

# **Anthropomorphism, Aesop's Fables and Their Use in Lifelong Learning and Vocational Training by Awakening Participants' Memes**

**Odyssefs Kollias**  
**Business Consultant**

*The manuscript has been perceived in order to stress the importance of, how the synergy between tradition (Aesop's fables), professionally established business practices and vocational training can promote entrepreneurship, and show how different sectors can cooperate for a common target. The awakened memes can derive a mimic effect and awake participants' childhood memories that can contribute to deeper understanding of business behavioral context. The symbolism represented by anthropomorphism (human behavior of non-humans), as opposed to zoomorphism (non-human behavior of humans), uplifts human nature, and helps connecting different sectors such as: history, tradition, training, entrepreneurship, entertaining, fashion, commerce and science.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Today's strong competitive business environment leads professionals to communicate their products and services in a rather superficial and irrational manner by imitating or adapting marketing methods which are irrelevant to the context of their businesses.

Globalization, hastiness, excessive ambition and imitation which are the predominate behaviors among entrepreneurs and employees, necessitate opening people's minds and present them values and social norms that can influence economic stability and development.

Lifelong Learning is an opportunity not only to give people knowledge and skills but also to make them useful in the society within they live. Therefore ideas which can convey a message in a simple, clear way are essential. Simplicity is lacking from today's thinking and is necessary to look back to the roots in order to find solutions for modern societies.

Innovating by inventing new ways of teaching professional and social behaviors might become a modern way of delivering Vocational Training. By awakening participants' memes one can persuade them to follow other ways of behaving and performing. A meme is a cultural feature or a type of behavior that is passed from one generation to another, without the influence of genes:

A meme is the cultural equivalent of the unit of physical heredity, the gene. (Cambridge Dictionaries, meme). Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation (Dawkins, R. 1976, "The Selfish Gene", chapter 11).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

It is not within the scope of this paper to present new vocational training techniques neither to say too much about experiential training, where the subject belongs to. The aim is to exam whether Aesop's fables can contribute to the better understanding of various concepts when presented into a seminar syllabus. This method can be incorporated into other existed training techniques, such as presentations, assignments, group work, role playing, theatrical incorporation.

In literature concerning Education one can find various ways of using fables in the learning process.

One such example example is the myth of: "The tortoise and the hare". The story deals with *a hare who ridicules a slow-moving tortoise and is challenged by the tortoise to a race. The hare soon leaves the tortoise behind and, confident of winning, takes a nap midway through the course. When the hare awakes however, he finds that his competitor, crawling slowly but steadily, has arrived before him.* This myth has been used as the base for description in the article: "Customer Satisfaction Fables" (Jacobucci, D, Grayson, K, Ostrom, A, 1994, Management Review, 35,4, pg. 93). So one reads: "*Just as the tale of the tortoise and the hare, those firms that have been customer focused all along will show stronger performances than those firms that have only recently turned their attention to satisfying their customers, perhaps in reaction to increased competition. Continual efforts toward improvement, even if slow, are superior to mad- dash redefinitions of one's business priorities*". It is obvious that the tale serves as an example so that the writer show the importance of focusing continuously into customer satisfaction processes.

Also in the article: "The e-commerce race for Wales: another Aesop's fable?" (Prtterill, L, 2004, Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, Volume 11, No 3, pp. 382 -389) the above myth is used to describe the e-commerce situation in Wales, which is compared to the tortoise. The writer proposes innovation vs imitation for the SME's of Wales in order to develop e-commerce function, rather than hurry in order to fill the gap from the rest of the world to the above subject.

