The Metaphysical Quality that gives a Visual Identity Mark its Sway.

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Abstract

Addressing a specific aspect of visual communication, the focus of this paper is to examine the connection between elemental nature-inspired archetypal symbols and contemporary Visual Identity Marks, for example the archetypal Solar Cross to the BP VIM, Helios, by establishing the existence of a contextual relevance and relationship. It furthermore analyses the fundamental influence of these archetypal symbols upon the viewer/user (internal and external audiences), no matter what level of sophistication the viewer's/user's society has achieved.

To build an appreciation of the continuity and effectiveness of the use of elemental nature-inspired archetypal symbols within a contemporary context, areas of expertise not traditionally utilised within visual communication, such as sociology, archaeology, theology and folklore were engaged.

While being defined as *"a recurrent symbol or motif in literature, art or mythology"* (Random House Dictionary, 2012), an archetypal symbol also possesses a metaphysical quality. This metaphysical quality enables the symbol to act as a galvanising and motivating force, which re-enforces individual and group identity, and ultimately transmit a sense of the sacred and the institutional within a mutable world.

The archetypal (natural) symbol is the response of the psyche reflecting the 'internal truth'. The VIM (cultural) symbol is a vehicle to maintain power for financial or political profits as well as sustain group coherency, and individual identity. Encoded within both a 'natural', and a 'cultural' symbol, is a deep spiritual quality tapping into a deeper symbolic language which evolved from humanity relating back to nature.

Drawing upon notions of individual interpretation, the paper analyses the very idea of personal and/or subjective mental constructs related to visual identity marks.

Key words:
Branding, semiotics, symbolism, natural symbol, cultural symbol

"The present connects the past with the future – knowing about the past provides a basis from which we can plan. Signs, symbols and icons have been part of the collective subconscious of the human race since earliest times." (Sasson and Gaur,1995)

The work of design historians Sasson and Gaur (1995), suggests that there is an unbroken line of human visual communication beginning with stone and cave paintings and glyphs of prehistory that has maintained relevance throughout history and can still be seen in association with the international corporate empires of the 21st century.

Utilised by the ancient power heads of religious cults, armies and royal households through to their contemporary equivalents, the CEOs of multi-national corporations and national governments and institutions, graphic symbols have played a pivotal role in the practice of communication and manipulation of the populace for millennia.

The ancients employed a mark or symbol, which was believed to possess a spiritual, and mystical import (Jung, 1978:88), behind which they stood united, to generate a statement of both personal and group identity.

"Just as symbols are concerned with mind and matter and not with one or other on its own, so they are concerned with the relationship between the individual and the whole." (Jung, 1978).

Consumerism can be seen as the contemporary equivalent of ancient religions and tribes, and the utilisation of Visual Identity Marks (VIMs)[1] in both periods have a similar intent, that of creating the notion of elusive qualities. Displaying the VIM of certain consumer goods - clothing apparel, mechanical and technological items through to petroleum and energy products - has become more

[1]. The term 'visual identity mark' (VIM) rather the range of contemporary descriptors for brand identity symbols such as logos, logotypes, trade marks, and brand marks is driven by my need to describe both ancient and contemporary branding marks. The term VIM describes ancient marks without relying on contemporary terminology. A visual mark is the core visual identification element for a company, corporation or institution, either government, religious or non-profit organization such as a charity. It can come in the form of a logotype or a symbol. Symbol: Non-typographic element of an abstract or representational nature. Apple, Nike, and BP feature graphic symbols as an important, if not the primary element of their visual identity mark. Logotype: A unique grouping of letterforms that represents a brand. IBM, and Coca Cola utilize logotypes as the primary visual element of their visual identity mark.

significant and defining than using the item itself, and links an individual's identity strongly and directly with a brand or corporation. (c.f. Klein, 2000; Olins, 2004).

Some contemporary VIMs integrate into the market place and the viewer's/user's[2] psyche almost immediately, some VIMs take further visual refining and a comprehensive media program, and some, despite an extensive media rollout, wither, having never been embraced or adopted by the intended audience. Due to the increasing pressures and the plethora of consumer choices in the contemporary world, and the sense of constant change, viewers/users are searching for continuity and a belief in an institution and therefore trust. And to that end, the corporate VIM, *"is a means of building trust with the customer"* (Cowin & Matusitz, 201:23).

Defining the emotional triggers that give VIMs their persuasive effect within the global marketplace was a key objective for this work. It aimed to have a meaningful, significant focus and question, which was augmented by the application of a quite different and potentially note-worthy perspective. This perspective was to investigate the influence of the numinous, which may tell us different things about the way visual identity marks might be effective in terms of communication.

The hypothesis within this paper, proposes that numinosity is a metaphysical (conceptual, notional, and philosophical) quality found within well-established graphic symbols, both archetypal elemental inspired and contemporary VIMs.

