Ernst Cassirer

Philosophy of the Symbolic

Edited by Arno Schubbach*

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Abstract: The historical beginnings of Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of culture remain unclear. For it is not apparent how his major philosophy of culture and the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, published in the 1920s, emerged from his earlier epistemological work and *Substance and Function* from 1910. However, this gap can be filled to a certain extent by the "Disposition" of a "Philosophy of the Symbolic" from 1917 that could be reconstructed from Cassirer's literary estate and is documented in this contribution. In the preceding "Introduction" an overview of Cassirer's text is given and some consequences for our general understanding of Cassirer's project of a philosophy of culture are put up for discussion.

Keywords: philosophy of culture, Ernst Cassirer, Neo-Kantianism, Philosophy of Symbolic Forms

Editor's Introduction

The historical development of Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of culture arising from his earlier theory of scientific knowledge remains somewhat obscure. Not that there were too few texts available unfolding the one as well as the other: Cassirer's epistemology is developed in his major work *Substance and Function* from 1910, his philosophy of culture is extensively documented in the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* that appeared in three volumes from 1923 to 1929. In addition, further texts, especially from the 1930s, were edited from his literary estate and offer valuable insights into the continued development of Cassirer's philosophy of culture and his reflections on its foundations.¹ Yet, there is only a small number of texts providing insight into the historical transition from Cassirer's epistemology to his philosophy

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¹ I am referring here to the edition *Ernst Cassirer – Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte* (ECN), which made accessible many important texts especially for the period after the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.

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*Corresponding author: Arno Schubbach, Philosophisches Seminar, Universität Basel, Basel, Switzerland, E-mail: a.schubbach@unibas.ch. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4536-3940>

of culture and their systematic relation: Between 1910 and 1923, Cassirer mainly presented two studies in the history of ideas, namely *Freedom and Form* (1916) and *Kant's Life and Thought* (1918). But their systematic significance for the development of Cassirer's own thought and the beginnings of his philosophy of culture is not obvious.

However, this gap can be filled to a certain extent. In Cassirer's literary estate, we find extensive records cataloged as "research notes" concerning the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, which have been largely ignored by Cassirer scholars.² Among them, one is able to reconstruct a text of 32 pages that was titled by Cassirer himself as "Philosophy of the Symbolic" and dated June 13, 1917.³ Clearly, this text should not be read as a major treatise. It is rather a first outline, a "General Disposition", as Cassirer calls it in the title. However, this "Disposition" allows valuable insights into the historical beginnings of Cassirer's later philosophy of culture as well as its systematic framework. Therefore, this text will be documented below and made available to the research community for the first time in English translation.⁴

In the present introduction, I will take a fresh look at the disposition of the "Philosophy of the Symbolic," aiming at Cassirer's framework and basic understanding of 'the symbolic'. For this purpose, I shall, in the main section, give an overview over Cassirer's disposition. In the conclusion, I highlight three main aspects of Cassirer's outline of a philosophy of culture and of his concept of 'the symbolic' that is surprisingly, but not without reason, rarely addressed directly in his outline of a "Philosophy of the Symbolic".

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² Cassirer's literary estate is stored by the *Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library* at *Yale University* in New Haven, CT, under the archival number GEN MSS 98 and is divided into 54 boxes and 1,083 folders. The research notes on the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* are to be found in box 23, folder 424 – box 24, folder 447 (Volume I); box 26, folder 491 – box 26, folder 501 (Volume 2); and box 28, folder 538 – box 29, folder 548 (Volume 3). On the history of the literary estate, cf. Giroud (2004).

³ The different parts of the text are to be found on folded sheets in GEN MSS 98, box 24, folder 440 (p. 1–8), box 24, folder 441 (p. 9–24), and again box 24, folder 440 (p. 25–32). For a more detailed account of the archival findings and a more extensive justification of the coherence of the reconstructed text, see the section "The Discovery" of the first chapter in Schubbach 2016, pp. 40–50; Schubbach in print. A scan of the text is freely available via the Digital Collections at the Beinecke Library: <http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3542106>, <http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/4099163>, <http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/4099162>.

⁴ Cassirer's original German text is already accessible in the appendix of my study *The Genese of the Symbolic* (cf. Schubbach 2016). This study discusses the beginnings of Cassirer's philosophy of culture and its further development in more detail and will be published in English this year, see Schubbach in print.

Overview

A brief survey of the disposition of a “Philosophy of the Symbolic” shall begin with an overview over its basic structure. Cassirer sketches his approach in five steps: “(I) The Psychology of the Symbolic”, “(II) The Logic of the Symbolic”, “(III) The Number-Function (N)”, “(IV) General Doctrine of Knowledge”, “(V) The Fundamental Problems of Aesthetics”, and “(VI) The Metaphysics of the Symbolic”.⁵ At first glance, this order may seem puzzling. Already the starting point of a “Psychology of the Symbolic” may surprise some. Cassirer follows a Kantian and neo-Kantian tradition that, since Hermann Cohen’s interpretation of Kant, had always opposed any psychologism that would fail to recognize the normative dimension of the validity of knowledge (cf. Anderson 2005, esp. 298–307). Against this backdrop, it does not seem very likely that Cassirer approaches a “Philosophy of the Symbolic” starting from a ‘psychology’. Yet, readers more familiar with Cassirer will recall that his major epistemological work from 1910, *Substance and Function*, ended precisely with a chapter on the “Psychology of Relations” (cf. Cassirer 1923, pp. 326–346). Consequently, Cassirer presumably takes up his older approach and now develops it further under the concept of the symbolic instead of that of relations.

How then, is such a neo-Kantian psychology to be understood? First of all, it is worth remembering that already Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* is by no means free of all psychology (cf. Hatfield 1992, esp. 209–217). Admittedly, he critically opposes a psychological or “physiological derivation” (Kant 1998, p. 221) of cognition in the style of Locke: Instead of retracing the psychological or physiological origin of cognition from the most basic ‘sensible impressions’ provided by empirical perception, he aims at working out the forms and laws of knowledge and refers, for this purpose, to the faculties of consciousness, i.e., to “that which our own cognitive faculty (merely prompted by sensible impressions) provides out of itself” (Kant 1998, p. 136). Accordingly, Kant’s ‘psychology’ would therefore have little to do with the modern empirical and often naturalistic research that we associate with psychology, but rather invokes the “original sources (capacities or faculties of the soul),” because they are supposed to “contain the conditions of the possibility of all experience” (Kant 1998, p. 225). The key point of Kant’s approach is, however, that these conditions, the forms and laws that characterize the faculties in this way, also determine the possible objects of experience. This correlation of the condition

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⁵ Cassirer’s disposition is quoted without graphic elements such as underlining. The page numbers correspond to the count of the pages, which are paginated by Cassirer’s own hand only up to page 8. They can be found in the following documentation of the disposition at the foot of the text.

of cognition and its objects is the starting point and the fundamental premise of the neo-Kantian epistemology since Cohen's seminal reading of Kant. Thus, Cassirer simply assumes, without speculating on the faculties of human beings, that it is the relational or symbolic structure of experience that ensures the determination of its objects.

