

Self-Awareness Meme

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Abstract

The search for Self-Awareness has always had a constant presence in the development of humankind. This paper investigates how this search is a “Meme” and how Depth Psychology is part of it. Look at how the evolved meme held in the minds of Western Civilization now threatens our existence due to the theory of natural selection and the current need to find a meme pruner. Discuss possible meme pruners.

Self-Awareness Meme

To seek “Self-Awareness” is to seek understanding that one exists. For you to know you exist your life has to feel “real,” you want to feel “alive,” one way for this to happen is to live in full consciousness, being aware of all your thoughts and actions. The study of Depth Psychology originated out of a desire to open the door to the unconscious and shine a conscious light on it. This makes Depth Psychology part of the search for “Self-Awareness” and Psychoanalysis is another part of it. Psychoanalysis is all about restoring the flow, the libido, the psychic energy between the conscious and unconscious, clearing any blockages out of the doorway. It is however, only one way to restore the flow, and the subject for this paper was chosen by another. Direct momentary access to the unconscious was made with the help of an “Osho Zen Tarot pack. “Awareness,” Major Arcana card no. VII was pulled from the pack, “The awareness that is growing in you now is not the result of any conscious ‘doing,’ nor do you need to struggle to make something happen” (Foundation, Osho International, 1994, p. 17). Direct access to our unconscious can be obtained if we want it, but our continued struggle for full consciousness, a proof of existence through “self-awareness” gives rise to the possibility of it being a “Meme”.

What is a “Meme”? Dr Susan Blackmore (1951 -) describes the meme as a “unit of information (or instruction for behaviour) stored in a brain and passed on by imitation from one brain to another” (Blackmore, 1996). Richard Dawkins (1942 -) author of the book “The Selfish Gene” in 1976, coined the word from mimeme (Greek mimos, "mimic") without knowing about mnemes (persisting effect of memory of past events). Information stored inside the brain is passed on from generation to generation, copying, dying, mutating and multiplying depending on its environment. The meme is a mind version of Dawkins “selfish gene” and he gives examples as; ideas, tunes, scientific theories, religious beliefs, clothes fashions, and skills,

such as new ways of making pots or building arches (Dawkins, 1989, p. 192). Blackmore adds astrology onto this list, saying it is a particularly ingrained one. In the process of surviving, memes just like genes, create mutually supportive meme groups. In a paper presented to “The Psychology of Awakening: International Conference on Buddhism, Science and Psychotherapy” in 1996 called “Waking from the Meme Dream,” Blackmore thinks we are all “just co-adapted meme-complexes. We, our precious, mythical "selves", are just groups of selfish memes that have come together by and for themselves” (Blackmore, 1996). Meme-theorists contend that memes evolve by natural selection and are the building block of culture or cultural evolution which spreads through diffusion propagating from one mind to another. A recent NOVA program called “Ape Genius” seems to support the idea of meme’s being the key to our evolutionary progress. During the study of ape and human interactions they found a teacher/child/object, “magic triangle,” appeared to be missing as a way of passing information on in apes who showed a more direct link to the object. Scientists believe the fact that apes appear to have no history to pass on (no memes), no shared commitment, no shared goal, and no desire to teach or be taught, has locked their evolutionary progress and brought about our own civilization (NOVA, 2008). If our search for “Self-Awareness” is a “Meme” where might it have started, and what mutations has it gone through?

This paper will take you on the evolutionary journey of the Self-Awareness Meme, show how Depth Psychology is part of the meme and look at how its mutated replica held in the minds of Western Civilization now threatens its own existence and ours.

