

Chapter 1 : Bakhtin, Cassirer and symbolic forms – Radical Philosophy

Ernst Cassirer is one of the foremost Neo-Kantian philosophers of the 20th century. This semi-easy to read book is the 1st of 4 volumes of his Opus about the Philosophy of Symbolic Forms.

Because he was Jewish, he left Germany after the Nazis came to power in 1933. After leaving Germany he taught for a couple of years in Oxford, [where?]. When Cassirer considered Sweden too unsafe, he applied for a post at Harvard University, but was rejected because thirty years earlier he had rejected a job offer from them. Cassirer died of a heart attack in April in New York City. His son, Heinz Cassirer, was also a Kantian scholar. In accordance with his Marburg neo-Kantianism he concentrated upon epistemology. Philosophy of science [edit] In Substance and Function, he writes about late nineteenth-century developments in physics including relativity theory and the foundations of mathematics. He also wrote a book about Quantum mechanics called Determinism and Indeterminism in Modern Physics. Warburg was an art historian who was particularly interested in ritual and myth as sources of surviving forms of emotional expression. In Philosophy of Symbolic Forms –²⁹ Cassirer argues that man as he put it in his more popular book Essay on Man is a "symbolic animal". Whereas animals perceive their world by instincts and direct sensory perception, humans create a universe of symbolic meanings. Cassirer is particularly interested in natural language and myth. He argues that science and mathematics developed from natural language, and religion and art from myth. The Cassirer–Heidegger debate [edit] In Cassirer took part in an historically significant encounter with Martin Heidegger in Davos. Mazlish however notes that Cassirer in his The Philosophy of the Enlightenment focuses exclusively on ideas, ignoring the political and social context in which they were produced. The Logic of the Cultural Sciences [edit] In The Logic of the Cultural Sciences Cassirer argues that objective and universal validity can be achieved not only in the sciences, but also in practical, cultural, moral, and aesthetic phenomena. Although inter-subjective objective validity in the natural sciences derives from universal laws of nature, Cassirer asserts that an analogous type of inter-subjective objective validity takes place in the cultural sciences. Cassirer sees Nazi Germany as a society in which the dangerous power of myth is not checked or subdued by superior forces. Cassirer claimed that in 20th century politics there was a return, with the passive acquiescence of Martin Heidegger, to the irrationality of myth, and in particular to a belief that there is such a thing as destiny. Partial bibliography [edit] The Problem of Knowledge: Die Sprache, English translation Volume Two: Mythical Thought [Zweiter Teil: Das mythische Denken], English translation Volume Three: The Phenomenology of Knowledge [Dritter Teil: Essays and Lectures of Ernst Cassirer, , ed. The Warburg Years Essays on Language, Art, Myth, and Technology. Translated and with an Introduction by S.

Chapter 2 : Ernst Cassirer - Bibliography - PhilPapers

The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: Volume 4: The Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms At his death in , the influential German philosopher Ernst Cassirer left manuscripts for the fourth and final volume of his magnum opus, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.

Retrieved November 10, , from <https://philosophyofsymbolicforms.com/> Philosophy of symbolic forms Cassirer published the major work of his philosophy, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*: As opposed to the Aristotelian theory of concept formation, in which a common substantial element is sought through a comparison of the similarities and differences of a class of particulars, the functional concept is formed by articulating a principle by which a set of particulars can be ordered as a series. This principle of serial arrangement of a group of particulars, unlike a substance, has no reality or meaning independent of the elements it orders, and these elements have meaning only in terms of the positions they each occupy in the series. Cassirer formulated this indissoluble bond between universal and particular of the functional concept as $F(a, b, c, \dots)$. It suggested to him a model for how the mind forms experience in all spheres of human activity, cognitive and noncognitive. What Kant delineates abstractly as one of the principles of his first Critique, Cassirer finds as a phenomenon within human experience: The critique of reason becomes the critique of culture. Each area of human culture has its own way of bringing sensed particulars together in symbolic orders. Cassirer also suggests the possibility of additional symbolic forms, such as economics, morality and technology. In *The Phenomenology of Knowledge* , the third volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1929) , Cassirer presents three symbolic forms as corresponding to the fundamental functions of the development of consciousness. Consciousness at this level takes the form of myth. Symbol and symbolized occupy the same level of reality. The dancer who dons the mask of the god is the god. This function builds a world of common-sense objects, of thing-attribute relationships and classes. Symbol and symbolized now are different orders of reality. Symbols refer to things. Here symbols can refer in fully determinate ways to other orders of symbols. The purest examples of this are mathematics and mathematical logic. He examined how the expressive function of consciousness is the most fundamental manifestation of spirit *Geist* and how spirit is a transformation of life *Leben*. Life is the ongoing flow of existence that is first formed by the human power of expression, out of which, as described above, arise all forms of human culture.

Chapter 3 : Ernst Cassirer - Wikipedia

At his death in , the influential German philosopher Ernst Cassirer left manuscripts for the fourth and final volume of his magnum opus, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms.

