

The Thief, His Mother, and Us: Sociological Issues with Implications in Ten Pedagogisable Aesop Fables

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Doi: 10.23918/ijsses.v10i2p244

Abstract: He was an “ugly” slave. Born around 620 BCE, Aesop has magnificently depicted timeless sociological issues in numerous universally known fables. Unknown in schools, for being probably too “popular” to be taken seriously, Aesop fables could represent a significant source of wisdom and even knowledge about sociology. Men, women, boys, daughters, sons, wives, maids, thieves, fathers, almost every member of a modern society has been immortalized in a strikingly simple complexity. The present paper will be an investigation through a conceptual content analysis of Aesop’s embedded theories -texts and sub-texts- found in ten selected fables around the notions of security, parentlessness, ageism in the work place, power, status, and even surprisingly beyond that. The hidden facet of the Greek slave as a sociologist might be (re)discovered through a comparative study between sociology theories (academic content) and ancient Greek fables (popular culture). The connection between the two worlds -academic vs. the non-academic fictional pop culture- is often known to be exclusive since apparently conflictual. The outcome of this study has shown a potentially pedagogisable content to be taught in sociology schools and elsewhere like psychology schools and probably more. **Aesop Fables: a modern handbook of sociology?**

Keywords: Academic Long Form Content, Aesop Fables, Sociology, Pedagogisation, Pop Culture

1. Introduction

We know it now. Sociology can definitely borrow from the narrativity of textual genres like fables. Sociology is that science that study human behavior, attitudes, relationships and interaction including other aspects of societal life like culture, sub-culture, education, family issues, education, social movements, social change, politics, social classes etc. To sum up, sociology is about social phenomena and issues. Whether we like it or not, we cannot not to communicate. Communicating implies living with the other(s). Being alone is supposedly the worst thing human beings can experience. Thus, human interactions whether at home, at work, or any social or public place are subjects of sociological studies. Historically, the individualistic and naturalistic approaches were the two mainstream approaches that preceded the interactionists approach. Those approaches focus on the individual and/or his inherited dispositions. According to the naturalists, human beings are led by their instincts just “like animals”. Humans are therefore, “social” individuals. Their behaviors are predictable owing to based on instincts,

Received: January 9, 2023

Accepted: February 23, 2023

Safir, K.B. (2023). The Thief, His Mother, and Us: Sociological Issues with Implications in Ten Pedagogisable Aesop Fables. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 10(2), 244-262.

desires, needs and all the socially based other behaviors including living in groups, founding families and sharing the same culture. Aristotle was the first philosopher who considered that “man is by nature a social animal” (Bull, 2021). He was followed then by Darwin to assert the same theory (Hawkins & Hawkins, 1997).

The term pedagogisation has been initially coined by Janpeter Kob. It simply means the transfer of a seemingly untransferable content from a domain to another, from a discipline to another through an inter/cross/multi-disciplinary mode. The worlds of fiction and nonfiction seemed to be exclusive so far. However, and throughout this paper the compromise of the two worlds can be possible if we shift our intention from text to sub-text and from the explicit to the implicit. And the implicit can sometimes be more interesting than the explicit. From that perspective, we think that Aesop has encoded a myriad of theories in a form of innocent very short stories called fables destined apparently to children and slaves for an exclusively entertaining purpose. We are probably wrong. Aesop fables are hidden gems of wisdom for any person who lives in society and who wants to understand the dynamics of complex sociological issues in interaction. Who could believe that the Eagle and the Arrow fable can imply the necessity to be aware of social media cyber-criminality by extension and even more? The plasticity of Aesopian narratives offers a chance to learn and teach a lot about the human follies and wisdom in different endlessly differing often complex contexts.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Sociology and Social Issues

“Sociology is the social science that studies human societies, their interactions, and the processes that preserve and change them. It does this by examining the dynamics of constituent parts of societies such as institutions, communities, populations, and gender, racial, or age groups. Sociology also studies social status or stratification, social movements, and social change, as well as societal disorder in the form of crime, deviance, and revolution » (Form et al., 2021) . It would be utopian to imagine a society without problems, crises, conflicts, and misunderstanding. As it would be folly to pretend that sociology with its plethora of theories can solve all the issues. From a functionalistic point of view “stability is necessary for a strong society”. The responses to social issues are supposed to be social reforms rather than unrealistic facade changes. For the conflict theory, social class, race, and gender inequalities are the characteristic of any society. Conflicts arise whether we like it or not. And because humans are gregarious, social interactions that can imply misunderstanding are the norm. “One cannot not communicate”, remarked Watzlawick (1965). Furthermore, socializing with the others is not without risks. Behavioral issues may arise at any moment making things worse with the interventions of other members of society. From those problematic moments societies can create wisdom or what we call experience. Experiences shape the identities of individuals through the repeated unavoidable interactions that occur at home, in schools, street, work places, to mention only these. The social issues Aesop tried to depict were remarkably modern through their timelessness. Greed, treason, diplomacy, kingship, friendship, arrogance, equity, religion, death, murder, contempt, pity, gluttony, and loneliness is just a short list of the plethoric number of the quasi limitless issues and problems humans dream to solve someday.

