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The Greek Mythology in Aesop's Fables: The Language Meaning and the Interfaith or Ethical-Didactic Comparative Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach by combining textual analysis of selected fables with a comparative interfaith lens and theoretical interpretation of both primary and secondary sources. Hermeneutic analysis serves as the central instrument for interpreting the moral and religious dimensions of the fables, in interaction with key philosophical and religious texts from different traditions. Fables such as *The Tortoise and the Hare* and *The Lion and the Mouse* are analyzed to highlight the ethical and spiritual values they convey, while comparisons with classical works such as Hesiod's *Works and Days* and Plato's *Republic* help uncover the cultural and intellectual backdrop in which Aesop's narratives were shaped and transmitted. The study contributes to the fields of education and social sciences through an integrated perspective that links classical literature with ethical pedagogy and cultural pluralism. The fable has a multidimensional language meaning. The paper has to analyze the interweaving of the Greek mythological elements in Aesop's fables, focusing on how these narratives convey ethical norms and moral messages of universal. This study seeks to analyze the intersection of religious and mythological elements within Aesop fables, focusing on how these narratives convey ethical norms and universal moral messages. Employing an interdisciplinary approach encompassing literary, mythological, and religious studies, the research explores themes such as divine justice, fate, and moral virtues. These are then compared with the foundational principles of four major religious traditions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism.

Keywords: Fable; Greek Mythology; Comparative Ethics; Moral Education; Language Meaning; Aesop

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 15 July 2025 | Revised: 22 August 2025 | Accepted: 3 September 2025 | Published Online: 19 September 2025
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i9.11081>

CITATION

Salihu, G.T., Kafexholli, T.V., Millaku, S., 2025. The Greek Mythology in Aesop's Fables: The Language Meaning and the Interfaith or Ethical-Didactic Comparative Approach. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 7(9): 1217–1227. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i9.11081>

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1. Introduction

Aesop's fables constitute one of the most enduring treasures of ancient literature and with the meaning of the language. Through their simplicity and universality, they have survived across centuries. These brief narratives or pragmatic meaning (as the meaning of language)—often featuring animals as protagonists—convey moral and philosophical messages tied to the cultural, social, and spiritual realities of their time. Although often perceived as secular moral teachings, a deeper reading reveals the presence of religious elements intertwined with the mythology and semantical meaning of language or the religion of ancient Greece. In sixth-century BCE Greece, the polytheistic faith was not merely a belief system but closely integrated into daily life. The gods represented both natural forces and human moral values, while the myths accompanying them served as mechanisms for transmitting ethical lessons and shaping collective consciousness^[1]. Within this context, Aesop's fables functioned not only as a form of popular entertainment but also as powerful educational tools, conveying ethical and spiritual values with lasting impact. Religious elements in Aesop's fables appear in various forms: the inclusion of deities as characters, reflections of divine justice, the role of fate and interventions by supernatural forces, as well as the presence of moral virtues aligned with principles promoted. For example, in the fable *The Peasant and Hermes*, the god Hermes intervenes to help a peasant, emphasizing the proximity between the human and divine realms. This example illustrates that Aesop's fables offer more than mere moral advice—they also reflect the spiritual dimensions of the era in which they were shaped.

Beyond their Greek origins, Aesop's fables have transcended cultural boundaries and been integrated into various of language meaning and philosophical traditions. Themes such as justice, humility, mercy, and punishment for wrongdoing appear across Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, demonstrating the broad reach and universal impact of these stories^[2]. A comparative analysis as in meaning of literature and language with these traditions reveals not only the cross-cultural resonance of the fables but also their role as symbolic bridges among diverse belief systems and value frameworks. The study is grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework encompassing literary analysis, comparative mythology, and religious studies. It

draws upon the contributions of classical and contemporary authors such as Jean-Pierre Vernant^[3], who explores the relationship between myth and Greek morality; Mircea Eliade^[4], who offers a fundamental distinction between the sacred and the profane; and Joseph Campbell^[5], who emphasizes the universality of mythological structures across cultures.