The initial emergence of graphic archetypal symbols, was investigated by Max Muller, who expressed the view that when human beings first encountered the 'Infinite' and named intangible objects such as the Sun, Moon and stars, or semi-tangible phenomena, such as mountains, rivers, seas and trees, a dialogue between individuals, elemental deities and other individuals in a group was established (Muller, 1863). Ancient societies desired to identify a cosmology that clarified their place within the natural physical world and the abstract supernatural world inhabited by their gods, leading to the invention and application of graphic symbols, which were seen as an important part of this dialogue.

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2. **'Viewer/user'**: will refer to the diverse audiences that have contact with or are engaged in some way with the Helios and VIMs in general. 'The term 'viewer' defines individuals and groups who see a visual identity mark (VIM) and are not necessarily a customer or consumer of the organisation that the VIM represents. 'User' refers to individuals and groups who indirectly or directly engage and invest in the organisation that the VIM represents. These terms have been used because they best describe commercial and noncommercial discussions found within this paper. The 'Viewer/user' also applies to ancient visual communication strategies, where terms such as consumer and customer do not apply. These terms also do not define the audiences in the traditional way of 'internal' and 'external' (Christensen & Askegaard, 1999).

As one of a number of archetypal elemental symbols, the Solar Cross, (Fig.1) asserted by H.R.E. Davidson, as one of the earliest known symbols, was employed as a vehicle that facilitated the union between the individual, the societies in which they lived, and the elemental deities that were worshipped (Davidson, 1969).

Figure 1

From its pre Bronze Age roots, the meaning and use of the Solar Cross, as well as other archetypal elemental symbols, changed as societal groups became more organised. A genuine belief existed that there was an ability for humans to negotiate directly with elemental deities (Clark, 2008). Subsequently the dialogue between humans and omnipresent unseen forces had the power to affect and assist in alleviating the ongoing fearful concerns of the group, which included invasion, famine, and defeat in war.

> *"Filled with a sense of the presence of divinity (holy); appealing to the higher emotions or the aesthetic sense (spiritual) ...Therefore, after an object or mark has acquired, or been given an emotional or spiritual force, it has gained numinous qualities, sublimely perceived by the individual or group"* (Fontana & Firim, 2003: 83).

The cosmos-inspired Solar Cross (a combination of the circle, and the cross) is, as Jung asserted, a result of the unconscious contents within the human psyche and its archetypal energies (1978: 83). In an essay entitled 'Symbolism', Robert G Cohn states:

> *"The necessary distinction between sign and symbol is made, the latter being 'an object' which refers to another object but which demands attention also in its own right, as a presentation."* (Cohn, 1974).

The theory that social cohesion is partly a product of the conscious development and use of visual identity and propaganda type programs that implement these VIMs is supported by H.R.E. Davidson (1969), Victor Turner (1994), and Tom Holland (2006) in the area of archeology and

anthropology, and Emile Durkheim (1893), Robert De Board (1990), Cartwright and Zander (1968), Paul A. Hare (1998) and Carl Jung in the areas of sociology and psychology, as VIMs are often at the heart of creating the desired 'point of difference', to confirm and reinforce a sense of group identity, an 'us and them' scenario.

Examining the fundamental personality of a group, the need for group identity, the interconnections between individuals, and the equally important drive to find a connection with the divine that exists within and outside the individual, is as good a beginning point as any for my hypothesis.

The creation and continuation of 'the group' is driven by a human need to define themselves as distinct from 'the other'. Forsyth (2006) defines a group as *"two or more individuals who are connected to each other by social relationships."* Goals, whether purely physical or of a more ideological bent are achieved through the existence and organization of groups.

A significant aspect of the collective identity of the group is to focus on members' similarities rather than their differences *"suggesting a unified, singular social experience, a single canvas against which social actors constructed a sense of self."*
*(*Cerulo:1997).

Motivators such as purpose, belonging and survival are relevant to both ancient and contemporary worlds. But other considerations are applicable to both periods concerning what drives the group dynamic, such as: change, social pressure, influence, coercion, power, cohesion, attraction, rejection, interdependence, equilibrium, and instability. In '*Psychoanalysis of Organisations*' (1978), De Board agreed with the opinion of influential anthropologist Victor Turner concerning groups, noting the unavoidable and universal presence
groups in a society.

De Board claimed, that *"groups are inevitable and ubiquitous."*
(1990:14), and "*Groups mobilize powerful forces which produce effects of utmost importance to individuals"* (1978:14).

According to Hare, the defining characteristic of a group is social interaction. But Cartwright and Zander (1968) echo Durkheim's theory of 'collective conscience' (1893), by suggesting that other aspects are necessary to define group identity *"refers to the shared beliefs and moral attitudes*

that operate as a unifying force within society" (Jary & Jary, 2005: 93).

Durkheim's theory describes a group as a collection of individual members whose personal identity merges with the other members. Additionally, it is feasible that qualities described by Olins (2003:27), in relation to an individual's use of a brand could be seen in the needs or desires of a group member looking for consistency, status and reassurance in an uncertain world,

> *"brands",* he contends, *"represent clarity, reassurance, consistency, status and membership, everything that enables human beings to help define themselves. Brand represent identity"* (Olins, 2003: 27).