2.2 Narratives

Narratives -a series of real or fictional related events or experiences (Narrative, nd) - can be traced back to more than 30,000 years ago. Other historical sources went even further and assumed that “some of [the] stories can be traced as far back as 1500 BCE, to the ancient Sanskrit text, the Rig Veda; many of [them] are even older” (Chacko, 2021). The earlier versions of narratives were drawings in caves that narrate the daily activities of our ancestors. Children love stories, adults too. You probably remember the stories told to you in your childhood. Narratives have social functions. We usually tell a story to somebody to change behaviour, raise awareness or to change something. Telling something to somebody is a social interaction. Narratives entertain. They are lies to tell the truth. They can amuse through real or fictional experiences that depict humans, animals and even objects using personification and allegories to name only these. They are social problems and issues that depict consequences of certain “anti-social” behaviours to be followed usually with resolutions. Narratives and cultures are inseparable. They reflect the values and the wisdom of nations and civilizations around the world and can even borrow from each other for wisdom is universal. No wonder that nations till now entertain -no pun intended- their myths and legends to transform them as a national cultural and even historical treasure. Generations are proud to protect their narratives through systematic academic procedures like literary archives and even hollywoodian movies, and Dracula is only the tip of the iceberg.

2.3 Fables

A fable is the shortest narrative that dramatizes slices of people’s lives in a pleasant and entertaining way. The shortness of fables makes them one of the best short form content. In a digitalized world, short form content is the most suitable literary content for post-millennials. Fables can be a serious competitor for digital content like social media content and long form content taught in schools (see the article “Short Forms for Big Minds”). Like any narrative, fables are allegorical fictional compositions that feature animals, humans, and other entities and objects like in Aesop’s “The Eagle and the Arrow”. Fables were traced back in ancient Pharaonic paintings featuring a cat and geese. Fables usually present morals at the end, at the beginning or -interestingly- hidden between the lines as implicit lessons. The double function of fables that consists in entertaining and educating make it an excellent “pedagogisable” teachable content. Almost the quasi psycho-social traits and temperaments are personified in the fables. This characteristic adds a real instructional value to this type of narrative that represents the whole society with its multiplicity and complexity within different contexts.

2.4 Aesop Fables

The “strikingly ugly slave” (Aesop, 2022) and the “coherent legend” (West, nd) called Aesop (c. 620–564 BCE) is the father of more than 358 fables that “highlighted human follies and weaknesses” (Aesop, 2022) according to scattered references. Although no writing presumed belonging to him survived, his numerous fables were -and are still- maintained by the surprisingly powerful oral tradition in a myriad of languages. The converging ancient Greek sources were enough to prove the authenticity of the fables accredited to Aesop and Aesop only. Aristotle, Herodotus, Aristophanes, Sophocles, and Plutarch mentioned him as the slave who became one of the greatest - not to say THE greatest- fabulist of all time. As a “Wise Fool and Philosopher” (Gibbs, 2009), and an Archetypal Hero (Papademetriou, 1997),

Aesop is as legendary as his remarkably instructing fables that function as real panacea to unethicalness (Iyanda, 2020). The name of “Aesop” and “fable” became synonymous. The Aesopian style based on the anthropomorphic animal characters has been employed by big names in literature like Lewis Carroll, Kenneth Grahame, Rudyard Kipling and the French fabulist Jean de La Fontaine (Kubiak, 2021) to name only those.

2.5 Aesop and Sociology

The powerful sociological role of narratives to understand the individual within a society is undeniable (Işık, 2015). In his article, Franzosi (1998) asked the following question “why and how sociologists should be interested in narrative”. His answer was straightforward: “Narrative texts are packed with sociological information and a great deal of our empirical evidence is in narrative form” (Franzosi, 1998). For Erol Işık, sociology, as a discipline offering analyses at different levels of social life can borrow from these textual data in various different ways (Işık, 2015). From a Shakespearian perspective, life is a stage where all the (im)possible scenarios are (un)predictable. Therefore, reading those scenarios from animals is a way to live their experiences as if we are there. Readers can feel and live every emotion with a possibility to rewind time and unkill the dead and Aesop has magnificently understood that. Fiction in its shortest form (fable) is the best way to create a world and uncreate it later on if we want. Writers as well as readers can “play God” for a moment and that feeling is simply power in its entire splendor. Choosing the shortest form of literature has a pedagogical function. It is a way to sensitise the world with simple unsophisticated words to teach life to the young and the old, the good and the bad, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, “the born and the unborn” (Lincoln, nd). Adults’ folly, as well as children foolishness, are both portrayed in a series of fables that depict their wisdomlessness in “the Man, the Boy, and the Donkey” or “the Shepherd Boy and the Wolf”. The myriad of temperaments and features used in the fable were enough to cover the quasi totality of human psycho-sociological and interactional issues humans can encounter. Greed, treason, envy, suicidal thoughts, power, diplomacy, kingship, friendship, arrogance, equity, religion, death, murder, contempt, pity, gluttony, loneliness, cooperation, (im)patience, reason, intellect, role modeling, and the list can go on and on.