We may not be able to travel back in time to see where the self-awareness meme starts, but we can look to indigenous populations for a sign of its primitive beginnings. Gregory A. Cajete gives us some clues in ‘Look to the Mountain’ an Ecology of Indigenous Education. He

notes how the primal routes of learning about one's spirit, one's true nature, learning to be fully human has continued to evolve as "a way to seek and find one's life, one's completeness", and how these metaphors continue to express universal perceptions and concepts so deeply within indigenous populations that they are seldom discussed or questioned. Though it is important for individuals to become self-aware of their weaknesses and live their lives wisely, critical to the way of learning is its experiential process rather than any intellectual structure. Cajete notes that most Indian tribes share a lot of the same basic sacred knowledge concerning language, art, nature, breath, ritual and a universal energy that infuses everything in the cosmos. With an ecologically-informed consciousness and attention to "thinking the highest thought", the Indian strives to live in a state of full consciousness. When this is achieved he reaches an enlightened state where he is at one with the cosmos and gets to "that place that the Indians talk about". He can only get there by practice not instruction, as that "place" is a feeling rather than a location. Through story and ritual they "remember to remember" who they are, where they come from, and the spirit they share with all of creation" (Cajete, pp. 42-45). The stories and rituals re-connect them to their journeys in a sensory way as that feeling of being in full-consciousness, "that place," is carried in their minds and can be accessed in all its richness. Our minds have become the perfect environment for the replicator of a meme capturing the Indians state of self-awareness, and by the process of natural selection it is being transferred from mind to mind.

East and West Meme

As civilization developed, the East found access to the full richness of the self-awareness meme, that fully-conscious feeling, through control of the human mind, the central theme of Buddhist teaching (Burns, 2007). Self-awareness was brought about (brought into being) through the practice of sitting meditation, living a simple and ordinary life, self-reliance that was

inter-dependent with everything. Like the Indians, the East knew about the sacred universal energy that infused everything in the cosmos, everything had Buddha nature, everyone was Buddha. However, in the West a major and problematic mutation of the meme evolved due to the influence on rhetoric (persuasion through language) and epistemology (what is knowledge?), along with an independent self-reliance.

Both memes were for a kind of inner peace, search for the truth, wisdom and enlightenment, and aimed to expand the range of human consciousness by self-discipline and renunciation. Even though the lessons were similar, with a breaking down of the ego by the use of paradoxical language, the approaches were very different. In the East the main emphasis was on an experiential process in the form of meditation practice. This required present awareness and control of thoughts and actions to achieve an inner peace and calm, thus bringing about a rich connection to “that place” of their ancestors. They placed little importance on language and the paradoxical teachings broke down dualistic thinking and induced acceptance. The West took a much harsher approach. It was thought full-consciousness could only be achieved by becoming aware of our past thoughts and actions, in the same way as we are conscious of our present thoughts and actions. Plato and others devoted their lives to helping people become aware of themselves, discoverable by dialectic, analysis or study, believing reason to have divine attributes. Epicurus (341-270 BC) said “it is reason alone which makes life happy and pleasant” (Ehrenwald, 1976, p. 168). Greek philosophers strived to show others how unwise they were by questioning them; Socrates said “the unexamined life is not worth living for men” (Grube, 2000, p. 38a). Similar to many Buddhist teachings, questions lead people into contradictions until they turn their own arguments against themselves. However, instead of receiving calm and connection, the efforts of the West for self-awareness often ended in humiliation, anger,

detachment and even death (Socrates was executed for his efforts). By omitting any ritual of meditation, the West cut off the deeper connection needed to feel our ancestral past and this void has created a yearning for the “soul our ancestors were able to touch” through their ritual (Cajete, p. 58). At this point the Western self-awareness meme mutated into a “search” (a future event for who am I?) rather than a “being” (present event of I am).

