fable where one suggested moral was `One should help others because we all are going to be in need one day` (m., 123). Although the child has not stressed the outstanding value of every creature regardless its size, he was not far away from the correct message. Concerning the false fable of the pigeon, some subjects were fond of extracting plausible epimythia. `Some compliments are paid with bad intentions and in no time the real thoughts of the flatterer are going to be exposed` (f., 127) or `Better alive than full` (f., 133).

Only in one case and in contrast with what had been reported by Dortman (1988), did children reverse the actual meaning of the fable and gave epimythia which were in accord with the just world belief but absolutely opposed to the spirit of the fable. Thus, and only in regard to the story of `wolf`, the proposed epimythium was `The just won't ever be defeated` (f., 121). This young girl was more interested in propagating an ethical situation than in remaining close to the story and depicting in her statement a real situation.

Correct moral: In 106 out of 385 cases fifth and sixth graders managed to find the correct moral of the fable. The most difficult aesopic fable proved to be that of the Sun, with 3 out of 55 correct responses. Then followed

the fable of the `wolf`, which described an immoral but real situation, 6 out of 55 correct interpretations, and the `fox` story that, although it ended with a sentence revealing the essence of the abstract idea of the story, proved to be rather hard to comprehend.

A considerable variety was observed in the ways children chose to express their own epimythia, which they attached to every fable. Some of them preferred to repeat the last sentence of the story, which in direct speech conveyed the morality of the fable - e.g. `Nobody is so weak as not to be able to return the good he has received` (m., 135) for the `lion` fable - while some others used an already **known proverb** - e.g. `Hardships test real friends` (f., 145) for the `bear` fable. Another option was reference to an **abstract moral idea** that governed the narration - e.g. `That is greed` for the `dog` fable - or the construction of a **concrete and specific epimythium** - e.g. `When the bad wolf has decided to carry out his evil plans no sense of justice was going to deter him from fulfilling them` (f., 142). Another version of this last type was an epimythium resembling the format of a title, as happened in the case of the `lion` story, where the child stated `The small and weak pays back the big and the strong` (f., 142).

In only one case, an eleven-year-old girl gave an entirely **allegorical and clearly poetical** tone to the epimythium she invented in regard to the fable of `Sun`. `When wildness passes near you, your heart starts

withdrawing and diving into its loneliness, and freezes under the cold eye of violence; but when kindness springs up, the heart begins to warm as a flower kissed by the sun and floats in a sea of happiness` (f., 137). Apart from the totally poetical conception, the child managed to accumulate all the elements of the story in a figurative construction. Even the man's swimming in the pool, which was included in the story only to stress the sun's undisputable victory over the North Wind, was included in her epimythium after gaining an entirely new metaphorical dimension.

CHAPTER NINE

THE RESEARCH'S RESULTS ON CHILDREN'S REACTIONS TO THE ANIMAL

PROTAGONISTS OF FABLES

9.1 THE CURRENT INVESTIGATION

This investigation aimed to detect children's attitudes towards the characters of fables. The issues that it dealt with were the two age groups' ability to recognize the conventions by which animals are depicted in literature. In addition, young children were also questioned about the plausibility of animals' ability to speak and think in a human-like way. The way that kindergartners perceive animals' place in human life was also within the range of this research. Apart from those topics, references to the gods of the ancient Greeks gave rise to a study of children's assumptions about divinity, and especially of their reactions to the presence of a pagan god in their stories.

The issues that were examined were comprehension of the animals' characters as stereotyped in literature, children's preferences concerning the characters of their books, their beliefs in the personified nature of animals, their notions about the animals' role in the food chain and about the

presence of God in their stories (see appendix two, questions marked with Ag).

In regard to the investigation of the animals' conventional character, kindergartners tended to characterise most animals as good or bad. When they pronounced such a general verdict, the investigator called on them to explain the reasoning behind it. The offered explanation was considered important for detecting the child's real opinion about the stereotyped character of the specific animal.

Because fables treat animals not as well rounded personages but as quasi-mathematical symbols placed within a logical equation, acknowledgement of their conventional nature accelerates understanding of the stories and detection of their hidden moral truth. Thus both kindergarten children and fifth and sixth graders were interviewed on this topic.

Another 22 children, after listening to a story about a lion that ate other animals, were asked to express their opinion about the eating behaviour of the lion they had just strongly condemned. 'If we admit that the lion was not right to eat the animals, what do you think that it would eat? After all it has to eat something'.

Animals are not the only protagonists of the aesopic fables. Inanimate objects, human beings and even gods also found their place in the aesopic universe. The only fable related to children which employed a divine protagonist was

'Zeus and the Camel'. After the narration of this tale, 29 kindergarten children were interviewed in order to express their attitudes regarding the superhuman protagonist. In this tale, Zeus appears as the omnipotent god who is responsible for the maintenance of the ethical order of the world, both Natural and human.

9.2 METHODOLOGY

In order that kindergartners' conceptions of animals' conventional character in literature might be compared with the ideas of older children, both age groups were interviewed regarding this issue. The material, the sample and the procedure of the research are analytically described in the fifth chapter of this manuscript.

9.3 RESULTS

Kindergarten and fifth and sixth graders do not hold the same ideas about the conventional characters of animals. Younger subjects tend to define the nature of any animal only by applying the criterion of devouring or being devoured, and in most cases they ended with the general terms of evaluation good/bad. Older children, on the other hand, score more highly on detecting the animals'

conventional characters and suggested a wider range of characteristics attributable to the animals under investigation.

9.3.1 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN (FOUR TO SIX-YEAR-OLD)

More analytically, the results obtained by the current research and concerning children from four to six-year-old are as follows:

9.3.1a ANIMALS' CONVENTIONAL CHARACTER

Kindergarten children were very willing to respond to the questions investigating animals' conventional character in literature. Kindergartners gave 1002 answers concerning the stereotyped characteristics of nine animals, both domestic and wild.

From the results it is clear that kindergarten children had the obvious tendency to use, in every case, the criterion of devouring or being devoured and, accordingly to end with a general judgment of evaluation, whether good or bad.

Analytically their responses are as follows:

9.3.1a_(i) ASSIGNMENT OF A CONVENTIONAL CHARACTER

Data are presented in Table 9.1.

General evaluation as good or bad. From a total number of 1002 responses obtained from kindergarten children, 741 focused on a characterization of that general kind. A more detailed analysis of this evaluation, as well as the reasoning behind it, will be attempted in the following subdivision.

Although the fox is considered as a highly conventional animal both in literature and everyday speech, 64 out of 120 answers, characterized its nature as good or bad. More children regarded it as a harmful animal than a good one.

The lion is a ferocious animal and strongly connected with danger, and thus children saw it as a bad one. From 109 comments on its nature, 59 saw its personality as evil and only 9 saw its character as good.

Despite the size of the elephant, 55 children considered it good, while 14 saw it as bad. In a total of 109 responses, 69 were focused on its goodness or badness.

The case of the wolf is slightly different, since it has entered literature as the archetype of evil. Children's favourite fairy tales, like the Red Riding Hood, and the Seven Little Kids, refer to the wolf as the personification of badness and danger. Thus, where the wolf was concerned, children's practice of calling any animal good or bad is

Table 9.1

Four to six-year-old children's ideas on the animal conventions in literature.

Animal	Good/ bad	Correct trait	Person/ ty trait	Intel/ nce trait	Appearance trait	Inf/ tion	Response
Fox	64	16	20	-	12	8	120
Lion	68	9	17	3	5	7	109
Ele/nt	69	15	8	1	8	8	109
Wolf	88		16	2	5	-	111
Lamb	93		5	-	11	3	112
Turtle	90	6	3	-	5	4	108
Cat	87	-	6	-	7	11	111
Donkey	93	-	3	-	7	3	106
Bear	89	5	6	-	12	4	116
Total	560	232	84	6	72	48	1002

justified. All the answers that attributed to the wolf a bad and a dangerous nature were considered correct. In a total of 111 responses to the wolf question, 88 underlined its menacing personality, while not a single person regarded the wolf as congenial.

Similar is the case of the lamb, the antipode of the wolf, which in literature denotes purity, innocence and naivete. The lamb personifies the good and kind aspects of life. It may, however, be very ambitious to expect kindergarten children to refer to the lamb with any specific characterization apart from the general ones `good` or `very good`. Because the lamb in every literary text symbolizes something nice, the evaluation `good` is considered correct. Out of 112 responses 93 focused on the good personality of the lamb, while none ascribed it a bad disposition.

The turtle is an animal rather unknown to children and, in spite of the fact that it is strictly stereotyped as the personification of slowness, children do not seem to know many things about it. Most of them realize that turtles do not harm anybody and are rather mild creatures, and so 82 out of 108 children characterized it as good. Another 8 thought of the turtle as bad, raising thus the responses that were included in the good/bad category to 90.

Although the cat is a domesticated animal and in many cases a beloved pet, its instinctive nature, which associates it with its feline relatives in the jungle, the panther and the tiger, inspired varied responses in regard

to its good or bad nature. Thus, for 87 replies that characterized the cat as evil or good, 26 held the former, while the remaining 61 the latter.

Kindergarten children thought of the donkey as a very good animal. Out of 106 comments made on it, 93 fell into the bad/good category. Of them, 83 answers grouped it with the good creatures, while the remaining 10 placed it among the bad.

The bear recurs in children's literature nearly exclusively in its teddy bear version. On the contrary, kindergarten subjects seemed preoccupied with the image of a big, dangerous bear, and thus 69 of their responses maintained its evil personality, while only 20 thought of it as good.

Personality traits. Not all the answers concerning the conventional nature of the story characters were sweeping judgements of good or bad. A high percentage dealt with the detection of personality traits. Even in those cases children did not seem to give weight to factors other than their behaviour towards eating. Again the applied criterion of being the victim or the victimizer was the predominant one. Although the terminology was different and they proceeded from the mere `bad` to the more sophisticated `greedy`, the reasoning that lied behind both characterizations was the same `because it wants to eat`.

In regard to the fox, 20 out of 120 responses thought of it as greedy, spoiled, a thief, unafraid and wild. The explanations for all those expressions, with amazing uniformity, were: `Wild. Because it eats` (f., 61); `Greedy. Because it eats` (f., 59); `Spoiled. Because it eats` (m., 58).

The lion is also `Wild. Because it bites` (f., 65); `Frightening` (m., 58); `Greedy. Because it eats animals` (f., 68); and `Afraid of the hunter` (f., 69).

The elephant, apart from being good or bad, was also pronounced, without any explanation as `Wild` (m., 71); `Brave` (m., 64); and `Scared` (m., 67). Only 8 out of 109 replies provided information on its character.

The wolf elicited only 3 complimentary comments by three children, who called him `Polite` (m., 56), but refused to give any reason for it. Except for this one, all other evaluations were derogatory. `Wild` (m., 55); `Spoiled. Because it eats animals` (f., 61); `Naughty` (m., 51); and `Afraid of the hunter` (f., 69), were some of the 16 out of 111 answers that formed the `personality traits` category.

The lamb, on the contrary, was faulted with only 1 reproaching characterization. It was `Spoiled` (m., 56), while according to all the others it was `Timid` (m., 66); `Obedient` (m., 63); and `Polite` (f., 49).

From 108 comments concerning the turtle, only 3 focus on personality traits and all of them describe it as `Scared` (m., 64), without any explanation.

From a total number of 111 answers which referred to cat, 3 of them thought of it as `Scared` (m., 57), while another 3 as `Wild` (m., 64). No justification was offered in both cases.

Regarding to the donkey, 3 out of 106 responses dealt with its personality traits. 2 children called him `Wild` (f., 62) and one `Afraid of the wolf and the bull` (m., 64), perhaps under the influence of a story that he had recently heard.

The bear is regarded as `Wild` (f., 49), according to 5 children and as `Angry` (f., 48), according to another one. The total number of responses on the conventional character of the bear were 116.

Intelligence traits. This category includes few answers since a very limited number of kindergarten children seemed to give any attention to intellectual traits of the animals.

Only 3 out of 109 replies thought of the lion as `Clever` (f., 56), or `More clever than the hen` (m., 63), a comparison, at least superficially, difficult to understand.

Another one out of 109 answers focused on the elephant's mental ability. `It is less clever than the fox` (m., 63).

The wolf was also characterized as `Stupid` (m., 63); and `Very stupid. The fox cheats him all the time` (m., 62).

Appearance characteristics. A number of 72 out of 1002 responses concentrated on the way animals look. Those children considered their appearance as the element basic to their conventional character in literature.

In regard to the fox, 12 responses out of 120 named it as `Big` (f., 69); `Small` (f., 63); `Heavy and fat` (m., 64); `Dirty` (m., 66); and `Ugly` (m., 65). The fact that subjects proposed antithetical characteristics and that some of them were far from true may reveal kindergarten children's vague conceptions of the fox.

Only 5 out of 109 characterizations dealt with lion's appearance, some of them in a way consistent with reality - `Big` (f., 59); `Beautiful` (m., 66) - some of them not - `Fat` (f., 63); `Ugly` (m., 57).

Another 8 out of 109 responses took into account the way the elephant looks, but failed to point to its most striking conventional characteristic, its enormous size. The elephant looks `Funny` (m., 58); `Dirty. Because the man who has him washes him with soil` (m., 64); `Clean` (f., 56); `Ugly` (m., 62); and `Has a big nose, takes grass and sucks` (f., 59).

A number of 5 out of 111 answers about the wolf referred to its appearance. According to them, the wolf is `Short` (f., 69); and `Dirty` (m., 61).

The lamb was `Small` (f., 60); `Clean` (m., 61); `Soft` (f., 69); `Pretty` (m., 60); and `White` (f., 70). It may be worth noting the connection between lambs' personality and its appearance. All the descriptions concerning its appearance are complimentary, while, on the other hand, no child found anything nice and attractive in the way the wolf looks.

The turtle was either `Small` (m., 53), or `Big` (m., 54) and maybe `Pretty` and has a head like that of the snake` (f., 59). A cat in a story is `Small` (m., 49); `A little big` (f., 63); and `Pretty` (m., 60). A donkey can be also `Small` (f., 63) or `Big` (f., 49); `Pretty` (m., 60) or `Ugly` (f., 64); and in a more bizarre version it `Has antlers` (f., 65). While a bear is `Big` (m., 64) or `Small` (m., 49) and `White` (f., 60).

General information. A number 48 answers from a total of 1002 gave general information on animals. Children did not attempt to define their conventional character, as it has been stereotyped in literature, but rather gave general information about their lives.

Information was given on the eating preferences of the animals (`The fox eats many hens`, f., 67), their occupations (`The lion works in a circus`, m., 52), their habits (`The elephant squirts water with its nose` m., 69), our behaviour towards them (`We eat the lamb`, f., 64), their offspring (`Turtles give birth to little turtles`, m.,

69), their enemies (`Cats fight with dogs`, f., 65), their use (`The donkey is very ridable. -What do you mean? -We can ride it`, m., 58) and the place they live (`The bear lives in a cavity with her babies` (m., 53).

Correct trait. In short we can confirm the suspicion that kindergarten subjects did not understand the conventional traits with which animals have been endowed in literature. Children of that age exerted the tendency to attempt only an evaluation of the general disposition of the character, and only secondarily do they pay attention to other features. Because of this, they fell hopelessly short of defining the stereotyped element of animals' character, in all the cases that it did not coincide with stress on the bad or good nature of the creature. Only in regard to the wolf and lamb, which personify evil and kindness respectively, did children score particularly highly, giving 88 out of 111 correct answers for the former and 93 out of 112 for the latter.

For the fox, 16 out of 120 answers referred to its cunningness, artfulness and smartness. From them, 11 did not explain why the fox was foxy, 2 justified their answers `Because it cheats` (f., 62), while 3 call it cunning `Because it eats animals` (m., 66) and offered no further explanation. Thus, even in the few cases that children pointed to the right characteristic, there are serious questions about the way they perceived it.

Only 9 out of 109 were the correct answers for the lion. For them the lion was the `King` (m., 63), the `Fearless` (m., 57), and the `Strong` (m., 58).

Only 8 out of 109 ascribed enormous size to the elephant; 6 out of 108 slowness to the turtle; and 5 out of 116 considered the bear fat. There were no correct answers for both the cat and the donkey.

9.3.1a(ii) REASONING BEHIND THE NEGATIVE CHARACTERIZATIONS

Data are presented in Table 9.2.

The general criterion that children applied every time they were asked about the conventional character of an animal was that of eating. Every animal that devours other animals or was thought to do so - because for some animals children did not have a clear idea of whether they were aggressive and carnivorous or not - was labelled as bad, while the herbivorous animals were in most cases good.

The only animal that was not considered by any child as bad was the lamb. All the others were regarded, even though in some cases by only a small percentage, as bad. The reasonings behind those estimations are:

Killing. In a total number of 332 characterizations as bad, 208 offered as an explanation the eating behaviour of the animal in question. The wolf, the lion, the bear and

Table 9.2

Four to six-year-old children's evaluations of the animals' bad character.

Animal	Killing	Threatening	Disturbance	Others' behaviour	No Expl/tion	Response
Fox	37	6	6	2	7	58
Lion	35	7	4	-	13	59
Ele/nt	8	-	2	-	4	14
Wolf	72	3	-	-	13	88
Lamb	-	-	-	-	-	-
Turtle	1	-	2	-	5	8
Cat	6	-	18	-	2	26
Donkey	4	2	3	-	1	10
Bear	45	11	-	2	11	69
Total	208	29	35	4	56	332

the fox, were thought of as responsible for killing, eating and biting other animals (`The fox is bad. Because it eats hens`, f., 49), men (`The lion is bad. Because it eats men`, f., 58), children (`The bear is bad. Because it eats little children, boys and girls`, m., 67), and fictive characters of well-known fairy tales (`The wolf is bad. Because it eats the 7 Little Kids`, m., 64). The elephant, the turtle, the cat and the donkey were also considered bad because they kill adults (`The elephant is very bad. Because it kills men with its nose`, m., 64), children (`The turtle is bad. Because it eats children`, f., 49), animals (`The cat is bad. Because it eats mice and birds`, m., 54), or whatever (`The donkey is bad. Because it bites and eats`, m., 64). Some of their answers reveal a total ignorance of the animal in question, like the turtle that can eat children, or are perfectly possible, though exceptional, as in the case of the elephant, which is thought as bad `Because it kills men by stepping on them` (m., 63).

Threatening. Not only killing, but also the threat of doing so was a reasonable justification for characterizing an animal as bad. Out of 332 explanations, 29 fell into this category. Judgments about the fox, the lion, the wolf, the donkey, and the bear belong to that group of explanation. `The fox is bad. Because it frightens the birds` (f., 57); `The lion is bad. Because it chases animals` (f., 63); `The wolf is bad. Because it wants to eat Red Riding Hood` (f.,

58); 'The donkey is bad because it scares the fox' (m., 64);
'The bear is bad; Because it jumps on us' (m., 52).

Disturbance. An animal is bad also if it disturbs somebody in some way. Although there is no real danger, its behaviour makes the lives of others less comfortable. A number of 29 out of 332 explanations speak of the harassment caused by the animals in question.

'The fox is bad. Because it steals food' (m., 58) 'The lion is very bad. Because it roars and makes a lot of noise' (m., 48) 'The elephant is very bad. Because it squirts water on men and make them dirty' (f., 63) 'The turtle is bad. Because it pisses in the garden' (m., 63) 'The donkey is very bad. Because it brays and people can't sleep or relax' (m., 58).

The animals' harassing behaviour differs from creature to creature; the lion roars, the donkey brays, the fox steals food and the turtle dirties the garden. It is worth noticing that from the wide range of the animals' disturbing contact, children have chosen and referred to those incidents that in reality are put in front of them as prohibitions. Cleaning habits, games with water that make others dirty, making noise when someone else is resting, and stealing are grave offences for children at preschool age.

Others' behaviour. Only 2 comments on the fox and 2 on the bear justified their characterization as bad on the

grounds of others' behaviour towards them. Children think that our reaction and feelings towards animals explained adequately their bad character. In that case the consequence was regarded as the cause of the phenomenon.

'The fox is bad. Because we chase it with the broom' (m., 64); 'The bear is very bad. Because we don't like it' (m., 58).

No explanation. Another 56 out of 332 comments on the bad behaviour of the animals did not explain their characterization and, in spite of the prompt questions aimed at eliciting a justification, the children did not offer any explanation.

9.3.1a(iii) REASONING OF THE GOOD CHARACTERIZATIONS

Data are presented in Table 9.3.

The wolf was the only one of the nine animals that was not considered good even by one child. All the other animals were thought to have positive aspects in their characters and were labelled as good.

It is worth noticing that one child, while he was dealing with the description of the animal characters, made an amazingly clear distinction between the real nature of the animals and the one-dimensional creatures of the children's stories. 'The fox is bad or if we like we can say

Table 9.3

Four to six-year-old children's evaluations of the animals' good character.

Animal	Absence negative behaviour	Positive beha- viour	Other's beha- viour	Human sta- ndards	Neutral inci- dents	No expla- nation	Response
Fox	1	-	-	1	-	4	6
Lion	4	2	-	-	-	3	9
Ele/nt	17	9	2	-	14	13	55
Wolf	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lamb	40	19	8	2	4	20	93
Tuttle	43	15	-	3	-	21	82
Cat	27	8	-	-	-	26	61
Donkey	31	20	-	-	6	26	83
Bear	8	1	-	2	1	8	20
Total	171	74	10	8	25	121	409

that she's good and beats the wolf or we can say that she is very bad and is with him. We can say what we like` (m., 68). When the same child was asked about the turtle, he said `They make it always good. I don't know if when it is in the garden it is good` (m., 68). He said the same about the turtle, the bear and the donkey, but no other child gave answers in the same words or spirit.

The explanations of the good evaluation are as follows:

Absence of any kind of bad behaviour. The large proportion of 171 out of 409 justifications of the attribution of the adjective good to the animals of the study, regarded as acceptable not a form of positive behaviour, but only the lack of a negative one.

Thus, when children were called on to explain their affirmative judgment, they offered the amazingly unanimous answer `Because it doesn't do anything`, which coincides with the reply `Because it doesn't do anything bad`. This stereotyped answer was offered by children in more than half of their positive characterizations.

Even in cases in which children defined animals' eating and drinking habits and came out with sentences like `Because it eats grass` (f., 54), they did not have in mind to stress what the animal really likes, but rather to call attention to what it avoids eating.

For kindergarten children ethical responsibility extends only as far as the prevention of wrong behaviour

towards others, and there are no sophisticated principles that hold men culpable not only for what they do but also what they avoid doing.

`The fox is good. Because it does not do anything` (f., 54); `The lion is good. Because it does not eat if you stay away from it` (m., 66); `The lamb is very good. Because it drinks only water` (f., 65); `The cat is good. Because it eats only meals` (m., 50); `The donkey is good. Because it doesn't chase animals` (m., 57).

It is questionable whether children, when they consider the lack of a bad action as a proof of a kind character, echo the opinion of the adults around them, in the cases that they judge children themselves, or maintain that this is the most that we can ask for those carnivorous and wild beasts?

Positive behaviour. Some 74 out of 409 answers pointed to a form of behaviour exhibited by the animals that made them look good. No comments on the fox were categorized in the positive division, while all other creatures did something considered favourable.

`The lion is good. Because it loves everybody` (m., 53); `The elephant is good. Because it helps men and carries them home on its back` (f., 67); `The lamb is good. Because it gives us milk` (m., 67); `The bear is very good. Because it tells jokes` (f., 62).

The explanations grouped in the category of positive behaviour were derived from many sources, like children's stories, as the one about the bear, reality, and children's vague ideas about the real life of the above animals. According to one child, for example, the lamb is nice and good `Because it lays eggs` (m., 51). Although the child could differentiate between the way a lamb and a hen look and was talking about the quadruped, he did not differentiate yet which animals produce what.

Another group of children evaluated animals' behaviour according to their usefulness to man, either by adult or children's standards. So the turtle is good `Because in the sea it comes out and takes poor people on its lid and takes them around` (m., 65).

Others' behaviour. Again, in 2 cases regarding the elephant and 8 concerning the lamb, the human attitude towards them was considered to define their moral status. The relation between cause and outcome works in a reverse order.

The lamb is very good because `people take care of it` (m., 64), and the elephant because `it is the friend of Tarzan` (m., 63).

Justification by human standards. A number of 8 out of 409 positive judgements justified animals' behaviour by human standards. Thus, `The fox is very good. Because it

neither shouts at nor beats her children` (f., 63); `The lamb is good. Because it listens to its mum` (f., 48); `The bear is very good. Because it does not swear` (f., 54). Children at the egocentric stage applied to animals the criteria assigned to their own behaviour.

Neutral incidents from animal's life. Out of 409 responses, 25 justifications of animals' good character explained the kind disposition of them by referring to ethically neutral incidents from animals' life.

`The elephant is very good. Because it eats a lot and is very strong and walks in the forest and crashes trees` (f., 63); `The lamb is very good. Because it goes around in the fields and there is a shepherd boy that takes care of it` (m., 59); `The donkey is very good. Because it brays` (f., 61); `The bear is good. Because it lives on the ice where it is cold` (f., 68).

These quotations show that incidents from animal's life probably considered by adults as ethically indifferent, like the place of living or the conditions of life, are put forward by children as justifications of the creatures' moral status. But it is questionable whether children suggest them as plausible excuses in order to avoid further questioning, or do regard the conditions of life as having real ethical significance.

No explanation. Only 20 out of 409 children did not give any explanation for attributing a kind character to any of the above mentioned animals. Even after using prompt questions they did not reveal the reasoning behind the criteria they employed in order to form their opinions about the good character of the animals.

