THE THREE FREEDOMS OF LANGUAGE

by

GREGORY SCOTT MOSS

(Under the Direction of Edward Halper)

ABSTRACT

I argue that understanding Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen Vol. 1 Die Sprache* requires grasping how he predicates 'autonomy' to language, and I argue that his discussion contains valuable insights regarding the autonomy of language as a distinct cultural form. I defend an interpretation of Cassirer through a close reading of the primary text and by arguing that language is autonomous in three senses, *qua* logical possibility, independence, and as a vehicle of human self-determination. Cassirer's philosophy offers a refreshing rebuttal to modern behaviorism and postmodernism. For Cassirer, the language activity makes the empirical world possible, and this transcendental function of world- making is the clue to discovering the freedom of the language act, which renders language a vehicle of self-determination and of knowing what is. Towards the end of this thesis, I defend Cassirer against criticisms that were and could have been leveled against him by his contemporaries, show why his research moves us beyond the limits of postmodernism and behaviorism, advances our understanding of language, and why it is therefore very relevant in contemporary discussions in the philosophy of language.

INDEX WORDS: Philosophy of Language, Ernst Cassirer, Symbolism

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GREGORY SCOTT MOSS

Major Professor:	Edward Halper
Committee:	Richard Dien Winfield
	Rene Jagnow

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2007

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Richard Dien Winfield, Edward Halper, Chad Wiener, and all of my friends in Philosophy for their direction, conversation, encouragement and support in my philosophical pursuits.

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Chapter One. Introduction

Through an investigation of Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen Vol.1 die Sprache*, I aim to answer the following question: is language autonomous? One might wonder what this question means and why one would ask it. Philosophy happens in language. Because this is the medium of philosophical discourse, in order to understand the capacity of philosophy to know the answer to the questions it asks, it is important to understand language. For these reasons and others, the philosophy of language has acquired a central stage in contemporary philosophy. In order to understand our question, we must not only clarify what language is, but we must first clarify what is meant by 'autonomy'. Autonomy is said in many ways, some which are of greater importance to Cassirer than others. First, autonomy can be thought of in the sense of logical possibility. Imagine that one is in a large field, with no obstacles blocking one's movement. There are many logical possibilities that are open to one in this situation. One could move north, south, east, west, etc... This notion of 'autonomy' is a kind of freedom from restraint which engenders a range of actualizable possibilities. When we think about languages, we might wonder whether there is only one form of the various languages, or whether there are a plethora of logical possibilities that govern the formation of each language. Is there only one form of each language or many possible forms that each language could take? Second, autonomy can be understood as 'independence'. In this sense, we say that someone is autonomous if they are not financially bound to some benefactor. We can apply the same idea to the idea of language. Does the idea of language itself have its own independent character that we can locate, and whose content we can specify independently of other ideas? If so, then we

could say that language is autonomous in the sense of having an ideational- logical independence. Understanding language in respect to this second freedom is tantamount to seeking an answer to the question: what is language? Third, and most importantly, 'autonomy' is said to be self-determination, in the Kantian and Hegelian sense. 'Self-determination' means that the character of what is determined is not determined by anything other than that character itself. In this way, self-determination is opposed to the notion of 'other-determination' in which the character determined acquires its character from something other than itself. Self-determination has an active and a passive element. The active element is that element which determines, while the passive element is that element which receives the action. A part of answering this question involves answering the question concerning the possibility of self-determination. If that which self-determines is itself one, then that which determines itself must be passive and active in the same respect. This leads us to wonder how self-determination is possible. This third sense of the term is related to both of the other senses of autonomy. In order to be a self-determiner, the agent must not be restrained from acting on itself. There must be options for the self-determiner to 'choose' from. In a similar way, the character of the free agent must be independent of other causes and have its own character, in order that it may have the opportunity for self-formation. When we apply this third sense of autonomy to language, we ask: 'how is language self-determining?' One might object to this formulation, for language does not do anything by itself. If a certain kind of being speaks, and language is not merely about itself, then how could language be 'self-determining?' We may formulate the question a different way: 'how is language a way through which the speaker determines himself? By asking the question this way when we ask 'is

language autonomous?' we are asking about all three ways in which autonomy is said. I argue that language exhibits all three of the said autonomies, and the aim of this thesis is the proof thereof.

Given this task, I have organized my paper into eleven sections. In the second section I discuss further problems that arise and require reconciliation when one inquiries into the autonomy of language. Here I address a problem concerning Cassirer's methodology. What is the method by which he inquires into the autonomy of language? Much of the motivation for Cassirer's methodology lies in his discussion of the history of philosophy in chapter I: "The Problem of Language in the History of Philosophy". In my third chapter I discuss, among other things, Cassirer's notion of objectivity, and what premises Cassirer draws on in his argument that language is a symbolic form. Chapter four is dedicated to spelling out what the 'symbol' is. This also aids in grasping why language is a 'symbolic form', and indeed, what general role symbols play in Cassirer's *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*. Chapter four also provides the condition for the possibility of the autonomy of language in any sense of the word, by illuminating how the symbol frees man from the determination of the flux of consciousness. Chapter five begins to unravel the question: with what must the philosophy of language begin? To answer this question Cassirer looks to the phenomena of language for his guide. Chapter six discusses the way in which language is free in the sense of 'logical possibility' mentioned above. This amounts to a discussion of language *qua* a culture concept. I draw much of this chapter's content from the introduction. Chapter seven discusses Symbolic *Pregnanz*, and draws limits to the freedom of language by discussing the way in which the individual is not 'free' in his language use. Chapter eight prepares for the solution to

the problem of the independence of the language-concept by examining how language relates to other forms of culture. Chapter nine discusses how language is autonomous in the sense of independence. The main problem in this section is how the language activity makes all of the other cultural activities possible. The main arguments in this section are reproduced from chapter four of the primary text. In chapter ten I discuss how language is autonomous in the sense of self-determination, and whether all languages exhibit this autonomy or only some, and to what extent different languages exhibit this autonomy. Much of this discussion is drawn from chapter three of the *Symbolic Forms*. The last chapter contains criticism that helps illuminate aspects of Cassirer's theory that may have been bypassed in the explication of his arguments, and it shows how some of his contemporaries might have responded and did respond to his theory of symbolic forms. This section is constructed to aid not only the descriptive element of Cassirer's book, but also to see the strengths and weaknesses of his position.

Much energy has been exerted towards explicating the content of the theory of Symbolic Forms located in Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen Vol.1 Die Sprache.* The secondary literature has, following the paradigm of reporting, consumed itself with descriptions of Cassirer's work, while avoiding any attempt at significant criticism. Moreover, this reporting has also generally overlooked the question concerning the autonomy of language in Cassirer's first volume. This failure occurs on all the possible levels of criticism. First, although there is much description of the position itself, there are no, or very few, attempts at reproductions of the arguments in the first volume. This is perhaps in part due to the fact that many of Cassirer's most important arguments are spread out over large sections of text, making the location of the specific

arguments difficult. Second, without the arguments, there can be no criticism of the arguments, rendering the quality of the description dubious, which in part explains why the question concerning the autonomy of language has been hitherto ignored. In order to engage in criticism, one must know the argument that one is criticizing. Nonetheless, one must not make the mistake of assuming that criticism is posterior to description or that criticism cannot afford a deeper understanding of the position critiqued. Toward the end of this thesis, I aim at acquiring a deeper understanding of Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Vol.1 by offering* an in depth analysis and defense of Cassirer's philosophy of language in light of various criticisms that I have found pressing, and could have been leveled by Cassirer's contemporaries. Seeing Cassirer through a more critical lens also sheds light upon Cassirer's place in the intellectual history of the twentieth century, especially in respect to his German contemporaries, Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein. This work cannot rectify the situation in regards to the secondary literature, but I hope to nonetheless make headway in Cassirer criticism.

Chapter Two. Aporiai

Understanding Cassirer's inquiry into language requires understanding the questions and catalysts that spur and inspire his inquiry. The most basic question is: what is language? The 'what' designates what is distinctive about language. This basic question highlights the central task of determining whether language has an independent logical character that distinguishes it from other ideas. Although Cassirer's questions suppose an ignorance of the autonomy of language, we are only capable of meaningfully asking the 'what is' question if we are already acquainted with that about which we are asking, namely language. For asking 'what is x?' is already to set it apart from y. We cannot search for something we do not have if we do not know what it is that we are looking for. Thus, the phenomenon of language provides us with the directive for our inquiry into its being, i.e. we can only begin to answer our question by following language-phenomena. To speak about anything requires presupposing language. What this is must be spelled out in the process of our inquiry. The autonomy of language can only be discovered by attending to what language shows us. In this sense, we must presuppose language in order to inquire into its autonomous character. Presupposing language is to presuppose that there is some language idea, i.e. some logical, structure, which can be explicated. On the condition that unity is the condition for any meaning whatever, which is a condition I clarify in the next chapter, we can only understand the meaning of language if there is some unity to the idea. If there is indeed some unity that makes a definition of language possible, what is the character of that unity? It is possible that language be one, and yet it may not have an autonomous character. We desire to know if the unity of language is in fact autonomous *qua* independent. We can learn something about the phenomena of

language by seeing how the word ‘language’ is used in ordinary English or German. We call some activities ‘language’ and not others. This implies that the ordinary understanding finds something in common that it designates with the word ‘language’. One of our questions concerning the autonomy of language is about whether the character of the language activity is special to it, or whether the language activity is itself something that shares a character with some other cultural form, yet does not possess its own identifiable meaning.

Transcendental analysis is well-suited for such an inquiry. 'Transcendental analysis' signifies the 'how' of Cassirer's investigation into language. The transcendental method is minimally a way of asking certain kinds of questions. The transcendental inquirer inquires into the condition for the possibility of that about which he asks. In respect to language, the question acquires the following form: given the fact that language is, what makes it possible? What is that form of language that would render it impossible if it were absent? As Krois observes, Cassirer asks about the possibility of the fact of language.[1] The transcendental methodology is an analysis, for its aim is an analysis of the 'inner' form of language out of and from the fact of language. The goal of language analysis is to discover the unity, or the pure form of language.[2]

Understanding the transcendental inquiry requires distinguishing the transcendental from an inquirer who aims at discovering a transcendent principle. The transcendental inquirer aims at discovering a transcendental principle, which is a condition for the possibility of something. A transcendent principle is one that is beyond experience. In being beyond experience it may make experience possible, but it can never

[1] Krois, John Michael. *Cassirer: Symbolic Forms and History*, pp. 42
[2] Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 71

be fully instantiated in experience insofar as it is transcendent. For example, Plato's One is the transcendent principle in which things participate. The one is never fully instantiated in what participates in it. On the other hand, this restriction does not limit the transcendental philosopher. For example, Kant claims that although the categories and pure intuitions are *a priori*, they only exist insofar as they are 'in experience'. Although there are other finer-grain distinctions playing a role here, the point is that if 'you' are a transcendental principle, this does not in any way prevent 'you' from being fully instantiated in the world.

This point is strengthened by the fact that Cassirer's transcendental inquiry is structural, not genetical.[3]To see this we must understand the distinction between a structural and a genetical account. Because we assume the unity of the language idea, and we inquire into the character of that particular unity that defines language, i.e. that which makes language possible, we are inquiring into that structural unity that makes language possible. We are not inquiring into particular historical processes and events that 'precede' the phenomena of language from which Cassirer's inquiry begins. In this way, although the inquiry is an inquiry into the origin of language, Cassirer undertakes an inquiry into the formal and logical origin of language, not into its historical or genetical origin. In other words, the transcendental analysis is a pursuit of the unity of language's being, which is located in its idea. For this reason, and because any inquiry into language must begin with and from within language, Cassirer's inquiry begins in *medias res*.[4] The task of a philosophy of language is not to derive one's conclusions about language from

[3] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp. 63-71, 118-128
[4] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp.109-136

any data-set, but to provide a structure in which the linguistic data can be organized.[5] Cassirer is engaged in a 'structural phenomenology'. Cassirer will at times appear as though he were giving a genetical account of language, and one of my tasks lies in showing that this appearance is due to a misunderstanding of Cassirer's methodology, and the empirical and transcendental elements and forms in it.

Why does Cassirer employ the transcendental methodology in approaching the question concerning the autonomy of language? Are we to merely assume the transcendental methodology? What is the motivation for such a method? Cassirer's investigation into the history of philosophy in the west highlights the advantages of his methodology in the study of language. Because Cassirer always contextualizes his own work in comparison to great figures in the history of philosophy, not discussing how Cassirer distinguishes himself from major figures in the history would at most offer an incomplete analysis of his philosophy of language.

Motivating the Transcendental Methodology: The History of Philosophy

The 'Copy Theory' of knowledge and language has dominated the philosophy of language in the history of idealism. This theory states that the linguistic sign and the idea that it represents is a copy of the non-sensible idea. In this way, the idea is the paradigm of the represented idea in the sign. Because, as we will see, Cassirer argues that language contains the formative function of symbolism, Cassirer rejects this thesis, for the formative function of symbolism is that synthetic act of sign-attribution that makes individual meanings possible. From this perspective, there is no idea that is not attached to a sign of which the signed-idea would be a copy. We will work out Cassirer's independent theory of meaning later. For now it is important to see how

[5] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp. 22

Cassirer proves that the Copy-Theory of language leads to a skepticism about the possibility of knowing objectivity.

If the signed-idea is a copy of the idea, then the signed-idea is an exact copy or it is not. If not, then the copy is incapable of fully expressing the idea. Thus, on this latter possibility, language would not provide a path to knowing the unity of being. If the signed-idea were an exact copy, then we would already have access to the non-signed idea of which the signed idea is a copy, in order for us to judge that it is an exact likeness. Thus, on the latter option, language is not an instrument of knowing, for knowing is something possible without language.[6] This argument against the copy theory shows that it leads to skepticism about language's capacity for being an instrument of knowing. Given that philosophy can only move in language, if we cannot know through language, then it is not clear how knowing will be possible. One of the disadvantages of the Copy Theory is that it leads to such skepticism, observable in the history of philosophy. It should be noted that the Copy Theory of language assumes that the 'sign' and 'meaning' are separate, i.e. that meaning is complete without the sensuous sign, which will be shown to be false.[7] The Copy Theorist rejects what I will call the symbolic form of meaning. Moreover, the other mistake of the Copy Theorist is his tendency to take the word as the primary element of language, not the sentence, for language, as a 'copy', is a word-sign that is a copy of a complete idea that is 'it itself by itself'.

Plato

Socrates postulates that there is a universal meaning that words signify. The Socratic dialogues are rife with the search for the universal that all of the terms have in

[6] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 107-108
[7] See chapter III.

common. Of course, this universal is never fully determined. This is not by accident. The Idea is independent of the word that signifies it. The only access we have to the Idea is the sensible word that represents the Idea. In this way, Plato propounds a representational perspective, which is contained in his concept of participation. Because the sensible is not intelligible, and the only access that one has to the Idea is by way of the sensible representation of it, it follows that the Idea is never fully represented in the sensible; it is a mere 'copy'. Thus, one can never fully know the Idea through language, although one can know the Idea, in a way, through the failure of sensible representation. The sensible, arbitrary, character of words prevents us from accessing what Plato calls pure being. Plato is the paradigm Copy-Theorist, and he sets the rules by which much of the history of philosophy thinks about language.[8]

Myth, Onomatopoeia, Interjection

Nonetheless, in Plato's theory of language, Cassirer locates much that is correct about language. Language is an intuitive form of representation that contains both arbitrary and non-arbitrary elements. It surpasses the *mythical* view of language, which does not yet use language in a representational way, for it recognizes no arbitrary element in speech.[9] Every thing has a name and this name is not arbitrary, but identical with it. This mythical view expects everything to speak to it, as though it were also human, and expects that using language is a way to manipulate and control objects. That nature does not 'speak back' is a refutation of this perspective.

[8] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.125-126
[9] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 117-118

In the *Cratylus*, Plato refutes the *onomatopoetic* theory of language, which states that for every thing there is a 'natural' word that suggests its object.[10] Descriptive linguistics shows that this theory is just not true. 'Tisch' is no more natural to the object to which it refers than 'table' is. To accept that language is completely onomatopoetic is to ignore the fact of language's arbitrary character. In any case, when one thinks of classic examples of onomatopoetic speech, e.g. 'quack', 'baa', and the other examples of this kind of speech, and compares them cross-culturally, one finds that different languages use different sounds to represent the characteristic noises of those same animals. This highlights the arbitrary character of even the most onomatopoetic of speech forms.

The mythical view, onomatopoetic, and the interjectional theories share one assumption in common, namely that there is a natural connection between word-signs and their meanings. The interjectional theory claims that all language begins as a pure expression of emotion, exhibited in the cry. Epicurus held the thesis that language is an expression of emotion, and develops from sensory-mimetic expression. But if the interjection is the most primordial of speech forms, then the current form of 'propositional' language must have developed out of a grammarless 'emotional language' which is characteristic of the other species. No one has been able to account for the qualitative leap, i.e. how propositional language develops from emotive 'speech'. As we will show,[11] this requires a qualitative shift from a non-symbolic use of the sign to a symbolic use, not a merely quantitative one. Interjectional theorists posit that although

[10] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 123

[11] See chapter IV, and in particular my discussion of the sign *qua* sign, and sign *qua* symbol which shows that a species using the sign in the former sense must undergo a qualitative change in character if it will be able to use the sign in the second sense.

language exhibits an arbitrary character at the present time, it did not 'originally'. This postulate has no ground, given that man is always found with propositional speech. This points to why Cassirer is not engaged in any historical or genetical account, for he denies the interjectionalist theory of language. The theory assumes that either pure 'emotive' speech is not qualitatively different from 'propositional speech' or although there is a difference between them, the transition of one to the other has never been observed, nor is it in any way plausible.[12] Neither the mythical, onomatopoetic, nor the interjectionalist theories of language can explain language *qua* sentence.

Pragmatic Sophistry[13]

Plato surpasses not only those who overemphasize the non arbitrary character of the word, and its connection with 'reality', but also those who overemphasize its pragmatic and indeterminate character. The Sophists emphasized the pragmatic, and the flexible, indeterminate aspect of speech. Communication is a pragmatic function of speech, and the indeterminate, arbitrary character of words allows for the possibility of rhetoric, the art of persuasion as an instance of the 'pragmatic'. For example, words can have more than one meaning, and each has connotations of its own. In this way, as a Sophist, I can convince someone of the truth of some position by equivocating on two of their meanings, unbeknownst to the person I am convincing. But in order to communicate some meaning, one must be able to represent that meaning. Thus, communication can only be a function of speech if in fact language is primordially descriptive and representational of meaning. This is only to claim that language must be communicative of meaning if communication is possible. The ambiguity of rhetoric is thereby only

[12] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 148-149
[13] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.119-121

possible on the assumption that language is expressive of meaning. Although language may only develop communally, and this requires that language serve a communicative function, humans communicate in many non-linguistic ways, i.e. through gestures and body language, and cannot be what is specific to language. Therefore, the pragmatic dimension of language, and rhetoric, as a subdivision thereof, are only possible on the platonic postulate of the descriptive character of language. Although language contains elements specified by these theories, they miss the descriptive and what will be shown to be the symbolic character of language.[14]

Rationalism

Descartes argued that because there is one form of reason, there must be one 'language' of reason that would immediately express the pure Idea. The 'goal' of developing a universal language of reason requires removing the impediments to knowing, i.e. the sensory, arbitrary character of symbols. Thus, the rationalist project is not concerned with studying ordinary intentional languages, but developing an 'alphabet' of thought, which would allow for an unimpeded expression of reason.[15] In this sense, the rationalist project, as set by Descartes, aims at annihilating the diversity of speech in order to express the unity of reason. In this way, the Rationalist project cannot aid Cassirer in his attempt at grasping the autonomy of language *qua* the intentional sentence. For Leibniz, who carries out Descartes' project, this 'universal language' would function as a marker of the logical position of concepts to each other.

It is impossible to develop a 'universal language' of reason. Here's why: only through the universal language of reason can we think the pure Idea signified by the

[14] On description and symbolism see chapter IV, especially the section on the sign *qua* sign.
[15] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 128-130

universal language, yet we must know the pure Idea before we can discover what the universal language of reason is. This logical circle prevents our entry at every point. In other words, because we begin from and within ordinary language, we cannot specify what the non-signed pure Idea is, and we could only specify it if we were employing the universal language, which we can only determine once we know the Idea. In this way, Cassirer argues that the rationalist project, which aims at an utterly non-arbitrary 'universal language', is impossible.[16] In some sense, predicate logic, or 'extensional language' is as close as one can come to a 'universal language'. These symbols are mere placeholders, or what Cassirer calls purely intellectual symbols. They signify empty predicates and subjects, and fall very short of the 'universal language' which would unambiguously specify the form and content of knowledge.

The Rationalist project models language upon mathematics. Modeling language on mathematics destroys the particularity and arbitrariness in speech, which is located in the content of intuition. Following the Kantian schema, mathematics is based in pure intuition, whereas language, as we will see, is primarily centered in the content of intuition. Such a model does not provide a method for studying the intentional languages. The Rationalist language-agenda is a failed attempt to develop a non-sensuous language that would unambiguously express the pure form and content of knowledge. Cassirer informs us that the goal of enlightenment, and of the Kantian revolution, is to know the sensuous character of language for what it is, not to utterly remove it from language study, [17] which is the purpose of modeling language on math. In this way, Rationalism assumes that the meaning of the Idea is complete, and separable from the sign that

[16] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.130
[17] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.132

signifies it, and that the representational character of the sign only provides a muddled picture of the independent non-sensuous idea.

Modern Empiricism[18]

In modern Empiricism, e.g. Locke and Berkeley, the 'Idea' undergoes a shift in signification. It is no longer a principle of objectivity, or logical-objective, but it is something individual and separated from objectivity. In this way, the idea, as universal, is in Empiricism separated from reality, which is utterly particular. The idea signifies a perception, or a collection of perceptions, which the word signifies. The Empiricist position accepts the Copy Theorist's assumption about the independence of meaning from the sign that signifies it. In this way, the word signifies the idea in the individual mind. The idea is produced by a subjective operation on sense data, such that the universal is a product of abstraction and comparison of sense contents. There are no *a priori* Ideas or natural classes. Because there is no necessary way in which subjectivity must combine perceptual data, the idea results from an arbitrary stressing of sense contents, resulting in arbitrary connections. Thus, the diversity of speech forms reflects the diversity of ideas, which reflects the diversity of ways subjectivity has formed objectivity. For this reason, Locke thought it an advantage to his theory that he could account for the diversity of speech forms.

Nonetheless, when one follows out the model-Empiricist perspective, one finds that the general perspective is self-negating. Here's why: insofar as language signifies universals, e.g. class-concepts, and concepts of relation, language cannot be a method or vehicle for knowing what is utterly lacking the universal or is utterly particular, i.e. reality. This results in a new mistrust of language. Because language is not a vehicle for

[18] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.133-139

knowing what is, it cannot be employed in determining its character. For these reasons, the Empiricist is not able to speak anything 'meaningful' about reality without contradicting himself. To know reality one must escape language, but insofar as language is the medium of philosophical expression, Empiricism must give up all claims about reality. For these reasons, we cannot accept that language terminates in the idea of the individual and has no formative function in constructing the empirical world.

From this discussion we notice what is amiss with both Classical Idealism e.g. Plato, Rationalism, and Empiricism e.g. Locke: The function of language is to know an objectivity that it does not make. One considers reality to be pure being, and the other thinks reality is pure becoming. Their commitments to these theses on objectivity are reflected in their assumptions about meaning. If 'meaning' is complete without the sign, and 'meaning' is the logical-objective principle of objectivity, then language will be an impediment to knowing objectivity, rendering objectivity unintelligible. If objectivity is utterly particular, then language will be impotent in its efforts at grasping objectivity. Thus, in Classical Idealism, Rationalism and Empiricism, language's function is a theoretical cognition that it can never attain.[19] These problems lead us to re-evaluate what language is. This discussion motivates Cassirer's methodology. Cassirer aims at discovering a language function that language is capable of fulfilling, and this requires taking a second look at the character of language and objectivity, and their relation.

By employing the transcendental methodology, Cassirer can overcome the skepticism that has lead us to postmodernism. Postmodernism, insofar as it denies that there is 'objective' meaning, denies that knowing this meaning is possible. Cassirer's transcendental methodology stems from Kant's version of the transcendental method: on

[19] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.147

the assumption that we construct objectivity, and that we have access to those subjective forces of construction, and on the assumption that language is a force of world construction, i.e. that there is some *a priori* principle of language in subjectivity that constructs the world, then it will follow that language is itself knowable, and will be an instrument for knowing objectivity. I dedicate much of the following essay to recounting the proof of the premises of this seemingly loaded argument. This is Cassirer's answer to Postmodernism. Insofar as Cassirer argues that language constructs the world, Cassirer offers as a way out of Postmodernism from within itself. Given the failure of philosophy to pinpoint a language function that it can fulfill, Cassirer will not seek language's primary function in its capacity to know the given world, but in its capacity to construct it. In this way, Cassirer seeks an answer to the question of language from within a transcendental schema, and more pointedly, from within a Kantian one. For these reasons it is important to understand Cassirer's arguments and assumptions about meaning, symbol, and objectivity, for they illuminate errors made in the history of the philosophy of language.

Other Aporiai

Before we analyze Cassirer's understanding of meaning, objectivity, and the symbol, we must put forth other problems that will guide our inquiry. Although Cassirer's inquiry into the autonomy of language is an inquiry into language as language, this does not mean that we are searching for a form of language that exists independently of any individual language. This is not a thesis about studying language as language, but a point about why we do not expect to find a form of language that exists apart from an individual language that is it itself by itself in the sense of a Platonic form.

These remarks lead us to another *aporia*: if the aim of the inquiry is the unity of language, and the methodology assumes the unity of language, then the whole inquiry exhibits an inherent circularity. This circularity is definitive, though not exclusive for transcendental inquiry. We are only analyzing out, making explicit, what is already there, given implicitly. If we are only analyzing out what is already there, in what way is a plausible transcendental inference of the form of language possible, and how is it to be achieved? Although one often speaks of a transcendental 'deduction', Cassirer is moving toward the first principles of experience through an analysis of experience. In this way, although the first principles are already constitutive of experience, the philosopher must still analyze them out.

One application of these initial problems lies in the fact that it is not clear from what phenomena transcendental analysis must begin. There are many languages. From which language does the inquiry begin? Must we 'run through' each individual language empirically, before designating 'x' as the form of language? If this were our method, then we could not pinpoint language's universal, necessary form, for it could be the case that this form were only true of the languages observed, which would only validate a comparatively universal conclusion. One cannot observe all instances of language at all times, e.g. speech acts, which renders dubious any claims concerning any necessary elements that are universally predicable of language. Thus, it follows that any form of empirical, observation-analysis, which would only render a comparatively universal conclusion, will not meet the ambitions of the transcendental methodology, which aims at pinpointing the universal structure of the phenomena. Nonetheless, what are we assuming about language that would provide a basis from which an analysis of its 'inner form'

would be possible? In what respect does linguistics play a role in providing Cassirer with his initial data set? What is the standard which determines what the initial data set is?

