Mimetics as Digital Culture

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We live in a digital landscape where most communication for the younger generation is aided by technology, specifically social media. News feeds, or social updates with occasional links to informational media, are filled with digitally mediated conversations that occur through words, images, or often a mixture of the two. Nearly every computer-savvy person knows of the heated debates and vulgar insults thrown out in the comment section of controversial or trending posts; yet, these have not been a source of serious study for argumentation theorists. While underexposed as a valuable source of communication, rhetoric has changed as a result of the reliance of impersonal modes of argument on social media and digital platforms.

The advent of the internet created a space for global communication that transcends time and location. One of the most common features of the internet era is the "meme." Although typically thought of as a funny picture connected with a particular phase, "A meme is the simplest unit of cultural replication," and as a result "Human development is a process of being loaded with, or infested by, large numbers of memes" (Bacalu 154). Memes, or memetics, are often known as simple phrases, referential images or videos, yet performances or "behaviors for collective appreciation" become "units" of our collective culture (Milner 18). For example, when a friend is known for an idiosyncratic tick, such as "talking" with their hands or nodding their head like a chicken, this behavior becomes "memetic" and will be associated with them. On a larger scale, memes become cultural references as populations mimic behaviors or images that work to reference established norms, thus becoming ingrained as traditionally appropriate behavior.

Memetics cover a lot of cultural landscape, but linguistic and visual memes flood our daily lives, so much so that their linguistic, and by extension their rhetorical value, needs to be explored further. In this paper, I aim to explore the creation of memetic media and compare the features of the internet meme to Aristotle's concept of the enthymeme. My desire is to demonstrate the obvious links between the two that have, so far, lacked explicit exploration.

The Enthymeme: Filling in Missing Pieces

To begin, Aristotle's impact on rhetoric is profound but focus for the purpose of this paper will be on his definition and explanation of the enthymeme. An enthymeme is what Aristotle calls "a rhetorical syllogism," a form of logical reasoning in which one proposition is missing and must be filled in by the audience (6). For example, a syllogism would be: This restaurant requires customers to wear a tie. He is not wearing a tie. Therefore, he cannot buy food from the restaurant. The enthymeme leaves out one portion of the syllogism, which the audience completes themselves. In continuing the example above, if a man were to look at his outfit and state, "This restaurant requires customers to wear a tie, so I cannot eat at this restaurant" then it can be inferred that he is not wearing a tie. Aristotle explains that "The enthymeme must consist of a few propositions, fewer often than those which make the normal syllogism. For if any of these propositions is a familiar fact, there is no need even to mention it; the hearer adds it himself" (7). While stating all three propositions would create a clear line of reasoning, it may be redundant and less persuasive to force the connection when the audience is capable of coming to the same conclusion with their own faculties.

The enthymeme, much like the meme as I will argue, has its own grammar and structure that allows it to be interpreted by the audience. The missing portion that demotes the syllogism to enthymeme is crafted in consideration of the shared understanding of social, economic, or historical knowledge. Ed Dyck uses formal logic in connection with an explanation of the enthymeme to demonstrate that "a topos is an element (a part) of an enthymeme, that is, a thing out of which an enthymeme is constructed" (109). To Aristotle, topoi, otherwise called the topic, refers to a strategy that the speaker uses to help drive his speech. He explains, "Not all facts can form his basis, but only those that bear on the matter in hand . . . Consequently, as appears in the *Topics*, we must first of all have by us a selection of arguments about questions that may arise that are suitable for us to handle; and . . . the more closely [the facts] bear upon it, the more they will seem to belong to that speech only instead of being a commonplace" (Aristotle 17). The common topoi attempt to establish universal ground, whereas close facts create particular topoi. Commonplaces include calls to nationalistic beliefs, American vs. European, while particular topoi are meant for a particular audience; for example, facts about a motorcycle vs. a hybrid car would only interest specific people. It is explicit references to the topoi the Dyck argues is left out when crafting the enthymeme; since the very nature of a topoi is familiar to the intended audience, it is unnecessary to include it.