9.3.1b KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN' PREFERENCES OF STORY CHARACTERS

In order to assess the preferences of children, they were asked to choose the agents of the story they were going to listen to on another occasion. From 51 kindergarten children who were asked, 11 of them answered that any story would be welcomed and left to the investigator the responsibility of the selection. Another 11 pointed to animals, 17 showed a clear preference for imaginary protagonists, both traditional and modern, 9 asked for tales with men, women and children, while 2 offered suggestions about some aspects of the story, regardless of its personages.

For the children who choose their story characters from the make-believe world, the royal family and fairies were the most popular, 6 and 5 preferences respectively. Two children preferred ghosts, while the Superman, Monsters and E. T. were also referred to.

Two children who did not mention any special protagonist expressed their preference for a story `with no killing` (f., 59) and `with a happy ending` (m., 63).

The fact that children like animal characters in their stories was made clear by their selection of a very high percentage of non human protagonists. A wide range of animals was referred to, while dog, 8 preferences, and cat, 6, seemed to be the most popular ones. The huge elephant and the bear, 5 preferences each, were selected as their favourite among the animals of the forest. Donkeys, 3, ducks, 3, lions, 3, parrots, 2, butterflies, 2, lambs, 2, rabbits, 1, giraffes, 1 and a number of other animals, included reptiles, snake 1, and birds, nightingale 1, were also given children's preference.

This study, although it does not make any serious claim to reach conclusive results about children's preference regarding the persons of a story, dares, however, to suggest the formulation of a subtle tendency towards choosing animal personages in a tale.

9.3.1c KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S PERSONIFICATION

A total of 45 children were asked about animals and inanimate objects' possibility to speak and communicate in human language. Twenty-two of them were addressed the question after listening to a story about talking animals,

while the remaining 23 answered after listening to a fable about the personification of the natural elements, sun and north wind.

Nearly all the kindergarten subjects, 40 out of 45, denied that both animals and inanimate objects are capable of talking. When they were asked to explain the existence of speech in the fables that they had just heard, they offered various justifications.

Children seem to recognize the conventions of stories, where things that are not true in everyday life happen; 'It was just a tale. They can in the stories' (m., 65). Others pointed to the person who lent his voice to the narration. 'You pretended that they did. Always men pretend and they do not speak really' (f., 56).

Some other children defined the difference between human talking, that is confined to men, and inarticulate cries that are suitable to animals, 'They don't speak. They only make sounds like beee or gaaar and things like that' (m., 61).

The imitation of human speech is the most that animal can do, whereas for objects there is nothing that can be labelled as talking, 'Things do not speak. And the only animal that speaks is the parrot. It can say everything' (f., 50).

The special conditions in which animals appear to talk are also underlined, 'only on telly they do' (m., 64). If animals talk, their language must be considered as an inter-

animal one, to which man do not have any access; `Animals speak among themselves. They say their own words and understand one another` (m., 65).

Only 4 out of 45 children answered `yes` to the question investigating the talking ability of animals and natural objects. A fifth one, when was asked if the North Wind and the Sun can really talk, she replied `no`, but reasoned her answer as `Because they aren't friends any more. If they become friends again then they will talk again` (f., 68). The only reason that she found to derive natural elements from the potentiality of speech was the existence of bad terms between them. This reply was classified among those which endow animals and inanimate objects with the power of talking.

From the remaining 4 children that considered animals and objects to be talking creatures, only one confessed `I have heard many times. My doll talks to me. My bed also` (f., 60). Another one knows, but she was never in a position to hear for herself, that bad animals, when they see a good one, say "I'll eat you now" ` (f., 66). According to another subject, animals talk when they feel the need to express themselves, `If they have something to say they say it. Just like we do` (m., 67). People are characterized as friends when they share their thoughts among themselves, and so do the animals and the inanimate objects when they achieve intimate relations; `They talk because they are friends` (f., 68).

9.3.1d KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S IDEAS ON ANIMALS' POSITION IN THE FOOD CHAIN

A sample consisting of 49 children were confronted with the question where meat comes from. From the 45 subjects who responded, only 20 pointed to animals in general, or to some animals like hens and lambs or to cruel ones, such as foxes and wolves.

Another 12 concluded that meat comes from animals, but first they mentioned a number of different men, like butchers, gypsies, that undertake the unpleasant task of killing the animals. Only 6 children did not go further than the shops and asserted that they do not know more because anyway, 'it is not my job. Not my dad's job either' (f., 58).

Another 5 children were entangled in endless circles of thought that did not go anywhere. 'We get it from the butcher -And the butcher? -From a shop. -And this shop? -From another shop' (f., 62); 'From the supermarket. -And the supermarket? -From one box? -And where did it come from in this box? -From another box.' (m., 64). The remaining two children gave very obscure answers like 'Men make it out of something that I don't know what' (f., 62), or 'From the trees. It hangs like oranges and men collect and sell it' (m., 66).

To the 32 children that pointed to animals as the source of meat, the question of the suitability of such an

action was addressed. Only 3 children were content with the notion, 'It is perfectly all right, because we have to eat meat. And it is very tasty as well' (f., 60). Another 3 acknowledged the malice of animal slaughter but asserted its necessity, 'It is not good but we have to, not to die. If you don't eat meat you'll die. And the hen makes nice soup' (m., 60).

The remaining 26 subjects' reactions ranged from profound repulsion, 'Oh! Gosh! Never! What a thing!' (f., 68), through information about animals' lives, 'I know meat is good for the body, but animals want to live too. Whales are in danger of extinction because some bad men kill them without any reason' (m., 65), to end with the golden mean 'No, it is not good. But if they kill only the bad ones, it is o k' (m., 45), or suggesting only a bloodless exploitation of the animals, 'No, we shouldn't kill them. We can only take their eggs or their wool' (m., 71).

Proper behaviour towards animals was also put forward in this way. 'Lambs are ever so nice. It is no good to harm them. We should respect them' (m., 65). Even the child's egocentrism seemed left behind when a kindergarten girl replied 'No, because we don't like being lambs and men eat us' (f., 70). Another reaction was that of thrusting the responsibility of the condemnable action onto somebody else's shoulders, 'We don't do anything. We found them in shops. They bring them from foreign countries where they

have thousands and thousands of lambs. They kill them and then give them to us. We don't do anything` (m., 63).

The next question to the 26 children who admitted that meat comes from killing animals and also that it is not moral to do so, sought their suggestions as to what should be done. This proved a very puzzling question for kindergarten children, who showed themselves very perplexed when confronted with a major ethical dilemma.

Only 2 of them, after intensive thinking, admitted they could not think of anything. On the other hand, 4 confined killing to some exceptional cases, `They will kill only the bad animals and not the good ones, because if they kill every animal after a while we won't have any` (m., 64), or `Only if someone is alone on a peak of a mountain and he is very hungry then he can kill one, not to die from hunger. Otherwise, never` (m., 65).

Another 3 children solved the problem by shifting the responsibility to somebody else, `We never kill. Only the butcher kills. -Is it good? -It is not good for the butcher but it is o k for us, because we don't do anything` (m., 71).

Another 3 subjects, who had earlier admitted that the source of meat is animals, pretended ignorance and got away with the statement `We buy meat from the butcher. -Where does the butcher find it? -How can I know? I am not a butcher` (f., 63). Two more children proposed very drastic solutions in order to protect animals from killing, `We must

hide all the animals because the shops want to find and kill them` (f., 64), or `We must kill all the butchers and set all the lambs free and then they will live` (m. 71).

The 10 remaining children came to propound being vegetarians. The fact is particularly interesting if we bear in mind that the experiment took place in Greece, where few people know anything of vegetarianism, and the percentage of vegetarians is nearly non-existent. However, 10 children replied `We shouldn't eat meat at all` (f., 66) and gave a list of other foods that are ethically permissible to eat; lentils, spaghetti, rice, vegetables, but also chocolate, candies and cheese.

In regard to kindergartners' conceptions about the eating habits of the lion and evaluation of its actions, their answers were as follows:

Some of them, 2 children, did not give any response, 2 admitted the existence of a natural law that coerces the lion to do those actions, `It will eat animals because it must grow` (m., 64); 8 limited the animals that could be lion's food only to bad ones, `It can eat only bad animals like the fox, but not good ones that had do nothing to it` (f., 67). Another 2 suggested that the lion should follow man's eating habits and said `It should eat meals just like us` (f., 65), thus dissociating the prepared dishes from the ingredients they are made of. Another 3 subjects preferred a herbivorous lion to a carnivorous one, `It can eats vegetables and grass` (f., 62). Another 2 ascribed to the

lion all the qualities of a scavenger, 'It can eat papers, we throw away and rubbish' (m., 66). The remaining 3 kindergarten subjects have a more ambitious plan 'Nothing. It must remain hungry and then it will die, because it is such a bad animal' (f., 66).

Kindergartners' responses to the position of animals in Nature not only reveal misconceptions about what really happens, but also show their tendency to treat animals as similar to us not by abolishing any difference between human and non humans, but by viewing them from an ethical prospective. Thus, we can assert that the presence of animals as the protagonists of a story which conveys moral lessons does not seem to raise objections from children.

Children of kindergarten age cannot, however, associate their lively, beloved animals with the meat dishes they are usually served. Animals, despite the fact that they are not confused with human beings and lack the ability to communicate in a human way, are individuals respected for their own value, living an independent life, and enjoying it without any hindrance imposed by man.

The new kind of personification suggested by this investigation is not the old formed notion about animals, which can chat exactly as we do, and bear all human characteristics under their skins and furs, but the conception of animal nature as having an inherent value and being as holy as every human being.

When children judge actors' actions they do not give any thought to the nature of the victimizer or the victim, they do not care who is the man and who is the animal, but apply the same ethical laws to the both of them. If a man kills a hen to eat it, he is as guilty as the lion that devours a child only because it is hungry. Children do not object to extremely severe kinds of punishments when an ethical transgression is done. But, when an animal attacks another one, only because this is the law of Nature and an unchangeable necessity, the action is not viewed as a compulsory principle of life, but as a repulsive moral crime. Children have altered natural laws into moral ones, and if we would like to refer to a kind of personification present among kindergarten children it is more right to call it **ethical personification**.

When kindergarten children deal with stories that employ animal agents they apply to them the same ethical rules which function in a human society. The goal of this part of the investigation was to study children's reactions towards the place of animals in the food chain, and their opinions about the morality of that role. Kindergarten children show clear evidence that they ignore, consciously or unconsciously, where the meat in our meals comes from, and what is the food that carnivorous animals live on.

9.3.1e KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

Children proved themselves capable of mastering the conventions of the story, and regardless of the opinion they hold about Zeus' divine or human identity in real life conditions, under the story spell he was treated as possessing all those qualities that the fable had endowed him with.

Although this research cannot make any suggestions about the exact perception of God by kindergarten children, in the case of Zeus the results obtained showed that they did not have a clear idea, not only about the personality of the ancient Greek god, but also about the nature of divinity in general. 'Men thought of him as god, but he is not a real one. The priest is the real God' (m., 57). They also spoke about deity in human and very trivial terms, 'He was god long ago, but after he was fired and the one that we have now came' (m., 67). But there were also those children who saw God as more spiritual, 'I don't know if he was a god, but he is not any more. Now there is only one God and he is a spirit' (f., 68).

Zeus, or his suggested divine nature, does not seem to perplex children, who treat things, persons and situations within their make-believe environment. According to the story Zeus had the power to do many things, and even if he was or was not a god, he was not like one of us and could do

nearly everything, not only for himself but also for all those weak animals that asked for a favour.

All the 29 children attributed to Zeus an existence independent of that of the narration. When children were asked to define the nature of Zeus, through questions about the place he lives, our ability to go there and his power to grant our wishes, they seemed to consider as very special.

He is not one of us, and lives in^a very remote and fabulous place. Of the 24 children that responded to that question, 16 located him in heavens, 2 in the big forest, 3 in the most tremendous buildings they could think of, like the Palace and the National Theatre, and 2 connected him with the Christian symbols of the church and the crucifix.

Of the 28 children who answered a question about our ability to visit him, 15 confirmed it, while the remaining 13 refused it, only because of practical reasons. Some 5 of them spoke about the distance, 4 thought of our ignorance of his whereabouts, and 3 considered the whole expedition dangerous, because `you never know with him` (f., 68), and only one perceived him as invisible and thus inaccessible by practical means.

When children were asked whether Zeus could grant our favours, of the 26 children that responded to our question, 2 answered that they did not know, 4 replied that he could do everything, 10 said `no` because of the distance, the danger that every contact with him entails due to his unpredictable nature, while the remaining 10 thought that it

depends on our character `if we are good children` (m., 64), on the nature of the wish `if we ask for bad things like drugs, no. But if we ask for something good, like if we ask for rain to make the wheat grow, he will` (m., 58), or on the availability of the things we are asking for `if he has, he will` (f., 57).

It is very interesting to see children's attitudes towards the ability of Zeus to grant a favour in the story conditions. Although he seems to be able to answer all our prayers, he simply could not, even if he wanted, to do what the camel had asked him. The reasons offered to justify Zeus' refusal were ethical `the camel was jealous` (f., 48), practical `he does not have any spare antlers` (f., 57), and issues of the natural order `he can give antlers only to deers, not to camels`.

Children put the ethical order of the world above the physical one; something that should not happen, cannot occur. In addition, according to kindergarten children's views of the story, the course of things presented in the narrative is the only possible one. If Zeus did not give antlers to the camel for any reason, there is no way to persuade children to grant its favour, even in a absolutely hypothetical situation. This case brings to mind the world of the pink dogs of the piagetian experiment, where when preoperational children were asked `if all the dogs in the world were pink and you had a dog, what colour it would have been` they were divided between black, brown or white.

Children, regardless of the way they conceive a person or an animal outside the story conventions, are, apparently, ready to respect the principles set by the tales, and to treat each protagonist in his own magical environment within the make believe world. The presence of old gods in children's tale, does not seem to confuse them in their comprehension of the story or to prevent them from enjoying it. The influences, if any, of those narrations on the religious education of the kindergarten children was beyond the goals and possibilities of this study.

9.3.2 FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADERS (TEN-TO-TWELVE-YEAR-OLD)

Data are presented in Table 9.4-9.6

Older children, in contrast to the younger ones, seem to be much more aware of the conventional character of the animals. In agreement with the kindergarten subjects the data obtained from this study revealed also that the stereotyped characters of some animals are conceived better than that of others.

As was proved by the results of the current research and is summarized in Tables 9.5 and 9.6, the number of fifth and sixth graders who pointed to the correct conventional character of the animals in question was obviously greater than that of the kindergartners who managed to accomplish the same task.

Table 9.4

Ten to twelve-year-old children's ideas on animal conventions
in literature.

Animal	Correct	Person/ty trait	Intel/nce trait	Appearance trait	Inf/tion	Response
Fox	74	15	2	13	4	108
Lion	73	7	5	10	--	95
Ele/nt	52	21	6	4	7	90
Wolf	65	4	12	9	4	94
Lamb	54	5	7	16	2	84
Turtle	53	13	8	5	8	87
Cat	23	12	21	10	11	77
Donkey	14	18	21	8	6	67
Bear	39	20	10	5	7	81
Total	447	115	92	80	49	783

Table 9.5

Ten to twelve-year-old children's correct and incorrect responses on animal conventions in literature.

Animals	Corrcect	Incorrect	Subjects
Fox	54	1	55
Lion	48	7	55
Elephant	31	24	55
Wolf	44	11	55
Lamb	28	27	55
Turtle	51	4	55
Cat	23	22	55
Donkey	12	43	55
Bear	39	16	55

Table 9.6

Four to six-year-old children's correct and incorrect responses on animal conventions in literature.

Animals	Corrcect	Incorrect	Subjects
Fox	15	98	113
Lion	8	105	113
Elephant	15	98	113
Wolf	88	25	113
Lamb	93	20	113
Turtle	6	107	113
Cat	-	113	113
Donkey	-	113	113
Bear	5	108	113

The fox, for example, is a highly conventional animal and 54 out of 55 children pointed to its artful nature. Second comes the turtle; 51 out of 55 subjects mentioned it as the archetype of slowness. Forty-eight out of 55 children characterized the lion as the king of the animals, the proud, the brave, and the fearless. For 44 out of 55 fifth

and sixth graders, the wolf stands as the symbol of evil, ferociousness and greed. The bear personifies for 39 subjects strength, lack of discretion and stoutness. Another 31 out of 55 subjects gave the correct answer for the elephant, which is regarded as the exemplar of enormous size, and strength.

Although the lamb was characterized by the kindergarten children as simply 'good', and they were thus credited with full marks of correctness, older children, avoiding the general evaluation terms good/bad, failed, in many cases, to define the fixed characteristics of the lamb. Only 28 out of 55 children pronounced it as good-hearted, innocent, pure and the typical victim.

The cat was proved a less well defined conventional character, since children's knowledge about it and their everyday contact with the animal led them to talk about it in a factual rather than a fictional manner. Only 23 out of 55 children thought that cat entered literature as the model of cleverness, jealousy, naughtiness, friskiness and pampered behaviour.

The most difficult conventional character to grasp was that of the donkey. Only 12 children thought of the donkey as stubborn, long suffering and the illustration of a slave.

In regard to the nine animals used in the research, 55 fifth and sixth graders offered 783 comments concerning their conventional nature. They had made many more comments than the kindergarten children and nearly every one of them

accumulated a list of characterizations which ranged from a list of mere synonyms, like 'The fox is cunning, artful, foxy, sneaky and clever' (f., 123), to an outline of the agents' behaviour in many different domains, like 'The donkey is long suffering, stubborn, rather kind, nearly dull, big and likes living in the fields' (f., 137). Apart from the answers that are already mentioned and were classified as correct regardless^{of} the aspect of personality they referred to, all other comments were classified in the same categories as the responses of the kindergarten subjects.

The major difference between the answers of the two age groups, apart from the larger number of responses of the older children, is the lack of the general characterization bad/good in the fifth and sixth graders' responses. Even in the cases of the lamb and the wolf, that are stereotyped as good and bad respectively, older children avoided falling back on the handy panacea of the good/bad evaluation. They preferred to say something more specific and less vague.

The frequency of the kindergarten pupils' comments were 84 in regard to the animals' personality traits, 72 concerning their appearance, 48 on information about their lives, and 6 in respect to their mental characteristics. The order of the presentation of the categories is different for the older ones. First comes animals' personality with 115 responses, then the status of their intelligence, 92 replies, and the way they look, 80, and information about

the conditions of their lives comes at the end, with only 49
comments out of 783.

CHAPTER TEN

THE RESEARCH'S RESULTS ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF FABLES ON CHILDREN

10.1 THE CURRENT RESEARCH

Kindergartners' reactions towards cruel events depicted in the aesopic stories was investigated in two ways. First, all the preschoolers were closely watched by the investigator, both during the story telling and when they were interviewed, in order to detect any sign of anxiety or fear caused by the violent actions depicted by the narrations.

In addition, 51 subjects, the first and second group of the total sample, were asked specifically whether they found the stories frightening. They also were encouraged to specify those elements of the stories they considered frightening or to refer to stories that made them feel nervous or terrified (see appendix two, questions marked with Fr).

The issue of the stories' endings was investigated by employing a number of different means (see appendix two, questions marked with E). The first way of discovering children's preferences concerning the endings of the fables

was the construction of three alternative endings that were offered to kindergartners in order that they might select the one they liked best. For the fables of the `deer` and the `cock` the three choices were; the punishment of the villain, the repentance of the supposed victimizer and the withdrawal of his evil plans, and third, the murder of the innocent character in the story.

For another two fables, the `doctor` and the `mum` stories, both of which ended with an ambiguous event, kindergartners were asked to invent their endings. The `doctor` tale had stopped before the jury gave its verdict, while the `mum` story stated the boy's illness but did not proceed to present the development of his health problems.

In response to two fables of the fifth group, `wolf` and the `pigeon`, kindergartners were asked whether they liked the endings of the stories or not. In order to illuminate more fully their negative or positive evaluation the children were additionally asked to comment on the fairness of the conclusion.

Another way of revealing children's attitudes in regard to the endings of the stories was the recalling of the ending of all those stories that finished with the death of one of the narration agents. It was expected that immoral fables, the ones which terminated with the fall of the innocent and the triumph of the villain, would be recalled less successfully than those endings which satisfy the conception of right and justice.

Regarding the topic of death, all the kindergarten subjects who took part in the study were asked to express their ideas concerning three aspects of the matter; the place a person goes after his death, the deeds of the dead person, and his thoughts, if they were any.

From each of the five groups of fables one aesopic tale that ended with the death of a hero was selected to be questioned about death. During the questioning period preschoolers, along with other questions, were also asked on the death issue (see appendix two, questions marked with D). In order that all the subjects of the same group be asked about the death of the same character, even in the cases ~~where~~ they had misunderstood the ending of the fable and declared that at the last moment it escaped death, the researcher introduced the question thus: 'Let's suppose that the deer did not run away, but was eaten by the lion, ...'. Then the set of three questions concerning death were pronounced in exactly the same manner as they had been addressed to those subjects who admitted the death of the hero right from the beginning.

Kindergartners were also interviewed in order to determine the story character with whom they had identified during the narration of the story (see appendix two, questions marked with I). After listening to each story children were asked to select the protagonist whose part they would have liked to play in a supposed acting out of the fable. They were also encouraged to express the reasons

that led them to make their specific choice, so that the criteria that children normally employ in order to identify themselves with the story characters might emerge.

Kindergartners were asked to select the agent they would have liked to act out in all the fables, except the one of 'The dog and the bone'. This was omitted because it involved only one protagonist.

Another aspect of identification that fell within the scope of the current research was children's explanation of their tendency to identify with the victims of the story. In the cases of the 'deer', 'donkey', 'hen', 'ant', and 'wolf' aesopic stories, some kindergartners, 20, 19, 24, 7, and 18 in number respectively, expressed their preference for the hero that was destined, according to the narration, to die at the end of the tale. Those children were additionally questioned, not only about the reasons that led them to make this choice, about their emotional reaction to the possibility of their portraying to perform, during the dramatization, the protagonists' fate and consequently their death.

Although the fables of the 'cock' and the 'boy' end with the devouring of the fox and the lambs respectively, they were not included in the investigation of the identification with the dead hero because no child chose to perform their behaviour in a hypothetical situation of performance.

10.2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the current research has been described in the fifth chapter of this manuscript, and there is no need to repeat it here. The 113 four to six-year-old children listened to 18 different aesopic stories, and after that they were interviewed in an attempt to reveal the psychological effects of fables on them.

10.3 RESULTS

The results obtained in this part of the research in regard to violence as it is revealed in the fables, the sad endings of them, children's conceptions of death and their identification with the story agents are presented as follows:

10.3.1 CHILDREN'S FEARS AND STORIES

Children were asked to respond to two aspects of the topic; first to point to the frightening elements of the specific aesopic stories they listened to during the current study, and second to define the themes of the stories that usually make them nervous and scared.

10.3.1a THE AESOPIC STORIES

Although 51 subjects were asked to directly express their opinions on the frightening effects of the specific aesopic tales and the total sample, 113 kindergartners, were watched over very carefully and closely in order that any sign of anxiety derived from the fables be observed, only one girl exhibited a kind of apprehension and alarm when she heard the fable of `The deer and the lion`.

The young girl, fifty-months-old, was upset and on the verge of tears when she realized that the lion was about to eat the little deer. She refused to cooperate during the interview, and because she still felt unhappy the experiment was cancelled for that day. After two days, and having been persuaded by the comments of other children who were listening to the stories, she spontaneously asked for another session. She was then cooperative and enjoyed the whole process, until the moment she heard that her last story was going to be about a lion. After that she expressed her wish to quit, exclaiming `Oh, no! I don't want to hear anything about him`. She asked and was, of course, permitted to leave the room.

The other children, another 112 young subjects, who were observed by the investigator for any indication of fear, did not show any sign of anxiety. In addition, 51 of them were asked whether the stories frightened them, which all of them denied strongly.

10.3.1b FRIGHTENING THEMES IN CHILDREN'S STORIES

None: A number of 51 children were asked about the themes of stories that normally frighten them; 19 of them claimed that no tale at all could frighten them.

Two children defined the themes of the stories that used to alarm them when they were little babies, but stressed the fact that they did not scare them any longer. One subject, as a baby, was scared by Little Red Riding Hood `because the wolf ate her` (f., 55), whereas the other talked about stories of ghosts and sharks that, as he stressed, do not frighten him any more (m., 58).

Three more children referred not to themes that frighten them but to those that do not scare them, and so they pointed to lions (f., 62), dragons - `I'm not afraid of stories with dragons, because all of them went to heaven and God stabbed all of them to death` (m., 59) - and to deaths (m., 51). Although those kindergartners rushed to declare that they were not affected by that kind of story, perhaps they had pointed to those issues that frighten them at a deep level.

Supernatural creatures: Another group of children, 16 out of 51, confessed that stories about a great variety of supernatural creatures made them feel uneasy.

First came narratives about monsters, dragons and witches, and then tales about robots who shoot, visitors

from space, huge scorpions and `some creatures that move their hands and say "agh agh" and then I can't sleep all night` (m., 64). It is obvious that, apart from the case of witches, the place of traditionally threatening figures, as they were communicated by fairy tales is now taken by the products of the modern technical civilization and are transferred to children by both books and television.

Animals: Only 5 preschoolers asserted that they were tense when they listened to stories about animals that ate one another as well as little children. On the other hand, they once again stressed the fact that, although the stories they heard included animals' devouring other creatures, they were not frightened by them.

