

Cutting the Puppet Master's Strings: Part 3-Meme Propagation



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THRIVE IN THE AGE OF KNOWLEDGE

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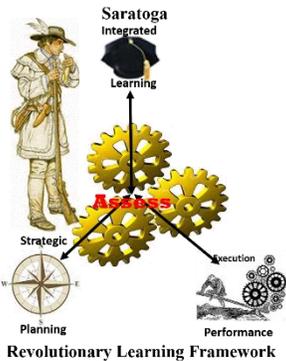
Morgan Works helps organizations transform into Revolutionary Learning Organizations to thrive in the rapidly changing and chaotic environment.

The Age of Knowledge is a dynamic and disruptive environment in which organizations must continually adapt themselves to meet challenges and opportunities or face irrelevance or even extinction. It is marked by the rapid emergence of disruptive technologies, the ease of use of these technologies and users that can rapidly and effectively apply information to achieve their own ends and purposes.

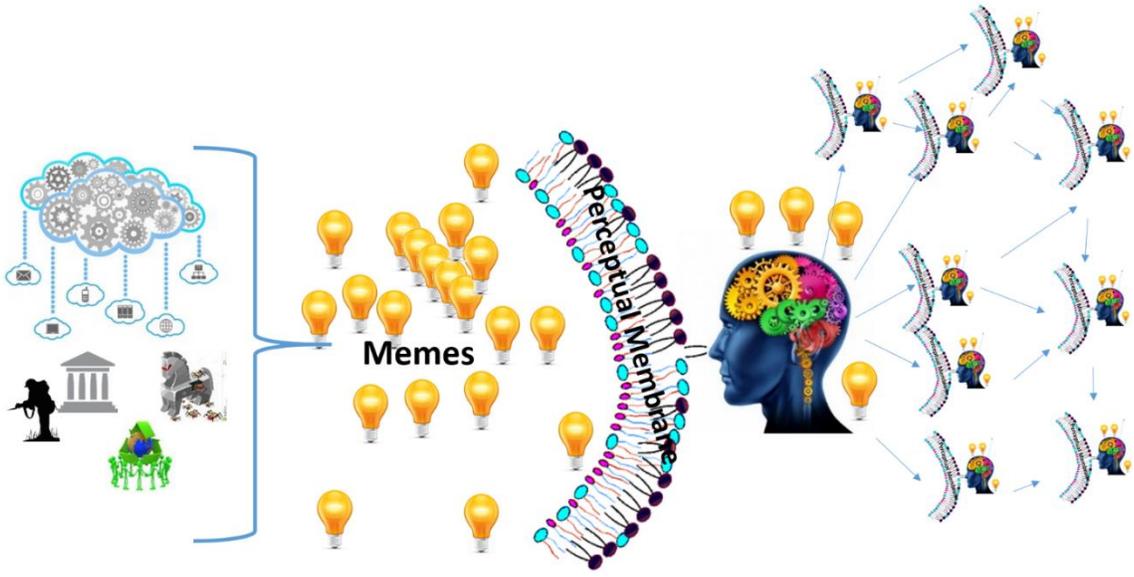
***Key Points:** A Puppet Master skillfully creates memes based this understanding and uses social media to virally propagate them, often in synchronized waves that reinforce each other. Much like continuous lapping of the waves upon the beach, these “meme waves” stroke the emotions, often to the point that logic and rational discourse may prove ineffectual. So how do we prevent the Puppet Masters from controlling society’s string with powerful memes? The first step is to quickly identify the Puppet Masters and their goals. The second and third steps are to counter with facts and then create counter-memes based on the facts.*

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Morgan Works provides a suite of integrated planning and execution tools through the Saratoga Revolutionary Learning Organization Framework™.



Saratoga's modules may be implanted separately or as part of a cohesive framework to integrate key aspects of planning and execution in a Revolutionary Learning Environment. It is based on knowledge enablement to help people and organizations to understand their environment and to thrive in a chaotic and rapidly changing world. **Thrive in the Age of Knowledge**



When I first started writing about memes in the 1990's for some cognitive work I was doing on initiations and the impact of initiatic ceremonies upon the mind, very few people had heard of memes. You could not find the word in a dictionary and there was little or no references to it on the internet. I got a lot of questions asking, "what is a meme?" Now the word is common and you can look it up readily. A quick Google search produces 492 million hits, including a definition:

an element of a culture or system of behavior that may be considered to be passed from one individual to another by nongenetic means, especially imitation.

a humorous image, video, piece of text, etc., that is copied (often with slight variations) and spread rapidly by Internet users.

Most of these hits in Google are memes in action. They seem to be everywhere on social networking and social media sites and are often used by the mainstream media as well. I suspect that more than a few news stories are shaped around memes the authors want to propagate or unconsciously include. I am willing to be bet that most editorial segments are increasingly meme based and designed to propagate memes and to shape opinions and behavior.

