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Socrates' Three Filter Test

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One day an acquaintance ran into Socrates and said: “Do you know what I heard about your friend?” “Wait a minute,” Socrates replied. “Before you tell me anything, I want to put you through a little test.” This is called the “Three Filter Test”. “Three Filters?”

“True,” continued Socrates.” “Before you start talking about my friend, it might be a good idea to stop for a while and filter out what to say.”

Let’s start with the first filter: the “reality filter”

Are you sure that what you are about to tell me is absolutely true?”

“No,” said the man, “Actually, I just heard about it and...”

“Okay,” said Socrates, “so you don’t know if that’s really true or not. Now let’s try the second filter. This filter is called the Goodness filter.”

Is it a good thing you want to tell me about my friend?

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“No, quite the opposite...”

“So,” Socrates continued, “you want to say something bad to me about him and you’re not sure it’s true. But you can still pass the test, because there is one more filter left.”

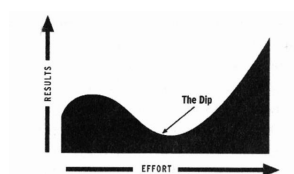
This filter is called the Usefulness filter.

“Would anything you tell me about my friend work for me?”

“Honestly, no, it’s useless.”

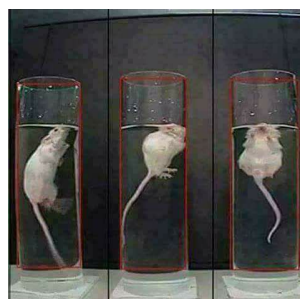
“Good,” replied Socrates, “if what you’re about to tell me isn’t true, if it’s not good, and if it isn’t useful, why would you tell me?”

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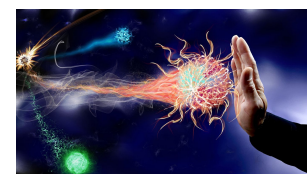
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