At the same time, the study integrates perspectives from moral philosophy and educational theory to examine the didactic function of fables in both historical and contemporary contexts.

1.1. Methodology

The paper has to analyze the interweaving of the Greek mythological elements in Aesop's fables, focusing on how these narratives convey ethical norms and moral messages of universal relevance. Relying on an interdisciplinary approach—literary, mythological and with language meaning—the study explores the presence of themes such as divine justice, fate and moral virtues, placing this classical narrative in comparative dialogue with the foundational principles of four major religious traditions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism. Through comparative analysis and textual language or contextualization, Aesop's fables are treated as early forms of moral education and value transmission through symbolic storytelling. Selected fables, such as *The Lion and the Mouse*, illustrate principles such as mercy and justice, which are found in the Bible the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam*, the divine justice described in the Qur'an, and the karmic law of Buddhism. The findings of this study argue that Aesop's fables function as transcultural structures of ethical thought, surpassing temporal and cultural boundaries. As Gadamer notes, the interpretation of narratives always involves a fusion of the reader's horizon with that of the text, granting meaning a dialogical and historical dimension^[6]. This methodology aims to demonstrate that fables, beyond their didactic function, build deep bridges of meaning between ethics, religion, and classical philosophy.

1.2. Findings and Discussion

The study's findings highlight the essential presence of divine justice, fate and religious virtues in Aesop's fables. Many of these narratives portray an inner cosmic order

consistent with the Greek concepts of *moira* (fate) and *dike* (justice), as well as the figure of Zeus as guarantor of moral law. The meaning of the language and a comparison with monotheistic and Dharmic religious traditions underscores the universality of the ethical values these fables convey:

- In Christianity, the fable *The Lion and the Mouse* illustrate mercy and humility, aligning with the Biblical teaching from Matthew 5:7: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”
- In Judaism, the principle of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) is reflected through a restorative justice that resonates with the moral logic of the fables.
- In Islam, themes of patience and divine justice echo verses from the Qur’an such as Surah Al-Asr (103:1–3), which emphasizes steadfastness and righteous deeds.
- In Buddhism, the notion of karma and the law of cause and effect are closely linked to the moral conclusions of Aesop’s fables.
- The language of the fableness is multidimensional.

This intertextual analysis demonstrates that, although rooted in the polytheistic context of antiquity, Aesop’s fables function as symbolic bridges between cultures and religious beliefs, offering a shared moral code that transcends time and place.

1.3. Research Implications

The analysis of the religious dimensions in Aesop’s fables contributes significantly to the contemporary discourse on ethical education and interfaith dialogue. The fable emerges as a narrative form with high pedagogical potential due to its structural simplicity and richness of meaning, making it an effective tool for fostering moral reflection across diverse cultural and religious audiences. It may act as a bridge between belief systems and value frameworks, promoting moral awareness rooted in shared human principles. In this context, the approach of philosopher Martha C. Nussbaum proves especially relevant. She emphasizes that literature—as a form of exploring sensitivity and justice—plays a crucial role in shaping civic and intercultural ethics. According to her, “stories and tales convey emotions that are fundamental to the construction of a more just and humane world^[7]. In this spirit, the fable is recognized as having an educational function that goes beyond traditional moral-

izing, positioning itself as part of a new methodology for cultivating ethical sensitivity in pluralistic societies.

1.4. Originality and Contribution of the Study

This study offers a novel and original approach to Aesop’s fables, treating them not merely as part of the literary and folkloric heritage, but as narratives containing deep theological and ethical dimensions, particularly relevant for the cultivation of moral sensitivity in contemporary pluralistic societies. In this context, the fable is no longer viewed simply as a narrative structure or a repository of popular wisdom, but rather as a medium of ethical reflection, capable of articulating universal themes such as justice, virtue, responsibility, and moral choice. Unlike traditional studies that focus on the mythological or folkloric aspects of fables, this research interweaves interfaith analysis with the didactic and symbolic functions these stories carry across different cultural and spiritual frameworks. As Francisco Rodríguez Adrados notes, “Aesop’s fables remain a permanent mirror of human mentality through simple symbolism and messages that transcend time^[8]”. While existing academic literature—both in local and international contexts—has thoroughly addressed the historical, linguistic and mythological facets of fables, there is a notable absence of a consolidated interdisciplinary approach that combines aesthetic analysis with ethical-didactic and religious dimensions. This gap underscores the theoretical and practical value of this study. The research aspires to open new pathways in the fields of moral education, intercultural dialogue, and literary and religious studies. The paper has been developed in full accordance with international academic standards, strictly observing the principles of academic integrity and avoiding all forms of plagiarism. All sources, ideas and citations have been clearly documented following academic convention, ensuring complete transparency, accuracy and originality of content.