Cultural Inheritance: Darwin to Digital Rhetoric

Moving away from Aristotle's enthymeme, the concept of meme originated, surprisingly, with biologist Richard Dawkins. While his book *The Selfish Gene* focuses primarily on the replication of genetic material, his last chapter "Memes: The New Replicators" attempts to explain the evolution of culture. Dawkins conflates his understanding of biological evolution with cultural evolution. He argues that "Cultural transmission is analogous to genetic transmission in that, although basically conservative, it can give rise to a form of evolution" (Dawkins 203). Dawkins is a Darwinian biologist, who believes that:

> The new soup [referencing allele pools] is the soup of human culture. We need a name for the new replicator, a noun which conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of *imitation.* "Mimeme" comes from a suitable Greek root, but I want a monosyllable that sounds a bit like 'gene.' I hope my classicist friends will forgive me if I appreciate to *meme.* If it is any consolation, it could alternatively be thought of as being related to "memory," or the French word *même* [same]. (206)

Before continuing with my discussion of meme history, I must digress into an explanation of Darwin's theory of evolution. Evolution is the rise of a new species, which, when simplified, means a population of sexually reproducing individuals that cannot cross-breed with another population. Dawkins exemplifies this cultural evolution by explaining that Chaucer's Middle English would be incomprehensible to a modern Englishman, and vice versa; Chaucer would not recognize standard English (203). If those from the Medieval age were to be alive today, there would be limited communication between the two parties, meaning all involved would be unable to replicate ideas, behavior, and/or beliefs within each population. Darwin's theory of evolution revolves around the drift between viable genetic exchanges through some kind of isolation, whether that be time, space, or internal mechanisms such as behaviors. Thus cultural evolution occurs when a group speciates, or becomes a unique species, promoting quick growth in what we recognize as culture.

Dawkins uses "mimeme," the Greek word for imitation, shortened to meme to explain how ideas, pictures, or phrases "propagate themselves by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in a sense, can be called imitation" (203). He demonstrates the memetic process through a scholar discovering an interesting fact and sharing it with his colleges or in his lectures, and, once it is shared, that piece of information "parasitizes" the host (207). Memes, for Dawkins, act as a viral component that enter into the audience's mind, non-consensually infecting the individuals. Once infected, the individuals cannot separate their understanding of the cultural unit from themselves. Inheritable material, such as genes, are non-negotiable pieces that constructs his or her physical traits; memes, as cultural units, then make up one's cultural inheritance impacting their speech, behaviors, and frames of reference. One is born into a family and cannot

separate their genetic inheritance from their physical selves, and memetics follow the same logic. Once one is infected with a specific cultural unit, there is almost no way to uninitiate the self as a replicator.

Dawkins' memetic process does have its limitations defined primarily by the time it was written. Published in 1976, he claims that the ability for memes to replicate is limited by computer space (211). In the 1970s, download speeds were slow, and the space on hard drives restricted the amounts of information one could access. Because of this, Dawkins's understanding of what makes a meme has not been ignored; instead, he provides a historical understanding. Going forward, this paper's analysis is rooted in the ideas of digital rhetorics, the work that studies "meaning-making, persuasion or identification as expressed through language, bodies, machines, and text that created, circulated, or experienced through or regarding digital technologies" (Hoss 6). The same as with Dawkins's original idea, the lenses inspired by digital rhetoric argue for the participatory nature that, when applied to memes, explains the potential for unregulated authorship and recreations that occur regardless of space or time.

At the start of Bill Wasik's book *And Then There's This,* he coins the term "nanostory" to describe the viral nature of fads and the lifespan of internet content (5). He furthers this idea arguing "the Internet is revolutionary in how it has democratized not just culture-making but cultural monitoring, giving individual creators a profusion of data with which to identify trends surrounding their own work and that of others" (Wisik 14). Because memetic spread takes place throughout digital spaces, meme culture means people see and recreate using established templates to further their participation within the culture of the digital era. Digital culture, as I will continue to discuss, encompasses the spaces where digital communication and identity are formed. Gamers, content creators, "influencers," and other identity groups that fall under the umbrella of digital culture act as subcultures that establish and "enforce" their own rules, roles, and regulations. For the purpose of this study, the focus on digital meme culture, otherwise referred to as Internet memetics, deals with memes that allow users to "signify communal belonging" (Nissenbam and Shifman 485)**.** In all, much of digital culture and the media housed on various platforms revolve around this ability to establish ideas or forms, reproduce content, then die as quickly as it began. Meme templates, the form/structure they take, become the cultural units Dawkins establishes, but "speciation" occurs at an alarming rate because viral popularity saturates the space's consciousness leaving little room for individuals to recreate in order to "signify" their belonging.