3. Content Analysis of the 10 Aesop Fables

3.1 The Country Mouse and the Town Mouse

3.1.1 Summary

This fable is about a country mouse and his town mouse friend who exchanged invitations.

3.1.2 The Complete Story Link

<https://www.read.gov/aesop/004.html>

3.1.3 Sociological Concepts

Luxury, hospitality, peace, insecurity, stress, risk taking, modesty.

3.1.4 Analysis of Text and Sub-Text

The fable is about space, hospitality, and urban vs. rural sociology mainly. This sociology studies the different changes of behaviours in relation to specific spaces including cultures and sub-cultures. Living in urban or rural areas has a price. Both have benefits and flip sides as well. From a sociological point of view, the choice of a living place is related to the individual character and personality and the way they manage risks. The difference of density between urban and rural spaces impacts the nature of behaviours, social exchanges, and the interactions. The large density of the towns creates a feeling of business, over-crowdedness and above all the multiple stressful scenarios. Housing, transportation, services, utilities and communication are based on the growing demands of the ever growing population. The very modest meal offered in the country made the town mouse decide to show his cousin “how to live” as a sub-text that says “you are dead until you move on to the town”. The presence of the dog and the two huge mastiffs that created a situation of panic with their threatening noise symbolized all the dangers of a town life. Luxury has a price. The same could be said for a modest life in peace.

3.2 The Thief and His Mother

3.2.1 Summary of the Fable

A schooled boy who lives with his mother stole a book from one of his classmates and brought it to her. The mother decided to keep the book to sell it later without scolding the boy. The small thief became a big one and was finally sentenced to death. Before that, he bit his mother’s ear lobe as a punishment for the bad education she gave him.

3.2.2 Complete Story Link

<https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/the-thief-and-his-mother>

3.2.3 Sociological Concepts

Motherhood, fatherlessness, parenting styles, poverty, precocious adulthood, social (ir)responsibility.

3.2.4 Analysis of Text and Sub-Text

The first act of the fable was an act of theft which is one of the misdemeanours societies try to get rid of. Theft in sociology is a negative anti-social behaviour. The reaction of the mother leads us to tackle motherhood, parenting style and education. Education as another social issue implies discussing the responsibility of the mother to educate a social citizen, her son. The mother, when deciding not to blame the son for his first “small” -seemingly “innocent” -theft, sent her son a nonverbal message saying that misdemeanours are allowed in her family. As the saying goes (Aesop again) “qui vole un oeuf vole un boeuf”, meaning (He who will steal an egg will steal an ox). Thefts could be desperate acts resulting from necessity and poverty. However, the end does not justify the means. The son’s “small” theft became “bigger” and at the same time ignored by the irresponsible mother. Thinking that survival implies taking the possessions of others, the law intervened. The absence of the father is another hidden facet of the story. In sociology that absence reinforces the feeling of impunity. It also gives a feeling of responsibility providing money or objects that could be sold. That precarious responsabilization is the

worst thing a child can face in that situation. That situation implies the absence of the notion of playing since stealing was a “job”. Fathers’ absence can result from death, separation, divorce, or a remote job. In sociology the implications of fatherlessness are unimaginable. Absent-fathers can cause lasting damages on sons and families. Poverty, dropping out of school, drug addiction are examples of the devastating effects on children not to mention violence, “forced” theft and prison. And this is exactly what happened to the son, prison. Above all, Aesop knew all those devastating effects hundred years BC. The end of the fable offers an astonishing Hitchcockian ending. The son biting his mother’s ear lob as a punishment for the bad education she gave him. Aesop tries to remind the world that fathers or in loco parents and mainly mothers in fatherless families have a huge responsibility. They can “make” or break children. They can produce an honest citizen or a future criminal. Educating children in a righteous way can strengthen and maintain social peace. On the other hand, if ignored can reinforce social insecurity. And again, Aesop knew that hundred years BC. So, mothers, beware of spoiling your progeny when money tempts you! Consequences.

3.3 The Old Hound

3.3.1 Summary

An old hound asked to hunt could no longer catch a stag with his weak teeth. His old age did not permit him to hunt the way he used to. His Master berated him without caring of his age and inability.

3.3.2 Complete Story Link

<https://fairytalez.com/the-old-hound/>

3.3.3 Sociological Concepts

Old age, ageism, youth, servitude, fidelity, social status, slavery.