We may already anticipate an objection to Cassirer's methodology: even if we were to determine the specific unity of language, we would not have accounted for the individuality of each language. Each language is a language, yet different from all other languages. This objection highlights the other obligation of the transcendental philosopher. Since the inquiry is into the unity of language's being, must Cassirer inquire not only into the autonomous character of language, but also into the condition for the possibility of the diversity of language? In this respect, our question becomes broader: 'what makes language language?' asks 'what makes language possible?' This question can also be formulated in the following ways: 'why is language one and yet many?' or 'what are the conditions for the possibility of the unity and diversity of languages?' These formulations are two ways of asking the same question. Any plausible account of language must account for the unity and diversity of languages. The grammar of English and the grammar of German are not the same. These particular unities, e.g. the respective grammars of English and German, require explanation. Indeed, both 'autonomies' must fall under the scope of transcendental analysis: the autonomy of language itself and that of the particular languages. The unity and diversity of language seems to require a transcendental account. We must see whether Cassirer can fully account for language by positing only one form or whether he will require two.[20]

[20] How could one *a priori* character account for the unity and diversity of language, unless it were itself both one and many? Even if there two, how could one distinct *a priori* character account for the diversity of language? One would either require a new character for each particularity, or one for all of the particularities. If the former were the case, then there would be *a priori* characters that many languages would not possess. It follows that the fist possibility is impossible, for there would be *a priori* characters true of some languages that would not be true of the idea of language. If the latter is the case, then the one character must exhibit itself differently in different languages. Cassirer never formulates this argument as I

If our methodology is non-empirical, i.e. transcendental methodology does not derive conclusions inductively by collecting evidence, then we carry the burden of interpreting the role of the empirical data collected by Cassirer in his explanation of language: "In face of this methodological dilemma, the only possibility was to formulate the *questions* asked of linguistics with systematic universality, but in each case derive the *answers* from actual empirical inquiry."[21] A certain interpretation of this passage may seem at odds with Cassirer's transcendental methodology, which cannot derive its answer's empirically. If he were to derive them empirically, then he would risk attributing 'transcendental' forms to only some languages, which would mean either that some languages are possible even without the attributed transcendental forms or that some languages that we thought were languages are not languages. Nonetheless, I propose that understanding the logical function of language will explain this apparent incongruity. One of our tasks in interpreting Cassirer's methodology is to understand how his empirical inquiries contribute to the investigation of the 'autonomy' of language, and how Cassirer reconciles his empirical studies with his transcendental approach.

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have presented it here. Nonetheless, it will become clear in section five that if Cassirer does not posit two transcendental elements, then he cannot account for language *qua* culture. We must further delve into Cassirer's theory of culture and language to see whether he can explain the diverse cultural forms by positing one form or whether he requires two.

[21] Diesem methodischen Dilemma gegenueber bleib keine andere Entscheidung uebrig, als die Fragen, mit denen heir an die Sprachforschung herangetreten wurde, zwar in systematischer Allgemeinheit zu formulieren, die Antwort auf diese Frage aber im jedem Fall aus der empirischen Forschung selbst zu gewinnen. Cassirer, *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*, pp. VII

Chapter Three. Idealism: Thinking And Being

Language, according to Cassirer, can only be understood in a system of idealism.[22] Moreover, according to Cassirer, no philosophy of language has followed and implemented the general principles of Kant's epistemological revolution propagated in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*.[23] Indeed, Cassirer fills this gap: his whole philosophy of language is only conceivable as an extension of the critique of reason to a critique of culture.[24] This extension of Kant's critique of reason to a critique of language is evident in his application of the transcendental method.[25] Precise formulations of the questions from which Cassirer's philosophy of language begin demands an understanding of how Cassirer extends the critique of reason to a critique of culture. In order to understand how Cassirer extends and deviates from the critique of reason, we must extract the assumptions that Cassirer makes in respect to classical idealism, the starting point from which the Kantian critique begins.

Classical Idealism

According to Cassirer, classical Idealism, e.g. Plato, posits that reality is one.[26] This signifies that thought can access being. That thought can access being requires that thinking is being, or that being and thought share a structure in common. For if they did not, then how would thinking ever achieve knowledge of objectivity? Philosophy aims at knowing the unity of being through thinking, which grasps the universal. If being is

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[22] Cassirer*, Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 72

[23] Cassirer, *Language and Art I*. pp. 148

[24] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 80

[25] The term 'transcendental method' is not a term used by Kant, but by Cassirer's teacher, Herman Cohen, who headed the Neo-Kantian school of Marburg, Germany. As said, the method is primarily a way of asking questions. Verene, *Metaphysics of the Symbolic Forms*, pp. 9-28 Both John Michael Krois and Wolfgang Marx are keen observers of the Neo-Kantianism influence in Cassirer's work.

[26] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.115-132 This section includes Cassirer's discussion of Idealism which I paraphrase in my section on 'Classical Idealism'.

utterly particular, completely excluding the universal, then philosophy can conclude nothing about the character of objectivity. Thus, philosophy is only possible if being is accessible by thinking the universal. If one were to take a semi-empirical or post modern position and argue that the world is utterly particular and thereby unknowable by reason, then one is not only denying the possibility of philosophy, but one is also claiming to possess some knowledge about that which no knowledge can be had, namely pure becoming. The classical idealist unifies the notions of intelligibility, unity, and meaning. The condition for the possibility of philosophy is the assumption that the world is one, intelligible, and meaningful.

This assumption becomes very plausible when one considers the completely meaningless and unintelligible, namely contradiction. 'The sky is blue and not blue in the same respect at the same time' is an utter contradiction. It is unintelligible and meaningless. Here we are denying any unity to 'sky', i.e. we do not unify it under one predicate, although we have used the rules of grammar to build a grammatical sentence. Because we have denied it unity, its utter diversity renders it unintelligible. Thus, unity is the condition for intelligibility while manyness, its opposite, is itself the condition for unintelligibility. For these reasons we say that if there is a world knowable by philosophy, then it will be meaningful, one, and intelligible. In this way, if there is becoming, then it will be a becoming in the context of meaning and stability; not a pure becoming. For these reasons, our assumption in the *aporiai* that if language is intelligible and has its own autonomy, then it must be meaningful and therefore one, is not unfounded.

This assumption that experience is one, i.e. meaningful and intelligible, is very important for the beginning of Kant's revolution in epistemology, for Kant assumes the unity of experience in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. What he wants to avoid is any dogmatic claim about the character of that objectivity. What Kant and Plato have in common is this assumption that experience is meaningful. Although unity, pure meaning, is the condition for a meaningful world, meaning itself, in its logical 'structure', is not entirely meaningful for us. Part-less- Unity -itself, as the condition for any particular unity, makes each particular meaning intelligible. But when we consider it by itself, it becomes a particular unity among many. For example, unity's opposite is manyness. This opposite is particular to unity. Now unity, in having a particular opposite, is one meaning among many. If this is the case, we require another unity to make this particular unity possible, *ad infinitum*, for it becomes one unity among many that must participates in unity itself in order to be one. Thus, pure meaning, intelligibility, or unity itself is not completely intelligible, although it is the condition for the possibility of any particular meaning. In this way, the meaningful world postulated by philosophy is not pure meaning itself, but it is one world in which unity is always in many, or a world whose intelligibility lies in its being unified by particular meanings. Given Cassirer's understanding of Idealism, in arguing that language must be understood in a system of idealism, Cassirer is assuming that the unity of the world is not a part-less unity, but is a unity of many particulars, which can be understood in two different ways, as a totality and a whole of parts.

From this discussion we can understand why Cassirer considers Kant an Idealist. Kant thinks that experience is made possible by the *a priori* categories of experience,

which are logical-objective principles of experience. Although Kant is critiquing Idealists like Plato, who argue that what is is the Idea, he shares the general perspective that objectivity is only made possible by a principle of thought, namely the category.[27]

A similar dialectic holds for meaninglessness, manyness, and utter unintelligibility. These words themselves possess meanings, although they signify meaninglessness. In this sense, utter manyness is unintelligible, for it itself is a unity that distinguishes it from unity itself and the other particular unities that it is not. Thus, even the utter meaningless contains some meaning for us, rendering the notion of utter manyness and meaninglessness partly unintelligible, on account of its intelligibility. In this way, the world, if it were utterly particular and a pure becoming, could not be, for we would have already provided it with some meaning. The one is 'in' the many and the many is 'in' the one: each determines and represents the other.[28] The phrase 'unity of being' that I use to speak about Cassirer's notion of objectivity means that objectivity is one and many, and that the many is in the one and the one in the many. The 'unity' of experience is not the unity that excludes all diversity, that part-less unity in which all unities participate, but it is the unity of diversity, as I have described it. Because philosophy thinks the one, it follows that the world, *qua* knowable, will be a world of particulars thought in the context of the universal. .

[27] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 135 Here Cassirer distinguishes the classical idealist from the empiricist. The classical idealist seems to take on a broader meaning in Cassirer, including any thinker who argues that the idea or concept is a logical-objective principle of reality. In this sense, the idealist argues that the real exhibits the form of the ideal, or meaning, while the empiricist argues that the idea is a kind of psychological occurrence, divorced from reality. In this second sense of 'idea' the idea is separated from 'objectivity' and is relegated to an ontological status that does not exist except in the mind of the individual.

[28] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. pp. 105

The Way to the Symbol: The Function of Signification

The Kantian critique of reason develops out of a crisis in metaphysics. How is it possible to know the unity of experience or begin philosophy, insofar as philosophy aims at knowing the unity of experience?[29] Innumerable metaphysicians seem capable of reading off the meaning of experience, but how do we know that subjectivity's representations of objectivity actually correspond to objectivity? If the only access that subjectivity has to objectivity is its own representations of it, then it seems that there is no access to objectivity. Knowing is thereby impossible if the unity of experience is given completely independent of any activity of subjectivity. The skeptical conclusion shows that any objectivity distinct from subjectivity is a phantom. If subjectivity has no access to it, then it is nothing for it, and therefore not anything. It is irrelevant. The knowable object is one that is accessible to subjectivity. In order to solve this problem and avoid dogmatism, Kant suggests that if objectivity were constructed by subjectivity, then because subjectivity has access to itself, it would be capable of knowing the unity of experience. This paradigm shift, known as the Copernican revolution in epistemology, assumes that experience is meaningful and that the *activity* of subjectivity constructs the *structure* of objectivity which is the unity of experience. The function or activity of subjectivity is the formation of objectivity.[30] In simpler terms, the individual constructs reality, and because it constructs reality, it can know it. Thus, the Kantian project involves investigating how the activity of subjectivity informs perception with its own structure. Because what is knowable is the particular in and through the universal, and the universal is 'given' by subjectivity, the matter or particularity of experience is not due to

[29] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.74

[30] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.79 The structure is understood by the function.

subjectivity, but given to it. In this sense, the activity of subjectivity makes experience possible by informing the given. Subjectivity and objectivity are not distinct spheres,[31] and Cassirer takes up this assumption from Kant. In this way, Kant breaks down the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, by making the subject the center of objectivity.

'Subjectivity' is Human. It is not the fly that is thinking itself, but the Human Being. Thus, investigating the unity of experience is an investigation into the Human Being.[32] If there is a definition of what 'man' is, this definition must be functional, not substantial. This is a presupposition of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.[33]

Kant applied his transcendental method to the following question, which appears in many forms: 'how is experience possible?', 'how is metaphysics possible?' and 'how is natural science possible?' Asking 'how is experience possible?' is Kant's way of asking 'how is the unity of being possible?' Because experience happens and is accessible only in the context of consciousness, asking 'how is experience possible'?' asks 'how is the unity of consciousness possible?' Given Cassirer's commitment to classical idealism, i.e. the assumption that experience is one, i.e. meaningful and intelligible, and the Kantian project, we can understand Cassirer's assumptions about the unity of consciousness and experience. "What defines each particular content of consciousness is that in it the whole of consciousness is in some form posited and represented. Only in and through this representation does what we call the 'presence' of the content become possible".[34] The fundamental characteristic of consciousness is that the whole is not obtained from its

[31] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 90
[32] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 78
[33] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp. 63-71 Cassirer designates this unity as a *Vinculum Funtionale*.
[34] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.98

parts, but every notion of a part is encompassed by the notion of the whole.[35] In this way, the one or the whole is of the parts and the part, or the many, is in the one whole. These passages highlight Cassirer's commitment to the thesis of Classical Idealism and the Kantian formulation thereof. Cassirer's description of the unity of consciousness is basically Cassirer's commitment to Kant's analytic unity of apperception.[36]

Cassirer's commitment to and discussion of Classical and Critical Idealism helps us understand *Cassirer's* argument that that function of signification makes experience possible. From the assumption that every content of consciousness refers to every other content of consciousness, that every content of consciousness represents the form of consciousness, i.e. that experience is one, and that the unity of objectivity is due to the function of subjectivity*, it can only follow*[37] that the meaning, i.e. unity and intelligibility of experience, is due to consciousness's giving meaning to experience through its function of signification[38], i.e. the function of combining contents into one consciousness; into a referential unity.[39] The function of signification is the act of unifying the particularity of consciousness, or that function which makes the structure of experience, the meaning of objectivity, possible. This is the only but nonetheless very important

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[35] Cassirer*, Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.102

[36] The analytic unity of apperception is the principle from which Kant deduces the categories, which make experience possible and provides it with its determinate character. This deduction also accounts for the synthesis of the *a priori* manifold of the pure forms of intuition, namely space and time. Thus, although Kant argues that experience is only possible on account of the two *apriori* intuitions and the twelve categories, even the unity of the *a priori* intuitions is due to the synthetic act of consciousness through the categories in judgment. The principle of apperception states that no representation is possible unless it can be accompanied by the I, i.e. unless it can be for me. This principle is the principle from which Cassirer "deduces" the function of signification, not any one of the particular *a priori* categories. Cassirer later calls the 'I' the absolute unity of being, indicating that it would not be utterly inappropriate to designate Cassirer's commitment to the unity of being as a commitment to the analytic unity of apperception.

[37] Although Kant does not infer this, Cassirer takes Kant's assumption and makes an argument of it.

[38] 'Die Funktion der Bedeutung' *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*, pp.42

[39] This argument is formulated in third and fourth section of the introduction to the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, although the condensed version is given at the beginning of the fourth section, pp.105-106.

argument that Cassirer offers for his claim that the meaningful world is made possible by the function of signification. Note that explicating the premises of this argument are contingent upon understanding how Cassirer is committed to assumptions in both the schemas of Classical and Critical Idealism. Only through a discussion of the plausibility of these idealisms and Cassirer's commitment to them can we make the premises of Cassirer's argument plausible. From this perspective, Cassirer claims that the content of experience, sensation, the existence of which no one will deny, is brought to the unity of consciousness by the function of signification. In this way, the activity of consciousness makes sensation possible by infusing it with meaning.

From and Beyond Critical Idealism: Completing the Critique of Reason[40]

Cassirer's commitment to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is not merely a commitment to transcendental methodology as a way of asking questions. The foregoing argument shows that Cassirer is committed to Kant's thesis that consciousness's synthetic function makes experience possible. Cassirer's question "how can a finite sensory content be made into a vehicle of a general spiritual meaning?"[41] asks 'how can a particular sensory content of consciousness represent the whole of consciousness?'[42] This leads us to ask: 'How is representation possible?' The structure of consciousness is representational. When we ask about the possibility of the structure of consciousness, we ask about the structure of representation. As we have seen, Cassirer appropriates the Kantian framework in answering the broader question about the possibility of a

[40] How Cassirer completes the critique of reason in the critique of culture is not fully displayed until chapter VI.

[41] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 93 The question, 'how is meaning possible' is the same as 'how is the representational character of consciousness possible, i.e. insofar as the particular sensory content represents the ideal meaning or unity of consciousness?'

[42] Answering this question is the goal of part three of the introduction, "The Problem of Representation and the Structure of Consciousness", pp. 93-105.

meaningful world by answering that the 'function of signification' makes the meaning of experience possible. As Cassirer himself contests, the problem of meaning is the main problem of the philosophy of symbolic forms.[43] In this way, the problem of knowledge becomes a problem of meaning, and the problem of meaning is that problem whose solution lends us an understanding of the unity and problematic of objectivity.[44]

Cassirer's extension of the critique of reason to a critique of culture lies in Cassirer's appropriation of the synthetic unity of consciousness to the broader question about the possibility of any meaning whatever and thereby to the possibility of human experience in general. Cassirer sees his work as a broadening of epistemology under which the natural and cultural sciences are subsumed.[45] Understanding the extension of reason to a critique of culture requires an understanding of culture, cultural sciences, and its distinction from consciousness's primordial, spontaneous synthesis of phenomena. At this point their similarity is of greater significance. We already know that subjectivity constructs and interprets world. It will be shown that culture, as a form of the synthetic function of consciousness, signifies ways in which Human Beings make their world one and meaningful, i.e. construct and interpret their world, such that the forms of culture signify the different frameworks for world-construction and interpretation.[46] Accordingly, Cassirer designates the form of culture as the form of human activity.[47] This is not an

[43] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp.63-71
[44] Krois, pp. 42-49, 62-64
[45] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 69
[46] There are many ways to unify the phenomena, i.e. different frameworks for interpretation of being. Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.77. For example, art and myth provide different contexts for world-interpretation, both of which are usually understood as forms of human culture. In myth, I may explain the thunder by reference to Thor's hammer. Through the story of Thor, I interpret the world; I give it meaning. By informing matter with my concept of a vessel in Ceramics, I infuse meaning into the world of sensation, and thereby interpret my world. In any case, 'experience' is not, for most ordinary individuals, the world determined according to the principles of natural sciences.
[47] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. pp 80

exhaustive definition of culture, but it shows a *prima facia* way in which the function of signification is connected to culture. The culture concept will become clearer in section VI with our discussion of the autonomous character of language *qua* culture concept. Nonetheless, Cassirer's question 'what makes meaning possible?' has an answer, 'the function of signification', concerning the possibility of culture as a way of attributing meaning to the world. In sum, for Cassirer, the function of signification makes *any* and *every* possible framework of world-interpretation possible and thereby human experience in general possible. "What holds good for understanding the possibility of cognition also applies to all truly independent basic functions of spiritual life."[48] In this way, Cassirer attempts to *complete* the Kantian project by applying the transcendental method towards answering the question concerning the possibility of human experience in general, which always involves culture, not merely the possibility of experience *qua* natural science. This means that Cassirer's extension of Kant is also a deviation from him. The following section on Symbolism shows how Cassirer deviates from the Kantian framework by expanding his notion of objectivity. Thus, Cassirer's extension of the critique of reason to culture begins with civilization as its starting point, and asks about its possibility.[49] As Hendel writes in the introduction to the symbolic forms, the theory of symbolic form involves "the extension of the meaning of knowledge to include culture within man's life of self-expression and discovery of world"[50]

[48] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 178
[49] Cassirer, *Language and Art I*, pp.167
[50] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.47

The Apriori Form of Experience

The goal of Idealism is to connect the intelligible with the sensible.[51] Cassirer's *telos* is to connect the intelligible with the sensible by showing that the pure function of spirit must seek fulfillment in the sensory world.[52] Given that being is the one in the many and the many in the one, and the function of signification makes this possible, the notions of noumena, pure meaning, mere sensation, or pure becoming, are logical abstractions from the one world in which meaning and the sensible are united. This means that 'meaning' is a logical unity among meanings themselves, but does not signify any real 'it itself by itself' or noumenal being beyond the world of sensible experience. If it were, then one could only think its existence by bringing the condition for thought into thought itself, making it one representation among many, thereby destroying its character as the 'it itself by itself'. If pure meaning were noumenal, then it would still have a sensible sign, 'meaning', and would be rendered particular. Spiritual content and its sensuous expression are united; the spirit is not a self-contained content 'preceding' its sensuous expression.[53] Mere sensation is a product of abstraction.[54] Philosophy analyzes 'meaning' and the 'sensuous' out of phenomena.[55] Objectivity is intelligible if meaning is in the many, and the many in meaning. Cassirer, following Fichte, must therefore deny the existence of noumena, and any world of utter particularity and becoming. This is both consistent with Kant insofar as Kant's project limits reason's ability to know what is beyond experience and a diversion from him insofar as Kant insisted upon the existence of noumena. In other words, Cassirer denies the existence of any being or noumenon

[51] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.86
[52] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.87
[53] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 178
[54] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 198
[55] Hamburg, "Cassirer's Conception of Philosophy", pp.58

beyond experience, and for this reason Cassirer's Kantianism should be taken with a 'grain of salt'. Because unity also requires diversity for its being, Cassirer claims that if 'form' has a priority over 'matter' then it is only in value that we prioritize it.[56] This will become explicit in Cassirer's argument that understanding is dependent upon the sensuous element of experience, which I explicate in the section on symbolism. Knowing objectivity requires both the mere sensible and the function of signification, for without the former, no unity can be true, i.e. be 'of the world', and without the latter, there is no sensible whatever. Cassirer's rejection of the noumena highlights Cassirer's fundamental principle of cognition, namely that 'the universal is perceived only in the particular, while the particular is only thought in the universal.'[57]

Kant insisted upon the noumena in part because he required a realm where freedom would be possible. The realm of objectivity that Kant's categories determine is a realm of mechanism, or determination in accordance with the external principles of efficient causation. Because Cassirer rejects the idea that there is any other world than the world of experience, it is not clear how language could be 'autonomous' in his schema insofar as he is committed to the Kantian framework, which relegates all autonomy to the realm of the noumena. Because we know that the Copy Theory is a miss-guided way to think about language, Cassirer's elimination of a realm of mere being which language copies in its expression of being actually illuminates the fact that the autonomy of language is contingent upon the idea that there is no other world than the world of experience, not *vice versa*. In this respect, we must see how the autonomy of language is

[56] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms,* pp.162
[57] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.86

a form of 'self-causation', and how spirit, as a function or activity of human beings, is free.

The *a priori* form of experience, one that is given 'at birth', and is present throughout the life of subjectivity, is ambiguous in Cassirer. He is committed to the analytic and synthetic apperception of consciousness. In spite of this, it is not altogether clear what assumptions Cassirer makes about the unity of consciousness. We know that he argues that it has a transcendental form. The question is: what is that form? In the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Cassirer enumerates the basic qualities of consciousness: space, time, thing, attribute, and cause and effect.[58] These pure intuitions and categories of relation are listed as the *Grundrelationen,* which provide an account of what Cassirer considers to be the given structure of consciousness made possible by the function of signification. In addition, following Kant, Cassirer implies that the I and number are *a priori* forms of experience.[59]

Wolfgang Marx, in his *Abschied von kantischen Letzbegruendung*, suggests that Cassirer is not committed to any 'fixed categories' that make experience possible, only a stable function. In this respect, although Cassirer is not committed to any deduction of the categories, he is still committed to *a priori* principles.[60] In the *Logic of the Cultural*

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[58] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 94. *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*, pp.28

[59] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, 226-249, 249-277 Number in Kant is built out of the understanding's construction in time. In this sense, because Cassirer admits the synthetic function of consciousness, and the *apriori* intuition of time, he also accepts its product, arithmetic. Given the *apriori*, synthetic origin of arithmetic, the arithmetic judgment is a synthetic, *apriori* form of judgment. Cassirer never states this explicitly, but implies it throughout the chapter cited. In respect to the I, Cassirer's commitment to the unity of apperception commits him to this notion of the I as the expression of absolute being, or that vehicle of representations. I commit significant space to the discussion of the I in chapter X.

[60] Marx, Wolfgang. "Abschied Von Kantischer Letzbegruendung?" *Uebr Ernst Cassirers Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen,*. [...] pp. 65-72. "Er beschraenkt sich auf eine Funktionsanalyse von Kategorien und Ideen. Cassirer verzichtet auf eine Invariantentheorie." This conflicts with the first volume of Symbolic Forms, where Cassirer commits himself to the thesis that the categories of relation are constitutive of experience. It is never clear to what extent Cassirer commits himself to certain categories. Nonetheless, I

Sciences, Cassirer claims that the two essential features of the physical world are property constancy and law constancy.[61] Property constancy corresponds to the category of substance, or thing-attribute, and law constancy to cause-effect. In this way, Marx's position on Cassirer appears to render Cassirer's general theory of culture inconsistent across the works throughout his career, for he seems indebted to an invariantist position in the first volume of the symbolic forms. Perhaps Cassirer himself is not absolutely clear as to what the *apriori* character of experience is. This becomes problematic, for according to Cassirer himself, understanding his philosophy of language is contingent upon understanding what his idea of what the *a priori* character of experience is.[62] Cassirer's theory of culture will provide us the lens to understand why Marx thinks that Cassirer is not committed to an invariantist position, and why he must at least in part be so committed if we are to consistently understand his theory of culture and language.

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think that he must commit himself to some, for if he did not, then he would have an account of the act that brings representations to consciousness, but he would not be able to explain how this happens, for the categories bring representations to consciousness, and this originary synthetic act makes experience possible. In this respect, one cannot separate a commitment to the synthetic unity of apperception and a commitment to the categories in judgment that through the synthetic unity of apperception bring representations to the analytic unity of apperception. Moreover, Cassirer's commitment to *a priori* intuitions also commits him to determinations according to the categories, for the intuitions do not come ready made but are constructed by the Understanding in judgment. I believe that Cassirer's commitment to the *Grundrelationen* in the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* expresses his commitment to both the synthetic unity of consciousness and minimally, the categories of relation. For these reasons, Marx cannot be right that Cassirer does not commit himself to any invariants of experience, whatever they are. As we will see, Cassirer's hierarchy of languages, ranging from advanced to primitive depends in part upon certain invariants of experience, although these invariants are not only the pure intuitions and the categories of relation.

[61] Cassirer*, Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, pp.74 Marx correctly connects Cohen with Cassirer in this respect, for both Cohen and Cassirer recognize 'Kontinuitiat' as a category of experience.

[62] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 41

Chapter Four. Beyond Kant: The Symbol

Kant's 'Symbol'

Most commentators recognize that the notion of the 'symbolic form' is Cassirer's own invention, and is not a term borrowed from Kant or any other thinker. [63]Given this invention, one might expect his notion of the symbol to diverge from Kant's notion of a symbol. Kant briefly discusses the symbol in his *Critique of Judgment*.[64] Kant distinguishes between two forms of intuitive representation, the 'schematic' and the 'symbolic'. The schematic is a form of representation that is definitive of reality according to determining judgment, while the symbolic is a form of reflective judgment that is nominal and not definitive of reality. This means to say that the symbolic has no proper intuition, but is grasped according to a certain interpretive schema according to a rule. The schematic is a direct presentation of a concept, while the symbolic is an indirect presentation of a concept. For example, the representation of a ruler of a state shares a form in common with that of the mind and the body, but only by an analogy, not in reality. The symbolic representation of a concept is a form of reflective judgment. As a form of reflective judgment, the symbolic representation is not constitutive of reality. But in Cassirer, objectivity is symbolic in form. In Kant, we begin with two representations, and by analogy we discover a similarity in both, e.g. the ruler directs the state like the mind directs the body, and we thereby subsume both under one concept. For this reason, the symbol in Kant is a nominal subsumption, which lays no claim to objectivity. Where Kant divorces the symbolic from the real, Cassirer unites them, claiming that reality is

[63] See Krois or Lofts in the works cited on this connection.
[64] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pp. 226

symbolic in form. Cassirer makes this move by expanding the notion of the symbol, as we will see.

