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The Swastika: the symbol

Introduction

Historians, sociologists, psychologists and scholars from the social sciences in general, have pondered for decades the enigma of the Nazi Party of World War II. How it was possible for a country to be lead to commit such atrocities and transgressions of human sensibility is a question, which is somewhat, illuminated with a discussion of the symbol that came to represent Nazism. The author does not intend to answer this or any such profound question. However, an overview of the historical evolution of the swastika and a review of the myriad of interpretations of the symbolic meaning of the (insert) reveal that the swastika and the Nazi philosophy were very much in harmony. It becomes clear that the swastika played an important role in establishing throughout the world, an illusion of power tradition, heritage and pre-eminence for the Nazi party, The analogy between the symbol of the ideology of Nazi Germany, the swastika, and the symbol of Christianity, the cross, becomes pointedly clear as this paper progresses.

A review of symbolic theory as postulated by Suzanne K. Langer, Philip Wheelwright, Carl G. Jung and others, sets the groundwork for the investigation of the “Universal” symbol in the second section of this paper.

In a monumental (major) opus published in the “Annual report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution”, in 1894, Thomas Wilson compiled the most comprehensive collection of information on the history of the swastika up to that time. The beginning of the report is a disclaimer regarding any “interpretation” (Wilson’s) of the symbolic meaning of the swastika and includes a statement of intent, which stresses the desire to report all the facts, findings, and interpretations as proposed by the anthropologists and historians of the day. A large portion of the section on the “Universal Symbol” draws from the report by Wilson. Findings occurring after his report are gleaned from works by W. Norman Brown. (and Gonzales)

The author found that George Mosse’s book, “Crisis in German Ideology”, offers one of the best explanations of the origin and evolution of Nazi Philosophy. The work is examined in the third section of this paper. There exists a dearth of information regarding the (insert) and the Nazi party. Many of the works cited in the bibliography provide only a page or two at most, regarding what the author feels is one of the most fascinating aspects of the Third Reich phenomenon.

The theoretical aspects of symbols as they apply to the swastika and Nazi ideology are explained in the concluding section. Arguments are posed which delineate the swastika as a certain type of symbol and as an archetype.

Since the word Aryan is very prominent in Nazi literature and in many discussions regarding the origin and meaning of the (insert) the author feels it important to cite a critical distinction between the “Aryan” as used by the Nazis and the “Aryan” as used by anthropologists and other scientists.

The word used by the Nazi party of the Third Reich referred to what scientists commonly(refer to as) mean as Indo-European, and Indo-Germanic. According to W. Norman Brown,

These designate a group of many peoples united by a common culture, of which the outstanding feature is relationship of language...more than four thousand years ago, the original Indo-Europeans were a group of uncivilized tribes living within a comparatively small area, possessing a fairly homogeneous religion, employing more or less similar institutions, and speaking closely connected dialects. (pp. 5,6)

According to Dr. brown, many of the tribes were expanding into Europe and Asia by the year 200 B.C. and within a few centuries became prominent in world affairs. The scientific meaning for the word Aryan (on the other hand) describes the inhabitants of central and northern India and those of Persia. For purposes of clarity, the author indicates the

meaning of the word Aryan in the following fashion: the Nazi Aryan is written Aryan (I.E.), indicating its reference to Indo-Europeans, the scientific Aryan as Aryan (Sc).

The concept of "symbol" has been of philosophical, literary and scientific concern for centuries. For the purpose of this paper, the author's treatment of the swastika is relegated to the non-verbal imagaic(imagistic) domain. Many treatments and discussions, however, are directed toward the literary symbol as it applies here. The author has chosen the works of Suzanne K. Langer, Philip Wheelwright, Ernst Cassirer, Kenneth Burke and David Cox as references for the discussions and definitions of symbols and signs relevant to this study.

Perhaps of greatest importance to the symbolic interactionists is the idea that man is a symbol using animal (Burke; Langer), "animal symbolicum" as Cassirer claims (p. 26). The author would expand this concept to redefine modern man as Homo symbolicum. (expand with some ideas about memory,emotion, objectivity and ideation, abstraction allallow man to contemplate past and abstract meaning and therefore predict future events)

Kenneth Burke regards substitution as the most basic process involved in symbolism,

A fundamental resource 'natural to symbolism is substitution...once emotional involvement is added to symbolism's resources of substitution which included the invitations to both condensation and displacement...the conditions are set for the symbol-using animal...(p. 8)

Burke refers here to Freud's explanation of dream formation. The term displacement describes " ...the transference of emotions (cathexes) from the original object to which such emotions are attached, to a substitute or symbolic representation of that object in the dream"(Freedman & Kaplan, p.287). Condensation is further defined as the " ... mechanisms by which several unconscious wishes, impulses, or attitudes are combined and find expression in a single image of the manifest dream" (Ibid).

Most of the analysis which the author attempts in this paper is based on the symbolic philosophy of Suzanne K. Langer. Langer considers symbols to be special types of signs that are either denotative or connotative.

