

## This Video Will Make You Angry CGP Grey

Hello Internet.

Thoughts compete for space in your brain: cat photos, news stories, beliefs structures, funny GIFs, educational videos, not-so-educational videos and your thinking inventory is limited.

A thought without a brain to think it, dies.

Now we can treat thoughts as though they're alive.

Specifically alive like germs.

That might sound weird but stick with me.

Take jokes.

Jokes are thought germs that live in your brain -- and when you tell the joke to another brain, you help it reproduce.

Just like when you have the flu and sneeze to help it reproduce.

This germ gets into its host by snot through the mouth and this one by words through the ear but it's reproduction either way.

Logging on to your social media then, is exposing yourself to everyone's mental sneezes.

Each post a glob of snot with an thought germ trying to get in your brain -- if not for permanent residence then at least long enough to get you to press the share button and sneeze it with everyone you know.

In this analogy then, a funny cat photo with a perfect caption is a super-flu.

Now just as germs exploit weak points in your immune system, so do thought germs exploit weak points in your brain.

A.K.A. emotions.

Once inside, thought germs that press emotional buttons get their hosts to spread them more -- measurably more.

Well, except sadness, sad thought germs don't get very far.

Awe is pretty good which is why websites that construct thought germs like biological weapons arm them with them titles like "7 whatevers that will blow your mind" or "The Shocking Secret behind... this thing"

But anger is the ultimate edge for a thought germ.

Anger, bypasses your mental immune system, and compels you to share it.

Being aware of your brain's weak spots is necessary for good mental hygiene -- like knowing how to wash your hands.

Because even without intentional construction, any thought germ on the Internet can, on its own, grow more infections as it spreads.

To talk about why, lets forget anger for a moment and go back to that cat photo.

Every photo ever taken is a thought germ, and most die a quick death like the bazillion cat photos (or baby photos) posted on The Internet that are never shared.

But a mildly funny cat photo can grow into so much more, because just as transatlantic flights were the best thing to happen to germ germs, so the Internet is the best thing to happen to thought germs.

For once on-board, that cat photo is a thought germ that can leap into other brains.

And those brains might share it, and here's the key point, occasionally, change it -- a Photoshop here, a tweaked caption there.

Most changes are terrible, but some make the thought germ even funnier, getting brains to share it more.

Which results in more changes and a shot at super-stardom.

A thus a lowly cat photo can achieve global brain domination.

At least for a few hours.

The Internet, with its unparalleled ability to share and randomly change thought germs can't help but help make them stronger.

With jokes, that's awesome -- but with angry germs not always so awesome.

No.

Angry germs, the more they're shared undergo the same process, changing and distorting to be

more aggravating.

These have a better chance of spreading than their more accurate but more boring rivals.

But like plagues, thought germs can burn through a population too quickly.

Just watch your favorite meme generating machine for a week and you'll see the life-cycle fly by.

However some thought germs have found a way around burnout.

Now, I must warn you, depending on which thought germs live in your head and which you fight for, the next section might sound \*horrifying\*.

So please keep in mind, we're going to talk about what makes some thought germs, particularly angry ones, successful and not how good or bad they are.

OK?

Deep breath: calm.

Though germs can burn out because once everyone agrees, it's hard to keep talking and thus thinking about them.

But if there's an opposing thought germ, an argument, then the thinking never stops.

Disagreement doesn't have to be angry, but again, angry helps.

The more visible an argument gets the more bystanders it draws in which makes it more visible is why every group from the most innocuous internet forum to The National Conversation can turn into a double rage storm across the sky in no time.

Wait, these thought germs aren't competing, they're co-operating.

Working together they reach more brains and hold their thoughts longer than they could alone.

Thought germs on opposite sides of an argument can be symbiotic.

One tool symbiotic anger germs in particular can employ is your-with-us-or-against-us.

Whatever thought germ just leaped to the front of your brain, push it back.

This video isn't about that.

We're just talking about the tool, and this one makes it hard, for neutral brains to resist and its diviciveness also grows its symbiotic partner.

This explains why, in some arguments gaining more allies also gains more enemies.

Because though the participants think they're involved in a fiery battle to the death from the anger germs perspective one side is a field of flowers and the other a flock of butterflies.

\*Of course\* planting more flowers will get you more butterflies and getting more butterflies will pollinate more flowers.

If there is some argument that splits the population and lasts forever that even the most neutral people find difficult to avoid, you just might be looking at a super successful pair of symbiotic anger germs that have reached ecological stability

Now, one final depressing thought.

Uhhhh...

I mean one more Awe inspiring point, that will reveal the secrets of, ahhh -- actually no it's just depressing.

When opposing groups get big they don't really argue with each other, they \*mostly\* argue with themselves about how angry the \*other\* group makes them.

We can actually graph fights on the Internet to see this in action.

Each becomes its own quasi isolated internet, sharing thoughts about the other.

You see where this is going, right?

Each group becomes a breeding ground for thought germs \*about\* the other -- and as before the most enraging -- but not necessarily the most accurate -- spread fastest.

A group almost can't help but construct a totem of the other so enraging they talk about it all the time -- which, now that you know how thought germs grow, is exactly what make the totem always perfectly maddening.

Now, all this isn't to say that there's no point in arguing.

(That's a different video).

Or that the Internet isn't amazing, or that there aren't things worth trying to change peoples' minds about.

And thought germs of all kinds come and go.

But it's useful to be aware of how thought can use our emotions to spread and how the more rapidly a thought is able to spread the more chances it has to become \*even better\* at spreading through random changes made to it.

Sometimes that's great, sometimes it's terrible.

But if you want to maintain a healthy brain it pays to be cautious of thoughts that have passed through a lot of other brains and that poke you where you are weakest.

It's your brain -- be hygienic with it.

So, of course this video is a thought germ, one constructed very intentionally over time to spread a thought germ about thought germs -- exposing their secrets -- one could say.

But I tried as hard as possible, not to have, this video attack your brain through emotions, so it could use a little help spreading.

Please be a good germ vector and click the share buttons to sneeze this at your friends.

Your coworkers.

Your family.

Infect them all.

You shared the video, right?

Well if you're still here, you really got infected hard.

Only thing left is to click onscreen and sign up to the email list which will get you exposed to many more thought germs in stick figure video form.