It may not have been checked over by human eyes. For matters of precision please consult the original pdf. Here is the point of contrast with Kant. The sources of such a wide-ranging theory seem to be diverse: The philosophy of Geist is characterized by Hegel as the representation of the route natural consciousness takes to true knowledge as a matter of necessity. It is precisely thanks to the novel that languages are able to illuminate each other mutually; literary language becomes a dialogue of languages that both know about and understand each other. For Bakhtin, it is precisely the breakdown of the period of sealed-off national languages monoglossia at the end of the Hellenic period that allowed the decentring of cultural consciousness represented in and by the novel to develop. No longer was there an absolute faith in the correspondence of language and reality; only a formal analogy was now sustainable. Although a distinct and irreducible symbolic form, myth can and does enter into combinations with other forms and has a particularly close kinship with both language and art. It is especially apparent in openly emotional language and in lyric poetry. Thus while Bakhtin was to treat the absolute domination of language and literature by myth as an issue that receded into the distant past, the relative power of myth in these spheres is treated as an eternal question. Similarly in poetry and poetics the mythical conception of the world has been dominant. As Bakhtin puts it: Myth and hegemony This complex of myth and language is thus oriented against the decentralizing, critical forces of culture, seeking to limit those forces and present a single viewpoint as directly expressive of natural existence. In a famous passage he notes that The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. The authoritative word is located in the distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. There is a crucial difference between stylistic and generic categories, which Bakhtin does not admit. Myth, in this sense, refers to the absolute hegemony of one language, the ideal limit of the authoritative hegemonic principle. This was perhaps the single most important advance made by Bakhtin over Cassirer: However, Bakhtin was not prepared to take the next logical step: However, argues Bakhtin, it was only with the entry of the spirit of the carnival square into literature that the critical impulse implicit in popular travesty could achieve ideological structuredness. The epitome of this transposition of popular humour into literature Bakhtin famously found in the work of Rabelais. Human life appears to us with all its defects and foibles. Whereas the lyric poet can revitalize mythic feelings, the comic artist is particularly realistic: We become observant of the minutest details; we see this world in all its narrowness, its pettiness, and silliness. We live in this restricted world, but we are no longer imprisoned by it. Such is the nature of the comic catharsis. Things and events begin to lose their material weight; scorn is dissolved into laughter and laughter is liberation. In these works excessive seriousness and pedantry are revealed: When both retrench themselves behind a false gravity, nothing remains but to subject them to the test of ridicule and expose them. Who speaks and under what conditions he speaks: All direct meanings and direct expressions are false, and this is especially true of emotional meanings and expressions. Deception meets dubious truth claims, and incomprehension meets pseudo intelligence in a polemical fashion. In seeking to expose the nullity of knowledge and language, scepticism ultimately demonstrates something rather different: The farther the negation is carried in this point, the more clearly a positive insight follows from it. The novel becomes the image of democratically organized social relations, of a different hegemonic principle. In this new world it is not the authoritative, mythic use of language as a law to be obeyed that is operative, but a critically active selection, rejection and assimilation from a plurality of social perspectives. In its most fully developed form, the novel is a model of the transcendence of the opposition between the individual and society, of compulsion and internal impulse through the democratic hegemonic principle. The novel takes on the role of a philosophy of culture in that it aims to reveal the basic formative principle behind verbal images of the world. Common and typical principles of formation are revealed behind diverse and dissimilar

discourses: It is here that the synthesis of subject and object, man and God is made possible, for man is no longer simply a creation but also a creator. The ideal towards which our knowledge must strive, then, does not lie in denying and rejecting particularity, but in allowing it to unfold in all its richness. For only the totality of faces gives us the One view of the Divine. The world becomes the symbol of God in that we pass through it in all of its forms, freely submitting ourselves to its multiplicity, to its antitheses. I believe, however, that the focus of my article is quite different to that of Poole. Bakhtin, *Progress*, Moscow, , pp. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Emerson, University of Texas Press, Austin, , p. *The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, trans. Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, trans. Iswolsky, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Pettegrove, Nelson, London, , p.

Chapter 4 : The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms - Ernst Cassirer - Google Books

Ernst Cassirer believed that all the forms of representation that human beings use—“language, myth, art, religion, history, science”—are symbolic, and the concept of symbolic forms was the basis of his thinking on these subjects.