The concepts of group identity and group dynamics are essential to an understanding of the burgeoning notion of institution in developing Bronze Age societies. The fundamental stability of human behavioural patterns over a long period of time provides opportunities to grasp the social mechanisms that operated within the ancient world. The existence of stable patterns reveals firstly that there was and still is a need to establish groups, both of a intimate primary (familial) and larger secondary (societal) type which evolve into communities and societies: and within these established larger secondary groups, subgroups evolved. Social groups have been linked to each other whether by choice, necessity or circumstances.

While a sense of security may have been achieved with the development of large secondary groups, nature and its capricious forces were ever present. Because of the need to rationalize these powers humanity attempted to create a sense of control or order via an integration of the omnipresent forces within the developing societal structure. As British antiquarian and academic H.R.Ellis Davidson observed in her *'The Chariot of the Sun and other Rites and Symbols of the Northern Bronze Age'* (1969), the sense of vulnerability, experienced by early humanity in relation to the forces of nature would have been palpable:

> *"whose powers included the rule of storms, the bringing of rain, and the Sun's warmth, and giving of victory in battle, as well as the gifts of law and order to mankind to combat the forces of chaos."*
> (Davidson,1969)

When a group or society adopted a VIM, it became a vehicle of identification. VIMs had and have the ability to communicate that there is a common bond between

members of the group and allow groups to differentiate themselves from other groups. Groups of individuals in the ancient world understood the concept of adapt or die, acquiring new cultural behaviour when necessary, by absorbing the cultural customs, languages, symbols and the gods of their conquerors or new region (Turner, 1982).

In primitive societies a sense of separation from the cosmos simply did not exist (Dallett, 1998). All aspects of the natural world – animate and inanimate objects, spaces and places – were deemed sacred. Jung considered primitive humanity's response to their external surroundings not to be objective, but more subjective and internalised, driven from deep within their unconscious psyche (Jung, 1978). Rudolph Otto, considered the reactions and effects of the natural world upon the human psyche or behaviour as key to his work *'The Idea of the Holy'* (1917), which discussed the existence of a metaphysical quality he referred to as the 'numinous'. As a result, this theory proposed that a layering of phenomena that was more visceral than rational occurred within inanimate marks, objects, spaces and places.

In concurrence with Otto, Jung believed the numinous was non-physical and celestial in nature, a fundamentally religious experience. His examination of the human psyche and the effects the natural world exerted on it was addressed in his theory of the 'archetype' claiming that archetypal symbolism is innate human imagery that exists in the psyche (Jung, 1978). He considered archetypal symbols were natural symbols, and the embodiment of mankind's 'natural religious function', an aspect of the psyche that must be developed to ensure psychic health and stability (Fontana, 1993: 26). Contemporary definitions of archetypal characteristics reject in part elements of Jung's initial thinking, developing an evolved terminology for the notion, 'neo-archetypes' (Faber & Mayer, 2008). However, when examining the contemporary definitions, the fundamental intent is still present.

> *"…neo-archetypal theory, archetypes possess five key characteristics… (c) often elicit intense emotional responses when encountered. Also, such archetypes (d) operate at an automatic or unconscious level, and (e) are culturally enduring so as to be easily learned and widely recognizable. Third, in neo-archetypal theory, archetypes are mental constructions that, when triggered, tend to elicit powerful emotional responses in those who are exposed to them."* (c.f. Faber & Mayer, 2008; C. S.Hall & Lindzey, 1978; Jung, 1961–1963/1983; Katz, 1984; Stewart, 1987).

Archetypes can often convey messages that verbal and written information cannot. This implies that reality is the individual's perception set in motion by the synchronicity of the archetypes we have experienced. Patterns of behaviour and responses have been set up over an extended period of development within western culture that involves archetypal symbols and their uses (Martin, 2011). Accordingly the presence of the numinous will influence an individual's connection to the situation.

They are innate prototypes for ideas, which are subsequently involved in the interpretation of observed phenomena. Their synthesised nature and natural occurrence, such as the phases of the moon or the weather of the seasons, into 'symbolic expressions', which were eventually, projected in physical manifestations such as archetypal elemental symbols, like the circle,(Fig.2) the cross (Fig.3) and the Solar Cross (Fig.4).

Fig 1

Fig 2

Fig 3

Conversely Durkheim saw archetypal symbols as cultural symbols, and their relevance evolved from their repetitive exposure within a society that contributed to building a sense of familiarity and trust in the viewer/user (2001). The way archetypal symbols were used repetitively equated to a sense of continuity, reflecting the natural elements, the very thing the archetypal symbols were representing. Durkheim also acknowledged the existence of the sacred and the profane within symbolism and VIMs:

> *"Thus...the sacred (the other worldy) and the profane (the mundane) is parallel to the social dichotomy between the common life of the community and the private life of the individual"*
> (Durhkeim in Cosman & Cladis, 2001: xxii).