Consequently, a "Psychology of Relations" or a "Psychology of the Symbolic" aim at the relational or the symbolic structures that condition both the conscious experience and the objects of experience. In the "Psychology of the Symbolic" this question primarily comes down to the temporal relatedness of each experience. This involves the aspect of recollection, which Cassirer relates to Kant's consideration of "reproduction and recognition" (p. 3; cf. Kant 1998, pp. 228–234), and the aspect of "anticipation," (p. 6) in which Cassirer sees present "(practical) tendencies towards movement" (p. 7). Cassirer's argument opposes any reduction of experience to isolatable, purely momentary elements (cf. p. 3 and 5f.) and ultimately concludes that any presentation already presupposes the temporal structure of representation: "Depiction of the not-now in the now[.] This the secret of representational consciousness [*Vorstellungsbewusstsein*] as such, such that without this putative representation there is simply no presentation possible" (p. 4). In many respects, these lines anticipate the 'psychology' immanent in the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (cf. Cassirer 1955, pp. 98–105) and especially the conception of "symbolic pregnance" in the third volume (cf. Cassirer 1957, pp. 191–204, esp. pp. 201–204).⁶

At first glance, Cassirer's "[a]nalysis of time-consciousness" (p. 4) shows astonishing parallels to Husserl's "Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness," which was not published until 1928, and especially his elaboration of "retention" and "protention" as constitutive aspects of the present moment (cf. Husserl 1991, pp. 88f.). However, the brunt of Cassirer's analysis is quite different: His primary interest is not an analysis of 'internal time-consciousness' establishing its intentional relation to the world in itself. Instead, he aims at describing the interrelatedness of "the 'inner' and the 'outer'" (p. 1) constitutive for psychic life as such. Therefore, he frames his discussion of time-consciousness with the question of expression, i.e., of the "function of expression [...] as constitutive of the 'existence' of the mental itself" (p. 1). But he not only conceives of such an expression as enabled by 'the symbolic'. After the analysis of time-consciousness, he explicates "the symbolic function" more radically "as a 'transition' from 'inner' to 'outer'" (p. 8). This is also the reason why he illustrates this "'symbolic' relationship" in turn by its – presumably – most elementary example: the "relation of mind [*Seele*]

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⁶ Matherne (2018, 152) also suggests "that we should conceive of his [Cassirer's] psychology of culture as a more mature version of his psychology of relations". The "Psychology of the Symbol" would be a connecting link here that would allow this question to be considered in more detail.

and lived body [*Leib*]” (p. 2). Noticeably, “the relation between body and soul” provides Cassirer’s philosophy of culture from its very beginning with “the prototype and model for a purely symbolic relation,” as Cassirer also states in the third volume of the *Philosophy of the Symbolic Forms* (Cassirer 1957, p. 100). But body and soul here do not form a dualistic ontology; instead, they are the elements of a “double relational unity” (p. 2), which in turn presupposes the ‘symbolic function’.

Thus, the “Psychology of the Symbolic” takes a different approach than Kant’s ‘psychology’. Both explore the structures that condition subjective experience, as well as its possible objects. Different from Kant, however, Cassirer does not justify these structures by recurring to cognitive faculties and their forms or laws. Instead, he links the conceptual relations or symbolic structures of experience to a constitutive interrelatedness between ‘the inner’ and ‘the outer,’ the mind and the body, and thus, ultimately, situates experience in cultural and social contexts.⁷ That is why the “Psychology of the Symbolic” abandons any speculation about the allegedly cryptic depths of consciousness. Instead, it considers consciousness in the context of different forms of symbolization and their historical development.⁸

This approach has far-reaching consequences which become clear right away in the ensuing second section of the disposition. “The Logic of the Symbolic” jumps right into the discussion of logic in the mathematical sense and deals with the logical treatment of concepts. This is somewhat surprising, because, against the Kantian background of Cassirer’s philosophy, one could expect a rather different kind of ‘logic’ that follows a ‘psychology’ in the Neo-Kantian sense discussed. Indeed, Kant’s ‘transcendental psychology’ culminates in the “Transcendental Logic” of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which is supposed to ensure the relationship of cognition to objects. According to Kant, it is the faculty of understanding that constitutes this relationship, which is why the “Transcendental Logic” consists in an inquiry into this faculty and its *a priori* concepts. The key challenge in this part of the *Critique* is to explain how the understanding, even though it cannot refer to objects directly, can nevertheless do so by means of referring to intuitions. For Cassirer, however, this discussion is no longer obligatory and in fact quite unnecessary. Neither does he start from the Kantian distinction between understanding and its concepts on the one hand and sensibility and its intuitions on the other, nor does he attempt to clarify the general relationship between cognition

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⁷ At the end of his “Psychology of the Symbolic”, Cassirer also hints to the social dimension of expression: “every function of expression is already something internal-external – does not merely ‘signify’ one such[.] Likewise via the function of expression (of the ‘imitation’ of the expression), there initially exists for *itself* an animated ‘thou,’ another subject” (p. 8).

⁸ With this shift to a functional and historical *a priori*, Cassirer ties in with Hermann Cohen’s further development of transcendental philosophy, see Schmitz-Rigal 2002, pp. 50–84.

and its objects by virtue of a reference to cognitive faculties. Instead, he simply assumes that it is the relational or symbolic structure of experience that determines the objects of experience. Said in other words: By addressing the symbolic structures of experience, the “Psychology of the Symbolic” simultaneously ensures the most basic relation of experience to its possible objects and thus already does the work of Kant’s “Transcendental Logic”.

At first glance, then, Cassirer’s “Logic of the Symbolic” has no connection to Kant’s “Transcendental Logic”; it assumes that the task of the latter is already settled and goes on to discuss the nature of mathematical logic. At second glance, however, Cassirer’s treatment of logic implies a critique of the “Transcendental Logic”, which appears only on its surface as not concerned with mathematical logic. At closer examination, however, it does maintain a subtle connection to it. For Kant determines the elementary structure of the understanding, which enables it to relate to objects, as the act of judgement. That is why he unfolds the forms of judgment in reference to Aristotelian logic, in order to determine the *a priori* concepts of understanding and their relation to possible objects of experience (cf. Kant 1998, p. 210–214; Longuenesse 2001, pp. 73–166). Put more simply, Kant grounds experience in general on structures which he derives from the logic of his time. However, around 1900 this logic was replaced by quantificational logic, which Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead adopted as the basis for reconstructing all mathematics by virtue of elementary relations. It is this theory of relations that Cassirer embraces in *Substance and Function*. He understands it as the ground of all cognition and its objects. In doing so, he remains within the Kantian framework and modernizes it at the same time, namely insofar as he – like Kant and Cohen – still conceives of the structure of judgment as constituting the fundamental structures of experience, but also grounds these structures in the new mathematical theory of relations (cf. Cassirer 1923, pp. 326). By contrast, the “Philosophy of the Symbolic” goes beyond this framework by detaching the structures of experience from mathematical logic. Thus, the “Psychology of the Symbolic” mentions neither judgment nor concept, since they are now the topic of the “Logic of the Symbolic.” And the latter discusses the theory of relations and concepts without merging them with the general structures of experience. One of the central points of this presentation is then that Aristotelian logic, from which Kant extracted the fundamental structures of all experience, is to be derived from a specific treatment of concepts in mathematical logic.⁹ In other words, the seemingly universal logical foundations of all experience which Kant assumed, turn out

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⁹ “The whole of symbolic logic must be derivable from this – sub- and superordination of concepts, of judgments, and of conclusions (Implementation: The developed form of Aristotelian logic is this symbolic logic!)” (p. 16).

to be too narrow. These ‘foundations’ are, according to Cassirer, not universal at all – they are based on mathematical logic and its specific understanding of concepts.