There have been also trials using Aesop's fables into various types of education. Among others one can cite the use of the fable: "*The Crow and the pitcher*" for teaching physics to children. The fable goes as follows: *In a spell of dry weather, when the birds could find very little to drink, a thirsty Crow found a pitcher with a little water in it. But the pitcher was high and had a narrow neck, and no matter how he tried, the Crow could not reach the water. The poor thing felt as if he must die of thirst. Then an idea came to him. Picking up some small pebbles, he dropped them into the pitcher one by one. With each pebble the water rose a little higher until at last it was near enough so he could drink. In a pinch a good use of our wits may help us out.* The experiment in which the understanding casual regularities in the world is a key feature of human cognition, is compared among children 5-7 years old and crows is important (Sarah A. , Jelbert, S. , Taylor, A. , Gheke, L. , Clayton, N. , Gray, R. , 2012. "Using the Aesop's Fable Paradigm to Investigate Causal Understanding of Water Displacement by New Caledonian Crows", PlosONE, Vol. 7, Issue 7).

Another educational experiment took place at the 5th Kindergarten School of Serres town, in Greece. According to an online publication this experiment was based on the Aesop' s fable: "*The Salt Merchant and His Donkey*". The story goes as follows: *A Merchant took his donkey to the shore to buy salt. On the way home the donkey tripped and fell into a stream. On rising, the load of the donkey was lightened because some of the salt had dissolved. The Merchant returned to the shore to replenish the salt and, on returning, this time the donkey fell into the stream on purpose to lighten the load. Again, the Merchant returned to the shore, but this time, knowing what the donkey would do, loaded the donkey down with sponges. On returning home the donkey again fell into the stream but this time the sponges filled with water and doubled his load.* This story was used in order to make students at preschool age familiar with materials who melt into water and the others who do not as well as with materials who absorb the water. So, they made experiments with sponge, salt, sugar, caps, staples, oil and other materials. Students told their teacher: " Mrs, Aesop was right".

Also in the article "A fractured fable: "*The Three Little Pigs and using multiple paradigms*" (Hurt, A., Callahan, J. , 2013, New Horizons in Adult Education & Human Resource Development,,25 (3), 27-40) it

is argued that "*stories have long been a vehicle for teaching, learning and sense making; A story helps in learning difficult and complex concepts by providing a fun yet informed explanation of the phenomena in question. Stories can be considered Popular Cultural Artifacts (PCA). These include movies, poems, music, fiction and nonfiction, fables and fairy tales*".

## **OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this paper is to investigate and to present, how moral conclusions of fables can efficiently deliver instructions to marketing and sales professionals, in order to implement more successfully their business practices for their better being as well for the common social good.

Fables and myths can be used supplementary to scientific knowledge in vocational training and mentoring and can prove to be a more receptive educational method than the use of pure academic theories.

Participants may develop a positive attitude towards training, since "Do's" or "Don'ts" which are usually applied in standard vocational methods, are here replaced by the interpretation of fables. Also the memes of participants may awaken so that education acquires an experiential and sentimental face.

## **MOTIVATION**

Through my long experience as a tutor into the lifelong learning, I have realized that there is a need for practical ideas in order to "metaphor" the ideas and to inspire for a new way of working.

Simplicity is lacking from today's thinking hence, it is necessary to look back to the roots in order to find solutions for modern societies in crisis, like Greece.

Lifelong learning is the effort to make people's minds change and give them paths to improve their performance by changing their way of thinking, working and facing the customer.

Practical ideas are needed in order to "metaphor" the ideas and to inspire. Into the sector of Training and Development - adult education- the comparative thinking approach by using case theoretic approaches in other words economic sociology can be proven beneficial for participants.

One can derive by implementing the "Socrate's method" (maieutic method) lessons for her/ his job. This method had been applied by the ancient philosopher Socrates, who was "*teaching by question and answer*" (*The Free Dictionary*: maieutic method). As an example, one fable can be reproduced and give it as a subject for group discussion. After that, with the directions of the instructor, conclusions can be derived out of the fable.

Also an entertaining effect is achieved through the narration of a fable which will enrich the training process and add value to it.

## **THE SYNERGY EFFECTS**

A synergy effect is derived out of the combination of Aesop's fables and business concepts. Another synergy is achieved through the use of myths with pictures and of their parabolic use into vocational training. Last but not least in importance, is the use of this parallelism (fables and business conclusions) as an indicator that human beings and businesses have parallel lives.

