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THE BITTEN APPLE RELIGIOUS-PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEWPOINT

By

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Abstract

This short article explores the historic (cultural) and symbolic (archetypal) semantics of the Apple logo. The human mind will always seek to penetrate or beautify any human activity, even logistic. The purpose of this study is the emersion and prominence of the deepest psychic elements of human «being» (i.e., human nature) in the modern world of Technology, even in this eminent electronic and digital world.

Keywords: apple, fig, temptation, Apple company, Protoplasts, forbidden knowledge, half-education.

Introduction

We've all seen the familiar American multinational technology company Apple logo; it's a bitten half apple. Why did that giant company choose that logo? There are plenty of theories. Even if this has not been made public by Apple and simply was an urban legend, we would like to think that there is a special (conscious or unconscious) meaning behind, for example, Apple's decision to use the colors of the rainbow for its 1977 logo and the new "revived" logo in 2021. Of course, each era attempts to interpret its signifiers with new categories of thought. This involves the potential for misinterpretation. However, although on the surface we may think that we are thinking or discovering something by chance, we believe that both the personal (Freud), and the collective unconscious (Jung) play their part. Among the various theories that have been proposed to explain this logo, I would like to mention the top five, in my opinion:

- The story of Nymphus (Mithra) who gains immortality through the consumption of a golden apple. This divinity was honored as the patron of loyalty to the Roman emperor. Faith - trust is directly related to knowledge. Without faith, no knowledge can be acquired. We see the fidelity associated with knowledge in the myth of the Garden of Eden. Adam trusted Eve, and Eve trusted the snake. Both failed to believe in the omniscience of God. The Apple company wants us to believe its omniscience, promising to provide us with valid and current knowledge.
- British mathematician, computer scientist, logician, cryptanalyst, philosopher, and theoretical biologist Alan Turing (1912-1954), the father of today's computers, died after eating a poisoned apple. In fact, unrecognized for his work, facing jail for gross indecency and humiliated by estrogen injections intended to 'cure' his homosexuality, he bit into an apple he had laced with

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cyanide. He died in obscurity on June 7, 1954 (Frith, 2011). So, in honor of that great inventor, the Apple company launched the apple.

- According to tradition, the English mathematician, physicist, astronomer, alchemist, and theologian Isaac Newton (1643-1727) finds himself beneath a tree and contemplates the mysterious universe. Suddenly, he was hit on the head with an apple. In a flash, he understands that the very same force that brought the apple crashing toward the ground also keeps the moon falling toward the Earth and the Earth falls toward the sun: *gravity* (Gefter, 2010). The apple represented knowledge, as in the biblical story of Adam and Eve, or was a reference to the fruit that brought Sir Newton to the notion of gravity. The first logo had the image of Isaac Newton and was designed, in 1976, by Ronald Wayne, a founding partner of Apple, with Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs. So, the very first Apple logo had the image of Sir Isaac Newton sitting under an apple tree while the second logo (rainbow Apple) was derived from Newton's prism work (Siddiqua, 2012). Proponents of this theory note the name of Apple's portable PDA, the Newton, but that was over a decade after the logo was created (Frith, 2011).

Besides, the Apple Rainbow Strip was conceived in 1977 by American graphic designer Rob Janoff and coincided with the introduction of the Apple II, Apple's first personal computer. The new logo featured a six-finger rainbow spectrum (six colored stripes) to symbolize the launch of the world's first color-tolerant computer (Aviram, 2021). Meanwhile, Newton, who discovered the visible spectrum of light in the seventeenth century and separated the spectrum, facilitated understanding and differentiation between the colors of the rainbow.

- Apple designer Steve Jobs named Apple in 1976 because he mostly liked fruit. Steve followed a fruity diet and suggested the name Apple to Steve Wozniak after Jobs visited an apple orchard (Kyamko, 2023).
- Some people like to think that the logo indirectly symbolizes the forbidden fruit of Adam and Eve, depicting greed and knowledge (Siddiqua, 2012). Was it a coincidence that Jobs (= patient) was named after Eden's (first) work? Or was the Polish name of the co-founder of Apple, the Polish Jew Wozniak (*woźny*), a coincidence? Carl Jung wouldn't agree. Don't forget that in the minds of many painters of the time, a **polished** apple would draw more attention to Eva. Nevertheless, the **Polish** and Ukrainian name Wozniak also means a worker carrier, it is the one that transferred the name to Apple of Jobs.

