

# Respect

## College car vandal needs to grow up

I thought when you came to college, you grew up. I thought you came to college to get away from all that crap you had to go through in high school. I could be wrong. Let's examine.

All of us had those "friends." The type of people that you run into later that you haven't seen in two or three years. You shake hands, ask how he's doing, and ask about his girlfriend or his classes or anything to break the awkward silence. Both of you know you really don't care.

I saw one of those people the other night.

I was walking around on East Campus. I was there to bowl, or go to a concert, or something. It doesn't matter, maybe it was a dance. I ran into my current roommate, one of our friends from high school, and her boyfriend. The boyfriend is the "friend."

I played football with him, and he graduated a year before me. We went through the routine. Shook hands, asked about classes, exchanged manly greetings.

A few minutes after meeting, he decided that there was pressing beer to drink, and one did NOT have my name on it. They all left. Big deal, two more years and I'll run into him again.

The dance ended, and I strolled back to my car with those other friends. I walked toward my car to discover it was covered in bright orange, "KEEP-OFF-THE-GRASS" type fencing, and a street barricade blocked my hood.

A senseless act of vandalism, I thought. It wasn't funny, but maybe I didn't see the humor in that kind of

### Antone Oseka

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thing. No big deal. "Who let the high schoolers out?" I thought.

I asked my roommate later why my "friend" had acted so weird, and made such a quick departure.

"He doesn't like you because you flipped him off when we were freshman," she replied.

"Freshman?" I said. "That's not right. I haven't seen him since we've been in college."

"In high school," she said matter-of-factly.

I gave everyone the one-finger wave in high school. It was a sign you were liked, that you were my friend. It didn't seem right to wave normal. We were cool, or we really wanted to be cool. We flipped each other off.

That's why I couldn't figure out why this guy thought I meant it.

And, if it bothered him that much, why didn't he stop me that day and straighten things out. Or why didn't he straighten things out during a football practice. THUD - "Don't ever flip me off again!" would have come across nicely. Why did he carry an eight year grudge?

If you know me, I'm a trusting (naive) person and didn't put two and two together until a day or so later.

The vandal who hit my car the night before wasn't a stranger. He knew that car was mine, and decided it was time for revenge after eight years of tormenting thoughts of me flipping him off.

I took the next logical step. I asked my roommate.

"Your car was messed with Friday night?" she lied. "I don't think he did it."

I'm not that trusting of a person. To seal the coffin, his girlfriend came over to visit some friends in town who were staying in our apartment. She started joking about how smooth her boyfriend was. He messes with peoples' cars when he's drunk. He thinks it's funny.

I'm sure he wouldn't think it was funny if someone messed with his new Dodge truck.

There is a moral to this story.

1. People need to grow up.  
2. People need to respect each other's property and rights. Wow, I could swear I read that in a famous document somewhere.

3. People need to talk if something bothers them, and not carry around eight-year grudges. To get mad at a person is one thing, but to hold a grudge for eight years is just not healthy. Maybe my "friend" should get some help with his emotions.

Maybe he should just re-read number 1.

Oseka is a junior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter.

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# Eye opener

## Idea virus takes over unsuspecting mind

It hit me, recently, what I'm up to.

What I've been up to, on one level or another, as long as I've written for the Daily Nebraskan.

I had no idea I was so subversive. Anyone here familiar with the idea of memes?

Okay, let me digress for a minute.

A meme is the smallest element of idea — of meaning. Like a gene in biology, a phoneme or morpheme in linguistics, the meme is rarely observable outside and apart from the larger construct it simultaneously inhabits and creates.

Bodies are made of and by genes. Blue eyes, brown eyes, it's all in the genes.

Morphemes are a little more abstract.

The "a" in "atonal" is an example of a morpheme, the smallest meaningful bit of language; it means something like "against" or "anti".

A meme, well, a meme is even more abstract — and harder to pin down.

But we can recognize its operations in large, long-lived ideas, like Christianity.

Christianity changes its memes around a lot. We no longer think burning witches is so cool, for instance.

But it maintains a recognizable form. Christians everywhere recognize the cross.

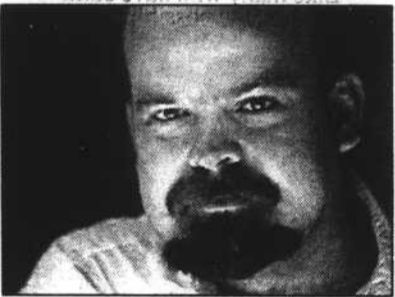
Maybe the cross is a meme. The simple "X" of sticks over a grave, the gold crucifix on a slender throat — beneath them both lies the identical meme.

Christianity survives in part because it has strong memes. That is, its memes tend to organize in very stable ways. From generation to generation the meme structures of Christianity exhibit very little drift.

I don't mean any disrespect, I'm just trying to put the idea of memes into a context we can recognize. I could have chosen democracy or scientific method.

Now, what I've been up to, all unbeknownst like, is the manufacture of a particular kind of virus. A meme virus.

A virus in biology is a strand of DNA which, having no life of its own, can replicate inside an organic



Mark Baldrige

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system, using the system's own processes to proliferate itself.

A meme virus would be, then, something that is not an idea in itself, not even a piece of an idea.

It would be something like a catalyst that creates, in its unlucky recipient, the conditions under which certain kinds of meme constructs might thrive.

In other words, it's a disease (or perhaps un-ease) not of the mind, but of ideas.

And the first and most noticeable symptom of the disease is doubt. Just so you'll know.

It's not like I've sat around and tried to figure out how to corrupt people's ideas. I have, really, nothing to do with it.

I'm like the guy with a bad cold at the office. I'm contagious.

Since I'm sort of a public figure, I may be real contagious — that's why I'm mentioning it now.

You see ... I, too, am a victim of the meme disease.

Several years ago my ideas got sick. One hell of a lot of them died off. It was terrible.

I wondered if I'd have any ideas left by the time I got through it. I didn't know what a meme virus was, in those innocent days as, one by one, doubt ate my ideas.

There was a long period (it seemed long) in which the silence in

my head was deafening.

Slowly, new ideas appeared.

They were worse than the disease.

Because the ideas that grew back to fill the silence in my mind were strange, liquid, transparent, ready to slip out of shape and change and evaporate and come back in new clothes.

They made me seasick with all their morphing.

It took a long, long time to get my sea legs — and that's why it took me so long to realize what I was up to.

I, like everyone else, am at the mercy of my ideas.

My mind has become the factory for producing slick meme viruses. I crank them out at an alarming rate, each more insidious than the last.

Maybe, one day, I will constitute a kind of one man plague — a psychic Typhoid Mary. And I can't stop. Not yet.

I am in the throes of a disease and my meme viruses are already out there, working away.

Sooner or later someone susceptible — someone whose defenses are down, someone far from home, someone at college, say — will catch the bug.

It may not run a course identical to mine — the virus mutates with each replication — but the end result will be very similar. Another poor person will become a virus factory.

I did not invent the virus and it won't end with me. I am but a poor vessel. I am being used.

It just so happens that the memes in my head make my brain produce happy chemicals when I'm out there infecting others.

Because of the ideas in my mind I believe that what I believe is true — just like any of you.

But what I believe is true is more like a howling vortex of chaos than a bowling alley — more akin to the void than the Vatican.

My ideas are in league with the devil of doubt.

Hope you guess my name.

Baldrige is a senior English major and Opinion editor for the Daily Nebraskan.



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