3.3.4 Analysis of Text and Sub-Text

The greying of individuals is a part of the greying of a nation. From that perspective, sociological studies have tried to consider aging and its repercussions on a family, a community or the whole society. Aging as an inevitable natural process has many significances for different individuals. Through *The Old Hound*, Aesop tried to asking greying people or old people to yield the same performance they yielded in their young age is simply an absurdity. The second lesson Aesop wanted to give is about refreshing a nation by training new generations to replace the old ones. The fable also reveals the will of the hound was “as strong as ever”. The problem was simply that the body could not follow due to physical incapability. Aesop -through the statement of the hound asks to “honour” the servants of society that can be interpreted as the “labour class”. This fable can be a message to the leaders including businessmen and employers to “honour” employees and servants. On the other hand, fidelity to the job and to the employer and the duty to honour it, is portrayed and emphasized as a poof of loyalty, faithfulness and support. We know that ageism affects everyone. In a study, the World Health Organisation found that “Half the world’s population is ageist against older people” (Who, 2023). This form of violence based on age is prejudicial and thus can impact self-esteem and by extension the whole economy. The Hare and

the Tortoise fable was a magnificent consolation to remind the whole humanity that a slow Tortoise can be more spirited than -a sometimes- arrogant young Hare that personalized youth (Wortley, 1997). Slavery, as a concept, could also be that “second bird” Aesop wanted to hit with one stone. Who knows? Servants are often treated as slaves in some countries till now. The way they are treated should, according to Aesop, be considered and reconsidered.

3.4 The Fox and the Grapes

3.4.1 Summary of the Fable

A fox found a beautiful but out of reach bunch of juicy ripe grapes. He tries to jump and get the grapes. He failed. He tried and tried again but in vain. Finally, the fox convinced himself that the grapes must be sour. He looked at them in disdain and left.

3.4.2 Complete Story Link

<https://www.read.gov/aesop/034.html>

3.4.3 Sociological Concepts

Hanger, temptation, effort, failure/defeat, contempt.

3.4.4 Analysis of Text and Sub-Text

Hanger is what motivates individuals to be active, inventive and resourceful. However, when someone cannot reach his objective issues usually follow. The strategies and behaviours can then differ depending on the characters of people. Persistence, theft, disappointment and avoidance are the three social behaviours expected when people are in need of an object that satisfies them. In order to justify his failure, the fox has chosen to trick his mind and force it to believe a lie: sourness of the grapes. Sociologically speaking, social justifications after failures are of paramount importance. They identify the trendy social behaviours useful to understand the social attitudes towards different issues. Furthermore, the conflicting believes the fox holds were the sweetness vs. the sourness of the grapes he wanted to get to quench his thirst. This is what sociologists have defined as the cognitive dissonance theory. There was a gradual move from believing that the grapes are mellow to a “no they actually are not”. For Capelos and Demertzis, the value of an impotent self and a desirable but unattainable object change to a morally superior self and an unwanted object, while maintaining an aura of victimhood (Capelos & Demertzis, 2020). Aesop’s fox tried finally to save his “face” to face his astounding failure without thinking that it could be better to choose perseverance instead of giving up. The careless forced smile of the fox tells a lot about a pain that should be “read” and understood by society.

3.5 The Crab and its Mother

3.5.1 Summary

“The mother asks the young crab (her son) to walk straight forward because he walks sideways. But, he couldn’t walk straight, so he asked his mother to show him the way, but she also couldn’t walk straight” (Charlz, 2022).

3.5.2 Complete Story Link

<https://www.read.gov/aesop/005.html>

3.5.3 Sociological Concepts

Role modeling, theory vs. practice, teaching by showing, education/ pedagogy, unrealistic parents’ expectations.

3.5.4 Analysis of Text and Sub-Text

The whole very short fable is about the “Theory of Role-Modeling”. Role modeling strategies can be implemented in different contexts. Parenting, education, management, workplace leadership, nursing and medical education are among them. Apparently, Aesop focuses on the family sociology of role modeling more than anything else. However, the implications and the nonverbal messages that could be sent to other domains are legion. Educational sociology focuses attention on the intricate teacher- student relationship that has become a real issue. Teachers -like parents- are all the time “ordering” their students to perform well and “to be the first in the class”. Competitiveness is killing school. Instead, educators admit that cooperating with the other whether in the classroom or in the cyberspace should be the norm. Today, competing with the others leads nowhere. However, competing with oneself could be beneficial. Teaching students is no longer productive. Engaging them by showing processes could be more important. This approach implies solving problems with students in the classroom then gradually seeking the learners’ autonomy. Learning how to learn should be taught in a cooperative mode. Furthermore, being a teacher means becoming a co-learner. Someone who can not only be the guide to the side, but someone who can spark change and transform attitudes and whole lives. So, “why don’t you show us how to succeed teacher?!” Furthermore, education cannot be the sole discipline where this fable can fit. Role modeling at home including mothering, fathering, and parenting styles can also be other avenues of research and why not of inspiration for modern societies. Aesop’s fable modern version could be this: “Son, be the first in class! But mom, I can’t unless you show me how but you can’t because you simply were not ...”. Parents often expect the impossible from their sons and daughters as a way to get another chance by highjacking their own children lives. And this is exactly what Aesop tried to tell through two small crabs.

