

# Nation as Meme

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Nation: An imagined community which is understood as distinct and separate from all other nations. "Nation" is a relational term; like any other sign, one nation consists in being what others are not. This concept, in fact, belongs to the realm of signification, not to any external referential world. Nations have no essential, intrinsic properties; each is a discursive construct whose identity consists in its difference from others.<sup>1</sup>

Most people today believe they "belong" to a "nation," and would have no problem designating it; America, Japan, France, India or wherever. A single name designating a "nation" can evoke considerable emotion among the hearers. None of them would have any doubt that they have a duty of loyalty to whatever nation they profess to belong to. However, if we ask a person to define what is meant when the word "nation" is used, several anomalies emerge. The idea of "nation" has developed over the centuries to indicate usually an area ruled by a particular government and encompassing the people that live within that area. However, the government or governing body of any district designated a "nation" today rarely represents more than a percentage, sometimes smaller, sometimes larger, of the people of the area. It is not a problem of democratic government, it is a problem of who the governments consider their citizens to be, and for whom they think they are

governing, and conversely, what the people think of as their "nation." There are artificial nations often united by force, in which the separate cultures brought together retain their own national identities cooperating in a sort of super-national union. This union can break down into its composite parts if the unifying factor weakens or disappears, huge centralized authority probably not able to command the respect and obedience which culturally unified nations do. The artificial nation is probably fated to be decentralized.

Taiwan was, in a sense, declared a non-nation when its seat in the United Nations was given to China. On the other hand, the majority of the citizens of Taiwan, while feeling ethnically Chinese, do not feel themselves to be citizens of mainland China, but rather citizens of the nation of Taiwan.

In the years 3,000-4,000 B.C.E. when city-states were beginning to form in the Middle East, the idea of "belonging" to a particular nation was probably nonexistent. People were born or brought into a particular community which had a ruling group equivalent to what is now called a government and the only thing that would have any aspects of "loyalty" involved would have to do with religion rather than government. In any particular city-state there were kings, priests, craftsmen, people engaging in barter or tradesmen peasants, forced labor and slaves, each of whom had their own agenda in terms of attitude toward what would now be called "the government."

In the city states of Greece such as Athens or Sparta, the number of citizens of the state was probably less than half of the people who lived in the confines of the city. There were slaves, of course, and lots of foreigners who would not have inherited citizenship, in the case of Sparta, people who lived in

the surrounding areas under the domination of the Spartans and were involved in the forced labor system which gave the Spartans themselves more time to train themselves in the military arts. In Athens, those that gathered at the Areopagus to decide the fate of Socrates, for example, were but a small percentage of the people living in Athens at the time. The concept of "nation" as it is normally thought of today was achieving an existence outside, but not entirely disconnected from that of religion. The main accusation against Socrates was that he was leading the youth of Athens away from obedience to the true religion. Even as late as the time of Alexander the Great (died 326B.C.), the empire was thought of as one of Greek culture, while Alexander himself was, of course, Macedonian. And territorially, the empire consisted at its peak of vast areas of the Middle East and Egypt, including all of the former Persian Empire under Darius III, and more. But it never achieved any kind of unity in the minds of the people Alexander had conquered nor the status of "nation" in their eyes, although Alexander himself may have considered it a single entity and did have himself referred to as the "King of Asia."

The Middle Ages saw the same phenomenon as ancient Greece in Europe and it continued on into the Renaissance when in the city of Florence, for example, where democratic government was thought to be the rule, the number of citizens who were considered competent to cast a vote in the elections of the *Signoria* was significantly less than the number actually living within the walls of the city.