Section 1(Symbolic theory)

According to Langer, a sign indicates, " ...the existence --- past, present or future -- - of a thing, event, or condition" (p. 57). Signs also fall into two categories: natural and artificial. Langer states that, " wet streets are a sign that it has rained" (p.57) and could be a natural sign. However, if the wet streets indicate to one that the street cleaning machine has just passed, then the "...wet street would qualify as an 'artificial sign'" (p.57). Signs are tied to an object and are of significance only to the subject, person, using the sign. That is, a sign may truly be a sign to one person and not be a sign to another. There exists a one-to-one correspondence between the sign and its object (i.e., the thing, event or condition which it indicates. (p. 59)

Symbols, as previously noted, are a special kind of sign. In addition to the three elements of subject, sign and object appropriate to a sign, the term " conception" of the objects is introduced and consequently the transition to the arena of symbols is made. To quote Langer:

Symbols are not proxy for their objects but are vehicles for the conception of objects. To conceive a thing or a situation is not the same thing as to 'react toward it' overtly, or to be aware of its presence. In talking about things, we have conceptions of them, not the things themselves; and it is the conceptions, not the things, that symbols directly 'mean'. (p. 61)

Before delving too deeply into the theory of symbols it is important to illustrate an example of the swastika as a sign and as a symbol in accordance with Langer's descriptions. The swastika has been used as an amulet or charm indicating 'good luck', 'health', or 'general well being'. Therefore, the necklace with the swastika attached is an indication of present or future health or well being (a sign). However, if two people meet and one draws a swastika in the dust, the "mark" is symbolic if one or both subjects understands it to represent the sun (object) and there exists the conception of light, warmth or power, etc.. the difference in the two cases lies solely in the conception of the (insert). In the former case, there exists no true conception, but merely a condition of health or happiness. The latter includes the conception associated with the object, 'sun'. What does the sun mean? What feeling or images are elicited by the sun and therefore the (insert mark)? The 'conception' is tied to the 'object' but is now brought forth by the 'symbol', (insert).

In this example are present four elements: subject, symbol, conception and object. This is what Langer calls a *denotative symbol* since the object is very much part of the symbol. When the symbol can be discussed, used, or 'related to' without reference to its object, or when the original object of a conception has long since been forgotten, then there exists what Langer terms the "*connotative symbol*". "Because the connotation remains with the symbol when the object of its denotation is neither present nor looked for, one can think about the object without reacting to it overtly at all". (p. 64) The relationship for a connotative symbol is then subject, symbol and conception.

It is important to note that there is an explicit reason for using the term 'conception' rather than 'concept'. According to Langer, a conception is something that is personal to individuals, i.e., individuals have their own conceptions of things. A concept is the common denominator of these individual conceptions and is the reason one is able to communicate at all with symbols; that is, we are able to communicate "meanings" and "ideas" because we share with members of our culture the same concept of a symbol or group of symbols. As Langer explains:

A concept is all that a symbol really conveys, But just as quickly as the concept is symbolized to us, our own imagination dresses it up in a private, personal conception, which we can distinguish from the communicable public concept only by a process of abstraction.(p. 72)

Langer further contends that language is linear and sequentially oriented and she refers to the symbolism generated by language as "discursive symbolism". On the other hand, a photograph is non-linear and is considered a "lump" or holistic stimulation of one's visual sense. Media of this sort which is non-sequential fall under the rubric of "presentational symbols". (chap IV) The (insert) is therefore a presentational symbol. Phonetic vs. pictographic and ideographic languages arguably elicit different neurological processes in deriving meaning. (this last s is new)

Philip Wheelwright refers to a certain type of symbol as the "organic" or "depth" symbol. There seems to be a similarity between his term and the relationship of a connotative symbol and the metaphor as defined by Langer. Regarding the "depth" symbol, Wheelwright feels that:

Where this kind of living symbol is concerned, the stability of the V-T (symbol-concept) relation is not just an accidental happening, nor again is it achieved and kept unvarying by fiat, it is developed and modulated by the capacity as the being who can apprehend an express meanings through language (symbols). His materials are drawn from his expansions of experience, and from various kinds of psychic association, some of which may have erupted unaccountably from the depths of his unconscious. (p. 13)

The consideration of the symbolizing process as an ongoing operation or process between the unconscious and conscious realms of the mind is incorporated in the definition of symbol given by David Cox:

Symbols are a special kind of sign, and they are distinguished from other signs by the fact that they are part of the thing that they signify. It is this

characteristic that enables them to form a bridge between consciousness and the unconscious, because a symbol manifests unconscious drives and shares in their nature and is also (unlike the unconscious drive in itself) something that has a form and shape that can be consciously comprehended. This double nature of the symbol enables it to mediate between consciousness and the unconscious. (p.57)

This interplay between consciousness and the unconscious seems similar to the inferred processes involved in crating “conceptions” to which Langer refers.

As mentioned earlier, certain ideas from literary symbolism are borrowed here. The metaphor as proposed by Langer and Wegener is of primary importance. A metaphor is a phrase that is used connotatively, i.e., the symbol is tied primarily to its concept and not its object (or activity). In fact, it is usually necessary to actually ignore or totally disregard the usual object of the symbol (word) and apply the “concept” to a new object according to the context in which it appears. Metaphors expand the literal meaning of words, or more accurately, expand the “concept” of the original symbol(word). The author will demonstrate that a similar phenomenon has occurred with the swastika.