In reality they seemed to confuse the fear a wild animal infuses in real life condition with that elicited by a story that employs animal protagonists. Most probably it was not the story that scared them, but a wild animal walking free in their own environment. Thus, they gave replies such as `I'm afraid of birds that come and take you from your hair and pull you up` (m., 64), or `about lions that are out of the cage in the zoo; because they can eat you` (m., 69).

Killing: Another 6 kindergartners referred to fighting and killing among men as they were depicted in stories.

`There is one story that the good fought with the bad and there was a lot of fight and killing` (f., 68); `When there are murders and a lot of murderers and they kill people` (m., 51).

General statements: Another 2 out of 51 children made very general remarks on the topic and, despite a number of prompting questions, they did not specify their comments.

`I am scared of frightening stories` (m., 51) and `All the stories that are bad` (f., 63).

Literary indifferent conditions: Television programmes and darkness were the only causes of fear mentioned by another 3 preschoolers. Two of them did not like thrillers on television (f., 62; f., 63), while another one admitted that she gets upset `when it is dark and the lights are off` (f., 59).

10.3.2 FABLES' ENDINGS

Kindergartners' attitudes towards the endings of the stories were investigated in four different ways; the recall of the endings of the stories that concluded with the death of a character, the selection of an ending among three alternatives, the appendix of children's own endings and the judgements on the way the stories finish.

10.3.2a RECALLING OF THE ENDINGS

Children aged four to six-years were asked to recall the endings of seven fables which end with the death of one story agent.

Table 10.1 presents the results regarding children's performances in recalling the endings of all the aesopic tales.

Table 10.1

Four to six-year-old children's recollection of the ending of fables.

Fables	High	Moderate	Low	Total
Deer	12	-	10	22
Donkey	12	4	6	22
Cock	20	1	1	22
Hen	13	7	9	29
Ant	8	14	1	23
Boy	9	-	10	19
Lamb	18	-	2	20
Total	92	26	39	157

Low: Performance was characterized as low if answers were opposed to the correct ones, or were children's own creations - `Then the grasshopper, when he woke up went to some other animals and they gave him food` (m., 55) - the description of the reverse situation - e.g. `The fox, the lion and the donkey became friends and nobody ate anybody` (f., 62). The case of no response was also characterized as low.

Fables that ended with the unjust death of the kind hero were in general not successfully recalled. Among them, the tales of the `deer` and the `hen` were poorly recalled, while the story of the `boy` that concluded with the devouring of the innocent lambs was the one that gathered the most `low performance` responses. However, the failure at recalling adequately the fable of `The boy who cried wolf` can be attributed, apart from its immoral ending to the poetic style of its narration.

Although children in many cases attributed exactly the reverse ending to stories in which the good hero was killed, there was not even one case where the innocent hero was said to have died where that did not accord with the narration. For the `cock` fable, for example, none of the 22 subjects incorrectly recalled the death of the rooster or the dog, the two protagonists they considered good.

Correspondingly, cases of dishonest heroes punished with death at the end of the narration were recalled successfully. Concerning the same fable of the `cock` there was no answer favouring the rescue of the fox that was scheming against the innocent cock.

Moderate: If preschoolers' answers succeeded in recalling half the facts depicted in the end of the story, their replies were considered half-true and were categorized as moderate.

Regarding the `donkey` fable, for example, moderate answers were `The lion ate the donkey` (m., 66; m., 66) or `The lion ate the fox` (m., 51; m., 66).

The vast majority of replies characterized as moderate came in response to the `ant` fable due mostly to the obscure character of the ending. The last sentence of the story, which did not contain the verb `died` but referred to the ever-lasting sleep of the grasshopper, was most probably responsible for a great deal of misunderstanding. So, kindergartners gave answers such as `The grasshopper slept for a long time` (f., 49); `The grasshopper slept hungry` (f., 64); `The grasshopper slept all the winter until the spring came again` (f., 69).

High: When kindergartners stated the correct ending of the fables then their performance was labelled as high and they were credited with full marks in their responses.

For the `deer` fable, for example, the correct answer was the one given by 12 subjects `The lion ate the deer` (e.g. f., 65).

If we look at the correct replies for every fable we will observe that the aesopic story of the `cock` elicited the most correct responses. A total of 20 subjects scored high while one gave a response characterized as moderate and another one a low-rated answer. This tale is also the only one of the seven that ends with the severe punishment of the villain, who was prevented from fulfilling his evil plans.

It is thought as likely that the accordance of the story ending with the children's conception of the ethical helped them in succeeding in the task of recollection.

The other fable that elicited a high number of correct responses was that of 'The wolf and the lamb'. Although many recalled the story, however, its morality was not appreciated by the kindergartners. In regard to this aesopic story the investigator can only suggest that the observed high performance of kindergartners may be attributed to the accordance of the ending not with children's notion of justice, as occurred with previous fables, but to its compliance with their expectation that wolves eat lambs. So in children's stories, as in everyday life, the image of a ferocious wolf eating a defenceless lamb is a well established and predictable cognitive schema. On the contrary, the scene of a deer being eaten by a lion, for example, does not very often appear in children's stories. In addition, the fact that the deer was presented at the concluding sentence talking to itself, perhaps, confused the story's reference to its killing. Another possible reason for the difference between the recalling of the endings of two stories that both seem to retell the motif of an innocent animal being eaten up by an evil creature may be the description of the great effort made by the deer in an attempt to challenge its own fate. On the contrary, the lamb, which always symbolizes the powerless victim, did not

make even the simplest move to escape from the wolf and save its life.

Kindergartners' recall of the ending of the fables seemed to be influenced by two major factors; first their notion of right and wrong, and secondly children's existing knowledge of what they expected from a story. When children realized that a kind of condemned behaviour was being performed, they easily recalled successfully the ending that described the wrongdoer's punishment. However there were many cases in which children, could not spot any offence (e.g. The deer's wrong evaluations of the true and untrue friends were not grasped by the young subjects) and so blameworthy or simply vain actions were considered as right. For the actors who committed those unconceivable offences no punishment was required and, although they were guilty by adults' standards, they were treated as absolutely innocent by children.

Children's conception of right and wrong in combination with their expectations from the story, affected their recall of the fables' endings. When natural and anticipated events were presented, kindergartners were more likely to recall correctly the ending than in cases in which rare or extraordinary scenes were described.

10.3.2b THREE ENDING ALTERNATIVES

In regard to the fables of the 'deer' and the 'cock' 22 kindergarten subjects were asked to choose among three

alternative endings; one presented the villain's abandonment of his evil plans; another portrayed him getting punished because of his cruel deeds; and a third delineated the unjust death of the kind hero.

The results obtained showed that only 1 out of 22 kindergartners favoured the devouring of the good agent in the `deer` fable and none in the `cock` tale. Children's tendency to view their stories as the mirror of ethical, and not merely realistic, situations was confirmed. The fact that one of them showed preference to a morally condemned event does reflect his appreciation for it but the influence of the real ending of the story on the child.

Another 7 out of 22 children for the `deer` fable and 9 out of 22 in regard to the `cock` narrative selected the ending that described the severe punishment of the villain. The fact that the proposed penalty was death did not deter these preschoolers from favouring that choice, thus revealing their tendency to ask for the merciless administration of justice in those cases in which a grave offence is committed.

The vast majority of children of kindergarten age preferred a story-world free of cruelty and violence. For 14 out of 22 of them, it would have been better had the lion pitied the deer and let it go. Thirteen out of 22 of those young subjects would have preferred it if the fox were not a scheming character, but had really meant her invitation for

a nice song and all three protagonists were presented in the concluding scene singing.

Summing up, we are probably permitted to say that young children clearly favour happy endings, provided that no evil and unjust actions are performed in the narrative. But if an offence is committed they seek the severe punishment of the wrongdoer in order that the disturbed ethical order of the world be restored.

10.3.2c ADDITION OF AN ENDING

Kindergartners were asked to choose another ending for two fables; the `doctor` and the `mum` stories.

In regard to the `doctor` tale children were encouraged to predict the verdict of the court. Only 4 out of 29 did not say anything, while 10 put the stress onto grandma's behaviour and pronounced verdicts concerning her. According to another 15 the jury decided about the doctor.

In contrast with grandma, who was cleared from any charge at least by some kindergartners, the doctor was found guilty by all the 15 children who gave a verdict on him. They offered a wide variety of offences, as they understood them, and different suggestions of deserved types of punishment. `They decided to imprison the doctor because he made the grandma worse` (m., 71); `They said to kill the doctor because he stole` (f., 55); `The jury asked the

policemen to cut off the doctor's hands not to steal again` (f., 68).

A total of 7 children favoured grandma's acquittal, whereas the remaining 3 convicted her for not paying the doctor. According to a young subject `They asked grandma to pay the doctor. Because he did some good to her and she should pay. And then the doctor will have money to buy things and he won't live like a thief any more` (m., 66). Another preschooler defined the punishment as `They should put the grandma into prison to die there` (m., 53).

In regard to the `mum` fable, one child did not give any suggestion for another ending of the story, while the remaining 28 agreed that the little boy was going to be all right after a while. The only difference between their answers was the time and the procedure necessary for his cure. For some of them a very limited time and no effort was needed for his recovery - e.g. `After five minutes he was o.k. again` (m., 57) - whereas some others put him into a convalescent period - e.g. `Then they called in the doctor and he gave him some medicine and asked him to stay in bed for a week, and then he hadn't any pain` (f., 55); `They took him to the hospital and the doctor gave him an injection and then he had an operation and the doctor opened his belly and he took all the food out and then he was all right and went home` (f., 68).

Examining the `ending after ending` suggested by kindergartners for the fables of `doctor` and `mum`, it is

clear that children tend to ask either for a happy ending, every time that a wrongdoing is not observed, or for a severe punishment, when an offence had been committed was again affirmed.

10.3.2d APPRECIATION OF THE STORIES' ENDINGS

Twenty kindergartners were asked to express their appreciation or disapproval in regard to the narratives of the `wolf` and the `pigeon`. After that, the same children were encouraged to comment on the fairness of the stories' conclusion.

For the aesopic tale of `The wolf and the lamb`, 18 children declared their appreciation of the ending, and only 2 maintained that they did not agree with it.

Similarly, for the `pigeon` story, 20 out of 20 kindergartners professed their liking of the ending of the story.

But their reactions were entirely different when kindergartners were questioned about the justice of the conclusion. In regard to the `wolf` fable 17 kindergartners expressed their strong contempt for the deeds of wolf, and only 3 justified them; 2 without explaining them and another 1 stating `The wolf had to eat the lamb because he was hungry for days and he wanted something to eat` (f., 70).

For the `pigeon` narration, 16 out of 20 young subjects disapproved of the actions of the fox, 3 excused the animal but without any explanation, and 1, declaring his appreciation, said `It was all pigeon's fault because it flew to the other tree and dropped his cheese` (m., 69).

From the children's responses here presented it becomes obvious that kindergartners tend to view stories as unique, complete and unchangeable bodies to be respected and not to be tampered with. The manner in which it has been composed is considered as the most successful and well-suited one. Even for those who regard the events described in the story as not proper, there is no way that they can intervene in the evolution of the plot and replace the ending with another one. The moment the narration left the hands of its creator and was put onto the paper, it gained its independent existence and, although we may disagree with the morality of some of its aspects, we have to realize that is how story exists. Kindergartners' appreciation of stories despite their disagreement with the narrative's morality, show children's recognition of literature's right to make its point, regardless of the beliefs of the reader.

10.3.3 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S CONCEPTION OF DEATH

Kindergartners were interviewed in regard to their ideas on death. Their responses were as follows:

10.3.3a THE PLACE OF THE DEAD PERSON

The results are presented in Table 10.2.

No response: Only 5 out of 113 kindergartners did not give any answer to the question concerning the place where the dead agent goes after his death.

The dead body: The vast majority of children, 75 out of 113, referred to the place the dead body could be found, and they obviously considered the dead persons as lifeless corpses. Due to their young age and limited cognitive abilities, kindergartners could not distinguish between the lifeless body and the immortal soul that continues living after death. Because they were identifying the person with his perishable body, they were more concerned about the place the corpse was located.

Because three out of five fables were about animals that had been eaten by carnivorous beasts, many children located the victims in the bellies, hearts, lungs, throats or the mouths of their victimizers. `The deer is now in the lion's belly` (m. 66), `The lambs are now in the wolf's throat` (f., 49). Obviously children's vague conceptions about the creatures' digestive system made some of them talk about hearts or lungs, whereas better informed subjects mentioned mouths and bellies.

Some other children realized that big animals like deer cannot be eaten at a gulp, and maintained that their dead

Table 10.2

Four to six-year-old children's responses on the location of the dead hero.

Actors	No response	Corpse	Normal life	Distance	Nowhere	Total
Deer	1	14	4	1	2	22
Hen	2	17	2	6	2	29
Gras/per	1	16	1	1	4	23
Lambs	-	13	2	2	2	19
Lamb	1	15	1	3	-	20
Total	5	75	10	13	10	113

bodies remained bleeding on the ground. These children described scenes taking place soon after the death had occurred.

Thus, the lamb was `on the ground bleeding` (m., 52) and the grasshopper that died of hunger and cold was `in the snow` (m., 56). The fate of the hen was somewhat different and there was a wide range of answers defining the place its body was located. `They took her to the butcher's and he skinned her and sold her to people` (m., 65); `After killing she became a meal` (f., 63); `The villager hung her from a tree and people came to see how bad she was that laid only golden eggs` (m., 51).

Children's acquaintance with the funeral procedure was obvious in responses that referred to burying under the earth and cemeteries. `The grasshopper was buried in the soil` (m., 65); `They took the hen to the hospital and then to the cemetery` (m., 66); `They put the lamb into the grave and left it there` (f., 63).

Return to a normal life: A total of 10 out of 113 kindergartners regarded death as a usual event of ordinary life, something like an accident, that was, of course, sad, but that could not bring life to an abrupt end. For those 10 children the dead hero returned after death to his normal activities, as if nothing very drastic had happened to him.

`The deer is now in his hole with his mom and dad` (m., 54); `The grasshopper went and found his friends the

grasshoppers` (f., 63); `The lambs stay with the shepherd boy on the mountain` (f., 53).

Departure for a distant place: The separation between living and dead persons is a fact of life that some kindergartners seem to have recognized. Thus, they located the dead story characters in a far away place which, for some of them, was somewhere in earth, while for others in heaven.

In regard to the lamb of `The wolf and the lamb` fable, the children said `All the dead persons go to another country` (f., 60); `If someone dies he goes away and we never see him again` (m., 58); `The lamb went to the heaven with God and it stays there and looks down to the earth` (m., 56).

Nowhere: Another 10 children insisted on the fact that dead people do not go anywhere and we cannot find them in any place. Those kindergartners seemed to equate death with nothingness and non-existence. This identification of death with lack of existence is perhaps to be understood not in a strict existential and philosophical sense, but as a permanent separation from the dead person and our inability to meet him ever again.

In response to the grasshopper's death a kindergartner assumed that `he is nowhere. Because he is dead. The dead are nowhere` (f., 62).

Table 10.3

Four to six-year-old children's responses on the actions of the dead hero.

Actors	No response	Normal life	Return	Relaxing	Nothing	Total
Deer	1	1	2	6	12	22
Hen	4	4	3	4	14	29
Gras/per	3	2	-	3	15	23
Lambs	2	3	2	2	10	19
Lamb	3	1	2	3	11	20
Total	13	11	9	18	62	113

10.3.3b THE ACTIONS OF THE DEAD PERSON

Table 10.3 presents the results obtained by this part of the research.

No response: Compared with the previous question on the place the dead person goes, the definition of his own activities after death was considered by kindergartners as more difficult, and 13 out of 113 of them did not respond to this question.

Normal life: According to 11 out of 113 kindergartners the dead hero continues to lead a normal life even after his death. He carries on playing, dancing, singing or doing his own job as it was defined by his nature.

`The lambs play with kids and deers` (m., 65), while the hen `lays her eggs` (f., 63).

Efforts to return to life: Some kindergartners, 9 out of 113, thought of death as a reversible and unhappy situation and described the efforts of the dead persons to return to life and continue their normal activities.

The deer, for example, `put his antlers into the lion's belly and wanted to make the lion die and then to go out again` (m., 64), or `maybe he has a match and set the lion

on fire from inside and comes out of the lion's belly and go to his mom and dad` (f., 61).

Relaxing: For 18 out of 113 preschoolers death was a type of relaxation either in the form of sleep or as rest. The dead person does not do any of the activities a living creature normally does, and has only two options; either to sit and do nothing or to sleep a long deep sleep.

`The grasshopper just sits there` (m., 67); `The lamb sleeps because it is dead` (f., 50)

Nothing: Sixty-two out of 113 children realized that the dead person is unable to do anything and replied with answers that made clear their assumption that death is the end of every activity.

`The lambs don't do anything now because they are dead. The dead don't do anything` (f., 59).

10.3.3c THE THOUGHTS OF THE DEAD PERSON

Table 10.4 presents the data analytically.

No response: Only 7 out of 113 kindergartners did not answer anything to the third question concerning death in spite of the fact that the researcher, with prompt questions, tried to encourage them to answer.

Table 10.4

Four to six-year-old children's responses on the thoughts of the dead hero.

Actors	No response	Don't know	Previous life	Family	Return to life	Future	Nothing	Total
Deer	2	2	3	1	4	1	9	22
Hen	1	1	4	2	8	2	11	29
Gras/per	1	1	3	1	3	3	11	23
Lambs	2	2	2	1	2	2	8	19
Lamb	1	2	2	2	2	2	10	20
Total	7	8	14	7	18	10	49	113

`I don't know`: Another 8 out of 113 subjects did not give any specific answer but, although they admitted they could not guess the thoughts of the dead story characters, they were pretty sure that they had thoughts. It was not the lack of thought that prevented those kindergartners from answering but, as they confessed, they were not able to know or imagine them.

Previous life: For 14 out of 113 kindergartners dead persons spend their time speculating about their past and especially contemplating the events that led to their death. `The hen thinks how many eggs she laid in her life` (f., 56); `The grasshopper thinks how much he suffered in his life and how cold he felt` (m., 65).

Family: Thoughts of a member of his family are relatively common among dead people, according to 7 kindergartners. Nearly all the dead were supposed to remember their own mother - `The lambs are thinking about their mom` (f., 56) - while a girl referred to the sister of the victim; `The hen is thinking about her sister that she would cry now` (f., 62). However, children's reference to the mothers of the dead persons probably reveals their own anxiety at the topic of death and represents an attempt at alleviating it.

Return to life: According to 18 out of 113 kindergartners, the dead story characters were trying to make plans to return to life. `The deer thinks about taking a knife and cutting the lion's belly and then to walk out free` (f., 60). Death is a sad and poignant situation which rather resembles a trip to distant place. There is always a possibility of coming back if the trip is not enjoyable any more.

Future: For 10 out of 113 preschoolers, the victims, while they were dead, thought about taking revenge for their own murders or, having learned their lessons, they were promising themselves not to commit again the same mistakes. In regard to the `hen` fable the victim was supposed to be thinking `Next time it won't let anybody take her eggs` (f., 66) or `To go to the police and ask them to arrest the villager because he killed her` (m., 53).

Death is viewed as a kind of suffering. If somebody else was responsible for it, he deserves to be punished. In the case that the victim himself had caused his own death, he should from now on learn a lesson and not repeat those actions again.

Nothing: A considerably high number of children, 49 out of 113, replied that dead persons do not think of anything simply because they cannot. Some answers regarding the lamb were: `Nothing. It cannot think of anything. Just

like a statue` (f., 63); `Nothing. It doesn't think because it is dead. It sleeps` (f., 70).

Although concerning the actions of the dead person 62 preschoolers asserted that he was unable to perform any deed, their number fell to 49, 13 less, in regard to the thoughts of the dead. Obviously, actions were considered by kindergartners as needed more strength than a simple thought. Thus, some dead people could only think, but not act. In addition, many children might have observed that a lack of motion always accompanies death and the confining of the dead to a coffin, which badly restricts movement may have led them to believe that, although those conditions were responsible for the impossibility of action, they were also unable to regain their thoughts as well.

10.3.4 KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S IDENTIFICATION WITH THE STORY AGENTS

In analyzing the results obtained in regard to the issue of identification, only two aspects of the topic were investigated; the criteria employed by kindergartners, and their identification with characters destined to die.

As was shown by kindergartners' answers, they pointed to nearly every character taking part in the story as their favourite hero to identify themselves with, and there was no need to categorize their responses in regard to the identity

of their model. As happened concerning the fable of `donkey` for example, there were kindergartners who selected the donkey, others that chose the lion, and another one who preferred the fox, each of them considering his favourite hero as the good person of the story. `I would like to be the donkey because he does nothing` (f., 65); `The lion, because if we don't go near to him he doesn't eat anybody` (f., 56); `The fox, because she was good, she didn't eat anybody` (m., 60). Kindergartner's different conceptions of kindness, plus their tendency to respond to the story with information both derived from it and for their previous knowledge about the protagonists, were responsible from the wide variety of choices made on the basis of the single criterion of good character.

10.3.4a CRITERIA OF IDENTIFICATION

The data are presented at Table 10.5.

The criteria children employed in order to decide about the story hero they preferred to identify with are as follows:

No response: In a very limited number of cases, did children not reveal the reasons that drove them to make their specific choices. Another 2 refused to point to a

story character with whom they identified, raising the replies belonging to no-response category to 6.

Kindness: The vast majority of responses, 288 out of 392, regarded the kindness or goodness of the hero as the main reason that motivated them to identify with him.

`I like the camel because she is good, very good` (m., 67); `I like Zeus because he is good and he did the right thing` (f., 56). Different evaluations of the story agents' character led to different identifications.

Even in cases that they could not decide which character was really good and kind, they chose one hero just because all the others were too bad for them to be identified with. `I prefer the crow. Because the fox is very bad, she tells lies` (f., 63). Some other children did not want to take part in an acting-out situation, because they could not find a person good enough to identify with. `Nobody. Neither the Sun nor the North Wind, because both of them are very bad and don't like each other and quarrel` (f., 53).

In contrast to other topics, like characterization and punishment, kindergartners, when asked to justify the selection of their favourable hero for identification, referred nearly exclusively to information derived from the story. Very rarely did they explain their choice by recalling information they already knew. `I don't like anybody, because both the mouse and the lion are bad. The

Table 10.5

Four to six-year-old children's criteria for their identification with the fable heroes.

Fables	Kindness	Interest	Superio- rity	Simila- rity	Infere- nce	No answer	Total
Deer	19	1	-	1	1	-	22
Fox	20	1	-	-	-	1	22
Bear	13	5	2	1	-	1	22
Donkey	20	1	-	-	-	1	22
Cock	21	1	-	-	-	-	22
Hen	25	3	-	-	-	1	29
Camel	19	3	4	-	2	1	29
Doctor	23	6	-	-	-	-	29
Mum	23	-	-	6	-	-	29
Lion	19	3	-	1	-	-	23
Sun	11	4	4	-	1	-	23
Ant	17	3	2	1	-	-	23
Boy	14	2	-	2	-	1	19
Rabbit	5	4	8	1	1	-	19
Crow	13	3	3	-	3	-	19
Wolf	15	2	-	1	2	-	20
Pigeon	11	3	4	-	2	-	20
Total	288	45	27	14	12	6	392

mouse makes holes at home and makes everything a mess and the lion eats all the men and animals` (m., 62).

In some of the cases that children identified with a person they considered to be good, and explained the heroes' kind character by deriving information from what already knew about him, some misconceptions about the animals benefits to men were made obvious. So, the child who identified himself with the ant in the fable of the same name justified her choice thus `It is good because it gives us honey` (f., 54).

Interest: In 45 out of 392 cases, children chose to identify themselves not with the best but with the most interesting character. According to them, the agents that perform the most exciting actions were also the most appealing ones.

`I want to be like the pigeon. Because it flies. It is nice to fly up in the sky` (f., 65); `The fox. Because it is fun to pretend to eat men and they run away` (f., 60); `I like to be the man on the tree because I like climbing` (m., 64).

One child also wanted to be the fox in the `fox` fable `because the fox's costume is the best. I like to wear that one` (m., 49).

Superiority: Twenty-seven out of 392 responses revealed children's favour for story characters who were

superior in comparison to all the other characters in various respects. The cleverest protagonist - e.g. `The pigeon because it was very smart and didn't believe the fox` (m., 52) - or the strongest - e.g. `The Sun. Because he was very strong. Not like the North Wind` (f., 58) - or the winner - e.g. `The turtle. Because she won the race` (m., 64) - attracted the attention of children who chose them to identify with.

Similarity: In 14 out of 392 responses, children preferred to identify themselves with the protagonist who exerted a kind of behaviour more similar to their own. In the fable of `mum`, for example, 6 kindergartners wanted to take the part of the boy because as one of them explained `he was a small boy` (m., 63).

Some other children explained their choices as: `The deer. Because I always run very fast, just like the deer did` (m., 64). `The shepherd boy. Because I have a lamb in my village. It is my own lamb` (f., 54).

Interference: Another 12 children chose to take the part of a story agent only in order to take the course of the events into their hands and change it according to their own will. The choice of those kindergartners did not reveal their appreciation of the protagonist's behaviour but, on the contrary, because they condemned its actions, they wanted the power to change them.

`I want to be the rabbit and then not to sleep and then to beat the turtle because she is slow` (f., 63); `The wolf, not to eat the lamb because it's a pity` (f., 70); `I like more to be Zeus and then I won't cut the camel's ears` (f., 59).