In order to understand how Cassirer disagrees with Kant, we must understand what Cassirer's notion of the symbol is, which we will treat in the next section. Minimally, Cassirer merges the 'symbolic' with the 'schematic' rendering the 'symbolic' an instance of determining judgment. But this is only to say that Cassirer obliterates the distinction between 'regulative' [reflective] and 'constitutive' [determining] principles in Kant.[65] Cassirer claims that the human intellect needs symbols, not images,[66] a claim with which Kant would disagree, given his notion of a symbol. In spite of this diversion from Kant's notion of 'symbol', Cassirer is responding to Kant's imperative for further research into the notion of the symbol and its relation to language. Kant claims that the notion of the symbol is little discussed and requires a deeper investigation.[67] Thus, it is relatively safe to speculate that even Cassirer's 'symbolic form' stems from Kant's imperative to investigate the symbol.

Symbolic Form: The Function of Symbolism in Cassirer

Understanding how Cassirer distinguishes himself from Kant, i.e. his notion of the 'symbol', is instrumental in understanding his extension of the critique of reason to that of culture and the possibility of meaning. What is the symbol? The symbol is the representation of meaning by way of a sense content.[68] In other words, the symbol is the exhibition of meaning in the senses.[69] This definition highlights how Cassirer changes and expands the notion of the symbol. Given this definition, the representation of any

[65] Hendel, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp 27
[66] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 50
[67] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 2nd Edition, pp. 226
[68] Hendel, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.pp.50-54
[69] Hamburg, pp. 28 The symbol is the 'Sinnerfuellung im Sinnlichen'.

concept, indeed any meaning, either direct or indirect, is 'symbolic' in form. Kant's separation of the symbol and objectivity is destroyed by Cassirer's expanded definition, which allows that a 'direct presentation of a concept' is not only schematic, but also symbolic. Moreover, because we also know that meaning is not only conceptual meaning, but that intuitions, as forms of unification, are forms of meaning, Cassirer's definition of the symbol, unlike Kant's, does not involve a reference to the concept. Any representation of a meaning by a sensory particular, whether it be conceptual or intuitive, counts as a symbol.

Given Cassirer's assumption of Classical Idealism, namely that each content of consciousness represents the whole relational unity of the particulars of consciousness, i.e. the meaning or unity of consciousness, it *follows* that consciousness is 'symbolic' in form. This is a new way of formulating the first premise of the argument for the function of signification that we reconstructed earlier.[70] Saying 'experience is symbolic in form' means that 'the one represents the many'. From this definitional insertion into our previous argument for the function of signification, we can make a further claim about the condition for the possibility of experience. Because the unity of apperception is symbolic, and the function of signification makes the unity of apperception possible, it follows that the function of signification makes the symbolic character of consciousness possible. Because the function of signification makes the symbolic character of consciousness possible, Cassirer is warranted in claiming that the function of signification just is the symbolic function of consciousness, which just is the infusing of sensation with meaning, i.e. that which makes the symbol possible. Thus, the function of

[70] See the last paragraph of the section 'The Way to the Symbol'.

signification is the symbolic function.[71] From these assumptions it follows that the unity of experience is symbolic and that the unity of experience is only possible due to the symbolic function of human consciousness. I note that although Cassirer argues that the function of signification makes experience possible, nowhere does he insert the notion of the symbol into the argument as I have in this formulation. In spite of this, given that I have faithfully reproduced Cassirer's definition of the symbol, this extension of his argument for the function of signification is one he could have made and implicitly relies on throughout the text.

Man is *animal symbolicum*.[72] Cassirer does not inquire into the possibility of the symbolic function.[73] For his question is, 'how is the meaningful world possible?' His answer is, 'the symbolic function'. This, of course, is a 'functional definition' of man, centered upon that activity that makes him be what he is, namely the act of symbolizing phenomena or transforming sensations into vehicles of meaning. For these reasons, Cassirer does not ask 'how is the symbolic-significatory function possible?' To ask this question is to have missed his answer.

This argument propounding the symbolic form of experience displays how Cassirer's theory of meaning escapes the pitfalls of rationalism and empiricism. For if language is a synthesis of the intelligible and the sensible, as Cassirer thinks[74], because its character shares the form of objectivity, language can function as a medium through which knowing objectivity is possible. The Rationalist/Idealist and the Empiricist take

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[71] This is the answer to the question of part three in the introduction, which we find in part four of the introduction, "Ideational Content of the Sign. Transcending the Copy Theory of Knowledge", pp.105-114

[72] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp 26

[73] Cassirer, *Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, pp. 100

[74] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.95 "Language is not merely sensuous, but is filled with an intellectual content". Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 319

one side of the Symbol, i.e. 'sense-content' or 'meaning', and posit it as objectivity, which renders the two-sided character of language poorly suited for philosophy. Objectivity is a synthesis of 'being' and becoming. Positing 'pure being' or 'pure becoming' as objectivity is like positing in thought what is unthinkable, thereby rendering the unthinkable thinkable, and destroying its character. These perspectives miss the symbolic form of reality, leading them to distorted view of language and its capacity as a vehicle for thinking it.

Hamburg implies that it is a deficiency of Cassirer's theory of symbolic forms that he does not argue that the employment of the symbol in the construction of symbol worlds is the case.[75] In other words, he denies that Cassirer has an argument propounding his conclusion that the function of symbolism is the *apriori* function of world-formation. He finds Cassirer's theory of the symbolic form to be based on the fact of symbol-use in science, such that the whole theory of symbolic forms is one extensive thought experiment. This is in part true, but in large part false. Although it is may be true that Cassirer derives his clue concerning the symbolic form of reality from symbol-use in science, I think we can locate more general arguments propounding his conclusion that the symbolic function makes the unity of consciousness possible. Once we understand the assumptions of the Cassierian project, the argument can be constructed. It is important to know what requires an explanation and how it requires one. In one sense, Hamburg hits the target, for Cassirer assumes that the world is one, and that subjectivity is the origin of this unity. From these assumptions, and our definition of the symbol, we infer the conclusion that the world is symbolic and constructed by the symbolic function. These are the two main arguments that form the foundation of Cassirer's *Philosophy of*

[75] Hamburg, pp. 87

Symbolic Forms. Insofar as we rely on presuppositions, Hamburg is very correct in his assessment, although I sincerely doubt this is what he implies in his criticism.

Understanding the symbol provides the clue for grasping the notion of the symbolic form. The symbol is the representation of meaning by way of a sensuous content. The referential quality of the symbol is not the same as the referential quality of a mere sign.[76] Cassirer's definition of the symbol allows us a *prima facia* dissection of the notion of the symbolic form into two respective parts: sign and signified. Insofar as the symbol is a representative relation, that which represents is the sign, and that which is represented is the signified. The sensuous element functions as the sign of the meaning, while the meaning is that which is signified by the sign. For example, in respect to the unity of apperception, every content of consciousness is a sign of the whole, the whole being what is signified. Hamburg and Poetzold accept the notion that the symbol is dyadic, its constituents being sign and signified, or *Sinnerfuellung im Sinnlichen*.[77] Although I agree that the symbol includes these two parts, following Krois, I disagree with this schema of the symbol, for besides the fact that there are many ways the sign can signify a meaning, it bypasses the requirement that the symbolic function makes the symbol, meaning in sensation, possible, such that the way in which the sense content signs the meaning is itself an aspect of symbolic form. Krois quotes Cassirer in his definition of the symbolic form: the symbolic form is each energy of spirit through which a spiritual content or meaning is connected with a sensory particular and is *internally*

[76] It should be noted here that the symbol includes the notion of the sign, but the sign by itself does not exhaust the notion of a symbol. Sign and Symbol are different notions, although the symbol includes the notion of the sign in its concept, while the notion of a sign does not by definition entail the notion of the symbol. It could be otherwise expressed. The sign can function as a symbol, or it cannot. Here we are attempting to lay out the conditions under which a sign functions as a symbol.

[77] Hamburg, pp.28

adapted to it.[78] What this definition *prima facia* explains is that although the sign and the signified are constituents of the symbol, there are many ways that a sign can signify, and this dimension must be included in the definition of the symbolic form. For example, the semiotic relation can take the following forms: sign=signifies, sign represents signified, and sign represents the act of signification.[79] Following Cassirer's definition of the symbolic form, the tripartite constituents of the symbolic form are the sign, the signified, and the way in which the sign signifies the signified, i.e. the activity of producing the symbol.[80]

In this paragraph I attempt a reconstruction of Cassirer's argument that the sign is entailed in the concept of meaning. This argument is an extension of his arguments that the function of signification makes meaning possible, and that this function just is the symbolic function. If the symbolic function makes the meaningful world possible, then it follows that all meaning is symbolic, or what is the same, all meaning is symbolic in form. Because the sign is a necessary constituent of the symbol, it follows that the sign is a necessary condition for meaning itself and any meaning whatever. If this be doubted, I challenge the reader to try and think of a meaning that is not signed. One will find that this is impossible. Nonetheless, it is important for Cassirer to go further than to claim that the sign is a necessary condition for meaning. He claims not only that the sign is an external condition for meaning, but that it is an internal condition. The sign is the sensible element of the symbol. Thus, as there is no sense content that is not meaningful, there is

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[78] Krois, pp.49, Cassirer, Bayer, Cassirer's *The Metaphysics of the Symbolic Forms: A Commentary*, pp.1-8, *Essay on Man*, pp.32-35

[79] For a further discussion of the logical possibilities in the semiotic relation, see chapter VIII.

[80] At this point in the argument, if any doubts exist concerning the tripartite form of the symbol, I beg patience from the reader, for I devote the eighth section of the paper to this constituent, in which I expand upon the notion of the symbolic grammar.

no meaning that is not also sensible. Because meaning is symbolic in form, and the sign is entailed in the notion of the symbol, it follows that the sensible sign is entailed in the notion of meaning itself, or as Cassirer states in his definition of symbolic form, that meaning is *internally* adapted to the sign. To be 'internally adapted' to the meaning signed means that the sign is never an external addition to a complete meaning, but is formative in the development of the meaning that it signs. This idea has significant consequences for Cassirer's philosophy of language, as we will see. In sum, this conclusion expresses Cassirer's commitment to a certain perspective on objectivity: objectivity is not pure being, pure unity, or mere becoming, mere flux, but it is symbolic in form, i.e. both one and many.

To highlight this point, consider the dialectic of unity and diversity. The particular can only be thought in the universal. But the universal cannot be thought if there is not some particular sign for it. It is true that this idea makes understanding dependent upon the sensuous, which is merely another way of expressing the fact that meaning is only possible if it is internally adapted to a sign or that intelligibility requires the sensuous sign. Pure meaning itself, utter unity, cannot be thought except when it is given a sensuous sign, e.g. the written or spoken sign 'meaning'. Once it is given a sign, it becomes one particular meaning among many, requiring pure meaning for its possibility. This explains why providing a definition of meaning is impossible, for attempting to define it without the sensible sign makes the condition for meaning a particular meaning, which itself requires the condition for the possibility of meaning, *ad infinitum*. This makes explicating Cassirer's theory of Symbolic Forms very difficult, for it is centered on the problematic of meaning. Meaning itself is unintelligible without the particular sign

for it, while 'sensation', the other part of the symbol, as a term, must have a meaning, if it is possible. Thus, 'meaning' and 'sign' are inter-determinative. One cannot be understood without the other. As 'sign' and 'signified' are inter-determinative, so are 'meaning' and 'sensation' and 'unity' and 'diversity'. The symbol is thereby composed of inter-determinative constituents. The inter-determinative constituents are border-concepts, whose intelligibility is limited. For the one, 'meaning' is usually meant to signify what is universal, and the other, 'sensation', signifies what is utterly particular. Both are one-sided half-truths. Thinking the particular as particular requires the universal, and thinking the universal requires the sensible sign. This border-concept dialect of sign and signified, i.e. of unity and diversity, shows that while a sign cannot be a symbol if it does not signify a meaning, the meaning it signifies is only possible if it is given a sign. In other words, the symbol is a representative holistic unity of pure unity and mere diversity, pure universality and pure particularity. The notion of the pure 'universal' and the utterly 'particular' are abstractions from the one symbolic world in which both are unified in the symbol. Because objectivity is only possible given the two principles constitutive of the symbol, thinking objectivity is also contingent upon the sensible sign and its universal.

How the sign *qua* symbol makes meaning possible can be clarified in an example. In the flux of consciousness no particular content that passes through ever repeats itself.[81] Before some sensuous content in the flux of consciousness is taken out of the flux of consciousness, e.g. a shade of red, and made to stand for some quality in the flux of consciousness, e.g. the color red, there can be no identification of 'red' in this flux. The fact that consciousness does not take this content as merely present, but in memory and imagination as past and not yet vanished shows that consciousness relates to the content

[81] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.89

differently, i.e. consciousness has created a sensuous sign, e.g. a shade of red, by stabilizing a sense content, that makes identifying red in the flux of consciousness and thinking the meaning 'red' possible at all.[82] Thus, it is clear that a mental content is only fully determined when it is given a sign.[83] The sign is a necessary condition for a complete thought-content. This is Cassirer's lesson for us in The *Function of the Sign: The Problem of Meaning*.[84] The function of the sign is to carry meaning. We can only think the particular, or identify the identity of the particular as an instance of some particular meaning, e.g. 'red', if there is some sensuous sign bound up with it, e.g. our representation of a shade of red. This example highlights Cassirer's conclusion: the sign, as a symbol, is the condition for the possibility of meaning.

Sign qua Symbol and Sign qua Sign

Understanding the symbol involves distinguishing it from a sign that functions as a signal. The symbolic function is universal, because it permeates the whole of consciousness.[85] Every content of consciousness symbolizes the whole of consciousness. It is a condition for the possibility of any sense content that it represent a meaning, i.e. that it be a symbol. For example, the book[86] on my desk is in space and time. *Qua* spatial, it represents the whole of space, *qua* time, it represents the whole of time. As a member of a collection of books, it represents number, and as a content of consciousness it represents the I, for the I is that vehicle of any representation whatsoever. This example highlights how the book can function as a natural symbol. This highlights the other aspect

[82] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 90 "All apparent reproduction presupposes an original and autonomous act of consciousness. The reproducibility of the content is itself bound up with the production of a sign for it." When it has a sign, it can be re-thought.
[83] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.86
[84] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.85
[85] Krois, page 51, Hendel, pp.14, Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp. 32-35
[86] This example of the book ignores it as a product of culture, which is the subject of section V.

of the symbol. It is not only universal in its representation, but it is flexible in respect to what it symbolizes. The book is not only a symbol of space, but it is also a symbol of time, number, and the I. Both universality and flexibility are characteristics of the symbol.[87]

We have determined that the symbolic form is composed of the sign, sensation, the signified, meaning, and the way that the sense-content signifies the meaning. Notice that the universality and the flexibility of the symbol refer to the way in which the sign functions in the symbol. The sign can be used to sign many different meanings, for it is not bound to merely one signification, as we see with our example of the book. In this way, the way that the sign signifies in the symbol exhibits flexibility. This flexibility is due to the sensuous element of the sign. Moreover, the sign in the symbol signifies a meaning, some unity that re-occurs in the flux of consciousness, as the book signifies the content of consciousness as a content of consciousness in the unity of apperception. But the sign *qua* signal is more difficult to determine, for a sign functions as a signal when it is not a vehicle for meaning. Specifying the meaning of a meaningless sign appears impossible. But its meaning can be determined by comparison to the sign.

The sign as a symbol signifies a universal and signifies flexibly, while the sign as a sign, not as a symbol, signifies a particular and signifies it only. This shows that the sign is merely physical, while the symbol is not. This is the particular referential quality of the sign *qua* sign. In this way, the sign as a sign lacks the significatory qualities of universality and flexibility.[88] One might say that the meaning of the sign *qua* sign is its referent, and its referent is its 'meaning'. Moreover, the sign as a sign can only signify a

[87] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp.32-35
[88] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp.32-35

particular impression, and the particular sign which signs the particular impression cannot be appropriated to sign some other signification. This kind of sign is a physical signal, not a symbol. Symbols are designators, while signals are operators.[89] This description can be misleading, for both the symbol and the sign refer. What is intended here is that the symbol describes the particular that it signs as an instance of some universal, such that 'a is b' represents 'a' as 'b', where 'b' is the predicate in which 'a' is grasped. The signal does not describe 'a' as 'b', but merely refers to a particular, 'a', and cannot be used to describe 'a'. So the sign operates as a mere reference to a particular, while the symbol describes and represents it by unifying it in some meaning-context. If we return to our example concerning the color red, these definitions become clearer. If the sign were to function as a signal, and not as a symbol, then the sign would signify only a particular shade of red, and would only be used in reference to that passing shade. It would not be used to signify the various shades of red or to pick out 'red' in the world.[90] It is important to note this distinction, for we will only be able to understand the symbolic form of language if we distinguish it from a mere signal.

Natural Symbolism

As concluded, Cassirer assumes that the form of consciousness is characterized by certain forms of relation, and their conditions, namely space, time, thing-attribute, cause-effect, number, and the I. These define the conditions for the possibility of any consciousness whatever. Because the unity of consciousness is made possible by the symbolic function, these pure intuitions, categories, and relations, as forms of unification and meaning, are symbols. In what way are they symbols? Given that they are the

[89] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp. 32

[90] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 281-282 Cassirer cites Lotze in this connection, who calls concepts like red 'first universals'.

conditions for the possibility of any consciousness whatever, these pure intuitions, categories, and relations are all called ‘natural symbols'. As Krois points out, the natural symbol is that meaning and unity that permeates all sense experience.[91] The constant variables of experience are the natural symbols, as are those sense contents that represent the given unity of experience. Note that although the natural symbol has these qualities of universality and flexibility, the forms of unification expressed by the natural symbol, i.e. space, time, number and the I, are all ‘fixed’ unities. Each consciousness exhibits the same structures due to the spontaneous act of consciousness. It is not the case that there are many different space-structures or many different I structures. These unities are common to every human consciousness. Moreover, as fixed unities the actual character of these forms of unification cannot be controlled or manipulated by any individual consciousness, but they are the conditions for the possibility of consciousness itself and its structure. This does not mean that language, for instance, always perfectly embodies these forms. As we will see, these forms are, for the most part, imperfectly embodied in language.

[91] Krois, pp.53

Chapter Five. Grasping Cultural' Symbolism Through Language

Thus far we have only said that 'natural symbolism' and the forms of cultural activities are ways of 'creating' the world or infusing the world with meaning. This identification of 'natural symbolism' and the activities of culture through the human activity of meaning-infusion have not illuminated their difference. Still, only through the notion of the 'symbol' as the representation of a meaning by way of a sense content could Cassirer extend the *Critique of Pure Reason* to the critique of culture. All of the 'cultural' symbolisms and 'natural' symbolisms can be unified under one concept: the symbol. Because we have not yet distinguished the cultural symbol from the natural symbol, this unification remains ambiguous. Because language is a 'cultural symbol', in order to discover whether it has an autonomous character, we must define what a cultural symbol is, and how it is possible. This involves distinguishing the cultural symbol from the natural symbol. This should afford us a better understanding of how the symbol makes the extension possible. Indeed, as Cassirer writes, in order to understand cultural symbolism, we must understand the natural symbol.[92] I introduce the cultural symbol through a discussion of the 'fact of language' with which Cassirer's philosophy of language begins. The cultural symbol will be distinguished from the natural symbol in the section five.

"Spelling Out" the Aporia: The Sentence

In the section on the *aporia*, we introduced one of the most basic problems of the philosophy of language: what is the character of that fact of language with which the

[92] Cassirer, *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*, pp.41 "Auf die natuerliche Symbolik, auf jene Darstellung des Bewusstseinsganzen die schon in jedem einzelnen Moment und Fragment des Bewusstseins notwendig enthalten oder mindestens angelegt ist, muessen wir zurueckgehen, wenn wir die kuenstliche Symbolik, wenn wir die 'willkuerlichen' Zeichen begreifen wollen, die das Bewusstsein in der Sprache erschaffen"

philosophy of language begins? Answering this problem will afford us a better understanding of other *aporia* concerning the unity and diversity of language, and should shed insight into a more precise formulation of Cassirer's question concerning the being and autonomy of language. As discussed, asking the question assumes that we are familiar with that about which we are asking, and that there is some unity to the language-idea that distinguishes it from others. The transcendental question: 'How is language possible?' takes the familiar phenomena of language as its beginning. The philosophy of language must have a logical starting point, and that starting point is the sentence.[93] The fact of language is the fact of *significant speech.*[94] What is the sentence, and why is the sentence, not the individual word, that with which the philosophy of language begins?

The sentence can be most easily described in terms of its structure and content. It primarily shows itself as a combination of meaning-carrying sound *signs*, or tones, that are ordered according to rules governing those specific contents. In this way, the meaning of each individual sentence is built out of the meaning of the meaning-units, e.g. morphemes and the rules for their combination, and the meaning of any particular word is not determinable apart from the sentence-context. Any language contains an indefinite plethora of sentences, and can be generated out of the rules and the sensuous substratum, e.g. alphabet and lexical categories, that constitutes it. This is often called the *productivity* of language, which is the capacity of language to generate a potentially unlimited number of sentences from a limited number of rules and signs.[95]

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[93] Cassirer. *Essay on Man*, pp.27-41, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.303-307

[94] Even Wittgenstein must say that speech is significant. For him, this means that meaning is use. The significance of language is the meaning that is located in its use.

[95] The productivity of speech is not independent of the evolution of a language. As language is passed on to

The case for the primacy of the sentence is not merely empirical. The following argument shows this. If one were to take the word as the primary element, one could not define the word without invoking others, and thereby the meanings of other words. Thus, in this way, one cannot invoke the meaning of one word without invoking the systematicity, i.e. the inter-definitive character, of meaning. Words and their meanings are inter-definitive, and even stating the meaning of the word requires invoking word-order, i.e. rules governing the combination of words, and because the sentence is the expression of the unity of the syntax and the semantics of speech, it follows that if one assumes that the word is primary, then one must always evoke the sentence as the word's possibility, thereby nullifying its claim to primacy. The word is only definable in the context of the sentence.[96] Because the meaning of the word is not definable except by invoking the unity of the sentence, Cassirer takes the sentence as the primary locus of language, not the word.

Why is the primary element of language the sentence, and not the word? Cassirer provides three general arguments for the claim that the sentence is the primary element of language, and is thereby that with which the philosophy of language must begin. First, that the sentence is primary, not the word, has been confirmed by empirical linguistics.[97] Second, the development of the free-morpheme, the word, and a stringent distinction between the parts of speech, is a relatively late development in the history of language, and some languages, mostly poly-synthetic languages, contain mostly bound-morphemes

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new generations, the new generations invent new words and alter the syntax, changing the quality and number of possible sentences.

[96] Cassirer never, so far and I have noticed, invokes Frege's 'context principle', but it seems that the primacy of the sentence in defining the meaning of the word is very similar to, if not identical to Frege's principle. See Frege's *Foundations*.

[97] Cassirer cites Wundt and Ottmar. Cassirer. *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. pp. 304

that are a part of word-sentences that do not have meanings outside of the sentence.[98] For example, [nam-kId-te-n-ai][99] means 'catch -tiger- past -do- first person agent'. Each meaning unit in this phonetic description of this polysynthetic language is a bound morpheme, e.g. 'nam' and 'kId', which cannot stand alone, like the word 'cat' can. If the word were primary, then some languages which we would ordinarily classify under 'language' would not count as a 'language'. Focusing on the sentence as the primary element of language is consistent with the history and phenomenology of language.

Third, historically and phenomenologically, the word never shows itself independently of the sentence.[100] For the most part, language, *qua* sentence, shows itself as spoken by humans. Insofar as all languages that have been catalogued fit this primordial characterization of speech, all of the human languages are included in the 'fact' of language. Language is a form of life, a form of human life[101]. Because much meaningful speech is determined by how people use language, and use is for the most part use in the context of a sentence, it follows that assuming the sentence as the unity of language from which philosophy of language begins accounts for the pragmatics of meaning.[102] Assuming that the word or phrase is primary misses this aspect. Humans speak to each other in sentences; they do not speak words by themselves. Conversation would be impossible without the sentence. The third argument does not conflict with the second, for although Cassirer thinks that the most complete form of speech is located in the form that fully develops the free morpheme, he recognizes that the free morpheme,

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[98] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. pp.304
[99] *Language Files*, pp.165
[100] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.304
[101] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.153
[102] For example, 'how are you doing?' means 'hello' in standard American English. The meaning of the question is determined by how it is used by its speakers.

the independent word, is never free of the rules of speech in the sentence. The phenomenological and historical primacy of the sentence is not at odds with Cassirer's claim that the 'freest' sentence is one which includes the free morpheme. This idea will be developed in section ten.

If language is a form of life, then it has an 'organic form'. Cassirer calls the form of language a 'concrete universal'.[103] What is a concrete universal? The term signifies that 'form' and 'matter' are inapplicable concepts in delineating the form of each language. Like the notion of 'life'[104], the form of language cannot be completely abstracted from the matter of language. Any particular content of language, e.g. sound-sign, is only meaningful or possible in the context of the structure of the sentence, but there is no structure if there are no signs in which the structure can inhere. The sensuous substratum of speech, and indeed of every 'cultural form', is already 'formed', e.g. the alphabet, syllabify, etc.[105] The rules of a language apply only to that particular language, and the particular signs that belong to that language. The rules of grammar are rules pertaining to signs of a particular kind, and insofar as the signs are only meaningful in the context of the sentence, the main carrier of meaning, it follows that the form of the substratum, e.g. the alphabet or syllabary, and the structure of the grammar, cannot be fully separated from each other. We would use 'form' and 'matter', which imply that the former can be fully thought a part from the latter, in our talk of language if they were.

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[103] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*. pp. 118-128

[104] This assumes a certain notion of 'life' which Cassirer discusses in his *Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms*. 'Life' is present in every part of the living organism, and thereby cannot be separated in thought from the living individuals in which it is. The whole is prior to the parts, and the parts acquire their function from the whole, while the inter-determining character of the parts constitutes the whole. Language is like life in this way. Cassirer can thereby connect the organic form of speech with the fact that only living beings speak. Cassirer borrows this notion of life from Hegel, who lays bare the concept in his *Science of Logic*. Hegel, *Logic*, 279-282

[105] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.86

The rules of English are exhibited in each instance of English, and the rules of German are exhibited in each instance of German, but never apart from any of those instances. In this way, the universal that is language is a concrete one, that 'is' only insofar as it is in each instance of the language itself. If each language exhibits its own concrete universal, i.e. its own unity, and if its structure is due to the function of unity, then it should be clear to everyone why we expect two *a priori* characters, and why we expect Cassirer to account for the diversity of language, i.e. the unity particular of each. Although language is a concrete universal, and there is no particular 'language itself', our investigation assumes that there is some logical character that makes each of these particular concrete universals 'language'. Thus, although 'language' is immediately a particular language, and although we seek the unity of all of the particulars, our investigation does not commit us to denying the concreteness of language's universality.[106] Instead, we aim to analyze out what is always only already 'in' in the individual language.[107] This discussion lays bare the *aporia* concerning that with which Cassirer's philosophy of language begins, and why we should expect Cassirer to provide us with a transcendental account of both the unity and particularity of language forms.

The Diversity of Speech Forms

We know that the primary element of language is the sentence. This provides us with a clue that the plurality of 'languages' have something in common, and it provides a clue as to what the unity of language is. Given what we know about language, we can ask: 'how is the sentence possible?' and 'how is it possible that there are so many different ways to construct a sentence?' It is still unclear how our discussion of the

[106] This is the first instance of language's concrete universality. Chapters VIII and IX show us an even deeper way in which language is a concrete universal.
[107] See chapter I, pp.3.

sentence teaches us anything about the autonomy of language. Each language exhibits its own unity in respect to semantics, syntax, and pragmatics, and builds its unity differently.