In any case, loyalties were somewhat divided in Europe between the local government, a larger entity which maintained

ultimate political power, and the Holy Roman Empire while it had only nominal power, did maintain a religious-political hegemony which influenced the states of Europe in many ways. But within this system, what today is called a "nation" is difficult to discern. Joan of Arc was more or less the star in the midst of a national identity crisis, and the content of what she claimed were visions were interpreted by the French as Almighty God's blessing upon their nationhood. It was undoubtedly during the Hundred Years' War that Europe, at least France, and perhaps England as well found their identity as nations. It was not till much later that Italy began to see itself as a single nation, if indeed it does even today. In the 16th century, Florence was a vassal of France, or at least the Medici government was installed and maintained by the power of the French, but the people did not consider themselves French or a part of the French "nation" in any way, nor did they consider themselves "Italian" since Italy did not yet exist as a single country. They certainly did not consider themselves as part of the Holy Roman Empire and they perceived the Papal States as a rival, if not an enemy. It is clear from reading the history of the Italian peninsula that governments of cities like Ravenna, Rimini, Ferrara, and Florence itself changed regularly while the loyalties of the citizens seem to be toward the locality rather than the governing France, Papal court, Spain, or whatever. Italy as a whole was not totally unified until 1870 when the Papal States were annexed by the rest of Italy.

Today the concept of "citizenship" in a "nation" is usually thought to include all of those living in a certain area. But, of course, citizenship is considered by some countries to have been derived simply by being born within the confines of a

particular area. On the other hand, in some countries citizenship is inherited only from citizens. If one's parents are not citizens then citizenship has to be bestowed by special order such as in Liechtenstein or Andorra. In other "nations" such as "Kurdistan," the term "citizenship" can hardly be used in any legal sense, but the members of that "nation" are only ethnic Kurds and those who may have elected to join that nation through marriage, etc.

### Nation as Meme

The concept of "nation" is a "meme," a term created by Richard Dawkins and first discussed in *The Selfish Gene* in 1976.<sup>3</sup> The "meme," in the same way as the biological gene in a biota, is a self-replicating concept,<sup>4</sup> a "parasitic" concept existing in the minds of intelligent beings and its main activity is to perpetuate its own existence in the culture. "Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperm or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation,"<sup>5</sup> and further by Dawkins as: "...a unit of cultural inheritance, hypothesized as analogous to the particulate gene, and as naturally selected by virtue of its 'phenotypic' consequences on its own survival and replication in the cultural environment."<sup>6</sup>

The origin of the meme of "nation" is relatively easy to understand. But the usefulness in designating the concept a meme is that this helps account for the continuance of the existence of the concept even when the conditions under which it originally arose no longer hold true. That is to say that even when the religious underpinnings of the "nation" disappear, the

concept of "nation" does not.

The origin of "nation" was certainly "family," the social group that primitive man had to be loyal to in order to live. In an evolutionary sense, man has developed among the primates and is therefore a social animal which has selected interdependence within the group as the major survival strategy. The group, founded on the family, is itself a separate being in which the various functions necessary for life were distributed according to physical aptitude; finding food through hunting, and otherwise, bearing and teaching children, etc. Being "loyal" to a group which was based on the family was, at that point, a necessary aspect of staying alive. "Loyalty" is the attitude of working for, or not doing anything to damage the welfare of the group to which one belongs, even though there is no immediate profit, although profit is necessarily expected in the long run. Considering the thousands, perhaps millions of years this was effectively necessary for the survival of the humans or their ancestors, it is not surprising that this "loyalty" became an aspect of humanity which was inseparable from its character found in its genes as well as in the "meme" which developed from these conditions.

Groups became larger, and supporting the members of the group became only part of its interests. When hunting-gathering was the main source of livelihood and, in accordance with the system, the numbers who were involved were usually limited to those who were related by birth, even distantly. There was a vital need for the individual members of the group to work to maintain the ability of the group to achieve its purpose of supporting its members. When agriculture and livestock raising became prevalent with the accompanying coalescence of groups

into communities and cities however, the group found itself with other agendas beyond that of maintaining the livelihood of the individual members of the group. The activities of the group-community came into conflict with other groups or communities more often than when the problem was simply a matter of rights to a hunting area and the like. Additionally, the property of other groups became the target of the search for livelihood. Conversely, of course, the purposes of maintaining the property of the group came to be of primary importance. Agriculture was of prime importance in increasing the number of people in a group until the groups became cities, and rapidly larger areas governed by a single group, and the property to be protected, or indeed to be taken from other groups, increased proportionately.