10.3.4b IDENTIFICATION WITH THE DEAD HERO

The results are presented in the Table 10.6.

Table 10.6

Four to six-year-old children's responses on their identification with the dead hero.

Actors	No response	Shifting	Inter- ference	Indi- fference	Total
Deer	2	2	10	6	20
Hen	2	1	7	9	19
Gras/per	2	1	11	10	24
Lambs	3	-	-	4	7
Lamb	2	-	10	6	18
Total	11	4	38	35	88

No response: Eleven out of 88 children who were asked to express what they felt after considering once again that they had chosen to identify with the hero supposed to die, did not say anything and despite encouragement to speak, they kept silent.

Shifting: Another 4 out of 88 children shifted immediately to another person as soon as they were reminded that the first one was going to die.

The kindergartner that had pointed to the deer soon after he was reminded about his devouring by the lion said: 'Then, I'll be the lion. But I'm not going to eat the deer. No way!' (m., 64). Another child that was strongly opposed to the lion's condemnable behaviour replied 'I don't want to be the deer after all. Nor the lion. He's ever so bad. I would rather prefer not to play at all' (m., 66).

Interference: Most of the kindergartners who selected the dying hero remained firm in their choice, but stressed the fact that if they were going to act his part out they would rather prefer to change the course of the story so as to permit him to escape the danger and carry on living.

In regard to the 'donkey' aesopic tale a young pupil replied 'If I was the donkey I would called "help, help" and then everybody would had come to rescue me from him' (m., 64). Another one found a more peaceful solution. 'I would have been friends with the lion and taken him home with me. He isn't so bad after all. If you say to him "O.k let's be friends" he enjoys it' (m., 54). Another child, acknowledging the fact that the narrative could not be changed, created a revenge just after the story ending. 'When I'll die and go to heaven I'll punish the villager from there' (m., 58).

Indifference: Another 35 out of 88 kindergartners declared their indifference to the unpleasant end of the hero and stated that, despite his death, they still thought that he was the best one to be identified with.

Most of the kindergartners reacted with the statement `No, I don't care` (e.g. f., 54) and they gave no more explanation about it. From the few of them that justified their indifference, some maintained `I don't care. It's funny to pretend you are killed` (e.g. f., 61) or `It's just a story. It isn't true` (e. f., 60). Another kindergartner explained his persistence thus `I don't care. I can't be anybody else. The wolf is very bad and I don't want to be him` (m., 60).

CONCLUSIONS

Although aesopic fables are considered highly popular among children in general and kindergartners in particular, the current investigation showed that preschoolers exhibit little knowledge of certain famous fables.

Concerning children's preferences among stories, preschoolers showed a clear tendency to appreciate every story that was recounted to them. It was also proved that kindergartners' criteria for liking or disliking fables were not aesthetic but ethical, and that children did not judge stories as literary products. Their strongest reaction to the fables was sharp disapproval of the immorality depicted in specific tales.

In regard to children's perceptions of the truth of the stories, the investigation has presented clear evidence that children tend, even at kindergarten age, to acknowledge the fictitious character of stories, and consider them to operate at a make-believe level. The very few children who accepted the historical background of stories located their occurrence in remote times and places.

The kindergartners who attempted to explain the origins of stories, which they considered imaginary, gave explanations that proceeded from awkward and ambiguous assumptions (first step), to a conception of stories as incorporated into the consumer system as commercial

products, focusing either on the process of transportation (second step) or the procedure of production (third step). Despite their inability to point to the human mind as the birth place of stories, a fourth group of children's explanations was more sophisticated and referred to persons that do not belong to the market system but to intellectual authorities. A more advanced group of kindergartners (fifth level) revealed the relationship of literature to the tradition and viewed literature as a literary inheritance from previous generations to the next. An unexpectedly high percentage of children advanced to the level considered as right by human standards and regarded, stories as creations of human fantasy.

In regard to the magic elements of fables, children of four to six-years showed a clear tendency to consider morally condemnable events as more improbable than physically impossible ones. Thus, when they were asked to point to the weirdest part of the story they preferred to refer to ethically reproachable events than to make-believe episodes. But nevertheless, in cases in which they were directly asked about the plausibility of magical elements in every day conditions, they denied it.

Kindergartners did not seem to find the fables amusing. As this study has shown, they prefer slapstick, incongruity, and related to taboos humour as well as the depiction of vivid actions and references to laughter to the kind of humour presented in the aesopic stories.

Furthermore, when asked whether they found the tales humorous or not, the striking majority of them replied in the negative. The limited percentage that found them comical attributed humour to aspects of the storytelling, such as their reference to silly words and actions, or mimicking of the characters' voices. Few examples of superiority-humour were exhibited, while some other children laughed at the protagonists' predicaments and at immoral actions, such as deception.

In addition, four to six-year-old children were unable to understand and enjoy verbal humour, and the two fables based on two kinds of verbal humour, witty remarks and word games, were not considered funny.

Children's recall of fables was very high, and only in regard to the recollection of the fables' epigrammatic last sentence did kindergartners fail to obtain good marks. The fact that children could remember fables reasonably well can be attributed to the simplicity of the stories, the straightforward style of the narration, the plain vocabulary, the concreteness of the tale, the limited number of protagonists and episodes, and maybe to the particular attraction that the stories exert on subjects of kindergarten age. On the other hand, their inability to recall the abstract last sentence or epimythium can be explained by its theoretical character, as well as by the insignificant role it played in the evolution of the story.

In contrast to the preschoolers' recall of fables, their understanding of them was not high. More than two-thirds of children scored moderate or low on comprehension at a deeper and more sophisticated level. Kindergartners were not very successful at detecting the hidden motives of the protagonists' actions, nor at defining the consequences and implications of related events. The highly intellectual demands of fables, which delineate complex moral problems, were shown to be beyond the understanding of kindergarten children. This was most evident in regard to the comprehension of the epigrammatic last sentence of the genre, which was beyond the mental grasp of the vast majority of children. Thus, preschoolers, instead of attempting to contemplate the actual meaning of the last sentence, distorted it in order to accord with their conceptions of the world, or with their expectations about the evolution of the story, or to accord with their conception of the genre, or simply preferred to elaborate on specific words or phrases referred to in the last sentence.

Some strong tendencies regarding preschoolers' characterization of the characters of the aesopic tales have been revealed by this research. Children showed a clear inclination towards polar judgments of good and bad, and thought of protagonists as possessing their kind or evil qualities to an absolute degree. They made a clear distinction between `goodies` and `baddies`, and viewed the story as a battle between them. The influence of a `halo

effect` on their judgements led to the justification of all the actions of agents perceived as good, and the condemnation of all actions committed by characters supposed to be bad. The research has shown that children of four to six-years-old did not rely upon the text to make their evaluations but were influenced by preconceived ideas about the characters.

Kindergartners favoured clear cut distinctions between good and bad protagonists, and liked their stories to depict the forces of both good and evil, as well as the battle among them. Even in fables which depicted two positive or two negative behavioural models, preschoolers tended to convert this form into a conflict of good against bad.

Another interesting finding was that children listened to the fable with an already-formed idea about its good and the bad characters, at least in those cases in which a carnivorous and a small animal were involved. As soon as they heard that the story was about a lamb and a wolf, they expected to hear a tale `about the little lamb and the bad wolf` (f. 51), as a young pupil hurried to correct me and thus restore the moral order of the fictional world.

A plausible explanation of this may be the fact that the animal characters of the fables lack names. If we consider that names are always used to express the existence of a distinct personality and to stress its individuality, the above hypothesis seems plausible.

Children, when they expressed their evaluations of the character of the animals, obviously bear in mind the unchangeable laws of Nature. It is a matter of fact that beasts of prey kill weaker animals, in life as in stories. The innovation of the fable genre is its attribution of reasoning forces and human emotions, such as pity and gratitude, to animals, thus enabling them to question many aspects of animal life that might be considered unaltered and perennial. In fact, the mouse has to be eaten by the lion, which in its turn has to be caught by the hunters; but the humanization of the characters temper this law of nature and replace it with a more refined and humanistic one.

Nevertheless, kindergartners tend to approach the fables with preformed ideas about the personalities of the animals depicted, and the majority of them selected the story information they need to justify these preconceptions. If they had conceived of the story heroes as good, they recalled only those phrases that accord with this characterization. If this was not possible, they modified some of those events or added information from their own general knowledge.

Another feature observed in the kindergartners' replies regarding the personality traits of the story agents was that all the protagonists were described only as bad or good. In addition, they attributed the greatest degree of this bad or good character to the animals. No agent of the

story was anything but good or bad, and all of them were either very good or very bad.

In order to explain their judgments on story agents' personalities kindergartners relied on information depicted in the story, or on already formed ideas about them. Preschoolers' unsophisticated use of their own knowledge as a source of information about the story characters shows that kindergartners, more than other readers project all their own intellectual and emotional properties on the stories. Thus, the story, viewed under the subjective sight of the reader, gains as many different shapes as the number its readers. The difference between a kindergarten and a adult reader is that the former, deeply absorbed by the text, interferes too much with it and, by speculating about it under the guidance his own experience, distorts the actual text and misunderstands its meaning.

From the criteria that kindergartners employed in order to judge the heroes' characters, it is obvious that they tend to view any event that takes place in a story as morally significant. Above all, killing is the gravest of crimes and an absolute criterion for determining the good or bad character of a story agent.

In regard to the kindergartners' conception of justice as it was revealed by their reactions to the aesopic fables, the current research showed that children aged from four to six-years expected, every time they had detected a moral offence, the wrongdoer to be severely punished.

Offences were not conceived by kindergartners in exactly the same way they are grasped by adults. Murder was never justified by them and reference to the unbreakable laws of Nature was never made. Apart from killing, which was condemned under all circumstances, other moral crimes, like theft, lying, and deception, were also seen as calling for retributive justice. Even violations of social conventions and morally indifferent facts, such as the lack of mental ability or physical fitness, were regarded as breaches of the ethical law and deserving punishment.

It was also observed that a small number of children revealed a tendency to approach stories and the ethical dilemmas presented in them with already formed ideas about the role of every story agent. They judged actors and evaluated situations according to their previous knowledge of them, ignoring entirely the actual deeds performed during the narration. Thus, while the vast majority of children based their judgements about the ethical problems involved in the narration of the stories, some others turned to their own knowledge of the story characters and responded in an idiosyncratic and immature way.

In all the cases that kindergartners detected the existence of a moral crime - of course according to their own peculiar conception of ethical violation - they strongly demanded the ruthless punishment of the wrongdoer. It has become obvious in the study that for children aged four to six-year-old, the most severe punishment is the fairest one.

For kindergartners punishment is not proportional to the offence, and the ultimate penalty tends to become the panacea for every kind of wrongdoing. Even the rabbit's falling asleep during its race was seen as deserving the death penalty.

However, there were kindergartners that found death a rather painless penalty, and in a significant number of cases the subjects asked for a period of merciless torture to precede it. Other suggested of penalties were imprisonment, common penalties familiar for their school or home experience, like standing against the wall or being locked up in the bathroom, deprivation of privileges or, very rarely, a mere reprimand.

It must be underlined that although children showed an outstanding and extraordinary cruelty in the way they administered justice, their severity was not due to a supposed evil nature but rather must be attributed to an unquestioning respect and devotion to the principle of punishment.

As became obvious from the current research, kindergartners believe unshakably in the corrective power of punishment and, astonishingly, all of them maintained that the attribution of justice would deter offenders from repeating their crime. In the case that they were not punished, it was assumed that all of the characters would prepared to commit their previous offences again. This evidence shows that it is not a demand for revenge or a kind

of unjustified cruelty that makes kindergartners ask for severe punishments, but they trust them as a means of correction and prevention, which can protect society against criminals and force them not to commit the same wrongdoings again.

In dealing with fables, kindergartners treated men and animals as equals at least before the law. If an animal had committed a crime towards a man it was condemned regardless of its animal nature. In the same fashion, no extenuations were found to alleviate the guilt of a man who killed an animal; action was regarded as condemnable and contemptible.

When kindergarten children attempted to evaluate moral actions as they were depicted in the fables, very few of them viewed them as ethical events. As the current research showed, the vast majority of kindergartners either viewed ethical events in a totally amoral way or judged them according to their aptness to produce a desirable situation, and not concerning their moral significance. In addition, they tended to focus on a specific aspect of the action in question, which most of the time would be entirely insignificant and incomprehensible to an adult audience.

Bearing in mind these results, it is not hard to comprehend why four to six-year-old children failed to detect the hidden morality of the fables. Even when the specific action that constitutes the narratives moral dilemma was isolated and speculate upon, kindergartners

failed to grasp its ethical dimension and perceived it in a way quite different than that intended by the fabulist.

Children's ability to detect the moral point of the fable is of paramount importance, as it justifies the stories' position in education throughout the ages as they contributing to children's moral development. Unfortunately, the current research, at least concerning kindergartners, does not confirm the commonly held idea of fables as helping to accelerate children's moral edification. Subjects four to six-years-old were shown unable to comprehend the stories' general moral and its application to their own environment.

Thus, in regard to the fables' general moral and its application to children, kindergartners stated immature and unsophisticated epimythia. They offered retellings of fable episodes under a 'should' cloak, awkward transformations of story events to real-life conditions, their own wishes disguised as ethical demands, overgeneralized statements, which could fit into every situation, and exhortations they normally hear from their parents or teachers which, though valid and important, had not the slightest connection with the fables in question.

Another characteristic reaction of kindergartners, when they were encouraged to find the fable's moral, general or specific, was their centering on specific events and agents. Children did not take into account the whole narrative in order to define its morality, but concentrated on its first eye-catching detail. More specifically, they expressed

approval or disapproval of certain events, suggested means of protection for the defenceless victims of stories and through a process of identification, and defined the proper behaviour of or towards the protagonists of the fables.

If we bear in mind children's desire to respond to all questions addressed to them and the egocentric mentality that characterizes the preoperational stage of development, their tendency to focus on specific details when dealing with a general issue, and to explain the whole topic by isolating limited aspects of it and commenting on them in a very idiosyncratic way, is easily comprehended and explained.

In other cases kindergartners proposed epimythia that were comments on the literal level of the story, suggestions of punishment, evaluations of the protagonists' personality, judgments on the episodes described or explanations of parts of the concrete narration.

In general, very few of the kindergarten subjects managed to identify the correct or even a minor ethical idea presented by the fables. Kindergartners' performance in detecting the hidden morality of the aesopic fables was very poor, and preschoolers revealed their inability to grasp it.

Much more difficult than detecting fable's general epimythium was the application of it to their own living conditions. The vast majority of children scored lower at the second task and found it more complicated, since the

moral's application presupposed knowledge of the general moral followed by its adaptation to certain conditions.

It was surprising and unexpected, though not inexplicable, that kindergartners found it more difficult to interpret the attached epimythium than to detect it by themselves. The data showed that when four to six-year-old children were asked to explain the already stated epimythium, their favourite tactics were to focus either on the concrete story or on specific concrete words and phrases of the epimythium. No kindergartner scored better at interpretation of the stated epimythium than at detection of the fables' general moral. No kindergartner seemed to take any hints from the attached moral, explicitly expressed, in order to modify his conception of the stories general moral.

Apart from the epimythium, the last sentence of the fable, which reveals the story's hidden meaning in a general and abstract way, also proved highly complicated for children. Kindergartners could not recall it and, if they were reminded of it, they failed to interpret its meaning.

In all cases that the moral of the fable was presented explicitly in any of the selected ways (epimythium, last direct sentence, promythium, three alternative choices) children of kindergarten age were not helped by these means to detect it. The data suggested that kindergartners had more chances to identify the hidden morality of the story if it was not displayed than when it was displayed in a hidden or abstract manner.

Although it seems doubtful that someone who can succeed in a task without a help can not do the same if he is assisted, the kind of 'aid' provided to children was not conceived as that by them. Even when kindergartners pointed to the moral truth of the fable, both in general or in the specific terms of their own life, most of the time they referred to concrete situations. If the concrete story did not lead them to a generalized ethical concept, the attachment of a highly abstract and notably general statement, instead of helping, puzzled them so much that they were put off from the whole endeavour.

In regard to the different types of aesopic fables and their facilitation or hindrance of kindergartners' grasping their morals, the research proved that children aged four to six-year-old had great difficulties in understanding stories based on puns and in comprehending the inner truth of amusing tales. By contrast, they scored higher at finding the moral truth of aetiological and genuine fables. The pattern of wrong behaviour-punishment received, on which both types of fables are clearly based, proved much easier for children than subtle language games resulting in humorous situations.

Moreover, in the fable 'The wolf and the lamb', which described an ethically condemnable event, children dodged the description of an immoral situation, forcing out of it morals for proper behaviour. In a similar way, they managed to produce moral lessons for the no-point story of 'The

pigeon and the fox', revealing their tendency to find ethical causes in every event of life, even in those that cannot be explained in moral terms.

In sharp contrast with kindergarten children, pupils aged ten to twelve-year-old did not respond to the detection of fables' moral task with affirmative, pragmatic sentences in a moral disguise or after focusing on specific actions or agents of the narration. The most primitive answers that fifth and sixth graders gave in regard to the detection of the concealed fable truth were comments on the narration at a literal and concrete level. Those replies were totally devoid of any veneer of an admonitory character, and were rather their reaction to the superficial tale than an attempt at endowing the story with a moral. So, older pupils expressed their own evaluations of the story agents and specific actions, or gave summaries of the narrations, or offered explanations of obscure events.

Fifth and sixth graders' confinement to the very surface of the aesopic narration displays a degree of inability in the transmission of the concrete to the abstract and from the literal to the figurative. But their persistence in not forcing a 'should' out of an 'is' statement, or in isolating the first element that attracted their attention and stretching it to the shape of a general ethical axiom, reveals a better understanding of the concept 'story moral' than that of kindergartners'.

In general, fifth and sixth graders scored relatively high. In spite of the fact that, in many cases, they were not able to express the correct epimythium, by pointing to minor ideas they showed their familiarity with the process of extracting a moral from a figurative narration. They proved that they had already acquired the skill of detecting an epimythium, even in those cases that they could not find the correct one.

If we consider the fact that fables, like proverbs and proverbial expressions, gain their real significance not as isolated examples but within the context of speech, then we can realize that a great number of those ten to twelve-year-olds who, instead of pointing to the correct moral, stated a plausible minor idea, would, in a fable within the proper context, have been able to reveal its hidden truth.

In regard to animals' conventional character in literature older children, ten to twelve-years-old, had already conceived the stereotyped character of most of the animals, and even when they failed to give a correct answer, they made serious attempts to do so. Younger children, four to six-year-old, on the other hand, came out mainly with general evaluations of the good/bad type, since it is enough for them to discern the chaotic universe they live in into two divisions; one risky, that must be avoided, and a safe one that can be approached. All the animals that were dangerous to others were labelled as bad, while the mass of

defenceless victims was regarded as good. The children applied one single criterion and the whole world was neatly polarized into `goodies` and `baddies`.

As this research has shown, kindergartners tend to favour stories with animal protagonists, which they deprive of the charisma of talking in a human like way. Animals are not thought to possess the faculty of language, but that does not make them inferior to man, at least at an ethical level. Human and not-human creatures obey the same moral laws and are equally responsible for transgressions of them. The only type of animism, or better, personification, that kindergarten children seem to believe in is one that can be labelled as moral personification. According to this, physical law gains an entirely ethical dimension and, although human and non-humans differ in nature, they remain equal before the moral, law obeying exactly the same ethical canons.

In regard to the supernatural agents of the aesopic tales, kindergartners showed, apart from an obvious misconception of the nature of divinity, an amazing compliance with the conventions set by the story, and proved themselves able to understand and respect the principles on which the narration is based. The gods who appear in fables are viewed within the framework of the story and, even if the children's beliefs about God are different in real life conditions, they treat gods in their tales as the story line requires.

Fables, although they abound with cruel events, such as deaths, deceits and a great amount of cruelty, do not scare children because they locate these actions in a remote time and place. In addition, the animal nature of the story protagonists and their actions, which differ radically from those of the real world, let the child feel safe in his own environment when he listens to them. The forest becomes for him a source of excitement and adventure, and not a source of real perils.

At a young age children are more concerned about being deprived of the love and acceptance of their parents, topics never touched on by fables, since they never depict clashes between family members. Children do not see any similarity between their own position and that of a deer that tries to save himself from the lion that wants to devour it.

Moreover, in fables cruelty is depicted without any realistic detail, but is referred to only very briefly. Nobody cries or bleeds, and the very action of death is normally communicated by the phrased "and x devoured z", which is the most painless way of presenting the loss of a life. The manner of presentation is mainly informative, lacking any affectionate and emotional dimension.

Perhaps the introduction of the story agents by reference to their species and not by a distinct name makes them more impersonal and deprives heroes of a discrete identity. Even the definitiveness of death is hardly conceivable to kindergartners, as the same agent recurs in

many stories, in spite of the fact that in some of them it is devoured by the villain of the narrative. It has not yet been examined whether the child, as he moves from one story to the other, is fully aware of the fact that the deer, which was the victim of the lion in the homonymous fable, is a totally different creature from the main protagonist of 'The blind deer'. Also, protagonists' presentation as one dimensional figures, without a well defined personality, also contributes to the lack of individuality they suffer and the consequent lack of pain at their loss.

The topic of fear, as it is treated in children's books is a highly complex and multilateral phenomenon, so it was impossible for a research dealing with every aspect of fables' reception to isolate and study it in any depth. The current investigation was concerned only to show that the fables themselves, in spite of the fact that they describe cruel aspects of life, do not frighten those children who have a normal emotional life. Maybe the remote place and time of the story setting, or the animal protagonist, or perhaps the acknowledgement by kindergartners that the whole narration is just a story, creates a safe distance between listeners and plot and protects them from feeling fear and panic. The frightening effects of books are not determined by the book itself, but are much more connected with the emotional disposition and experiences of the child. Different individuals are sensitive to different situations,

and their emotional life and background are more responsible for their reactions than the stimulus itself.

In regard to the topic of happy ending of stories and children's disposition towards it, the current research showed that kindergartners exert a clear preference to endings that coincide with their belief in a just world. If the story had described a battle between evil and kind personages, kindergartners expect the narration to end with the triumph of the good hero and the punishment of the villain. Children tend to prefer endings that restore the ethical order of the world as they comprehend it.

It was also observed that kindergartners favoured endings in accordance with an angelic picture of life. They would like to see the villain step back from his evil plans, even in the concluding sentence of the story, and creating a harmonious relationship with his potential victims. A story-book world, without victimizers and unjustifiably cruel persons, seems to be the children's ideal as it was revealed by this study.

Although children can bear cruel actions in a story they, as the current research has revealed, do not like unjustified violence occurring towards the end of the narration. It is acceptable for them to see the villain suffer, but the undeserved pain of the innocent hero at the very ending of the story raises children's objections. But when something like this takes place in the story, as it happens very often with fables which conclude with the

downfall of the kind hero, kindergartners are willing to respect the way the story proceeds and finishes. The narration, viewed as an entire unit, enjoys its independent existence and cannot be mutilated, even if it is not pleasing and agreeable.

Another issue that was investigated by this study was the conception of death in regard to the aesopic stories. It became obvious that kindergartners talk about death in terms of life, and view it rather as a different way of living than as an abrupt halt to every activity. When they were asked to locate the dead person they stuck to the lifeless body and mentioned funerals, cemeteries, and beasts' bellies, if the death was caused from devouring. Trips to distance places, either in earth or in heaven, and return to previous activities were also referred to. In all those places the dead persons carried on their normal lives in slightly different conditions from formerly. Some of them were ready to come again to life, working out various plans, or had thoughts about their past, family or even their future.

For most kindergartners death is a reversible situation that cannot cause permanent immobility or dysfunctioning of the body and, although it is definitely a sad event, that most of the time creates separation, it remains a different way of living and not an irreversible situation. But in contrast with previous researches, this experiment showed that a considerable number of children aged from four to

six-years had already moved towards a more sophisticated conception of death, and stressed the inability of the dead person to perform any action or thought.

Another topic examined by this study was children's criteria of identification with story agents. Kindergartners, beyond any doubt, preferred to identify with the personage they considered the kindest hero in the narration. They did not pay any attention to whether his role is a chief or a subordinate one, but mainly were concerned about the qualities of his personality.

Another criterion they used in order to identify with a story agent, but to a much lesser degree than kindness, was the significance of the part he took in the story. Inspiring personages that performed stimulating and exciting actions were chosen to be identified with. Moreover, the hero's superiority, in comparison with all the other characters, and his final victory, were also taken into account by kindergartners. Very few of them employed the story hero's similarity with their own personalities as a requirement for identification, while some other kindergartners chose to identify with a person they do not really like or appreciate, but who had the ability to give a different route to the story plot.

In general, the hero's death during the narration did not deter children from identifying with him. Even when they were reminded of the hero's death, and consequently of their own death, the vast majority of them did not shift to

another less amiable but more hero. Apart from the children who had already conceived the untrue nature of the story and consequently the lack of any danger for them, there were other children who stuck to their favourite personage but wanted to try to act out the situation in order to reverse his fate.

Summing up the results obtained by the current research, we can support the view that aesopic fables' inclusion in the kindergarten curriculum is justified by four to six-year-old children's preference for stories employing animal characters which interact with one another in polar relationships. It was also proved that young children of kindergarten age were not affected negatively by the rather harsh morality of the fables, which seemed to accord with children's own moral views.