In the following discussion I highlight the great diversity of speech, and this great diversity shows why we need to ask about the possibility of the unity and diversity of speech forms. For instance, the written and spoken for 'table' in English is 'table' and [tebl] while in German the written sign is 'tisch'. Each language has its own set of spoken and written signs that constitute its sign-system, and these signs that constitute its lexical base are themselves composed of more basic sounds and characters. For example, the basic set of characters out which signs are built in English is the alphabet, while in Japanese this basic set consists of syllables, which is appropriately called a ‘syllabary‘. The diversity extends from the diversity of the sensible sign to the meaning that is signed. In Arabic there are over five thousand words for Camel[108], while in English I cannot imagine more than a handful. The semantic diversity of speech ranges from sign-diversity to diversity in the meaning-index in the lexicology of each language.

Moreover, each language has its own set of rules that determines how it organizes the signs in its respective sign system. For example, in English I may say 'It is true that you are white' while in the translated German the word order would be different, e.g. 'Es ist wahr, dass du weiss bist'. Languages are diverse in respect to semantics and syntax. Lastly, it is also true that the rules governing what one should say and how one should say it in different circumstances varies according to culture, and that much of the time the literal translation is the wrong one, because the meaning is entrenched in the circumstantial use of the language. For example, I may say 'How are you?' to a native American English speaker, with whom I am not acquainted in a buying/selling relation,

[108] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 290

and expect a 'fine thanks' but I should not say the German 'equivalent' of this English sentence to a native German speaker in the same situation, 'wie gehts dir?', and expect the same reaction, for the meaning of each phrase is in part due to the way in which it is used by the native speaker. In a more general sense, following pragmatic variability, it should be expected that the strength and force of prescriptive Gricean rules[109] such as 'assert the stronger!' and 'assert the truth!' do not hold as conversational rules for all languages or at all in any facet of the culture in which the language is spoken.

At this point it should be clear that there are many languages, each which shares a structure in common with the others, i.e. the sentence, although each possesses its own unity in respect to semantics, syntax, and pragmatics. In passing, it should be mentioned that this discussion of language variability pertains to the particular languages themselves, e.g. dialects and idiolects[110], within which there are other variations. For example, although 'slang' is commonly used by speakers of all languages, many slang terms are specific to particular groups. Moreover, language evolution, or change over time, is another important aspect of language diversity. Not all languages evolve the same way, although there are patterns of language evolution. For example, velar consonants often become palatalized in between vowels, and this has been observed over a multiplicity of language groups. Nonetheless, given that the signs of language are arbitrary[111], e.g. 'tisch', those languages which have a large number of arbitrary signs in common are inferred to be of closer relation than those with less. German and English are

[109] See Grice's *Logic and Conversation*.

[110] The idiolect is the unique language that is spoken by an individual speaker, while the dialect is a group that speaks a certain version of one language that can usually be understood by speakers of other dialects within that same language. Hence, we can distinguish, on the surface, three general levels of language variety, namely *Language, Dialect, Idiolect*.

[111] Although it is true that there is a very predominant arbitrariness in speech, it is also true that the kind of sign employed, and the kind of syntax employed are indicative of the world-view of the people that speak it and the degree to which they are free. This is discussed in greater detail in chapter X.

of a closer relation to one another than German and Japanese, for English is the daughter of the 'Germanic' family group. What accounts for the evolution of the arbitrary in language? I do not intend this discussion to complete a catalogue of the diversity of language, but merely to point to the great diversity in speech forms, which Cassirer himself cites throughout every chapter of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms.*

The 'natural symbol' is a fixed unity, i.e. each natural symbol has one character, and human beings cannot, by any force of will or in any voluntary way alter this form. Every individual human consciousness is structured by the same forms of relation, e.g. space, time, the I, etc. Language is not merely a 'natural symbol' for it exhibits a variability that the natural symbol does not. Not everyone speaks the same language. There are over six thousand languages in the world, each with its own unity. The same also holds for all other forms of culture, e.g. art, myth, religion, and science.[112] Man does not only build dams, like the beaver, but man paints, composes music, builds skyscrapers, and nanotechnologies. He practices not one religion, but many varieties of them, each with its own structure, and each of a different kind. Man tells stories, which function as explanations of his primordial questions and his desire to know. These stories exhibit a great variability, e.g. is it Thor, the Hammer God, who is the cause of thunder, or some other mystical figure? This diversity can also be described in terms of the cultural form's tendency toward stabilization and evolution. Language is a relatively conservative form, for it is a vehicle through which human communication happens. Nonetheless, that language must be passed on to new speakers in new generations insures that it will not remain unchanged.

[112] These forms of culture do not exhaust the forms of culture, but they are the forms upon which Cassirer focuses.

If culture, like 'natural symbolism', is minimally a way in which Human Beings unify the phenomena, or interpret the world, these cultural forms are also very different from one another and from natural symbolism in their great diversity. Language shows itself as one cultural form among many. Thus, our question: 'how is language, in its unity and diversity, possible?' must first be formulated as a question concerning the possibility of culture, or the 'cultural form'. What *a priori* characters account for the unity and the diversity of language *qua* cultural form?

Chapter Six. The First Freedom

The Unity of Culture: The Function of Signification

In asking about the autonomy of language, we are inquiring into what distinguishes language from other cultural forms. What binds the forms together as forms of culture, but does not destroy their particularity as specific forms?[113] "Do the diverse branches of cultural life actually present such an intermediate field and mediating function, and if so, does this function disclose traits, by means of which it can be recognized and described?"[114] Yes, and Cassirer has already provided us the answer to this question, even if we have, as of yet, been blind to it. The fact of language is the fact of *significant speech*. Each sound-content of a language is a sign that signs a meaning. Because the symbol is the representation of a meaning by way of a sensible sign, it follows that language, and any cultural form, as a way of representing meaning by way of a sense content, *is* a symbolic form. This conclusion follows from Cassirer's definition of the symbol, and his assumption that language is primarily a system of spoken signs. In assuming that language is significant speech, Cassirer infers, by positing the definition of the symbol, that language is a symbolic form.[115] Bound and free morphemes, i.e. words, are symbols. Sentences are minimally complex combinations of symbols organized by a set of rules. Because the existence of the symbol presupposes the symbolic function[116], it follows that language and any other cultural form, is only possible if it exhibits the symbolic function. Thus, language, *qua* the sentence, exhibits the function of

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[113] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.84-85

[114] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 84-85

[115] This is one of the presuppositions of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol.1. The linguistic sign is a symbol, and the linguistic sign is always found phenomenologically with other linguistic signs.

[116] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms,* pp.179. Here Cassirer repeats the Kantian principle in respect to culture that is characteristic of the theory as a whole: 'the static is based on the dynamic'. The static symbol is based on the dynamic function.

signification, and this function is a *transcendental* character of language. We have already formulated Cassirer's argument that the symbolic function makes the symbol possible, and is that function that is exhibited in all uses of the symbol. For this reason, language would be impossible if it did not contain the function of symbolism. This function makes language, as a symbolic form, possible and is thereby called a transcendental character of language. This function is a pure function, as it is exhibited in the natural symbol, which makes every concrete use of language possible. This is what Cassirer expresses when he claims that the use of a symbol does not create the symbolic function, but merely stabilizes it in giving the sign a distinct meaning. In order to use the linguistic sign, one must have the capacity to signify, or the function of signification.[117] This transcendental character, as a function, confers upon language and *any* cultural form, the function to symbolize what it signifies. That language is a symbol expresses the fact that language is capable of description and representation; it is not merely 'operative'. The symbolic function is that mediating function that unifies the diverse branches of cultural life, while preserving the specific way in which each symbolizes the world.[118] "Their being [the being of the symbolic signs in cultural symbolism] arises from their signification. Their content subsists wholly in the function of signification".[119] Cassirer provides us with a clue in our investigation into the autonomy of language. If the content of the various forms of symbolic signs is determinable by investigating the symbolic function, then this is where our investigation into the autonomy of the linguistic sign must begin.

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[117] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.105-106

[118] I expect that there may be doubt concerning this point. In section VIII I explain why the symbolic function does not destroy the particularity of the particular cultural forms. This is intimately connected to the third element of the symbol, namely the way in which the function produces the sign-signified relation.

[119] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.106

From these considerations a very strong conclusion can be inferred. We have said that man is the symbolic animal. What makes man be what he is is the function of signification. But this function of signification is what makes language possible. Thus, language is not just phenomenologically *found in conjunction with* man, but language and man share the same symbolic form and function. What makes human consciousness possible is what makes language possible. In this way, both cultural symbolism and natural symbolism is made possible by the function of signification, i.e. unified by the notion of the symbol. In this respect, the symbol is the schematism[120] of meaning, i.e. that framework in which any representation of a meaningful world is possible. In this way, the 'symbol' makes the extension of the critique of reason, (natural symbolism) to a critique of culture (cultural symbolism) possible. This thesis can be taken directly from Cassirer himself: "the diversity of forms are held together by one meaning",[121] and "all symbolic forms are of the same symbolic function".[122] This quote highlights what we recognized earlier, albeit in a less intelligible form, in the section *From and Beyond the Critique of Idealism,* but could not yet formulate in terms of the symbol.

Other Species 'Speak'

We have said that man is the symbolic animal, and that language, as a symbolic form, is only possible on account of mans being symbolic. But do other species 'speak?' If so, their language must be a symbolic form, and as a symbolic form, it must exhibit the characteristics of universality and flexibility. It must be able to represent and designate.

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[120] As Hendel notes in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms,* the notion of the schema in Kant 'caught Cassirer's imagination'. pp. 14 Only here the schema is not time, or some time-determination, but it is the symbol. This schema is a conceptual schema in which the different ways in which humans interpret their world can be thought together as a unity.

[121] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.107

[122] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 106

Because we take the sentence as our logical starting point, any 'speech' that is not sentential in character will not count as a 'language'. Cassirer argues that no other species possess language, for any documented 'animal speech' never amounts to a 'symbolic speech'. For this reason Cassirer argues that the difference between the mental state of a speechless creature and an adult human is the function of symbolism.[123] Savage and Rumbaugh, contemporaries in linguistics with us, confirm that because the ape knows not how to use a symbol, it cannot 'speak'.[124] Other species exhibit the use of non-symbolic sign processes that are 'pre-linguistic', and thereby non-symbolic.[125]

The empirical research shows that other species do not designate objects, e.g. 'a' as 'b'. To be able to describe an object, i.e. unify the particular in a universal, one must be able to separate oneself from the object. Because one is able to separate oneself from the thing, one can represent it as having its own character. Language is not merely expressive because language is capable of description. One reason Cassirer rejects the possibility of an 'animal language' is because there is no proof in modern linguistics that shows how a species has evolved from being able to express the object as a part of the subject to being able to express the object as an object with a particular character that is separate and distinct from itself.[126] In fact, linguistic data supports the opposite conclusion, namely that other species are not capable of signifying what is not immediately present to them. Their form of reference lacks the quality of 'displacement'[127] which is a quality all human languages share in common. We can

[123] Cassirer, *Essay on Man,* pp.128-134
[124] *Language Files*, pp. 35
[125] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp.27-41 Cassirer cites Wundt as a case in which the Canine's reflexes are conditioned.
[126] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp.27-41
[127] *Language Files*, pp.35

represent the shade of red in the flux of consciousness as 'red' because we can hold the image in imagination and memory after it has 'passed'. For this reason we can identify the passed shade as a shade of red. Our earlier discussion shows that this capacity for using a sign as a symbol is a necessary condition for expressing meaning. Empirical research has shown that other species cannot do this, and because they cannot, they must live in a world without meaning. The lack of the displacement quality shows that the animal-sign cannot signify the universal, and thereby does not exhibit the characteristic of 'universality', i.e. that it is not a symbol. Because the sentence is the main vehicle of linguistic meaning, and makes the meaning of the individual linguistic sign possible, it follows that the 'animal language' is neither capable of 'displacement' nor 'productivity'. The animal is nonetheless capable of stimulus-response behavior. But the fact that animals are not capable of displacement or productivity, and humans are, proves that language, as a symbol, is not explainable in terms of mere stimulus-response behavior or in terms of 'signals' that are used in conditioning. The displacement quality of language is itself a ground to dispel the notion that language is a stimulus response behavior, for humans can and do produce linguistic signs even when the 'stimulus' for them, e.g. the particular 'red' shade, is absent. Universality and Displacement go together. One cannot have displacement without being able to take a particular as representative of an instance of a universal in memory, i.e. without taking the particular as representative.

Because the animal is capable of reference, the character of the animal form of 'reference' must be defined in terms of the sign *qua* sign, as we outlined earlier, it should not be surprising then when an animal can imitate and learn signs for particular objects in its field of perceptual awareness. For example, an ape should be able to imitate the sign

for red when the shade is presented to it, but should not be expected to be able to use this sign to represent many different shades of red and indeed other meanings, when the shade is not present. In fact, it will not do this, and this shows us that although ape speech lacks the quality of displacement, the ape can be conditioned to hold up the sign for red when the shade is present, i.e. it can be conditioned to behave this way and thereby exhibits stimulus-response behavior. What the humans and the other species have in common is the material substratum that constitutes the sign, namely the stuff out of which the sign is made, e.g. the actual shade of red.[128] The difference lies in how the shade is used. Thus, we say that the world, whose center is neither humanity nor the nonhuman, which includes human and nonhuman life, is utter indeterminacy.[129] This is to say that subjectivity is the center of being, and when it is not taken as the center, then it is not clear what determinacy the world has.

If there is no possible 'objective use' because the observed non-human life forms live in a world without meaning, it follows that it only signs objects as part of itself, or its subject. Following this line of reasoning, Cassirer is ready and willing to attribute 'emotional language' to other species, but not 'propositional language'. The way in which the non-human employs the sign in its way of referencing is defined in terms of *Gebaerdensprache,* or gesture-language, which is a form of *grasping.*[130] "In grasping, the I separates itself from the object, but the object is still part of the I- it is not yet a part of

[128] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp.117

[129] The problem of the character of the common world shared by different organisms will be reassessed in the criticisms. This also means that there is no 'world' in which both are, except the world of symbolism or the human world. All beings are experienced through the lenses of human experience. Cassirer often cites Johannes von Uekuell in this connection. Uekuell was a biologist who claimed that in the human world there are only 'human things' while in the fly world there are only 'fly things'. Reality is thereby as diverse as the diversity of organisms, but this diversity can only be thought symbolically, i.e. through the human lenses, which means that there is really no way to see the world as the 'fly' sees it or to reconstruct the world of the other organisms. *Essay on Man*, pp.23

[130] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.180

the objective world, i.e. a world of objects."[131] No animal moves from clutching, or clutching at a distance, from subjectivity, to indicating, which requires the function of signification.[132] Insofar as gesture is a form of sign- imitation, the only meaning attributable to the sign-gesture is the particular impression-referent[133], and this is always an imitation of the living being itself, which is that which is always present, and therefore signifiable.

One other disadvantage of the gesture-speak is the fact that it is limited to space.[134] Language primordially shows itself in sound, for sound's flexibility lends itself well towards the flexibility of the symbol.[135] Of course, deaf people speak, and those who live in sound write, but not all languages have writing systems, and the development of a 'sign language' for the deaf is a late phenomena.[136] Writing and other forms of language outside the medium of sound presuppose the descriptive function of language that other non- human species lack.

From Stimulus Response to Symbolism: Helen Keller and Language Acquisition

By attending to special exceptions in language acquisition studies, the symbolic form of language is brought into full view. Helen Keller was a girl who was both deaf and blind. Before Helen Keller learned language, she could only connect individual signs of the alphabet with individual things. Her sign-use was limited to the sign *qua* sign, i.e. to signing particular tactile impressions, always missing their connection. Each sign had

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[131] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.181

[132] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.181 The sign use of other species can only be described as a kind of 'clutching' or 'clutching at a distance' but not as an indication or symbolization.

[133] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.183

[134] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 185

[135] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.184

[136] One might object that this notion of man is inconsistent with evolution. Cassirer thinks that his theory is not inconsistent. He claims that Apes entered a blind alley in the evolutionary schema, while Humans did not. *Essay on Man*, pp.30-31

one and only one referent, and this was its meaning. Before she learned the sign for 'water' she could not apply the term to any instance of water whatever, and could only imitate the sign of her teacher in the presence of the stimulus, such that she was conditioned to sign a specific sign in the presence of a certain stimulus. But when she learned that 'water' applied universally to any instance of the tactile impression of 'water', i.e. once she learned the name, she could apply the word to any instance whatever and apply it even when the stimulus was not present. This transition highlights the fact that the whole problem of language is contained in the 'name'.[137] To be able to use a 'name' presupposes the symbolic function. In the use of the name communicativeness takes precedence over exclamation,[138] for being able to represent the object in the name makes its character communicable. This shows that once she learned to use ‘water’ as a name, she could sign it even when it was not present, and thereby communicate its meaning when it was not present. In spite of this fact, one's first step into language cannot be the acquisition of a 'first word'. This would presuppose a principle contrary to Cassirerian principles, namely that a word can have a meaning outside of the context of other words in a sentence. The centrality of the name should not undermine the primacy of the sentence. Noam Chomsky's 'Construction of a Grammar Theory' explains the data ranging over language acquisition by arguing that children learn language by actively constructing their own grammar by engaging their innate capacity for language.[139]

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[137] Cassirer, *Language and Art II*, pp.179

[138] Cassirer, *Language and Art I*, pp. 179

[139] This theory accounts for the fact that children who are raised in an environment where the same language is spoken usually exhibit a consistency in their mistakes. This theory claims not that children have some innate grammar, but that the ability to build one, and the one they build, is contingent upon what they hear in their environment. The external signs of language acquisition may fist exhibit itself in the form of a word, but the child already has the capacity for and has learned some grammar, even though it has not yet been expressed in speech. This theory of language acquisition is consistent with and supports Cassirer's theory, which heralds an *apriori* function of language. It has advantages over the imitation model and the

Although Helen Keller lacked the sense data in which language is primordially found, she learned language. This proves that the form of culture and meaning in general can be expressed and represented in any sense-data, given the proper learning environment.[140] Her innate faculty is not dependent on the sense content, although it requires some content for its fulfillment.

Like coming into language, the process of losing the capacity to speak after having learned to speak can also provide a nice example of the symbolic character of language. 'Aphasia', 'loss of speech' is a disorder which destroys one's capacity for propositional speech. In spite of this, someone with 'Aphasia' can still express their emotions, yet they have lost all access to the function of representation and higher cognitive functions. This disorder highlights the fact that rational thought is dependent upon symbolic thought[141], and the fact that language provides some important link to objectivity and human experience. Cassirer consistently uses the language-acquisition process as a way of defending his claim that language is a symbolic form, for the reason that it highlights this qualitative transition into the world of meaning.[142]

Acquiring the symbolic function provides entry into objectivity out of the force and determinism of the flux. How can language be a vehicle of self-determination if the speaker's character is utterly determined by the force of the flux? Language cannot be such a vehicle unless the character of man is distanced from the immediacy of the flux,

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reinforcement model. The imitation model cannot account for the mistakes children make, and it is an empirical fact that children do not learn language through positive reinforcement or direct learning. This theory of language acquisition indicates the productive-active aspect of language learning, and is indicative, as we will see, of the autonomy of language. *Language Files*, pp. 285-289

[140] Cassirer*, Essay on Man*, 27-41

[141] Cassirer, Essay on Man, pp.27-41

[142] Cassirer also cites Laura Bridgman, who also began learning language within her critical period, however late in life, who also lacked access to certain sense-mediums.

and in the realm of symbols, he is so distanced, for he lives in a world of mediacy. Thus, understanding Cassirer's notion of symbolism is necessary for grasping how man could ever determine himself in and through language. The world of natural symbolism is, as a product of the spontaneous act of the symbolic function, a necessary condition for the autonomy of language. Self-knowing, a kind of self-determination, is also made possible by the symbol. One cannot immediately know or determine oneself. If one could immediately know oneself, then one would be passive and active in the same respect, *qua* knower and known. Thus, we know that self-knowing and self-determination can only be a mediate process. This will provide us our clue into discovering how language is a vehicle of self-knowing. This entry into objectivity through the symbol is a freedom from utter indeterminacy. In this sense, it is true that the symbolic function provides a power over the flux of consciousness in the synthetic act.[143] Thus, we say that the symbolic function makes freedom from utter indeterminacy and flux possible.

The Productive Imagination and Free-Signification

Although we have derived the symbolic function, that which makes meaning possible, i.e. turning signs into symbols by assigning them meanings, we have not yet accounted for the diversity of the cultural forms, e.g. myth, religion, language, etc. Each language and indeed each cultural form could only have its own character if human beings have the capacity for free-signification, i.e. if the character of the cultural form is not limited to one logical possibility. This is the first freedom. When I say 'capacity for

[143] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.184. Entering into a symbolic world is entering into a world that is free from the determinism of the flux of consciousness. It is a power which gives one the ability to unify and order it. The post-modern flips this value upside down, and calls this symbolic world a world in which freedom is not possible. But this ignores the fact that utter indeterminacy is itself a force which nullifies the possibility of any freedom whatever. The symbolic form, and thereby language, is the form which makes freedom possible.

free-signification' I mean the fact that I am not limited to speaking and forming a language with only one possible form. For instance, I can speak English or German, and I am therefore not limited to speaking a language with a specific grammatical form, e.g. a language whose grammar requires moving the verb to the last position in a subordinate clause. There must be some form, but what this form is is variable. Thus, to exercise the capacity for free-signification is to signify in culture in a way that is logically 'indeterminate'. This first freedom is not unrelated to the way in which language could be a vehicle of self-determination. One cannot determine oneself in language if one has no options open to him in his activity. In what follows we must see to what extent the individual has 'options' in respect to the formation of language, how he uses language, and what language he speaks.

Because each form exhibits its own unity, and indeed each language has its own unity, and the structure of each symbolic form is due to the function of consciousness, one should expect that Cassirer would infer some second *a priori* form that would make the unity of the particular cultural forms possible. As argued in the introduction, there cannot be one *a priori* form for each particular unity, but there must be one *a priori* character that manifests itself in various ways.[144] What transcendental capacity could function so? If the function of signification makes any particular language as a language possible, what makes it possible for each language to signify in its own particular way? On Cassirer's account, there must be some capacity which determines the particular ways in which the function of signification is applied to the particular languages. Given the first freedom, what makes this freedom possible? Given that the logical variability of the cultural form, or style concept, requires a transcendental function for its possibility, and

[144] This argument is located in the twentieth footnote in chapter II.

the fact that Cassirer is committed to a transcendental account, Cassirer must locate the possibility of the diversity of languages in some *a priori* faculty. From the literature, it seems that Cassirer suggests that the free, productive imagination is that *a priori* function that makes the free-significatory aspect of the culture concept possible, and distinguishes it from the natural symbol, whose possibility is exhausted by the *a priori* function of signification.[145] True, this is more of a suggestion than a firm conclusion; for one could deny the premise that the possibility of the diversity of the cultural form must be located in a transcendental principle. Nonetheless, the human exercise of the productive imagination provides an explanation for the free-significatory aspect of the language form, and thereby accounts for the variety of forms of signs and rules that determine the application of these signs in the particular languages and in the cultural forms in general.

The first freedom of language is the form of free-signification in the diverse speech forms. Language, *qua* a cultural form of symbolism, is made possible by the functions of signification and the free productive imagination. The principle and origin of all image worlds is sought in the autonomous creation of spirit.[146] Man is not limited to one form of signification in language. He can use an alphabet or a syllabary, or some other form. He may opt out of a genitive case, and never fully distinguish the verb from the noun, or as is the case in the *Indo -European* languages, he may fully distinguish them and connect them through inflecting the verb according to the subject and its number. So it is with the other forms of culture. In this way, the free application of the

[145] It is true that the Kantian deduction of the categories and their application to intuitions is contingent upon the combination of the pure manifold of intuition by the productive imagination. But notice that this act of the productive imagination is not free, i.e. one has no control over this act. In sum, it is an act of spontaneity rather than will. In the cultural forms, freedom is understood as self-determination, or the ability of the subject to act on his own capacity by way of another in a way of his choosing.
[146] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.111

capacity of signification is the origin of the different ways in which man signifies within one cultural form, and the different ways in which he signifies in culture generally. Positing the productive imagination offers much explanatory power and this should count in its favor. How else could one account for the origin of the arbitrary signs, e.g. 'table', 'tisch', of the linguistic symbol, which have at most an arbitrary connection to their signification, and of their change over time?[147] Empirical linguistics, although it strives to describe the language phenomena without referencing such an imaginative capacity, it nevertheless does not explain the phenomena, but only describes it. Positing the source of the first freedom in imagination is Cassirer's attempt at explaining this aspect of free-signification.[148]

Before moving on, we must show that Cassirer actually holds the thesis that I attribute to him. There is much support for my interpretation in the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* and other works of Cassirer. Hendel recognizes the importance of the imagination in Cassirer's work: "Every schema of understanding is a phenomenon of imagination which is at once intellectual and sensuous.[149] And as Cassirer contests, "We can arrive at a system of the manifold manifestations of the mind only by pursuing the different directions taken by its original imaginative power.[150] We say that the capacity of

[147] It is true that August Schleicher's 'regularity hypothesis' is an important principle still governing how we understand proto-languages, but it does not completely account for the fact of language change and diversity. 'Free-signification' accounts for language diversity, and any irregularities and counter-examples that are not accounted for by the regularity hypothesis. Even if we were to whole-heartedly embrace this principle, which I am apt to do, it would not reduce the force of our conclusions. While Schleicher denied that language is devoid of human freedom, and modeled language on Darwinism, Reductionism could not explain the phenomena by postulating such a model, but has instead settled with a description of the empirically observed *regularities*. Cassirer's postulation of freedom is the beginning of an attempt to explain the regularities, i.e. to understand the *ultimate forces* of language formation. Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 166-171

[148] I return to this topic in the section of Factors of World Formation.

[149] Hendel, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.52

[150] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.88 'original imaginative power' is 'ursprunglichen

signification is 'free' because it can use language at any time, indicating that language is within its power: "because these [cultural forms] have their source in free consciousness [they are within its power] it can evoke these meanings at any time.[151] This freedom is involved in the production of the linguistic and general sign of culture, for "consciousness creates definite sensory contents as expressions for complexes of meaning".[152] What we have specified here in chapter VI is the logical autonomy of the 'culture, or style, concept'[153] within which language must be thought. As a 'style concept', it is clear that the individual cannot be deduced from one function as it can in natural symbolism, where I can deduce 'a' from F (a, b, c,), as a mere instance of the function, 'F'. The individual unity of each language cannot be deduced from one 'function' but is in part due to the freedom of the human spirit, resulting in a multitude of cultural forms, each with its own 'style'.[154] Besides Hendel, the central position of the imagination in culture is confirmed by Lofts in *Repetition of Modernity*: "on a more *profound* level the presence of the symbolic, as a sensuous image impregnated with meaning, is the product of the 'productive imagination'.[155]

It is of the utmost importance to emphasize 'free' in 'free productive imagination'. Perhaps one will object that the notion of 'freedom' or 'self-determination' is absurd, and is thereby a notion that cannot be appealed to in the explanation of the

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Bildkraft', Cassirer, *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*, pp.21

[151] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.106

[152] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.106 We see that the arbitrary aspect of the linguistic sign and our ability to evoke it and use it at any time supports our claim that the capacity for free-signification makes the cultural form, and language in general possible.