## **WHY FABLES**

The type of myths that have been chosen for this purpose are anthropomorphic because, humans can easily relate themselves to human-like examples, even if those are being reproduced by non human beings.

Fables consist a major part of the European cultural heritage, and can create a civilized, participating, creative and interactive training environment. "*There is a considerable evidence that use of anthropomorphism and animism in science teaching is a common practice in all grades of education*"<sup>(3)</sup>.

They can also bring closer different cultures and personalities. The convergence of cultures which is achieved through the use of fables helps in the forming of a new business global and digital environment.

Professionals living in regions where local culture is strong and drives the way they behave and act as entrepreneurs, cannot adapt common business practices thus, they fail to perform efficiently in a wider market. One can turn this disadvantage to an advantage by proposing the use of local traditional myths and fables to metaphor global practices of entrepreneurship.

Lifelong learning is the effort to make people's minds change and give them directions and paths on how to improve their daily job and personal performance, by changing the way of thinking, working, dealing with the customer and managing their business.

Especially when Marketing Services are to be taught to people who work at the Retailing industry and in Customer Care, where Relationship marketing and Teamwork are essential part of their daily job then, new methods must be applied in this effort.

## **WHY ANTHROPOMORPHISM**

Anthropomorphism is the attribution of human characteristics, like emotions and speech, to non-human beings, i. e. a god, an animal, a plant, a sound, weather phenomena. "Derived from the Greek word *anthropos* (meaning "human") and *morphe* (meaning "shape" or "form") anthropomorphism involves more than simply attributing life to the nonliving"<sup>(1)</sup>. It is often used in stories, theology, cartoons, digital design, even to robots. Aesop, an Ancient Greek fabulist, was the first known to use anthropomorphic stories. Walt Disney is the best known from the past century.

Anthropomorphism, rather than zoomorphism, acts more beneficially in describing everyday behaviors because, it exalts human virtues rather than over-simplifying human behaviors down to animals' life level, the way zoomorphism does. "The origin of anthropomorphism lies in the psychology of perception, which tends to make us interpret what we see as more complex than it actually is"<sup>(4)</sup>.

Aesop's fables are short stories containing dialogues between humans, animals, plants and gods concluding to moralistic lessons. Using Aesop's fables in vocational training, allows for a wide variety of issues to be addressed regarding the ethics of business practice. The behavioral integration which is achieved helps participants to conceptualize the intangible assets that drive the globalization of economies.

The wrong or guile behavior of characters in Aesop's fables can often find their equal to real life examples of foul business-to-business or business-to-customer relations, which can be easier identified through tale characters interactions rather than scientific books.

Humans are more prone to learn from the mistakes of light tales rather than books which, we interact without sentiment. Practical business conclusions can be derived out of fables, with the maieutic (Socratic) method.

## **THE RESEARCH**

The idea presented above, forms the core of a research which investigates how participants' perception of business practice has been improved by introducing anthropomorphic fables within their training.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Participants who are trained in Customer Care, Services Marketing and Sales, are prompted to participate in a training technique, during which they are asked to read an Aesop's fable accompanied by a related picture, discuss about its moral conclusions with each other and fill in a questionnaire. Also the instructor/ tutor recalls their memes on myths and into the specific fable/

The myth

The chosen myth is called: "The Shepherd's Boy", which reads as follows:

*There once was a young Shepherd Boy who tended his sheep at the foot of a mountain near a dark forest. It was rather lonely for him all day, so he thought upon a plan by which he could get a little company and some excitement. He rushed down towards the village calling out "Wolf, Wolf," and the villagers came out to meet him and some of them stopped with him for a considerable time. This pleased the boy so much that a few days afterwards he tried the same trick, and again the villagers came to his help. But shortly after this, a Wolf actually did come out from the forest, and began to worry the sheep, and the boy of course cried out "Wolf, Wolf," still louder than before. But this time the villagers, who had been fooled twice before, thought the boy was again deceiving them, and nobody stirred to come to his help. So the Wolf made a good meal off the boy's flock, and when the boy complained, the wise man of the village said: "A liar will not be believed, even when he speaks the truth. "*