1.5. Historical, Language and Cultural Context

Aesop’s fables cannot be fully understood without being situated within the historical, language, cultural, and spiritual framework of sixth-century BCE Greece. During this period, mythology and religion did not function as separate systems but were deeply integrated into the daily lives of citizens. The gods represented the forces of nature and

human moral values, while myths served to explain natural phenomena, transmit ethical norms, and construct a shared worldview. Within this backdrop, Aesop crafted fables that reflected not only the social realities of his time but also a worldview deeply rooted in myth and religion. His stories go beyond mere didactic or aesthetic function, encompassing a profound spiritual and moral dimension articulated through the symbolism of characters and their interaction with divine forces. According to Bremmer, Greek mythology was not simply a collection of fantastical tales, but a system of understanding in which the gods played an active role in determining human fate and behavior^[1]. This idea is evident in the fable *The Man and the Gods*, where the deities appear as protectors of justice and moral order. Likewise, in the fable *The Peasant and Hermes*, the direct intervention of Hermes reflects the community's belief in the coexistence between the divine and human realms^[9]. These examples demonstrate that Aesop's fables are not merely moral tales for popular instruction but carry a rich symbolic and religious dimension, offering an authentic window into the collective consciousness of ancient Greece, where ethics and faith were deeply intertwined.

2. Aesop's Fables

Aesop's fables consistently reveal themes that resonate with the core principles of various religious traditions. Concepts such as divine justice, humility, punishment, and fate are manifested through allegorical situations that convey ethically and spiritually significant messages. One of the most distinctive features of the fables is the inclusion of mythological figures to reinforce these values. In the fable *The Little Bird and Zeus*, for instance, the god Zeus is portrayed as the guarantor of justice and protector of the vulnerable—a role that imbues the divine figure with educational and moral significance^[10]. This interplay between mythological symbolism and ethical teachings demonstrates a deliberate integration of religion with moral pedagogy. A deeper analysis of the fables also uncovers the central value of humility. The fable *The Cicada and the Ant* conveys a strong message on the importance of labor and dedication. According to Mircea Eliade, this tale reflects a universal model of ethical humility and self-discipline found in both Judaism and Islam, where morality is expressed through personal effort and respect for

natural cycles^[4]. Furthermore, in the fable *The Foxes and the Vineyard*, the fox's attempt to justify its own failure, followed by a lesson on the consequences of wrongful behavior, echoes the notion of divine justice. This fable closely resembles the concept of karma in Buddhism and Hinduism, where every action leads to a natural and inevitable consequence^[2]. In this way, Aesop's fables transcend their traditional moral function and emerge as interreligious narratives capable of transmitting universal wisdom across diverse cultural and spiritual contexts.

3. The Universality of Aesop's Fables

The universality of Aesop's fables is clearly reflected in the parallels they share with narratives and teachings across different religious traditions. These correspondences are not only thematic but also include narrative structures and ethical values that give the stories an educational function with cross-cultural resonance. In Judaism and Christianity, narratives emphasize divine intervention in rewarding loyalty, justice, and virtue. A comparable theme appears in the fable *The Peasant and Hermes*, where an honest man is rewarded by Hermes for his sincerity. This fable conveys the same moral message found in biblical accounts such as that of Joseph, who, despite being wronged, is ultimately rewarded by God for his integrity^[10]. Similar patterns can be observed in Eastern traditions. In Buddhism, the moralizing *Jataka* tales illustrate the path toward moral enlightenment through examples from the Buddha's previous lives. As in Aesop's fables, these tales use animal characters to represent values such as compassion, wisdom, and self-restraint, creating a form of moral education through allegory^[11]. These parallels show that allegorical moral storytelling is a shared heritage of humanity, and through such similarities, Aesop's fables reaffirm their role as interreligious and intercultural bridges for constructing a shared ethical consciousness.