He matriculated at the University of Berlin in 1898. Sampling various courses at the universities at Leipzig, Munich, and Heidelberg, Cassirer was first exposed to the Neo-Kantian philosophy by the social theorist Georg Simmel in Berlin. These interests culminated in his dissertation, *Descartes: Kritik der Mathematischen und Naturwissenschaftlichen Erkenntnis*. Although his quality as a scholar of ideas was unquestioned, anti-Jewish sentiment in German universities made finding suitable employment difficult for Cassirer. Only through the personal intervention of Wilhelm Dilthey was Cassirer given a Privatdozent position at the University of Berlin in 1901. His writing there was prolific and continued the Neo-Kantian preoccupation with the intersections among epistemology, mathematics, and natural science. Immediately Cassirer was absorbed into the vast cultural-anthropological data collected by the Library, affecting the widest expansion of Neo-Kantian ideas into the previously uncharted philosophical territories of myth, the evolution of language, zoology, primitive cultures, fine art, and music. In addition to his programmatic work, Cassirer was a major contributor to the history of ideas and the history of science. In conscious contrast with Hegelian accounts of history, Cassirer does not begin with the assumption of a theory of dialectical progress that would imply the inferiority of earlier stages of historical developments. By starting instead with the authors, cultural products, and historical events themselves, Cassirer instead finds characteristic frames of mind that are defined by the kinds of philosophical questions and responses that frame them, which are in turn constituted by characteristic forms of rationality. In 1924, Cassirer was chosen Rektor of the University of Hamburg, making him the first Jewish person to hold that position in Germany. Cassirer saw the writing on the wall and emigrated with his family in 1933. In 1935, Cassirer boarded the last ship the Germans permitted to sail from Sweden to the United States, where he would hold positions at Yale for two years and then at Columbia for one. His final books, written in English, were the career-synopsis, *An Essay on Man*, and his first philosophical foray into contemporary politics, *The Myth of the State*, published posthumously. For Cassirer, Neo-Kantianism was less about doctrinal allegiance than it was about a common commitment to explore the cognitive structures that underlie the variety of human experience. After the death of Cohen, Cassirer became increasingly interested in value and culture. Inspired by the Warburg Library, Cassirer cast his net into an ocean of cultural expression, trying to find the common thread that united the manifold of cultural forms, that is, to move from the critique of reason to the critique of culture. As to what precisely symbolic forms are, Cassirer offers perhaps his clearest definition in an early lecture at the Warburg Library. In this sense language, the mythical-religious world, and the arts each present us with a particular symbolic form. For in them all we see the mark of the basic phenomenon, that our consciousness is not satisfied to simply receive impressions from the outside, but rather that it permeates each impression with a free activity of expression. In what we call the objective reality of things we are thus confronted with a world of self-created signs and images. To the geometer, the line means a quantitative relation between the two dimensions of the plane; to the physicist, the line perhaps means a relation of energy to mass; and to the artist, the line means a relation between light and darkness, shape and contour. More than simply a reflection of different practical interests, Cassirer believes each of these brings different mental energies to bear in turning the visual sensation of the line into a distinct human experience. No one of these ways of experiencing is the true one; though they each have their distinctive pragmatic uses within their individual fields. The task of the philosopher is to understand the internal directedness of each of these mental energies independently and in relation to the others as the sum total of human mental expression, which is to say, culture. The first two forms Cassirer discusses, in the first two volumes respectively, are language and myth. The third volume of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* concerns contemporary advances in epistemology and natural science: Cassirer works historically, tracing the problem of philosophical knowledge through the Ancient Greeks up through the Neo-Kantian tradition. The seemingly endless battle between intuition and conceptualization has been contended in various forms between the originators of myths and the

earliest theorists of number, between the Milesians and Eleatics, between the empiricists and rationalists, and again right up to Ernst Mach and Max Planck. Physics gains this unity and extension by advancing toward ever more universal symbols. But in this process it cannot jump over its own shadow. It can and must strive to replace particular concepts and signs with absolutely universal ones. But it can never dispense with the function of concepts and signs as such: *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. The first, from , deals with human nature rather than metaphysics proper. In agreement with Heidegger, curiously, Cassirer seeks to replace traditional metaphysics with a fundamental study of human nature. What is of novel interest here concerns his discussion of then contemporary philosophical anthropologists like Dilthey, Bergson, and Simmel and also the *Lebensphilosophen*, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, who otherwise receive short shrift in his work. His critical remarks of these latter thinkers involve their treatment of life as a new sort of metaphysics, one marred, however, by the sorts of dogmatism of pre-Kantian metaphysics. In the lecture from , Cassirer names language, myth-religion, and art as forms, but that number cannot be considered exhaustive. Even in his summatory *Essay on Man*, consecutive pages maintain different lists: The first two of the four volumes of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*—on language and myth respectively—would seem to indicate that each volume would treat a specific form. But the latter two volumes break the trend to deal with a host of different forms. Moreover, it is ambiguous how precisely those forms are related. For example, myth is sometimes treated as a primitive form of language and sometimes non-developmentally as an equal correlate. Arithmetic and geometry are the logic that undergirds the scientific symbolic form, but in no way do they undergird primitive forms of science that have been superseded. Whether the forms are themselves developmental or whether development takes place by the instantiation of a new form is also left vague. For example, Cassirer indicates that the move from Euclidean to non-Euclidean geometry involves not just progress but an entirely new system of symbolization. However, myth does not seem to develop itself into anything else other than into something wholly different, that is, representational language. Taken together, the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* is a grand narrative that expositis how various human experiences evolve out of an originally animalistic and primitive articulation of expressive signs into the complicated and more abstract forms of culture in the twenty-first century. Though spontaneous acts of mental energy, symbolic forms are both developmental and pragmatic insofar as they adapt over time to changing environments in response to real human needs, something that resists an overly rigid structuralism. Those responses feature a loose sort of internal-logic, but one characterized according to contingent cultural interactions with the world. Therefore, one ought not to expect Cassirer to offer the same logical precision that comes with the typical Neo-Kantian discernment of mental forms insofar as logic is only one form among many cultural relations with life. Here, as ever, Cassirer begins with the history of views up into his present time, culminating in the presentation of a definitive scientific thesis that he would then proceed to refute. Animals are not simply reacting to the environment as it presents itself in sensory stimuli. They adapt themselves, consciously and unconsciously, to their environments, sometimes with clear signs of intelligence and insight. Different animals use diverse and sometimes highly complex systems of signals to better respond and manipulate their environments to their advantage. Dogs, for example, are adroit at reading signals in body language, vocal tones, and even hormone changes while being remarkably effective in expressing a complex range of immediate inner states in terms of the vocalized pitch of their whimpers, grunts, or barks, as well as the bends of their tails, or the posture of their spines. Cassirer thinks this theory makes good sense of the animal world as a corrective to a too-simple version of evolution, but doubts this can be applied to humans. Over and above the signals received and expressed by animals, human beings evolved to use symbols to make their world meaningful. The same ringing of the bell would not be considered by man a physical signal so much as a symbol whose meaning transcends its real, concrete stimulation. For man, a bell does not indicate simply that food is coming, but induces him to wonder why that bell might indicate food, or perhaps whether an exam is over, or the fulfillment of a sacrament, or that someone is on the telephone. None of those symbols would lead necessarily to a response in the way the conditioned dog salivates at the bell. They instead prompt a range of freely creative responses in human knowers within distinct spheres of meaning: Symbols—in the proper sense of this term—cannot be reduced to mere signals. Signals and symbols belong to two different universes of