The training aim is to make understood the meaning of the "Gaps of Services" given by a company<sup>(10)</sup>. The gaps usually occur when a company gives fake promises. For example, if the advertisement is showing a smiling girl at the cashier, then the customer expects to find a smiling girl there. If a promotion contains fake promises, then the customer feels betrayed. Or, if the company has a sound brand name, then the consumer expects to deliver prominent service otherwise he/she might feel abused. Even the architecture and the design of a venue or of a website in the e commerce and e marketing delivers promises to potential or existed customers which should be provided. In other words, briefly, the desired outcome is consciously understand the meaning of the statement that: companies should under promise and over deliver<sup>(7)</sup>.

#### **THE QUESTIONS POSED TO THE PARTICIPANTS ARE THE FOLLOWING**

1. What is the main idea / moral conclusion of this fable?
2. Is your company giving promises? How does it do it? Which are those promises?
3. Do your clients feel that promises given have been kept? How do you know this?
4. Did the myth conclusions help you better understand the gap between questions 2 and 3?

#### **REFLECTIONS ON AESOP'S FABLES FROM GREEK PROFESSIONALS**

Some of the reflections, to the above experiment are quoted as statements made by the participants in business seminars. Here are the answers to the 4<sup>th</sup> question:

"Myths are diachronic and always have a didactic meaning. On my opinion this is a decent and efficient way to tell to public not only moral values and practical principles, but economic and entrepreneurship meanings as well, especially when the sentiments are involved".

"Trainees build in their minds images and reflections that are impressed in their minds, so that the concept is memorized much better than the traditional lecturing and consulting".

"I understood that if you want to be reliable you have to promise only for those you can deliver. Be honest in order to have real benefit and useful".

"The myth did not help me a lot, since i knew it. . .".

"Yes i realized that the key for a successful cooperation is trust".

"I understood that promises should not be far away from expectations that customers have".

"I understood better the gaps that can exist and I became conscious that once a customer feels that has been betrayal then will never trust the company".

"Of course it helped me a lot".

"It might be that we feel that we do our best with our customers. I understood that it is not true, since the question is how our customer feels".

"There is a difference between fake and straight promise".

"This process was neutral for me, but i can understand its use and its parabolic meaning" (Phd holder).

"Surely it helped me to understand that we should deliver what we promise"

"This specific fable helped me understood that i have to be true in my personal as well as in my professional life".

"This fable is a nice example. It helps to realize the rationale of promoting products or services and the relationship that exists among promises and reality".

"Of course".

"Communication problem".

"Since i owe a large company i realized through this fable that every employee in the company gives a promise to the customer. This promise should be delivered by the company".

"Yes, i can see the implementation of the fable to practical issues".

"Yes, it helped me a lot".

## OTHER AESOP'S FABLES

There are many other Aesop's fables (myths) that can be used for training purposes. Participants should derive by themselves the proposed here below conclusions:

