Does not each of us, in coming into this world, go through a transformation just as wonderful as that of a sea-egg, or a butterfly? and do not reason and analogy, as well as Scripture, tell
us that that transformation is not the last? and that, though what we shall be, we know not, yet we are here but as the crawling caterpillar, and shall be hereafter as the perfect fly.  

(The Water-Babies 87)

Tutor to the Prince of Wales and first Professor of Modern History at Cambridge University, Charles Kingsley (1819-75) was well-known in his own day as an educator and as a strong advocate for Thomas Arnold’s educational reforms. Kingsley became especially vocal as a proponent of the Greek ideal of forming a sound mind in a sound body—so vocal, in fact, that his suggestion that sports should play a major role at Eton, Harrow, and the other training grounds for the leaders of the Empire became caricatured as "muscular Christianity."

As the tag suggests, however, the goal of education for Kingsley, whether it was to be education of the mind or of the body, was ultimately religious. He was, after all, an Anglican clergyman and chaplain to Queen Victoria, and the emphasis in his pedagogy is highly moral: while granting that any knowledge, even religious, must be based on observation (Letters 2: 303), he writes that the principal aim of education is to "enable us hereafter to make ourselves and all around us, wiser, better, and happier" (Letters 1: 60). If more empirical knowledge does not produce a better human being, it comes under Kingsley's attack.

Furthermore, like Dickens in Nicholas Nickleby (1839) and Hard Times (1854), he worries that schools have been taken over by the "reforming," statistics-minded educators—the Gradgrinds and the M'Choakumchilds. What is required to reverse this deadening trend, he feels, is not more "facts" but a love of learning, and this can best be nurtured by exploiting the child's natural inclination for the fanciful. At the same time, in preparation for the highly moralistic goal that Kingsley sets for education, the student must first be taught to see. While encouraging the development of the imagination, therefore, Kingsley did not conceive of children's literature as a refuge from the real world. It was to be a non-threatening, imaginative preparation for the assumption of
one's Christian responsibilities in a world of real, complex, and sometimes fearsome adult problems. "Correct" perceptions in childhood—that is, perceptions that had been coached and clarified by the narrator—would prompt strong emotions in the young reader; these emotions, in turn, would compel moral actions in the same readers as adults.

Charles Kingsley was best known in his own day as a preacher and as the author of six highly polemical novels. Since he held such strong views on the philosophy of pedagogy, however, it is not surprising that he is today most widely appreciated as the author of a delightful children's book. Since it was written, in 1863, *The Water-Babies* has been dramatized, animated, filmed, and televised, and many adults, if they know nothing at all about Kingsley's other works, still fondly recall the compelling fantasy of this story, the fine original illustrations by Linley Sanbourne (who became, in 1900, the chief cartoonist for *Punch*), and the even happier world that Jessie Willcox Smith evoked with her colorful drawings for the 1916 edition. Thirty-five years after its publication his tale of a little boy who plunges beneath the water into a world as colorful as Alice's Wonderland remained among the ten most popular children's books in England, and it is today still available in three editions.

*The Water-Babies* offers a classic example of children's literature employed to disarm and to teach. C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Antoine de Saint Exupery and many others after them have used this Kingsley an model: writing a nonsensical story supposedly for children, fully aware that it will be read aloud by adults. Since Kingsley's own earlier...
The Water-Babies as Catechetical Paradigm

by John C. Hanks, S.J.

Dunno, not much of a way from this world, go through a transformation, or as we'd call it, a change of heart, and do not reason and argue, as well as I think, but that transformation is a death and last that thing we used to be, we know now, we see here, but as the changing category, shall be the beginning of the perfect.

The Water-Babies

June to the Prince of Wales and first Professor of Modern Hebrew at Cambridge University, Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) was, by occupation, an academic and in a strong advocate for Thomas Arnold’s educational reforms. Kingsley became especially vocal as a proponent of the Greek idea of forming a moral and a religious base of the society; in fact, he says, “The character should be a moral one of life, in harmony with the moral principles of Christianity.”

In the view of the Catholic Church, the goal of education for Kingsley, whether it be the education of the nation or of the body, was to be religious. He was, after all, an Anglican priest and chaplain to Queen Victoria, and the emphasis in his philosophy of education, which he strongly expressed in his important works (Ignatius; 1833), is that the principal aim of education is “to make us desire to make ourselves and of second, as what we want most.”

In his work, Kingsley knew that knowledge is not a human being, it comes under the mind’s attack. From Emma, Markham’s Nicholas Nickleby (1839) and Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, the characters are so involved in the novel’s plot, the Cheshire Cat and the Jabberwocky, what is required to recover the characters’ sense of self, is to be aware of the images, and the story must be read by experiencing the characters’ internalsold for the body. As the same, the principal aim of education is to make us desire to make ourselves, and of second, what we desire most.”

When we know that knowledge is not a human being, it comes under the mind’s attack. From Emma, Markham’s Nicholas Nickleby (1839) and Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, the characters are so involved in the novel’s plot, the Cheshire Cat and the Jabberwocky, what is required to recover the characters’ sense of self, is to be aware of the images, and the story must be read by experiencing the characters’ internal thoughts. Kingsley knew that knowledge is not a human being, it comes under the mind’s attack.

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