On the other hand, the long standing idea that fables promote the moral edification of kindergartners was not proved. Four to six-year-old children exhibited a clear inability to grasp the moral truth of fables by proceeding from the concrete literal level to a deeper, abstract one. They were always confined to the concrete story, and were not able to see anything more than animals interacting with one another. Young children, due to their limited powers of abstraction, had great difficulty in identifying actions at the appropriate level of generality. Apart from kindergartners' difficulties in seeing simultaneously the

two levels of the aesopic tales, the morally advanced ethical ideas - e.g. flattery - conveyed by some fables were also a barrier inhibiting comprehension.

The fact that kindergartners were unable to detect the conveyed moral of the fables was also obvious from their inability to comprehend the real interpersonal relationships described in stories and leading to their hidden morality. Four to six-year-old children could not disclose the actors' ultimate motives or the consequences of their deeds.

By contrast, kindergartners revealed that, in dealing with a story, they were strongly influenced by their previous life experience, the rules of their own lives, and the way the story develops. They tended to focus every time on a different detail ignoring the whole story and, in general, they showed clear characteristics of the preoperational thought stage. Children were unable to differentiate their knowledge from that obtained by the protagonists of the fables, and they could not distinguish between their own point of view and that of the story agents. In addition, preschoolers revealed a clear preference for ethical explanations, even at the expense of reality, and favoured a conception of the world with clear cut boundaries.

All these characteristics of kindergartners' thought are in agreement with Piaget's developmental schema. According to Piaget, children at the stage of preoperational thought are bound to follow a centration in their

observations and judgements, and are not able to take into account more than one dimension at time. Their tendency to shift from one detail to the other, their persistence in flat stereotyped characters, their obvious preference for a well-defined world in which everyone has his own place, and their view of causality as a one-way relation are characteristics of preoperational thought.

Children brought to ~~the~~ the literary text their previous knowledge and experience. When they attempted to understand it, they called upon their own experience and interpreted the literary work being helped by the text itself and their own personality. The relationship between them and literature was not one-way, but the child reader relied, more or less, on the text in order to make his own contribution to it. Thus, when four to six-year-old children listen to fables they enriched them with facts and situations from their own lives and view them from their own experiences. Their knowledge of the universe, or of the way the particular genre functions, their notions about the ethical order of the world, and their concepts of good or bad, were sometimes superimposed to the text.

Fable, although it sounds like the simple folk tale, bears more resemblance to proverbs and parables, and aims, just like them, at making abstract ideas sufficiently striking or objective so as to be understandable and memorable. Fable consists of a brief sermon on morality, and has been used as a peg on which to hang an ethical lesson or

a piece of advice. But, because of this, it became the least understandable of all story types and remained inconceivable for kindergartners at a deeper level. Only later on, at the age of ten, eleven, twelve, when children are old enough to grasp abstract ethical values, a good aesopic collection can be instructive and conducive to morality. At the ages of four to six, on the contrary, aesopic tales are approached by children as merely enjoyable and entertaining short stories, since kindergartners lack the ability to understand the conveyed abstract ideas.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, D. M.; & Sutton-Smith, B. (1977). `The Development of the Trickster in Children's Narrative`. Journal of American Folklore, 90, 29-47.
- Adamson, J. W. (Ed.) (1922). The Educational Writings of John Locke. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Addison, J., The Spectator. No 183, 3: 45-48.
- Addison, J., The Spectator. No 512, 4: 31-33.
- Adler, F. (1912). The Moral Instruction of Children. New York: D. Appleton.
- Aiken, J. (1982). The Way to Write for Children. London: Elm Tree Books.
- Alberghene, J. M. (1988). `Humor in Children's Literature`. Journal of Children in Contemporary Society, 20, 223-245.
- Allen, J. (1988). `Promoting Preschoolers' Moral Reasoning`. Early Child Development and Care. 33, 171-180.
- Alston, W. P. (1964). Philosophy of Language. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Ames, L. B. (1966). `Children's Stories`. Genetic Psychology Monographs, 73, 337-396.
- Anderson, R. (Ed.) (1795). The Works of the British Poets. London.
- Anthony, S. (1940). The Child's Discovery of Death. A Study in Child Psychology. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.
- Applebee, A. N. (1973). The Spectator Role: Theoretical and Developmental Studies of Ideas about and Responses to Literature with Special Reference to Four Age Levels. Phd thesis. London Universtiy.
- Applebee, A. N. (1978). The Child's Concept of Story. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Arbuthnot, M. H. (1947). Children and Books. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company.

Archer, R. L. (Ed.) (1916). Rousseau on Education. London: Edward Arnold.

Archibald H. T. (1912). The Fable as a Stylistic Text in Classical Greek Literature. Baltimore: J. H. Furst Company.

Armstrong, M. A. S. (1954). 'Children's Responses to Animal and Human Figures in Thematic Pictures'. Journal of Consulting Psychology, 18, 67-70.

Arnold, A. (1986). 'Big Bad Wolf'. Children's Literature in Education, 17, no 2, 101-111.

Arnold, A. (1988). 'The Pig-Pet, Pork or Sacrifice?'. Children's Literature in Education, 19, 80-85.

Ault, R. L. (1977). Children's Cognitive Development. New York: Oxford University Press.

Baker, A.; & Greene, E. (1977). Storytelling: Art and Technique. New York, London: R. R. Bowker Company.

Ball, A. (1959). 'Swift and the Animal Myth'. Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, 48, 239-248.

Barley, N. (1972). 'A Structural Approach to the Proverb and Maxim'. Proverbium, 20, 737-750.

Barrett, P. C.; & Barrett, G. V. (1966). 'Enjoyment of Stories in Terms of Role Identification'. Perceptual and Motor Skills, 23, 1164.

Bateman, R. (1967). 'Children and Humorous Literature'. School Librarian, 15, 153-161.

Batteux, C. (1764). Principes de la Litterature. Paris.

Baudoin, J. (1669). Les Fables d' Esope Phrygien. Brussels.

Baumrid, D. (1978). 'A Dialectical Materialist's Perspective on Knowing Social Reality'. In W. Damon (Ed.) Moral Development. San Francisco, Washington, London: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Beavis, M. A. (1990). `Parable and Fable`. The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 52, 473-498.

Bell, S.; & Ledford, T. (1978). `The Effects of Sociodrama on the Behaviors and Attitudes of Elementary School Boys`. Journal of Group Psychotherapy Psychodrama and Sociometry, 31, 117-135.

Bentley, R. (1817). Dissertations. London: G. Auld.

Benton, M.; & Fox, G. (1985). Teaching Literature. Nine to Fourteen. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Berndt, T. J.; & Berndt, E. G. (1975). `Children's Use of Motives and Intentionality in Person Perception and Moral Judgment`. Child Development, 46, 904-912.

Best, T. (1983). Reynard the Fox. Boston: Twayne Publishers.

Bettelheim, B. (1976). The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales. London: Thames and Hudson.

Biersdorf, K. R.; & Marcuse, F. L. (1953). `Responses of Children to Human and to Animal Pictures`. Journal of Projective Techniques, 17, 455-459.

Binder, L. (1970). `Humour in Children's Literature`. Bookbird, 8, 8-14.

Birch, C. M. (1955). Traditions of the Life of Aesop. Phd thesis. St. Louis Missouri Washington University.

Black J. B.; & Wilensky, R. (1979). `An Evaluation of Story Grammars`. Cognitive Science, 3, 213-229.

Blackham, H. J. (1985). The Fable as Literature. London: The Athlone Press.

Blount, M. (1974). Animal Land. The Creatures of Children's Fiction. London: Hutchinson & Co.

Boas, G. (1933). The Happy Beast. In French Thought of the Seventeenth Century. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press.

Bowd, A. D. (1983). `Children's Fear of Animals`. Journal of Genetic Psychology, 142, 313-314.

Bower, G. H. (1978). `Experiments on Story Comprehension and Recall`. Discourse Processes, 1, 211-231.

Boyd, N. A.; & Mandler, G. (1955). `Children's Responses to Human and Animal Stories and Pictures`. Journal of Consulting Psychology, 19, 337-396.

Boyle, C. (1699). Dr Bentley's Dissertation on the Epistles of Phalaris and the Fables of Aesop Examin'd. London: The Bennes.

Brackett, C. W. (1934). Laughing and Crying of Preschool Children. New York: Teachers College Press.

Brewer, W. F.; & Lichtenstein E. H. (1982). `Stories are to Entertain: A Structural-Affect Theory of Stories`. Journal of Pragmatics, 6, 473-486.

Brinsley, J. (1624). Esops Fables. London.

Brown, A. (1975). `Recognition, Reconstruction, and Recall of Narrative Sequences by Preoperational Children`. Child Development, 46, 156-166.

Buchanan, J.; & Thompson, S. (1973). `A Quantitative Methodology to Examine the Development of Moral Judgment`. Child Development, 44, 186-189.

Bull, N. J. (1969). Moral Judgement from Childhood to Adolescence. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Bush, G. (1965). The Fable in the English Periodical, 1660-1800. Phd thesis. St. John's University.

Bush, J. (1984). `Fables and Illustration`. Children's Literature Association Quarterly, 9, no 2, 70-72.

Butler, D. (1980). Babies Need Books. London: The Bodley Head.

Butler, D. (1986). Five to Eight. London: The Bodley Head.

Calvet, J. (1934). Manuel Illustré de l' Histoire de la Littérature Française. 8th Edition. Paris: de Gigord.

Campbell, A. (1972). `Stories About Dogs: A Critical Survey`. The School Librarian, 20, 107-112.

Cantor, J. R.; & Zillmann, D. (1973). `Resentment toward Victimized Protagonists and Severity of Misfortunes they Suffer as Factors in Humor Appreciation`. Journal of Experimental Research in Personality, 6, 321-329.

Cappa, D. (1958). `Kindergarten Children's Spontaneous Responses to Storybooks Read by Teachers`. Journal of Educational Research, 52, 75.

Carnes, P. (1983). `Traditional Expectations in the Modern Fable`. Neohelikon, 10, no 2, 203-216.

Carnes, P. (1988) (Ed.). Proverbia in Fabula. Essays on the Relationship of the Proverb and the Fable. Bern: Lang.

Cass, J. E. (1967). Literature and the Young Child. London: Longmans.

Cather, K. D. (1935). Education by Story-Telling. London, Bombay, Sydney: George G. Harrap & Co Ltd.

Chambers, A. (1984). Introducing Books to Children. 2nd Edition. London: Heinemann Educational Books.

Chambers, D. W. (1971). Children's Literature in the Curriculum. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Chambry E. (Ed.) (1960). Esope Fables. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Chapman, A. J.; & Foot, H. C. (Ed.) (1976). Humour and Laughter: Theory, Research and Applications. London: John Wiley & Sons.

Child, I. L.; Storm, T.; & Veroff, J. (1958). `Achievement Themes in Folk Tales Related to Socialization Practice`. In John W. Atkinson (Ed.), Motives in Fantasy, Action, and Society (pp. 479-494). New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc.

Christenberry, M. A.; & Wyckoff, D. (1979). From Aesop to Charlie Brown: Cross-cultural Values in Traditional Literature. Paper presented at the 1979 Study Conference Association for Childhood Educational International. St. Louis, Missouri.

Chukovskiy, K. (1963). From two to five. Translated and Edited by Miriam Morton. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Clark, G. (1976). 'Henryson and Aesop: The Fable Transformed'. ELH, 43, 1-18.

Cohen, I. M. (1961). A History of Western Literature. London: Cassell & Company.

Colwell, E. H. (1957). 'Of Mice and Men'. The Junior Bookshelf, 21, 180-186.

Comenius, J. A. (1896; 1910). The Great Didactic. Translated by M. W. Keatinge. First publication 1896. London: Black.

Comenius, J. A. (1956). The School of Infancy. First publication 1858. New York: The University of North Carolina Press.

Coody, B. (1983). Using Literature with Young Children. 3rd Edition. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers.

Cook, E. (1976). The Ordinary and the Fabulous. An Introduction to Myths, Legends, and Fairy Tales. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Costanzo, P. R.; Coie J. D.; Grumet J. F.; & Farnill, D. A. (1973). 'A Reexamination of the Effects of Intent and Consequences of Children's Moral Judgments'. Child Development, 44, 154-161.

Crago M.; & Crago H. (1983). Prelude to Literacy. A Preschool Child's Encounter with Picture and Story. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.

Croxall E. (1724). Fables of Aesop, and Others; Newly Done into English. 2nd Edition. London: J. Tonson and T. Watts.

Cullinan, B. E. (1981). Literature and the Child. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Daly, L. W. (1961). Aesop without Morals. New York: Thomas Yoseloff.

Damon, W. (Ed.) (1978). Moral Development. San Francisco, Washington, London: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Daniel, S. (1982). `Political and Philosophical Uses of Fables in Eighteenth-Century England`. The Eighteenth Century, 23, 151-171.

Darley, J. M. ; Klosson, E. C.; & Zanna, M. P. (1978). `Intentions and Their Contexts in the Moral Judgments of Children and Adults`. Child Development, 49, 66-74.

Darley, J. M.; & Zanna, M. P. (1982). `Making Moral Judgments`. American Scientist, 70, 515-521.

Darton, F. J. H. (1932). Children's Books in England. Five Centuries of Social Life. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Darton, F. J. H. (1982). Children's Books in England. 3rd edition. Revised by Brian Alderson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DePalma, D. J.; & Foley, J. M. (Eds) (1975). Moral Development. Current Theory and Research. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Descartes R. (1948). Discours de La Methode. First Publication 1937. Leyde: Jan Maire.

Diehl, E. (1949). Anthologia Lyrica Graeca. 3rd Edition. Lipsiae: B.G. Teubneri.

Diel, P. (1966). Le symbolisme dans la Mythologie Grecque. Paris: Payot.

Ding, G. F.; & Jersild, A. T. (1932). `A Study of the Laughing and Smiling of Preschool Children`. Journal of Genetic Psychology, 40, 452-472.

Dodsley, R. (1965). An Essay on Fable. First publication 1764. Los Angeles: University of California.

Dortman, M. H. (1988). A Model for Understanding the Points of Stories: Evidence from Adult and Child Readers. Phd thesis. University of Illinois.

Dover, K. J. (1974). Greek Popular Morality. In the Time of Plato and Aristotle. Oxford: B. Blackwell.

Dryden, J. (1700). Fables Ancient and Modern. London.

Dubitsky, T. M.; Harris, R. J.; Sanders, L. K.; Betzen, R. J.; & Bunton, R. L. (1982). 'The Effects of Discourse Force on the Comprehension of Fables, Parables, and Folktales'. Bulletin of Psychonomic Society, 19, 127-130.

Durkin, D. (1959). 'Children's Concept of Justice: A Further Comparison with the Piaget Data'. Journal of Educational Research, 52, 252-257.

Duska, R.; & Whelan, M. (1977). Moral Development. A Guide to Piaget and Kohlberg. New York: Gill and MacMillan.

Eames, M. (1961). 'John Ogilby and his Aesop'. Bulletin of the New York Public Library, LXV, 73-88.

Egoff, S. A. (1981). Thursday's Child. Chicago: American Library Association.

Egoff, S.; Stubbs, G. T.; & Ashley, L. F. (Eds) (1980). Only Connect. Reading on Children's Literature. 2nd Edition. Toronto, New York: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, A. (1968). A History of Children's Reading and Literature. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Elyot, T. (1953). Early Tudor Poetry and Prose. Edited by Habel et al. New York: Appelton-Century-Crofts.

Fabre, J. H. (1937). Social Life in the Insect World. Translated into English by Bernard Miall. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Falkowitz, R. S. (1984). 'Discrimination and Condensation of Sacred Categories: The Fable in Early Mesopotamian Literature'. In Reverdin, O; & Grange, B. (Eds), La Fable (pp. 1-32). Geneve: Fondation Hardt.

Farnill, D. (1974). 'The Effects of Social-Judgment Set on Children's Use of Intent Information'. Journal of Personality, 42, 276-289.

Favat, A. F. (1977). Child and Tale: The Origins of Interest. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English.

Fein, G. G. (1981). 'Pretend Play in Childhood: An Integrative Review'. Child Development, 52, 1095-1118.

Fisher, B. F. (1987). A History of the Use of Aesop's Fables as a School Text from the Classical Era through the Nineteenth Century. Phd thesis. Indiana University.

Fisher, M. (1970). 'Is Fiction Educational'. Children's Literature in Education, 1, 11-21.

Fisher, M. (1979). The Efficiency of Fables in Developing Concepts of Morality in Mentally Handicapped Youth. Paper presented at the XVII Interamerican Congress of Psychology. Lima, Peru.

Flapan, D. (1968). Children's Understanding of Social Interaction. New York: Teachers College Press.

Fleischman, S. (1976). 'Laughter and Children's Literature'. The Horn Book Magazine, 52, 465-470.

Fletcher S. S.; & Welrom J. (1928). Froebel's Chief Writings on Education. New York: Longmans.

Formanek, R. (1974). 'When Children Ask About Death'. The Elementary School Journal, 75, 92-97.

Fowel R. (Ed.) (1973). Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Fox, D. (1962). 'Henryson's Fables'. ELH, 29, 337-356.

Fox, G.; Hammond, G; & Jones, T. (Eds) (1976). Writers, Critics, and Children. New York: Agathon Press.

Freedle, R. O. (Ed) (1979). New Directions in Discourse Processing. Vol. II. New Jersey: ABLEX Publishing Corporation.

Freidson, E. (1953). 'Adult Discount: An Aspect of Children's Changing Taste'. Child Development, 24, 39-49.

Frye, N. (1963). Fables of Identity. Studies in Poetic Mythology. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc.

Frye, N. (1971). The Educated Imagination. London: Indiana University Press.

Furetiere, A. (1671). Fables morales at nouvelles. Paris.

Gambell, T. J. (1981). `Simile and Metaphor Production in Children's Oral Language`. Educational Research Quarterly, 6, 17-21.

Gardner, J. (1977). On Moral Fiction. New York: Basic Books.

Glazer, J. I. (1986). Literature for Young Children. 2nd Edition. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company.

Glazer, J. I.; & Williams, G. (1979). Introduction to Children's Literature. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Gleim, J. W. (1779). Samtliche Schriften. Reutlingen.

Godwin W. (1805). Fables, Ancient and Modern. Adapted for the Use of Children. 2nd Edition. London: T. Hodgkings.

Goetz, G. (1892). Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum, III. Lipsiae: Teubner.

Goldman, R. (1964). Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Goldman, S. R.; Reyes, M.; & Varnhagen, C. K. (1984). `Understanding Fables in First and Second Languages`. NABE Journal, 8, 35-66.

Gordon, A. K.; & Klass, D. (1979). They Need to Know. How to Teach Children about Death. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Gordon, E. I. (1960). `A New Look at the Wisdom of Sumer and Akkad`. Bibliotheca Orientalis, XVII, 122-152.

Gottlieb, R. (1983). `Jean de La Fontaine and Children`. The Horn Book Magazine, 59, 25-32.

Graesser, A. C.; Robertson, S. P.; & Anderson, P. A. (1981). `Incorporating Inferences in Narrative Representations: A Study of How and Why`. Cognitive Psychology, 13, 1-26.

Graham, D. (1972). Moral Learning and Development. London: B. T. Bastford LTD.

Gregor, I.; & Nicholas, B. (1962). The Moral and the Story. London: Faber and Faber.

Grueneich, R. (1982). `Issues in the Developmental Study of How Children Use Intention and Consequence Information to Make Moral Evaluations`. Child Development, 53, 29-43.

Grueneich, R. (1982). `The Development of Children's Integration Rules for Making Moral Judgments`. Child Development, 53, 887-894.

Guiton, M. (1961). La Fontaine Poet and Counterpoet. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Gupta, R. D. (1975). `Indian Parables of the Fox Story`. In Rambauts, E; & Welkenhuysen, A. (Eds), Aspects of the Medieval Animal Epic, (pp. 241-249). Leuven: Leuven University Press.

Gutkin, D. C. (1972). `The Effect of Systematic Story Changes on Intentionality in Children's Moral Judgments`. Child Development, 43, 187-195.

Hadzopoulou-Caravia, L. (1986). `Instructive Animals in Greek Children's Literature`. In F. Butler; & R. Rotert (Eds), Triumphs of the Spirit in Children's Literature (pp. 164-170). Hamden: Library Professional Publications.

Hagman, E. R. (1932). `A Study of Fears of Children of Pre-School Age`. Journal of Experimental Education, 1, 110-130.

Hale, D. G. (1972). `Aesop in Renaissance England`. Library, 27, 116-125.

Handford, S. A. (Ed) (1974). Fables of Aesop. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Hannabuss, S. (1981). `Fear and Violence in Books for Children and Young People`. The School Librarian, 29, 196-205.

Hannabuss, S. (1987). `Metaphors, Morality and Children's Books`. The Use of English, 38, 51-58.

Hansson, G. (1973). `Some Types of Research on Response to Literature`. Research in the Teaching of English, 7, 260-284.

Hasbargen, A. (1982). `Perceptions of Fairy Tales: Developmental or Distasteful`. Journal of the Association for the Study of Perception, 17, 19-27.

Hausrath A. (Ed.) (1940). Corpus Fabularum Aesopicarum. Lipsiae: B. G. Tenbneri.

Havelock, E. A. (1978). The Greek Concept of Justice. From its Shadow in Homer to its Substance in Plato. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press.

Havens, R. M.; & Andrus, R. (1930). 'Desirable Literature for Children of Kindergarten Age'. Journal of Genetic Psychology, 36, 390-412.

Haviland, V. (1973). Children and Literature. Views and Reviews. London: The Bodley Head Ltd.

Hawkins, J.; Pea, R. D.; Glick, J.; & Scribner, S. (1984). 'Merds that Laugh Don't Like Mushrooms': Evidence for Deductive Reasoning by Preschoolers'. Developmental Psychology, 20, 584-594.

Hawkworth, J. The Adventurer. No 18, 1: 149-159.

Hazard, P. (1947). Books Children and Men. Translated by Marguerite Mitchell. 3rd Edition. Boston: The Horn Book, Inc.

Heeks, P. (1981). Choosing and Using Books in the First School. London: Macmillan Education.

Heider, F. (1958). The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations. New York: Wiley.

Henderson, A. (1981). 'Animal Fables as Vehicles of Social Protest and Satire: Twelfth Century to Henryson'. In Goossens, J.; & Sodmann, T. (Eds), Third International Beast Epic, Fable and Fabliau Colloquium. Munster, 1979 (pp. 160-173). Koln: Bohlau Verlag.

Henryson, R. (1987). The Moral Fables of Aesop. Translation, Introduction, Notes by G. D. Gopen. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Hildick, W. (1974). Children and Fiction. London: Evans.

Hirst, L. A.; & Slavik, C. (1988). Using Traditional Teaching to Expand Language Development and Critical Thinking. Paper presented at the Eighth Annual International Native American Language Issues Institute. Phoenix, Arizona.

Hodnett, E. (1979). Aesop in England. The Transmission of Motifs in Seventeenth-Century Illustrations of Aesop's Fables. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Hollindale, P. (1974). Choosing Books for Children. London: Paul Elek Ltd.

Honeck, R. P.; & Hoffman, R. (Eds) (1980). Cognition and Figurative Language. Hillsdale, New Jersey: LEA.

Hornbeak, K. (1938). 'Richardson's Aesop'. Smith College Studies in Modern Language. 19, 30-50.

Hornyansky, M. (1965). 'The Truth of Fables'. The Tamarack Review, 19-28.

Horwitz, R. H.; & Finn, J. B. (1975). 'Locke's Aesop's Fables'. The Locke Newsletter, 6, 71-88.

Huck, C. S. (1979). Children's Literature in the Elementary School. 3rd Edition. New York: Holt.

Hurlimann, B. (1968). Picture-Book World. Translated and Edited by Brian W. Alderson. London: Oxford University Press.

Imanoglu, O. E. (1975). 'Children's Awareness and Use of Intention Cues'. Child Development, 46, 39-45.

Jacobs, J. (1970). History of the Aesopic Fable. First publication 1889. New York: Burt Franklin.

Jalongo, M. R. (1985). 'Children's Literature: There's Some Sence to its Humor'. Childhood Education, 62, 109-114.

Jan, I. (1973). On Children's Literature. Translated from the French by Catherine Storr. London: Allen Lane.

Jauss, H. R. (1974). 'Levels of Identification of Hero and Audience'. Tranlated by Benjamin and Helga Benett. New Literary History, V, no 2, 283-318.

Johns, B. (1867). Books of Fiction for Children. Quarterly Review, 122, 55-89.

Johnson, D. F.; & Goldman, S. R. (1987). 'Children's Recognition and Use of Rules of Moral Conduct in Stories'. American Journal of Psychology, 100, 205-224.

Jones, A.; & Mulford, J. (Eds) (1971). Children Using Language. London: Oxford University Press.

Jones, A.; & Buttrely, J. (1970). Children and Stories. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Jordan, J. (1973). 'Young People: Victims of Realism in Books and in Life'. Wilson Library Bulletin, 48, 140-145.

Jose, P. E.; & Brewer, W. F. (1984). 'Development of Story Liking: Character Identification, Suspense, and Outcome Resolution'. Developmental Psychology, 20, 911-924.

Jung, C. G. (1970). Modern Man in Search of a Soul. London: Routledge & Kagan Paul.

Kagan, J. (1971). Understanding Children. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Kane, B. (1979). 'Children's Concept of Death'. The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 134, 141-153.

Kappas, K. H. (1967). 'A Developmental Analysis of Children's Responses to Humor'. Library Quarterly, 37, 67-77.

Karniol, R. (1980). 'A Conceptual Analysis of Immanent Justice Responses in Children'. Child Development, 51, 118-130.