3.6 The Wolf and the Crane

3.6.1 Summary

After having devoured his prey a bone stuck in a wolf's throat. Feeling a great pain, he decided to offer a reward to anyone who would pull out the bone from his menacing mouth. A crane, moved by pity and greed accepted the dangerous mission.

3.6.2 Complete Story Link

<https://read.gov/aesop/006.html>

3.6.3 Sociological Concepts

Greed, reward, danger, risk taking, pity, ungratefulness, wickedness.

3.6.4 Analysis of Text and Sub-Text

The fable begins with a greedy wolf and ends up with a greedier crane. In sociology greed means the decision of not sharing resources like money, food or other valuable possession with a hope to get something from someone. With a bone stuck in his throat, the wolf could not eat again. He could die. According to Aesop, greed can kill. Hurrying to a crane was the perfect cure. The crane was apparently the only animal who owns the tool. She (crane) has a long neck and bill. The wolf promised a reward to the crane if she pulls that bone out of his throat, but did not mention the "nature" of that reward. Rewards in sociology have social functions. "Rewards are the elements of relational life that have positive value for a person". The wolf knew that the crane's life could be the perfect reward. That was a smart move. However, foolishness was personified by the crane putting her head in a wolf's throat accepting to take a risk. Again, greed -mixed up with pity- was the ingredient of the story. As soon as delivered from the bone, the wolf started to walk away without giving any reward to the crane. That reaction was justified by the fact that the best reward when encountering a danger -meeting a wolf- is survival for how could we expect a reward from wicked people? The question that could be asked, what was the most powerful drive of the crane's decision, pity or greed? Maybe both? Considering the nature of risk taking is interestingly appealing. Accepting to put his head inside a killer's throat for a reward was simply a suicidal move from a naïve but greedy crane. He had everything to lose: his life. How can a wise animal (human being by extension) opt for an uncertain reward instead of a certain safety? Greed could have killed the crane. "A good turn deserves another"? (Aesop). Yes, again.

3.7 The Miller, His Son, and Their Ass

3.7.1 Concepts

People-pleasing, relationship, insecurity, self-esteem, gratification, self-sacrifice, self-neglect, priorities, approval, adaptive coping mechanism.

3.7.2 Summary

A Miller who tried to please all the people he met on his road ended up by losing his Ass in the river.

3.7.3 Complete Story Link

<https://fablesfaesop.com/the-miller-his-son-and-their-ass.html>

3.7.4 Analysis of Text and Sub-Text

No doubt. This fable is a whole manual for anyone who wants to study social people pleasing patterns with all the related terms like self-esteem/self-worth. People-pleasing has become a pandemic (Picardo, 2021). It is “the act of chronically prioritizing others' needs, wants, or feelings at the expense of, or to the detriment of, our own needs, wants, or feelings” (Magee, 2022). Through the dialogue of a miller and his son and their interaction with people they crossed by (women, villagers...), Aesop portrayed -a seemingly- epitome of a severe case of a person -the miller- who is ready to do anything to please the others. The end of the fable teaches us that an excessive pleasing behavior leads nowhere. People pleasing is not a mental issue, but an abnormal adaptive social mechanism that may cost someone his self-worth. Furthermore, people pleasing is symptomatic of a self-neglect and thus a social neglect. Those kinds of “pleasers” need social approval. They simply seek gratification through sacrificing their own lives. Therefore, they have an issue in prioritizing actions and behaviors. Nourishing the others is ok, but there is no harm to nourish yourself at the same time. Genuinely compassionate people have a tendency to put the others needs ahead just to be perceived as agreeable which can lead to harmful social patterns that may include self-sacrifice and burn out. Pleasing and social rejection are thus intrinsically linked by a relation of causality. Still, pleasing is not harmful if utilized moderately without a self-neglecting behavior.

3.8 The Eagle and the Arrow

3.8.1 Concepts

Arrogance, over-pride, interpersonal relationships, war/peace, health, economy friendship, communication.

3.8.2 Summary

An arrogant eagle when trying confidently to catch a prey heard a whizz of an arrow. Too late, the arrow hit him straight in the heart. Before dying, the eagle looked back and found out that the arrow was feathered by one of his own plumes. His property. What an irony!