[153] Cassirer, *Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, pp.76-77.

[154] Cassirer draws a comparison between the logical structure of science, as a way of subsuming the particular under the universal, and the culture concept which cannot completely deduce the particular from the universal except in a way, i.e. by inferring 'freedom'. Cassirer, *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, pp. 67-70

[155] Lofts, *Repetition of Modernity,* 49-56. For further discussion of the influence of imagination in the production of the diversity of linguistic forms, see Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 297-302

diversity of speech forms. As we have said, if that which self-determines itself is one, then that which determines itself must be passive and active in the same respect. For this reason, Cassirer must solve this problem in order to attribute autonomy to language.

Cassirer overcomes this problem by positing that the self-determining agent, as an active being, can only be free in a mediate, symbolic world, and this requires that the subject, as in Kant, be plural. Self-determination must be a mediate process. The inter-faculty act of free-signification makes language *qua* cultural form possible. This highlights how freedom within a Kantian schema is possible. Indeed, it is endemic to the Kantian project that self-determination makes experience possible. For in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that experience is only possible if the imagination acts on the pure manifold of intuition, which is in turn synthesized by the Understanding. Thus, even in the Kantian schema, self-determination is a necessary condition on experience. Cassirer extends this idea to the critique of culture, by positing that the productive imagination is a condition for the possibility of culture. Nonetheless, this extension includes a departure.

There is a difference between 'free' signification due to the productive imagination and the inter-active determination of capacities in Kant's *Critique of Reason*. In the production of natural symbolism, the individual agent has no control over how the Imagination or the Understanding combines the manifold. This is why the natural symbol is a 'fixed' symbol. In other words, the synthetic act in the natural symbol is due to the spontaneity of human faculties. But what is distinct in cultural symbolism is the fact that there is no one possibility that human consciousness must actualize in applying the function of signification. Again, this is essentially the first freedom. Man is free to

employ any logical possibility of his choosing in the production of his language. This is not to say that what logical possibility that man employs in his determination of a grammar and linguistic sign is arbitrary, but merely that he is not restricted to any one form. This point can be extended to all cultural forms: the form of the cultural act is not confined to any one form. In addition to this freedom, Cassirer suggests that the engagement of the faculty of imagination is the cause of this 'free-form' or lack of constraint. From this perspective, the 'free' of 'free' signification also signifies a control over the faculty of signification and a control over the phenomena that the productive imagination in itself does not signify. The freedom of free signification is a kind of power, exhibited by the fact that the individual can call forth language 'at will'.

This discussion illuminates how Cassirer's notion of objectivity differs from Kant. For Cassirer, because the first freedom is the form of the cultural symbol, and culture is in the world, so is 'freedom', not merely its effects, in the world. Objectivity is not a nexus of efficient cause. There is an ambiguity in Kant that Cassirer would like to avoid, namely the ambiguity concerning the transcendental I. Is the I merely the unity of apperception, or is it the unity of the transcendental faculties, or the noumenal self, or is it the representations that the individual has of itself or all of these? Cassirer's discussion of culture and its forms is a discussion of the activity of man. The 'freedom' of *the a priori* form of language *qua* culture is the form of the linguistic act, which only signifies the fact that this form can take many forms, and that man has significant control over when and how to employ these forms.[156]

[156] The control that man has over the cultural form is not a complete control. Indeed, one is born into a culture, and the way that the function of signification has been applied in the past by one's ancestors will determine how the new born applies the function of signification. Moreover, even in maturity, if one wishes not to speak, things will not stop having names. But in maturity, this individual will, through his knowledge

Our conclusions show us that we have specified how language is an instance of human freedom *qua* culture, but it does not specify what the second autonomy of language itself is. In other words the first freedom, free-signification, does not explicate whether language is its own idea, i.e. if it stands as an independent ideational form apart from others. Grammar, as the set of rules that determine the different ways in which meaning-units are combined in a language, is a result of the application and reflection of the function of signification in that particular language. We can speak of grammar as a result of the particular ways in which a people have applied the function of signification, and although this is one general way of explaining the origin of grammar *qua* culture, it is also true that one could explain the diverse structures of myth, art, and religion in the same way.[157] We are on our way to answering the question: 'what is the autonomy of language?' by answering that language is only possible if it is a product of the exercise of the capacity for free-signification. Although we know not 'what makes language language' we can formulate the question more precisely than we could before. In asking, 'how is human experience possible?' Cassirer recognizes that human experience is not exhausted by the involuntary synthesis of the Understanding. In fact, human experience cannot be limited to experience of categories in time and space, but culture, which covers

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of the language, possess a 'command' over this language and a freedom to learn another if he or she so wishes, and in this way, break free of the determinism given over in birth. This 'un-free' aspect of the language activity is discussed in the following chapter.

[157] Noam Chomsky's theory of the Universal Grammar argues that language is innate. Cassirer would agree with Chomsky on this point, given that Cassirer locates the origin of the form of language in the free application of the significatory function of human consciousness, without which no language would be possible. Nonetheless, Chompsky argues this conclusion from empirical grounds, while Cassirer shows the transcendental condition for the possibility of any language whatever. Thus, Cassirer's argument is much stronger, and provides a more stable foundation for the organization of research into linguistics. Although I am unsure of the connection, I speculate that Chompsky's theory is minimally preceded and perhaps influenced by Cassirer. Although language is 'hard wired' for Chompsky, Cassirer could agree that the language capacity and function is hard-wired, even though language is primarily understood as an act, which has a free form.

all free human activity, is always already present in experience, and undeniably central in determining the character of experience for us.[158]

If language is an activity of subjectivity, and its being is located in the function of signification, then the *leading question* and clue motivating his language study takes on a broader and more precise form then it had before. Under the Kantian framework, asking 'what makes language language?' is not a question about a substantial character common to a group of entities in the world like one might ask about 'table'. Instead, because language is a human activity that necessarily exhibits the symbolic function which makes experience possible, the question concerning the second autonomy of language, namely, 'what makes language language?', is a question about the functional unity of language, or what the peculiar character of the language activity is. On these assumptions, asking 'how is language possible?' becomes *'how does language make experience possible?*' In other words, how does language, as a form of cultural symbolism, make human experience possible? What we thought was a question about language and only language must now be formulated as a question concerning the relation of man to language, and language to the world. I devote much of the remainder of this work towards answering the question concerning how language makes objectivity possible, namely the second autonomy of language.

[158] I further discuss this thesis in Chapter VII.

Chapter Seven. Symbolic Pregnanz

"The ego, individual mind, cannot create reality. Man is surrounded by a reality that he did not make, that he has to accept as an ultimate fact."[159] 'Symbolic *Pregnanz*' is a concept that expresses Cassirer's understanding of human experience. Symbolic *Pregnanz* means that the world is saturated in symbolism, and that objectivity is already given when I or any individual enters it. Symbolic *Pregnanz* expresses Cassirer's theory of meaning.[160] Krois defines Symbolic *Pregnanz* as the following: "the way [Art] in which a perception as a 'sensual' experience contains at the same time a certain nonintuitive meaning".[161] When I, as an individual, come into being, I enter into a symbolic world. *Birth is birth into symbolism*. This world into which we are born is characterized by 'natural' and 'cultural' symbolism, as we have described it. "The social world is first opened up to man through language. The world of the 'Du' opens before the thing world, i.e. the world of things.[162] We are in space and time, yet we are also given 'over' and 'into' a community with its own cultural forms and its own language, that every member of the community possesses in common.[163] When I learn and acquire the language, I become a member, for the first time, of that common world of spirit. As I do not make the world I enter, I do not make my language that I learn as I grow. That language is communal, or built around common activities, is evidenced by the existence

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[159] Cassirer, *Language and Art II*, pp.195

[160] Krois, pp.52

[161] Krois, pp.53

[162] Cassirer, *Die Sprache und der Aufbau der Gegenstandswelt*.

[163] Cassirer's statement about human experience in symbolic *Pregnanz* is mirrored in Heidegger's notion of the 'world' as a totality of reference relations, or as a context of significance in *Being and Time*. In this notion, one finds similarities between Cassirer and his contemporaries. Still, there is a significant difference here between Cassirer and Heidegger. Cassirer thinks that the function of meaning is prior to the pragmatic involvement of man in the world, whereas Heidegger first locates meaning in man's pragmatic involvement in the world, not in any logically prior function.

of nomenclature and occupational languages.[164] In this respect, there is no problem of 'other minds', for the fact that we live together in one world and one language, requires that we live together in meaning, i.e. that we are all 'minds'. To ask: 'given that I have a mind, how do I know that others have minds, if the only access to mind that I have is to my own?' is to forget that because I answer you, that we live together in one 'spirit realm'.[165] In this way, language is a portal to human experience; for only through it may we enter into a community of cultural meaning. Helen Keller's birth into human experience begins with her birth into language. A world that is not 'symbolically pregnant', in respect to natural and cultural symbolism, is impossible.[166] As Hamburg states, every fact is always in a symbol context.[167] This discussion highlights the very *public* character of meaning and the limits on the freedom of the individual in his capacity to freely-signify in speech. Many are only given one option: to speak 'x' or 'y' or some other language. In the same way, although new generations of speakers change the face of language, e.g. slang and nomenclature, they inherit a language with a given form and content, and are not the origin of it as individuals. Still, given the proper environment and opportunities, the individual is free to speak his mother language or a different tongue. The first freedom is one we can thereby predicate of the human race and of course, in a restricted way, to the individual of the species. In respect to the public character of meaning, Cassirer does not think of meaning as something that is a 'private'.

[164] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.287

[165] Although the Cassirerian solution to the problem of other minds is different from Wittgenstein, their solutions are almost identical. Both can argue that the problem of other minds is due to not recognizing the fact that language is a communal activity.

[166] We have already proven this in respect to natural symbolism. That there is no world without culture is clear when one thinks about feral children. When they are not taught to speak, they lose the capacity to learn it after their critical period has passed. Once brought back into the world of culture, they do not adapt well, and usually die prematurely. A world without language and thereby without culture is one in which one cannot live for long. *Language Files*, pp. 285

[167] Hamburg, pp. 28

The Community of Consciousness

One might object that because language is something that all human beings share in common, any philosophy that begins from individual consciousness cannot account for the community-aspect of language. Cassirer asks about the possibility of any human experience, i.e. about the possibility of universal subjectivity. Because we all share the same function in common, any individual consciousness is only an individualization of the universal consciousness. This actually highlights how well suited transcendental philosophy is for accounting for the community-aspect of language. Because we share the universal function of consciousness, we are capable of learning a language, and we are therefore capable of entering into a common world with a particular empirical form.

As Hamburg misunderstood the tripartite structure of the symbolic function[168], so Krois misunderstands Symbolic *Pregnanz*. Krois contests that "the fundamental fact of 'having a world' falls outside transcendental philosophy."[169] According to Krois, "'Symbolic *Pregnanz*' is not another name for Kantian 'transcendental unity of consciousness'. Its locus is not some 'I think' that accompanies all of our ideas."[170] Krois' thesis that Cassirer's theory of meaning, as expressed in the notion of Symbolic *Pregnanz*, leads Cassirer away from a theory based in the unity of consciousness, can only be sustained by not reading the introduction to the first volume of the *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*.[171] Because understanding cultural symbolism depends on understanding natural symbolism, and natural symbolism is grounded in the synthetic

[168] See chapter III.
[169] Krois, pp.62
[170] Krois, pp.56
[171] Section 3 of the Introduction, 'Problem of the Representation and Structure of Consciousness'. Here he maps out the fundamental conditions of unity which provide a basis for understanding artificial symbolisms.

unity of consciousness, it cannot follow that the fundamental fact of having a world 'falls outside of transcendental philosophy'. For this reason, Krois misunderstands Symbolic *Pregnanz*. As Cassirer writes, “the empirical world is not a brute fact”.[172] No, the *fundamental fact of having a world* is made possible by the symbolic function, which, as a function of consciousness, makes Cassirer's extension of the critique of reason possible. This is just to say that the given world that the individual does not make always presupposes a transcendental principle, and is only possible through it. The transcendental principle supposed is the function of symbolism, which does not fall outside of transcendental philosophy. Krois' claims border on interpreting Cassirer as a kind of realist, who believes that human consciousness meets a world whose meaning and unity is utterly divorced from the structure of consciousness. If this is not Krois view, it is difficult to understand what his statement means or how it could be plausible given Cassirer’s other philosophical commitments. It is true that the individual, as he is given over to the world, is given to a world in which there is already meaning. Culture is built over time, and I, *qua* individual, do not build the cultural world; humans build it together. But Cassirer's notion of *Symbolic Pregnanz* should not be interpreted to mean that the synthetic function of human consciousness is not the *a priori* cause of the unity of experience. Cassirer defends himself: "Not only science, but language, myth, art, and religion as well, provide the building stones from which the world of ‘reality’ is constructed for us, as well as that of the human spirit, in sum the world -of -the- I."[173] We

[172] Cassirer, *Language and Art I*, pp.166
[173] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 91

should not forget that language, for Cassirer, can only be understood in a 'system of [Critical] idealism'[174].

[174] '[Critical]' is my addition. Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.72

Chapter Eight. The Grammar Of The Symbolic Function

We have not yet ascertained what the second autonomy of language is, for we have not yet distinguished the language idea from the other cultural forms. We seek the second freedom of language, its logical character that distinguishes it from other cultural forms, by asking how language makes objectivity possible. If we can pinpoint the autonomy of language, then we could say what distinguishes language from art, myth, religion, and science. Thomas Goeller thinks that Cassirer left the question about the relations among the cultural forms open[175]. For this reason, determining Cassirer's position regarding the autonomy of language would be an advance in Cassirer research. If Goeller's claim is true, then it is also true that Cassirer did not specify the logical function of language that makes experience possible, i.e. the second autonomy of language. I argue that Cassirer specifies the logical function of language, and clearly distinguishes language from the other forms. One must only reconstruct the arguments.

Our directive for answering this question must begin with an analysis of the symbolic function, where Cassirer locates the 'content' of the cultural forms. We should well remember that the symbolic form is tripartite, e.g. sign, signified, and the way the sign signifies the signified. Since the logical determination of each form is located in this function, we seek a schema of the symbolic form which would specify the particular function of language. In other words, we seek a grammar of the symbolic function.[176] A 'grammar' would specify those various creative directions of spirit that are manifest in the symbolic function. The meaning of each form lies in the way, manner, and modality

[175] Goeller, Thomas, *Ueber Ernst Cassirer's Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*, pp.138
[176] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.86

of expression.[177] Where else can the grammar of the symbolic function be located except in the third aspect of the symbolic form, which specifies how the sign signifies the signified?

The Directions of the Symbolic Function

Signification *qua* reference is signification 'of' and reference 'to' a 'signified'. There is not one logical possibility governing the way that the sign signifies *qua* symbol. The logical possibilities of the symbolic form are exhausted by the following three directions: (i) sign signifies sign, (ii) sign signifies a significant that is different from the mere sign, i.e. the sign is the vehicle of a particular meaning, and (iii) sign signifies the act of signification. These are the three symbolic functions of expression, representation, and pure signification.[178]

Cassirer classifies myth, and the mythical use of language under (i). This stage is the most immature stage of the symbolic function, for it has not fully reached the stage of representation. Because of its immature position, Cassirer calls it the 'expressive' function, and excludes it from the fully representational. The sign is not fully a symbol, for it is itself what is signified. In the mythical use of language, the thing is not yet distinguished from the name. Nature speaks. From this perspective, there is no arbitrary element in speech, and because one has power over words, one has power over things through the use of words. The name (sign) =thing (signed). In this way, language is a form of magic.[179]

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[177] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.189

[178] These three function are the *Ausdrucksfunktion, Darstellungsfunktion*, and die *Funktion der reinen Bedeutung*. Krois, pp.81. According to Cassirer's own words, "drei Funktionen [...] allgemeinen Plan der ideelen Orientierung, innerhalb dessen Wir nun gewissermassen die Stelle jeder symbolischen Form bezeichnen kann." Cassirer, *Das Symbolproblem*.., pp.11

[179] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.117-118

In religion, art, and language generally, the function of the sign and of signification transitions from an identity to a relation. The function of signification becomes instantiated, and reaches the function of representation, *Darstellung*. Now, there is a complex structure explained by a function. For example, in the story of Noah, the 'rainbow' represents a covenant between God and man. The rainbow is not itself what is signified, but it is the sign of God's covenant with man. Here we perceive the separation of sign and signified, in which the sign, rainbow, carries the meaning 'covenant'. In intentional languages, most terms are representational in this way. For example, examine the class concept 'cat'. This term signifies a certain species, not the sign 'cat'. And in art, Picasso's *Guernica* symbolizes not the sign itself, but it symbolizes the horror of war. The artist informs the matter with the concept.

Dwelling further upon this symbolic function requires a better understanding of its third direction. When the sign functions as a sign of the act of signification, we enter into extensional 'language', i.e. symbolic logic, and mathematical physics, namely mechanics. These correspond to the two *a priori* characters of objects of experience, i.e. law-constancy and property-constancy. The object of mathematical physics is the outer and inner intuitions of natural symbolism, or 'nature' *qua* spatial and temporal. Mathematical physics studies the mathematizable relations of matter in motion. For any mathematization of the relation of matter *qua* matter to occur, mathematical physics must nullify the difference between the kinds of matter, in order for it to fit matter under the homogenous number concept. This form of knowing abstracts from the content of any sensible, and thinks it as a content subject to efficient cause, i.e. as an object subject to mechanism. “The sign in the sense of the pure reference sign expresses an abstract

ordering."[180] For example, science is indifferent to the character of a book as an artifact, but thinks it as a three-dimensional figure, and as an instance of the manifold of time. Cassirer symbolizes the structure of the science-concept as F(a,b,c). 'F' symbolizes the function that determines the structure between the members of the series that are determined by the function, e.g. 'a', 'b', and 'c'. These are only defined as instances of the same function, and are not distinguished from one another in any other way, except as different instances of the same function. In this way, the particulars are homogeneous. [181] Because they are homogeneous, the particular can be deduced from the series as an instance of the function, completely determining the individual as a particular instance of the universal. The 'sign' of mathematical physics is a place-holder, 'a', or 'F', indicating one more instance of a universal relation 'in nature' or natural symbolism. The sign of mathematical physics, 'F' or 'a' signifies the universal relation among instances of matter-motion relations, thereby signifying the function. Insofar as this symbol is the paradigm of this science concept, the mathematical physics symbol signifies the function of structure.[182] The science-concept represents the *law-constancy* exhibited by objects of experience, and in this way it symbolizes the pure function of signification.

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[180] Cassirer, *Das Symbolproblem*, pp. 10

[181] Cassirer maps out his theory concerning the logical structure of science in *Substance and Function*. In the *Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, Cassirer distinguishes this form from the culture concept, even though he considers science a cultural form. Where the cultural form exhibits a characteristic indeterminateness, the logical structure of the science concept does not, for it completely determines the individual as a particular instance of the universal. Cassier, *Logic of the Cultural Sciences,* pp.67-70

[182] Cassirer cites Hertz as a Physicist who recognized the symbolic nature of the science-concept. Humboldt thinks that Hertz plays an explanatory role in Cassirer's theory, but I cannot find any heavy reliance upon him. Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 85 In one sense, Hamburg might be arguing that Cassirer is applying the symbol schema of science to the cultural forms, but if he were then he would confuse his own distinction between the logic of the science concept and the culture concept. Moreover, science is called a cultural form, yet it is distinguished from the culture concept, for it does not contain the characteristic indeterminacy of the culture concept. Thus, science is and is not a cultural form; it is a border-concept of the cultural form. *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 85

Like the mathimatical-physiscs concept, the symbolic logic concept symbolizes in the same way. A simple sentence, Px, shows how the logic concept symbolizes the pure function of signification. 'P' stands for any predicate whatsoever, while 'x' stands for an instance of that predicate. The more complex sentence, (Px & Qx), symbolizes the conjunction of two predicates in the same subject 'x'. In this way, symbolic logic *qua* predicate logic, symbolizes the predicate constancy of natural symbolism. 'P' is constant for and in every instance of 'x'. Predicate logic abstracts from the character of the subject and the predicate to express the predicative relation as such, leaving the individual subject and the universal predicate undetermined. 'Px' means 'x is P' or there is some predicate 'P' that we attribute to some subject 'x'. In this way, predicate logic symbolizes the thing-attribute relation that Cassirer thinks is one universal categorization of experience. Thus, as expressive of the predicative relation, the sign of symbolic logic signs the act of signification.

The Spiritual Direction of Language

"Each of these functions [expressive, representational, and significatory][183] creates its own symbolic forms, which, if not similar to the intellectual symbols, enjoy equal rank as products of the human spirit. None of these forms can simply be reduced to, or derived from, the others; […]" "All [forms of the symbolic function][184] live in particular image-worlds, which do not merely reflect the empirically given, but which rather produce it in accordance with an independent principle."[185] These functions refer to the various functions of the one symbolic function, following the various logical possibilities governing the sign/signifies relation. Accordingly, we should expect that

[183] The bracket is my explanatory addition.
[184] Once again, the brackets are my insertion.
[185] Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms,* pp.78

each symbolic form is created by one of the three directions of the symbolic function. Yet, we find many different symbolic forms under the function of representation, minimally art, language, and religion. One might dispute that both language, art, and religion represent. But I think it is clear that they can be made to represent some meaning. If it is agreed that they all represent, then what is the difference in the way in which they represent? All exhibit the *Darstellungsfunktion*. Thus, there must be some independent principle that distinguishes these representative cultural forms from each other if the mere function of representation cannot. Cassirer affirms the logical autonomy of language: "[…] Language, as well as scientific cognition, art as well as myth, possesses its own constitutive principle which sets its stamp, as it were, on all the particular forms within it."[186] This is the second freedom, which we have yet to spell out. What inference can we draw about language's 'constitutive principle', i.e. the second autonomy of language, from the grammar of symbolism?

Language is present on the first two levels of the grammar of signification, namely the expressive and representational levels, and strives toward the third. "Die Sprache geht von Ausdruckssinn zum reinen Darstellungssinn fort."[187] In this respect, language permeates the function of signification. It is present in myth, yet for the most part functions as a representative form of symbolism. Of what is language representative? Intentional, ordinary language, is not representative of pure signification, like the extensional or the mathematical-physical concept is. For in ordinary language, the expression of the subject-predicate relation is always an expression of the attribution of a particular predicate with a particular subject. For example, 'The cat is brown' attributes

[186] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.97
[187] Cassirer, *Das Symbolproblem*, pp. 11

'brown' to 'cat'. This is what I mean when I claim that language is an 'intuitive' form of expression, for it expresses subjects and predicates in intuition and through it. It is true that this categorical sentence exhibits predication, but it is not an expression of pure signification, i.e. predication irrespective of the content of what is signified; it is an application of it to a particular case. Language cannot fully emancipate itself from the foundations of intuition and intuitive representation.[188] The linguistic symbol is not fully intellectual. It prepares the way for it.[189] That this is true is clear if one considers the possibility of predicate logic. Predicate logic borrows the 'is' from ordinary language, e.g. English, for its expression of 'Px' or 'x is P'. By nullifying the intuitional content of the sentence, e.g. 'the cat is brown', it can express pure predication. Language, *qua* sentence, manifests the pure symbolic function in its representation of intuition, which provides for the possibility of an abstraction wherefrom a purely predicative logic develops. Nonetheless, predicate logic cannot be developed from any language whatsoever, for not all languages possess the resources for or contain the expression of the copula 'is'.[190] The copula 'is; in symbolic logic represents pure predication, e.g. 'b' of 'a' irrespective of the character of 'b' or 'a'. For this reason, being has the meaning of predication, and in ordinary language, the predication involved always involves an intuitive character. Being, understood as 'existence', is another way 'is' is said, and is a necessary condition for predication. In order to predicate 'b' of 'a' 'a' must be in some sense, even if it is only in thought, and its class is an empty set, i.e. void of referents. 'Being', the most universal/relational of significations, is expressed in some languages,

[188] Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 228
[189] Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 228
[190] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.314, 313-317. For example, most African and Native American languages do not have an expression for 'being'.

e.g. English. This highlights the fact that not every language exhibits the pure form of predication, which Russell attributed to language. Even in languages where 'is' is found, the expression is not an expression of pure 'synthesis' as it is in predicate logic. From the ancients we know that being is 'said' in many ways.[191] To name a few, 'Being' can express 'existence', 'predication' or 'pure relation' and 'identity'.[192] From the preceding Cassirer can claim that only in the expression of 'is' does language reach up to the third tier of the grammar of signification, and it only reaches up to it ambiguously, on account of its intuitive character. Thus, it should come as no surprise that Cassirer dedicates very few pages to chapter five of the first volume of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, "Language and the Expression of Pure Relation. The Sphere of Judgment and the Concepts of Relation"[193], and yet dedicates so much of his discussion to chapter three, "Language in the Phase of Intuitive Expression"[194]. Language never expresses 'pure being', but is always already an application of 'being' to a particular thing. Because it reaches up ambiguously, it cannot achieve the clarity of meaning that is achieved in extensional logic and the mathematical-physical symbol.[195]

Through this analysis we understand that language is primarily representational of objects and their attributes, as expressed in the 'is' expression, and that it is the condition for the possibility of the third tier of symbolism, for only in borrowing 'is' is the third tier possible. "Das 'Ist' der Kopula ist die reinste und praegnanteste Auspraegung fuer diese

[191] This phrase is from book IV of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. "Being is meant in more than one way, but pointing toward one meaning and some one nature rather than ambiguously." Aristotle. *Metaphysics*, book IV, pp.52
[192] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 313-319
[193] pp. 303-319
[194] pp.198-277
[195] Because logic's development begins from language, when Kant invokes the unity of the judgment he invokes the unity of the sentence. Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 161

neue Dimension der Sprache, die man als ihre Darstellungfunktion bezeichnen kann."[196] This provides us a focus for our investigation into the logical autonomy of language. Language is representational in a way myth is not, and reaches up to, but fails to achieve the clarity of the signification of symbolic logic and science. The goal of language is the form of 'relational thought'.[197]

With all of this specification, language can only begin to be clearly distinguished from the representational forms of art and religion. Our question: 'is language autonomous?' is not yet answered. Perhaps language shares a function with other forms and there is no specific language function. If this were the case, then this project would have already found its end, and there would be no 'second' autonomy, which is a live option. Cassirer comments on their differences in his essay *Language and Art I*. Language, unlike art, exhibits a tendency towards science, while art exhibits no such tendency.[198] Art lives in the world of 'immediate experience' and preserves the intuitional approach to representation.[199] While language is a universal gift, in some significant sense, art is an individual one.[200] Still, these forms of representation intermingle with one another. For example, poetry is a linguistic-art form, in which language is rendered as art. In emphasizing the autonomy of language from the other cultural forms, Cassirer does not ignore the fact of their interrelation. We must first see if and what the autonomy of language is in order to assess whether or not its being mingled

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[196] Cassirer, *Das Symbolproblem*, pp.10 The 'Is' of the copula is the purest and most pregnant characteristic for this new dimension of language, which one can designate as its function of representation.
[197] Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 228 There may still exist some doubt that language exhibits an inherent tendency towards expressing pure relation. We have only showed that developing the third tier requires linguistic resources. This 'tendency' will be discussed in chapter IX, where we discuss the hierarchy of languages according to their ability to express pure relation.
[198] Cassirer, *Language and Art*, pp. 153
[199] Cassirer, *Language and Art*, pp. 159
[200] Cassirer, *Language and Art I*, pp. 146

with other forms prevents it from having an autonomous character. " […]in order to characterize a given form of relation, in its concrete application and concrete meaning, we must not only state its qualitative attributes as such, but also define the system within which it stands."[201] Each form has a quality and a modality.[202] Stating the qualitative attribute of language is to state its logical autonomy, and to state the system within which it stands is to state its modality. In this way, although language may be autonomous, it stands in different systems, i.e. art, religion, myth, etc, each with its own character. In this sense, one can render and interpret language as a medium of art in poetry, e.g. poetry as a mode of language, without identifying language with art or destroying the autonomous character of either.[203] Myth can only identify the sign with the particular thing if there is the thing. Art and religion can only signify a meaning with the object if there is the 'rainbow' and there are 'colored' objects. Science and logic can only employ the object to represent the form of signification if there are objects from which it can draw and abstract the pure relation.