This twist makes clear that the “Philosophy of the Symbolic,” while grounding experience and its objects on the symbolic, considers at the same time the latter with reference to the specific forms of symbolization (cf. also Cassirer 1955, pp. 93–98). Correspondingly, in the sections on both logic and aesthetics, just as in the section on psychology, Cassirer stresses that the symbol is to be understood as a condition for the particular field under consideration.¹⁰ At the same time, he puts his effort not so much into clarifying his concept of ‘the symbolic’, as rather into safeguarding its various forms and exploring their respective characteristics. Thus, in respect to logic he highlights its “particular application of the symbolic” (p. 17), and in respect to aesthetics he stresses its “specific ‘point of view’” (p. 21). It seems clear that both the generality of the symbolic – encompassing all forms of experience – and the specificity of its different forms – like logic or aesthetics – moves to the center of Cassirer’s considerations.¹¹

The new focus on both the generality and the specificity of the symbolic brings into light not only the particular forms, but also the differentiations within those forms. A good example of this is Cassirer’s new approach to the specific form of logic. First, Cassirer rejects the plausible attempt to approach the “Logic of the Symbolic” with a look at the role of symbols or signs in mathematical logic, because he argues with reference to Leibniz’ or Lambert’s understanding of “sign language” that they presuppose that “the concepts are already given, are known by other means” (p. 9). In contrast, he insists on “the objectifying function and significance of the ‘sign’” (p. 11), but hardly explains this function or the role of the sign in greater detail. Instead, he turns to the “Logic of Subsumption” (p. 12), beginning with the observation that concepts can be, and indeed often are, “disparate, ‘heterogenous’” (p. 13), depending on the underlying relations generating them. For example, the concept of natural numbers and the concept of triangles are heterogenous. But it seems possible to relate them to one another, when one, for example, counts triangles.

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10 Thus, Cassirer conceives “the ‘symbolic’ moment as a constituent of the logical itself, therefore as a moment of the concept-function itself as such” (p. 10). Taking up this thread, he similarly notes with regard to aesthetics: “Once again, what should initially be put into question is not the role of the symbolic in aesthetics (the question is almost exclusively posed in this manner!), but rather the constitutive role of the ‘symbolic’ in delineating the aesthetic ‘point of view’, the aesthetic ‘region!’ Thus, it is precisely analogous to the above case of the logical!” (p. 21).

11 For this shift, Cassirer’s rereading of Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and especially of its so-called “First Introduction” proved to be suggestive and instructive, as I tried to show in detail in the second chapter “The Empirical Transformation of the Transcendental” in Schubbach 2016, pp. 141–237; Schubbach in print.

Following Cassirer, the task of formal logic is thus “to overcome this heterogeneity” of concepts by considering only their extents and their mereological relations to each other: the “‘form’ [of logic, A.S.] consists simply in the fact that it abstracts from the specific form of concepts” (p. 15).

Thus, logic from the outset considers only the extent of concepts, such that it is not able to grasp scientific knowledge in its entirety, which is built on the unfolding of specific concepts and develops into a diversity of fields and disciplines. Therefore, in the following section, Cassirer supplements the logical perspective on the concept by considering its development into “the whole system of exact sciences” (p. 18) starting from the “number function.” Yet this attempt to order first the various fields of mathematics and then also different exact sciences – meaning, in effect, that Cassirer seems to reduce them to their mathematical basis – runs into considerable problems, as I tried to show in detail elsewhere (see Schubbach 2016, pp. 86–103; Schubbach in print). However, it can nonetheless be stated that with the new concept of ‘the symbolic’ a shift of focus to the specificity of scientific disciplines and fields can be observed. This shift is also recognizable in the following, very short section “IV) General Doctrine of Knowledge”: Although this “‘epistemology of the symbolic’,” following a marginal note, is intended to draw on *Substance and Function*, it is meant to connect the epistemological discussion of “empirical science” with that of “science of history” (p. 20). In this way it not only goes beyond the scope of Cassirer’s older epistemological study, but also realigns the focus on the differences between the sciences and envisions their possible systematic order that is to be understood ultimately as a part of a larger and encompassing order of symbolic forms.

In respect to aesthetics and the arts, Cassirer again highlights both the “constitutive role of the ‘symbolic’” (p. 20) and the importance of “the symbolic peculiar to it” (p. 23). However, this systematic intention hardly goes beyond a statement of intent. Admittedly, Cassirer makes very clear that he regards classical concepts of aesthetics, such as semblance and play, imitation or illusion, as unhelpful, indeed as obstacles, for bringing into focus the specific aesthetic point of view and its form of symbolization, because they measure aesthetics by the alien “standard of absolute reality” (p. 21). But he hardly characterizes the aesthetic point of view in a positive way. The presumably later added note on Lessing’s *Laocoon* at the end of the section can thus be seen as a kind of prelude to the pending exploration of this new field (cf. p. 24).

Overall, we have seen how Cassirer simultaneously focuses on the generality of the symbolic and the specificity of symbolic forms. With this, he outlines a philosophy of culture that emphasizes its plurality from the outset and understands thus plurality as an intrinsic value of culture. It is this aspect that Cassirer renders the subject of the concluding section of his disposition “The

Metaphysics of the Symbolic” (p. 25). As is typical for Cassirer, he seemingly takes a new approach in this section by raising the question of what the relationship between truth and reality is. After a few references to the history of this philosophical problem, the first key point of this discussion is the well-known Kantian motto of the “Copernican turn”: “What is essential lies in the transition to the positively specific characteristic of the knowledge-function: this function does not reproduce the object, but rather it constitutes this object – indeed, it ‘is’ the object itself.” (p. 28f.) In consequence, truth can “be defined immanently”, i.e., independently of an “external ‘original’” (p. 29). Therefore, its inherent symbolic structure can move into focus, because it is not directly referenced and obliterated in a presupposed reality. This leads to the second and more original key point in this section: Truth conceived in such a way allows and enables its own inherent plurality. It is the plurality of “various symbolic levels”, of “Knowledge, Art, Philosophy, Religion” (p. 30) that takes center stage in the final pages of the disposition.

There are at least two reasons for this. A first reason lies in the fact that Cassirer wants to place all emphasis on the value of this plurality. Thus, the plurality of symbolic forms is related to “the process of self-renewing and increasing life itself” (p. 30) and Cassirer stresses its inherent value by conceiving it as “the concrete fullness of the diverse itself” (p. 31). A second reason for Cassirer’s focus on the plurality of culture is related to the systematic task of clarifying how this plurality is to be understood. Cassirer’s own formulations are by no means always clear and invite misunderstanding. The reference to ‘symbolic levels’ seems to suggest that they can be ordered hierarchically. The formulation of a “path through these symbolic levels” (p. 30) seems to suggest that they form a certain sequential order and are secondary to a specific progression and goal. Against this background, Cassirer himself presumably sees the danger of evoking the impression of a simplistic Hegelian model of dialectical development which could in turn cast doubt on his emphasis on the plurality of culture. That is why, arguably, he refers to Hegel and distinguishes his own approach in two main respects from him. First, Cassirer highlights that the intrinsic value of the development of the ‘symbolic levels’ lies not in its supposed goal, but exclusively in its process: “the path through these symbolic levels is synonymous for us with the goal” (p. 30); “in this path and on this path we have life” (p. 31). Second, the relations between these different symbolic levels or forms cannot be grasped from the point of view of one specific form, as can be seen when Cassirer objects to Hegel’s dialectic and its arguably imputed prioritization of logic (cf. p. 31 and also Cassirer 1955, pp. 83f.). Cassirer thus rejects not only the Kantian assumption that logic provides the universal foundation of experience, but also the Hegelian claim that the relationship of the various forms of experience to one another could finally be summarized within the terms of a logic from the absolute standpoint.