In describing the metaphorical process, Langer employs the following example of the work “run”.

If we say, “The brook runs swiftly”, the word “runs” does not connote any leg-action, but a shallow rippling flow. If we say that a rumor runs through the town, we think nether of leg-action nor of ripples; or if a fence is said to run round the barnyard there is not even a connotation of changing place (p. 140)

The symbol/word, “run” originally elicits the “concept” associated with rapid leg movement. However, through long-term use of the various metaphors, the “concept” of the symbol “run” broadens considerably so that the word “run” ultimately has a far greater meaning that it had in its early etymological roots.

The following passage indicates(illustrates) an important distinction that Philip Wheelwright makes regarding the ideas of metaphor and archetype:

As man desires not only novelty but also a security of connection with the stable and unchanging, so the imagination operates not only by fusing or recontextualizing old ideas in such a way as to generate new ones but also by grasping the particular idea and the transient image in relation to something more universal and perduring. The former is the metaphoric way of imaging ...the latter may be called archetypal, or (where picture-thinking is stressed) emblematic. (p. 124)

The metaphoric process described by Langer is simply a process in which the ‘concept’ of a symbol becomes broader, or more encompassing. However, there remains a common denominator between the original ‘concept’ of the symbol and the broadened ‘concept’ of that symbol after the metaphorical process has occurred. The similarity, or link, is the result of a distillation of a common denominator of ‘concepts’ of all the various metaphors of the symbol (i.e., “run” in the previous example).

The author’s contention is that even though the metaphorical process described by Wheelwright yields new ideas from old ones, there is inherent in these “new ideas” the basic “concept” of the original idea or symbol. It appears, therefore, that the processes defined as metaphorical and archetypal are very much the same, or at least possess a considerable overlap of characteristics. The archetype can be found in any metaphor. (careful with this last sentence)

The only true distinction to be made regarding the metaphor and the archetype then, hinges on the age or “perduring” characteristic of the archetype versus the metaphor that may be very ephemeral. Wheelwright claims that,

A genuine archetype shows itself to have a life of its own, far older and more comprehensive than ideas belonging to the individual consciousness or to the shared consciousness of particular communities. (p. 55)

Perhaps the greatest proponent of the term “archetype” is Carl G. Jung, who defines the idea as;

...a tendency to form such representations of a motif...representations that can vary a great deal in detail without losing their basic pattern (motif – theme or concept, idea) ...the difference between instincts and archetypes: What we properly call instincts are physiological urges, and are perceived by the senses. But at the same time, they also manifest themselves in fantasies and often reveal their presence only by symbolic images, these manifestations are what I call archetypes. (1964, p.58)

The swastika may be considered to be an archetypal image or “emblem” according to Wheelwright, and the underlying concept, as becomes obvious, is that of the sun, power, rebirth, fertility, etc. It will also become evident that the basis of most Nazi philosophy was founded on an archetype or “symbol” characterized by the word “Volk”.

The author will show that the swastika has possessed many “conceptions” throughout the ages, yet one “concept” has emerged: man’s relation to Nature in all its splendor and horror. This concept is an archetype/emblem and is conveyed by the symbol (insert).

It is customary to refer to a symbol that shares the same meaning throughout time and across cultures as a “generic” or “universal” symbol. Symbols that have a common meaning or understanding only within a certain culture, race, or other group of people is called a “specific” symbol. When a symbol is meaningful only to a single person, i.e., has only a personal meaning, it is said to be an “individual symbol”.

The following two sections of this paper will discuss first the combined “specific” uses of swastika, culminating in a “universal” symbol; the second section studies the underlying ideas of the culture responsible for the most dramatic of all “specific” uses of the swastika—Nazi Germany.

Section 2 From Specific to Universal

In order to illustrate the antiquity of the swastika and the scope of the interpretations of the symbol, the author will cite a number of cases from reports of Thomas Wilson of the Smithsonian Institute and W. Norman Brown of the University of Pennsylvania.

During the last part of the 19th century there was considerable speculation and discussion in professional journals and circles on the symbolic meaning and origin of the swastika. German anthropologists and historians prompted much of this interest for reasons that will be considered in the section, “The Specific Use of the Swastika”. The author offers a variation of “symbolic interpretations” from German as well as other international researchers. The reports are presented in chronological order of discovery and the interpretations of meanings given to the symbol (insert) are interspersed in the section.

The swastika is a form of cross as are the Christian and the Greek crosses. Because of this, it is considered among the oldest of symbols, its origin in time and place having been lost in antiquity. However, as a symbol Wilson believes, “...the Swastika was probably the first to be made with a definite intention and a continuous or consecutive meaning, the knowledge of which passed from person to person, from tribe to tribe, people to people, and from nation to nation, until with possibly changed meaning, it has finally circled the globe”. (p. 764) Wilson refers to the evolution of a symbol from the individual to the specific to a generic (universal) use.