A second related question is why should the apple show up bitten? And to this question several answers-theories have been suggested:

- The logo of the bitten apple was supposed to represent the idea of taking a bite of knowledge and pursuing knowledge. It has become a symbol of innovation, creativity, and avant-garde thinking.
- Focusing on the representation of the bite, Janoff slipped the curvature of the small «A» in the original Apple logo in the negative space of the shape of the apple itself. Today, the original logo of the little «apple» has long since disappeared, but a similar curve remains (Edwards, 2022).
- A bitten apple may indicate the imperfect human knowledge since we do not present the whole apple, but as a fruit, from which a piece of it has been

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removed (see the apex of the pyramid triangle in ancient Egypt): human humility.

- It symbolizes its remnant, the residue from its own residue. This is the object with a small «a» of Lacanian psychoanalysis, that de-hypostatizes the concept of the object. It is the object that is the cause of desire, meaning the lost totality, which nonetheless never existed (Baudrillard, 1981).
- The past participle (*bitten*) of verb “bit” apple plays with the word 'bite' and 'byte.'
- The bite can refer to the erosion a worm (see serpent) makes of a fruit. In these cases, you can see the worms in the apples. This erosion can be found today in the concept of implosion, viz. the internal breakdown of a group of things. In a sense, the devil offers the apple as a gift to Eve, to seduce her from her imaginary object (God) into the symbolic realm, where speech and eating are done with the mouth. Eva's ego is alienated, and Eva by this time becomes narcissistic. Moreover, aggression, expressed in the biting (of the fruit), is characteristic of the symbolic order. After all, since Eve was captivated by the (specular) image (view) of the beautiful fruit, it is verified that the visual field is structured by symbolic laws (of language). Finally, the fantasy is intimately connected with animal ethology (see snake).
- It wants to declare that in nowadays mundane order is no longer in harmony, but in disorder, in fragmentation (see Surrealist, Absurd, Bizarre Art, Gonzo Art, Weirdest Artworks etc.).
- The apple bite done by Eve, which was curious (in terms of info/knowledge). But curiosity may be the source of philosophy and the cause of self-destruction.
- That Eve did not eat the entire apple may symbolize the sense of half-truth (see “*Halbbildung*” of Th. Adorno, 1959), which is a well-known snake/ Satan strategy: The fragmented reason (*ratio*) to the whole Word (*Logos*).

Apple tree or fig tree?

Certain fruits derived from the ovary and other flower parts accessories are called «fake fruits»; read “false knowledge”. Instead, the real fruits are the fruits that grow from the ovary, but do not include the thalamus or any other floral part. The main edible part of an apple is the fleshy container. Therefore, it is a “false fruit” (*Byju's response*).

That the tree of «*knowing good and evil*» was an apple tree (Hebr. תְּפֹחַ עֵץ) came from identifying the meanings of the Latin word *malum*, when the Bible was translated into Latin (Vulgate) by Saint Jerome (420 A.D.), i.e. (noun) *apple* and (adjective) *evil*. We first see this identification in medieval manuscripts (*miniatures*) of the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries, as well as the «*incunabulum*» (16th cen.), and then to all the great painters: Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), Michelangelo (1475-1564) and others, as well as the great 17th-century English poet John Milton (*Paradise Lost*, 1667).

The trees of all ancient cultures and religions (India, Egypt, Greece, and all Mesopotamia) had a special meaning (metaphysical). For instance, according to the Assyrian civilization, «*the tree of life*» symbolized the divine order of the world (Parpola, 1993). In the Bible narrative, apart from all the common trees, there were also two special trees («strange»): life (sapience) and knowledge (information).