However, these distinctions from Hegel teach us little about how Cassirer himself conceives the relationship between the different ‘symbolic levels’ or specific forms of symbolization, how he envisions the ‘path’ and ‘process’ through them. At the beginning of Cassirer’s new project, many questions arise and will have to be dealt with in the course of the work on it.¹² But Cassirer’s “Philosophy of the Symbolic” is unambiguously committed to the plurality or diversity of forms: “in fullness and in context, in the particularity of specifically diverse symbolic expressions, lies for us the unity and the fullness of the world, of reality” (p. 31).

Conclusion

Cassirer’s disposition of a “Philosophy of the Symbolic” from 1917 raises many questions that remain unasked by Cassirer and even less answered. However, it must be kept in mind that this is but a first outline of a project that could only be realized through years of intensive work and finally would not come to a completion even in the three extensive volumes of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* that were published until 1929. Nevertheless, as this introduction hopes to have made clear, this outline is of great interest to Cassirer scholars. It provides new insights into the beginnings of his philosophy of culture and its development from his earlier epistemological work. In particular, it reveals the continuity between Cassirer’s theory of the concept and its constitutive role for scientific knowledge and his approach to the symbolic as a condition of all forms of cultural expression.

It is true that here – as in his later writings – Cassirer spends little effort in explicating the concept of the symbolic. However, the recurring terminology, especially the notion of the “series” or “series-function” (pp. 4f. and 32; see also Cassirer 1923, pp. 16–26), reveals that both the symbolic and the concept shall address the problem of “representation” in a very specific form. Both ask for the way in which a certain element is supposed to ‘represent’ something – and both answer this question by construing this element as a member of a relational or symbolic structure that it itself presupposes and thereby can also ‘represent’. This topic is crucial in the “Psychology of the Symbolic” (cf. p. 5f.), but also in the “Logic of the Symbolic” (cf. p. 11) and is summed up finally in the “epistemology of the symbolic” as follows: “[t]he particular as ‘representation’ of the general case” (p. 20). This approach to the problem of ‘representation’ is known from Cassirer’s epistemological work (cf. Cassirer 1923, pp. 282–285), but within the context of this disposition it seems to become the basis for Cassirer’s understanding of the

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¹² In more detail, I examined these questions and their development in the early stages of the project in the third chapter “The Genesis of the Symbolic and Cassirer’s Engagement with the Cultural Sciences” in Schubbach 2016, 246–356, and in Schubbach in print.

symbolic. In contrast, “the symbolic” and “representation” are only marginally addressed on the basis of a theory of signs, which would be expected from the point of view of a semiotic reading of Cassirer.¹³ The sign is rarely mentioned: in the note on Lessing’s *Laocoon* and its analysis of the various arts and of their “specific ‘signs’” (p. 24); in the context of logic with reference to Leibniz’ or Lambert’s understanding of “sign language” which Cassirer seems to regard as peripheral at best and misleading at worst. Finally, Cassirer’s insistence that “the objectifying function and significance of the ‘sign’ must be recognized” seems to take a semiotic perspective, but ultimately leads back to the “‘relational’ nexus” that constitutes our “experiential reality” (pp. 11f.). Thus, the problem of ‘representation’ is not formulated on the basis of sign theory, but framed by the question of how an element can signify another element or represent something general, because it is a member of a series or part of a structure (cf. p. 5 and Cassirer 1923, p. 300). It is this basic approach that we find also in the programmatic “Introduction” to the first volume of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (cf. Cassirer 1955, pp. 100–102 and 105–107).¹⁴

The disposition also highlights a second important aspect of Cassirer’s philosophy of culture. The assumption of the generality of the symbolic is conjoined with a new methodological focus on the specificity of its forms, like language and myth, art and science, and the further differentiations within these forms, like certain languages and particular myths, various arts and different sciences (cf. Cassirer 1955, pp. 76–78). Cassirer understands the symbolic as general condition of culture, but he does not limit the question to the most general and *a priori* conditions. Even less does he attempt to derive the different cultural fields from a presupposed concept of ‘the symbolic’. Quite the opposite, Cassirer starts with the specific and historically unfolded various regions of culture in order to reflect on their both general and specific symbolic conditions. In doing so, he bases his philosophy of culture on the cultural facts as established in empirical research about languages, myths and religions, arts and sciences (cf. also Luft 2015, pp. 12–16). Thereby, he connects his philosophy of culture and its basic concept of the symbolic with the empirical research carried out in cultural studies of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century and decisively locates his philosophy in an interdisciplinary context – an approach with which philosophy often struggles to this day.

Finally, the relevance of Cassirer’s “Philosophy of the Symbolic” can also be seen in its ethical-political stakes. For the disposition may reveal the emphasis that Cassirer places on the plurality of culture less cautiously than Cassirer’s published texts

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¹³ For an exemplary semiotic interpretation of Cassirer see Krois 2004, esp. pp. 16f.

¹⁴ Put simply: Cassirer does not take as his starting point a theory of the sign and its signification, but of representation in the sense of “*Darstellung*” – a concept that was introduced by Kant in his first *Critique* and then further developed in the third, see Schubbach (2017, 2019). I hope to further elaborate on this approach elsewhere.

do. It seems obvious that Cassirer understands the plurality inherent in the symbolic and the diversity of forms in which it unfolds as an ethical or political value of its own. To emphasize this value, he makes recourse to a pathos-laden language committed to life and its fullness. This language, however, was particularly typical of philosophers and intellectuals at the time who emphasized the unity of life and thus considered the plurality of culture rather as a symptom of its decline and dissolution (see exemplary Joël 1914, esp. pp. 50f.). Cassirer, in contrast, takes a different angle. It is the plurality of culture that constitutes its life, its fullness and its value. Occasionally, these pages even create the impression that Cassirer sticks only to the singular of ‘the symbolic’ in order to intensify the irreducible diversity and richness of cultural regions and points of view: “The symbol in this sense – this unity, which always remains the same in the next case and the next, again and again – this is perhaps the final form of metaphysics that is possible for us!” (p. 32) For this unity and sameness of the symbol refers from the outset to its unfolding into a diversity of symbolic forms, each of which is specific, but at the same time related to and reflecting others: “Language, Art, Concept, Myth fused into one – each reciprocally lighting up – reflecting – this is the highest point to which even our ‘reflection’ can advance” (p. 31). In the midst of World War I, when Cassirer outlined his philosophy of culture, he saw furious cultural criticisms prevailing. But in the plurality and diversity, the fullness and richness of culture, he found a rationale for a different approach – and a reason to oppose the critics of culture that endangered the future of culture.

Note on the editorial format of the following “Philosophy of the Symbolic” by Ernst Cassirer

The following documentation of Cassirer’s “Disposition” of the “Philosophy of the Symbolic” does not pursue the goal of a critical edition, but is intended to make the text accessible as a diplomatic edition for scholarly research. Therefore, it also dispenses with any commentary. The 32 pages of Cassirer’s manuscript are printed page-by-page in English translation by D.J. Hobbs. The graphic structure of the pages has been reproduced schematically. The text reproduces Cassirer’s own handwritten corrections with the following conventions:

- Text – Underlining
- ~~Text~~ – Deletion
- Te\x/t – Insertion between the lines
- Text* – Uncertainty concerning the original text

At the bottom of each page, a page number in square brackets is given, which corresponds to Cassirer’s pagination on the first eight pages and is then continued on the following pages.

Ernst Cassirer:

“Philosophy of the Symbolic” (General Disposition) Gen. 13.VI.17
Sheet I

verte!