discourse: Signals, even when understood and used as such, have nevertheless a sort of physical or substantial being; symbols have only a functional value. Essay on Man 32 Between the straightforward reception of physical stimuli and the expression of an inner world lies, for Cassirer, the symbolic system: That dimension is distinctively Kantian: Animals have little trouble working in three-dimensional space; their optical, tactile, acoustic, and kinesthetic apprehension of spatial distances functions at least as well as it does in humans. But only to the human is the symbol of pure geometrical space meaningful, a universal, non-perceptual, theoretical space that persists without immediate relationship to his or her own interaction with the world: In terms of time, too, there can be no doubt that higher animals remember past sensations, or that memory affects the manner in which they respond when similar sensations are presented. But in the human person the past is not simply repeated in the present, but transformed creatively and constructively in ways that reflect values, regrets, hopes, and so forth, It is not enough to pick up isolated data of our past experience; we must really re-collect them, we must organize and synthesize them, and assemble them into a focus of thought. It is this kind of recollection which gives us the characteristic human shape of memory, and distinguishes it from all the other phenomena in animal or organic life. Essay on Man 51 As animals recall pasts and live within sensory space, human beings construct histories and geometries. Both history and geometry, then, are symbolic engagements that render the world meaningful in an irreducibly human fashion. This symbolic dimension of the person carries him or her above the effector-receptor world of environmental facts and subjective responses. He or she lives instead in a world of possibilities, imaginations, fantasy, and dreams. However, just as there is a kind of logic to the language of contrary-to-fact conditionals or to the rules of poetic rhythm, so too is there a natural directedness expressed in how human beings construct a world of meaning out of those raw effections and receptions. That directedness cannot, however, be restricted to rational intentionality, though reason is indeed an essential component. In distinction from the Neo-Kantian theories of experience and representation, Cassirer thinks there is a wider network of forms that enable a far richer engagement between subject and object than reason could produce: With his definition of man as the symbolic animal, Cassirer is in position to reenvision the task of philosophy. Philosophy is much more than the analysis and eventual resolution of a set of linguistic problems, as Wittgenstein would have it, nor is it restricted, as it was for many Neo-Kantians, to transcendently deducing the logical forms that would ground the natural sciences. The functions of the human person are not merely aggregate, loosely-connected expressions and factual conditions. Philosophy seeks to understand the connections that unite those expressions and conditions as an organic whole. What is needed for the proper study of myth, beyond this appreciation of its utility, is a step by step un-riddling of the mythical objects in non-mythical concepts so as to rationally articulate what a myth really means. Sigmund Freud, of course, also considered myth to be a sort of unconscious expression, one that stands as a primitive version of the naturally-occurring expression of subconscious drives. Cassirer considers myth in terms of the Neo-Kantian reflex by first examining the conditions for thinking and then analyzing the objects which are thought. To say that objects of any sort are what they are independent of their representation is to misunderstand the last century of transcendental epistemology. From this point of view all artistic creation becomes a mere imitation, which must always fall short of the original. And it seems that all other processes of mental gestation involve the same sort of outrageous distortion, the same departure from objective reality and the immediate data of experience. Language and Myth, trans. For if myth is akin to art or language in falsifying the world as it really is, then language is limited to merely expressing itself without any claim to truth either: Cassirer rejects such fictionalism in myth and language both as an appeal to psychologistic measures of truth that fail to see a better alternative in the philosophy of symbolic forms. For Cassirer, myth and language, discussed below does reflect reality: Instead of measuring the content, meaning, and truth of intellectual forms by something extraneous which is supposed to be reproduced in them, we must find in these forms themselves the measure and criterion for their truth and intrinsic meaning. Instead of taking them as mere copies of something else, we must see in each of these spiritual forms a spontaneous law of generation; and original way and tendency of expression which is more than a mere record of something initially given in fixed categories of real existence. The question is no longer whether mythic symbols, or any of these other symbolic forms, correspond to reality since it is distinct from that mode of representation, but

instead it is a question on how myths relate to those other forms as limitations and supplementations. No matter how heterogeneous and variegated are the myths that come down to us, they move along definite avenues of feeling and creative thought.