[201] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.97
[202] Cassirer*, Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.95
[203] Cassirer, *Language and Art I,* pp.160-161

Chapter Nine. The Second Freedom: The Logical Function Of Language

Are the characteristics by which we combine and separate the empirical world given independently of language or formed by language?[204]In a preliminary aspect, we already have our answer. Language is an intuitive form of representation, whose logical autonomy, e.g. *qua* independence, lies in the way in which it makes objectivity possible. But it is not yet clear whether language's autonomy lies in this function, given that there is nothing barring the other cultural forms from serving the same function. I agree with Thomas Goeller that language is the first and most important organ for winning a world of objects.[205]. Goeller has Cassirer's answer without his argument. The purpose of this chapter is to show that this is Cassirer's position regarding the logical autonomy of language, and to display the support that Cassirer provides for his position. All of the cultural forms employ objects in the representation of meaning.

Outline of the Argument

The argument of chapter VIII is the following: Because meaning is only possible if there are objects employed in signification, and all cultural forms require objects for signification, and there are objects, if language creates the empirically given world, and thereby functions as the precondition for objectivity, then it will follow that language is a precondition for any other cultural-symbolic form. Or what is the same, the function of language is the production of a world of empirical objects, and thereby all *a posteriori* concepts. In order to prove that language makes all the other cultural forms possible, Cassirer must prove that the logical autonomy of language lies in the way that language makes the world of empirical objects possible. This would prove that all of the other

[204] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.278-280
[205] Goeller, Thomas, pp. 138 "Die Sprache ist die universelle Objektierungsform."

forms require language in order to be symbols. In this sense, all of the other cultural forms would be 'dependent' upon the existence of language, and would not be autonomous in this sense. But this 'dependence' still leaves room for other functions that language does not fulfill. For example, even if language is the precondition of any world of objects, it does not follow that art can only fulfill the linguistic function; art can exhibit its own way of representation, e.g. 'representation of representation' of some object. This is the preoccupation of chapter VIII, i.e. to transform the second premise, 'if language creates the empirical world' into a categorical statement 'language creates the empirical world'.

The explanation of language's autonomy must happen within language, and this fact will provide us the clue to the bridge from the second to the third autonomy of language. We have already discussed *what language is not* in the context of chapter one of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, "The Problem of Language in the History of Philosophy".[206] Here we will move to the fourth chapter of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms,* "Language as Expression of Conceptual Thought"[207] in which we find his clearest, most straightforward argument that language makes the world of empirical objects possible. Reading this chapter in conjunction with the second part of the Introduction is very helpful, for the argument in this chapter is heavily dependent on his theory of meaning, and in this second part of the Introduction he discusses the internal relation between meaning and sign, which is central to his theory of meaning that we outlined in chapter III.

[206] pp. 117-176
[207] pp. 278-302

Given this outline of the argument, as we have seen[208], our question: "how does language make objectivity possible?" assumes that language, imbued with that symbolic function that makes experience possible, must also make objectivity possible. From this assumption, Cassirer claims that each function is a means by which the mind objectifies its own powers.[209] Each function *[Ausdruck, Darstellung, Bedeutung]* of spirit creates the empirically given in accordance with an independent principle. If this is true, then we would expect that every cultural form makes objectivity possible, and that language could not be distinguished from the others based on its capacity for world-formation. Language is not the only way to objectivity.[210] But Cassirer qualifies this claim: "Language is the first entrance to objectivity [...] It unlocks the door to conceptual thinking".[211] According to Cassirer, although the other cultural forms play a formative role in the construction of objectivity, these are not possible without language's primordial construction of objectivity. Before spirit can make the world its own in art, religion, etc., it must have a world. Language is the condition for the concepts of things, i.e. for the representation of empirical objects.[212] That language makes the empirical world possible is a claim that the character of the objects in the world, i.e. what is entailed in the empirical concepts, is contingent upon the formative power of the language activity. That this is the case is hinted at in the special language-cases cited by Cassirer. For example, when sufferers of 'Aphasia' lose propositional speech, they lose the ability to represent objects, and therefore lose access to objectivity. The same holds for the evidence linguistics has acquired from observing language acquisition. When Helen Keller learns the name, she

[208] See chapter five.
[209] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.78
[210] Cassirer, *Language and Art I*, pp.152
[211] Cassirer, *Language and Art I,* pp.152
[212] Cassirer, *Language and Art I*, pp. 148-149

enters into a world of universals. This clues us into the fact that language provides us access to the empirical world, making the Kantian presumption not so preposterous.[213] In this sense, although the *a priori* category of thing-attribute in the categorical judgment makes the object as such possible, the content of the *a posteriori* concepts is contingent upon language. "The function of language is the organization and categorization of the empirical world."[214] Why is this the function of language particular to it, and not some other function?

The Logical Function of Language: Qualifying and Class Concepts

Proving that language's function is the first production of the empirical world is to prove that the *a posteriori* concepts that define our empirical world, e.g. 'natural' or empirical class concepts, are due to the linguistic act. For this reason, Cassirer focuses on the origin of concepts in his discussion of the logical autonomy of language. What is the origin of the *a posteriori* concept? The origin of the *a posteriori* concept lies in either our *abstraction* from a given data set or in the *production-selection* of that data set, or arises some other way. The data set from which we abstract is the language that we speak. Consider the empirical concept 'animal'. Where else should one begin in deciding what an animal is, except by analyzing what is called 'animal'? Without the language, there would be no data set from which the abstraction of the concept would be possible. Cassirer posits that logical abstraction of a concept consists in the analysis of words. So we can reformulate our question: Is the origin of the *a posteriori* concept due to our abstraction of the concept from our language or to the production of the data set in language? On the face of it, the first does not seem plausible, while it is not clear what the

[213] Cassirer, *Language and Art I*, pp. 149-150
[214] Cassirer, *Language and Art I*, pp.183

second option means. The second is an option that does not have such a prominent place in the history of language study. We must see what comes of it in Cassirer.

Assume that abstraction is the method through which the *a posteriori* concept is derived. Abstraction is abstraction from language. If abstraction is the method, then the concept must already exist in the language before we can first derive the concept, for if it were not already in the language, then we would possess no assurance that the words from which we derive the concept 'animal' were instances of the concept 'animal'. If we are already assured that the instances of 'animal' are our guide for determining what is entailed in the concept, then abstraction would not be the origin of the concept. From these premises it follows that the act of abstraction is not the origin of the *a posteriori* concept. For example, think about the concept 'animal'. What is entailed in the concept? What is common in all of those instances of animal? We already assume that a certain group, apart from some other group, has some common trait that defines them as 'animals'. If we do not already know that what is called an animal is an animal, i.e. an instance of the concept, then we have no way of knowing that the definition that we abstract from the group considered actually is an 'animal'. The only way that concept-abstraction from language is possible is if the concept is already contained in the language itself, in each of the examples of 'animal' that we take as our initial data set.[215]

What we should initially notice is that abstraction, although not a form of concept-formation, is a method of concept *clarification*. English speakers generally know how to use the word 'animal', but they cannot usually provide the definition thereof, except perhaps by pointing to examples. This highlights the fact that abstraction from a

[215] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.278-279 Cassirer cites Sigwart in this argument against the proposition that concept formation is solely due to abstraction in any form.

set assumes that the set has already been subsumed under a concept. In this sense, abstraction as such requires that the set from which abstraction occurs be subsumed under the notion of sameness, difference, like and unlike, etc. When one abstracts, one compares the contents of the given set, and one assumes that there is something common to be abstracted from the set. Thus, the set must be a set of 'complex' or plural contents, not plural-less unities, for then there could be no 'common' characteristic, except for perhaps their being identically non-identical. In abstraction, we inquire into the why of the series, or the formal unity of the series, i.e. the formal cause. For instance, we may transform the bound morpheme into the free morpheme in our analysis of 'pitar', 'matar', 'bhratar', etc, and decide that the bound morpheme 'ar' means 'kin' and develop a free morpheme, e.g. 'kin' for 'ar'. [216]

We assume the first freedom, namely that language is formed by a free application of the symbolic function. The symbolic function makes experience possible. We assume that the symbolic function of language makes objectivity possible. Because objectivity is temporal and spatial, it is equivalent to say that the objectivity made possible by the symbolic function is temporal and spatial. The origin of the *a posteriori* concept is the origin of the empirical object. Although a tautology, this may not be, and is probably not, immediately clear to everyone. The origin of the *a posteriori* concept is not due to an abstraction from language, for the concept must already be present in language before it can be clarified in abstraction. As said, the structure of language is due to the function of signification in language. The structure of language includes the organization of the empirical world in language. The way the empirical world is organized in language is expressed in the empirical concepts of the language. Because the structure of language

[216] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.293

is due to the symbolic function in language, and the structure of the language includes the organization of the empirical world, it *follows* that the presence of the empirical concept in language is due to the symbolic function in language, or language's production and selection of it.[217] This is to say that the function of symbolism makes the classification in perception possible, not that any particular classification is *a priori*. This means that *all a posteriori* concepts have an origin in a transcendental function, but what the content of the concept is cannot be determined *a priori*. Thus, our question: 'how does language make objectivity possible?' or 'what makes language language?' has its answer. The primordial synthesis of the perceptual world is the function specific to language that distinguishes it from all other cultural forms. For this reason, the logical function of language provides homogeneity among representations from which logical analysis is possible.[218] This logical function is the 'second freedom' because it is *the independent function of language*. This is that function that makes language be what it is, without which it would be impossible. For this reason *the second freedom is a transcendental principle of language*. This becomes clearer when we see why and how the second freedom must be a moment in the third freedom of language. The transcendental function of free-signification which makes the culture concept possible finds its specific application in the second freedom. The goal of the essay thus far has been to discover what the 'idea' of language is. Until now, it has not been clear whether or not language is autonomous, i.e. whether it can be distinguished from the other cultural forms. This freedom is different from the first. The first freedom is the freedom of the culture-concept, i.e. the fact that each particular language is not limited to any one particular

[217] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 281, 294 See Chapter five.
[218] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 294-295

form. This freedom states that human beings are not constrained to one particular form or grammar in the formation of their language. Nonetheless, it still could not specify what it is that makes all of the distinct languages 'language', or what distinguished language from the other cultural forms, which is what I claim Cassirer achieves in the arguments that I have reformulated in this section.

From this conclusion we can confidently say that because language is a human activity, human beings construct the determinate character of the empirical world through the linguistic act, i.e. speaking. To push the conclusion further, because language's structure is due to a *free* application of the function of signification i.e. the first freedom, the structure of the empirical world must be due to a *free* differentiation of the perceptual world. For this reason, there is no necessary organization of the empirical world or any necessary content entailed in any *a posteriori* concept. What is entailed in any *a posteriori* concept is contingent upon what human beings put in it. There are no 'natural classes'. For this reason, we see why understanding the first freedom helps us understand the second. Humans are not only free to determine the form of their language, but in using language and the autonomous linguistic function, they are not restricted to any one classification of the empirical world. There are many logical possibilities in the determination of both. This need not imply that the form of particular languages and the classification of the empirical world in it is arbitrary, as we will see in the following section on the factors of world formation.

If one objects that we are not deductively certain that language's function is the production of the empirical world, one might wonder what the origin of the classification in language is. Assume that language is not instrumental in the production of the

character of empirical objects, and that the character of the empirical objects is given independently of the linguistic act. Assume also that language is that from which the character of the concept is clarified. There are many languages, and the organization of the empirical world in each, e.g. the empirical -class concepts contained in each, are different. If language is a guide to understanding the character of the given empirical world, and each language contains conflicting data concerning the character of the empirical objects, then one would not be able to decide which language indicated the 'real' class in the world. To choose any one language as opposed to another would be wholly arbitrary and highly contingent upon the language into which one is born.

The representation of the class concept is contingent upon the representation of the qualifying concept. I can only represent an 'apple' if I can also represent its sensible qualities, e.g. 'red' or 'green'. Thus, before language can freely form class concepts, it must freely form the fleeting impressions into re-producible representations.[219] In other words, impressions must be formed into representations before they can be grouped together in the class concept. One must fix a sign to a passing quality and make it representative of other sensible qualities. The representation must be produced by language before it can be re-produced in consciousness.[220] Because the organization of the empirical world is due to language's productive capacity, and the representation of the class concept in language is possible only if the sensible qualities given in time and space are represented, the 'qualifying' concept must also be produced by the language act.

[219] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 281. Cassirer cites Lotze again in this connection who first recognizes the 'first universal'.
[220] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 281

The qualifying concept is not like the generic class concept. The instances of the class concept are subsumed under one common character, while the qualifying concept cannot be 'subsumed' under one common character. For example, one cannot abstract the common character 'red' from all of the shades of 'red'. One's representation of red will always be of a particular shade, which excludes all of the shades that it is not. 'Red' is not like 'animal'. Nonetheless, the other shades are called 'red' in their similarity to the shade that is rendered representative.[221] These sensual qualities that make the representations of the class-concept possible are the qualifying concepts. Thus, before language 'subsumes' or unifies representations, it must differentiate the flux of consciousness. For these reasons, Cassirer argues that the beginning of the empirical concept, and thereby of the empirical object, is a free differentiation of the flux of consciousness. Through language the world of sense content becomes one of intuition or 'idea'.[222] Because the logical function of language is the synthesis of the empirical world, it follows that the primary function of language is the formation of the qualifying concept, or that first act of flux determination.[223] Krois agrees: the first function of language is to establish identity by means of a qualifying concept.[224] This 'identity' that is established by the qualifying concept refers to the stabilizing of the flux through sign-attribution, as I have described it.

This act of making the impression into a representation is the same as infusing meaning into the world, or turning the impressions in the flux of the natural symbol into a cultural symbol. If language is a cultural, symbolic form, and it produces the character of empirical objects, though not the flux that is the presupposition for their production, then

[221] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 281-282. Cassirer cites Lotze in this connection, who calls the qualifying concept the 'first universal'.
[222] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.88
[223] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 278-280
[224] Krois, pp.98

it follows that *the empirical world reflects human spirit*. For this reason, the character of the empirical objects in the world reflects human culture.[225] To study the empirical object and the *a posteriori* concept contained in the language of a people is not a license to study the complete, independent object, but a license to study the way in which a people have created their world, and in a way, to study the people themselves. For example, in Greek the 'moon' means the 'measurer', while in Latin the 'moon' means the 'glittering'. [226]The Greek's 'moon' reflects what they see in it, and this is also true of the Latin 'moon'. This example emphasizes Cassirer's point concerning the second freedom: the determination of the flux is 'free' in the sense that there is not one logical possibility for determining the meaning of 'moon', and man is not restricted to any one of these possibilities. He is free to determine which distinctions he highlights, how he highlights them, or whether he chooses to pass them over at the expense of some other distinction(s). In this way we see how the first freedom not only completed by the second, but how the first is a moment in the second as well.

In English, we have many colors, e.g. purple, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red, to name a few. For the people who speak Bassa, Cassirer denies not that they do not experience these sensible qualities in time and space, but that they do not organize the data of their experience the same way, i.e. they experience the world differently. In Bassa, there are two colors: 'hui' and 'ziza'. 'Hui' covers the spectrum from purple to green and ziza covers it from yellow to red.[227] That there is only one world is shown by the fact that both the Greek and Latin have a word for 'moon', and that English and Bassa have

[225] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 284
[226] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 284-285*, Essay on Man*, pp.128-136
[227] *Language Files*, pp. 509

words for 'red'. Reality is like water.[228] Reality has one form, e.g. the form of symbolism exhibited in natural symbolism, yet within this form the forms of reality are fluid, e.g. 'moon' *qu*a glittering and measurer. This clarifies what we mean when we say that 'freedom' is in the world. The form of culture is not divorced from the form of reality, but is itself the fluid form that the 'water' exhibits in its flow.[229]The form of reality is 'free' like the form of water is 'free'. One could box Cassirer's whole metaphysics into one phrase: the world is confined to the limits and form of human action. Cassirer's point is that the character of the world comes not ready made, but is a production of the human capacity of free-signification which begins in language. One should note that although language is our entrance into culture and the world of empirical objects, it nonetheless presupposes the world spontaneously combined by the function of symbolism in the natural symbol.

All objects are in time and space. These are *a priori* intuitions which make any given intuition possible. Thus, the formation of the empirical object is contingent upon the synthesis of space and time. Although space and time, like all natural symbols, are fixed unities, they are interpreted differently in different languages.[230] Because language's logical function is the formation of the empirical world, and the empirical object is only possible if it is in space, it follows that the only way that language could make the object possible is if it synthesizes space. We find the residue of this production

[228]Bayer, Cassirer's *Metaphysics of the Symbolic Forms: A commentary*, pp. 65-72

[229] The water analogy is tied to the life of man and the organic form of language. Language is a 'form of life'. Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.153 In this way, the form of the world is a living form. Cassirer can account for the 'organic' nature of our experience by appealing to how cultural forms, and language specifically, make experience possible.

[230] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 198-226

in spatial metaphors that function as expressions of relation, e.g. ‘inside’, ‘outside’. Space is an instrument for object definition.[231]

Because language makes representation and the world of empirical objects possible, it makes the other cultural forms possible. Our hypothetical argument is now categorical. We speak before we engage in any other form of free signification. Language is the first entry into objectivity. This entry into objectivity is at the same time an entry into the *Weltanschauung*[232] of the people of that language. This sheds light on the nature of language acquisition. Learning a language is simultaneously learning a world, and the learner is free to enjoy all of the other cultural benefits of humanity. What language designates is a new mediation, a particular reciprocal relation between subjectivity and objectivity.[233] Immediate sense impressions take on order when they are named, e.g. 'red'.[234] They acquire a new permanence and fixed articulation. The logical function of language explains why second-language acquisition is so difficult. Because learning a language is to learn a world, once one has passed the critical period of language acquisition, one's notion of the world has been solidified in one's mother tongue. To learn a second language after this period is equivalent to learning a new world. This highlights the problematic of translation. To translate a language is to translate a world.[235] The post-modern agenda fails for its proponents to not understand that the world to which language

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[231] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 204 For a detailed analysis of how language combines space and the other natural symbols in the formation of empirical objects, see chapter three *of Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. More of this will be discussed in Chapter IX. I will not burden the reader with a further discussion of the relation between language and space. In any case, because language is an intuitive form of representation, it cannot express pure relation except by borrowing spatial terms, like 'internal' and 'external'.

[232] Weltanschauung means 'worldview'.

[233] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.93

[234] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 87-93 "Namen [...] Mittel der Gegenstandsbildung". Cassirer*, Die Sprache und der Aufbau der Gegenstandswelt*, pp.126

[235] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp. 128-136*, Language and Art I*, pp. 181

corresponds is not some other world independent of language. On the contrary, language is a force of world production, and because it is so, we can know the world by knowing our language.

Factors of World-Formation

"Only what in some way touches on man's inner activity, what seems 'significant' for it, obtains the linguistic stamp of signification."[236] What are the human factors that contribute to the linguistic production of the empirical world? Showing that there are factors involved in the selection of a world moves us away from the idea that the selection of the world is arbitrary. If a distinction would serve man's practical interests, i.e. serve the fulfillment of his goals, it would probably receive the 'linguistic stamp of signification'. For instance, in Arabic there are 5, 744 words for Camel. [237] For the Arabic world, Camels are of a much greater practical import than in the English speaking one. It is well known that the Eskimo has over 100 words for 'snow'. Snow touches on the inner life of the Eskimo to a much greater degree than the native of the Piedmont. Hence, we expect a greater diversity of significations for snow in the Eskimo language. In this way, Cassirer can explain much of the diversity of *a posteriori* concepts in the diverse languages, by appealing to the diverging pragmatics of civilizations in respect to their environment and goals.

Earlier we suggested that Cassirer relies on the imagination as a faculty that plays a significant role in the production of the various culture concepts and the diversity within the various cultural forms. Given that language is the first form of free-

[236] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 288
[237] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.290

signification, the mere imagination[238] of man cannot be ignored as a factor in the formation of the empirical world. For quite some time it has been recognized that gender is not a quality of all languages, but a quality observed in the Indo-European language group. That nouns are 'masculine', 'feminine' or 'neuter' specifies nothing about the sex of the noun that the gendered article modifies. For example, 'der Fernseher' in German means 'the television', and the definite article 'der' is masculine. This bears no connection, as far as I can see, to the sex of televisions. Because there is often no inherent connection between noun and sex, Cassirer can explain the gendered article by arguing that it signifies the fact that concept formation is in part due to linguistic fantasy, which supports Cassirer's claim that language has a free form, e.g. the first freedom.[239]

Language's logical autonomy explains why language, and thereby the objects in the world, contains 'negative' and 'positive' connotations. Because the empirical world reflects human spirit, the world will also reflect man's passion. For this reason, Cassirer claims that emotion and inner attitudes play a role in the determination of objectivity. The empirical world is laden with value, and this value is expressed in the connotation, i.e. how we 'feel' about things in the world.[240]'Snake' is not a value-less designation. It has 'negative' connotations, e.g. of deception.[241]

Illuminating factors that play a role in world-formation, e.g. pragmatics, imagination, and emotion, increases the plausibility of the Cassirerian schema, for the reason that they account for the great variety and richness of the fluid character of the

[238]Here in the *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen* Imagination is 'subjektive Imagination', pp.297, or 'imaginative Gesichtspunkt', pp.275

[239] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.294

[240] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 300

[241] The poet is very sensitive to these distinctions, and language *qua* art would be indeed very dull without all of these nuances of meaning and connotation. Indeed, revolution in language, its liberal element, is due to the poet's sensitivity to the nuances of speech forms. See Cassirer, *Language and Art* I and II.

empirical world. Understanding Cassirer's discussion of the human factors of world formation explains the *aporia* concerning his usage of empirical data in transcendental justification, and his relentless citations of the results of empirical linguistic research. Cassirer cites gender-usage in the Indo-European group and examples from Arabic not to justify his claim that language forms the world, but to exemplify particular instances of how humans have implemented the function of world-formation in language. The answers that Cassirer derives 'empirically' answer the question: 'how have the particular languages of the world applied the autonomous function of linguistic world formation?'

The Dialectic of the Language-Function

Before language collects representations together, it must divide impressions, and through dividing impressions, e.g. producing 'red', it produces a representation. This representation then functions as a 'first universal', and represents many other non-identical impressions, e.g. the various 'red' things. Because the quality concept is the primary linguistic concept, from which the class concept develops, the process of language formation moves logically from a signification of the particular, i.e. fixing a particular impression as a representative, re-producible content, to the signification of the universal or the class concept. Language is first a logical process from un-differentiation to differentiation.[242] Through division, e.g. 'red' shades, language unites, e.g. all 'red' shades as 'red'. This is the dialectic of world-formation in language. We observe this formative pattern in world formation not only in the logical transition of the production of

[242] Cassirer, *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*, pp.240 "Denn gerade in der Unbestimmtheit, die Sprache heir noch anhaftet, in der mangelnden Ausbildung und Trennung ihrer einzelnen Kategorien, liegt vielmehr ein Moment ihrer eigenen Bildsamkeit und ihrer Wesentlichen inneren Bildungskraft." Cassirer, *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*, pp. 247: "sie [die Sprache] setzt eben diese Gegenstaende selbst und deren scharfe Auseinandersetzung und Sonderung voraus."

the qualifying concept to the class concept, but also from within the logical formation of the class concept itself.[243]

Cassirer locates the first stage of class-formation in the unifying of representations based on their similarity in the character of the object *qua* a sensual quality, or in this instance, based on their similarity in respect to natural symbolism. For example, the Melanesian and some Native American Language's have a prefix for round and long objects, such that both 'sun' and 'ear' belong to the same class.[244] Here the inherent spatial quality of the objects is the common factor uniting all of the instances. The classification of objects transitions from a unification according to a common content to a unification according to a common relation. In some Native American languages, the word for the 'same' object differs if the object is sitting, standing, etc.[245]

[243] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.295-302
[244] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.295-296
[245] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.296

Chapter Ten. Self-Determination And The Possibility Of Philosophy

All languages function as activities of world-formation, which is the specific way that the application of free-signification, or the culture concept, happens in language. For this reason, one could say that although the autonomy of language *qua* culture concept is different from languages independent function, the second is the fulfillment of the first, i.e. the specific language function is the specific way that the capacity for free-signification or culture is exhibited in language. The spirit of each people, e.g. their imagination, desires, and goals, are reflected in the language each speaks and in the world that they have built. Hence, these first freedoms of language belong to all peoples of the earth. Having determined what the autonomy *qua* independence, of language is, we can ask the following question: is language a vehicle for self-determination, and if so, which languages provide the tools for knowing that autonomy? Moreover, which languages provide the resources for knowing the unity of being in general? Although Cassirer argues that all languages possess the first freedoms, he argues that very few languages are able to fully function as mediums self-determination and of self-knowing.

The aim of philosophy is to know the unity of being. The unity of being is made possible by the symbolic act of the human subject, or the pure function of signification. Thus, the goal of philosophy can only be fulfilled if it knows what makes the unity of being possible, i.e. the pure symbolic function. The pure symbolic function is the self. Thus, philosophy aims at self-knowledge.[246] "The highest objective truth that is accessible to the spirit is ultimately the form of its own activity".[247] Thus, the highest objective truth accessible to the spirit is the truth of the symbolic function, which unites

[246] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp.1
[247] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 111

all of the activities of man. Before we can determine which languages fully reflect the autonomy of man, we must investigate how self-knowing, or philosophy, is possible.

