



# Memetic Life

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In order to understand the world we live in we often need conceptual tools. Sometimes they are arbitrary in order to simplify complex matters, other times they are merely analogues of physical and metaphysical reality.

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## What is memetic life?

### Ever heard of Memes?

The term 'meme' was coined by **Richard Dawkins** in his 1976 book *"the selfish gene"*

It explains how there is a relatively watertight analogue between the language of biology and culture. Where all life, from watermelon trees to people, is "written" in DNA using the nucleotides A-T-C-G, memes are made of, or written, using a couple dozen phonemes.

*"you are more than your genes, you are also memes"*

Ideas of how to do things have been subjected to endless trials throughout time, and successful results have been unearthed by filtering useful ideas from futile, driving the evolution of culture and science. One example is utilizing heat expansion to do work. We've gone from the simple piston steam engine to nuclear power plants through many different iterations of the same concept.

The endless differential copying of these ideas/cultural units/memes, is what accounts for the excellence of results in human culture and science. Because of this we have impeccable skills to build bridges and sewage canals, write poems and create stunning visual illusions, most of which started out as simple prototypes, or attempts by earlier generations.

**GENETICS describe the evolutionary process of information being copied** and mutated into variety, then selected by environments. This or that toad might fit well in one environment, but will die of climate extremities or resource insufficiency in another.

Survival of the toad is then an interplay between its internal and external world; genes in combination with environment.

The information copied is called the **replicator**, and genes are the replicators for biological evolution. Genes copy information, sometimes imperfectly, so mutations occur that are then tested against an environment. If the mutation is beneficial to the biological systems survival in a given environment (forest, dryland etc.) it thrives and perhaps outcompetes its relatives. If the mutation is harmful, it will suffer a demise of some sort, perhaps extinction.

**MEMETICS also describe the evolutionary process of information being copied** and mutated into variety, then tested against an environment. But where **GENES** refer to biological replicators, **MEMES** refer to cultural replicators.

Ideas, ways of doing things, language, even catchphrases and jokes are **MEMES**; Units of culture.

## The toad and the joke

1. We can imagine a species of toad that emerged through mutation to fit well in a wet forest environment.

Some major climate change occurs and the toad population is forced, say north, on the continent. In moving away from the fitting environment, the toad must hope for some other type of wet forest further north, and an inability to find such a place will result in the death of the toad, and perhaps the entire toad population.

If it finds a suitable wet forest the toad population will thrive as is, but if not, only mutations will save it. If the environment changes often, mutations will be the only hope for longevity of the toad genes.

2. Now let's imagine a joke instead of a toad. At some highschool a joke emerges in an environment of ingroup knowledge and customs. If successful (funny), it spreads (copies itself) like a wildfire throughout the school. If it is really funny it will spread beyond the premises of the school and perhaps into larger society, or simply other schoolyards. The joke might work among adolescents, but if one student tries to tell the joke to his grandparents (tries to replicate the joke/meme/cultural unit) it might not be successful at copying itself. The grandparents might stare blankly at their grandchild upon delivery, and the joke will not replicate. In this environment (elderly culture) the joke dies. It is not successfully copied into the minds of the grandparents to further spread. This specific evolutionary brand of the joke ends there.

Perhaps our student is wise, and anticipates this. He might tweak the joke (mutate) so that it fits better with the older audience. Perhaps the joke needs to be dulled down a bit before it jives with the grandparents. So let's say the student takes an offensive joke and makes it less impactful. Now the grandparents laugh, and the mutated joke copies itself successfully into their minds. They will now possibly remember and retell the joke at other social gatherings. It might fare well, and if so; the joke is now a replicating success. It thrives like the toad that found its wet forest. It will be told and retold, and somewhere down the line someone will omit or forget certain parts of the joke, perhaps add an element, making it either better or worse (in relation to the social environment it is presented in), affecting its chance of survival.