I) The Psychology of the Symbolic

A) In general –

The problem of “expression” – the “inner”
 and the “outer” – The false dualism
 between inside and outside: the function of expression
 as a necessary function; as constitutive for the “existence”
 of the mental itself.

In the following, discussion and critique of psycho-
 physical “parallelism”

An incorrect question in this “parallelism”; suggests
 the view that there is first an inner,
 which subsequently and accidentally externalizes itself,
 comes to the surface –

Justification for the opposing view:

The inner and the outer not merely additive;
 complementary – but rather correlative.

(In the words of Goethe:

Nothing is inside, nothing is outside...

and of Hegel in the Logic)

Therefore, the body in relation to the mind is no

mere ἄλλο – (nor certainly the radical “other,”

the heterogeneous, as assumed by the entirety
 of dualistic metaphysics)

The deeper flaw in this view lies in the mere fact that one element is initially posited as existent,
 which then “expresses itself” or “discharges” in a process
 In truth, the relationship is just the reverse: the only thing that is given in mental life is the
process as a whole complex – the “state” does not exist for itself, but rather is merely an
 abstraction – There is thus a false, static view of the mental in operation here – In truth, we must
 also begin here with the dynamic – and derive the static from it! (Leads back to Substance and Function)

Also considered physiologically, every excitation of a nerve should already be thought of as a movement – It is never localized restrictively, but rather always already belongs to a whole system of diffuse movements – the excitation (the affect) thus does not “express” itself (as it were, accidentally) in movement, but rather is already movement. Again, an analogy from physics:

1) the (“dead”) matter acted on by forces

2) Dynamic “construction” of matter (Kant, Faraday)

“Atom” as an auxiliary term

2 but rather both are necessarily related to one another.

Knowledge of this necessary relationship annuls all metaphysics of mere “occasionalism.” Every path leads to “occasionalism”: it is the necessary and absolutely logical consequence; whenever this essential correlational unity is misunderstood.

Already here, therefore, we have to take a step that will prove to be fundamental on all levels henceforth:

The relation between mind and lived body must be converted from an “allegorical” relationship into a “symbolic” relationship:

the connected “otherness” into a doubly relational unity

What this unity initially signifies when it is understood purely psychologically; on what it is grounded, on what its necessity is based.

I) “Representation” as a mentally
constitutive basic element

3

a) Evidence of this link

1) in the character of the mental as such
Everything physical \material/ simply is; as a state of
being, which has only a simple existence [*Da=sein*]
and signifies nothing other than itself
Everything that is called “mental” is fundamentally
characterized by the fact that it not only “is,” but
rather goes beyond itself as a mere state of being;
it “signifies” and “means” something else (a second)
and ultimately a whole series of others
[Theory of the intentional and intentional acts
Literature, see: Brentano, Psychology
Uphues,
Husserl, Logical Investigations
Scholastic theory of the intentional]

2) in the character of the basic element of
representation [*Vorstellung*]
Representational consciousness [*Vorstell. Bewusstsein*]
only possible by means of this representative; better:
originally presentative function
(Kant’s synthesis of reproduction and recognition)

- 4 Depiction of the not-now in the now
 This the secret of representational consciousness
 [*Vorstellungsbewusstsein*] as such, such that without
 this putative representation there is simply no
 presentation possible –

(Brief) Analysis of time-consciousness –
 time conditioned by the constantly vanishing
 and constantly self-preserving moment

This passing away and remaining conceived of as
unified first constitutes the concept and the
 phenomenon of time –

It is not that “the” time is the form of inner sense;
 but this basic representative moment is
 simultaneously the precondition of “the” time of
 “consciousness as such”

If, in counting, I forget –...

[The persistent and lasting ego as “correlation
 of apperception.”

(but “ego” here is still all-too-complex
 a concept!)]

If we call this function, by means of which the
 “element” represents the totality of the series, the
 universal series-function R, then the R-function is the
 condition

- 1) of time-consciousness
- 2) of consciousness as such, of “inner
 experience”

because even if I consider a momentary cross section of consciousness, the series-function is operative in it:

Condition both of the consciousness of coexistence and of the consciousness of succession.

5

II) Inadequate “explanations” of this phenomenon (also considered purely psychologically)

The derivation of representation from “association.” It collapses immediately once we have recognized what is ostensibly representation instead as “presentation”: because only the “present” can be associated, and so the apparent explanation here actually runs in a circle.

Return to the fundamental problem in Hume: Kant’s formulation: (problem of causation) How can I comprehend the fact that because of “something” there is a “something else?”

Here, put even more radically:

How can we comprehend the fact that, because a determinate mental state is “given” to me, there is also another [not immediately given] “existing” for us.

This can obviously not be explained by “association”: because association itself contains precisely the same question.

At best, association only means that a and b and c are there in consciousness; but the manner in which they are intertwined, related to one another, such that the one “represents” the other, is not explained thereby – not the ἐντι ψυχῆς, but rather merely ὡςπερ ἐν δουρείῳ ἵπποις

The mere “togetherness” and the mere sequence still says nothing at all concerning the ρ-function; the latter is not explained in so-called “association,” but is rather attained by fraud, implicitly conceived of as involved

[Final resolution: the question is flawed: because the totality, the R-function is what is genuinely “real” – the individual state merely an abstraction]

- 6 Even the problem of causation becomes unsolvable if we first consider the separate elements, then think about their relation –

It is solved by recognizing lawfulness as such (in causality) as a basic synthetic function.]

But this “representative” moment is not sufficient for the unity and for the phenomenon of consciousness as such, and so it is now faced with another. “Consciousness” does not only mean looking back, but also looking ahead; not only representation, but also anticipation. This comes particularly to the fore in will and impulse; but it is a fundamental character of “representation” [*Vorstellung*] as such. Representation [*Vorstellung*] does not only mean the image of something (= from something [*von etwas her*]), but rather a direction to something (= towards something [*auf etwas hin*]).

“Perceptio” is always simultaneously “*percepturitia*,” therefore tendency, striving!

Considered again in the context of time: in the present, not only the past, but also the future is re-presented [*vor=gestellt*] (= pre-formed in productive fantasy)

“No psychologist has yet thought that the imagination

is a necessary ingredient of perception itself” – but this applies first and foremost not only to the reproductive, but to the productive power of imagination, which relates and directs the present to the future, fabricating, as it were, by means of the future.

7

(This directional representation [*Richtungs-vorstellung*] (dp, dp') will also prove to be a psychologically and logically basic characteristic of consciousness)

Psychologically, what must be added here first and foremost is an analysis of the representation of movement [*Bewegungsvorstellung*]: the latter, however, not conceived of as separate, but rather as an integral moment of movement itself. The “represented” [*vorgestellte*] movement is already a moment of the “executed” movement; both intelligible only in and alongside one another.

The “present” of consciousness, its existence thus consists in an intertwining of these relationships to the past and to the future : – of (theoretical) “perceptions” and (practical) tendencies towards movement.

But “theoretical” and “practical” can still not at all be separated here in this primordial form of consciousness!

(Therein lies the legitimate seed of “voluntarist” epistemology (e.g., Dilthey’s Origin of Our Belief in the Reality of the External World, q.v.!; but this moment is usually

8. quite overvalued, as if we were to “infer” an external world, a not-I, from the felt resistance.

This is not the case: no more do we “project” the “impression” into the “external world” by virtue of the *a priori* principle of causation.