3.8.3 Complete Story Link

<https://fablesfaesop.com/the-eagle-and-the-arrow.html>

3.8.4 Analysis of Text and Sub-Text

A part of us or something that we possess can easily be transformed into a weapon that would hurt or even kill us. This is what seems to be the first lesson we should learn from Aesop's The Eagle and the Arrow. The weapons we supply to our enemies and sometimes to our friends -which is worse- can be sharper and more painful for we are the fools who provided them to those who intend to -or will- hurt us. The fable comes with another wisdom. "Don't you ever show a self-reliant pride like the eagle!". Eagles have that tendency to show their pride by choosing lofty rocks and look down for their prey in an arrogant way. Arrogance kills. "Arrogance potentially may be at the root of many problems in interpersonal relationships on many levels: dyadic, family, group, neighborhood, city, state, national, and worldwide" (Cowan et al, 2019). Commentaries point out that there is no harm to die by a weapon. However, the "knowledge" that those weapons were provided by the victims- anyone of us- make the suffering more intense and the pain sharper. The symbolic of the feathers goes beyond the picture of the weapons. It can be anything. Objects, information, money, resources, knowledge are among the "weaponisable things" one may imagine. In other words, any powerful value human can possess. Furthermore, the source of the harm can vary. It can be a known or unknown source. An enemy that you know, an enemy that you don't, a dubious friend (see Aesop's the Man and the Satyr), or simply a close friend. All of them can be a source of treachery. When it comes from your friend the pain is more hurtful. From a macro political perspective, providing a potential enemy by the means of our destruction is simply folly. From a micro economical perspective, providing those who want to destroy our health with money and helping them to survive in a market is suicidal. Therefore, what we give should always be considered and reconsidered. Did Aesop predict the potential dangers of sharing private information online that might be used by "someone" -be it a friend or an enemy- to hurt or destroy us someday? It seems to be the case. Aesop, the father of the sociology of social media?

3.9 The Doctor and His Patient

3.9.1 Concepts

Public health, education, economy, social interactions/communication, prevention vs. cure, medical sociology.

3.9.2 Summary

A doctor who had been caring of a patient died in his hands. In his funeral, the doctor moved by despair and sadness said: "If he had only refrained from wine". "It is too late to say that", replied one of the mourners blaming him for his "professional" neglect.

3.9.3 Complete Story Link

https://aesopfables.org/F213_The-Doctor-and-His-Patient.html

3.9.4 Analysis of Text and Sub-Text

“If he had only refrained from wine...” For Aesop advising a sick man or advising others after the death of a sick man is nonsense. From a sociological perspective, advising people to “refrain” from a deadly toxic substance at the wrong moment is folly. It is high time we move from a social epidemiology to a sociology of prevention (Renaud, 1987). Health sociologists insist on the necessity to adopt the preventive approach rather than the curative one. The death of the man under the hands of his doctor according to Aesop is symptomatic of a total failure of the adopted approach. The sick representing the whole society and the doctor representing the health system were enough to epitomize the 21st century health problematic based on the stereotype of 'working-class fatalism' as explained by Pill, and Stott in 1987 for alcohol *abuse* being typically working class issue. The presence of the doctor in the fable confirms the obsolete curative approach Aesop wanted to denounce. Aesop advocates a reconsideration of the priorities that could be fatal if implemented in a wrong way. Wellness implies prevention. There is no use to build hospitals if the health system relies on unprofessional doctors who would come too late with their prescriptions and advice. Today, many medical sociologists are yelling and begging for a consideration of “some recent criticisms of medicine in order to highlight the difficulties which are involved in redirecting medical effort towards a preventive rather than curative strategy” (Davis, 1979). Aesop, a vanguard medical sociologist?

3.10 The Lion, the Ass, and the Fox

3.10.1 Concepts

Team work, servitude, greed, expertise, status, leadership (style), social economy, political contexts

3.10.2 Summary

A lion, an Ass, and a fox went hunting in team. They caught a large quantity of preys. The ass was asked to divide the spoil. The fair division of the spoil satisfied the fox but furiously angered the lion. The poor ass was added to the spoil which gave a great lesson to the fox.

3.10.3 Complete Story Link

<https://www.read.gov/aesop/140.html>

3.10.4 Analysis of Text and Sub-Text

A tragicomedy that was seemingly written for children/slaves turned out to be a fabulous timeless lesson of wisdom for adults that might occur anywhere where the notions of status and leadership and (in)justice prevail. This is exactly the picture of our modern world. Societies are governed by laws, rules and principles like status differences, social classes, and above all the almighty meritocratic system that epitomize the anti-thesis of the dreamt off Socratic idealistic and egalitarian romantic world. The power dynamics between the lion symbolizing the strong autocratic king, the ass symbolizing the fair but foolish lower class citizen, and finally the “wise” fox is admirably depicting our modern hierarchical(ised) society. It is true that hunting, like any social activity, requires the collaboration of a

