

This mode of interpretation was, of course, the traditional one. In 1531, Sir Thomas Elyot had given Aesop the same fundamental position and functions in training his "Prince." After the boy had the merest smattering of Latin, Sir Thomas would have him turn to Greek and use Aesop as his first Greek author.

Nowe to folowe my purpose: after a fewe and quicke rules of grāmer/immediately or interlasyng hit therwith / wolde be redde to the childe / Esopes fables in greke: in whiche argumēt childrē moche do delite. And surely it is a moche pleasant lesson / & also profitable / as well for that it is elegāt & brefe (& nat withstanding it hath moche varietie in wordes / and therwith moche helpeth to the vnderstandinge of greke) as also in those fables is included moche morall and politike wisdomē. Wherfore in the teachinge of them the maister diligently must gader to gyther those fables / whiche may be most accōmodate to the aduancement of some vertue / wherto he perceiueth the childe inclined: or to the rebuke of some vice / wherto he findeth his nature disposed. And therin the master ought to exercise his witte / as wel to make the childe plainly to vnderstande the fable / as also declarynge the signification therof compendiously / and to the purpose. fore sene alwaye / that as well this lesson as all other autours / whiche the childe shall lerne / either greke or latine / verse or prose / be perfectly had without the boke: wherby he shall nat only attaine plentie of the tonges called Copie / but also encrease and nourishe remembrāce wonderfully.³

Sir Thomas and Brinsley agree that the fables of Aesop must be emphasized as morality.

Both Sir Thomas and Brinsley are only following the tradition, as does Erasmus also. Besides the chance-allusions we have noticed or shall notice, he discusses in the *Christian Prince* the matter in some detail. He says of the teacher,

While his pupil is still a little child, he can bring in his teachings through pretty stories, pleasing fables, clever parables. When he is bigger, he can teach the same things directly.

When the little fellow has listened with pleasure to Aesop's fable of the lion and the mouse or of the dove and the ant, and when he has finished his laugh, then the teacher should point out the *new* moral: the first fable teaches the prince to despise no one, but to seek zealously to win to himself by kindnesses the heart of even the lowest peasant (*plebs*), for no one is so weak but that on occasion he may be a friend to help you, or an enemy to harm you, even though you be the most powerful. When he has had his fun out of the eagle, queen of the birds, that was almost completely done for by the beetle, the teacher should again point out the meaning: not even the most powerful prince can afford to provoke or overlook even the humblest enemy. Often those who can inflict no harm by physical strength can do

³ Elyot, *Gouernour* (1531), fol. 30v; Croft, Vol. I, pp. 55-57.