During the Bronze Age (3,000 -1,500 BCE), Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and key ancient organised religions emerged from the Anatolian region, now known as Northern Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria (Fig.5). These societies were becoming increasingly stable and geographically established

as evidenced through their sophisticated building enterprises. A considerable amount of organised labour was required for these projects and through the attempt to organise and placate the mutable societies, a developing sense of institution, signaling the beginnings of a basic hierarchical social system occurred, which included the notions of cults and thriving forms of religious practices. (Smedley,1998). The repeated engagement of an archetypal elemental symbol, used as a VIM of sorts, was first found (Dallet,1998) in these cults and religions.

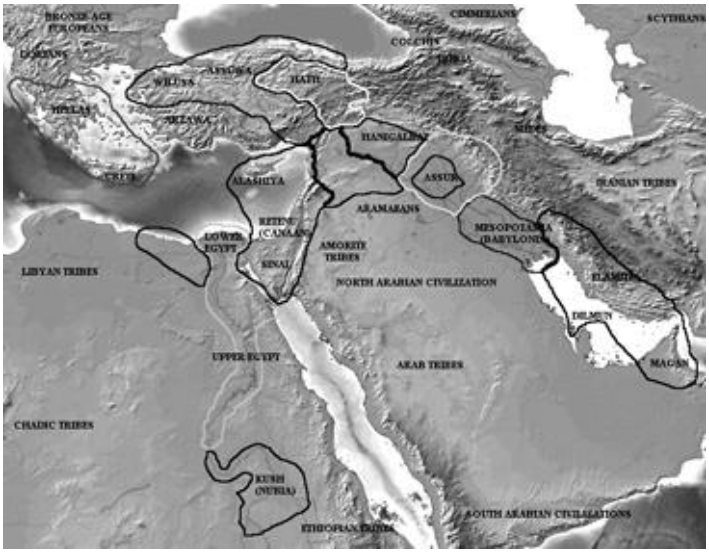

Fig 6

Fig 7

Originally, graphic archetypal elemental symbols were an individual's expression of an experience in the natural world (Dallett,1998). With the development of social organisation in human groups, a formalised language of graphic symbols emerged through the reoccurring use of archetypal elemental symbols on ancient monumental structures, as well as on mundane (Fig.6) and sacred objects (Fig.7).

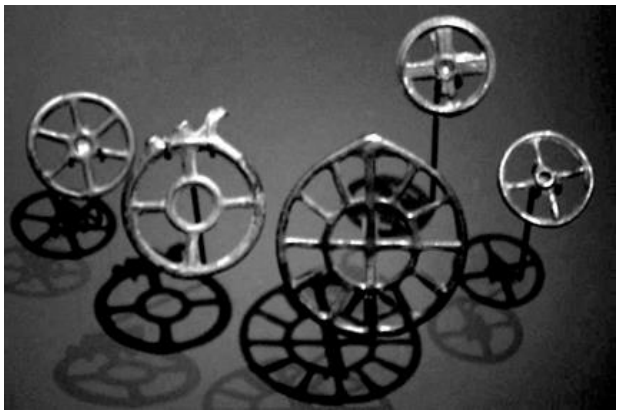

Fig 8

As societies grew more established and trade and commerce evolved, examples of visual identity began to be engaged in the form of individuals' VIMs, via branding of livestock and basic manufactured goods. Societies with an economy depending on slave labour also used similar branding (VIM) devices. Meggs noted that: *"the ownership of property and the specialization of trades or crafts made visual identification necessary."* (2005: 9).

Building on the observations of Meggs (2005), historian Albertine Gaur (1997) deliberated on the ancient purpose of symbols as VIMs:

"This branding or marking (tattooing) can also be voluntary whenever an individual wishes to demonstrate his or her complete identification with a particular group or mode of worship"
(Sasson & Gaur, 1997: 22).

Although uncomplicated in their visual construction, archetypal symbols (Fig.8) contained a complexity of meaning representing 'other worldliness' for the viewer/user. Thus, VIM usage in the ancient world conveyed a sacred quality.

This aspect of the relationship between group identity and a VIM can be directly related to ancient rites and rituals which included the pivotal usage of archetypal elemental symbols (Fig.9). Van Gennep suggested that rituals, particularly the rites of passage, which address all the major transitions that humans go through in their lives, are directly related to the tangible, and especially, the natural world around us. He concluded that rituals link humanity to the celestial bodies and the

great rhythm of the universe (Westerveld, 2010:10). Rituals marked and acknowledged the rites of passage and/or ruptures that occurred within the life of the group or individual as well as the agricultural cycle and the movements of heavenly bodies in the night sky.

Through the application of archetypal elemental symbols, such as the Solar Cross and the circle, on to sacred objects, the VIMs were perceived as symbols of liminality giving them a numinous quality. Jung and Durkheim agreed, that when a group adopted a symbol/emblem, the symbol acquired 'spell binding powers' and possessed an ability to trigger a sense of identity within group members.