We may feel comforted when we hear mythical stories, but in the West we have become separated from the richness of the original experience, which is still in our mind. This leaves something unfulfilled and fills us with a yearning and a sense of disconnection. The myths, archetypes, fairytales, become fantasies, dreams, desires. Yearning in general, implies something unobtainable and at this point our “search” for self-awareness made it inaccessible. Cajete thinks Western cultures have replaced the indigenous concepts of “seeking and becoming complete” with Capitalism and Consumerism (Cajete, p. 46) and our search for “who am I” has turned into an internalized search for identity and existence. We have left myth, and all its metaphors that can help us on our journey, far behind and lost our way. Discussing ensuing myth deprivation James S. Bruner says that “the alternative to externalization in myth appears to be the internalization of the personal novel, the first a communal effort, the second the lone search for identity” (Murray, 1960, p. 286). Our disconnection from the earth, our ancestors, and from each other grows along with our desperate unobtainable search for who we are; this has resulted in anguish.

This anguish was noted very early on in Western civilization. Jesus said to his disciples. “Why are you always anxious?” And Native Americans comment on white peoples faces being tense and always seem to be seeking something. Buddha himself taught “that the root of suffering is to be found in our constant wanting and craving” (Tolle, 1997, p. 76).

Industrialization has separated us from our earthly connection, science has separated our mind and body, and ensuing mental illness, unhappiness, violence and unease has led to psychoanalysis separating our mind into our conscious and unconscious.

Meme in Depth Psychology

The father of Psychoanalysis was Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and even though he recognized the undercurrent of unease in his book “Civilization and its Discontents” he failed to find its cause (Tolle, 1997, p. 76). Freud had abandoned hypnotherapy in favor of a “talking cure” to treat people with mental illness. He proposed that awareness existed in layers, with some thoughts occurring below the surface, in the “Unconscious.” He “advocated consciousness so that you are not sucked into the unconscious swell/swamp” (Ehrenwald, 1976, p. 77), which held repressed emotions, traumas and instincts. Believing this rubbish dump of the unconscious was the cause of much mental illness, he sought to open the door to the dump with the idea that bringing the rubbish into the conscious mind would initiate a cure. One way he systematically studied the unconscious was through dream analysis and he referred to dreams as the “royal road to the unconscious,” providing a route for repressed traumas held in the unconscious through to the healing light of the conscious mind. The link between dreams and healing was not new. After sleeping at the Greek Temple of Epidauros “Pilgrims related dreams to the officiating priest” (Ehrenwald, 1976, p. 51), with the belief the dreams held a divine clue to the necessary treatment. “The Interpretation of Dreams” by Artemidorus of Daldis inspired Freud’s “Interpretation of Dreams,” but while Artemidorus saw “dreams of importance coming from God” (Ehrenwald, 1976, p. 54), Freud was far from a believer. He saw religion as barely distinguishable from magic, where the faithful lose sight of reality (Ehrenwald, 1976, p. 83), and his theory about the unconscious belonged purely to the

individual. It was this religious distrust that eventually created a permanent rift between Freud and his student Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961).

Jung was the founder of analytical psychology and a firm advocate of religion. During extensive work with dreams, Jung discovered we all shared part of Freud's unconscious. Calling this shared part of the unconscious the "Collective Unconscious," he split Freud's personal unconscious along with his friendship. He believed religions were needed as an outlet for the unruly forces of the collective unconscious and provided a safety valve for the "Perils of the Soul" (Ehrenwald, 1976, p. 83). Jung found we all shared dream structures, psychic patterns that help us understand conscious ideas, they appear inwardly in our dreams and fantasies, "impelling us to behave in ways that re-enact the original process" or appear "externally in myths and religious teaching" (Snowdon, 2006, pp. 52-54). Cajete also recognizes the need for mythic stories containing metaphors such as tracking, hunting, questioning, pilgrimage, visioning, orienting, and pathway. As they reflect basic ways "that humans process and structure their learning" (Cajete, p. 68), they help us process our world and make sense of it. Jung called these dream structures "Archetypes" and founded archetypal psychology around them. The word archetype is derived from the Greek words "arche" meaning "first," and "type" meaning "imprint" or "pattern". Jung was anxious to point out the term did not originate with him and has been present in folklore and literature for thousands of years, changing according to the culture they arise within (Snowdon, 2006, p. 53). Archetypes are deposits of experiences frequently repeated in the history of mankind; often religious in nature, they reside as energy deep in the unconscious. Jung had certainly found residues of our many memes. Any possible biological explanation for archetypes was pushed aside by Jung in favor of a metaphysical one that would be unanswerable, even though he thought they may have a separate reality of their