Not unlike the symbol itself, the word “swastika” has also travelled the world over and has become a universal word with the same “image” of the emblem (insert) coming to

mind. Wilson gives a variety of definitions and etymologies, the most complete of which is offered in Littré's French Dictionary:

Svastika, or Swastika, a mystic figure used by several (East) Indian sects. It was equally well known to the Brahmins as to the Buddhists. Most of the rock inscriptions in the Buddhist caverns in the west of India are preceded or followed by the Holy (sacramentelle) sign of the Swastika.

Etymology: A Sanskrit word signifying happiness, pleasure, good luck, it is composed of Su (equivalent of the Greek $\sigma\upsilon$) "good", and asti, "being", "good thing", with the suffix ka (Greek $\kappa\alpha$, Latin co) (Wilson, p.768).

The word "Swastika" itself is known to be fairly old. Professor Max Muller shows that it was used in the grammar of Panani in India as far back as 400 B.C. The final "a" in the word swastika was used as an example of the pronunciation of a certain "a" in the Sanskrit language (Ibid., p. 772).

During the years 1871-79, German anthropologist, Dr. Heinrich Schliemann found many specimens of swastika in his excavations at the site of ancient Troy on the hill of Hissarlik, dating back to 1200 B.C. (Ibid., p. 771). Remarking on the swastikas found there, and the fact that the crampons of some swastikas faced clockwise (dextro) direction while others had the crampons facing counter-clockwise (levo), Professor Max Muller states:

A remark of yours (Schliemann) that the svastika resembles a wheel in motion, the direction of the motion being indicated by the crampons, contains a useful hint, which has been confirmed by some important observations of Mr. Thomas, the distinguished Oriental numismatist, who has called attention to the fact that in the long list of the recognized devices of the twenty-four Jaina Rithankaras the sun is absent, but that while the eighth Tirthankara has the sign of half-moon, the seventh Tirthankara is marked with the Svastika, i.e. the sun. Here, then we have clear indications that the Svastika, with the hands pointing in the right direction was originally a symbol of the sun, perhaps of the vernal sun as opposed to the autumnal sun, the Suavastika (levo direction) and, therefore, a natural symbol for light, life, health, and wealth (Wilson, p. 773).

The most important aspects of Muller's comments concern themselves with the symbolic "concept" of the "Swastika symbol". He refers to the "denotative" symbol that is linked to an object, the sun. The concept is that of wealth, warmth, light, fecundity and the myriad of feelings and uses that the sun was understood to have for man at that time. It should be mentioned that almost all other authors disagree with Muller regarding a "meaningful" difference between the "right", dextrorotatory, (Svastika) and the "left", levorotatory, (Suavastika) -handed swastikas. The overwhelming opinion is that there is no difference between the two (Ibid., p. 773). This was not the case however with the clockwise (dextro) Nazi swastika which had a definite symbolic difference from the counter-clockwise (levo) swastika. This will be discussed further in the paper.

In his article, "Notes on the Religious, Moral, and Political state of India", Colonel Sykes concludes that "...according to the Chinese authorities ...followers of the mystic cross (insert) were diffused in China and India before the advent of Sakya in the sixth century B.C." (Ibid., p. 774).

In 1888, Emile Burnouf, a French anthropologist, proposed that the ancient swastika symbol mentioned in the Veda was a fire symbol and substantiates much of his theory by recounting the myth of Agni. The method and apparatus (old fire drill or chark) for starting fire was claimed to be the origin and therefore the meaning of the (insert) (Ibid., p. 777).

Also in 1888, Dr. Max Ohnefalsch-Richter announced that the swastika in Cyprus had nearly always a signification more or less religious and sacred, and attributed to the symbol the "objects" of rain, storm, lightning, sun, light and season. He further claimed that the swastika "...lends itself easily to the solar disk, the fire wheel, and the sun chariot" (Ibid., p. 790)

Michael Zmigrodzki, in an article in 1890, commented on the frequency of the swastika at the site of ancient Troy. Mr. Wilson summarizes Zmigrodzki's remarks as follows:

...these representations of the swastika have relation to a human cult indicating a supreme being filled with goodness toward man. The sun, stars, etc., indicate him as a god of light. This in connection with the idol of Venus, with its triangular shield engraved with a swastika and the growing trees and palms, with their increasing and multiplying branches and leaves, represent to him the idea of fecundity, multiplication, increase, and hence the god of life as well as light (p. 775).

Count Goblet d'Alviella, a professor of History of Religions at the University of Brussels, published a book in 1891 entitled La Migration des Symboles, in which he agreed with Ludwig Muller, Percy Gardner, S. Beal, Edward Thomas, Max Muller and other authors, that the swastika was a symbolic representation of the sun or sun god. D'Alviella argues that it was not the cross part of the swastika which represents the sun, but the bent arms (crampons) which suggest the revolving motion (Wilson, p. 785). In a rare expression of opinion, Mr. Wilson disagrees with the proof offered in D'Alviella's book and states that he (Wilson) was,

...more in accord with Dr. Brinton and others that the swastika is derived from the cross and not from the wheel, that the bent arms do not represent rotary or gyratory motion, and that it had no association with, or relation to, the circle. This, if true, relieves the swastika from all relation with the circle as a symbol of the sun. Besides, it is not believed that the symbol of the sun is one that required rotary or gyratory motion or was represented by it, but,it is rather by a circle with pointed rays extending outward (p. 786).