Kay, W. (1970). Moral Development. London: George Allen & Unwin LTD.

Keil, F. C. (1986). 'Conceptual Domains and the Acquisition of Metaphor'. Cognitive Development, 1, 73-96.

Kennedy, D. A.; Spangler, S.; & Vanderwerf, M. A. (1987). 'Story Structures: The Fable'. Reading Teacher, 40, 575.

King, M. (1971). 'The Development of Some Intention Concepts in Young Children'. Child Development, 42, 1145-1152.

Kintsch, W. (1977). 'On Comprehending Stories'. In M. A. Just & P. A. Carpenter, Cognitive Processes in Comprehension (pp. 33-62). Hillsdale, N. J.: L. E. A.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (1973). 'Toward a Theory of Proverb Meaning'. Proverbium, 22, 821-827.

Kishler, T. C. (1959). The Satirical Moral Fable: A Study of an Augustan Genre with Particular Reference to Fielding. Phd thesis. University of Wisconsin.

Klein, A. (1985). 'Humor Comprehension and Humor Appreciation of Cognitively Oriented Humor: a Study of Kindergarten Children'. Child Study Journal, 15, 223-235.

Klein, N. (1975). 'More Realism for Children'. Top of the News, 31, 307-312.

Klein, N. (1977). 'Growing Up Human: The Case for Sexuality in Children's Books'. Children's Literature in Education, 8, 80-85.

Klingberg, G. (1957). 'The Distinction between Living and not Living among 7-10-Year-Old Children, with Some Remarks Concerning the So-Called Animism Controversy'. The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 90, 227-238.

Klingender, F. (1971). Animals in Art and Thought. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Knox, V. (1788). Winter Evenings. London: C. Dilly.

Kogan, N.; Connor, K.; Gross, A.; & Fava, D. (1980). Understanding Visual Metaphor: Developmental and Individual Differences. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 45 (Serial No. 183).

Kohlberg, L. (1964). 'Development of Moral Character and Moral Ideology'. In M. L. Hoffman & L. W. Hoffman (Eds), Review of Child Development Research (pp. 383-431). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Kohlberg, L. (1973). 'Moral Development and the New Social Studies'. Social Education, 369-375.

Kohlberg, L. (1984). The Psychology of Moral Development. The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages. Vol. II. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

- Koocher, G. P. (1973). `Childhood, Death, and Cognitive Development`. Developmental Psychology, 9, 369-375.
- Kovacs, R. S. (1950). The Aesopic Fable in Ancient Phetorical Theory and Practice. Phd thesis. University of Illinois.
- Kramer, S. N. (1956). From the Tablets of Sumer. Indian Hills, Colorado: The Falcon's Wing Press.
- Krogh, S. L.; & Lamme, L. L. (1985). `Children's Literature and Moral Development`. Young Children, 40, 48-51.
- Kueth, J. L. (1966). `Perpetuation of Specific Schemata in Literature for Children`. Psychological Reports, 18, 433-434.
- L' Estrange, Sir R. (1962). The Fables of Aesop and Other Eminent Mythologists, with Moral Reflections. London: Sare.
- La Fontaine, J. (1880). Fables. Paris: Garnier.
- Lamartine, de Alphonse (1931). Cours Familier de Litterature. Paris: Hatier.
- Lamartine, de Alphonse (1935). Preface des Meditations, Oeuvres. Paris: Librairie Larousse.
- Landwehr, J. (1963). Fable-Books Printed in the Low Countries. Introduction by H. De La Fontaine Verwey. Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf.
- Langfeldt, J. (1961). `The Educational and Moral Value of Folk and Fairy Tales`. The Junior Bookshelf, 25, 7-15.
- Laurence, M. J. P. (1957). `Animals and "Dressed Animals"`. The Junior Bookshelf, 21, 289-294.
- Le Bossu, Rene (1671), Traite du Poeme Epique. Paris.
- Leeson, R. (1977). Children's Books and Class Society. Past and Present. London: Children's Rights Workshop.
- Lehman, K. (1984). `Tolstoy's Fables: Tools for a Vision`. Children's Literature Association Quarterly, 9, 68-70.
- Leisher, J. (1984). `In Support of Fairy Tales for Language Instruction`. Unterrichtspraxis, 17, 352-354.

Lenaghan, R. T. (Ed.) (1967). Caxton's Aesop. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Lessing G. E. (1825). Fables and Epigrams; with Essays on Fables and Epigram. London: Hunt.

Lessing, G. E. (1773). Fables. Introduction, Translation by J. Richardson. York: C. Etherington.

Lewis, C. S. (1961). An Experiment in Criticism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lewis, J. E. (1988). The Voluble Body: Re-inventing the Neoclassical Fable. Phd thesis. Princeton University.

Lewis, M. M. (1969). Language and the Child. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research.

Leyburn, E. D. (1956). Satiric Allegory: Mirror of Man. London: Yale University Press.

Libby, M. N.; & Aries, E. (1989). 'Gender Differences in Preschool Children's Narrative Fantasy'. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 13, 293-306.

Lord, J. V. (Ed.) (Intro) (1989). Aesop's Fables. London: Jonathan Cape.

Lukens, R. J. (1982). A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature. 2nd Edition. Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company.

MacCulloch, J. A. (1932). Medieval Faith and Fable. London: G.G.Harrap.

Madeja, S. S. (Ed.) (1978). The Arts, Cognition and Basic Skills. Missouri: Cemrel.

Madeja, S. S. (Ed.) (1978). The Arts, Cognition and Basic Skills. Missouri: Cermel.

Maharg, R. A. (1984). 'The Modern Fable: James Thurber's Social Criticism'. Children's Literature Association Quarterly, 9, no 2, 72-79.

Mandler, J. M.; & Johnson, N. S. (1977). 'Remembrance of Things Parsed: Story Structure and Recall'. Cognitive Psychology, 9, no 1, 111-152.

- Manning, S. (1960). 'The Nun's Priest's Morality and the Mediaval Attitude Toward Fables'. Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 59, 403-416.
- Maranda, E. K.; & Maranda P. (1970). Structural Models in Folklore and Transformational Essays. The Hague: Mouton.
- Marshall, M. (1982). An Introduction to the World of Children's Books. Hants: Gower Publishing Company LTD.
- Martin, M. L. (Intro) (1984). The Fables of Marie de France. Birmingham, Alabama: Summa Publications.
- McDowell, M. (1973). 'Fiction for Children and Adults: Some Essential Differences'. Children's Literature in Education, 10, 48-63.
- McGhee, P. E. (1971). 'Cognitive Development and Children's Comprehension of Humor'. Child Development, 42, 123-138.
- McGhee, P. E. (1974). 'Moral Development and Children's Appreciation of Humor'. Developmental Psychology, 10, 514-525.
- McMurry, C. A. (1917). Special Method in Reading in the Grades. New York: Macmillan.
- Meek, M.; Warlow, A.; & Barton, G. (1977). The Cool Web. The Pattern of Children's Reading. London: The Bodley Head.
- Meier, G. F.; & Lange S. G. (1764). Der Gesellige: Eine moralische Wochenchrift. Halle.
- Meigs, C.; Eaton, A. T.; Nesbitt, E.; & Viguers, R. H. (1953). A Critical History of Children's Literature. New York: The MacMillan Company.
- Melear, J. D. (1973). 'Children's Conceptions of Death'. Journal of Genetic Psychology, 123, 359-360.
- Miller, P. (1985). 'Children's Reasoning about the Causes of Human Behavior'. Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 39, 343-362.
- Miller, R. C. (1989). 'The Problem of Evil and Religious Education'. Religious Education, 84, no 1, 5-15.

Miller, T. W.; and Veltkamp, L. J. (1986). 'Use of Fables in Clinical Assessment of Contested Child Custody'. Child Psychiatry and Human Development, 16, 274-284.

Miner, R. G. (1972). 'Aesop as Litmus: The Acid Test of Children's Literature'. Children's Literature, 1, 9-15.

Mirel, B. (1984). 'Tradition and the Individual Retelling'. Children's Literature Association Quarterly, 9, no 2, 63-66.

Mitchell, M. E. (1966). The Child's Attitude to Death. London: Barrie and Rockliff.

Moore, B. J. (1962). 'Facts and Fairies'. The School Librarian, 11, 251-257.

Moran, J. D.; & McCullers J. C. (1984). 'The Effects of Recency and Story Content on Children's Moral Judgments'. Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 38, 447-455.

Moran, J. D.; & O' Brien, G. (1983). 'The Development of Intention-based Moral Judgments in Three- and Four-year-old Children'. The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 143, 175-179.

Moss, A. (1984). Poetry and Fable. Studies in Mythological Narrative in Sixteenth-Century France. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Muir, P. (1954). English Children's Books. 1600 to 1900. London: Batsford LTD.

Nagy, M. (1948). 'The Child's Theories Concerning Death'. The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 73, 3-27.

Needler, H. (1991). 'The Animal Fable Among Other Medieval Literary Genres'. New Literary History, 22, 423-439.

Needler, Howard (Intro) (1982). Fables from Old French. Aesop's Beasts and Bumpkins. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Nelson, S. (1980). 'Factors Influencing Young Children's Use of Motives and Outcomes as Moral Criteria'. Child Development, 51, 823-829.

Nelson, S. (1982). 'Writing for a Real Audience'. Exercise Exchange, 26, no 2, 27-28.

Newbigging, T. (1972). Fables and Fabulists: Ancient and Modern. First publication 1895. New York: Books for Libraries Press.

Niblett, W. R. (1963). 'Some Problems in Moral Education Today'. In W. R. Niblett (Ed.) Moral Education in a Changing Society (pp. 13-30). London: Faber and Faber LTM.

Ninomiya, K. (1987). 'Development of the Judgments of Kindness in Children'. Japanese Psychological Research, 29, 94-98.

Nippold, M. A.; Martin, S. A.; & Erskine, B. J. (1988). 'Proverb Comprehension in Context: A Developmental Study with Children and Adolescents'. Journal of Speech and Hearing Research, 31, 19-28.

Noel, T. (1975). Theories of the Fable in the Eighteenth Century. New York: Columbia University Press.

Nojgaard, M. (1984). 'La Moralisation de la Fable: d'Esoppe a Romulus'. In Reverdin, O; & Grange, B. (Eds), La Fable, (pp. 225-252). Geneve: Fondation Hardt.

Nucci, L. (1984). 'Teaching Children Right from Wrong'. Teacher Education Quarterly, 11, 50-63.

Nucci, L. P.; & Turiel, E. (1978). 'Social Interactions and the Development of Social Concepts in Preschool Children'. Child Development, 49, 400-407.

Nummedal, S. G.; & Bass, S. C. (1976). 'Effects of the Salience of Intention and Consequence on Children's Moral Judgments'. Developmental Psychology, 12, 475-476.

Ogilby, J. (1965). The Fables of Aesop. Paraphras'd in Verse. Introduction by Earl Miner. Los Angeles: University of California.

Omanson, R. C.; Warren, W. H.; & Trabasso, T. (1978). 'Goals, Inferential Comprehension, and Recall of Stories by Children'. Discourse Processes, 1, 337-354.

Orbach, I.; Feshbach, S., Carlson, G., Glaubman, H.; & Gross, X. (1983). 'Attraction and Repulsion by Life and Death in Suicidal and in Normal Children'. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 51, 661-670.

Orbach, I.; Gross, Y.; Glaubman, H.; & Berman, D. (1985). `Children's Perception of Death in Humans and Animals as a Function of Age, Anxiety, and Cognitive Ability`. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines, 26, 453-463.

Ordal, C. C. (1983-1984). `Death as Seen in Books Suitable for Young Children`. Omega, 14, 249-277.

Owen, J. E. B. (1984). The Isopets: Their Sources, Originality and Their Contribution to Medieval Didactic Literature. Michigan: Univ. Microfilms International.

Paley, V. G. (1981). Wally's Stories. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Paris, S. G.; & Upton, L. R. (1976). `Children's Memory for Inferential Relationships in Prose`. Child Development, 47, 660-668.

Parr, S. R. (1982). The Moral of the Story. New York: Teachers College Press.

Pater, W. (1893). Plato and Platonism. London: McMillan.

Peevers, B. H.; & Second P. F. (1973). `Developmental Changes in Attribution of Descriptive Concepts to Persons`. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 27, 120-128.

Pellegrini, A. D. (1985). `Relations between Preschool Children's Symbolic Play and Literate Behavior`. In L. Galda & A. D. Pellegrini (Eds), Play, Language, and Stories: The Development of Children's Literate Behavior (pp. 79-97). New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Pellegrini, A. D.; & Galda, L. (1982). `The Effects of Thematic-fantasy Play Training on the Development of Children's Story Comprehension`. American Educational Research Journal, 19, 443-452.

Perez, S.; & Parker, W. (1985). `Using an Aesop Fable for a Lesson in Values`. In N. C. T. E. (Eds), Literature-News That Stays News (pp. 59-61). Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.

Perkins, A. (1984). `Introduction. The Five Hundredth Anniversary of Aesop in English`. Children's Literature Association Quarterly, 9, no 2, 60-62 and 72.

Perry, B. E. (1936). Studies in the Text. History of the Life and Fables of Aesop. Lancaster: Lancaster University Press.

Perry, B. E. (1940). 'The Origin of the Epimythium'. Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association, 71, 391-419.

Perry, B. E. (1952). Aesopica. Vol I. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press.

Perry, B. E. (1957). 'Babriana'. Classical Philology, 52, 16-23.

Perry, B. E. (1959). 'Fable'. Studium Generale, 12, 17-37.

Perry, B. E. (1962). 'Demetrius of Phalerum and the Aesopic Fables'. Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association, 93, 287-354.

Perry, B. E. (Ed.) (1965). Barbius and Pheadrus. Loeb Classical Library.

Peters, R. S. (1960). 'Freud's Theory of Moral Development in Relation to That of Piaget'. The British Journal of Educational Psychology, 30, 250-258.

Peters, R. S. (1981). Moral Development and Moral Education. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Pflieger, P. (1984). 'Fables into Pictures Books'. Children's Literature Association Quarterly. 9, no 2, 73-75 and 80.

Phillips, J. L. (1969). The Origins of Intellect: Piaget's Theory. San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Company.

Piaget, J. (1928). Judgment and Reasoning in the Child. London: Kegan Paul.

Piaget, J. (1929). The Child's Conception of the World. Translated into English by John and Andrew Tomlinson. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & CO. LTD.

Piaget, J. (1932). The Moral Judgment of the Child. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and CO. LTD.

Piaget, J. (1959). The Language and Thought of the Child. Translated by Marjorie Gabain. 3rd Edition. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD.

Piaget, J. (1962). Play, Dreams, and Imitation in Childhood. New York: Norton.

Pickard, P. M. (1961). I Could a Tale Unfold. London: Tavistock Publications.

Pillar, A. M. (1983). 'Aspects of Moral Judgment in Response to Fables'. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 16, 39-43.

Pitcher, E.; & Prelinger, E. (1963). Children Tell Stories. New York: International University Press.

Pitts, P. V. (1979). Children's Pictures of God. New York: Character Research Press.

Poulsen, D.; Kintsch, E.; Kintsch, W.; & Premack, D. (1979). 'Children's Comprehension and Memory for Stories'. Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 28, 379-403.

Pritchard, M. H. (1976). Fables Moral and Political: The Adaptation of the Aesopian Fable Collection to English Social and Political Life 1651-1722. Phd thesis. University of Western Ontario.

Protherough, R. (1983). 'How Children Judge Stories'. Children's Literature in Education, 14, no 1, 3-13.

Provenzo, E. F. J. (1976). Education and Aesopic Tradition. Phd thesis. Washington University.

Purves, A. C.; & Beach, P. (1972). Literature and the Reader: Research in Response to Literature, Reading Interests, and the Teaching of Literature. Urbana: University of Illinois.

Rankin, E. F.; & Thames, C. L. (1968). 'A Methodology for Studying Children's Reactions to Stories in First Readers'. The Reading Teacher, 22, 242-245 and 299.

Raphael, T. E. (1982). 'Question-answering Strategies for Children'. Reading Teacher, 36, 186-190.

Reinstein, P. G. (1983). 'Aesop and Grimm: Contrast in Ethical Codes and Contemporary Values'. Children's Literature in Education, 14, no 1, 44-53.

Rice, P. C. (1979). 'Independent Reading Units'. Instructor, 89, no 3, 171-173.

Ritchardson, S. (1975). Aesop's Fables. First publication 1740. New York.

Robin, A. (1936). Animal Lore in English Literature. 2nd Edition. London: John Murray.

Rooth, A. B. (1968). 'Domestic Animals and Wild Animals as Symbols and Referents in the Proverbs'. Proverbium, 11, 286-288.

Rotenberg, K. J. (1980). 'Children's Use of Intentionality in Judgments of Character and Disposition'. Child Development, 51, 282-284.

Rousseau, J. J. (1948). Emile. Translated by Barbara Foxley. 2nd Edition. London: J. M. Dent.

Rubin, K. H.; Watson, K. S.; & Jambor, T. W. (1978). 'Free Play Behaviors in Preschool and Kindergarten Children'. Child Development, 49, 534-536.

Rumelhart, D. E. (1975). 'Notes on a Schema for Stories'. In D. G. Bobrow and A. Collins (Eds), Representation and Understanding (pp. 211-236). New York: Academic Press.

Rumelhart, D. E. (1977). 'Understanding and Summarizing Brief Stories'. In David Laberge and S. Jay Samuels (Eds), Basic Processes in Reading: Perception and Comprehension (pp. 265-303). Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Rybash, J.; Roodin, P.; & Hallion, K. (1979). 'The Role of Affect in Children's Attribution of Intentionality and Dispensation of Punishment'. Child Development, 50, 1227-1230.

Sale, R. (1978). Fairy Tales and After. From Snow White to E. B. White. Chambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press.

- Schmidt, C. R.; & Paris, S. G. (1983). 'Children's Use of Successive Clues to Generate and Monitor Inferences'. Child Development, 54, 742-759.
- Schwartz, A. (1977). 'Children, Humor, and Folklore'. Horn Book, 53, 471-476.
- Schwartz, A. (1987). 'Children, Humor and Folklore'. Catholic Library World. 59, 67-70.
- Scott, D. H. (1980). Chinese Popular Literature and the Child. Chicago: American Library Association.
- Shannon, P.; Kameenui, E. J.; & Baumann, J. F. (1988). 'An Investigation of Children's Ability to Comprehend Character Motives'. American Educational Research Journal, 25, 441-462.
- Shavit, Z. (1983). 'The Notion of the Childhood and the Child as Implied Reader'. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 16, 60-67.
- Shedlock, M. L. (1951). The Art of the Story-Teller. 3rd Edition. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Sheley C. F. (1942). The Role of the Fable in Present Day French Education. Phd thesis. George Peabody College for Teachers.
- Shell, J. E. (1972). The Role of the Emblem and the Fable in the Didactic Literature of the Sixteenth Century. Phd thesis. Rice University.
- Slater, M. (1989). 'La Fontaine's Christian Fables'. Seventeenth Century French Studies, 11, 136-146.
- Smetana, J. G. (1981). 'Preschool Children's Conceptions of Moral and Social Rules'. Child Development, 52, 1333-1336.
- Smith, M. E. (1912). A History of the Fable in English to the Death of Pope. Phd thesis. University of Harvard.
- Smith, M. E. (1915). 'The Fable and Kindred Forms'. Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 14, 519-129.
- Smith, M. E. (1916). 'Notes on the Rimed Fable in England'. Modern Language Notes, 31. 206-216.

- Smith, M. E. (1917). 'The Fable as Poetry in English Criticism'. Modern Language Notes, 32, 466-470.
- Smith, M. E. (1917-1918). 'A Classification for Fables, Based on the Collection of Marie de France'. Modern Philology, 15, 477-489.
- Smith, M. E. (1931). 'Aesop: A Decayed Celebrity'. PMLA, 46, 225-236.
- Snoddon, R. V. (1987). 'Sharing Skills'. School Library Media Activities Monthly, 3, no 8, 31-35 and 51.
- Solomon, A. M. V. (1985). 'Fable'. In G. W. Coats (Ed.), Saga, Legend, Tale, Novella, Fable (pp. 114-132). Sheffield: University of Sheffield.
- Sophian, C.; & Huber, A. (1984). 'Early Developments in Children's Causal Judgments'. Child Development, 55, 512-526.
- Speece, M. W.; & Brent, S. B. (1984). 'Children's Understanding of Death: A Review of Three Components of a Death Concept'. Child Development, 55, 1671-1686.
- Spengel, L. V. (Ed.) (1966). Rhetores Graeci. Frankfurt, Main: Minerva.
- Steele, R., The Tatler, No 147, 4: 12-15.
- Stein, N. L. (1979). 'How Children Understand Stories: A Developmental Analysis'. In Lilian G. Katz (Ed.), Current Topics in Early Childhood Education (pp. 261-290). Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Stein, N. L.; & Garfin, D. (1977). Preschool Children's Understanding of Stories. Unpublished manuscript. University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.
- Storr, C. (1970). 'Fear and Evil in Children's Books'. Children's Literature in Education, 1, 22-40.
- Storr, C. (1976). 'Why Folk Tales and Fairy Stories Live Forever'. In N. Tucker (Ed.), Suitable for Children? Controversies in Children's Literature, (pp. 64-73). London: Sussex University Press.

- Storr, C. (1986). `Folk and Fairy Tales`. Children's Literature in Education, 17, 63-70.
- Sulzer, J. G. (1748). Versuch von der Erziehung und Unterweisung der Kinder. Zurich: C. Orell und Comp.
- Sulzer, J. G. (1792). Allgemeine Theorie der Shonen Kunste. Leipzig.
- Sutton-Smith, B. (1975). `The Importance of the Storytaker: An Investigation of the Imaginative Life`. The Urban Review, 8, 82-95.
- Sutton-Smith, B. (1981). The Folkstories of Children. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Tamashiro, R. T. (1979). `Children's Humor: A Developmental View`. The Elementary School Journal, 80, 69-75.
- Tappert, T. G. (Ed.) (1967). Luther's Works. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Taylor, A. (1931). The Proverb. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Thiessen, I. (1988). The Importance of Metaphors in Fairy Tales in Promoting Egostrength Values and Well-being. Paper presented at the International Council of Psychologists 46th Annual Convention. Singapore.
- Thompson, J. G.; & Myers, N. A. (1985). `Inferences and Recall at Ages Four and Seven`. Child Development, 56, 1134-1144.
- Thompson, S. (1946). The Folktale. New York: The Dryden Press.
- Thompson, S. (1955). Motif-Index of Folk Literature. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger.
- Thoms, H. (1982). `Aesop Operas`. Music Educators Journal, 68, no 7, 40-41.
- Thorndyke, P. W. (1977). `Cognitive Structures in Comprehension and Memory of Narrative Discourse`. Cognitive Psychology, 9, 77-110.

Thwaite, M. F. (1972). From Primer to Pleasure in Reading. 2nd Edition. London: The Library Association.

Tibbetts, S. L. (1973). 'What's so Funny?: Humor in Children's Literature'. California Journal of Educational Research, 24, 42-46.

Tod, R. (1971). 'The Treatment of Childhood Stress in Children's Literature'. Children's Literature in Education, 5, 26-45.

Tolkien, J. R. R. (1964). Tree and Leaf. London: Allen and Unwin.

Townsend, J. R. (1974). Written for Children. An Outline of English Children's Literature. 2nd Edition. London: Garnet Miller.

Trease, G. (1970). Tales Out of School. 2nd Edition. London: Heinemann.

Tucker, N. (1976) (Ed.). Suitable for Children? Controversies in Children's Literature. London: Sussex University Press.

Tucker, N. (1981). The child and the Book: a Psychological and Literary Exploration. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vives, J. L. (1913). On Education. Introduction, Translation Foster Watson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wadsworth, B. J. (1971). Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development. New York: Longman.

Wadsworth, B. J. (1971). Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development. New York: Longman.

Walsh, J. P. (1973). 'The Writer's Responsibility'. Children's Literature in Education, 10, 30-36.

Walsh, J. P. (1975). 'Seeing Green'. In Edited by E. Blishen The Thorny Paradise. Writers on Writing for Children (58-61). London: Kestrel Books.

Wendelin, K. H. (1980). 'Taking Stock of Children's Preferences in Humorous Literature'. Reading Psychology, 2, 34-42.

- White, D. N. (1949). About Books for Children. New York: Oxford University Press.
- White, D. N. (1954). Books Before Five. London: Oxford University Press.
- White, E.; Elsom, B.; & Prawat, R. (1978). 'Children's Conception of Death'. Child Development, 49, 307-310.
- Whitesell, F. (1947). 'Fables in Medieval Exempla'. Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 46, 348-366.
- Williams, G. (1971). Children and Their Books. London: Gerald Duckworth & CO LTD.
- Williams, R. (1990). 'God-Concept Socialization: Some Explanation from Piaget'. Religious Education, 85, 311-315.
- Williams, R. J. (1959). 'The Literary History of a Mesopotamian Fable'. The Phoenix, 10, 70-77.
- Wilson, A. C. (1984). 'To Instruct and to Amuse: Some Victorian Views of Aesop's Fables'. Children's Literature Association Quarterly, 9, 66-68.
- Wimmer, H.; Gruber, S.; & Perner, J. (1984). 'Young Children's Conception of Lying: Lexical Realism-Moral Subjectivism'. Journal of Experimental Child Psychology. 37, 1-30.
- Wimmer, H.; Gruber, S.; & Perner, J. (1985). 'Young Children's Conception of Lying: Moral Intuition and the Denotation and Connotation of "to lie" '. Developmental Psychology. 21, 993-995.
- Windmiller, M.; Lambert, N.; & Turiel, E. (Eds) (1980). Moral Development and Socialization. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1963). 'The Young Child at Home and at School'. In W. R. Niblett (Ed.) Moral Education in a Changing Society (pp. 96-111). London: Faber and Faber LTM.
- Wolfenstein, M. (1954) Children's Humor. A Psychological Analysis. Illinois: The Free Press.
- Wray, W. R. (1950). The English Fable 1650-1800. Phd thesis. Yale University.

