

Morphic Resonance

Hypothetical concept proposed by British author and biologist **Rupert Sheldrake**, which suggests that all self-organizing systems inherit a collective memory from previous similar systems. It is considered a pseudoscience and is not recognized within mainstream scientific theories.

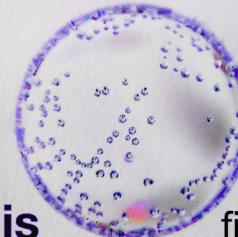
Morphic resonance is a hypothesis about memory in nature. When similar patterns of activity are repeated, they become more likely to happen again; they become increasingly habitual. The context for this hypothesis is a clash of two of the most fundamental paradigms that have shaped western thought. The Greek paradigm of eternity, as articulated by Plato, saw changeless principles underlying all reality. By contrast, Jewish people thought in terms of historical development. The idea of changeless laws of nature was built into the foundations of modern science, but the Big Bang theory and evolutionary cosmology throw these into question. The universe is continually developing and may be governed by evolving habits rather than eternal laws.

Morphic resonance proposes that nature has memory. When a pattern happens, it becomes more likely to happen again—like reality developing habits.

If we want to stick to the idea of natural laws, we could say that as nature itself evolves, the laws of nature also evolve, just as human laws evolve over time. But then how would natural laws be remembered or enforced? The law metaphor is embarrassingly anthropomorphic. Habits are less human-centred. Many kinds of organisms have habits, but only humans have laws. The habits of nature depend on non-local similarity reinforcement. Through morphic resonance, the patterns of activity in self-organizing systems are influenced by similar patterns in the past, giving each species and each kind of self-organizing system a collective memory.

From the amazingly coordinated movements in flocks of birds, to telepathic communication between wolves separated by hundreds of miles, to the co-ordination of termite colonies, many aspects of social behaviour observed in nature imply that the behaviour of the group is coordinated through fields that include and link together the individual animals. These social fields are kinds of morphic fields, and contain a memory given by morphic resonance. Human groups are also influenced by collective morphic fields, including families. Family fields inherit patterns from previous generations by morphic resonance, affecting the behaviour of people within them, sometimes giving rise to dysfunctional patterns that are carried over unconsciously. The ancestors play a hidden role within present-day families, as many traditional cultures recognize, and as some people in modern cultures are coming to acknowledge through family constellation therapy.

All cells come from other cells, and all cells inherit fields of organization. Genes are part of this organization. They play an essential role. But they do not explain the organization itself. Why not?



Morphogenetic fields are not fixed forever, but evolve. The fields of Afghan hounds and poodles have become different from those of their common ancestors, wolves. How are these fields inherited? I propose that they are transmitted from past members of the species through a kind of non-local resonance, called morphic resonance.



A morphic field is proposed as an organizing influence. It's not a physical blueprint you can point to, but a shaping tendency.

Inheritance might include more than code. It could include a bias toward familiar organization.

Similarity is the connector. The closer the resemblance, the stronger the pull of the past.

Time becomes porous. Earlier patterns “echo” into later patterns, making repetition easier.

Physics as tradition: patterns persist not because they must, but because they've become the default.

The nature of inheritance was, until recently, treated as synonymous with genetics. If people wanted to say something was inherited or hereditary, they would say ‘it's genetic’. Yet genes only code for the sequence of amino acids in proteins, or affect the activity of other genes; they do not code for the shape of an organism, or its behaviour. To assume that all these organize themselves on the basis of making the right proteins is like expecting a pile of building material to assemble themselves into a house. Morphogenetic fields provide the plans and morphic resonance guides the development of these plans over time. Inheritance involves not only genes and epigenetic changes in gene expression, but also morphic resonance, which underlies the inheritance of form and instinct.

Not information stored in one place — but a tendency distributed everywhere. Memory, in this view, is more like a field than a file