Fig 9

> *"without the totem the clan could not exist, because the totem provides members of the clan with their name, that is, their identity and hence unity"* (Durkheim in Cosman & Cladis, 2001: xviii).

Similarly to the cohesive quality of Jung's symbol or Durkheim's totem, a contemporary VIM often serves the purpose of galvanising and reinforcing group coherence.

After the agricultural stage of humanity's development had been reached, the sun deity rose to full importance, with humanity's attempt to establish a dialogue with this essential element. To humanity, the Sun embodied the powers of creation, therefore a constant thread of sun worship and solar deities ran through most religions and cults of the ancient world. *"embodying the powers of creation and the sources of light and life represented by the Sun"* (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996:950).

Fig 10

Fig 11

The term 'My Sun' was used as an address to royalty throughout the ancient world. The worship of the Sun dominated the great civilizations of antiquity with its representtation through the gigantic figures of gods and heroes – Atum, Osiris (Egypt)(Fig.10) ; Baal, Mithras (Mesopotamia); Helios, Apollo (Greece)(Fig.11). From his work entitled '*The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*' Jung reflected, *"The sun in its course must represent the fate of a god or a hero who, in the last analysis, dwells nowhere except in the soul of man…"* (1981:75).

As with other archetypal elemental symbols, the energy within the sun symbol, a circular shape, may have enabled viewers of widely diverse backgrounds to comprehend the significance of the use of the mark and therefore connect with it.

The graphic marks of ancient religions such as circles, crosses and the solar cross were the stylized, static, symbolic equivalent to the physical ritual actions of worship that honoured the nature deities, and eventually became accepted as the brand marks for a deity, suppling the opportunity for the society to show immediately its alignment to that deity. These creative forms of expression bound its society, creating an institutional framework upon which it based its group coherence for profit and/or survival, its identity and, ultimately, its laws.

Due to humanity's need to communicate with forces larger and mightier than themselves, the desire to establish a dialogue with what was considered the life giver, the Sun, was considered good politics and probably profound for those who held power or who wished to be perceived as a person of influence and consequence (Diel,1969). *"The need to find a visual articulation of the intangible and the subconscious of 'the group', is essential"*
(Friam, 2001).

"External truth needs a human language that alters with the spirit of the times. The primordial image undergoes ceaseless transformation and yet remains ever the same, but only in a new form can they be understood anew. Always they require a new interpretation if, as each formulation becomes obsolete, they are not to lose their spellbinding power." (Friam, 2001)

Why did the symbol for the Sun, the Solar Cross, evolved from a primary visual metaphor of ancient nature worship into a complex metaphor that became representational of institutions, both in political and commercial arenas in both the ancient and contemporary periods?

"As we use the term here, however, a symbol is characterised by its ability to communicate through abstract configuration rather, than literal picture or letterform…Actually, a good abstraction captures the essence of a company's qualities in the most simple, concentrated aesthetic form…" (Lippincott and Margulies, 2004: 12).

VIMs have been employed consciously and strategically for a much longer period than proposed by design commentators/historians Philip Meggs and Steven Hiller, who both maintain that the considered engagement of a visual identity program was an early 20th century concept. One example of an earlier deliberate utilisation of a VIM lays in evidence which points to the 4th century C.E., Roman Emperor, Constantine, who had a political investment in engaging the interplay of group identity, religious ideology and brand marks.

Aware that his army had a mix of beliefs, with Sun worship of the pagan soldiers, which included the cult of Mithras (Cumont,1911) on one hand and the Messianic Belief of the Christian soldiers on the other (Fox,1988), Constantine combined their group identities and loyalty to him, by exploiting their connection and associations with the ancient symbol of the Labrum (Fig.12), (Barnes,1981). Hence the Labrum (ChiRho) was engaged as Constantine's VIM and was applied to appropriate touch points of the period, such as coinage (Fig.13), shields, Imperial banners, and architecture (Fig.14) (Fox, 1988).

Fig 12

Fig 13

The numinous may not have been clearly identified until the 18th century, but its existence, effect and influence has been recognised and utilised possibly, since ancient history. Words such as 'holy' and 'sacred' and terms like 'spiritual power' are used when the concept of the numinous is discussed. It is linked to religious rites and activities and all things connected with the supernatural, deities and 'other-worldliness'. It is in the realm of the abstract and the intangible.

The noun 'Numinosity', originally coined by Otto has a different meaning from its root word 'numen'. 'Numinosity' is described as 'supernatural and mysterious; filled with a sense of the presence of divinity (holy); appealing to the higher emotions or the aesthetic sense (spiritual): Of the numen; Spiritual; indicating presence of divinity; awe-inspiring. As a result, after an object or mark has acquired, or been given an emotional or spiritual force, it has gained numinous qualities, sublimely perceived by the individual or group.