Chapter 5 : Cassirer, Ernst (â€™) - Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy

The Philosophy of Form in Kant I 2. 4. The Symbolic Function and the Forms 47 The philosophy of symbolic calendrierdelascience.com 1,Language /.

The Origins of the Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: Kant, Hegel, and Cassirer Published: There are two connected questions: What are the fundamentals of this philosophy? For Cassirer, Verene states, "the primary way to understand any human production is to grasp how it came to be what it is. Each symbolic form undertakes the formation *Bildung* and configuration *Gestaltung* of reality *Wirklichkeit* according to its own unique laws. In the middle of this chapter, Verene digresses and provides a brief presentation of the Cassirer-Heidegger debate at Davos. The chapter ends with an attack on post-modern thought, as it is understood by Verene, for its anti-metaphysical tendencies: In this chapter, Verene develops the view that politics is a symbolic form; he also provides some reflections on the relation of philosophy to politics as well as the consequences of this for ethics, human freedom and the nature and role of the state. As Verene has published on Hegel and worked on Cassirer for over 40 years, this work promises to fill an important lacuna in Cassirer studies. What is more, Verene skips quickly from one statement to another, rarely taking the time to develop a point in greater detail. In the case of myth, this happens when it "levels down" the distinction between image and reality. The aim of the cult "consists in overcoming the separation of the I from the Absolute. In his critique of Hegel, Cassirer writes: For the balance of forces that he wished to establish proves in Hegel to be only an illusion. Nature retains nothing in her own right; she possesses only an apparent independence. It was not able to withstand for long the attacks that were directed against this point with increasing force. Language, myth, art, religion and science never culminate in one particular symbolic form: For Hegel the different cultural forms culminate in absolute knowledge: All the earlier stages it has passed through are, to be sure, preserved as factors in this culminate state, but by being reduced to mere factors they are, on the other hand, negated. At the heart of culture, there is found a primordial strife that is originary of the relationship between I and world that simultaneously differentiates and unites them. Cassirer, like Hegel, plays on the double meaning. Thus, "the worldview of myth and of theoretical knowledge cannot coexist in the same area of thought. They are mutually exclusive: It is at this point that Cassirer quotes Hegel: Cassirer has a theory of action that is clearly developed form his engagement with Hegel.

Chapter 6 : The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: Volume 1: Language by Ernst Cassirer

The Symbolic Forms has long been considered the greatest of Cassirer's works. Into it he poured all the resources of his vast learning about language and myth, religion, art, and science—the various creative symbolizing activities and constructions through which man has expressed himself and.

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, vol. Verene [Yale University Press,]. The volume includes a DVD containing copies of the originals of the entire correspondence. There are no purely personal letters, but many have a personal tone or contain personal details, as Cassirer is often writing to his friends and colleagues. The reader will not find long, essay-like letters in which Cassirer develops his philosophical ideas. Most letters vary from one half to one or two printed pages. There is correspondence with the leading members of the Vienna Circle: There is a letter from Edmund Husserl commenting briefly on the second volume of the Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: There is correspondence with the Swiss psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger, who founded Daseinsanalyse. There is considerable correspondence, as might be expected, with Aby Warburg, founder of the famous Warburg Institute and Library and its director, Fritz Saxl, which was originally located in Hamburg and later moved to London. There is correspondence with Susanne Langer in concerning her translation of Language and Myth, and in the same period with Paul Schilpp concerning the preparation of the Library of Living Philosophers volume on Cassirer that appeared in , after his death. In this letter first noted by D. Verene in the introduction to Symbol, Myth, and Culture: Essays and Lectures of Ernst Cassirer [Yale University Press,], Cassirer says that such a volume was planned but the Ungunst disfavor of the times caused him to postpone it again and again. Since Cassirer died during the preparation of the Library of Living Philosophers volume, it appeared without the customary autobiographical essay. As a substitute, there appeared a biographical sketch by Dimitry Gawronsky, whose friendship with Cassirer began in their student days at Marburg. Cassirer completed her typescript of Aus Meinem Leben mit Ernst Cassirer, which includes a few selections from letters. You are not currently authenticated. View freely available titles:

Chapter 7 : The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms : Ernst Cassirer :

This book is "the first commentary on Ernst Cassirer's Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms" provides an introduction to the metaphysical views that underlie the philosopher's conceptions of symbolic form and human culture. The author, John W. S. in Bayer focuses on the meaning of Cassirer's claim that philosophy.