D'Alviella argues further that symbols of the sun god were often associated, alternated with, and sometimes replaced by the swastika. He felt that this also proved the swastika to be a genuine sun symbol. Again Wilson feels that sufficient evidence is lacking in D'Alviella's proof (p. 787).

Several authors including D'Alviella, Thomas, and Danish researcher, Ludwig Muller feel that the swastika evolved from the triskelion (three legged cross)(insert pic). R. P. Greg dismisses the theory in favor of his own. As Wilson relates,

...the swastika is far older and wider spread as a symbol than the triskelion, as well as being a more purely Aryan (I.E.) symbol. Greg says that Ludwig Muller attaches quite too much importance to the sun in connection with early Aryans (*I.E.*) and lays too great stress upon the supposed relation of the swastika as a solar symbol. The Aryans (I.E.), he says, were a race not given to sun worship; and, while he may agree with Muller that the swastika is an emblem of Zeus and Jupiter merely as the Supreme God, yet he believes that the origin of the swastika had no reference to a movement of the sun through the heavens; and he prefers his own theory that it was a device suggested by the forked lightning as the chief weapon of the air god (p. 779).

In regard to the theory that the triskelion spawned the swastika, Wilson writes that the triskelion first appears on Lycian coinage between 700 and 480 B.C. and claims therefore that, " It is impossible that a symbol which first appeared in 480 B.C could have been the ancestor of one (swastika) which appeared in 1400 or 1300 B.C., nearly a thousand years before" (p. 790).

In 1924, excavations in the Indus Valley at the sites of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa provided the first material remains of a civilization existent in India earlier than the first millennium B.C.. The multiple-story dwellings were built of elaborate brick, possessed carefully planned drainage systems and there also existed sophisticated art work and pottery. There were many splendid representations of the swastika found at these sites that were estimated existent at 3000 B.C.. It is theorized that the people responsible for this culture were the Dravidians. In any event, this culture existed at least fifteen hundred years before

the Aryans (IE) arrived in the area (Brown, p. 21). Explorations at Baluchistan in the early 1930's, (formerly a province of west Pakistan) revealed a civilization as old as that of the Indus Valley in which seals bearing the swastika were also found (Ibid., p.23).

Regarding the theories relating the swastika and the triskelion, Brown claims that further to the west of Baluchistan in the Japhetic region, excavations of sites dating back to 3000 B.C. disclosed various examples of both triskelions and swastikas. With this additional information, the proposition offered by Philip Wheelwright that the swastika and the triskelion each evolved from both a sun and wheel symbols and "...represent independent paths of development from a common source,..." (p.130) seems very plausible.

In a study refuting the Nazi claim that the swastika was an Aryan(I.E.) symbol, Brown offers a concise overview of the early diffusion of the swastika;

Our available evidence permits us to make certain more or less definite generalizations about the swastika. Its early centre of gravity appears to have been the Iranian plateau, but the exact place of origin may have been anywhere between the Indus on the east on the hithermost Persia, or upper Irak on the west, It was spread over that entire region by 3000 B.C. It appears next in the Aegean culture, particularly at Hissarlik, from 2000 B.C. on; and from there it went on the one hand to Greece, and on the other to the lower Danube. From these two regions it spread throughout the rest of Europe (p. 28).

A list of various meanings or associations from the symbol (insert) was compiled by M. Wilson following his studies;

In the estimation of certain writers it has been respectively the emblem of Zeus, of Baal, of the sun, of the sun-god, of the sun-chariot of Agni, the fire-god, of Indra the rain-god, of the sky, the sky-god, and finally the deity of all deities, the grate God, the Maker and Ruler of the Universe. It has also been felt to symbolize light or the god of light, of the forked lightning, and of water. It is believed by some to be the oldest Aryan symbol (p. 770).

The truth of the last statement hinges on the use of the word "Aryan" which was discussed in the introduction. If Wilson is using the scientific term (i.e., inhabitants of central and northern India and Persia) then it is very likely true that it (swastika) is the oldest "Aryan symbol". However, if the term is used in the German sense (i.e., meaning Indo-European) then the swastika is not the oldest "Aryan symbol".

As a suitable transition from the previous case studies and "authoritative" symbolic interpretations of the (insert) to the "theoretical" discussion of the "symbol" the author cites Philip Wheelwright who provides an interesting portrayal of the genesis of the Sun-symbol. His description also forms a very plausible "concept" of the sun, a concept that can perhaps be viewed as the foundation of all the "specific conceptions" of the sun-symbols which man has ever possessed or created;

There is one daily phenomenon in particular that impresses men repeatedly, and in the most diverse ages and countries, as symbolizing certain attributes of godhead. That is the sun. The solar effulgence arouses men's minds to a sense of power and majesty, while the light of it, in making vision possible, becomes a ready symbol for the spiritual vision, which is synonymous with the highest wisdom. A further attribute of the sun, its orderly course through the sky, is symbolically suggestive of the element of law in nature (p. 124).