Fig 14

The notion of the numinous was introduced through seminal works by Immanuel Kant's '*Critique of Pure Reason'* (1781) discussing the hypothesis of 'immanent' and 'transdecent', and Otto's *'The Idea of the Holy*' (1917) with the bipolar concepts of 'the scared and the profane', which influenced Jung, especially in his later work.

Otto claimed that there existed an 'above to below' state which is essentially a foundation for the belief in a non-physical, celestial source of power. He characterizes the feelings as involving: 1] Ultimacy; 2] Mystery; 3] Awe; 4] Fascination; 5] Satisfaction (Ross, 1996). There was a layering of states or phenomena that was more visceral than rational. Hence the influence of the numinous becomes apparent when its intangible effects are physically manifested through the

viewer's responses or actions.

The 'numinous' is a mystery that is both 'terrifying' (tremendum) and 'fascinating' (fascinans) at the same time, to the viewer. *"The numinous fascinates or draws us to it with a force that is nearly irresistible."* ('Otto on the Numinous' www.academic.brookln.cunny.edu/English/ melani/gothic/numinous.html accessed 07.02.2003. Author not credited,). The recurring theme of bipolar dimensions is found within the numinous. As with Otto's thought that 'the sacred and the profane' co-exist within the numinous, there abides another set of polarities: that of the 'Mysterium Tremendum' and 'Mysterium Fascinosum', and each of these individual states have a layering, such as the Stupor and the Shudder within Mysterium Tremendum'.

In Durkheim's theoretical work, *'The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life'* (1964), he asserted that the 'science' of sociology could justifiably describe religious and economic activity as 'social fact' (1982) which includes the values, cultural norms, and social structures that are external to the individual. He concluded numinosity was a 'below to above' state essentially 'ground of being' which relies on the physical, experiential world.

During Jaffe's involvement in Jung's 1963 project *'Memories, Dreams, Reflections'* she wrote of 'the god image' that was a psychical manifestation of the powerful, inexpressible 'internal life' of the psyche (Jaffe,1963), and that symbols and other physical objects, shaped by experiences, some of which are external, are created out of this 'internal life'. As Otto suggested, *"numinosity originates from outside the self but is perceived within."* (Clark, 2008). Jung considered the numinous to be a state that was generated from within the human psyche and projected outward to be then in turn on viewing embraced internally.

When exploring the concepts of the numinous and the mystical, Nigel Smart asserted,

> *"The two can go together. But there are differing accents…If you stress the numinous, you stress that our salvation or liberation (our becoming holy) must flow from God or the Other…. If on the other hand, you stress the mystical and the non-dual, you tend to stress how we attain salvation or liberation through our own efforts at meditation…There is another way in which we may look at the distinction between the numinous and the mystical."* (Smart, 1983).

Here lies the debate between Otto's 'above to below' and Durkheim's 'below to above' notions of the numinous and the long established understanding of its association with the sacred. Within significant visual identity marks, such as the archetypal elemental symbol, the Solar Cross, the viewer believes that the sacred abides, due to the long-standing existence and use of these particular archetypal symbols within western culture. The viewer therefore feels comfortable in accepting this symbol as a part of their defined identity. The symbol is not just an inanimate two-dimensional glyph but an embodiment of a sacred concept. Its very presence evokes the presence of the sacred.

Dallet proposes that a duality or layering existing within an object, symbol, or space indicates the presence of the numinous within (Dallet,1998), reinforcing the argument that a VIM, in possessing a sense of the numinous, will work as an entry point for an individual's psyche and thus triggers behaviour that has been contrived by an external force in the form of a third party (Dallet,1998).

"Dallett suggests that we begin by examining what we find 'numinous'. Indeed, what we find numinous is an opening or a gateway into the psyche and self understanding."
(Morrissey S. 2002).

Fig 15

The expression 'spellbinding powers' referred to earlier, in relation to the intangible qualities of a group's symbols of identity, are equally demonstrated in contemporary visual culture (Fig.15).

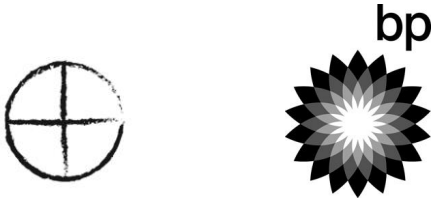

Fig 16

I needed a contemporary case study to re enforce my theory. The long established equity found in sun symbolism conveys a sense of trust and reassurance and consequently provided a launch pad

for BP's Helios (Fig.16) to gain an acceptance in the global marketplace, and also an acceptance of BP's new 'Green' philosophy.

BP's revolutionary brand mark, The Helios, launched in 2000, allows such a discussion, by reflecting on the development of a successful brand mark through two differing but equally relevant lenses. Firstly from the perspective that asks the question: What might be revealed by analysing BP's Helios brand mark in relation to its similarities to an archetypal elemental symbol, and secondly, from a pragmatic perspective, including the brand aims and creative strategy, of both the client (BP UK and Amoco US) and the design agency (Landor Associates.).