Only after this can be discussed:
the symbolic function as a “transition” from “inner” to “outer”
(hitherto discussed purely in the context of the “inner”)
a “transition,” however, that is by no means a μεταβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος, therefore not an “allegory.”

(see the implementation of this sheet, pp. 1 and 2.!)

To develop it more precisely – every function of expression is already something internal-external – does not merely “signify” one such

Likewise via the function of expression (of the “imitation” of the expression), there initially exists for *itself* an animated “thou,” another subject (cf. implementation in Wundt’s *Ethnic Psychology*)

General DispositionSheet II a)

I) The Psychology of the Symbolic

See Sheet I

II) The Logic of the Symbolic

a) First, we must emphasize what we are not dealing with here \initially/

We are by no means \primarily/ dealing with the role of a so-called “symbolic logic” –

Of course, this problem in particular can just as easily be discussed later: see II b!

This is a very mediated and complex problem – and basically not a philosophical problem, but rather a technical one – a question of the practical “notation” of certain items of knowledge and thereby, of course, also the *attainment or rediscovery* of specific connections.

(In this context, symbolic logic, no matter how highly it is valued, can at best be compared with analytic geometry or the algorithm of differential calculus)

Even Leibniz’ outline of the universal characteristic or Lambert’s semiotics do not seem to go beyond this point.

Both are outlines for a sign language, once the concepts are already given, are known by other means: here, however, the point is for us to recognize

the “symbolic” moment as a constituent of the logical itself, therefore as a moment of the concept-function itself \as such/!

(Precisely analogous to the case of the psychological earlier: not the role of the symbolic in mental life, but rather as a condition of the “mental,” as a defining moment thereof – likewise not the symbolic, its use and its fruitfulness in logic, but rather as fundamental for the problem and task of logic itself)

a) The Problem of the Concept

1) Correct and incorrect theory of the concept –
The phenomenon of “representation” (Berkeley!)
Berkeley, in his otherwise correct critique of the “abstract” concept, only overlooks the fact that “representation” [not: association! cf. above, under Psychology!] already – is a concept.

“Power” of the individual to “represent” a totality
Second question: what is “represented?”

Not the individual representations [*Vorstellungen*] and their sum (e.g., the totality of “the” triangles), but rather the constitutive series-function, the epitome of the relationship between member and member (“the” triangle)

General Theory of the Concept (cf. Substance and Function!)

2) Historical Connection

Conflict between “nominalism” and “realism” of the concept.

Relatively correct basic ideas for the solution were contained in “conceptualism” [*Terminismus*] –

but the “concept” [*Terminus*] may not be understood here as – “only a sign,” and thus as an expression of subjective arbitry [*Willkür*], but instead the objectifying function and significance of the ‘sign’ must be recognized!

Of course, this is only possible when the epistemology of the sign-function is understood; when it \is/ recognized that it is already indispensable in the structure of the objective reality of phenomena! – a notion that goes completely beyond the middle ages!

The sign ceases to be merely “nominal” - when

it is understood as a constituent of experiential reality as well (namely of its “relational” nexus). This, however, leads to problems that can only be dealt with in a later context!

b) The Logic of Subsumption

[The “extent” of concepts and its expression in spatial symbolics.]

The derivation of the concept revealed the fact that the “series-principle” on which the concept is based can, in and for itself, be of a variety of types. Every fundamental relation that creates a form for the “attribution” [*Zuordnung*] of contents

or in more complex cases

gives rise to a particular mode of concept-formation. The concepts thus arising, however, exist,

as it were, on a variety of levels, depending on the productive point of view that is decisive here
 – Thus, e.g., thing-concepts and act-concepts
 object-concepts and number-concepts.

Gen. Dispos.
 Sheet II b)

According to the mode of its emergence and validity, the concept of ‚tree‘ cannot be compared with the concept of “5”; the concept of carbohydrates cannot be compared immediately with the concept of π or $\sqrt{-1}$, since the producing “categories” are different.

In the first case, the substance-category:

A thing “has” “property” α ,
 does not have property β

In the second, a pure category of ordering
 one element “follows” in series after another –

In general, all concepts that imply directions
 as spatial directions: above, below, right, left
 negative number

(It is often said here that this should be grasped only
 “intuitively,” but that is a preconception; there are in
 any case pure directional concepts)

The groups of concepts arising in this way are thus
 initially disparate, “heterogeneous.”

But because we are constantly dealing with their reciprocal
relationship (because, e.g., “things” – are “counted,”
 thus thing-concepts and number-concepts are related
 to one another synthetically), there thus arises

the requirement for logic to overcome this heterogeneity by being related to an originary homogeneity.

The intuition of space presents itself as such a homogeneity – the former conceived of not as a qualitatively differentiated “psychological” space, in which merely qualitative differences play a role, above and below, right and left are not interchangeable – but rather as metric space, in which there are only differences of pure quantity, of size.

This explains the fact that, of the concepts – setting aside all the diversity of their “origin,” their “significance” and their productive point of view (producing category) – only their extent (thus, their pure size ratio) is retained

(This “external” relation is possible for all concepts; they all “have” an extent, though this of course says nothing about their otherwise totally diverse constitution, about their specific law of construction. How even the most heterogeneous things can be “counted”).

E.G., triangle, circle

– a series of formations $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta$

If I abandon the form of the specific law of attribution (which is expressed in the “definition” of the triangle or circle), then the only thing that remains for me is the fact that, generally speaking, what is many is fused into one, there are many “instances” of a “concept,” a manifold therefore stands under a “genus.”

So-called “formal” logic comes to a halt at this mere moment of abstraction: its “form” consists simply in the fact that it abstracts from the specific form of concepts (just as number does not take charge of what is “numbered”)

Logic thus achieves the “homogeneity” of concepts by means of a symbolic representation of all conceptual relations in pure spatial relations Relations of extent, of the “greater” and “lesser”; of being-contained-in-one-another and being-contained-outside-one-another.

[On the other hand, however, only this general relation of homogeneity is retained from “metric” space, the greater and lesser, being-inside- and being-outside-one-another as such, not the how-many-times-as-large – thus, the basic provisions of the metric

as such come into question, but not their particularizations, which already arise in the application of the number-concept

Therefore
here also
 $a + a = a!!$

$a \leq b$ but not: $n a = b$
 $n b = a$

[Borderline cases in the “disjunctive” judgment]

In light of all this, the traditional way of dealing with “formal logic” can be explained

(Literature: Fr. Alb. Lange, Logical Studies
Ievons, Principles of Logic
Implementation! Couturat, Algebra of Logic
Schröder, Algebra of Logic

The spatial picture is the completely sufficient symbol for all relations under consideration here, but it is of course a mere-symbol!

And also, not only all differences of direction, but also of form [*Gestalt*] (indeed even of number; see above!) are annulled in it, only circles [remain]; only the general notion of the fundamental relationship of part and whole viewed in the form of space remains!

The whole of symbolic logic must be derivable from this – sub- and superordination of concepts, of judgments, and of conclusions (Implementation: The developed form of Aristotelian logic is this symbolic logic!)

Thereby, of course, we are now, in the context of the logical, already faced with a particular application of the symbolic (which comes about via the relationship of the “conceptual form” to the “spatial form,” thus at by means of one specific attribution). What forces itself upon us here is the general observation that the symbolic function can confront us in a wide variety of phases (and, so to speak, at various “altitudes”).

Gen. Dispos.
Sheet II c)

Not only “formal,” but also “objective” [*gegenständliche*] logic is “symbolic” for us; but both are so in different senses.

