

## THE ANT AND THE GRASSHOPPER IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Presumably everyone heard the story of the ant and the grasshopper in their childhood. In this short fable written by Aesop around 500 BC, the grasshopper is depicted as a lazy and fun-loving individual, while the ant represented a hardworking and disciplined one.

In the story, the industriousness of the ant, which insults the grasshopper with sarcastic language while refusing to help him by saying "You sang? I'm glad; now you can dance.", is highlighted as a virtue.

Actually, in this fable, Aesop gives a very early example of 'Social Darwinism' 2400 years before Herbert Spencer. It is simply because "refusing to help a hungry creature on a cold winter day and leaving it to die" essentially is a subliminal message that the individuals who do not add value to the society should be eliminated out of the system.

Interestingly, a more humanistic story of the locust, a short-horned type of grasshopper, is told in Plato's Phaedrus, 150 years after Aesop [1]:

*"It is quite improper for a lover of the Muses never to have heard of such things. The story goes that these locusts were once men, before the birth of the Muses, and when the Muses were born and song appeared, some of the men were so overcome with delight that they sang and sang, forgetting food and drink, until at last unconsciously they died."*

Plato asserted in that anecdote that the passion of grasshopper for music was not caused by their fondness for entertainment or their laziness, but emerged as a virtue they possessed thanks to the value they gave to art.

While the locust was transformed into two different characters by Aesop and Plato at close intervals, the only one that has survived to the present day is the lazy and careless figure drawn by Aesop. One possible explanation of this fact is that fairy tales always appeal to a wider audience than short anecdotes in philosophy books.

This comparison is also important as it shows the main reasons for the rapid spread of disinformation in social networks. Because disinformation shared on social networks spreads faster than accurate information and is more accepted by many users due to similar reasons.

People read and share fancy posts, written in a simple language with convincing visuals and short expressions that are easily accessible on social networks. At the end of the day, they believe more in the disinformation presented by such posts and do not need to investigate its accuracy.

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### REFERENCES

[1] Fowler, H. N. (1999). Plato, Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.