Building a sense of both individual and group loyalty is at the heart of a brand identity program and is usually achieved with engaging the viewer/user via a connection with the corporation's VIM. The Helios has a direct visual relationship to the Solar Cross (Fig.17) and it's meaning, as it is the intention of both the Helios and the Solar Cross to establish a connection to nature via representing the sun and its radiance. Thus it possessed a pre-established equity that the viewer/user could quickly recognise and relate to.

Until 1999 "BP" had been an acronym for British Petroleum. BP's chairman, Lord John Browne was concerned that the corporation would always be seen as a British rather than a global brand because of its name, and existing VIM, the Shield, which had been the primary identifier for more than 80 years.

Fig 17

In the 1990s, prior to Browne's unexpected redefinition of BP, Roy Croft argued that BP needed to develop a more effective visual communication strategy that would guarantee a strong presence in the marketplace. (Croft, Kopp, & Dover, revised 09.12.2004).

A comprehensive brand audit of the Shield mark deemed it held negative equity, as it was generally perceived as visually static and imperialistic in its symbolism (Reeser,2010) (Fig.18). Visual communicators and brand strategists understand that brand marks can engage the viewer/user to 'connect with' or to 'reject' an organisation, based on its relevance to the viewer/user (Wheeler, 2004).

Fig 18

BP's Lee Edwards, and Landor's Courtney Reeser, were tasked to create a brand mark for the newly amalgamated BP and Amoco corporation and as Reeser stated,

> *"Landor convinced them to only use 'BP' as the brand, as it was a more believable global brand." He also noted "there was an opportunity to have a symbol dominant program because of the immense scale of global exposure that the BP brand has".*
> (Reeser,2010)

At the same time, the new name "beyond petroleum" devised by David Fowler, from Ogilvy and Mather, reaffirmed the more accessible sense of the new philosophy in the marketplace. Therefore, the typography within the new brand mark became secondary by utilising a lower case sans serif reaffirming the encoded message of informality and a 'one to one' connection, to be easily decoded by the viewer/user.

The strategic consideration and design brief for the Helios had a simple undertone to promote BP as 'Green'. It was Brown's priority to generate a notion of an environmental consciousness while engendering the sense of a global brand, and as Reeser reflected: *"'Green' was seen as the most differentiated idea and allowed us to create a more powerful and meaningful symbol."* (2010).

More than simply a ubiquitous presence, the new brand mark needed to be universally understood and be able to cut through cultures and geographies, as this significant shift had to be handled with the utmost understanding of maintaining relevance to its established viewer/users, which were well in excess of 11 million in 2000 (Roth, 2008), while encouraging and engaging new viewer/users. It was essential that the Helios was acknowledged as the signature of BP while reinforcing the new 'Green' ideology as an authentic declaration for change. (Roth, 2008: 18). *"Driven largely by its traditional physical asset base to using knowledge and*

innovation to create future value [in] beyond petroleum" (Roth, 2008: 4).

The brand image was to communicate the collective consciousness of the 'Green' philosophy that existed at the end of the millennium. As Davidson (1968) suggests, nature triggers a degree of fear within the human psyche, a fear that has exerted an influence on the relationship between human groups and the elements of nature since ancient times when groups feared the capriciousness of the elements. Ironically it was a reversed fear of what humanity was doing to nature that triggered the 'Green' movement.

The repeated and consistent implementation of the Helios throughout the communication strategy and brand identity program enhanced the existing numinosity of the 'natural symbol' and generated a second aspect of the numinous resulting in the Helios becoming a 'cultural' symbol. As Landor indicated in their *'The Essential Branding from the big Book of Marketing', "The Helios became an external representation of the brand idea and a powerful internal symbol."* (McGraw, 2010:33).

Effective contemporary visual communication strategies are developed by understanding the psychology of group dynamics and the accurate identification of groups of viewers/users within the marketplace. Visual and corporate identity rollouts, rebranding programs, and advertising campaigns are designed to reassure existing markets while aiming to establish new markets (cf. Lippincott & Margulies, 2004, Olins, 2004, Wheeler, 2009). The visual communication strategy for the Helios, employed a repetitive and ubiquitous rollout reflecting the reliable and repetitive cycles of nature, while the brand belief "beyond petroleum" reinforced BP's new 'Green' philosophy.