It is clear then that the swastika has had many "denotative" uses as a "specific" symbol within many cultures throughout history. Inevitably, however, it has usually evolved (by metaphorical/archetypal processes) within each of the societies into a "connotative" symbol in which the object has lost its original "primacy" and the "concept" has become pre-eminent in the paradigm of subject-symbol-concept-(object). If one draws an analogy to

Langer's idea regarding the "metaphorical process", it can be seen that the final "object" of the swastika is now very broad and can easily be summarized as "Nature" (i.e., trees, water, sun, lightning, etc.). the subject is "Man", the symbol, (insert), and the "concept" is all that Man has ever felt, thought or experienced about, or with, "Nature". The artificiality of distinguishing between the words "Nature" and "Man's relation to Nature" is readily discernable. It is common not to differentiate between the two terms since one's response to the word "Nature" and his definition of "Nature" is based totally on man's perception of "Nature". Hence, the symbol (insert) becomes "connotative"(personalized) and the "concept" is simply referred to as "Nature".

Having reviewed the interpretations offered by the "authorities" for the meanings and origins of the (insert), the reader can appreciate the involvement consciousness and unconscious processes in the creation of "conceptions" as described in definitions for symbols offered by Langer and Cox. The (insert) is truly an "organic" symbol as Wheelwright explains and its ubiquity also satisfies his criteria for a "genuine archetype". Mr. Wilson's copious work makes it abundantly clear that the age of the swastika and the present "concept" and meanings for the (insert) transcend the individual conceptions and specific "concepts" of the past. Academic researchers of the 19th century soon realized that the "concept" of their "shared consciousness" regarding the swastika was also, not totally "comprehensive". The specific use of the swastika by Nazi Germany certainly broadened the "concept" of the symbol.

Section 3 The Volk symbol

The most dramatic "specific" use of the swastika is that of the Nazi party of Germany. Because of this, it is necessary to explain the underlying reasons and phenomena which pave the way for the Third Reich and its use of the (insert).

As long ago as the Congress of Vienna in 1815, after the fall of Napoleon, the German people struggled for a sense of national unity. The Congress resulted in a loose federation of German states with no semblance of "German Oneness". Immediately prior to, and following the formation of this coalition, there emerged a philosophy of the Volk. According to George Mosse, Volk is;

...one of those perplexing German terms which connotes far more than its specific meaning. "Volk" is a much more comprehensive term than "people" for to German thinkers ever since the birth of German romanticism in the late eighteenth century "Volk" signified the union of a group of people with a transcendental "essence". This "essence" might be called "nature" or "cosmos" or "mythos", but in each instance it was fused to man's innermost nature, and represented the source of his creativity, his depth of feeling, his individuality, and his unity with other members of the Volk. The essential element here is the linking of the human soul with its natural surroundings, with the "essence" of nature (p. 4).

Volk philosophy was an extension and modification of earlier Romantic philosophy. It was equally as irrational and emotional and as a result, Volk ideas were "...focused primarily on Man and the World" (Ibid p. 14). Before the Industrial Revolution, the people had a sense of individuality as craftsmen, farmers, retail merchants, etc. They desired however, a national identity rather than a national unity even though many Germans mistakenly thought it was political unity that was needed. The Industrial Revolution resulted in the loss of individual identity for many people, and the Congress of Vienna failed to give the Germans the national identity they desired, much less any form of national unity.

The loss of individuality caused by the Industrial Revolution was common throughout Europe but most people had a sense of national identity. Mosse claims that in Germany's unique situation, "Where foreign occupation and the wars of liberation coincided with the wave of romanticism, and intermediary between the extremes of individuality and

the quest for cosmological identity was found in the form of the Volk” (Ibid., p. 14).

Probably the strongest bond between the individual and the Volk is the pantheistic concept of Nature, a vestige of Romantic philosophy. Referring to the romantics, Mosse states;

Nature was not cold and mechanical, but alive and spontaneous. It was indeed filled with a life force that corresponded to the emotions of man. The human soul could be in rapport with nature since it too was endowed with a soul. Every individual could therefore find an inner correspondence with nature—a correspondence that he shared with his Volk. In this was the individual linked himself with every other member of the Volk in a common feeling of belonging, in a shared emotional experience (p. 15).

Alluding to the future arguments of aliens to the “Volk”, Mosse remarks, “Yet after all, the Volk did not have universal dimensions, but was limited to a particular national unit” (Ibid., p. 15).

It should be noted at this point that “Volk” implies a group of people with some common bond, some common denominator of similarity. The term “Volk” as it is used in this paper refers to the “German Volk” as distinguished from an “English Volk” or “Neanderthal Volk”, etc.. According to Mosse the word “rooted” is found extensively throughout Volkish writing. The metaphor intimates man’s strong dependence, correspondence, heritage and link with the landscape, with nature. Each man’s soul is the tap-root, so to speak, and it joined the soul of other men forming the Volk, “...which embodied the life spirit of the cosmos” (Ibid., p. 16).

