

THE ANT AND THE GRASSHOPPER IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The narrative of the ant and the grasshopper from Aesop's fables, originating around 500 BC, remains a familiar childhood tale. Within this concise allegory, the grasshopper embodies leisure and indolence, in contrast to the ant, emblematic of diligence and discipline. The fable underscores the ant's industry, which, through its refusal to aid the grasshopper in a sarcastic retort, saying “*You sang? I'm glad; now you can dance!*” extols the virtue of toil. Remarkably, Aesop's fable presages 'Social Darwinism' prefiguring Herbert Spencer's conceptualization by 2400 years. The underlying implication that neglecting to assist a starving creature in dire circumstances suggests the removal of individuals perceived as non-contributors to societal welfare.

Significantly, Plato's 'Phaedrus,' narrating a more humanistic account of the locust, a type of grasshopper, emerged 150 years after Aesop's rendition [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 attributes the locusts' song-induced demise not to mere indulgence or sloth but as a consequence of their profound appreciation for art, viewing their passion as a virtuous trait. While both Aesop and Plato crafted distinct characters from the locust, Aesop's portrayal of the idle figure persists today, overshadowing Plato's interpretation.

This comparison assumes significance in understanding the proliferation of

misinformation across contemporary social networks. Disinformation disseminated through these platforms exhibits accelerated propagation rates, surpassing accurate information. This phenomenon mirrors the allure of folk tales; similarly, engaging content, characterized by simplistic language, compelling visuals, and brevity, garners greater acceptance among users.

Disinformation, conveyed through these platforms, often surpasses authentic information in dissemination rates, echoing the historical allure of folklore over scholarly discourse. This phenomenon is rooted in the preference for easily consumable content characterized by its simplicity, captivating visuals, and succinctness, akin to the appeal of traditional folk tales.

Consequently, the accessibility and superficial appeal of such content alleviate the need for critical scrutiny, leading many to forego the rigorous investigation necessary to discern accuracy. As a result, a concerning trend emerges, where the ease of access and consumption supersedes the essentiality of verifying the reliability of information, perpetuating the cycle of misinformation in an increasingly interconnected digital sphere.

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REFERENCES

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