Inversely, the social focus moved from the group supporting the individual to that of the individual supporting the group. That is to say that, as the awareness of the identity of all the members of the group became less personal, the "family" aspect of support in which each member considered the other members of the group as personally related became, of necessity, so diluted by the numbers involved that the duty of mutual support, once rendered to the family, had the whole huge group as its object. The duty of support thus became less mutual since the object was no longer a person but an abstract entity made up of people related in other ways than blood or family, although, of course, any ethnic group may indeed have begun as a single extended family. As the size of the group grew, the connection of the group to the individual grew more tenuous. Whereas once the individual depended upon the other individuals within his group to help him survive, to support his

daily economy, the source of any immediate transaction became more and more remote and the people with whom any interaction occurred were unrelated and unknown.

There thus came a time when the community reached such a size as to make it impossible for any one member of the community to know even in the most passing manner all the other members of the community. At the same time, the group as a whole needed the adherence of all the individual members of the group in order to maintain its position *vis-a-vis* other outside groups as well as to maintain its functions of acting as the framework for the livelihood or common welfare of the individual members. And it thus became necessary for there to be some binding force other than the obvious advantages of economic livelihood. This binding force or relationship within the community developed as the community developed and had two sources, one being a common understanding of the common character of all the members of the group. In the widest sense this was the consciousness of the individual members of having the same culture, that is to say the same perceptions of good and evil, the same religion and often the same physical characteristics. The other was a common interest in opposing others groups who differed in these characteristics and/or were liable to be aiming at the material goods with which the group maintained its own livelihood.

### Nation and Religion

Whatever the binding factor forming the common consciousness, there had also to be some way of maintaining this consciousness of unity with other unknown members of the group through constant reinforcement, usually in the form of

annual or special ceremonies, rites, memorial functions. In the history of cultures it is almost an axiom that the first groups that could be called nations were also religions, two aspects of the same cultural phenomenon.

Today we know of many early cultures which saw their origins either in creation by a god or gods, and perceived themselves as therefore unique. Most cultures begin with this sense of being unique, attested to by the many cultures including the Ainu, Inuit, etc. whose name simply means "man," only achieving the status of a proper noun after contact with other cultures made it necessary.

Until recent history a common religion was a corollary of government. From the time of the earliest city states, the religion was the government or controlled the government whose central activity was religion. All communities had a religion as a basis for their daily life and forming the touchstone for the customs of their daily life. One of the most ancient communities so far discovered, Çatal Huyuk in Asia Minor, certainly had a life centered on religion judging from the artifacts and dwellings excavated. The city-states of Sumer such as Ur and Lagash had the *ziggurat* as the central architectural structure which had the role of temple, the city offices, the treasury and a warehouse.. The people of these cities were known to have a common pantheon, but each city was protected by a particular god who was the patron of the city and its people, forming, of course, a source of unity. These people did not separate their religious activities from the civil activities.

In Egypt the Pharaoh was considered an incarnation of *Amun Ra*, the god that was the source of all life for the

Egyptians. The Pharaoh, being God, not just his representative, laid claim to the devotion and the fruits of the labor of all Egyptians. He was, in fact the nation itself,<sup>7</sup> and a focus of the unity of the people.

The Hebrews were a people defined by their allegiance to their god, *Yahweh*, as indeed are their descendants today, the Jews of Israel. The Jews consider themselves a people united by blood and religion and have maintained this unity for over three thousand years. In their Bible the Jews are often chastised for their "unfaithfulness" to *Yahweh* and, in fact, their faithfulness or loyalty to *Yahweh* is the central theme of their history from the time of the biblical founder of their religion, Abraham. Even today, the Jews at the "Wailing Wall," the remaining west wall of Herod's temple in Jerusalem, bemoan their "disloyalty" to *Yahweh* and seek His forgiveness as a return to the long past glories of the Kingdom of David. In a sense, Israel is one of the most honest of modern governments, laying claim to a certain area of earth based on the foundation that it was given to them by their god, *Yahweh*, three thousand years ago.