Similar to Wasik, the authors of "Internet Memes as Contested Cultural Capital: The Case of 4chan's /b/board" believe that digital meaning-making "function[s] as cues of membership, distinguishing in-group members from mere passerbyers" (Nissenbam and Shifman 485). Nissenbam and Shifman further their analysis to argue that Internet memes have now become a form of cultural capital, referring to Bourdieu's work on one's ability to demonstrate their understanding of a

culture and secure their membership within it (Nissenbam and Shifman 498). While they clarify that memes are unstable cultural capital, they establish that their instability is what allows members to continually redesign, and thus reinforce the required knowledge to belong to the "in-group" (498). In his chapter, "Critique of Digital Reason," David Gunkel theorizes that digital reason belongs to the post-structural and postmodern critiques in order to argue that the rapid expansion of technology endangers reason and demonstrates that once qualified, it loses meaning. When conflated with Nissenbam and Shifman's claim of unstable cultural capital, the viral nature of memetic media could be short-lived thanks to the tendency for more mainstream groups to expect rational, organized discourse, at least in the sense of what is comprehensible to the average demographic of the community.

For example, and in an attempt to move toward this study's purpose, an internet meme is "a group of digital items sharing common characteristics...which were created with awareness of each other, and were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users" (Shifman qtd by Milner 14). Each meme is imitated through an awareness of and adherence to a particular style, which can include: the tone in which the words/phrases are to be read, placement of words, font and text size, as well as image format (quality, GIF/standard image, etc.). All memetic media imitates established behaviors or beliefs of a certain group. Internet culture pulls images from popular sources, such as social media, to reference relatable struggles or mock what it deems as inappropriate behaviors.

Meme Creation and Reproduction

The people who create and read memes cannot be separated from the medium as they are the viewers who are ingrained in the culture that reproduces itself. As a result, this paper explores only one type of meme from one culture: memetic internet images. To best demonstrate the creation and reproduction of a memetic internet image (internet meme), the following section is an analysis of "Is this a pigeon" meme in relation to the "five fundamental logics" (multimodality, appropriation, resonance, collectivism and spread) used in meme creation as explained in Ryan Milner's *The World Made Meme: Public Conversations and Participatory Media*.

Multimodality

The dissemination of information through the internet is aided by it multi-medium approach (Milner 24). Images, words, video, and coded reference to other works or experiences create a layered internet meme that relies on an understanding of one or more reference points to be read. For example, the image in Figure 1is known to the meme community as the "Is this a pigeon?" meme, which shows a man confusing a butterfly for a pigeon.

Figure 1: "Is this a Pigeon"

This screenshot is from a Japanese anime, *The Brave Fighter Sun Fighbird,* first televised in 1991 ("Is This a Pigeon?" Knowyourmeme).[1] Yutaro Katori, an android posing as a human research assistant for a local professor, humorously mistakes a butterfly for a pigeon while talking to a detective outside the professor's home ("Figh Bird Episode 3 Subbed" 4:36). This meme combines a linguistic phrase with an image taken from a television show, both of which work together to be interpreted as the speaker's confusion or conflation of unrelated concepts (a butterfly and a pigeon).

Appropriation

Milner defines memetic appropriation as "the process of creating a new meaning through the formats already established" (25). According to knowyourmeme.com, the only database of memetic internet content, this image with caption did not become a meme until early 2018 when a user on Twitter appropriated (mimicked) the format and Netflix, a week later, tweeted another new variation (see Figure 2)[2] garnering a significant number of "likes" ("Is This A Pigeon?" Knowyourmeme**).**

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[1] "Is this a pigeon?" *Tumblr,* uploaded by Indizi dell'avvenuta catastrofe, 6 December 2011

[2] "Is this a teen?" *Twitter*, uploaded by Netflix, 3 May 2018

Figure 2: "Is this a Teen?"