own (Snowdon, 2006, p. 53). He proposed there was a psychic energy “libido” that flowed between opposites in our psych, one of them being the conscious and unconscious. If the opposites get out of balance then the libido builds up in the unconscious, causing fantasy, violence and psychosis (Snowdon, 2006, p. 55). One of the best ways he found to restore the flow was through dream analysis, it compensated for areas of the conscious mind that had become distorted, brought back archetypal memories from the collective unconscious, and drew attention to both inner and outer aspects of our lives, leaving us more conscious (Snowdon, 2006, p. 82).

Patrick Harpur in his book “The Philosophers’ Secret Fire” accuses both Freud and Jung of translating dreams into “waking” language, saying the “Greeks spoke of seeing dreams not having one.” Leading Archetypal psychologist James Hillman (1926 -) insists on: “letting the dream be, on observing it in its natural twilight habitat, on attending deeply to it – but not extracting message from it according to the presuppositions of the daylight world” (Harpur, 2003, p. 42). Hillman preferred the idea of a “seeing” cure rather than a “talking” one and thinks if a dream image is experienced fully as real then it releases us from whatever patterns we are stuck in. “It is intrinsically healing and liberating for the soul to be told the stories, the myths, of its tribe” (Harpur, 2003, p. 43). He believes that if we seek full awareness in our dreams, experience their reality in the moment, pay attention to the symbols and the stories, then that will be enough to bring about unconscious healing. Interestingly, a recent study with apes shows that the use of symbols can help them overcome uncontrollable instincts that lead to erratic and unpredictable behavior (NOVA, 2008).

Though Harpur is critical of Freud and Jung, and others like them, for literalizing dreams and losing touch with the image, Jung did appear to apply a more mystical attitude to interpreting

dreams than others. He viewed ‘Primordial images’ held within the collective unconscious were as much “feelings as thoughts...own independent life rather in the manner of part-souls, as can easily be seen in those philosophical or Gnostic systems which rely on awareness of the unconscious as the source of knowledge” (Ehrenwald, 1976, p. 356). Through the dream Jung believes we can “collect our scattered psyche from the outer world” (Edinger, 1994, p. 16), and if the ego can experience itself dying this will often be a “prelude to the birth of awareness of the Self” (Edinger, 1994, p. 29). Often this experience of ego death will occur after a great struggle, bringing about that quintessential moment of transcendence where everything comes together, that’s the instant blockage removal we can obtain in the event of a fire. Jung’s treatment cure of “Active Imagination” was very similar to Hillman’s living dream cure.

Psychiatrist and New Age Catalyst Dr Winifred Rushforth (1885-1983) followed in the footsteps of Freud and Jung with dream analysis to explore the unconscious, but thought, like Hillman, that the dream state could provide a cure in itself. She says:

“to sleep is to become unconscious and as we yield to the process we create the dream which, as we awake, brings us wisdom and urges us to attend and be aware of this life-giving flow, in touch with the past, present and future time, in touch with primitive energy”. (Rushforth, 1981, p. 20)

In her book “Something is Happening,” Rushforth makes many connections to the existence of memes, saying the past is in all probability imprinted in our unconscious. She shares Jung’s view of the need of religion, saying, “the Bible undoubtedly teaches us good psychology. It warns us against identification of the persona or mask- a front we present to the world – and it teaches us to find our centre, the real self by relating to the Creative Spirit which we call God” (Rushforth, 1981, p. 12). While a total advocate for the benefits of religious teaching she also acknowledges the major discoveries of Charles Darwin in his Theory of