group especially in times of famine. However, sharing the preys was simple but tricky at the same time. There were four options for the ass: sharing equitably the preys himself, which is not without consequences, asking the fox to share it, sharing the preys inequitably by giving the largest part to the lion “to please” him, or finally asking the lion to share the preys in a “wait -and- see” manner. The sharing operation was a real dilemma. For sure, it was not a privilege but a deadly satanic trap where in all the scenarios the lion is king. The fox wisdom saved his skin but not his honor. He accepted the underdog role while learning from the poor ass foolishness. Saving his skin was a priority. Having a fair part was not. In an idealistic world the ass is right. Unfortunately, he forgot that the one who possesses the carnivorous teeth and claw was the lion, and the lion alone. It is a social asset. The choice of the characters was not arbitrary. It was rather perfectly staged in a Shakespearian way to show the social disparities. A carnivorous lion vs. a vegetarian ass and an omnivorous fox. It is now interesting to ask the philosophical everlasting question of equity vs. inequity. Who was right and who was wrong? Can we consider the “poor” ass as a foolish victim or a martyr? Is fairness with the wicked lion foolishness? In “The Hound and his Master”, and according to Aesop, a hound can never become a master. A hound will be a hound until he loses his teeth to please his master. The fable could be interpreted as another invitation to follow the leader/king (lion) and to please him at any cost. As if the moral bears an implicit message to the slaves (ass) that says: “don’t you ever disrespect the stronger even if you think that he is wrong”. Another interpretation would say that the ass was unjust for he forgot that he belongs to the inferior species or social class if we use “modern” terms. He was a simple “follower” and should have behaved accordingly by pleasing the “strongest”. After all a CEO cannot get the same salary as a “simple” employee unless the responsibilities are shared. The fable is another consequential narrative that sends a blurred message: “don’t you ever challenge an authority unless you possess the means of your policy”. Is Aesop with or against the “fool/fair” ass decision to accept to share and the way he shared the spoil? Nobody knows. And probably, nobody will know.

4. Results

The following table data is an attempt to state the findings of the research according to a logical sequence and following the fables used in the theoretical/conceptual section including the explicit text and even the explicit sub-text with the different theories, issues and concepts that can be used to meet the two worlds of narratives -fables specifically- and sociology schools. The fictional and the non-fictional can meet somewhere unless it is mythology based. The pedagogisation of Aesop fables for academic or instructional purposes can serve children in kindergarten, primary, middle, secondary and even tertiary schools to teach ethics, morals, social principles, cultural norms, communication, time management, sociology, politics, and even interwoven disciplines like psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, rhetorics, and socio-politics through a multidisciplinary, crossdisciplinary or transdisciplinary mode(s). The plasticity of Aesop fables is by far incomparable.

Fable n°	Title	Theories/issues/concepts	Explicit Aesop instructions	Implicit instructions
1	The Country Mouse and the Town Mouse	- <i>Urban sociology</i> - <i>Rural sociology</i> - Abundance - Hospitality -Peace, Insecurity, Stress, Risk taking/managing, Modesty	“Poverty with security is better than plenty in the midst of fear and uncertainty”(Aesop)	Luxury and abundance has a price. A modest life has a price too. Your character can determine the way you manage risks or avoid them.
2	The Thief and His Mother	-Mothering styles, -Laissez-faire parenting, -Fatherlessness, -Misdemeanors	- “Don’t beg borrow steal” Meaning: <i>to do whatever is necessary to get something that is wanted or needed.</i> -He who will steal an egg will steal an ox	Thieves have mothers. They are irresponsible mothers who should be the ones to blame for any misdemeanor. The absence of a father (fatherlessness) caused financial needs which led to theft and acceptance of theft as a social ultimate solution. “Tell me who your mother is...”.
3	The Old Hound	Ageism, aging, fidelity, ingratitude	You ought to honour [people] for what [they] have been instead of abusing [them] for what they [are]. (Aesop/adapted)	If you lose your assets/strength don’t expect to be treated the same way as when you possess them.
4	The Crab and its Mother	Role model (Merton, nd)	Example is better than precept.	Never ever hijack the lives of those you adore even if they are your children
5	The Fox and the Grapes	Cognitive dissonance/ self-justification -Sisyphian loop -Social frustrations	There are many who pretend to despise and belittle that which is beyond their reach.	Consumers’ frustration/concept of desire.
6	The Wolf and the Crane	Greed	“Expect no reward for serving the wicked”(Aesop).	the best reward when encountering a danger is survival
7	The Miller,	-People-pleasing - Ethical relativism	“If you try to please all, you please none”	Chronically prioritizing others' needs at the

	His Son, and Their Ass	- relationship, insecurity, self-esteem, gratification, self-sacrifice, self-neglect, priorities, approval, adaptive coping mechanism.	(Aesop).	expense of our own needs might be unproductive and maybe dangerous. If the entire world sees something as right, it does not mean it is. They might be wrong.
8	The Eagle and the Arrow	Arrogance, over-pride, interpersonal relationships, war/peace, health, economy friendship, communication, war/peace.	“We often give our enemies the means for our own destruction” (Aesop).	We often give our friends the means of our destruction too.
9	The Doctor and His Patient	Medical sociology, prevention vs. cure, public health, education, economy, social interactions/communication	“The best advice may come too late” ‘Aesop).	The obsolete curative approach is a nonsense. Investing in prevention is the smartest way to stay healthy.
10	The Lion, the Ass, and the Fox	Team work, servitude, greed, expertise, status, concept of leadership (style), Socio/ politics of leadership, folly, martyrdom	“Learn from the misfortunes of others” (Aesop).	-Realpolitik (Otto von Bismarck) vs. egalitarianism/ -When asked to be fair, think twice of the consequences or leave it to someone smarter than you. It would be even much smarter.