Netflix's meme copied the same format but changed a few features to mock the use of adult actors for adolescent characters. If the reader is familiar with the meme format, they will read it as the inherent flaw in dramas about high-school teens being performed by actors nearing their thirties. The meme's creator uses the same image components (man, butterfly, text), but modified what each aspect represents in order to infer a new interpretation of the image. Nothing else can be changed within this meme without losing its readability. If "high school TV dramas" were to be placed anywhere else on the image, then the creator risks misinterpretation. So, while the meme can be appropriated to make new meanings, the style cannot change dramatically without losing the ability to be read and understood.

Resonance

Most media can be interpreted because the audience is familiar with the format of how it is supposed to be read. For example, graphic novels can be read successfully when the reader interprets the images in conjunction with the text because each part combines to create one message. Yet, if the reader has no experience with the content of the message, it becomes difficult to read. Memes, like other media, work because they are personally or culturally significant to the viewer. A meme's ability to connect with an audience is what "resonates" with a group who then shares the meme further, infecting new people with the message.

In rhetorical theory, the idea of resonance ties together with Chaïm Perelman's construction of universal and particular audiences. While often argued against for valuable reasons, Alan Gross situates audience construction by writing, "Perelman believes that all rhetorical audiences are constructed by the speaker. Of course, there are real audiences; of course, their study poses a genuine problem; but it is a challenge, he feels, beyond the scope of rhetoric: the study of

real audiences is that business of experimental psychology" (204). A speaker's intended audience is imaginary in the construction of the message, but the creator must consider who their viewer *may* be in order to create meaning that is capable being understood. In this sense, the message's creator plays with their understanding of the intended audience to address the needs of those who may interpret or receive meaning. Of course, it is then reasonable that Gross attempts to place the study of audience with the realm of psychology rather than rhetoric, but persuasion can only be attempted through a construction of the message's intended receiver leaving it firmly ground in rhetoric.

With this in mind, Gross concludes, "The audience is of two kinds, universal and particular. Universal audiences consist of all rational beings; persuasive discourse addressed to these thematizes facts and truth. Particular audiences consist of one segment or another of humanity: Americans, Republicans, Elks, Medicare recipients; discourse addressed to them thematizes values" (210). It is socially impossible to address a completely universal audience, as our world is fragmented by regions, religions, and concepts of personhood, but memetics is not concerned with the universal as its reach is limited to segmented digital communities. Instead, the construction of a meme, and its ability to resonate, depends on its appeal to a person's values, such as humor, social belief, or interests.

Milner may not reference particular or universal audience, but he recognizes two types of connection: *studium,* "connection with an image on a cultural level," and *punctum*, "connection with an image at the personal level" (30). Memes can be interpreted through these connections; for example, the image in Figure 3 is commentary on a cultural issue. [3]

Figure 3: "Is this a Woman's Fault"

Again, someone who knows how this meme is supposed to be read would interpret the speaker, "Society," as conflating "man committing a heinous act of

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[3] "Is this a woman's fault?" *Tumblr*, uploaded by Pumpkinspicepunani 26 November 2018.

violence," such as sexual assault or murder, with a woman's action, how she is dressed or how she has rejected a "nice guy." This appropriation of "Is this a pigeon?" plays on a cultural understanding of current gender politics, which without an awareness of "rape culture" or social movements such as "Me Too" one would be unable to grasp the intended message.

Next, punctum is a personal connection with the meme's message. Figure 4 is meant to resonate with the individual.[4]

Figure 4: "Is This Dealing with my Problems?"

The "Is This Dealing with my Problems?" meme comments on a person's ineffective coping skills, sleeping instead of facing an issue, but if the viewer is unable to connect with the intended message the meme will not be shared further. Like a cold, the viral nature of the meme can only infect another if those previously infected allow it to spread.