Humility and Belief in Divine Fate

The concepts of humility, justice and divine punishment are present in all major religious traditions and are also vividly manifested in Aesop's fables. According to Nasr, justice and retribution are fundamental principles that link the Abrahamic faiths, in which God is portrayed as a just being who inevitably rewards good and punishes evil^[12]. These

ideas are visible in fables such as *The Cicada and the Ant*, where the cicada symbolizes lack of preparation and laziness, while the ant embodies dedication and self-discipline. This ethical contrast aligns with Islamic teachings, in which work and devotion to daily responsibilities are considered a form of worship and moral duty. In the fable *The Foxes and the Vineyard*, the characters face the consequences of their choices, reflecting a principle similar to the concept of karma in Buddhism and Hinduism—where every action brings an appropriate consequence, either in this life or the next^[2]. In this way, Aesop's fables function as vehicles for transmitting universal principles aligned with the ethical and spiritual teachings of many world religions.

4. Updating the Fables in Modern Society

In the context of contemporary global and multicultural societies, Aesop's fables maintain their relevance as educational and philosophical tools for promoting universal values. According to Armstrong (2010), simple stories with moral cores provide powerful instruments to educate younger generations on principles such as justice, humility, and honesty^[13]. The fable *The Cicada and the Ant* has been widely used in international curricula to cultivate awareness about responsibility and the value of work, contributing to the development of ethical and intercultural consciousness. In this light, Aesop's fables emerge as an effective platform for addressing themes such as solidarity, social justice, and integrity, offering a rich and enduring resource for modern education. Wright^[14] argues that traditional narratives with ethical or religious content play a crucial role in shaping moral awareness in the postmodern era. Likewise, Jackson^[15] emphasizes the importance of using narratives with religious and ethical content in education, viewing them as means to foster intercultural dialogue and develop coexistence competencies in pluralistic societies. In this context, the use of fables to address religious or moral themes serves as a powerful tool for interfaith dialogue. Their relevance lies in their ability to address moral dilemmas that transcend cultural boundaries. As Prior states: "Storytelling is a moral exercise; it trains the heart to feel virtue and vice^[16]". This

makes the fable not only a narrative form but also an educational instrument with deep formative power in the modern age.

5. An Interfaith Comparative Approach to the Virtues of Mercy and Justice in the Fable 'The Lion and the Mouse'

The fable *The Lion and the Mouse* presents a moral archetype in which the relationship between strength and weakness is depicted through an act of mercy. The lion, as a symbol of power, chooses to spare the mouse—a gesture that does not diminish his strength but, on the contrary, reinforces it. The moral turning point occurs when the mouse saves the lion's life, reflecting reciprocity and the value of altruistic action. This fable carries a universal ethical dimension that finds resonance in major religious traditions. In Islam, mercy (*rahmah*) is one of the fundamental attributes of God and is mentioned in nearly every surah. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:143) emphasizes: "Allah is full of mercy towards mankind," placing mercy at the heart of the Islamic experience^[4]. In Christianity, mercy is a central virtue. In the Sermon on the Mount, it is stated: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy"^[14], a teaching that directly mirrors the moral structure of the fable^[2]. In Judaism, the concept of *chesed* represents genuine love and mercy toward others. The Midrash contains stories where acts of mercy—even by ordinary people—have enduring spiritual impact^[7]. In Buddhism, *karuṇā* (compassion) is one of the four sublime states (*brahmavihāras*). In the *Jataka* tales, selfless acts of compassion are closely tied to the moral structure of the fable, in which the mouse's help becomes crucial to the lion's salvation^[4]. Beyond theological content, this interfaith comparison demonstrates that mercy is deeply rooted in universal ethics. As theologian Küng affirms: "There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There will be no peace among the religions without a global ethic—and mercy is its foundation^[12]". From this perspective, *The Lion and the Mouse* is not merely an educational tale but a moral interfaith metaphor, with broad application in fostering empathy, justice, and solidarity in pluralistic societies.