Science, Symbols, and Logics John W. Sociology through Literature, Philosophy, and Science. Praeger, in press. Although he sometimes addressed political and sociological topics, his influence on contemporary sociological theory is largely indirect. Cassirer is mainly important to sociology because of the position that he occupied in the German intellectual field at a critical historical juncture, the way he addressed the research problems at hand, and the influence that he had on a subsequent generation of scholars who went on to create their own influential theoretical programs in the cultural and social sciences. Cassirer embraced this challenge and moved to Marburg to study with Cohen. Gawronsky reports that Cassirer was an extraordinary student – he read prodigiously, had a photographic memory, was a relentless workaholic, and possessed an unusual facility with languages. For his dissertation, Cassirer examined the I have relied extensively on the many excellent Cassirer commentaries and collections especially: In a style that would go on to characterize all of his future work, Cassirer approached the problem through the lens of intellectual history. His project had two parts. The first on Descartes, he submitted for his doctorate in, the second, on Leibniz, Cassirer entered into the Berlin Academy competition in which he won. In spite of this acclaim and the obvious brilliance of his work, faculty employment was scarce, especially for Jewish scholars, and so Cassirer lived for many years as an independent intellectual in Berlin. During this period he too became a Privatdozent at the University of Berlin in, thanks to the personal intervention of Dilthey, he published a number of important texts that made him quite famous, and finally, in, he was offered a professorship from the newly founded University of Hamburg. He died of a heart attack in New York City in, three weeks before the allied victory in Europe. Bourdieu describes relationalism as the philosophical style of the modern natural sciences and, also, as the grounding for his own distinctive research program. But what exactly is relationalism? Is it different than structuralism? And what does it gain us? Why does Bourdieu think that we need it? Here, it is useful to recall Cassirer. In his classic text, Substance and Function, Cassirer introduced the distinction between substantialism and relationalism as two different modes of scientific thinking. Substantialism is the more traditional of the two. It begins with Aristotle but variations live on in scientific theories for another years. Like Foucault, Cassirer does not focus on the content of specific theories, so much as the logical form according to which statements within those theories come to be perceived as rational. For Cassirer there are deep levels of scientific discourse – he calls them logics – which shape how scientific concepts are assembled. These core logics remain stable, even as different theories come and go. Whether Foucault the classic post-modernist was at all influenced by Cassirer the last great neo-Kantian is hard to tell. It is interesting though to recall that Foucault began his career as a Kant specialist. Second, it is not just bad logic, it is also bad science. In what amounts to a major innovation in science studies, Cassirer describes how a core logic grips those who operate within it by creating specific styles of knowledge. In this case, substantialism generates frames of understanding that are essentialist, that take things as given in their immediate appearances, and produce commitments to science as the quest for the elemental substances from which the things of the world are fashioned. Cassirer describes many philosophical problems with this logic, but he also points to the profound implication that other possible conceptualizations are thereby foreclosed. First, that order is defined by mathematical functions: But in the most modern of sciences, even standard mathematical functions are too constraining too essentialist, and so a new logic emerges in science that is based on pure relationality. Here, Cassirer highlights the work of Cantor and others who laid the foundations for modern topology theory a branch of mathematics concerned with the formal analysis of relational systems. He describes similar developments elsewhere, in Chemistry: These connections are beyond the scope of this small essay. He was another young, brilliant, soon to be under-employed Jewish intellectual. After being wounded in the war, Lewin completed his Ph. Unlike Cassirer, however, Lewin went almost immediately to the United

States where he became a famous, iconoclastic leader in the field of American social psychology. Lewin arrived just as quantitative styles of analysis were firmly taking root in American social sciences. He was skeptical of much that he saw. Citing Cassirer, Lewin declares: And, there is Bourdieu. Originally trained as a philosopher, his experiences during the Algerian war led him to shift to sociology. By the time he had taken up his professorship at Hamburg, he had survived the First World War reading foreign newspapers for the German government and like many of his generation, he saw old things in new ways. Language, math, art and religion are parts of this universe. Cassirer begins conducting a systematic interrogation of symbol systems that is interpretive, relational, and focused on unpacking the varied logics of symbolization. But this then raises a new question – why has Cassirer been so little noticed in the history of structuralism? Of course, as Caws well understands, the matter is complex. A key difference was that Saussure and the structural linguists who followed him were social scientists, working with data. Cassirer was a philosopher, working with concepts. In contrast, one of the great advantages of the Saussureian project is its widespread enactment in social scientific practice and the corresponding development of various methodological tools and research traditions. There are other complaints as well. Beyond this is a more general complaint that all of these traditions, semiotics included, are of limited utility if they are not well grounded in an understanding of the material practices of agents negotiating everyday life. First, as a philosopher of science, Cassirer provided a valuable intellectual bridge between the natural and the social sciences. Relational thinking in the former was thus made relevant and accessible to social scientists like Lewin and Bourdieu. Second, as a theorist of culture, Cassirer developed a philosophical foundation for modern theories of structuralism that was ahead of its time. There is, of course, much more that could be said, including a fuller discussion of the relationship between Cassirer and contemporary research programs on cultural and institutional logics. Friedland, Not only does Cassirer have much to say about how to analyze a cultural logic, he also explicitly focused on the problem of assessing the linkages that connect different symbolic forms together. In this the logical implications of modern mathematics meet up with the intellectual conundrums of Neo-Kantian philosophy. Like his mentors – from Simmel to Cohen, his colleagues in Gestalt psychology, and the intellectual lineages that he draws upon – from Hegel, to Kant, to Leibniz and beyond, Cassirer becomes focused on the relations between parts, wholes and the articulations that link them together. University of Texas Press. *The Symbolic Construction of Reality: The Legacy of Ernst Cassirer*. University of Chicago Press. *On The Theory of Action. Sketch for a Self Analysis. An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture. The Myth of the State. The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms. The Phenomenology of Knowledge. The Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms. The Art of the Intelligible. The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences. Towards A Religious Sociology. A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger. His Life and his Work. The Library of Living Philosophers. Symbolic Forms and History. Philosophy in a New Key: Selected Papers of Kurt Lewin. The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer. Library of Living Philosophers. Field Theory in Social Science. A Repetition of Modernity*. State University of New York Press. Munir and Michael Lounsbury eds. *Perspective as Symbolic Form. An Essay on Interpretation*. Schilpp, Paul Arthur ed. *The Last Philosopher of Culture*. Edited by Jeffrey Andrew Barash.