In the Acts of Apostles in the Christian Bible, the people of Ephesus shouted down the sermon of Paul with "Long live Diana of the Ephesians," revealing the real unifying factor of Ephesus.

Japan from the earliest times considered the Emperor the descendent of *Amaterasu Omikami*, the Goddess of the Sun, and all Japanese were related to the first Emperor, Jimmu Tenno. From the Kamakura Period (C.E 700) onward, while the actual power of ruling was in the hands of the various war lords, the focus of the unity of the Japanese as a people remained with the

Emperor. When, in fact the Japanese Emperor came once more into full power with the Meiji Restoration, the Shinto religion for which the Emperor was the representative and symbol, the religion again provided the unifying force of the several wars waged by Japan afterwards. In the Pacific War, as the Second World War is called in Japan, the Japanese fanaticism as evinced in their "*Banzai*" charges on Guadalcanal and Saipan, displayed a religious fervor beyond anything seen in the opposing American forces. The Japanese were forced to separate the religion from the government at the end of the war by the occupation forces, retaining, however, the Emperor as a symbol of the "nation" which, in effect sustained its religious ethic. The Japanese word *Matsuri* refers to a religious festival, usually a Shinto festival, while *matsurigoto* (things of the festival) is another word meaning "politics." The relationship is hard to miss.

In Europe, the "Holy Roman Empire" claimed domination over all of Europe based on the inheritance through designation of the Emperor by the Pope, a right supposedly awarded to him through the "Donation of Constantine." This document supposedly granted the spiritual and temporal dominion over Rome and the entire Western Empire to Pope Sylvester (314-335). The document is now universally admitted to be a forgery but was long used as a political weapon by the Roman Catholic Church. Although unity of the Holy Roman Empire was never actually achieved, the aim of uniting under one emperor or another was thus given a religious basis. Even after Europe lost the unity of religion under Rome, the claim to the role of emperor continued, as can be observed with the title of the leader of Germany up to the early part of the 20th century

being "Kaiser," derived from the Roman "Caesar." (Although the word "Caesar" has no religious meaning, it is taken as related to leader of the Holy Roman Empire, much as the word "Tsar" derives from the same claim to the inheritance of the ancient realm of Caesar through the Greek Byzantine Church.)

Thus the religious basis for political entities has continued down to very recent times and, in fact, exists today in many parts of the world, at least as an ideal. There was the short-lived United Arab Republic based on a pan-Arab ideal with Islam as its source. Israelis consider their religion as the foundation of their government, as does the currently dominant group in Afganistan, the governments of Pakistan, Iran, Bhutan, and others.

It is rather the exception for a government to claim adherence to no particular religion, and those that do so are simply denying that the state has the power to make religious decisions for the people or judge them according to religious canons, not that there are no religious affiliations within the state.

When a particular religious ideal loses the power of being the basis of a group which can be considered a political entity, the problem arises as to from where the ideals which will form the basis for the political entity will derive. That is to say that if there are conditions which make the designation of a particular religion the foundation of a political entity difficult, the values of the religion of the majority involved in the foundation are adopted, while a specific religious designation is avoided. In the case of the United States of America the founders were Christian in orientation, but were divided among several sects. The resulting ideals as they are preserved in the

American Constitution and the legal history of the U.S. are entirely Christian. It only needs a look at the coins and currency minted by the United States engraved with the motto, "In God We Trust" to understand that the government has not spurned religion but is actually quite religious in outlook. The same observation would hold true for Iraq, for example, which, while not claiming to be a religious government, nevertheless affirms publicly its adherence to Islamic ideals.