When launched, assisted by a comprehensive rollout strategy, including 1400 brand champions, The Helios sat immediately and comfortably within the psyche of both the internal and external audiences of BP. BP's 'brand strength' in the oil and petroleum category grew in measurable equity, which is defined by the market's perception of differentiation and uniqueness, from appropriately 30% in 2001 to 50 – 60% in 2004 (Landor, 2009). The upward movement in brand equity added to the corporation's intangible brand value (Fig.19), and during the same period BP experienced a move in 'brand statue' from 48% to 55% by 2004. (Landor, 2009)

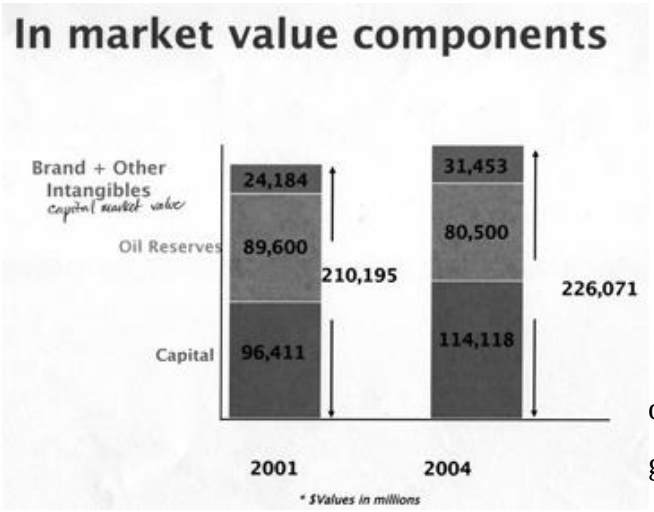

Fig 19

The Helios had, and has its own value in terms of pre-established equity. This value was generated from an amalgam of the unique long-standing colour combination of green and yellow, and the viewer's/user's recognition due to its resemblance to the archetypal elemental symbol, the Solar Cross and its variations. Thus, from its inception, the Helios was invested with the notion of trust and reassurance for the viewer/user. It straddles the boundary between Jung's definitions of symbols, which are 'natural' and 'cultural'.

Conclusion

To conclude, a VIM consists of layers of meaning. The first layer is that of the numinous; where in lies the sacred and the abstract; the celestial; and the concept of the institution and subsequently, a sense of trust. This layer encourages the viewer/user to feel validated, and secure in their chosen group identity. It is within this layer that both image and emotion coexist.

The second layer is the representational; which brings to the mark a sense of the realised, where an idea takes a physical form. Within the representational layer, a concept of the profane or worldly lies; the tangible demands to be acknowledged; and finally, the concept of the commercial.

Therefore the perceived numinous qualities found within the recognised VIM will often trigger a physical response from the viewer, such as a relevant stance, gesture, or action to acknowledge the symbol's presence and create a strong visual statement for the world to see. The viewer becomes a vehicle of expression for the theme that the symbol represents.

Hence the influence of the metaphysical quality of the numinous becomes apparent when its intangible effects are physically manifested through the viewer's/user's responses to elemental symbols in the ancient world, and subsequently VIMs in the contemporary world.

"They are, at the same time, both images and emotions. One can speak of an archetype only when these two aspects are simultaneous. When there is merely an image, there is simply a word-picture of little consequence. But by being charged with emotion, the image gains numinosity (or psychic energy); it becomes dynamic, and consequences of some must flow from it"
(Jung, 1978: 87)

This observation can be reinforced with a contemporary example found in the current electronic advertising (Dec. 2008) for Foxtel in a promotional slogan: *"See something, feel something."*

BP's Helios broke the accepted trend for a VIM in the petroleum category. The visual cues that viewers/users had come to expect from VIMs in this category did not exist in the Helios.

The viewer/user relates unconsciously to a natural symbol in a manner that reveals the VIM to have a deeper spiritual and/or sacred value. Cultural symbols, which have evolved into contemporary VIMs gain a numinous quality through their repeated and ubiquitous exposure in the market place, establishing a sense of continuity that reflects the recurring cycles of nature. The BP Helios, while a natural symbol, is employed as a cultural symbol to represent a corporation that moved from operating solely in the petroleum sector towards representing other forms of energy.

The resulting Helios became an emblematic representation of an evolving awareness amongst the collective consciousness of viewers/users. Durkheim asserted that collective consciousness is when a shared belief operates as a unifying force in society and for BP the unifying force was the innate fear triggered by nature in humans (environmentalism). The equity found in sun symbolism conveyed a sense of trust and reassurance. This equity provided a springboard for BP's Helios gaining acceptance in the global marketplace for the corporation's new 'Green' philosophy. Jung and Durkheim contended that when a group adopted a natural symbol as a cultural symbol (VIM), it triggers a sense of identity with "spellbinding powers". For BP the Helios as a cultural symbol, represented the corporation as a champion for environmental consciousness and alternative energies.

Numinosity gives the Helios 'spiritual' qualities. The Helios as a natural archetypal symbol has a sacred quality built on nature; it resonates immediately with a viewer/user. The Helios became a cultural symbol through the visual identity rollout designed by Landor Associates.

The Helios transmits a duality, as mentioned previously, in meaning by conveying the ‘Green’ message as a cultural symbol and its metaphysical numinous quality as a natural symbol. Although operating from two distinct perspectives, archetypal symbolism and contemporary ‘Greenness’ both relate to nature.

This type of VIM has the potential to convey a numinous quality driven from their archetypal elemental origins (natural symbols of Jung). The repeated application and use of a VIM also referenced and reflected the reliable and repetitive cycles of nature (cultural symbols of Durkheim).

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