In rhetorical terms, these memes have been crafted to mock a belief or value common in the creator's and audience's community. Memes are able to resonate because they draw on the communal values that have been branded as flawed, thus inspiring the need for commentary. A universal appeal aims to be understood by the entire audience, but a meme will always have a limited reach since their primary method of communication occurs through a visual meant to be read by a group of people who are intimately familiar with the community who creates it. The meme begins in the particular audience, and it continues to address smaller groups through a call to studium and/or punctum.

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[4] "Is this dealing with my problems?" *Tumblr*, uploaded by babashookbitch, 25 November 2018.

Collectivism and Spread

Memes infect individuals, then those individuals spread memetic media further through social media platforms, i.e. Tumblr, Instagram, Facebook, Reddit, etc. It is the collective, the people who resonate with the media, who absorb the message, spreading it further to others who may relate. Thus, memetic media becomes representations of the culture or individuals' behaviors/beliefs. Ryan Milner closes the first chapter of *The World Made Meme* with "these media [memes] are premised on collective strands intertwining to create new tapestries of cultural productions" (40). Internet memes combine visual and text to create a specific reference point to be read by the viewer, communicating the creator's message through implicit inference. Thus, connection to the meme elicits a share to further demonstrate that one understands the reference and seek out others who "get it."

To further explain, Eric Jenkins, in "The Modes of Visual Rhetoric: Circulating Memes as Expressions," explores memetic spread, further arguing that memes are modes that become "circulating energies of contemporary existence rather than re-presenting the interests of particular rhetors" (443). Jenkins' argument for the spread of modes does not localize itself on individuals or specific audiences, instead circulation is a collective phenomenon that consistently interprets and reconfigures these media to support "the broader media ecology" one that "continually alters situations and contexts by varying the rhetors, audiences, exigences, and constraints" (445). Rather than one cohesive unit of cultural spread, memetic media creates a rich, virtual ecosystem that plants and pollinates through various groups, ideas, and meme formats. Sharing a meme, the smallest unit of culture, is inherently a participatory act that aids in the success of the total ecosystem.

Enthymemes and Visual: Is There an Argument?

Scholars are beginning to turn to the theory of the enthymeme in order to explain the implicit meaning drawn from images. Few have taken the theory further to begin arguing the validity of visual argument. Valerie Smith is adamant about the possibility of visual argumentation: "Aristotle's conception [of the enthymeme] both explains how visual arguments are possible and helps us understand how they work" (115). Smith points out that the reductive view of the enthymeme as an incomplete argument not only limits its value but is a misinterpretation of Aristotle's concept (116). She continues through an explanation of the differing abilities of the enthymeme: arguing in what is "probable" to allow the audience to "be convinced by these considerations but differences of opinion may remain," to consider "ethical and emotional dimensions of argument," and a strong connection between the message's sender and receiver (117). The recognition of these qualities allows what would otherwise be ambiguous images to create meaning.

Images, Smith recognizes, allow the viewer to infer meaning from what is familiar (120). Smith explains, "Within our cultural frameworks, we understand visual aspects of nonverbal communication to carry a limited and likely range of meanings"; for example, when a person is standing with his fist clenched and face red, onlookers would assume this person is angry (120). The enthymeme, as Aristotle proposes, allows the audience to complete the argument for themselves, which means the speaker must construct an argument that builds within it a system where the audience infers what is the "probable" conclusion given all the other information. The meme functions in the same manner. The community pulls an image and creates a probable interpretation, which is then used within each iteration to create the interpretive framework. Memetic internet media can create new codes for its culture, but often it digitizes communication that has already been established. For example, Smith exemplifies the clenched fist as a visual indication of anger, which is a universal symbol for feelings of rage. The "Arthur's Fist" meme follows the same logic but uses a children's cartoon from the 1990s to replicate this visual code to indicate frustration with trivial matters (knowyourmeme). Figure 5 reads as one speaker being frustrated because they cannot get back their property, the phone charger, because the borrower feels they need it more. [5]
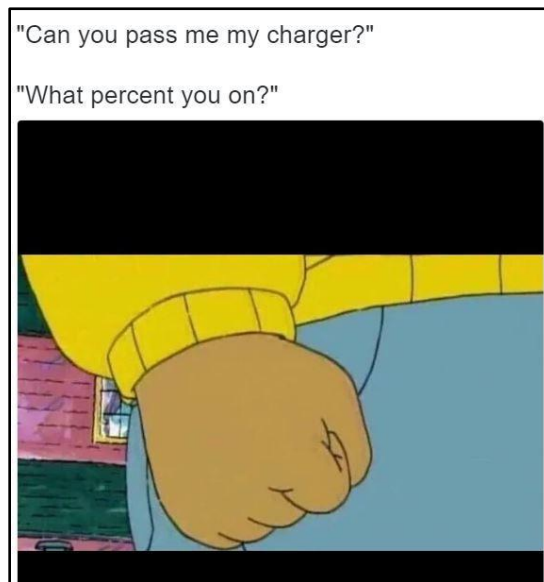