6. ‘The Tortoise and the Hare’: An Interfaith and Pedagogical Perspective

The fable *The Tortoise and the Hare* represents a classical example of a moral narrative that transcends time and cultural context. At its core lies the tension between reckless speed and quiet perseverance—a contrast that articulates virtues such as patience, humility, self-discipline, and trust in gradual growth. Built on a simple narrative structure, the fable conveys an ethical reflection on how success is conceptualized in a society overwhelmed by performance pressure and the constant demand for immediate results. From a didactic standpoint, this fable offers a powerful framework for cultivating moral awareness, particularly in educational environments that aim to nurture character development. The hare embodies excessive self-confidence and a lack of mindfulness, while the tortoise embodies commitment and steady progress through discipline. These contrasting^[17] figures provide fertile ground for pedagogical analysis that fosters self-reflection and moral resilience. In an intercultural and interfaith context, the fable surpasses its folkloric function and resonates with shared values that link the moral with the spiritual across various religious traditions:

- In Buddhism, the path to enlightenment is a long and gradual process requiring *samadhi* (concentration), *sati* (mindfulness), and *virīya* (effort). The slow and steady pace of the tortoise symbolizes the essence of spiritual striving toward self-realization^[14].
- In Islam, *sabr* (patience) is a highly esteemed spiritual quality. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:153) states: “Seek help through patience and prayer, for Allah is with the patient” — a principle embodied in the tortoise’s persistence^[18].
- In Christianity, the figure of Joseph (Genesis 37–50) represents humility and unwavering faith that triumphs through integrity. Aesop’s fable aligns with this message, showing that the tortoise wins not through cleverness, but through the virtue of perseverance^[7].

As Martha C. Nussbaum observes, “Good literature cultivates moral sensitivity through vivid imagination”^[7]. In this context, the fable *The Tortoise and the Hare* is not merely an entertaining tale, but a narrative form that educates moral consciousness through symbolism and reflection. It

transcends its traditional function and becomes a didactic tool with deep formative and intercultural potential, offering a pedagogical framework for the development of ethical and spiritual competencies in contemporary pluralistic societies.

7. Interfaith Learning Through Fables in Contemporary Curricula

In today’s educational reality—where cultural and religious pluralism has become the norm in many democratic societies—there is a growing need for pedagogical approaches that not only inform about different belief systems but also foster mutual understanding and the development of intercultural and interfaith dialogue competencies.

As Robert Jackson emphasizes, interfaith education does not aim to create a new belief system but rather to establish “mutual hermeneutic understanding” through inclusive and non-doctrinal methods^[7]. In this context, the fable holds a unique role as an archetypal and transcultural narrative form. It serves as a powerful medium for transmitting moral and spiritual values thanks to its symbolic language and universal content—both of which are easily understood by different generations and cultural backgrounds. The allegorical nature of the fable, combined with its simple narrative structure, creates a safe space for reflection on ethical issues without doctrinal implications. This makes the fable particularly suitable for integration into curricula focused on diversity education and interfaith coexistence. The inclusion of Aesop’s fables in interfaith curricula contributes to several key educational goals:

- Offering symbolic explanations of concepts such as compassion, justice, forgiveness, and punishment in a non-dogmatic form;
- Fostering moral empathy and critical thinking through the analysis of character-driven dilemmas;
- Addressing themes such as equality, personal responsibility, and helping others in ways that are accessible to students of diverse ages and backgrounds.

These elements align with the model of the “ethical narrative” proposed by Colby and Damon^[18] and Lewis^[19], who stress that moral sensitivity is best developed through engagement with stories that contain conflict and space for personal reflection—as opposed to rigid doctrinal rules.