Religion presents a certain mythology and a set of ideals and value judgments by which a culture lives and acts. It, too, is a self-sustaining "meme" present in the minds of the people of the culture which demands loyalty, not simply because of promises of support, although a reward is always promised to the loyal, but on the basis of instilled values of right and wrong and destiny. A meme, in the same way as a gene, is "selfish" in the sense that it works for its own continuance, replication and increase. Thus religion is usually accompanied by threats of damnation and punishment for those that disbelieve, deny or abandon it. For the faithful of any religion, the person who is unfaithful is sinful and can not avoid damnation according to the judgment of the gods.

From the first, the government or controlling body assumes this mantle of religion, either expressly, or by tacitly supporting a certain set of values and ideals derived from religion, and claims the loyalty of the citizens as the foundation of those values and ideals. These values and ideals are considered unique to the culture of that government so that all other governments are "different" and always inimical to some extent. This unique entity is the "nation" which maintains its existence as an unquestioned ideal in the minds of its citizens.

Through this maintenance of religious ideals and values, a government relegates to itself an ideal existence, which is given a concrete existence as the quasi-religious entity, the "nation."

While the nation, almost by definition, is too large for all of its citizens to be even slightly acquainted with everyone else, there must be a factor by which the citizens are made to believe in a common "unique" culture coextensive with the nation. As in religion, the nation relies to a great extent upon rites commemorating historical or legendary events of importance to the nation, holidays celebrating national heroes, etc. In this way the people are made aware of this unifying entity and participate in them as acts of "patriotism."

In nations avowedly religious in nature, the national festivals will be much the same as the those of the religion, the Birth of Mohammed, or of Buddha, or of Christ, with a few others pertaining to the nation such as the founding of the country or the commemoration of those who have died for the nation in its wars, etc, while the avowedly secular state will have mainly this type of commemoration, albeit some suspiciously religious holidays may overtly or covertly remain. The celebration of Christmas is a fact in most Western nations, in spite of its obvious religious origin, and in Japan what were religious festivals up to the end of the Pacific War, now have innocuous secular names that hide rather than eliminate their religious intent. The holiday of "Gratitude to the Worker" celebrated on November 23 in Japan, was formerly the Shinto harvest festival, "*Ninamesai*" (新嘗祭), giving thanks to the ancestral Goddess for the year's harvest.

## Patriotism

The quasi-religious "nation" gives rise to a quasi-religious faith which we call "patriotism," defined as "loyalty to a nation," but when referring to a nation or some similarly large group the word "loyalty" becomes the far more solemn "allegiance." Americans do not merely promise to be loyal to the U.S., they "pledge their allegiance," an indication of seriousness of the statement and a hint of the measure of religious content therein. This allegiance presumes a duty of the citizen beyond that of obeying its laws, to being prepared to assist and support the nation in its endeavors and defend it against its enemies. This extends to being prepared to die in any conflict in which the nation may become involved.

The source of this duty is presumed to be that the "mother/father land" has nurtured and given them a place to live and prosper, or at least live, in a far greater way than their parents from whom they received life itself.

From a philosophical point of view, loyalty then is a form of reciprocal duty to parents or to country. True, the child has no choice into which family or which nation it will be born. This comes about completely by chance, and from that point of view, the parents or country nurture the child or citizen so that he or she may live a life appropriate to humanity not out of generosity, but rather duty. In this sense, the extent to which parents or nation may demand sacrifices of the child or citizen in response to their magnanimity is logically difficult.

Another problem is that which Dawkins discusses in *The Selfish Gene* in which altruistic behavior is foreign to the drive of the gene and in this case, the meme. The case is made by Dawkins that the gene is only interested in its own replication,

and any behavior which denies this goal is impossible. In evolution, things evolve by natural selection in which only that which is advantageous to the organism survives. That is to say, natural selection means that a gene selects, in a sense, that which is advantageous for survival. It is therefore counterproductive and actually impossible for the genes to act to their own disadvantage. Those actions which may seem to be disadvantageous to the individual are always advantageous, or apparently so, to the performer of the action. Self sacrifice is always in the service of a self-serving goal. Animals supposedly not having consciousness can seem to be sacrificing themselves for something else. The act of the bird pretending to be wounded in the presence of a perceived aggressor in order to lead the attacker away from the nestlings seems to be an act of altruism. Insofar as this action is for the preservation and continuance of the bird's children, and therefore it's own genes, it is rather an intricately evolved response to a particular danger to the continuation of the genes of this particular bird. In the same way, the most praiseworthy altruistic action among humans also has a perceived advantage to it even though the action may indeed be life threatening.