The Critique of Idealism: Doppelrichtung

Although Cassirer claims that language can only be understood in a system of idealism, his philosophy of language is also contingent upon Kant's critique of idealism in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.[248] The critique of idealism argues that self-awareness is not possible except through an awareness of objects in space. This critique is a critique of a kind of idealism, not any possible idealism, for Cassirer, following Kant, adheres to a form of idealism in locating the form of reality in the form and function of spirit In general, the argument proceeds as follows: knowing the self requires representing the self to oneself. I can only represent the self in the *a priori* intuition of time. Time, or succession, is that intuition in which I find a representation of myself. I can only represent the unity of time through something persistent in perception. Every category of understanding applies to the world of experience through some time-determination. The category of Thing-attribute in the Categorical Judgment is applied to experience through the unity of time. The unity of time, succession, is represented only in the body as a spatial figure. From this it follows that I can only represent succession if there is something persisting in time, and this is the body in space. I can only represent the unity of time to myself if I model it on a spatial figure, i.e. if I draw a line. Thus, I can only be aware of myself if I am aware of objects external to myself, i.e. if I am aware of objects in space. Awareness of the I, the *Cogito*, is contingent upon some other fundamental truth: the external world.[249]

[248] Krois, pp.32, Cassirer, *Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms*, pp.44-51
[249] Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp.327

From the clue that self-determination requires determination in and through the use of the symbol, and the critique of idealism, Cassirer extracts the principle that the self cannot know itself unless the pure function of signification injects itself into the phenomena, and more explicitly the symbol, and knows itself in and through it. By injecting itself into time and space, the function of signification produces the symbol, i.e. the representation of meaning by way of sense content. The pure function 'made external' is the symbol. Knowing the function of symbolism is contingent upon knowing the products of that function. The symbol is the mediate principle of knowing.[250] Once spirit has objectified itself, it can recognize the form of its own product, the symbolic form, and can recognize itself as the function that created it. "Spirit knows itself and its antithesis 'objectivity' only by injecting itself in the phenomena."[251] Because spirit only knows itself by injecting itself in the phenomena, we understand why the formation of empirical objects requires the linguistic synthesis of the pure manifold of space.[252] This process of going out into intuition and coming back to oneself is what Cassirer calls spirit's *Doppelrichtung*[253] One can only recognize oneself as distinct from 'objectivity' by immersing oneself in it. The road outward becomes the road inward.[254] The symbolic forms are mediated by spirit and only through these mediacies can spirit come to know itself."[255]

This process of examining the product in order to know the producer is exhibited in the transcendental methodology itself. We have exercised this principle in our inquiry

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[250] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 76
[251] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.178
[252] "Logical and Ideal Relations need to be analogically projected into space before becoming accessible to linguistic consciousness." Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.200
[253] Literally 'Double- direction' Cassirer, *Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 44-51
[254] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 213
[255] Cassirer, *Metaphysics of the Symbolic Forms*, pp. 44-51 (228-267)

into language: 'how is language possible?' asks 'what is that function that produces the form of language?' Because language exhibits the symbolic form, we inferred that language is formed by the symbolic function. These two statements are different. One claims that language is symbolic in form, and the second that the symbolic function constructed this form. Language, like any cultural form, provides the possibility for man to find himself 'again' in seeing himself as the source of the structure of experience.[256] Man only knows himself through the mirror of his culture.[257] As Schelling argued, there is no direct pass to the transcendental I.[258] Cassirer's metaphysics is summed up in this notion of *Doppelrichtung*: his metaphysics is life become self-aware.[259] Philosophy, self-knowing, is only possible through an analysis of the symbol. Thus, it is not an overestimation to say that Cassirer's methodology and notion of philosophy is contingent upon Kant's critique of idealism.[260]

Now, it is important to recognize that Cassirer's notion of the *Doppelrichtung* can also be read in Hegel: "It [the Idea] is the round of movement, in which the notion, in the capacity of universality which is individuality, gives itself the character of objectivity and of the antithesis thereto; and this externality which has the notion for its substance, finds

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[256] Lofts, *Repetition of Modernity*, pp. 63

[257] Cassirer, *Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms,* pp.102

[258] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 263

[259] Cassirer, *Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms*, pp.44-51 (231-269), Krois, pp.66

[260] Philosophy can only think the source of the universal, the function of signification by thinking the symbol. This highlights Cassirer's commitment to the claim that thought is symbolic. Because language sets the limits of all higher cognition, and is symbolic in form, Cassirer holds that thought and speech share the same form. "Die Idee ist nicht vor der Sprache, sie wird in der Sprache und durch die Sprache." Cassirer, Die Sprache und der Aufbau der Gegenstandswelt, pp. 150. The idea is not before language; it becomes in and through language. Non-symbolic thought is equivalent to being able to think a pure meaning whose completeness is not contingent upon its sign, which we have shown to be impossible. See section III: That thought is conditioned by language follows from the following premises: because the sign is a necessary condition for meaning, and the linguistic sign first makes the meaningful world possible, there is no thinking apart from language. In other words, there is no thinking or symbolic representation in thought apart from language.

its way back to subjectivity through its immanent dialectic."[261] Nonetheless, Hegel's *Doppelrichtung* is the *Doppelrichtung* of the Idea in its dialectic, not the *Doppelrichtung* of Cassirer's 'Spirit'. For this reason, I judge it best to say that Cassirer's notion of the *Doppelrichtung* is influenced by Hegel's Idea and Kant's Critique of Idealism.

Our question 'is language a vehicle for self-determination?' has already, albeit in an implicit way, been answered. By speaking, human beings form a world. Given the breakdown of the subjectivity/objectivity distinction, i.e. that the form of the synthetic activity of subjectivity is the form of objectivity, in this formation of the world through the act of speaking, human beings in turn determine themselves. Thus, language, as a symbolic form, is one medium through which human beings determine themselves. In the *Weltanschauung* of a people a view of the people is contained, indeed, this world-view reflects how the people view themselves in the context of the world that they have formed in and through language. The way that the speakers of a certain language determine their world speaks volumes about the character of the people and the civilization who speak that language. For example, the way the world is determined in the Standard American English language reflects how the American people have created their civilization. The kind of world formed by the American people reflects something about the American people; minimally what kind of symbolic-producer is required to form such a world. This claim is *not* that man makes himself the symbolic animal. Man is symbolic animal, and no act of will can alter this fact. Man is 'given over' to this determination. Man's freedom lies in the way in which a people determine themselves as the symbolic animal, i.e. the way that they engage the function of symbolism through symbolic activities. This last point shows how contrary Cassirer's view is to the

[261] Hegel, *Logic*, pp.278

postmodern. The postmodern claims that language is oppressive, for it is a realm of determinacy. For Cassirer, only because language is a house of determinacy can we be free.

Self-Awareness in Language[262]

The self is the pure function of symbolism. Because language is a cultural form, and the cultural form is that through which the self is known, it follows that language either possesses the tools for knowing the self as the symbolic function or it does not. A language is said to be more autonomous if it provides the resources, in its set of rules, for the signification of the self as pure activity, as opposed to some other form of self-signification that binds the representation of the self to a particular intuition. For the former is more autonomous, because it fully actualizes the self-awareness of the subject in its grammar, while the latter exhibits only a partial self-awareness in its grammar by limiting the application of the function of signification to the signification of oneself as an object or intuition, and not as the pure activity of symbolism. The former thereby provides the tools for knowing the self, while the latter only achieves the same in a deficient manner.

Languages which provide the tools for self-knowing also provide the tools for the full engagement of the human capacity for self-determination. Those languages which allow the expression of the pure function of symbolism allow the individual speaker to employ the function of symbolism to signify signification itself, and to thereby fully engage their capacities. This new forum for self-determination highlights how the third

[262] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.198-215, or any other subsection in chapter three. The following argument schema is extracted from part two of chapter two and chapter three. The argument is repeated in each subsection of chapter three in the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* in respect to time, space, number, and the I.

autonomy of language is not merely an autonomy of a civilization or a group of speakers, but also for the individual speaker. Given that some civilizations are freer than others, the speaker of the language which allows for the expression of pure symbolism has acquired a capacity to determine himself in a way that the speaker of a different language, say in another culture, that does not allow this expression, cannot. Perhaps it is foolhardy to say, for example, that by merely speaking language 'x' one is freer than someone who speaks language 'y'. But on Cassirer's view, one is given more opportunities for self-determination if one speaks a language that can express the signification itself. This I do not find foolhardy in any way. For example, because philosophy is self-knowing, and this requires knowing the function of symbolism, on Cassirer's account, speaking a language that allows the expression of this function provides for the possibility of philosophy as a way of being, whereas seizing this opportunity may be much more difficult in other languages.

This point draws the limit of the transcendental account of the autonomy of language. The transcendental account on which Cassirer relies up to this point can be taken further, except only in a way. Cassirer cannot argue that although many languages do not provide subjects the proper tools for fully determining themselves, self-determination is somehow a transcendental principle of language. This would make many activities that exhibit the language function not languages, thereby rendering Cassirer's account of language contradictory. Even though all languages are vehicles of self-determination, thereby rendering self-determination a transcendental character of language, all languages do not fully contain this function, and for this reason the third freedom of language, in the fullest sense, is not fully a transcendental character. Even so,

that one can predicate self-determinacy of language requires that language exhibit the transcendental function specified in the second freedom, for without the second freedom, we would have no language to which we could predicate any capacity for self-determination.

Indeed, as the second freedom of language is a completion of the first freedom, so is the second freedom a moment in the third. How could this be the case if the third freedom is not transcendental and the second is? Perhaps one could say that the reflexivity of man's symbolic activity makes language possible, and that the language activity is that through which the object is formed. Now, I suggest that this is a misleading way to talk about the reflexivity of spirit in culture. It is just as false to say that there are objects without language as it is to say that only once humans have mastered the language act that they thereafter draw the lines in the sensuous substratum. To speak is to draw lines in the sensuous manifold of consciousness. There are only objects if there is language, and if there is language then the object is immediately given. This expresses a double conditional. If and only if language, then there is the object, if there is the object, then there is language. So we cannot talk about the reflexivity of subjectivity in culture as though it were prior to language or object formation. It is true that the reflexivity of the symbolic act is manifest in consciousness' production of the natural symbol. This capacity for self-determination makes the capacity of self-determination in culture possible, even though the former is an act of spontaneity, while the latter is not. The reflexivity of the symbolic act in culture is only possible through the determination of the object, which itself first comes to be in language. Thus, we say that the reflexivity of the symbolic act in culture is only possible through the independent

function of language, i.e. the second freedom. This is the fuller meaning of the *Doppelrichtung*. Thus, the second freedom is a moment in the self-determination of the subject in language, the third freedom. Once subjectivity has a world, it can see itself in it as its producer. Spirit's reflexive capacity in culture is first exerted through the determination of the external world, which first happens through language. Insofar as each language exhibits the second freedom, each language exhibits the character of self-determination. This means that the reflexivity of the symbolic act is a transcendental character of language that makes experience possible. Reality is like water, whose form is the form of the reflexivity of spirit, the content of which is filled in differently by different self-determiners. For this reason, we say that the reflexive character of language, as a vehicle of self-determination, is transcendental. Nonetheless, not all languages fulfill the reflexive capacity. This is what I mean when I claim that although the reflexive language act makes experience possible, and is therefore transcendental, this act is more reflexive in some languages. Experience only begins in language, and for this reason, Cassirer argues that experience always exhibits the reflexive transcendental character of subjectivity.

Because language is a form of intuitive representation, language cannot express humanity except intuitively. This is also to say that the self-awareness of a people in a language can only be expressed intuitively. Nonetheless, although language is not a purely intellectual symbol, e.g. the linguistic symbol does not express pure symbolism, it does not follow that language cannot express the function of pure symbolism, which is what is signified in symbolic logic and mechanistic science. One might think that because it is an intuitive form of expression, e.g. 'the cat is brown', the predication involved is

always bound to a particular subject and predicate, and cannot therefore, express predication itself, namely 'x is P' or 'Px'. *Within intuition*, language can distinguish pure activity from pure intuition. For a language to manifest the subject as pure activity, it must fully distinguish the verb from other grammatical components or parts of speech. The verb is the expression of pure activity, e.g. 'to run', 'to play' 'to be', etc. To be sure, even here the verb will only be used in conjunction with a particular subject, but it is also true that the part of speech itself signifies an act that one can attribute to many a subject. As pure activity, language must fully distinguish verbs from substantives. Moreover, because the symbolic function is not any particular intuition, the language must have a grammatical component for the distinct expression of subjectivity within the noun class, as one finds in the personal pronoun, e.g. 'I', which as a personal class must be distinguished from other objects. For these reasons, it is essential that a language in which man's self-awareness is fully signified contain the noun, a class for the distinct expression of subjectivity, and the verb as distinct parts of speech. Every language possesses a term for other and self signification. As Cassirer himself contends, there is always some reflexivity in speech.[263] What is pertinent to self-awareness is *how* the language signifies the self. The following discussion follows how different languages designate the 'self' and to what degree certain languages fail to express man's freedom in their grammar, and which languages are thereby better suited for self-determination and philosophy.

[251] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms,* pp. 259

Unifying the Empirical and Transcendental Methodologies

In chapter three of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, *Language in the Phase of Intuitive Expression*[264] Cassirer discusses the degrees to which the various languages of the world reflect a self-awareness of subjectivity. He discusses not only the way in which the 'I' is represented, in respect to the analytic and synthetic unity of apperception, but he also discusses the understanding of the other natural symbols, e.g. time, space, and number[265], that is contained in the various languages. Cassirer focuses on a descriptive analysis of the various languages of the world in order to organize them into a hierarchy of self-awareness, beginning from 'mimetic' through 'analogical' and finally to 'purely symbolic'. These are the three stages to language's 'inner freedom'.[266] Each discussion of how the various languages of the world manifest human freedom and to what degree they manifest them, functions as an example of Cassirer's notion of the *Doppelrichtung*. This notion functions as the organizational schema of the hierarchy of language. The better suited a language is for expressing pure relation and activity, e.g. the natural symbols and the symbolic function, and the less immersed it is in the expression of the particulars of intuition, the higher the language ranks in the hierarchy. The empirical data employed in these sections functions as a way to organize the different languages and to aid in illuminating the *Doppelrichtung* through examples. Cassirer does not rely on the empirical examples to argue that language's independent function is to produce a world

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[264] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.198-277

[265] In some languages, space is represented by terms for the human body, time is only represented by terms for 'now' and 'not-now', thereby bypassing any distinction between past and future, and in other languages there are no specific numbers greater than three, just 'many' and often the character of the number-sets vary depending on what is being counted. With this note I only wish to hint at the great variety of ways that languages have understood space, time, and number. As we will see, the representation of the 'I', and the representation of any of the natural symbols as a pure relation is a very late phenomenon.

[266] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 190-193

of empirical objects. He proves this thesis without the help of the empirical example. The empirical data is instrumental in showing how and to what extent languages have employed the function of symbolism differently, and to show to what degree different languages are capable of expressing the self, i.e. the pure synthetic function of symbolism. Misunderstanding Cassirer's use of the empirical data may result in thinking that he is engaged in a genetical pursuit, which he is not.

The progression from the 'mimetic' to the 'purely symbolic' is a historical progression of spirit towards an understanding of itself. Even where language starts as purely imitative or 'analogical' expression, it constantly strives toward becoming purely symbolic. [267] Although all languages are symbolic forms, some are more immersed in intuition than others, e.g. more 'mimetic' or 'analogical'. A purely symbolic language is a language that fulfills the symbolic grammar, i.e. a language in which self-determination is complete and philosophy, self-knowing, is possible, and from which science and symbolic logic can be developed. In this way, we have a clue as to what languages count as 'purely symbolic'. Indeed, human culture, and therefore language, represents the process of man's progressive self-liberation.[268] In what follows, I primarily concern myself only with Cassirer's discussion of the way the *Doppelrichtung* is manifest in the linguistic determination of the 'I'.

Cassirer distinguishes four stages through which language develops in its representation of the 'I'. These 'stages' are different ways in which languages have formed the I-concept, and they represent the quasi- historical progression of man's becoming self-aware in language. Phase I includes those languages in which the

[267] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.197
[268] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp. 228

representation of the 'I' is bound with 'objective' terms and derived from the intuition of the body. When the I signifies the body, a particular object in the world, it does not signify pure activity, but the fact of spirit's immersion in the phenomena. To cite a few examples, this representation of the 'I' is found in the Altaic language group, Hebrew, Latin, Coptic, Indonesian, the Indo-Germanic group, Vedic, and Sanskrit. Even in the Indo-European languages, e.g. German, there are remnants of 'bodily' representations of the 'I'.[269]

In phase II[270] the I is represented as a noun that can be either active or passive. In this second phase the I belongs to a special class. In Bantu, there is a personal and an object class. Man *qua* animate, active and independent is included in the personal class, and acquires a special prefix, while man *qua* animate and passive is included in the object class and is designated with its own prefix.[271] Phase II represents man as a body and as an active being in the world, such that although the I is not represented as pure activity, it is not only represented as a body, as intuition, but also as something active.

Phase III includes languages that designate the I concept not merely as a body, or as a body that acts on other bodies, but as a subject that is capable of acting with and on other subjects. In the Bungandity languages and languages of South Africa, the term for the verb changes if many people are acting together, if the act is being done by only one individual, or if the act involves an exchange between a plurality of individuals. In this

[269] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 251 The suffix 'lich' originates from the term for 'body'. Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.307
[270] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 252-253
[271] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.253

phase the beginning and the end of the action, both subject and object, is located within a plurality of different subjects.[272]

All languages contain a way to express the subject as a body who acts on both other bodies and other subjects. Thus, all languages express the I as it is expressed in the first three phases. Although the highest phase, the fourth phase, includes the lower ones, because all languages have some way of expressing subjects, verbs, and objects in the first three phases, it would be a grotesque manipulation of the empirical data to claim that some languages have not achieved the expressive capacity in the first three phases. But these phases are not ways in which subjectivity is expressed as pure activity. Phase IV includes those languages which express the I as pure activity, as the I that relates to itself. "The relation becomes closer still when a plurality of subjects is replaced by a single subject, so that the starting point and goal of an action are first separated and then rejoined into one content.'[273] This 'I' is the I that signifies itself as pure activity.[274] For this reason, Cassirer agrees that Greek is a truly philosophical language. Greek contains a 'middle form' in between the passive and active expressions of the verb, in which the subject is that which acts and is acted upon. This grammatical form expresses the self-relational aspect of subjectivity, and is therefore well suited for the pursuit of self-knowledge. These phases become clearer when we consider them in the context of noun, pronoun and verb development.

The Possessive Pronoun

In the first three phases, the I is not yet fully objectified in the personal pronoun, 'I', in which it receives a grammatical signification of its own, independent of some

[272] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 258
[273] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 258
[274] This pure activity is expressed in any inflected verb, e.g. 'to be', 'to run', etc…

particular intuition, the I and its personal relations are represented by the possessive pronoun.[275] This is reflected in child speech. Before the child learns 'I', it learns 'mine', indicating the primordial way in which the I is represented in primitive language.[276] The possessive always links the I to some particular object that is possessed by it,[277] preventing the function of signification from fully objectifying itself. For this reason, when the I is only represented by the possessive pronoun or its functional equivalent, subjectivity has neither fully instantiated itself in objectivity nor yet fully distinguished itself from objectivity. In such languages there is not yet a personal subject class within the class of substantives that is expressed by its own grammatical structure. Indeed, the history of linguistics shows an indifference between 'I' and 'mine', 'you' and 'yours' in proto-languages. The indifference is a not-yet having distinguished between 'I' and 'mine' such that 'I'= 'mine'. This indifference still shows through in the phenomena today in the Ural-Altaic and Native American languages, in which 'I go' means 'my going'. We see that in many languages there is not even one grammatical case for the expression of possession, e.g. a 'genitive', but there are many different ways of expressing possession. For example, in the Melanesian and Polynesian languages, the character of the object possessed dictates how one expresses the possessive relation, resulting in many heterogeneous ways of expressing ownership. This shows that the development of a homogeneous expression of possession, i.e. 'mine', 'yours', 'his', 'hers', 'whose', etc. is a relatively late phenomena. Languages which never express the I by itself, but are limited to its expression as a possessive or its grammatical equivalent, never reach the fourth phase of I representation. Because they have not yet separated the I

[275] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms,* pp.260
[276] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.260
[277] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.266

from intuition, and do not express it through its own grammatical form, it cannot fully manifest life become self-aware, or the symbolic function, and is therefore a deficient mirror for understanding the symbolic function. As the expression of subjectivity is not yet distinguished from objectivity in these languages, so the verb is not yet fully distinguished from the substantive. In many such languages, there is no passive form of the verb, because they have not yet achieved a fully 'active' verb. Even when the verb signifies action, the verb employed is often contingent upon the substantive involved. The verb usually signifies an 'occurrence' more than it signifies a pure act of subjectivity. In Malay, for example the verbs are distinguished from each other based on types of action, namely, how complete or incomplete the action is, or how far the occurrence is from the subject.[278] In such languages, there is not yet a development of the purely active verb or pure subjectivity. Both are intermingled together in intuition. The "polysynthetic" languages and "analogical"[279] languages exemplify the character of language in only the first three phases.

Although immersion in intuition confines subjectivity to representing itself according to some individual representation therein, this immersion in intuition is not wholly negative, but is actually very sensitive to designating the slightest differences in

[278] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 255

[279] Most Native American Languages fall in the "polysynthetic" category, while Hungarian and Japanese fall into "the analogical" category. The polysynthetic languages acquire their name from their being composed of mostly bound morphemes, such that their character is highly 'synthetic' in its lack of free standing meaning units. The 'analogical' languages are called such because they represent a middle group between the polysynthetic and the inflectional. The analogical do not contain inflected verbs, but are not composed of only bound morphemes. Although Cassirer acknowledges that Chinese is an isolating language, i.e. a language which consists of only free morphemes, he places Chinese in the 'analogical' level, because of its status as a 'tonal language'. 'Ma' changes meanings depending upon the stress and pitch, linking change in pitch to change in meaning. This indicates a very intimate relation between meaning and intuition, which leads Cassirer to designate Chinese as 'analogical' in his schema. Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 186-197 Cassirer suggests that Chinese is a degraded form of the inflectional; a similar pattern that English is beginning to show. Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 303-319

the quality of what it signifies. For example, in the Bakairi language, a language spoken by the aborigines in Tasmania, there is a word for palm tree, a word for parrot tree, but no general word for tree under which both kinds are subsumed, like in English or German. In many Native American Languages, there are thirteen verbs for washing, many different verbs for eating, different verbs for striking and breaking, etc. The verb for 'to wash' differs depending on what is being washed and who is washing, and similarly for the other verbs. Given the high degree of intuition immersion in these languages, they are suitable for explaining all of the distinct features and shades of action while they nonetheless miss the general subsumption of the particulars under one universal.[280] In this sense it is not wrong to say that these 'primitive' languages are 'one with nature', for the I has not yet distinguished itself or its activity from intuition and things.

The Personal Pronoun

In the representation of the I in the personal pronoun, 'I', the 'I' achieves, for the first time, its full objectification. It is objectified not as a body, but as it is, pure activity. Although it is fully objectified, it fully separates itself from intuition, i.e. it does not require a particular object to accompany it like the possessive pronoun.[281] This is the dialectic of spirit's 'journey' to and from intuition. Because it is fully separated from intuition, it is capable of expressing pure relation, and for this reason, it is capable of functioning as a vehicle for self-determination, for it is no longer beholden to other-determination in intuition. The 'I' functions as a mere placeholder for the speaker. Insofar as it is capable of expressing pure relation, and is a mere logical vehicle, e.g. a grammatical form, it expresses the analytic unity of apperception. As Cassirer writes, it is

[280] Cassirer*, Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.288-294
[281] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.265

the fundamental characteristic of the I that it is an absolute unity.[282] The personal pronoun is a relatively late phenomenon, which is not observed in all languages.[283] Moreover, in the Indo-European language group, the noun is fully distinguished from the verb. The verb is an expression of pure activity, while the I is included in a personal class, e.g. the 'personal pronoun' of the class of substantives. This shows how the Indo-European language group has distinguished the verb from the noun and the expression of the person, 'I' from the substantive class. Each is its own part of speech, e.g. 'verb, 'noun', 'personal pronoun'. Those languages which manifest the symbolic form in the fullest way are the inflected languages. In inflection, the verb is formed according to the subject and its number, i.e. singular or plural. For example, 'er geht' 'du gehst' are instances of the inflected verb 'gehen' or 'to go' in German. These bound functional morphemes are determined according to the subject, indicating the active nature of the subject. The subject is contained in and implied by the inflected verb: 'gehst' contains and implies 'du', while the Polysynthetic languages and the Analogical languages exhibit no inflection whatever: 'nam' or 'catch' in the polysynthetic language we cited earlier exhibits the same form regardless of the subject involved. It does not contain or imply subjectivity. The place holder 'I', in its separation of the intuition in the personal pronoun, makes its representation as an active I in inflection possible. Inflection represents the synthesis of the separation of 'I' and 'Verb' that occurs in the process of the I's objectification. The *Doppelrichtung* in the representation of the I concept is the separating out of the function of signification from itself in objectification, i.e. in

[282] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 262

[283] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.269-27 This is a disputed point in historical linguistics, and it is very important for Cassirer's claim that the *Doppelrichtung*, in the linguistic representation of the I concept is a historical progression from ignorance towards self-awareness.

achieving its own grammatical representation, and through this separation coming back to itself as pure activity as represented in inflection. "Mit der Entwicklung der persoenlichen Fuerwoerter hat sich das Gebiet des subjecktiven Seins von dem des Objektiven im Sprachlichen Ausdruck klar geschieden- und doch fassen sich eben die Ausdruecke fuer das subjektive Sein mit denen fuer das objektive Geschehen in der Flexion des Verbums wieder zu einer Einheit zusammen." In inflection one witnesses the synthesis and unity of the I and the verb. All of these different ways of representing the I in language testify to the fact that "die Form der Sprache ist eine Bewegungsform".[284] This clue in speech highlights how well suited the inflected languages, e.g. German and Greek, are for the pursuit of self-knowledge. For this reason, a consequence of Cassirer's view is that philosophy and science are not possible in all languages, but only in the Indo-European language group is advancement in science and philosophy possible. It is no accident that science and philosophy have flourished in the west. Hence, Cassirer limits the third freedom of language, in its fullest sense, to a family of languages,[285] and it is not figurative when we say that one's philosophical capacities are very contingent upon the language that one speaks.

It is important that we clarify the extent to which the hierarchy of languages in Cassirer's four phases represents a historical development. Although Ancient Greek is a 'truly philosophical language', it is ancient, and but nonetheless a better vehicle for self-knowing than many modern Native American or Malaysian languages. Presumably, because Greek originates from the Proto-European, its 'philosophical form' developed

[284] Cassirer, *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*, pp.237

[285] This analysis pretends not to categorize all languages, but to provide a schema for the linguistic data. There may be undiscovered languages that represent the symbolic function as well as the inflectional languages do, and this would be wholly consistent with Cassirer's thesis. The point here is that the inflectional languages provide the resources for self-knowing.

from the form of the Proto -European. Different languages in different families develop the capacity for pure function signification at different points in history, while some never develop the capacity. This shows that the historical progression of the I in its *Doppelrichtung* is not descriptive of how human activity has progressed, but expresses an idealized development. Cassirer's idealized development of languages is a logical categorization that reflects the extent to which human languages have undergone qualitative and quantitative changes in their capacity for self-signification. History is the history of human activity. Characteristic human activity, the symbolic act, can be engaged differently and to different degrees. Those languages that express the function of pure signification express the fact that the culture in which the language is found has fully actualized its capacity for signification. Humans make progress linguistically as they begin to fully engage their capacities in speech. In this sense, a group has progressed more than another if it can fully express the function of signification. To apply what we have said abstractly about freedom and the individual speaker to a more concrete example, a speaker of English is more free to be a free-signifier than a speaker of Hopi, and in this sense, a speaker of English is more free to be a Human Being, for he has the capacity to determine himself in speech in a way that the Hopi speaker cannot. Because the Hopi speaker can learn English and the English speaker can learn Hopi, it is clear that the Hopi speaker is not barred from ever acquiring this third freedom, but can acquire it in second language acquisition. The speaker has determined him an autonomous agent, which he is merely by speaking his language inasmuch as the structures of autonomy are embodied in language. This may violate some of post-modern man's sensibilities, but

Cassirer's general theory, although it shares similarities with post-modernism, here again moves in the opposite direction.