### ***Knock-Knock who's there?***

This specific *species* of joke is a perfect example of longevity through mutation. Soon after the original joke was invented, it used up its capacity for being laugh-inducing (having resources) so it mutated again and again to stay funny and repeatable.

## So MEMES are like GENES, but for culture

The English language is a meme in itself. Any specific language is.

**Institutions are memetic**, meaning that they are results of certain cultural ways of doing things. A corporation is a common memetic structure of commerce, as the economic environment it was born in was financial and pecuniary in nature. In our culture we (are taught to) apply value to the concept of ownership, and in doing so we set the stage for what types of organizations (memetic structures) will be accepted by society. It would be hard to convince the modern investor to nationalize or in other ways communalize capital assets, so most institutions are privately owned. This then, is fundamental to the memetic structures of our institutions.

Had we been living under, say Stalin, the memetic structure of our institutions would be state owned, as that would be acceptable in that society.

### MEMETIC LIFEFORMS: They exist and you are a cell in one (or several) of them.

As a reader of this essay, you are probably finding yourself located somewhere within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's perimeters, so why not start with that:

**NATO** can be said to be many things: An alliance, a set of ideals, a set of rules, an institution. But I am trying to submit to you that besides being all of those things, NATO is a living entity. It is a lifeform. How so?


To many people in the late 40's NATO was a tad controversial in its conception. Many citizens of the member states did not fancy the idea of military decision making aspects being placed centrally and far away from their political reach. The "sales pitch" so to speak was that NATO should exist to serve its function as a bastion against the Russian horde. Should the Soviet Union be dismantled, NATO would follow suit. (This was not a promise, but a vague expectation among critics, stemming from the rhetoric used by state planners and news outlets during NATO's conception)

Of course, the USSR and the Warsaw pact dismantled, yet instead of reigning in the powers of NATO, Western state leaders expanded it into the former Warsaw pact nations and beyond. While it did oversee a temporary reduction in military spending among its member states, the entity NATO grew.

Why? Did we grow accustomed to it? I think the answer is more profound.

NATO is alive. Failing to consider this leaves us at a disadvantage when attempting to understand the world of established geopolitics, or any chartered large group relations for that matter.

We forgot to factor in NATO's internal desire to stay in this world. I submit to you, dear



reader, that NATO as a whole has desires. They stem mainly from the individuals (cells) comprising it. *Job security, power, prestige and social relations* are enough to imbue NATO with something akin to a "will".

Shutting down NATO would mean firing of workers, managers and bosses. That alone is enough to give the entire memetic structure of NATO a reason to "live" without satisfying its intended purpose. Like a person being born and raised to erect a statue of an emperor. Upon completion the emperor might have no more need for the person and is willing to exile or kill his slave. But the person has its own set of reasons to stay alive.

## DEFINITION OF LIFE

Any system capable of:

**- Eating**

NATO consumes resources to grow and maintain itself

**- Metabolizing**

NATO converts these resources to do work

**- Excreting**

NATO disposes of waste and left-over resources

**- Breathing**

NATO structures has air input and Co2 output

**- Moving**

NATO can move its operations from one place to another

**- Growing**

NATO expands in size and reach

**- Reproducing**

NATO creates offspring and could potentially create a sister organization

**- Responding to external stimuli**

NATO obviously does that, as it was built for

**NATO checks every definition.**

**NATO is therefore alive.**

## **NATIONS are memetic lifeforms as well. And they are eerily similar to people.**

A human is an organism, and at the same time a superorganism or holobiont composed of individual cells. These cells are perhaps not "aware" that they are cells in the same way we are aware that we are humans, but cells are lifeforms in and of themselves, trying to survive and replicate. Over time they clustered into what we could define as superorganisms: Humans. They did this without a plan or motive, simply through biological pressures and an inherent natural drive for survival and longevity. And here we are, the humans. We also clustered into superorganisms, from hunter gatherer tribes, through nations to international institutions.


Just as the cells comprising our bodies didn't have a stated objective to do so, but gravitated towards our current form as a result of mutations and environmental pressures, so too did we (humans) cluster into memetic superorganisms without a coherent plan or stated goal. It happened over time due to memetic mutations in social environments.