In a remark that seems very analogous to the growth of the swastika from a denotative to a connotative symbol, Mosse refers to the word “landscape” and its expanded “concept” to include “... not only the mountains, valleys, trees, and fields, but also the legendary exploits of those who had lived within this ‘genuine’ environment for centuries” (Ibid., p. 16). Direct reference to antiquity and the broadening of the “concept” is similar to the ideas proposed by Wheelwright for an archetype or in Langer’s case, for a “connotative symbol”, evolving from a denotative one.

Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, in his famous Land and Leute, (Places and People) c 1860, set the foundations for much of the Volkish thought and literature to follow. Mosse summarizes Riehl’s statements;

Only nature was genuine, since it was infused with both the life force and historical meaning for the Volk. Any merely man-made improvement upon it would destroy the ordained meaning of nature and thereby rob both the individual and the Volk of significance and regenerative powers (p. 19).

Of the different factions of German society, which Riehl argues constitute various parts of the Volk, there remained a class of people that were dangerous to the body politic and unfit to be accommodated within Volkish society. This group was called the proletariat and it was the instability and restlessness of this group that precluded their integration into the Volk. Among the groups thus called were “...the journalist, the polemicist, the iconoclast, who opposed the ancient custom, advocated man-made panaceas, and excited the people to revolt against the genuine and established order. Above all there was the Jew, who by his very nature was restless” (Mosse, p. 22).

The germ of anti-semitism is laid by Riehl’s interpretation of the romantic notion that not all Germans were part of the Volk. As Mosse explains, “Although the Jew belonged to a Volk, it occupied no specific territory and was consequently doomed to rootlessness” (Ibid., p. 22). The Jew functioned as middleman in many of Germany’s agricultural regions (oftentimes as a livestock dealer, merchant or moneylender). Even though the Jew satisfied an economic need in the agricultural structure, he was often viewed, as anyone to whom debts were owed, as an example of the modern capitalist. It is not surprising that the first popularly organized anti-semitic movement arose in the agricultural section of Hesse, an area of true Volk (Ibid., p. 28). “ The ideology was elevated into a Germanic faith...” (Ibid.,

p.30) through a process that rapidly diffused Volkish ideas through the population and led to their triumph over all other ideologies

The writings of Riehl came as a turning point for the Volk philosophy. Until this time, the Volk writers and philosophers had lamented and complained about the plight of the Volk. Riehl pointed a direction for action. He delineated the institutions and groups of people beneficial or detrimental to the Volk. The subsequent Volk writers could now give explicit plans for action. One important step was the infiltration of the youth movement and educational arena. Volkish philosophy had penetrated these institutions by the 1880's and as a result influenced many of the intellectual and political leaders born during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. "The Volkish thinkers themselves considered it essential that the contemporary society undergo a revolutionary change. However, their idea of revolution was centered upon a breakthrough of nature's primitive forces and the life spirit in the existing (modern, mechanized) society: a radical transformation which would revitalize the Volk" (Ibid., p. 29).

It was at this time that Hitler saw his instrument for true political revolution. The Volkish philosophy became the bulwark for the Nazi movement's philosophy. Although the Nazi philosophy had to accommodate other groups and philosophies, its foundations remained primarily Volk.

Remarking on the actual origin of the Nazi swastika or "hakenkreutz" (hooked cross), Frederick L. Schuman states;

The Hakenkreutz or swastika flag was the product of Hitler's cogitations of this problem. Where he first encountered the design of the swastika or hooked cross he had never recorded and has perhaps forgotten...In the State Historical Museum at Kiev were black and white swastika flags used by the bandit leader Petlura in 1919 when he harried the Ukraine with fire and sword, slaughtering Jews wherever he went. Whatever his first contact with it, to Hitler it also signified anti-semitism (p. 24).

In 1918 a secret lodge known as the Thule Bund was formed to counter the alleged conspiracy of secret Jewish organizations. "harking back to ancient Germanic mythology, it adopted the swastika and the spokes of the sun's rays as its symbols" (Mosse, p. 229).

It is known that even before 1890 the (insert) appeared on the covers of, and was interspersed throughout, many Volkish periodicals. "By 1912 half a dozen or more Volkish groups, some of them quite large, were using the emblem on the title pages of the periodicals and on their stationary" (Ibid., p. 239). The influence of the anti-semitic movement of the Thule Bund and use of the swastika by the main Volk periodicals that were also adopting a strong anti-semitic attitude, is elucidated by Wilfred Daim in his book, Der Nann Die Hitler Die Ideen Gab. Daim claims that Hitler, during his early career, was very concerned with the issue of anti-semitism and extensively read a periodical called "Ostara". It was frequently adorned with a swastika on its covers and the author was considered a "fanatical racist" (Maser, p. 167).

As mentioned in the section on the universal aspects of the swastika few authorities felt there was a significant difference between the clockwise and counter-clockwise swastika. Hitler apparently was at least aware of the Buddhist theory that the "anti-clockwise" swastika signified "fortune and well-being", but was adamant about using a "clock-wise" swastika.