Evolution, seeing them as exciting but unknown possibilities for the human race (Rushforth, 1981, p. 120). Rushforth over her lifetime tried to find many alternatives to the costly and timely treatment of psychoanalysis to restore the flow of psychic energy between the conscious and unconscious, founding dream and craft groups. Similar to Hillman, she believes healing must come from a direct relationship to the healing power (psychic energy) which could be found in the deep unconscious and notes Vipassana Meditation, a form of Buddhism, had been found to aid the “breakup of forgetfulness” (anamnesia) that is achieved by psychoanalysis (Rushforth, 1981, pp. 140-141). She says during her childhood many missionaries had been sent to the East to spread Christian gospel, but now in her later life Eastern people are flooding to the West to “teach meditation and other ways of approaching the great source”. She likens it to the search of the unconscious that is sought through analysis (Rushforth, 1981, p. 139) and observes the increased desperation for some kind of inner peace and the feeling that something mysterious was happening.

Search for Meme Pruner

By the time Eastern Buddhism, and the eastern self-awareness meme, found a presence in America in the 1950's a tumultuous period marked by urban strife and unwanted war in Vietnam, along with an increase in Asians from many countries found many searching for that lost inner peace. Sanskrit title “Buddha” means “one who is awake” and the pacifism and anti-materialism of the Buddhist philosophy was enthusiastically received by the west. Though books on Buddhism had been produced in English since 1898, there was no permanent Buddhist presence in America until the two Suzuki's, Daisetz Teitaro & Shunryu, arrived in 1950 & 1959 (Jacob, 2004). Since then however, the Western self-awareness meme has overpowered the Eastern one and literal interpretation of Zen texts has led to abuse of power by many masters and

lengthy corruption within Western Zen Centers. After doing an investigation into the widespread corruption Stuart Lachs concluded, “Zen's teaching to avoid words and explanation was taken too literally and has fostered an unfortunate narrowing of perspective” (Lachs, 2002). This had been predicted by Buddha, “before his demise the Buddha predicted that within a thousand years his doctrine would fall into the hands of men of lesser understanding and would thereby become corrupted and distorted” (Burns, 2007). This is just natural selection; the Eastern meme was less likely to survive in the environment of our Western minds, even if it is paramount to our survival. With our self and planetary destruction looming, finding ways to prune our memes back has become critical. Blackmore says there are “two systems that she knows of that are capable of dismantling meme-complexes (but there could be others)” (Blackmore, 1996). The two being Science and some forms of Zen Buddhism.

Admitting Science and Zen Buddhism are memes in them selves, Blackmore still calls them “meme-disinfectants, meme-eating memes, or meme-complex destroying meme-complexes” (Blackmore, 1996). Instead of suppressing doubt, which faith like religions do, she sees science (and some forms of Buddhism) doing the opposite. By asking questions like “Who am I?” they encourage doubt. My feeling here is that Blackmore makes a large error in her assumption that doubt could provide a pruner. The “who am I” comes straight from her western mind, “Buddha tells us who we are”, similar to many religions. Her hatred of religion, calling it one of the worst “mind viruses” (Blackmore, 1996) has blinded her to the atrocities science has created by its narrow, empirical and separated process and the fact science also seeks to suppress doubt with evidence.

Even though she has a PhD in parapsychology, her web site clearly states “Sue Blackmore no longer works on the paranormal” (Blackmore, 1996, p. who am I?), her mind

appears to be taken over with the “meme of the meme.” Many also feel the problem with the dualistic Western mind all began with Descartes’ famous phrase “I think therefore I am” but in fact if you look at the translation of the words, “Dubito, ergo cogito, cogito ergo sum (I doubt, therefore I think, I think therefore I am)” (Anderson), you can see that doubting can lead to big trouble.