Figure 5: "Can You Pass me my Charger?"

This is a common problem in the digital age: as the younger generation relies on smartphones, people compare battery percentages to argue their need for a charger, whether the item is their property or another person's. This image uses a well-known cultural code, clenched fist as anger, and creates a visual enthymeme for a very particular audience. The audience has to do most of the

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[5] @SnipderDeuceZero "'Can you pass me my charger?' 'What percent are you on?'" *Twitter,* 28 July 2016, 1:45 am, https://i.kym-cdn.com/photos/images/original/001/154/406/557.jpg

work in interpreting the message, but in explicating the implicit claims an argument can begin to form.

While Smith argues the emotional appeals of visual enthymemes, her reference to ethos as a visual argument applies to memes, as the creation and dissemination of memetic media continually tries to prove assimilation to meme standard to present the media as a part of a collective rather than the individual. The content is original because the reference's layers have been reformed, but adherence to the style of the meme signals to the audience that this meme belongs, so the creator must be a part of the community. Finally, she concludes by explaining that visual enthymemes function through the shared opinions of speaker and audience (Smith 121). She states, "Commonplaces, of course, are culture-specific grounds of potential agreement between speakers and audiences. Birdsell and Groarke suggest that visual commonplaces can argue just as verbal ones do" (Smith 121).

Reading the Meme

The final point that needs to be addressed about memetic media is how its structure influences its readability. Memetic media can be read because they rely on a certain set of grammars, which are defined by the collective who creates and disseminates it. The grammar of memes do not abide by the same prescriptive rules of standard English, meaning punctuation or spelling depends on the user and audience instead of what has been decided to be proper. Milner argues that memetic grammar is "a descriptive account" where "Understanding images depends on understanding the socially situated grammar foundational to them" (49). Grammar is created through the use of an image with implicit meaning, recognized as an iconic visual, and a phrase or word that frames the creator's intended message (Hahner 151). As mentioned previously, each meme has its own style inherent in its structure, so, in combination with an icon, a meme can be read by any person familiar with the two.

The image of a meme, as a portion of the grammar, becomes a frame of reference allowing it be read. Frame theory, as of this moment, is not extensive enough to encompass memetic media. Leslie Hahner, in her article "The Riot Kiss: Framing Memes as Visual Argument," argues that the speedy circulation of memes preclude them from existing within frame analysis, as scholars have no way to study the massive framework that goes into the dissemination of one meme. Hahner states, "Frame analysis suggests that audience members can engage multiple interpretive frameworks to fashion arguments about a given text" and uses this to justify a comprehensive look at "Vancouver Riot Kiss" meme, as shown in Figure 6 (153).[6]

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[6] Lam, Richard. *Riot Kiss.* http://richardlampix.com/index.html, accessed 8 December 2018.

Figure 6: "Vancouver Riot Kiss"

Richard Lam took this photo in 2011 during a riot that broke out after Canada lost the Stanley Cup, a hockey championship ("Vancouver Riot Kiss" knowyourmeme). Audience members bring a number of frames, ways of composing meaning through personal or cultural reference, to interpret meaning within verbal statements or visual media (154). An image that gets appropriated into a meme creates its own frame of interpretation, which is then replicated and altered slightly each time an audience member engages in a new iteration (156). To demonstrate, Figure 7 follows the same frame established by "Is this a pigeon?", but this meme's reinterpretation references another frame. [7]

Figure 7: "Is this Satan Worship?"