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The philosophy of symbolic forms User Review - Not Available - Book Verdict. Cassirer died in , leaving only drafts and fragments for the final volume of his magnum opus.

Biography Cassirer was born on July 28, , to a wealthy and cosmopolitan Jewish family, in the German city of Breslau now Wroclaw, Poland. Cassirer entered the University of Berlin in . Upon returning to Berlin in , Cassirer further developed these themes while working out his monumental interpretation of the development of modern philosophy and science from the Renaissance through Kant [Cassirer , a]. The first volume of this work served as his habilitation at the University of Berlin, where he taught as an instructor or Privatdozent from to . In Cassirer was finally offered professorships at two newly founded universities at Frankfurt and Hamburg under the auspices of the Weimar Republic. He taught at Hamburg from until emigrating from Germany in . He taught at Yale from to and at Columbia in . Two important American philosophers were substantially influenced by Cassirer during these years: One can only speculate on what this influence might have been if his life had not been cut short suddenly by a heart attack while walking on the streets of New York City on April 13, . The latter, in particular, is a magisterial and deeply original contribution to both the history of philosophy and the history of science. In both the Leibniz book and *Das Erkenntnisproblem*, then, Cassirer interprets the development of modern thought as a whole from the perspective of the basic philosophical principles of Marburg neo-Kantianism: Cassirer must thus be ranked as one of the very greatest intellectual historians of the twentieth-century and, indeed, as one of the founders of this discipline as it came to be practiced after . He continued to contribute to intellectual history broadly conceived throughout his career most notably, perhaps, in his fundamental studies of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment [Cassirer a,] , and he had a major influence on intellectual history throughout the century. Aside from the history of science see above , Cassirer also decisively influenced intellectual historians more generally, including, notably, the eminent intellectual and cultural historian Peter Gay and the distinguished art historian Erwin Panofsky see, e. For Cohen, this process is modelled on the methods of the infinitesimal calculus in this connection, especially, see [Cohen]. Beginning with the idea of a continuous series or function, our problem is to see how such a series can be a priori generated step-by-step. The mathematical concept of a differential shows us how this can be done, for the differential at a point in the domain of a given function indicates how it is to be continued on succeeding points. This theory, for Cassirer, is an artifact of traditional Aristotelian logic; and his main idea, accordingly, is that developments in modern formal logic the mathematical theory of relations allows us definitively to reject such abstractionism and thus philosophical empiricism on behalf of the genetic conception of knowledge. In this way, we can conceive all the structures in our sequence as continuously converging, as it were, on a final or limit structure, such that all previous structures in the sequence are approximate special or limiting cases of this final structure. The idea of such an endpoint of the sequence is only a regulative ideal in the Kantian sense it is only progressively approximated but never in fact actually realized. In explicitly embracing late nineteenth-century work on the foundations of mathematics, Cassirer comes into very close proximity with early twentieth-century analytic philosophy. Indeed, Cassirer takes the modern mathematical logic implicit in the work of Dedekind and Hilbert, and explicit in the work of Gottlob Frege and the early Bertrand Russell, as providing us with our primary tool for moving beyond the empiricist abstractionism due ultimately to Aristotelian syllogistic. Nevertheless, and here is where Cassirer diverges from most of the analytic tradition, this modern theory of the concept only provides us with a genuine and complete alternative to Aristotelian abstractionism and philosophical empiricism when it is embedded within the genetic conception of knowledge. For we no longer require that any particular mathematical structure be fixed for all time, but only that the historical-developmental sequence of such structures continuously converge. So it is no wonder that, subsequent to taking up the professorship at Hamburg in , Cassirer devotes the rest of his career to this new philosophy of symbolic forms. Warburg was an eminent art historian with a particular interest in ancient cult, ritual, myth, and magic as sources of archetypal forms of emotional expression later manifested in Renaissance art, and the Library therefore contained abundant