After studying Buddhism for over 20 yrs Blackmore is obviously aware of the abuse that arose in Zen centers out of the lateralization of the texts within the minds of the West, leading to “acceptance without question.” That is why she takes care to note that only “some forms of Buddhism” can prune; similar literalizing of religious texts has also led to major problems. In an article by Douglas M. Burns, titled “Buddhist Meditation and Depth Psychology,” Burns warns us that Buddhist Meditation should not be confused with Yogic Meditations which contort the body, he observes that, “if the cause of suffering is primarily psychological, then it must follow that the cure, also, is psychological. Therefore, we find in Buddhism a series of ‘mental exercises’ or meditations designed to uncover and cure our psychic aberrations” (Burns, 2007). This appears to make a lot of sense; many vaccines start with the original virus, and we need a mind cure to prune our multiplied and mutated self-awareness meme. Blackmore hopes by waking us up to the “Meme Dream” she has provided us with a cure (Blackmore, 1996) but the introduction of the meme theory, has just created another one. Burns goes on to advocate the practice of Buddhist meditation and gives many methods to overcome obstacles.

In Buddhist meditation you are told not to try and stop the activities of the mind, just let the mind pervade your whole body (Suzuki, 2006, p. 34). By concentrating on one thought, usually the breath during a sitting meditation (zazen), it will eliminate all others. However, Burns and Blackmore agree that today’s minds and lives are too busy to meditate. Discussing our pre-

occupation with always thinking (an overload of memes) Blackmore says “from a genetic point of view this seems extremely wasteful - and animals that waste energy don't survive. The brain uses about 20% of the body's energy while weighing only 2%” (Blackmore, 1996). Finding a meme pruner could be critical to our survival.

One psychologically based meme pruner that does feel effective is “The Power of Now.” In 1997, Eckhart Tolle provided a meme-eating meme of self-awareness which attempts to synthesize the teachings of Buddha and Jesus as a guide to spiritual consciousness. By drawing attention to the present moment, he brings us back into being. He breaks down our dualistic mind not with “paradox” like many Buddha and Greek philosophy texts do, but with a concept of psychological time. He shows us how our feelings towards the past and future only exist in our minds within the present moment and that we have the power to change how they continue to effect us, “One empirical fact of which we do have certainty: the existence of conscious experience as it proceeds through the course of daily living” (Burns, 2007). Tolle encourages us to “leave our analytical mind and its false created self, the ego, behind” (Tolle, 1997). Like the teachings of Buddha, Tolle helps us see suffering as a necessary part of life, but instead of just teaching us to accept it, he asks us to see where it comes and watch it so that it can no longer harm us. Similar to psychoanalysis he sees the pain-body (dark shadow of repressed emotions cast by ego in our unconscious) being dissolved by the light of consciousness. However, he is closer to Hillman with his ideas of how to heal. To dissolve the pain-body, he says simply being aware and watching it is enough, “Watching it implies accepting it as part of what is at that moment” (Tolle, 1997, p. 39). He gives us Western psychoanalysis along with the Eastern practice of “Mindful Meditation” (an active meditation and can be defined as careful, open-hearted, choice-less, present moment awareness) that can be done throughout our busy days and

nights. This ritual of active conscious mind meditation is one of Burns' hurdle jumpers to overcoming modern day meditation obstacles. The practice also provides us with an experiential practice that can effectively prune the memes and provide us with the riches of our ancient soul connection. Ritual has been shown to help activate and turn of powerful Archetypal patterns to aid healing (Smith, 2007). The mixture of Eastern and Western approaches to awareness at this point appears to give us a fairly well balanced meme-eating "meme of the meme."