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According to rabbinic interpretations of Talmud, the «*tree of the knowledge of good and evil*» was either a vine (Rabbi Meir), or wheat (Rabbi Judah), or תאנײם = fig tree (Rabbi Nehemiah). The vine and fig tree symbolize both types of passions (sins): internal and external (Cyril, MPG 77, 1184). For Midrash, particularly for the *Tosafists* (the rabbis who made *Tosafot*), this tree was citrus.

In the Eastern Christian tradition, this tree was not an apple tree, but a fig tree (Isidore de Pelusium, MPG 78, 213). Here are some possible clues about this, since the Old Testament does not spell out exactly what kind of tree it was. The originals (protoplasts), when they realized their nakedness, were covered with fig leaves, which are large and rough [see the Greek *threon* (θρῆον)]. The Jews were using fig tree as a lightning rod (Plutarch, 612c-748d) and generally as means of getting off all evil, thus they used to plant it in front of the door of their house.

The fig tree in ancient cultivation was associated with the power of fertilizers. The ancient Greek rhetorician and grammarian Athenaeus venerated it and called it «*holy*» (Plutarch, 612c-748d). Athenaeus (3, 10) writes, for example: «*The tree, the wild fig, out of the unripe figs (ἐπινά), a wild fig-tree (ἐπινόζ) is called from the male (ἄρρεν)*». In Timor-Leste, the Sun god impregnated his wife, Mother — Earth, on a fig tree (Eliade, 1964). Here we see many medieval painters depicting the snake with a woman's head, on the one hand, perhaps to suggest its sexually lustful nature, on the other hand influenced by the apocryphal Jewish tradition of the created woman Lilith. Lilith associated with one sect survived among certain Jews as late as the 7th century.

In addition, the allegorically sterile fig tree was cursed by Christ, because it contained only leaves and no fruit (Matthew 21:19; cf. Abb. 3:17), like formulistic and standardized Judaism. But the Rabbis, inspired by the «*Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste*» of the *Song of Solomon* (2:3), believed that, just as an apple tree bears fruit before it produces leaves, Israel always does first and then listens (*Talmud*, Hama bar Hanina, *Song of Songs* 2:3). Are there any apple trees that bear fruit (apples) prior to producing leaves? Yes, Rabi Hama replies: This is citron lemons. Furthermore, this Jewish conception that *acting* be posted in front of *theory* expresses the priority of the trust (*faith*) over knowledge (*information*).

Above all, snakes are generally found in fig trees. Although snakes don't usually drink wine or milk, there are reports that suggest otherwise. Folklorists and philologists have classified many useful folk patterns from around the world for lactating reptiles and milk drinkers (Ermacora, 2017). Where snakes are regarded as ancestors come to life, people naturally treat them with a lot of respect and often feed them with milk (Frazer 1914, p. 84), as in Greek antiquity. Often, white worms can be seen in figs and apples. But snakes never eat apples.

Testing faith (*trust*) as a temptation of knowledge.

Accepting something from someone, particularly when you have been notified of the possibility of fraud, requires confidence in your choice. In this way, Eve was deceived about the kind of knowledge. In that case, it's as if we were telling you: if you choose Apple...

Knowledge has never been obtainable and acquired freely and easily. It demanded true and profound knowledge, labors, and sacrifices. As a result, this theme had received numerous treatises, comments and observations from all people, cultures, and religions. This means that every knowledge-information must be tested

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(questioned and scrutinized). There have been several temptations: from fake news to hackers and criminal organizations spreading viruses.