In sum, Cassirer argues that there are three freedoms of language. Language *qua* cultural form, the necessary condition of which is the symbolic function, language *qua* world-producer, and language *qua* vehicle of self-determination and self-knowing, which provides a freedom from ignorance. The bulk of the Cassirer's *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen* is committed to arguing for and delineating these three freedoms.

Chapter Eleven: Objections And Replies

Interpreting Cassirer: Hegel, Herder, Humboldt

In the Introduction to Bayer's commentary on the *Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms*, Donald Verene claims that Cassirer borrows a principle from Hegel, namely that 'Das Wahre ist das Ganze' or 'the true is the whole'.[286] I admit that Hegel is a source from which Cassirer's philosophy develops, especially in respect to his notion of life and, in part, the notion of the *Doppelrichtung*. But if Cassirer borrows the principle, 'das Wahre ist das Ganze', from Hegel, then it would be a weakness of my account that I exclude this principle from my interpretive schema. One cannot divorce Hegel's principle that 'the true is the whole' from his notion of *Aufhebung* or dialectic. The truth of any one concept is bound up with the truth of all of the other concepts in Hegel's *Logic,* for each undergoes a negation of itself, i.e. of its difference, resulting in a new concept. In this way, all concepts are a part of the one Notion that completes itself in the run of the *Logic*. The notion of the concept in Hegel is drastically different than in Kant. Although Cassirer thinks that concepts are inter-definitive, their inter-definitive nature is fixed, not fluid, i.e. they do not undergo any 'internal dialectic' or transformation, and for this reason, they are not all a part of the one self-determining Notion. Verene accepts that Cassirer does not adhere to Hegel's *Aufhebung*. According to Verene, Cassirer's dialectic involves preserving difference, not negating it in the formation of a new concept. But this amounts to an admission that Cassirer does not borrow the said principle from Hegel. If he borrows the principle, it is in name only. As we have seen, Cassirer thinks that our understanding of ourselves and of our concepts evolves over time, e.g. 'space', 'I', but not that the logical character of the concept itself evolves, or involves an internal

[286]Verene, *Cassirer's Metaphysics of the Symbolic Forms*, pp. 1-8

'becoming other to itself' in the production of a concept whose truth is its truth, etc. It is spirit that undergoes the dialectic, not the idea. Humans come to determine themselves through language, but language, space, time, or any other concept does not itself ever become other to itself in an internal dialectic. Our understanding of fixed concepts changes as we progress in understanding, but the concept does not. It is not clear to me how one would show that the idea itself undergoes the change, not spirit, in Cassirer's work. It is true that Cassirer's picture of the historical progression of spirit parallels' Hegel, for the historical progression of spirit in the thinking of each is a progression towards fully actualizing freedom, but this general picture is not specific to Hegel but characteristic of Kant as well.[287] Cassirer is vehement that speaking conditions thinking, while the freedom of thinking in Hegel, i.e. its presupposition-less character, precludes any limitation by language, leading me to speculate that Cassirer, if anything, opposes Hegel on one of the most central issues in his philosophy of language. Cassirer's philosophy of language can be formulated without principles borrowed from Hegel, and prevents one from easily over generalizing or confusing Hegel's and Cassirer's thinking.

If anyone is influential in Cassirer's philosophy of language, it is not only Kant, but those who initially employed his principles in an attempt to apply the Copernican revolution to the philosophy of language, namely Herder and Humboldt. Herder, in his

[287] Verene also claims that Cassirer borrows Hegel's term for 'Phenomena'. Perhaps this is the case. What is not clear to me is why this is of much importance. Cassirer retains the notion that the sensible is a constituent element in reality, following Plato and Kant, and he wishes to preserve this concept against the notion of meaning, in order that he may formulate the notion of the symbol. One of Cassirer's critiques of Hegel is that everything, even what is not logic, the sensible, is brought into or made subservient to logic. Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 83-84 "Of all cultural forms, [in Hegel] only that of logic, the concept, cognition, seems to enjoy a true and authentic autonomy." Hence, even Cassirer's dependence on Hegel for his notion of the *Doppelrichtung* is conjoined with a negation of it: Spirit undergoes the *Doppelrichtung,* and retains its own autonomy which shows itself in various forms distinct from logic.

Uersprung der Sprache, calls language an 'organic form'.[288] Both Humboldt, a linguist, and Herder, applied Kantian principles to language study, although their applications, to which Cassirer is sensitive, lacked systematicity. Cassirer quotes Humboldt: "The subjectivity of language no longer appears as a barrier that prevents us from apprehending objective being but rather as a means of forming, of 'objectifying' sensory impressions".[289] Hence, Cassirer's position regarding the autonomy of language, as a world-producer, is not a revolution in the philosophy of language, but is a systematization of a revolution that began with Kant and survived in Humboldt. Cassirer's own words testify to this interpretation. This emphasizes the fact that Kant's influence on Cassirer cannot be underemphasized, and is utterly instrumental in understanding his philosophy of language.

Cassirer's Metaphysics: the Boar and I

The inferences of the most significant conclusions propounding Cassirer's positive perspective on the autonomy of language rely upon the assumption that the synthetic function of consciousness makes objectivity possible. Cassirer assumes that knowing objectivity would be impossible if this were false; if it were our obligation to read off an objectivity that was given completely independent of the activity of consciousness. An objectivity that is 'ready made' is one that is not formed by subjectivity, but one that subjectivity meets in experience. In this valiant attempt to avoid dogmatism, a new dogmatism arises: how do we know that we have clear, unrestricted access to the character of subjectivity? By 'access to subjectivity' we do not mean to any particular representation of subjectivity, but the form of subjectivity in general. If this

[288] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.153
[289] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 158

premise is denied, then none of Cassirer's inferences follow. Nonetheless, this is not a specific problem for Cassirer, but a problem for anyone who accepts presuppositions. Even one who thinks knowing is not possible with presuppositions must say *why* this is so, which shows that this is a problem for every attempt at determining objectivity.

A problem more pointedly Cassirerian appears when we follow the consequences of the Cassirerian hypothesis. The problem of meaning in Cassirer is the problem of the unity of being. There is an ambiguity in Cassirer's use of 'being' throughout his work. The synthetic unity of consciousness is immediately the synthetic unity of the individual consciousness. In this way, there is no consciousness that is 'it itself by itself' or is not individual. Moreover, the boar, for example, is a being with a different consciousness, in the same world interacting with the human consciousness. In this way, the world, and its character, involves human and non -human consciousness. If this is true, then the synthetic function of human consciousness cannot make the world possible in which the boar and I live. We can only talk about or imagine the boar that is in the world of 'man'. When I imagine the boar or perceive the boar, it exists in my consciousness. In what sense do the boar and I live together in one world? This 'togetherness' of world is a meaningless world. It is a world that is *Sinnliches ohne Sinn*. The only connection to the individual consciousness that is not human is a meaningless, indeterminate one. Once I ask, "do we both live in the same world?" the question becomes meaningless. The boar is already drawn into linguistic consciousness; it is already 'boar'. This self-negating question is characteristic of the questions with which the dialectic of reason could spend a lifetime. There exist two apparent opposing tendencies in man: his tendency to see himself in everything he does, i.e. to anthropomorphize the world, and his tendency to

search for a cause of being beyond himself. These tensions are eased when we see that *being is anthropological*. Man sees himself in being because human activity is the cause of being, which is nonetheless beyond the mere individual man. Nonetheless, the following highlights an ambiguity in Cassirer's notion of being: "Without symbols man would, like the animal, live in reality."[290] If this is true, then the symbol is not the unity of reality, but somehow prevents man from accessing reality. Given his flippant use of the term, it is not clear how many realities there are in Cassirer, and in what sense 'being' is one.

Nonetheless, Cassirers's answer to our question is clear: the common world in which the boar and I, and any other individual consciousness, lives is the world in which there is meaning, namely the world of human subjectivity. The problem is that we cannot talk about or imagine this 'common world' in which the boar and I live without invoking the synthetic meaning-infusing principle of consciousness that makes being possible. The questioner does not yet recognize that *subjectivity is the meaning of being* and the source for any meaningful answer. When we ask the question about the common world we posit subjectivity and ask it from within human subjectivity. This is the meaning of the critique of reason. Although reason inquires into the source of the function of signification, we should abstain from such an inquiry, for it is decidedly unfruitful. We cannot read off the character of objectivity without introducing subjectivity. Although it may be true that consciousness is immediately individual, we cannot give it meaning without assuming universal subjectivity or the universal consciousness of the 'I' within which all meaning is given.

[290] Cassirer, *Language and Art II*, pp. 167-174

Contemporary Figures: Konrad Wogau

Wogau is one of the few philosophers who formulates a direct criticism of Cassirer's notion of the symbolic form. Hamburg reports Wogau's argument. Wogau objects to the logic of the symbol. 'Meaning' and 'sensation' are inter-definitive. If terms can only be defined in terms of each other, then they are identical. Thus, 'meaning' and 'sensation' are identical, and Cassirer's notion of the symbol is contradictory.

Wogau's argument is invalid.[291] Because terms are mutually inter-definitive, it does not follow that they are identical. Meaning is systematic, i.e. any term has a meaning only on account of the other meanings in the language. From this fact it does not follow that all of the terms in a language have the same meaning. In fact, all of the terms in a language do not have the same meaning, despite the fact that they are inter-definitive. The opposite of meaning, utter diversity, involves the meaning of meaninglessness, the negation of meaning, while meaning is never definable unless it has a sensible sign, but this mutual definition of opposites does not commit us to argue that meaning=sensation, just as opposites, mutually definitive notions, e.g. cause and effect, do not require us to equate the two. Wogau's argument suggests his unfamiliarity with the ancient dialectic of the one and the many, one which plays a central role in the history of philosophy. As Lofts rightly argues, Cassirer does not reduce the particular to the universal or the universal to the particular[292], although he maintains their mutual determination. Cassirer could respond to Wogau in a similar way, by reminding him that although subjectivity and objectivity, word and thing are inter-definitive, we can nonetheless separate them out in thought.

[291] Hamburg, pp. 67-90, 104
[292] Lofts, pp. 39

Martin Heidegger

Martin Heidegger, a contemporary of Cassirer, never formulates any specific arguments against Cassirer, although he mentions his theory and his name in passing while discussing possible, but wrong, ways to think about language and culture. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger mentions Cassirer's theory of the 'symbolic form' as an attempt to discover the essence of language.[293] With the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, this attempt can only succeed with an analysis of the meaning of being. Heidegger spends little time on language in *Being and Time*, and returns to it with greater vigor after his *Kehre* or philosophical 'turn'. In *Being and Time* language is something divorced from intellectual content, and is merely the external voicing of a complete meaning.[294] Heidegger explicitly rejects this notion of language in his later work: "Unwahr. Sprache ist nicht aufgestockt, sondern ist das urspruengliche Wesen der Wahrheit als Da."[295] For the later Heidegger, language is that primordial medium that shows forth being and truth; it is not a mere voicing of what has already shown itself.

This rejection of his earlier thesis brings us to Heidegger's essay *Language*. Here Heidegger calls us to consider language as language.[296] In order to understand the *autonomy* of language we cannot judge the character of language based on our analysis of something other than language. Because Cassirer receives his clue concerning the essence of language from the function of signification, the function of human consciousness, Heidegger could argue that Cassirer misses the way in which language is *independent* from humanity, i.e. he misses its autonomous character.

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[293] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 206
[294] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 204
[295] Thomae, Dieter. pp. 286 "Untrue. Language is not put on/stocked up, but is the original essence of truth as there.
[296] Heidegger, *Language*. pp.189-194

It is interesting to investigate how sensitive Cassirer is to this issue throughout his work. "Each form, in a manner of speaking, is assigned to a special plane, within which it fulfills itself and develops its specific character in total independence […]".[297] Moreover, "In defining the distinctive character of any spiritual form, it is essential to measure it by its own standards."[298] "The criterion by which we judge it and appraise its achievement, must not be drawn from outside, but must be taken from its own fundamental law of formation."[299] Hence, Cassirer acknowledges Heidegger's call to think language *qua* language, and to judge its achievement according to its own standards.

Despite the fact that Cassirer thinks that he is investigating language *qua* language, Heidegger is not so easily mislead. To investigate language as language, we must investigate how and what language speaks to us. From this perspective, it is not humans who speak. Language speaks. Humans are the vessel through which language speaks.[300] Cassirer can only determine the autonomy of language by locating it in the symbolic grammar. Hence, according to Heidegger, Cassirer does not investigate the speaking of language, but only investigates how humans speak.

But how does Heidegger's way of speaking advance our knowledge about language? Assume that it is primarily language that speaks, and it speaks forth being. Also assume that human beings are the vehicles through which language speaks being. From these assumptions one of two things follows: either being is not primarily anthropological and is only shown forth as such because humanity is the vessel for the

[297] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.95
[298] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.177
[299] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp.177
[300] Heidegger, *Language*, pp. 208-210

showing forth of being, or being is anthropological and is shown forth as such. If the latter is the case, then Cassirer is correct in locating subjectivity at the center of being. If the former is the case, then since 'being' only shows itself as anthropological through the lenses of subjectivity, 'being' in the non-anthropological sense is indeterminate, utterly lacking any meaning, and therefore irrelevant in our discussion. For these reasons, Heidegger's formulation of the problem of language provides no real difference in content with Cassirer. Heidegger's formulation just confuses the issue. Perhaps Heidegger may be able to respond to this refutation by invoking the distinction between ordinary language use, i.e. idle talk and paradigm language use, namely language use in poetry. Heidegger cannot say 'why' poetry is the standard, indeed, that would be to undermine his treatment of language as language, and would render something other than poetry the standard. For these reasons, it is clear that for Heidegger, to understand language as language involves not providing an 'explanation' of what language is.

Why is the empirical world represented so differently in each language? Why is it that being shows itself differently in Arabic than in English? Why does camel show itself in over 5,744 ways in Arabic and very few if any in many other languages? Heidegger can only say: 'being shows itself', but he cannot say why. He has no explanation. Perhaps Heidegger thinks it hubristic to think that there is an explanation. Although we do not want to resort to name calling, it is not clear what is more hubristic: searching for an explanation, or claiming that there is none without any intelligible reason to think that there is not. Heidegger's schema provides no way to explain the unity, the rich diversity in language, language's representation of the empirical world, or the reflexivity of speech, while Cassirer's philosophy of language, on the other hand, is pain-stakingly

constructed to account for all of these aspects. It is not a coincidence that humans are that through which being shows itself. Being shows itself through language because subjectivity makes being possible, i.e. because humans speak and their speech always exhibits the transcendental characters of culture and the function of world-formation. If I may, language is a house of being, but not in the same way that Heidegger conceives it. Thus, Cassirer's theory is not only clearer than Heidegger's in its formulation, but actually provides a schema for the explanation and organization of the phenomena that shows itself in speech.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Wittgenstein, like Heidegger, undergoes a radical change in his philosophical perspective on language during his lifetime. In the *Tractatus* he thinks that language is a picture of reality. Because a picture only pictures the pictured, and not itself, Wittgenstein could not argue that language is a picture without arguing that it is not a picture. Secondly, he could not determine whether language ever really connected to or pictured the world, for the world was only accessible through language. Thus, Wittgenstein, as Heidegger does, rejects this version of the Copy-Theory of language, and in the *Philosophical Investigations* presents a different perspective.

In the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein calls language a 'form of life'.[301] I find it unclear whether this connection between Wittgenstein and Cassirer is one which Wittgenstein recognized or not, but it nonetheless reflects both a similarity and a difference in their perspectives. Minimally it is clear that Cassirer found Wittgenstein and behaviorism in general, to be pressing and threatening theories that demanded an address. In *Essay on Man*, he recognizes that the modern tendency, especially in behaviorism, is

[301] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, section 241 The 'language agreement' is a form of life.

to deny introspection as a way of self-knowing.[302] In the *Logic of the Cultural Sciences* he recognizes what Bertrand Russell recognized, namely that philosophers have begun replacing "thought process" with the term "language habit."[303] In the *Investigations*, a rough summary of one of Wittgenstein's conclusions is that meaning is use in accordance with the conventions of the linguistic community in which the language is used. Wittgenstein's private language argument inspires this conclusion and can be employed to formulate an argument against Cassirer's philosophy of language, which in turn highlights the similarity between the philosophers.

The private language argument is formulated as a *reductio ad absurdum* that no term can mean a referent private to some individual language-user whether that referent is a sensation or any other mental state, such as an intention or a belief. Assume that some individual, Sam, were to refer, through the use of a word, to a referent private, e.g. a sensation, to himself at the present time or at some future time. If Sam were to refer to this private referent, then only Sam would have access to this referent, for it would be private to him. It follows that no other person will be able to determine whether or not Sam has applied the word correctly, because they have no access to the private referent. Thus, only Sam is capable of determining whether Sam has used the word correctly or incorrectly. But if only Sam were able to check his own application, then the correct application would be that which Sam determined it to be. If the correct application is whatever Sam determines it to be, then any application of any word upon any private referent counts as a meaningful or a correct application.[304] If it is arbitrary to which

[302] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp.1
[303] Cassirer, *Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, pp.52
[304] This assumption is an instance of the assumption that the standard for meaningful application of words is external, and it is an assumption I discuss after the argument has been explicated.

referent that Sam applies the word, then the meaning of any word which refers to a private referent does not exclude any private referent whatever, and if no referent is excluded, then the application of the word is arbitrary. If the application of the word is arbitrary, then it follows that there is no correct or incorrect use of the word. But it should be relatively obvious that any meaningful word has a correct and an incorrect use. For if a word, 'pain', has no incorrect use, then it has no meaning particular to it, i.e. it can have the meaning of any other word, e.g. 'pleasure.' In other words, the meaning of a word requires that it have a correct and an incorrect application. Insofar as words which mean private referents have no correct application, it follows that they have no meaning, i.e. their referents cannot be their meanings. They are meaningless. *Thus, no term can be used to refer to any private referent*, e.g. any mental state whether that is a sensation or some other private referent.[305]

That 'meaningful language use is the use of language in agreement with the linguistic community's use of language of which the speaker is a part' is not a premise but the conclusion of the argument. Wittgenstein's claim about meaning in the *Investigations* is the way in which Wittgenstein fills out the content of the 'external criterion of meaning' in the *Philosophical Investigations*. In sum, only that which is public can be spoken about meaningfully.

The private language argument provides us with a potentially powerful argument that Wittgenstein could level against Cassirer. Because mental contents are private to individual minds, and the criterion of meaning is completely public, referencing the

[305] Soames, Scott. pp. 44-46 Although this argument is suitably aimed at criticizing certain uses of language, it is formulated as an argument about what kind of referent can be named. Only public referents are nameable, while private referents are not. If the additional claim is added that the meaning of a word is determined by how it is used in the larger linguistic community, then the meaning of any particular name will be the way that it is used, and would not be immediately equated with its referent.

mind, 'spirit', or any mental contents to explain the origin of meaning provides no explanation of meaning. Given that Cassirer cites the synthetic function of spirit as the source of the meaningful world and all meaningful speech, how could Cassirer respond to such a charge? The argument against Cassirer includes an unsound premise. I contend that Cassirer could actually *agree* with Wittgenstein that there is no substantive mental content that could function as an internal standard for determining the meaningful use of speech in general. But this agreement does not compromise Cassirer's position regarding the function of signification in the production of meaning. Why? The function of signification is an activity. As an activity, it is observable, and verifiable. Every linguistic act, which is a public act, exhibits the function of signification. Insofar as it exhibits the function of signification, we can employ publicly verifiable speech to affirm the function of signification as the source of all meaningful language use. It must be remembered that the function of signification is not predicated of any particular individual consciousness, but is the condition for the possibility of any consciousness whatever; it is something that can be observed. Transcendental philosophy is not Cartesian, i.e. it does not posit a 'ghost in the machine'. In this sense, it is not private at all, for every individual language user has access to this function and its product. One might argue that there is something inconsistent about a discussion of principle we cannot express, namely the universal 'I'. But insofar as the I is a placeholder, it is false to say that one cannot consistently say 'I' and mean it in the most universal sense, just as one can express 'x' and not contradict oneself. "The content of spirit can be conceived only in and as activity".[306] Spiritual life should be approached as functions and energies of formation.[307] Wittgenstein's argument

[306] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 160
[307] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, pp. 114

bypasses Cassirer, who takes the *public* use of language and the data collected by linguistics as the fact from which his analysis begins. What is gained by going further is what Wittgenstein claims is not gained: an explanation! Cassirer's explanation shows what is structurally common in all public uses, and what publicly observable function is itself always at play in the activity. Cassirer's notion of the *Doppelrichtung*, developed from the *Critique of Idealism*, contains Cassirer's response to Wittgenstein: only through objectivity and the objective act can spirit come to know itself. That Cassirer and Wittgenstein can agree on the question about the public character of meaning is clear from the fact that both can agree that the problem of other minds is based on philosophers not properly recognizing the public character of language.[308] Cassirer can agree with Wittgenstein that the standard of meaning cannot be private to any one individual, without agreeing that meaning is only use in accordance with the linguistic conventions of the community.

Perhaps Wittgenstein would argue, like Heidegger, that Cassirer compromises the autonomy of language by introducing mind. If this were his objection, it is not clear how it would not also apply to himself, for he claims that the language activity is a form of life. In this way, although Wittgenstein tries to avoid the 'mind' in his discussion of language, language is bound to human life and cannot be separated from it.

When we analyze Wittgenstein's own position, we also realize how much he must disagree with Cassirer. Language cannot be reduced to a contractual agreement or convention, like an agreement made between players in a game. The analogy of the

[308] Kripke, pp. *Wittgenstein, On Rules and Private Language* 114-145 Kripke discusses this problem in his Postscript: *Wittgenstein on Other Minds*. Wittgenstein's solution is like if not identical to Cassirer. The only way that we can formulate the problem of other minds is in language. Being in language is to be in a community of speakers, i.e. a community of other minds. See Cassirer's *Das Symbolproblem*, and Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*.

'game'[309] that Wittgenstein invokes to explain language is a poor analogy. If the origin of language is some form of contract, yet contractual agreement is only possible in language, then language cannot be explained by appealing to the notion of the convention or contractual agreement.[310] Because Wittgenstein does not depend on explicit agreement, this is a relatively weak argument against him. Moreover, because Wittgenstein thinks that self-relation is impossible,[311] he thinks that philosophy should only report ordinary language use, and that philosophy should not attempt to explain it. But this statement itself is not justified under the Wittgensteinian account, for it is a statement in which language is employed to refer to language, i.e. an instance of self-relation, and it transcends the bounds of reporting. What we gain from a transcendental account is an explanation, and this is what Wittgenstein denies us in limiting philosophy to reporting ordinary language use. This shows that the autonomy of language is a *public* phenomenon, like the symbolic function, that we can discover by analyzing the ordinary use of language. In this way, Wittgenstein cannot reproach Cassirer for using publicly verifiable language use to investigate the autonomy of language. Even in his relentless attack on using the 'mind' as an explanation of phenomena, he continually asks his reader to 'imagine'[312] certain hypothetical situations. In this way, his own language use continually contradicts his own theses, rendering the many aspects of the *Investigations*, like the *Tractatus*, internally inconsistent. In sum, Wittgenstein, like Heidegger, does not offer an explanation of the richness of language's diversity. If I ask, "how is the unity and the diversity of language possible?", Wittgenstein can only answer that 'each language is

[309] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, section 66
[310] Krois, pp. 53
[311] Wittgenstein, sections 215-216 This is a thesis carried over from the *Tractatus*.
[312] See, for example, section 266 of the *Philosophical Investigations*.

a different game'. We already know this. What we desire is an explanation of why this is so, even though there may be no explanation of the language phenomena. Unlike Heidegger, Wittgenstein recognizes that language is a form of human life, and this is Wittgenstein's great advantage over Heidegger. Unfortunately, Wittgenstein does not use the clue concerning the organic form of speech to investigate the autonomy of language, although he is nevertheless interested in the question, although he focuses on the first freedoms and would reject Cassirer's claims concerning the third freedom of language.

Language and Pure Symbolism

Language is an intuitive form of representation. Symbolic Logic and Mathematics, the paradigm for the science concept, i.e. $F(a,b,c)$[313], are purely intellectual symbols, i.e. the sense-quality of the particular is irrelevant in its determination as a particular of the function. Because language is an intuitive form of representation, e.g. 'the cat is brown', it cannot represent the pure form of signification except in and through some particular intuition. Cassirer arranges the various languages in his hierarchy of self-determination according to the degree to which they represent pure symbolism, i.e. the function of symbolism. Thus, Cassirer judges the degree to which a language exhibits the third freedom, i.e. the degree to which it is a vehicle of self-determination, by a standard that language can never meet. Cassirer is thereby guilty of the same charge by which he condemns the Rationalist: using math as a paradigm for language study is the same as fitting language to a schema that it is not, and to thereby destroy it. In other words, the degree of self-determination that is predicated to language depends upon the degree to which a language can express pure symbolism and is not bound to the determinacy of intuition. If language can never fully express the pure function of symbolism, 'Px',

[313] For an explanation of this formula see Chapter V.

because it is always bound to intuition, e.g. 'The cat is brown', then no autonomy as self-determination, and no degree of autonomy, can ever be predicated of any language whatever. This 'isomorphism' might be the nail in Cassirer's coffin.

I find this one of the most challenging criticism's of the third freedom of language. The first freedom is not very radical, and the second is one I find well supported in argument. If Cassirer can overcome this criticism, then I think Cassirer makes a plausible case in favor of the three freedoms of language.

This criticism also highlights an ambiguity in Cassirer regarding the organic/mechanical concept, and the logic/culture concept. Because language's third freedom is judged according to the standard of the science concept, F(a,b,c), i.e. the capacity of expressing pure signification, the achievement of the organic form of language, in its rising to the highest level of self-determination, is being judged by Cassirer according to the standard of mechanism, not life. These ambiguities fog our vision of the third freedom of language.

How could Cassirer respond to these charges? The third freedom of language lies in the way in which language can be employed in self-knowing and self-constitution. Cassirer argues that language, although it has its particular function, as outlined in the section on the second freedom, can still function as a resource for knowing the pure function of symbolism even if it is not a purely intellectual symbol. Although this appears contradictory, what this requires is an abstraction of the function of symbolism out of its intuitive form in language. In this process, one must not forget that the function of symbolism is always bound to intuition and this is itself indicative of the way the pure function has been employed in language and linguistic world formation. In this way, one

may argue that the degree to which logic and science can be developed from a specific language illuminates the degree to which one can locate the pure function of symbolism in language, even though language is never a purely intellectual symbol. For these reasons, Cassirer is not guilty of the same charge by which he condemns the Rationalist. Consciousness is both mechanical and organic in form, *qua* natural and linguistic symbolism. Because we can use language to understand the natural symbols of consciousness, it does not follow that Cassirer confuses the mechanical with the organic; he uses the organic to locate that principle common to both the organic and the mechanistic. Because knowing man is to know the pure function of symbolism, and this is inherent in the logic and math-concept, those languages from which these purely intellectual symbols can be more easily located provide the proper resources needed for separating out the notion of the symbolic function in thought. We do not judge the achievement of language according to the structure of the science concept. We judge the third freedom of language according to the possibility of the achievement of philosophy. Because science has isolated the function that philosophy aims at knowing, it is therefore privileged by it in the schematization of languages most suitable for philosophical inquiry. Given this defense of Cassirer, I find his account of the three freedoms of language to be a plausible one, which is central to understanding and appreciating the first volume of the *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*.

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