The fable creates an “open text,” as Paul Ricoeur sug-

gests, in which the reader is not merely a passive recipient but a co-author in the meaning-making process. This enables students to construct new understandings of values in accordance with their own cultural and religious experiences^[20]. In this way, the fable is not merely a tool for moral education, but a dialogical platform that helps shape a citizen who is sensitive to the other and capable of mediating ethical meanings within a pluralistic environment. This approach is also supported by contemporary studies in multicultural and interfaith education. Karen Armstrong notes that ethically grounded stories serve as “natural bridges” that connect people beyond their differences, inviting them into a shared experience of moral reflection^[10]. In conclusion, the inclusion of Aesop’s fables in interfaith curricula should be seen as a highly effective didactic strategy. It aids in the formation of citizenship that is sensitive to diversity and promotes deep reflection on justice and virtue through inclusive, non-impositional narratives rooted in shared human experience.

8. The Role of the Fable in the Ethical Awareness

The formation of ethical awareness during childhood constitutes one of the fundamental objectives of education and a natural meeting point between secular pedagogical approaches and religious traditions. As Robert Coles notes, “children absorb the moral dimension of experience through stories far more deeply than through abstract principles”^[21]. In this context, the fable—as a short, allegorical, and moral narrative—plays an irreplaceable role in shaping ethical sensitivity and social virtues from an early age. Religious traditions have long employed narrative forms to transmit moral values. In Judaism, *midrashim* and the *aggadic* stories of the Talmud function as formats that intertwine ethical messaging with the structure of the fable. These narratives facilitate the internalization of wisdom through symbolic figures and archetypal situations, offering children an experience of identification^[22]. In Sufi Islamic literature, authors such as Rumi, Ibn Arabi, and Saadi Shirazi use allegorical characters—often animals or mythical figures—to present ethical and spiritual dilemmas. Gethin emphasizes that “the language of storytelling penetrates where preaching fails,” highlighting the pedagogical power of the fable as a tool for ethical awareness^[23]. In Buddhism, the *Jatakas*—stories narrating the

Buddha’s previous lives—represent one of the earliest forms of the fable with a clear moral and spiritual function. In these tales, virtues such as compassion, self-restraint, and unconditional generosity are portrayed through animal characters facing dilemmas resolved through altruistic decisions^[24]. Like Aesop’s fables, the *Jatakas* aim to shape children’s character through a natural process of identification. Despite doctrinal differences, these traditions share a common appreciation of the fable as an educational tool. Rather than imposing moral norms, the fable invites internal reflection upon them, operating through imagination and empathy. As Nussbaum asserts, “literary narrative exercises the ethical imagination” and teaches children “to feel responsible for others through a process of internal emotional identification^[7]”. Along these lines, it is important to recall that even the simplest narrative form carries a deep moral dimension. “There is no narrative structure that does not carry moral responsibility. Even the simplest story is a reflection of the struggle between the two core elements of the human soul: sin and conscience”^[25]. This observation clearly emphasizes that fables—despite their structural simplicity—contain an inherent ethical confrontation that contributes to the development of children’s moral consciousness. In educational environments characterized by religious and cultural diversity, the fable gains even greater significance.

It serves as a “third language^[26]”—neither religious nor strictly secular—but universal and connective, building bridges between character education and civic formation. As Jackson also notes, intercultural storytelling can serve as a foundation for interfaith education by promoting empathy and the development of civic competencies^[15]. In conclusion, the fable is not merely a narrative form, but a pedagogical platform that helps children understand, reflect upon, and embody moral values not as obligation, but as conscious choice. This formative process remains present beyond childhood, contributing to the construction of a lasting and self-aware ethical consciousness.

