

**The Wonderful Wizard of Oz:
*A Journey of Self-Discovery through Partnership***

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The Wonderful Wizard of Oz was created purely for entertainment purposes. It has been a pleasure to discover that it is a text that speaks of love in the highest sense of the term: love for ourselves and for others.

According to the author, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* does not want to be a vehicle for morals or folkloric stereotypes of myths, fairy tales and legends that children like so much. It was written with the sole purpose of providing pleasure and wonder without the burdens of fear, pain and morals to a large audience of infants. Indeed children are not scared by the unknown. They have no filters and know how to capture every facet of the visible and invisible reality that contains wonder itself. Children have at their disposal an infinite web of knowledge, as they are still very close to their pure nature that allows them to see 'beyond'. Children are not afraid of death and in the fairy tale the witch is often the nicest character, they do not need to have something expensive or shiny in their hands, they can spend hours staring at an ant carrying a crumb of bread and get lost watching the leaves swaying clinging to the branches. They inhabit the world with wonder. The amazement and beauty of small things is much greater than all the dramas that are rife in a reality that sees them today, alas, more and more 'connected' to a digital world, and for this reason more and more ephemeral, hidden behind a thousand filters which makes them easily and irreparably conditioned and vulnerable.

The protagonist of the story is a little girl who crosses an unknown and dangerous land populated by characters who are very different from her. And she does it with the grace of someone who, despite difficulties, does not let herself be intimidated by the tyrants who rule the kingdom: the Wicked Witch of the West, her devotees, and the terrible Wizard of Oz himself. Dorothy is not discouraged by these institutions and their illicit rules. On the contrary, she welcomes them and uses them to evolve, showing on each occasion a crescendo of new skills that multiply themselves thanks to the power of partnership – whose foundations are sharing, support and mutual understanding. The strong message that the text conveys is clear: hierarchical structures often weaken personal power, and the aim of fairy tales is precisely to remind children that pure hearts need not be afraid of anything. Perhaps

alone we go faster, but together we go further. Eisler, in a recent study published together with anthropologist Douglas P. Fry, states that:

The new interdisciplinary perspective of the Partnership-Domination biocultural continuum reveals how cultural beliefs and social institutions such as politics, economics, and education influence and are influenced by childhood and gender relations. (Eisler & Fry 2019: 1-2)

The story shows how it is possible to build a new society through awareness, creativity and mutual care. It is symbolic of how Dorothy's solidarity, shared by her travel companions, can undermine Oz's institutions and change its community structure forever. In this sense, the paradigm of Eisler's Partnership becomes the means of change and the expression of a balanced and egalitarian lifestyle.

Oz is that place where, ten minutes before falling asleep, you bandage your wounds, soak your feet, and dream of being better, dozing off with a poem on your lips. It is that place where we decide that it is necessary to give humanity another chance (Cagidemetro in Baum 2004: 9).

The life of Frank L. Baum, author of the book, so full of events, attempts, victories and failures, is very reminiscent of Dorothy's journey through the world of Oz. The most exciting thing, however, is that, while wanting to remain in the realm of pure entertainment, he brings out a story made of wonders that find their perfect location in a journey towards self-discovery, and which sees the power of Partnership as an engine of action. It is a perfect composition that brings to the fore a social system characterised by mutual respect and profound care for the other, trust and diversity. It becomes a site of strengths rather than a reason for abuse and discrimination. Partnership emerges in every step of the path towards the Emerald City and back until the Kansan grasslands.

The passage from the monotonous and sun-burned prairies of a sad state in the center of North America to the Kingdom of Oz, which contains the whole universe, takes place thanks to a cyclone, and therefore thanks to the devastating force of nature. The cyclone becomes a transformative medium, causing the girl's uprooting and loss of coordinates. Dorothy is sucked up and passes to another dimension without fear, indeed with the curiosity of someone who wants to see what can be found in unknown places.

