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**Ethics Paper**

To form an opinion on the ethics of memes one should first investigate the origins of the word itself, and what it means to be a meme in today’s society. The word meme was originally termed by Richard Dawkins in 1976 “to describe small units of culture that spread from person to person by copying or imitation.” ( Shifman 2) This is a much different definition of the term meme than is used today. Today’s memes are found on the internet can range anywhere from funny cat, and baby videos to pictures with clever caption on them. Most memes are created out of jest and in good natured fun, but this is not the case for every meme. Some memes are ill in nature and some may view them as hurtful. However, the overall culture of memes is a positive one and memes for some they are little bursts of happiness in a world full real life which is not always so positive. Laws should not exist to regulate memes because it would be an suppress creativity and freedom of speech. It also shouldn’t matter the meme creator knows the subject or the meme or not.

Government regulation of memes can be a dangerous gambit, and one that would end up being more trouble than it’s worth. The underlying argument to regulate memes is that fact that they can be used negatively to impact an individual’s life. This argument points out that memes have been used as devices for bullying and slander, as is the case with the Star Wars kid meme. While this might have been the case in this instance it is not does not characterize the meme methodology and the culture behind them. Memes are meant to funny and spread around to others for their enjoyment of the content. They make light of many things in a world that is full of reality, which can be cruel and harsh. They have the ability to make a person’s day and enable the mind to drift away from the marathon that is life. Memes do far more good than harm and bring people together; connecting them socially through the internet. Ethically speaking, memes don’t need laws to restrict them any more than a social media does. Both provide escapes from reality and are not intended to producer malicious content even if it happens occasionally. The regulation of memes violations of freedom of speech into play as well. Even if the government could regulate laws in a way to not infringe on upon constitutional rights, it would still call for heated debates and questions even further what requires regulation laws. It also would halt a lot of creativity that flows through the meme environment.

A creator should be able to choose their assets freely to construct their vision. It should not be altered or disallowed because of where its inspiration is drawn from. Many ideas come from personal experiences that are specific to an individual’s life. So, a meme creator should not be restricted from using someone they know as their inspiration for original content. In a system that is already low on original content personal relations such as these drive new creation everyday and at the crux of make meme memes. “Small units of culture that spread from person to person by copying or imitation.” (Shifman 2) Culture can be something as simple as a relatable personal experience. It should also be obvious which memes are created just to inflict harm on individuals and which are in jest. The result of bullying from a meme going viral is entirely different. It would not be accurate to say the people laughing a good meme have the same intention as one who goes out of there way to say nasty, rotten thing to the subject of the meme. So those who decide to engage in such deplorable acts should have to answer to the law not the memes creative process.

Memes are meant for everyone to enjoy. They are made to be shared and bring people closer through laughter and smiles. It is a positive entity in a world full of negative ones. It would not make sense to have the government regulate memes and their creative process. Memes have culture behind them that positive as a whole and should be measured for the sum its parts not just negative ones.

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