Any memes created out of the internal search for self-awareness, be it related to science, religion, astrology, depth psychology or psychoanalysis (any meme within the meme) can all mutate into "mind viruses" and become harmful if they are treated as separate and literal from each other and from any experiential process. Even Blackmore mentions "We cannot afford to have one world in which scientists understand the mind and another in which special people become enlightened" (Blackmore, 1996). All these systems have developed out of our searching and yearning for that connection to that missing part that we feel will make us complete. At the moment we appear to be trapped in an internal, intellectual search for existence. By the practice of mindful meditation, ("reading about meditation is like reading about swimming" (Burns, 2007)) we can achieve an inner quality of peace and acceptance that is unavailable any other way. We live in a state of full-consciousness, that feeling we crave for resides in our mind. When we do this, when we get to that place the Indians talk about, that place where all the other memes dissolve, we will see that existence can not be complete with out us.

"You will realize you are related to existence and existence cares for you. Once clean and clear, you can see tremendous love falling on you form all dimensions.....We human beings tend to forget this, as we pursue our own private agendas and believe we must fight to get what we need. But ultimately, our sense of separateness is just an illusion, manufactured by the narrow preoccupations of the mind" (Foundation, Osho International, 1994).

To end this essay another card was picked from a tarot pack, pulled from the pack was: Major Arcana card no. I: Existence. Again, direct access to my unconscious just gave me everything required, proof of our existence. “Life will give you what ever experience that is most helpful to the evolution of your own consciousness,” this was a quote read out by Oprah Winfrey to promote Tolle’s new book “A New Earth.” If Hillman, Tolle and my unconscious are correct, we already have every thing we need to feel complete, to live fully conscious lives, and it’s free. We just need to start practicing BEING alive during our days and nights.

Unfortunately, due to natural selection, Tolle’s meme-eating “meme of the meme” appears to be evolving into something unknown, possibly why some “call it Darwin’s Dangerous Idea” (Blackmore, 1996). Under our misguided ingrained concepts of capitalism and consumerism, films and books like “The Secret” are giving mass appeal to the power of visualization and intent, a very powerful mind tool when mixed with belief, to manifest and transform our broken selves and planet. This power to “create” is not a new idea, it is from a meme already created in our minds. Buddhism teaches it, Freud was born into an era of “positivism,” and Rushforth and Tolle advocate it. However, we need to be clear inside to manifest positively. Buddha, Plato, Jung, Suzuki and Tolle (and many others) stress that the most effective way to redeem or transform the world is first to transform the little piece of it that is oneself. Though our consciousness may be collectively raised, many of us are too full of ego, too full of memes, carry too much buried rubbish. Our unconscious minds are behind doors with bolts on (sure death, even in a fire) and not likely to be raised. At the present moment, vision boards are cloaking millions with jewels, without them first cultivating the diamond from within; even Tolle may not be able to prune the powerful new meme.

Well over 500,000 people have already signed up for a 10 week live web event to go through Tolle's new book with Oprah Winfrey. However, they may just change the landscape itself instead of their perceptions of it, which is what "The Power of Now" is all about. The sheer number seeking a connection may bring about a change due to the power of memes, "the rapidly expanding population of copies starts to change the environment and that changes the selective pressures" (Blackmore, 1996). Like a flock of starlings they are forming a large group, partly because they are sociable, and partly because it is a defense mechanism, like fish forming shoals. If there are lots of them together it's harder for predators to pick them off. Unfortunately flocks of starlings can also turn the sky into a mass of black and cut out the light. "It is important to remember that evolution has no foresight and so doesn't necessarily produce the "best" solution. Memes are purely selfish" (Blackmore, 1996).

"So keep on playing those mind games together

Faith in the future out of the now " *John Lennon Mind Games*

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Dr. Susan Blackmore is a psychologist and writer whose research on consciousness, memes, and anomalous experiences has been published in over sixty academic papers, as well as book chapters, reviews and popular articles. She has a regular blog in the Guardian, and often appears on radio and television. Her book *The Meme Machine* (1999) has been translated into 12 other languages and more recent books include a textbook *Consciousness: An Introduction* (2003) and *Conversations on Consciousness* (2005). She has been practicing Zen for twenty years.