The power of the wind often recurs in the tales of shamans. It is a means, an element that allows you to fly from one world to another, as a manifestation of change and the transition to a new state, as a breath that gives life. The wind is also frequently mentioned in the Gospels as a manifestation of the Spirit: "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (Giovanni 3, 8: 1123).

As for the anthropologist Castaneda:

The wind moves inside a woman's body, because women have wombs. Once inside the uterus, the wind tells you things to do. The calmer and more relaxed the woman is, the better the results. It can be said that suddenly the woman finds herself doing things that she had no idea how to do. (Castaneda 1978:18)

According to many shamanic traditions, the most common four types of winds are associated with the four directions: the breeze is the east; the cold wind is the west; the warm wind is the south; the hard wind is the north. The four winds also have their personality: the breeze is cheerful, agile and changeable; the cold wind is gloomy, melancholy and thoughtful; the warm wind carries happiness;

the hard wind is energetic, impatient and imperious. Dorothy, albeit at the mercy of the wind, immediately understands that it is useless to fight against something powerful and infinitely greater, and in fact she lies down in her cot and falls asleep. Dorothy lets it happen. The little girl becomes a medium between two worlds and immediately the first magic materializes.

The little girl is snatched from a sad place, always the same, grey and bare, and lands in a country made of colors and full of life. She distances herself from those who no longer hope or dream, held down by a static ideal of duty and habit, crushed by a reality made up of hard work, incapable of wondering. Without knowing how, just for the simple fact of having entrusted herself to a nature as destructive as wise, Dorothy manages to free the Munchkins of the Eastern land from slavery, because she understood they were slaves of an abusive power. It is from the East, from sunrise, that Dorothy begins her new life, no longer transported but aware and conscious: she must walk through four kingdoms in four directions, and often overcome strenuous trials, trials that bring her to rediscover her power up to the Emerald City.

It is surprising how in many shamanic tradition, the theme of the four directions returns recurrently with strong meanings. In the Celtic tradition, turning to the North means honoring the ancestors who guide and protect us, the Spirits of the West cleanse from what is no longer needed, the healing and knowledge to be 'whole' comes from the South, while turning to the East invites us to start the new day complete and intact, after the previous steps that have transformed and purified us. For the Lakota Indians, the four directions correspond to the four elements (fire, water, air, and earth), the four states of being (mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional), and the four power animals (eagle, grizzly bear, white buffalo, and wolf). During the *Inipi*, or the sweat lodge, people pray and offer tobacco in the four directions invoking the favor of the spirits so that each passage is safe.

Dorothy moves in the four directions, and she does not do it alone, but blessed by the kiss on the forehead of the Good Witch of the North who, in a world in which the little girl has no orientation, shows her the passage towards light, which is paved with yellow bricks. There are many symbols in the book and the same golden road that Dorothy treads is an example. At her side we find Toto, *nomen omen* of a friendly Totem animal that accompanies her to the other world like a modern Anubis, supporting her with the gift of loyalty and fidelity (which means first of all, loyalty to yourself). In fact, Dorothy, while wandering through an unknown land, never loses herself and remains faithful to her principles of gentle strength and solidarity with those in need. Everyone in the clan can find each other thanks to her. In fact for these helpers-helped by Dorothy is a gift from God (*doron* means gift + *theos* means God).

The Scarecrow, who looks so much like the Puritan peasants of the early 1900s, has straw in his skull and is afraid of fire. Fire is the element of knowledge that, by burning, could consume it all, inevitably turning it into something different from what it was. The destruction of the old structures of knowledge and consciousness would elevate it, but how much fear is there in attaining awareness? The Tin Man represents the workers' power exploited by the industries, a heartless link in an infinite assembly chain. His being is dismembered because he does not have an ideal that holds him together, and his greatest fear is water, which could rust its gears. Crying would mean dying to him. His greatest desire is having a heart, the most perfect engine of a sentient being, but how much pain is in store for those with feelings? The Lion, king of the forest, wanders in despair without his throne because he has been domesticated by a society that has convinced him that he is worth little. He fears fire and feels part of a social circus that limits him. The ardor of courage has died out in him, he has lost himself and he is in search for his true nature as a leader. He would like to find himself, but how much effort does it need to take responsibility and fight also for the good of others?