In the case of religion, martyrdom, seems to be the supreme altruistic action. It has been seen historically especially in Christianity, but also in Judaism, Islam, and it has even in Buddhism as in the cases of monks burning themselves in protest toward the government in Vietnam at the beginning of that conflict. Especially in religion, while the sacrifice is perceived as very great, the reward for such action is also seen to be very great. In Shushaku Endo's classic, "*Chimmoku*," the Christians seem to welcome being murdered for their faith since

they believed the reward that they would receive in heaven was far greater than their lot in this world. Throughout the early days of persecution of Christianity in ancient Roman days, the constant theme is that dying gives a better life. Far from being altruistic, it is entirely in tune with the more natural instincts of evolution, which are entirely selfish.

In other words, one of the few forces in the world that can make sane people ready to kill themselves is religion, which manages this through promising spiritual rewards. Another of these forces, however, is the "nation," which far outstrips religion in its power to have its citizens face possible, probable, and sometimes even certain death for its sake.

Biologically, the gene involved seeks to be perpetuated in its offspring and will act altruistically to the extent that it is thereby aiding in its own continuance. The gene therefore will work for the welfare of others in proportion to the proximity of relationship. Kinship selection, that is to say, working for the welfare of members of the same family will have its own genetic background. Even among family, of course, children are genetically more closely related to their siblings than to either parent, while parents, unrelated genetically are, from the point of view of the gene, important as the means of self-propagation and therefore worthy objects of altruistic behavior. What may seem to be altruistic behavior is explainable by the "Selfish Gene" theory.<sup>8</sup> On the level of culture however, there is no biological connection between memes, and altruistic behavior such as that associated with patriotism can only be metaphorically compared with the operation of the gene on the biological level.

If the motive of altruistic behavior on the biological level

is the continued existence of the gene, altruistic behavior associated with the meme "nation," that is to say, "patriotic behavior," would seem to require a motive rewarded in some way on the level of culture. In the same way as with the gene on the biological level, the meme of "nation" seeks the perpetuation of self within the culture, not really the individual person in whom it exists. That is to say, the meme of "nation" has imbued itself with various defenses against abandonment. Especially evident is the *holy* aura which has surrounded it so that what may be perceived as unpatriotic behavior is condemned by the community as "traitorous" and liable to grave penalties, death being a not infrequent punishment. The reward for patriotic behavior, on the other hand, usually results in commemoration by the community or culture, and described as "living on perpetually in the minds of the people." This is especially true in the cases where the patriotic activity has led to the death of the patriot. The commemoration does not really reward or satisfy the dead patriot in any way. It does, however, reinforce and perpetuate the existence of the meme of patriotism, dead heroes being one of the most effective totems in unifying groups of people. As Dawkins states, "At another level, the nation is a major beneficiary of our altruistic self-sacrifice, and young men are expected to die as individuals for the greater glory of their country as a whole. Moreover, they are encouraged to kill other individuals about whom nothing is known except that they belong to a different nation."<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the sacrifice of one's own life for one's country is seen as an ennobling action which will contribute to the glory and continued prosperity of the nation, a notion profitable to the continuance of the nation and therefore endowed with a

sacred aura.

It does indeed seem difficult to think of a cultural concept as having an existence of its own apart from the individual in which it resides. It is, however, in no way different from the gene on the biological level which is said to be "selfish" not because of some kind of awareness of conditions which are profitable for it, and therefore consciously selected, but simply that any condition profitable to the gene will, by natural selection, become dominant in the course of evolution. In a culture, the conditions which will be profitable to a meme, the cultural environment which is amicable to the meme, will be reinforced through the communication within the culture.