9. The Fable as a Post Secular Narrative Form: A Dialogue Between the Secular and the Sacred

In contemporary societies characterized by cultural pluralism and the decline of traditional religious authority, there

is an increasing need for new discursive forms that integrate the ethical and the symbolic without relying exclusively on doctrinal references. In this context, the fable may be conceived as a post secular narrative form—one that contains deep moral and spiritual dimensions while remaining open and accessible to audiences of diverse faiths or none at all. The term *post secular*, as employed by Habermas, denotes a public sphere in which religious and secular elements coexist reflectively, fostering ethical and cultural dialogue^[27]. The fable, as an archetypal narrative form with ancient roots, embodies this mediating potential. It does not impose dogmatic belief but offers a space for inner reflection on moral dilemmas through symbolic language and allegorical figures. For example, the fable “*The Foxes and the Grapes*” explores themes of desire, disappointment, and self-justification—motifs that resonate across nearly all ethical-religious traditions, while also speaking to a secular reader who encounters these emotions in everyday life. In this way, Aesop’s fables create a “third discursive space^[28]”, where the secular and the sacred do not oppose one another, but instead intersect in a shared process of interpretation. This in-between space does not require external authority to legitimize moral meaning; rather, it enables the audience to reflect freely on ethical values, grounded in the universality of human experience. Such an approach transforms the fable into a powerful tool not only for moral education in religious contexts but also for fostering a universal ethics within pluralistic societies. Thus, the fable is not merely a resilient literary genre, but a transcultural and interworld view narrative form—capable of cultivating an ethical awareness that transcends the boundaries of specific traditions.

10. The Impact of the Fables

In the digital age—where traditional forms of transmitting knowledge and moral values are being reshaped by new information technologies—the fable continues to stand out as a narrative form with unique formative potential. Through digital platforms—such as educational apps, interactive videos, and social media—fables are regaining their relevance as ethically and spiritually rich narratives. Applications like *Bible App for Kids*, *Muslim Kids Series*, and *Buddha Stories* incorporate fable-like stories, animated and adapted for younger audiences, reinforcing virtues such

as honesty, forgiveness, and compassion in careful alignment with sacred texts from respective religious traditions. This transposition of the fable into a digital environment is not merely a new method of content delivery, but also a tool for cultivating moral and religious sensibility in an inclusive, interactive, and non-dogmatic way^[29]. One of the most intriguing aspects of this development is the use of fables in the digital iconography circulating on social media platforms. Emblematic figures such as the fox, the lion, or the tortoise are reimagined as symbolic visuals often used to comment on contemporary ethical dilemmas or to satirize socially charged behaviors. This repurposing of the fable within virtual public discourse preserves its didactic function, creating bridges for reflection among diverse audiences and demonstrating its semantic flexibility in a globalized and technologically interconnected context. In this light, the fable is not merely a narrative relic of the past, but an active instrument of moral education in the digital era—contributing to the development of both ethical and religious sensibility among younger generations, through the language, tools, and cultural frameworks of their time.

11. The Hermeneutic Features of the Fable in Abrahamic and Dharmic Traditions

Hermeneutics, as the discipline of textual interpretation, takes on distinctive dimensions when applied to fables—especially when these narratives are read within the context of religious heritage. Although the fable does not originate directly from sacred texts, it has been naturally appropriated and reconfigured by many spiritual traditions as a tool for ethical reflection and moral education. In this way, symbolic storytelling assumes a formative and mediating function, surpassing its superficial entertaining or moralizing roles. In Judaism, the tradition of *midrash* has established a multilayered interpretive culture in which metaphorical stories—including those featuring non-historical or fictional protagonists—are used to illustrate profound legal and ethical principles. This symbolic reading prepares the audience to connect narrative with the wisdom of the law and human experience, offering a deeper understanding of doctrine.

In Christianity, particularly within patristic thought, allegorical storytelling plays an essential role in spiritual

formation. Saint Augustine emphasizes that allegorical tales may influence the human conscience more powerfully than logical argumentation, as they reach the soul in a more sensitive and intuitive manner (Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine* (*De Doctrina Christiana*), trans.^[12]). In the Islamic tradition—especially in Sufi mysticism—symbolic storytelling plays a vital role in transmitting esoteric truths. Dervishes and poets such as Rumi and Saadi have employed fables to express the relationship between the human and the divine.