materials both on artistic and cultural history and on ancient myth and ritual. In particular, they lie at a deeper, autonomous level of spiritual life which then gives rise to the more sophisticated forms by a dialectical developmental process. From mythical thought, religion and art develop; from natural language, theoretical science develops. The most basic and primitive type of symbolic meaning is expressive meaning, the product of what Cassirer calls the expressive function *Ausdrucksfunktion* of thought, which is concerned with the experience of events in the world around us as charged with affective and emotional significance, as desirable or hateful, comforting or threatening. It is this type of meaning that underlies mythical consciousness, for Cassirer, and which explains its most distinctive feature, namely, its total disregard for the distinction between appearance and reality. Similarly, there is no essential difference in efficacy between the living and the dead, between waking experiences and dreams, between the name of an object and the object itself, and so on. Working together with the fundamentally pragmatic orientation towards the world exhibited in the technical and instrumental use of tools and artifacts, it is in natural language, according to Cassirer, that the representative function of thought is then most clearly visible. We are now able to distinguish the enduring thing-substance, on the one side, from its variable manifestations from different points of view and on different occasions, on the other, and we thereby arrive at a new fundamental distinction between appearance and reality. This distinction is then expressed in its most developed form, for Cassirer, in the linguistic notion of propositional truth and thus in the propositional copula. The distinction between appearance and reality, as expressed in the propositional copula, then leads dialectically to a new task of thought, the task of theoretical science, of systematic inquiry into the realm of truths. So it is here, and only here, that the generalized and purified form of neo-Kantianism distinctive of the Marburg School gives an accurate characterization of human thought. Recent commentators [Skidelsky] [Moss] have illuminatingly built on this circumstance in further articulating the relationship between Cassirer and Hegel. Hegel had conceived nature *Natur* and spirit *Geist* as two different expressions of a single divine infinite Reason, which manifests itself temporally from two different points of view. His project of an encyclopedia of philosophical sciences had three parts, the logic, the philosophy of nature, and the philosophy of spirit, where the logic had the task of depicting the dialectical conceptual structure of infinite divine Reason itself. But this Hegelian project for securing the ultimate logico-metaphysical identity of nature and spirit found ever fewer followers as the century progressed, as the rising tide of neo-Kantianism "aided by further developments within the natural sciences instigated by Hermann von Helmholtz " undermined the appeal of the original *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling and Hegel together with their Absolute Reason. The result was the problem of the *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften* as it presented itself to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Whereas intersubjective validity in the natural sciences rests on universal laws of nature ranging over all physical places and times, an analogous type of intersubjective validity arises in the cultural sciences independently of such laws. Universal cultural meaning thereby emerges only asymptotically, in a way similar to the genetic conception of knowledge of the Marburg School now seen as based on the significative function of thought. Rather than an abstract mathematical relation of backwards-directed inclusion, however, we are concerned, in the historical cultural sciences, with a hermeneutical relation of backwards-directed interpretation and reinterpretation " and, as a result, there is no possibility, in these sciences, of reliably predicting the future. In , however, Cassirer published a review of [Heidegger], which took a different approach from his remarks at Davos. By building the Marburg conception of knowledge, in his new philosophy of culture, on top of the more primitive forms of mythical thought [*Ausdruckswahrnehmen*] and ordinary language [*Dingwahrnehmen*], Cassirer takes himself to have done justice to the insights of both Hegel and Heidegger while avoiding both the infinite divine reason of the former and the radical human finitude of the latter. In the case of the idea of transcendental freedom, for example, we are only able to determine it negatively from a theoretical point of view , as a species of causality that is not bound by the conditions of time-determination governing the phenomenal world. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, however, Kant asserts that transcendental freedom acquires a determinate content from pure practical reason, through our immediate awareness of the moral law as normatively binding on our will as a fact of reason , and that the practical objective reality thereby conferred on this idea can then be transferred to the ideas of God

and Immortality. This is because the moral law unconditionally commands us to seek the Highest Good “the realization of the Kingdom of Ends here on earth” which is an infinite task requiring infinite practical faith and hope. The resulting divergence from the indeterminate and merely potential infinity arising within theoretical reason is visible in the famous passage on the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me at the end of the Critique of Practical Reason, from which Cassirer quotes in his review of Heidegger. But Cassirer, as we have just seen, has now achieved a parallel result though his methodological distinction between the natural and the cultural sciences. But, at the same time, we thereby also avoid fatalistic pessimism with its prophecies and visions of decline. Bibliography Selected works by Cassirer: Translated as Substance and Function. Translated as The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms. Yale University Press, Translated as Language and Myth. The Phenomenology of Knowledge. Bemerkungen zu Martin Heideggers Kantinterpretation. Translated as The Philosophy of the Enlightenment. Princeton University Press, Translated as Determinism and Indeterminism in Modern Physics. Eine Studie zur Schwedischen Philosophie der Gegenwart. A, Band 7, Nr. Translated as The Logic of the Humanities. Translated as The Logic of the Cultural Sciences. Schwemmer, Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte. Secondary and Other Relevant Literature: Translated as The Mechanization of the World Picture. Oxford University Press, Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger. An Interpretation, 2 vols. Translated as Being and Time. Philosophie der symbolischen Formen. Indiana University Press, Translated together with a protocol of the Davos disputation with Cassirer as Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics. Zu den Grundlagen transzendentaler Wissenschafts- und Kulturtheorie. Translated as Galileo Studies. Symbolic Forms and History. Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance. The Last Philosopher of Culture.

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