...memes should be regarded as living structures, not just metaphorically, but technically. When you plant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for the meme's propagation in just the way a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell.<sup>10</sup>

It thus happens that the concept of "nation" profits in the sense of being sustained and reinforced when associated by the basic quality judgments such as benevolence, righteousness, strength and fairness, which, taken together afford a sacred aura maintaining it. On the other side, those who doubt or deny the concept are politically alienated at best, and considered traitors at worst.

### The Media and Nation

The fact that nations are too large for everyone to know everyone else demands that there be means of establishing and maintaining a feeling of common awareness among the people of

a nation. The cultural concept of nation is not adopted by option but absorbed very early by the individual born into the culture, from every source involved in cultural education, especially communicated and reinforced by mass media, a function seldom ignored by governments, even the most liberal of which control the media, especially in times of national stress such as war.

The media today have developed today to the point where control is becoming much more difficult, and the attempts to keep information from abroad away from the population of a country are becoming very difficult for governments that would attempt to do so, except in the case of countries where technology has seen no advance. The nation, however, is a concept separate from politics, and where there is a strong anti-government movement, the real "nation" is thought by the anti-government forces to be their own. Therefore, anti-government publications will be just as "patriotic" and more so than those of the ruling government.

Even in countries where there is no anti-government movement, the press and other media reinforce the quasi-religious concept of nation when they report on even the activities during national holidays, and especially when reporting the activities of the country's armed forces, its veterans, etc. The acts of the heroes of any nation are taught to the youngest children even as part of learning to read, so that the hero, often legends with little historical foundation, becomes the example of the true patriot. Poetic sagas and epics ever since the Iliad and the Odyssey have been the source of lessons in patriotism to the people of many countries. Not only is it doubtful whether there really was an Achilles, a Hector or an

Odysseus; many other heroic adventures developed from only the barest bit of truth through the media of the day; El Cid, Marco Polo, Paul Revere, Wyatt Earp, and many others are among those who profited from excellent press.

## Conclusion

Originally, humans lived in social groups in order to survive. Living as a society was a successful survival strategy for humans and, in fact, so successful that societies which originally existed for the survival of the individuals making it up, became huge and impersonal, and began to demand that the individuals within it be in some way not only restrained from leaving or hurting the society, but compelled to assist the society in all its endeavors which may not necessarily be conducive to the prosperity of its individual members. Religion was the tool by which these societies were able to establish and maintain these constraints. Society relegated to itself the role of quasi-motherhood or fatherhood. In the process the meme of nation came into being and nations laid claim to the duties of patriotism from all their adherents-citizens, duties which are thought sacred and looked upon as ideals to live or die for.

It is indeed strange that what was a survival strategy for humanity has found an existence within the minds of those humans which is able to control and judge, to honor and condemn the very humans who are the vehicle of their existence, the quasi-religious meme, "nation."

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- 1) Hartley, John: *Nation; Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies*,
- 2) Resnick, M.: *Turtles, Termites and Traffic Jams*: MIT Press: Cambridge: 1997: p.14.
- 3) Dawkins, Richard: *The Selfish Gene*: Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1976.
- 4) Bouissac, Paul: *Why do Memes Die?* : In the World of Signs: Poznan Studies in the Philosophy the Sciences and the Humanities; vol.II, 1998; p.436.
- 5) Dawkins, R.: *The Selfish Gene*: The Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1989; p.192.
- 6) Dawkins, R.: *The Extended Phenotype*: Oxford University Press, 1982: p.290.
- 7) Reminiscent of the statement of Louis XIV of France, "*L'etat c'est moi.*"
- 8) In a problem in which a man is in position to save either wife or child and he saves the wife instead of the child that bears one-half set of his genes.
- 9) Dawkins: *The Selfish Gene*: p.198.
- 10) Humphrey as quoted in Bouissac; p.436.

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