So, we have on the one hand the «bottom» (under, lower, *earthly*) wisdom of the serpent (James 3:15), for example, in Greek THEOS-OFIS = *THEOSOPHY*, and on the other hand the «top» Wisdom (the Divine Word of God). Wisdom from above acknowledges and recognizes the imperfection of the human mind, and this appears in Apple's half-eaten apple. On the contrary, the «below» (demonic) wisdom —again based on the image of the bitten apple— urges everyone to try to eat from the “apple” or a «cake of preserved figs» (Greek «*palathion*» or «*palassion*»), i.e., miscellaneous information. Thus, a modern technology mega-city, such as e.g., New York City, has been rightly called «*the Big Apple*». The citizen of this modern Babylon feels that they possess all human knowledge (see *Hubris*), filling a man with vanity, but he was bitten by the serpent! One day, Iranian prophet Zarathustra (or Zoroaster) fell asleep under a fig tree and was bitten by a viper. Zarathustra woke with a great deal of pain. The viper told him that my venom would kill you, but Zarathustra answered that I am a dragon, and your poison cannot kill me (Nietzsche, 1883-92). Of course, Nietzsche's Luciferianism and arrogance did not allow him to admit his human weakness, but it manifested itself and the «*Übermensch*» died, even in a psychiatric hospital, that is, with a lost mental *identity*. Normally, an apple bitten by one human person is not eaten by another person. But a «chewy» (informational) food is usually eaten without criticism! We are craving information... We live in either simulations or a virtual reality. Virtual reality fascinates us as the fairest fruit attracted Eve.

Discussion and conclusions

Apple, as perhaps one of the largest IT companies in the world today, launched this logo to highlight the attractiveness of a (secure?) Information. Today's impressive technology overwhelms, enchants, and appeals to us. It is the admiration of external good-looking (beautification); the beauty of a (painting or digital) image and the manufacture; it is about the ancient Greek way of thinking (and later in the Renaissance), namely «to being seemed» and «to be looked at». This is the element that has given birth to the concept of *observation* in science.

This paper does not pretend to provide a solid scientific breakthrough. It is based on unproven assumptions, which cannot be verified or disproved, because we will never know the true intentions or unconscious motives of the originators and designers of this logo. But is all the scientific knowledge, a theory, and a model, which after a few years can be disproved? *Falsifiability* itself is considered a criterion of scientific knowledge (Popper, 1934).

What is important here is to emphasize that the intellectual «investment» of technical inventions is neither a new phenomenon, nor is it found only in the Apple company. The why is linked to existential Psychology and Psychoanalysis. Significant signifiers are timeless: archetypal to multiple meanings.

Of all the theories that have been proposed, there is no need for a single theory to be true; there may be a combination of two or more.

However, the instructive message that we can draw from such a story is not the type of tree, but the type of knowledge that we receive daily as food: bare leaves (dry information) or deep and conscious knowledge (fruit)? Protective knowledge or consumer-related information. The serpent can lurk everywhere. We must exercise vigilance. However, modern secular man is no less in danger than the biblical pair of

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Protoplasts, who for the first time were unprepared confronted with the temptation of grandeur and the glitter of knowledge. «*Consider all things; keep to what is good*» (1 Thess. 5:21), but to effectively achieve this “*so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves*” (Matt 10:16). If “rationally” (< *Logos*) we pay attention to what we see and «taste» (put in ourselves) each time, we may not be deceived, poisoned, disappointed, and eventually be destroyed like Judas (Matt 27:5). But how do we reconcile childish trust with rational scrutiny? Only when we embody the Word of God (Wisdom above) within ourselves. The Divine Word makes a distinction and cuts like a knife (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12) each “fruit”, i.e., every piece of data. This is why the Bible did not define exactly what the «tree of knowledge of good and evil» was, because each of us perceives this «tree» (or this fig tree) differently, depending on our character, age, gender, and experiences (cognitive *schema*). Saint Macarius the Great writes: «*Each of us is an imaginary fig tree, from which the Lord requires the inner fruit and not the epiphenomenal formation of the leaves*» (Homily 40, 1). One may see it as a temptation, and another as a motive for virtue and justice (Origen, MPG 17, 241); one as a curse (guilty), and another as a blessing (Eucharistic); one as the sum of electrons or vitamins, and another as an example of aesthetic natural beauty. Zarathustra and the apostle Nathanael (Jn 1:48-50) were sitting under a fig tree, but the former thought that he would defeat the venom of the serpent (death) by his own strength, and the latter conformed to the life and teaching of the incarnated divine-human *Logos* (Hebr. דבר, *Davar*).

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