5. Implications

Rebranding narratives -fables mainly- for instructional purposes can be an option for schools. “In this technological era, fables are no longer given any required meaningful recognition” (Iyanda, 2019). Neglecting the pedagogical function of fables is nonsense that can be considered and reconsidered. Making use of fables can change the way people act and react and can address the issues of children and adolescent misdemeanor. Furthermore, and with their adaptable short format fables are unbeatable. They are concise, instructional, interesting and easily digitalisable. They are simply readers’ friendly texts with interwoven disciplines ready to use in kindergarten as well as at university. So, again their plasticity added to their pedagogisability is a real hidden potential. Many authors in US schools tried to adopt a thematic approach to adapt Aesop fables as pedagogical worksheets. Miller’s “Teaching Theme with Aesop Fables: Finding Theme Worksheets Graphic Organizers”, and Whitaker’s “Aesop’s Fables Unit

Resources Teaching Moral and Theme Common Core”, are just few examples of the pedagogisability of the timeless Aesop’s masterpiece in college.

6. Discussion

We can clearly state that Aesop fables are one of the most suitable pedagogisable content for new millennial student around the world. Aesop fables are short, entertaining, positively moral and thus educational, relevant to our students’ -non teaching staff included- lives, easy to process / read, and above all outstandingly popular and thus familiar. Who didn’t hear or read Sour Grapes story featuring the fox and the juicy grapes? They are simply the anti-thesis of the traditional long, boring, rarely educational, irrelevant, complex, unpopular content that nobody wants to read unless forced to do so.

Aesop fables are a real treasure where future researchers can find hidden gems in a form of hidden theories from disciplines like psychology, economy, politics, communication pedagogy and other multidisciplinary areas where the social, the human the political and the economical meet. The Archer and the Lion, for instance, can give an unsuspected pedagogical lesson about the danger of living near a neighbouring “enemy” who can strike from a distance. The socio-political aspects found in that narrative is valid everywhere and thus strikingly timeless even if we include other terms like the concept of deterring weapons and cyber electronic potential wars. How could that “strikingly ugly slave” who lived 360 BCA predict that through an imaginary short fable and talk about complex geopolitical theories? The possibilities are endless and the potential pedagogisability of more fables with their multiple versions is legion. We have a lot to learn from that “ugly slave” who could beautifully solve a tremendously big numbers of issues and problematics if he was taken seriously as a multi-disciplinary visionary instead of a mere weird troublesome story teller with stories to read for children in kindergartens.

7. Conclusion

Aesop fables “have survived for millennia thanks in part to Aristotle and Herodotus” (Hoey, 2014) but not only. They have also survived thanks to their unique characteristics that include the uncommon wit and storytelling skill Aesop possessed. With his golden tongue and his golden pen, Aesop succeeded to attract millions of young and old readers. On the other hand, the incredible conciseness Aesop utilized has proved its efficiency to create that large interest. No place for boredom when you read Aesop fables. The friendliness of his text (Dreher, & Singer, 1989) and the agreeableness of his literary style enslaved -no pun intended- readers from all over the world in such a way that “Aesop” and “fables” can be used enter-changeably. Katsadoros and Feggerou remarked that the “plasticity” of Aesop fables is an interesting quality (Katsadoros & Feggerou, 2021). This plasticity is probably the best characteristic of Aesop fables for it permits an incredibly complex adaptability that can suit the societal multiplicity in terms of cultures, sub-cultures, ages, genres, social classes, races, political orientations etc. Today, narratives -and mainly fables- adaptability to sociology is undeniable let alone to other social sciences like economy, political sciences, psychology, and education. Furthermore, through the fables, Aesop succeeded to reach all the kinds of readers using an inimitable multilayered texture giving to the text its uncommon splendor and above all its readability. When a text texture is mastered -which is the case with Aesop texts- the writer can control his readers/audience and thus get the power to guide them “towards

the kind of interpretation intended by the writer” (Gail & Geoff, 2009). Aesop, that slave-turned- author who enslaved the world with his words? What an irony!

Appendix

The complete fables with online /web links

N°	Fable's title	Web link
1	The Country Mouse and the Town Mouse	https://www.read.gov/aesop/004.html
2	The Thief and His Mother	https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/the-thief-and-his-mother
3	The Old Hound	https://fairytalez.com/the-old-hound/
4	The Crab and Its Mother	https://www.read.gov/aesop/034.html
5	The Fox and the Grapes	https://www.read.gov/aesop/005.html
6	The Wolf and the Crane	https://read.gov/aesop/006.html
7	The Miller, His Son, and Their Ass	https://fablesfaesop.com/the-miller-his-son-and-their-ass.html
8	The Eagle and the Arrow	https://fablesfaesop.com/the-eagle-and-the-arrow.html
9	The Doctor and His Patient	https://aesopsfables.org/F213_The-Doctor-and-His-Patient.html
10	The Lion, the Ass, and the Fox	https://www.read.gov/aesop/140.html

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