These stories go beyond moral illustration: they represent spiritual journeys in which each narrative element carries metaphysical significance, conveying profound aspects of the connection between humanity and the Creator. Meanwhile, in Dharmic traditions such as Buddhism and Hinduism, narratives structurally similar to fables—like the *Jataka tales* and the *Panchatantra* collections—serve as contemplative tools for the internalization of concepts such as *karma*, *impermanence* (*anicca*), and spiritual liberation (*moksha*, *nirvana*). Through simple yet symbolically rich narratives, learners are invited on an inner journey toward spiritual truth, cultivating a deep understanding of cosmological laws and universal ethics. Thus, the fable emerges as a universal hermeneutic structure, dynamically interpreted according to the sensibilities of each religious tradition. It creates a transitional space between the ordinary and the sacred—a territory where moral reflection does not oppose doctrine, but enriches it through an intermediary, symbolic language accessible across generations. As highlighted in studies on the *Jataka* tales and the Bodhisattva path, the fable is not merely a story for children but a powerful tool for enriching moral and spiritual understanding^[30].

12. Conclusions

Positioned at the intersection of mythology, ethics and religion, Aesop's fables exemplify a compelling paradigm of moral narration that transcends time and culture. Far from serving solely as didactic tools for language and childhood education, these narratives constitute resilient symbolic structures that transmit ethical values through a shared narrative code—one that remains acutely relevant in contemporary interfaith and pedagogical discourse. This paper has demonstrated that, despite emerging from a polytheistic Greek oral tradition, Aesop's fables deeply resonate with the ethical

foundations of both Abrahamic and Dharmic religious frameworks. This resonance stems not from superficial similarities but from a shared ethical architecture wherein justice, humility, compassion, and retribution assume culturally specific forms while retaining a universal moral essence. A comparative interfaith lens reveals that the moral archetypes embodied in tales such as 'The Lion and the Mouse', 'The Tortoise and the Hare', and 'The Fox and the Grapes' are echoed in the core teachings of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. The integration of divine figures and the notion of cosmic justice further underscores the organic fusion of fable and faith. This convergence elevates the fable into a medium of moral transmission that is both inclusive and non-dogmatic. From an ethical-didactic standpoint, Aesop's fables emerge as potent tools for moral formation in multicultural, multi-religious contexts. As this study affirms, their symbolic language transcends doctrinal boundaries, offering educators a powerful vehicle for cultivating intercultural competence and fostering ethical reflection across faiths and generations. Viewed semiotically, the fable functions not merely as a transmitter of moral codes, but as a hermeneutic act that invites readers into a dynamic process of meaning-making rooted in their existential experience. As Paul Ricoeur aptly writes, "The subject reconstructs itself through narrative^[17]", suggesting the fable's role in shaping conscience and deep spiritual introspection. In the post-secular landscape—where religion reclaims a role in public life amid pluralistic cultural and technological realities—Aesop's fables regain strategic significance. They serve as shared narrative platforms that cultivate dialogical ethics, grounded in common virtues and mutual respect and the structure meaning language^[31]. This contribution is vital in an era where inclusive moral narratives are more necessary than ever. Moreover, as explored throughout this paper^[15], the fable endures through digital transformation—animated in educational technologies, visual media, and contemporary art—reinterpreting its symbolism to address emerging moral imperatives such as social justice, gender equity, and ecological responsibility. The fable, thus, is not a relic of tradition but a dynamic narrative form evolving alongside human conscience. In sum, Aesop's fables are not merely echoes of an ancient past. They represent codified wisdom capable of nurturing interreligious dialogue, informing ethical education, and bridging understanding in a divided world.

They affirm the timeless power of storytelling—through its most elemental form, the fable—as a profound means of understanding the self, the other, and the shared moral terrain of humanity.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, G.T.S. and T.V.K.; methodology, S.M.; software, S.M.; validation, T.V.K., G.T.S. and S.M.; formal analysis, G.T.S.; investigation, G.T.S.; resources, S.M.; data curation, G.T.S.; writing—original draft preparation, T.V.K.; writing—review and editing, G.T.S.; visualization, T.V.K.; supervision, G.T.S.; project administration, S.M.; funding acquisition, G.T.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

This study did not receive external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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