Zanna, M. P.; & Darley, J. M. (1981). Judgments of Responsibility for Foreseeable Accidents. Paper read at meeting, Society for Research in Child Development. Boston.

Zigler, E.; & Levine, J. (1967). 'Cognitive Challenge as a Factor in Children's Humor Appreciation'. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 6, 332-336.

Zillmann, D.; & Bryant, J. (1975). 'Viewer's Moral Sanction of Retribution in the Appreciation of Dramatic Presentations'. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 11, 572-582.

Zimen, E. (1981). The Wolf. Translated from the German by Eric Mosbacher. London: Souvenir Press.

Zipes, J. (1979). Breaking the Magic Spell. Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales. London: Heinemann.

APPENDIX ONE

FABLES

1. KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN (FOUR-TO-SIX-YEAR-OLD)

1.1 FIRST GROUP

1.1.1 THE DEER AND THE LION

A thirsty deer came to a pool. As he was drinking, he looked at his reflection in the water. Oh! What nice and big antlers he had! But how skinny and ugly were his legs! While he was still admiring his antlers and was feeling sad about his legs, a lion appeared. Instantly the deer stopped drinking and ran away as fast as his four legs could take him. He ran through the fields where there were no trees, and the lion was far behind. But when the deer came to a thicket his antlers got caught in the branches of a tree and he stayed there unable to move. The lion dashed at him and when he was about to devour the deer, the deer said to himself: `Alas! What I didn't like, saved my life and what I thought beautiful and worthy destroyed me`.

1.1.2 THE FOX AND THE WOODCUTTER

This story teaches that real friends help their fellows, not merely in words but particularly with actions. A fox who was being chased by hunters saw a woodcutter and begged him to hide her. `With great pleasure` he replied and let her go and hide into his hut. Soon afterwards the huntsmen arrived and asked the woodcutter if he had seen the fox. `No` he said in a loud voice, but, at the same time he was pointing, with his hand, at the hut, where the fox was hidden. The hunters did not take the hint, but believed his words and left. Then, the fox came out and was going off without saying a word. `Don't you feel ashamed?` the woodcutter shouted at her `You are not going to thank me of rescuing you`. `I would have thanked you` the fox called back `if you were a friend in action and not only in words`.

1.1.3 THE BEAR AND THE TWO TRAVELLERS

Two men were travelling together in the forest when a bear suddenly appeared before them. One, without wasting any time, climbed into a tree and was safe there. The other, because he was not good at climbing and nobody helped him, lied down on the ground and pretended that he was dead. You

know, he had heard that bears never eat the dead. When the bear came near him and put her muzzle into his ear to see if he was alive, he hold his breath, and the animal thought that he was dead, and left. When the bear was away the other man came down from the tree and asked his fellow traveller what the bear whispered to him when she put her muzzle into his ear. `She told me` he replied `not to travel again with men who leave me alone when I am in danger`.

Moral: This story teaches that difficulties and dangers show who the real friends are.

1.1.4 THE DONKEY, THE FOX AND THE LION

The donkey and the fox became friends and decided to go hunting together. One day, a lion appeared in front of them and the fox, realizing the danger, went up to the lion, behind the donkey's back, and told him: `Lion, if you promise me that you won't harm me, I'll catch the donkey in a trap and I'll hand him over to you`. `Well! Agreed!` said the lion. But when the fox trapped the donkey and he was unable to move, the lion ate the fox first, and then he ate the donkey.

1.1.5 THE COCK, THE DOG AND THE FOX

The dog and the cock became friends and they decided to travel together. Once, they went to the forest and when the night fell, they stopped to sleep in a tree. The cock went to a high branch and the dog laid in a hollow at the foot of the tree. When the dawn came, the cock, as he usually does, crowed `Kikirikou`. A hungry fox heard him and thought that he would make a nice breakfast. So, she went under the tree and said: `Cock, what a nice voice you have! Why don't you come down so that we can sing together?` `With pleasure` replied the cock` but, please, tell my friend who sleeps at the foot of the tree to help me to come down`. But as the fox went to tell him, the dog suddenly sprang out, seized the fox and tore her into one thousand pieces.

1.2 SECOND GROUP

1.2.1 THE HEN THAT LAID THE GOLDEN EGGS

A villager, apart from all the other hens, he had one that was different. This hen did not lay normal eggs but every morning she laid a golden egg. Every day the villager collected it, went to the market, sold it and, day by day, became more and more rich. One day, while he was picking up

the golden egg, he thought: `What a silly fellow I am! Instead of waiting every morning for one little golden egg isn't it better to kill the hen and find all the gold in her belly once and for ever?` Without any second thought he killed the hen and open her belly. There was no gold! Her belly was exactly the same as every normal hen's. So, not only he did not find any more gold but lost the golden eggs as well.

Moral: Whoever wants to get more, loses everything.

1.2.2 THE DOG AND THE BONE

A dog took a bone from the butcher's and as he was running off with it, came to a bank of a river. There was a bridge and the dog went over it to cross the river. As he looked down into the water, he saw what he thought was another dog, just like himself, with a bigger bone in his mouth. Splash!! he jumped into the water to snatch the bone of the other dog. Well, not only did he not find another bone, but when he jumped he lost his own bone into the water and never found it again.

Moral: Whoever is not happy with what he has, soon will find out that he has less.

1.2.3 THE CAMEL AND ZEUS

In the old times, when men believed that Zeus was a God, a camel lived. At that time camels had big long ears like that of the donkeys. One day she saw a deer and she liked his antlers very much. She would love to have a pair for herself! Without wasting any time, she went to Zeus and started asking him: `Please, Zeus, give me antlers like the deer`. Zeus got really angry with her, because she was not satisfied with her big and strong body, but wanted something else, and not only did he not give her antlers, but also cut her ears short. From that time on camels have funny small ears.

Moral: Men who want to get what other men have, soon find that they not only have nothing more but even lose their own things.

1.2.4 THE DOCTOR AND THE GRANDMA

A grandma who could not see very well called in a doctor. Every time he came to see her he applied some ointment to her eyes and, while she kept her eyes closed, he carried off some of her things until, in the end, he took nearly everything. When the treatment was over and the grandma

could see very well the doctor asked her for his payment. But she did not want to give him any money. So the doctor took her to court. Before the jury the grandma stood and said: `Your honor, I agreed to pay the doctor only if he would cure my eyes and make me see. But before he began I could see all the furniture and things in my house, but now, I can't see anything`.

Moral: Men who want to get more, in the end, not only fail to get them, it but make fools of themselves.

1.2.5 THE MUM AND THE BOY

A rich family invited a poor mum and her boy to have meal with them. At dinner the boy stuffed himself with food and he had many servings of animal guts, the dish he liked best. He ate and ate and ate and in the end, he had a terrible stomach-ache and began to feel sick. `Oh, mum` he complained `I am going to throw up my guts`. `Not yours my son` she replied, `only whose you ate`.

Moral: It is not wise to have more than you need. But those who do so and borrow things from others, when they have to give them back, are annoyed as though they were giving up something of their own.

1.3 THIRD GROUP

1.3.1 THE LION AND THE MOUSE

A mouse who ran here and there happened to walk over a sleeping lion. The lion woke up, seized the mouse, and was ready to devour it when it started to squeak: `Please, lion, don't kill me and one day I'll pay you back for the mercy you show now. Even a weak creature like me can prove useful`. `What a nice joke! You are really funny!` laughed the lion and feeling sleepy again let the mouse go. A long time passed and, one day, the lion walked into the nets of some hunters and was trapped there. Although he tried very hard to get free he could not, but was more and more entangled in the nets. The mouse heard the roar of the lion and when he saw what happened, bit the strings of the nets with his sharp teeth and cut them. And when the lion at last stepped out of the nets, the mouse told him `Do you remember, Lion, that you laughed at me when I told you that I would pay you back? I hope now you have learned that nobody is so weak not to be able to return the good he received`.

1.3.2 THE SUN AND THE NORTH WIND

The Wind and the Sun were arguing as to which one was the stronger, and in order to find out who really was they set a contest. Whoever could strip a villager who happened to pass by, of his clothes would be the strongest. The North Wind had the first go. He started to blow and blow and blow really hard. Phoo-oo-oo! But the harder the North Wind blew the tighter the man held his coat over him, and the North Wind couldn't take it. So he let the Sun try. At the beginning the Sun shone gently but after a while he started becoming warmer and warmer and the man, unable to stand the heat, took off his coat, his sweater, and even his trousers, and went for a swim in a nearby river. 'There!' said the Sun. 'What you couldn't do with all your violence and strength I did with my kindness and politeness'.

1.3.3 THE ANT AND THE GRASSHOPPER

All summer, when the weather was hot, the ant had been working hard, gathering grains and crumbs for the winter. All summer the grasshopper chirped and chirped and cheering everybody with his songs. But the summer passed by, the autumn came and the weather became rainy and cold. The grasshopper started feeling cold and he hardly could find anything to eat. And when the winter came and everything was covered with thick snow, the grasshopper suffered from hunger and cold. In the end he decided to go to the ant and ask for food. So he did. 'Why haven't you saved anything up from the summer' asked the ant when he learned what the grasshopper wanted. 'Because I had been singing the whole summer, enjoying myself and making others feel happy' whispered the grasshopper. 'And no work at all' interrupted him the ant. 'Go away now. When I worked you were laughing. Go away to learn that who does not work dies of hunger'. Off the grasshopper went, without any food, and that day he slept hungry in the snow and he never woke up again.

1.4 FOURTH GROUP

1.4.1 THE BOY WHO CRIED WOLF

A shepherd boy who was taking his flock out, one day amused himself with a shout: 'Villagers, come here, the wolf is near!' They ran from the village to the hill to catch the wolf and to kill, but the boy laughed at them, since the wolf was at his den. He did this twice; the villagers came both times. And every time he started to chuckle,

because, for him, this was fun.
But one night the wolf did come.
The boy called the villagers to run,
but they thought that it was a trick,
so they stayed in and the wolf ate everything.

1.5 THE PIGEON AND THE FOX

1.4.2 THE RABBIT AND THE TURTLE

The rabbit and the turtle set a running contest, and all the animals of the forest came to see who would be the winner. When the signal was given, the rabbit dashed off and in no time he had already run half the distance, and looked back to see what the turtle was doing. The turtle was still at the starting point, trying to move as fast as she could, but she was still walking very slowly. The rabbit laughed at her and he thought of having a nap before setting off again. Anyway, the turtle was very far behind. He lied down under a tree and slept. But when he woke up he could scarcely believe his eyes. The turtle had walked all the distance and that very moment she was crossing the finishing line and won the race.

1.4.3 THE CROW AND THE FOX

A crow had stolen a piece of cheese and flew to a high branch to eat it. A hungry fox happened to walk under the tree and, when she saw what a tasty piece of cheese the crow had in his mouth, she told him: `What a nice bird you are and what lovely black feathers you have! If you sing as beautifully as you look, you deserve to be the king of the birds`. The crow was very pleased at her words and started to sing. But as soon as he opened his beak, the cheese fell out of his mouth, straight down to the fox. She grasped it immediately and, while she went to her hole to eat it, said to the crow: `Oh Crow! It is not enough to have a nice voice and features in order to become the king of the birds. Most important is to have some sense`.

1.5 FIFTH GROUP

1.5.1 THE WOLF AND THE LAMB

A wolf saw a lamb drinking water from a river, and wanted to find a good excuse to eat it. After thinking for some time he told the lamb: `Oh Lamb, you make the water dirty and I can't drink now. You should get punished, I'll eat you`. `But look Wolf` replied the lamb, `the water is absolutely clear and I touched it only with the tips of my lips`. `OK` said the wolf `But, last year you called my father bad names. You should be punished. I'll eat you`. `But I wasn't even born last year` answered the lamb. `Not a word more`

shouted the wolf. `Do you think that I am going to remain hungry because you have a smart answer for everything?`. And saying so he opened his mouth and swallowed the lamb at one gulp.

1.5.2 THE PIGEON AND THE FOX

A pigeon had found a piece of meat, and flew to a branch to eat it. A hungry fox happened to walk under the tree, and when she saw the tender pigeon and the tasty piece of meat, she told him: `What a nice bird you are and what lovely white feathers you have! Why don't you come down here to the foot of the tree, and let me admire your beauty?`. The pigeon, very scared at the sight of the fox, not only did not go down, but also flew to a higher branch. But, while he flew, the piece of meat fell straight down to the mouth of the fox. She took it and, as she went to her hole to eat it, she said to him: `Oh Pigeon! I hope now you learned that if a hungry fox wants something, there is nothing on earth that can stop her from having it`.

2. FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADERS (TEN-TO-TWELVE-YEAR-OLD)

- The Fox and the Woodcutter.
- The Sun and the North Wind.
- The Lion and the Mouse.
- The Fox and the Pigeon.
- The Bear and Two Travellers.
- The Dog and the Bone.
- The Wolf and the Lamb.

APPENDIX TWO

QUESTIONS

1. KINDERGARTNER CHILDREN (FOUR TO SIX-YEAR-OLD)

1.1 FIRST GROUP

GENERAL QUESTIONS

When you read a story about a hare, the hare is usually fast and timid. When you read a story about a ... what is the ... usually like?

fox	turtle
lion	cat
elephant	donkey
wolf	bear
lamb	

(Ag)

QUESTIONS ON FABLES

THE DEER AND THE LION

Do you like that story?

Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?

(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?

(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is any moral in that story?

(If yes) Tell me which. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?

(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

What the deer liked?

What the deer did not like?

How was it saved at the beginning?

Why the deer was caught?

What happened in the end?

What the deer said at the end? (R)

Why the deer was feeling sad when he saw himself in the water?

Why the deer was feeling glad when he saw himself in the water?

Why did the deer say the last sentence? (U)

(Suppose that the lion ate the deer)

Where is the deer after being eaten?

What is it doing right now?

What does it think of right now? (D)

What do you think about the lion?
the deer?

(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was the deer right to prefer its antlers to its legs?
Why/not? (Ac)

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?
(If yes) Who?

Why?

Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that you think that it is suitable for him/her? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you like to play?

Say none, if no role is good enough for you.

Why do you like/dislike that one/any? (I)

(In case of choosing the deer) Even if the lion ate you?

Do you find it a horrid story?

(If yes) What exactly made you feeling scared?

(If no) What stories are you afraid of? (Fr)

Are the stories true?

(If yes) When did they happen?

Where did they happen?

(If no) How did stories first come into being? (O)

I'll give you three different endings of this fable. Which one do you like more?

If you do not like any you can think of something else.

A hunter came and killed the lion before the lion ate the deer.

The lion took pity on the deer and let it go.

The lion ate the deer. (E)

THE FOX AND THE WOODCUTTER

Do you like that story?

Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?

(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?

(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is any moral in that story?

(If yes) Tell me what. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?

(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

What did the fox ask from the woodcutter?

What he did for her?

What did the woodcutter say when the hunters asked him for the fox?

Did the woodcutter do anything to show the fox to the hunters?

What did the woodcutter asked for the fox at the end?

What was the fox's last sentence? (R)

Why the fox asked the woodcutter to help her?

Why did he hide her?

Why he said "no" and the same time he pointed at the place where the fox was hidden?

Why the fox did not thank the woodcutter?

What is the meaning of the last sentence of the fox? (U)

What do you think about the fox?

the hunters?

the woodcutter?

(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was the woodcutter right to point at the hut? Why/not?

Was the fox right not to thank the woodcutter? Why/not? (Ac)

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?

(If yes) Who?

Why?

Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that you think that it is suitable for him/her? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you like to play? Say none, if no role is good enough for you.

Why do you like/dislike that one/any? (I)

Did you find this story funny?

(If yes) What exactly do you find funny?

(If no) Can you remember any other story that you found really funny? (H)

Do you think that animals speak with men?

(If no) How can you explain the fact that the fox spoke with the woodcutter? (Ag)

THE BEAR AND THE TWO TRAVELLERS

Do you like that story?

Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?

(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?

(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is any moral in that story?

(If yes) Tell me which. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?

(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

What did the first traveller when he saw the bear?

What did the second traveller when he saw the bear?

What did the bear when she reached the man on the ground?

Did the bear harm anybody?

What did the traveller who climbed on the tree ask his friend?

What the traveller told the other man that the bear whispered in his ear? (R)

Why did the first traveller climbed onto the tree?

Why the second traveller did not climb onto the tree?

Why did the second traveller pretend he was dead?

Why did the first friend ask him what the bear had told him?

Who really told these things?

Are these two men friends? Why/not? (U)

What do you think about the first traveller, the one who climbed onto the tree?

the second traveller, the one who pretended he was dead?
the bear?

(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was the traveller who climbed into the tree right to do so?

Why/not? (Ac)

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?

(If yes) Who?

Why?

Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that you think that it is suitable for him/her? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you like to play?

Say none, if no role is good enough for you.

Why do you like/dislike that one/any? (I)

What kind of protagonists do you usually prefer in a story?
(Ag)

THE DONKEY, THE FOX AND THE LION

Do you like that story?
Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?
(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?
(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is
any moral in that story?
(If yes) Tell me which. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?
(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

What did the fox say to the lion?
What did the lion reply?
What happened at the end? (R)

Why did the fox ask the lion to trap the donkey?
Why did the lion agree with the fox? (U)

What do you think about the fox?
 the lion?
 the donkey?
(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was the fox right to make such a deal with the lion?
Why/not? (Ac)

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?
(If yes) Who?
 Why?

 Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that
 you think that it is suitable for him/her?
If s/he was punished that way, do you think that s/he is
likely to do the same thing again?
If s/he was not punished that way, do you think that s/he is
likely to do the same thing again? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you
like to play?
Say none, if no role is good enough for you.
Why do you like/dislike that one/any?
(In case of the fox or the donkey) Even if the lion ate you
up? (I)

You said that it was not good that the lion ate the donkey or the fox. But the lion has to eat something in order to live. What do you think about that? (Ag)

THE COCK, THE DOG AND THE FOX

Do you like that story?
Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?
(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?
(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. I'll give you three morals and you will choose the one that suits more to this story. If none of them is suitable you can think of one that satisfies you.

Friends help each other in case of danger.

What does it mean?

Everyone who is bad at the end will suffer.

What does it mean?

Foxes always want to eat cocks and dogs always like to eat foxes

What does it mean? (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?
(If yes) Tell me what? (Ap)

Where did the cock and the dog sleep?
What did the cock do at the dawn?
What did the fox tell the cock?
What did the cock ask the fox to do?
What happened in the end? (R)

Why did the fox ask the cock to come down of the tree?
Why didn't the cock come?
Why did the cock ask the fox to see his friend?
Did the fox know that the dog was at the foot of the tree when she went there?
(If no) What did the fox think when she went to the cock's friend? (U)

Where is the fox after being torn apart by the dog?
What is she doing just now?
What does he think of just now? (D)

What do you think about the cock?
the fox?
the dog?

Have you found that story funny?

(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is any moral in that story?

(If yes) Tell me which. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?

(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

What is the difference between that hen and the others?

What the villager did with the golden eggs?

What the villager thought of doing with the hen?

What happened in the end? (R)

Why the villager wanted to kill the hen?

(In case of the correct answer) What he wanted to do with the gold?

What's the meaning of the moral: 'Whoever wants to get more, loses everything'. (U)

Where is the hen after being killed?

What is she doing right now?

What does it think of right now? (D)

What do you think about the villager?

the hen?

(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was it fair for the villager not to find anything in the hen's belly? Why/not? (Ac)

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?

(If yes) Who?

Why?

Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that you think that it is suitable for him/her? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you like to play?

Say none, if no role is good enough for you.

Why do you like/dislike that one/any? (I)

Is there anything in this story that happens only in stories and never in real life?

(If the answer is not the correct) What about the golden eggs? (Ma)

Are the stories true?

(If yes) When did they happen?

Where did they happen?

(If no) How did stories first come into being? (O)

Where meat comes from?

Is it right to kill animals in order to get meat? Why/not?
(If no) What can we do for that? (Ag)

THE DOG AND THE BONE

Do you like that story?
Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?
(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?
(If yes) What exactly have you found funny?. (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is
any moral in that story?
(If yes) Tell me which. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?
(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

What the dog had in his mouth?
Where did he find it?
What the dog saw in the water?
Was it really so?
What it happened in the end? (R)

Why the dog jumped into the water?
What is the meaning of the moral: `Whoever is not happy with
what he has, soon he will find out that he has less`. (U)

What do you think about the dog?
(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was the dog right to want the bone in the water? Why/not?
(Ac)

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?
(If yes) Who?
Why?
Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that
you think that it is suitable for him/her? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you
like to play?
Say none, if no role is good enough for you.
Why do you like/dislike that one/any? (I)

What kind of protagonists do you usually prefer in a story?
(Ag)

Did you find this story funny?
(If yes) What exactly do you find funny?

(If no) Can you remember any other story that you found really funny? (H)

THE CAMEL AND ZEUS

Do you like that story?
Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?
(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?
(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is any moral in that story?
(If yes) Tell me which. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?
(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

How did the camels look in old times?
What did the camel like?
What the camel asked from Zeus?
What Zeus did? (R)

Why did the camel ask for antlers?
Why Zeus did that?
What is the meaning of the moral: `Men who want to get what other men have, soon find that they not only have nothing more but even lose their own things`. (U)

What do you think about the camel?
Zeus?
(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was the camel right to ask for antlers? Why/not?
Was Zeus right to cut off the camel's ears? Why/not? (Ac)?

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?
(If yes) Who?
Why?
Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that you think that it is suitable for him/her? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you like to play?
Say none, if no role is good enough for you.
Why do you like/dislike that one/any? (I)

Who is Zeus?
Where does he live?

Can we visit him?
If he wanted, was he able to give antlers to the camel?
Can we go and ask him to grant our favours? (Ag)

Did you find it a horrid story?
(If yes) What exactly made you feeling scared?
(If no) What stories are you afraid of? (Fr)

THE DOCTOR AND THE GRANDMA

Do you like that story?
Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?
(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?
(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is
any moral in that story?
(If yes) Tell me which. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?
(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

What was wrong with the grandma?
What the doctor did every time that he came to her place?
Did he cure the grandma?
Did the grandma pay him?
What the doctor did when the grandma refused to pay him?
What the grandma told to the judges? (R)

Why did the grandma call the doctor?
Why did the doctor steal the grandma's things?
Why the grandma did not pay him?
Why did the grandma tell to the court all those things?
What is the meaning of the moral: `Men who want to get more,
in the end, not only fail to get them, but make fools of
themselves`. (U)

What do you think about the grandma?
the doctor?
the judges?

(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was the doctor right to take the grandma's things? Why/not?
Was the grandma right not to pay the doctor? Why/not? (Ac)

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?
(If yes) Who?
Why?

Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that you think that it is suitable for him/her?
If s/he was punished that way, do you think that s/he is likely to do the same thing again?
If s/he was not punished that way, do you think that s/he is likely to do the same thing again? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you like to play?

Say none, if no role is good enough for you.
Why do you like/dislike that one/any? (I)

What do you think that the court decided? (E)

THE MUM AND THE BOY

Do you like that story?
Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?
(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?
(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is any moral in that story?
(If yes) Tell me which. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?
(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

What the boy did in the meal?
What he had after that?
How was he complaining to his mum?
What the mum told to the child? (R)

Why did the child eat so much?
Why the mum tell her child all those things?
What is the meaning of the moral: 'It is not wise to have more than you need. But those who do so and borrow things from others, when they have to give them back are annoyed as if they were giving up something of their own'. (U)

What do you think about the son?
the mum?
(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was the boy right to complain that he was going to throw up his guts? Why/not? (Ac)

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?
(If yes) Who?

Why?

Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that you think that it is suitable for him/her? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you like to play?

Say none, if no role is good enough for you.

Why do you like/dislike that one/any? (I)

What do you think that it happened after that? (E)

1.3 THIRD GROUP

GENERAL QUESTIONS

When you read a story about a hare, the hare is usually fast and timid. When you read a story about a ... what is the ... usually like?

fox	turtle
lion	cat
elephant	donkey
wolf	bear
lamb	(Ag)

QUESTIONS ON FABLES

THE LION AND THE MOUSE

Do you like that story?

Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?

(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?

(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is any moral in that story?

(If yes) Tell me which. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?

(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

What the mouse did to the lion?

What the lion did after that?

What the mouse said to the lion?

What happened to the lion one day?

Who helped the lion?

What the mouse told the lion after freeing it? (R)

Why did the lion get angry with the mouse?

Why did the lion let it go?

Why did the mouse help the lion?

What is the meaning of the mouse's words?

When did the lion and the mouse become friends? (U)

What do you think about the lion?
the mouse?

(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was the lion right to let the mouse go? Why/not?

Was the mouse right to set the lion free? Why/not? (Ac)

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?

(If yes) Who?

Why?

Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that you think that it is suitable for him/her?

If s/he was punished that way, do you think that s/he is likely to do the same thing again?

If s/he was not punished that way, do you think that s/he is likely to do the same thing again? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you like to play?

Say none, if no role is good enough for you.