The symbolic of the logical function as such [the function ρ of the concept] is the fundamental; the function σ_μ of the logic of extension, in contrast, a particular technical instrument for reproducing very specific relationships and abstractions. –

If this fact is realized, then the struggle against “formal logic” or “syllogistics” essentially comes to a halt

To be sure, this logic cannot “invent” anything (speaking in terms of content), but this is also not its essential aim; it belongs to a completely different sphere [“stratum”] of consideration.

Even the “knowledge of objects” indeed remains – symbolic, given that it does not give the “thing in itself” – but, in contrast to the mere logic of extension, it is of course a considerably expanded framework (as in the case of the Copernican vs. the Ptolemaic!)

Therefore the magic of number
 a higher level (of organization) of
 ++ mythical thought! perhaps
 here as well already beginning
 from the perception of the regularity
 of the simplest cosmic relations
 The number seven as the quartering
 of the lunar orbit etc. see III, 471ff
 Pythagoreans!!
 cf. Schema!

Precursor: Significance of
 number in mythical thought
 Magic of numbers ++

For us, the development of the logical function
 as ἀπόδειξις is followed by

III)

The Number-Function (N)
 from which, in turn, emerges the whole system
of exact sciences, namely

a) Concept of mathesis universalis as a
 science of order and measure

a) Arithmetic

fundamental function of ordering (ω) grasped in a symbolic
 expression of the first level (σ) or $\frac{\omega}{\sigma}$ as "numeral" and
 "operational sign" (= counting sign!)

b) Algebra

fundamental function of ordering grasped in a symbolic expression
 of the second level $\frac{\omega}{\sigma^2}$
 the number as a particular number, "represented" by the general
 number (a, b, c...) [species in Vieta]
general operational signs $(a+b)^2 = a^2 + 2ab + b^2$ etc.
 where a and b [are] arbitrary numbers

α) Gen. Theory of Functions

probably more correct as superordinate
The “function of series-ordering,” namely

- a) as a function of simple series-ordering (“number”)
- b) as series-attribution (theory of manifolds)
- c) as an ordering of juxtaposition “space”

see on this point explanation
on the special sheet!

(Exact Science)

This pointing back to the spatial function, which stands as something independent alongside the number-function

Geometry of Measure

Pure (Projective) Geometry
as a “spatial theory of ordering”

General Theory of Manifolds

“Mapping” [“*Abbildung*”] of series onto one another
Problem of cardinal numbers etc.

Alternate “attribution” not of unities within a series, but of whole series

c) Analysis

The number-concept supplemented by
the series-concept and function-concept

“Variable” number –

Alternate attribution of series

β) Applied to continuous series
infinitesimal analysis

γ) Applied to the relation between space and number
(analytic geometry!)

To be dealt with following logic and exact science:

IV) General Doctrine of Knowledge

The “epistemology of the symbolic”

cf. Substance and Function   a) The universal and the particular.
 The particular as “representation” of the general case.
 The problem of induction and the structure of empirical science.
 What is the universal...

b) The problem of “empirical reality.”
 Symbol and object. Object-category and “representation.” (The “house” as a succession of perspectival images)
 The function p and the object-concept.

(Still to be elaborated...)

IVa) The problem of empirical science

IVb) The problem of the science of history – The methodology of history

(Solution basically already expressed by Steinthal (Intro. 215) – history does not address the “universal”; but it does address the whole; it seeks to understand the individual by beginning with this comprehensive whole (particular spiritual categories for “classifying” the individual as part of the whole, contra Troeltsch!)

V) The Fundamental Problems of Aesthetics

Gen. Dispos.
Sheet II d)

Once again, what should initially be put into question is not the role of the symbolic in aesthetics (the question is almost exclusively posed in this manner!), but rather the constitutive role of the “symbolic” in delineating the aesthetic “point of view,” the aesthetic “region!”
Thus, it is precisely analogous to the above case of the logical!
[cf. Gen. Disposition, Sheet IIa!]

1) The Primordial Aesthetic Function

the specific “point of view” –

It is mostly determined only negatively, as differentiated from the world of empirical reality, such as from the logical-scientific world [the world of “causality”]

According to this negative characterization, the aesthetic is the world of play, of semblance, of – illusion.

But this “illusion” is always a merely relative one.

Conscious self-deception – but we can only talk of deception if another standard of absolute reality is already presupposed!

This is precisely what we may not do in our general

methodology of the symbolic as such.

Some remarks on this in
Münsterberg, *Philosophy*
 of Values?

We do not posit one level as “the” absolutely real one – rather, we ask: which positive, qualitatively determined form [*Gestaltungsform*] corresponds to the aesthetic “view”

Schiller’s theory of semblance and play, therefore, should rather be recast into the positive “image theory” of aesthetics as one specific mode of formation.
 (Therefore the definition: Beauty is a “living form” already comes closer to the mark

---

The fundamental difficulty of aesthetic theory lies in the fact that, here too, the positive symbolic has not been recognized, but was rather replaced by the concept of “imitation” – a development that finds its complete counter-image and correlate in the history of meta-physics (q.v.)

All forms of traditional aesthetic theories suffer from that difficulty

- a) Empirical theories of imitation from Aristotle to Batteux
- b) As well as idealist-speculative theories

Because here we are also always dealing with an archetype [*Urbild*] of the beautiful, which is somehow supposed to appear = shine through in the reflection [*Abbild*].

The aesthetic form as a reproduction of the metaphysical form

(Historical examples: Plotinus, Winckelmann, Shaftesbury!)

Allegory and symbol:
the role of allegory
in Winckelmann!

c) Even in all the modern psychological forms, in which the aesthetic

- 1) was interpreted as illusion, as “conscious self-deception”
- 2) or else empathy (the allegorical= metaphorical!) was regarded as the ground of aesthetics.

This form of
aesthetics is quite
clear in Schopenhauer,
World as Will,
3rd book!

Biese, Philosophy of
the Metaphorical?

The positive meaning of the aesthetic function as such; the core of the symbolic peculiar to it is once again thoroughly obscured by the concept of “imitation” and something that is to be imitated

---

Particular significance of the symbol-concept within
the aesthetic.

Literature: Vischer, Aesthetics

The Symbol

Volkelt, System of Aesthetics;

Aesthetics of the Tragic

Biese, Philosophy of the Metaphorical

On “Empathy”: Lipps’ Spatial Aesthetics

$$\frac{\alpha \varepsilon \sigma \tau \eta}{\sigma} = \frac{\sigma_1, \sigma_2, \sigma_3}{\sigma}$$

The problem arises to the level of keen awareness
in and in reaction to Lessing’s Laocoön: and indeed
characteristically as a differentiation, an intensifica-
tion of the earlier indeterminate concept of imitation:

Ὕλη καὶ τρόπῳ τῆς μιμήσεως διαφέρουσιν. – The “arts” are characterized according to their
specific “signs.” This deepening into “signs” leads to a deeper understanding of the aesthetic
form of expression (as positively specific, as viewed in its own terms, not from the perspecti-
ve of the object) as such. The specific aesthetic “regions” under aesthetics as an overarching
region.

Particular implementation of the basic aesthetic forms

Cornelius, Elementary Laws Hildebrand’s problem of the form in fine

of Fine Art Sculpture: Writings by Konrad Fiedler art

Worringer Cf. dissertation by Konnerth?

Literature: We are singling out here poetic

Wittkop symbolism!

R. M. Werner, Poetry

and Poet

Görland, Folk Songs

Analysis of Goethe’s lyrical “form,” cf. Freedom and Form.

VI) The Metaphysics of the Symbolic

Gen. Dispos.
Sheet II e.

