

## Socrates' Triple Filter Test<sup>8</sup>

This story tells that, one day, one of Socrates' disciples was quite agitated. He told Socrates that he had met one of Socrates' friends and that he had spoken badly of him.

Socrates asked the man to calm down. After thinking for a moment, he asked him to wait a minute. Before listening to what he had to say, the message had to go through a triple filter test. If the message didn't pass the test, it wasn't worthy of being heard.

As he always did, the Greek philosopher asked his anxious disciple a question: "Are you absolutely sure that what you're going to tell me is true?" The disciple thought for a moment. In fact, he couldn't be sure if what his friend had told him was actually malicious. It was a matter of perspective. "So you do not know if everything he said about me is true or not," said the philosopher. The disciple had to admit that he didn't.

Then, Socrates asked him a second question: "Is what you're going to tell me good or not?" The disciple replied that, evidently, it wasn't good at all. In fact, it was quite the opposite. He believed that what he was going to share with the philosopher would cause him discomfort and distress. Thus, Socrates said to him: "You're going to tell me something bad, but you're not completely sure it's true". The disciple admitted that this was the case.

Then, Socrates asked the third and final question: "Is what you have to say about my friend going to help me?" The disciple hesitated. He really didn't know if that information was useful or not. Maybe it would distance him from his friend, but considering that he wasn't sure whether it was true or not, maybe it wasn't useful at all.

In the end, the philosopher refused to listen to what his disciple wanted to tell him. "If what you want to tell me isn't true, isn't good, and isn't even useful, why would I want to hear it?" he finally told his disciple.

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<sup>8</sup> Socrates' Triple Filter Test, *Exploring your mind*, available at <https://exploringyourmind.com/socrates-triple-filter-test/> (last visited Nov 8, 2022).