Why do you like/dislike that one/any? (I)

THE SUN AND THE NORTH WIND

Do you like that story?

Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?

(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?

(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is any moral in that story?

(If yes) Tell me which. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?

(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

What they thought to do in order to see who is stronger?

What happened with the North Wind?

What happened with the Sun?

Who was the winner?

What the Sun said at the end? (R)

Why did they have a fight?
Why did they want to take off the man's coat?
Why did not the North Wind win?
Why did the Sun win?
What is the meaning of the Sun's last words? (U)

What do you think about the Sun?
the North Wind?
(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was the North Wind right to try in that way to take the man's coat off? Why/not?
Was the Sun right to try in that way to take the man's coat off? Why/not? (Ac)

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?
(If yes) Who?
Why?
Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that you think that it is suitable for him/her? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you like to play?
Say none, if no role is good enough for you.
Why do you like/dislike that one/any? (I)

Do you think that the sun and the wind speak?
(If no) How can you explain the fact that they spoke in this story? (Ag)

THE ANT AND THE GRASSHOPPER

Do you like that story?
Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?
(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?
(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is any moral in that story?
(If yes) Tell me which. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?
(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

What was the grasshopper doing when the weather was warm?
What was the ant doing when the weather was warm?
What happened to the grasshopper when the weather changed?
Did the ant give the grasshopper what he asked for?

What happened in the end? (R)

Why did the grasshopper sing all the summer?

Why did the ants work all the summer?

Why did the grasshopper go to find the ant?

Why did not the ant give him? (U)

What do you think about the grasshopper?

the ant?

(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was the grasshopper right to sing all the summer? Why/not?

Was the ant right to collect food all the summer? Why/not?

Was the ant right not to give food to the grasshopper?

Why/not? (Ac)

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?

(If yes) Who?

Why?

Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that you think that it is suitable for him/her? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you like to play?

Say none, if no role is good enough for you.

Why do you like/dislike that one/any?

(In case of choosing the grasshopper) Even if you died? (I)

Are the stories true?

(If yes) When did they happen?

Where did they happen?

(If no) How did stories first come into being? (O)

1.4 FORTH GROUP

GENERAL QUESTIONS

When you read a story about a hare, the hare is usually fast and timid. When you read a story about a ... what is the ... usually like?

fox

turtle

lion

cat

elephant

donkey

wolf

bear

lamb

(Ag)

THE RABBIT AND THE TURTLE

Do you like that story?

Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?

(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?

(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is any moral in that story?

(If yes) Tell me which. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?

(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

What did the rabbit and the turtle decide to do?

Who won at the beginning?

What did the rabbit do after a while?

What happened in the end? (R)

Why the rabbit was ahead at first?

Why did the rabbit sleep?

Why did the turtle come first?

When the race started, who thought the rabbit would be the winner?

When the race started, who thought the turtle would be the winner?

(In case of pointing the rabbit as the winner) Why did the turtle enter the race?

Regardless the result, when the race started which one you think would be the winner? (U)

What do you think about the turtle?
the rabbit?

(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was the rabbit right to sleep during the race? Why/not?

Was the turtle right to win the race? Why/not?

Do you like that the turtle won at the end?

Which one do you think was fair to win? (Ac)

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?

(If yes) Who?

Why?

Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that you think that it is suitable for him/her? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you like to play?

Say none, if no role is good enough for you.

Why do you like/dislike that one/any? (I)

THE CROW AND THE FOX

Do you like that story?

Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?

(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?

(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is any moral in that story?

(If yes) Tell me which. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?

(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

What the crow had in its mouth?

Where had he found it?

What the fox told the crow?

What the crow did after hearing the words of the fox?

What the fox did in the end?

What the fox told the crow in the end? (R)

Why the fox told the crow all those things?

Were those true?

Did the crow believe her?

What did the crow think about all those things?

Why did the crow sing the song? (U)

What do you think about the fox?
the crow?

(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was the fox right to tell all those things to the crow?

Why/not?

Do you agree that the fox took the cheese? Why/not? (Ac)

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?

(If yes) Who?

Why?

Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that you think that it is suitable for him/her?

If s/he was punished that way, do you think that s/he is likely to do the same thing again?

If s/he was not punished that way, do you think that s/he is likely to do the same thing again? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you like to play?

Say none, if no role is good enough for you.

Why do you like/dislike that one/any? (I)

1.5 FIFTH GROUP

GENERAL QUESTIONS

When you read a story about a hare, the hare is usually fast and timid. When you read a story about a ... what is the ... usually like?

fox	turtle
lion	cat
elephant	donkey
wolf	bear
lamb	

(Ag)

QUESTIONS ON FABLES

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB

Do you like that story?

Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?

(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?

(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is any moral in that story?

(If yes) Tell me which. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?

(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

What did the wolf see near the river?

What did the wolf tell the lamb?

What did the lamb answer to the wolf?

What the wolf tell the lamb after that?

What did the lamb answer that time?

What did the wolf say after that?

What happened in the end? (R)

Why did the wolf say about spoiling the water?

Was it true?

Why did the wolf say about insulting his father?

Was it true?

Why did the wolf eat the lamb?

Why the wolf would not eat the lamb from the first moment he saw it, but wanted to have that conversation with him? (U)

(Suppose that the wolf ate the lamb)

Where is the lamb after being eaten?

What is it doing right now?
What does it think right now? (D)

What do you think about the wolf?
the lamb?
(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was the wolf right to tell all those things to the lamb?
Why/not? (Ac)

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?
(If yes) Who?
Why?

Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that
you think that it is suitable for him/her?
If s/he was punished that way, do you think that s/he is
likely to do the same thing again?
If s/he was not punished that way, do you think that s/he is
likely to do the same thing again? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you
like to play?
Say none, if no role is good enough for you.
Why do you like/dislike that one/any?
(In case of choosing the lamb) Even if the lion ate you? (I)

Do you like the way that the story ended?
Do you think that it was fair? (E)

Where meat comes from?
Is it right to kill animals in order to get meat? Why/not?
(If no) What can we do for that? (Ag)

THE PIGEON AND THE FOX

Do you like that story?
Show me how much do you like/dislike it. (P)

Have you heard that story before?
(If yes) Show me how well do you remember it. (F)

Have you found that story funny?
(If yes) What exactly have you found funny? (H)

Many stories end with a moral. Do you think that there is
any moral in that story?
(If yes) Tell me which. (M)

Do you think that this story says anything about children?
(If yes) Tell me what. (Ap)

What the pigeon hold in its mouth?
Where had it found it?

What the fox told the pigeon?
What the pigeon did after listening to the words of the fox?
What the fox did in the end?
What did the fox say in the end? (R)

Why did the fox go under the tree?
Why did the fox say all those things to the pigeon?
Were those true?
What did the pigeon think of the fox when it listen all those things? (U)

What do you think about the fox?
the pigeon?
(Show me how much). (Ch)

Was the fox right to tell all those things to the pigeon?
Why/not? (Ac)

Do you agree that the fox finally got the meat? Why/not? (E)
Was it fair? Why/not?

Do you think that anyone should get punished in this story?
(If yes) Who?

Why?

Do you like to suggest any kind of punishment that you think that it is suitable for him/her? (J)

If you were going to act this fable out which part do you like to play?

Say none, if no role is good enough for you.
Why do you like/dislike that one/any? (I)

2. FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADERS (TEN TO TWELVE-YEAR-OLD)

GENERAL QUESTIONS

When you read a story about a hare, the hare is usually fast and timid. When you read a story about a ... what is the ... usually like?

fox	turtle
lion	cat
elephant	donkey
wolf	bear
lamb	

(Ag)

QUESTIONS ON FABLES

What is the moral of the following fables:
The fox and the woodcutter.
The Sun and the North Wind.

- The lion and the mouse.
- The pigeon and the fox.
- The bear and the two travellers.
- The dog and the bone.
- The wolf and the lamb. (M)

Table A.1

Four to six-year old children's range of characterisations for the animal characters of fables. (Piper Group)

Species	Good	Bad	Other	Total
	Characteristics			
Goat	27	1		28
Lion	1	21		22
Woodcutter	29	2		31
Don	14	1		15
Wardens	13	1		14
Two Travellers	24	2		26
Wolf and Lamb	12	1		13
Wolf	3	27		30
Lion	1	21		22
Don	3	17		20
Woodcutter	21	1		22
Goat	22	1		23
Fox	1	22		23
Dog	24	1		25
Total	150	118		268

APPENDIX THREE

TABLES

Table A.1

Four to six-year-old children's range of characterizations for the animal characters of fables. First Group.

Agents	Good	Bad	Other Characteristics	Total
Deer	22	-	-	22
Lion	1	21	-	22
Woodcutter	20	2	-	22
Fox	17	5	-	22
Hunters	13	9	-	22
1st trav/ler	20	2	-	22
2nd trav/ler	22	-	-	22
Bear	5	17	-	22
Lion	1	21	-	22
Fox	3	17	2	22
Donkey	21	1	-	22
Cock	22	-	-	22
Fox	1	21	-	22
Dog	20	2	-	22
Total	188	118	2	308

Agents	Good	Bad	Other Characteristics	Total
Lion	9	13	-	22
Mouse	21	1	-	22
Snake	21	1	-	22
Wind	4	18	-	22
Ant	13	9	-	22
Grass/pea	14	8	-	22
Total	82	50	0	132

Table A.2

Four to six-year-old children's range of characterizations for the animal characters of fables. Second group.

Agents	Good	Bad	Other characterizations	Total
Villager	2	27	-	29
Hen	21	8	-	29
Dog	10	19	-	29
Camel	13	16	-	29
Zeus	20	9	-	29
Grandma	26	3	-	29
Doctor	9	20	-	29
Jury	27	2	-	29
Mum	28	1	-	29
Boy	22	7	-	29
Total	178	112	0	290

Table A.3

Four to six-year-old children's range of characterizations for the animal characters of fables. Third group.

Agents	Good	Bad	Other Characterization	Total
Lion	9	14	-	23
Mouse	21	2	-	23
Sun	21	2	-	23
Wind	4	19	-	23
Ant	13	10	-	23
Gras/per	14	9	-	23
Total	82	56	0	138

Table A.4

Four to six-year-old children's range of characterizations for the animal characters of fables. Fourth Group.

Agents	Good	Bad	Other Characterizations	Total
Boy (Group)	8	11	-	19
Villagers	14	5	-	19
Rabbit	8	11	-	19
Turtle	18	1	-	19
Crow	11	8	-	19
Fox	4	15	-	19
Total	63	51	0	114

Table A.5

Four to six-year-old children's range of characterizations for the animal characters of fables. Fifth Group.

Agents	Good	Bad	Other characterizations	Total
Wolf	-	20	-	20
Lamb	20	-	-	20
Fox	-	20	-	20
Pigeon	20	-	-	20
Total	40	40	0	80

Table A.6

Four to six-year-old children's justifications of their characterizations of the animal characters of fables.
 First Group.

Agents	Story	Previous Knowledge	No explanation	Total
Deer	4	15	3	22
Lion	12	10	-	22
Woodcutter	13	5	4	22
Fox	7	7	8	22
Hunters	11	9	2	22
1st trav/ler	20	2	-	22
2nd trav/ler	16	5	1	22
Bear	10	10	2	22
Lion	8	13	1	22
Fox	8	12	2	22
Donkey	16	3	3	22
Cock	1	15	6	22
Fox	9	9	4	22
Dog	11	6	5	22
Total	146	121	41	308

Table A.7

Four to six-year-old children's justifications of their characterizations of the animal characters of fables. Second group.

Agents	Story	Previous Knowledge	No explanation	Total
Villager	28	-	1	29
Hen	22	6	1	29
Dog	17	9	3	29
Camel	23	5	1	29
Zeus	19	8	2	29
Grandma	20	7	2	29
Doctor	26	-	3	29
Jury	11	13	5	29
Mum	12	17	-	29
Boy	28	-	1	29
Total	206	65	19	290

Table A.8

Four to six-year-old children's justifications of their characterizations of the animal characters of fables. Third group.

Agents	Story	Previous Knowledge	No explanation	Total
Lion	14	7	2	23
Mouse	12	9	2	23
Sun	6	16	1	23
Wind	9	14	-	23
Ant	19	3	1	23
Gras/per	21	1	1	23
Total	81	50	7	138

Table A.9

Four to six-year-old children's justifications of their characterizations of the animal characters of fables. Fourth Group.

Agents	Story	Previous Knowledge	No explanation	Total
Boy	15	2	2	19
Villagers	15	-	4	19
Rabbit	13	2	4	19
Turtle	8	7	4	19
Crow	11	5	3	19
Fox	13	4	2	19
Total	75	20	19	114

Table A.10

Four to six-year-old children's justifications of their characterizations of the animal characters of fables. Fifth Group.

Agents	Story	Previous Knowledge	No explanation	Total
Wolf	12	8	-	20
Lamb	9	9	2	20
Fox	13	7	-	20
Pigeon	16	4	-	20
Total	50	28	2	80

Table A.11

Four to six-year-old children's criteria of evaluations of the animal characters of fables. First Group.

Agents	No expla- nation	General vague	Moral	Killing injury	Morally indif.	Others' behav.	Useful- ness	Total
Deer	3	7	2	8	1	1	-	22
Lion	-	2	-	20	-	-	-	22
Woo/ter	4	3	3	9	-	3	-	22
Fox	8	1	6	6	-	-	1	22
Hunters	2	-	-	20	-	-	-	22
1st tr.	-	2	4	4	3	-	9	22
2nd tr.	1	3	3	3	7	-	5	22
Bear	2	-	-	18	2	-	-	22
Lion	1	-	2	19	-	-	-	22
Fox	2	-	4	16	-	-	-	22
Donkey	3	8	3	3	1	4	-	22
Cock	6	2	-	-	1	11	2	22
Fox	4	-	-	18	-	-	-	22
Dog	5	-	-	12	-	5	-	22
Total	41	28	27	156	15	24	17	308

Table A.12

Four to six-year-old children's criteria of evaluations of the animal characters of fables. Second group.

Agents	No expla- nation	General vague	Moral	Killing injury	Morally indif.	Others' behav.	Useful- ness	Total
Villager	1	-	6	21	1	-	-	29
Hen	1	8	5	2	-	3	10	29
Dog	3	2	14	5	3	2	-	29
Camel	1	2	9	8	3	4	2	29
Zeus	2	4	15	2	3	-	2	29
Grandma	2	6	12	-	6	-	3	29
Doctor	3	2	24	-	-	-	-	29
Jury	5	3	21	-	-	-	-	29
Mum	-	4	11	-	3	-	12	29
Boy	1	5	18	-	3	2	-	29
Total	19	36	135	38	22	11	29	290

Table A.13

Four to six-year-old children's criteria of evaluations of the animal characters of fables. Third group.

Agents	No expla- nation	General vague	Moral	Killing injury	Morally indif.	Others' behav.	Useful- ness	Total
Lion	2	2	3	14	-	-	2	23
Mouse	2	4	2	10	3	-	2	23
Sun	1	1	2	-	3	14	2	23
Wind	-	2	3	-	6	12	-	23
Ant	1	1	18	2	-	-	1	23
Grasshop.	1	2	10	2	5	-	3	23
Total	7	12	38	28	17	26	10	138

Table A.14

Four to six-year-old children's criteria of evaluations of the animal characters of fables. Fourth Group.

Agents	No expla- nation	General vague	Moral	Killing injury	Morally indif.	Others' behav.	Useful- ness	Total
Boy	2	1	7	-	7	2	-	19
Villag.	4	-	10	5	-	-	-	19
Rabbit	4	-	-	-	17	-	2	19
Turtle	4	-	2	-	11	-	2	19
Crow	3	1	4	1	4	6	-	19
Fox	2	1	12	-	-	-	-	19
Total	19	3	35	6	39	8	4	114

Table A.15

Four to six-year-old children's criteria of evaluations of the animal characters of fables. Fifth Group.

Agents	No expla- nation	General vague	Moral	Killing injury	Morally indif.	Others' behav.	Useful- ness	Total
Wolf	-	-	1	19	-	-	-	20
Lamb	2	4	2	6	2	3	1	20
Fox	-	4	-	16	-	-	-	20
Pigeon	-	4	2	8	4	1	1	20
Total	2	12	5	49	6	4	2	80

Table A.16

Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the general moral of fables. First Group.

	Deer	Fox	Bear	Donkey	Cock	Total
No response	6	5	4	3	1	19
Real situation	-	1	2	1	-	4
Transmission	-	1	-	1	-	2
Overge/zation	-	1	-	-	2	3
Indifferent	2	3	3	3	-	11
Harming	6	4	7	7	1	25
Event	-	1	-	-	-	1
Agent	6	1	-	3	3	13
Evaluation of ch.	-	-	-	1	-	1
Evaluation of act.	-	2	-	-	1	3
Explanation	-	-	-	-	1	1
Involvement	-	-	1	2	-	3
Retelling	2	1	2	-	9	14
Minor ideas	-	1	-	1	-	2
Correct	-	1	3	-	4	8
Total	22	22	22	22	22	110

Total

Table A.17

Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the general moral of fables. Second Group.

	Hen	Dog	Camel	Doctor	Mum	Total
No response	-	1	2	3	1	7
Real situation	-	1	2	-	1	4
Transmission	1	2	3	-	-	6
Overge/zation	1	1	1	1	1	5
Indifferent	-	-	-	2	2	4
Harming	1	2	1	-	-	4
Event	6	5	6	5	19	41
Agent	10	5	2	3	-	20
Evaluation of ch.	1	-	-	-	-	1
Evaluation of act.	-	-	-	2	1	3
Explanation	1	1	-	-	-	2
Involvement	1	1	2	4	2	10
Retelling	3	4	3	-	2	12
Minor ideas	2	-	1	8	-	11
Correct	2	6	6	1	-	15
Total	29	29	29	29	29	145

Table A.18

Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the general moral of fables. Third Group.

	Lion	Sun	Ant	Total
No response	4	3	1	8
Real situation	2	1	1	4
Transmission	1	-	-	1
Overgeneralization	-	-	1	1
Indifferent	2	3	3	8
Harming	4	1	-	5
Event	3	4	4	11
Agent	2	-	-	2
Evaluation of ch.	-	3	-	3
Evaluation of act.	-	3	1	4
Explanation	-	-	-	0
Involvement	-	2	2	4
Retelling	2	1	1	4
Minor ideas	-	2	3	5
Correct	3	-	6	9
Total	23	23	23	69

Table A.19

Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the general moral of fables. Fourth Group.

	Boy	Rabbit	Crow	Total
No response	3	4	3	10
Real situation	-	-	-	0
Transmission	-	-	2	2
Overge/zation	1	-	1	2
Indifferent	-	-	-	0
Harming	-	-	-	0
Event	-	5	1	6
Agent	6	-	1	7
Evaluation of ch.	1	-	-	1
Evaluation of act.	-	-	-	0
Explanation	-	1	-	1
Involvement	-	-	2	2
Retelling	3	7	5	15
Minor ideas	1	2	4	7
Correct	4	-	-	4
Total	19	19	19	57

Table A.20

Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the general moral of fables. Fifth Group.

	Wolf	Pigeon	Total
No response	1	1	2
Real situation	2	2	4
Transmission	1	-	1
Overgeneralization	2	2	4
Indifferent	2	-	2
Harming agent	4	4	8
Event	1	2	3
Agent	3	4	7
Evaluation of ch.	-	1	1
Evaluation of act.	-	-	0
Explanation	-	-	0
Involvement	-	1	1
Retelling	3	-	3
Minor ideas	1	3	4
Correct	-	-	0
Total	20	20	40

Table A.21

Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the application of the moral of fables to their own lives. First Group.

	Deer	Fox	Bear	Donkey	Cock	Total
No response	5	3	4	3	5	20
Real situation	-	1	-	-	1	2
Transmission	-	2	1	-	-	3
Overge/zation	2	2	-	-	-	4
Indifferent	3	4	4	5	5	22
Harming	9	6	8	10	9	42
Event	-	-	2	-	-	2
Agent	3	2	-	1	-	5
Evaluation of ch.	-	-	1	-	-	1
Evaluation of act.	-	-	-	-	-	0
Explanation	-	-	-	-	-	0
Involvement	-	-	1	2	1	4
Retelling	-	-	-	-	-	0
Minor ideas	-	1	-	1	-	2
Correct	-	1	1	-	1	3
Total	22	22	22	22	22	110

Table A.22

Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the application of the moral of fables to their own lives. Second Group.

	Hen	Dog	Camel	Doctor	Mum	Total
No response	3	5	5	6	1	20
Real situation	1	1	2	-	1	5
Transmission	1	2	2	-	-	5
Overge/zation	-	1	2	-	-	3
Indifferent	6	3	5	9	3	26
Harming	3	6	3	-	-	12
Event	8	3	-	6	21	38
Agent	4	3	2	4	2	15
Evaluation of ch.	1	-	-	-	-	1
Evaluation of act.	1	-	-	-	-	1
Explanation	-	-	-	-	-	0
Involvement	1	2	2	-	-	5
Retelling	-	-	-	-	-	0
Minor ideas	-	-	2	4	-	6
Correct	-	3	4	-	1	8
Total	29	29	29	29	29	145

Table A.23

Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the application of the moral of fables to their own lives. Third Group.

	Lion	Sun	Ant	Total
No response	12	11	7	30
Real situation	-	-	-	0
Transmission	1	-	-	1
Overge/zation	-	-	-	0
Indifferent	2	3	8	13
Harming	3	1	1	5
Event	3	4	1	8
Agent	1	-	-	1
Evaluation of ch.	-	-	-	0
Evaluation of act.	1	2	-	3
Explanation	-	-	-	0
Involvement	-	-	2	2
Retelling	-	-	-	0
Minor ideas	-	2	2	4
Correct	-	-	2	2
Total	23	23	23	69

Table A.24

Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the application of the moral of fables to their own lives. Fourth Group.

	Boy	Rabbit	Crow	Total
No response	4	5	6	15
Real situation	-	1	-	1
Transmission	-	-	-	0
Overge/zation	1	-	1	2
Indifferent	5	2	5	12
Harming	3	-	1	4
Event	-	7	1	8
Agent	-	-	-	0
Evaluation of ch.	-	-	-	0
Evaluation of act.	1	-	-	1
Explanation	-	-	-	0
Involvement	-	1	3	4
Retelling	-	-	-	0
Minor ideas	-	3	2	5
Correct	5	-	-	5
Total	19	19	19	57

by *[Name]*

Table A.25

Four to six-year-old children's ability to detect the application of the moral of fables to their own lives. Fifth Group.

	Wolf	Pigeon	Total
No response	3	2	5
Real situation	1	1	2
Transmission	2	-	2
Overge/zation	1	1	2
Indifferent	6	4	10
Harming	4	9	13
Event	-	-	0
Agent	1	2	3
Evaluation of ch.	-	-	0
Evaluation of act.	-	-	0
Explanation	-	-	0
Involvement	1	-	1
Retelling	-	-	0
Minor ideas	1	1	2
Correct	-	-	0
Total	20	20	40

In the focus of this chapter is the experimental testing of fables' applicability to a children's book. The fifth chapter, which presents the research plan and procedure of the study, also mentions the goals, method, the experiment's design and the research procedure, in particular important.

In the remaining two chapters of the work the results of the experiment are presented. The first two chapters

Summary of Thesis submitted for PhD degree

by Angela Yannicopoulou

on

The aesopic fable and the education of the young children
with special reference to the ages from four to six

Although aesopic fables were not originally the literary property of children, due to their plain style, their animal protagonists, and the lessons in prudence they conveyed, they became classics of children's literature and have been incorporated into school curricula for more than twenty-five centuries. The special aim of this research was to investigate the ways young children, from four to six-years-old, approach fables at a moral, cognitive and psychological level, and their ability to enjoy the stories while also grasping the morality the stories illustrate.

In the first chapter the literary qualities of fables are examined, with special reference to the different manifestations of the genre throughout the ages. The second part of the first chapter deals with kindergartners' conception of stories in general and their preferences regarding literature. In order to illuminate children's perception of stories, their cognitive abilities, as developmental psychology has defined them, was incorporated into this research.

In the second chapter, the morality conveyed by aesopic fables and the mental capacities and ethical comprehension of four to six-year-old children are analysed. Since fables employ animals to act out human foibles and illustrate human morality, the non-human personages of the stories and children's reactions to them are the focus of the third chapter. The fourth chapter deals with violence, as it is presented in children's books in general and fables in particular. It also expands on kindergartners' approach to it, their conceptions of death, their views of story endings, and the readers' identification with the story characters.

As the focus of this inquiry is the experimental testing of fables' suitability as a children's book, the fifth chapter, which presents the research plan and procedure of the current study, describing its goals, method, the experimental sample, and the research procedure, is particular important.

In the remaining five chapters of the work the results of the experiment are presented. They concern four to six-

year-old children's perception of the aesopic narrations as literary products (chapter six), their approach to the moral issues raised by fables (chapter seven), their detections of the stories hidden morality (chapter eight), their response to the tales' non-human protagonists (chapter nine) and the psychological effects of fables on them (chapter ten).

This research failed to demonstrate that young children learn from fables in a way that would lead them to apply their abstract moral lessons to comparable moral decisions in their own lives. Four to six-year-olds neither understood nor even suspected the hidden morality at the fables, and could not read the stories at any level besides the literal one. Nevertheless, their enchanting plots, the simple beauty of their narration, their animal protagonists, and the crude level of the morality they depict, which correspond with children's own moral conceptions, justify the place of the aesopic fables among the classics of children's literature. Although the importance of the aesopic fables to the moral development of four to six-year-old children was not demonstrated, their place as the favourite reading of children was definitely confirmed.