It is not brain, heart and courage that our characters lack, but the wholeness of their real “I”, the awareness that we are all different and therefore precious to each other. “Mutual” values (another Eislerian term) are the theme of this journey, values that lead to the rediscovery of personal power. Such power has no reason to exist, or at least does not entirely fulfill its function, if it is not in the service of the group. Starting from these premises, the characteristics of each protagonist are not actually perceived by them. The characters are desperate because they do not feel whole, and they cannot find their place in the (and their own) world. They feel wrong, inadequate, useless and certain of being incomplete, even if the story denies it at every point. For example, the Scarecrow has brilliant ideas typical of a fine brain, the Tin Man is generous and shows on several occasions that he has a big heart, and the Lion gets involved in support of each clan member without delay. They are a bundle of ideas, emotions and heroism, while Dorothy, whose feminine ethos is made of purity and strength, becomes the one who allows them to reveal themselves. The girl is full of compassion for all the beings she meets along the way, but at the same time she is also very practical and realistic: she never forgets to eat and rest, keeps herself tidy and thinks about her dog, Toto. Her character is not domeneering, yet Dorothy is the guide of others, the one who can make them discover the best version of themselves. None of the characters is superior to the others: they are different, and when these differences come together, in full respect of others, the action is set in motion along the yellow brick road which leads to a change in the state of things and, ultimately, translates into their evolution.

The principles of Partnership are fully present in this fairy tale which sees each character’s self as not separated from the others’ but, on the contrary, rooted and connected in a relational matrix in which the presence of the other enriches each one. The peaceful coexistence centered on diversity becomes a catalyst for change. Consequently, every need is met *with* others rather than at their expense.

On the other hand, the Wizard of Oz is the one who holds the power of dominion and maintains the submission of his people by exercising fear. Oz is the architect of a fake city, where personal development is impossible. As a result, his subjects are not able to see the colors of the world and are unable to free their creativity and self-expression. They obey without even asking the reason for certain choices, and their spirit is subdued and suffers from a lack of freedom and, consequently, of personal evolution.

The Wizard of Oz uses fear with the intention to dominate and be respected without ever having to move from his palace. He forces everyone to wear filter glasses fixed with padlocks, thus limiting the freedom to see ‘beyond’ the curtain of his falsehood. For this reason, he is presented as a dead, shapeless character, swamped in his own lies until he is discovered and all the veil of mystery and reverential power that hovers around him finally crumbles.

At the same time, Oz is also a very creative magician. In fact, with very simple psychomagic acts, he provides the Lion, the Tin Man and the Scarecrow with their “wholeness” through the power of imagination and intention. The archetypes found in the places and characters of Oz symbolize the process of self-awareness through which it is possible to rediscover everyone’s talent and, at the same time, the potential of the community in which everyone lives. Indeed, as to achieve a true state of "Partnership", each community must allow every member to be oneself, without exclusions, because even the humblest role can prove to be fundamental. Warriors, tinsmiths, magical animals are needed in order for the cosmos of Oz to start working properly again. A dynamic cosmic balance would certainly be created if everyone could express their (personal) available talents without wanting or having to prevail over the others. This world would be made up of peaceful and fruitful collaborations, thus even allowing people to travel easily/swiftly between different dimensions.

Even in Oz, a perfect “mutual” model is created: violence and dominator attitudes are destroyed, and justice becomes the value that rules a new type of society.

What according to Baum was supposed to be a simple entertainment book carries with it a very powerful message of hope for a better world. We all must aspire to this world, which must not be limited to the kingdom of Oz or to the world of fairy tales. On the contrary, as Judy Garland reminds us in her masterful cinematic interpretation of the classic movie, one must transform dreams into reality: *Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high, there is a land that I dreamed of once in a lullaby.*

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