Puppet Masters use both aspects of the definition above to propagate memes throughout a culture. During the propagation, there are two key aspects to memes:

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- Well-constructed memes spread virally and fast. The nature of many social networking sites, with their easy ability to like and to share a picture, video, or text, helps to rapidly propagate them.
- They do not need to be truthful or factual. They are often spread with little or no checking and, once they start to virally spread, even fact checking often does not stop their spread.

Memes operate on the emotional and subconscious level rather than the logical and rational levels of the mind. The more they virally spread the more powerful they become, almost as if the meme takes on a life of its own. For a non-traditional view of how this happens see the [Noosphere](#) of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. If the Noosphere did not exist before social media, one can make the case that it is an “artificial” Noosphere.

A Puppet Master skillfully creates memes based this understanding and uses social media to virally propagate them, often in synchronized waves that reinforce each other. Much like continuous lapping of the waves upon the beach, these “meme waves” stroke the emotions, often to the point that logic and rational discourse may prove ineffectual.

While all memes are designed to shape the recipients' minds, not all are created equally. Some memes are benign or beneficial, for example memes designed to stop the spread of a disease or to promote other aspects of good health and constructive behavior. Remember the Indian shedding a tear over litter from the commercial in the 1970's or Smokey the Bear? They are both powerful memes. But positive or not, they were designed to influence and to shape behavior. Behavior manipulation, even for benign means, can often be problematic and can easily become [Skinnerian behavior modification](#).

So how do we prevent the Puppet Masters from controlling society's string with powerful memes? Perhaps the first step is to quickly identify the Puppet Masters and their goals. Since memes operate on the emotional and subconscious level, the most effective counter-meme is another meme. The danger is that the cycle of meme/counter-meme can escalate and create even more damage than the original meme. Therefore, while the counter-meme program speaks to the emotions and subconscious, the campaign must also include an appeal to the rational and logical minds that explains the memes and what the meme propagator is trying to accomplish with them. The more people understand about memes and how they work, the more the logical/rational parts of their minds will be able to peel back the layers of symbolism within the meme and see it for what it is—an attempt to manipulate behavior. This requires critical thinking skills and access to reliable information.

Are viral memes crowding out truth? With the prevalence today of 24/7 "news" channels to always on social networking has quantity crowded out truth? Does

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quantity have a quality of its own to create thought patterns? Has social networking actually become de Chardin's Noosphere?

"Listen, I want you to understand something. It doesn't matter that you know. The truth doesn't matter. We live in a post-truth world—I read about it on your site, Alex. The point is, no matter what you do, the fact that you have that information can't hurt me. There's just too much information out there and the official story is too firmly etched in the public mind."

Fuller, A.C.. The Alex Vane Media Thrillers: Books 1-3 (Kindle Locations 12121-12123). A.C. Fuller Books. Kindle Edition.

Meme propagation requires five elements: a message, a propagation engine, a medium, perceptual membrane engagement, and the target mind. Since memes tend to work on the emotional level, the message needs to speak to the emotions more than the logical mind. This is linked to the third element as well, the perceptual filters in the membrane. The perceptual membrane filters out information from the conscious mind. However, they can be conditioned. How often have you started out with one opinion and then one day found that opinion shifting and you did not even realize the process? Successful memes act on the perceptual filters and alter them to allow their message through to the mind. The mind, the fifth element, has both a conscious and a subconscious component. The successful meme works first on the subconscious component and then the conscious component, subtly shaping opinions and ideas. Once the conscious mind is engaged, it becomes part of the propagation engine. The propagation engine of social networking, when compared to the age of books and newspapers, is like comparing a Ferrari to a Model-T. Likewise, the medium of social networking compared to even television is like a superhighway compared to a country road. Social networking allows a message to go viral in hours, maybe even minutes depending on the construct of the message and the state of perceptual membranes. Thus, a message that seems to go viral immediately, may be the capstone in a meme campaign that paved the way for it. A good propagator understands the relationship of all engines media and the minds they want to reach and orchestrates, or sometimes takes advantage of existing events to create a capstone event.

For reference, some of my past articles include:

[The Data Puppet Masters and the Muddling of Knowledge](#)

[Cutting the Puppet Master Strings Part 1](#)

[Cutting the Puppet Master Strings Part 2](#)

Cutting the Puppet Master's Strings: Part 3-Meme Propagation

[Longitudinal Learning: Any Road or the Right Road](#)

[Adaptive Learning Organizations and the Water Wheel of Knowledge](#)

[Thriving in the Age of Knowledge](#)

[Cognitive Dominance and Training](#)

[Cognitive Dominance: Open the Doors of Perception](#)

[Big Data for Leaders: Integration and Exploitation](#)

[Big Data: Ontology as the Lexicon of Strategy](#)

[Big Data for Leaders: Strategic Linkage](#)

[Disingenuous Statistics and Models: The Viper That Strangles and Poisons and How to Kill It](#)