We begin with the fundamental problem of metaphysics – with the relationship between truth and reality –

First standpoint: that of identity

either a naïve identity, as with the Ionians, in which case the problem as such cannot yet emerge at all – or a conscious identity – posited as with the Eleatics

ταυτόν γάρ ἐστὶν νοεῖν τε καὶ εἶναι

Or still in Descartes in modern philosophy:

“La vérité étant une même chose avec
l’être”

But we cannot remain with this pure identity – which is already demonstrated by these examples.

For Parmenides, in spite of all the identity between “thinking” and “being” [αὐτο γὰρ ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὐνεκεν ἔστι νόημα.]

there is a second path – which is not that of “truth” – ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ τῆσδε ὁδοῦ διζήσεως εἶργε νόημα, a path which he is obliged to travel in order to get to a physics, a theory of (empirical) reality –

For Descartes, “thinking” and “extension” (being) are two substances, for which a connection and

a mediation is sought in God. –
All of this points to a fundamental dualism.

First Attempt at a Solution to this Dualism:

Representation Theory [Abbildtheorie]¹⁵

[The “agreement” between “representation”
[*Vorstellung*] and “object”
The “similarity” between representation [*Vorstellung*]
and object]

General Development of Representation Theory

1) The sensualist \empiricist/ form of representation theory – the “notion” as an effect is somehow similar to the “cause,” to the object

Main forms   α) Idol Theory

(Democritus, Epicurus, Gassendi.

β) The theory of “form” in Aristotle

γ) The species theory of the medieval period

δ) The overcoming of the medieval species theory

The mechanical representation theory

Movement as a fundamental concept – inner movement
as a “reaction” to outer movement [Schema: actio=
reactio]

Hobbes τὸ φαίνεσθαι as

“reaction”!

[26]

¹⁵ For the sake of clarity, the term *Abbildtheorie* will be translated as “representation theory” throughout this *Disposition*, although the term in German has a much stronger meaning. As will become clear, Cassirer uses it in a quite broad and far-reaching manner. -Trans.

ε) Sensualist representation theory

The “simple” impression – ideas as copies
of impressions (Hume and John St. Mill)

2) The idealist form of representation theory

The Platonic form of the theory: the Ideas
as “archetypes,” appearances as “reflections”
[“*Abbilder*”]. The positively fruitful \universal/
moment of the “Idea” as ἕτερον τι (cf. Plato-
Collegium!!) is thus *narrowed* to the notion of
“imitation of the Idea by the appearance” – the
(symbolic) παρουσία and κοινωνία [empirical
judgment points towards pure judgment – as a
limit concept! e.g., the pure straight line, pure
equality]
is *narrowed* to the notion of μίμησις

The peculiarity of the purely logical function is also
obscured by this notion of μίμησις; thinking
becomes ἀνάμνησις, the recollection of something
seen previously!

[Platonic form of representation theory – the
allegory of the cave –

This allegory operates precisely at the border – it recognizes the knowledge of appearances as symbolic – but it requires turning from “creations” to the pure light –

therefore, the positive aspect of appearance – the necessity of the symbolic itself, its inability to be annulled [is] not comprehended (The “In the colorful reflection we have what is life”)

Underlying reason, because conceptual thinking is not envisioned here in the context of its own peculiar symbolics, but rather the concept (eidōs) is an αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό –

For this reason, it engulfs the appearance, annuls its validity, instead of allowing it to stand as a relative symbol!

Therefore, the significance of “experience” not secured despite every attempt in the second Platonic period – experience remains, although it [is] a παράδειγμα of the idea (παράδειγμασι ἄρα χρώμενοι *by the stars*) but always only “reflection” [*Abbild*]; retains a remnant of the Eleatic “semblance”)

Cf. on this point 3) The overcoming of representation theory
Lask, *The Logic of Being*, in the “Copernican Turn”

or

What is essential lies in the transition to the positively
Fichte’s idealism!

specific characteristic of the knowledge-
function: this function does not reproduce
 the object, but rather it constitutes
 this object – indeed, it “is” the object itself.

Gen. Dispos.

Sheet II f

To this extent, the law of the logical the –
 “author of nature!”

Precisely the same

development appeared
 earlier in aesthetics!

Now, therefore, the region of truth is able to be
defined immanently, without any relation to
 correspondence with an external “original!”

(Positive meaning of the doctrine of the
 unintelligibility of the “thing in itself”: – it is not
 sought in “comparison” with the “absolute,” which
 is impossible, it is sought in pure categorial
[specific] lawfulness itself!

Only thereby is the idea of imitation overcome:
 the allegory has transitioned into the positive
 “symbol”... .

— This too precisely as in
 the case of aesthetics
 see Gen. Dispos.
 Sheet II d

New relationship between truth and reality!

Positive implementation of this relationship

In Goethe's words: "We become aware of what is true in things as incomprehensible life"

We behold this life, which is for itself and freely "incomprehensible," within the various symbolic levels

Knowledge, Art, Philosophy, Religion

We do not differentiate among them, do not establish an absolute either-or of one or another phase:
rather, the path through these symbolic levels is synonymous for us with the goal.

We do not know any other goal, a goal as an absolute endpoint, given that what matters for us is the process of self-renewing and increasing life itself.

The divine is not simply located outside of life as a "purpose," but rather it is this, its self-movement – Of course, in the face of the totality of this movement, the individual always remains

only a member, only a fragment
 [Hegel: the moment to be sublated: The truth
 is the whole)

But genuine metaphysics is not intended, nor is it
 permitted, to conceive of this whole merely
dialectically, as in Hegel –

because we would thereby already be faced once
 again with a merely abstract individual symbol –

but rather, in fullness and in context, in the
 particularity of specifically diverse symbolic
 expressions, lies for us the unity and the fullness
 of the world, of reality –

From the most primitive expression: from
 gesture through spoken language to the “concept,” to
 the aesthetic form, to the religious idea, to
myth, there leads here One continuous path, One
 consistent “structure” –

in this path and on this path we have life –
 not simply as something otherworldly, to which this
 process only “points,” but rather as the concrete
fullness of the diverse itself!

Language, Art, Concept, Myth

fused into one – each reciprocally lighting up –
 reflecting – this is the highest point to which even
 our “reflection” can advance.

But in a positive sense, behind this “reflection” is always standing the intuition of the true, of which we become aware as “incomprehensible life”

*Jean Christophe!

So too in every genuine work of art,* in every scientific work, this basic relation!

Just as in the “doctrine of knowledge” the object is not the “transcendent,” towards which we are merely pointed by our experience; but rather, the totality, the overall content of experience itself; of course, however, as a limit concept! Thus, the “in-itself” of this metaphysics remains even here a limit concept and not something otherworldly, but rather the idea “in relation to which all our knowledge undergoes a fusion into a systematic unity – This “life” the best-known and the most underivable the mystery manifest!

The symbol in this sense – this unity, which always remains the same in the next case and the next, again and again – this is perhaps the final form of metaphysics that is possible for us!

Not the goal, but rather the series itself is what identifies this metaphysics; because the goal would be – death; only the series itself is life!

We know this “life” only in its “expressions”; but precisely this is the quintessence of our whole preceding observation that “expression” is nothing accidental, inessential, “external,” but rather that it is the necessary, the true, and the sole manifestation of the “inner” and of the essence itself. From \the/ simplest gesture, from spoken language up to the highest spiritual activities and to the purest “metaphysics,” this insight has proved itself to us.

Everything transient is only an allegory – but precisely as an allegory it ultimately attains pure eternal value!

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