So what might that entail?

**Let me take a leap right away to clarify where I'm going with this, and why I think it is important: Most nations, if not all, are the memetic equivalent to **JUNKIES**.**

Over billions of years life changed form and function to match a changing environment, and currently we are the dominant species on the planet. If you are a cell in a human body: congratulations! So far you are part of a successful series of symbiotic mutations. Well done.

*But, what about the skin cells of a junky taking too much xylazine laced fentanyl?* Not so good for them. The junky's brain cells will, albeit begrudgingly, sacrifice a lot of skin cells to give themselves a dopamine rush here and now. In the grand deal of symbiosis, the skin cells lost out. Without knowing it of course, since cells don't have brains to anticipate risk. The skin cells are just the first to suffer from the brain cells desires. Soon the entire system will die due to the drug. But that is a risk the brain is allowing, because the rush of the drug, compared to the horrors of increasingly worsened sober reality, is simply too much to bear. Ignoring reality and rationalizing harmful choices during distress leads to the death of the junky.



How does that relate to nations? Right now, the brain cells of our nations (elite politicians and oligarchs) are gladly willing to sacrifice not only the skin cells (poor people with no societal decision making power) but also the entire body (civilized society) for a quick fix of **money, power and prestige** within the next quarter/year/decade. Fracking, Oildrilling, mass consumer markets, containerships filled with plastic rubbish, car culture, military fleets and jet planes are destroying the entirety of memetic and genetic life on this planet. Yet the brain cells of our societies (politicians and oligarchs) are letting this happen. Either by ignoring realities or rationalizing them. Just like the junky.

**We have to face it. In creating large scale institutions we risk creating memetic lifeforms that escape our control. This has already happened.**

The vast amount of different institutions in our world has taken on a life of their own. Most people on the planet would like to see a reduction of military spending, but lobbying has the same effect on policy makers, thereby nations, that withdrawal has on junkies. They create an extreme and unhealthy need for substances that are harmful to the nation's people and its environment.

If an institution is unpopular or unwanted in society, political pressures seek to remove them. If they resist warranted removal they become analogues of **parasites**.

Many institutions are akin to behavior-altering parasites for nations. Lobbyists are akin to the neuroactive compounds made by parasites that stimulate a response in the host's central nervous system.

Most people want new hospitals and health centers instead of more prisons. They want reasonable freedom from surveillance. They wish to diminish the military industrial complex, they want a ceasefire in Gaza etc. Lobbyists distort those wants, and the result is a society not representative of its population. This is extremely dangerous.



## FINANCIALIZED WESTERN WORLD

People *usually* want more equality. The 0.1% has grasped too much power and is wielding it to their own favor, detrimental to the masses.

Just like a parasite secretes enzymes to numb its host, so does the financial sector numb the nation of its destructive presence through lobbyists and think tanks. Not only is the resource draining financial rentier class (parasite) accepted in our society (host), it has convinced the host that it is *vital for its survival*.

The idea that *private financial* lending and investment is the driver of growth, instead of a hindrance to it, an overhead to production, an added cost to living, is a destructive distortion of reality that keeps us trapped in a backwards and malicious way of handling credit. Paying mortgage interests or rent, private insurance fees and healthcare are costs that keep American producers unable to compete internationally with exports of most consumer goods. That's one of the reasons why every corporation in the Fortune 100 list of the largest transnationals has been the recipient of subsidies and direct state intervention. It's one of many reasons American so-called capitalism needs protectionism and approximately 800 military bases to function even minimally. It is also the reason that most unofficial MAGA hats sold by webshops and traveling vendors at Trump rallies are produced in China.

### Are there memetic Super-superorganisms?

Is there a memetic umbrella organism, or way of doing things that govern most, if not all of its constituents?

I think so. That is the topic of my next essay.

**Thank you for reading, stay tuned for more!**

**- F.I. Dusenberg**