**TABLE 1**  
**CONCLUSIONS OF FABLES FOR TRAINING PURPOSES**

<b>Title of the fable</b>	<b>Conclusion for training purposes</b>
The Lion and the Mouse	No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.
The Hare and the Tortoise	Slow but steady wins the race
The fox who had lost his tail	Misery loves company
Mercury and the Woodman	Honesty is the best policy
The Father and his two daughters	You cannot please everybody.
The fox and the crow	Flatters are not to be trusted
The Eagle and the fox	Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
The father and his sons	United we stand, divided we fall.
The two travelers and the axe	Who who shares the danger ought to share the prize.
The Miser	The true value of money is not in its possession but in its use.
The Farmer and his sons	Industry sometimes pays unexpected dividends.
The Ass and the mule	An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
The Ass carrying the image	They are not wise those who give to themselves the credit due to others.
The ass and the grdonkeyhopper	Even a fool is wise, when it is too late
The Goose with the golden eggs	Greed often overreaches itself
The King's son and the painted lion	We had better bear out troubles bravely than try to escape them.
The wild boar and the fox	It is too late to whet the sword when the trumpet sounds.
The Lioness	The value is in the worth, not in the number
The dog and the shadow	Grasp at the shadow and lost the substance
The seagull and the kite	Every man should be content to mind his own business
The lion, the fox and the donkey	Happy is the man who learns from the misfortunes of others.
The fisherman piping	To do the right thing at the right season is a great art.
The Donkey in the Lion's skin	Clothes may disguise a fool, but his words will give him away.

The monkey and the dolphin	Those who pretend to be what they are not, sooner or later, find themselves in deep water
The cat and the mice	He who is once deceived is doubly cautious
The travelers and the plane-tree	Some men underrate their best blessing
The bat, the birds and the beasts	He that is neither one thing nor the other has no friends
The donkey and the frogs	Men often bear little grievances with less courage than they do large misfortunes.
The mouse, the frog and the hawk	Harm hatch, harm catch.
The donkey, the fox and the lion	Never trust your enemy.
The fox and the woodcutter	There is as much malice in a wink as in a word
The Goat and the Goatherd	Do not attempt to hide things which cannot be hid
The Wolf and the Lamb	The tyrant will always find a pretext for his tyranny

## FURTHER RESEARCH

In the continuous quest for finding new and efficient ways of making lifelong learning a contagious and efficacious process it remains to be investigated various other ways, techniques and aspects of incorporating fables into Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning.

Besides the fables that have been used in this research other means can also be used, such as: fairy tales, myths, local fables, traditional stories, storytelling processes. Also P.C.A. (Popular Culture Artifacts) such as shadow play or animation can be adopted in Lifelong Learning and Vocational Training.

Can a comparative study be carried out among different cultures?

Which other ways do exist in order to create an entertaining and creative environment into the learning process?

Can vocational training become an experiential and entertaining process further to transmitting knowledge?

What about using memes into lifelong education? If we recall memes of participants is there any possibility of better penetrating ideas and concepts?

Which other memes can be used into vocational training that can create a receptive environment?

## REFERENCES

- Epley, N. , Waytz, A. , Cacioppo, T. (2007). "On Seeing Human: A Three-Factor Theory of Anthropomorphism", *Psychological Review*, Vol. 114, No 4, 864-886.
- Griffin, C. (2006), "Research and Policy in Life-Long Learning". *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 25, 6, 561-574.
- Kallery, M and Psilos, D. (2004) "Anthropomorphism and Animism in Early Years Science: Why teachers Use Them, how They Conceptualize Them and What Are Their Views on Their Use. *Research in Science Education*, Vol. 34, Issue3, pp. 291-311.
- Kotler, Philip and Bowen, John and Makens, James (2003). *Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism*. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 3rd edition).
- Kracher, A. (2012). "Imposing Order- The Varieties of Anthropomorphism". *Studies in Science and Theology* 8, 239-261, 2002.
- Mavropoulos, Theodor (2005). *Aesop's fables*. Zitros Publications, Thessaloniki, Greece.
- Oliviera, T. (2006) Grundtvig in the Lifelong Learning Program, Speech presented at the Grundtvig Learning Partnership conference: "The joy of Learning".

- Pinchas, T and ANTL, Z. (1991). "*Anthropomorphism an Teleology in Reasoning about Biological Phenomena*". *Science Education*,75 (1), 57-67.
- Tsirkas, Stratis (2012), *Aesop's myths*, (2012). Hiridanos publications, Athens, Greece.
- Wilson, Alan, Valerie A. , Zeithaml, Mary Jo Bitner and Gremler Dwayne (2012). *Services Marketing*. (N. Y. Mc Graw- Hill, 2nd edition).