Harry Potter, the book/film series following a boy wizard as he attends a school for witchcraft and wizardry, was deemed "satanic" by those with strong Christian morals due to the plot containing references to black magic. The specific speaker, "Christian soccer moms," is an even deeper frame. Most people considered the Harry Potter series as dealing with the complexities of adolescence and the debate of what makes a good or a bad person, but those in

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[7] "Is this satan worship?" *Tumblr,* unloaded by classicalxeverything, 25 November 2018.

the religious community strongly despise the series, arguing "the children's book 'normalizes acts of magic' and . . . therefore it is exposing their children to the works of the devil" (Espinoza). The "soccer moms" carries with it a stereotype of an overbearing maternal figure, which further situates this meme with a very particular audience. The version of this meme was created through the layering of references meant to be read by another who has similar frames to reassemble the message. Overall, the popularity of the meme allowed it to establish its own grammar, its own format to convey meaning, yet it was still is able to target very small audiences by intermingling concise and pointed references.

As mentioned previously, enthymemes can have meaning because what is missing is relevant to the intended audience. Both the enthymeme and the meme work within a particular audience grounded in a topoi that connects the message's creator and viewer. The meme's commonplace is within its style and image; for example, the Figure 8 is a meme created for an Introduction to Biology class.
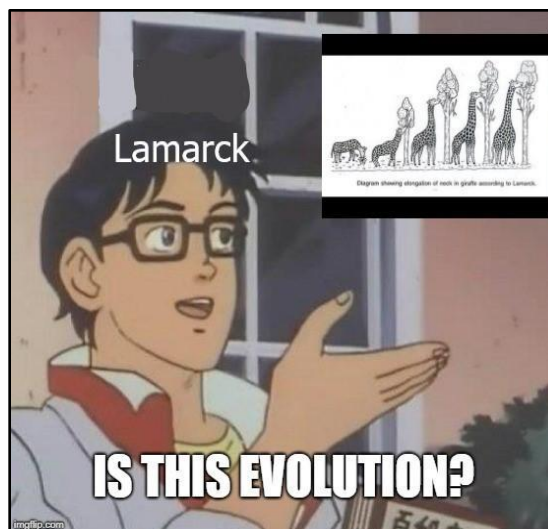

Figure 8: "Is this Evolution?"

In discussing evolution, the class learned that Lamarck's theory of evolution wrongly assumed that animals could inherit the acquired traits of their parents. The most common explanation of Lamarck's theory is that if each generation of giraffes stretched their necks, then their offspring would acquire that elongated neck. This would be comparable to a mother learning to sew and her child being born knowing how to do the same. If one is familiar with the style and intended interpretation of the meme, they would conclude that "Lamarck" wrongly found that the picture covering the butterfly represents the process of evolution. The audience would not need a deep understanding of the content, although it would help the reader evaluate the validity of the claims within the meme. The purpose of this example is to demonstrate that once a commonplace is established in the

visual and style of the media, then any meme following the established grammar can be read.

Conclusion: The Start of a Memetic Enthymeme

If memetics, as Dawkins asserts, is the most compact portion of cultural transmission, then it deserves explication as a function of our daily lives. Internet memes are pervasive in today's cultural landscape, but their rapid circulation makes it nearly impossible to distinguish the lines of creation and development. A single meme continues to be appropriated by others until there is little original content left within the format, but the meme can continue to infect people who send and receive it. The only requirements for being able to read and remake the meme are a familiarity with the style and an ability to reference content that would resonate with one's intended audience, much like the enthymeme. In more than one way, the enthymeme and meme are crafted in similar ways for a particular audience to interpret. Yet, there are few formal studies on the creation of memes within the field of rhetoric, while Aristotle's enthymeme is widely known and explored. The enthymeme is a powerful tool the speaker can employ to forge a connection with his or her audience, and if the meme helps create connections between otherwise anonymous content creators and consumers, it may be demonstrating the evolution of persuasive means in our adoption of a digital world.

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