An interesting point regarding the assumed omnipotence of the (insert) was made pertaining to Hitler's "National Reich Church". Hitler had a thirty point program for instituting his idea of a Nazi church and the thirteenth point was that, "On the day of its foundation, the Christian Cross must be removed from all churches, cathedrals and chapels... and it must be superseded by the only unconquerable symbol, the Swastika" (Shirer, p. 333). The implication here is that Hitler truly considered the swastika to be more powerful than the cross. This symbol obviously had been rooted in history before Christianity (at least as old as and perhaps the mother of the swastika). The cross, as a Christian symbol, is considered by many as the most awesome and potent (Cox). Shirer remarks that;

The Nazis now had a symbol which no other party could match. The hooked cross seemed to possess some mystic power of its own, to beckon to action in a new direction the insecure lower middle classes which had been floundering in the uncertainty of the first chaotic post-war years. They began to flock under its banner (p. 12).

Section 4 Conclusion: The swastika Volk equation

Mosse's difficulty in defining the Volk and the final definition and description that he proposes is indicative of the problems involved in defining a "symbol". Volk "connotes more than its specific meaning", "is a much more comprehensive term", it "signified the union of a group of people with a transcendental 'essence'". Such expressions lead one to realize that the term "Volk" is a discursive symbol as explained by Langer. The "object" of the symbol is the image of men bonded with Nature and therefore bonded with themselves. The "concept" is the feeling resulting from this bond; the creativity, the depth of man's feelings and the unity with his comrades in the "Volk".

Jung claims one can experience a symbol both as an individual and as a member of a group. Referring to Jung's "collective" symbol Violet de Laszlo states,

...it must proceed from the most complex and subtle strata of the contemporary psychological atmosphere. Conversely, the effective, living symbol must also contain something which is shared by considerable numbers of men: it embraces that which is common to a larger group. Consequently, it must include those primitive elements, emotional and otherwise, whose omnipresence stands beyond all doubt (Jung & de Laszlo, pp. xxi,xxii).

As mentioned previously(earlier), the Germans were instrumental in popularizing both the investigation of the (insert) and its interpretation as a sun-symbol. It had been remarked by authorities that the swastika was one of the oldest Aryan (I.E.) symbols and it was also known that it was commonly used as a sun-symbol. Since one of the prime tenets of the Volk philosophy held that the Volk were sun worshippers, it was only natural for the Volk followers to strive to prove that the (insert) was indeed the oldest of the Aryan symbols and that it was symbolic of the sun. As Mosse observes;

The Nazi concept of the Aryan (I.E.) Culture was a natural consequence of the Volkish philosophy. As the ancient Germans represented people closer to the roots of the Volkish tree than their modern counterparts, so the ancient religious beliefs, mythology, and gods also came to represent the unfailing source of primeval strength and genuineness, qualities that were lacking in modern religious doctrine. Consequently, ancient symbolism, such as the rune and swastika, and old legends, such as that of Mittgart, a place believed to be the original home of Nordic man, assumed an immediate and urgent importance (p. 77).

Wheelwright's distinguishing characteristics for a genuine archetype (i.e., antiquity and perduring quality) seem well satisfied by the "Volk" symbol as expressed by Mosse, "In giving the Volk roots in the remote past, history also seemed to endow it with endurance" (p. 16).

A symbol especially in the specific and individual sense is originally denotative. It is very much tied to its object as the swastika was tied to the sun, water, lightning, etc. After time passes the symbol (insert) becomes connotative since the object of the symbol is not

really necessary for the meaning. The “concept” can stand alone. The connotative symbol could be considered similar to the “organic” symbol as defined by Wheelwright, and his archetype is perhaps the result of many cultures having the same symbol (insert) and different “objects”, yet possessing the same fundamental “concept”, theme or motif. This would imply that the specific cultures shared the same “connotative” symbol and perhaps the same archetype/emblem.

The author claims that the (insert) and “Volk” are both connotative symbols. The former is presentational and the latter discursive, symbolizing the same “concept”, the ‘essence’ of man united with nature. The definitions offered by Wheelwright and Jung for “archetype” are characterized as symbols with special attributes. The criteria for archetype also seem to be well satisfied by the (insert) and “Volk”.

The German anthropologists in the late 19th century searched for a “denotative” symbol (i.e., a sun symbol) and finding the (insert) like an iceberg in the sea, brought back a symbol whose “connotations” were far greater than they had anticipated. The (insert) symbol was nourished and grew through the millennia of human thought and use. Though it was not as widely seen or used as the Christian cross it was to be weaned from the “world” by the Third Reich and would soon manifest its awesome power and strength, the magnitude of which was equal to any symbol heretofore known to “Man”.

Shirer remarks in his book, “The swastika, borrowed though it was from more ancient times, was to become a mighty and frightening symbol...” (p. 13). The (insert) was not to become mighty, powerful or omnipotent since it possessed these qualities long before the Germans resurrected it. On the other hand this universal symbol, connoting the pleasure, harmony and well-being felt by man when united with Nature did not alter the power of the (insert) but it did revamp its “concept”. The connotations of the swastika are still universal; now however, it truly is frightening and brings forth all the feeling associated with famine, pestilence and slaughter; Nature’s less appealing side.

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